

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAYMOND P. TAUB

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Ray Taub conducted by Kurt Piehler on June 29, 1994. I guess I'd like to begin by asking, why did your parents come to the United States?

Ray Taub: I think they came to--really to escape the persecutions that they had in what is now Poland, but at that time, it was Russia. The pogroms were--I remember my family telling me they were horrible situations, and the only thing I can recall would be the scenes in Fiddler on the Roof and the stories that went along with it during my childhood. They had to get out, and my mother, I remember, came over with her parents and an older sister when she was approximately three years old. My father came over much later, although they both came from the same town in, as I say, what is now called Poland, a little town called (Mizricz?), and that's about all I could tell you about that. But it was to avoid the persecutions that went on in those days.

KP: Your father, was his first job as a tailor?

RT: Yes, his first job in the United States was a tailor, and he had a tailor shop in Brooklyn. I remember ... seeing pictures of it. I was too young to appreciate it, because I was a year old when I came to New Jersey, so I didn't have too much recollection. But it is ... 281 Saratoga Avenue which is now a horrible area called Brownsville, next to Bed-Sty [Bedford Styvesant], so I'm glad I got out of there. I'm glad they had the sense to get me out of there when they did.

KP: Now your father also worked as a railroad conductor.

RT: Yes, he worked for the old BRT which was the forerunner to the BMT, that stood for Brooklyn Rapid Transit. And a strange story there--he once found--someone had left a clarinet on the subway, and nobody claimed it in so many days, so he got it, and my brother and I both played clarinet because of that. [laughs]

KP: Did he go back to working as a merchant?

RT: ... No, he came out to Somerville. My uncle lived in Somerville-- my mother's brother--and things were not going well in New York, so he brought them out to Somerville, and we established-- that is my parents established a hardware and house furnishing store in Somerville in 1922.

KP: Now you mentioned one of your earliest memories of a major event was the Hall Mills murder case. What were your memories of that?

RT: Well, it took place--our store was number 111 West Main Street, and the State Police had a headquarters about seven stores farther west on the same side of the street. ... All of the official business that did not take place in the courthouse took place there. All the reporters from the New York newspapers and Newark newspapers and I guess all over the United States that were interested headquartered in that. It was a hotel. It was called the Waldorf Hotel, run by a man named Jimmy Viola, who had a restaurant/bar downstairs and hotel rooms upstairs. And I do recall vividly, my father taking me into the courthouse during one of the sessions when the pig-lady was testifying. They brought her in, as I recall, on a bed, and I say, I knew some of the

principals. I can remember the judge because I went to school with his son. His ... home was just down the street from where my office eventually was. Well, it was a fascinating time.

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

RT: The Great Depression leaves me with very, very vivid memories. I can remember when we did not have any money in the house. I was eight years old when it started, and I remember coming home from school one day, and my mother was in tears, and I said, "What's the matter?" She says, "We have no money." And I recall my sophomoric remark about, "Well, ... there are checkbooks there. You have a whole lot of checkbooks." I thought that you could just write a check, and you had money. Well, I learned my economics early. It was devastating. In fact in 1931 or '32, we lost our store. ... My father had to declare bankruptcy, and fortunately my mother had the foresight to buy a home in town, off of Main Street where we lived. We lived above the store originally. And so we had a place to go to, and my father started a Venetian blind and window shade business out of the house. He was also one of the few people who could repair umbrellas. So he did that, and he worked up a very nice business. And I would say he was the first one in New Jersey who was written up in one of the Newark papers. I don't remember which. He had a little car and on its top was a sign: "Taub, the Blind Man." And now, of course, you see it many places, but I think he was an originator of that.

KP: A number of your family members served in the First World War. Were they volunteers?

RT: No, not really. I think they were all-- those that did were drafted because they had just ... [come] over to the new country. They just ... [came] over, and they did not know the whys and wherefores of the morays of the country, so those that did [serve], served by draft.

KP: But you did have one relative, Leo Taub, who was killed in France. He was in the U.S. Army.

RT: That was in World War II.

KP: Oh, Okay.

RT: Yes. I had two uncles who served in World War I.

KP: Okay.

RT: But Leo was killed in World War II, and he's buried in, I think in England. I know my brother went and visited his grave.

KP: What did your parents think of the First World War?

RT: I think they were too new here to understand what was going on. I think they had survival at the utmost of their goals at that time, and it was just something that they had to live through. I don't think--I never heard any stories about it as a youngster.

KP: What did your parents think of America?

RT: Oh, they loved it. My father always got involved. He loved politics. He loved to read the newspaper, and he just loved the democratic way of life. I mean, he took part--he was active in the Democratic Club. He was ... master-at-arms I believe for the Democratic Club, and he was very, very active. In fact, you could not run for Board of Education in our town unless you got his approval. I don't know how he did that, but you couldn't get elected if he didn't okay you. But they enjoyed the democratic society that we all enjoy here.

KP: Did he ever run for office?

RT: Nope, he never ran for office. I think as far as he got was he was an ... honorary deputy sheriff. And that's about as far as he got.

KP: What was your mother's reaction to the United States?

RT: She enjoyed it, because it meant a lot of freedom for her. I think she didn't have too much time to enjoy too many of the niceties of life because, as I mentioned, she was one of two children who came over. But there were seven children after that, and the older had to take care of the younger. And the whole family eventually lived in Manhattan and Brooklyn. My grandfather--my mother's father--was also a--well ... I'd call him a deluxe tailor. He had a firm where he made the first police uniforms for the Borough of Brooklyn before it was incorporated into New York City with Manhattan. But he had a deluxe type of operation in New York. And one of my uncles carried it on, and he had a very, very exclusive designer before designer names were popular. He had a designer who had a name, and I remember during the Depression going up to his firm and seeing them model bathing suits for 100 dollars, which to me was outrageous! How could anybody pay 100 dollars? But I can remember that vividly, also.

KP: You attended the Somerville school system?

RT: Yes, all the way.

KP: What are some of your recollections of your high school?

RT: Well, high school to me was a very enjoyable period. I didn't like what we call middle school now because I had one teacher who gave me a very difficult time. I was a good student. I wouldn't say that I was a poor student in any sense of the word. In fact, I think I graduated high school in the upper tenth of my class. But high school was enjoyable. As a teenager, I had a very, very good social life. We had a great group of friends, and we always did things. It was a wonderful experience, and I got a good education there also.

KP: Why did you come to Rutgers?

RT: I think I came to Rutgers because it was near. ... Well, we were still in the Depression at that time, and I remember my brother, who was sixteen years older than I was, was teaching in

the city of New York, and he helped subsidize me. We had to pay tuition of 66 dollars, I think, three times a year, and it was rough getting that 66 dollars. I played in a band at that time every Saturday night, and I made three dollars, and we got a sandwich along with it. And I used to pay for my room rent here at Rutgers. I lived off-campus, but it was three dollars a week for the room and five dollars for a meal ticket at Old Winants. And the food was good. I never objected.

KP: From your high school, how many people went to college?

RT: We had a very good percentage. I don't know--we had a very large class. The record for the number--we had 262 in our graduating class. That record stood for many a year because it is a small area. The whole school had about 1000 students. But it was a real good-- I think we had a very good percentage of those who went on to college. Perhaps I would say more than 50 percent.

KP: ... In terms of your high school, what was the make-up of it? ... What percentage would you say was first generation?

RT: I think it was a minority of first generation, because we had a lot of old-timers. Somerville is an old, Revolutionary town, so you had a lot of third, fourth generation Americans going to school at that time. We, as few Jewish families in the area, we were the minority at that time.

KP: Were there any tensions?

RT: No, no we never, never saw-- of course you did get the occasional remark, but I mean anti-Semitism was hidden. Although Somerville, at that time, was a hotbed of the Ku Klux Klan. And I remember as a youngster, a Ku Klux Klan, a ... torch light parade going down Main Street in the evening with the hoods and what have you, and it was funny because we ... all knew who was under the hoods. They were the local people.

KP: Who were under the hoods?

RT: The mayor, the funeral director, ... the manager of the grocery store next door. We all knew they belonged to the KKK.

KP: What was your attitude toward the Klan?

RT: Well, we used to call them the kluxers. ... They used to burn a cross on the mountain between Somerville and Pluckemin-- that was their headquarters. We just accepted them. I don't think they had any animosity to us in the sense of what you read about going on down south, but we knew they were there, and we knew what their goals were, and we just kept out of their way.

KP: Did they ever take aim at a particular member of the community or did they have anything specific in terms of what they wanted to do?

RT: I don't recall anything like that. There was nothing-- no headlines were made from the local group, although they were large in number because the headquarters [there] ... took care of a lot of northern New Jersey, I believe. But we never had any incidents, really, that I can recall.

KP: When did you decide that you wanted to go into optometry as a career?

RT: Well, as I mentioned it was-- we were coming out of the Depression, and my brother, who I mentioned was a teacher in the New York public school system, mentioned one day-- because he had a friend who was an optometrist, who did quite well-- and my courses at Rutgers led to that. I majored in math and natural sciences, ... and I always enjoyed science. ... So I investigated it, and I said "Gee, this is something where I can help people." And that's why I went into it.

KP: What was your view of the campus? In other words, where did you see the divisions on campus when you were here?

RT: The divisions that I can recall were between the haves and the have-nots. At that time the NYA, I think it was, the National Youth Administration was very, very much in existence and that was part of President Roosevelt's fixture actually to help students get some extra money. And it seemed to me that the ones that had money were the ones that got the jobs in NYA. We who had nothing were left out. But the divisions were-- I had friends-- I mean they crossed all sorts of lines. I had no problem with getting enough. I made a lot of friends here, and there was really no problem. ... I think the fun thing that I enjoyed was the soap-box oratory of the Communists at that time.

KP: Where would they speak?

RT: On Queens. In front of William of Orange, I believe. As I recall, somewhere on campus. And we'd go out to hear them, and we would hiss and boo, or whatever might take (you on you're own sasses?), but it was a really-- to me I was not politically involved, so it didn't make much impact upon my thinking at that time.

KP: The soap-boxers, were they Rutgers' students?

RT: Oh yes. They were all students. Oh yes, I can remember, I don't remember his name, but I can see his face and see him preaching to us. At the moment I don't remember what his name was, but he was a-- I think he was a junior at that time, and I was a freshman. But we just laughed it off. We didn't give it too much ... importance in our daily lives.

KP: You mentioned that your favorite professor was Albert Holzman. How did he become-- what was your relationship to him?

RT: I took a German course-- in fact most of my courses I took with the engineers. I don't know why except that I was in that math and that natural science course. ... We had German ... six days a week, including Saturday. ... It was in Old Queens, and Dr. Holzman, knowing that we had six days-- most of the courses were given three days a week, but his with six days a week, Monday

through Saturday-- he knew that we had so much hours to cover that he would start his course with something about current events. And there was always a good discussion of what was going on in the world. Now, mind you, the winds of war were rumbling at this point in time, and he had been a member of the Class of 1917. Never did we associate him with feeling that he was a Nazi or anything like that. He just was a very interesting personality and a good teacher, and I really enjoyed him.

KP: You mentioned that you discussed current events. ... This was 1938, '39 ...

RT: Yes.

KP: ... '40. What was the general sense of what was happening in the class?

RT: Well, I think the winds of war, as I said, were rumbling in a far off distance, but mostly we were concerned, I think, with coming out of the Depression, with Roosevelt's projects that ... had been forthcoming, the WPA, the PWA, the NRA. All of these were very foremost, I think, quite foremost in our speech and our talk and our environment. It was all around us, so I think that and the political situation. Of course, in 1938 Hitler was on the rise, so this also came to the fore, but it was a very good discussion. I mean it was not one-sided, and everybody spoke--it was a very good class. We had a ... good membership in that class, in other words, who could contribute to all sorts of viewpoints.

KP: You mentioned that Professor Holzman was a member of the Class of 1917. How did he sort of see events and what was happening in general?

RT: I don't think that I can recall that. I was a little bit too young to really understand what was going on. It wasn't until later that it made more of an impact, but I know that he was a good group discussion leader, and he would bring people out. Even those who were shy to begin with came out.

KP: You've remained very loyal to the Class of '42 and Rutgers. Is there a reason that you attribute [this to]? Is it one thing, or is it just the whole experience at Rutgers?

RT: Well, as I may have mentioned in my little biography I gave you, I only spent ... two years here, but I was so wrapped up in it. I made so many friends that some have continued up till now. ... As Bill Bauer said, "You don't have to be a graduate of Rutgers to be a member of the class"-- because I was always active in the class. So, I've just continued and being close enough, I can partake of the executive committee and so forth. I was reunion chairman one year, and I was class agent during our 50th reunion, which incidentally we won the Ashmeade award, but I've enjoyed the collegiality I guess of the guys that were in it.

KP: You had transferred to the Southern College of Optometry. How did you find this college. Why this college?

RT: I applied to, I think, ... there were eight colleges of optometry in the United States at that time. One of which was Columbia. One was in Philadelphia, and there were few, not too many, but ... somebody suggested this one in Memphis, Tennessee. And the reason I chose it is they gave me credit, full-credit for my full two years at Rutgers. The others wanted me to go an extra year, but I had already had my basic math, science and some of the humanities, so I just took that as the easy way out, and I was very happy I did. It was a very good experience to leave this area and get a taste of life in a different area.

KP: Before you left for this southern optometry, what's the farthest you had traveled?

RT: Oh, golly, I don't think I went farther than New York City. ... I had been very provincial. I had not gone anywhere. Well, I should say once with the Rutgers band on a Thanksgiving Day, we played Brown and the band went up to Providence. And I think that's the farthest I'd been away from this area ever since I remembered being here.

KP: Was it a shock to go to the south in the late '30s?

RT: It was a shock in the sense that the style of living-- and at that time Jim Crow was at its height. That was a shock, and ... there were several of us Yankees who were down there at that time, and we used to write letters home of all the differences that we had seen. For instance, riding in ... back of the bus. We had some men from New York City, who thought they were going to break up the integration right then and there and sit in the back of the bus, but the driver would not move until they moved, and we started learning that ... it's a different world down there at that time. That was 1940. ... No it was 1940, '41. ... The customs were different. I wasn't used to having black people-- we didn't call them black people then; they were still called Negroes-- walk off the sidewalk to let you pass. I couldn't tolerate that, but we ran into that. And Jim Crowism-- you'd see ... in the railroad stations, the water fountains for whites only and blacks only, a restaurant where the rear entrance was for blacks only. It was quite a shock to my system.

KP: How did you feel in terms of southern culture and religion being Jewish? Did you ever encounter tension there or ...?

RT: No, Memphis itself, which was a large city when I was there at that time, it had 292 thousand people. Now it's well over a million, I think. But it had a very big Jewish population, and they took us in beautifully. I mean we were entitled to go to the temple of our choice. There were several temples there. They encouraged that we didn't have to pay a membership. There were dances given to the students, and it was no tension at all at that time. I was well received.

KP: So Memphis was a big enough city that you didn't feel that it wasn't too provincial?

RT: Right. Right.

KP: Which leads me to go back to one thing-- in terms of Rutgers, ... did you go to chapel when you were at Rutgers?

RT: Yes, we did go to chapel. ... It wasn't voluntary. You had to go. I think it was Mondays. You were assigned a seat, and that's where you sat every Monday around noon as I recall.

KP: What did you think of the experience of going to Chapel?

RT: I never liked going to chapel because it did have a Christian motif, and at that time, ... we who were the so-called minority were-- people ... took it for granted that this is perfectly all right. I mean to say the Lord's Prayer or to sing Christmas carols. There was never any resistance to it and never any knowledge that it would be bothersome to some people. It was just an accepted fact. But it never ... really interfered with anything. We went because we had to go, but we brushed it off.

KP: How did your experiences at Optometry school compare to Rutgers? Optometry was a professional school, so the comparison is a limited one.

RT: Well, yeah, it was a professional school, but the thing I missed most after leaving Rutgers was the campus. Here we had a large building, a three or four-story building, that was in the middle of town. It was in the medical area of Memphis, and ... there was no campus. They had no extracurricular activities, because the war had just about made noise. Well, I got there in September of '41, so I was only there a few months before the war broke out. So ... we went through the quarter system, not semesters, and we had an accelerated system after that, so we went through summers, but the lack of a campus is what I really missed the most and the campus activities.

KP: Where did you live when you were in Memphis? Do you remember?

RT: I lived first-- there were some boarding houses around the school, and then my roommate's folks came down-- came up I should say. They lived in Miami, and for the last two ... quarters or three quarters or four quarters, I don't remember, we lived in a residential hotel, and that was beautiful. It was called the Forrest Apartments. It was named after General Forrest, a ... Confederate general. ... His mother cooked for us. She was a good cook. His father was a retired salesman, and Bob and I had a great deal of fun together. He had access to a car which we had never had before, so we had room for dates. We had a social life, and it was a much better situation than living in the residential apartments of the boarding house. We used to eat in a boarding house actually, where many ... residents of this apartment house would get together, and we'd have dinner-- well all of our meals together-- for 28 dollars a month, I recall. But the food was good. It was good southern cooking.

KP: In other words, you would say your experiences in the south were very positive?

RT: Positive in the sense that I enjoyed it except, of course, trying to get used to the Jim Crowism. That always bothered me, and it continues to bother me to this day whenever it rears its ugly head.

KP: You entered the Navy. Or were you drafted? How did you come to the Navy?

RT: That's a long story. ... I was drafted with a bus load of young kids. I imagine we were all very young at that time.

KP: Were you drafted at Memphis?

RT: No, No. I was fortunate enough-- living in a small town like Somerville, I had access through my father with the draft board. And I was fortunate enough to get a deferment. My roommate from Miami did not get a deferment, so he had to leave his studies-- in the middle of his studies actually, and come back after the war to finish. I completed my studies before I was drafted. But then I went to Newark for a physical. ... The last part of the physical was a psychiatric examination. Now, if you can picture, there were six psychiatrists on each side, and it depended upon which column you were in as to whether you'd go to the right or to the left, and as somebody left, room number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 on either side, you took his place. Well, as fate would have it, I had number six on the right. I'll never forget it. Had I not had that person, that psychiatrist, I don't think I would have been here today perhaps or-- it was just fate that I joined the Navy. I went to him, and I pulled up the seat next to his desk, and he balled me out, and I smiled. He says, "What are you smiling about?" I said, "Well, I understand what you are trying to do. You want to see if I'd get riled or something like that." Evidently we were talking, and he noticed that I had some scientific background, medical background, and it came out that I was an optometrist. He said "You're an optometrist? Wait a minute." He dropped all of his questioning, got up from his chair, went down two flights, and picked up a young PFC, who was working at that station, and said "Look, this guy is an optometrist. Do you want to end up like he does? We have a draft today for 28 men for the Navy. You'll never see a ship." So, I said "Okay, I'll join the Navy." And that was a matter of fate, and that's how I got into the Navy.

KP: Now, you had served in the R.O.T.C.

RT: No, I was in the band, which was part of the R.O.T.C., but we never had any formal-- we did have some studies, but it never went beyond that.

KP: You did not want to elect to go into that?

RT: Well, no. After two years, it didn't make any difference. ...

KP: So you end up going into the Navy, and they promised you ...

RT: "You'd never see a ship."

KP: ... you'd never see a ship. And that didn't come to pass?

RT: That did not come to pass.

KP: ... So after you were inducted into the Navy, ... what was your first experience? Where did you do your initial training?

RT: I took my boot training in Newport Naval Hospital. And it was the old story that they had said you had to be there at six o'clock. There was no direct transportation from Sommerville, so a friend of mine got six of us together, who were going, and he had us drive his father's car to Newark, and we got there about seven. No, we had to be there at eight. We got there just before seven, I remember. We almost got killed on the highway that morning because ... before it was light we left, and we almost hit a truck that had a beam sticking out of its rear. But, aside from that, we got there, and of course, they didn't call upon us until 12 o'clock noon. And then they started calling our names, and they said, "This group is going to Newport, Rhode Island," and a cheer went up because nobody knew where Newport, Rhode Island was, and it didn't make much difference. But we went to Newport, Rhode Island for our boot camp.

KP: Did you go by train?

RT: We went by train, and I stayed there, oh I don't know how long, in boot camp. I didn't finish boot camp because I had my degree, and they gave me a rating right away. I just had to produce my diploma, and they made me a pharmacist's mate third class. And then I got a promotion almost immediately, so I was pharmacist's mate second class, which would have been equivalent to a staff sergeant in the Army. And then I was ... sent to Newport Naval Hospital, which was right across the bay. And I did, oh I guess from August until January, I had duty there and a draft came out for destroyer escorts. ... This was a new-type ship the Navy had, and they drafted over 100 of us there to go on DEs, Destroyer Escorts. ... We all left for Norfolk, Virginia. Yes, we left for Norfolk, Virginia for our pre-commissioning school where we learned-- well we learned nothing because we were attached to a hospital, so we got all the training we wanted, or ... they had given it to us. But if you were ship's crew, if you were a seaman or if you were a signal man or what have you, you had to go to a school in Norfolk. But we were assigned to a ship at that point. And I was assigned to the USS Jack Miller, DE 410. ... I trained with my group, and thirteen has always been my lucky number, so while we were there, I was assigned to 410.

There was also a group for the 413, and I asked the man who was going to be a pharmacist's mate on that if he wanted to change places with ... me, and he said, "I don't know. I've been with these guys a long time. Let me think about it." Well, he came back about a week later and says, "No, I'm gonna stick with these guys. You know, we're all buddies now." Well, I don't if you recall but, the DE 413 was the Samuel B. Roberts, Samuel B. Roberts, I think, which was one of the DEs that was sunk. And in the Gulf War the Samuel B. Roberts, a frigate, was sunk also. Samuel B. Roberts does not have a good taste, but it was lucky for me because he never took my place, and I never took his. They lost quite a few casualties, too. I was told only one man got off alive, but I think there were sixteen who got off alive. And our ship was never scratched, never.

KP: Were there any casualties on your ship?

RT: ... Nope. ... I shouldn't say that, we had casualties. I had been through four typhoons. ... A typhoon is worse than any air raid that you'll ever go through. We used to take double rolls. I

remember the largest we took was a double 56-degree roll. And the casualties we had-- I was very busy at that time patching up people who had hot coffee spilled on them. So that was the only casualties we ever had. There were a few minor things. We used to do some minor surgery. But, really, when you weren't getting shot at, it was a good duty. It really was enjoyable because there was no physician on board. There was a chief and myself, a chief pharmacist's mate, and we were the medical officers. We had to do everything: shots, pills, cough medicine, oh just about everything.

KP: How did your training match up to what you ended up doing? Did they train you well enough to do everything?

RT: Yes, I had a very good mastery of anatomy. ... That has, I think, ... served me in good stead because this I could do something with every day. Plus the fact that my eye care situation allowed me-- we had a lot of people who had foreign bodies in their eyes, because every night at sundown, the destroyers would-- maybe the other naval vessels did too, I don't know-- but they would call a situation called "blowing tubes." In other words, they'd blow the ash out of the funnels, out of the smoke stacks. And if you were out on the afterdeck, you got something in your eye frequently. So we had a lot of this, and I became very adept at removing foreign bodies. But it was an enjoyable cruise.

KP: In terms of your training, what were the stages of your training? You were exempt from most of basic training. In other words, the pharmacist's mates went through separate track.

RT: Oh yes, I didn't have to go through that because I had enough credentials to eliminate that sort of thing.

KP: So what would be the differences if you had gone through basic versus your training as a pharmacist mate?

RT: Well, if I had to go through basics, I would have to learn everything from A to Z. I mean, they used to tell me that they learned how to give shots by poking oranges with needles. I didn't have to do any of that. I had enough background that I could just fit right in. I had, as I say, a good anatomical background. I had a good technique using my hands. I could suture. I could do a lot of these things, so I didn't have to go through that basic. There were ... two or three hospitals where they trained corps men in the United States for that, but I never had to do that.

KP: You mentioned you and the chief pharmacist's mate were the only two medical people on board. When you would get into port, how did other pharmacist's mates handle it? Were you glad that you never saw battle casualties? Do you think you would have been prepared?

RT: Oh, I would have been prepared. I mean, we were prepared. We worked in the hospital before-- as I say I was in Newport Naval Hospital before I went to Norfolk. So I had enough basic patient attendance, I should say. In other words, I learned at the hospital how to take a blood pressure, ... how to do some lab work, how to concoct some pharmaceuticals. While although fortunately my chief was a pharmacist and when you go to a new ship, they don't give

you all your medications, you have to make them. They gave me the powders and the alcohols and the water. And he did all that. So, it was very, very ... good mix, myself and him.

KP: How big was your destroyer?

RT: The destroyer was 306 feet long, and it ... [had] a crew-- the most we ever had was 218, and the least was about 203. And that's officers and men. We had about eight officers, and the rest were regular seamen ....

KP: Having been on a destroyer, they are not very big.

RT: No, they are not. [laughs]

KP: Are there any stories or memories you have about what close quarters does?

RT: Well, I remember before when I first got my orders to go to sea; I had two days off, and I ... went home, from Newport. ... Then I had to get back. But I remember-- the only thing I'd ever been on, as far as being on water, was the ferry between New York City and Jersey City. ... I was trying to visualize in my own mind how wide is a destroyer and how big? How small? I had no idea. Would I be seasick? Or would anything like that happen to me? I didn't have any idea. But when I got on board, we went to Norfolk, as I said, for our ... pre-commissioning, and they took us out for a couple of days on a Destroyer Escort. And I rather liked it. It was close quarters, but I enjoyed water, and I'm not a swimmer, but I enjoy being on water. There is a certain feel to it that either you adapt to it or you don't, and I certainly did.

KP: So overall, you really enjoyed your experience and felt that you were matched up with the right service?

RT: Yes, I think so. As I say, aside from getting shot at sometimes, or going through typhoons, it was very, very nice. ... Of course I, personally, didn't have to stand watches, like the other men did. Of course I was on call for 24 hours a day. My bunk was right outside of sickbay. ... Occasionally we had some casualties in the sense of, as I said, burns, and I had a couple of people we didn't realize were epileptics on board, and we had to take care of them, but it was an enjoyable cruise, as we say in the Navy. I did not mind it.

KP: How fortunate was your vessel, in terms of not experiencing casualties?

RT: Well, I think we were marked with the sign of good luck all the way through. I always tell this story, well there are two stories. The DE 404, the DE 407, the DE 413, and I think, the DE 416 or 17, ... -- but it's always four more, but you see from, no three more,-- from 404 to 7 is three, from 7 to 10 would have been three, but we never got hit. All those other ships were sunk. The 404, 407, the 413, and the 416, they were all hit or sunk. Ours never got a scratch. The one story that I must tell you is this: ... Towards the end of the war, we were on what they call picket duty at Okinawa. Picket duty meant that you had several destroyers and destroyer escorts circumventing the whole island of Okinawa. Each ship was responsible for twenty miles. In

other words, we would go north twenty miles, turn around and come south twenty miles. And there was a ship from our point north and our point south. We had that twenty miles to patrol for anti-submarine warfare or early sightings or what have you. After about ten days out on the picket line, we had to go in to Okinawa to be refueled and refurbished as far as our food was concerned. They would send a ship out to take our place for that twenty mile trek until we got all these things done. The first time we went out, the ship that took our place got hit by a kamikaze. So we went out again. They towed her in, and we were going up and down. Twenty miles up, twenty miles down, for another week, ten days, and then it was time to go in again. The ship that took our place got hit by a Kamikaze. And then we went out, and did our twenty miles again, and this was once, twice, it happened three times. The ship that took our place was hit by a kamikaze, and I've always been a fatalist ever since that occurrence. I think that was unusual and I got used to it.

KP: In other words, you should have experienced a kamikaze attack. Did you ever get hit by a Kamikaze?

RT: ... We were close, but we never got hit.

KP: So you were, in fact, under attack from kamikazes?

RT: Oh yes, oh yeah. They were very close to us. In fact, I remember seeing one. ... We were watching a movie on our fo'c'sle [forecastle]. We used to have movies when we were in port, and I was sitting next to a chief bo'sun's [boatsman's] mate. I said, "Look at that crazy guy, how low he is, and he's got no lights on." And oh, no more than ten seconds later, we hear this tremendous explosion. This was, of course, at night. ... We turned around, and we saw this tremendous explosion, and that was when ... an aircraft carrier got hit by this kamikaze. ... I could have reached up and touched him. He was seen that low. And then there were a couple of other explosions. This happened, I think in the island of Ulithi, I believe.

KP: Was this kamikaze attack before they were common?

RT: No, no. No, they were quite common at that time, but we never expected them to come in that way. They usually came in on moonlit nights. We used to dread the full moon because they could spot our wakes and the closest we came, as someone said, there was a stick of bombs that fell on our aft. In other words, on our tail, missing us by about 50 yards. And that's as close as we came to getting hit.

KP: Your ship-- part of it is probably to luck, but what about the leadership on your ship?

RT: We had a very good skipper. The first skipper we had, his name was James Whaley. He was an Annapolis man. ... All that he started out with-- lieutenant commanders as their skippers, and then they eventually, if they were worthwhile, they became commanders. Well, being an Annapolis man, he had seniority. So our ... division, or group, whatever it was-- in other words we had six ships in our division. We used to get the choice of any duties that would come about because he had seniority. One time on Eniwetok, he went ashore when we were in port, and

evidently he got drunk. ... He was at the officer's club, and the executive officer came up to me-- I was also-- one of my duties was as chaplain. I was also the librarian. But one of my duties was to anybody who was leaving the ship, I had to survey their belongings. ... The executive officer came rushing up to me once, and said, "Inventory the skipper's gear." He wouldn't tell me what happened, but our skipper never came back. ... We of course heard that he had gotten drunk, and he said that the man at the end of the bar had taken his twenty dollar bill. But that man at the end of the bar was the island commander. He was a rear-admiral, and they didn't want him to have any court-martials, so they got rid of him. They transferred him off immediately, and we sat in Eniwetok for ten days without a skipper.

KP: So he never came back to the ship?

RT: Nope. We never saw him after he got his gear out. We got it out, and we never saw him again. As our replacement, was some yeoman, which ... is like a clerk. In Pearl Harbor he ... called somebody a lieutenant commander when he should have been a full lieutenant. So they gave him to us as a skipper. He came aboard with lieutenant commander's leaves, and he was on board several weeks or months, and then we see he's got lieutenant's tracks again, because it caught up to him that the yeoman made an error in his rank. But, eventually he became lieutenant commander, and he was our skipper. Now this skipper, the second skipper-- the only other skipper we had-- was V. C. Royster, the "V" standing for Vermont, "C" for Connecticut, and Royster was his last name. And as he was indoctrinating himself to us on the fantail, he said that it was custom-- I think he came from the mid-west, Wisconsin or Michigan, that all of his brothers and sisters were named after states. Now V. C. Royster, if you go through your history, was the editor of the Wall Street Journal, and he has won two Pulitzer prizes. ... I've kept a bit in touch with him when he's done it. I've congratulated him, and he's answered me. But it was an interesting story. He was an interesting guy.

KP: Was he Navy?

RT: He was USNR. He was reserve. He was not regular Navy, no.

KP: How did his leadership compare with that of your first captain?

RT: Well, it was different. You see, instead of getting the cream of the crop, he was the low man on the totem pole. So we used to get the cream of the crap. And we had all sorts of ugly duties. We missed-- we really by hook and crook-- I don't think this was in, I think this was still with Captain Whaley-- when the Japanese-- they were trying to get the Japanese out of Tokyo harbor where they sent in three-- they sent in two DEs and a destroyer to what they call "crossing the T" to entice the battleships out of, I think it was Manila harbor or somewhere in the Philippines. That's where the Samuel B. Roberts went, and we didn't. We were supposed to go and our skipper got us out of that duty. So I'm sure it was Captain Whaley. I'm sure if we had Captain Royster, we would have been the first ones sunk there, too. [laughs]

KP: So you mentioned, that in terms of duty, you got duty that was not the most desirable. What other differences did you note in terms of the two captains?

RT: Well, my captain-- as I mentioned, I was the librarian, and my captain was, he was quite an intellectual. He was a very bright man. And we thought he was an old man at that time. He was 33 years old, I think, when he took command. He had been on the USS Hornet. He got the Silver Star for bravery when the Hornet went down, or when it was bombed, and then he got this as a token. But he always wanted me to get certain books because when we'd tie up to other ships, we would trade books. I'd have library hours from 11 to 12, I mean, every day. But I remember he wanted me to get Anthony Adverse, that was a new book at the time, or just about maybe a year later-- we got them a little late out there. But I had a tough time. ... I finally got it, and I came up to his cabin, I said, "Here captain. This is what you've been looking for." He would never show emotion, but he'd say, "Taub, good job." I remember the words so greatly. He was something else. Another time he came-- he called me up to his cabin-- he wouldn't come down to sickbay of course-- he called me up to his ... cabin and said, "Doc," he said, "My teeth are loose." And I didn't know what to do. [laughs] But I did something. I think I gave him some sort of an alum preparation, and then never heard from him again. But we'd see all kinds of crazy things.

KP: So Royster was much more of a character than Whaley ...

RT: Well, he was a lesser individual in a sense that he didn't have the personality, or the-- lifetype. Royster was not a Captain Quig, by any means. He was a Captain Milquetoast. But Whaley was as close to Captain Quig because he would punish people for-- I remember, you weren't allowed to use the showers except for certain times, and somebody would always sneak in and take a shower, and he would ... put them in the brig. We had a little closet under one of the decks, and they'd stay there for 24, 48 hours, eating nothing but bread and water. And he would do these things. So if you remember what Quig did with the strawberries and all this, he was on that order, but he wasn't that mean. He wasn't mentally deranged at all. He was a good skipper.

KP: The Navy and the Air Corps were the elite services. What did you think of the quality of the crew, beginning with say the junior officers? Were there any regular Navy, or were they all reserve and volunteers?

RT: We had-- Captain Whaley was the only regular Navy officer we had. As I say, we had eight or ten officers, but they were all USNR. They were all taken from the hills of Ohio or Idaho, some from Chicago, one from Mobile, Alabama. Two or three of them were lawyers. They were all reserves. Our crew were really a motley crew. The fellow that slept under me, he could hardly speak English. He had a very heavy, southern accent. He'd never worn shoes before he came into the Navy, from what I was told. [He] never took a shower, so we had to give him ... what we called an ... "iron brush scrub." We used to throw him in the shower and soap him up and brush him down with a very hard bristled brush. Most of these kids had never seen the water before and never had any training, but it's amazing what the Navy can do to a group. After our shakedown in Bermuda, we went through the Panama Canal. ... Then up to San Diego. We were there about ten days, and we went out to Pearl Harbor for another ten days. And by that time we had a crew that was ship shape. They knew how to use the guns. They knew how to fire

torpedoes. They knew how to fire the five-inch cannon on board, and we were a well-trained group.

KP: How important is the shakedown cruise?

RT: A shakedown cruise really is to see-- it's literally what it means, a shake down. It's to see how the ship reacts. Are there any problems with the ship? You take it from the shipbuilder, which happened to be Brown Shipyards in Houston, Texas. We went down to Galveston, and San Jacinto before we went out into the Gulf of Mexico. San Jacinto is where we loaded our ammunition. It was an ammunition dump. ...

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... After leaving San Jacinto, as I say, we went to Bermuda. And we went out every day to do a different problem. There would be a problem that we had to solve, whether it be flank speed to see how the ship reacts at its topmost speed. I remember one of the exercises was you're going flank speed and then all of a sudden, you have to go in reverse immediately to see if the ship will hold up. And, of course, it did. But every day was anti-submarine warfare. There was target practice. There would be planes flying overhead, and you had to shoot at a-- they would pull a sock ... to train our crew how to shoot the 20 mm anti-aircraft little guns. So it was a good experience. As I mentioned, we got ashore twice. ...

KP: So you managed to get ashore?

RT: Yeah, we managed to get ashore, and I said, I remember there were eight of us that got ashore. We went together, and we went into a shoe store because we thought we'd get some nice, black shoes to go with our dungarees. Because this was called a dungaree Navy. When you are in a destroyer or lower, you're in the dungaree Navy. You never get dressed up. No uniforms. So we go in and order eight pair of shoes, and we go up to the clerk to pay our bill, and he says, "Where are your ration coupons?" "What ration coupons?" So we couldn't buy shoes, and he lost a big sale because rationing was a big part of everything in those [days]. Of course, it was a British colony at that time. It still is, but we didn't have ration coupons.

KP: And so they wouldn't sell them to you?

RT: They couldn't sell them to us without the ration coupons.

KP: You mentioned you were in the dungaree Navy. How often did you wear your uniform?

RT: We never wore our-- the only time we'd wear a uniform ..., for instance, when we got to Pearl Harbor, and you went into downtown Honolulu, you would wear whites. But I don't think any time after that until I got back after V-J Day to the island of Guam. I was at a hospital there. I was at a fleet hospital, and we used to have dances with the nurses. ... Then we were allowed to put on our uniform. In fact, we had to, you couldn't wear your dungarees. But you worked in dungarees.

KP: Dungarees and a particular kind of shirt?

RT: Yes, ... a chambray shirt. It was a uniform. ... It was a government issue type of thing. But it was strictly informal. Whereas on the larger ships, the battleships, and the aircraft carriers, they had sometimes where they had to wear their dress uniforms. But we never did. This was called the dungaree Navy or the Mickey Mouse Navy. ... [Those] were the terms that were used for that.

KP: Did you want to be on a battleship? How did you feel about being on a destroyer escort? Or did you never give it much thought?

RT: I never gave it much thought until--well let me see, when you're in the Pacific, and when you are a pharmacist's mate on a small ship without any medical doctors-- that is medical help-- the biggest concern was getting onto a larger ship that had a dentist. ... As soon as we'd pull into port, we'd ask for a ship that had a dentist. And I would always have people needing dental work. So we'd call what we called a dental party, and we would go by our whale boat to whatever ship. It could be a transport or a freighter or a tanker. These ships carried dentists by and large. ... I once had to go to an aircraft carrier with a dental party. And to me, it looked like the most--well it was a tremendous apartment house. It was so confusing to me that I said, "I'm glad I'm on a DE," because we just had two decks, above deck and below deck, and that was it. Those large ships, they couldn't roll as much as we could. They didn't bob around as much as we did, but they were just too much. It was very, very--what shall I say--it wasn't as friendly because the divisions were too big. Our divisions, we knew everybody on the ship. And the larger ships, each division--that is whether you had a gunnery division, a communications division, ... a[n] air group or what have you--those divisions kept to themselves. They didn't know anybody else on board. But with our ship, we knew everybody.

KP: So you really knew the whole crew?

RT: Oh sure, sure.

KP: During the shakedown and during the length of your ship's tour, did you lose crew members?

RT: Yes, we did lose some crew members. ... In fact in Bermuda, we lost an officer who had a heart attack, and we went out that day, and by the time we came back, he had passed away ... When we were out in the Pacific, as I mentioned before, ... I had two people who had epilepsy, and they were transferred. We had one who--in World War I they called [it] shell shocked, and here we called it combat fatigue. He literally went off his rocker, and we had to send him back. We had a case of appendicitis, I recall, when we were out there, and we had to turn back into port. Incidentally, the pharmacist's mate has jurisdiction over the commander of the ship, over the captain. We could tell him when we had to get back to port if there was something like--they would transfer him to another vessel that had surgery, and we had one of those. And we did have a gunner's mate who fell. He fell from the boat deck down to the main deck and broke some ribs.

And I remember it was a harrowing experience. We had to send him across to a tanker in a litter, in like a gurney, over these rushing waves. And he was strapped in there, so if anything happened, if he fell--of course, they never fell. The seamen know how to rig lines, and it went over without anything, but we did lose a lot of people that way, normal transfers. We had officers change positions. They get transferred off, transferred on, what have you. But it was all done at sea with these little carriages that went between ships.

KP: You mentioned that your initial captain was a tough disciplinarian. Did you lose any members of the crew due to disciplinary infractions, and was that handled on the ship? Did your captains try to transfer out members of the crew who did not work out?

RT: No. He was ... I would say the opposite of that. ... When we came into Boston after our shake down cruise from Bermuda, I had one young seaman. No, he was a fireman. He worked below decks who ... was terribly seasick. ... Chelsea Naval Hospital in Boston had a seasick clinic, and I was told to take him there and see if he was faking it or he really was seasick. And the report came back that he was a terrible candidate for going to sea. ... We presented the report to our skipper, and he tore it up in front of me. He says, "He goes with us!" He didn't care about anybody getting seasick. We had a few people who got seasick. I never got seasick. I don't know how I avoided it. I don't think it is mental, because I thought surely I would get seasick. But it never bothered me.

KP: Even in the typhoons?

RT: Nope. It never bothered me. I never got queasy at all. And some would always get queasy. So, I think it's the way ... your genes or what have you.

KP: You made a port of call at Bermuda. Where else did you have ports of call?

RT: ... After Bermuda, as I say we went to Boston. And from Boston, we went to Norfolk, Virginia. In Norfolk, Virginia we escorted the old battleship, the USS New York, it's a very old World War I battleship, to Trinidad. ... We stayed overnight in Trinidad, and only half of the ship goes on liberty. You're divided into port and starboard. In other words, half the ship is port, and half is starboard. So I didn't get liberty in Trinidad. But the boys came back and there were some wild stories about the people in Trinidad. Then we did something that was one of two things that I've always wanted to do in my life, is go through the Panama Canal, which was a marvelous experience.

KP: You had always wanted to do that?

RT: Yes, there were two things I wanted to do.

KP: What was the other one?

RT: The other was to put my two hands in two states and my two feet in the other states at the Four Corners. And I did that two years ago. So I've accomplished both of my goals in life.

KP: Why the Panama Canal?

RT: It just fascinated me. There was a book I used to have, my brother gave to me when I was in grade school, and it showed the building of the Panama Canal. ... I can see the pictures in it, and I say I would love to go through that some day, and I did. From there, we came to Balboa, the other side of the canal. It's what they call the Pacific side, and I had liberty there. ... I remember one incident. I was trying to get a fountain pen in Houston before we got on ship, before our ship was commissioned. I couldn't find a fountain pen because the war effort took everything. And I went to a drug store in Balboa-- ... no, actually it was--what's the name of that? ... Is it Panama City? No. Anyway, it's in Panama, the capital of Panama, I think. I go into this drugstore, and there you could buy any type of fountain pen that you wanted. And I got a Schaeffer fountain pen, which I used throughout the war. And I got some ink, too, because I knew we wouldn't have access to that, and they were loaded with them down there. And that was an interesting place. It was the first time ... I'd ever seen women selling lottery tickets on the street. They had these big boards with tickets on them, and you purchased them from these women.

KP: Why did that strike you as strange?

RT: I never saw that. That was before we had lotteries up here. I mean it was way before. This was 1944.

KP: So it was the idea of a lottery?

RT: Yeah. And the way they were selling them on the streets.

KP: What else struck you about Panama?

RT: Panama at that time was quite clean. Whereas the boys say Trinidad was very dirty. ... We just spent 24 hours there, and then we took off, and we went up to San Diego. San Diego was a great experience. I'd never been to California before, and we anchored out in the bay, I guess. ... We took these water taxis--what takes you into the foot of Broadway in San Diego. It was a real sailor's town. They had tattoo shops all over, and I'm sure there were a lot of prostitutes around, and theaters and restaurants. But it was a nice city and the climate was nice, this was in July. ... I remember I spent [the] Fourth of July at the destroyer base. I had to take some youngsters down to the destroyer base for a dental party. And while I was there, I was entitled to dinner. And on holidays, in the Navy, they always have big dinners with a printed menu. And I got one of these and brought it back to ship. ... I mean I had a good meal at this destroyer base in San Diego.

KP: Anyone on the base at the time was entitled to this meal?

RT: Yeah. ... I was there during mess hours for the dinner and partook. But I remember they gave you a printed menu.

KP: Interesting.

RT: Even at the Newport Naval Hospital, when I was there during Thanksgiving, we had the same thing. ... A printed menu and a very fine meal.

KP: The image of sailors going on leave is one of very wild and raucous behavior. Did this apply to your own ship?

RT: ... In Houston, before we were commissioned, our crew was together. And we did have a lot of people who went across the border to Mexico. ... I remember one boy who drank too much tequila, and he came back, literally blind. It didn't last long. It was what we call a hysterical blindness. But it did affect some of them. ... These were very young kids, they were 17, 18 years old. They never knew what to do, and they used to drink.

KP: Tom Kindre mentioned that he was in a largely midwestern National Guard unit, where most of the unit came from small towns. He found that many members of his division let loose in Italy once they realize they were far from home. Did you see any of that?

RT: Well, we were limited because, as I say, in those areas, in San Diego and in Houston, we did see that. But after that, we were nowhere near any place that that could be done. So we never ran into it too much. I will say this, that going from the Panama Canal up to San Diego, we had ... our first battle stations. ... What reminded me of it was this hysterical blindness. We had one boy who went blind from nerves. And I had to take him to the San Diego Naval Hospital. ... There he was diagnosed as hysterical blindness. ... In 48 hours his sight came back. But I tell you, knowing a little bit about the eyes at that time, I gave him a lot of tests on malingering, and he really could not see. His mind blanked out his visual capacity.

KP: Did this particular incident--was this one of the reasons you ended up going into behavioral optometry? Did the war time experiences affect the course of your career?

RT: No, not really. That came about later.

KP: That's different.

RT: Yeah, Yeah. ... Behavioral optometry didn't exist at that time.

KP: Did you have much of a problem with venereal disease when sailors went on leave?

RT: We lost one man to venereal disease in Galveston. He was a very handsome sailor. He was a first class water tender. He used to go--we knew the girl he went with because we used to see them in town. ... One day, he comes into sickbay for a check, ... and I saw a chancre. ... That's a misdemeanor. You had to report it, and they took him off. We had-- I think, he was the only one that got a venereal disease in Galveston. So, I'm sorry he left the ship because he had been in the great white fleet, which was approximately when? He'd gone around the world with the Navy before World War I, I think.

KP: So he was an old Navy man?

RT: Yes, he was an old Navy man. And he used to tell some stories that just were fascinating. But we lost him in Galveston.

KP: When you say he used to tell stories, what did he tell you of the old Navy? ...

RT: The old Navy, and being in Paris, and how they greeted the sailors then. They were so happy to see the Americans and what have you. He was loaded with stories, but I missed out on that.

KP: On the way to Pearl Harbor, after you left San Diego, how long did it take a Destroyer Escort to make it to Pearl Harbor?

RT: I think it took us about five or six days.

KP: You did go on leave in Hawaii. What struck you of Hawaii?

RT: Hawaii--I have been back there since--and last time I was there was 1989, I believe. And it brought tears to my eyes to go back because it is so changed. During the war it was a hustle-bustle place. It was very clean. ... There was a street called Hotel Street where the sailors would line up to go up to a house of ill repute. The thing that I can remember the most, and I used to dream about it when I was out in the Pacific, there was a place called the Black Cat. It was a bar and an ice cream parlor. ... I love malted milks, and I got a malted milk there that really knocked your eye out. And I used to dream of that malted [milk]. And I couldn't wait to get back when I came back home. ... It was there when I came back from overseas. But when I went back in 1989, it wasn't there. But Ford Island was really devastating, to see what is now called Battleship row and all the damage done by the Japanese on December 7th. It was a very busy place during the war. They had the--I forget which Naval district it was--11th Naval district? That was the headquarters, the admiral was there and so forth. That's where all the orders were given where your ships were going. So, it was a lovely place. But the people were very nice, and the interesting thing was they had lady barbers. There were no men barbers that I saw in Pearl Harbor-- that is in Honolulu. They were all usually Chinese women that ran barber shops. And there used to be a place, on one of the streets, that we took our picture with a hula gal. In other words, she wore a grass skirt ... and a typical ... Hawaiian type of costume. ... They would take our picture for a dollar. And I sent this home. ... My mother wrote me subsequently and said that my father didn't believe that it was real. He thought it was a cardboard lady that I was holding. Subsequently, these women were in--Life did a piece on this where they showed some of these gals taking pictures with the sailors. So I told my mother to look ... this up, and sure enough, there was the same girl that I had taken a picture with in the Life piece. So, I guess my father realized it wasn't a cardboard woman. [Laughs]

KP: What were your parents' attitudes toward your military service and your being in the Navy?

RT: I think they were just concerned because there are a lot of people, a lot of soldiers, sailors, marines, what have you, airmen, who were killed from Somerville. ... Their one hope was that I would come home alive, and unscathed, which I fortunately did.

KP: What was your first incidence of battle? You went on battle stations several times.

RT: Oh yes. We'd go into battle stations if there ... was a submarine. ... From sonar you'd get an echo from a submarine, and then we would drop depth charges and so forth. We don't know whether we got any submarines. We never saw any debris come up, but we think we got a lot of whales. Of course, they'd give the same echo. But the first battle I was in, I think was--we went from Pearl Harbor and we passed Kwajalein. The battle of Kwajalein had already passed. We went to Eniwetok; that was our headquarters. From there we went to Saipan. That was the first time I had ever ... seen a dead body. It was a Japanese floating in the water. ... There were, not kamikazes, they didn't have kamikazes then. There was still some shooting at night. ... I remember we attacked--we were told to attack an island where there was a Japanese battery. ... We went in there at night and shot some cannon fire and came back. There was no return. But that was the first place, Saipan.

KP: And in subsequent battles that you were in, what memories do you have ...?

RT: We were in the Caroline Islands. We were in Saipan, Guam, Okinawa, of course, was the biggest. We went down. We passed the equator ... we were in Palau. We were involved in that a little bit. Then we went to--my skipper was (Whaley?) at that time. [He] got a choice job of taking some Marines for R&R to Guadalcanal. This was way after the battle of Guadalcanal, of course. And they were on two big Dutch vessels. And it was a pleasure to see. With your binoculars, you could see the Dutch officers wearing sharply creased white shorts and white shirts and white hats. And then we took the Marines to Guadalcanal and then dropped them off there. But that was our ... first time we crossed the equator. And that's interesting.

KP: Did you do all the rituals?

RT: Yes, as I say, the King Neptune--there were only six shellbacks on our ship, which means there were only six people who had gone over the equator before. So they had to initiate two hundred and some. ... The night before, we were called upon to King Neptune's court. We each got a summons. We had a thing that we had done. In other words--I forget what mine was, but something we had done wrong and consequently, we had to pay for this. ... The next day we had to go through a battery of--it's an initiation process. It was funny. ... The skipper said, "Now, as you go through, you are now a shellback, so you have to take it out on the polliwogs." ... [You] were called a polliwog if you hadn't gone through. So the idea was to go through first. ... I remember the last thing they did. They had been saving garbage for weeks in a great big tarpaulin, and they hung this tarpaulin full of garbage from one of the five inch mounts. And that was the last thing they did. They threw you in this garbage. We had a dog on board. He was a mascot. And he had to go through. Our skipper was tough. [Laughs] But we had fun. ... After that we went through two more times, I think, we crossed the equator. But then it was just small bits and pieces because most of us had been through. ... I remember, one of our crew said he had been through, but he had no credentials to prove it. There is a little card you'd get and a diploma.

So I went to the yeoman. I said, "I will personally type it into each person's service record to show that he'd been through." And I did that. I went in every night to the yeoman's office, and I typed this in, the time and the latitude and longitude that we'd crossed the equator. That was a great experience.

KP: You had mentioned you were chaplain of your vessel.

RT: Yeah.

KP: How did that work?

RT: It is listed as one of my duties, but of course I had ... nothing religious to do. But most of it was to do with ... signing off the gear. In other words, to make sure they didn't take anything that didn't belong to them.

KP: So that was the chaplain's job on a ship?

RT: Yeah. ... In other words, ... if anybody wanted to go to any kind of service, religious service, it would only happen when we were in port, or if we were tied up to a larger ship, or near a larger ship where they had services.

KP: So the Navy, which ship ranked having a chaplain?

RT: Oh, the larger ships, battleships, aircraft carriers, cruisers. I don't think anything lower than a cruiser.

KP: So someone would be appointed chaplain, but there would be no services?

RT: Yeah, right. But I imagine if we lost someone at sea--in other words, if we did have a deceased member of the crew, I imagine the chaplain would have to read the service.

KP: But fortunately, you never had to?

RT: No. No, never had to do that.

KP: How many books did you have in your library?

RT: We had approximately 100 books. It was a cabinet similar to the one you have in your office about ... four shelves. ... They were utilized by a certain few. Not everybody read because we had, as I say, a lot of country boys. But there were a lot of people who read. I enjoyed reading. I did a lot of reading because I had really good hours. I had sickbay from eight to nine in the morning, and one to one-thirty in the afternoon. And that's all. And the rest I was on call.

KP: So what did you do?

RT: I used to read. [Laughs] Sure. Or write letters. I had ... my own desk, and it was really great.

KP: So in other words, you had more space than the average sailor?

RT: Yes, yeah. See the other men had to serve watches, which meant four-hour watches. You're on four, and off four ... so that you would--or sometimes it was on four, off eight, I don't remember. But ... that's where the ship's bells come into play. You know how a ship's clock tolls time. ... Everybody had to serve, whether it be from a midnight shift to four o'clock in the morning, or four o'clock till eight, eight to twelve, and so fourth.

KP: You mentioned the country boys. What would they do? I mean they obviously had watch and so forth. What would they do on the ship?

RT: A lot of them would play cards. The chiefs were notorious; we had a lot of chiefs on board. I mean each division had a chief. They played "Acey-Ducey," which I understand today is called backgammon. It's similar to backgammon if it isn't the same. And I learned how to play cribbage. So you'd have games like that. ... We had a ship's store that had other things that they could do. They could buy cigarettes for five cents a pack. Cigarette smoking was, of course, very tolerable then. I smoked a pipe. I used to pay five cents for a pouch of tobacco. ... We'd get candy bars for very little money. That was our recreation. But if you read--I used to go, I remember, in front of the pilot house, away from everybody, and read. I'll tell you one thing I did once, I just remembered, I took my shoes and socks off and sat in front of the pilot house, which means I was exposed to the sun. And I got the worst case of sun poisoning on my feet. Of course my feet were never exposed. Now it became not sunburned, but it was terribly itchy. And in the Navy, two things are misdemeanor. Venereal disease, of course you had pay docking, and sunburn.

KP: Oh really?

RT: Yes. You weren't allowed to get sunburn. You had to wear a shirt at all times. ... I didn't report it because if I did, I would have been docked. So that was something I just recalled. Oh, it lasted for about two, three weeks. It was terrible.

...

KP: In terms of your experiences in the South Pacific, but outside Hawaii, did you have any ports of call where you had leave or had other reasons to leave?

RT: No, there was no place to have a leave. I never got to Japan. I was close to Japan, but there were no big cities. ... Where we'd anchor, there'd just strictly be a base. I was on Okinawa. I was on Palau, but these were all battle-torn. I mean, the trees literally ... their trunks were shot in half, or less. Eniwetok was an atoll. We used to say, "It's all atoll and nothing at all left." It was interesting, though, to see the wash machines that also was a "cat" base [for the] Catalinas, the rescue planes that the Navy ... used. .... We used to see these little windmills. We were, of course, stationed on our ship, and we'd go ashore for a beach party. That was our liberty. A lot

of guys would go swimming and so forth. We had a lot of casualties there, I should say, from scratches from coral. And scratches from the guys who would climb up coconut trees and shim down and get all bruised and lacerated. But in Eniwetok, they had this cat base, Naval Air Station, and these little windmills, ... they couldn't have been more than three feet, and we'd see a bunch of them off ... on the atoll itself. I asked somebody, probably an airman, "What were those?" Those were windmills, literally windmills, where the airmen did their laundry. In other words they had basins. They rigged out oil drums. They cleaned them out and put their clothes in it, and the windmill would turn a plunger, and they would wash their clothes that way.

Talk about turning something, I also had to take one of our chiefs, who had a bad tooth, and I had to take him to a hospital--it was a tent hospital on Eniwetok--to a dentist. ... The dentist had to remove his tooth. He had elemental tools, he had no equipment to speak of. The drill was operated--I had to get on a bicycle seat and turn, you know pedal, to turn the drill for the dentist. ... Then I had to hold the chisel while he used a hammer to get the tooth out. That was a terrible experience. One of the worst experiences I've ever had. Of course, you could feel the vibrations, and that poor guy sat there with very little anesthesia. But I just happened to remember that.

KP: How would you term the medical care in the Navy? Was that exceptional, the nature of that dentistry?

RT: I imagine that was exceptional, because it was a very primitive place. You got into-- on some of the larger ships, on your tankers, on your transports, on your oilers, they had much better facilities, and they had a physician on board who had a couple, maybe one or two pharmacist's mates working with him. And they had anywhere from a two or six bed hospital. Aircraft carriers, battleships had tremendous facilities. They could do surgery, of course. Submarines had no equipment. And the big story was the pharmacist's mate who did an appendectomy under the water. I don't know if you ever heard about that, but that was written up then. And we got immediate repercussions from the hospital, ... from BurMed, Bureau of Medicine in the Navy. Never, never do any type of surgery unless you have the proper facilities and the proper surgeon to do it. This guy made headlines. I mean, he ... did an appendectomy under water.

KP: And he was not authorized to?

RT: No, no, no but he made--I think they made that part of a movie at one time, so it's interesting. But by and large, as small as we were, our ... sickbay was no bigger than this area right here. ... And we had a lot of stuff. We could do suturing, as I say, we could-- penicillin had come out. We used penicillin. We used sulfa drugs. We used to have ... two types of cough medicine. Of course, occasionally, someone would catch cold. We'd have elixir of turpin-hydrate with codeine and Brown's mixture. Nobody liked Brown's mixture. But they used to like ours. We had a truck driver, I remember, named Wiley. I remember his name from New York City. A real tough guy. And he'd come in every morning and start coughing, and he'd need cough medicine. So we'd give him a shot of elixir of turpin-hydrate, ETH, as we called it until I realized once I'd see him around on the ship, he never coughed. So I told my chief about it, and he says, "Give him Brown's mixture." Now Brown's mixture was, I think, it was an ammonium

chloride. It tasted salty as the devil. So I told him on the next day he came in, "We have no more ETH, you'll have to take this for your cough." He never came back.

KP: Why was he taking the first one?

RT: It was liquor. It was alcohol. High alcohol content. [Laughs] He knew what he was doing.

KP: Did you encounter any indigenous populations in any of the ports?

RT: Aside from Hawaii, the only place that we ran into indigenous populations was Okinawa. We did see natives there.

KP: Did you have any problems?

RT: No, no, never any--no, no, I shouldn't say that. There were some on Guam. We ran into them in Guam too. In fact, there were farms on Guam. ... After the war, after V-J Day, when I was stationed in the fleet hospital there, we used to go on Sundays to the other side of the island with a personnel carrier. Our group was an eye clinic group that I was attached to at that time. We'd go to a banana farm. We'd give a farmer a dollar, and we'd cut off a whole stalk of bananas and bring them and have it all week. It was delicious. And we used to examine them too. I examined, we would examine their eyes at that time. They were entitled to care.

KP: In terms of life on a ship, how was the water supply on a DE?

RT: A DE has a condenser. We had a bubbler. In other words, what we called a scuttlebutt, a drinking fountain. All of this water, of course, is limited. We could make so much per day. And that's why--well, in fact, showers were salt water showers. You used salt water soap. But your drinking water and the water you cook with and so forth was made through condensers. And it was scarce. But we never ran out of it unless the condenser broke down. But that didn't happen too frequently. It took a while to get used to the taste, because it doesn't have a lot of minerals in it.

KP: In terms of food, especially on long, long voyages...

RT: As I say, when we had food, we had good food. When we didn't have food, we had terrible food. Our ship, I think, was one of the few in the Navy, that I have ever heard of-- we had three cooks, a chief cook who never cooked, and a baker. With one cook, they ... would have watches. They would be on and off. But on Sundays when this one particular cook was on, and we had steak, we could put our order in the morning on how you wanted it done, rare or medium. If you didn't put your order in, you got it shoe leather, like everybody else. It was well-done. We had a terrific baker. He used to make some beautiful, good tasting breads and pastries. By and large, the food wasn't bad, but, as I say, when we ran out we'd go into C-rations and once or twice K-rations, which were packaged nothings. So it wasn't too bad.

KP: How frequently did you resort to C and K-rations?

RT: Not frequently, unless we were on long trips away from supply ships. I'll tell you, once we did -- this brings another story to mind. We were escorting a refrigerator ship. Now a refrigerator ship was just that. It kept meats. It brought meats out to the Pacific. ... The skipper of the refrigerator ship, when we reached our destination, I forget where we had brought him to, he liked our escort so much that he sent over veal cutlets. And we had never had veal cutlets. And one time by mistake--this is unusual--we got a supply of beans, navy beans. Of course they're historical, legendary. But we got, I remember, it was Van Kamps beans that were supposed to go to the submarine service. Well you never saw a pack of sailors fighting for more beans. They were exquisite. The submarine service got much better food than everybody else. And they deserved it.

KP: Had you considered making the Navy a permanent career?

RT: No, never. I'd already had, as I say, my degree, and I was anxious to get out and get into a profession that I wanted to enjoy. ... Of course, as you look back, when ... we were discharged, they played what we call sign-up music. They wanted you to sign up for the reserves. Some fellas did, and, of course, they did very well because they'd go one or two weeks a year, and they would go up in rank. They would get ... pay, and, of course, they got a pension at the end of twenty years.

KP: You never considered even going into the reserves?

RT: No, no. We had all had enough. I was in just about three years, and that was enough. We never saw an end to the war. It was interesting. We never saw an end to the war. We didn't know how it was going to end.

KP: I think that is one of the most interesting things I have learned so far in conducting these interviews. When you look at history it sort of has this nice, neat chronology.

RT: Yes.

KP: ... but you, at the time, even in 1945, you didn't think ...

RT: We did not see an end to the war, and we didn't know anything, of course, about ... the structuring of the atom bomb--that it was about to be dropped. But I happened to be at Okinawa. Yes, we were watching a movie, and a report comes over--no let's see. The report came over a few days earlier that ... Hiroshima had been bombed. But we were at Okinawa, watching a movie, when a report came over the ... ship's radio, that the Japanese have surrendered. And I'll tell you, you never saw so much hell break loose. Everybody-- we forgot the movie, and everybody ran amuck, and from every ship in that big harbor they were shooting their 20 mm's guns. That means tracers all over the place. The island commander called a condition red. Condition red order is cease. Nobody stopped. This went on for three or four hours. Fortunately, nobody got hurt. But they could have.

KP: So this was a fairly dangerous thing to do?

RT: Yes. ... The next night, after we got the original announcement, we saw the white plane carrying the emissaries from Japan to the Philippines for the signing of the declaration of peace. ... It was at (Kadena?) airport in Okinawa that they took their first--it was their first leg before they went on to the Philippines. I have pictures of that someone had given me. ... We weren't allowed to have pictures taken, although somebody did have a camera, and I got an album later, but I'm not in any of the pictures.

KP: What was your attitude towards the enemy?

RT: Well, its interesting, because for a long time and still to this day, I will not buy a Japanese car. There's that hidden something. I have Japanese friends now, Oriental friends, what do you call them, Asian now is the PC [politically correct] word. But ... we didn't care for the Japanese too much because we'd see prisoners of war from Japan, and we heard stories about how they were mistreated. We didn't feel that way about Germans. We were totally different. It was a different situation. I'd never been exposed to what was going on in Europe. It really bothered me what the Japanese did.

KP: Did you have any contact with Japanese? You mentioned you had seen one Japanese body.

RT: Oh yes. When I was at Guam, we had a prisoner of war camp there. ... We used to ... give them medical treatment. So we treated a few of those. ... We had one surgeon, I remember, from Selma, Alabama, a tall, good-looking commander. I don't remember his name. But one of the Japanese--he was a physician also--got very arrogant, as you have seen in movies. And he put him down right away and let him know where he was. He was a prisoner of war and consequently, he had nothing to say about anything. This was our jurisdiction. But it was interesting treating a few of them. Some of them were just lay-soldiers. In other words, they were privates or whatever. It was interesting on Guam also-- even after the war was over, we were getting casualties into the hospital of Japanese who were up in the hills who had heard or they saw the Americans there, and they were jumping off of the cliffs committing suicide. And some of them would die, and some of them would be injured. So we'd get some of those to the hospital. None of them that I ever ran into spoke English though that I can recall.

KP: So you never had any conversations with them?

RT: No, no conversation with them that way. Just physical contact.

KP: ... There was a very stark image of the Japanese during the war. What was your image when you actually faced Japanese prisoners of war?

RT: They were meek. I mean, when they were in captivity, as it were, we had a barbed wire compound ... on the hospital grounds. And they were very meek, except for this one physician, I remember, who was very arrogant. That's the only thing that I can recall.

KP: Did that surprise you?

RT: No, no. No, it didn't surprise me at all. Because we'd seen movies, you see. All during the war there were still movies about the Japanese atrocities and what have you. So it didn't surprise me, no.

KP: How many movies would you see in the Navy?

RT: Oh, we'd see them any time we were ... at shore, at anchor in a bay, at a port of call, as you call it. We'd have movies. Our mailman would go ashore and get the mail and bring back movies, or movie for the evening. We had a projector. We had a projectionist. ...

KP: What was your favorite movie? ...

RT: Oh, I don't remember. I don't remember. I can remember, though, the one we saw the night of the declaration of cessation of hostilities, ... Guadalcanal Diary. So, here it was all shoot-'em-up, and all of a sudden it all ceased.

KP: How did you meet your wife?

RT: Oh, that's an interesting story. When I came back to the states, my wife came from Trenton. She had just graduated from teachers' college at Trenton State. And her first job was in Raritan, which is next to Somerville. ... I like to say the story is that I came home and found a lady in my bed, because she was ... rooming in my house. So then, if you found a lady in your bed, you had to marry her. Today, it wouldn't make any difference. But actually, she was in the next room. We had an extra room, and my mother rented it out during the war. Of course, it was very difficult to get rooms, and she lived in our house.

KP: As a boarder?

RT: As a roomer, yes.

KP: Was it a family connection before?

RT: No, no. ... There is a story how she got there, but, I mean, that was it. She was in our house, and my mother prepared ... me for her. She liked her, and she was trying to set up a match, and it worked. [Laughs]

KP: Before leaving the war, is there any other vivid memory or story that I forgot to ask about the war?

RT: Well, yes. When I mentioned the mailman--at one point, we did not get mail for three months. We didn't know why. It was always following us, never caught up to us. When it finally caught up to us, I think it was in Palau. We got 16 or 18 bags of mail. Over three months. I mean that's for the whole ship. Of course, normally, we'd get mail whenever we'd pull into a

port. It would follow us. But this fellow, this Irishman I mentioned, Riley, he had one bag for himself. It was all addressed to him. He opened it up, and it was all comic books. That I can recall vividly. [Laughs]

KP: He just got comic books?

RT: All he got was comic books. A big, burly truck driver. He was older than most of us. I was older than a lot of the crew also. My chief was a re-tread. A re-tread is a man who served in World War I. He was 44 years old. He was the oldest man on the ship. As I said, our skipper was about 33 or 35. ... We had a radar man on our ship who had five children. Why he was ever sent to combat, I don't know. ... My chief, who was 44 years old, in combat, had a son who couldn't go into combat. He was stateside because he was on special assignment because he had bad eyes. They wouldn't let him go overseas. There were all sorts of paradoxes that way, but it was interesting.

KP: Do you stay in touch with many members of your crew?

RT: ... I did stay in touch with a few, and I imagine they either passed on or what, but I still keep in touch with one, and I've seen him about three times. He lives in California now. ... We've seen each other out in California. I saw him once. I belong to a destroyer escort sailors' association, which has over 1000 members. But our crew has never had a reunion. A lot of ships have reunions. Our ship never did that. But this one fella was a sonar technician. We used to be buddies on the ship, and we have kept in touch.

KP: Did most members of the crew sort of bond with another member of the crew?

RT: Yeah, generally in your division or usually it was in your division. Or, I would say, it was also an intellectual bonding. There were certain people on our ship who had college degrees, and we sort of hung out together. We'd talk. At the end of the day, you'd sit out on the fantail, which was the tail of the ship. And you'd have philosophical discussions. It was interesting. Other seamen, young kids from Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, they had no interest whatsoever. They didn't even play cards. I don't know what they did. But that was very, very interesting to notice that.

KP: Did you encounter any black sailors?

RT: Yes, sure. Every ship in the Navy ... [had] black sailors who were steward's mates. That's all they were allowed to be.

KP: So your crew, even a destroyer escort, had steward's mates?

RT: Yes, we had approximately six. We had a steward's mate, first class, and there was Jim Crowism there, because they slept in the rear of the ship, near the laundry, which was a very hot place. ... They were segregated.

KP: You were on an even smaller ship. So what were the relationships between the steward's mates, the black members of the crew, and the larger crew?

RT: ... Of course, I can't speak for the rest of them, but I had very good relations with them. There were two of them that I enjoyed very much. Because when I was hungry, I'd go up to the officers' mess. They took care of the officers. That's all they did, and they would slip me a sandwich. But they were great guys. Two of them I can remember. ... I think ... they had six altogether. But there was really no problem. We had no problems on board. When I was at Newport Naval Hospital, they used to have race riots. The blacks were kept in a separate building. And twice they had revolts. They had to call the shore patrol out, I remember.

KP: Were you present when the riots took place?

RT: I was there, but I wasn't involved. I heard about it the next day. But they said they banged up a lot of the cots and the living quarters and what not were damaged.

KP: What were the issues? Mistreatment or ...?

RT: It wasn't mistreatment, I don't think. I think it was segregation more than anything. Because they got the same medical help. They got the same food. There was no difference there. It was just--I presume because we never knew what the root of the trouble was. But I know there were two race riots. We called them race riots at that time.

KP: And that was the term, in fact, you would use. It was called race riots.

RT: Yeah, yea.

KP: You went on to serve in Somerville on the Civil Rights Committee. Did that stem from your World War II experience?

RT: No, I think it was always just an innate feeling with me. ... I grew up with blacks. I never had any maladjustment with them. I couldn't see any difference. That's why I think I felt so badly when I went to Memphis. I just couldn't tolerate to see how they were [treated]. I saw in Memphis, to tell you the truth, an incident--I lived in an apartment house and across the street was a girls' dormitory. ... There was a policeman who lived in the apartment house that I lived. And we heard the next day after, and we saw on the street, he saw a peeping tom, a black fellow peeping into the girls' dormitory window. And he shot him. And he said, "There are his brains on the street." And they were. And this was, you know I could not, I just couldn't take this. It was way beyond my ken. So I just always felt that way, I think.

KP: When the war ended, did you go into private practice?

RT: Yes. ... I was discharged [and went into private practice]. ...

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

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