

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD L. SPAULDING

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

and

MARK EISEMAN

ORADELL, NEW JERSEY

APRIL 2, 2005

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Mark Eiseman: This begins an interview with Richard L. Spaulding on April 2, 2005, in Oradell, New Jersey, with Mark Eiseman and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. First off, Mr. Spaulding, I want to thank you for sitting down with us tonight.

Richard Spaulding: Thank you. It's my pleasure.

ME: Can you tell us a little bit, about where and when you were born?

RS: I was born and raised in Ionia, Michigan, about a hundred miles from Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan, and thirty-five miles from Michigan State. ... I still go back, considering everything, and I enjoy it. ... I was born in 1929 and have been around the world. [laughter]

ME: Could you tell us a little bit about your parents, maybe start with your father? ... Did he live in America from the beginning? Did he have to come in from overseas?

RS: No, he was born in Michigan and his father was mayor of Ionia. And my mother was a local girl [from] a family of five girls and they married and she was at one of the banks in Ionia, ended up with General Motors, as a certified public accountant, and so forth. So, my life, as a whole, until I got out of high school, and so forth, it was Ionia, Michigan, from athletics to travel to you-know-what.

ME: Did you have any other family in the area? Or was it just your immediate family?

RS: No, it was primarily my immediate family and my grandfather and grandmother, and so forth.

ME: Within your immediate family, did you have any brothers and sisters?

RS: Yes, I did. I had an older brother, I had a sister, myself, and a younger brother, so, we had quite a family.

ME: A good-sized household.

RS: Yeah, yeah, it was good and, [with] my younger brother, surprisingly enough, my mother didn't realize she was pregnant. ... She went to the hospital and found out that she was about to ... give birth ... and my brother weighed two pounds, eight ounces, when he was born and came out alive and went on and played football, and so forth. Unfortunately, he lost his life in an automobile accident, at the age of twenty-two, I think it was.

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Can you describe Ionia for us?

RS: Well, Ionia ... it was a small town. I think, at the time I was there, I don't recall specifically, but it was probably four thousand people. [It] had a manufacturing company, the Ypsilanti Reed Furniture Company, which employed a lot of people in Ionia. ... It was progressive, close to the automobile business in Lansing and Detroit, and so forth, so, there was quite a bit of business off-shoots from the automobile business, but there was a lot of employment, in supporting the

automobile business, and so forth.

ME: Growing up, what kinds of activities were you involved in, Boy Scouts, athletics, anything like that?

RS: Oh, yeah, yeah, participated in just about all of it, from, you mentioned Boy Scouts, yes, I was a Boy Scout. Athletics, yes, played football and basketball and was given great honors for that capacity and did a lot of local work, where I was employed by a lot of the local business people, at my young age, ... of selling newspapers on the street, delivering mail ... on the weekends. I was delivering mail, selling papers on the train, when it came into Ionia. ... So, I was very much involved, for my age, in the City of Ionia and, hate to use the word, but I was pretty well known, and that's continued on all my life. I've still got my bank account, checking account that I opened in 1935, and it's still alive. [laughter] ... They have the Ionia Free Fair, which is one of the largest fairs in Ionia, in Michigan. I think, this year it's going to be the ninety-ninth fair and I've participated [in them]. When I came back from Korea, ... I had the Thunderbirds there to put on a show during the fair and helped get celebrities to perform at night, at the night show, and, at the same time, before I was doing that, I was taking tickets and selling tickets on the midway, ... to make a couple of bucks. [laughter]

SH: What time of year is the fair held?

RS: It's usually the last week of July, first week of August and it's an annual function and, to this day, is alive.

SH: Now, do 4-H groups participate?

RS: They're all there, they all participate, yes, the country folks, and it's great.

SH: There is a lot of agriculture.

RS: Oh, yes, much, much agriculture involved and it was interesting. ... They have a big midway for young people, they have horse races and, as I say, some entertainment that we've all heard of or seen over the years, and so, it's quite active. All the people in Michigan know of [the] Ionia Free Fair. [laughter]

SH: What about as a young man growing up, before, in grade school. It sounds like you were very ambitious and quite an entrepreneur in grade school, but what did you do for fun?

RS: For fun, well, I think probably the biggest challenge and the fun I had was participating in sports and activities and going and watching practices and trying to participate in my own area, and so forth, but it was good.

SH: Now was your older brother someone you tagged along with?

RS: No, no, [not] my brother; I was the only one. My older brother was not a sports enthusiast like I was, but I got to know the newspaper people when I was young and he helped me a lot. He

gave me a lot of confidence and I helped him in selling papers, peddling papers, and so forth. ... So, I got to know these people. I got to know the bank people, the president of the banks, and the mayor of the town, and so forth, and that gave me a lot of strength to proceed and try to do the best I can with what I have. ... I learned a lot of lessons by being affiliated around some of the management people of Ionia, Michigan, and they worked with me and helped me, directed me.

SH: What was your father's main focus?

RS: He was at the ... N. J. Spaulding Hardware [Company]. That was my grandfather's company and my grandfather was the mayor of Ionia for I don't know how many years, but for several years. My dad worked there. Then, when my grandfather sold the store, he went to work for the reformatory in Ionia, which is, as I said earlier, one of the largest in the State of Michigan, between Jackson and Ionia. That's where he ended up and my mother ... ended up at the bank, and then, at General Motors, at the car agency in Ionia, the Cadillac agency.

SH: Did your parents ever talk about the Depression and how it affected the area around Ionia?

RS: Not that I really recall, other than I remember a lot of comments were made, "Come on now, do a good job. Give it your best effort," and so forth, but [we] never sat down to talk about the effect or the would-be effect. ... I learned from these people that I talked to, these business people, and so forth.

SH: You were very close to your grandfather.

RS: Yes, I was, right. He guided me in a lot of ways and, sometimes, I always thought it was easier for my grandfather to do it than my father and [I] never had a problem with my father, but my grandfather, I think, sunk in on me a little bit more. [laughter] ... He was very conscientious, very critical, and, when he saw something that he didn't think was really the right thing to do, he would talk to me and direct me. ... A lot of those discussions, I can remember to this day, compared to some I had yesterday and I can't remember who it was with or what [we discussed], but that's age. [laughter] ... It was good, it was really good and I enjoyed it and that gave me the strength [to succeed] and I used a lot of information that they proceeded to discuss with me, sometimes critical, but, on the other hand, [they would say], "Remember, Dick, do this, do that," and, to this day, it's still a part of me.

ME: During World War II, did you notice any changes in Ionia?

RS: Well, yeah, ... [there was] a lot of manufacturing, a lot of engineering, and so forth, and supplies and demands for units, and so forth, that were used during World War II. ... I knew quite a few people, gentlemen, that were in [the] Korean War, because I'd been around [them through] football. ...

SH: In World War II?

RS: In World War II, yeah, and ... always, when they came home, I'd make a point to see them

and they talked to me and wanted to know what went on [in Ionia], so on , and so forth. ... That was quite an extensive part of my life in those days, ... hearing what was going on and what they were doing. ... Every now and then, you'd get the bad news that somebody had passed away, but, yes, ... it gave me some strength to think about down the road and what was going to happen [to me]. Then, of course, Korea came shortly thereafter and I went from there.

ME: Do you remember when you first heard about Pearl Harbor? How did the town react?

RS: Not really, other than I talked about it many times afterwards, but a lot of people were upset to think about what was done and how it was done and our immediate reaction, and so forth, and [we were], quite frankly, quite surprised that it was done.

ME: Many of our interviewees have talked about their extreme like or dislike for President Roosevelt. How did your family view the President?

RS: Oh, I think, as I remember, my family and grandfather, and so forth, thought quite highly of Roosevelt and what he was attempting to do and under the conditions that ... he had to take under his belt ... to put [the country back] together. But I don't recall any real upheavals as a result of discussions or what I read in the paper. ...

SH: Do you remember any discussions within your family around the dinner table when Truman became President and decided to drop the atomic bomb?

RS: No, I don't, I really don't. A lot of people were not educated in the area that you're talking about, you know, in the machines and tools to do it with and [the] outcome, "What's going to happen?" but I don't remember any discussion with my parents on that.

SH: Did they feel confident in Truman?

RS: Oh, I think, as I remember it, ... I didn't see any displays that were against him or upheaval. Obviously, nobody's perfect and there were some discussions, as I recall. ... I've forgotten any that did happen.

ME: Did anybody in your family serve in either World War I or II?

RS: My father was in World War I and I think my grandfather was, too, was in there, but they were working at [the time of] World War II and then Korea came.

SH: Were there any satellite military bases set up around Ionia?

RS: No, no, not that I remember.

ME: Was your family active in a church in Ionia?

RS: Oh, yes. Our whole family was a member of ... St. John's Episcopal Church, ... my brothers and my sister, myself. I was an acolyte at the church and participated heavily and weekly. ...

Even after I left Ionia to go to school, ... I still participated and I have participated in the church [throughout my life]. I can't say I have in the last year or two, because of a discrepancy, but I have followed and participated in the church and that still is the oldest Episcopal Church in Michigan, I believe, yeah.

ME: One of the articles that you sent in detailed a trip you took to New York City when you were about eight to visit your aunt, Ione Ulrich Sutton. Can you tell us a little bit about that trip?

RS: Yes, well, that was an [eye]-opening trip for me, especially when I went alone, at eight years of age, and got on a train in Detroit. ... Mrs. Sutton is my mother's sister. She was in the Museum of Modern Art with Nelson Rockefeller. She founded it with Rockefeller, and so, "Grand Central Station, here I come." She came and met me and [we] went around. At the time, she and her husband were living, during the week, at the Lexington Hotel, which is [at] 48th and Lexington, down the street from Grand Central. ... So, she was very active and she was very honored to have me there and took me over to the museum and introduced me ... to a lot of people. ... One thing I never will forget, we got on ... the elevator one day, going down for lunch, and the man got on the elevator, "Oh, Dick, how are you? [Are] you enjoying this?" and I said, "Yes, Pete, it's great, great fun." Well, anyway, we carried on for a little bit and got down [to the ground floor]; my aunt said, "We've got to go back upstairs for a minute," and back we went. She got in her office and closed the door. "I want to tell you something, don't you ever call anybody by their first name," and she said, "I want that understood," and I said, "I'm sorry I did that," and I tell you, I've carried that out for many, many years in business, because of that, and, from there, we went up and saw the Yankees play. ... My aunt's husband was a PR man for the Yankees, and so, we got to [meet] Babe Ruth and really had a nice time and that started me, that truly did start me, and I've still made a lot out of it, to this day, of what we did.

ME: Your aunt really stressed the need for education. Did your parents push you towards higher education or did you choose that path?

RS: Well, yes, I think I have to take my hat off to my mother, especially, because my mother was a guideline and she was very interested in the children, her children, including me, and she pushed education and she wanted us to be involved in the school and she helped us do that. My father was not as progressive in that area as my mother. My mother was really the founder and the pusher, and so, we got along. She participated in school functions for them and sports. She was very good, but my father was not as active as [my mother]. I mean, he used to go to the games, don't misunderstand, but my mother was there, chasing and going.

SH: How was your mother's family involved in the community? I noticed that your aunt's name sounds very similar to the name of the town. Is there a connection?

RS: Oh, I don't think so. Ione Ulrich Sutton is her name, I-O-N-E, and I never heard that there was a connection. She was born, along with her sisters, [including] my mother, in a town called Muir, which is about fifteen miles from Ionia, and her father was in the lumber business and had a lumberyard in Muir, Michigan, ... but they all went to Ionia to school, and so forth. ... A lot of people have wondered about that, Ionia and Ione.

SH: I thought it was just me. [laughter]

ME: You are not alone.

RS: No, you're not alone, but, anyway, ... the family was pretty close. ... My mother's father was a very astute businessman and ran a very good lumberyard business , and so forth, but I never, because of the distance, [went there] and we didn't have an automobile until, like, nineteen, I want to say, '45, yes. ... My grandfather in Ionia, he had a car and he used to allow my father to take it and drive it once in a while, for us, ... but we didn't have a car.

ME: Where did you end up going to college?

RS: Michigan.

ME: At Ann Arbor?

RS: Yes, at Ann Arbor.

ME: How did you end up choosing the University of Michigan over, say, Michigan State?

RS: Well, I don't know. I knew quite a few people [who went to Michigan State]. I went down and interviewed at Michigan State. I got accepted. [Clarence] "Biggie" Munn accepted me to play football there, but I just decided that I would like to go to Ann Arbor. I loved it, you know, the buildings and the name and [the] participation , and so forth. So, I went there. ... When I went out to the Rose Bowl in 1947, '48, ... in Ionia, [there was] a gentleman that ran the Hill Fravel Laundry, [who] owned it. He was an Ohio State man, but he sponsored a lot of football trophies , and so forth, for the high school. When Michigan was going to play USC, he said, "Let's go to California."

SH: You were a freshman in college.

RS: [laughter] I wasn't quite there. ... We talked to my parents and, long story short, Hill Fravel had a Jeep station wagon and we put on there, "Go Mich," and four of us got in the car and off we went and we drove non-stop to California, with two football tickets.

ME: There were four of you in the car.

RS: Four of us in the car and we went out there and went out to USC, just to look around after we got out there, and who came out of the lavatory but the coach of USC. ... I walked up to him and I said, "Coach, I'm So-and-So from Ionia, Michigan, I'm out here [for the game] and I just wondered, is there any place I could buy, we could get, two student tickets?" He said, "You came out here without tickets?" I said, "Here's a gentleman that will confirm that and we're all legitimate. There's nothing going on that shouldn't be going on. We're here," and he said, "You came out here, you brought these boys out here, with no tickets?" and John Fravel said, "That's right." "Come on in my office." ... In his office, we went and we had ID, of course, you know, showed him and he said, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you two tickets, to

you and John Moore, ...we're going to make you ushers at the Rose Bowl. ... We're going to pay you six dollars-and-fifty cents and give you a lunch, a box lunch. We're going to put you on the fifty-yard-line, next to the press, right near Harry Wismer and all these old boys, and I want you to enjoy it." ... We said, "I assure you, we'll do the best job [we can]. You'll never find a problem with us." Long story short, we did. My God, we were on every radio show going, and [we told them] how we got there and what we did , and so forth. [laughter] When we got home, over the next three or four weeks, we got about four hundred-and-fifty dollars in the mail from different people ... [that] sent us a dollar here, a dollar there. ... We took that money and sent it back to USC, to ... Coach Steele, and said, "Thank you for a wonderful time and we want to donate this to the Athletic Department." [laughter] ... By God, he took it and he wrote to us and we never heard the end of it. We were on every damned radio show going. So, that was ... that trip.

SH: That was some trip.

RS: Yes, it was really something to be aware of., so, that's the way it was and I ended up in Michigan. ...

ME: What did you study at Michigan?

RS: Business, yes, and then, Korea came along and my mother was on the draft board in Ionia. ... Not to do anything illegal, but she called me up one day at school; she says, "Son, I'm going to tell you, you'd better think about what you're going to do with the military, because once you get your draft notice, you can go only to the Army. You can't go to the Navy or the Marines or whatever, [the] Air Force." I said, "Okay." So, I talked with a couple of other boys at Ann Arbor about it and I said, "I'm going down to Detroit, to go to Selfridge Air Force Base, to see about going to officer's training, Officer's Candidate School." So, we went down there, the three of us. Next thing I know, when the sergeant came in, we got to talking, he said, "Why don't you guys fly airplanes?" I said, "My God, I've never seen an airplane, let alone fly it. You know, I'm lucky to have a car, or a family car." Anyway, he said, "Well, I'll think about it. We [all] take the same test. You've got to get a little higher percentile on the flying part of it and ... your health requirements are a little bit different, your depth perception, and so forth." So, we took it and we went and did everything they asked us to and we took our written test for about two-and-a-half hours, got ready to go and we got all finished up, and he called us in the room and he said, "Well, I want to tell you something, you guys did a great job. All three of you qualified to go to flight school." [laughter]

SH: The Air Force recruiter said this.

RS: Air Force, yes, and I said, "My goodness," as did everybody else. Anyway, based on that, and they confirmed it in writing to us , and so forth, we agreed to go into flight school. ... This was, like, in February, and so, we had to finish our schooling for the semester [at] Ann Arbor and ... went to [the Air Force] as a cadet for one year, the lowest rank you can get, you know, but, anyway, we went to flight school and learned to fly airplanes and jets. ... From graduation, in May of '52, we went to fighter school and flew F-84s in training, and then, went to Korea and flew combat.

SH: You graduated from Michigan in 1952.

RS: No, I didn't, no. I had to leave because I was [in the service]. In those days, you couldn't [get deferred].

SH: Did Michigan grant you your degree anyway?

RS: No, they did not. ... So, we've had many discussions about that situation. [laughter]

SH: Since the University of Michigan is a land-grant college, did you have mandatory ROTC for your first two years of college?

RS: No, no. ... I didn't have any ROTC and, I don't know, I've never thought about that. ... So, anyway, we just went and graduated and got our commission ... in the Air Force.

SH: Where was your flight school? Where were you assigned first?

RS: We went down to Alabama and Georgia, and then, went out to Phoenix, to Williams Air Force Base, where we graduated from.

SH: Your training was broken up into different sections, with so many months for each phase.

RS: ... Yes, six months.

SH: Six months in Alabama, six months in Georgia.

RS: Yes, yes. ... Not Alabama, it's Georgia. I'm sorry, I said it, but, anyway, ... then, we went down and graduated from school and got our pilot rating and our commission as a second lieutenant.

SH: You earned your wings in Phoenix.

RS: Phoenix, and then, went from Phoenix, Williams Air Force Base, across town to Luke and went through gunnery school there, went out in the desert, practicing dive-bombing and strafing and shooting, and so forth.

SH: Out of Phoenix?

RS: Out of Luke Air Force Base.

SH: Luke, in Phoenix.

RS: Yes, but it's in Phoenix there, and then, from there, we went directly to Korea. So, we had about one hundred-and-fifty flight hours, yes, and went to combat, went into combat with a total of about one hundred-and-fifty flight hours. ... Out of that, we probably had about, I don't know,

thirty-five, forty hours of jet training, and so, that was the military that got me started [in aviation].

SH: Did you feel that you were well trained by that time?

RS: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: In that short period of time.

RS: Yes, yes. Well, you did, because you did what you were supposed to do and you're participating in gunnery and the range, and so forth. I don't say that we were 102 percent satisfied, but, yes, we felt comfortable.

SH: Was there a high washout rate during your training?

RS: Yes, ... there were quite a few, initially, in the turbo-prop or the propeller airplanes, T-6.

SH: Did you start out on a small plane, like a Piper Cub, and move up?

RS: Well, [the] T-6 is, which is a prop airplane.

SH: Single-engine?

RS: ... Single-engine, but [there is a] pilot and co-pilot, or instructor. ... There were quite a few washouts, but, when you got out ... into Williams in Arizona and got into a jet, into a T-33, with an instructor, [after] what you ... had gone through six months earlier, flying a jet was really easy. It was comfortable.

SH: How did they determine whether you would go into bombers or fighters?

RS: They made that depending on the requirement, the Air Force did.

SH: Were you given a choice?

RS: No, not that I recall, you know, because some of them went to multi-engine and we went to single-engine and I don't know how that was reflected, but, then, we went to Korea.

SH: In training, were your instructors, for the most part, World War II veterans?

RS: ... They were mostly World War II [veterans], the end of World War II, and had stayed in the military, and so forth.

SH: They were not using civilian instructors at that point?

RS: No. ... Yes, when I went to basic, there were civilian instructors there, in the T-6s, right, and they were ex-World War II pilots, and so forth, but, when we got out to Williams, in T-33s

and the F-84s, and so forth, I don't remember that there was any [civilian instructors]. ...

SH: Prior to your military service, you had traveled as far as New York and California. What did you think of the South? Were you shocked at what you saw?

RS: ... Shocked, where?

SH: In the South, in Georgia.

RS: Oh, well, we were so busy. ... You were working, or schooling or studying, so, you didn't get a lot of chance to see what was going on in the South or in a particular state, and so forth. We were there and we were marching and we were being criticized and we were [standing] inspection every day, [to see] if you made your bed, and so forth.

SH: Did you have any opportunities to get into town?

RS: ... Oh, yes, on a weekend, you know, after Saturday morning. You know, we have parades, and so forth, then, we would be able to go, but there weren't too many automobiles available for us students, but we were able to get in [to town] and, I remember, I was a member of the Elks Club. They had an Elks Club there, in Dalton, and we went there a couple of times, but you didn't have time to frog around too much and your mind was quite on the [job at hand].

SH: Did the two other men who had gone with you to enlist stay with you during your training?

RS: ... One of them did. The other one, they all survived and went [to Korea], but one of them went to multi-engine, and so forth. So, it worked out very good and, strangely enough, one of the guys is still a very good friend of mine, to this day. He's still alive and that's [Richard] Kempthorn, out in Kempthorn Motors, out in Canton, Ohio, Football Hall of Fame.

SH: When did you first become aware of the Korean War?

RS: Oh, I don't remember, obviously, with the draft board and everything set up and reading the papers, and so forth, yes.

ME: Did you have an opportunity to visit your parents in Ionia before you shipped out?

RS: Yes. ... When we graduated, we went back [to our homes]. I went back home and another very good friend of mine, Fred Chapman, was from Ionia and his father was president of the Ionia Free Fair for many years. ... He was back in Ionia and he was an enlisted man. He was a photographer. So, when I got back, I guess my mother and father told he and his ... mother that I was coming home. So, a long story short, we got together and the local car dealer, the Ionia Cadillac dealer, we told him ... we had to go to San Francisco. He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll give you a Cadillac to take out to California. You drive out, the two of you. ... I'll give you the money for the gas, and so forth, and you take it out and I'll tell you where to take it, to the dealer. I'll sell it and you deliver it." So, we drove cross-country and got to San Francisco and we went to the dealer and the guy came out, "Oh, my God, here they are." So, a long story short,

he thanked us and he said, "Well, let me move it, so [that] I can get somebody to take you out to the base." He backed up and backed into a car and smashed it. [laughter]

SH: You made it out all the way across the country without ...

RS: Anyway, that was the story there. ... So, he took us out to the field and, long story short, we ended up [separating] and Fred had to go his way with his requirement, but we all got together in Korea.

SH: Did you?

RS: Oh, yes. He used to fly up on a given afternoon for an hour or two, told him to be sure and have his camera to take pictures and, to this day, he is still in Ionia and I talk to him frequently, frequently. So, that's another story of the local town.

SH: In training, were there any close calls, either for yourself or others?

RS: ... I don't recall any close calls, but there's always some problems here and there and, yes, there were some accidents and a couple of deaths in training.

SH: How does that affect your morale?

RS: ... Yes, you think strongly about it, and so forth, but, in many ways, it gives you the stimulation to go in there and clean house and do the best you can and that's what happened when we were in Korea. It made a big impression, the Air Force did, on my life. I never in my wildest imagination ever dreamt or thought about becoming a pilot, but, when I went down to go [into the service], I wanted to be an officer. I always wanted to be, quote, "king," as opposed to an enlisted man. ... We have to have both, don't misunderstand, but, ... whether I was playing football or basketball or what[ever], I always wanted to do the best and be the best.

SH: Among the materials that you sent in is a photograph of you that makes it look as though you were part of a drum and bugle corps.

RS: ... That was when I was, I don't know how old I was there, but probably about six or seven and I liked the drums. ... Ione Sutton, her husband, who handled the PR for the Yankees, and so forth, he was a drummer. ... He got me practicing on the drums. He bought me a thing to tap on, you know, and he got me started in becoming a drummer and I pursued it when I went back home. ... The people you saw, I was in the band. I don't know how old I was, but seven or eight or something like that.

SH: You look really small.

RS: Oh, yes, I really was, yes.

SH: The drum is almost bigger than you.

RS: Yes. Those two guys are still alive in Ionia and they're in that picture, yes, but that's how that happened.

SH: Which band was this?

RS: Ionia High School Band.

SH: You played in high school.

RS: Yes, but that's how I got started in that, trying to develop a little rhythm, ... you know, but my uncle, Ione's husband, he was great with that. So, anyway, that's what we did and I went, came back. I survived an incident, which you read about, I think, in the [files I sent you].

ME: When you got your overseas orders for Korea, what was your reaction? Were you excited about finally getting to use your training or was it nerve-wracking?

RS: ... You're always excited, because you trained to do this. Your ambition was, with the situation in the world as it was and with the Korean War, you wanted to go. It was a challenge. You're going to have an opportunity to [prove yourself].

SH: How long had the Air Force been flying jets at that point?

RS: Well, it started in about, the end of the '40s, as far as there were P-51s, which was a piston airplane, but the first jet airplanes, single-engine, were the F-80s and the F-84s, F-86s, and so forth, and we were right there on that. ... The jet trainer, the T-33, was what you trained with, because you could have an instructor in the backseat and he could follow you and help you and talk to you and communicate, and so forth, and we used to enjoy the heck out of that, as a challenge, and so forth.

SH: In the hierarchy of the base, were you guys the cream of the crop?

RS: Well, ... I don't know whether we were the cream of the crop, but we might have been the lowest paid, and so forth, but, yes, we met the challenge and [we were] very restricted as to what we could do off base, and so forth.

SH: Can you talk a bit about that?

RS: Well, we just had too many things on our mind just to go out. I'm not saying we never went out and had a beer, and so forth, but you couldn't let yourself get out of control with off base activities, and so forth. ... I'm not saying there weren't such things on occasion, and so forth, but your mind was pretty much developed and determined, knowing where you were going or what you were going to do. ... God knows, we were preached on this, "You've got to have a clear mind. You can't come in [when] you're all fogged up and think you're going to do it." ... So, it was good and, many times, out in Arizona, summertime, we had to be up and ... out on the base at four o'clock in the morning, because of the temperatures. We got off and we were done with our schooling and ground school. We'd come back, we had ground school. So, we were done at

nine, ten o'clock in the morning, because it'd get [to be] ninety, one hundred degrees in the afternoon. You couldn't get the damned airplanes off the ground. So, a lot of times, it was sort of different.

SH: Did you do a lot of night flying because of that?

RS: Well, ... I wouldn't say because of that, because we had the requirements for night flying. You had to do so many hours, and so forth, and you'd maybe do it with an instructor on the first one, and then, he'd get out and say, "Okay, go," and we'd talk on our radios, and so forth, how we were doing, you know, and so forth. So, it was an education.

SH: Was your flight training in Phoenix point-to-point?

RS: No. ... We were based in Phoenix and, wherever we went, we came back [there]. I don't say we never went over and stayed overnight, don't misunderstand, on an overnight.

SH: Where would that generally take you?

RS: Oh, take us to Arkansas, take us up to Northern California, ... Nevada, Las Vegas, you know. Oh, yes, we had that, and then, [for] practice in that area, we used to take off, go up to Prescott, Arizona. ...

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

ME: This is side two of tape one.

RS: Yes, to continue on from side one, we'd go up [to] Prescott, Arizona, [near the] Grand Canyon, and we'd go up to thirty-five, thirty-eight thousand feet. ... As a test and a practice, and so forth, we'd head south and we would put our airplane into idle and we weren't, I won't say allowed, but [we were] supposed to "dead stick" the airplane into the field at Phoenix, which is a hundred-and-twenty-five, a hundred-and-thirty miles from Prescott. ... You went in, and we used to call it ... dead stick because you had no power, other than idle, and landed the airplane and that was always a challenge to everybody, you know.

ME: I would think so. [laughter]

RS: And that was another good example of how to maintain your altitude, how to maintain your stalling speed, fuel, and so forth. ... It's amazing how I did that two or three times back there, in practicing, and so forth. That experience taught me a lot about the actual happening that I had in Korea with the loss of oxygen, I didn't know what I was doing, ... but it was those kinds of things that were good and they made you [sharper] and you begin to like what you were doing. You were enthusiastic about it.

SH: Was there any new equipment in the aircraft, such as communications equipment or armament?

RS: Oh, there was. Communications, there was some, yes, that came with the airplane that were upgraded, you know. The communications were upgraded, but you had to be very careful in those days, especially when you're at war, so-to-speak, to know where your support, your products, are, because you can go into Korea and find out that you don't have the spare parts to support the aircraft that's there. So, you not only get a new aircraft, but you have to be very careful about the spare parts and how to support it, in case you have a problem on the ground, in the air or whatever. ... One thing about it was, when we got the airplanes, the F-80s and the F-84s, and so forth, they were a new vintage and, consequently, they had support programs available from the manufacturers. "We need this box, we need this box, we need this," and so, we didn't, at least not to my knowledge, run out of spare parts, like we could have, but ... our airplanes were all over South Korea, not just in Taegu, where I was. ... So, you had to be careful and do some planning and know ... where you're coming from or where you're going, ... but that was an experience and you just got your body [and] your mind made up that you're going out and go after them, "Show me a MiG and I'm going to shoot at it," you know. That's what we did and it worked out good.

ME: In Korea, when it came time for your first mission, what were some of the feelings going through you, nerves, excitement?

RS: Well, excitement, yes, because ... we had debriefings with pilots that had just come back and had been up there and knew what we were doing and where we were going and things to alert us to or to be aware of, and so forth. ... I don't say we didn't think about not coming back, don't misunderstand, but it was a challenge and we thought we were quite able to do it.

SH: From California, did you go to Japan first or directly into Korea?

RS: Yes, we went to Hawaii, stopped in Hawaii.

SH: Were you flying?

RS: Flying. No, I was in a passenger airplane. Yes, we were going there, and then, from there, we went to Japan.

SH: Which base in Japan?

RS: ... Up in northern Japan. That was just to load up, and then, we flew into Taegu.

SH: Were you in your own aircraft at that point?

RS: No, they were already there. See, they brought us over and the jets were ferried over.

SH: Where is Taegu?

RS: It's south. Seoul is up in here and Taegu is down here. Yes, it's south. If you're looking at it, it's southeast, yes. ... From the bomb line, it was about ... three-fifty, four-hundred miles.

SH: Where was the bomb line?

RS: North Korea. Yes, yes, that's when you start looking [out]. ... You know where you were going and we had pictures; a lot of the time, we had pictures that our photographer ships had taken ... [of] what we were looking for. ... We had some interesting missions, right down the main street of some of those cities up there.

SH: You came into Korea from one of the bases in the northern part of Japan. What did they tell you to prepare for before you actually went out on your first run?

RS: We did it up in Taegu. We had the briefings and de-briefings [there].

SH: That was where it began.

RS: Yes, yes. This [Japan] was just a stopover for fuel, ... to get them across.

SH: Did you come over as part of a group or were you coming in as an individual replacement?

RS: Coming in partial. ...

SH: What was the make-up of your group? Were the men from all over the country?

RS: All over the country, yes. ... You didn't replace fifty people at one time, ... five people, ten people, you know, so that you had the experience continually.

SH: Which group were you assigned to?

RS: 49th Fighter Squadron, yes, ... Fifth Air Force

SH: Were you flying with other UN troops?

RS: Oh, yes, oh, sure, there were other pilots from [other nations].

SH: Were they at the same base?

RS: Same base.

SH: Would you fly together or were there separate contingents?

RS: ... No, no, we joined up and ... they'd be on some of the missions, and so forth, with us.

SH: Who was stationed at Taegu with you? What other UN contingents were there?

RS: Oh, well, the English were there, ... French, I'm not sure, but, yes, there were those people that were there and [had] been through the same training. ... Some of those pilots were in our flight class, and so forth.

SH: Were they flying the same type of aircraft?

RS: ... Yes. So, when we flew, we knew them. We didn't have three or four different airplanes in a flight, yes, and we all worked together and discussed, when we got down, what we saw.

SH: You briefed and debriefed together.

RS: ... Debriefed, oh, yes, yes, definitely, and it worked out good, from that standpoint, yes.

SH: Was your commander an American?

RS: American, yes, a colonel or the general, ... I don't remember their names. ... So, it worked out pretty well from that standpoint. One thing, at least I felt, when you got there and got ready to go into action, I felt that I had been sufficiently trained and I was comfortable. Obviously, you rehash in your own mind, "If this happens, that happens, what do I do? Where do I go? How do I do it?" but, basically, we all were pretty satisfied with ... the training, even though it was a very small ... number of hours that we went in there with.

SH: Did you normally go up in groups of four?

RS: Yes, fours or eights, you know, ... but fours, yes, definitely, and you go out in spread formation. ... The leader leads you onto the target and number two follows, number three and that was all planned before we left the ground, as to who was going to do what.

SH: Were you ever in a situation where you were worried about some of the other members of your group not being sufficiently trained or not being serious enough?

RS: Well, from time-to-time, you see a mishap or something that maybe could have been covered up if we'd [had] a little bit more training done, and so forth, but, generally speaking, ... we weren't perfect, don't misunderstand me, but we managed to survive, somehow, generally speaking. [We] lost a couple of good friends, really good friends, Christmas Day of '52; boy, oh, boy, I tell you.

SH: What happened?

RS: We were flying, ... and nobody seems to know really what did happen, but [we were] in North Korea about a hundred-and-fifty miles. ... He got hit by ground fire and spun and went into the ground. ... We swear, to this day, that he survived, because we had a radio, but [he was] never to be found and I've been to China, I've been all over with the Air Force, to see not just about Al, but a couple of the others, but Al was really a good friend. ... His wife called me this morning, down in Florida, from Tampa.

SH: What was his last name?

RS: Rase, R-A-S-E, Al Rase, and I'm still, I don't say I'm contributing, but I'm still involved in

tracking people down, and so forth, with the military. I've enjoyed that.

SH: How many downed flyers are you looking for at this point?

RS: Oh, my goodness, at this stage, fifty years later, and so forth, ... well, I can tell you, I've seen the list and it's literally hundreds and, every now and then, and maybe if they're successful, they may find bodies, you know, two or three over a year, and that's just not Korea, that's all over, they do this. ...

SH: Are they mostly found in Korea or China?

RS: In Korea, for Korea, yes, yes. ... A lot of them were taken to China and a lot of discussions have been held with the Chinese people that are up in the northern border there, and so forth, and some say, "Yes, oh, yes, somebody was here. I don't know his name," ... and they have found [some there]. The Chinese have helped, you know. [We] made a suggestion; if they don't help us, they shouldn't come over to the Olympics, you know, because we should try to find as many of these bodies as we can. ... The Chinese have helped. In fact, ... as far as I know, they've become pretty decent people.

SH: So, it's opened up more and more.

RS: Oh, yes, yes, but I don't say we've found anymore, because it's a long time ago, but from time to time they come across and the same thing in North Korea.

SH: Have they ever found anyone still alive? I mean, when was the last time ...

RS: I think they have, but ... in terms of numbers, I'll bet you it's not ten, but I think they have accomplished that and I read something just, not in the last six months, there was something about that in the *Air Force Times*. ... Anyway, that was life.

SH: To pursue this just one more question, is this a civilian group that's working or is there ...

RS: No, it's the military, out of San Antonio.

SH: So, are they working through government, or CIA, or ...

RS: Every angle they can cover, you know, and they get together once a year at different locations in the States for the survivor's wife or whatever, families, children. They come up and the Air Force, military, not just Air Force, the military brief the dependents on what they're doing, what they've found, and so forth, and it's pretty hard to swallow for a lot of people.

SH: Are some of the other UN forces also part of this?

RS: Yes, there are some, but this is primarily ... in our area, that we, not just Air Force, Marines, Navy, everybody's there. ... Most of the people that they talked to, be it whatever, if they found anything, they would tell us, the foreigners, and so forth. But it's a big job, ... seen a lot of tears

of that.

SH: Now this accident is Christmas of '52, you've gotten over there how many months before that?

RS: Oh, I got over there in early late, August-September, August I think it was '52 and Al went down on the 25th of December '52 and we went in, I stayed flying until 26th of March.

SH: Well, I wish you luck on this search for these downed flyers.

RS: Oh, yes.

SH: Let's go back and talk about what it was like in August and what your first assignments were, and how often did you go up, for you personally how often did you fly?

RS: August of what year?

SH: Of '52 when you first got to Korea.

RS: Oh, yes, we got briefed and ... we started in. I don't say we flew every day. I mean, we flew missions every day, but we also ...

SH: Did you?

RS: Oh, yes, we had flight missions going on, unless weather restricted or maintenance or something like that, but, oh, yes, they were flying.

SH: So, as a flyer you could be called on every twenty-four hours to fly?

RS: Well, you could, but very seldom would that happen, but you would be programmed and you'd go to your debriefing as scheduled and you go in a private room, where you're going and what you're going to do and targets and opportunities, and so on, oh, yes.

SH: When were you roused out of bed to start your day then?

RS: Oh, it varied.

SH: Did it?

RS: Oh, yes, because we flew ours all day long, all night, a lot of times. ... But you had the schedule put up, the operations people put the schedule up, so, you knew when you were going to fly. ... I don't say from time to time somebody didn't get awakened, but, no, you had the schedule up and you knew who you were flying with and where you're going, and so forth. ... We'd review it you know, and so forth. So, that worked out well and we just kept going, you know.

SH: What was a typical day like?

RS: We might go and have lunch on the base, or something like that, or we might get up and if we're going to fly in the morning, we're going to go and take off at seven o'clock, or something like that, we'd be up at four. ... We'd be down looking at the airplane with the maintenance people [to] be sure everything was working right, start it up and the maintenance guys would be there. So, it varied, but then, again, we'd go at noon sometimes. So, we'd be out, but procedure's pretty much the same, to be sure everything is functioning and working right and in accordance with the checklist, and so forth.

SH: How often did weather play a part on where or when you didn't fly?

RS: Oh, yes, it varied from time [to time] because we had some real snow that winter. ... We couldn't do a hell of a lot on several days there, you know, not consecutively, but we had problems getting the runways cleared, and so forth.

SH: In your de-briefings, or in the news at the base that you were stationed at, what were you hearing about how the ground forces were doing, or did you, was that not part of anything that you were ...

RS: Well, it wasn't a real, real part. We didn't get a briefing every day, but when we were going in on targets, we would have the information as to where the ground forces are, beware of this and look at this, and so on , and so forth. so, it was coordinated quite closely.

SH: It seemed to be quite fluid, it moved.

RS: Oh, yes, yes. It was, but we had to be very careful how it was said and when, because you know sometimes people would listen in.

ME: Did you have a chance while you were over there, did you guys get any time off, any USO shows or anything like that for entertainment purposes, or was it all business all the time?

RS: No. It was pretty much, over there, it was pretty much business all the time. Once in a while, we'd go to Japan for a couple of days or something like that for R&R.

ME: Extended weekend

RS: Yes, go on that, but it was pretty much business.

SH: Did the base have a club like an Officers' Club or an Enlisted Club?

RS: Yes, they had that, I mean, a place to eat. ... Our beds and our living accommodations were quite close by, so we didn't have to walk ten miles to get to where we wanted to go, but, no, it was close by and they had good service.

SH: What occupied your time when you weren't flying?

RS: It was hard to say because we were reviewing documentation of where we were going and planning and had many, many discussions with authorities of higher echelon about what we thought , and so forth. ... Then, again sometimes, we'd go into towns close by, walk around, and so forth, but not too exciting, to put it that way.

SH: We've heard about long extended chess games, card games.

RS: Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't doubt it ... because of the time, of course, but if you weren't flying, and so forth, and your airplane was on the ground, you'd be down there working with your maintenance manager.

SH: Would you?

RS: Oh, sure, just to review things with us and turn the batteries on. ... Now and then, we'd have to start up the engine and see if our pressures were okay, and so forth. ...

SH: Did you have the same maintenance crew or ground crew?

RS: Pretty much so.

SH: Did you become friendly with them?

RS: Oh, sure.

SH: Do you know where they were from, or their names?

RS: New York was mine. I haven't heard from him in several years, but he used to work with you and they did.

SH: Did anybody have any superstitions about, like a little routine they would go through before they would fly?

RS: I don't know. If they did, [they] kept it amongst themselves or on their chest or something, I don't know.

SH: You talked a little bit about the security involved, what were some of the things that you were told to do, or not do, or what about infiltration, that kind of thing?

RS: Oh, well, we were told, you know, do what we had to do to live, you know, if you got shot down or you were alive, and so forth. ...

SH: What did they tell you to do if you were shot down over enemy territory?

RS: Whatever it took to survive. ... If you got a chance while you're going down, or if you're still in the airplane, talk, tell them, where you are and where you're going, ... the area you're in,

and so forth. But you didn't find too much of that because everybody that was involved or if a man was involved he was scared to death, you know, when he went down, and so forth. ...

SH: What kind of survival equipment did you have?

RS: Oh, we had stuff that we put in our flight jackets and our flight trousers, ... things to suck on, I mean, the candies, and so forth, but not an awful lot of that. ...

SH: Did you have maps or IDs?

RS: Yes. We had maps that we flew with or knew where we were going and we had the itinerary out, and so forth, and followed it, ... oh, yes, we had that. ... I'm sure some of those maps were found by the northern people, and so forth, but, oh, yes, we knew exactly.

SH: Did you have a special kind of ID as part of the UN forces or ...

RS: No, no. I had an ID, but just another man on the street so to speak.

SH: Did you keep a diary or journal?

RS: I did, yes, ... wrote it and typed it up, ... [with] the date and the time, what happened, where we went, and so forth. I've got all that, yes.

ME: You were over there you said from August to then March of the next year, that was in '53, that's seven or eight months. How many missions would you say you flew?

RS: I had thirty-eight, I think, it was, thirty-eight, but, you see we didn't start flying missions until like October. ... When we got over there, we got oriented and trained and went up and flew around a little bit to see what the area looked like so you could recall, but we didn't start really getting shot at until October or something like that.

ME: That was like the first time you got shots coming back up at you?

RS: Yes. [laughter] ... You wouldn't always get shot at when you're up there, but you go down pretty low on the ground. Sometimes, you'd hear the MiG go by you and you'd see a ball of fire going by you or something like that, a red ball, yes. ...

SH: That's the exhaust of the MiG?

RS: No, it's the gunfire, but ... you were always looking for it, I'll tell you.

SH: Were you fired on during your first mission?

RS: Oh, I don't remember. I have to look it up in my record.

SH: Were you more afraid of fire from the ground or from the air?

RS: Well, in our case, the [F-]84, we were more prone to the ground fire, whereas the [F-]86 was ... a more maneuverable airplane that fought against the MiG, the MiG-15s. ... So, they did the air-to-air work whereas we did air-to-ground and we'd pick out targets and we know where we were going and who's going to go and altitude , and so forth.

SH: Now many bombs did your F-84 have?

RS: Two, plus guns, you know, on the wing. ... When we'd be coming down we would on occasion, use the guns to further the damages, and so forth, but, yes, we had two-thousand pound bombs. ... But ours was air-to-ground, whereas the [F-]86s were air-to-air, were the missions they flew, yes, and then, we just kept going until I, well, in March I had a problem and lucky to get back.

ME: You want to get into that a little bit? I was going to say so it was March 26th, of '53 now? Do you know what your mission was that morning when they told you?

RS: ... Yes, it was an early morning mission that we were going on. So we took off in Taegu at about, I think it was four-thirty, five o'clock in the morning because we were going up, clear into North Korea, to dive bomb, and so forth, on vehicles that were carrying support and people, and so forth, from North Korea to where they were based or going to accomplish. ... When it got daylight, they turned their lights off and they'd go hiding behind trees and all types of things, so we wanted to get up there so we could get them before they, while they were on the MSR, the main supply route. ... We'd go down there and raise hell with it and that was the mission. So, we were airborne about, I don't know, four-thirty in the morning and went up there ... It was still dark and when you'd go on missions like that you'd use a spread formation with, your leader would be here and wingman and the wingman, and so forth, and you'd spread out. You'd have your night-lights working, blinking on your plane so everybody could follow it, could be where they were and, strangely enough, I got up there and I couldn't see anything. I lost my night vision because of my oxygen, lack of oxygen.

SH: Now before you'd taken off though, hasn't there been a delay, or something for you, the ground crew didn't have your aircraft ready?

RS: Oh, I don't remember. If I said it that's what happened

ME: You said that all the other guys had a hand getting their tarps off the top of the plane and something you had to it by yourself.

RS: Oh, yes, but that happened more than once, but the problem that I had was the regulator on the oxygen, the regulator was defunct, went defunct.

ME: Was that something that you could have checked ahead of time?

RS: Oh, I did.

ME: And there was no sign of it.

RS: There was no sign of it, but I got up there, and I couldn't see. Because I lost my night vision, I couldn't see where my other fellows were and so we were communicating and whatever my name was, they said, Turn around and go back, because we've got to go on to the target and we don't want anything to happen."

SI: You hadn't been able to catch up with them and get in formation?

RS: They were probably, you know, fifty yards in front of me, but I couldn't see and I couldn't see the spots and blinkers

SH: And they couldn't see behind to see if you were there?

RS: And even if they could, they wouldn't know what to say because I was like a drunk. So, anyway, I turned around and started going south, back towards South Korea, and we were about four, five hundred miles up into North Korea. ... I know I started switching radios and trying to get things, and the long and the short of it is, after many minutes, I finally got contact with the radar controller just over in South Korea.

ME: Do you remember his name?

RS: ... Callahan? I've got his name, pictures of him, and everything, and so he started trying to direct me and I said, Where am I going?" "Don't worry, follow me." So, anyway, he started directing me and talked me into; yes, that's his, the man right there, what's his name, Callahan?

ME: Clarence Bell.

RS: Bell, Clarence Bell, he's from Texas, yes, but, anyway, so as I went down a little bit in the air I started to get a little better feeling with the oxygen, and so forth, the pressure

SH: Did you at any point know all this? Did you know what was wrong with you?

RS: Oh, I didn't know.

SH: Did you ever think, "Oh, my gosh, I don't have oxygen."?

RS: No. Not that I recall. So, anyway, long story short, Bell talked me into this, going to this base that I didn't even know where it was, ... but he said, "No, follow me, follow me, and careful on your turns," and so on. Anyway, I finally saw the base and I told him I had it in sight and [he said], "Take it easy" and I turned the corner and went up, and I hit the runway and I collapsed. ... My reaction went, "boom" and I went off the end of the runway where I was, not much fun, and they got me out, and so forth. ... They put me in bed at this base and woke me up a couple of times. I didn't know where I was, I didn't know whether I was north, south, or where and I said to the gentleman next, in the other bed there, I said, "do you know where we are?" He said, "Yes, we're in South Korea, just" and that was Ted Williams, [the] baseball player, and, until he

died, we corresponded every Christmas, you know.

SH: Did you?

RS: Yes. So, then, they straightened me out and they sent an airplane in and ferried me down to Taegu. ... Then, from there over to Japan because I was having a hard time. ...

SH: It still was affecting you, your breathing.

RS: Oh, yes, then to Hawaii, and then, to New York. I stopped at home first in Michigan.

SH: They let you?

RS: Yes, no, no, they let me go there and that was it. That I survived was one thing, but the mission that I got, or the job I got with the Air Force was unbelievable. ... One of the Secretaries of the Air Force had met me and he suggested that I go to work in New York for him and the Secretary of the Air Force ... in the public relations business.

SH: Now, this was still in the Air Force.

RS: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: Your health wasn't affected bad enough that they asked you to leave.

RS: ... No, no, no, stayed right there and stayed there on active duty, 52nd[Street] & 5th Avenue, had a staff car, and everything else, police identification badge. ... I could go anyplace, you know. ...

SH: What does a PR man for the Air Force do?

RS: In New York, get as much publicity as you can, positive publicity, be it radio, be it whatever, television, you name it and try to promote different programs and recruiting, and so forth, so, it was a pretty active business.

SH: What were some of the things that you did?

RS: Oh, many, many, you know, put people on TV, you know, [Arthur] Godfrey, get interviews with writers they wanted to talk about different functions. ... It was quite a vast business.

SH: Were you bringing Air Force men to appear on these panels with people like Godfrey?

RS: Sure, sure, and a lot of them were coming into town on other business, and so forth. We'd get them interviewed with, [Bob] Considine and all those guys, you know. So, we became very good friends with a lot of these people and maintained the friendship until they died, and so forth. ... Then, I stayed until '58, active duty in the Air Force in New York City, and I had an opportunity to go to work in aircraft sales business. Again, through a friend of Ione Sutton's, and

so forth, who was in aviation. So, I decided I would do it, and meantime, I'd married in '55 and we had four girls in two-and-a-half years.

SH: There are twins in there I hope.

RS: I hope, and so, I resigned my regular commission and got a reserve commission. Mr. Zuckert gave me and he assigned me, to for my reserve assignment to the Air Force office in New York. ... I'd go three weeks a year on active duty at the office and help him during the time, if there was anything we could do, and I stayed assigned to that office until 1979.

SH: Did you have to go back up and fly again?

RS: No, no. I didn't fly again after I got out in '79, and then, I was ... available for brigadier general and this job at the New York office was only a full colonel, which I was. So, they transferred me down to Washington ... in the defense fuel supply center, which handled all the fuel, purchasing and funding fuel for all the Armed Forces and that was a hell of a job, I tell you, that was interesting.

SH: I bet.

RS: Yes, in '81, I had my thirty years so I had to leave the Air Force and I retired from the Air Force and out of thirty years in the Air Force, reserve and active, I was stationed for training, two bases, Korea one, out of thirty years three bases and that's all. The rest of it was in New York.

SH: There are people out there who are pretty amazed at that I'm sure. [laughter]

RS: Yes, but that's why I say the Air Force was very good to me and, I hope, I was equally as good to them.

SH: To go back to your first stint in New York as a PR man, we talked briefly about some of the successes that you had, but were there any that didn't turn out quite as you have planned or

RS: Oh, there's always disappointments, and so forth, you know.

SH: Any better ones you could talk about?

RS: I'm trying to think, because if I could remember them I'd talk about them, but you're talking about Air Force personnel?

SH: Or just any of the things that you tried to do that

RS: Oh, well, a lot of things that you tried to do, we'd talk about what we were going to do and where we're going on airplanes, and so forth. A lot of them we couldn't sell to the people because they couldn't plan it, they couldn't do the studies, and so forth, so that there was a lot of that. But we tried, I say I, we tried to educate the people in the fields in the markets, and so forth. If we had an idea, you know, with our name and our position we could always generally

get through to the individual and we would talk about it and many times I'd go over and see him for thirty minutes or an hour to show him what we were doing, and so forth, and that helped a lot, that got us a lot of mileage and it developed a great rapport, to the point sometimes, they would call me and say, "Geez, we read about this," or, "We heard about this, can you help us? Can you get the man on?" and we'd go at it. So, it worked both ways, but it was a real challenge.

SH: You received several decorations while you were in the Air Force and, particularly, in Korea, can you talk about some of those that you received?

RS: Oh, the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Clusters, that type of thing, yes. [laughter] Korean War medal, you know, a lot of little things like that that take up your front.

SH: Was it for this incident that we've spoken about where you lost consciousness and still managed to bring your plane in, was that where you received the Air Medal?

RS: Oh, that was one of the Oak Leaf clusters on the Air Medal.

SH: So, what did you get the Air Medal for?

RS: Oh, we got it from missions that we had done you, know, and what we'd succeeded in doing, and so forth. Every now and then, you'd get an Air Medal, or you'd get a cluster. What about the family?

ME: Yes, you were saying that '55 is when you married. What was your wife's name?

RS: Marie.

ME: How did you meet her? I know that she was ...

RS: She was an Air Force flight nurse.

SH: Did you meet her when you were being cared for

RS: When I came back.

SH: Where did you meet her?

RS: Mitchell Air Force Base, Long Island.

SH: How did you meet her?

RS: She was a flight nurse and I was out there flying, I was still flying, up until '58, and I met her at a couple of functions, Air Force functions at the Officers' Club, and so forth, and we got together.

SH: What does a flight nurse do in the Air Force?

RS: Well, they trained themselves to travel with patients , and so forth, to try to keep them alive and keep them going, and so forth, but that's in the airplane.

SH: Where was she from?

RS: Boston. Yes, Boston, and she liked the Air Force, she's a twin also. Well, it was good.

SH: How long did it take you to pop the question?

RS: Oh, two minutes, I guess. I don't know how long it was, but it was more than a month, I'll tell you that.

ME: A couple of dates.

RS: Yes.

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

ME: This continuous an interview with Richard L. Spaulding on April 2, 2005 in Oradell, New Jersey with Mark Eiseman and ...

SH: Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

ME: Mr. Spaulding, right before the last tape ended we were talking about your family, your wife; you were talking about how you two have met, you were kidding around, but how long did it take you to finally pop that question?

RS: I don't really remember, but it was in a reasonable period of time, you know, '53 when I came back and she was out at Mitchell Field and I was out there so it was sometime in '54 and we got married in '55, February '55.

ME: Did you guys stay in the city or did you move out to New Jersey? How did that work?

RS: No, we stayed in Woodside for a while. Then, we started doing things and producing live ones, and so forth, so we had to go and grow.

SH: And where did you go to?

RS: We went up to Riverdale and from there to New Jersey, over to northern Jersey. I was still stationed in New York City.

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about your family?

RS: My wife as I told you was a flight nurse, Air Force flight nurse

SH: She resigned her commission?

RS: Yes, she got out, yes, and we had four girls in two and a half years, one, one, and then, two, and then, we had a boy in 1961. ... We had all four daughters in the same university for one year. Fortunately, that's why I'm still working that's '76. But no, it's worked out well and the family is good and we kept producing and working together as a team, ... We now have, we just celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in February, 20th, so, that's how it all started and we're still going.

SH: Now does your family live close around in the area?

RS: Well, two of them, two of the girls live in Oradell, and two of them live in Washington, Maryland area, and then, I have a son, who lives out near Dulles Airport in Virginia and he's in the aviation business, too.

ME: This growing up, having the four girls up front in such a short period of time, how nice is it to get a male counterpart in the house?

RS: Thank God. I couldn't believe, when they called me at my office for the third delivery, I was then in Rockefeller Center, the hospital called me, downtown, said, "Mr. Spaulding, your wife has delivered" ... and I said, "Tell me quick, what?" ... [To which they replied] "Oh, we don't give that information out over the telephone." I said, "Okay," [they said] "Come on down," so I went down and went upstairs and they called and told them I was coming. I said, "Well let's go." [they said] "Follow us," and I thought, "What the heck is all these people doing and we go down and one of the nurses opened the door and [said] "Mr. Spaulding, after you," ... I walked in and there's Marie with one on each side and I said, "What is this all about?" I said, "Somebody better stand in front of the window because I'm liable to jump." [laughter] That's a true story. So, anyway that's how it started. I mean that, was the end of the girls, two at once, and then, Rich came along, that was fun, good, so, that's the family side of it and kids are all very close as Mark will tell you, yes, the girls everybody, grandma and grandpa, grandpas and grandpas, it's good.

ME: You said you had sent all of them on to college, put the girls together, and then, the son also went. How important did you find education to be for them? You said that your mom had really stressed it with you. Did you continue that tradition with your kids?

RS: Oh, sure. We stressed a lot, as did my wife, Marie, trying to keep things going and keep it coordinated and build the confidence level in the girls and in the boys so they can go on.

SH: Is it a guess to say that they went to the University of Michigan?

RS: No, they went to High Point University in North Carolina, but that's the way it goes, and so it worked out well and I was graduation speaker when the last two graduated down at High Point.

SH: Were you really? What did you speak on?

RS: I knew you'd ask me. A lot of things I could have said that I wouldn't, but no, it was really nice and High Point is still great today to me and I to them, I helped a lot. So, that works out and Rich went and played football at James Madison and now, as I told you, he's back in the aviation business.

SH: Now is it the same business that you have?

RS: A lot of it similar, leasing, selling, buying, generally transport-type airplanes, big airline airplanes.

ME: One of the things that I found pretty interesting when you gave us one of those pre-interview articles to read were some of the people you got to meet through your work. You said you got to be pretty close with Elvis Presley for a little while.

RS: Yes, yes.

ME: How did that come about?

RS: Well, it was through a situation from, started back in Lake Placid in 1947, people that were working in the summertime at the Lake Placid Club. ... They were going to school and they're working in the summer to get some of their credits done, and so forth, and we maintained relationship with each other, a lot of us. ... In 1969, I got a call from this gentleman and he said "Spaulding, are you interested in taking on a new client?." I said, "Well as long she's got money" and he said, "No, no, you misunderstood me." So, he told me it was Elvis and, "Elvis is going to start going on one night stands,, which he had never done and I told him that I knew you and was highly recommended," and [he] said, "Are you interested?" [I said], "Yes, I certainly am." [He said], "Come on out here, I'll call you and let you know when he's available to come out and talk with us, see what he says." So, I went out there in late August and we were there for, I don't know, talked to him for an hour and he says, "You're my man, let's go." And we signed a contract in September 19th. We flew the first mission, went to Phoenix ,of all places for a one night stand and packed it up and went to Michigan, went to St. Louis, and a lot of things happened. When I say a lot of things, it was interesting to see this man at work and how he got along with his people, and so forth. I can tell you I gained a lot of respect for Elvis as a result of this being with him and traveling with him and talking to him and just watching him perform.

SH: Were you piloting some of the aircraft?

RS: No.

SH: You were just traveling making sure that everything

RS: Yes, oh, yes I was there with him. No, it worked out just splendid and so every time he needed an airplane for such programs, he would call me thereafter, till he died in '77, but we saw a lot and we did a lot and unfortunately, a lot of the press didn't know exactly what was going on. ... Elvis was the type of person that you couldn't go out in the street, he couldn't go downstairs

for breakfast, or get his shoes shined or whatever, because people just tear him apart and he got so that he was having a hard time doing his shows. Doc [George C.] Nechopoulos, his doctor was always with him. So, he'd take Elvis in the backroom and give him a needle full in his right rear and give him enough pomp to go out and do the show. But it wasn't that he was selling drugs like a lot of people thought he was. He was just getting energy up so he could do the show and he did that and did it successfully, and was always nice to talk to. I saw him do a couple of things, to show you the type of person. We were in Minnesota and we were going to Cleveland. He was going to perform in Cleveland that night, of the morning we left Minnesota, and we got down there okay, and it wasn't too long thereafter because we had to park off the corner of the airport. It wasn't too long after we got there, the two young ladies came running out to the airplane and one of them fell right near the entrance to the airplane and, "My God," Elvis said, "pick her up, find out what's wrong with her." She was crying, and so forth. Anyway, long story short, police took her to the hospital. She had broken her arm and had quite a bad break. Elvis said, "Come on, the police will bring you down, you go to show and we'll go from there." So, when we're going to Tampa the next day, Elvis said, "You want to go with us to Tampa, we'll get you a room." So, they went down to Tampa, the two girls did, and went to the program that night and thanked him and the next morning Elvis had airline tickets for them back to Chicago and they said, "Thank you very much," ... they got back and each had a new Cadillac in their driveway. That was the type of a man that Elvis was. He gave away more Cadillacs than dealers sold. ... At Christmas time or at New Year's time I don't know just what year it was, but we were in Washington and Elvis is with President Nixon. They called and said, "Get him out of there, get him out of there" you know, the doctor called, he said "Get him out of there because it's going to snow and he's not going to be able to go home." Well, I said, "Well, I'll do the best I can, but I can't walk in the President of the United States' office and do this kind of thing. " But anyway, we got him and went down to his home. I didn't go with him, the pilots went down because they couldn't get back because of the snow, so they went down, he said, "Come on, you guys, and go on the party at the house." They went and had a rip-roaring time. But in the meantime they didn't have the appropriate clothing, in their minds, so Elvis had his man, who owns a clothing store downtown, they went down and bought a whole new suit and they didn't buy it either, he gave it to them and next morning they said goodbye, and got out. ... When they got home, they had a new Cadillac in their driveway, each of them, three of them. But that was the kind of a man, I don't say he was perfect, don't misunderstand, but he was very, very generous of people, things they could do, and the way he could contribute, and we just had a very, very good relationship. It was pleasant and every now and then, he'd call me up, just to talk to see what's going on. Anyway that's, you talked earlier about a couple of experiences, people you met.

ME: How about one where you had the chance to meet one of the nation's presidents?

RS: Which one?

ME: George Bush, the First. You had a chance to meet up with him and get his autograph and what not. How did that come about?

RS: Well, we were going to have, when I say we, my flight class, '52 Charlie, was going to have a reunion in Washington, the survivors and people who are still alive in '89. So we started to do

the planning, and so forth, of what we were going to do and go to the White House, a trip to the White House, and not the Blues, but the Air Force team was going to fly out at Andrews, the Thunderbirds, yes, they were going to put on a show and so we were. I got us all invited out ... I also had made an arrangement with a friend of mine, in the White House, for us to go down and visit the White House and take a tour of the White House, and then, have the bus there waiting for us to take us out to the air show. We got the approval and went down and, sure enough, my friend had made arrangement for President Bush to come down and welcome me and to say hello to all the people , and so forth. So, we did this, and I thanked him no end, and the tour of the White House was perfect. So, long story short, we went out to the Air Force base and thanked President Bush. When I got back, I wrote him a note to thank him for this and I said, "I've got something and I would like to show you because I think it would be good for your collection," and I said, "You know Jack McCoy," in the letter I said, "he did this." "We'd like very much to meet with you to make the presentation."

SH: Now Jack McCoy is the artist?

RS: Artist, yes. So, I got a call from the secretary of the president, she said, "You got it, just tell us a couple of dates that you could make it." So, we did. Jack and I went down with the original and we got talking and I said, "Mr. President, "If you would sign this original, then we're going to have prints made of it. I will have three-hundred prints made because our class pilots members would like to have it." "Oh," he said, "That's no problem at all." He said, "Just leave it here," and I said, "Well I got one other thing to say to you." I said "Not only thank you, but would you mind if we put the title of this print, this picture, titled *Bogey Three O'clock Low*. Bogey is the enemy and the Bogey is President Bush's Navy airplane over the White House and here's the Air Force up here so the bogey is down here." He said, "My God, that will be tremendous." So, he signed the original and that's what we called the print, *Bogey Three O'clock Low* and I own the original, which I'm probably going to give to the Smithsonian, you know., it's all there, his signature, and so forth. So, that was how that print got to be.

SH: It's great. You know we've seen pictures. ...

RS: Oh, yes, and it worked out really well and, because of that, not that I became good friends, but we know each other, Mr. President and Dick, and so forth, and I was a program chairman for the Wings Club in New York, and we wanted to celebrate our 50th or 60th, we wanted to know who we would get to honor and I said, " I can't promise anything, but I think I can get a long way with President Bush." Long story short, I got a hold of him and ask him if he would come. He said, "I'd be delighted" and he came up and we put on an entertainment, Skitch Henderson had his band there, so it was good. Anyway, that's a lot of words. I don't know what you'll do with it ,but.

ME: A couple of questions that I think are important to hit on. When the Korean War Memorial was opened up a couple of years back, have you had a chance to go out and see that, yet, living so close?

RS: I have. I went down there shortly after it opened.

ME: What were your thoughts on it?

RS: Well, my thoughts were it was there, I don't know how else you would show it. It didn't do a lot to me in terms of excitement, and so forth, but, yes, it's there and it's dated, and so forth, and the big wall down there, and so forth, and I'm certainly proud to have been a member of that era.

ME: Some of the people looking back called it the Forgotten War; did it get the play that Vietnam and World War II got? What are your thoughts? Did you guys get enough recognition for the work you did over there?

RS: Oh, I don't think we got nearly enough and you look at people that, to this day, just recently, I called the *Air Force Times*, I don't know I called somebody. They talked about the wars, World War I, World War II, Vietnam, so on, and so forth, never mentioned the Korean War. I called them at the Air Force Association, I said, "You know this is not right, this is not right. How could you omit where we lost thousands of people and you didn't include it?" [They said] "Oh, my God, that was an oversight." I said, "Oversight? You should lose your job," that's what I told them. A lot of discomfort in that area, a lot.

ME: Have you gotten involved with any type of veteran groups specifically for Korea?

RS: Not really, I mean, involved yes, membership, and so forth, but not as far as participation and doing anything. I don't have that luxury of time, or haven't had, and traveling like I have been in the past and things to do, and I thought a lot about this since I had my operation. I've contributed a lot of time and money, which I enjoyed doing, but I don't see why I should stay contributing monies and nickels and dimes and dollars, and so forth, at my age. I've done and I've paid my bills and I've been recognized and I thank you for it, but I'd much really rather give money to my daughters and their families as opposed to you know the Air Force Association. The Air Force Association I always will contribute because we did lot together, but the others, I get them all the time.

ME: One of the things I see that you have set up, though, is back in Ionia, Michigan, a scholarship fund for kids up there. How did that come about?

RS: Well, that came about and it didn't progress as I had planned it to. My mother was a great Episcopalian, what I wanted to do at the church, St. John's Episcopal, was set up a fund for kids, contribution, scholarship fund. ... We all agreed, family-wise that we should do this and so I went out with the minister, and so forth, and [he said,] "Oh, Dick, it's great, great, great." Well, a long story short, when I got ready to do it, put it into being, he turned his back on me, and so forth. ... It never was put together to this day, but I told some of my very good friends, "When he leaves the church and is gone, I will open up the contributions that he agreed to the fund and I would contribute and we would get people in the church to contribute."

SH: Now it was for children of members of that church to go to college?

RS: Their children. My aunt wanted it and I wanted it, my mother wanted it, but he just turned his back to me and we never had a dispute or anything. I said, "We want to do this. Let's do this,

you announce it to your group." [He said,] "Well, I don't have time to talk about it Dick," and this and that. I said, "You'll never talk to me again."

ME: One last thing I think we should probably touch on is have you ever had a chance to go back to Korea or over in that area of the world?

RS: No. China, yes, but not really, and I'm not sure that I would want to go because the country and everything has changed so much, I wouldn't know whether I was in Tokyo, Japan or Taegu, Korea. So, it's not something that I would really like to do. There are damned few places I do want to go to, I can't name them today as I've been there, but I don't get excited about going back and I quite frankly, I don't get excited about traveling, period, today with all the problems in aviation and things that are going on, and so forth, but, no. I don't have the desire. I would go if there is a reason to go, don't misunderstand, but just to pack it up and go, no.

SH: Just one quick question, you were still in the military during Vietnam. How would you sum that up from your perspective?

RS: Well, I don't know, because I wasn't really that close,, so to speak to what was going on and the people that were involved, because there were some high-powered people involved in that. ... I just never got that much involved, especially in the reserve status, ... as in the Air Force because I was more involved in the Air Force as opposed to what we were doing in Vietnam, and that sort of thing.

SH: Were you still working on any kind of public relations for the Air Force at that time? I was just thinking that would be a really difficult time.

RS: Not really, because anything that I did, or we did, in the Air Force, we just didn't go out and write our own book. If we had an idea, we had to communicate it, talk and discuss and see what our limitations are upwards and downwards, and so forth. So, it wasn't something that you go out and freelance, as we would call it, and so I really didn't get, my biggest education on that, Vietnam, was what I read in the funny papers, you know.

SH: One last question, you've talked very eloquently about the impact of your growing up in Ionia, Michigan and the impact of family on the man that you are and became, being involved in the Korean War, and then, maintaining your affiliation with the Air Force right on through, being a full colonel. There were many areas of your life that impacted, the man you are. You were a very young man in Korea. What lessons did you learn?

RS: I've thought about that a lot because I've seen other people of my age, or older or younger, but of my age get hurt. When I say get hurt, get laughed at or get criticized, and so forth, because of their irresponsibility, or lack of determination. ... I think this all started back in Ionia, as I originally said, and I have tried to be honorable, honest, and I tried to incorporate that kind of an attitude in my kids and they in their children, and so forth. But it has meant a lot to me and I'm not a know-it-all, and if I don't know I'll tell you I don't know, and I'm not that embarrassed. ... I think, like Mark and his sisters and brothers, and so forth, and all the girls, they're wonderful and I think that a lot of it is because of their relationship with their immediate

families, mothers and fathers. They have done a great, great job and I really take my hat off to them. That was the way I looked at life. My folks instill theirs, installed this on me and instilled it in me, but here we are.

ME: Is there anything you can think of, a story that you think we may have missed or anything like that?

RS: No, I don't think so. I think the thing that I wanted to get across is just what I just finished saying. My life, not perfect, but my life is, has been quite successful, because I've been trained and taught and listened to, of how to approach subjects and use common sense and not try to be the President of the United States. I've enjoyed it and I made mistakes, don't misunderstand me, but I don't have to apologize. I didn't do it intentionally, I guarantee you that, and it's nice to have a relationship like you've seen here with the kids and grandparents, hell, we just enjoy it. So, come on back.

SH: Well, thank you.

RS: Come on down.

SH: I thank you so much for taking time to sit for the interview and congratulations Mark for your job.

RS: Thank you very much.

ME: I want to say thank you so much and I will say this concludes our interview with Richard L. Spaulding on April 2, 2005 in Oradell, New Jersey with Mark Eiseman and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

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

Reviewed by Rodolfo Medini 10/5/05

Reviewed by Geoffrey Yen 2/28/07

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 4/15/07

Reviewed by Edwin Robinson 8/3/07

Reviewed by Richard L. Spaulding 8/25/07