

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH PITULA

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

FANTASTIC TRANSCRIPTS

Nicholas Molnar: This begins an interview with Mr. Joseph Pitula on September 21, 2012, in Flemington, New Jersey, with Nick Molnar and Steve Acone. Thank you, Mr. Pitula, for having us here today in your home in Flemington. Could you tell us when and where you were born?

Joseph Pitula: Sure, was born, actually, at home. At the time, most of the children were being born at home then. Of the six children in my family, five were born at home. My sister Jean, the youngest, was born at the Hackensack Hospital.

NM: All right.

JP: This is going back to 1925.

NM: Okay.

JP: So, I was born on 167 South Street, Hackensack, New Jersey, on May 4, 1925; my mother, Mary Pitula, and father, Stanley Pitula.

NM: Usually, we begin our interviews by asking you a little bit about your family history. Can you tell us a little bit about your father and what you know about his family history?

JP: Well, my father was born in the part of Austria-Hungary which is now part of Poland. This is during the Austro-Hungarian Empire there. He was [of] Ukrainian descent, and he came over, oh, when he was approximately seventeen or eighteen, I believe. Naturally, at the time, he needed a sponsor and one of the relatives sponsored him and they were able to get him a job. That was one of the requirements at the time and came through Ellis Island, like all the other immigrants of that day, that period.

NM: Your father already had relatives living in the United States.

JP: There were some relatives. I'm not sure how many there were, because they may have come over later or prior to his arrival. He was only a young fellow at the time.

NM: Your father got a sponsor and he got a job. What did he do initially?

JP: He was working at Horn & Hardart, making coffee. [laughter]

NM: Okay. Did he continue to work there for the rest of his career?

JP: No. I don't know where he lived. He did have a sister living in New York. I'm not sure whether she came over prior to his arrival or not. He never really told us the whole story.

NM: What about your mother? What do you know about her family background?

JP: Yes, well, my mother was born in New York City. Her parents were Ukrainian and Polish.

NM: Was she first-generation?

JP: Yes, right, I would say the first-generation.

NM: Do you have any siblings?

JP: Well, yes, I came from a family of six. At the present time, there are three of us still living. My oldest sister, Julia, she passed away, Pauline, my sister, passed away and my brother, Stanley, he unfortunately passed away at a very young age, sort of tragic way, and the living siblings are Helen and Jean.

NM: Where do you fit into the six siblings?

JP: I'm right in the middle, right in the middle. [laughter]

NM: Did you grow up in Hackensack?

JP: I grew up in Hackensack, yes.

NM: Could you share with us what you remember about the area back then?

JP: Oh, sure. It was, oh, gosh, a rural area, lots of fields, plenty of open space for growing up, without any problem or worry. We had farmland around where I lived. Once in a while, there was a horse that broke loose, would be running down the street. [laughter] We did have a relative that lived right next door to us, (Jenny Dragon?), and she, coming from the old country, knew how to handle these horses. As they were coming, flying down the street, she would get in front of it and wave, and doggone it if this horse didn't stop. I was amazed--that she didn't get run over. [laughter]

NM: What area of Hackensack were you located in?

JP: The lower part, near the border of South Hackensack. At the time, it was called Lodi Township, but, then, eventually, they changed it to South Hackensack. [Editor's Note: This occurred in November 1935.]

NM: You mentioned that it was a very rural area. Were there places where you could go to a movie? Was there public transportation?

JP: Oh, well, if we wanted to go to a movie, we'd walk to the movie, to the center of Hackensack. There were three theaters there at the time in Hackensack, the Eureka, the Fox and the Oritani. The price for the Eureka was only ten cents to get in it. [laughter] I think the Fox and Oritani were a nickel [more], fifteen cents, I believe.

NM: As a young child, what did you do for recreation?

JP: Oh, plenty of recreation, played cowboys and Indians, [laughter] run through the fields, make our own bows, cut down one of these weeds and make arrows out of them, make our own

bow from a tree branch put a string across it, chase butterflies. We had plenty of those, running around there, and then, as I got a little older, played, what? baseball, football, throwing with my neighbors that were in the area. In fact, the homes weren't close by. So, they were a little walking distance to each home.

NM: Steve, do you have any questions?

Steve Acone: You just mentioned playing baseball. You played baseball in school, correct?

JP: I played baseball in school, right.

SA: What was your favorite position?

JP: I was the outfield, outfielder, right.

SA: I used to play baseball, first base. I could not handle the outfield.

JP: Right. I enjoyed playing shortstop, but the shortstop there then was too good, a little better than I was. Actually, I was at a young age at the time. Probably, maybe, that was a little of an unfortunate situation for me, because I started kindergarten when I was four and when I got to my senior year in high school, I was only sixteen and, naturally, there were older ballplayers on the team. I mean, I was in an unfortunate situation where I was competing with older, better quality players.

NM: What do you recall about elementary school?

JP: Well, elementary school, I remember kindergarten, where I would fight for a little red wagon. Whoever got there first would be able to get the red wagon and this one kid by the name of Eddie would always try to beat me to it. [laughter] Kindergarten, growing up, I enjoyed the school and progressed through the grades.

NM: Where was the school in relation to where you lived?

JP: It was, I would say, about--it had to be a good mile from our home and, naturally, walked there, no bus service, but, at the time, through the snow and snow piles and all that, we still managed to get there. I recall lunchtime--we didn't eat in school, like nowadays. We had to run home and I would run all the way home, so that I would be able to eat my lunch and get back in time. I'd try to fix something fast, because my mother and Father were working. One of my sisters was still, in grade school, but I can't recall whether I beat her home or whatever. [laughter] I would sometimes open up a can of beans and have that for lunch.

NM: You mentioned that both your mother and father worked.

JP: Yes.

NM: Where did they work?

JP: Well, at the time, my father actually worked in a chemical plant. I can't recall that period when he was working in a chemical plant, but, then, if you go back to when I was around four, that period when you still remember somewhat what's going on, it was through the Depression. I recall him being out of work at the time and the men, actually, that were out of work applied for relief checks, but they had to do some manual labor, also. It's not just "sit home and collect your relief check." They had to go out on the street, filling potholes, picking up scraps and all, anything, just to keep them occupied, busy, until they could find themselves employment; eventually, did get employed by the road department, county road department, where he actually worked until he retired.

NM: Did your mother work through this entire period?

JP: Yes, she was a seamstress. She worked for the American Novelty in Hackensack. I do recall going there, occasionally, to bring her things she needed. I could walk in to the [shop floor], as the machines were buzzing away, "Zing, zing, zing," walking all the way through, without any problem. Nobody bothered you at the time, [laughter] and then, when I'd get [to her], oh, my mother would introduce me to all her friends and say, "This is my boy." [laughter]

NM: Did you have a job growing up?

JP: You know what I did growing up, to make a few dollars? I was eight, nine, ten, in that age period. I would collect newspapers, junk. We'd walk to the Bogota dump with my cousin Pete who was eleven at that time. We'd go out in the dump and it was [near] the paper mill. They would clean out the beater, they would bring all what was on the bottom, the sludge and all that, out to the dump. We'd go through that and we'd find coins and, also, metal, the copper and brass and whatnot, and then, we're able to sell that in the junkyard, but we walked all the way to Bogota and back again. We did a lot of walking when I was growing up.

NM: Moving into your high school years, did you have any favorite subjects?

JP: I did like history. That was one of my favorites. I had no problem there with history. Bookkeeping was simple enough, also no problem. Let's see, what else can I remember, recall, about high school? except for the fact that, I would, again, have to walk there, walk to high school, no bus transportation. I would walk along the railroad track in Hackensack and my enjoyment was walking on the rails, also, watching that no trains were coming. [laughter] Also, another thing I used to love to do was jump from tie to tie, and then, just run. I guess it was good exercise. At the time, I didn't realize it, but it's good for the body.

NM: Do you have any teachers who stand out in your memory?

JP: No [teachers], none that I could recall, that I had any favorite teacher or anything else. They're all the same to me.

NM: You noted that some people in your community were affected by the Great Depression.

JP: Oh, yes, yes, sure.

NM: Could you tell me what you remember about that?

JP: Oh, sure, yes, I remember going to a store, or whatever it was--where they would collect clothing and shoes and things like that for anyone that would need and see what they could use. I went with my Uncle Mickey and he picked out a pair of shoes. I thought it was wonderful--he could go out and get shoes and not have to pay for it. They were all donated by people that were in a position to help out, and, also, going to the relief station with my mother to pick up flour and dried fruit and sugar that they would hand out to us. At the time, I didn't realize how critical it was. Naturally, you're not thinking that way as a youngster, but we also did have a small plot of land that my father farmed. We had plenty of food, corn, tomatoes, peppers. He had everything, beets--oh, he planted just about almost everything. It was a good plot of land. There was also land around which was unclaimed land that he used also. We had chickens and, as I stated in one of my memoirs that I wrote for the senior center, I had to clean out the chicken coop. That was my job. [laughter] Besides that, my other job was chopping wood to stack up for the winter, because we didn't have central heat. We had a stove and that was my job all summer long, too, in-between my playing and whatnot, to stock the woodshed.

NM: Roughly how large was this plot of land that your father farmed?

JP: Oh, it was quite large, spread out, land that didn't even belong to him, land that he owned, but land beyond that. I'm not sure how much land he farmed.

NM: In terms of feeding your mother and father and six children, was your family self-sufficient?

JP: I would say so, yes, actually, we were. He did own a home. Yes, I recall him having a little difficulty getting payments, but my older sister, Julie, was working at the time and I'm pretty sure some of her salary helped out.

NM: I have interviewed others who had family farms or things of that nature at the time. They often spoke about farmers bartering goods rather than selling them.

JP: Oh, yes.

NM: Was that something that your family did?

JP: It's possible, it's possible. I'm not sure whether [we did]. I know that we had a Mrs. Kintop and Mr. Kintop, our neighbor farmers, and he had a nice little farm there with ducks and cows and whatnot. After my father chopped down some of the cornstalks, I would bring it over to Mr. Kintop on a wheelbarrow for the cattle. [laughter] Sometimes Mr. Kintop took me in his horse and wagon to pick up feed for his animals.

NM: You mentioned that you would go with your mother to the relief station.

JP: Yes.

NM: Could you describe what this place was in the community? I have not encountered this before.

JP: Oh, it was located on Essex Street in Hackensack and it was a converted house, something like the food pantry, where it would be stored up with government supplied products. It wasn't anything people donate like the food pantry nowadays. It was all government supplied, the food that they were handing out, the sugar and the flour and the dried fruit and some canned goods.

NM: Did many people in the community use this station?

JP: Oh, there were quite a few, yes, sure, because we're all--it was a depressed period of time and there were plenty of people out of work at the time.

NM: It sounds like at least your neighbors nearby were also farmers.

JP: Oh, yes, they all had something, ducks, geese, rabbits. There were several in the area. Mr. Argenio farmed and also worked on a farm. Plus he also was a rag picker. He had this horse and wagon. When he would come home with the wagon, we'd all jump on the wagon. He would be cleaning stores, like Woolworth's, Macy's, McCrory's, one of the five-and-dimes around there, and, naturally, sometimes, there would be candy that had fallen on the floor and he had swept up. We would be looking for it [laughter] in the trash that was on the wagon. He had a large family that we played with.

[TAPE PAUSED]

NM: While you were in high school, the attack on Pearl Harbor took place.

JP: Yes.

NM: Can you tell us what you recall about that day?

JP: Sure. Well, actually, the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked was a Sunday and I was listening to--we didn't have TV at the time--so, I was listening to the Giants football game, on radio and they broke in with the announcement that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. Wow, that was a shock. I'd guess it was, like, "Bingo," right? something like a bolt out of the blue. You never expected it and, probably, the people, the older ones, knew that something was going on, but what the heck was I at the time? sixteen, I guess, fifteen, sixteen. I didn't give it too much thought, what we were going to get ourselves into, really. [Editor's Note: Japanese forces attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, thrusting the United States into the Second World War.]

NM: I understand that your brother served in the Army.

JP: My brother, right, but he served during the Korean War.

NM: I am sorry. He was younger.

JP: He was yes, my younger brother. He actually was signed by the Cleveland Indians. In fact, I can show you, later on, his picture, if you care to see it.

NM: We would love to. Before Pearl Harbor was attacked, as a high school student, did you have any plans for yourself after high school?

JP: No. Actually, I was working at the A&P, after school. The A&P was located in Rutherford. I would run home from [school], after. If you had working papers at the time in school, you were dismissed a little early, around two-thirty or so. I would run home and get changed, run back to Essex Street, hop a bus to Rutherford, I think that was about six miles away, [laughter] and work for two hours, from four until six, at the A&P. That I would do every day and Saturday, would work all day Saturday. That's how I was able to make extra money for whatever I needed.

NM: What did you do for A&P?

JP: I worked initially in the dairy department, slicing cheese, and then, from there, I progressed to a checker, to running the checkout machine. Now, at that time, we had to memorize all the prices of the different canned goods and boxes of food that were on the shelves. It wasn't computerized or anything like that. We had to go over a list each day to check, make sure that any of the prices were changed, so that we wouldn't be charging the customers more than they should be. So, it's quite a deal to have to remember all these prices, yes, but I guess, at that time, they didn't have as many varieties of each product as they do now.

NM: How old were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

JP: I was sixteen.

NM: How did your community react to the news of the Pearl Harbor attack?

JP: Well, I guess they were all stunned. I can't recall any comments from anyone.

NM: How did your family react?

JP: Well, my father would always be listening to the news, but he never really came out with any direct comment as to really how he felt. I guess, inside, he knew something, there was going to be a problem. Naturally, I was getting up to draft age, because they had the draft going on then. [Editor's Note: The Selective Service Act of 1940 required all twenty-one to thirty-five-year-old males to register for the draft. These age parameters were expanded to eighteen to forty-five years of age after the United States entered the war.]

NM: Did you consider joining the service?

JP: No, I didn't. Actually, I didn't think about volunteering or joining right away. I knew that I would probably be drafted eventually, so, I [waited]. That year after I graduated, I was able to work full-time at the A&P, although I did work for a Dr. Pafe also, grinding eyeglass lenses. I thought maybe that when I was inducted that there would be some kind of a position for that in the Navy, but, evidently, there was nothing available, open, at the time. Now, you want to go through the period when I went into the service?

NM: Yes.

JP: Okay. So, when I graduated high school in June, I'd just turned seventeen then, in May. So, it was one full year that I was able to work before being drafted. So, I signed up for the draft then the following May. You would sign up for the draft as your birthday date came along and I recall going to the draft board with two other friends from the neighborhood. Well, one of the boys that I signed up with was drafted into the Army but he didn't make it back home. He was in paratroopers and he was killed out there in Europe. The other boy, he came back okay, two of my friends, anyway, that were in the service with me then.

NM: You wrote on your survey that some of your cousins also joined the service.

JP: Oh, I had two uncles, my Uncle George and Alex. They served in the Army. They were in the European Theater and they were in--I believe George was telling me that he was in the Battle of the Bulge and I don't know what division Alex was in. I had a brother-in-law, Adam, that was also in the service and a brother-in-law, Howard and Eddie; also, cousin Pete, and, oh, cousin Johnny. Johnny was in the Navy. So, we had quite a few from our family that were in serving at the time. My brother Stan, we called him Sonny, he served later, in the Korean War, for that period, but he was stationed out in Austria.

NM: He was stationed in Europe during the Korean War.

JP: Yes.

NM: When you were drafted, did you have a choice of which branch you could choose?

JP: Oh, yes, yes. I chose the Navy. I thought that I would--my cousin Johnny convinced me to join the Navy. So, that's one of the reasons I joined the Navy. Fortunately, they gave us a choice. That was in July, I believe, July, and then, I went off to Newport training base there in August, if I can remember exactly the date. I probably have it in here somewhere.

NM: That is okay. We can add it in later. Are there any moments from the induction process that stand out in your memory?

JP: Well, as I stated in the papers that I wrote, I was physically fit, but I certainly was hoping that I wouldn't get rejected for any particular reason. That's the only thing that would be outstanding. I was happy that I was accepted to serve.

NM: Tell us about your initial training at Newport.

JP: Our initial training was, well, when we finally got there, the first thing they did was cut our hair all off, shave it off, and, as I stated there in that write-up, we were called "skinheads." We had to wear boots all through the training. I recall running out on the grinder [an outdoor track], getting us up at five in the morning and just having a pair of, like, bathing trunks, running out on this grinder. One of the older fellows, I guess older, he was probably twenty, twenty-two, he's hanging on to the back of my pants as I'm running, because he's huffing and puffing. The guy was a little chubby there, and, oh, was puffing along, [laughter] but I guess I helped him get through it.

NM: You said you "finally" got there. Was it a long trip to get to Newport?

JP: Well, by train. Newport was one of the bases that still used hammocks in the barracks and it was quite a task to pull yourself up from one of the beams and swing into the hammock. Some of the fellows, "Whoosh," hit and missed and went off, hit the deck, [laughter] until they got used to it, although I recall, in the evening, one fellow fell out of it, "Clunk," fell right out of the hammock and they had to cart him off to the sick bay, yes.

NM: From what you said earlier, it sounds like you were in pretty good physical shape.

JP: Well, I would think so, yes. At the time, I would say so.

NM: Did you find anything either physically or mentally challenging about this training?

JP: No, not at all, no, nothing. I went through the training period fine. There was that one story that I put in the syllabus there about parading in front of the ex-king, King Edward of Great Britain, which was quite a thrill. We passed right by him and we had our eyes right--there he is, blonde hair, standing there with his wife, Wally Simpson, was it?

NM: I do not know.

JP: Oh, yes, Wally Simpson, and it was quite a thrill and I really enjoyed that. Seeing a king was quite impressive. [Editor's Note: King Edward VIII of the United Kingdom abdicated his throne on December 11, 1936, so that he could marry American socialite Wallis Simpson. He subsequently became the Duke of Windsor and served as governor of the Bahamas during World War II.]

SA: Was it difficult for you to get used to the regimented lifestyle on the base?

JP: No, no. I enjoyed the food, was good. Our favorite, SOS, "shit-on-a-shingle," that was good. [laughter] That was that chopped beef and sort of a little bit of a sauce on a piece of toast; have Navy beans in the morning. One thing I didn't care for was the corn mush, when we had that.

SA: Was there anything about your training that you disliked? It sounds like you had a fairly easy time.

JP: Yes, I had a pretty easy time of it. Getting toward the end of our training, we were carted along--not carted, but we were marched off--to the rifle range and I guess to test how well we were as marksmen. I didn't do too well, but one of the fellows that was a pretty good sharpshooter, wound up that they chose him--as we were getting our papers as to what destinations we were going to next, I was assigned to the storekeeper's school in Bainbridge, Maryland, I guess because of, probably, my A&P working background. This fellow that was a sharpshooter, he winds up assigned to the Armed Guard on the merchant ships. Oh, my gosh, when he heard that, he broke down and he was crying. Oh, my gosh, he thought that was the end of his life, because, at that time, many of these ships there were being sunk, on the route to Murmansk, the port in Russia.

NM: Was this your first time outside of Hackensack or the New Jersey area?

JP: Well, not really. I guess I had spent a couple of weeks in, like, a day camp in the Poconos--not the Poconos, Bear Mountain, at Lake Kanawauke. Actually, well, that's in New York, so, that's, if you want to say, out of New Jersey. [laughter]

NM: Okay. Did you meet people from all over the United States in your training?

JP: Oh, yes, as I went, right, in training, and also as you go along through the service, you meet people from all different states.

NM: Did you encounter anyone who you found it difficult to understanding their speech, with their accents?

JP: No, no, not at all.

NM: You found out your next assignment after your training at Newport.

JP: My next assignment was the naval base in Bainbridge, Maryland, the storekeeper/yeoman's, combination storekeeper/yeoman's school. I spent, I believe, four months there, from September through to January, and then, we were put on the train to California, USNS at Shoemaker, CA, another thing I really enjoyed, that this was actually my first--after Newport, my first experience out of New Jersey. Newport, then Bainbridge, but this trip across country, to me, it was memorial. I was amazed to see the country. Of course, by train, it took us quite [awhile], six days, to get from--where did we leave from? I guess from Washington, DC, or possibly Bainbridge, Maryland. Then to Union Station, and on to California. On the way, I was amazed at some of the sights to see, the beautiful country that we live in, passing through the West that I always loved. As a kid, I wanted to be a cowboy and here it is, I'm out here in some of the places that I would hear while listening to *The Lone Ranger* or one of the other [shows], *Bobby Benson*, and seeing, actually getting to see firsthand, the mesas and the buttes, the beautiful rivers, the Colorado River, Red Mountains and plains, that, to me, it was quite a thrill just to be able to enjoy that opportunity to see this. So, our first stop was Stockton, California, and, from there, we were sent to the receiving station. It was close to--when we had liberty, we'd go into San Francisco. I don't know how long a period that was, maybe a month, or more from January--

yes, about a month--that we were there at the receiving station. At that time, they would go through everything, physicals, making sure that we were [healthy], teeth, including, if you had decayed teeth, they'd [Mr. Pitula imitates getting a tooth pulled], rip it out, which they did. I had a couple that were taken out, yes, and so that you were fit when you were going overseas.

NM: At the storekeeper's school, did you, at that point, know if you would be stationed on a base or on a ship?

JP: No, no, I had no idea where I would be assigned at the time.

NM: What were some of the things that you were taught in your advanced training?

JP: It was almost like bookkeeping and, also, you had to learn how to type, which helped me later on when I became a yeoman, a yeoman striker. There was an opening for a yeoman, and then, I figured, "Hey, that [sounds good]." So, I applied for it, as I was at the--this is after I got to the advanced base in New Caledonia. They had come over. I was in the receiving station in Nouméa at the time and it came over the loudspeaker that they were looking for yeoman strikers, that were storekeeper yeoman strikers. So, I said, "Hey, might as well apply for it," and that's how I got to stay, actually, in New Caledonia. It was at the COMSERONSOPAC, which is, we called it, Command Service Squadron of the South Pacific. The abbreviation was COMSERONSOPAC, and there was the COMSOPAC also, where the Admiral [had his headquarters], where Admiral Halsey [Fleet Admiral William Frederick Halsey, Jr.] was for a while, but I didn't get to see him, and then, other admirals along the way. We'd always have, like, a parade to their command center in the morning, Marines marched to the band music there, "Bum-bum-bum," as they're marching along. He'd parade them to the headquarters in his command car.

NM: If you had not taken this yeoman striker position at New Caledonia, where would you have gone?

JP: It's possible I would've been assigned to a ship or another base, whatever. At the time, I didn't give that a thought. I just thought I wanted to get one of those stripes on my arm. [laughter] So, I jumped at the opportunity.

NM: What do you recall about your trip over to the Pacific? Was this your first time on a large ship?

JP: Oh, yes, first time. It was a troop transport, which was actually a converted Italian luxury liner. It was the *Conte Grande*; it was changed to the *Monticello*, the name of the troopship. It was a converted luxury liner. The bad part was that I was assigned to the lower deck, the bottom of the ship. [laughter] They had stacked us in bunks about four high, four to five high. My gosh, it was really--they had us in there like, not exactly like a slave ship, but packed in there pretty tight--but, actually, we were able to roam the ship. In the evenings, we'd go up on deck even, to cool off--it was so hot down below.

NM: Were there rough seas going across?

JP: No, the seas weren't too bad. We took a zig-zag [course], I recall that, zig-zag. It took us forever to get to where we were going and, always, we're watching that little radar up on top of the ship, as it's circling around. When it would stop, we'd say, "Ooh, hope it's not a sub," [laughter] but the crew said, "Don't worry. We're fast enough to outrun any sub."

NM: Did your ship to travel alone or was it part of a convoy?

JP: It was all alone, all alone, no convoy.

NM: Did any of the men get seasick on this cruise?

JP: Oh, yes, there were quite a few were seasick and, fortunately, I was okay. I didn't get seasick.

NM: Tell me about your first stop in the Pacific. Where did you stop?

JP: That was the first stop. It was the port of Nouméa in New Caledonia.

NM: What were your initial impressions of New Caledonia?

JP: Oh, it was beautiful, palm trees, coconut palms, lovely beach. It was actually a French possession and the people there, naturally, Frenchmen, there was also the natives on the island, or we called them Kanakas and I guess they were a mixture of Polynesian and whatever, because some of them had this reddish hair. I don't know whether it was dyed or whether it was natural, but they looked like bushmen, and, also, there were Orientals, plenty of Orientals there also. The women would be running around with their sandals, sampan hats, but I don't know whether they were Japanese or Javanese. It could've been either, but they were living on the island as other people, like even the Japanese that were living in Hawaii at the time.

NM: That is interesting. I wonder if they were possibly Vietnamese.

JP: They could've been. It could've been any of those Oriental [people], from the Oriental race.

NM: Tell me a little bit more about what you remember about life on the base and your duties. As I mentioned before, we have never interviewed somebody who served on one of these bases. Can you describe the base, how big it was, how many people served there?

JP: Oh, yes, actually, it was quite a large base. There were quite a few ships in, coming in and coming out, going out, all the time. We were situated high on a hill, and so, I could look right down into the base and one of the beautiful things, after we were there a while, was seeing these PBY [sea]planes come in, because we knew that was bringing us mail. Naturally, news, any news, mail, news from home, was always very welcome, but, being away from home, you have your thoughts of home and everything else.

NM: Were you able to write to your family and receive letters from home?

JP: Oh, yes, we were able to write, which all the mail was actually [censored]. We would write it up, then, it would go to a censor. He would look it over and cut out or block out things that he didn't want to appear in the letters that we wrote. Then, it was V-mail, like a photocopy. That's how it was sent out.

NM: I know that Steve has a lot of good questions; go ahead.

SA: You served as a storekeeper on the base.

JP: As I said, I was a yeoman striker then, because of the fact that they had announced over the loudspeaker they were looking for people to fill the compliments there at the headquarters of the South Pacific Command. So, I jumped at the chance, because I figured it would be able to give me [the chance to get] promoted quicker that way and that's what everybody's looking for, to get a promotion, too. [laughter]

SA: What were some of your responsibilities?

JP: Was clerical, more clerical, clerical work, yes, a lot of typing.

SA: I have read a few other interviews with men who served in similar capacities. Did you ever have to deal with balance sheets, concerning GIs salaries? Did you ever process any of the officers' papers?

JP: Oh, yes, we processed officers' papers and assignments, but I didn't do any balancing of ledgers or anything like that.

SA: What did the Navy pay clerks in your position?

JP: Oh, gee, let me see, what was the pay? I think we started out with, initially, in boot training, I think it was twenty-one dollars.

SA: Twenty-one?

JP: I think it was twenty-one dollars a month. I'm not sure what it went up to. I can't recall the gradual pay raise scales there. [laughter]

SA: Did you mail that money home or did you keep it for your own use?

JP: Some I kept for personal use. I don't know how I would mail it, unless it was not really in my possession or the government's possession, where they would be able to send it to home, because my mother had been saving money for me that I somehow sent. Maybe it was wired back or whatever, through the government, where I didn't actually see it, but it was sent on to my home address. Of course, I had wound up with about nine hundred dollars saved when I was discharged, that my mother had put in the bank for me.

SA: In general, did you enjoy your work? Did you find it boring?

JP: No, I enjoyed it. Naturally, the climate was beautiful, temperature-wise, all year round, except for periods where we did have heavy rains, monsoons, in that period, but, other than that, to me, I enjoyed it.

SA: Did you get a chance to see the island?

JP: Oh, sure, yes, in town, and also a lot of the island which was about a hundred miles by thirty miles.

NM: Do you have any favorite memories?

JP: Favorite memories was, every month, they had a dance at one of these French places that welcomed the servicemen and I'd get to dance with the French girls, which was pretty nice.

NM: What was a typical day like for you?

JP: It was just all work, seven days a week, report to headquarters, go through your periodicals that would come through, assign them to different departments. Then, we'd have a fellow pick up and deliver it to all the different Quonset huts. There were a bunch of Quonset huts. Actually, our sleeping quarters were the tents, slept in six to a tent, up on this nice mountain ridge there. You could look down on the Pacific waters and the bay and at the naval base.

NM: What was the weather like there?

JP: Weather was very comfortable. It wasn't overbearingly hot. It was just perfect, like a perfect temperature. To me, that was really [nice]. Christmas Day, I remember Christmas Day was a beautiful day, warm out, even a little warmer than we have out now, and thinking, "Gosh, I'd love to see snow again." [laughter]

NM: You mentioned that you would occasionally go dancing, once a month.

JP: Yes.

NM: In the town. You mentioned that the population was very diverse, Frenchmen, islanders and Asians. Did you have any interactions with these people in town?

JP: With the people, oh, yes--well, not even in town. Some of them would walk up through our compound. A little French boy would always come by looking for American coins. He would trade French coins for the American coins, and, as he would go by, he used to [say], "(*Alae, alae, ta-ta?*)", as he would go on his way. [laughter] There was the governor's [mansion], actually, the governor of the island had his mansion there. They invited us in this one year. It was like an open house, open to the servicemen, and they had plenty of food and wine and whatnot that they had out for us, even though we were underage. [laughter]

NM: Did any of the locals work on the base? Were you too separated from the base to notice?

JP: No, we didn't have any locals working. That was one of the things. Naturally, we had our periods where we had to serve, like, guard duty or whatever you call it. In the evening, we would have to just circle around all the different Quonset huts and make sure that they were locked, had to wear a forty-five sidearm, which I was hoping I would never shoot, [laughter] but they had precautions, because there could be, easily, sabotage, which did happen prior to my getting there. There was sabotage at the mine, located across the bay from our compound and nickel naturally, during the war, was a precious metal that they were mining. They had an incident where the mine, someone sabotaged, blew up. So, you always had to have a little caution in the back of your mind as you're working and your guard duty, in the night, that no one would pop out and just do you in.

NM: You were stationed at Naval Base 131.

JP: 131. Yes.

NM: For approximately two years.

JP: Yes, almost two years, yes.

NM: How closely did you follow the news about the War in the Pacific?

JP: Every day. Every day, we'd get write-ups on what was going on. One of the ships get hit by a mine as it was coming in, right outside the harbor, which was quite emotional, if you want to call it that, for the [base]. Everybody was rushing around, getting personnel off the ship and whatnot.

SA: Were there any other instances where you felt the war was close to you, where you could experience real danger?

JP: No, not really. Oh, I did get to see--it was shot down, though--a Japanese Zero, was carted in on one of the weapons carriers, and we said, "Wow, look at that there." You could see the Rising Sun on it.

NM: Are there any other vivid memories that stand out from your time there?

JP: As far as?

NM: Whatever you might recall, either in your everyday duties or other circumstances.

JP: It was just routine, actually, every day, every day, and evenings, we had little [entertainment] with the boys. Some of the Southern boys, they had the guitar and fiddle, I had a harmonica, I'd play the harmonica. So, we had, like, a little band for our entertainment. There was, like, a little rec shop, rec room, where you could play Ping-Pong, and you were allotted two bottles of beer. That was your rations, liquor rations, two bottles of beer, and some of the older

guys would want you to sell your bottle to them, so [that] they could pile up about three or four of them. [laughter] So, I do recall one incident where someone got a hold of some Australian beer. We got a little looped one night. Boy, that, the following day, I was sick as can be, from my first experience, the one, first experience of being sick from drinking too much.

NM: What else would you do for recreation on the base, when you did have some downtime?

JP: That was it, getting together. Downtime, we'd have to do our wash, wash your own clothing and everything else. There was a washing machine plugged in by the shower and I used to wash, every other day or so, my clothes, hang them up on a line.

NM: From interviewing other gentlemen who served on bases in Europe, in particular, I interviewed some truck drivers in supply units, they would talk about how the black market developed, cigarettes, things like that. Was there anything comparable to that on your base?

JP: No, I can't recall that. I know, actually, I didn't smoke prior to going into the service, but, on that troopship, they had handed out cartons of cigarettes to [us], as we were going onboard. That was my first attempt at smoking and, naturally, after a while, you get hooked on it. So, the sea stores were only five cents a pack, fifty cents a carton, when we were on the island. So, there was no, I can't recall any, black marketing. After, now, this is after the war was over, I went down, on a rest-and-recreation, R&R, to New Zealand and we either could fly down on a C-47, but there was also an LST that was going down, *LST-124*. The fellow that was going down to New Zealand with me--actually, he was being assigned to the Joint Purchasing Board in Wellington--he said, "Hey, you want to come along, see if we can get on the *LST-124*?" and I said, "Yes, why not?" instead of waiting for a slot on one of the planes to get over to [New Zealand]. I said, "Fine." So, I wound up on the LST going to New Zealand, that took us, oh, gee, gosh, a good five days or so, five, six days. The ship, the LST, I didn't realize it, boy, when it was out there, out at sea, would go from one side to the other, and then, it'd go way up in the air, and then, it'd flop down. Boy, that was just the routine of, "Bong, bong, bong." [laughter] There was a couple of Marines going also to New Zealand and this one Marine, he was so sick that he was in the bunk. It was a little chilly on the deck and I didn't have a warm weather jacket. So, I said, "Hey, can I borrow your jacket?" So, I borrowed his jacket. I went out on deck and I was sitting out there, just looking at the waves, the ship rolling with the waves. [laughter] It was quite an experience, because they took us down through the Tasman Sea, close to Australia and then, into Wellington Harbor. Once I got to Wellington, I was supposed to get to, report to, Auckland. So, I would wait in Wellington for them to unload all their cargo and everything else that was going to New Zealand. I reported to the Joint Purchasing Board there, because I had to deliver papers. A lieutenant, I don't know what his rank was, but he was commander on the LST, first lieutenant or whatever--he asked me to bring papers, some papers, to the Joint Purchasing Board. While I was there, I ran into CPO Chief Brown that served with us over at the COMSERONSOPAC and he said, "Hey, Joe, what are you doing out here?" I said, "Well, I'm on R&R. I'm going to Auckland. He said, "Well, we'll get you on a train from Wellington, instead of going back on the LST." So, I took a train from Wellington to Auckland and I reported there for my leave.

NM: What was Auckland like during the war? Could you describe it?

JP: Well, this is after the war. Everybody, naturally, they were all happy that the war is over. This is in September, was September, right? right after the signing of the Japanese surrender. [Editor's Note: V-J Day was declared on August 14, 1945, in the United States. Japan formally surrendered on September 2, 1945, in a ceremony held onboard the USS *Missouri* (BB-63) in Tokyo Bay.] I had a good time out there, met, naturally, the girls and she took me out in the country, showed me some nice spots in the country. From there, then, after my leave was up, I flew back to Nouméa on a C-47.

NM: You were at Navy Base 131 when the war ended in the Pacific.

JP: Right.

NM: What was the reaction like on the base?

JP: Oh, they were celebrating, yes. Yes, the French there, they'd shoot, like, firecrackers and everything else, yes. Everybody was happy, because, actually, they were a little frightened that the Japanese were going to invade them, invade that island, as they got closer to New Guinea and they were in Guadalcanal, in that area, which wasn't too far from New Caledonia. Also, the Australians were afraid also, in the early part of the war, that Australia would've been invaded.

NM: After the war ended, did your daily activities on the base change at all?

JP: Oh, sure, because, then, we're starting to wind down with our activities and that's when I was sent back to the receiving station. They had me working in the personnel department, because of the typing and all that that had to be done, typing out lists for the personnel that were going to be sent back to the States. As I pointed out in my little story there, I saw an opening come along for a fly-back from Noemea back to San Francisco on a B-24, I believe, a B-24 bomber, and I do have, on the world map, I had marked it out, I wanted to show you. Can you, I don't know whether you want me to show it to you.

NM: Yes, I will pause it.

[TAPE PAUSED]

NM: For the record, we are looking at a map of the places where Mr. Pitula traveled and served in the Pacific. You mentioned before the break that you went on a B-24 to come back home.

JP: Right, on the B-24, on the way back, and our first stop was in Fiji, landed at Fiji, had to stay overnight, naturally, because they weren't flying at night at all. All of these stops were because of the fact that we had to refuel and, after the island of Fiji, we flew on to Canton Island, which is close to the Equator, and then, at that [was] where we had our first incident of a little emergency. Prior to that, I should say that we're flying back with a bunch of Navy nurses that were being sent back to the States and there was about, I guess, about seven, eight of us, plus the crew, onboard. All of a sudden, one of the crew members is running back and forth, and then, he's pounding, pounding. I say, "What the heck's going on?" They couldn't get the landing gear

down, of the plane, and we had to circle around, circle around, all of this. You could see where the emergency vehicles were coming out on this coral atoll, the landing strip. That's all it was. It was just a bare, bare, nothing, nothing on it but just a couple of huts, Quonset huts, and it was a refueling station. That's all it was. Eventually, they were able to get the landing gear down manually, and then, we were able to land safely, without any problem, but that was a little scary. [laughter] Now, the next leg was to another little island, Palmyra, just not too far from Hawaii, and that was a beautiful [island], just covered with coconut palm, just looked like that's all that was on the island, [laughter] just a landing strip and a load of coconut palm. That was also a spot that we had to refuel, and then, from there on, we flew on to Oahu. We landed at the naval air station in Oahu and then, from there, I couldn't continue, because the spot on the plane, my spot, was taken up by an officer that bumped me. [laughter] So, then, I had to spend about a week down at the receiving station in Hawaii, Aiea, I believe it was called that name. At night, you could smell the pineapples in the pineapple groves and Hawaii was nice. It was nice to be able to spend a little time in Hawaii, but, then, after the week was up, we were carted off to our ships to come back to the States. The ship that I was assigned to was the *Saratoga*, the carrier. As I was walking in line, up the gangplank, the officer of the day spots me, says, "Hey, Pitula, what are you doing out here?" and it was a friend of mine from Hackensack, Johnny Zisa, said, "My gosh." He said, "Hey, you get out of that line. You're not going to get bunked up with the rest of them." So, he had me living in the crew quarters with him. So, I spent my four days going back to the States as one part of the crew on the carrier, with the privileges of early chow, getting my blues all pressed for my liberty in San Francisco.

NM: How many troops did they put on this aircraft carrier to bring back to the States?

JP: Oh, God, it was loaded. They had the hangar deck cleared out and it was all bunks in the hangar deck for them. It was soldiers, Marines, the works, sailors.

NM: Before you were discharged, did you ever entertain the thought of staying in the military?

JP: Not at that time, no, not at that time. After I was discharged--well, actually, after getting back to San Francisco, I still was on active duty. I had to report to Pier 92 in New York. Now, I was home on thirty day leave and was able to get home for Christmas, which was wonderful. I recall getting off the bus, then, walking down Green Street in Hackensack and the first person I ran into was my sister Jean. She said, "Oh, Joey, is that you?" and she came, ran and jumped into my arms, and it was quite a thrill. A very happy moment.

NM: You came home in time for Christmas. How did your family react to your homecoming?

JP: Oh, happy, very happy. So, after my Christmas leave, I was assigned to Pier 92 in New York for further assignment and my next assignment was the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, which was actually located in Arlington, Virginia. So, I spent my time at the Bureau from January until April, April, May, when I was discharged. Actually, I guess, while I was there, I was typing up, like you're doing with history, for the archives, just typing out stories of the service and it was wonderful. I enjoyed staying in Washington also, because, naturally, there's so much to see in Washington, too, when you're off duty.

NM: What was Washington like in the immediate postwar period?

JP: It was like back to normal, like everyday living, all the experiences, walking down the streets of Washington, past Ford's Theatre, where Lincoln was assassinated, that home across the way where he died, naturally, all the monuments and everything else in Washington, amazing. When I first saw the Capitol, it was all lit up at night. It looked so beautiful.

NM: Did you have any plans for what you would do after your time in the service?

JP: No, not really, not really, no plans at all, at the time. After getting discharged from Lido Beach in New York, we signed up for our--the twenty-one, I think it was, they gave us twenty-one, something or other, dollars for fifty-two weeks, twenty-one?

SA: Yes, you said twenty-one.

JP: 21/52? I believe that's what it was, they called it.

NM: 52/20?

JP: 52/20 Club. [laughter]

NM: Yes. [Editor's Note: The GI Bill included a "52/20" clause, which provided twenty dollars a week for fifty-two weeks to discharged servicemen while they looked for work.]

JP: Yes, and so, I did that for, what? from May until around July, May, June, July, but, then, I was looking for work. My first shot at a job was [as] a messenger for the Melchior, Armstrong, Dessau Company. They were an export outfit and I was a [messenger], delivering documents to the different shipping companies for clearance of the ship that the material that they were manufacturing at Melchior, Armstrong, Dessau [was on]. They were a manufacturer of refrigeration equipment. A lot of this stuff was going to South America, and then, I would have to go to the Customs House to get, also, the clearance on the documents stamped, then, bring it back to either the shipping company or back to Melchior, Armstrong. So, I can't recall right now what the procedure was, but, anyhow, I worked there for a while, and then, I thought--I got to know some of the people in the different shipping companies and I got a job also there. So, I left Melchior, Armstrong and I was working in the shipping company in New York City, but I didn't stay there too long, got back to New Jersey, and then, took up a job with the Willis Air Service, over in Teterboro, in the accounting department. I thought probably that would be my profession then, business administration. So, I was at Willis Air Service for a little short time and, actually, Willis, they were a bunch of veterans from the service, pilots that formed this little company, a little shipping [company], planes taking off to different areas. I recall there was also a carrier there, the Flying Tiger carrier, and they had that shark, tiger shark, painted on their planes, out there in Teterboro. From Willis Air Service, then, I wound up with a job in Lyndhurst, for the J. M. (Lehman?) Company as an expediter and, after a while, as things are, I was laid off. Then, I started looking for a job again and I wound up with Rutherford Machinery and worked there for a while, but the salary was low. I said, "This is nonsense. Maybe I should try to learn a trade." So, we had friends that moved to South Hackensack, actually neighbors that opened up a

business. On this plot of land where I used to play, Mike had his sheet-metal shop, MikeZattareli. So, I said to Mike, I said, "Mike, is it possible I could come and learn the sheet-metal business with you?" He said, "Sure." So, I worked there. I was working with him in the evenings, and then, I was still working at Rutherford Machinery during the day, in my office job. After a while, I got to run all the sheet-metal equipment and I figured, "Well, okay, this is it," and so, I worked there for Mike for a while, and then, I decided to look further, to some other company where I could make more money. I wound up at DuMont, applied for a job there and I was hired at DuMont's. I worked at DuMont's, in the sheet-metal shop, for about four-and-a-half years and, unfortunately, things were slow, and then, I was laid off again. So, I said, "Oh, my gosh, what am I going to do now?" because, at that time, I was married and had a young child. So, I decided, "I think I'm going to get back into the office, working in the office again." So, I went to the different agencies and ran into one of the men that used to work over at J. M. (Lehman?) Company and he said, "Oh, Joe, good to see you again. I think I'll try to find you a nice, good place where you can succeed, work yourself up," and it was the Square D Company in Secaucus. I went for an interview and they liked my credentials, because of the fact [that] I worked in, had done, office work, also, worked in the sheet-metal shop. That seemed to be what they were looking for, someone in material control and that capacity. So, I was hired and, from there on, I progressed. I became, after a while, material control supervisor and progressed along the line, and then, from there, I also wound up in sales, became a salesman in the sales department, as an office sales[man], and worked at Square D for the rest of my working life, retired in 1987 and have been in retirement since.

NM: Where was Square D located?

JP: In Secaucus. Actually, their main headquarters was in Milwaukee.

NM: Did you continue to live in the Hackensack area after the war?

JP: Yes, yes. But in 1948 I was married and was living in East Rutherford.

NM: Where did you, your wife and young child eventually relocate to?

JP: Well, after meeting my wife, I guess you have the story there--I don't know, did you read that story or not?

NM: Yes.

JP: Well, I don't know whether you want me to repeat it now.

NM: Go ahead, please.

JP: I met her at a dance at the Y in Hackensack. The YMCA in Hackensack gave servicemen free membership and Wednesday was always dance night, and so, naturally, all the girls and the young fellows were out to see who they could meet up with. I danced with a few of the girls. One of the girls was Alba. She was a good-looking, dark-haired girl. I didn't realize it, but she was also a friend of this other girl that I had started to dance with, which turned out to be my

wife. She was the blonde. She had beautiful blonde hair and I danced with her and she felt comfortable dancing with me, so, I asked her, well, for a date. She said, "Well, yes." We were walking and we walked down Main Street in Hackensack and there was a movie theater, the Fox Theater, and I said, "Would you like to go to the movies next week?" She accepted and, from then on, we kept dating [laughter] and, eventually, wound up marrying her and living with her parents in East Rutherford.

SA: You told us about the various jobs you held in your career. Where does your college experience come into that?

JP: Oh, during the time that I was--prior to being married--I was going to Bergen Junior College and was going through a business administration course that I was taking, going evenings, working during the day, going in the evenings, and after, eventually, I married and we had a child, so, naturally, this is--I was going to Bergen Junior College, I believe, since from 1946, nights, and then, got married in 1948 and had our first child in 1951. I guess it was after my first child, it got to be a little bit of a burden on my wife. So, I dropped out of Bergen, out of college, which had merged with Fairleigh Dickinson at the time. So, I didn't complete my four years at all, but it took quite a while going nights. So, I wound up with about two years' credits.

NM: I understand that you also used the GI Bill when you purchased your home.

JP: Oh, yes, yes, right, through the GI Bill. The rate at the time was four percent, which was a good rate, but not compared to what the rates are nowadays, but, at that time, four percent was pretty low. We bought our [home], after, like I say, we lived with the parents for two-and-a-half years in East Rutherford and decided, after our child was born, that we should be on our own. We looked for an apartment. It was kind of tough, because there weren't many apartments being available at that time, because, naturally, with the war effort, they weren't building. They were just starting up again building homes and whatnot, but we couldn't afford a home right then, at that time. I had to rent, find a place to rent. We wound up in this beat-up, old railroad flat in East Rutherford, in the Carlton Hill Section of East Rutherford. It was a cold water flat, no central heating there. We purchased an old stove, which was fueled by kerosene, and, in the winter, it got a little cold. We were pretty cold. So, being this was four rooms, they called them railroad flats, I had to get another kerosene-fed stove for the living room, but that, I had it exhausted, so [that] we wouldn't get overcome with the carbon monoxide. So, that was our means of heating in the wintertime. As far as heating water, the tank was connected with a gas heater. That was our way of heating the water for our showers or the wash and all that. Shower, forget about a shower. A tub was all that we had there. It was quite a dump, what we moved into. My wife, when we were working on it, she was in tears, really, but that was all that was available. We had to put up with that for almost four years, until we decided we had accumulated enough money to purchase a home, put a down payment on a home, which we did. That was in Lodi, bought a home in Lodi, which was a two-family home. I figured we could get an income coming in from our tenants. That seemed to work out pretty good for a while.

NM: You mentioned earlier that Hackensack was very rural when you were growing up. At this point, were you noticing a lot of new construction in the area?

JP: Oh, I guess after the war, things started to boom again, pick up. Homes were being built, factories were going up, but more and more demand, I guess. People that didn't have much were able to maybe start buying refrigerators. Then, TV was coming out at that time. So, naturally, the factories were being put up. The car, I had an old car that I purchased for about 250 dollars, that I rode around in and, finally, dumped it. After a while, I was able to buy myself a decent car.

NM: What is that area of Hackensack like today?

JP: I haven't been actually back to Hackensack in quite a while, because I guess, at times I do go there, it's too congested, not like it used to be when I was growing up as a kid.

NM: Going back to when you grew up in Hackensack, what was the composition of your neighborhood? Was it a Polish section? Was there a German section, for example, African-Americans in another part of the city? What was Hackensack like then?

JP: Yes, well, where I lived, there were quite a few African-Americans, also Italians. The lower part, where we were living, was more with the blacks and the Italians, like the rag picker that I was talking about. I guess you would call that the poorer section of the town, and then, the further up, going toward the school, Broadway School, was more--not that they were wealthy, but it was just ordinary folks, were probably just a little better off. It was the more Italian section up that way. The church was there, the St. Francis Church, in that section, which they congregated, where, naturally, the Italian group congregated. My experience with the blacks was pretty good. We had played with them, baseball. This is prior to my service time, growing up. There was blacks that lived next door to my grandmother on Lodi Street, one on each side, and, also, across the railroad track, they were all blacks in that area. They had their baseball team and we had ours and we played against each other. They were the Green Street Strutters and we were the Hackensack Eagles, played together. When we got thirsty, I would run over to my grandmother's house to get a jug of water. We'd come back, we'd all be drinking out of the same jug.

NM: Were there a lot of African-Americans in your school as well?

JP: Not as many, not as many, no. Well, the black population, naturally, there was always more white population there at the time, but, no, at the Broadway School, I can't recall too many blacks attending school there. Now, there must've been another school that they were going to; I don't know, but I'm not sure, but there could've been. I never thought of segregation or anything like that at the time growing up. So, I don't know whether that was in play or not.

SA: You joined the Reserves after the war, correct?

JP: Yes, I did, yes, I joined the Reserves after the war and we'd attend meetings once a week, but I can't recall how long. What I have doesn't tell me when, but that was the Reserve. I don't recall length of service.

NM: Did many people join the Reserves?

JP: Yes, a few of us, to get extra money. That was the reason for joining the Reserves [laughter] and the Korean War didn't start yet, but, when it did, the outbreak of the Korean War, I was married then and we also had a baby. Sharon, my first daughter was born and, when I got papers as to whether I would report for active duty, I had to fill out what I was doing and it did show that I was still going to school, to college, and that I had a child and they sent me back [a response] and said, "You're deferred." So, that was the extent of that, of my Naval Reserve service.

SA: Did you ever miss the service at all, or were you just enjoying your civilian life?

JP: On, no, I wouldn't say I missed the service. I'm happy that I was in the service. I think it's a good experience and that all young fellows should really have a taste of military service.

NM: Is there anything that you think we missed that we should ask about?

JP: Let me see, I can't really think of it, of anything right now, that I can add to it. Did I cover enough? I don't know.

NM: No, it was great. You covered a lot.

JP: It takes a while to try to remember everything and, also, to mesh it in with the period of time that you're talking about. [laughter]

NM: This will conclude today's interview. Thank you again, Mr. Pitula, for having us.

JP: Well, I thank you for requesting the interview.

SA: Our pleasure.

[Postscript from Joseph Pitula: At this time, I have three children. My oldest Sharon, is a registered nurse. My second child, Lynn, is a dental hygienist and my third child, Joseph, has his PhD from SUNY-Buffalo. He is a molecular biologist and a professor at the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore. I have six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.]

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 1/13/15

Reviewed by Joseph Pitula 4/3/2015

Reviewed by Molly Graham 5/13/2015