

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT W. PARET

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

DECEMBER 27, 2008

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Major General Robert Paret in Knoxville, Tennessee, with Shaun Illingworth on December 27, 2008. Dr. Paret, thank you very much for having me here today.

Robert Paret: Well, thank you for coming.

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

RP: I was born in North Bergen, New Jersey, in the third floor back apartment of an apartment house my grandfather built.

SI: Really? Was he in construction?

RP: No, he was a plasterer; did the fancy plastering that you used to see in bank buildings, and so on, the decorative plaster stuff. He was an Englishman, came to the country at the age of eighteen and was an indentured servant [apprentice?] for awhile, worked a lot in Miami, during the early days, apparently, but he died an Englishman, never took out his citizenship. So, then, he died ... when he was eighty-five, so, he lived a long life.

SI: Did you know him when you were growing up?

RP: Yes. In fact, he was the only grandparent I knew. The others had all died before I was born.

SI: What was his name?

RP: Walter, Walter Lewis.

SI: Was he your mother's father?

RP: My mother's father, right, yes, and he lived with us, because he was there before I was born, and my mother and father lived on the third floor of the apartment house, in the back, and my uncle, who was my mother's brother, lived on the first floor, in the back of the apartment house. It was a six-family apartment house, rather interesting.

SI: What was your father's name?

RP: It was Francis, Peter Francis Paret. He went by Frank, and then, my brother was named Frank. He was named Frank Lewis and I was named Robert Walter, after my grandfather, yes.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your father's background, such as where his family was from?

RP: He was born, I believe, in Jersey City, New Jersey, and we knew very little about his family.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You were saying that your father did not quite know much about his family background. Do you know how they came to this country?

RP: ... Yes, I think he probably knew some[one], but, I don't recall ever hearing about it. My brother tried to research the Paret Family and I think he concentrated on France as, ... perhaps, the primary source of the family, but I'm beginning to be a little suspicious of that, because Nat [Natalie K. Paret, Dr. Paret's wife] and I have done some traveling and we got into France and over to Colmar, on the east side of France, next to Germany, and they heard of Paret [pronounced "Pa-ray"], but they also heard of Paret [pronounced "Par-et"], and Paret [pronounced "Par-et"] is likely to be the German pronunciation. Of course, it's been called everything, "Pa-ray," "Par-ez," "Parrot," the whole works, but that was kind of interesting to me. ... If you look into some of the Internet autobiographies or family names or try to trace it, there are a lot of Paret [pronounced "Par-ets"] from Germany, and, in Louisiana, there are a lot of Paret [pronounced "Pa-rays"]. So, it could have been that we were in Alsace-Lorraine or originated from Alsace-Lorraine, could have been German or French, depending on who was in charge at the time, and there's a famous doctor, and I think that's where my brother was trying to aim for, Ambroise Paré [pronounced "Pa-ray"], but it's P-A-R-E, no "T." So, of course, that's certainly a possibility, but that's the only thing I knew about my father. ... I knew his brother, who was Uncle Will, and we had a cousin that was also named Bill, but he was, no, on the Meyers side. He was Bill Meyers, yes. So, he wasn't a member of the Paret side. My mother was, of course, English. ...

SI: What was her name?

RP: She was Eula Pearl Lewis Paret, and there's some Southern in there, I think, [laughter] but she was born in New York City and she and my father were married in New York City. She was a teacher after high school. At that time, you got a high school diploma and you could be teaching. So, she taught, initially. My father was a bank teller for a long time, and then, when I was more cognizant of his job, he was, not a CPA, he never had that, I don't think, that qualification, but he was an auditor of some kind with the Harborside Warehouse Company, out of Jersey City. They were situated right on the docks of the Hudson River and the boats came in and unloaded all the fruits and vegetables, and it was a cold-storage warehouse, which I'd been in a couple of times, was very interesting. ... He was a big smoker, so, he eventually developed cancer of the lung and had his right lung removed, and emphysema on the other side. ... The Harborside Warehouse people just let him go, and, [at] that time, no Social Security, no retirement program at all. So, he wound up making jewelry, handmade jewelry, at home in order to make a living. ...

SI: Was that in the 1920s or the 1930s when that happened?

RP: That would be ...

SI: When you were very young?

RP: Yes. No, that would be when I was in college, and before, before I got into college, ... because, when I was just driving, I ... used his car and went down to the Harborside Warehouse Company and cleaned out his desk. ... I remember being very upset about that [and] wanting to talk to the boss and tell him a piece of my mind, because he had been discharged while he was sick, ... interesting kind of thing, and the other interesting part of that is, all of his bosses died violent deaths.

SI: Really?

RP: After that, yes, in car accidents and all kinds of strange things. That made an impression, yes, when I was young, but he lived for quite awhile, years after that, with only one lung and emphysema in the other.

SI: That is pretty remarkable.

RP: They got through it. My brother was in medical school at the time, and that's how we found the surgeon. So, that would have been between '40 and '48, yes, that would have been in that [period], because Frank, ... I think he graduated from Rutgers in '40, and then, went to medical school after that, down at Hahnemann, in Philadelphia, and he was in the accelerated course, because of the war, and was deferred until, I guess he finished in '43, and I believe he went in the service at that time, but I'm not sure of that sequence, because he also had an OB/GYN residency in New York, at Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital. ...

SI: Was that the ASTP that he was in or the V-1 program, I believe, for the Navy?

RP: V-12, I think. There was some V-12 program, yes, but he was in the Army, the Medical Corps during that period of time, and I'm not sure when he got out. ... When he did get out, though, he came back to New Brunswick and established an OB/GYN practice there, in New Brunswick, until he retired, worked at Middlesex Hospital. ...

SI: Do you know Dr. Norman Reitman?

RP: No, I don't. The name is familiar, but I don't know him, I don't think.

SI: He was a prominent doctor in the New Brunswick area, and at Rutgers, also. I think he was a doctor for the football team for awhile. I was just curious if they knew each other or if you knew him, because he also worked with Middlesex Hospital.

RP: Yes. No, maybe that's why the name's familiar, but, I could have known some other Reitmans, too.

SI: Going back to your parents, do you remember how they met? Did they ever tell you how they met?

RP: No, I don't remember, although it could have been that it was in New York City, because my father worked as a teller for one of the New York banks, but, if they told me, I've forgotten.

SI: Do you know how they wound up in the North Bergen area?

RP: Again, no, and, again, if you surmise, my grandfather, perhaps, built that six-apartment apartment house and ... I believe that's the only place they've ever lived, or ever lived at that time. So, I don't know. They had some friends out in New Jersey that I knew for a long period of time. ... Charlie Devine was his name, and I think he was my father's best man at the wedding. So, there was some connection there in the New Jersey area, somehow, there. ...

SI: What do you remember about growing up in North Bergen? What are some of your early memories of the town?

RP: We lived on, eventually it became 75th Street, 427 75th Street, North Bergen. It was a main bus route. It was just a side street, but the buses came down the major avenue, which was Bergenline Avenue, and turned onto our street and drove down, eventually, I think, headed toward places like Hoboken and the ferry slips down at the base of Hoboken. So, we had a busy street and it wasn't that wide. ... It could accommodate parking on one side and the other, too, and then, two cars could go past each other both ways. Yes, it eventually became a one-way street. ... I used to play out in the street all the time, with kids, other kids, stickball, marbles, anything like that. ... Everybody watched out for each other and, if a car was coming, they'd yell something like, "Car," and you'd get out of the way for a bit and let it go by, and then, get back to the ballgame. So, my grade school was just down [the street], and, actually, it wasn't two blocks away from me. We were on a kind of a plateau, and then, within a block, it was a hill going down, and then, the school was on the other end of that block, Robert Fulton Grammar School, I think it was called. So, I walked to school every day, the usual story, would walk to school in a mile of snow. [laughter]

SI: Was the neighborhood made up of different groups of people, like different ethnicities and so on, or was it all one ethnicity?

RP: It was all-white and I don't recall any Spanish speakers at the time, but there were different religious folks that lived around us, and, in fact, across from Robert Fulton ... Grammar School was the Jewish synagogue, which was right across the street. So, I had a lot of friends out of that ethnic group. I think most of the others were probably Catholic or, at the time, Dutch Reformed. We had a church, again, about two blocks from us that we went to, Woodcliff Community Church, which was Dutch Reformed. ...

SI: It sounds like everybody got along pretty well. Was there any divisiveness?

RP: No, no, not at all. I can't remember any. There were some fights between the kids, occasionally things like that. There was a guy by the name of Gordon Schaefer, who was a big football player, who everybody steered away from, [laughter] but he was a nice guy. He was fine and we were about five or six blocks from the town of Guttenberg, G-U-T-T-E-N-B-E-R-G, Guttenberg [pronounced "Goo-ten-berg"] or Guttenberg [pronounced "Gut-ten-berg"], they used to call it, which was only two blocks wide and about five blocks long, and it was one of the little

towns in the row, North Bergen, Guttenberg, West New York, Union City, Jersey City, ... Hoboken. So, it was all up in that area.

SI: I have never heard of Guttenberg before.

RP: Yes, and my aunt, one of the aunts that lived on the first floor, my uncle's wife and her sister, Aunt Caroline, used to work in Guttenberg and I think their name was Meyer, M-E-Y-E-R. So, they were [of] German descent, I think, yes. I don't know what she did, office work, I believe, but that was our connection to Guttenberg.

SI: Would you say it was an industrial town or was it mostly people getting on these transports and going into Hoboken or New York City?

RP: Guttenberg, I don't think, had any industry, except along the main Bergenline Avenue, where there were shops and things like that, but, usually, mom-and-pop stuff, as I recall. I don't remember any factories of any kind, but North Bergen was kind of divided. ... We were on the Palisades, so, there was a big drop-off into the river, but, then, on the top of it, where we were, there was just homes, and then, ... going back west, it eventually wound up going into the railroads that were down there in the swamps, over which now the Giant Stadium is situated. It was Secaucus, Newark, and that, and the railroads came up [from] the bottom of that area. So, now, there were factories and things down there that were served by that railroad and there was a big, old quarry down there that was a lot of fun, because you could swim in it, if your mothers would let you. If they didn't know, you could swim in it. [laughter] So, it was fun.

SI: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

RP: I don't have that much recollection of it being a big thing with us. My father, I think, certainly, survived it by probably working at the bank or as an accountant. My mother taught, for a little while, anyway, until my brother was born, I guess, and he was born in 1918, ... but they apparently survived, and then, were living kind of free of rent in my grandfather's apartment house. So, they got through, I believe, on that account, yes, but I don't remember any hardship as far as I was concerned.

SI: You do not remember having to cut back on things.

RP: No, sure didn't. No, we weren't; there was no extravagance at all, living in an apartment house. I know that the big entertainment was a Sunday drive in the car, which I hated, because my father smoked and my grandfather smoked and I used to die of suffocation. I sucked air out of the trunk. ... You couldn't open a window back then. That was how you caught colds back in those days. We didn't believe in the virus theory, I guess. [laughter] So, I couldn't open a window until I got old enough to where I could object to going, because they didn't want me running in the streets without somebody around, I imagine.

SI: Did you see it having a larger impact on North Bergen or these other nearby areas?

RP: No. ... I was just not cognizant of it. If there was, I was not. As a kid, I probably just let that one go by, not very [aware of it], and the kids I played with were all pretty healthy and able to play ball particularly, or football, whatever we wanted to in the streets. So, there wasn't, to my knowledge, any real impact, back at that time. ...

SI: What did you think of your education at Robert Fulton and, later on, Cliffside Park?

RP: ... Now that I look back on it, I think it was very good. We had some, I think, very fine teachers at Robert Fulton, who were very caring, and my family knew the principal there, ... Clarence something, and he lived on the end of the block from us. So, I had to pass his house every day to get to school, but I can remember some really fine teachers there that were very kind and ... very helpful. North Bergen did not have a high school, so that everybody out of Robert Fulton went to high schools in other connecting communities, and many of them went to Union Hill High School or Emerson High School in Union City, New Jersey or Weehawken, which was south of us, and I decided to go to Cliffside Park, which was north of us, and I don't know if there were any other people in my class that went there, kind of interesting. I don't know why I picked it. My brother went to Emerson and I had a girlfriend at the time who went to Weehawken. So, I can't remember why I chose Cliffside Park, but Cliffside Park was pretty good and I had some really good teachers up there, too. I had a math teacher that was nervous, thin, nervous, (LaRocca?), I think her name was. I didn't do very well in math. I don't know why. [laughter] ...

SI: What were your favorite subjects? What interested you the most?

RP: I don't know, probably English, for one, but, I wasn't a grade "A" student, probably mid-"Bs," or something like that, made it through, except for math. I probably just passed through math. ... I didn't take a language, I don't think, maybe I did, took a language in high school. I wound up taking German and scientific German in college, of which I now know very little. ... I really can't remember a lot about that.

SI: Were you involved in any extracurricular activities or sports?

RP: I tried to play football, but my father wouldn't let me. I wound up being on the management part of that, one of the kids that managed the ball or the uniforms or something like that, ... but I didn't then get into the playing. I did a lot of swimming at that time, but mainly through the Boy Scouts. I was very active in Boy Scouts. The troop I was in was Troop 17, was at Woodcliff Community Church, which was, again, a couple blocks away.

SI: Was that the Dutch Reformed church?

RP: Yes, the Dutch Reformed church, and, through that Boy Scout connection, I wound up, eventually, as the waterfront director at Camp Towadena, during the summers, used to ... get out of high school early, take my exams early, and so on, and go up to the camp and open it up as a part of a pioneer squad. We'd start out early. A couple of us would go up there and open up a building or two and get things started, and then, the pioneer crew would come up and open up the rest of the camp, all tents, put up all the tents.

SI: Where was the camp located?

RP: It was up in Stillwater, New Jersey, up on the Appalachian Mountain Range, so, out of Newton. You know where Newton is, right? It was close to Newton and, at that time, a very tiny town. If you blink an eye, you can miss it as you go through it. ... Through that, I became a merit badge counselor for swimming and lifesaving and used to travel down to the Hoboken YMCA, on Saturdays, to conduct an hour's worth of water training in swimming and lifesaving for the Boy Scouts, for whoever came down. So, I did that for a long time.

SI: Were you still involved with the Boy Scouts when you went off to college or when you went in the service?

RP: No. I think, by that time, ... well, that was the early part of the war, too, so, I think, by then; I wound up [in], I forgot whether it was called Explorer Scouts, and I remember being one of the air raid warden guys. When they pulled air raids, warnings, I had to put on an armband and go out and tell people to turn out their lights if we saw any, because, again, we were right on the Hudson River and any lights out of New York or out of our area would allow the submarines to silhouette the merchant ships, and so on. So, I remember doing that. ...

SI: Growing up in the late 1930s, particularly in an area with so many different ethnicities, were the events happening overseas with Hitler and Mussolini ever discussed among your circle of friends and your family?

RP: No, really not. I still communicate, by email, with one of the Scouts who was one of my assistants when I was waterfront director, Eitel Hespelt. His name is German, he was; and I just recently found out that he had been to Germany in 1939 and had remarked that the people in Germany really loved Hitler. So, it was the first time I'd ever heard him say anything about it; so interesting.

SI: Before Pearl Harbor, were you and your friends thinking that there might be a war, or was it just sort of a shock?

RP: I think it was a shock to most of us, and I was in high school, just got into high school, essentially, and so, I don't remember anybody discussing it though, or making a big thing of it. I know you've asked the question before of others, by reading some of these reports [the oral history transcripts posted to the Rutgers Oral History Archives website], "Where were you on Pearl Harbor Day?" and I remember where I was. I was with my mother and father in the car, Sunday afternoon, ... when we heard the news on that radio, and then, I think, as a kid, ... [I thought], "Oh, man, I need to go," that kind of attitude, ... but I was much too young at that point in time. So, yes, I remember hanging [my head between the front seats]; it was a coupe of some kind, but it had enough backseat for me. My grandfather was gone by then, I believe, and I remember leaning between the two seats and listening so intently to the radio. We were all pretty upset about that, yes.

SI: Do you remember if there was any initial fear or panic in the wider neighborhood or the city, anybody thinking that there might be an imminent attack?

RP: No. I think everybody was just angry, the people, as I recall. After that, they were just angry, "Let's go do something," ... and a lot of the guys I knew, that were older than I was, were in there enlisting and doing something. I had a real good friend, a guy by the name of Walter Larsen, who was older than I was by maybe two or three years, was in our church group and in our Scout troop. ... Of course, I wasn't keeping up with everybody at that point in time, but I knew he was in the Army, and then, I found out, very shortly, that he was killed ... over in Europe. ... corroborating I thought he was killed at the invasion of Normandy, but, when Natalie and I have been able to travel, one of the reasons we went to Colmar was to find his grave, and we had been to Normandy. ... I went into the Normandy office and said, "I'd like to visit Walter Larsen's grave," and they looked it up on the computer. "Well, he's not here. He's in Epinal, over on the east side of France," and [I said], "Oh, okay." So, we traveled over there. ... We had a car rented and we traveled over there. It took us a couple of days to get there, and [we] stayed in Colmar, and Epinal was very close. When we were in Normandy, the place was full. It was in June, so the anniversary date was fairly close and there were all kinds of buses and cars and people, hundreds of people. When we drove into Epinal, we were the only car in the cemetery. We drove in, empty cemetery, and, when we got out of the car, a gentleman came out of the office and, as he approached us, he said, "You're here to see Walter Larsen's grave," and that floored us. I mean, they'd communicated, apparently, knew we were coming, and he said, "I'll take you down, but let me tell the superintendent of the cemetery you're here. He's tending his roses," or something, and so, I said, "Fine." Then, we walked down and [among] all the white crosses, of course, beautifully kept, and a bouquet of flowers in front of Walter Larsen's cross, the only one in the cemetery, imagine that, just fantastic. [Editor's Note: First Lieutenant Walter Larsen, US Army, served with the Office of Strategic Services, attached to the Norso Division. He was killed in action on September 10, 1944, near the Bridge of Maisey in France.]

SI: I have heard they do a wonderful job.

RP: Oh, gee whiz, yes, and the superintendent finally came, in his grubbies. He'd been working in his garden, and had an accent, a slight, I think, Italian accent. I can't think of his name right offhand. Anyway, he told us the story. He said, "Well, when you're finished, come on up to the office. I can give you all the stuff on Walter Larsen." The superintendent wound up telling us that he, the superintendent, was the chief first sergeant, or something, he was in the Army under [101st Infantry Division Commander General] Maxwell Taylor. He was Maxwell Taylor's sergeant. So, that was kind of interesting, but he pulled out how Walter Larsen was killed, and a big story. Walter had parachuted into France, somewhere around the 10th of June, something like that, and met up with the French Resistance and was harassing the German retreat and he caught up with a bunch of Germans at a railroad crossing, was killed at that crossing. The French Resistance put up a monument to him there. So, I have somewhere around here ... a picture of all that, if you would like to see it, eventually.

SI: Sure.

RP: Yes. So that kind of thing is just really fantastic, yes.

SI: You were in high school when Pearl Harbor happened. How quickly did the home front feel the change? How quickly did you begin to see things like rationing and the blackouts?

RP: I think almost right away, particularly blackouts. I mean, we got the word, fairly quickly and the Scouts were enlisted, the Explorer Scouts were enlisted, to do that, that part of it, anyway. I mean, they had others [involved in performing air raid drills], of course. Gasoline rationing, very quickly, and my brother, let's see, he was still; the timeframe now is going to get me all messed up, because he had a Model A Ford and, somehow, found out, I guess in *Popular Science* or *Popular [Mechanics]*, some of those [periodicals], how to change that Model A into a diesel by wrapping a copper coil around the manifold and putting in an extra tank, so that you could put gas in the extra tank on the engine side of the firewall and run it on gasoline until the manifold got hot, and then, switching it over to the diesel, which was in the main tank. ... It would, "Pow, pow, pow, pow," and then, finally, take off, but, in order to have gas enough, he had to use as much rationing stamps as he could get and filled up a big, old fifty-gallon drum, which we buried up in Culver Lake [in Sussex County, New Jersey]. His father-in-law-to-be was a reverend and had a cottage up there. So, we buried that at night, one time. [laughter] We did some crazy things, but that was ... how he could get gas to [do that]. You could get diesel, but you couldn't get the gas, I think, at the time. No, I remember doing that in the middle of the night with him, he and another guy. ... That's the big part of rationing, as I recall. Food wasn't a problem, that I know; I was always well-fed, yes.

SI: Was the Scout camp able to keep going with all the rationing restrictions?

RP: Yes, yes. I think they must have had some kind of compensation, or dispensation, I guess, to provide that, but I don't know. I wasn't in on the administration of any of that.

SI: You were an air raid warden. When did that start?

RP: Well, it had to have been in '42, '42 [or] '43, I think, before I went off to college, by far. So, it was only a short period of time that I was really involved in that. ... I went to college, I guess it was [in] August of '44, yes, and was ... at Rutgers for a little bit of time, and I don't remember how long, before I was given my day to report to the induction centers, because I enlisted, spent a little time at Fort Dix and that route, and then, traveled by train, eventually, winding up at Lowry [Field], in Denver. I think the train took a circuitous route. I think we were headed down South, toward Louisiana, and then, were diverted. We didn't find out, until much later, that there was some kind of epidemic in one of the camps. So, they diverted us up to Lowry, where we began ... more testing, actually. It was called stanine testing, to become a pilot, and they had qualifications. [If] you were, it was something like twenty to twenty-two, you would be a fighter pilot, eighteen to twenty, you would be a bomber pilot, and down, navigator/bombardier, depending on your testing grade. ... I went through with a friend of mine from high school, from Cliffside Park, by the name of Warren Harms, and he and I went through the stanine testing together. ... At that time, we were getting a little discouraged for some reason, that they were giving us a runaround. So, he and I just went in there and enjoyed the play. It was like playing the Wii [Nintendo video game console] board. You're doing all kinds of crazy things ... with

your eyes and keeping a stylus on a rotating disc, that [you had to watch] where the thing moved to. I can remember some of those kinds of things.

SI: Just for the tape, you were describing where you would have to move sticks to test your depth perception.

RP: Depth perception, right, an old depth perception [test]. In a long box there were two lines that were used, to move until they were in line. ... I think he and I both came out with the top stanine. So, we were going to be headed for fighter school, and then ... somewhere [in] that period of time, they dropped the bomb on the Japs. We were confined to Lowry. [Editor's Note: The atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6, 1945, and August 9, 1945, respectively, and V-J Day was declared on August 14, 1945.] We weren't allowed off the base for that celebration, and I understand a number of guys jumped the gate, but I went to bed, I think, [laughter] but it was over, and then, we started going into the remote-controlled turret mechanic's school, which nobody was doing any work in. You know, we weren't [enthusiastic]. Nobody was too serious at that point, ... but that was interesting. I did fly in the B-29 a couple of times, because you could go down to base ops, and then, hitch a ride at night and sit in one of the bubble gunnery places and view the mountains and the city and the lights and all that at the time.

SI: Was that the first time you had ever flown in a plane?

RP: That's it. That was, yes, at Lowry.

SI: Outside of the North Bergen area and up at the Boy Scout camp, had you ever done any traveling before?

RP: No. The big thing, and I think my parents [set this pattern] when they vacationed, they vacationed down at places like Asbury Park on the ocean, or I don't even think we went into Atlantic City, that was a little bit too far at the time. Asbury Park and, what were some of the others, Lavallette? ... When I was in college, during the summer, we used to go down to Lavallette, and we called it "Love-A-Lot," at the time, and ... some of those other towns down there, which was very nice. I mean, they were sparsely populated at that time and the beaches were wide open and clean. It was really nice. The Corner Tavern people, the people that owned the Corner Tavern [in New Brunswick], George something, had a boarding house at Lavallette, I think it was, and we'd go down there and stay occasionally, during the summer, in-between classes at Rutgers.

SI: Going back to the World War II era, you had this job at the Boy Scout camp. Did you have any other part-time jobs, summer jobs?

RP: No, that, I did that for a number of years, started out, again, working on a pioneer squad and, eventually, working [my way] up, but ... I loved to swim, so, [I] wound up being a pretty good swimmer. The little "R" up there [on the wall in General Paret's office] is my junior varsity "R," [a letter for athletic accomplishment]. My brother was a much better swimmer. ... In fact, he ... had a New Jersey State Championship, I think in backstroke, ... but that's where I enjoyed

swimming, and I think that's what led me into the waterfront director's job, eventually, being an assistant once or twice. So, I enjoyed Boy Scout camp. I mean, that was all summer up in the mountains and on a beautiful lake and you couldn't ask for a better job, summer job, get paid to do it, like getting paid to fly, you know. [laughter] You wonder why they do that.

SI: Did the Boy Scouts do other things, like scrap drives or bond drives?

RP: Yes, they did, and I don't remember being heavily involved in that, although I probably was, because they'd recruit a troop to do that. My father was one of the committee members of the Boy Scout troop. So the family was pretty well involved in that kind of thing. ... I can't remember what it was that we did; something about stamps.

SI: You put the stamps in a booklet, and then, you turned the booklet in for a war bond.

RP: Yes, yes. So, I don't know how we were involved in that, but I know there were some drives, collecting things, I think, for recycling, I guess, or whether we did that at that time [or not], but, yes, there were some collections that we were involved with, that the whole troop got involved in.

SI: In general, would you say that World War II, before you went to Rutgers and you were in the service, was an everyday thing for you, or was it more removed, like something that was happening somewhere else?

RP: No, I think I remember it being every day, particularly getting the news and getting the newspapers and reading about the advances or the retreats and about the campaigns in North Africa and Italy, and then, eventually, the Normandy invasion, and so on. I remember reading the newspapers about that and, of course, discussing it with people at that time and being very concerned when we were losing, and then, when it pretty much shifted to the Pacific, hearing about that. I mean, we were all pretty much involved in the emotions of all that period, yes.

SI: Were you keeping a correspondence with friends in the service, or did you have any relatives that went in?

RP: My brother, that would be [one], but he was stationed pretty much in the United States, Georgia, I think, when he was [in], as a doctor, ... but, no, I didn't have enough information, and, as a kid ... probably, not many would take any time to write to a young kid, but we had other drives, blood drives. I don't know when I gave my first unit of blood, but probably in college, after [I turned] eighteen. They wouldn't take it before that, I would imagine. That's an interesting question. I have to see what I can find out about that. Trouble is I'm the "Last of the Mohicans" as far as my family's concerned, so, I can't go back and ask. ...

SI: When a member of the community lost a relative, was there any kind of community reaction to that, say, trying to help that family out, or was it more of a private matter?

RP: No, it depends on who it was whether you were very knowledgeable about the family [or not]. ... Our doctor was Dr. (Fisher?) and Dr. (Fisher's?) son was in the Navy at Pearl Harbor

and I remember that he wound up as the last name on the survival list in Pearl Harbor. That's what we heard. So, yes, that was a cause for some hope and celebration, that we knew somebody that had survived in that area, but you would notice, going down the streets, that the gold stars, and so on, [were] hanging in windows. That was pretty commonplace. They were either blue stars or gold stars, one for serving and one for loss. [Editor's Note: Service Flags, displayed by families with children serving in the US Armed Forces, featured a blue star for each living child and a gold star for each deceased child.]

SI: Yes, the gold star is for a loss.

RP: Loss, yes, I remember seeing those. On our block, I don't remember any gold stars at all. So, I don't remember any that I knew.

SI: In high school, do you remember them either cutting anything because of the war or even adding classes, maybe a class in aircraft identification or something like that? Do you remember the war impacting the high school at all?

RP: No, I don't, don't remember anything additional. ... I remember aircraft identification, but that I ... started out getting in the military. ... I don't think we got that in high school. I don't think there was that much impact, that I recall. There may have been, but have you heard of it happening?

SI: It depends on the school. I have heard of it in some schools, that they would add additional physical training or classes in how to make resources stretch out in the war.

RP: ... I can't recall anything like that.

SI: You also hear that, because of gas rationing, schools involved in sports had to cut back on their schedules and traveling.

RP: Yes. Now, that may have happened and I just wasn't cognizant of it, yes. I had to travel by bus to school. So, there was a line that was just four or five homes away and on the main drag and I picked that bus up, and maybe walked four or five blocks when I got up into the Cliffside Park area to get there. So, it was all commercial transportation. ...

SI: Your brother had been at Rutgers in the early 1940s and late 1930s. Had you had much contact with the University through him? Had you gone down to the campus at all?

RP: ... Yes, we would visit occasionally. He was a Beta, but he didn't live in the Beta House. I can't remember where he lived then. He went through the Ag School, in order to get what he felt was needed for premed, because the Ag College was cheaper. I remember that portion of it. Then, he swam on the team, so, we went for swimming meets, and so on, when he was involved. So, I had, you know, some contact with Rutgers at that point. My mother wanted me to go to Princeton. You know, I don't know why, but I don't even think I had been to Princeton when I made the decision to go to Rutgers, ... and I think, probably, that was Frank's influence. "Ah, Princeton is too expensive," or something. He must have said something to me and, by that time,

my father ... had been fired, because of his illness. So, I had to do as much as I could to stay there, and I think we paid for my first semester anyway, somehow, and then, I left for the military. So, then, I came back and had some GI Bill, I guess, and, also, received a scholarship from Dean Silver. Oh, the other guy I tried to remember the other day was (Kurtland?). Is that right, Dean (Kurtland)?

SI: The name sounds familiar, (Kurtland?).

RP: He was, I think, after Silver, and, of course, Dean [Howard] Crosby, we knew very well, but I think that, the scholarship from Dean Silver, [helped], and then, I worked. I had three jobs, essentially. One was preceptor of the Student Union, which was given to us. That job was ... out of, I guess, the Dean's office. Then, I worked at the cafeteria, busing tables. That gave me my meals, and then, I had a job, ... depending on [the] year, in one of the administrative offices, up in Winants Hall, publications, ran printing presses and envelope stuffing, and then, one year, worked in the [box office], through the Athletic Department, sold tickets at ballgames and things like that; so, worked out pretty good, made my way through.

SI: What do you remember about that brief period there before going into the service? It was at the height of the war and Rutgers was heavily affected by World War II.

RP: I don't remember too much of that, unless I've got it kind of mixed up with when I came back, but, I don't remember, at the time, whether we had to wear the dinky, or whatever it was called.

SI: The dink, I think.

RP: Dink, yes, as a freshman. I don't remember that, and, again, I was only there for, maybe, four or five months during that period. Then, when I came back, I was a veteran, of sorts, [laughter] had a little pin that you could wear [the "Ruptured Duck," an honorable discharge emblem], but I was classified as a veteran, came back with all the veterans who had really been in the conflicts, the Guadalcanal guys and the European fellows. ... So, I guess it gave me a false sense of belonging to the veterans' group from [World War II], even though I hadn't seen anything but Lowry Air Force Base, but I remember being in amongst the older guys, that kind of impressive kind of thing. One incident that I really remember fairly clear; going through the cafeteria, which was at Winants Hall, you had a metal tray that you slid along the bars. ... They were served as you picked things, and so on, and then, one day, one of those [fell], somebody dropped a tray, and it created all kinds of confusion, guys dropping to the floor, the loud noise and things like that. You look around and see all these guys that had really been in it down on the ground. Things like that happened, but that's the one I remember. ...

SI: Did you have the job in the Student Union before the war or was that only after the war?

RP: No, it was after, yes.

SI: Did you live on campus before the war or did you commute down?

RP: No, I lived on campus, and I can't think of where I lived. That's completely gone through me. It had to be in, probably, one of the [dormitories], Ford Hall, or something like that, I would imagine, up in the Quadrangle. Yes, it might have been up there, but I don't have much recollection of that, because it's been overpowered by having lived in the Student Union for three, four years.

SI: You mentioned that you wanted to be in the Army Air Forces and you did not want to be in the Army infantry. How did you feel about just going in the military in general? Were you kind of, I would not say desperate to get in, but, since most men your age were in the service, was it something that you saw you had to do?

RP: Right. Well, I think I was ready to go. I was ready to get into it. I had absolutely no idea what it was going to be like, but ... as a kid that age, you kind of felt left out, at least I felt that way, if you weren't in. You weren't part of it. So, when my assignment date came up, I was ready. I was going to go. ... Maybe the first few months I was at Rutgers, I was in limbo, waiting. That might have been the big thing. I could remember, at Fort Dix [getting] the usual Army boots and raincoats and things like that, that were so stiff, and marching around there for awhile, cold weather, getting shots, and then, eventually, being shipped off to Lowry. ...

SI: Was it difficult to make that transition from the freedoms of civilian life to military life?

RP: I think we were kept so busy during that period of time that I think we ... probably felt some restriction, and I'm sure some guys did more than others, but I don't know. I guess I was brought up to respect authority of some sort, and my parents were pretty authoritative, and my mother, anyway, was. So, it wasn't too bad for me. I didn't have any real problem with it. Then, when I came back to Rutgers, I was in the ROTC and ... I think I was in there for four years, but I remember the last two years was an elective. I think the first two years you had to be in ROTC. I'm not sure of that, though.

SI: I was going to ask you about that. In general, because of Rutgers' land-grant status, ROTC was mandatory for the first two years, and then, an elective for the last two years, but, from what I understood, in that postwar period, veterans could opt out of ROTC. I was wondering if you volunteered for all four years or if some of your military service counted towards ROTC.

RP: No, I think we also got paid for ROTC, didn't we?

SI: Yes.

RP: Yes. So, I think I probably opted in for the four years, yes, to help me out, to help me get through that financially, yes. ... I had no qualms about winding up being a second lieutenant at that point in time, because, then, when I went back in the Korean War, I went into pilot training as an officer, as a second lieutenant.

SI: It is interesting that you have the perspective of both an enlisted man and an officer. Looking back, having lived most of your life as an officer, could you see the difference between how enlisted men lived and how officers lived when you were in the World War II period?

RP: Yes, oh, yes. ... As a cadet, which is really lower than a private, we lived in barracks and had to do the usual thing [living] out of a barracks; get up in the morning, have your bed made and, get out in formation and all that kind of stuff, and then, march off to something, class or a testing facility, or something like that. Where officers were obviously a lot freer, strolling around the base and driving around, or something like that. So, yes, there was definitely a big difference, but, again, as a cadet ... if I had continued in that, that training, [I] would have wound up as an officer, I think. That was part of it, and, particularly, having passed the stanines as a fighter pilot. ...

SI: When you were looking into signing up for the Army Air Forces, was that what you wanted to be? Did you want to be a fighter pilot?

RP: Yes, I think so, because that was the glamorous thing to do at that time. You'd hear about the air wars and ... read things about the '51s [P-51 Mustang] and the '47s [P-47 Thunderbolt] and '38s [P-38 Lightning], and so forth. So, yes, I think, if you were going to be a pilot, that seemed to be the epitome of being one, being on your own and, not having to be responsible for a crew, and so forth, and I think I thought about that, pretty much.

SI: Growing up, had you been interested in aviation? During World War II, there were obviously a lot of movies and books about the air war.

RP: Yes, yes. I don't think up until the war did I think one way or another about it. It wasn't on my mind. The war certainly brought that to mind, for sure. I think, up until that point, I was interested in medicine, in being a doctor. ... The family physician, Dr. (Fisher?), was a real fine guy and I knew him very well, through my family. My brother then being interested in medicine was another draw ... and he had friends, young guys, who were doctors, eventually. So, I think that was my initial thought about what my future might be or hoped to be. Then, when the war hit, I mean, ... all that was, "Hey, not enough time, at this point," and the need, I thought [was] for everybody to get in and do what I should think [they would] have to do, what I did, yes.

SI: Were you expecting a much longer war?

RP: Yes.

SI: In May, the war was over in Europe, but were you expecting the war with Japan to go on for much longer?

RP: Yes, I think so. ... That was pretty scary, at the time, because of the reports of casualties and some of the difficulty in island hopping, as our forces had to do. Yes, that was a scary thing. Yes, I, for one, feel very definitely that, if the bomb hadn't been used and dropped, I would have been in the midst of that, somehow, because I was the right age to be and was certainly going to be one of the replacements in whatever force I was in and, I feel, at this point, anyway, that I probably wouldn't have survived. Think of the casualties that that would have [resulted in]. I mean, all the little, old ladies of Japan would have a pitchfork, if nothing else, kids would have

been doing something, in that fanatical state that they were in at the time. I think we would have lost thousands and thousands. ...

SI: After the bombs were dropped and V-J Day happened, you were just sort of kept in this limbo, doing busywork; is that correct?

RP: Yes, well, we were, at that time, I think, put into that remote-controlled turret mechanic's course, which was ... pretty much electronics, how to operate from a central gunning position, ... five other stations on that B-29, and you could take over from a central position, I think the top turret, and you could use that to shoot at anything coming at you and override some of the guns to do that. So, it was all electronics, ... which would have been a pretty good trade to know, and I don't know if anybody went on to continue that, but, at that point, I was certainly willing to get out and get back to college and get out of the war, from that standpoint. ... Then, when the Korean thing started up again, and, by that time, ... I had gone through ROTC and had my commission, so that's when I went back and said, "Hey, I'd like to be a pilot." I had my diploma. ... I tried to get into medical school at that time, but they were just beginning to just pick straight "A" students, or something, at the time, and I wasn't a straight "A" student.

SI: There was also an influx of GI Bill guys.

RP: GI Bill, yes, there was. Getting into medical school was pretty tough then, although ... Rutgers had a good reputation for getting guys in medical school, particularly through Dr. [Ralph] DeFalco. He was in the Biology Department and he was influential, I think, in keeping me there and doing things. In fact, when I came back, before I did get into medical school, I went back to him and did cat anatomy, for a little bit, on my own, and he got me the position in the eugenics lab. ... I was a pretty poor professor. [laughter] Eugenics was pretty tough, ... but, he was very influential and probably got a lot of guys into medical school. By that time, I was a veteran and had the combat behind me, and my brother had a friend at Flower Fifth Avenue in New York City and I think that's how I got into medical school.

SI: Okay. Do you want to take a break?

RP: Sure, [we] could take a break.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You mentioned that you were practically on the docks, or maybe you were actually on the docks, ready to go overseas, and then, you were called back and released from the Army Air Forces.

RP: Right, Army Air Corps, yes.

SI: What was coming back to Rutgers like? Was it difficult or easy? Did they make it easy for you?

RP: Oh, I think, ... as I recall, it certainly was easy to get back in, having, oh, I guess, been a three or four-month alumni, essentially, and was helped considerably on having a place to live and getting to be a preceptor in the Student Union. ... The first Student Union I was in was across from the Old Queens and Winants. On the other side of the street, there was only a small building, white building, and the preceptors lived way up in the top of that thing. You had to go up the back stairs. It was one of the old houses, obviously, and there's just a room. Certainly, there was a bathroom somewhere along the line there. We stayed in that about a year, and then, we moved across the street, the other way, to the bigger Student Union, and I forgot ... what fraternity that was originally, Sigma Chi, but they took that over as the Student Union, a larger building, and then, three of us, plus Dean Crosby, had rooms up in the back. Fred Huettig and Bob McCoy, Dean Crosby and myself, ... each of us had a room up in the back of that building, and that's where we stayed ... until we graduated.

SI: What would you do as a preceptor in the Student Union?

RP: Our job was, after the housemother, Mrs. (McKenzie?), I think her name was, [left for the day], she was hired through the day, to open it up and keep it until four or five, and then, us preceptors would rotate the night calls, or night preceptor shift. ... We had an office, which we would use for studying, but we had to be sure that nobody ruined the place, essentially, and hand out ping-pong paddles and balls and pool cues and things like that, and just make sure it was not misused, and we did that from five to twelve, or whenever the closing hours were, and that was rotated between the three of us, ... and, for that, we got the room. We had a room. So, it was easy, just pretty much like the preceptors in any of the [dorms], I guess, if they're still doing that, any of the [dormitories], Ford Hall or [the] Quadrangle [halls] or so on, and, of course, we had ... Dr. Howard Crosby up there to, I guess, preceptor the preceptors. [laughter]

SI: I am always regretful of the fact that we never had the opportunity to interview Dean Crosby. Tell me a little bit about him. What do you remember about him?

RP: He was an exceptionally fine guy, really very concerned about students. He would go out of his way to help, but he was also strict. He wanted them to toe the mark and to do the right thing. He was very good friends with [F. Austin] "Soup" Walter, and who the three of us also became friends with, too, I think. I did, for awhile. I tried to get into the Glee Club and couldn't. ... I don't think I could carry a tune, but Howard was just an exceptional guy. I don't know what else to say about him, very into music and arts and that part of the University, and forever a friend to me. He became a real good friend of the ... three of us. ... I had a good friend, Jim Rehill, who was a veteran, was knocked out of the skies in Germany, in a B-24, and ... landed in Sweden, I think, where he was interned until the British could get him out and sent home, and he died about two years ago, I think it was. So, I don't know what else to say about Dean Crosby, just [someone who] I thought was a fantastic guy, ... who worked for the students. I mean, he's a student advocate for sure.

SI: Would there always be students coming to him with problems, asking for his help?

RP: Yes. I think he was assistant dean, I think, at the time, and he would go out of his way to help any kid that needed help, but he ... was not going to let you get away with anything, either,

I don't think. So, [he] wanted you to be part of the community both ways, responsibly as well as, if you needed help. ...

SI: You resumed your interest in medicine and becoming a doctor. Tell me about your courses, selecting a major and your academic life.

RP: Well, coming back ... I didn't know any better, but I took the biology [courses], I took a premed course, and it was labeled that, I think, premed. So, you got into biology and zoology, eugenics, organic chemistry, scientific German, what else? physics. We had a physics lab and chemistry labs and, there's a lot of time spent in labs, and anatomy lab, that type of thing, so that was a lot of work. I've had, since had, partners in medicine and family practice offices that were Spanish majors, and that was after I was there, but, that's where it's gotten to. My son, Chris, did the same thing. He took most of the scientific courses ... at Baylor, and then, wound up, with some of his friends from Baylor, who took a lot easier courses, not the scientific route, getting into medical school. They were ethnically different, too. They were of Mexican descent, so that that was a little bit of a boost during the time he was trying to get in, initially, but I think the admissions thing has changed. Initially, when I was going in, anyway, they wanted you to be into the scientific arena, but, then, somehow, ... I guess they went through periods where the admissions would want you to be a more rounded, quote, "rounded," student or something. ...

SI: Did you have much opportunity to take electives or classes outside of your major?

RP: Yes, yes. I had a course under Mason Gross, in philosophy, as I recall, and I think you had some points for athletics in there. ... Music, you could have, in fact, I did, take a music course, but I didn't get into the Glee Club.

SI: Did you take the course with Soup Walter or Dr. Howard McKinney?

RP: Yes, I think it was McKinney. The course was from McKinney, yes. I auditioned with Soup, one time, which I didn't pass. [laughter] I would have loved to do that, yes, ... but I didn't have any musical training or talent at the time. I still don't.

SI: Were you interested in the concerts? Did you go to the concerts?

RP: Yes, yes. I had season concert tickets, which were held in the old gym, [the College Avenue Gym]. Yes, I did that.

SI: Were you more interested in the classical music or did they have the Big Bands there?

RP: I think I had an interest in both. I enjoyed the Glenn Miller kind of thing ... as well as the Boston Symphony and, yes, particularly that when those Big Bands came to the campus, man, they were great, fill that whole hall with music, no doubt. Yes, I thought that was fine, and I'd usually bring a date to those, when I could. ... Yes, I had good time with that. That was a good thing.

SI: Did you get started with the fraternity before you went into the service or was that only when you came back?

RP: When I came back, yes, when I came back.

SI: Did you get involved in that right away?

RP: It was pretty close, because, again, my brother was a Beta. So, I guess, they find that out, or you get asked to go to the various fraternities to pledge and they found that out. ... I was interested in the Betas from that standpoint, because he had a good experience, I think, and Betas were fun. We had a lot of fun at the Beta House. ... [Editor's Note: General Paret retrieves a photograph.] Here's a picture of one of the house parties. ... This is Jim Rehill, who was my friend, and that's me. That's my [date], the girlfriend at the time was from my [hometown], Woodcliff, North Bergen.

SI: Did you mostly date girls from back home or did you date girls at NJC?

RP: No, she was my one and only for a long time, and then, eventually, ... before I graduated and went back into the service, she wanted to get married and, at that time, I was still thinking, "Well, man, how do you make a living, ... marry and stay in school?" and so she was into the marrying theme, and so, she decided to date somebody else and threw me off. [laughter]

SI: It always strikes me, when I see photos from this period, just how much older most of the students look, the returning veterans.

RP: Yes.

SI: This was in the Beta House.

RP: Yes, that's in the Beta living room, on 50 Union Street. ...

SI: Did the Beta House maintain a lot of the fraternity traditions, particularly in terms of initiations?

RP: Yes, they did, but, when the veterans came in, I think the hazing thing went down, yes. ... I wasn't hazed when I came back, and, again, I had only four months in the military at that point in time, but, again, if you were a veteran, they didn't put you through any hazing, as far as I know, anybody. None of them were put through any hazing to join fraternities.

SI: Were fraternities popular at that point?

RP: Yes, I think so. ... There were a number of reasons, I believe, and one certainly [was] the camaraderie, which most veterans are very used to and hold that in high regard, but because you did have help ... in studying and on exams. ... Everybody, I guess every fraternity house, had a closet full of old exams that you could look at and study from, plus, the social portion of things. You could get into very nice parties. I mean, of course, we had a [housemother]. I don't know,

... in this one [photograph], whether the housemother was here or not, maybe so; yes, I think the housemother and somebody was over here. So, they were always in attendance. So, it didn't get rowdy and, certainly, the pot thing hadn't started back then, the marijuana, and so on. Alcohol was certainly present, but ... I don't remember anybody getting drunk; particularly if you had a date, you weren't going to act like a fool.

SI: For everyday things, like having dinner, did you have to wear a jacket and tie?

RP: At dinner, in the evening, yes. You had to dress. Again, there were guys who worked in that arena, so, [they] got their food, or I guess got something for working at the house. I wasn't involved, since I had the other jobs. So, it was pretty good, a home away from home, and we treated the furniture ... that way, and so on. It was very nice.

SI: Did you have to attend chapel while you were there?

RP: I think, initially, when I first went to Rutgers for the three or four months before I got into the service, we did, and I'm not too sure [about] afterwards. ... There may have been credit for chapel, of some type, if you went to chapel, but I don't remember that occurring all three or four years of that. The Rutgers chapel, [Kirkpatrick Chapel on the Old Queens Campus] ... I thought it was pretty nice. I enjoyed going when I did go. Initially, I think it wasn't particularly a religious theme. It was more announcements and college business kinds of things, but I don't remember it being extremely religious at all, very non-denominational, obviously.

SI: Do you remember if any speakers came to the chapel?

RP: Yes, I remember, but I don't remember their names or who they were, but I remember, occasionally, having somebody come. Now, that could have been somebody out of the campus that I didn't know. ... I don't remember any big names of any kind.

SI: Do any of your other professors stand out within your major, besides DeFalco?

RP: No. I think the organic chemistry [professor], and I can't think of his name, stands out a little bit, and the German, scientific German, professor, but I don't remember their names. DeFalco is the one, I guess, I was probably more exposed to ... in the Biology Department, but, of course, Mason Gross was obviously a big one and he was very prominent, but, other than that, I don't remember anybody.

SI: Having spent your career in medicine, looking back, what do you think of the training you received at Rutgers?

RP: I think it was very good. Rutgers had a good reputation for premed and, I think that helped, having been from Rutgers at the time and having been a premed student, a definite premed student, but I think, I don't know why I got into medical school; I was maybe a "B," "B+" student, and not in all subjects, so, by that time, I guess, they had gotten a little more lenient in admissions, at New York Medical College, anyway. ...

SI: I know that New Jersey students always had this disadvantage in that they had to go out of state for medical school.

RP: Right.

SI: Do you remember that being discussed or if that was ever a problem in your case?

RP: Yes. It certainly was a concern that we didn't have a medical school in New Jersey, but most medical schools, I think, at that time took out-of-state, or not from their own [parent] college or anything, like Hahnemann. My brother went to Hahnemann. ... There wasn't a college associated with Hahnemann. University of Pennsylvania, ... certainly, was in [large numbers], probably had more students in attendance there at Hahnemann, but, in New York, [with] NYU and New York Medical School, where I went, there were a number of medical schools ... within the city. So, they had to pick from other colleges. So, I don't know how big a deal that would have been. I was just glad to get in, get in one of them. In fact, I get my gold diploma this year. I have an invitation, somewhere around here, to be at the ceremonies in May of this year to get a gold diploma. ...

SI: Is that for fifty years?

RP: Fifty years, yes, fifty years as a graduate.

SI: You talked before about the two distinct groups, kids just coming out of high school and the veterans who were older. Do you remember other ways in which that difference was defined? Did the two groups ever clash over things?

RP: Oh, I don't remember any clashing that went on. I think the veterans were wise enough to avoid that type of thing ... and had probably had enough conflict. They didn't want to come and have any more. ... I think a lot of them got involved in the intramurals and things like that, too, but many of them were married and lived up in trailer camps and trailer parks, and so on, with their families. So, there was a little bit of a division there, but ... most of them, I'm sure, came back pretty serious about getting someplace, and they probably raised the standard, ... they knew what studying meant. I'm sure some of them had troubles, too. It was a good time to be there, and Rutgers, I believe, went all out to help them to do this, get them in, expanded their facilities and [they] took over Camp Kilmer in some places and that's probably what developed that upper campus. [Editor's Note: Portions of Camp Kilmer and other properties acquired by Rutgers University in Piscataway, across the Raritan River from the original New Brunswick Campus, eventually became the Busch and Livingston Campuses.]

SI: That was where the trailers were, initially.

RP: Yes, and some of them were up there, as I recall.

SI: Did you have any sense that Rutgers was overcrowded or was kind of straining under this influx of students?

RP: I never felt that. I mean, having a crowd on the campus seemed to be kind of normal for me. I mean, coming out of the military, where there was a huge number of guys on a small Army installation, or airbase, or something like that, that was pretty much like a campus, in a way. So, coming back to it wasn't a bad thing and, if there was any straining, that was pretty well kept with[in] the administration, as far as I was concerned. ... The President is Dr. [Richard L.] McCormick, right?

SI: Today, yes.

RP: There was a McCormick Family that was in the maintenance area, had to do with the campus maintenance, that my brother was familiar with for quite awhile.

SI: His father was a long-time distinguished professor at Rutgers, but his mother, I think, held several positions at Rutgers. One of them may have been in selecting offices, space management. Maybe that is the answer.

RP: Yes, facilities management, yes. I remember the individual, the male, big, maintenance kind of guy.

SI: That is probably not his family then.

RP: ... I don't think it was a professor, but he was a nice guy.

SI: Do you remember any other members of the administration, like Dean Metzger, having any interaction with them?

RP: Dean Metzger, I think I interacted with; of course, Dean Silvers, Dean Crosby, somebody between Metzger and Crosby, ... in fact, somebody mentioned him, one of the [other interviewees], Larry ...

SI: A dean named Larry?

RP: Yes, I think that's what it was. I'd have to go back. ...

SI: I can look that up.

RP: Yes, that's him; I can't think of his last name. ... I guess, being a preceptor and knowing Howard Crosby, ... we would know and get involved with some of the others, on occasion. Jim Rehill and I sold rings in our senior year. ... I don't know how we got that, through the Student Council or student body; we were asked to be the ring salesmen. So, we would have something to do with the administration at that time. Was it Ballard?

SI: The ring company?

RP: Balford?

SI: Balfour.

RP: Balfour Rings, or something, yes, at the time. So, Coach [James] Reilly, in the swimming team, was a big mentor of mine, of course, and my brother's. I wasn't as good as my brother was, by any means, but I did manage to get that little "R," ... and he was great. Curtin?

SI: Dean Ed Curtin?

RP: Ed Curtin, okay.

SI: He was the dean.

RP: Yes, that was one of the deans, yes, and there's still another one, Larry somebody, I think; can't think of that one, straining my brain. [laughter]

SI: What event did you swim when you were on the swimming team?

RP: I attempted the fifty-yard breast and freestyle, and I did very poorly in back, backstroke. I wasn't very good at making turns. ... There was [Robert] Nugent, a guy by the name of Nugent, and Bob McCoy, who was in the Student Union, preceptor, one of those preceptors with me, and Fred Huettig and Howard, ... Bob McCoy and Nugent were on the swimming team. Nugent was pretty good, as I recall, yes, one of the students.

SI: Do any of the meets stand out in your mind, or any rivalries?

RP: No. They were all a rival, [laughter] but the meets were fun. ... In spite of not being a winner, ... I enjoyed doing it, and tried to keep from drowning, [laughter] yes, but it was good, a good thing. ... I think we swam every day, as far as practice was concerned, so, it was great exercise.

SI: You must have been very busy, between what was a pretty heavy course load, swimming, working in the cafeteria and all the other preceptor activities.

RP: Yes, I think I was, but the campus was just all up and down College Avenue. ... We didn't have to go over to the other side, to the stadium, to some of the courses or classes. I did go to the Ag School [the College of Agriculture, now the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences at Rutgers] for entomology, I think, was one. I don't know if I'd been over there for anything else, but entomology kind of stands out. Yes, I was pretty busy, and I stayed busy, but some of it was, particularly the work ... as preceptor was nothing. I mean, it was sitting at a desk and handing out paddles or checking to make sure nobody was, whatever, smoking or things like that in the Student Union. The waiting on tables was a short period of time, generally at lunch is when I did it, I think, and then, an hour or so in one of the administrative offices, to get change, get some money. So, it wasn't bad. I can't complain. I wouldn't have complained. ... Being busy was kind of what you're supposed to do, I guess.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about the Air Force ROTC training? What do you remember about that? What stands out as memorable or good or bad?

RP: I don't [recall]. I can't think of anything, at the moment, that would stand out ... with that. I remember having to do some close-order drill, or something like that, ... and have a uniform on, which wasn't too bad. I mean, that was, again, a little bit of exercise, a little bit of thinking about what the commands were, nothing big. As far as the courses, I don't remember anything. I don't think we did much in the way of tactics and strategies or anything like that, must have been a lot of philosophy kind of thing, military. Yes, that doesn't stand out very much.

SI: Was there any change when the Air Force became a separate service? Did that affect the ROTC training at all?

RP: I don't know, because, let's see, that was in '47. I don't remember it changing anything. It changed the uniforms somewhat, the emblems and badges and that type of thing. Somewhere along the line, there was a two-week training [course], summertime training, too, I think, and I think I went to Stewart Air Force Base in New York for that, but, again, it ... doesn't stand out amongst all the other camps I've been in, and training sites. So, again, it was another way of probably making some money and staying in school.

SI: Was there any flight training in the ROTC?

RP: No. ... I don't think they could afford that.

SI: In very rough terms, would you say that most of your fellow cadets were from the veteran group or from the non-veteran group, or was it a mix?

RP: No, I think it was mostly the non-veterans, yes. I don't remember any other veterans in there. Most of those guys came back on the GI Bill. ... I don't know whether I used the GI Bill right after I got back in at college or whether I saved that. I did get through the first couple of years of medical school using the GI Bill, too. So, yes, it helped a great deal for me and, by that time, I had gotten married. ... Then, I was in the Air [National] Guard, in New Jersey, and flew with the Air Guard in New Jersey for awhile, until ... the travel from my home in North Bergen, ... traveling into New York City for medical school and trying to get to Trenton to fly got to be too much and too much time on the road, essentially, which took away from studying the medicine books. So, I finally got out of that. ... By that time, I think ... there was a junior-senior medical student program for the Air Force and you could join that ... and that happened. I applied for that, so that I could stay in medical school, and, actually, was decreased in rank when I did that. ... From the Korean War and being in the Guard there, [in] New Jersey, I came out, I think I was a captain by that time, in the operations side of the house, and then, when I joined the Medical Corps, in the Air Force, I was put back to second lieutenant, as a junior in medical school, and then, how did that work? Then, I think, when you became a senior, you became a first lieutenant in the Medical Corps and, on graduation, you became a captain again. So, I've been a second lieutenant twice and a first lieutenant twice and a captain twice, and, of course, a cadet once; so, then, on up from there.

SI: As you were going through the ROTC program in this postwar period, was anybody thinking that there would be another war?

RP: I don't remember anybody thinking about it or worrying about it, and I think, when the Korean War started, it was, "Oh, we're just going to play around over there for that and it's not going to be a big thing," and so forth. Then, it got pretty serious. ...

SI: Was Communism in general, and the Soviet Union in particular, discussed as a threat?

RP: I think we talked a lot about that, on occasion, particularly when you heard stories about [General George S.] Patton saying, "God, we ought to go get the Russians, get the Commies," and then, a discussion about that ... and people not particularly wanting to do that, because [of] all the casualties. So, it was certainly two trains of thought, "Don't go after them," and, "Let's go." I think it would have been different if something had happened very shortly after Germany surrendered, if there was some incident that would have forced us into it, might have been different then, clean up both fronts, but we were pretty tired of it by then, yes. ... Then, when the Korean thing started, I had some interest, for sure, in going into it and getting into it. ...

SI: You graduated from Rutgers in January of 1949.

RP: No, it was June, June of '49, yes.

SI: What did you do in that period? It was a full year before you were recalled for Korea, right?

RP: I don't remember now. ... I was in the ... Pilot Training Class of '51 George, which graduated in October of '51. So, I went in, probably, August, September of '50, I would imagine, yes. ... I don't know what I did between, right offhand, have to go back and try to figure that out.

SI: Did you get a job?

RP: Yes, I did, I did. I worked for a real estate agency up in Bergen County, New Jersey, for awhile, as a salesman, supposedly, and I was, again, very poor at that. That wasn't my forte. I was supposed to go down streets and knock on doors and ask people if you want to sell your house, or something like that, or make phone calls, get on the phone and try to drum up [business]. ... The guy I worked for, first name was Harry and he was a good friend of Bruce Bauer, who became a very good friend of Fred Huettig, Jim Rehill and myself and Howard Crosby. We met him at the shore, at Lavallette, and the CT Tavern guy, George; I can't think of his last name. Anyway, we'd meet Bruce Bauer down there. He had his family there and he became a very good friend of ours, was a very wealthy guy and sold monuments, cemetery monuments and mausoleums, and so on, and Harry had been his partner at one time in real estate. So, I did that ... until I was called back in, into the [Air Force] as a second lieutenant. So, I was a poor salesman. [laughter] ... I didn't like knocking on doors and making phone calls and asking people, "Do you want to sell your house?" or, "Do you want to buy a house?" or whatever. ... I remember not being interested in going to work when I had that job.

SI: I remember, from everything I have learned, that both the job and the housing market were very tight in that period.

RP: Yes, I guess so. Yes, I remember sitting at a desk in a little store-like office, trying to think of how to go through the phonebook and ask for [contacts], to get leads and things like that, the boring-est thing I've ever done. So, gee, I don't know how people do that.

SI: Were you applying to medical schools at that time?

RP: Yes, I had applied, and had applied and not been accepted at that point in time. So, the Air Force was a pretty good out. ... I think I would have had to go back to school and get a masters, or something like that, a doctorate in something, to be able to break into the admissions, routine for medical school. Yes, that was a hard time in life for me. ... I wasn't married at the time. ...

SI: Were you in the Reserve unit then? Did you have any kind of Reserve commitment?

RP: No. I think ... you were in the Reserves, but Inactive Reserves, and that didn't account for much, but, by that time, I'd made the decision to go back, if I could. ... I think, again, I might have been, having had the commission, ... liable for recall, and I felt that way anyway, that they might do that, as far as needing somebody, and then, I'd have been put in something I might not enjoy. ...

SI: You chose to reenlist.

RP: Yes, chose to go back.

SI: Reenlist is probably the wrong word.

RP: Go back into pilot training, yes. I applied for pilot training, yes.

SI: That was right after the war began.

RP: Yes, that would have been in '49, '50.

SI: Even before the Korean War started, you had applied for that.

RP: Yes. Well, the war started when, '50, didn't it?

SI: Yes, June of 1950.

RP: Yes. ... I think I'd applied before that. Once I didn't get into medical school, I think, I decided I'd do that, since it was one of those things I wanted to do in the beginning, yes.

SI: When you rejoined the Air Force on active duty, your first stop was Nellis [Air Force Base in Nevada].

RP: No, first stop was James Connally, at Waco, yes, James Connally Air Force Base at Waco. ... That was pilot training, primary pilot training.

SI: What do you remember about that?

RP: That was interesting. We started out in the T-6 [Texan], which is a single-engine, low-wing trainer, 850-horsepower engine, and that was a little unusual, kind of a high-powered trainer. ... I still have a lot of good friends who were in that class, that are still going to reunions, but James Connally was in Waco, Texas. So, Waco, Texas, was an interesting little city, because Baylor University was there, a very Baptist town, and, at the time, I think, prohibited [alcohol], a prohibition kind of town, but very active. I mean, we had a good time there. We had a class of officers, and then, parts of our class were cadets. So, we had another division there, and we soloed at some small, little airports that were situated around James Connally and soloed off of some of those, had night training flights that took us over the dark part of Texas. So, navigation was then a lot of fun, at that point in time. Yes, it was good training, a good thing.

SI: When you entered this training track, was it generalized, and then, later on, they decided who was going to be a fighter pilot and who was going to be another type of pilot?

RP: Right, right. Yes, it was another decision making area. ... From James Connally, there were actually, from what I understood later, ... four primary training bases [attended by those] in the Class of '51 George, and then, when you graduated from that primary training, then, you went on to advanced training, and that advanced training would be fighters or jets or prop fighters and bombers. So, when you were selected to jets, we went to Williams Air Force Base [in Arizona], and that's where I went, and there were other guys who went to Craig [Air Force Base in Alabama], in P-51s, and then, there were two others ... that were multi-engine trainers. So, I went to "Willy" and stayed there until [I] graduated in October of '51, and then, we went on to fighter training, or gunnery training. ... From there, I went to Nellis Air Force Base, which [was] pretty nice. From the standpoint of it being a real primary training basis for each unit of training. ... Then, from there, we were to be shipped right to Korea, came home for Christmas, and then, went right to Korea. So, I landed in Korea somewhere in January of '52, and the deal there was, you did a hundred missions or a year, whichever came first. My hundred missions came in a year, so, I was there for about ...

SI: You were there for all of 1952.

RP: All of '52, yes. ... We were sent to Taegu. K-2 is the airbase, and, when we, the couple of us that ... had been together ... both at Connally and "Willy," and then at Nellis, landed at K-2 and looked over the base, ... we were trained in F-80s [Shooting Stars], in gunnery, and we landed there and there wasn't an F-80 on the field. So, we then transitioned into F-84s [Thunderjets], and it took us, a couple of us, about three months before we could fly in combat, because they were bringing in replacement pilots that had flown the F-84 and were ready to go. So, we had to train in the F-84 for a little bit, again, on gunnery ranges, and we wound up doing all the extra work, gunnery range officer. We built "the Sheep Shed," which was, we were "the Black Sheep," F-84, the Eighth Squadron. We built the Sheep Shed. We pulled duty on the end of the runway, ... and so forth, and all kinds of extra duty until we could fly, and then, when we

got to check out the F-84 and learn how to shoot the guns and drop the bombs from that, then, they sent us on missions. ...

SI: Earlier in the war, both with the F-84 in general and in your unit in particular, there was a mix of the air-to-air combat role and air-to-ground combat role, and then, they decided that the F-86 would take over the air-to-air combat role.

RP: F-86, yes.

SI: Were they still in the process of making that decision when you were there or was it all air-to-ground when you were there?

RP: Yes. ... The F-84s were mostly the air-to-ground, at that point in time. The F-84, we could outmaneuver the MiG, because we could turn a shorter, a tighter radius, and so on, but we couldn't keep up with them. ... We weren't as fast as the MiG was. ... Our problem was, we were generally attacked by the MiG, when we were on a ... bombing run, or something like that, interdiction mission or close-air support for the frontline troops. We did those. We did napalm runs. I eventually got put on, for a short period of time, ... a tunnel-busting mission, where we tried to skip bombs into tunnels, and, of course, railroad interdiction. The Koreans, ... North Koreans, had three ways to get down to the frontlines, railroads on either coast and one in the middle, and roads, I guess, that way, too. That was their main supply routes. So, we interdicted those a lot, bridges, and so on. We didn't go out to fight the MiG. That was the F-86 [Sabre] job. ... We had a pilot with us, in the F-84s, Dolph Overton, who became the fastest ace of the war, when he left us and went to fly with the F-86s, very nice guy, real Southern gentleman.

SI: During the three months of training, transitioning into the F-84, were they teaching you that? Were they saying, "The MiGs are going to attack you; this is what you should do?" What were they telling you about that?

RP: No, generally, it was, again, a gunnery range kind of thing, how to drop the bombs, how to hit the target with the bombs, and strafing, hit the target with the guns, so that you didn't hit your own bullets. You have to hit the target at a certain angle, so that you'd not have it too slight and have the ricochet come up and get you. You fly into ... the ricochets. That was primarily it. The in-flight training against the MiGs were primarily your element lead or your flight lead that would give you a little bit of a briefing, "If we're attacked, here's what we're going to do, and follow me." Generally, you wind up being a wingman. ... Your job, as wingman, was pretty much to follow your lead and to guard his "six," his backend, to ward off any attacks from there, somebody diving at him. ... I don't think, ... with the F-86 running high cover for us, we didn't have a lot of difficulty with the MiG, but we did have some. A good friend of mine, in the same flight I was in, was hit on a bomb run, coming out of a bomb run, and got back in spite of the fact that he was hit, got the Purple ...

SI: Purple Heart?

RP: Purple Heart, yes, got the Purple Heart because of a nick in his chin from shrapnel that ... went through his mask. The MiG's shell hit his plane right at the right wing root, next to the

cockpit. He eventually became a member of the House of Representatives from Virginia, his name is Stan Parris, still alive. All of us have lived. Many of my friends have lived pretty good lives, good living.

SI: We have been jumping around a little bit and I want to go back and take things in order.

RP: Sure.

SI: Going back to your training, you started out in the Texan, then, went through a succession of more powerful trainers, and then, you went into jets.

RP: Yes. We went through the T-6, your primary trainer, and then, we went to the T-28 [Trojan]. ... The T-6 was a main-gear-and-tail-wheel [landing gear system]. The T-28 was tricycle gear, nose-gear-and-main [landing gear system], and a little [less powerful], not as powerful an airplane, I don't believe, but steady, a steady trainer, but it was the prelim to the F-80, T-33/F-80, which was tricycle gear. So, it was kind of a transition area and we did that at "Willy" for a little bit, I believe, and then, got into the F-80, which was a jet, the first jet for the Air Force. Which was a nice airplane, particularly without tip tanks. [If] you could take the tip tanks off, it was very maneuverable, but only had about, oh, forty-five minutes of flying time, out of the main tank.

SI: You need the tip tanks to extend the range.

RP: You needed the tip tanks, yes, to get any range, and it was used in Korea, initially, as our main aircraft, but, then, they finally got the F-84 over there, which was a better gun platform and bombing platform, and then, the F-86, which was a better air-to-air fighter. ... [I] never got to the F-86, and the other airplane that was used over there was the P-51, which the guys who have flown that loved it, so, kind of an exciting airplane, I never did that, either.

SI: What did you think of each plane that you flew?

RP: I think ... once you got to flying them, you enjoyed them; you thought they were pretty good. The F-84, as I said, was a very good gun platform, as far as strafing, bombing, and very stable from that standpoint. It would have been nicer to be faster. We could have kept up with airplanes like the MiG, and so on. Now, the airplanes are super, wow, great.

SI: Were there any accidents in training?

RP: Oh, yes, yes. We lost one classmate, who was a cadet, in primary training, couldn't get out of a spin. ... At "Willy," I don't remember anybody. I could look that up. I've got the books up here. In gunnery, at Nellis, we didn't lose anybody. ... It's pretty well-controlled, and gunnery school's always a pretty safety conscious kind of thing you go through, but you still have to be aggressive enough to do the job. So, that was air-to-air, shooting at sleeves off a tow plane, which is always exciting, to have somebody shooting at your rear-end there.

SI: Did you have to take turns flying the tow plane?

RP: Not at Nellis, but, when I came back from Korea, we opened up a gunnery school at Laughlin [Air Force Base in Texas] and at that time, we had to not only train the students, but we had to ... pull the sleeve, too. So, you have to depend on the other pilots.

SI: Did most of the people in the class, aside from people who were killed in accidents, stay through the whole program, or was there a high washout rate?

RP: I think the highest washout rate would be in the primary course, yes, and once you get through the primary course, you're pretty well squared away, and I don't know that we washed out anybody ... at "Willy," in fighter jets, in F-80s. I don't think ... anybody'd make a big thing of it, if it happened. So, we were put into groups of four, three to five, I guess it was, students, with one instructor, and he carried you through primary, unless he was [removed], due to some transfer or something. ... In primary, at Connally, one of my instructors was the first pilot to shoot down a jet in World War II, a German jet, with a P-51, using a P-51. Yes, so, that was pretty neat, to have somebody with that kind of experience.

SI: Did they bring real world examples from what was happening in Korea into your training?

RP: As far as gunnery, there was very little, as far as air-to-air stuff. We were taught how to approach a target and how to dive on one and how to recover and about the need to get back behind the sleeve, and things like that. ... We did have occasional simulated dogfights within the flight. So, we did have some of that, but I don't remember any of the instructors saying, "This is what you have to know from Korea," ... and, of course, World War II was a totally different [air war], wasn't jet fighting, ... except for, I guess, the few airplanes the Germans were able to get up, as far as jets were concerned. The instructor that I said got the first German jet, he dove at him out of the clouds and was able to get up enough speed in a '51 to catch him. ... He explained what he did and we were all bug-eyed about that, [laughter] ... but he was pretty good.

SI: You always expected that you would be going to Korea, or did you think you might be assigned to Europe or some other theater?

RP: I think all of us who were put into fighters, all knew we were going to go to Korea eventually, fairly quickly, and I don't know what the bomber guys [thought]. ... A couple of them went into B-29s, I think, but, back at the reunions, I've really not heard a lot of the bomber guys talk about their experience in Korea. I think they got sent to other commands; good question.

SI: What was the trip to Korea like?

RP: We left San Francisco, flew into Hawaii, and I don't think we stayed overnight. We just landed at the airport and refueled, and then, went on, hit Guam, spent a little time at Guam, looking around and, again, getting refueled.

SI: Did you go over in a transport plane?

RP: Yes, yes, four-engine, I think it was a C-54, as I recall, long flight, prop-driven, landed in Tokyo, took a train down to, I think it was Tachikawa [Air Force Base], and then, they flew us in, by transport, into K-2, so, yes, very long trip. Coming back was shorter. We did the Great Circle trip out of Japan, up through the Aleutian Islands and into Seattle. That is the way I got home, just before Christmas. I made Christmas, but I made it; a little diversion here. ... I got into Seattle something like the 23rd, and so, every plane was loaded with servicemen coming to the East Coast. So, somebody advised me, "Go over to the;" I forgot what the name of the office was, security office or something. "They ... usually have packages, secure packages, secret stuff that ... has to be taken to Washington. So, see if they have one, because that gives you priority to get on the airplanes." So, I went over and said, "Hey, I'm going to New Jersey. You got anything going [east]?" "Yes, we got a package." So, they bolted it to my wrist and [said], "So, you contact Major So-and-So when you get to Washington and hand it over to him." So, man, that's great. So, I got on the airplane and got to Washington, DC, in the middle of the morning, some two or three hours [before dawn?], and had an irate major come up, say, "What are you doing ... at this time of night?" and so forth. "Hey, Major, don't kill the messenger, just take this damned thing from me." So, he did and shut up, and I got on a train and got up to New Jersey and made it for Christmas. So, that was good; things you could pull in the military. [laughter]

SI: I have never heard of that before.

RP: Yes, that was fun.

SI: One more question about training; looking back, is there anything that you think they did particularly well, that really helped you when you were in combat, and then, something that you wish they had trained you more in, once you were actually in combat?

RP: I think what they're doing now, in the Top Gun kinds of training, where you really get involved in a dogfight, with numerous forces. They hold these at Nellis yearly, I think. That would have been really good for us to do. I think we did, at the time, what was the current knowledge. That changed very shortly after we left Nellis. There's a ... book by John Boyd, B-O-Y-D. He was a pilot, behind us in pilot training, ... but he put out a challenge, throughout the Air Force, that he would whip anybody within so many seconds. [Editor's Note: US Air Force Colonel John R. Boyd earned the nickname "Forty Second Boyd" for this challenge. He never published a book, but disseminated his theories through other works, such as the landmark article "Destruction and Creation" and the briefing document "Patterns of Conflict."] ... He'd start out over one of the green patches [in Nevada] and, actually, it was something like the Cottontail, [which] was a house of prostitution, and it had a green patch around it. It was easily identified from the air. He would start out for there, and let ... his aggressor get on his tail, and, within so many seconds, he would be on theirs. The combat maneuvers that he would use, he was teaching at that time, and he became a big advocate of fighter airplanes and fought a lot of the higher brass who were, generally, generals that had been Bomber Command pilots. So, he was fighting a little bit of an uphill battle, but I think he won it, and he particularly won over the Marines, if you read the book, but I think if we had had that kind of training, we would have been a lot more prepared than we were for air-to-air combat. [Editor's Note: General Paret is referring to one of several biographies written on Colonel Boyd, as well as personal communication with a great friend, fellow pilot, classmate, and in Korea an Eighth Squadron pilot, who knew John Boyd]

during those times. My friend retired as a Lieutenant General.] I think we were very well-prepared as far as what we did with the '84, bombing and strafing and close-air support, and so forth. Some of the things we did there was no training for at the time, like the tunnel busting team I was on. We had no training on how to skip-bomb a five-hundred-pound delay-fuse bomb into a tunnel. We were learning at that point in time how to try to do that, and the reason for doing that was ... we had two teams; we had a tunnel-busting team, we had a night flight team. The Koreans would transport everything down at night. ... At night, apparently, when you went up there, you'd see this big, long line of headlights coming down these three main routes, and so, we had a team, ... it was a single airplane, that would go up and find the road, see the lights, cut back to idle, glide down to a certain level, and then, drop a bomb on the front end of the convoy and try to get one on the rear end of the convoy, and then, get out of there. So, they'd do that, and then, they found out that these convoys, ... during the day, would be holed up in railroad tunnels. They'd come off the road and get into a railroad tunnel, and so, "we" would go up as tunnel busters and try to skip-bomb into a tunnel, and you'd try that; you've got to have some experience on how to do that before ... you're very successful. So, even though I was on the team, I don't know if I ever got a bomb in a tunnel. ... There are stories that are kind of funny, too, about that. One person tells a story of dropping the bomb, and then, pulling up, and they're trying to look to where the bomb was and find the bomb flying his wing, before it got into the tunnel or hit the mountain or something. So, he had to get out of there pretty quick. It had an eleven-second delay fuse on it. Once you pulled it and dropped it, this propeller would wind up so many times, and then, explode, ... but, if you did get one in, somebody'd get one in, you could get up here and see the both ends of the tunnel blow. So, you figure you got something. The other part was napalming, [which] was always an interesting thing. Napalm a trench line of troops that would, should get them for sure, but, again, you have to be able to put it in there. So, we had good training for what we did, I think, no problem.

SI: After you got to K-2, you had this three-month period of acclimating to the F-84, and then, you got a slot. What do you remember about your first mission?

RP: Not much. [laughter] After a hundred of them, you don't remember a lot of those things. I kept a book that should have been expanded on. I think this is the book; yes, little, very short notes on where the mission/target was, and something that might have happened during the mission. ...

SI: The first mission was on April 21, 1952. You were attacking Kwaksan, K-W-A-K-S-A-N.

RP: That's the map coordinate, yes.

SI: To quote from here, it says, "Stomach knew I was on a combat mission, plenty of butterflies." What was that like, all of a sudden being in combat?

RP: Yes. Well, you certainly were nervous about it, and I think for a couple of reasons. You wanted to do well, you wanted to be able to hit the target and stay with your guys and not have any problems. We were, primarily, exposed to flak, that was our biggest enemy, and the MiGs, as I said before, weren't a big problem for us ... since the '86s were there, but the railroad tracks were just covered with anti-aircraft guns. So, you'd start diving into a target and you'd see all the

black puffs of flak, and you know those weren't going to hurt you, because they were already expended, but where was the next one ... coming from? and you had to do that, and then, concentrate on getting your sights on the target and trying to hit the target, ... and then, pull off before you got too low. That was always a problem, if you'd get "target fixation" and have somebody run into a target. That was part of the training, was ... certainly not to do that. ...

SI: Did you always fly in four-plane elements?

RP: Yes, we would generally go up as a squadron. The majority of the time it would be whatever the squadron itself could muster, and then, there were two other squadrons. We were the Eighth Squadron, there was the Seventh and Ninth, in the 49th Fighter-Bomber Wing. So, there may be a full-court press kind of thing, where you sent up the whole group to eliminate a section of track ... for that mission for the day, and, some days, we did three missions, depending on what was going on up there. ... Targets were directed, pretty much, I guess, out of Fifth Air Force in Tokyo, and then, filtered down to us, but, then, occasionally, we'd have a single flight of four; go out for a specific mission of some kind, particularly close-air support, when you'd contact a "mosquito," a forward-air controller, and he would direct you into a target with smoke rockets and you'd try to hit a gun emplacement, or a particularly nasty nest of guys, ... and we did that.

SI: Would you only be able to communicate with the ground through smoke or would you have radio contact?

RP: They'd have radio contact with us, and they'd tell us, "Okay, the smoke rocket hit and the target's so many meters from there," in whatever direction, and then, he'd say, "Okay, good job," or, "You missed," or something like that. [If] you've got four airplanes, you have four chances of getting it.

SI: How long were your missions, typically?

RP: The longest ones were probably somewhere around two hours, but most of them, I think, were in the hourly range, yes, "Time: Takeoff was 13:15 [1:15 PM]. Landing was 2:05." So, that was fairly close to Taegu, and, if we went up toward the Yalu River, it was longer. ... Okay, that's what it was; takeoff was at one, and then, time in the air was two hours and five minutes. So, I think that was pretty much the average, and I put down "weather time" as part of that, how much weather we encountered, two hours and ten minutes on one, and, "An hour and thirty minutes of weather," which was always exciting.

SI: What does that mean?

RP: That means flying formation through clouds, where you're on instruments, or your leader's on instruments and you're just hanging onto his wing, being able to look at the lights on his airplane or whatever, follow his wing tip. Some of it got pretty heavy over there.

SI: Would weather prevent you from doing missions? How much of an obstacle was weather?

RP: If it was on a target, over the target, where we couldn't get enough altitude to do a dive-bomb, yes, that would stop it. Now, the tunnel busting missions, it didn't stop us. ... We were in touch with the radar sites on (Cho sen?) [Cho-do?] Island, something like that, where they'd direct us down in, pretty much right over the railroad tracks, and that was always scary, because, when you came out of the clouds, there'd be mountains on both sides of you, and so you had to depend on some pretty sharp radar guys. ... I've been on a couple of those that got pretty hairy from that standpoint, but, if you just had weather en route, then, we would generally go. I eventually became a flight lead and [I] remember a weather trip where the only thing I could see of the lead in front of me was his tailpipe and the fire in the tailpipe, and feel the bubble of his jet wash on my canopy. So, I had to hang in there, and you just ... have to concentrate on one thing and your wingmen have to concentrate on you. I had to just stay right there and hope that ... the wingmen were able to stay there. We did lose one pilot, that I know of, in weather that, apparently, [he] became disoriented and went off. We don't know what ever happened to him, a pilot by the name of McHaffey.

SI: How reliable was the F-84 mechanically? Would it ever, say, lose an engine? Did you ever have to go back or have any trouble?

RP: ... Yes, I think it was very reliable, a very reliable airplane, and, of course, we had good mechanics. My mechanic was a young fellow named Dillon and I wish I had kept up with him. I mean, that's where the reliability comes in, is with the mechanics, the ground crew. There were always stories about not being able to get the airplane off the ground in hot weather, and we had to use JATO [jet-assisted takeoff] takeoff, which were extra boosters, to get off the runway with a heavy load, a couple five-hundred-pounders or more, more hundred-pounders or so, rockets or anything like that. So, if you loaded the airplane down, particularly in the heat of the summer, it was a little difficult to get off, plus, we were encumbered, for quite awhile, with a runway that was made of PSP, permanent steel planking. It was a corrugated steel runway that they came in and put down within a short period of time, in sections, so that you could get an airplane on and off of it. We flew off of that for quite awhile.

SI: Why was it difficult to deal with that?

RP: Just it's not smooth like a concrete runway, and, after some use, on some of the sections, the ends would curl up, ... so, every once in awhile, somebody'd have a tire problem, things like that. It just wasn't as good traction as [concrete] and not as smooth for takeoff, and so forth. At Taegu, we had a mountain to the south of us, I think it was, had a humpback in it, a saddleback, and, lots of times, you'd aim for the saddleback, to try to have enough altitude to get through that, get over that mountain. ... They gave us airplanes. Occasionally, or fairly frequently, you'd get your own airplane. So, the first one I got was Number 411, and that was a good airplane, except, ... to me, it didn't seem to have a lot of power to get over that mountain. So, every once in awhile, I'd eyeball that thing and go around it, to catch up. That may have been just my paranoia, but, then, I got, my last airplane was [Number] 313 and I chose that for the superstition. "I'm not going to be superstitious. I'll take that one." [laughter] It was good. It was an F-84G, had refueling capability, which we never used over there.

SI: The F-84s you were flying were "D"s and "G"s.

RP: Yes. I think "C," "E" and "G," I think is what we had. The "F" was a swept wing, yes.

SI: Was there any noticeable difference between the different models that made them better in certain ways?

RP: Yes, I think they changed the power plant on them, as they got [more powerful engines] in, and then, the refueling capability came in, but, I'm really not that sure right now just what the changes were, but they did do some improvements, yes.

SI: As a pilot over there, do you remember saying to yourself, "I definitely want to fly a 'G,'" as opposed to another plane?

RP: As I say, I think, yes, we were all interested in "G," because ... [they were] newer planes, and lots of those airplanes we had were old. We had old airplanes, we had old ammunition, and particularly the five-inch HVAR rocket, which was a World War II rocket, I think, and, every once in awhile, one of those would go crazy. [Editor's Note: The high velocity aircraft rocket (HVAR) was developed by the US Navy during World War II for air-to-ground bombing.] You'd fire it and it would go off to the left, do crazy things or spin. ... Getting to hit the target with those was kind of interesting, but I think just the rocket portion of it was probably getting too old. ...

SI: Were all of your missions day missions or did you also fly night missions?

RP: I didn't fly any of the night missions. We flew, lots of times we came back at, in the evening, when it was getting dark. In fact, ... the last mission, my hundredth mission I flew, there were five of us who were going to fly a hundredth mission together and they called it "the 49th Five Hundredth" mission of the day, and we didn't get off until late evening and came back near dusk, at night. We're over the target in the dusky part of the evening, and ... only four of us completed the mission, because one pilot had to abort, because of a door coming open or something. So, he did it the next day, but four of us completed four hundred missions together, kind of fun, yes, and that was at dusk. Now, the guys who were picked just to do the night missions, there were just so many of them that did that, and, again, I don't know how they divided that up, who did what. That should have been fun, though. ... The radar people would warn them if anybody was coming up to get them, but I don't think the MiGs had much nighttime capability, either. ...

SI: One thing I have heard from the men who flew at night was about the decoy and diversion tactics that the North Koreans would use, like putting searchlights on top of a mountain, to try to get pilots to fly into the mountains.

RP: Yes.

SI: Flying in the day, was there anything that the North Koreans or the Chinese would do in an attempt to cause you to crash?

RP: There was a friend of mine who came back with a cable that ... had cut the airplane just at the cockpit level and got back just so far before it broke. So, he came back with cable on both sides of him. So, they would string cable across mountains. So, if you got down too low or got down within that area, you're liable to hit a cable. So, that was one of the things they did for sure. I don't know of any other [tactics]. They loaded the flak around bridges, some obvious targets in along the railroad tracks, where we're interdicting. I mean, that was obvious, [the] targets that we were attacking, and then, we did ... strike at what we thought were military academies or complexes, or things like that, and there were a couple of airfields that had some old relics of airplanes on them then. ... If we couldn't find a target of opportunity, we'd go up and shoot at that just for fun, ... nothing else. There were enough targets, dams and powerhouses and things like that, that we were after, railroads, of course, and roads and ... any kind of troop concentration, then, we'd go after. ...

SI: After you had attacked your primary target, were you free to look for targets of opportunity?

RP: Yes. In fact, they encouraged that, up to a certain point, but, generally, by the time we got up there and dropped, and got down to low altitudes and dropped bombs, and did that type of thing, then, your fuel began to get a little critical. So, you'd have to get back. I've landed, a couple of times, where I landed and got off the runway and onto the taxiway and ran out of fuel.

SI: Was there ever a situation where you thought you would have to bail out?

RP: I had one occasion where we got pretty low on fuel. I thought we might, but, we were able to stretch it a little and glide in, and just get off the runway, anyway. So, that's pretty close; otherwise, no. We had ... quite a few airplanes damaged and we lost a number of guys.

SI: Was it mostly flak?

RP: Yes, primarily flak, yes. The only one I really know of where the MiGs got him, but didn't knock him out, I mean, didn't knock him out of the sky, was the one I told you about, Stan Parris. He was number four in my flight; I was number two at the time. So, he was the last guy off the target and that's [when] a MiG picked him up, but he managed to get back to Seoul. He had to keep the airspeed up on the airplane. Otherwise, it was going to drop off, because I think he got hit in the right wing root, so, he had a lack of control. We never found him, once he got hit, and we tried to get to the MiG. We never found it. We never caught up to him, but he got back to Seoul, and then, overshot the runway, because he had to keep the airspeed up, and went across a ditch or something and into a rice paddy and got out. So, the airplane was pretty good, as far as that's concerned. ... We had guys that, ... one of them, particularly, was General (Orr?), I mean, Colonel (Orr?), had his right rear empennage shot off; [they] had shot off the horizontal, had the whole thing shot off and he got back. ... He got hit coming out of a cloud ... where they had, I guess, aimed the flak right at the hole. As he came out, they got him, but he got back. So, a pretty good airplane, and, of course, odds are you've seen pictures where the flak hit the wings and knocked holes in the wings and things like that. Yes, it was good from that standpoint; of course, we did lose some.

SI: How often would you encounter enemy fighters on a mission?

RP: As I said before, not often. ... Once we got the F-86 high cover, we were in pretty good shape, but occasionally. Maybe in, that's a guess, in a hundred missions, I probably [had] the one that I just spoke about, where number four was hit, maybe about three others, [where] we were involved, somehow, but I never saw one. No, I never saw one in the air, tried as I might on those occasions, [laughter] and, again, ... generally, I would be, probably, flying as a wingman. So, my concentration was to follow the guy in front of me, and try to make sure he didn't get hit then, yes. ... The ace I spoke to you about, Dolph Overton, he was a [US Military] Academy graduate and, after he left us, left the F-84s, and went to the F-86s, he went out to the (Cho sen?) Island radar site and spoke to the radar guys and said, ... "Tell me about what you know," in essence. ... They said, "Well, MiGs have forty-five minutes of fuel, from the time they takeoff until the time they have to hit their perch to let down," and he said, "Okay," ... he gave them his call sign, "I'm going to call you when I'm in the air," and so on. So, he had an arrangement with the radar site and they would tell him, "Okay, they've been up in the air for twenty minutes. They've got twenty-five more minutes before they're going to hit the perch," and then, he'd time that and be up above them, at that perch level, and then, when they hit the perch, he'd just follow them down and shoot them down. He got seven in three days, I think, was his record. He got kicked out of Korea by the State Department, because he had a couple of gun camera films where the gear and flaps were down and the MiG was landing on a runway. We weren't supposed to go across the Yalu. You know, that's like fighting with one arm behind your back. They can come at us, but we couldn't come at them, but I think that was a Truman Administration initiative, not to get ... the Chinese involved. So, interesting war, fight with some restrictions; "fight with restrictions," that's crazy.

SI: When you were in Korea, the war had become a matter of maintaining the line. The back and forth portion of the war was over. What did you and your fellow officers think about the war at that point?

RP: Oh, we thought that was; Panmunjom, that was the Panmunjom negotiations, yes. ... Again, you don't fight a war to stalemate, you fight a war to win. Why fight the war if you're ... not going to win, you're not going to try to win? So, I think that was a thing of discussing, "What are we doing? Why not go finish this thing, get it done, just like we did in World War II?" Diplomatic relationships are great, if you can ... end the thing, but not if you sit there and parry back and forth. Some of the things we heard were, the Koreans would ... spend time negotiating how high their flag was on the table. If ours was higher than theirs, then, they'd come back and bring another flag, I mean, just [stalling], and guys [are] dying out there, ... particularly in the frontlines, for God's sake. That's crazy, but that's what Communism does, use everything against you that you hold dear. ... I'm with [President] George [W.] Bush on this thing, attacking Iraq and Afghanistan. I think [if] we had done that to Hitler before he got started killing everybody, we'd have been a different country, a different world, by now, but the liberals rule at the moment.

SI: Can you tell me about close-air support missions on the front? What was that like for you, flying those missions? From other pilots I have spoken with, they have said that can be very hairy, because you obviously do not want to hit your own troops.

RP: Right, yes, and, again, we would check in with a spotter airplane, a "mosquito," sometimes, they were called, and he would identify us and we him. ... We'd find him, and then, he would, generally, send a smoke rocket into where the target was. So, we had our point of attack. Generally, either it was with fifty-calibers or try to put a bomb in that area, or napalm. ... We would approach it. He would give us an idea how to approach it, "Approach from the south," or from the east, "and our frontlines are here and this line is from there." So, you had the boundaries. So, I think that was reasonable. You still had to be pretty much on target, not to hurt anybody, and you didn't want to approach it where a bomb went over or hung up, or something like that, [where] you'd likely drop it on our troops. No, I didn't hear too much of a lot of that happening, if I heard of any, not from our outfit anyway. We were never told that we'd missed the target there.

SI: On that kind of mission, would you get the word when you were on the ground in Taegu or would you be flying kind of a patrol and they would call up to you for air support?

RP: No, that was primarily the main purpose of the mission, to go up and meet the spotter. ... I don't remember ever being diverted from a primary mission to go down and do that.

SI: You were not patrolling an area to be called on by the ground forces.

RP: No. Now, occasionally, we did run, with a downed pilot, we would run a cap on [them], over an area where there was a downed pilot, and, if you were lucky enough to have communication with him, you would try to keep enemy troops away from him, and I don't think I was on more than one or two of those. Lots of funny stories about things like that, though; those weren't always tragic ones, ... hearing a story about a pilot that got back, got picked up and brought back, and, apparently, when he went down, he was in a rice paddy area. So, when we would come by and strafe the troops that were [there], whoever our guys were trying to strafe, the troops that were coming at him, he'd dive into the rice paddy. So, he had a comment about, "It's the first time I've ever jumped into fecal material and loved it." [laughter] ... He used the other word, so, you'd get a laugh out of it.

SI: Were you fairly confident that, if you had gone down, there would have been ...

RP: A rescue attempt? Oh, yes, I think so. Yes, we carried ... survival gear in our parachutes and backpack with whatever you wanted to put in there. The fact is, I have some film, I think, that comes up once in awhile as a screensaver here, that shows the backpack and all the stuff we could load into that, with an included radio, ... so, you could ... keep in touch with people flying around, and, of course, if they knew you were down, that's the first thing they'd look for, a parachute. So, they had a pretty good rescue record of guys that were pulled out of there, if they were alive. So, it wasn't a bad feeling.

SI: During your training, had you had any kind of survival school-type training?

RP: Yes, ... I did some training in Panama, a little, but that was after the war. That was with the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, the U-2s. I was down there with them, but I just observed that, as a doctor. We did get some instructions, but nothing like where they put us out

in the woods. ... I guess we didn't have time to do that. They wanted us over there fairly quickly, but, again, you talk to other guys and we had one pilot, he became a major general with the Air Reserve, a guy by the name of Taylor, John Taylor. He looked like Pancho Villa when he got in an airplane, these *bandoleras* and half shotgun, and he was going to fight his way out. The rest of us, I think, tried to think, "Well, we'd better eat something," so, funny guy, handlebar mustache.

SI: What were the living conditions like at Taegu?

RP: Well, we had barracks, individual barracks for squadrons, ... and then, a main bathroom/shower area, and the barracks were two sides, beds on two sides, pot-belly stoves, maybe three or four in a barrack area, and I don't know how many guys. ... Taegu was, the base was pretty good, from that standpoint. The permanent steel planking runway was the biggest problem. They eventually put in a cement runway, I think. By the time we left, I guess, they had one, but the accommodations were fine for a war, I mean, a heck of a lot better than the frontlines. ... We had an officers' club and a hospital, wasn't a big hospital. In fact, I communicate with the doctor, Dr. Iozzi, Lou Iozzi. He and I communicate fairly frequently. ... He was our squadron doctor. So, each squadron had one at the time, a flight surgeon, a headquarters building, pretty nice. There were two groups on K-2, on Taegu, [the] 49th, and I think the other one was [the] 136th, which was originally a Texas outfit, Texas Guard outfit, and then, supplemented with replacements as they needed them. The 49th Fighter Group was, is I think now, still, the longest running fighter group in the Air Force. It started out in Australia, in Brisbane, flying. They flew ...

SI: P-40s?

RP: ... P-40s, and then, eventually, P-38s, they had there. Richard Bong is the highest World War II ace in the Air Force, I think it was P-38s, yes, and we still meet. We have a reunion coming up in May, down in Biloxi, Mississippi.

SI: They are still a unit. They fly F-117s.

RP: Yes. They fly '117s out of Holloman [Air Force Base in New Mexico]. In fact, now, ... they're flying the F-22.

SI: The Raptor?

RP: The Raptor, yes. [Editor's Note: General Paret reaches for a photograph.] There's the Eighth Squadron and the Ninth Squadron [that] have been disbanded, and here's the new head, squadron commander, of the Seventh Squadron. They're going to be flying the F-22.

SI: What would you do in-between missions?

RP: Oh, gosh, ... you played volleyball, or you took a gun out to the bomb drop range and fired your .45, or you wrote letters, hit the officers' club for dinner, or not for dinner, because you dined in the mess hall, but for drinks at night, party. ... You had to make sure you checked the

schedule for the next day, so [that] you didn't drink too much, [so that] you could sober up by the morning, although it wasn't that riotous, and there was a movie, occasionally. Occasionally, a USO show came through, not very many, but some. ... If you could get a vehicle, if you could borrow somebody's vehicle, like, the weatherman had a vehicle, if you ... borrow his jeep, you could get into Taegu and shop. There wasn't much in the way of shopping, but they had a big, old square there that had a lot of brass, things made of brass, made of shell casings, that ... the Koreans would collect these brass shell casings and make plates and stuff out of [them]. You could buy some of that kind of stuff. There was a PX, but that usually closed at night. That was about it, mainly write letters, read books.

SI: Did you have much interaction with the Korean civilians?

RP: No, not a lot, not a lot. We had houseboys. ... We had one houseboy per barracks that would kind of take care of things, and he would, if you had any laundry, he would get it to somebody who did the laundry. We had little Korean girls, I don't know how old they were, not very old, that used to be our waitresses in the mess hall and cute little girls they were, and then, we had, I think the PX had local civilians working [in it]. People who could speak English would work there. I guess, ... I didn't see any of those, but some of the construction folks, probably, were Korean, ... but they were all pretty much on the American side, as I remember, and nothing, no problems. We occasionally took trips ... and there are some films I have here, pictures I have of taking a trip up into the mountains around Taegu to go to a shrine that was real pretty, carved out and painted with the Buddhist kind of paintings. ... We were warned to take guns with us, because you never know what's up there, that type of thing, but we never met any problem, and the other thing would be rest-and-recuperation leave when you went to Tokyo, or in Japan, and got into some of the Japanese resorts, things like that, around Fujiyama, and so forth. ... Spent your time, primarily writing and reading, I think, and trying to stay warm in the winter.

SI: Were the skip-bombing missions that you talked about towards the end of your tour?

RP: [Yes].

SI: About how many of those missions were you on?

RP: Probably four or five, I would think, ... and, again, I don't know how effective they were, so, I don't know whether that was the reason they stopped it [or] whether they continued after I left, because that was near the end of my tour.

SI: Would you usually have an idea of how effective your bombing had been?

RP: Yes, we would get reports at the next briefing, that so much of the railroad track was eliminated, but that was interesting, too, because the Koreans, ... North Koreans, could repair that track in very little time. They had, I guess, the "coolie" labor, thousands of people they had, to build that up again. So, yes, I think they did a marvelous job of repairing. [laughter] That was a continuous, endless job, trying to keep the tracks down. Bridges, if you got a bridge, that would take a little longer for them, ... and I think we were winning the war. ... I think some

more strategic bombing and some taking care of a little bit on the other side of the Yalu might have finished it. So, I have kind of a memory of carrying with me a map of China, of a mission that you were supposed to divert to. ... I guess that was after Eisenhower got in, and he threatened them, "Get to the table or else," kind of thing, but I don't have that map. I have my folder someplace. It's all yellowed and crimped and cracking and I don't know where it is, probably upstairs; lose track of all that kind of stuff after awhile.

SI: Thinking back over all of your missions, what stands out the most? What were the times that you really remember or think about often, if we have not already discussed them?

RP: Yes, I think ... some of the things that I remember vividly, I think, I've already talked about, particularly having the MiG attack, where number four got hit. Most of them were just, the heavy flak was the most impressive thing, and they had the railroads lined up with guns all the way along. When you went into the briefing room, you could tell where the railroad lines were, all the black marks of the [antiaircraft guns]; somebody had put all the flak down and concentrations of flak, and so on, and some of the weather flights, which were kind of hairy. ... My Distinguished Flying Cross, I got for, somebody wrote me up, as getting a locomotive, or something. [Editor's Note: General Paret focuses on his photograph screensaver.] Yes, that's one of the shrines on the way up the hill, sort of just by the side of the road, a Buddhist shrine.

...

SI: I was going to ask you about that, your decorations. From interviewing World War II veterans, I know that a lot of them were based on how many missions you flew. [Editor's Note: The interviewer turns to the screensaver.] There is another photograph.

RP: Yes, that's Gene (Hunk?) and he was our maintenance officer, and "Black Tom" is Tom (Langtree?), and that's a five-hundred-pound bomb. [Editor's Note: The words "Black Tom" are painted on the bomb.] So, Gene's still alive and we'll see him in May, and Tom (Langtree?), I don't think is alive. That was his hundredth mission. That's what they usually did on the hundredth mission, is paint the bombs up and give you a little extra boost in going on one. This is at one of the reunions. Chico Solis is back here, one of our guys. I think one of these fellows is dead, over here. ...

SI: Often, in World War II, the awards seemed to be based on how many missions you had flown and you received the Distinguished Flying Cross at the end of your tour. Were your decorations for specific actions or was there some of that in Korea as well?

RP: Oh, I think there was some of that. [Editor's Note: General Paret focuses on his photograph screensaver.] Now, this is a trip ... that we took not too long ago in France and we're approaching Rommel's headquarters. Those white cliffs indicate we're getting close to Rommel's headquarters. Yes, ... I think we got an Air Medal for so many missions, twenty-five, I think. So, we wound up with the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters. [Editor's Note: General Paret focuses on his photograph screensaver.] This is our barracks. Ed Traweck, a very good friend of mine, he and I are very good friends, he was next to me. I was in the barracks, in the bunk here. We got a Distinguished Flying Cross for either something special or as part of the mission or a hundred missions. I think that was the criteria, and then, they gave other medals out depending

on anything special. [Editor's Note: General Paret focuses on his photograph screensaver.] So, there's Korea.

SI: In Taegu?

RP: Yes, yes, somewhere around Taegu, I think. That's the way people were living then.

SI: There are a lot of shacks, one on top of another.

RP: Yes, sanitation, not the greatest, packed into those small, little huts. The thing about Korea [that] was interesting was, ... the mountains around you looked bare, because the Korean people had stripped all the dead wood off of them. ...

SI: Is there anything else you would like to say about the Korean War, before we move on to other parts of your military career?

RP: Oh, I have a lot of friends still from it, and [the] camaraderie that you get from being with guys on the missions, and so on. I'm sorry that it didn't come to a real good conclusion. We're still fighting the North Koreans. ... From the aspect that it was a memorable time for me, it was good. I survived it, so ... you can always look back on it as a good thing that way. It was interesting.

SI: How did you leave Korea? What was your next assignment?

RP: Well, I left, ... as I said before, we flew, I guess, the Great Circle route kind of thing; the Great Circle route through the Aleutian Islands in the middle of winter, because I left there in December, and I thought they were trying to kill me in that. [laughter] ... I don't remember where we left, which airbase we landed at, but it was out on the Aleutians, and it was just absolutely snow, blackout kind of, whiteout kind of thing, and then, into Seattle, and that's how I got home for Christmas. My next assignment was at Laughlin Air Force Base and Ed Traweck, a friend, ... and I, a lot of guys were being assigned to Luke and Nellis, and so on, and, when it came time for us to be assigned, we were assigned to Laughlin Air Force Base and opened up a gunnery school. We actually flew airplanes in and out of that base until we got enough T-33s and F-80s to open up a gunnery school, because they didn't have enough '84s at that time. They were all in the war, [as well as] F-86s. So, we opened up the same thing that you have at Luke and Nellis, ground and air-to-air, ... no live air-to-air, but live ground targets. [Editor's Note: General Paret focuses on his photograph screensaver.] These are JATOs, the JATO pod.

SI: Is that the steel runway?

RP: And this is the steel, PSP steel, and two five-hundred pounders.

SI: For the record, we are looking at a screensaver made up of your wartime photos. You had to build up this gunnery school.

RP: We had to build up [the aircraft] at the gunnery school, and so, we got to fly a lot of airplanes back and forth, ... and then, we taught not only our guys, but we taught British, Netherlanders, Thailanders. I don't know whether we taught Germans. I don't think so, but those were the guys ... that came over to us and went through pilot training, and then, came to us for the gunnery portion of it. ... I was there for about three years. ... No, I left there in '54 and got into medical school; ... '55 to '59, rather. So, I went to Rutgers for one [semester] to do that cat anatomy under DeFalco and got involved in the eugenics class ... for a semester, I guess, and then, got into medical school. ...

SI: Did you have to fulfill a requirement of a certain number of years for the Air Force or did you just ask to leave?

RP: No, I had to fulfill a four year term, but I was not a regular, so, I had the option, when my term came, that I could get out. So, I got out to get into medical school. ... Medical school started in New York City, so, I started in, I guess it was August, September of '54, and then, at that time, worked with ... the New Jersey Guard for awhile, for about two years, I guess, and flew with them, again, T-33s, until I got too involved with medical school and [it got to be] too much of a travel; ... had to go through North Bergen, Newark, and all the way down the highway to Trenton, to get to McGuire, and then, come back, and study, too. ... So, it just got to be too much. If I'd have been closer to Trenton or had a better means of transportation, I think I would have stayed with that for awhile, because I just enjoyed the flying. After medical school, I was hooked, because I was in that junior-senior program, and so, I went right back into the Air Force and went to Brooks Air Force Base [in Texas], to flight surgeon school. ... In finishing flight surgeon school, I was assigned to the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, which was the U-2 outfit, and spent three years with them, three, four years. ... At that time, I applied to go to a residency, in the Air Force, ... at Wilford Hall [Medical Center] in San Antonio and was accepted by the doctor who was the director of the OB/GYN residency program, but the generals in Washington, in the Surgeon General's Office, kept pushing me to go through aviation medicine. I had known a number of doctors who had done that, a number of flight surgeons who had done that, and they were all stuck in administration jobs afterwards, which was, I guess, the entire reason for the program. They all became colonels and generals and head of MAC, Military Airlift Command, and things like that. So, that was a decision I made that probably was not the best decision. [laughter] I should have gone to that and done it, but, instead, I got out. I decided to get out and do general practice for awhile, in Del Rio, [Texas], but, then, went back to the Guard in San Antonio. The outfit that was on the other end of Taegu was the San Antonio Guard and [I] became their flight surgeon, so, got back into flying as a flight surgeon. [Editor's Note: The unit was designated as the 182nd Fighter Squadron, attached to the 136th Fighter Bomber Group, during the Korean War and is today known as the 149th Fighter Wing.] ... They eventually wound up with F-16s, so, I did a little backseat work with them, for fun, but wound up as the Texas State Air Surgeon and was promoted to colonel, eventually, and then, the Air National Guard had flight surgeons who were assigned to TAC [Tactical Air Command] and MAC [Military Airlift Command] and SAC [Strategic Air Command], and that was a route to the first star, [brigadier general's rank]. ... Then, from that, you had a chance at working with the Surgeon General of the Air Force, and that was a two-star spot, [major general's rank]. So, that was my progress. ... I was chosen out of [the] Texas Air Guard and ... was picked by the Military Airlift Command Surgeon, General Bob Unger, to be his assistant for the ANG, for the

Air National Guard, and he wound up having a stroke. So, he was discharged. [Lieutenant General] Monte [B.] Miller took his place as the Military Airlift Command Surgeon. When it was time for me to move, Monte Miller had gone to [serve as] the NATO Command Surgeon in Europe, and then, was selected to be the Air Force Surgeon General, [assuming the position in August of 1988], but, in the meantime, his predecessor chose me as the ANG Assistant to the Surgeon General. ... So, I became a two-star that way. I had forty-four years of service, one way or another. So, it was pretty good.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: I want to go back for a minute to when you were serving with the U-2 unit. What exactly did you do as a flight surgeon in that unit? What did your duties entail?

RP: Well, it was primarily with the pilots, of course, ... and the pilots were having to wear partial pressure suits. So, that was a job where you kept track of their health and you did all their physical exams, and so forth. ... Whenever they went on a flight, you checked them out before flight and did a preflight checkout with them, put them in a partial pressure suit, made them pre-breathe oxygen for an hour, and it was finally cut to about twenty minutes. Your physiological support division, ... that you were in charge of, carried them out to the airplane on oxygen, switched him over to the airplane oxygen system before ... they are set to fly. We monitored their health pretty good. We went on TDYs with them. So, any time they were off [to] Australia or Panama, down at ... [the] Air Force base in Panama, we had a flight surgeon with them, to do the same thing, plus, physiological support guys to put them in the suits and pre-breathe them, and so on. So, you were there ... to take care of their upper respiratory infections and things like that. If they had to be hospitalized, then, they just went to the hospital, but you monitored them ... along with the doctors. ... We had very little of that. Most of these guys were pretty healthy. In fact, there's about four or five of them that eventually went on to fly the SR-71 [Blackbird]. ... One lives here in Knoxville.

SI: Really?

RP: Buddy Brown lives here in Knoxville.

SI: By the time you were in this job, had they already worked out most of the problems with flying at high altitude and high speed?

RP: Yes.

SI: They understood what effect that had on the body.

RP: Yes, oh, yes. ... I think when they got into the SR-71, which I didn't get to work with them [on]; when I left Laughlin, they left Laughlin and went to Beale [Air Force Base in California] and into the SR-71, things were pretty well worked out, because they had to wear a better partial pressure suit, actually a full pressure suit, at their altitude. Underneath your pad there, that book, the two top books are about the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing.

SI: Were they involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis?

RP: Yes. The U-2s were. In fact, Rudy Anderson was a real good friend of mine. He was the one that was shot down. He lived across the street from me on Laughlin and wound up [being shot down and killed-in-action while performing reconnaissance over Cuba]. The guy who was editor of the book, McIlmoyle, ... Gerry McIlmoyle and Rudy Anderson and I went through the Thirty-Second Degree, Masonic Degree, Scottish Rite, together. ... They asked people who survived to write something memorable or what you did or something like that, and here's the Cuban [Missile Crisis], Rudy Anderson was the one shot down, Buddy Brown's here, Steve is the guy [who] brought back the first pictures of the missiles in Cuba, but this book is just out. ...

SI: It is called *Remembering the Dragon Lady*.

RP: Yes, *Remembering the Dragon Lady*. ... In fact, Gerry McIlmoyle started that book and asked everyone he could contact to add a story; I just added my part to it. ... I didn't fly the U-2. I flew in the U-3 and was qualified, partially, to fly the U-3, which was just a Cessna, twin-engine. It was used to help pilots land when they were beginning training, and on recovery from missions.

SI: For the record, again, the book title is *Remembering the Dragon Lady*, by Brigadier General Gerald ...

RP: McIlmoyle

SI: McIlmoyle and Linda Bromley. In the book, you described, basically, a little bit of what we talked about here, but in more detail on how you would treat the pilots and how you prepared them for the flights and a little bit about where you served. There is also a picture of you. Was this a staged photo?

RP: Well, yes, it was staged, yes. I was flying, but ... that one was staged.

SI: Okay. In the photo, they are handing you your medical bag in the cockpit.

RP: Right. That was in ... the local airbase [newspaper], introducing me to the air base at the time.

SI: Did you have to keep secret what you were doing? Did you ever tell anybody who was not in the military?

RP: No, ... that was top secret. Now, the whole town knew what was out there ... but you very seldom heard anybody talk about it or even ask you what you did, ... and many of the pilots lived in town, and some lived, of course, on base. They made that base totally different. Now, this is my second tour at Laughlin, when I went back with the U-2s ... and I lived on the base ... because we had to be ready to respond if we needed to be.

SI: As flight surgeon in the Texas National Guard, what were your duties there? Were they more administrative or were you doing hands-on work?

RP: No, it was hands-on. When I was assigned to the 149th [Tactical Fighter Wing, now the 149th Fighter Wing] it was in the Guard unit that was at San Antonio. I would go up for weekend drill and do pretty much the same thing any flight surgeon [does]; see people, take care of people if they needed taking care of, but mostly physical exams and keeping up with the mission and what was happening, and making sure the pilots were in good shape, essentially. ... When I became State Air Surgeon, it was primarily inspection visits and paperwork. ... The higher you go, the less active people you see, but, then, I still had to fly. So, I would fly with the 149th. Lots of times, they would fly down to Laughlin, where I was living at the time, and pick me up and we'd go someplace in Texas, either one of the other three units. One was in Houston, the unit that President Bush was with was in Houston, one in Dallas, which were also flying units. So, I would visit them, fairly frequently, as the State Air Surgeon ... and to help out, if they needed help, and to try to recruit doctors and that whole thing. Once I ... was selected to the MAC Air Surgeon, then, I went to Scott Air Force Base on a monthly basis and, eventually, wound up doing inspections of all the Military Airlift Command Air National Guard medical units. ... These units, if they were activated, would go with the Military Airlift Command. So, I became Dr. Monte Miller's, General Monte Miller's envoy, I guess, ... to these Guard units and stayed with them over a weekend and answered any of their questions they might have about what their duties might be when they were absorbed by the Military Airlift Command. And take back any problems to General Miller as to what support they might need. ... So, it was kind of an intermingling of their state needs and how they would be supplied, or their support through the state area, as well as support through the federal area, ... and try to update their training; tell them, "This is what you're going to have to do if you're ever brought on active duty." So, it was an interesting time. We flew all over the country doing that, took up a lot of time.

SI: Was it difficult to maintain a practice while doing this?

RP: Oh, yes, but, ... in a small town like Del Rio was, it's also a legitimate way of getting out of town. I wasn't going on vacation; I was going to military duty. So, it made me feel better. [laughter] ... I didn't have to answer [the], "You're always on vacation," thing. ... I couldn't take my entire family either, lots of times, on those. So, I had to be a little careful about it.

SI: Would they be able to come with you on TDYs?

RP: No. ... Particularly with the U-2s, they couldn't do it. ... When we did go to TDYs to Australia, it was interesting. We were all pretty well "hush-hush" ... while we're here in the country, and then, over in Australia, they'd have an "open house" for the Australians.

SI: Really?

RP: [laughter] So, I could never understand that, but, in Australia, what they were doing was collecting weather samples. ... We were in East Sail, Australia, so, ... the pilots were collecting weather samples from the southern part of Australia down to the Antarctic. [Editor's Note:

General Paret focuses on his photograph screensaver.] [That] is one of our duties, mobile control officer. So, that's me.

SI: Is that photograph taken in Korea?

RP: Yes, that's in Korea.

SI: What would you be doing in that duty?

RP: Guiding the airplanes into landing, speak like a tower operator. This is obviously in the summer. Here's hotel helpers in Japan, hotel employees. I think that was in Yokohama, trying to talk to them.

SI: After you retired from the Air Force in Texas, was that when you came up to the Knoxville area, to Tennessee?

RP: Right. You're right. ... I retired from the Air Force in '88 and we moved up here in '88 and I retired from my [practice]. I was an anesthesiologist there. ... I had gone to school in San Antonio, back in the '70s. I did an anesthesiology residency. So, I retired from that as well as from the Air Force and came up here. At my retirement ceremony, in Washington, DC from the Air Force, the Surgeon General at that time was [Lieutenant General Murphy A.] "Murph" Chesney, [who served as Air Force Surgeon General from August 1985 to July 1988]. I remember that there were a couple of people who were setting up an occupational medicine service here [in Tennessee] for the nuclear sites. ... There were three of them here, at the time. They're now down to two. They're closing one down. There was nobody in Oak Ridge concentrating on occupational medicine, which is essentially what a flight surgeon is. ... So, I was asked to come up and start an occupational medicine clinic for a company called Peer Consultants. It became Peer Occupational Medicine [POM]. We, my wife and I, started working with the companies who subcontracted to DOE, Department of Energy, to run, to work on these nuclear sites, and we worked with POM for two years. ... Nat and I set up the office and brought in all the equipment and got it going, and then, after two years, the person who owned the company decided to cut our salaries in half and we said, "No, we don't want to do that." So, we opened our own business, in occupational medicine, and then ran that for about ten years and, finally, all of a sudden, had two or three offers to buy us out. We were doing pretty well. So, we sold it, to Concentra, and, I said, "Retire." Natalie retired. Two weeks later, I was asked by some people I'd worked with to come help them out on a part-time basis, and so, I'm doing that still. I work three mornings a week, from eight to twelve, and the rest of the time, fool around, do all this.

SI: You have a very well-stocked office. You must be very busy.

RP: Try to be. [laughter]

SI: In your medical career, what did you find most interesting or challenging as a doctor?

RP: Oh, I think the most challenging was anesthesiology; the most interesting was, really, the flight surgeon's duties, and being able to fly and do that, too. ... I became the fifteenth dual-rated flight surgeon in the Air Force at the time, the first one being Brigadier [Major] General [Charles H.] Roadman, and then, ... I think even his son, [Lieutenant General Charles H. Roadman, II], became one, but, now, they've got a number of them. They finally opened that up; when I got into the Medical [Corps], I had to give up the pilot's rating, to become a flight surgeon, and then, when I got into the 4080th Strat Recon Wing, ... I had gotten my pilot's rating back again. So, I became dual-rated, and so, that was the fun part, and the pilots knew that you had been a pilot. So, I could get on an airplane as a passenger ... and they'd say, "Hey, you want to come up and fly for awhile?" and things like that, so, I got a lot of flying time, and that was primarily multi-engines. In the F-16, I'd fly backseat, and I'd get to fly the F-16 from the backseat. So, that was always fun, got a lot of envious stares from guys when I'd fly into a conference at Scott in an F-16 and everybody'd say, "Whoa, how'd you do that?" So, that was fun, and it would be enjoyable again, to do.

SI: Do you want to say anything about your family? You have four children.

RP: Yes. As you can see, we have Chris and Deborah; Chris is Natalie's son. His father, also an Air Force pilot, died when Chris was very young. Our two youngest grandchildren, two boys, Hunter is the youngest and Mason, are Chris' children. Deborah, Chris' wife, was a neighbor of Chris and Natalie way back when each of the children was two or three years old. So, they, Chris and Deb have known each other a long time and do a beautiful job. Chris is a dermatologist now. Over the years, with our four children, we've supported five Texas universities. Chris went to Baylor, to the University of Texas Galveston where he received his PhD in microbiology, virology and immunology, then to Texas Tech for his MD, and then came to Tennessee to Vanderbilt for his derm residency. He and a fellow resident have only had their two offices open a year or so in Spring Hill, Tennessee and in Columbia, Tennessee. Our oldest son, Dean, is a Baylor grad and completed his PhD in psychology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is thirty years younger than I am, so, he's fifty-two. He's a psychologist in the Forth Worth area and has his own business and travels quite a bit nationally with that. Dean and his wife, Carol, are the parents of our two granddaughters, Amanda and Leslee. Bobby, my second son, received both his undergraduate degree and his graduate degree from Texas A&M. He is a construction manager working for a company in Dallas and has two sons, Carter and Taylor. Our daughter, Renee, who you saw in a picture chopping wood here, is a graduate of Southwest Texas and has her own franchise business in San Antonio, CertaPro Painters. So, they're all doing well. Natalie is my second wife. She's a registered nurse, retired nurse. My first wife divorced me. Natalie and I met at the hospital in Del Rio, Texas. She was the chief operating room nurse and, after three or four years, we were married and moved here. So, she keeps me young. [laughter]

SI: That is good. Is there anything else you would like to add to the record, or anything that we skipped over?

RP: Not that I know of. I think you've pulled my entire life out of me. [laughter]

SI: That is what we try to do. It is difficult to do that in the short time we have.

RP: Oh, sure, sure. I think your program is terrific. I've tried to follow it, as much as I can, and found that reading your interviews with other veterans has been inspirational and fascinating. I feel some of their experiences have been absolutely great.

SI: I am glad you are reading them. It is because of folks like you and your classmates that we are able to keep going. This trip, and future trips, have been made possible by a recent gift from your class, the Class of 1949. We are very thankful to them. Now, we are going to interview another classmate of yours in Mississippi later on in this trip.

RP: Good, good. So, you're [going] from here to Mississippi.

SI: Yes. From here, we are going down to Biloxi. On the way back, in Canton, we are going to interview a classmate of yours.

RP: Good. You're going to get to go to the ballgame.

SI: No.

RP: No, down in Birmingham.

SI: We are going to be driving through Birmingham twice, but not on the day of the game.

RP: Not on the day of the game, that's too bad.

SI: The Papa Johns Bowl.

RP: Right.

SI: It is good to see Rutgers in the bowl game. [Editor's Note: On December 29, 2008, the Rutgers Scarlet Knights defeated the North Carolina State Wolfpack, 29-23, in the 2008 Papajohns.com Bowl in Birmingham, Alabama.]

RP: Oh, yes, I think that's great, and I was always disappointed with Princeton's decision to quit the game, with us. ... I just couldn't understand that. The oldest game in the history of the world and Princeton gave that up as a marketing tool, because Rutgers got too good for them? When I was ... at Rutgers, I think we beat Princeton two or three times, and probably really helped out the Corner Tavern a lot then. [laughter]

SI: Yes, you had Frank Burns as a quarterback. That was one of the golden eras of Rutgers football.

RP: ... Right, right, and Frank was a classmate. ... At the same time that I'm supposed to get my gold diploma from medical school is my sixtieth reunion at Rutgers. It was the fiftieth of medical school and the sixtieth of my Rutgers class reunion, both are the same weekend. So, I'm going to try to do both, but it's going to be a little bit of a scheduling hassle to do.

SI: We also have an event on the Friday morning of Reunion Weekend. Everyone who is interviewed is inducted into the Rutgers Living History Society. If you are not there, you will be inducted in absentia and we will send you your certificate.

RP: ... I'd love to go back to the campus. That's great, and, again, we have real good friends. Fred Huettig was ...

SI: I interviewed him, also.

RP: Did you?

SI: Yes, but he has not returned his transcript. If you ever see him, ask him about his transcript.

RP: Oh, I'll get on him. Yes, he's headed for St. Croix, right. He usually goes right after Christmas. He has a home down there. He goes down to wallow in the sun.

SI: I was trying to remember; did he graduate in 1953 or 1952?

RP: He graduated in '50.

SI: Yes, the Class of 1950, okay. I was wondering when you would overlap, but I was mistakenly thinking of 1953 for some reason.

RP: No, he graduated in '50, and I think Bob McCoy, the other preceptor, graduated in '49.

SI: Is he up in Massachusetts?

RP: He's up in Cape Cod.

SI: Cape Cod, and he is still alive.

RP: Yes.

SI: He is somebody else I have to interview. Again, thanks to this grant from your class, we might be able to go up to Cape Cod to interview him.

RP: Well, I appreciate your coming here, because I had put on my form ...

SI: The pre-interview survey.

RP: Pre-interview survey form, that I would be glad to come up there, but, since I'm still working, that becomes a little difficult.

SI: We have had the most success in people coming to New Brunswick from a distance if they have family still in the area. We try to arrange the trips for people who have no other reason to

come to New Brunswick. We also try to get people to interview on Reunion Weekend, but you are going to so many other things that you do not necessarily have time to sit down for an interview.

RP: Right, yes, and your interviews, I know from reading them, take about two hours, each one, don't they?

SI: I would say they are about as long as this, which has been about four hours.

RP: It has; time for lunch. [laughter]

SI: Let me just conclude by saying thank you very much; I appreciate your hospitality and your family's hospitality.

RP: Thank you.

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

Reviewed by Matt Doherty 9/19/09
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 10/9/09
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 10/12/09
Reviewed by Robert W. Paret 3/8/11