

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALLEN GORDON

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 Allen Gordon on November 3, 2006, in Princeton, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth. Mr. Gordon, thank you very much for having me here today and arranging this interview. To begin could you tell me where and when you were born?

Allen Gordon: I was born in Brooklyn, New York on a kitchen table at 440 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn, New York.

SI: I'd like to know a little bit about your family history beginning with your father. Do you know if his family was originally from Europe or ...

AG: My father was born in Lithuania, which became Russia and they battled back and forth. He came to this country when he was seven years old. Mom was born in Philadelphia, never misspelled a word in her life, and we lived in Brooklyn in my grandparents' home for three or four years when we moved to New Jersey, Elizabeth. My father took a job working for my uncle. He had a large plumbing and heating distributorship in Elizabeth. My father managed the office from that day until he passed away many, many years later. We went to public schools in Elizabeth. When I was eleven or twelve years old we moved from the lower side of Elizabeth to the fancy part of Elizabeth where people had wall-to-wall carpeting, and I went to Alexander Hamilton Junior High School for two years. From there to Jefferson High School and from there to Rutgers. I was an active kid. I was a jock, president of the student body in high school, that sort of thing. I have two letters here. I'm a string-saver so I'm going to pull stuff out of the woodwork. This is a copy of the letter telling me that I received an Upson Memorial Scholarship to Rutgers and it's dated July 24th. The Upson Scholarship was given to kids who exhibited forms of leadership. It's described in the letter. On July 26th, here's a letter from Harry Rockefeller, I don't know if that name rings a bell for you.

SI: The football coach.

AG: Yes, and it says, "It is my understanding you have been awarded an Upson Scholarship," and so on. He says, "And I hope you will be a member of the football team in September." So they sort of go together, and I did play football my freshman year. Can freshman play varsity ball today?

SI: I'm not sure. I believe so.

AG: All right, because for a long time they weren't permitted to. You played on the freshman team. I came in at the tail end of World War II when those rules were not in effect, and, after my freshman year, I remember bumping into Mr. George Little (Athletic Director) who told me that I was one of three freshmen in the history of Rutgers who earned three varsity letters in their freshman year. So in a sense, I majored in the locker room for a while and then realized my grades were terrible. They were just awful and I spent the better part of a day, or more, with the university psychologist taking all forms of aptitude tests, because I was really very unhappy. ...

SI: This was in your sophomore year?

AG: Yes, it was in my sophomore year, you're right, and when we finished all of these tests, and somewhere I have a little chart showing the results in the various areas of aptitude, intellect, whatever, he said, "Mr. Gordon, what is your major?" and I said, "It's biology because my mother wanted a doctor," and he said, "That's very interesting as I look at your scores. When were you asked to leave the school?" I said, "My grades are terrible but I wasn't asked to leave school." He says, "That's very interesting." He said, "If you answered a few more questions in the same direction you are going in the other questions, you'd have received a negative score in mechanical, scientific aptitudes." He says, "But you're off the chart in verbal, social relationships, and so on." I said, "Okay, change my major," and essentially went from one dean's list to the other and scored pretty well. I was very happy and challenged in the courses I was taking. I ended up with a degree in sociology and with the intention of doing corrective, or penal work when I finished. As a result, the Army did me well. I'm jumping around, I know. I ended up as an MP officer in a prisoner of war camp and that told me that's not what I wanted to do as a career. I was discharged from Camp Kilmer, which is close to New Brunswick, and went down to the personnel or whatever they called it at Rutgers, because I knew that frequently they arranged interviews with different industry representatives to interview kids to come to work for them. They told me about a couple of openings and I interviewed in New York, got a job, thanks to the good auspice of Rutgers. So, again, I owe a lot to the school. Okay, let's jump back in.

SI: Well, I wanted to go back to the beginning. You mentioned your father had come from the Czarist empire, did he ever tell you any stories about what it was like there, or why his family, or why he chose to go?

AG: The only thing I remember him ever telling us was that when he was a little boy he used to help a sheepherder, and that was it, that was the only thing he ever said. Many, many years later, Edna and I traveled quite a bit, and I remember saying to my father, I said, "Dad, where were you born specifically? Tell me, you know, exactly," and I was pretty sure I knew where, because he had told us that and he said, "Well, why do you want to know?" And I said, "Well, I'd like to go there," and he got furious. He got absolutely furious with me. He said, "Isn't this world big enough, why do you have to go there?" So, obviously, we didn't go. But the family left that part of Europe because of the *pogroms*. People were being killed for no good reason, and they found their way to America. I'm sure that story has been repeated many, many times.

SI: Do you get the sense that there was something specific that happened to him that he didn't want anybody to go back there?

AG: No, it's just that life wasn't good for them there. They came for the same reasons so many other thousands of people left Europe. The Jewish people left because they were being kicked around.

SI: Did you ever hear any stories about your mother's upbringing in Philadelphia?

AG: That's an interesting question, Shaun. I know that my mother was born in Philadelphia. What the family did there or what prompted them to move to New York, I don't know. My grandfather had a small shop on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn where he sold plumbing and heating supplies. Fittings, pieces of pipe, that sort of thing. His oldest son struck out on his own

and, as I know the story, had a horse and wagon where he borrowed, bought, whatever inventory from his father and went to Elizabeth, New Jersey and opened a similar little business, which grew to be a very, very substantially large plumbing and heating distributorship. He had a very successful business and ended up providing a life for my family.

SI: So do you know how your parents met? Did they ever tell you the story?

AG: Oh, boy, somehow I have a memory of either my mother or my father telling me that they had met at a dance. I also have a memory of someone telling me that my father had danced in the Harvest Moon Ball at Madison Square Garden. That would be comparable to today's *Dancing With the Stars* [a currently running television show featuring celebrities paired with professional dancers in a dance competition]. My father was a quiet man and I have seen him at different affairs, weddings, whatever dancing. He was good but I didn't know if he was that good. Again, it was a different thing, in those days you could do the foxtrot, or a waltz, and that was pretty much it. But that's my understanding. They met at some sort of a dance.

SI: Now, you were born in Brooklyn. Do you have any memories of living in Brooklyn?

AG: I remember the house was a large home and, in retrospect, I have no idea how my grandfather was able to afford that home. I remember there were fruit trees in the backyard. It had a detached garage, a large building, but the home itself, when you walked in the front door, there were stone lions on either side of that walkway and the lower level of the house had a sitting room and a dining room. There were sliding doors to shut off the dining room. The kitchen had a back stairway. Theoretically, I was born in that kitchen, I mentioned on the kitchen table, but it was just a tremendous home and there was a stairway going up to the bedroom level, the second level of the home. At the bottom of the front hall stairway, on the main level, there was a telephone. My uncle finally built a screened roof over that telephone, because my older brother, Irwin, used to throw kid's blocks down on anyone that answered the phone. You know, these are the weird memories that come up only at times like this. But I have very little memory other than that. The neighborhood was Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn, which I believe to this day is a Toney area, or certainly upper middle class.

SI: Was the area primarily Jewish or were there other ethnic groups?

AG: I would have to say, at that time it was Jewish, yes, but we moved from there when my father went to work for my uncle in New Jersey, to an apartment house on Elizabeth Avenue. There were two apartments on the floor, it was a three story building. The building was owned by my uncle. You know I always referred to him as "the rich Uncle Sam." Sam owned the building and the deal was we would live there rent free but maintain the building. That meant my mother swept the stairs once a week. The summer of going from the seventh to the eighth grade, we moved up to a two-family house on Chilton Street in Elizabeth and life went on from there. I was twelve years old at the time.

SI: You said that area where you first lived was not as nice as the other area.

AG: Elizabeth, that's right, we moved "uptown" after some years.

SI: What was the first neighborhood like? Did you ...

AG: The first neighborhood was primarily Italian. The apartment was on Elizabeth Avenue, a business street. We walked about five or six blocks to the grade school that was in the area. There were no school busses in those days, and we also walked to junior high school, which was a much longer walk, but that's what kids did.

SI: What did you think of your schooling in that area?

AG: I thought it was excellent. In retrospect, it was excellent and it's funny, I'm not blowing the horn for New Jersey at this point, but I can tell you that we've lived many places since I got out of service and I've had any number of people tell me that. In conversation and again, these are old coots talking to each other, they said, "Well, gee, we never learned that in school," or, "our curriculum didn't include the kinds of things you're talking about," and I developed an inordinately high respect for the education I received in the State of New Jersey.

SI: Your school, academically it was good, what about others like sports programs?

AG: They had all the usual sports programs, yes, as well as the other activities. I played in the band, in high school, there were a multitude of clubs and activities in which to be active.

SI: What instrument did you play in the band?

AG: I played saxophone at first and then switched to bassoon, and I played one year at Rutgers, too. The NJC group found out that there was a guy over across town that could play bassoon, so I ended up as the only male member of the New Jersey College for Women woodwind quintet, and that was fun, you know, playing with the girls.

SI: I'll definitely ask you about that later. How did you get involved with the saxophone and music?

AG: That was primarily my mother's influence. She felt that the three of us had to be involved with music and we all took lessons on one thing or another. Irwin, I remember, played the accordion and then switched to drums in high school. He was a drummer and Larry played the tuba. He switched to trumpet, or coronet, or something, but never really pursued it.

SI: Were there any other community activities like Boy Scouts or maybe some youth groups that were run through the synagogue?

AG: I was active in a number of them. I don't remember Irwin being active. Larry, of course, was always involved in basketball, that was his life, and he did very well at it. I was active in intramural sports and I ended up, in high school, playing football. My junior year I went out for the basketball team and I really wasn't much of a basketball player. I was on the JV; I was allowed to sit on the varsity bench. I found out that the school didn't have a wrestling team and I spoke to one of the gym teachers about it. He said, "Well, if you can get a whole bunch of guys

together, I'll talk to Mr. Averill," the principal, "and we can have a team and I'll get a schedule for it. So I became the manager of the wrestling team and we organized it and we had some good times out of it. One of our trips was to West Point so we enjoyed that and I was on the track team. I put the shot and threw the disc and did win the State championship with the disc, and went on and threw the disc at Rutgers, as well, for two years. I was president of the student body; I was, you know, "Jack Armstrong."

SI: So the early years that was in the middle and towards the end of the Great Depression, what do you remember about the Depression and how it affected you and your family?

AG: Oh, boy, it's funny, when I compare notes with Larry, who's five years younger than I. He says, "We were poor," and I say, "No, we were middle class," largely because our family wasn't on relief. All of my friends were on relief at school. That meant they got a new pair of shoes every month. I had to wear hand-me-downs, but my shoes had leather soles. Theirs had some sort of a composite paper sole and that's why they got new shoes every month. You certainly learned to appreciate a buck. I remember a neighbor lady bringing in a small radio to my mother and saying, "Please hold this for me through tomorrow because the social worker," or whatever, "from the relief is coming to visit and if they see that we have a radio, they may take us off relief." That was considered a degree of affluence, to have a radio. That family, the husband was at a tubercular sanitarium in New Jersey, had two sons. Later on, at Rutgers, I walked in on the first day of a psychology class and one of the sons was the instructor. He had gotten his PhD! I looked at him and I sort of recognized him and began to talk to him and we both realized who we were and where we came from and it was an interesting experience.

SI: Wow, that's quite a story. Do you remember who he was?

AG: His name was Schwartz, Dr. Milton Schwartz. I don't know if he's still there, or I would doubt that he's still there. He was considerably older than I, must have been certainly eight or ten years older, and I'm seventy-eight, so I would doubt that he's still teaching.

SI: Well, there are a lot of older teachers at Rutgers and there is *professor emeritus*. So you had the impression that your neighbors were struggling through the Depression?

AG: Yes, yes.

SI: Did you see that among your friends in things they could or couldn't do with you?

AG: Well there wasn't much you could do. The kids' activities after school was to shoot marbles or play ringolevio, you know, that sort of thing. You had to make your own good times. I remember the school taking a trip to the World's Fair in New York from Elizabeth. There was a bus and, I think, you had to come up with like fifty cents in order to go and I had been to New York any number of times, because that's where my grandparents lived. We did have a car. Good heavens, we had an automobile, very few people did, and many of the kids on the bus had never been to New York and Elizabeth is fifteen, seventeen miles from Manhattan. So you learn to do without, or they never had it so they didn't know they were missing anything.

SI: Were your friends a mixture of children from different ethnic groups

AG: Yes.

SI: They weren't split.

AG: No, no, no, no, no. It was a truly a melting pot, truly a melting pot.

SI: Did all the groups get along as far as you know?

AG: I would say yes. There's one memory though that I do have of, now again this was '39, '40, thereabouts; a friend of mine, his first name was Paul, I don't know that a second name is meaningful, but we used to march in the schoolyard during gym class. Marching was, you know, part of it and I remember him sort of like counting at cadence while we were marching, saying, "*Für stinken Juden*," "Stinking Jews," and I had been to Paul's home. We were friends, but, evidently, that's what he was learning at home at that time in our history and, certainly, it affected our friendship, but I still played with Paul. He had an older brother, who was my older brother's same age. I don't know that they were close, but Paul was a friend of mine but this is what the kids were learning.

SI: Do you think his parents were members of the *Bund*?

AG: Possibly. We lived in Elizabeth. Union, which was close by, was the home of the *Bund*, or was a *Bund* headquarters in that part of the state. It was a very active group, but there was no very active anti-Semitism as I remember. Yes, there were quips like that and maybe I wasn't sensitive enough at that time to pick it up and, certainly, it didn't bother me. I knew that I was Jewish. I remember my mother always saying, "You've got to do good in school, you've got to be good, you've got to be the best, you're Jewish," and, "Ma, what the hell has that got to do with it?" You know, but that was the mindset, and that's the way it was.

SI: Did religion play like an active role in your life or was it a background identity?

AG: My parents, my grandparents were orthodox, my folks kept a Kosher home. They did eat out, but they did not eat foods that would not be Kosher under any circumstances. They wouldn't eat ham or bacon or lobster, all the good things, and it's funny because some of that carried on. Irwin, my older brother, still maintains those eating habits. I certainly don't and I don't believe Larry does, in fact, I'm sure he doesn't. You know, what's better than a piece of lobster for God's sake?

SI: What about the holidays, did you celebrate them?

AG: We celebrated the holidays and, again, it begins to diminish with the generations. As a child we celebrated all the holidays. After I got married we celebrated some of them. Today, I can tell you in my house we do have a Passover meal because it's an excuse to get the whole family together, and we do conduct a little mini service but that's of no great significance,

although, it let's the grandchildren know where they come from and what they are and we think that's important.

SI: So what else did you do for fun as an adolescent teenager? You were very involved in sports and clubs,

AG: Yes, we belonged to the YMHA. I went there for Hebrew school lessons, when they could catch me, and I played in their basketball league for a number of years. I played on the team that came in second at the first national championships. We had to travel to Pittsburgh for that. I was in Rutgers at that time. But I became quite active at the Y and I remember the director of the Y coming to me one day, he said, "We're thinking about trying an experiment. Would you be interested in it?" "Well, what's the experiment?" And at this time, I had started to commute to Rutgers in my senior year. Campus life no longer interested me. It was a short train ride and I wanted to be at home, I guess. He said, "We have a girl's group, of teenage girls, and I want to try a male leader for that group. Would you be interested in doing it?" "Sure." These were fourteen, fifteen-year-old girls and at that time, at the Y because of my exploits at Rutgers and so on, all these kids were in love with me and that was great because my girls demolished every other team in the league. I mean, for Allen they would kill and we had interesting conversations at our meetings that were held once a week. We discussed: should you kiss on the first date, that sort of thing, and, in retrospect, it was a very interesting experience for me. Many years later I got a phone call from a lady who was on staff at Rutgers, her name was (Arleen Shatsky?). I don't remember her married name and she's involved in family orientations.

SI: Like something in the School of Social Work?

AG: Probably, and she said, "Do you remember me?" I said, "Sure, Arleen, I remember you." She said, "The Emanon," that was the name of the group; emanon is no name spelled backwards. "We're going to have a reunion and we want you to come to it." I said, "Well, gee," she says, "We'll send you plane tickets and we'll pay for your hotel room." I said, "Wow, sure I'll come," it was a weekend and I went and here were all of the girls into their then fifties. And we had a wonderful day together, reminiscing through all the things and I was their fearless leader.

SI: That relatively brief experience really had an impact on their lives, or stayed with them.

AG: Yes, yes, enough so that they want to remember the things that we did. I thought I had a copy of that, evidently not, I'm sorry, that would have been interesting because they made a big party when I went into service and it made the Elizabeth paper but I don't have it. I'm sorry, Shaun, I don't have it.

SI: That's okay; if you come across it later you can always send us a copy. So you did that for about a year or so?

AG: Yes, and I took my last fling. I was graduated in June of '50, Korea broke out at that time. I don't know why but I hadn't applied to any graduate schools at that point and sure enough I got that famous letter about your friends and neighbors want to see you and I was drafted. I went to Fort Dix for my basic training and then we get into the military part of our chat.

SI: Well, I want to go back and ask one or two more questions about the Depression. Do you remember if there were any of the New Deal programs in effect in your area, like the WPA, or...

AG: Yes. I remember looking out the window of 1000 Elizabeth Avenue where we lived. There were trolley tracks that ran down Elizabeth Avenue and there hadn't been trolleys on them for some years. I remember the WPA was taking up those tracks, that was one of the many jobs that they did, and a number of my friends' fathers worked on the WPA, and it's funny, I remember one Christmas. There was a toy store in Elizabeth and they announced that they were going to give out fifty or a hundred free gifts, Santa Claus would come at seven o'clock and give out free gifts, and I went with my mother. I don't believe Irwin went and Larry had to be an infant, I'm five years older, I had to be what? six or seven and here were all these people crowding around the front of the store. This guy came out in a mangy looking Santa Claus outfit and was giving people presents. I remember my mother reached over the shoulder of the person in front of her and got a gift and she put her arm back and said, "Please, please, I have three children."

SI: Did he give her two more?

AG: Yes, and it's funny the memories that come back. I remember walking with the family on a Sunday afternoon. In those days, they had candy stores. Candy stores sold candy and toys, and the window was always full of toys. We looked in the window one day and Irwin saw a Marine Band harmonica. He wanted that desperately and my mother went in and bought it for him. It must have cost thirty-five cents and I said, "Well, I want one, too." She said, "No, Irwin will share with you." "Right." Those things don't happen with siblings. It was funny, I used to kid Mom for years and years afterward, when something would happen I'd say, "Yes, Mom, and I'm going to get a harmonica, too." Years went by and I was working at a kids' camp during the summer in Connecticut. My mother sent a postcard saying they were going to come up that weekend and they had a surprise for me. I was sure they bought me a car. Things were a little better then and I remember sitting, waiting. It was a parents' weekend and the parents were driving in. My folks drove up and got out of the car, and I assumed that either Irwin, my older brother, or a cousin, or someone was driving the other car. And Mom gave me a harmonica. She said, "Now, you can stop throwing that up to me." So I finally got my harmonica, and that was that.

SI: Did your family talk about politics much, or support either party or any politician?

AG: The only political thing I remember was sitting in the kitchen listening to the radio. They had Hitler on the radio giving one of his speeches and I don't know if you are familiar with that, Shaun, but he was a very dynamic, shrieking, kind of speaker. I remember my mother saying, "I hope he chokes," and that was the only political thing I remember growing up. Now I'm sure they discussed these things at family get-togethers. In those days, the first Sunday of the month was my mother's family-circle meeting, the second Sunday was my father's family-circle meeting, the third Sunday was a cousins' group, and on the fourth Sunday we just visited relatives. So family was very, very important and the kids were always relegated to a bedroom. Invariably, during the winter, all the coats were on the bed and the kids sat and played games on

the floor, while the adults were in the dining room having their coffee, or tea, or whatever and discussing politics. I don't ever remember being exposed to political discussion.

SI: They didn't share any opinions?

AG: No, no. Well, yes, they thought very highly of Roosevelt and but in those days most everyone did.

SI: So it sounds like you knew a little bit about what was happening in the world both overseas, like with Hitler in Germany and also ...

AG: Well, of course, when Irwin went into the Army that was yet another chapter.

SI: Did you know much about the situation before Pearl Harbor? Did you follow the war in Europe or ...

AG: No, we knew that there was a war. I remember going to visit my grandparents, sitting in the car, my father had the radio on in the car and listening to President Roosevelt give his speech. It was the day Pearl Harbor was attacked. I remember hearing that speech. Those things, I guess, you just don't forget.

SI: Was it the first time you had heard about Pearl Harbor?

AG: Yes. Knew nothing about it. Irwin was three-and-a-half years older than I so that I was in high school when he started Rutgers but I knew very little about it. Irwin asked my father to save the newspapers and my father, like I, was a very structured, methodical person. He saved the *Elizabeth Daily Journal*, every issue, all the time Irwin was in the Army. They were stacked up in the basement of the house. When Irwin came home, he said, "Why are you saving newspapers?" He looked through a couple of them and they went out with the trash. Those were his memories that he preferred not to remember. But I knew all the expressions, the Battle of the Bulge, the 101st Airborne, things like that but in terms of what was really happening, no, no.

SI: You wouldn't sit around the radio listening to the news?

AG: I just have no memory of that. I do remember in junior high school there was a kid in our class, I don't remember his first name, his last name was McDonald, and his father was in the Canadian Air Force. He used to sit in class and knit. He was knitting a scarf for his father. Knitting a scarf is easy, it's about forty or fifty stitches and you keep repeating it until it's long enough, then you give it to your mother to finish off. McDonald spoke to the principal and they said, "Okay, knitting is now permitted at Hamilton Junior High School" and I can remember my mother casting on the stitches for me and sitting in class, because it was the thing to do, and all the kids were knitting scarves. That was called "Knittin' for Britain" and we knitted scarves and the McDonald family shipped them off to wherever. Something I haven't thought of in a long time.

SI: It's interesting it came about because everyone was doing it.

AG: It was the thing to do.

SI: Were there any other activities that you remember, like scrap drives?

AG: We saved fat in cans, or silver foil. You look for someone who threw away an empty pack of cigarettes and then very carefully separate the foil from the paper and you made a ball of it and then there was a place to bring it. You can bring that, and fat and scrap metal, or whatever, and it was part of the war effort.

SI: So between Pearl Harbor and the end of the war, when you were getting ready to go to Rutgers you were in your early teens and ...

AG: Yes.

SI: So you finished junior high and went into high school pretty quickly thereafter?

AG: Following year. You went from the ninth grade to the tenth grade, junior high school was seven, eight, and nine; high school was ten, eleven, and twelve.

SI: How was your high school affected by the war? Were there programs...

AG: We had air raid drills and the school bell would ring, and you went out in the hall and sat down on the floor and you sat there until the bell rang again and you went back to class. That was it.

SI: Do you remember having any fear of an actual air raid, or was it just a drill?

AG: I never put two and two together. I assumed this was something that you did because they want you to do it, but no way were we going to be bombed, we live in America. It wouldn't happen. In gym class we did have an obstacle course in a little park across the street from the high school. It was like the obstacle courses that you saw on *Movietone News* and part of gym class was running through the obstacle course. But, we just never anticipated anything. Like 9/11, [the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001]. That was pretty much out of the question.

SI: You lived in an area where you were close to a German population.

AG: Yes

SI: Were there any rumors about saboteurs or spies?

AG: Nope, nothing that I remember. Again in those days, I guess, I was ...

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SI: You were telling me that you're involved in this football league in junior high.

AG: And the track team and the basketball team.

SI: What position did you play in football?

AG: Tackle, left side tackle. In those days you played offense and defense. They didn't have a separate team for offense or defense, and that was true in high school, too. You played the game; that was it.

SI: In high school the teams you competed against were they also all in the Elizabeth area or did you have to travel?

AG: Well, there was, in those days we called it travel, I lived in Elizabeth, I know we did play Asbury Park, we had to go there, Paterson, Weequahic High School, Southside High School, Woodbridge, Perth Amboy, it was pretty much North Jersey.

SI: I was wondering if any of that travel was curtailed because of the war with gas rationing, did that affect it?

AG: I don't ever remember that coming up. You know, that's interesting. My father had an A classification, which I think gave him like three gallons a month of gasoline so that travel was limited to that extent, yes. There was enough gasoline to visit relatives and that was pretty much it.

SI: What else do you remember about rationing? Do you remember if that had much of an effect on your life?

AG: We had the ration stamps. I know that I worked at summer camps when I got old enough, out on the waterfront primarily. One year I was, the first year I was a waiter, then after that I became a Red Cross instructor, so I could head up a waterfront and when you went away for the summer, you had to bring your sugar coupons. You had to bring the family sugar coupons with you. The camp insisted on that, and you gave them to them and they were able to buy whatever it took to make the food for the kids. Rationing was there but we managed to live within the guidelines. I don't know that we were ever deprived of anything, really. But, again, we lived a very moderate lifestyle. When I think in terms of how I raised my children and how my children are raising theirs, I don't know if they could exist under the conditions that we did. But we didn't know any better, we were happy, we had family, we were healthy and you made do, that's the way it was.

SI: Do you remember corresponding with your brother when he was in the service?

AG: Letters back and forth, yes. Yes, we used to get V-mails from Irwin and every once in a while, you'd see something black on it where they had edited it out. He kept us apprised of where he was, what he was doing and, you know, tell us about his activities, and so on, and later I learned that he was in a special combat engineer battalion that was assigned to Patton's Third

Army. They did "jobs" for Patton. I'm pretty sure Irwin participated at Remagen Bridge, which was a big battle, his engineer group went in and blew it up. Later, after armistice, Irwin had a squad, he never gave me any real details, but I remember him saying, "Well, the job was the squad would dig down to an undetonated bomb and I would defuse it." Yes, and that was what he did during the war. He came home with two Purple Hearts, he was hit a couple of times. He was at the liberation of Dachau but, that was about it. He never really discussed any of the detail.

SI: Were you able to, without knowing the details of what he had been through were you able to tell a change in him?

AG: Oh, yes, yes. He became more quiet, more reserved. Of course, he was my older brother. Sometimes kids, you know, they're not happy unless they're beating the snot out of each other. I can remember Irwin holding me, and Lawrence hitting me. I was the middle son, the middle child, much has been written about the middle-child-syndrome. But he became a very sensitive, caring person as compared with the big brother who used to whip me around.

SI: Are there any events during the war that stand out in your memory, like hearing about D-Day or V-E Day or V-J Day?

AG: Yes, V-E Day, that was my senior year in high school. I was president of the student body. You know, the things that go on today as compared with then are amazing. When we had assembly and, again, Thomas Jefferson in Elizabeth was the only all-male public high school in the State of New Jersey. When we had assemblies, the president of the senior class would lead in the salute to the flag. I was the president of the student body, the Jefferson Student Organization. My job was to read the Bible! I would read a certain number of psalms and then lead in the Lord's Prayer. We had a little ceremony on V-E Day and when the assembly was over, everybody supposedly went back to their classrooms. I had to return the Bible to the school office. I walked in and Mr. Passmore, the vice principal of the school, was looking out the window and all the guys were running out of the school. I still remember him looking. I couldn't do it, hell, I was in the office, I couldn't run and he said, "Will you look at them, Mr. Gordon, like rats from a sinking ship." Everybody took off, it was V-E Day and they knew that it was over for the most part, plus V-J followed soon after, and that was it. But I knew then, of course, that Irwin would be coming home soon.

SI: Yes, I've actually seen one of the yearbooks of Thomas Jefferson High School. We interviewed a man named, Alfred Vardalis, I think he was a couple of years ahead of you there, and he showed us one of the yearbooks and one of the things that was interesting was it's so different from what you think of an average high school yearbook. Because it was done during the war it was so patriotically themed and everything was eagles and flags and stuff. I think there were a couple of programs that were kind of geared towards preparing young men for the war like this obstacle course you mentioned. Do you remember anything else?

AG: Well, of course, they taught us to march to different commands, you know, but nothing beyond that, that I remember.

SI: Like aircraft identification or spotting?

AG: No, no, no. A lot of the kids were learning that in social church groups, or whatever, you could be exposed to that, but not in school. I don't remember it being taught in school.

SI: You mentioned the blackouts earlier, did they last throughout the whole war or ...

AG: Yes, even when you went to the Jersey Shore during the summer, along the boardwalk there were lampposts every hundred feet and they were blacked out on the side facing the ocean, and I don't know that it ever came to use but I do remember that, yes.

SI: So these summer camps were down at the Jersey Shore?

AG: The summer camps that I worked in, no, were in Connecticut and New York State.

SI: You mentioned that they had at least the problem with sugar; do you remember how the war might have affected the camps in any other way?

AG: Well, by the time I started to work in the camps, let's see, I remember the sugar thing. That was in the very first year and then after that the war must have been over because rationing was over and it was a full fare.

SI: So your senior year was the very end of the war but being a senior at that time were you thinking that you would have to go into the military then?

AG: Oh, sure. Yes, oh, the draft was there. Any number of guys did enlist. I remember there was a friend of mine, Danny Shapiro, who enlisted in the Navy the day after V-E Day and from that day on became known as "Hero Shapiro" because the war was over. It wasn't very nice but we always kidded him about it but a lot of the guys did enlist. My mother wouldn't hear of it, so Irwin was there and she felt that that was our family's contribution.

SI: It sounds like a lot of your classmates probably had family members in the service?

AG: Yes, yes. Well, everyone with a sibling, yes, the draft touched every home, every home in World War II. It wasn't that way later on. I know of any number of situations where guys were able to get deferments, exemptions for strange reasons I thought. During my tenure in the military there was a draft but, evidently, if you knew people or people knew you, and whatever, you didn't have to go. I've often kidded about that, if we ever have a draft, I want to be on the draft board, everyone will go, starting with the politicians' kids.

SI: But in World War II everyone was pretty much taken. Do you remember anybody losing a brother or something?

AG: Oh, yes. I lost a cousin in North Africa; any number of the kids had brothers who were either wounded or killed. Of course, Irwin was wounded twice.

SI: Was that something that was discussed, or dealt with in school, or was it just ...

AG: No, that was kept outside pretty much. You know, the Gold Star mothers, there was a little banner that people hung on their windows and that was it. The war in the papers was pretty much painted with broad strokes. I've always kidded about it saying that the great B-movies that used to come out always showed the commanding general in the staff and command room with a big map of Europe and he'd say, "We'll move the IV Corps in here," you know, the big arrow would point down and, unfortunately, that had to be translated into a corporal hiding behind a rock and saying, "You over there, get over there," big switch from moving the IV Corps in. So the newspapers dealt, I felt, dealt with the war, on broad stroke basis. Today, you know, you see it on TV, you hear it on the radio, the newspaper's loaded with intimate details and, you know, on a day-by-day basis you hear the body counts. That wasn't so then. They didn't do it.

SI: So how did you become interested in Rutgers?

AG: I applied to several schools, was interviewed, had to go to New York to talk to the guy from Columbia, and so on, and Swarthmore was a consideration. Irwin went to Rutgers. I felt I should go to Rutgers, applied for and was admitted and, you know, did get the scholarship, which certainly helped. And Rutgers was Rutgers, that's what you did.

SI: Had you been to Rutgers before to visit your brother?

AG: I went to Rutgers during my senior year in high school. To a football game on my own. I don't remember how I got the tickets but I took the train from Elizabeth to New Brunswick and then walked from the train station around the campus and hitchhiked to the stadium. I saw the game and went back the same way and loved it. Just loved it. I can't tell you who was playing but I remember going there and saying, "Wow, this is really special, seeing, you know, Old Queens and the stadium and Bismarck running around in the bushes." You don't know about Bismarck, do you?

SI: I've heard some stories.

AG: Bismarck was a big, shaggy dog that belonged to one of the fraternity houses. He used to run around chasing birds in the bushes around the scoreboard.

SI: So you chose Rutgers and you hadn't met with like the coach before that? He just sent you this letter out of the blue.

AG: That's right.

SI: What do you remember about your first days at Rutgers, coming to Rutgers that fall?

AG: A couple of friends from high school were living at the Tau Delta Phi house and they asked me if I would like to live at the house. I spoke to my folks about it and you compare the cost of the house with the dorm, and this and that and the other, I ended up living in the fraternity house. I did pledge and became a member and that lasted two years and I just didn't enjoy fraternity life.

I remember one of the deciding factors. I played football and swam, was on the track team my freshman year. My sophomore year I didn't go out for football, all the old guys were back then, bigger, stronger, better, and I remember the president of the house sitting down with me and saying, "Hey, Allen, you know, you played football and then you were on the swim team and track team, now, this year you're not playing football. I hope you go out for swimming and track again, you've got to keep the name of the house on campus." I said, "Well, the hell with that." You know, granted at that time I was a "frater," I was a member of the fraternity but I didn't feel that my life should be directed in extra curricular activities by some joker sitting in a fraternity house, and that was the end of that ballgame. I did go out for swimming and track in my sophomore year and earned varsity letters.

SI: And lived in the fraternity ...

AG: No, it didn't do anything for me. I moved out after my sophomore year and into a rooming house with Irwin, who had returned to school along with several other veterans.

SI: So you came back and Rutgers was still very much under the war conditions with nobody around and ...

AG: Oh, yes. I was in, I was told, the largest freshman class in the history of Rutgers, there was seventeen hundred of us. I understand that's a pittance compared to what's going on today.

SI: Oh, yes, that's a couple of classes. So when you arrived on campus, was the ASTP still a factor?

AG: Yes, the Astraps were still there. Rutgers is a land grant school and the first two years were required. You had to take ROTC and I did. Obviously, I had to and I remember the ASTP guys marching around the place and the ROTC classes were interesting. I took the first two years; and then, you know, why should I continue with this? I made sergeant as a sophomore and just didn't register for it my junior and senior year. In retrospect had I gone on and graduated with a commission, I don't know what would have transpired because Korea was there when I graduated. But, you know, if you're happy and satisfied today, right now, sitting here, then everything prior was right. So I have to assume that that was the right thing to do at the time.

SI: What was the focus of the ROTC at that point? I mean, they'd just come out of this period where they were just pumping guys into the military for basic frontline infantry.

AG: Oddly enough, I remember classes in map reading, weapon identification, marching, of course. I know we had a major who taught our classes and I don't remember much more than that, it's very, very hazy.

SI: Do you think that most of your fellow cadets had a similar attitude of, you know, why are we doing this? Do I need this?

AG: Yes, the war is over, why bother? It was taking up time in your schedule and, eventually, you had to put on the uniform once a week and march around in Buccleuch Park. Buccleuch Park, wow, is it still there?

SI: Oh, yes.

AG: Oh, really?

SI: Yes. They restored the mansion and it's a historical site. I think they, Rutgers, still does some activities there but not like it used to, it's just too, the school's too big. From what I heard you did field exercises there as well?

AG: Yes.

SI: Digging trenches and ...

AG: I don't remember, no, no digging. We did have squad maneuvers, able, baker, charlie squad things and running around hiding behind trees, you know. That was pretty much it.

SI: What do you remember about that year on the football team under Harry Rockefeller?

AG: Frank Burns was the quarterback. It was exciting. I loved it. What can I say, it was a football team, you know?

SI: How much time, on average, a week would it take during the season? Now it's a huge commitment for the players.

AG: No. I never missed a class because of football. You went to football practice when classes were over. I remember saying, "Hey, it's going to be getting dark soon and they're going to have to stop practice early." We showed up at the practice field behind the stadium and sure enough, they put up posts with lights and we practiced after it got dark. But never missed a class, never.

SI: Were you able to do much outside of the class, like extra curricular ...

AG: Well, my extra curricular activities pretty much were either football, swimming or track.

SI: Okay, those took up most of your free time outside of class.

AG: Yes.

SI: When you first arrived on campus, what were your academic interests? Well, okay, you're in the biology course first ...

AG: Trying to figure out what the hell all that stuff had to do with being a doctor and never really put it together. I was very unhappy in what I was doing and didn't enjoy the classes, didn't do well in them, and that's what happened.

SI: So it was just like a bad fit between your interests and the classes?

AG: Absolutely.

SI: It wasn't that the sports were eating too much time?

AG: Oh, no, no, it had nothing to do with it. I put in many, many hours studying but it was like water off a rock. I just didn't have the inclination, or the aptitude for it and I don't know how many kids today fall into that same trap of doing something because someone else wants them to do it. In fact, Irwin got out of the Army, went back, finished his undergraduate and went on to do graduate work. He bypassed his master's. There was a special program where you could go on for a PhD and he did just that, and did very well. He's a very bright guy and I remember, we went to his graduation, the whole family. I remember him walking up to my mother with the diploma and saying to her, "Here, you've got your goddamn doctor now, leave him alone." I changed my major and went on to be very happy and did well.

SI: How quickly did you get into sociology? Did you try anything else?

AG: The end of my sophomore year, I switched first to business administration. In those days they called it economics and did that for a semester, or so, and then the credits did in fact carry over and I was very, very happy when I got into the sociology program. I liked the instructors, they were good, they were interesting, and I felt that I learned a lot, and the background and all the other stuff certainly didn't hurt. It's funny as a result of those aptitude tests and everything else, I have a thing about doing things mechanical. I've got a garage full of tools and hardly know how to use them but I attempt to do all kinds of ridiculous things. To me, changing a socket on a lamp is a big deal, you know, but I can do it, I can do it, that's mechanical.

SI: When you got into the sociology program, it's a fairly sizable program now, but how large was it then? Was it just starting out?

AG: Well, there was the sociology house. There were three or four instructors and a fairly broad scope of courses. I remember Dr. Marden was the head of the department. He taught "Marriage And The Family" and the rumor around the guys was, "Yes, he got a divorce last year." Whether or not that was so, I don't know, but that was, you know, the rumor. Another man who did make an impact on my life was Dr. Massing, who lived in Manhattan, used to commute to teach classes. He had married the woman who was the former wife of Gerhardt Eisler who was a high-up guy in the Nazi party. Massing was a liberal and he would walk into class, put down his briefcase, go to the blackboard and write the title of the book and an author and say, "I read that book last night and I want all of you to read it." We used to keep a list of these things and we lived in terror of his ever referring to any of those books in the final, or any of the quizzes. He worked as a book reviewer for the *New York Times* as well and he was a very interesting man. I remember him saying that every student should be politically affiliated in one way or another. He said in Europe by the time you reached the *gymnasium*, was their high school, you were affiliated with a political party and you discussed things between classes, or in classes, and he said he tried to arrange for benches on the campus in the Old Queens area so that students could

sit there between classes and discuss. It was pointed out to him that they did try it for a while and all the guys that normally slept overnight in the train station ended up sleeping on the benches with their bottles in little brown paper bags. So, it attracted all the drunks and they did away with the benches on the Queens campus. But, he was an interesting man.

SI: Do any of your other professors stand out in your memory?

AG: Well, there was him, of course, Dr. Grant was a math instructor that I remember. McCormick taught Western Civilization

SI: Oh, Richard P. McCormick?

AG: Yes. Who else was there? I took a course in public speaking and it was on a Saturday morning, I was commuting at the time and it was the only class I had. I loved the public speaking class with Norm Crawford (the name of the instructor) and is he still involved?

SI: No, no. I was expecting you to say Richard Reager, though. Most people talk about him.

AG: No, no, Norm Crawford was the instructor, and I don't know how I got into the conversation with him. He said, "You come on your commute just for my class?" I said, "Well, yes," and he was so impressed with that and I got a four in that class. At that time four was the top grade. I don't know how they do it today,

SI: It's reversed; well, no, no, it's that way now.

AG: I remember every once in a while we had to give a little prepared talk, or whatever, and I came into class with what looked like a check. It was a deposit slip from a local bank, and I said to the class, "Here's a check for twenty-three dollars and eighty cents," and I tore it up. I said, "That's what you're throwing away every time you cut a class. Tuition is this much," the class cost that much and that's the one extemporaneous talk I remember. Norm Crawford was interesting. Who else was there? I don't know, I'm sure there were many others but those are the ones at the top of my heap.

SI: So you said that you developed an interest in penal sociology related to ...

AG: Yes, and, in fact, I was interviewed during my senior year by a man from the New Jersey State Department of Corrections. He did take me down to Trenton State Prison. We went through it, but then, by that time, I was on notice for the draft. After serving, I was supposed to go back and go to work in the corrective system. I remember saying to him, "Well, don't you have to take some kind of a test, that's a Civil Service job?" And he says, "But we can structure that." I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "Well, the requirements for the test would be: must be a graduate of the State University of New Jersey, must have majored in sociology, must be over six feet tall," and so on, and so forth. He says, "You'll be the only one taking the test." I said, "Wow, that's politics," and that was it. Fortunately, I did end up doing that kind of thing, or related thing in the military and I knew that that was something I didn't want to pursue as a career. So that's when I went back to campus and got my interviews.

SI: Well, what got you interested in corrections in the first place? Sociology related professions?

AG: I don't know, why does someone want to be a fireman? It was something I thought would be interesting.

SI: One of your professors wasn't especially interested in that kind of sociology or told you about it?

AG: Dr. Lunde, wow, was a chaplain in the ski troops during World War II and taught sociology at Rutgers. One of the classes he taught had to do with corrections and penal stuff, or whatever was related. The title of the course was "Criminology" and that did trigger something in me.

SI: Now you were in classes with a lot of veterans, probably when you look at the numbers the majority were veterans, if not most, what was that like being in classes with these guys who had been through the war or were a number of years older than you?

AG: Well, these were older guys and I remember their conversations were on a different level, a different interest, than the kids, if you will, that were there and to that extent I looked on them all the way I looked on my older brother. There was something to be learned from them, from their outlooks, from their interests, what was important to them, as compared to what was important to me. They would have political discussions, we, the kids, didn't.

SI: Did you interact with them or did the two groups stay to themselves?

AG: Only to the extent that they may have been on the same team, you know, they were on the swim team, or whatever. It was a, "Hello, hi, how are you?" kind of relationship. The one guy that I did develop a closer relationship with was a guy who went on to be active in Rutgers things, Bert Manhoff.

SI: Yes, they were related.

AG: Bert and I pledged to Tau Delta Phi together and we double dated on a number of times and Bert was like my big brother in absentia as Irwin came later. Bert was an early dischargee and he was a lot of fun to be with.

SI: So there were veterans in the fraternity house when you were living there? What was it like to be in that close proximity? We interviewed actually Bert Manhoff and he talked about how ...

AG: Bert passed away.

SI: Yes, yes, he did. He talked about how he heard a plane going over and he'd like get under his bed because, you know, it would bring back the memories from the war and he'd just react. Did you see that kind of behavior among the veterans?

AG: You know that's interesting. My freshman year they held an annual East-West swim meet. They did hold it, at that time, at Fort Lauderdale and I went to that, and we drove down from New Brunswick. Who else was in that car? This guy that was a wonderful butterfly swimmer, but we were driving and it was getting dark and one of the guys dozed off and then woke up screaming and we stopped the car, "You all right?" He says, "Yes, I'll be okay, I had a bad dream," and that was my exposure to that.

SI: He relived something.

AG: Yes. One guy I remember in a chapel, boy, these are memories, we had to go to chapel once a week, I don't know if they still do it, and one of the guys had a malaria attack in chapel. I remember that. So, you know, it was always there, there was always something. These guys had a different life, a different assortment of experiences and exposures that we as kids didn't live through; you know, the big deal was ration stamps and A gas coupons and trying to find out where you could buy gas without a ration stamp.

SI: So do you think having them in your class shaped the way things played out on campus and made you guys who weren't in the service a little more mature?

AG: Yes, I think it lended a degree of maturity, sophistication, and, again, these weren't old men. In retrospect, these were guys who were twenty-four, twenty-five years old. They weren't that old, but to an eighteen year old, or a nineteen year old, yes.

SI: Do you think they made you guys more worldly? Made you more aware of political things?

AG: Yes, we knew that it was there, I think we took our studies more seriously as a result, as a result of being in their environment.

SI: We talked a little bit about the football team, what do you remember about being on the swim team and the track team?

AG: Swim team was terrific. Coach Riley was something else. He would sit there and I remember my roommate went out for swimming and Coach said to him, "Well," he says, "you have to work on your stroke. Your breathing isn't good, your body line is off and your kick is terrible." [Laughter] The kid looks at him and he says, "What else is there?" and Coach Riley said, "Why don't you go out for track?" Swimming was a lot of fun. I enjoyed it. Again, this was a mixture of, again, the kids and the veterans coming back. I remember beating Princeton, that was a big meet. The two years I swam, the swim team was undefeated. They were terrific. I still have the white sweater with the red R on it. I can't get into it, but it's in a drawer. They were good memories. That winter we went to the East-West meet in Fort Lauderdale. We stayed in the Coast Guard barracks. Coach Riley's son, who I believe later became swim coach, had his father's Lincoln automobile and he took a bunch of us into Hollywood Beach. It was New Year's Eve, and we walked into the Hollywood Beach Hotel. There were four or five of us. The ladies were in evening gowns and men were wearing tuxedos, and we walk in. They had a punch bowl and Barry Halpern, who lived in Atlantic City, somehow, got jostled and spilled some punch on a lady. I remember someone saying, "I don't remember seeing these young men

here before," and the next thing I knew we were out on the street, getting back into the car and driving around for New Year's Eve. But, again, those were good memories.

SI: You mentioned chapel, it was mandatory, that's one of the older Rutgers tradition that faded away, but do you remember any other Rutgers tradition that were ...

AG: Oh, sure, there was the "hello" tradition, I don't know if they still do that.

SI: No. There are not too many traditions.

AG: No? When Irwin was a freshman I remember him coming home with this little cap, it was a beanie cap, and when you passed an upperclassman you had to tip your hat with a beanie.

SI: Did you have to do that when you were at Rutgers?

AG: No, no, the beanies were gone, the hello tradition continued. Of course all the songs. I did buy the record some years after graduation. I don't know if that's still available, the Glee Club singing all the Rutgers songs.

SI: Oh, they still have that.

AG: I have it; I transposed it to tape and so on. I still remember the words to many of them.

SI: When you weren't playing games, did you go to a lot of athletic events as a spectator?

AG: Oh, yes. I went to as many of the basketball games as I could go to. I remember going to a couple of lacrosse games. I never went to a Rutgers baseball game and they had good teams. They had good teams in those days. I went to a fencing match or two. That was fun to watch. What else was there? I don't even know if Rutgers had a soccer team at that time. That was during football season so there would have been a conflict. But, I remember going to those events.

SI: So you were very involved with sports and you lived at the fraternity house, but were you involved in any activities through the fraternity?

AG: Well, that band thing but that was a school activity. Activities at the fraternity house, yes, they used to have parties on occasion and, certainly, you take a date to a party, and that was it. But there was no great social life attached to it. Just lived in the house and put up with the nonsense. I did play on the house basketball team.

SI: You weren't like an officer?

AG: No. I had no desire.

SI: Was the New Jersey College for Women ...

AG: The coop?

SI: Were you in the quartet when you first came to Rutgers or later on?

AG: That was when I first came to Rutgers and that was short-lived but we played a couple of times but it was only because it was so different, you know.

SI: But there weren't many men over on that side of the campus?

AG: No, no. NJC was a women's college. Well, you had to walk across town to get there. My great love affair was with a girl over there and that was it, and that lasted a year or two.

SI: So you would go over often or ...

AG: Oh, once a week, or so.

SI: Were there a lot of strict rules related to dating women from NJC?

AG: Well, they had to be in at a certain time and that's the only rule I remember. You had to pick her up at the house. This gal lived at a Spanish house; you picked her up there and deliver her before eleven o'clock.

SI: In that era, what would you do on a typical date?

AG: Go to a movie, sometimes we went to the Hillel that was downtown. I don't remember what we did there, they had dances and that was pretty much it. Go for long walks.

SI: Were you involved with Hillel or any other

AG: No. When they had a dinner I would go to it, it was a meal, but none of their activities, no.

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

SI: This continues an interview with Allen Gordon on November 3, 2006, in Princeton, New Jersey. We were just talking about your commuting.

AG: Once I started to commute the activities at school were limited to things like the junior prom or the senior prom, and that was pretty much it. My life then revolved around things in Elizabeth, the Y, my activities with that girl's group, I played on a AA basketball team, and that accounted for a good deal of my time.

SI: Did you work at all while you were in college?

AG: Summers. Then I began to work, once I was living at home, yes, I did work weekends at, I had a cousin that had a shoe store in Newark and I worked in the shoe store on Saturdays.

SI: I was curious; you never worked for your father or in the family business?

AG: In the plumbing and heating business? I worked there from the time I graduated until I went into service. So I got out of school in June, July and August I worked at a kids' camp and then September, October, November, three months, I worked at the plumbing and heating supply place. I'm very happy that I did work that last summer at the kids' camp, that's where I met my wife.

SI: Was she another counselor?

AG: She was a counselor.

SI: Where was she from?

AG: She was from the Bronx. The camp was in New York State and she had the CIT girls, that's counselors-in-training, who could make up their own schedule. I ran the waterfront and those girls wanted to swim all day, everyday. So that's how I met my bride.

SI: Before we move on to the service, I want to see if there is anything else. Is there anything that you remembered at Rutgers that you think we should talk about? You're in a number of clubs you listed.

AG: Yes.

SI: *Deutscher Verein*.

AG: The *Deutscher Verein*, that was a once a month get-together. I think we did it more to butter up the instructor who ran the club than anything else. So that I was in the club while I was taking German, after that I don't know that I went to any of the meetings. But it was a line in the yearbook, you know. There was the band; the commuter club was a thing that met on occasion at the Student Union. What else was there? What else did I list?

SI: The Booster Club, the Varsity R Club.

AG: Yes, well, those are things that you belong to as a result of your activities. The Varsity R Club, at the time, didn't have meetings; you were a member of the club because you are on the varsity list.

SI: Just one final wrap up question on Rutgers. We can always go back. Rutgers before World War II had been, there were some Jewish students but there was a lot of anti-Semitism. There weren't many African American students; it was pretty much white, Protestant or Catholic.

AG: It was a Dutch Presbyterian school.

SI: Yes, so in your period being one of the first classes after World War II, did you notice Rutgers changing, was it becoming more open?

AG: There were still three Jewish fraternities as I remember; the Phi Eps, the Sammies and Tau Delta Phi, none of those fraternities had Christian members. It was later on, on occasion, I'd get what I call, I got another "begging letter," you know, asking for money, that the fraternities did open their doors to others, and that's a good thing, but so far as anti-Semitism on campus, no, no, I never saw it. I never saw it.

SI: What about other groups, like African Americans or did you see them in greater numbers?

AG: There were other African American student athletes at school, Harvey Grimsley and Bucky Hatchet, you know, the athletes came in and there were, of course, black student students, but, no, this was an opening. It was, hey, you know, it's the end of World War II, things were happening, and I have to say, they were good things.

SI: Were they welcomed or was there prejudice against ...

AG: I never saw any prejudice, never heard of any; they were, you know, students, kids, that's what you did.

SI: One other question, what did you think of Harry Rockefeller and your other coaches, but mostly Harry Rockefeller?

AG: Well, of course, he was the coach of the football team, became director of athletics. When Harvey Harmon came in to become football coach, Mr. Rockefeller moved on to become director of athletics and he was a nice man, that's all I could say about him. Although I remember having, that's funny, over a weekend there was a fire at a fraternity house and there were one or two deaths as a result of that fire. I was home for the weekend and I heard about it. I came back to school and was still living in the fraternity house. I was walking down one of the streets and Harry Rockefeller was coming in the opposite direction. He looked at me and he says, "Gordon, you're alive." Well, it turns out that there was a kid whose last name was Gordon who died in that fire and the word had been out that Gordon, me, because I was better known than he as a result of playing football, and so on, had died in the fire. That's the one reconnect with Harry Rockefeller.

SI: Which coach did you work most closely with?

AG: I would have to say it was Coach Riley. I never worked really closely with him but I would say that I knew him certainly better than I did Mr. Rockefeller or the track coach, Mr. Makin.

SI: All right, so, after you graduated from Rutgers you worked in the summer camp and then you worked for your father, but just as you graduated from Rutgers, the Korean War broke out. What do you remember about that, in terms of did you immediately realize that this was going to have an impact on your life?

AG: Yes. Yes, I knew it was coming, it was a matter of when. Once I got the letter and passed my physical, I was an A-1 category, and it was only a matter of time. So I worked at Elizabeth Plumbing and Heating until the time came.

SI: And that was November 2, 1950?

AG: My God, yes. Today is the third, yes. [laughter]

SI: Yesterday was the anniversary.

AG: Yes. I had to show up at the Elizabeth Armory. They put us on a bus and took us to Fort Dix, New Jersey. I remember standing there with a crowd of kids and there were ladies there from some organization giving out Zippo cigarette lighters and Hershey bars to all the guys. A man walked up to me and said, "You're in the Army now." I said, "Well, yes, I guess." He says, "You'll do well," then he walked away. I had no idea why or what, whatever prompted that, but we got on the bus and rode to Trenton and then out to Fort Dix. As we rode into the camp, I saw all these kids with dirty faces and, wearing these green suits carrying guns and I said, "Well, obviously, this isn't the real Army, I'll see the real Army at another time," and you know what? Two-and-a-half years went by, I never saw the real Army. I never saw the real Army; I just continued to see kids with dirty faces and guns. On the bus there, you hear all the crap coming from the other guys, how well they were doing in business, or whatever, and yet on the other side of the coin, when we were assigned to our barracks, I remember hearing one guy saying, "Gee, everybody gets his own bed." So this is the Depression coming out. Basic training at Fort Dix, I was assigned to I Company of the 39th Infantry Regiment. They later told us that we were called intelligence company. Everyone in the company "tested-out" as being OCS eligible. As a result that company didn't have a single AWOL in sixteen weeks of basic training. We took combat infantry basic. There wasn't one AWOL, there wasn't one fight. We scored higher than any other company at Fort Dix, in everything we did, so that the level of competence was pretty good and, as a result, I think it made living in close proximity with all these people that had much better IQs an experience because you had interesting people to talk to.

SI: Were a lot of these guys college graduates?

AG: Many of them were, yes, I would say in my company the majority were. We had a couple of interesting guys. One of them was a brother of Richard Kiley, Richard Kiley played *Man of La Mancha* in New York. Another guy was a writer for, what's his name, the schnozze, the stand up comic?

SI: Jimmy Durante?

AG: Jimmy Durante, yes, he was a writer for Durante and told interesting stories about working for him. It was an interesting group.

SI: Was there anybody who was a World War II vet?

AG: Not in my basic, no. Later on at OCS, there were a couple of guys. Between OCS and basic there was leader's course.

SI: The basic was entirely at Fort Dix?

AG: Yes, entirely at Fort Dix. I have something here related to that. The Leadership School. I was honor graduate, which meant that I was assigned prior to going to OCS to the school and taught MOI, Methods of Instruction, which was fun and I qualified for OCS. I still remember my interview. I was interviewed by three officers and one of them said, "What branch of service would you want to be in if you got a commission?" I had my answer already for that, I said, "Medical Corps, Quartermaster, or Signal Corps," and he said, "That's interesting, none of those are combat arms," and, like a complete idiot, I said, "Well, sir, it's my understanding that OCS is very difficult and I don't see any point in a combat arm because then I'd be killing myself to kill myself," and they didn't smile. He said, "Do you know that you're talking to three combat arm officers?" and I took a look, infantry and artillery, the three of them. I said, "Oh, well, I guess this interview is over?" [laughter] Well, one of them says, "You're interested in medical service." I said, "Yes," and he said, "Tell me about cellular division." That weekend, talk about serendipity, that weekend I was helping my bride study for a bio exam. She was at NYU and one of the questions were the three forms of cellular division. I still remember it, myosis, mitosis and symbiosis, and the guy looked at me like I was from another planet and he said, "Well, okay. Any other questions?" "No," and I was assigned to OCS at Fort Riley, Kansas, which was called the gentlemen's OCS. There were three OCS schools available at that time, one was Fort Benning, Georgia, infantry. Another was Fort Sill, Oklahoma, artillery, and then Fort Riley for everything else. Some of the guys who were assigned to Fort Riley wanted to be in infantry and they had to take special interviews for that. When OCS was all over, again, they asked us what we would want to do on getting our commission. I opted for the provost marshal, (military police), and a couple of other things of no significance, and, I think I was fortunate to be assigned as a provost marshal officer. Then I went to another school for thirteen weeks, Provost Marshall School at Camp Gordon, Georgia, no relation, and there we learned about all the good things having to do with being a military cop, military governments, and it ranged all the way from directing traffic in combat to military government. From there I was reassigned to, of all places, Fort Dix, New Jersey. At that time, the graduating class of West Point, the 1950 graduating class was put into the Korean Theater immediately upon graduation and more than half of them were cleaned out in a couple of months. Then, the government realized, the military realized that troop duty was necessary, so there was a minimum requirement of ninety days of troop duty prior to being put into a combat theater. So I was assigned to Fort Dix to the MP battalion there, and pulled the usual details and then was assigned to the Far East. First stop, of course, they couldn't wait to get me there, they flew me every inch of the way, no boats. Airplanes to Japan and then to Korea and first assignment, and it was classic. I remember we sat down in what they called a theater, a theater is a large room with a lot of seats, and somebody yelled, "Attention," and in walked this bird colonel. They pulled out a map of Korea with certain areas highlighted where there were POW camps. I still remember the first words out of that guy's mouth. He looked at the group of primarily young second lieutenants and he said, "Gentlemen, it's not much of a war but it's the best we have to offer," and then we went on from there.

SI: What did you think of that?

AG: You know, I didn't know what the hell he was talking about. I mean, was war such a big deal? To this guy, well, yes I guess if you're a career officer you need a certain amount of combat time and I don't know if he said it to be funny or what. But that's what he said. I spent a week, or ten days on Koji Island being exposed to POW camp procedures. From there, I was assigned to the camp on the mainland. When I got to the camp, there was a huge rice paddy with tents. Prisoners are sleeping on the ground. If it was raining, they slept on mud. A couple of hours after it rained, it would almost be dust again. The climate was extreme in both directions, and we set out to build a camp. The camp would consist, and did end up consisting, of a headquarters area and three enclosures. I was assigned to enclosure number one. That was the showplace enclosure and, again, you know, it's the old story; the guy who gets there most recently gets all the jobs. When I was assigned at Fort Dix, I walked in, the company commander greeted me and said, "Okay, Lieutenant, you are now supply officer, motor pool officer and mess-hall officer," you know, all the good things. We were receiving boxcars of lumber, roofing materials, and so on. An engineering company was there who laid out the perimeters and the rest was left to us to build the camp. We had blueprints to work from as to the sizes of the buildings, where the buildings would be placed, and so on, and they built bedboards. A bedboard was about six feet square and about eight inches high. They would go inside the buildings to create a floor with an alley up the middle and each man was given a blanket. They pooled the blankets so that they slept on two or three layers of blanket and they were like puppies in pet store windows. The Geneva Convention requires one pound of coal per day per man for heating and cooking, and a good portion of that coal was dirt and stone from phony contracts from Japanese suppliers, but, nevertheless, we were able to subsist. There was a potbellied stove in each of these buildings. A building would hold, let's see, there were eight buildings to a compound, eight compounds to an enclosure. I ended up with what was supposed to be four thousand prisoners. We had between fifty-five hundred and six thousand in my enclosure. There were two other enclosures and the prisoners were kept busy on details. It's very easy to, when you have unlimited manpower, build roads so that jeeps, or whatever, could have access to the enclosures. It was just like a big mud path, and you line up a detail of a thousand prisoners and you walk them down to a little river that ran by. Each one would pick up a stone and continue to walk back to where the road was being built and drop the stone and then continue on his way and pick up another stone, and you could actually see the road building. So that, it wasn't hardtop or anything but it was enough that vehicles could then go over it and you learned to do things like that. Classic military, I replaced a major. I was a second lieutenant; I replaced a major in that enclosure to build it. He was just a scorekeeper up to that point and when I left nine months later, I was replaced by a captain, so that, I don't know how those assignments came about, but I ran the camp honor guards and good things like that. And the thing that I had, that throwback, when we were talking and I began to get emotional, I developed a cyst on the periphery of my left nipple, I don't know what caused it, rubbing perhaps from the fatigues or something. We had one physician in the unit, First Lieutenant Burt Brody was the camp physician. He had a couple of guys that were male nurses, military guys and he says, "You know, Gordo, (he called me Gordo), there's a surgeon flying in to do surgery on one of your prisoners tomorrow. He can remove that cyst while he's here." I said, "Gee, that would be great," because he had already stuck a hypodermic needle into it and he said, "No, no," he said, "that has to be removed surgically." So the surgeon flew in, we had a little landing strip nearby,

in a monoplane and he says, "How would you like to watch the surgery?" I said, "Yes, that would be cool." So we have this little tent, there's an operating table and they bring in this prisoner, who first went to sick call for burns on his side. He was having pains in his side and the prisoners were treating him with hot rocks. They would heat the rocks in a little potbellied stove and then put it on him for the heat to alleviate whatever it was. Well, the guy had a burst appendix and the surgeon came in to do an exploratory surgery. I'm standing there watching this, and this sucker makes an incision on this guy from his navel all the way down to his hip and I said, "That's the guy that's going to operate on me," and I passed out. I fell, I fainted, and they dragged me off on a side and a little while later I came to and the first words I remember hearing was the male nurse who said to the surgeon, "Hey, captain, the hangman's getting up." I learned that a lot of the guys in the camp referred to me as "the hangman" because I had the unfortunate experience on a few occasions, if a prisoner hung himself, and we had this happen, it was my job, as the enclosure commander, to go in and cut him down. I had a couple of them in my enclosure and another one when I was duty officer one night. But there's a whole procedure, you had to maintain the knot, the CIA wants to look at the knot to see how it was put together, or whatever, and do an examination and these memories. I remember going into one of the empty buildings during the winter, they would bunch up for body heat, and this one building was empty and here's this prisoner hanging from one of the exposed beams, the stool he had stood on to jump off was in the far corner of the building. Now he had either kicked it there or, possibly, he was hung by the other prisoners. You'd never know. And we kidded about it frequently; you know, the monkeys run the zoo. When we had an inspector come through from Geneva, the Red Cross, he would go through the place, there was one inspection the whole time I was there, and he said, "Part of the protocol is that you must photograph and fingerprint all the prisoners." Well, I guess, that was necessary because it was very difficult to even count them. Initially, you would have a roll call, each of the GIs that ran the compounds would get up there, and until you hear a Southern GI calling out the three part Korean names, Kim San Drok, you know, or whatever and the prisoners would laugh, you know, they thought it was real funny this guy trying to call out the names, and it was a very lengthy procedure to call out five hundred names. So I said, "You know what, square them off and count them." When you would get two-thirds of the way through, they would shift around so you couldn't count them. I said, "All right." An enclosure has an outside fence and inside that with barbed wire, and everything, and so that concertina wire, that's rolled barbed wire, and then another fence. We took the concertina out of one section, I said, "Pull them out, one at a time, and put them between the fences and when you get them all out, that's how many you got." Well, I called in my number one prisoner. They had their own hierarchy, whether we like it or not, and that's yet another story. I said, "Mr. Hong, we're going to fingerprint and count the prisoners, notify all your honchos in the enclosure." He said, "When do you want to start?" and he spoke good English. I learned later he had been a prisoner, when he was an officer in the Japanese Army, during World War II, and then he was a soldier of fortune, became an officer in the Korean Army and ended up in a prisoner of war camp again. He just didn't have good luck and I said, "Well, we're going to start as soon as the equipment gets here and that will be Wednesday." He says, "I need more time than that. You have to hold off until the following Monday." "What the hell are you talking about? We're going to start on Wednesday," and he said something in Korean and all the office help that I had, I had one guy that made tea, another guy that swept, you know, whatever, they all walked out of the office and closed the door, and I said, "What's going on?" And he sat down he says, "Lieutenant, you must give me until Monday before you photograph and fingerprint." I said,

"Why?" He said, "Because we have a number of people in here that are not prisoners." "What the hell are you talking about?" He says, "For a man's birthday, or whatever, he would get into a detail and go into the little town nearby to unload railcars, or whatever, and would change places with a local farmer. The local farmer would come into the camp, get three meals a day, which he didn't get as a local farmer, nobody to bother him and then on a detail again, they would switch." He says, "I need until Monday to get all the prisoners back in and get rid of the civilians," and there was no way to stop that. So that switch was made, and that's it. Along those lines, and I'm edging toward the Geneva Convention in my conversation with you.

I was standing in the sally-port, the sally-port is an entrance way to the enclosure, it's a gate on one side and an open area and another gate before you get to the compounds, walk in, and I see one of the prisoners that has welts on his face. He had obviously been beaten. I said, "All right, I want that man in my office right now and I want the GI on that detail in my office right now. In fact I want all the GIs on that detail," because it was one GI to every fifty prisoners and details were always three hundred, four hundred prisoners at a time. I had my own interpreter. I said, "All right, Kim, I want to know who did it," and I lined up the GIs, and the prisoner walks down the row and there was six or eight GIs, short, tall, fat, thin, whatever, and he said something in Korean to my interpreter and my interpreter started to laugh, in classic military jargon I said, "What the \*\*\*\* is so funny?" And I had given Kim sort of an American sense of humor at this point and he was laughing and he says, "He say they all look alike," which was classic because the GIs said, "All those prisoners, all the gooks, they all look alike," and here was the prisoner coming back and saying that. Well, now maybe he said that because he was afraid of retribution. I said, "Okay, Kim, I'm going to leave here now and I want you to ask him again," and he did and he identified the guy. I submitted papers to have that SOB court-martialed and it was denied by our executive officer—Colonel Brown. Notification would have to be sent to POW Command in Pusan and he didn't want that. Instead, I settled for company punishment and removed him from his station. My exposure to the Geneva Convention, I guess, started at OCS. There was a block of instruction on the Geneva Convention. When I went to branch officer school at Camp Gordon there was more instruction on the Geneva Convention. At Koji, again, exposure to the Geneva Convention, more so there because then I was already involved with prisoners. When I went to my assignment, high in order, the first day or two, each of the GIs were given, it's on the first two pages of the Geneva Convention, "the care and treatment of prisoners," and it spells out very clearly what you can and cannot do, mostly what you cannot do, and it's done in broad stroke conversation, "you shall not humiliate, degrade, physically hurt, damage," whatever, and so on, and I still remember the expression. Each of my guys had to sign a statement that said, "I have read, understand and will comply with the aforementioned paragraphs in the Geneva Convention." There is no excuse for prisoner maltreatment, and when I read about the goings on today, I just wonder what the hell happened [Iraq/Abu Garaib torture and prisoner abuse]. So that's my shtick on that.

SI: Do you think, again, I don't want to break up the narration too much, but do you think that most of the men under your command, and also your fellow officers, felt as strongly as you about the Geneva Convention and the need to treat prisoners humanely?

AG: Well, it's a two-edged sword. There was one case that I knew of in our camp before I got there, this was when they were still living in tents, where one of the GIs was just miserable. You

know, the routine, "All right, everybody back into their tents, when I blow the whistle you all run out and line up." He'd blow the whistle, "That wasn't fast enough, do it again," you know, that kind of nonsense, which was completely uncalled for. What the hell was their hurry, you know? And they finally, he was standing in the middle of the little exercise yard in his compound, they ran out, knocked him down and stomped him to death. So I say it's a two edged sword. If you treat them right, they'll treat you right, and it was very easy, I think, to treat them right. Funny, I remember once a detail was doing something and some of these prisoners were early teenagers, they were really kids. Some of them were old men. In my enclosure I had a father and son as prisoners in the same enclosure. This prisoner was carrying something with somebody else and I walked over and I helped them and he said, "Oh, Lieutenant, you like George Washington, you help the prisoner, you help the soldier." So that I think I had the respect of the prisoners. I remember walking through the enclosure one day with this man that I mentioned earlier, Mr. Hong, I have no idea what his rank was in the Korean Army, but when I walked through the enclosure with him, the prisoners would salute me, they would bow to him, and I never really found out what the deal was with Mr. Hong, he was an interesting man.

SI: When you said the prisoners had their own structure, were they just maintaining the rank they had in the Army, or had they come up with their own system?

AG: We called them "honchos." It was easier to deal with one than with fifty, so you deal with that honcho and you say, "Okay, your guys aren't making the bed in the morning, make sure they straighten their blankets out," or "if they're wet make sure they hang them out to dry," or that sort of thing. Initially, they did wear insignia, they made their own little insignia and that had to stop. There could be no visual hierarchy, but we knew that it was there, and it was easy to work within that framework, you could get things done a lot more quickly.

SI: I want to go back a little bit, when you first got to Koji, earlier in the summer, they had really bad problems with prisoners of war.

AG: They had captured the commanding officer. A Marine detachment was sent in to straighten it out, and those guys were tough. I saw what they had done. There was a little museum at Koji. It was a room, about this big, with some of the things that they had taken away from prisoners. They had made weapons out of wood and charred them on a fire so that they were black, and, from a distance of fifteen or twenty feet, you didn't know if you were looking at a pistol or a piece of wood. Food was being air-dropped into them. They had all the prisoners in a little valley and perimeter guards were on the tops of the ridges on either side and all the prisoners were living in that valley. Well, they had to build a camp and when I got there they were still building it. They were told not to hang blankets on the barbed wire fence. If they did, the Marines took them down with flamethrowers. If somebody was hanging a blanket at the time it was too bad. You know those things happen, those are the things you prefer not to remember.

SI: So when you were there for the orientation, what did they teach you in that period based on what they had been through, on how to treat the prisoners?

AG: It was pretty much a matter of observing what was going on at the time. You watched them do their formations, you watched how they lined up for details, how they were counted in

and out, how the guards were assigned. They used ROK troops, Republic of Korea troops, to each detail along with one GI. There'd be one GI and like six or eight ROK troops for every detail of fifty. It was a numbers game. You go out and watch them do whatever they were doing, supervising them, watching them do it and it was a day to day thing.

The prisoners had their own entertainments. They frequently had little shows that they put on. Mr. Hong came to me one day and he said, "We want to have a play, (one of the buildings had been converted with a little stage) and I want to buy material to make costumes." I said, "Okay, I'll talk to the colonel about funds." He said, "Oh no, we have the money." "What do you mean you have the money?" He said, "Don't worry, I have the money." I said, "All right." My interpreter and I and Mr. Hong drove into Kwangju, which was a, I believe it was the fourth or fifth largest city in Korea, but at that time it was all mud brick and very rural living. There was a little shop, the man had bolts of material there, inexpensive rayons, vivid colors, and so on, and Hong picked out five or six bolts of material and pulled a wad of money out of his jacket. [Laughter] I said, "Where the hell did you get that?" And Kim, my interpreter, explained to me that sometimes the details would go out, when it was cold especially, they'd wear a field jacket and overcoat over it. When they'd come back they were just wearing the overcoat, they sold the field jacket. Money was put in the shoe when they came back in, it had to be turned in. That's where the money came from. So then I said, "Wait a minute, we have five or six bolts," and Hong is counting out the Korean money. I said to Kim, "You tell him that where I come from, when you buy this much you get something extra, you get a better price, you get more material, you get something free," and Kim, he speaks to the shopkeeper, and then he starts to laugh again and I said, "All right, what's so funny?" "He say you're not where you come from." [Laughter] That was the deal, you know. But they made their costumes and they had their plays and it was fun.

I remember they had an Olympics. One morning I came out to the enclosure and the major exercise area, which was like pretty damn near the size of a football field, had been decorated with little strings that ran from one side to the other with little paper flags, US, UN, and Korean, all over the place, and they had their games all set up, competitions. There was a judge's table with stacks of cartons of cigarettes. The prisoners were allowed, I don't know, X cigarettes per day; they had been contributing their cigarettes for weeks and weeks in anticipation of this so that the winners would get a carton of cigarettes. I have some slides of that at home somewhere. They had an honor guard. They even had cheerleaders with little musical instruments that they had made themselves and were singing these songs and so on and having a hell of a time. I remember mentioning, or being in awe of this to one of my compound commanders and he said, "Shit, Lieutenant, that ain't nothing compared to what we did during World War II." You know, the ingenuity of the GI under difficult circumstances to do things with his hands, with basic materials that were available. I have a couple of small jeeps that are made in infinite detail, right down to multi-leaf springs underneath it. The jeep is about, you know, ten inches long, but it's in perfect, perfect size that they made with a tin snips and food cans and then painted. It was just amazing.

SI: What were your living conditions like in this camp?

AG: My living conditions?

SI: Yes and your men.

AG: Well, the GIs had tarpaper roofs over very rudimentary buildings and double-decker beds in there. That was the troop area. The company that ran the camp was about a hundred-fifty to two hundred men, that was the enlisted area. I lived in the company grade BOQ. There was a field grade BOQ, so that the lieutenants and captains lived in one building and the majors and colonels, there was a light colonel, and a full bird that ran the camp. There were three or four of them in their building, and there must have been six or eight of us in our building. We each had an Army cot and a desk to work with.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were just talking about the quarters and your living conditions at the camp.

AG: Yes, I had my cot, a little area with a desk and a chair and that was it. The shower was communal for the officers. The toilet was a one-holer and, funny, I have a postcard somewhere at home, from Larry, my kid brother, I had written in a letter home about that, sitting on that cold, damp one-holer and the family being in the plumbing and heating business, I have a postcard saying, "Sending two toilet seats for the officers—Enjoy them."

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

AG: We ate in the officer's mess. It was a room about the size of this one, with the tables and chairs, and so on. We had the same menu as everybody else but it's the military. You separate the officers from the non-officers, and the food was good. There were things, of course, that we never had: fresh milk, you know, you had powdered milk, that sort of thing, which was hardly a sacrifice. It wasn't like watching *MASH* on TV, where they complained about the same food day after day. Our food was pedestrian, but good.

SI: How remote was this camp? You mentioned that you were near this town ...

AG: We were about twelve or fifteen miles from Kwangju, there was a little village that wasn't much more than a dozen mud huts close by. I say close by, a mile or so outside the camp, but we were on what had been rice paddies, mountains on either side, and pretty remote. Margaret Bourke-White was a *Life Magazine* photojournalist who did a series in *Life Magazine* at that time, called: "The War Eisenhower Doesn't Know About," and she wrote about units like ours that were in remote areas.

Every so often, I used to call it cowboys and Indians. Snipers would fire into the camp and, thank heavens, no one was ever hit while I was there. But we'd end up chasing, whatever, playing army, real honest-to-God soldiers with guns, yes. In fact, one day, a detail came back and they were a man short. I reported this to the colonel and he said, "Your prisoner, Lieutenant, go get him." They had been working in a rock quarry during the day. So Kim, my interpreter, and I and a driver took off in what's called a carrier, one step above a jeep. We rode out to where they had been working. We had flashlights and were yelling, looking, whatever, "Where the hell

is he?" We heard this God-awful roaring and a medium tank comes rolling in. A Korean officer sticks his head up out of the, what do you call it? Parapet, or whatever. I said, "Kim, ask him what the hell he's doing here?" So they talk back and forth and he says, "They always patrol this area in tanks." I'm standing there with my sidearm, a .45 pistol, and Kim and the driver had a carbine. I said, "They come in tanks?" [laughter] We got back in the vehicle and went back to camp. The prisoner showed up about two weeks later. He looked like the wrath of God and when we questioned him, he was hiding out. He had escaped, he was hiding out, but he was hungry. The townspeople wouldn't accept him because they knew he is a prisoner, you know, he's painted on the back. He just came back to camp because he was better off there. There was no way he could get back North to his family. That was the escapee we had while I was there.

SI: So escape wasn't really a problem?

AG: No. No, we had guards there all the time, all around the perimeter of the enclosure. There were towers with machine guns. You follow the protocol. I do have a letter at home, telling me that about two months after I rotated out, the South Korean Army surrounded the camp and set up fields of fire over the living area, meaning our troops, our company area, the mess hall, the BOQ, the enlisted area, and cut the fences. A couple of the prisoners did die. Many, many of them just took off into the economy. Many of them did stay there. Those who did stay were reassigned to other camps, and the camp was shut down. The reason for it all, Syngman Rhee, in his infinite wisdom, thought that if he released all those prisoners, get them out, they'd all join the South Korean Army. How many did, I have no idea. I've told you everything I know about this.

SI: Now you had ROK troops under your command as well?

AG: Yes, I worked in close concert with a ROK troop commander and his people were assigned to my enclosure, perimeter guards did not have direct dealings with the prisoners, only GIs did, so they were guards.

SI: Okay, so they were guarding the perimeter; they didn't have anything to do with ...

AG: Not inside the enclosure, they were not in the enclosure.

SI: Because I have read that was one of the problems they had at Koji.

AG: At Koji, yes.

SI: So you deliberately kept them separate.

AG: Yes, they did man the towers; they manned the towers but nothing inside the fence.

SI: How did your troops, the American GIs, get along with the ROK troops? Was there any interaction?

AG: Very little, very little, the guys all caught up on their reading. They all had a little section of one of the buildings that they called their office and assignments would be given to them to provide prisoners for details. They would work within the prisoner hierarchy to get the prisoners out and even that was interesting. There is, or was, possibly still a class/caste system. Many of the prisoners wore a field cap. If they put on their cap, where you couldn't see the long, black, jet black, hair, they could almost have passed for GIs. The next group were the classic Korean people, same features. Then there was a third group, very swarthy, dark-skinned. They looked as much Chinese as they did Korean, there is a difference in facial expression, but they were the bottom of the pack, the dark-skinned ones. The honchos always wore their prisoner garb, with stitched pleats in their pants. Their shoes were always shined, the boots. When you went up to the next class, they wore the baggy fatigues, with a PW on the back, you know, the whole thing. Any piece of miscast clothing, shoes that didn't fit, whatever, the dark-skinned prisoners wore. If you ask for a detail, if it was to work at the railhead, you got the middle group. If it was a honey bucket detail [A honey bucket is a bucket that is used in place of a flush toilet in communities that lack a water borne sewerage system], the dark-skinned prisoners would all fall out for it, they were sent for that. So they had their own caste system and we never messed with it.

SI: You mentioned earlier that you found out that the prisoners were switching places with civilians.

AG: Yes.

SI: But they always came back?

AG: Yes.

SI: Do you have any idea what they were doing while they worked in the camp?

AG: Yes. I had a little, what would you call it? Dispensary, sick call, give out aspirin, and so on. In the dispensary there was a chart on the wall, with various maladies listed. The number of prisoners that had been in there for those maladies and the top item was FUO. I asked Burt, our camp doctor, who turned out to be my best friend while I was there, I said, "Burt, what's FUO?" He said, "Well, as a civilian physician we used to call it GOK, God-Only-Knows. But in the military, FUO is Fever of Unknown Origin." I said, "Do you have any idea what this is?" He said, "Gordo, do you really want to know?" I said, "Come on, Burt, I'm the enclosure commander. You got something up there. If the old man came in, or a guy from Geneva shows up unannounced, what's FUO?" He said, "All right, I'll tell you. Two of your prisoners are clapped up." I said, "What the hell are you talking about?" He said, "Two of your prisoners have gonorrhea." "Burt, I know that gonorrhea sets in a couple of days after contact," it's treated with penicillin, "How could two of my prisoners," and I stopped, I said, "Oh, my God." They went out on details and they walked away from the detail long enough to get FUO, and that's the way it was. So I then said to the male nurse that ran this little clinic for me, "I want to see those two guys. Bring them in here. I want to know how they got dosed up." In both cases it was their birthday. They were honchos, they arranged to be put on a detail, they went into town, they went to the local house, had their contact and came back.

The inspections of the houses of ill repute at the outskirts were unbelievable. Burt called me one day and he said, "Hey, Gordo, we're going to check out the cat house, you want to come?" I said, "Yes, that'll be fun," and we went to this physician's office and I got an education. The physician had a dual-price structure in order for the ladies to have their health card, their license, as it were. If you took the physical and you were diseased, the doctor would treat you for one cost. If you took the physical and were diseased, he would still stamp your card, but you didn't have to take the penicillin or whatever it was, injections. So, a lot of these gals had clean-cut cards but were, in fact, spreading diseases. And his microscope that he was supposedly looking at vaginal smears, or whatever, had a layer of dust on it that had to be an inch thick. He never really examined them, he just sold the cards and did it. So that's how my two prisoners got it.

SI: He was a Korean doctor?

AG: Yes.

SI: Did you have to look after your own men, the American GIs, in that regard?

AG: Well, the American GIs had their own sick call and did whatever they had to do. Yes, guys would come down with diseases. If you went to sick call and you were diseased, you were treated with penicillin, took a couple of days, and then you were put on restriction for thirty days, couldn't leave the post. A couple of these guys had their "wives" in town and this one guy was on his third restriction. I call him; I said, "What the hell is it with you? Why do you continually go out and get dosed up again?" And he says, "Lieutenant, you put me on restriction for thirty," (you, meaning the camp policy). He says, "After being on restriction for thirty days I just can't wait when I get out there." I said, "Well, you know there are ways to prevent these things?" He says, "I can't wait when I get out there." You're dealing with, you know, GI mentality. These were the little vignettes that come back to me now when I talk about it.

SI: Well, I know in World War II the Army was very fanatical about preventing venereal diseases, largely because of the limitations of penicillin. But, you know, it seemed like that continued through Korea and even Vietnam. I'm sure today they don't particularly like it.

AG: We used to kid about it. Condoms were available and the guys used them to draw down over their rifles so water wouldn't get in, in the rain, or by tying them like a big rubber band so they could blouse their pants, and sometimes, I guess, they use them when they had contact.

SI: So what was morale like on the base among your men, you know, they're in this remote prisoner of war camp?

AG: The morale of the officers, I'd say was middle-of-the-road. We had an opportunity at one point to make our commissions permanent. Of the six or eight officers in my building, two signed for the permanent commission, the rest of us didn't. I don't know what the field grade did; I assume they did only because they were career officers. But most of the guys were disillusioned. We saw waste that was unimaginable.

SI: Like what?

AG: Right down to the boxcars of lumber that were shipped to our camp, and began to disappear. We found out that our executive officer had a lady friend in town and he had a home built for her. A home, it was, you know, probably a room this size out of two-by-fours. You know, he filched the lumber out of our little lumberyard and then did it.

We didn't have a refrigerator for sometime and we sent our PX officer off to, our PX was a room half this size, and he came back, and this was a guy whose family was named in *Two Years Before the Mast*, he came from a very high-toned California family. When he got married the family sent him and his wife to Switzerland to take their master's degrees, so there was big bucks there, and he was our PX officer and did some other stuff, and he came back and he says, "Gordo, you can't believe what happened." When he became PX officer, his first trip down, the guy giving out the PX supplies, signing for requisition, said, "Do you want the same deal as the captain had?" And it was a career officer in our unit, and he said, "What's that?" He says, "Well, you sign for these items and then you sign this one, that you turned them back in, and you get two hundred dollars." The items that he wanted him to sign for were beer, we never had beer, sugar, sugar was sold in one pound bags, I don't know why but it was in the PX, items like that. The mundane stuff was okay, and Cotter said to this guy, "Well no." "You mean he's been signing the beer back in? We've never had beer." He said, "No, I want that stuff to go, I'm not signing anything," and he forsaked or forsook, what's the word? He didn't want the two hundred bucks; he wanted the guys to have their beer, and this kind of, call it military nonsense, didn't rest well with the Christmas help. I was part of the Christmas help. The draftee OCS guy, you know, worked with the temporaries. We weren't part of the WPPA, the West Point Protective Association, that kind, and I had written a small book that I gave to each of my kids so they would know some of these things that we're talking about, and I had mentioned to my youngest that by the time I was ready to go home, I was pretty disillusioned and he said, "Pop, I saw that in the first page of your book."

But you begin to see all the things that happen and maybe that's the way it is, maybe that's the way it's always been, but I didn't want a part of it. I didn't want a part of it. And it was funny because, initially, I was really gung ho. I graduated quite high in my class at OCS, high enough that the top five or six guys had an opportunity instead of getting a reserve commission, they get a regular Army commission without going on a competitive tour of duty, and I was given that opportunity. I graduated from OCS on a Friday, got married on Sunday, and we went to Bermuda on our honeymoon. I have that letter, that I felt I should discuss with Edna, my wife, and she read the letter and she said, "Well, what does this mean?" I said, "Well, it means that I would make a career in the Army." And right then and there on the third day of our honeymoon, she said, "You have a choice, you can have me or the Army," and that sort of took care of that. I've always referred to her as the great Bronx liberal, you know, she was out getting petitions signed to bring the boys home and all the rest of that. So that was always lurking off in the shadows. The military, like any large organization, there was a show on Broadway called *Solid Gold Cadillac* and one of the stars of the show was this young guy, who had been to Annapolis, and he's talking to his boss and he says, "I thought that I'd...", the boss says, "Wait a minute, didn't you go to Annapolis?" He says, "Yes." "And didn't you just say 'you thought'?" He says, "You wasted four years. Where do you get off at thinking?" He says, "The military, like any large corporate organization, is an organization that's put together and developed by geniuses to

be run by idiots," and I saw that in action. I saw that in action, and that's the way it is. We're a wonderful country, I love every inch of it. I feel that I'm very patriotic, but I just stand back from it. You never know when they're telling you the truth.

I had an experience. In error, I received a notification that officers of my category had been extended for six months. I checked it out and I was not in that category, it was an administrative error, but I was left to do all the proof and the grunt work to get that error corrected. In order to do it, I had to go to Pusan and I got leave from my commanding officer. I needed two or three days. You had to take a train and trains don't run horizontally in Korea, they run north and south because of the mountains. So, if you want to get over here, you have to go up here and then down again to get there. One of the men in our unit was a Swiss national, who had been given a direct commission in the US Army, in military intelligence, and was assigned to our outfit, miscast. He wrote letter after letter and was finally assigned to be the historian of the Eighth Army in Korea, reporting directly to Mark Clark [commander of the United Nations forces during the Korean War], good job. He was in Taegu. I had to spend a night in Taegu in order to get to Pusan and I looked up Captain Hermann. Hermann, he was a spear holder at the MET in New York and lived in Manhattan as a civilian. When I walked in, he said, "Oh, Allen, I'm so glad you're here." He says, "Something happened and I'm busting to tell somebody about it. A twix came through for, 'Mark Clark's eyes only'." He says, "But I have access to that as a result of my assignment and Clark is up on the line and I have to tell somebody." He says, "You're nobody, I'll tell you." I said, "Okay." And I have a picture of the two of us sitting in the center of the building, the headquarters building he was in. It's like a large donut, the center of the donut was a rock garden, very pretty, and we were sitting there and he says, "Stalin is dead. He died yesterday. The news hasn't come out yet because we don't know who's going to replace him and what his posture will be with regard to the goings on in Korea, and that's it. Now I've gotten it off my chest. How's that?" "What did you hear and so on?" Two days later, Stalin's death was announced. All the history books are off by three days. Now my question to you is, what else haven't they told us? What else have they twisted, or turned, or whatever. Now, granted, there were probably good security reasons for that but I just object to that kind of handling of information.

SI: It's an interesting question that historians have to deal with quite often. Something of that scale shouldn't be off by that much. Usually it's an issue of like, well, you and I are in this room and only the two of us can say what really happened in the camp, but not when Stalin died.

AG: Right, yes.

SI: So how often you were able to get off, get out of the base?

AG: From camp? I had access to a vehicle with my interpreter. I could go into the local village for tea and beer, or whatever, and I was a young, married man, I wasn't about to fool around. I did go on R&R for four days to Japan, rest and relaxation, and that was a very worthwhile trip. Japan is a beautiful country. I went to Nara and Kyoto and Tokyo. I managed to get to those three cities in the four days. It was very pleasant and then soon after R&R, my time was pretty much up there, and I did rotate back, but I did get the R&R in.

Before I left, I coached our unit basketball team. We had one basket on a little piece of hardtop. They had an Eighth Army basketball tournament and we went to Taegu to play. So I did get, I think, it was two or three days for that. We got knocked out in the second round.

SI: So, you did have some activities to keep the men busy while they were not on duty.

AG: Yes, yes, there were exercise areas. There was a two-person assignment, to our camp called TI&E, Troop Information and Education. Their responsibility pretty much was to line up classes for the prisoners, in democracy, and to give, what I would have called at that time, civics lessons to any of the GIs that wanted to sit and listen to whatever they had to say. It was government oriented.

SI: Was there a concentrated effort to try and convert the prisoners to a democratic way of life?

AG: There was the, what did they call it? The Young Men's Association where the TI&E people would go in and give lectures about how democracy works, and so on, and, of course, there was a huge following. Whether or not they really believed it, or they were doing it to brownie-up, I don't know, I don't know. But they were basically good people; they just, you know, wanted to live their lives.

SI: Earlier there had been issues between separating out like the diehard communists and people who were, you know, not as diehard, or anti-communists. Did you have to deal with those issues in your enclosure?

AG: Very limited. Yes, there were some diehards. They were frequently at odds with the other prisoners. We rotated a few of them out of our unit. There were other locations where they kept the diehards. For the most part, again, our prisoners were draftees who were in the military and they were at the wrong place at the wrong time.

SI: They were all Koreans, though?

AG: Yes.

SI: There were no Chinese.

AG: Yes, no Chinese.

SI: Were they all people who you captured earlier in the war?

AG: Yes.

SI: Right at the very beginning?

AG: Yes, early on, when it was, "Operation Yo-Yo," back and forth. They picked those people up.

SI: Had they been at Koji? I know they had a bunch start there and then they spread them out.

AG: No, my prisoners had been at other locations on the mainland. Interesting, during my orientation at Koji, the guy who was my mentor there, leading me around through this, said, "Come on, we're getting a bunch of prisoners in from the mainland." They would have been the diehards that they wanted put on Koji. They had LSTs coming in, to the beach, and inside you could hear them singing. They had told them they were taking them home. The LSTs came to the beach, there was a line of GIs, all carrying MIs, like a funnel, down to a truck, a six by six truck, big, big truck, and a whole series of these trucks, waiting to load up these prisoners to take them to the enclosure. The front of the LST came down onto the beach. The prisoners looked out and saw American GIs with rifles and they knew they weren't home and they wouldn't get off the ship. There was a protocol for it and the guy said, "That's easy, they'll get them off, watch." They go to the far end of the hold, they were down on this big carrying area, and they dropped in tear gas. The prisoners ran out and onto the truck. The truck was supposed to hold forty or fifty guys standing up, they can put seventy or eighty on, how did they do it? They loaded up the fifty, the driver would begin to roll the truck and then jam on the brake and when they collapsed, then they bring them in. Some of the prisoners were on litters, they carried them off and just dropped them on the beach, and other people had to pick them up and put them on the truck. They were rough at Koji and, after the experience they had, I could understand their being rough. As time goes on, you developed a fairly callous attitude. You don't care as much and, fortunately, for me, I think that didn't happen to me until very late on, and I was rotated home and got out, because you just couldn't understand what was happening. There was no real justification, at least not that we were exposed to, nothing that we knew.

SI: You were never told then anything more than just the basics about Korean society or the ...

AG: Yes, you were left on your own pretty much to learn, and education in Korea is very important. It is not uncommon, if you walk into this little village, for a little kid to walk up to you and say, "I am a Korean schoolboy, would you speak to me?" Because they wanted conversation. They all had little pads that they carried. The pads were made out of squares of toilet paper and a stubby pencil that they could write with. They were taught English and, I think, German in their public schools, what there were of them there. So education was important to them. I heard later that the first encyclopedia was, in fact, generated in Korea. So it's a culture that reveres education.

SI: What about security in terms of procedures that you had to put in place to avoid, you know, were you worried about a prisoner taking a guard, or kidnapping anybody, or try to take over an area?

AG: We had the tower guards, the GIs were with them during the day. You could not carry a weapon into the enclosure; into the prison area you had to check it in my office. I don't know, maybe I was just young and naïve. We had a little barbershop for the prisoners and soon after I got there, I went out and I said, "Hey, tell him to give me a haircut." In the Far East, at that time, when you got your hair cut, they shaved your forehead, all around your eyebrows, as well as your face, and everything else. I lay back and the guy gave me a shave with a straightedge razor. I walked back into my office and one of my GIs says, "Lieutenant, do you know what you just

did?" I said, "Yes, I got my haircut. He was pretty good, see, it's even." He says, "That guy had a straightedge razor and he was shaving your throat." I said, "Yes," and that's where it ended. Now I don't know of any situation where the barber did, in fact, cut anyone's throat, but I was perhaps naïve enough, or trusting enough, that those things didn't concern me. I was there to do a job, the prisoners acknowledged that. They were prisoners, that the war wouldn't last forever and, eventually, they would go home. No one wants to be separated from their family. The amount of mail that we got was very limited. PWs could send mail, most of it was returned, "addressee unknown," you know, so they were without family. We had, oh, maybe, two or three instances where a family would show up at the gate looking for a relative and we would allow them time together but that was it, that was it.

SI: So how far from the front was this camp?

AG: Well, Korea is about the size of the state of Florida. Let's say that I was in, I was about a third of the way up the peninsula, to the 38th Parallel. So to that extent it was a couple hundred miles.

SI: So pretty far back.

AG: Pretty far back, pretty remote, as I mentioned, we did have our cowboy and Indian experiences but they were limited.

SI: How did those people get there? Did they just infiltrate or were they just people who had been there earlier in the war and just never made their way back?

AG: Well, the prisoners came from all parts of Korea. It wasn't a matter of catching them here and keeping them here. They were transported.

SI: The snipers

AG: Oh, the snipers?

SI: Yes, how they got there?

AG: They were probably living in the economy and were radical enough that they wanted to go off and pop off a couple.

SI: Were they aiming at the guards?

AG: They were firing into the camp. My suspicion is it was at random and they just wanted to do some damage, I guess, and it was funny because I remember the only water we had to drink was tanked in to us initially. Finally, an engineer outfit did come in and drilled a well on the side of one of the little hills within our camp area. There was a pump there and there was always a guard at the pump. One night, and it was sort of comforting, you could hear the pump going off in the night, a ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, and it stopped. Everybody ran for their sidearm and we got into vehicles. The Colonel appointed a couple of us to go out and see what was

going on and there was the Korean guard standing there and my interpreter says, "Well, the pump is off, what happened?" The guard said, "I turned the switch off." "Why did you do that?" And here's the answer, he says, "We know that when the war is over the GIs will leave." Now we had left, at that point prior to the destruction of the camp, we had a metal working shop, a woodworking shop, a barber shop, the headquarters office, living areas for six thousand in my enclosure, as well as the other two. "We know when the GIs go home everything will stay here. We don't want to wear it out," and that's why he turned off the water. So it was turned back on, and God knows what the Korean officer did to that guy, but that was it. The attitude was that, "this too will pass," and, hopefully, sooner than later.

SI: So you were rotated out in May of '53.

AG: Yes.

SI: The war only lasted another month.

AG: May of '53, I was released from active duty.

SI: At that time did you have a sense the war was going to be over soon?

AG: Well, we knew Eisenhower had made a promise. One of his campaign promises, that he would go to Korea. I remember one day, we got Telexes, or Twixs, or whatever, that there was to be absolute radio silence. We could not communicate outside the camp and no one knew why. It was just radio silence. I was out in my enclosure, I was walking, and there go these, I guess, they were B-29s, huge planes, a whole bunch of them and one of the prisoners, one of my office people, says, "That's Eisenhower." "How the hell do you know?" Well, it was. The prisoners knew, they had their own internal information, God only knows where they got it from. It was probably well-known information, we just hadn't gotten it. Eisenhower did show up in Korea. So to that extent we said, "Well, yes, at least they're thinking about us." But you know when you look at the numbers, US casualties, a hundred and sixty-five thousand, fifty-four thousand were killed in action, eight thousand Americans missing, two million Koreans died for what? As I say, by the time I got home, I was ready to be a civilian. I was ready to be a civilian. I'm glad for my military experience. I think it was very worthwhile. It helped form my life, many of my attitudes, my strictness with the kids; I don't know, they turned out okay.

SI: It sounds like that was an attitude you developed over time, so it was something.

AG: Yes.

SI: You know ...

AG: It gradually grew on and on and on, yes, and then comparing notes with other people, I'm not unique.

SI: Did the other officers in your unit kind of talk about that?

AG: Yes, the waste, the waste, the nonsense. Now, perhaps we weren't communicated with as well as we should have been to explain some of the things that we thought were ridiculous, or whatever, but, yes.

SI: Had any of the men in your unit come from the frontline units?

AG: Yes. I had guys that were up on the line and then were re-assigned.

SI: Did they have a different attitude towards the prisoners, or did you notice anymore hostility?

AG: I'd have to say, no, I'd have to say, no. Now, again, these were North Korean prisoners. Many of the guys on the line had dealings, you know, with the Chinese. Maybe the attitude would have been different had we had Chinese prisoners, I don't know, I don't know.

SI: So what happened after you came back from Korea?

AG: Came back from Korea, got rotated out of Camp Kilmer, went to New Brunswick, got leads on jobs, interviewed at a couple of places, and started my married life. Really, I'd been married but we finally got our own place, and I went to work for the Bigelow Sanford Carpet Company. The first six months were out of town and I was home weekends. Edna was still in school. It was all right, she was a senior. I got back and worked in Manhattan, on Madison Avenue, began to form a background and an experience in the marketing of consumer goods and that's how I made my career.

SI: In advertising and marketing?

AG: Marketing and sales. Marketing is an umbrella that includes sales, public relations, advertising, all those good things, and, after enough years, I did, in fact, move into general management. So I had good jobs. I achieved the lofty level of vice president in several publicly held corporations and those were different days, God, were those different days. I went to work for Owens Illinois, in Toledo, that year and I don't know if I still have it or not, the letter to the shareholders, you have to report the salaries of the top three officers of the company. The president of Owens Illinois, sixty-five thousand employees, earned eighty-seven thousand dollars and I was much further down the scale. The monies that are being earned today, the pension programs, it's a whole different life, but, again, I'm not sorry for what I did. I don't regret a minute of it.

SI: So how do you think your time in the military and being an officer influenced the way you managed people in your career?

AG: It gave me a posture, a mental posture. It's hard to do this without blowing your own horn, I guess, but I soon got into managerial positions. I worked well with people; I was able to instill in them an attitude of get the job done. Get a job done well, don't hurt people, it's not necessary, just do your job, and if you do your job well enough, and you go from one assignment to another, after a while, they'll say, "Hey, you know, Gordon's been in three or four different task forces now, or whatever, and he's always been a part of it, let's make him the manager of that

department," and I've seen this happen with other people as well. Do your job, I think the system will reward you, and to that extent, I said, "I had good jobs. We lived well." In fact, that's funny I remember, we were living in Columbus, Indiana; I was vice president in marketing at Cosco. They make the baby furniture and card tables and step stools, you know, and that sort of thing, and Scott, my oldest, was getting ready for college and I said, "Well, what do you want to do? What do you want to be?" He says, "I want to be psychologist." I said, "Really?" I was president of the Bartholomew County Mental Health Association. I said, "How would you like to see the working of a state mental hospital?" ...

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

SI: This continues an interview with Allen Gordon on November 3, 2006, in Princeton, New Jersey. Please continue.

AG: He said, "Yes, that would be great," so I made a couple of phone calls and we visited three state institutions in one day and, as a result of being active in the Mental Health Association, they took us to parts of the hospital that the average visitor didn't go to. There, we really saw people that were sick and when we finished that day, I said, "Scott, is this what you want to do?" He says, "Well, yes, I think so." I said, "All right, understand the people we saw working in these institutions, the social workers, the counselors, whatever, they don't make a lot of money." Now, at the time, I was vice president in a publicly held corporation. We were living in one of the bigger homes in Columbus, Indiana, small town. Our vacations took us to Europe a couple of times a year and Scott said something that I'll never forget. He said, "Dad, I have no great aspirations, I'd be happy to live just the way we're living now." Well, he went on, he's done very well, and he lives a hell of a lot better than I ever dreamed of. He's done very, very, well. My three children have done well, and that was an interesting little experience about, you know, raising the kids in that environment in small towns. That's what we did.

SI: So you, as you said, I'm not sure but tomorrow's your fifty-fourth anniversary?

AG: Fifty-fifth

SI: Fifty-fifth, I'm sorry, fifty-fifth, and congratulations, again.

AG: Yes, yes. Thank you.

SI: You have two sons...

AG: Two sons and a daughter. The first was born soon after I finished a training program with Bigelow, my first job out of the Army, and we had a rocky road. Edna didn't carry well. She had a number of miscarriages, like five or six, and I got to the point where I could handle them pretty well. She'd call me in the office and say, "You better come home, I think I'm losing it," and I learned that if I put my head between my knees, I wouldn't faint, and then go on home and get her to a hospital and, you know, we lost it. So by the time we moved to Toledo, we felt that an only child wasn't the best way to go and we did all the paperwork and we adopted an infant, Janie, a little girl, and then by the time Janie was four, four or five, Edna said, "You know I'm

pregnant." I said, "All right what are we going to do?" Because in order to have Scott, she must have spent three or four months in bed, with a visiting nurse with the injections, and I would make a lunch for her in the morning and then make dinner at night, you know, that sort of thing. She says, "Well, Scott is nine or ten, Janie is three or four, I can't visualize spending three months in bed." Whatever she says, "I'm just going to do whatever we do," and she did whatever we did, and Todd was born. So he came out beautiful and that's our three kids.

SI: You've had a very long career and a number of jobs and we don't really have time here to go into detail but it is interesting that you had so many different positions. When I think of most men working in your generation it was you stayed with what you started with.

AG: That's right. I was a corporate nomad, both of my brothers finished school, went to work for one company. Irwin went to work for RCA and retired with RCA. Larry went to work for Shell and retired with Shell. I was possibly a generation ahead of my time. If a company didn't meet my needs, I fired them and got another company, and that's what I did. I'm the middle child and much has been written about the middle child, especially, when the three are of the same gender. There's all sorts of shtick, that go on. That's what happened.

SI: Most of your career took you to, looks like Illinois, but the Midwest?

AG: Well, we moved from New York to Toledo, Ohio and from there to Columbus, Indiana and from there to Chicago and we've been in Chicago now since 1975, so, really, that's our home.

SI: How do you compare the East Coast to the Chicago area?

AG: I remember having a discussion with someone about that, in Toledo, soon after I got there, and he asked if people behaved differently. I said, "Yes." I said, "In the Midwest something can happen and you feel something over here and you say, 'Oh my God, I'm bleeding. That guy stuck me.' But he did it with such finesse that I didn't realize what happened. Whereas on the East Coast, they come running at you screaming, with a rusty machete, and butcher you that way." It's a more aggressive lifestyle in the East, at least it was. I have every reason to believe it still is. You get heavy population density, that's it, but, you know, I find that if you go into the Loop area in Chicago, you could just as well be in Manhattan. Population density has that kind of an effect on people, and there had been lots of experiments where they've put mice together and having very densely populated cages and after a while they begin to eat each other. So that's what happens when you live there. It's more competitive.

I remember going into Manhattan on a weekend pass from Fort Dix and picking up my intended. We went down into Manhattan to go to a movie, or something from the Bronx, and we were in Manhattan, and we had to use the subway. The subway doors opened and it was wall-to-wall bodies and I said to her, "This one's crowded, let's wait for the next one," and she thought that was hilarious. She said, "They're all going to be like that," and, sure enough, by the time I finished that trip I learned how to beat my way into a crowded subway car and make my way. But you learn to live under those circumstances. When we moved to Columbus, Columbus is a very small town and I went out to lunch one day with one of my co-workers. We went to the hotel in town, it had a nice dining room, and I drove. We parked in the underground parking for

the hotel, we got out, and I locked the doors of the car and he looked at me and said, "We don't do that here." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Just get out of the car and shut the door; you don't have to lock it. You're living in Columbus," and he was right. We learned, as we lived there, we never locked the backdoor of the house. We lived in a big house. We never locked the door because the milkman would come in and put the milk in the refrigerator for us. You know, try that in, you know, wherever, you don't do that. I don't know if you can do it in Columbus anymore but that was, you know, the extreme change in lifestyle. It was very interesting and, I think, very rewarding.

SI: I thought of a couple more questions from the war era. One was, you got married just before you went over to Korea?

AG: Roughly six months before, I got married a day or two after graduating from OCS. I went to Camp Gordon, Georgia. She stayed at home with her folks going to school. When I was assigned to Fort Dix, we did get a furnished room in Trenton. She had commuted to NYU from Trenton and I lived in the BOQ one night a week. She had a late class and she stayed with her folks and I would stay at the BOQ on post, and then when the ninety days of troop duty was up, I was gone. She went back to her folks and continued on at school.

SI: I was curious if the fact that you could potentially go to Korea if that influenced your decision to get married, or accelerated it?

AG: I would have to say, no. I met her at a summer camp. You know, I told you about the girls who wanted to be on the waterfront all day, so I had lots of time with her, and every evening, so essentially, in the two months of summer, I had the equivalent of a several year courtship. You know, if you're dating a girl you see her, what, two or three nights a week, whatever. I was seeing this girl seven nights a week and all day, everyday. If you do the hour thing, do the numbers, that would translate out to a couple of year courtship and when I went into the Army, yes, we did get engaged and I don't know how much the Army played in that decision. I loved her, I love her, she loves me and we followed the natural course of events.

SI: It wasn't like a case of, "Oh, I'm going overseas?"

AG: No. "Let's get married." No, no, I don't believe we ever had a conversation like that, no.

SI: Another question I had was, Korea was the first war that the United States fought with an officially integrated army. Was your unit integrated? Did you have African Americans?

AG: Yes, we had several. Every once in a while, you would hear a comment from one of the rednecks, "Yes, we can thank Eleanor Roosevelt for that." But the African Americans in our unit were all good contributors. Hey, you know, they're guys and they did a good job.

SI: Were any of them officers or were they all enlisted men?

AG: Oh, yes. We had a father and son officer team. The father was there first, I don't remember his last name, he was a captain, career military, and one day this African American second

lieutenant shows up, and it was this guy's father, or rather his son. But, they did their jobs and, you know, that was it. I never saw any outward manifestation of anything. They pulled their duty officer jobs, whatever, whatever along with everybody else. They were guys in uniform. There was a captain and a lieutenant.

SI: So there was that level of mobility?

AG: Yes.

SI: There were no fights or just a couple throw-ins?

AG: No. The only fight, unfortunately, occurred on one night I was duty officer. Now maybe there were others, but I wasn't exposed to them. When the guys go to bed at night, it was lights out at a given time. It was, you know, the string coming down from the top of the tent with the bulb on it and the guys would sit and talk in the dark and, as it was played back to me, when, and, you know, I had to stop the fight, or whatever, this one guy was laying in bed and he said something like, "When I get home I want to meet my wife just as I left her," and another guy yelled back, "How's that? Fresh out of bed with somebody else?" And that started the fight. Well, I don't know how much of it was done in jest, or whether those guys never hit it off, or whatever, but they did get in a fight over it. That was it.

SI: So when you were the duty officer you'd have responsibility for the whole camp?

AG: Yes.

SI: How often did you pull that duty?

AG: About once every week to ten days. It was a rotating thing with all the officers and you rode around on a jeep to the other enclosures, did the thing, and walked around, and so on. One little story, and I'll probably get emotional when I tell it to you. Every so often, if I, or anyone else drove around, it was my enclosure, they'd hear a bugle blowing. Now for the guys that had been on the line, hearing a bugle blow meant a Chinese attack and it didn't rest well with the guys to hear a bugle blowing. There were perimeter lights, if you looked into the enclosure you could see some people scurrying around. They were supposed to be in their buildings. You are not supposed to leave the building, but if a jeep would show up around the perimeter, you'd hear a bugle, and everybody would run back. I was a second lieutenant, young, I said, "I'm going to get the bugle," and I set up a deal. We knew pretty much what area of my enclosure it was coming from, which compound it was in, and we sent a jeep down the perimeter road with the high beams on. Sure enough, the bugle went off. We had put guys along that road in a drainage ditch so they could watch, and they pretty much determined the building the bugle came from. So in my infinite wisdom, I went into the enclosure with two or three others, at night, you could not bring arms into the compound, and we went in there, got all the PWs out of the building, shook it down and found the bugle.

I have the bugle, and scratched on the bugle is a guy's name and, oddly enough, a Star of David scratched on it and the first line-and-a-half, or so, of the *23rd Psalm*, "the Lord is my Shepherd."

Well, I took the bugle home, never thought much about it, and then, every so often you read an article in the paper about someone in England that found a wristwatch and a guy's name was in the watch and they tracked him down and found out who it belonged to. Well, there was a name on the bugle. I called and got dealings with the VA and they couldn't give me any information about the name. I mentioned this to my younger son, who's heavily involved with computers. He says, "Well what's the guy's name, dad?" And I wrote it down for him and he says, "I'll call you in a couple of days." A couple of days later he says, "Call this number, he lives in Long Island." I said, "Wow." So I called and a young woman, his daughter, told me he had died the year before. I explained to her that I had her father's bugle and she said, "Well, he was never in Korea." "Are you sure?" She says, "Well I'm pretty sure. Dad was in Germany." I said, "You know the dates and everything else, the timing was right," and I had a number of conversations with this young woman and I told her that I used the bugle. There is a portion of the Passover service where you call the Angel Elijah to come to the table and I was always a little screwy, I guess, but you're supposed to open the front door of your home to allow the angel to come in. I would open the door and blow the bugle and as the grandkids got older, they would fight about who's going to blow the bugle this year. And I told her about that and I said, "Do you want your father's bugle?" And she said, "No," she says, "it means more to you than it does, would to us," and she sent us pictures of her father, of her father and mother, the grandparents, and so on, and I haven't been in touch with her for I don't know how long. But I used to give presentations frequently about all of this and I always ask the audience if anyone knew this man and no one ever did. Now the question is, she claims that her father was in Germany. They had none of his discharge papers, and so on. Possibly, if I delved further into it, his unit could have been moved to Korea from Germany, but I just didn't pursue it that far and, in talking to others of my vintage, I find that their children know nothing, or very little about all of these things, and I think that's terrible, and that's why I'm here today. So I have the bugle and we still blow it and, maybe, some day I'll meet the family. They moved from Long Island to somewhere here in Jersey, I had several phone conversations with her, and so on, but Arnold Kiczales is gone.

SI: Very distinct name.

AG: Yes, but he's gone and that was it. That's the bugle story.

SI: And it wound up in one of the prisoner of war camps.

AG: How that prisoner got the bugle, I'll never know.

SI: Did you ever pursue that, like questioning him?

AG: At the time it was just a bugle, you know, I didn't see the scratching on it until I tried to polish it one day years later and saw that it had been scratched and, evidently, with a safety pin or something, very fine, you can hardly see it. But it's there.

SI: That's pretty interesting. Just one or two more questions. You mentioned that your enclosure was a showcase enclosure?

AG: Well, I said it was a showcase because whenever visitors came the old man would send them down to Enclosure # One. It was closest to the headquarters area and I ran a good ship. I ran a good ship. The prisoners, and I can't say they enjoyed me by any stretch but I began doing things on my own. I told you they get one pound of coal per man per day and right outside my enclosure on this dirt road was a mountain of two-by-fours. I would go down there at night sometimes and pull a detail to bring the two-by-fours, as many as they could carry, and divide them up and cut them up to burn them for heat. So the prisoners acknowledged that I felt for them.

SI: And they made you the jeep, was there anything else?

AG: The jeep, in fact, yes, on New Year's Day, '53, I guess, it was, Mr. Hong comes walking into my office and he says, "I have a presento for you." I said, "Well, what is it?" It was a case, Bulova. I open it up and there's a watch, a Bulova watch and on the back had been inscribed they did engraving with a nail; I'd seen them do it, "POW Number 5 Sang Mu Dai, Korea 1.1.'53." He said, "We want you to have this." I said, "Where the hell did you get a Bulova watch?" I tracked down this guy Cotter, that PX guy, I says, "Hey, Cot, you missing a Bulova watch?" He says, "Gordo, what are you kidding?" "We never had a Bulova watch here. We never got anything that good." The prisoners on their details had sold their clothes, or whatever the hell they did, to get the watch on the black market. So I still have the body of the watch, and I had it encased in Lucite, and I keep it on a shelf at home. Hey, you know, I treated them good, they treated me good, I guess, you know.

SI: It sounds like you could have come down hard on them for these things like smuggling in things or smuggling out.

AG: Yes, but what good would it have done? What would have been the benefit? What would it prove? The monies that were taken from them were put into company funds and the field grade officers had a good time with it. The money wasn't used to benefit everybody. If I sound socialist, I'm sorry, but they did their thing, it kept them quiet. It kept them, I can't say happy, how the hell could you be happy, but content, that's right. They were putting in their time and they knew it and I was there as a timekeeper.

SI: What about the Geneva, the inspectors from Geneva, what were those inspections like?

AG: They were cursory, a tour through the camp. They'd stop and ask the prisoners a few question, you know, "Are you being fed well? Are you being treated fairly? Are you warm? Are you clean? Are you showered?" you know. That was, I remember reading in the *Stars and Stripes* an article about GI prisoners during World War II were housed in, no, wait, not during World War II, I'm sorry, they had done a thing about American prisoners of war taken by the North Koreans, that they lived in buildings with cold, drafty corridors and that they had to run through those corridors, to get to their cold showers. We had a couple of tanks, canvas tanks, like an outdoor swim pool, a circular one about three feet deep with water in it. The prisoners could jump into that to take a shower. We had no showers as such. It was outside, winter, summer, spring, or fall, that's what we had for them to take their showers, and it was a big scream in the US about the American GIs who had to run down those cold, drafty corridors to

get to their cold showers. So did we treat our people better than ours were being treated? I don't know. Our prisoners got their three meals a day. They had their heat; they had dry bed boards to sleep on. We lived within the framework of the Geneva Convention, yes, and that's what we did.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add to the record, or anything that we missed?

AG: No, I would hope from all of this that this kind of information is exposed to many, many people, that they should know what went on, what goes on, and heaven forbid, what may go on. We just don't know. But that's pretty much my story.

SI: Okay, well, thank you very much for sharing it.

AG: You're welcome.

SI: Thanks for coming a long distance.

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Reviewed by Lance Weaver 4/6/2007

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 4/18/2007

Reviewed by Allen Gordon 7/2/2007