RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WARNER THURLOW

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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MANCHESTER, NEW JERSEY
MARCH 25, 2011

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Rosa Jeong: This begins the interview of Warner Thurlow in New Brunswick, New Jersey on March 25, 2011 conducted by Rutgers student, Rosa Jeong and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Thank you both very much for coming in to talk with us this morning. Please tell us, Mr. Thurlow, when and where you were born.

Warner Thurlow: I was born in the city of Newark, New Jersey, on I don't know what day of the week, at 8:20 AM, October 18, 1924.

SH: All right, thank you. Let us talk a bit about your family background. Could you tell me about your father and his background?

WT: … I don't really remember my father. Unfortunately, he passed away when I was four years old and I don't really think I have a recollection. Some people are good, they can remember things that happened before they were born that way, but they've heard it so much that they just believe they were there. … He was the youngest of four, he was born in Brooklyn, New York [in] 1891. He passed away in the year 1928 at the age of thirty-nine. … He was, as I say, the youngest brother. There were two older brothers and a sister. … The three boys did all go to college; one went to Cornell, another one went to, I think also to Cornell. My father … stayed in New York City and went to Columbia University. He graduated in 1912. I still have his yearbook picture and his diploma curled up somewhere. He continued on and … took two more years and went to Columbia Law School. He never was a lawyer, but I guess it didn't hurt him to have that background. They can't take it away from you, they keep telling me-- I told my son that. He went and got a fellowship to get his PhD from Rutgers, but he didn't really need it with his life's work. It certainly didn't do him any harm, and that looked very nice up on the wall of his office. It impresses visitors, particularly.

SH: What was your father's profession?

WT: Well, all I know is what my mother and grandmother had told me. I'm the only child so I was brought up by my mother and my grandmother, really.

SH: You were brought up by your maternal grandmother.

WT: My maternal grandmother and my mother. … I kind of think there was a little talk by my father's mother and father, about him going over to New Jersey and getting one of those Jersey girls, because my mother was also born in Newark. … You can't hold that against us.

SH: That is right.

WT: My wife Jean was born in Newark, too. I really didn't know her until recent years.

SH: You did not check out where she was born beforehand.

WT: No. [laughter]

SH: Did your father serve in World War I?

WT: Briefly; I really don't know, I don't have any written information. My mother often talked about the fact that he was at Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky. I even have a pair of gloves knit by somebody in the family. Wristlets of khaki colored yarn, where your thumb goes through and you put your gloves on over it to keep your wrists warm. … I also have a knit helmet to put over your head with your face sticking out like the skiers use today, all in khaki, US Army colors. … He was sort of like me--he got in at the end of the war. They lived in Utica, New York at that time, and we do have something where he served in the Utica home guard which at that time, World War I, might have been similar to the National Guard, but he did go to Kentucky, but it wasn't long enough service for the benefits following World War I. Because at the time, two days after my father died, my grandfather died, my maternal grandfather. … That left my mother and my grandmother and I floating around Newark with a twelve-room house. … It was not good times in '28, '29, '30. Neither one of them had any insurance, so it was really tough, and I often give my mother great credit for the fact that she did raise her young child, Warner, and got us through a lot of hard work and skimping. She was a very resourceful lady. … She did do all right. I can tell you more about her if you want, but I'll finish up with my father. …

SH: Yes, please.

WT: I know he worked as a salesman and he travelled. I have a whole stack of postcards from hotels from the major cities, all over the Midwest and the South and even in the Northeast also, where he would write home to me for my mother to read. … All hotels had postcards, even at that time. It was always an arrow saying, "My room." … He also worked as a ship broker, some way out, shirt-tail relative of a family. … The Thurlows and a partner owned a shipping company, and owned … thirty or forty shares in various vessels, all three, four, and five-masted schooners, which were like these gypsy truckers of today. They would pick up odd loads wherever they'd go, and take it, and pick up a load to come back, or come back empty, whatever way they could to make some money. … These ships were all built in smaller areas. A number were built in New Jersey, but all of the ones that they were involved in were all built in the State of Maine. … There were shipyards in every river on the coast of Maine. … Many of them are still very active up that way, particularly in Bath, Maine. … He was the New York agent representing Crowell and Thurlow Shipping Company out of Boston. … I have stationary, and I have a book where he's listed in the New York Board of Maritime Authority. … I have a lot of pictures with him, and visiting the shipyards in Perth Amboy. … He had a good friend that owned that. … He had another good friend who was a ship chandler. … I met all those people and I got very involved as I got older in the coastal schooners. … That's one of my interests, besides Jean. [laughter] … I guess that business was fading as it got into the '30s. … There were still active of coastal schooners in World War II. Several were torpedoed off the New Jersey coast and Cape Hatteras, of course, and all of the trouble points on the eastern seaboard because mainly they called them coastal schooners because they went up and down the coast. They'd go up to Nova Scotia, a lot of them came out of Canada, a lot out of New England, and all the way along. There was even one coastal schooner built in my second hometown, in Spring Lake, New Jersey, named after the first mayor. He's named O.H. Brown, and he was one of the first founders of Spring Lake. That town was incorporated in 1892, so things have changed all

the way around. You never believe it, there were some built on the Delaware River, and they gradually just drifted, rotted away, and the businesses all died with that. Crowell and Thurlow ended up … having five or six steamships, that they joined at times-- they had to, or go out of business. … One steamship could probably hold five or six times what one coastal schooner could carry. They mainly carried lumber, granite for the buildings in Washington, New York, all the major cities, then all the granite quarries up and down the coast of Maine. Even some islands, they would quarry the granite, and big steam powered derricks would lift it up and get it on ships. … Coming back from down in the southern part, on the return voyage, they would bring back forest products. They'd bring back rum from the islands, sugar, you know, that type of thing. A big business is gypsum. … It was used in the construction business and in Staten Island, there's a number of places and there were a number of shipyards on Staten Island, still are. So, that's one of my interests and as far as I know, that was about what my father did, because, you know, I was the first, as they say, the only child. They'd moved back to Newark when my mother had the baby. I was born there, even though they were living in Pleasantville, New York, before that. I think that he was, like a lot of men of that era, they went from job to job, and he never really had great advantage of his law degree at all, except general knowledge in business, dealing with people and it certainly didn't hurt. …

SH: Do you know what he was selling? Was it the products that the ships were transporting?

WT: Not necessarily, I don't think there was any connection. There was a company in … downtown Manhattan, I think there is a little street called Maiden Lane, and there was a pottery company there. … I don't know how he got involved in that. … We have an awful lot of sample Italian and Spanish pottery that was imported now, not on those ships, but there is a vigorous business in pottery, even today. …

SH: Your grandfather dies a year after your father dies?

WT: No, two days after.

SH: Two days after.

WT: Yes.

SH: Where were you living when your father passed away-- in Pleasantville?

WT: Yes, we were in Pleasantville.

SH: Where did your maternal grandparents live?

WT: In Newark.

SH: In Newark.

WT: Yes.

SH: Your mother then moved into her mother's house.

WT: Yes.

SH: Where in Newark was your home?

WT: 46 Lincoln Avenue.

SH: Okay.

WT: In fact, it wasn't far from Rutgers. That might be of interest, because Lincoln Avenue was a branch in north Newark, off Broadway. Not Broad Street, Broadway, and the Rutgers School of Pharmacy was … half a block away. It's now a youth organization now, I think, but I can remember that very vividly.

SH: How did your mother and grandmother cope financially during the Great Depression?

WT: They didn't do it long, but at the time, after I was born, I guess they moved. They must have moved down when my mother had the baby. I'm not really sure, I wasn't there, you know. [laughter] Yes, but I just go by what I hear. My father and mother lived upstairs with me and my grandmother and grandfather lived downstairs. … It was a very old, sort of Victorian type house, with three floors. There wasn't any heat on the third floor. It had a monstrous furnace in the cellar, I remember that, and it had like a kitchen downstairs. … Soon after the two men died, they figured they had to do something. Well, prior to that, about 1920, my grandmother was an extremely interesting lady, and she had three or four sisters and … a very close relationship, because my grandfather was a custom tailor in Newark. … My great grandfather worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad, and he … had a very good job. He retired in 1905, and he, of course, lived in Newark, and he was in charge of all the structures, including bridges and railroad stations and all that, between … Jersey City and Trenton, where the railroad leaves New Jersey. … That's another one of my interests. …

SH: Do you want to talk about your mother's family?

WT: Yes, sure.

SH: Please, go ahead then.

WT: Well, my mother was the only girl. My grandmother had a son and a daughter, and my mother had a pretty good life, I think, as a youth, because she was married in her home in Newark, and she went to private school. She didn't go to college, she didn't go to public school. I don't really know at all. The only thing I've ever heard her talk about is the equivalent of a high school or a finishing school or something. It was on, I think, Mount Pleasant Avenue in Newark. I think it was called Miss Craven's School. I remember going there with her once to see it when I was quite young. She had a lot of very good friends. … They all were very supportive of her when all this tragedy hit the family, and me too, you know, because I was only a little guy around. … She went to school with many of the rich families in Newark, the Ballentines and the

Kruegers. … They were all brewers. … Newark was a brewing center because it had such good water, but when really times got tough and we had to scratch a little bit, they were very helpful in helping my mother out with some of their kids clothes that were outgrown. … Some very fine companies made my gloves for instance, you know, or overcoats, and they would do other kind things for her. …

SH: You were talking about your maternal grandmother.

WT: … My grandmother was a country gal. … She was born in 1856, before the Civil War, and she died at the age of one hundred in 1956 in Spring Lake. So, at that time, there weren't many people that were a hundred years old. Now, it became very common. It seems to be that everybody is living too long. …

SH: What was her name?

WT: Her name was Georgie Anna Coats. … She married William C. Warner, which is my mother's maiden name. … At that time, it was popular to name your kid your mother's maiden name. I have a cousin that passed away, his name was Rommel. … They called him Art. They called me, as a kid, Bumpy. Then, when I got in the Navy they called me Red. Now, they call me Grandpa. [laughter]

SH: You have progressed.

WT: Yes, I've come a long way. … She was a women's suffragette. She was out crusading animals' welfare. She … told the tale a hundred times. In downtown Newark they used to have fountains that had water for the horses because everything was horse drawn. At her younger age, some man was beating a horse, and she gets out there and starts beating him with her umbrella. … She was marching in protests. She was into everything.

SH: Where was she born?

WT: Up in Tranquility, which is in Sussex County. … It's on the border of Warren and Sussex County. … That's where my great-grandfather, on her side, named Coats was from and Coats were active in Sussex County. I looked them up in their historical society one time, he was the keeper of the roads. He … had a roller or something to go out and roll the snow down. I don't think they had much in the way of plows back in those days. … I'm English descent on both sides, which makes it very easy to find genealogy information, and most of them came from either New Jersey, north, all the way to Maine. … New England had great genealogy records, so with the help of an uncle that passed away and his son, … I ended up with them. I got us pretty well traced back. … They're all English. … My grandmother's sister, her middle name was, can't remember, but it was a German name. I said, "How did he get in there?" … It turns out that there was a brother of somebody that she was named after … that came from up around Ithaca, New York, which is Tompkins County. … She married my grandfather, naturally, and he was from Newark. His New Jersey background had a number of other English names in it, so they all fit right together. … He had a custom tailor shop. … Today, they're a rarity, you don't find those. … They used to go to Hong Kong to get good suits made, you know, and probably

still do. … He made some very good ones, and he had quite a business going. He had a shop where people would come in and they'd measure you for everything [on] Market Street in Newark. … He used to take the trolley car up and down. I remember riding the trolley cars in Newark, too. … That's pretty much about my grandmother but, she was a survivor. She had to be during my early years, I guess it was 1934, something like that. … I should tell you how we got to Spring Lake.

SH: Yes, and how you survived those first few years.

WT: … I tend to wander and Jean tells me that I talk too much.

Jean Thurlow: Oh, yes. He likes to talk.

WT: I go to lunch, and everybody in the whole restaurant has finished eating, and I'm still talking. … She has to be a good listener. I think it was 1920, my grandmother and her sister used to come to Spring Lake. My great grandfather came to Spring Lake when he worked … for the Pennsylvania Railroad. … My great grandmother had some crippling disease, and she was in a wheelchair. So, whenever they'd come to Spring Lake, he made sure that he knew that the train stopped at the Como station, which is now a part of Spring Lake and it is no more. There used to be three railroad stations in Spring Lake alone, and so someone would meet him with a carriage and a wagon. They'd come down for the summer. … They had a summer place in Spring Lake. In the winter at the time, nobody stayed in Spring Lake except the locals. I consider myself a local. "Clam diggers" they call them down here. … My grandmother and her sister bought a piece of property in Spring Lake, and there was very little of anything on it. It was a total, I think, of … six lots, here to the railroad. … My grandmother bought out her sister's half. They did it together, I don't know how they worked it all out, but my grandmother ended up with two lots and my … grandmother's sister had the rest of it. … I think she mainly rented it as an income property, and my grandmother … and my grandfather used to go down to their house, and so they were both on the same street but it was a different part of town. … Strictly a summer place, plus they had this house in Newark. Well, she decided the best thing they could do [was] go to a smaller house and get out of the city. … My grandmother decided she was going to sell the house in Newark. She sold it fairly easily but she had to hold the mortgage, and after a couple of years, I don't think he paid much of his mortgage payments. The buyer turned all the spigots on in the middle of the winter, and just walked out of the house. Somebody called her and told her, "There is water running out your front door." … They went back and got cleaned up and everything. So, she ended up with the house back again and I think the bank finally took the rest, so she didn't get much of anything out of the house in Newark. … What she did get, or what she might have had, she decided that [she was] going to fix up the little bungalow in Spring Lake. … In the meantime, they had sold her other house, of course. So that was a summer home with no furnace, no cellar, one fuse, you'd go in every room, you'd … search for the string to pull a light, and that was that way all the time until I renovated [it] not too many years ago. It wasn't that bad. [laughter] … In 1930, '29, they decided we're going to have to move to Spring Lake, so she got some local contractors. … First off, they closed up some of the little tiny bedrooms, which there were … four little ones and one big one. … The house is … pretty much the same as it was, now, and it's quite a unique house, it fools you. But it made two big bedrooms, a nice dining room, a big living room, kitchen, bath, and it has a cellar. … See, I was coming along

then to be there because we were living half there and doing the renovating at the same time. … I can remember when they were digging out the cellar out by hand. Man, a couple fellas would go down, it was a little bit of cellar under one room, and they just started shoveling into a wheel barrel and wheeled it out the outside cellar entrance and dumped it behind the garage. Well, that was good, and they did make a nice cellar in there, it may get a little water in it now, but it didn't used to. [laughter] … They had to build a new chimney, a new fireplace up through it, because it had to go down to the floor of the cellar. They did put in … better electricity, and everything was fixed up, so it was a winterized house. … As the time passed, we were able to do little improvements. I think my grandmother shoveled coal in the furnace until she was ninety-six or something like that. She'd go out and rake leaves. You could burn them at that time, and she'd light little piles all around the yard. It would be a dead spot of so-called lawn under it. … That went on for quite a while and, meantime, I was going to school. I started school, so I was moved and lived in Spring Lake by 1930, and I started school in Spring Lake.

SH: Is that where you started the first grade?

WT: Yes, … they didn't call it kindergarten, it was sub-primary or something like that. … It was a very good school, still a very good school. It's a wonderful little town, really. I was in the fourth grade and things were getting tough. … Shoveling coal and even buying it was a problem, and so my mother had a first cousin, who lived in East Orange, and my grandmother had two sisters that lived in East Orange. … She closed up the house, and the plumber came and turned off the water, boarded up the doors and all that. So we went up in my mother's '29 Chevy, and I went to school for fifth, sixth, and seventh grade in East Orange. With spring, we'd come back down and then go up again in the fall. So I went to fifth and sixth grade living in a house that was across the street from my mother's first cousin. So, it was very nice. In the meantime, my mother got a job, and she was always good for talking like me, I get it from her. [laughter] … She worked for a gourmet food store on Central Avenue in East Orange, and we lived a few blocks away. … It was good, and some income. They don't pay much for working and waiting on people in a store, for sure, but she managed. Then she got a job in a jewelry store, it was in Newark. It was one of the very fine old stores near city hall, on Broad Street, and through some old friends who said, "Why don't you go down and see what's his name?" … We were back to Spring Lake, and she started commuting, which at that time was a lot of fun too, with the old steam engines, and all the cinders coming in, and all that. [laughter]

SH: I was just going to say.

WT: … She'd get up very early in the morning. … If it was later on, she decided to stay with my aunt who lived in East Orange, and she went to work there, and then she went down to go to Newark on a trolley, but then the jewelry store moved from Newark to East Orange. … They had a nice store, not far, about a block from Best and Company. … It was the high end part of town then. So, I could walk when we were living near there to school for fifth and sixth grade. Seventh grade, then they went into a junior high, which we didn't have in Spring Lake at that time, we went through eighth grade. So, I went to the junior high. … We were living with my grandmother's two sisters, and so we found out that there was a bus that went right in front of the house there, went all the way across town, and went past the junior high. So, that was fine. I'd

take a bus, it cost me a nickel each way. … My mother was getting pretty good to let me go along on a bus, you know, even though I was in the seventh grade.

SH: I think so.

WT: Look out for Warner. [laughter] … I learned a lot in East Orange. I had made a couple of good friends. … They had a lot of things we didn't have in a small town. … For the boys, they had metal shop, they had wood shop, they had clubs. … I got interested in astronomy, rocks and minerals, everything else. … My mother said, "Well, it will be nice if Warner graduates from his real school down in Spring Lake." So, in eighth grade she was able to scrounge up enough to buy coal, about a couple bags at a time, to keep us warm. No eighty degree temperature in the house then, had about six blankets on me, but that was fine. I graduated with all my buddies. … High school was a choice between Asbury Park or Manasquan, but I don't want to let my good interest get away from me, before it gets too late-- chickens.

SH: Oh, yes.

WT: Don't forget chickens, okay?

SH: Okay. [laughter]

WT: … In the fifth grade, my interest in poultry started.

SH: Okay.

WT: Okay, but getting back to the family situation. That's a lot about the family, I think.

SH: What would you do for recreation in East Orange as opposed to what you would do for recreation while living in Spring Lake?

WT: Well, in East Orange, we were about half a block from a movie. … They had Saturday morning matinees or something with all the serials of all the crazy adventure things, which you had a ticket you punched every time. If you got all ten serial parts to it, then they'd, I don't know what they'd give you, but I never made all of them. … I used to go around right behind my aunt's house where we lived for two years in the winter. There was a whole row of stores and there was all kinds of dumpsters. They didn't call them dumpsters, they were garbage cans, but I'd find all kinds of stuff and I'd bring home dishes and something that looked like it'd be worth something. [My mother would say], "What did you bring that for? We don't need that." That was one of my things, and then I got interested in stamps, and I used to go and buy blocks of four stamp plate locks and things like that. … I was involved in these clubs in junior high, but … with our transient pattern of living, I never really got involved in Scouts or other youth organizations, and Little League. … I say that I'm computer illiterate and proud of it. I'm very poor at games, and I don't like games. I don't even watch *Jeopardy*, [the game show]. That's something. [laughter]

SH: I think you would be very good.

WT: … I say that *Jeopardy* and *Wheel of Fortune* is a late show for most of the seniors. [laughter] …

SH: Were you given chores at home to do?

WT: … I would always have to take the ashes out of the furnace, and I'd take them out. They collected ashes when the trash men came, … a lot of people just put them down in their driveway, because no driveways were paved so that helps to keep the mud down, things like that. … I used to cut the grass and I used to do a lot of things like that but I always had an interest in chickens. … I must have been eleven or twelve. I wanted to have a chicken, because I just liked chickens, I don't know why, but my mother said, "Well, what are you going to do with a chicken?" I said, "Well, I'll make a house for it, like a rabbit thing out in the yard." So I did, I found a … bunch of old wood and made a [coop], not much bigger than this table. It wasn't that big, and I fenced it in and I said, "I'm going to get a chicken." So, my mother took me to Asbury Park. There was a live poultry market there at that time. That was the only place I can think of buying a chicken. "I want one that lays eggs." [laughter] … He says, "Well, I found an egg or two in this pen over here." So, he says, "Here, there's a nice one." So, he gives me this chicken, my mother paid him a dollar, I guess, or something. So, I put it in my pen. I'd buy the food for them … at the A&P [grocery store], because the A&P's used to sell chicken feed. You don't remember, that's before your time, but they always had it as you came in the door, right in Spring Lake, and they had twenty-five pound bags you could buy for a dollar-ten or something. So, that's how I fed my chickens. Of course, all the scraps from the kitchen, they liked to pick over, and they'd pick around a lot in the yard, but that's not one of Spring Lakes' wonderful features, that you can have a chicken. … I don't think, of course at that time, I don't think they knew I had a chicken, because I only had one. … Well, the chicken did lay eggs, not a lot, but we ate them. … All of a sudden, it got broody, and it … laid one or two eggs, and then it just sat on them, wanted to hatch them, that's called broodiness. … So, big surprise, one of them hatched, and I had this little baby chick. Now, this was fifth grade, and this was the time my mother was negotiating to move up to East Orange to stay in a good friend of my cousins who had gone to Florida. They wanted somebody to stay in her house which, I think, she convinced her to do it with us. … "Well, we'll take it along with us." So, I still can't remember how we got the chicken up there, and all the other things back and forth. We also had a dog, and it was in a '29 Chevy. We still had that one, but we did, and upstairs in this nice three-story old house they had a big sun porch with no heat on it, but it had windows all around. That's a good place for the chicken, so I put lots of newspapers down, and they had a lot of window screens and I propped them all against each other and had a little run there and I had a box or something that the chicken walked around. The little one would walk around, they'd scratch on the paper. Well, I had my chicken. … I came out one morning and the chicken tried to fly out of the window screens and landed on the top, I guess, and knocked them all over, and the little [chick became] a very flat baby chick. You could imagine me-- I'm heartbroken. … My mother says, "We have to get rid of the chicken." So, I said, "Well, I don't want anybody to eat my chicken." "Oh, you can't keep it here now, that's no good. This is somebody else's house." She says, "I think I can find you, maybe somebody will give it a home." So, there was a vet down the street. So, she … convinced me that he would find a home for my chicken. Whether he ate the chicken, you know, it was tough times then. … [laughter] That was my beginning of my interest in chickens. …

SH: Do you have any memories of anyone else or other scenes that you remember of the Great Depression? I don't know if they called it by that term then.

WT: Well, I don't know what they called it, but I guess that happened, what '29, the crash then. [Editor's Note: The stock market crashed on October 29, 1929, which is known as Black Tuesday.] So, '29, I was five years old. … In the early '30s was where it was tough. … One thing [about] my mother, one of her idiosyncrasies, she always bought gas from Tydol Gas, a man on the corner. It was nearby and he was a good guy. He would fix her car for her, and then when I got my car and he'd go over there and he'd let me use his grease pit to get under my car. … He always had these little things that you put on your license plate. … Mostly, the people that went to Florida had a frame with palm leaves that says Palm Beach on it. Well, my mother wanted something put on her car so she had this little thing that he was giving out. It was a little fat man with an oil can. … This was when the repeal of the Eighteenth [Amendment], when Prohibition ended. Now, my mother was not a drinker, she couldn't afford to be a drinker, she liked orange juice with a little something in it. I don't know what they called it, but that was all. … She got a hold of a little sticker on there that says, "Repeal the Eighteenth Amendment." They would look at my mother, "Oh, Mrs. Thurlow." [laughter] … That was one thing I remember about that. [Editor's Note: The Twenty-First Amendment repealed the Eighteenth Amendment, or Prohibition.]

SH: Following suit from her mother and grandmother right?

WT: Yes, a little bit, yes.

SH: Was your family involved politically?

WT: Well, my mother always voted and my grandmother, too.

SH: Did they ever talk about Roosevelt and the New Deal programs?

WT: I think my grandmother was more alert on that kind of thing than my mother. She was amazing. … When we first got television, she'd watch everything. She'd get all the news. She'd come out with some question about something [that] happened that I wouldn't even know what she was talking about. My mother said, "Eh." … She was quite a smart person. … I think she liked Roosevelt. … He did a lot, and I don't know whether that had influenced me one way or another, but I worked for thirty-five years in downtown, here in New Brunswick in the County Administration Building, and I was definitely a Democrat. … When I grew up in Monmouth County, and we're now back down that way, and they're all Republicans, but it doesn't matter so much to me. … I always thought that Roosevelt was pretty good. I'm an Independent.

SH: I did not know whether the family discussed that.

WT: … There were so many things. I used to collect all the stickers. … NRA stickers came out and you would put them all over everything. That was the National Recovery Act, I think, was sort of an early anti-poverty [program]. … CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps, and all

the other things that came in under, the TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority], I think they developed. … There was tremendous growth in things that went along at that time.

SH: Were you aware of any of the WPA [Works Progress Administration] projects that were being initiated in New Jersey?

WT: Yes, in fact, we had a WPA Project, came and gave a program at out grammar school. … Our old-time grammar school had an assembly every morning and we had the whole school, all eight grades, went into the auditorium. … The gym teacher played the piano, and they read a prayer, they saluted the flag, and they had three songs we sang. One patriotic, one general interest, and one religious, and many of the old hymns … we still sing in church today. She'd play away on the piano, and they'd say, "We used to play that in school," and then she says, "We did in mine too." So, I think that was sort of universal but it isn't the same anymore. This project, WPA group, they gave jobs to artists and musicians, the theatrical people. They had all kinds of things to get any, all kinds of people with different skills, to get a job. … These were all musicians and they couldn't find work, I guess, and they worked for the WPA traveling band. They were pretty good. I remember, I pulled the curtain, that was one of my jobs. … [laughter] [Editor's Note: The Works Progress Administration (later Work Projects Administration) was a New Deal program passed in 1935 which employed millions of Americans in various projects across the United States.]

SH: Did any members of your family work on WPA projects?

WT: I don't think so, no.

SH: As a ten year old, did you pay attention to what was going on in the world?

WT: … I always liked to listen to the radio and play records, 78 RPMs. … There used to be a distributor in Asbury Park that serviced and provided jukeboxes, and they always had a big pile of records that they'd taken out of the jukeboxes. … I'd go through them all, and … for, I think a dime, you could take a record. So, I got a lot of records that way. That was a hobby, and I listened to radio. Not that I paid a lot of attention to the news, but, of course, with the war starting not too long after that.

SH: What does a ten year old boy do after school?

WT: Walk home and do the chores, and homework. We did have homework.

SH: Did you have games that you played?

WT: Oh yes, we used to play in the street. The streets weren't paved then, there was just gravel in Spring Lake. Only a few streets were paved and the water wagon used to go up and down, … sprinkling salt water from the … couple of fire hydrants. They could pump it from the ocean down near the swimming pools. … They'd spray, a big old Mack truck would come with a big fan of water coming out, … that keeps the dust down. It sure rots out the fenders of the cars. … We used to play baseball, and pickup ball of some kind. I got a hold of a couple old golf clubs

and we used to smack golf balls in the middle of the street. Basketball, yes, we played that in school. I wasn't very good at sports, because it's a game, isn't my thing. I had a terrible time catching. … Finally, I got a catcher's mitt, but I'm left handed, and it was the wrong hand, I'm a left handed catcher. … I had to have this one to throw the ball but I had to take the catcher's mitt off so that I can throw it. I was the last man … they'd take, I was the last one. [laughter]

SH: Right.

WT: At a school, or a playground, or anything, I was always … way out in left field or right field, or somewhere where you couldn't do much harm.

SH: Before we began recording, you talked about how you lived near Lakehurst and about seeing the dirigibles.

WT: Yes, dirigibles. Dirigible, whatever, airships they call them.

SH: Were airships common? What about Charles Lindbergh?

WT: I don't think I was aware of Lindbergh myself until way after. I think it was '28 that he flew over there. … I remember when his baby was kidnapped in Hopewell more vividly. I can tell you a story on that if you want. [Editor's Note: Charles Lindbergh made the first non-stop flight over the Atlantic Ocean from New York to Paris on May 20-21, 1927. In March 1932, his child was kidnapped from his home in Hopewell, New Jersey and found murdered.]

SH: Sure.

WT: … The airships were always flying over because all during the war, they had blimps coming out of Lakehurst, these anti-submarine observing [airships]. They did a lot of work, and it was always every day you would see them fly over. … Then, of course, the airship *Los Angeles*, and *Akron*, and *Macon*, I think there were several of the US ones, and the Hindenburg was on a regular schedule. … It would usually come over and then circle around the New York skyline or something and head over toward Lakehurst unless it was a weather condition or something that they had to delay it. … You could always hear it coming. … Today, these Goodyear blimps, and some of the others, I'd say, "There goes a blimp," because they sound completely different then regular, even propeller driven airplanes, but you could see the big swastika on the tail, and it says Hindenburg on the side, no problem. [Editor's Note: On May 6, 1937, the German zeppelin *Hindenburg* blew up in Lakehurst, New Jersey. Once it caught fire, it burst into flames due to its use of highly flammable hydrogen gas.] Jean remembers that too. … I used to ride my bike, I put a thousand miles on my bike, I think, before I was fourteen years old. … I'd always ride to the boardwalk, and I'd go down, pick up stuff on the beach, and look for sea glass, or big clam shells, or whatever else I could find. A lot of kindling too, a lot of wood washed up. … I had a car then, I'd pick up a whole lot because we'd have to start the fire in the furnace or we'd have to do it in the fireplace. … It was always something interesting. I rode all over the place. We used to ride the bicycle out to Allaire State Park. … Today, I sure would worry if my grandkids rode their bike that distance. …

SH: There was already a boardwalk then?

WT: Oh yes, the boardwalk was … always there.

SH: What was your favorite activity to do on a Sunday afternoon?

WT: Gee, I don't know, read the funnies, I guess. [laughter]

SH: Was your family involved in the church at all?

WT: Yes, my mother and grandmother went to the Universalist church in Newark. It was a very big church at that time. They have since combined with Unitarian Universalists, but I don't know whether that church is even there in Newark anymore. … My mother was married in her home by the minister from that church. … When they moved down to the shore, pretty much permanently, about 1930 or in that area, they didn't have any church that they were affiliated in. … My mother always said, "Well, take Warner around and see which one he likes." … They do that today, we're active in our church now. … In Spring Lake there are two Roman Catholic churches, one Methodist church, and there was a small Baptist church which is no longer there. So, I don't recall, going to visiting churches but she said she went to the Episcopal church in Sea Girt which is a beautiful old church, been there many years. … She said, "Well, I like that." I liked the priest walking around with his incense and all that. It was a High Episcopal church, and so that's where we went to church, and I was baptized at age six, and my mother was baptized the same time. I don't know whether they baptized them in the Universalist church or not, I really am not sure but … the minister there said, "Well, now, Madeline, I think you should be baptized." So, she was baptized, and she was confirmed and I was confirmed there.

SH: Oh, wonderful.

WT: So, that was quite a family thing. … The minister at the time was a very interesting man. … He had the most beautiful hand writing you ever saw. … What do you call people that are fancy, inscribing certificates?

SH: I believe they are called calligraphers.

WT: Calligrapher, that's it, thank you. … My little books he gave out, my certificates that I got, it looked like it was done by a real professional. It was a beautiful job.

SH: Are there other stories about living in Spring Lake or East Orange before we start talking about high school?

WT: … I covered that pretty well, I think. [laughter]

RJ: What was attending school like during the Great Depression?

WT: I really didn't notice much difference because I didn't know any different because there wasn't a big push on different things that young people can get involved in. There was always 4-

H. There were organizations that you sort of participate while you're in school. … In Manasquan High School, where I went, they had an agricultural department and then there were like Future Farmers of America, the FFA, it's an agricultural group along with 4-H. Future Homemakers of America they had for the girls, had to have a separate organization for the girls. … It wasn't baseball, and football, and soccer. You played them in gym periods, but I don't know that … was an organized. Maybe some towns had summer recreation programs, but I wasn't aware of it. … The only exposure I had to play baseball was at school, really. …

SH: Did you notice any of your friends who did not go on to high school because of the Great Depression?

WT: I didn't know of any. I think that there probably were some, but again, since our high school class came from several different towns, I really didn't know other kids in grammar school or elementary school. … Things were tougher on an awful lot of people, and I'm sure that there wasn't anywhere near the kind of money available, even in bad times now, that was for recreation. You went to the movies, you went to the boardwalk, you went to the amusement park, took a trolley ride, whatever, you know. It was a whole different ball game, I think. It wasn't organized, kids are always outside playing pickup and stickball, and pitch pennies, and all those kinds of things they'd do. Hop scotch, that was a big thing for the girls.

SH: You lived on the shore, where everybody would be coming in the summer anyway. Did your family ever take a vacation somewhere else besides the shore?

WT: Not as a family, really. I think, one time, I remember my mother, and one of my aunts from East Orange and myself, went up to Ithaca, New York to visit the … the family up there. … That was a three or four day … experience. … She had a '36 Chevrolet. … My mother also had a '32 Essex, whatever she could buy cheap.

SH: Now if you only had that now.

WT: … You didn't really know about all these things, so I don't think I even missed them.

SH: Did you go into New York City?

WT: Well you did, because … part of the Thurlow family still lived in there. My father's buried in New York in Brooklyn, in Greenwood Cemetery, which is a very famous attraction. People come and take guided tours through it. There's millions of people buried there, the most beautiful scenery and everything. … My mother always went over to Brooklyn, as long as she had a car able to make it. When I first bought a Model-A Ford, I went over there to visit my aunt, one sister of my father, who was in an old lady's home they'd call it then, in Brooklyn. …

SH: Do you keep up with that part of your family?

WT: Yes, to some extent. My father's two brothers, one lived in Connecticut and the other one lived in New Jersey, so the one in New Jersey was always the one closest to my father, and when my father died, he had been up there. He was in a sanatorium in Liberty, New York because he

had TB [Tuberculosis] and he also had diabetes. … There wasn't an awful lot they could for either one at that time, and that's what got him in the end. … My uncle had been visiting up on the weekend or some time there, just to see him, because he was the only one that had a car that would make it to the Catskills, but anyway, he left, came home, and my father had passed away. … The hospital or sanatorium asked the state police to see if they could find the other Mr. Thurlow, … what kind of car he had, and they did find him, and he turned around and came back. There were not a lot of cars up in that area at that time. You know, I don't think we really went on vacation. Well, I don't even know what age I was but my mother had an old friend that lived in Connecticut, too. We went up there over night one time, but there wasn't any long trips at all.

SH: Tell us about the decision to attend school in Manasquan or Asbury Park.

WT: Oh, okay. Well, I wasn't the worst kid academically in the Class of '43, but I wasn't the best either. But I had good friends in high school that were pretty good, and because at that time, this is 1939, they didn't have an agricultural department there. It was a new course and they were trying to introduce it to more and more high schools. … They still have it today, in 2011, a number of high schools around New Jersey that have a very active agricultural, or vocational agricultural department. Allentown is one, even New Brunswick High School had it for quite a while. In fact, I knew the teacher quite well, he was … one of my teachers in Manasquan, but I forget what we were talking about.

SH: How they started this new program.

WT: … I was walking around doing something, cutting grass, or picking up leaves, or something, and these two guys walk in the drive way in Spring Lake. … He says, "Hey, are you Warner Thurlow?" … I say, "Yes." He says, "My name is Mr. (Crosby?), and this is Mr. Lippincott." I said, "Hi, how are you?" He says … "I'm the superintendent of schools and Mr. Lippincott is our new vocational agriculture teacher." I say, "Oh, that's interesting." I didn't even know what they were doing, but he said, "I understand that you signed up for general courses in high school and I was wondering if you'd be interested in agriculture." [I said] "Yes, I might be." Well, they did ask us somewhere along the line … what courses we want to take in high school. I don't remember when but it was in the eighth grade, and so I didn't want to hide it. I said, "How can I go to college, we don't even have money to buy coal." … Well, my mother always said, "I want you to try to go to college, okay?" [I said] "Yes, yes, yes." All I wanted to do is drive my Model-A to California. [laughter] …

SH: When did you get that Model-A?

WT: Oh, I'll tell you that too.

SH: Oh, okay.

WT: When these guys were talking, so I said, "Yes, I might be interested in that." … My mother said, "Do you know who they were?" So, I introduced them and said they were looking

for students to take agriculture. "Oh, well he's very interested in chickens. He had a chicken once." That cast my career for life, the dumb chickens. [laughter]

SH: What a resume.

WT: One chicken and one dead baby chicken. … I said, "Yes, I think I'd be interested," but … my mother said, "Will he be able to qualify to get credits to go to college if he can?" … She's always hopeful. He said, "Yes sure, we have a college-prep agriculture and we have a vocational agriculture." The agriculture part was all the same, just that the college-prep had to take math and take English and sciences, chemistry, all that stuff. … So, that's what I did. That was how I made the choice.

SH: This was in Manasquan?

WT: Yes, they didn't have that in Asbury Park.

SH: What was the difference in traveling to Asbury Park rather than Manasquan?

WT: About the same. … We'd take a bus either way.

SH: Was it a school bus or were you taking a charter bus?

WT: No, I think it was a charter bus. They didn't have school buses, although … at that time there was no high school in Wall Township. … The sending districts were, we even had students come down from Bradley Beach, which is almost next to Asbury Park. … Students in Manasquan came from Belmar, South Belmar, which is now called Lake Como, Spring Lake, Spring Lake Heights, Wall, Manasquan, and Brielle. So, that's a lot of different people that's getting mixed up. … They had no facilities, they had an old building at one of the old school buildings down on the highway that they moved on to the property of the high school. … The students, when we came in, had to renovate that, put an addition on it to make a blacksmith shop in the garage entrance. … Then we built a classroom and a green house. … We did all that all the four years that we were there. … Most of the building is still there, they use it for storage or something now, but it's kind of off the beaten path. … That was a lot of fun, you learn a lot and met a lot of good friends and then we had a club. Well, it's like everywhere, you have to have a club. We were so new we couldn't qualify for an FFA chapter, Future Farmers of America, so they kind of grouped together and they called it the "Plow Jockeys." So, we had a number of nice young ladies who joined the Plow Jockeys, I don't know whether it was the boys that were the attraction or the plow, or the jockey, or the lot, but we had a group picture in our yearbook. … We went on trips and we had, I think, a couple of periods every day in Ag. … The rest were our regular courses. … Girls that were in commercial would take their courses, but if they want to take ag course, it was a course you could come to, join the club, whatever. So, it worked out very good, and the teacher was a real gentleman. … He grew up on a farm and South Jersey, … I forget where. … He was a Rutgers graduate, he had his bachelor's degree, and he was a county agent. No, he was a vo-ag teacher first, and then he left teaching and became a county agent in Passaic County, and then he was later at Mercer County. … He kind of boosted me along.

When I got in high school I had to have a project, now I got to get back to chickens before I get out of high school. This is in an eighteen hour interview I think.

SH: That is okay.

WT: Okay, well, part of any Ag program in any of the high schools that have it, you have to have some kind of project. … A lot of people taking it lived on farms, and there were a lot of farms in that area at that time. There's not a lot now, but since it included Wall Township, there were still farms that are there now that were there when we were in high school and many years before. So, a lot of our members took that, came from there, particularly as far out as Allaire State Park. They had a farm on that facility way back then. So, we had a good group, but Mr. Lippincott was there two years, and he decided he wanted to go onto better opportunities. He had a better opportunity in job pensions and whatever else came along with a faculty appointment. So, he left, and I'd see him every once in a while, and another man came in. His name was Herb Wright and … he was a vo-ag teacher in South Jersey and he worked for the park system down in Parvin State Park in South Jersey. … He was a real good guy too, and he'd take us to trips. We'd go out to Harrisburg, to the Pennsylvania Farm Show. We'd go visit the rug mill in Freehold, you know, that Bruce Springsteen talked a lot about. We did all kinds of things, visited local farms, went to a farm show when they had it down in Trenton before Atlantic City. … When I graduated from there, I had as my project, … I guess I started that in my freshman year. … The chickens came in pretty quickly because I decided I wanted to build a chicken house in the backyard and gather some more chickens. …

SH: The backyard of your house or the school?

WT: No, my backyard in Spring Lake. I don't think they really would allow that anymore. In fact, one of the neighbors used to have a couple chickens a few years ago walking around and they called the police, they called the game warden, they called the pest control guy, they called the exterminator, everybody trying to catch these chickens. Remember that one?

JT: Yes.

WT: It was a rooster and he'd get out there crowing in the morning and all the neighbors didn't like that. … I built a little ten by twelve chicken house out of some scrap lumber, … fenced in, had a door and windows that opened and roosts for the chickens. So, I had everything, feeders and water. … I ordered twenty-five baby chicks from Montgomery Ward. You used to buy them from Sears or Montgomery Ward. So, I wanted to get pullets, so I'd have eggs. … They usually send you one extra chick. So, I'd get twenty-six chickens, came in the mail, and I put them out there with a brooder, and then, raised them. I think about twenty of them or twenty-two of them survived and grew up. They were a nice mixed breed. Good layers, laid brown eggs, not noisy. So, I kept records of all my expenses, and when they started producing eggs, sometimes I had twenty chickens laying maybe. … I'd get twenty eggs a day some days. Some days, I'd get three or four, but I'd have several dozen eggs a week. I could sell to a couple neighbors and my mother's friends, or wherever I can sell them. … I used to go and cut cat tails out in the meadows, and sell cat tails door to door. People in the summer liked to have that thing

on their porch. … I did all kinds of things. We raised some money, but that was good. I kept the chickens quite a long while. … That was my next step in the career in agriculture.

SH: In 1939, you are entering high school. Hitler invades Poland. Was this something that was on your radar screen?

WT: Oh, yes, I know because, one thing, they put out a new stamp for overrun countries. There was a series of them. They had Poland, Czechoslovakia, every country that he took over, they'd have some … commemorative stamp here honoring the country or something. I had a lot of those but I sold all of it, a little while ago. I was very aware of that. … Of course, '39, we weren't always involved that early, I don't think.

SH: No.

WT: No.

SH: I wanted to know if you were aware of it.

WT: Well, I was well-aware of that, and my grandmother had a lot of interest in that too.

SH: You talked about your family being English.

WT: Well, I think Winston Churchill was their hero. … He was quite a guy.

SH: When did you first here about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

WT: I was sitting in my Model-A with my mother in the Belmar Railroad station. She was waiting for the train to go up to East Orange to go to work the next day, and I would get up early to take her to the station. … In '41, she was in the store, this was in East Orange rather than Newark, and she could stay with my aunt or her aunt too. … She'd sometimes would go back on Sunday, and come down Friday night. There was a lady across the street who used to work in Newark. You'd see her on the train every day, you know, the commuters. … At that time, the railroad, it had two railroads that ran on the tracks. It was the New York and Long Branch Railroad, which ran … from Avenel or somewhere in Woodbridge, down … through Long Branch and then down to Bay Head and then it turned around and come back. … The Pennsylvania railroad and the Jersey Central, both trains would go. The Pennsylvania would go into New York directly, and they'd change engines in South Amboy, but the New Jersey Central went through Elizabeth Port, and have a station right in on Broad Street in Newark. So, that's the one she always liked. She liked them, they were friendlier. … What it cost to commute on a train now is several hundred dollars. … In those days it was like twelve dollars a month or something, it was cheap. They had a "Dollar Shopper Special" on Wednesdays. It'd be a dollar round trip for any of the shore towns into New York.

SH: Oh my, really?

WT: Yes, it increased shopping; get them out, keep them moving. Keep the trains running. …

SH: What was the reaction when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

WT: … I was sitting there, and I had a radio in my Model-A, which was quite an accomplishment because it had no dashboard, you know, it was just, you hung it below the gas tank somewhere. … The radio said they bombed Pearl Harbor and my mother said, "Well, I guess I'm going to lose another one to a war." … I said, "What?" [She said], "Well you're going to get into the war, into the service." I said, "Well, eventually I probably will." I didn't even think about that but … I said, "Ah, go on," you know. In the meantime, the radiator was overheating, here comes the train. … So my mother went, "Goodbye." … She remembers my father going. …

SH: That is a different story than we usually hear.

WT: … She … didn't say it in humor. … She was very upset about it. …

SH: I am sure.

WT: Yes, that was quite a day.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RJ: Did you attend college before the military?

WT: No.

RJ: Did you finish after the military?

WT: … Yes, in the meantime, my poultry interest was still with me, and still in high school I had work in the summertime, so I worked at a commercial florist, field-grown flowers, and bulbs and green, … seven or eight greenhouses, after school and on weekends in the summer, everything. … After that, … I drove, delivered groceries another time, and there was always a car involved in these things. … There was a small poultry farm. … It's small by today's standards in Spring Lake Heights, which is right adjacent to Spring Lake, just inland. … He had about five or six thousand laying birds, which at that time an individual could make a decent living with that many. Today, you couldn't afford it, you'd need fifty thousand chickens. … I got a job with him. … I worked after school, summertime, senior year. … When I got my car I was still sixteen. The day I turned seventeen I went and got my permit, but I had a Model-A Ford that I bought the previous summer, … fixed it all up and back around in the yard, and back in and out of the garage. So, I had my car, I could go to work. So, I worked with this one individual, and he was sort of overwhelmed. He had about four long chicken houses. … At that time it was within a half a mile where I lived, and so I worked there. … Even when we were seniors the draft board was … getting down to any age group they could grab. … They were even taking people who were forty-two, forty-five, and anybody seventeen, eighteen. Oh, they were very hungry. So, of course, we had to register for the draft board, and so I was classified as 1-A. Ready to go, grab him, so a good half or better of our high school class either had quit and

enlisted, or drafted right out of class, but … I think they would allow you if you finished half of your senior year, you can still get your diploma, some arrangement they had. Some just quit and joined the Marines or something. … So, being a farmer or a farm worker, they were, of course, all deferred because you got to eat. … At that time, agriculture was a pretty big picture in New Jersey. It's still a pretty good industry as it is, a very good industry, and "Jersey Fresh" and all those things come along promoting New Jersey produce and fish, and shellfish, and nursery plants and flowers. Everything in it is Jersey Fresh, so we were advocates of that a long while ago. So, I was working on this farm, for I don't know how long before they finally, before they were going to take the whole class, all the boys, and then I think there was such an uproar amongst the parents and the school and everything else that they said, "Well, let them finish." So, by that time, I had still been working all that time, so I said to the farmer, … "Any day I'm going to go, they're going to call me." So, he says, "Why don't I put in to get a deferment?" I said, "Oh, that sounds interesting." So, anyway, I applied for the draft board for reclassification because of agriculture, and the way they would do that, they would contact the county agricultural agent to go visit the farm, and make sure that this applicant is actually there, is there a farm actually there, do they actually have anything they grow or produce. So, that followed with the county agent in Monmouth County at that time, was Mac Clark. He started as a county agent the year I was born. He was an older gentleman, he was a real gentleman. He talked to me, he says, "Well, yes, I think he'd be kind of lost here," because … you don't need a lot of people on a poultry farm, but you need to have somebody when there is only a farmer. He had no kids, no brothers, nothing, he didn't have anybody. It was really getting the best of him, I think, so he was happy. So, I got a deferment for six months, and that's all they gave you at a time, six months. … He had a bad back or something so I was doing more and more. I had to feed the chickens, and keep the water going and clean the chicken houses and change the birds when they got old, and get a whole new flock in, and we had to take care of the cleaning and grading the eggs, and then we'd take it up to Bradley Beach. … Twice a week we'd take them, and we had an old station wagon we'd load … up with egg cases and sold the eggs.

SH: Were you selling them to the military?

WT: No, to a wholesaler who supplied stores and restaurants. … So, then I was reclassified and I forget what classification agriculture was but it was one-six or something. … I had that. Meantime, all my friends were in the service by then. … I started kindergarten with this guy who later married Jean. That's where the intrigues come.

SH: Oh, the intrigues.

WT: His name was Don, and so he was in the Army. It wasn't the Air Force then. It was the Army Air Corps. He was in the … Air Corps and he was a gunner, … ended up in the Pacific on a B-29.

JT: In Guam.

WT: From Guam, and another buddy, he was going into the Army, he was in the Corps of Engineers. Another guy, he went in the Army. … He went over to Europe, he was in the Battle of the Bulge. … I was sort of a lonely guy around. … I used to go roller-skating. … Don said,

"Why don't you come up, let's go to Asbury Park, there's a rink, you can go roller-skating." "Fine, fine." So, he introduced me to that. I said, "This isn't too bad." I kind of liked roller-skating. So, then I did a lot of roller-skating, and I'd go up there to make friends, skate around with all the girls, and I was having a ball. [laughter] …

SH: Did anyone remark about the fact that you had a deferment while others were in the service?

WT: … I kind of felt a little guilty sometimes, but I figured well, I'm officially, it's not going to last forever. I mean, anytime it's going to say, "Okay, that's it." Which after a year and a half, I was [deferred for] a year and a half. Meantime, the war was winding down. … They weren't quite as anxious in '45. …

SH: You graduated in 1943?

WT: '43, yes.

SH: Did it seem like the Allies were winning the war in 1943?

WT: … I didn't even apply for the third one. No, I had three, a year and a half I was home, but I felt I was doing something. … I could smell the chicken manure wherever I went, that's what it was, a straw sticking out of my shirt. It was a funny time because I saw what it was like in the home front, and Asbury Park was a hotbed of activity, because two big hotels, the Berkeley Carteret and there was the Monterey right behind it. The government took it over and let the British Navy have that as a Rest and Recreation place. So, the "limey" sailors were in there, … hundreds and hundreds of sailors. Plus, the biggest presence of service people at the shore were Coast Guard. The Coast Guard stations were all manned and they were housed in the Jumping Brook Country Club and they used to ride the beach patrol on horses. … It was a real … danger. There were always blobs of oil on the beach from all the ships that were sunk. Torpedoed right off all the towns, then they'd get covered with sand, you step on it, and it'd be "ush." Talk about the Gulf of Mexico, I mean, I know what they mean. …

SH: Were you involved in any of the home front security? Were you involved in any of the patrols?

WT: No, I was just a kid. The Coast Guard did that, and they had an air raid wardens. Volunteers from every town would go around, and they did on the boardwalk in Asbury Park, they put up big curtains along the ocean side of the boardwalk, about a ten-foot tall awning. They roll them up in the daytime to keep their reflected light, because that's how they found submarines, would find the ships silhouetted against the glow from the shore,. … Everybody in New Jersey had to paint the top halves of their headlights black, so there wouldn't be any beams of light going up, and you should pull all your shades down and keep the … house dark. Streetlights, they'd turn out or they'd shield them so you couldn't see them. … That was very evident.

SH: What about rationing?

WT: Oh, we had ration books coming out of our ears and, of course, gasoline, you had a system where you'd get you're "A," "B," "C," "D," or "X," little square stickers. Go to an old car show, you'll see a lot of the cars from the '30s and '40s had ration stickers on the windows. They print them up now. Of course, I got "A," it was three gallons a week, and my mother had her car which was three gallons a week. She used hers and she said, "Well, here you can get a gallon out of mine, or something." … There were always people that were selling it for like, at that time, seventy-five cents a gallon. Well, it was twenty, twenty-five cents a gallon in the gas station. I remember it used to be "Five gals for a dollar," they'd put that up on the sign. … I didn't drive a lot, … didn't really have enough gas to do anything. … We had coupons for food. … We had little kerosene space heaters we'd put up, it would supplement the furnace. We used to keep it a low temperature. … They could get it for heating, like I got a book for kerosene. Shoes, you can get … coupons for shoes, and tires you had to ration. … You had to make sure the tires were inspected, and then you put a new tire on or buy a used tire, I had a lot of used tires. People had them hanging on the back of the garage so if they hit something, "Oh that's pretty good," put it on the car. … That was all very interesting, I still have a whole wad of ration books like that. I save everything, don't I? [laughter] No, that was very obvious. Even light bulbs, you just couldn't buy anything. We'd save all the grease. If you had bacon or anything, you had grease from something you fried. Any meat, you didn't have a lot of meat, because meat was rationed, but you'd save that in a coffee can or something, and keep it down somewhere and every time, instead of pouring it and getting rid of it, you'd pour it in there, and it would solidify. … Then you'd turn it in, you'd give it, they'd pick it up from the butcher shops. … You'd take a can of grease, you'd take it down to the butcher shop and they had always had--Van Iderstine was the company--they'd come around and pick up all the scraps from the butcher shops, they'd make animal feed out of it or they make candles, I don't know what they made out of it. … I don't know whether they'd give you anything for it or not, but there was always piles around. … A lot of towns would have, anything metal you could take down, old bicycles or a couple pieces of crowbars, anything metal they would pick up, aluminum. They saved the aluminum foil on the cigarette packs. They used to call it lead foil, or tin foil, or whatever, they'd roll them all up, and anything that was aluminum or lead or whatever other metals they used they would make big balls of it. They'd save string, you know. It was very interesting, really, when you think back.

SH: Were you watching what was going on in the war? Did you watch movies or news?

WT: Oh, I remember the news.

SH: Where was your news of the war coming from?

WT: Probably on the radio. … We never even got a paper because you couldn't afford to get a paper all the time. Once in a while, Sundays, we'd get the paper. The news in the movies, … you could go for fifteen cents in the matinee, or something like that. There was a little movie [house] in Spring Lake, the Ritz, I remember that one, and they would go down there and it was like a shed. It wasn't even a building. … One guy ran the whole thing. It had like shutters, wooden shutters that'd go down on one side, and he'd close them all because it was all open. The wind would blow through. … He'd close up all the windows, and then you'd hear him go up the steps, and you'd hear him start the projector, and then you'd see the Pathe News. … My mother

had, again these good friends of hers, one of them had a gift shop, and so she'd go and work for her for a dollar a day to sell in the gift shop. … They had candy, or books, and another lady had a yarn shop. … She'd go help her. She picked up a little bit there and again her, I think some of her real good friends, and her one good cousin that kind of helped her wherever she could. … Another sidelight there, when my grandfather died, he left some money to his sons and my father was one of them, and the two brothers, and the sister. Something in his estate was, however, divided up among them, but since my father passed on, … his survivor would be me. … It wasn't a lot of money, I think it was 2,000 dollars, that was a lot in those days. It was deposited in a bank in Brooklyn until I became twenty-one, and my one good uncle from New Jersey, he kind of watched over that. So, he said, "Well, why don't you see if you can get some of that to help out during all these hard times." … She had to go to the surrogate's office in Kings County in Brooklyn, and got a court order that she could withdraw thirty-five dollars a month from this two thousand dollars that was there. For several years, she got thirty-five dollars a month. Without that, I don't think our taxes would have been paid, you know. … That was big money.

SH: When did you make the decision to join the Navy?

WT: I didn't really make the decision. I was drafted, finally, in the draft board in Belmar. … We had to go to Camden for a physical, it's where the induction center was. So, we got on a bus in Belmar and went to Camden and, of course, you'd walk, take all your clothes off. Everybody's walking around stark naked except the guys that are examining. … The service is great for that, they want to beat you down, take any bit of dignity or pride you have away. Shave all your hair off, you know, make you feel insignificant, part of the act. … We went all through there, bend over, cough, you know, all these things, … this shot here, this shot there, one in both arms, and then … another line stops, and all these naked guys stand around there with a little bag with their clothes in it, and he says, "One at a time." You went in to this little room, … one guy went in, came out, and they say, "Army." Another guy says, "Army." Another guy says, "Navy." It was a chief petty officer and a master sergeant and they're sitting at a desk with rubber stamps, and he says, "State your preference, we'll place as needed." So, the first guy goes in, he says, "Navy." [He stamps], "Army." Next guy goes in, and says, "Navy" [He stamps], "Army." I come in, I said, "I'll fix it." I say, "Army." [He stamps], "Navy." That's how I got in the Navy. No choice, I think I fixed them. … Anyway, I'm glad I did, but then they take all the Navy guys, go off in another room. He says, "Okay, now anybody here want to join the Marines?" because Marines are part of the Navy. Two guys out of about fifty said, "Eh, oh yes." Navy beats you down, but Marines beat you down to a pulp, so I lucked out.

SH: Nice selling point.

WT: That's right, but I'm so glad I did.

SH: This is in January 1945, right after the Battle of the Bulge.

WT: Right.

SH: Were you aware of what was going on in Europe?

WT: Oh yes, but … I don't know that I knew the particulars. My one buddy was involved over there. In fact, he got together at Fort Monmouth with a bunch, … they had their own name, the "Bulge Bump" or something. It was anybody that had been anywhere involved in the Battle of the Bulge. They had a group like a ROMEO club, you know, Retired Old Men Eating Out. … I wasn't keenly involved, I figured well, what can I do, I'm just me.

SH: Had any of your buddies come back on leave at all?

WT: Yes.

SH: During that time, was anybody talking to you about what they had experienced in the service?

WT: It wasn't anything. As long as you were in this country, there was not much to talk about, it's pretty boring, you know.

SH: Okay.

WT: … Those who had been overseas, … Don came home a couple times, I remember. One day, he talked me into getting my Model-A going and he and I went up to Lake Sunapee, New Hampshire. He knew some girl up there, and brought me along. I had a few gas coupons, and he had some and then we found a place that would sell it to us for seventy-five cents, and then I put a gallon or two of kerosene in, because you mix it with gas, a lot of smoke but it ran. That was a good thing about those cars. My friend Bill was home a couple times. We got some pictures of that, yes he came home but he was down at Georgia. … He'd been all around, he was up at Fort Hancock at Sandy Hook for a while. I'd write to him, and he'd write to me. In fact, I have a V-mail that my buddy Bill had written. You do it in a little, I don't know how you wrote it, it was like a little telegram form, and you'd write it all out. … They didn't have fax machines but they put a tremendous number of letters in one little mailbag. … I don't know how they got it all back and forth, but he was just telling me, "The food is lousy, it's cold, it's noisy, I had the flu," you know, these things. "I met some babe."

SH: Were there any of the events from the time you were in New Jersey before you went into the military that you want to discuss further, such as the weather?

WT: We had a couple of hurricanes, I know. … The one in '44 was bad. We had a lot of damage along the shore. … I had three Model-A's, maybe four, never paid more than fifty dollars a piece. I'd get out in the worst weather, drive around on the snow, I'd go out and spin around in the parking lots, you know, all that fun. Jean hates when I try to do that, can't do it with my new Ford. … It was pretty mundane, really.

SH: I did not want to skip over anything that you remembered being here in New Jersey.

WT: I know the winter of '45, it was cold. … I had a bad cold when I went in. It didn't help walking around naked half the time. I used to have a big heavy winter coat that I wore, it was like fleece lined, a big high collar. … I used that to go to work because it was good and warm,

but I remember that. … Then when I got to boot camp, of course, I put all of that in a box and sent it home, and they give you a pea jacket and a sweater, and a knit hat. …

SH: Where did they send you for boot camp?

WT: Well, we … swore in at Camden. Then they put all the Navy bunch together then, and I think there was about sixty in a group that I ended up in, and they put us on a train. They gave me the envelope to carry with all the records in it, so that's my bit of authority I got out of being in the Navy, apprentice Seaman. They carried the thing down, and put us on the train from Camden. … Now it's the … quick line, fast line.

JT: Speed line.

WT: Speed line, I always forget that. The locals down there call it speed line, it's run by SEPTA, Port Authority, or somebody, to Penn Station in Philadelphia. Put us on the train south and we got off at Harve de Grace in Maryland. … We went to Bainbridge basic training center. The bus met us there, took us in. From then on, it was Navy.

SH: Did they start testing you?

WT: Oh, they were always testing something, yes. I don't know, at that point, we were just fodder coming in. Got to get you through boot camp first, and then they decide what you should do. … During the boot training, which was, I forget how many weeks, twelve, sixteen weeks, or something like that. Well, it was cold, and windy, and snowy, and so we go into this reception center, and they line you all up, a whole bunch of people. It was like a big gym, and there's some guy from someplace in North Carolina. … I think they all came from North Carolina or Mississippi, the guys that ended up in the company that I was in. … There's so many people compared to New Jersey. … We all ended up in different companies, and they had companies of about a hundred or so, 120, I think. … They had regiments, and there was four regiments, and each barrack had a 120 men. I think that's what it was. … This guy, he was a Seaman first maybe, he says, "Take your clothes off." [Mr. Thurlow is speaking with a Southern accent.] So, we'd take our clothes off. "Keep them within the square that you are standing," you know, as if you're talking to a wall, and that's about what you were talking to, a bunch of guys like me. … "Now, you take all of your clothes and you put them in this box." They give you a big cardboard box. I had to put all the clothes in the box. Somewhere along the line we got some jeans, or dungarees they called them. Dungarees and a blue shirt, you know, hat and coat, and everything, shoes, socks, underwear, toilet kit. So, we put them in there and then, "You will address this with your name from where you did come from." So, that's what we put on, sent that home, tape it all up, my clothes, go home. So, here, still had hair. He says, "Now you will form a line and come up this way," and you go over this way. You go through there, there's about four guys with barber chairs. … There used to be a movie, *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, or some war movie they had, well this was "thirty seconds over noggin'." That's what they called it, there. "Zip, Zip, Zip." Nothing, very much like they are now, you know, … all of the cops have to shave all their hair, but that was fun. Again, to make you feel like nothing. … We got the barracks, and we got the blanket. … They gave you a seabag, and they give you a hammock. Back then, they still gave you hammocks for the navy, because on the old ships they didn't have bunks, they had

racks where you hung a hammock up, and that's where you slept. … You had to keep all your belongings in your seabag. They gave you a blanket, and that was about it, but it was fun.

SH: It was fun.

WT: It wasn't really, but it was interesting.

SH: Looking back at it, it was interesting.

WT: Yes.

SH: Were you one of the older ones in the group or were there people of many ages?

WT: No, I think they were mostly the same age because of the way they were classifying people. I think the older ones that were eligible at all were already in.

SH: Are there any incidents or stories in boot camp that you remember??

WT: … Every night, they had an order that you had to follow, there was a lot of respiratory disease going around. You put 120 guys in this cold barracks, stacked two high, and about this far from each other, you're bound to pass everything. While I was there, I had chicken pox, I had … what they call cat fever, it was catarrhal fever, some kind of, it was in your throat like a bad, like flu almost. So, they decided that to prevent that, they'd make everyone take two sulfa pills. So, they'd line up there and the, whatever the guy was called.

SH: A corpsman?

WT: No, they weren't even corpsmen. The guy in charge, the drill master or something, it was a company commander, whatever he was. He was a chief of something, they wore special big ranger hats, you know, everybody hated them. … Their whole purpose in life was to make everybody miserable.

SH: A drill sergeant?

WT: Drill sergeant, that's what he was. They didn't have sergeants in the Navy though. But, drill instructor, and you had to salute them, because even though he wasn't an officer, you had to salute him because … you got to get used to somebody to salute, and from then on, it was once you were out of boot camp, you salute only officers. … It had to be perfectly over the eyebrow, had to be perfectly straight, you stand up straight, eyes straight ahead, hats on squared. They'd stop you, they'd say, "Button that shirt." Or say, "Put that hat on straight." You know, they loved to do that to the poor kids. So anyway, that was one of the things, and everybody had to line up before we went lights out, go to the drinking fountain, and he'd give you two white pills, like two aspirin. You had to take them, he watched as you took them, you couldn't spit them out, you couldn't keep them in your mouth because they tasted so bad, so you had to swallow them. A lot of guys had bad reactions to them, they got allergic to the sulfa I guess. In fact, I'm still a little allergic to sulfa, but it didn't affect me at the time, but there were a lot of guys in the

hospital from that. So I don't think that did a bit of good. Then I got really bad, and it was so cold, windy, and it was a cold winter in February, or late January. … They always had to find something, you'd have guard duty, … get into the routine of standing watch and stuff. So, you'd have your turn, and you'd go out and you'd guard the dumpster or the coal pile because at the end of the barracks was the furnace room. They always had a pile of coal or a big box of coal, so you had to go out there with a wooden stick rifle. I can stand there, two to four or twelve to four in the morning, or four to eight at night, or eight to twelve, you know, a four-hour watch. So, that made your nights. If you didn't have pneumonia then, then you'd get it. So, I did come down with pneumonia, I started feeling worse and worse and worse, so I went to the sick bay, and a guy says, "Uh, I don't know, you got to go over here." The first thing you know, I'm in the Navy hospital in Bainbridge. … I was there, I don't know how long, but I know I got like fifty shots of penicillin at four hour intervals for I don't know how long. Night and day, and it was an experience. … Then, of course, you lose your company because they got a certain schedule to get you out in so many weeks, so I lost my company. So somebody gathers your blanket and your stuff that you got in your seabag, and hammock, and everything, and put it all together, and they have a storage, they put it in there. So, when you got out, you got to go back and try to find it. Well, I lost a blanket and a pair of shoes. … Anyway, they give you another one. So, then I got out of there. … In this hospital, just laying around, you know, the food was better, it was relatively quiet, it was a good rest period, and, of course, you had to carry your seabag and everything when you got out of there, which was very heavy, especially when you've been in bed laying around, for I don't know how many weeks I was there. All of a sudden, I look up, my mother and my future wife were coming up to say hello on Sunday. … They got on the train in Newark and came down to Harve de Grace. … I damn near fell out of the bed, you know. [laughter] I couldn't get over that. So, they stayed a while and I got a cup of coffee, I don't remember what, and they went home, but that was my only visitor I had. … Then I got back to the company again, another company, and finally when we, we went through all the, you know, drills and long marches. … If you can't swim you had to learn to swim. Well, I did not know how to swim, and I still don't know how to swim but I know what you're supposed to do but I don't go swimming, I just like the beach. Luckily, Jean likes the beach, and she doesn't swim either. … I went to all these swimming lessons, again no clothes because it's all guys. … This humongous big Quonset-type building was a drill hall or a forum for each regiment in the camp, and they had a gym in there, and they had the pool, and they had all kinds of things, and everything that took place in there, except eating. … After supper, you could go and lay around or whatever you want to do, read, go to the library, anything. So, I had to report to the pool and learn to swim. Well, I don't remember but it was a long time, and when you finally could swim, and they didn't teach you to swim like most people swim, it was survival swimming. They teach you to use your hat, or your pants, or some part of your clothing to capture some air and hang on to it to keep from sinking. … You had to float on your back, like this with your head back, and go like frog, like this, with your feet going like this, I don't know what they call it, but that's survival. You can do this and float even in the ocean, not me. … I think the guy got so tired of seeing me, he said, "Grab the pole." He dragged me around the pool. He says, "There, you're qualified. Now, go up on the tower and jump off." [laughter] You don't think I wasn't scared.

SH: Did you jump?

WT: Yes, finally, I did come up. I figured I'd lay on the bottom. … That was an experience. So, what happens after that, I get out, and I come to Rutgers, and they still had gym and I had to take swimming lessons at the gym on College Avenue. [laughter] … I could wear shorts, my bathing suit there, and they finally gave up on me then, too. So, I got about seventy-five swimming lessons. … Another buddy and I had a row boat, and I'd get out in the Manasquan River, I'd jump out of the row boat, and as long as I had my hand on the boat or my feet on the bottom, I was all right. Boy, I tell you. I won't tell them about Lake Sunapee. … [laughter]

SH: I guess you did not do too well at Lake Sunapee.

WT: Well, I almost drowned. … My buddy and I met these two girls, they were waitresses at a big summer hotel up there, so they wanted to all go to the beach. Well, Lake Sunapee is the beach, and there was a float, or platform, out a ways. So, they all go swim out there and I'm standing around in the water up to my knees squishing down, getting wet, looking like I'm having fun. … They say, "Come on out." … I said, "Oh, no." "Yes, come on out." I get up, and I'm walking out, water is coming up. It's lake water, you know, fresh water, it comes up around here, so I'm holding my head up, trying to get out. I got ten feet to go, all of a sudden, no bottom. Next thing I felt was a hand on my back, I don't know who it was but I was like a rocket hit me, and I leaped and I got a hold of the platform and I hung on there and I climbed up and I would not get off. … Well, it was my buddy Don, more of this will follow, about Don. … The two girls finally said, "Look, you put one arm around me." … They'll get me to where I can touch bottom. I did, I got out, never went back in the lake again, but that was an experience. [laughter]

SH: I would not recommend that.

WT: I'm sure in the future when everyone might hear this or read about it, they'll say, "Boy, what a nut." [laughter]

SH: When you graduate boot camp, did you get leave to come home?

WT: Yes.

SH: Okay.

WT: Yes, I forget what it was, a couple weeks I think. We got a big picture, I still have it. … I can hardly find myself because they all look alike. We all had our whites on, black ribbons around, the tie, and then the hair, hat and squared, round; real salty looking.

SH: This would have been somewhere around March when you are getting out of basic training.

WT: Yes, it was warmer. …

SH: Where do your orders send you now?

WT: … We came back from leave and they put you in what they call OGU, Out Going Unit, which was a few barracks in one section. … When you finish boot camp you can have an option of trying to go to some service school to learn something, to learn a trade or learn what you'd like to do, or they want you to do, or whatever you can learn. If you want to be a cook, or if you want to be a radar man, or you want to be a gunner, or you want to be an electrician's mate, or a signal man [you can]. … I said, … "Well, how about I go to," … Norman, Oklahoma, the university was there, it still is I guess. … They had all the aviation schools, so I said, "Geez, I think I'd like to be an aviation ordnance man." … I would be servicing and handling ammunition and guns. … They said, "Okay, you can be that." So, in about another week or so, we're hanging around the OGU, I was going to the PX, or wherever, and then the war ended, V-E Day [Victory in Europe Day, May 8, 1945]. I was again in the hospital. …

SH: That was in May.

WT: May, anyway, I was not able to go on liberty when they had all the celebrations everywhere, so I was there. … They took all the lists down and then another list went up, … my name on there, Thurlow, Warner H. Let's see, what did they call it, DD, DE, APD Pool, which means destroyer, destroyer escort, or auxiliary, tender-type ship. It's just a pool. They still had a lot of new ships that were being built, and … people were getting out of the Navy, the enlistments were up, so they had a lot of jobs to fill, and they had to form a crew for all these ships. … I hung around another week or so. Next thing you know they called us, all these names, go to a certain place. They put us on a bus, and they took us to Baltimore. … At that time, they had an overnight steamer, an old wooden steamer with big paddle wheels. … Up and down, you know that rocking thing in the middle, beautiful old ship, it would cruise on the Chesapeake. So, they filled up the whole ship with all these guys, and then, of course, then they left around supper time. … There were two guys in a cabin. Well, the cabin was very small. They had a recreation director and they played games and they played cards. There wasn't any dancing because they were all guys. … In the morning, we wake up in Norfolk, Virginia, and that's where we all got off, got on another bus, and went to the Naval Operating Base in Norfolk. … It was a big brick building, it looked like a college dorm, you know, a nice permanent base there. They also had a lot of World War I barracks. Well, they put us in the barracks first and I know everybody went looking for their shoes to get up. … You want to bang them on the floor, because the cockroaches would run away where you put your shoe on, they were big guys. We finally got into this nice building, and it turns out the entire crew for this ship is going to be in that barrack and train for a month or so at Norfolk, which was all right. Right away, "You want to go swimming?" "No." [laughter] … We had a good time, and we had gotten off base. … Then, … more training, and all of the petty officers that came along lived in the same building. The officers, they didn't bring in until much later on, I guess, until we got to the ship. Then I got pneumonia again, and that was V-J Day. That's where I was, I knew I was in the hospital for one of them, V-J Day [Victory over Japan Day, August 15, 1945]. The streets of Norfolk were like Times Square, you know. Nobody could leave the base. We listened to it on the radio. … Next thing came along of any interest, they got us all together, get up early in the morning. Go down to the railroad, … put us on a troop train, two hundred and fifty something people, it was a whole crew. So, they had sleepers, Pullman sleeper cars, you know, two to a bunk, that was crowded. So anyway, we get on the train, I spent most of the time standing in the Dutch door looking out, watching the country go by. We went down to Georgia and then west, and ended up through

New Orleans. … There wasn't a railroad bridge, you had to go on a car ferry at that time. … Maybe it was north of New Orleans because you could see Baton Rouge, the state capital, from the train. … They have them even in New York harbor. They have a dock that goes up and down, and levels … the tracks. … You can't put more than two cars in a length on the ferry. … They push the others two at a time on the ferry across the river. Do the same thing, put us all off, put it all together again, then, keep going. So we went to Orange, Texas which is right on the Sabine River, which is the border between Texas and Louisiana. … I forget the name of the shipyards there. That's where the ship was being built. In fact, they still build them down there, newer ones, of course. … That was the home of a lot of destroyer escorts, but the one I went on was a destroyer. It was named after Butch O'Hare, the first naval aviator that received the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War II. He was very active and they named O'Hare Airport [Chicago] after him. So, they named the ship after him. [Editor's Note: Butch O'Hare received the Medal of Honor in 1942 singlehandedly defending the aircraft carrier *USS Lexington* from Japanese bombers. O'Hare was killed in action in 1943.] Destroyers are named after people, so are destroyer escorts. Battleships are named after states, and cruisers used to be named after cities; it was a system. So anyway, here's the shipyard, guys are working around, welding here and painting here. We were there, a month maybe, maybe longer, I don't even remember. So we could go into town, and we took a lot of pictures. … Helped out lugging stuff in and out, and then they started loading things, and supplies, and everybody, all hands on deck, all the food storage and all the equipment, pieces, all kinds of things. … The commissioning ceremony was in November of '45. … We get all christened up by a rear admiral or somebody. I have all the pictures of that, too. The next thing we did was cast off from there and go down river, and on to Galveston, Texas, which was where they had to go into dry dock, so we went to it across the water, in an industrial area, and so we could go into Galveston, but you had to get on a launch, go over and come back and forth. So, they put us in dry dock. … We stayed right on the ship. All they had to do was paint the bottom, and make sure everything was good underneath. So, we had a pretty good time in Galveston. It was Christmas Eve, I remember we went to church, I forget whether it was (Louie?) or not, but it was somebody, anyway. So we went, it was midnight mass, well it was long, and it was going on to one o'clock. I said, "You think we're going to be able to get that last launch back over there?" So, anyway, we snuck out and got back all right. That was our Christmas.

SH: As you traveled across the United States, did you find anything interesting or shocking?

WT: No, not really shocking, it was very interesting. I kind of went along with the gang. … You make friends very easily that way, you know. Tell stories about what you did, or didn't do, or want to do. Why'd I ever get involved in this interview? [laughter]

SH: Were the people from all over? You had said when you got to Bainbridge, you had thought that all the people seemed to be from North Carolina.

WT: Well, the ones that I went from the induction center to Bainbridge were all basically from New Jersey.

SH: Right.

WT: Then on the one going down to, on the troop train we went down, well it was the same gang you knew in boot camp pretty much. … You used to say that some of the ones from some states, they got on the wrong bus, they were trying to get on a school bus, and they got on a bus that took them to the Navy. The first time they ever had a pair of shoes was when they went into the Navy, some of them. … It was very interesting and I got to meet an awful lot of friends.

SH: Did you get any training? Was there a specialty MOS for you?

WT: Well, it's pretty much just a routine. You had to learn to march, you had to learn to do this, you had to learn to wash your clothes, you had to learn to tie them up and how to put them in your locker, and how to make your bed so that they throw a quarter on it, and it'll bounce, you know that old story. …

SH: Did they give you any training for a specific job on the ship?

WT: Not at that time, no, because I didn't even know what I would do there.

SH: I meant when you got to Norfolk.

WT: … Not until we got to the ship, really.

SH: Oh, really?

WT: They did seamanship and things with us. Basically, most of the guys were going to be either fireman or seaman, and you know, that's the enlisted, it's like private rank equivalent. So, you're either swabbing decks, or sweating down in the engine room twisting valves, and wiping pipes and whatever they did.

SH: Where did you wind up?

WT: I was on the deck force.

SH: You were on the deck force, okay.

WT: So, that was a "swabby." We swabbed a lot of decks and chipped a lot of paint. … They didn't really get any kind of real training until you got on the job. So, you knew about a ship, how many people had been on a destroyer, none of them, you know, they didn't know anything about a ship. So, you got to learn about the ship, you got to learn the terminology; you don't go to the bathroom, you go to the head, you know. You don't go up the stairs, you go up the ladder, … you don't hit the roof, you hit the ceiling, I guess. The deck, a lot of bumps on your head, there was a lot of ducking, especially where I slept.

SH: Did some of the petty officers have experiences from World War II that they shared with you?

WT: No, all they do is give you a hard time really. That was their job but always, until we got on the ship, and then basically, it's the old story that they had a lot of officer candidates coming in and they talk about the thirty day wonders and stuff. Well, anybody, that had real responsibility on the ship had had some experience but they always had what they call them, junior officers, ensigns, and they were thirty-day wonders, some of them. They had gone to ROTC, and learn all how the military operates, and things. They relied on higher level enlisted men to run the ship. … Jean's brother was a master chief in the Navy for thirty years and he always said, and I agree with him one hundred percent, "The chiefs ran the Navy, because the officers, the ones in charge knew … what to do and how to handle a ship." I mean, that's not simple, you don't learn that in college. … The chief is the boss, he's the head supervisor, in other words, then there's first-class, second-class, third-class, petty officers are working their way up and you're always trying to be promoted. Once I got on the ship and knew what I was doing, they give you jobs that are there, and you got to have somebody do it. … I ended up on the deck force, and I know that I would rather be there than be down in the hold all the time because you never see the light of day there, and I figured, well if the ship sinks I can find something to grab to float, you know. Because they don't call them tin cans for anything, … less than a quarter of an inch of steel, you know, that's it.

SH: How long are you in the dry dock before you do your shake down?

WT: About a couple of weeks, or maybe a week or so.

SH: That quickly?

WT: Yes, at Galveston. I did not get home, … but I did get away one time there. I have to tell them about that, you're falling asleep over here.

JT: No, I'm not.

WT: You've heard all this before.

JT: … I'm enjoying it.

WT: I don't think she's heard all of it.

JT: No, some things I've heard.

WT: Some things you've heard. [laughter] No, let's see, they had a telephone on the ship in dry dock, and I have no idea how in the world how they ever got a hold of it, no cellphones then, "Thurlow to the quarter deck!" "What do I do now?" They must have some dirty job, they want me to clean up something. Anyway, "You got a phone call." So, I pick up the phone, I say, "Hello." It was my favorite girlfriend, the same one that came to see me with my mother in the hospital in Bainbridge, that I had known for quite a while from roller skating, became very well-acquainted with her, and we were going to get married. So, her sister and husband said, "Why don't you try to go see Warner if he's going to be in Galveston." He knew where I was, Galveston. [He said] "Well, maybe you can meet him somewhere." Well, anyway, she figured

out that if I could get off two or three days, she could get on the train in Newark and take the Pennsylvania railroad, they had a through train to St. Louis, and so she said, "I can meet you in St. Louis in December." Well, it was Christmas week, somewhere in there, toward the end of the week, because we were there New Year's Eve. So I put in, I said, "Could I get off two or three days?" What am I going to do, we're just sitting there doing nothing, and we'll be there for another week. [They said] "Yes, okay." So, I arranged, when I talked to her, I said, "I'll meet you by the information booth." What do I know about St. Louis, I've never been there. Railroad stations all have big information [booths] with a clock, most of them. … I said, "I'll meet you by the clock," and I said, "I'll see what I can do, what kind of train that I can get on." … From Galveston, I got a bus into Houston or Beaumont, one or the other, I forget what, and then I got a train to St. Louis from there. I think it cost me eighteen dollars or something. … I'm only making seventy-five dollars a month, and I was sending fifty home to my mother. So, I got this train, went through Texarkana. … We end up to St. Louis, a big beautiful station, I come out there, I look around, "Well, where's the waiting room." Finally, I find my way. There's the information booth in the middle with the big clock over it. I'm looking over there and she's standing there. I don't know how we ever did that, unbelievable. So, we went to a hotel, made sure we each got our own room. We were very proper in those days. … I think we were there one night, maybe two. … I had to get the train back, and she waited another day to get the train that was going to New York. So, the busboy takes us up. Takes her to her room, and he takes me, and he says, "Go up there, go up the next floor," and there was my room. He said, "There's an elevator and stairs right down here." [laughter] What do you know, I went up and down the stairs, anyway. So, we had a day to see St. Louis, and it was snowing, it was cold. … It was a big park, like Central Park. … It was very nice. … Then, we went down to the hotel dining room bar, setup there, and we had a fancy drink. I forget what it was, but it was nice. … That was our story. … Then, she lost her ticket somewhere. … She called home, they ended up sending some by Western Union. She didn't have enough money to buy a ticket to get home. I had a round trip so, she did finally get home. … Everybody thought when she came back we're going to be married. Well, we fooled them, we didn't.

SH: You did not get married or you did?

WT: No, not them. [laughter] So, I got back, and then we took off for a shakedown cruise on the ship. Go down to Guantanamo Bay, which is in the news a lot lately. Beautiful part of Cuba really, and they've been there for hundreds of years it seems like, still are, of course. … We did all kinds of exercises with the ship to make sure it would go as fast as it was supposed to do and if it would turn as quick, and they had to fire the guns, and they had one island that they would … stand off the island and fire the five inch thirty-eights. … Red hot sun, had to have your hat on straight. … My job, besides being a swabby, it was a port lookout. So, I had to go to my battle station up on the bridge. Every time we passed a buoy I would say, "Passing buoy number four," etc. … It was very official. I am supposed to spot planes. … I got such a sunburn, and then, at a later time I got more sunburnt, and so that's why I'm having all this sunburn damage, because I had blond hair, and so I always go to the dermatologist, and Jean is very fair-skinned. … She was Jeannie with the light brown hair, but it's gotten very much lighter. [laughter] … We go twice a year, and he's always finding something. … Both of us, they found something that was precancerous. So, then they take that out, and they biopsy it, and then they come back, and they do this surgery or somebody take a little bit off and check and see if there are any more

cells. First time we were all right, they didn't find anything, either of us. So, we spent yesterday morning at the dermatologist. … That was … pretty much the shakedown.

SH: Did you get off of the ship in Cuba?

WT: Yes, we did, it was some special holiday or one of our maneuvers, we went to Jamaica, the whole ship. … Then we had a liberty in Kingston, which was very interesting. They had the old open trolley cars running around and come into the harbor and there's a big rum warehouse where they make all the Myer's Rum. … We went to all the bars and … all the places you'd go.

SH: Myer's Rum?

WT: Myer's Rum. … Yes, I think that's still around. Not a real popular one, but that was the one, they had the big signs there. It was interesting there. Typically, at the pier, all the natives came out, trying to sell stuff, and then you'd throw money over board, and they'd dive in the water and find it, you know. I don't know how they'd find money but they did, it's the way they made a living. Same with on the train, we'd go down and slow up to some town, and the people would come out selling cigarettes, or sell candy, or cookies, or something to eat. Ladies would come out and … take mail and mail it for you. … It was very nice, everybody seemed to be trying to help everybody else out, yes. Then we got off, then we did have one liberty at Guantanamo, and I think half the ship went to one town, and the other half went to the other one. … So when I went, I went with another buddy, we went to Guantanamo City. … We took a launch to the little town, where the … dock was. We got on this one car train, they used to call them the dinky. The one that runs from Princeton to Princeton Junction, only this was self-propelled with a big gasoline engine. The front of it was baggage where the guy throws on and off and the guy would sit there driving it, and the other half was seats. … This thing is going around through the weeds, and the old rickety thing was rocking and blowing the whistle and everything; coming through the backyards, like you see in a travel movie sometimes. Clothes hanging out, people hanging out the window, you know, kids playing in front of the train, guys blowing the whistle. It was fun, I like trains. So, we got there and found out when the last train was leaving. It was only back and forth, big deal, it was like a mile and a half. So, we went to visit everything. … One thing I always did, wherever I went, I tried to buy a charm, … and sometimes I could buy gold, but I'd often buy silver ones that were like a dollar, dollar and a half, so I had a whole bunch of those. I also saved trolley and bus tokens and I had a whole bunch of different ones. I was going to make a charm bracelet out of that too, but I never did. … I did make the charm bracelet, so I bought a charm, we went out, you know, a couple of beers, great beer drinking at that time. It was fun. … That's where I bought the cover that looked like a Mexican runner for the chair, or the table top with all the fancy colors on it. … I had a pair of these rattles you shake, … and the little "clap, clap, clap" things, whatever they are, souvenirs. … Then we got on the train, went back on the boat to the ship, and that was it. We did some more shakedown activities. The ship was tied up to a buoy in Guantanamo Bay. … They would have to swing the ship around because it would always drift with the tide. They undid the rope or chain or whatever they had there. … The guy made the wrong [move], too much on the port engine versus the starboard and he swings around. … The ship hits the buoy with one propeller. There's two propellers, one of them hit the buoy, it bent one of the blades, or nicked it or something. From then on it sounded like we had a flat tire, but I slept right over it.

… Then we had to go back to Charleston for repair, so we went to Charleston, and then we went to Pensacola, and then we went to Key West, all doing antisubmarine drills and dropping depth charges, … evasive tactics and trying to, like normal training. … Then, the ship probably did a lot of that the whole rest of its forty years of life, because it did end up, finally given to Spain, or Portugal, or somewhere.

SH: Where did you get the propeller repaired?

WT: Charleston, they had the Navy yard there.

SH: How long were you in Charleston?

WT: Oh, a couple weeks I guess.

SH: How did they treat sailors in Charleston?

WT: Oh, very fine. They supposedly never treated sailors very good in Norfolk. … They always used to kid about the signs on the lawns, "Dogs and sailors keep off the lawn," but there were so many Navy people in Norfolk, at that time, anyway.

SH: I wanted to determine if there was any difference in the way the civilians treated the Navy personnel there.

WT: I don't think so, because they had a lot of canteens wherever I went too, either at some church, or Salvation Army. …

SH: The Red Cross.

WT: Yes, the USO too, I guess they were. I can't remember. A lot were church related, particularly in the South. The churches were much more active, because there's so many more service people in that area, so many different bases. Then we saw the sites, we'd go around the waterfront. You could see Fort Sumter over there in the distance. … In fact, I even went to church there one time, too. I did go to church a couple times. We never had any church services on the ship that I can remember. There was a lot of routine drills and, of course, the big thing were antisubmarine warfare. ASW they called it. … A lot of the ships were converted to be more effective. They had better radar, better sonar, they had all kinds of different equipment, … a lot of them did away with the torpedo tubes because … the older destroyer always had torpedo tubes and heavy five inch guns, six on the one I was on. Sometimes, they'd take one mount off or they'd, or the early ones had smaller bores, and that … was for anti-aircraft and also for shore bombardment or whatever they wanted to be shooting at.

SH: On the shakedowns, were there any other ships involved?

WT: No, the shakedown is pretty much the ship itself. They do all of the training, get everybody used to doing everything. A lot of general quarters, a lot of stand around on the port, you look out where I was in the hot sun, I'd be rather down cleaning the head, you know. They

made me captain of the head too. The captain of the head is the one that has to keep the nearest men's room, no women's room in those days, but they had to keep them clean.

SH: All these wonderful titles, right?

WT: Yes, if you really goofed up then, then the chief would say, "Make him clean the toilets with a toothbrush." Not yours, but somebody's. [laughter]

SH: Were any airplanes involved in the ASW that you trained for?

WT: Yes, we used to shoot at targets, drones they called them then. Or they'd tow a target, another ship or another airplane would tow a target and they'd try to hit the target. You're not shooting at real planes in those days, but then they did have self-propelled drones that would make it fly, like these missiles they have now. They call them something else now.

SH: While you were on the ship, did you go to South America?

WT: No, Jamaica and Cuba were the farthest we went. We were in Pensacola, Orange, Texas, and Beaumont and Galveston, and then Charleston, Pensacola, Key West, which I liked very much, and we were there quite a bit. There's a sub base and when we were there, when Truman was president, and he had the summer White House right in the center of Key West and it's still there I guess. … Just before that, they had captured a German sub that was quite unique. It was a snorkel type thing, and it could run the diesels underwater. They had like a pipe come up and get air and exhaust, because our subs, almost all of them, if they were underwater, they had to run on battery. … The batteries had to be charged, and they couldn't go very fast but now with the atomic subs they solved all that problem, but at that time, the snorkel was a big thing and they captured [one]. … Usually, they scuttle it if they're attacked or damaged enough that it sinks. But they had this, I think it's in the museum somewhere, there maybe one in Chicago, I'm not sure, but they got a chance to go, you know, a couple of Navy guys there and we asked if we could come on [and they said], "Yes, come on." So, a couple of us went aboard and took us all through the amazing meticulous inside. … I hadn't at that time been in too many subs, but a lot of woodwork, sort of like with the Rolls Royce, they have the wood dashboards and everything. Well, there was a lot of wood visible, which normally you wouldn't see in a Navy ship. … I have an article, when President Truman went out for a ride on it and they actually submerged, on the German sub. … I have that in my book there with the Navy stuff. You look like your falling asleep over there.

JT: No, I'm not. I'm enjoying it. … [laughter]

SH: When President Roosevelt died was there any reaction?

WT: He died when I was in boot camp. Yes, they had a big assembly, in an amphitheater at Bainbridge. … They had a big memorial service, … speeches and everything. Yes, I can remember that. I was quite upset about that.

SH: Were there any comments about President Truman as the new President?

WT: Well, I don't know, but I ended up, I really thought Truman was a great guy. … He had a tough thing coming in there. He really didn't think he was going to ever outlive Roosevelt I don't think and he was a working guy. I mean he had a men's haberdashery in Missouri, and he's just the really only poor president we'd had. A working guy, and I think people were impressed with that. The fella I worked with many years here in New Brunswick, often said that Truman will turn out to be the most respected President we've ever had, and I think he was on the right track, you know, because he was as Democratic as they come, and I probably am too, but I pride myself in trying to be independent and I voted for both parties, and I try to make my own mind up.

SH: When the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, did you have any concept of what an atomic bomb was?

WT: I don't think anybody knew much about it really. You know, they come up with all the explanations, but it's just inconceivable that you could have such power in such things but, you know, there were a lot of stories about all the things that were going on, and all this and then dropping them, that was a real surprise. … I think if anybody was happy about it, [it was] because it was the end of the war. … I feel sorry for the people involved but look what's happened over there now, … with this tsunami and the earthquakes, and … who knows what's going to happen over there. … They have had experience in dealing with that kind of thing and I think they're very efficient going about what they're doing. Hopefully, they know what they're doing, I think they do. … We have Oyster Creek right down the road here, from me, we're not within the ten miles but we're within fifteen miles, so you think about that. [Editor's Note: Oyster Creek is a nuclear power plant located in Lacey Township, New Jersey. It is the oldest operating nuclear power plant in the United States.]

SH: Was your tour of duty just for the duration of the war?

WT: … Duration plus, they called it, … I think that's what it was. But it was definitely was to the duration, and that's what happened. I mean, I wasn't in that long, I missed everything, which was fortunate for me, unfortunate for a lot of other people. …

SH: Did they tell you that you had a four-year enlistment?

WT: No, they wanted you to sign up for four years, you know, before they discharge you. There's a separation center. … They did get me for inactive reserve, which was another four years or something. … So, I have two discharges, one from the Navy, … which is a coveted real discharge, and then one from the inactive or the US Naval Reserve.

SH: When you were in Charleston and Key West, had they told you when you would be getting out of the Navy?

WT: Well, they were going by, sort of by length of service, and I don't remember how it was, but … a lot of guys had been in longer than me, many of them, and they were of course leaving. We were losing friends all the time. One 'fella that I got pretty friendly with, used to go out on

liberty together, and did a lot of things, came from Asbury Park. … I didn't know him, he was in about three or four months before I was drafted, and he got out, got off the ship with length of service and other points, I don't know how it is. … I forgotten, but we had a pretty good idea when people that were joining the Navy about the time and weren't in a four year or six year enlistment, or whatever they had, but this 'fella, he lived nearby. This is very confusing, you know, I confuse myself sometimes. [laughter]

JT: He's had some life, really.

WT: Yes. No, but he and I were pretty good buddies and I always wondered what happened to him. … About a year ago, maybe a year and a half, my phone rings, and he says, "Hey, Red!" [I said] "Red? This is Warner." [He said], "Hey Warner, this is Lou." Louis Campamile is his name, and he lived in Asbury Park and … he left when we were in Charleston because his time was up, and then I stayed on until we went from there to Pensacola to Key West to Newport, Rhode Island, to New London, Connecticut. That's when I got off the ship, that was in July. So, anyway, so we got together and he still had the cousins that lived up near Asbury Park, so he says, "Next time I come up." So, anyway, he came up and we got together, wouldn't have recognized him, you know. Absolutely, nobody can recognize me either. … We had a nice visit. He was the guy that took a lot of pictures, and when he got out he wanted to try to go to Rutgers and he couldn't get in or some reason or another so he ended up going to the University of Miami. … He became a civil engineer, and he has a business in Miami, of civil engineering, surveying. … His sons are running that, and he's retired near the shore, and does what he pleases. [laughter]

SH: That is good.

WT: So, he comes up here once in a while. So, he took all the pictures that I took, and I had some that he had taken when we were in Guantanamo and other places. So, he took them all home with him, and he's very savvy with a computer, so he put them all on a DVD, and he put all the pictures on a CD so we can print pictures. … So, right here I got this nice DVD of all my pictures. He puts nice music with each picture. … It's really very nice. He even took every picture out of the album and I had written on the back, Houston Park, or something, you know. He even put that in the DVD. …

SH: Wonderful.

WT: He was a good friend, but I had a couple other guys I knew well. One from Minnesota, another guy from Florida, and I did see the guy from Florida again, later on. [He] came up when I lived in Edison. We went to a barbeque at his sister's place, and then I never heard any more from him. … The other 'fella, I'd send Christmas cards for years, I don't know whether he's dead or alive. … Those are the only ones I really kept in touch with.

SH: Have there ever been any reunions of the ship?

WT: Oh, yes.

SH: Did you attend them?

WT: One of them we did. … Every ship in the Navy, Marine Corps unit, or the Army Air Force base, anybody, they have reunions now. You see all the notices in the papers. It's just to get together a bunch of old guys, and women, too. … They have all kinds of groups too, but the destroyer, as a whole, a crew of destroyers, there's a Tin Can Sailors, is the VFW type for the Navy people, and I'm a lifetime member of that. That's all the ships, they have annual conventions, get together all over the country. I've been to a couple of local ones. They've had what they call workshops or something, where they have a one day meeting. They have a program and a dinner and a speaker and a little get together. … We went to one when it was in Tinton Falls. … The only person I knew in the whole place was the guy from our church. I didn't even know he was in the Navy, but anyway, he's since passed away, but I went to one of those, and then they've had them, New Jersey meetings, usually they have them now over by Forsgate Country Club on Exit 9 on the Turnpike; there's one coming up in not too long. … The ship itself, that's the USS *O'Hare* DD-889 Association, they've had yearly reunions for quite a while. … I guess I'm a life member, one of them too. You give them one hundred dollars, once, and you're a member for life, and they keep raising it up so you end up the same thing. … We went to one in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and we didn't know anybody there either. We went to Strasbourg, and we went to the Pennsylvania Railroad Museum, I got to see the museum which I had put a plaque in there on the wall for my great grandfather.

JT: Oh, yes.

SH: Wonderful.

WT: Yes, it was fun but the trouble is, even on just for one ship, the ship probably averages a life of forty years, and you get two hundred people, give or take fifty, and there's thousands of people, and you just can't know everyone. … On the ship, you're very compartmentalized, you know. You're on deck force, you know that you're Division A or Division B, or whatever, and that's who you know, … the ones you eat with, the one's you went on leave with, so that's all you know.

SH: You are discharged in 1946.

WT: July '46.

SH: How long were you in the reserves?

WT: I think it was five years or ten years, I'm not sure.

SH: When the Korean War broke out, where you concerned with being called up?

WT: No, I never got called, no.

SH: Were you worried that you might be?

WT: No, I didn't even really think [about it]. I was going to Rutgers then.

SH: After the Navy, were you starting to make plans to go to school? Was going to college in your mind?

WT: Well let's see, I always say I got out of the Navy in July. … My buddy and I put a roof on my mother's house which was leaking. I got married in August to Ruth, and I started Rutgers [as] a freshman in September. … She had already been working there because she knew I wanted to come. In fact, I have a picture of me in my uniform and her by William the Silent down there, putting my hand up there like this.

SH: Oh, really?

WT: So, she worked just over the hill here in the School of Education. … From high school, she went to work for the phone company, and so did Jean. Jean knew her.

JT: That's where I knew her from.

WT: … Well, we got married in '46. Jean got married in '48, and I was the best man at her wedding with my buddy Don, so I knew her all these times. Our high school class had reunions every five years, for sixty-seven years and ten months. Later, we get together more frequently.

SH: Oh, my.

WT: Once a month, we meet at a diner for breakfast.

JT: Just the few that are still left.

WT: There was 125 in the class, there's probably eight or ten, or twelve, that are still right here and come. We don't do anything formal, we just go to breakfast if we want to go there. … We were a very close group, I think, maybe because of the war, I don't know, but it was fun.

RJ: The ship you were on, the USS *O'Hare* was named after Lieutenant Commander Edward "Butch" O'Hare, a Medal of Honor recipient. Were you familiar with him while you were working on the ship? Were there things on the ship that honored him or was it just by his name?

WT: No, … he had passed on when that ship was commissioned, no things on the ship except his name. … During the christening ceremony, I think it was his mother that broke the champagne bottle or whatever they do, I'm not quite sure. The history of it is this--destroyers are in different classes, and this was the newest one. It was a little heavier and a little bigger. All of the destroyers that are built now are more like cruisers, where in those days they were relatively small. That's why they call them tin cans because they were so flimsy compared to a battleship. … If you go on the Battleship *New Jersey* down in Camden, it's like a rowboat along side of that, it was almost four hundred feet long but it was very useful and very fast. It would go about thirty-five knots which is a little over that in miles per hour. It was amazing how fast it would go, and it was very efficient and the latest thing, really. … Just the naming itself was the honor

for the family, and, of course, by then I think O'Hare Airport was already named because he came from Chicago. So, that's how that was, but everybody knew who he was but I don't think there was any mention of him much along the line. [Editor's Note: In 1949, Chicago's Orchard Field Airport was renamed O' Hare International Airport.]

RJ: What was the atmosphere of the crew? Were people happy to be there?

WT: Nobody was happy to be in the service, I don't think too much at that time. … You're very loyal to a ship. I think it's a little different with an Army company or battalion. It's more humdrum. … A ship is maybe more routine. … You do have a loyalty to your people you're with, and you're risking your life for, and eat with every day, and sleep with every day. You know, you get to be like buddies, I guess, maybe fraternity type people would feel that way. I never joined a fraternity, but I could imagine it would be. You get to know the guys that you eat with. … You respect them, you know the ones that you want to look out for, and the ones that are goofing off all the time, or trouble makers, you know. No, I don't know if they were happy but I think they were proud of their ship, I think that's more like it.

RJ: … Did you keep in contact with the crew after you got out of the Navy?

WT: Some did, some didn't. They do have these reunion type meetings. But a lot of times there are people that like go to conventions. They just love to go to conventions and that's basically what it is. It's a get together, meet people who have common background, and common interests, and you've all been there, done that. So, you know a little bit about how other people feel, but I just had two or three guys that I kept in touch with, and that's it. Now, both of them I've lost contact with, and they probably aren't even alive anymore. This one fella, I know he's around, but I didn't even know where he was at all and him living in Florida, and he comes up, and neither one of us want to fly, so we're not going to Florida.

SH: Can you tell me what you did to pass the boredom, because you are not always scraping paint and swabbing decks.

WT: Almost always, either that or cleaning the head. [laughter]

SH: I forgot about that.

WT: You get a couple hundred guys, it's a steady job. … I don't know how you put up with each other, I guess.

SH: Did you play cards?

WT: Oh, a lot of them did.

SH: I know you do not like games.

WT: No, I don't play cards either. I call them shovels and clovers, I don't know about spades and clubs. … They were always playing, they played a lot of casino, they played poker,

whatever they could win a buck or so on, sometimes. No, I never did that. Never played, shot dice or anything. It's a game.

SH: I wanted to ask about gambling.

WT: Yes, well I don't know, that was kind of under the table, I guess.

SH: Was it really?

WT: I wasn't really aware of that. [laughter]

SH: Let us talk about Rutgers. Where did you live?

WT: Well, that was a real situation at that time. That was 1946. Everybody and their brother-in-law, and cousins, and uncles were all taking advantage of the GI Bill of Rights, and if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't have been to college and thank God that came along. … I think that was what convinced me that I should come because I had that benefit, and it'll also guarantee your mortgage, and a lot of other good things. … I had it in the back of my mind, and I luckily took the SAT test when I was still in high school, and I don't think I mentioned that before. … It was in the paper … or announced at school or something that those that were interested in taking a college entrance exam, they were giving one in Asbury Park High School on a Saturday. So, I decided, "Well, I'll go, what do I have to lose." So, I went up and I took the exam. I don't know how I did in it, I don't know anything about numbers, but I know I took it, and I forgot about it, because who had money then to go to college, and if you had money, your parents had money to go to college, it didn't matter as much. You could always find another college, you know, or go to the Ivy League. So, and I think my future wife at that time had a feeling that I was going to try to get in, and probably would, and that's why she took the job here, because she had worked with the phone company and they wouldn't let you quit. At that time, it was an essential job, everybody was an operator, long-distance she was, Jean was local, and she was clerk. … They'd work weird hours in the phone company. … Here she went, spent all the money taking a good secretarial course, which then was as good as Katherine Gibbs. Now, they're called Berkeley College and they got them all over the place, but it was quite prestigious. I think there was one in New York and maybe White Plains and East Orange. … So, she happily, was right on the corner where my aunt lived, so she did stay there a couple times, but she commuted from Asbury Park to go there. That was a year or more that she went up there, and the only thing she had really had a problem with was short hand. I think a lot of people have trouble taking short hand. Now, they don't worry about that anymore. … She had the job with a professor at the School of Education, his name was Oscar Buros, and he was mainly a statistician, he was into tests and measurements. … He taught graduate level classes. He never got a doctorate degree, and for that the dean would never promote him to full professor. But he could run rings around the whole school I think. … He and his wife had a publishing company and they edited and got together a whole series of books called *The Mental Measurements Yearbook*. … It's about that thick and it was listing every single test known to man in this country and England, on anything on tests and measurements. … Then he would write an entry about it, explain all about it, and then he would have critical reviews about it from people in the field, and he did all of this through his office in his home and then in his office here. … She went to work for him. He

wanted to pay her 120 dollars a month, but … the university wouldn't pay more than one hundred, that's what they pay, one hundred dollars a month, twelve hundred dollars a year. You get that in a week anymore. … They finally relented, and she did get the job. So, that made it pretty good because I had a contact here, and that's my enticement to get to go to Rutgers. … I chose agriculture naturally because I liked the chickens and I ended up as … an animal husbandry major, poultry husbandry they called it then. … They had cows, and sheep, and pigs, and horses, and all other animals under animal science. So, where were we going to live? You know, we got married in August, and came up here in September, she was living up here in a little room around on Reed Street, I think, back of the gym, tucked under a stairway, the whole room wasn't as big as this. … There was a little bathroom on the first floor she could use. They had one single bed and a little dresser and a chair and that was it. … We came up here to start school, and we lived in her little apartment. It was very crowded even for newlyweds in a single bed, but anyway, then we started looking more desperately to find some place and we luckily, really, I hounded the housing office. They had a housing office, I forget that fella's name. They had a trailer park, a trailer camp, over by the stadium. They had a hundred trailers, no bathroom, no running water, kerosene heater, and a little kerosene stove to cook on, and that was for married students because all these guys coming in to the Class of '50, some of them were forty-five, fifty-eight, forty-eight years old, and some were seventeen, eighteen, just getting out of high school. I was in the middle, I was twenty-one, you know. I had little experience but not enough to compete with all that, and I had trouble with English. … We had to take remedial English, or no-credit English, until I passed a test by some professor named Davis. "Sexy-Rexy" Davis we called him, his name was Rexford Davis. So, I finally passed it … but we did find an apartment as you might call it. It was an unfinished attic on Hamilton Street. … It was a Cape Cod house I guess, with a big unfinished attic, and we rented out the attic which would room for an alcove for a bed, and a sofa, and a couple of chairs, and the bookcases, things around, but there was no kitchen and no bathroom. So, we shared the bathroom downstairs with the people who owned the house, a husband, a wife, and their son. … We had a half a shelf in their refrigerator, that you could put a hamburger in there or something, you know, half a shelf of the refrigerator, it was this big, you know, this deep.

SH: About fifteen inches.

WT: So, you didn't put a lot of milk and soda and beer in there, that's for sure. So we paid forty dollars a month, included everything. You couldn't separate the electric, didn't use anything else, didn't have a telephone. … We moved in there, and it was a student had moved out of there. … So, they had a fold away bed which was like a sofa bed, but it was a monstrous old thing. You couldn't get it out because the stairway was so narrow, I don't know how they ever got it up there, in pieces I think. They were talking about taking the window out and hauling it down. So, when we did move out of there, three or four years later, we took it apart and we had it in our cellar for years. … She would cook Thanksgiving dinner or chicken, or turkey dinner. We had one of these General Electric roaster things. It was a roaster oven, it sat on a little metal thing and it was like a big crock pot, only it was an oven. … She put the turkey there and you plug it in, it would blow all the fuses, and the poor people downstairs are trying to cook. Finally, he said, after about a year, said, "You know, if you could get a stove up there, maybe we could get gas up there so you could have a stove." … My brother-in-law did plumbing, so he put the pipe

up there and hooked up a gas stove that they had in their cellar for thirty years. It had knobs that turned like this, you know, and you had to light the match.

SH: Oh, my.

WT: Little oven, … twenty-four inch. … Then Ruth did good. … In order to do anything to cook, she had like a table, and we'd get water with a pail from their sink downstairs, and come up and then, she'd pour it in a dish pan. … After the dirty dishwater, we'd put it in like a diaper pale. … Then, take that down and flush it down. That's the way, we lived there for, almost, well three and a half [years]. … Three years anyway, because our son … my son was born in '49. So, I was still going into my senior year. So, we finally looked around, we ended up, she was working all the time with Professor Buros here, and I was working all the time while I was a student. … I earned Social Security credits that way, and so did she. … We would work nights, we worked evenings, she did all the proofreading in there with someone in the office or … brought it home, even when she was pregnant. The day she went to gave birth to Ernie, she was doing proofreading for him in one of these books. … The books are that thick. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of references, and any time this particular test was mentioned, he'd found it, and he searched libraries at Rutgers, Princeton, all over New York City, all over the place. … It was very complete and very well-respected in the field. … We looked around and one of the ladies' husbands was in the math department here, lived in University Heights. We couldn't get into the trailers no matter what. There was a hundred trailers, and I was like 215 on the list.

SH: Oh, my.

WT: They went by, if you had … three kids; if you wanted to move into a trailer, you were on top of the list. If you had two kids, you were a little further down. One kid, further down. If you were eight months pregnant, you were further down. If you were one month pregnant you were way down at the bottom. Ruth wasn't even pregnant, we would have never have gotten in there. So, we had this chance and … the husband, they were going to go to Europe in the summertime. So, they said, "We have a place at University Heights way back where the dorms, way out back by the sewage plant," somewhere up there. Nice place, shady trees around, one of the good ones. … We moved in there with the little baby, and he always cried like mad at supper time, so I had the secondhand baby carriage. We'd put him out in the baby carriage out under the tree, covered up with a netting, you know, we could eat, sit in there, and eat lunch, dinner, or whatever, and he'd been yelling out there, couldn't hear him, I'd close the door. So, we'd go and get him, and he was fine. That was one, then the people came back from Europe and we had to get out of there, so another girl that worked in the office for Professor Buros was having a baby at the same time and she lived in Fords, over in Woodbridge. … She says, "Well, why don't you come stay with us, because if you don't come stay with us, my mother's going to move in." So, the two couples in a little two bedroom house with one bathroom, and two little babies. So we put them on the floor, you know, and they'd be gobbling with each other, we'd be eating, hurry up and eat before one them starts yelling. It was a very nice experience. [laughter] … Then we said, "We can't do this." We had no furniture, we had a mattress, we had bought a mattress, we moved that with us. We put them in the Buros' garage, we took them down to Spring Lake in my mother's garage, we took all the stuff we had, mainly orange crates, it was all period furniture, early matrimonial, whatever we could scrounge. … We looked around some more and we found

a place in South Bound Brook, a little house right off Canal Road, that was for rent. … I forget what we paid for that, it was like one hundred dollars a month or something. … We grabbed on that, they were so upset because the mother was going to move in. We picked everything up and moved it all. In those days, all your friends helped you move. They had a truck or they had a pickup, or they had a big car or something, or they'd borrow a truck. So, I moved more refrigerators in my young married life than anything. So, we moved into the place and we had enough to give it some kind of furniture. But we were about a year, two years, maybe a year or so, there, and next door was another young couple and they had a little baby, it was a little older than ours. … He had an old Chevy, and I had an old Ford, and we talked back and forth. … It was Tom Kindre, so that's how I knew him. … We got to know each other, and he was going to graduate school then I think, because he was Class of '42. … I didn't even know it, I know there was a diploma on the wall in their hall and I think that was his wife's. I really don't remember. [Editor's Note: Tom Kindre is one of the founders of the Rutgers Oral History Archives and author of *The Boys from New Jersey*, which tells the story of Rutgers veterans of World War II. Two of Mr. Kindre's oral histories are available on the ROHA website.] … When we found another place for sale in the same development, only a bigger house that had a garage and had a cellar and a nice screened-in porch, it wasn't screened in, I screened it in. So, we decided, let's buy a house, and that one was some fellow bought it with a Veterans Administration loan, and he defaulted on the loan, and they took it back, and turned it over to the FHA or something. So, the house was advertised for sale, it was nine thousand dollars. It had two bedrooms, full cellar, full garage, nice corner lot, nice house. …

SH: Nine thousand dollars.

WT: Nine thousand dollars, and when we sold it several years later, we went over to Edison. No, we moved back to University Heights. … He took all the storm windows off, the storm doors off, even the bar that held the shower curtain out, when he lost the house, he wasn't going to give them anything. So, here I am, a house with no screens, no doors. So the guy next door says, "Hey, the guy that was in there," he says, "whoever buys this house and they want the storm windows, give him a call." So, I called the guy back, I think I paid him one hundred dollars for all the storm windows that belonged there, put them all back on again, you know, they're crazy. My mortgage which included the principle, the interest, the insurance, and an escrow for taxes, was ninety dollars a month.

SH: Less than what you were paying for your rent.

WT: Yes, well anyway, we did sell it for ten-five. I thought I did well.

SH: You did.

WT: Yes.

SH: You are in animal husbandry.

WT: Okay.

SH: You are a married man at this point. Did they have initiations for freshman?

WT: They didn't have any. Douglass hung on to it a long while, I think. They had to wear little hats.

SH: Were you required to attend any special events as a freshman?

WT: I don't think so. I really don't remember.

SH: Okay.

WT: … I had like a lieutenant or a major that I'd be going to class with. These guys are fifty years old and, you know, they're worldly. … They had all been in the service, everybody, one way or another. So, it wasn't a lot of school spirit. It was like a job really. I never lived on campus so I'd go home for lunch, wherever we were, and my wife and I would go home while she was working. After Ernie was born, … I'd go to work and if I really wanted to study at night, I'd go to the library, or the annex up here.

SH: Was the library on Voorhees Mall, or where it is now?

WT: … Whatever it is on the corner there, that was the library.

SH: Did you have courses on what is now Cook campus?

WT: Well, any of the Ag courses. … All my other courses were here, or out at University Heights. They had barracks out there. They had the river barracks out by the other side of these dorms along the river, little, Quonset metal buildings. They still probably have some. … My chem lab was out there. You go out in the snow or something, [it had] a kerosene heater in the corner.

SH: You got your masters degree afterwards?

WT: That was seventeen years later, yes.

SH: Okay.

WT: Well, I was lucky to graduate. … I just felt that … I got to make a living, you know, and my daughter was coming along. … We sold the one in South Bound Brook, let's see, then we went back to University Heights when my kids were little and lived in one of the older ones nearer to Metlars Lane. I don't even know whether they're there or not. … I moved back there when I started to work and up until then, I was up in South Bound Brook. … When I got the job in extension, which was '54, you know, it was four years after I graduated. So, we lived in South Bound Brook then. … There was no camaraderie, "rah, rah," college boy type thing.

SH: Did the veterans hang out together?

WT: … There was so many. They were the majority really. I think ours, '49, '50, were the largest classes they'd ever had, and they used to, they had a gym, in the old gym on College Avenue, and then that was the cafeteria. Then in Winants Hall they had the cafeteria when I first came, on the whole first floor. …

RJ: Was Rutgers University your first choice school?

WT: Yes, my first and only. [laughter] There weren't many colleges, even county colleges around then, there just weren

d ever had

and one in Trenton. The mill was in Trenton, the feed mill. So, I started there after graduating from Rutgers, a passable average and everything, and big college graduate. … I started driving a feed truck, and I made fifty-five dollars a week. Well, I thought that was pretty good, with the kids. … I had to commute half the time to Trenton from this area. So, I got a lot of experience in small farms and delivering tons and tons of fertilizer, and driving to various parts of New Jersey with eight, ten truck loads, eight ton trucks of lime and poultry feed and all kinds of other farm supply. … I worked between the different stores that they had in the summer time and July usually. During wheat harvest time, I would sample loads of wheat [that] the farmers would bring in to be put into freight cars to be shipped to ports for export. … Of course, I had allergies, and that was very good with all that wheat dust blowing around, and the feed mill, and all the salt hay and all the other grass seeds and things, I sneezed an awful lot. So, I got a lot of good experience there, but after two years I heard of another job opening, one of the salesman said, "Oh, you know, there's a place up in Clark Township, that's right by Westfield, between Westfield and Rahway. They're looking for someone to work in the store." It was also an agent buyer for the big feed company and fertilizer company that they all bought from. [The agent said], "Maybe you could find a job there." So, I went and inquired about it, and so I would get the job there as assistant manager because he was the only other employee they had. So, I worked in the store, I waited on customers, I assembled lawn mowers, and I filled orders, and unloaded freight cars of peat moss all by myself. … A lot of nice things that were good and dusty, so I had a lot of experience there and I knew more about home horticulture and grass seed and things that I never learned at college. … Major part of my job for years was mainly associated with, home horticulture they call it now. We're modern now, we have master gardeners who volunteer to give time to do work and answer questions for people, work in the counter at the office, go out and give talks, go solve problems, hold all kinds of events. Volunteering for free, and they also get training, quite a number of hours from extension people, from whatever field they're working in. … It's all worked out pretty good, and I still have allergies and I still sneeze year round, but I haven't sneezed at all today.

SH: Thank you, I am so glad to hear that. If there is anything else that you want to add, please do.

WT: Gee, I don't know. We covered the waterfront here. We even know how you got your nose. She blushes a lot, you notice the blush.

RJ: What were your feelings on not experiencing combat during World War II? Did you feel relieved or did you feel you missed out on the action?

WT: Well, I don't know that I felt that I missed out on the action. I had great sentiment for the people that were in. … At times when I might have felt funny, what am I doing here when they're all over, they're somewhere else doing something. But it's the way the fate falls, you know, you never know what's going to happen, and I was always a little older than all of my kids in all my classes because I didn't start school until I was six, and you know, you're one year behind everybody and I guess, well I figured, "Well, I'm lucky I'm here, and still alive, and survived, and let's hope and get this thing over with," yes. I never had any great desire to go quickly enlist, but I don't think any people would unless they really had a real cause.

SH: Well again, we thank you for coming all the way up here and being here.

WT: Do you know it's 2:30?

JT: We talked a long time.

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

Reviewed by Jesse Braddell 11/09/2011
Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 11/30/2011
Reviewed by Warner H. Thurlow 12/22/12