RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RONALD TUNNERMANN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Molly Graham: This is an oral history interview with Ronald Tunnermann for the Rutgers Oral History Archives. The interview is taking place on April 8, 2016 in Hillside, New Jersey, and the interviewer is Molly Graham. Ron, for the record, could you say where and when you were born?

Ronald Tunnermann: Where? Hoboken, New Jersey on January 17, 1939.

MG: Did you grow up in Hoboken?

RT: No, in Union City, which is right next to Hoboken.

MG: Was your family living in Hoboken at the time of your birth?

RT: No.

MG: Was that just where the hospital was?

RT: The hospital, yeah.

MG: Tell me a little bit about your family history, starting with your father's side.

RT: Well, my father was born August 2, 1906. It was a Thursday. The reason I say that is, jump ahead, my mother was born April 19, 1906, and it was a Thursday. The reason that I say [that] is that I found that out at Rutgers. I had gone to the library down there, many years back. As I was looking through different books, they had the year 1906, and I looked up [my parents' birthdays]. It was like a National Geographic type thing, and they're both [born on] Thursdays. My father was born in Hell's Kitchen in New York, Manhattan, you know, on the West Side, in the Forties. Have you ever heard of Hell's Kitchen? [Editor's Note: Hell's Kitchen is a Midtown Manhattan neighborhood that runs from 34th Street to 59th Street, between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson River.] Then, I don't know how long he lived there with his family, but they moved to West New York, New Jersey. West New York was on the [New Jersey side of the] Hudson River. They had a sign that he always said, that said, "This is West New York," because people thought that it was the west side of New York, but it's West New York. He lived there. My grandparents, they all passed away before I was born. He lived in West New York and North Bergen, which is right next to West New York. My daughter has that [information], when they passed away, his mother and his father, no, on my mother's side. I guess that was it. My father passed away in 1977, on December 15, 1977. I don't know how much more you want to know.

MG: Your father's family was German.

RT: Yes, they were born here, but his father, and I'm not sure about his mother, but his father was born in Germany. His father actually, and I get this kind of mixed up, it was [Dresden] or Flensburg, which is way up in the northern part near the Danish border. I remember his father always was telling him how you cross over a bridge, and you're in Denmark. When he was twelve, he left Germany and went on sailing ships for seventeen years. I think maybe it was

really he was seventeen and he left and went on sailing ships for twelve years, but one or the other. He came to this country. On one of the trips, it was when he sailed all over, like [on] merchant ships. They'd stop at islands and pick up supplies. I remember all these stories my father would tell me that his father told him about cannibals on some of the islands, where they'd go in there to pick up supplies and they'd see all these skulls piled on the beach. So, the captain was making [signals for], "Let's go. We're not going to stop here. Look at the cannibals." One year, I don't know what year it was, I think was the late 1800s, 189-something, maybe, he was here in New York. They docked in New York, and he stayed here, his father. Then, he went to Germantown, which is up in the Eighties in Manhattan, and he stayed there and then became a citizen. [phone ringing] [Editor's Note: The Upper East Side neighborhood of Yorkville used to be known as Germantown. From the late nineteenth century until the 1950s, many German and Central European immigrants settled in the area around 86th Street.] They'll hang up. It's always around this time, ten o'clock or so, and then the afternoon also. I don't answer it. He became a citizen. Like I said, my father was born in Hell's Kitchen, and then he moved over to New Jersey. He had fascinating stories, besides the cannibals, about when he was traveling, his father, on the ships and the things that they picked up and all kinds of stuff. When his father passed away, my father said that people, friends, supposedly said, "Well, he promised he would give us this or give us a concertina he had," and all kinds of stuff, maps, and all kinds of things from when he was traveling on the ships. My father always felt bad about that, because the things today, they would be museum pieces.

MG: What were some of these other stories that your grandfather would tell your father?

RT: One time, they stopped at some island, and there was somebody on the ship who caused problems, one of the ships he was on, and they had him locked in the brig, you know, in the jail on the ship. The guy got out, and he was a little crazy. He went ashore, and he was throwing stuff at the monkeys in the trees, coconuts from the ground. The monkeys threw them back, and they killed him. Yeah, that's one of the stories. It sounds strange, but that's what he said. Let's see. Then, the thing with the cannibals. Oh, one time, I don't remember where they were, but they stopped somewhere. Somebody came onboard, who I think he was Indian maybe, like a Fakir, remember that, F-A-K-I-R, you know. [Editor's Note: A Fakir is a Hindu ascetic or religious mendicant who performs acts of magic or endurance.] They came on, and my grandfather, he was like a first mate or something, but he had been up on the bridge with the captain. The guy came on, and they had a rope. He threw the rope up in the air. The rest of the crew was all down on the deck with the guy. They had a boy with them. The boy climbed the rope and then disappeared. Of course, the crew [imitates the crew mumbling in disbelief] couldn't believe all that. Then, the guy left with the boy and this rope and all that. The captain and my grandfather [were] laughing and all, because what it was, he said that the guy hypnotized the crew. There was no boy [who was] climbing the rope and disappeared. The boy was there, but he didn't do it. That was another story. The guy was able to hypnotize them. Of course, they didn't hypnotize the captain and my grandfather, because they were up on the bridge. That was another story. I'm trying to think now what else. Are you comfortable?

MG: I am good.

RT: You are, because you can move there.

MG: I am happy.

RT: If you want water, just yell. I've got it in there.

MG: Okay.

RT: Let's see, then coming to New York. The ships, of course, were all sail. They weren't like today, big cruise ships or nothing. He would climb, when he was younger, he would climb up the mast and go up to what they called the crow's nest, and then he'd have to go out also onto the [yardarms], I don't remember the words anymore, where the sails were attached, those things that were crossed.

MG: The mast?

RT: Mast [yard], I guess, yeah. I'm not sure now. In storms, they'd have to wrap the sails. I get seasick actually. [laughter] I think about that. Back then, I probably wouldn't have been, you know, when I was younger, but I get seasick now if I go on ships, boats, fishing boats off Montauk with a friend of mine. Anyhow, he would do that kind of thing where he'd have to go out and tie up the sails. Let's see. What other stories? I don't really know for sure. When he came to New York and he got off the ship and he went to Germantown, in a way, you could say, well, he was an illegal alien, right. This was like [in the] 1890s, I think, so whoever thought of something like that, like today. Today, we get all kinds of government stuff for free. Then, he became a citizen. I gave my daughter a lot of stuff. She has his baptismal papers. I'm not sure about the citizenship. I can't think of anything else right now.

MG: The ship duty, was that in support of a war at the time?

RT: The ship duty, no, no. It's just that he left Germany. I believe he was seventeen, because it doesn't seem like he would leave when he was twelve, but you never know. It was just that he left.

MG: Was the ship bringing supplies to different ports?

RT: Yeah, to different locations, like different ports. One was New York, where he got off, others in Europe. I remember him saying how they went around, yeah, that's probably with the Indian thing, because they went around the bottom of Africa. Was that Cape Horn? I think so.

MG: Yes.

RT: I think that's Cape Horn. [Editor's Note: The southern point of Africa is the Cape of Good Hope. The southernmost point of South America is Cape Horn.] Oh, that was the thing I was thinking of, it went around there, so that's how with the India stuff. Near the Equator, they call it the trade winds. You've heard of that. The ship, again, it's all sail, and when they would go to this certain area, I think it was near the Equator, the trade winds would stop. Suddenly, it was calm. The ocean would just be like glass, and the ship, they'd just have to sit there. They

couldn't move, because they'd have to wait for the wind to come back. That's where the word trade wind [originates], because it was a trading thing, going from port to port, pick up some here, pick up supplies, bring it there and I guess about the islands where they'd pick up maybe fruits and coconuts and stuff like that. The trade winds, he would say, they'd sit sometimes for days, waiting for the wind to pick up the sails and move the ship. I think that's about all I can think of.

MG: Your grandfather lived in the United States during World War I.

RT: Well, yeah, but I think he had passed away before then. See, I don't remember the dates. My daughter has that. Online and all that, she got all that stuff. He was not in World War I. My father was in World War II, but not my grandfather.

MG: Your grandfather met his wife in New York.

RT: In this country, yeah, yeah, in New York.

MG: What do you know about her life and her background, your father's mother?

RT: I don't know much at all, yeah, because my father always told us the stories his father had told him. Even her name and everything, like I said, our daughter has a lot of that. If you want to know all that stuff, I'd have to get it from her, and then I'd have to talk to you or call you or something.

MG: We can put it into the transcript later.

RT: Yeah, okay.

MG: Was Hell's Kitchen called Hell's Kitchen then?

RT: Yeah, yeah.

MT: Do you know how it got that nickname?

RT: I'm not sure. I think it was because it was a really bad area. They had, what do they call those guys, they were murderers; it's in the Forties, over [near] Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh Avenue, in that area. I don't really know the origin, but I know it was the something-something boys, they were killers. They'd hire these people to kill people. It does still have that name, because I hear sometimes on the radio about the restaurants in Hell's Kitchen and how it became popular, something different, but I don't know the origin of the name. It probably was because it was a bad area. I know my father was proud of it in a way because Hell's Kitchen. My mother used to say to him, his name was Gus, my mother would say, "Gus, don't tell people that." He said, "Why not?" Hell's Kitchen, of course, it's like saying you're tough, and he was. He was a tough man. His father, they all died before I was born. My mother's father, I think, was still alive when my sister was born. She was born in 1936 and I was '39, so somewhere in between,

the rest of them passed away. I know it was my mother's mother, so when we get to her, it had to do with the flu epidemic in 1918.

MG: The first wave.

RT: Well, 1918, yeah, the major flu [epidemic]. Twenty million people, I think, died throughout the world, but we'll get to that when we get to that.

MG: Were there a lot of other German immigrants living where your grandfather settled in New York,?

RT: Yes, a lot of Germans. From what I understand, in the Hell's Kitchen area, there were a lot of Germans immigrants there, yeah. Even in West New York also, it used to be mostly German, and I think Irish, though I'm not sure now, but I know German and Italians in that area of West New York. West New York today, I haven't been back there in a lot of years now, do you know about Union City? They call it Little Havana. Oh, yeah. Do you want to get into that part? I'm jumping around.

MG: Let us talk about your mother's family history.

RT: Okay. My mother, her name is May, M-A-Y, and I told you my father's name, Gustave, G-U-S-T-A-V-E. May Elizabeth Grau, G-R-A-U, and then, of course, Tunnermann [pronounces the "er" as an "a"] or Tunnermann, you could say Tunnermann [pronounces the "er"], because so many people do, but she was born in Union City. I forget exactly where. Her father, I forget what he did, what kind of jobs, I forget, but I know my mother's mother died in 1918 from the flu epidemic that was all over the world. I think it was twenty million people they calculated that died from that flu epidemic of 1918. I know my mother was the twelfth child. They had big families back then. Today, they don't have any at all or one, but she was the twelfth child. She was the youngest. My Aunt (Tilly?), that's (Mathilde?), I think, she was the oldest, and I'm not sure if the rest were all boys or if there was another girl somewhere in there, but my mother was twelve when her mother died from that flu epidemic. That's how I remember the years, because she was twelve, so I figure 1918 and she was twelve, so she was born in 1906. She kind of took care of the rest of them in the family, along with Aunt (Tilly?). It's funny I call her Aunt (Tilly?). It sounds funny, but you know her by Aunt (Tilly?). I'm not sure if they were all boys, the rest of them or not.

MG: Did you ever meet any of your aunts and uncles?

RT: You mean her brothers?

MG: Her brothers and sisters.

RT: Well, many years ago, we had a, my sister actually put it together, a surprise wedding anniversary for, I think it was the twenty-fifth anniversary, for my mother and father. There was a woman there. My mother had gone into the ladies room, and this woman had gone in also. When they came out, they were talking. The story was, my mother told us the story, [before] her

father died, she took care of him and so many of the other brothers, and nobody else wanted to be bothered. When her father died, any money that he had, which was not a fortune, she gave out to different ones. This one woman, her husband was one of my mother's brothers. I remember the name John. This woman, his wife, felt like he should have gotten more money. You know come to money, and people are [greedy]. My mother felt very bad about it. She did not talk to my mother for years and years and years, because she felt like he should have gotten more money. [My mother] took care of him. Nobody took care of her father. She took care of him. When we were at this surprise party, that's what happened. When she went in the bathroom, someone had left a pocketbook in there. She'd come out [and] said, "Who left their pocketbook?" It was this woman, and then they start talking. I never really met anybody. Well, no, I take that back. See, I'm trying to think of things. There were two brothers that lived with us, along with my sister, myself, my mother and my father when we were growing up, Uncle George and Uncle Fred. They lived with us in Union City, yeah, and then I know when they died, if that matters. That's the only ones that I met, because we were growing up with them. I was growing up, and my sister was growing up. They were older. Then, they died.

MG: What is your mother's heritage, and how did they end up in Union City?

RT: German. Well, her parents were German. I don't know. She was born in Union City, but I don't know when they came over or were they born here. I don't know that. Wait a minute. My mother was born here, but her father, I think it was, or her mother, one or both, were born in Germany in Essen, which is E-S-S-E-N, which is sort of in the middle of Germany, and I think it means eat in German. Other than that, I really don't know much. I don't remember what her father did. [Editor's Note: In German, *essen* is both the verb for "to eat" and the noun for "food."]

MG: I was going to ask you if you knew your grandparents' trades or what they did for work.

RT: No, I can't remember. Her father, baker, I'm not sure. I'm not positive. It had something to do with a bakery. I don't remember.

MG: You might have already said this, but did you get to know or meet any of your grandparents? I know it would not have been your mother's mother.

RT: No, they all had died before I was born. My mother's father, my sister was born in 1936, and I was born in '39, so between '36 and '39, he died, because I remember my sister said she remembers sitting on his lap and knee and all that stuff, but I don't remember what happened or why or when. Like I said, the stuff that my daughter had went into that. I think she found out, and she has it all recorded, you know, that kind of stuff.

MG: We could always do an addendum and put it into the transcript later.

RT: Okay.

MG: What else about your parents growing up do you know about, what their childhoods were like?

RT: Well, my mother, again, taking care of the family, because her mother [died] after she was twelve. Her mother passed away, so she didn't have anybody there to help her really. Well, Aunt (Tilly?) helped some. Maybe the brothers helped. My father, he worked, you want to know about him and what he did, right?

MG: I was curious about his childhood.

RT: His childhood. In West New York, he left school, I think, when he was [in] sixth grade. I think it was the sixth grade. That's why they always made a point of saying my sister and myself were the first ones in the family to graduate from high school. I feel like the correct term is to be graduated, like you know when you're working and you are promoted, well, you are graduated, but everyone says no, I'm wrong, so I'll say graduate. We were the first ones to graduate from high school in Union City. My mother didn't. My father didn't. I don't think their parents did at all. My father worked in that brewery in New York for a good part of his younger life. It was called Loewer's. It was over in the Hell's Kitchen area. Then, he got drafted in the Army when he was thirty-nine.

MG: That is kind of late.

RT: Yeah, it was near the end. It was in 1944, World War II. I remember my mother saying she wrote a letter to Washington, saying my sister and myself were five years old and seven or six or something, and got a letter back, [saying that] he should be proud to serve the country. Yeah, fine, but she was [alone]. Well, my uncles were there [at home], which was fortunate. Like I said, [my father was] kind of old, and they sent him overseas, too. They sent them to France, and there's a lot of stories about that, too. In France, they made him an MP [military police], interesting stuff. Then, when he came [back], what happened, the company Loewer's, the owners died, and the two sons took over and they were going to do all these wonderful things, you know they went out of business. That was that, so when he came back, there wasn't any job anymore. He got a job in North Bergen, and he worked until he had a couple of heart attacks and they let him go. Then, like I said, 1977, in December, he died from a heart attack, the third one. That was about it. He worked in that Loewer's Brewery. They were going to modernize it. That's what I remember him saying, the two sons. He had stories too about when he was over in France as an MP, you know, with the French people, interesting stuff. [Editor's Note: In September 1940, Congress passed the first peacetime draft of personnel for the armed forces. The Selective Service Act required U.S. male citizens aged twenty-one to thirty-six to register for the draft. After November 1942, the ages were eighteen to forty-five.]

MG: I want to ask you about that, but first, can you tell me how your parents met?

RT: Oh, yes, thank you. I'm glad you asked that. To me, that's an interesting story. My father had gone to a dance with a friend of his, and I'm not sure if it was in West New York, North Bergen, one or the other. It was a dance, and I think he said it was on a Saturday night. He met my mother there dancing. Then, that was that. His parents and my mother's parents were buried in the cemetery in North Bergen and West New York, buried in the cemetery. My father went by his parents' [graves]. It's hard to describe, but the cemetery was on a big hill that went down to

what they called West Hoboken. He was down there. My mother's parents were way up on top of the hill. It's a big cemetery, very big cemetery. Somewhere, I don't know if he was on his way back up to go to West New York, where he was living at the time, or my mother, whichever way, they met in the cemetery. I remember my mother always saying, "Whoa, he must be a nice man," because after the dance, he still came to the cemetery. On a Sunday morning, he got up and he came to the cemetery, so he must be a good man. They start talking, and that was that. They met. That's how they met, and then they got married. That's another story, too, about Catholic and non-Catholic. I don't know if you want to hear that. Okay, my mother was Catholic, and my father was Lutheran. Lutheran is really from Germany, you know, Martin Luther, and all. [Editor's Note: Martin Luther led the Protestant Reformation in Germany. Lutheran is a denomination of Protestantism that follows the doctrines of Martin Luther.] In Union City, there was a church up the block from where we lived. In the Catholic religion, you had to be Catholic to be married in a Catholic Church. We were brought up Catholic, my sister and myself. My father said that's okay, he doesn't really care, but they could not get married in the Catholic Church. There's a little more to that story, too. They were married in a Lutheran church in Union City. When my mother died in 1974, no, prior to that, I'm sorry, I remember coming home from school, high school, and my mother was very upset, because a priest from the church, Catholic Church, had come to the house, apartment, we lived in an apartment in Union City, and says that they'd been living in sin all these years, because they were not married in the Catholic Church. I remember my mother telling me that we were brought up Catholic. [We had] Communion [and] confirmation. She gave money to build a new church and all that, but that didn't matter. Catholic rules, you had to [receive the sacrament of marriage in a Catholic Church]. So, they were living in sin, and they have to get remarried. She was very upset. I was upset, and my father was, too. In a way, I don't know if you're Catholic at all, no, but it's a lot of bologna really. That's my feelings. I'm very religious, but I don't follow all that. When they start singing in church and hugging and handshakes, my wife and myself, we said, "We're not going to bother going anymore. We have our beliefs." I believe, really I believe, this dies, but I don't. I don't know if you understand that, but you know what I mean. They were never remarried. That was silly, living in sin. I mean, all [those] years. [That was] a long time. We were in high school, so that's what, seventeen, eighteen years, and prior to that, they were married in 1931. They were never remarried. That was silly. When my mother passed away in 1974, I didn't see him, but my sister said that the priest, that priest, had come to the wake in the funeral home and he apologized to my sister for that incident about living in sin and all that. I didn't even see him. I was there, but my sister told me later on that he apologized for that, what happened. I guess he read it in the paper [that my mother died] and must have remembered. [It is a] shame. Of course, my mother was very religious, like I said, and church, and both of us had Communion. We made confirmation and all that stuff. Anyhow, that's that, so they met in a cemetery.

MG: Were both families supportive of the marriage, even though they had different religious backgrounds?

RT: Well, they never said anything against it, both families. Of course, their parents were gone. The brothers, I guess they were. People thought differently back then. Well, I take that back. I think even today, some people are still very strict. I don't want to know, it's none of my business, but I know a lot of Italians are very strict about whether you're Italian, and Jewish

people also. My sister had been going with a fellow in high school, and he was Jewish. His family made him stop seeing her, because she was not Jewish. She wound up marrying an Italian guy. Supportive, I don't know. I guess so. They never talked about it.

MG: Do you know when the brewery that your father worked at was established because Prohibition took place for most of the 1920s?

RT: I've got stories about that, too. I don't know, no. I know it was Loewer, L-O-E-W-E-R, Loewer's, [with an] "s," Brewery. It was established, and like I said, the sons took over when the father died. That was when my father was in the Army, and like I said, they were going to do all these wonderful things and wound up going out of business. I don't know when it was established. When it went out, I guess it was in the '40s, because that's when my father was in the Army, '44 to '45, but I don't know when it was established, no.

MG: Did you say that you have stories about the Prohibition years?

RT: Oh, just one of my uncles, Uncle George, my mother's one brother, he worked for the town, Union City. At that time, they didn't have these trucks that go around, you know, cleaning the streets. He would push a broom with a couple other guys. He also drank a lot [of] beer. That's another thing with the brewery. He worked in a bar during Prohibition, one of the speakeasies [illegal bars], you know, you've heard of that. They got arrested for selling alcohol during Prohibition. He spent time in what they called The Tombs down in Jersey City [New York City]. It was a jail. I think they still call it The Tombs, yeah. When I tell these stories to my granddaughters, they think that's so interesting, "The Tombs." One is sixteen, the other is twelve. They really took to these stories I tell them. I like to tell them all these stories, because I feel like, like with this, it will be something I can pass on. My daughter knows a lot of this stuff. The only thing is they're not interested in my Army stories. For some reason people don't care about when you want to tell about the military. I don't know why. This thing with The Tombs, and they thought that was so funny, called The Tombs. "What's The Tombs?" Anyhow, he was arrested, and my mother had to go down to The Tombs and get him out, bail him out of jail, because he was in trouble for serving alcohol during Prohibition. It was one of those speakeasies, knock on the door and that kind of thing. That was Uncle George. [Editor's Note: The Eighteenth Amendment banned the manufacture, transportation and sale of liquor. It was ratified in 1919 and took effect a year later. The Prohibition era lasted from 1920 until 1933, when the Twenty-first Amendment repealed the Eighteenth. The Tombs is a historic jail in Lower Manhattan. The current Manhattan Detention Complex is known as The Tombs.]

MG: Did you say there was a story related to that with the brewery?

RT: Well, in a way, yeah, not with that, but what happened was the brewery, I remember my father saying they had horse-drawn carriages when it was not Prohibition, and they would deliver the beer maybe to Brooklyn or Manhattan or I don't know, up in the Bronx or Queens. They would deliver the beer, and they always had free lunches. The free lunches were always like ham and cheese and pretzels, things that were very salty. The reasoning behind that, of course, is you're going to wind up buying more beer because you're thirsty. My uncle would deliver the beer, Uncle George. He worked in the brewery also. He would deliver beer with the horse-

drawn carriages, and by the time the day ended, he was pretty much drunk. My father said how the horses, they just knew the way, you know, and they would [imitating a horse] get back to the brewery. My uncle would fall asleep and all that kind of stuff. That was Uncle George.

MG: What was your father's role at the brewery? Did he bottle the beer?

RT: Yeah. In fact, I still have, well, I gave it to Vicky, Vicky is my daughter, the scraper, where they'd have to clean out inside the big, big tanks. I don't know if he worked a bottling machine. I think so, but I'm not sure. He worked in a brewery. I'm not sure how long either. I don't remember.

MG: Was his work affected by the Great Depression?

RT: Well, they were. He had a job. He worked. He had a job. I always remember him saying how they were very lucky, my mother and my father, because my father had a job during the depression. I think my uncles did, too. So, they had money. They used to be able to say how they could buy, when they bought something, like appliances, things like that, clothes, that they had money, which was really nice. So, they weren't affected, in that they weren't on the corner selling apples as you'll hear about. They had food. They were affected by the depression, but not to the point of not having any money.

MG: Where were they living when they got married?

RT: Let's see, West New York. I'm pretty sure it was West New York. Yeah, I think it was in West New York, New Jersey. When my father's mother died, I do remember this, he said she was scrubbing the floor and she died. Then, his father had already passed away, so he moved over to, I think it was in Queens, where he had some relatives over there, and I have no idea where or what. He was over there for a while, and then he moved back to West New York, which, again, that's where he met my mother in the cemetery. I'm sorry. What was your question?

MG: I was curious where they lived.

RT: West New York.

MG: Before your sister was born, did they move to Union City?

RT: Let's see, they were married in 1931. She was born in 1936. Of course, prior to that, there was another baby. As I'm talking, I'm remembering stuff. If I go on and on too much, let me know. [It is] a sad story. They had another baby. It was a girl, and in 1931, I'm not sure what year, but it was prior to my sister in 1936. My mother was in the hospital, and it might have been in Hoboken. It might have been Saint Mary's. What happened was that the doctor, who was delivering the baby, his wife had kept calling because they were supposed to go on vacation, and he was trying to rush the birth. He used tongs or something, and he damaged the baby's skull and the head and the baby died. They had said to her, she never saw the baby, they took it

away and it died, they said, that if it had lived, it would have been like a vegetable because it was damaged. Then, my sister was born in 1936 and then me, '39.

MG: When did they tell you about that baby?

RT: I don't know exactly. I can't tell you that. I just remember growing up, the stories, talking, because my mother always used to say in that cemetery where they met, she used to always say when we went there, "Oh, there's the baby's grave" for years. Then, one day, I said, "Oh, is that the baby?" "Oh, no, no," she never saw that baby. This was somebody else's baby that was buried in a certain part where all the babies [who] were born [and did not survive]. She never saw that baby, her daughter. The only thing they told her was it was a girl.

MG: Did your mother ever work outside the home?

RT: Oh, yeah. She worked in a place in Union City where they made, I forgot what, they made something and she had to put them together with something. She worked for a couple of years and everything. My one uncle, he worked, and then he didn't work for a lot of years. Then, Uncle George just did the broom thing for the town. When they had elections, he would get money, because they'd stand outside the schools so people wouldn't influence people going in, things like that. The thing with the brewery for a while, he did a lot of different things, odd jobs, I guess you'd call them. My other uncle was a, I don't remember, but it was in Union City, and I remember for years growing up he would be there at home. Then, one time, I was about fifteen, 1954 maybe, he went back to work and I don't know why. Maybe it was just money to help out, and he went back. That day, he came home, didn't feel good, and he died at home in the apartment. He was, I think, forty-nine, so maybe he was born about 1904, 1905, around then, Uncle Fred. Uncle George, well, when we get into me with the Army thing, we'll talk about Uncle George.

MG: Was your father drafted into the Army?

RT: Yes, yeah, he was drafted. Like I said, my mother wrote to Washington, because we were both young and said, "He's thirty-nine." "Well, you should be proud." Fine, proud, but how about younger people, get them. He went to Fort Dix, and then they sent him over to France. While he was in Tinchebray in [the Normandy region of] France, they made him an MP. He had stories there, too, Germans. Do you want to hear them?

MG: I do, yes.

RT: A couple stories. One, he would be on traffic duty. He had a carbine. Do you know what that is? It's like a small rifle, and it was kind of heavy. So, he was standing, and there was a pole. He hung the thing on a pole. Of course, if you got caught, you're going to get in a lot of trouble. He said all of a sudden, German prisoners were walking by. Of course, they were guarded. I mean, it was a work detail. He said they were all looking up at the rifle, the carbine, hanging on the tree. I mean, they're prisoners. He saw them looking up at it, and he had the bullets. He'd taken them out, so he showed them the bullets, that he has them. [laughter] I guess they realized they were not going to get anything. Maybe in their minds they thought, "If

we can get that rifle, we can escape." He didn't get caught, thankfully, because he really would have been in a lot of trouble. Another one, he said there was a bridge on the end of the town, Tinchebray. I think that's the way you say it. There was a bridge. It was a low bridge, you know, crossed over a river or creek, I guess. He said, "Here comes a woman," an old woman, pushing a carriage. She wants to go across the bridge. He said, "No, you can't go across the bridge," because they might be coming along with a convoy, tanks and trucks and men. She kept trying to get him to [let her]. He finally said, "Oh, go across." He said that she went mopey-dopey across the bridge. Here's a convoy with the trucks and tanks, the noise, coming this way. He had to chase her to get across the bridge. [laughter] She got across before the convoy got there. He befriended a girl, a young girl, twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Her name was Jacqueline. He would give her like candy or different things, whatever he had in the Army, when they were given, the company would get stuff. Around Thanksgiving the one year, he said the Army sent a turkey. He said it was a really big turkey, and all they had was a little tiny stove. They didn't know [whether] they can cook the turkey on that. He gave it to their family, [the] family of Jacqueline. Many years after he got out, it was in the late '50s maybe, early '60s, somehow he just took a chance and wrote a letter to that town and mentioned the name Jacqueline. He didn't have the last name, and we got an answer. He explained how he was the soldier who had befriended her and the family and the turkey. She sent a letter. She was grown, and she was married to someone who worked in the government. I don't know how many children she had, but she had one or two children. It was interesting. I don't know if we kept that letter. I'm sure we did, but I don't know what happened to it. My daughter keeps saying, "Well, why didn't you keep it?" She likes to keep all that stuff from World War II and what went on. So, that's a couple of old stories.

MG: Being of German descent, did he receive any discrimination?

RT: No, he didn't have any problems. I know what you mean. In fact, when I tell people my father was in the Army, "Oh, the German Army?" "No," I say. "He was a citizen here. [He was in] the United States Army." He never had any problem.

MG: How do you think he felt fighting the Germans in Germany?

RT: No problem, because you know when you think about it, he was born here and his family was here all those years. His mother and father had died, so there was no connection to Germany. He had an uncle in Sweden, and he kept in touch with him for a little while. That was over, and that was that. Like I said, his family was from Dresden and Flensburg, which is up in the northern part of Germany, right by Denmark. I always tell people when they say to me the cold weather, I always liked the cold weather, and I say, "That's because of the Viking blood in me." [laughter] Denmark and Finland and Sweden and all that. No, he had no real connection with anybody in Germany. They didn't keep in touch with anyone. We wrote a letter. It was after our daughter was born. We wrote a letter. I don't know if it was in Essen or maybe in Flensburg, one or the other, Dresden maybe, but we got a letter back, trying to get information on the family, you know, Tunnermann. We figured there wasn't too many names [like that]. We got a letter back, but it said what happened was that so many records were destroyed in the bombings of Dresden. Dresden especially had a lot of bombings [by the Allied Combined Bomber Offensive during World War II] and the churches, all the records were burned and

destroyed, so they had no records. They said, "Come over here and search the cemeteries." I never got there.

MG: Did he stay in the Army after the war or in the Reserves?

RT: No, no, no, no, he came home. Like I said, the brewery went out of business. He got a job in North Bergen. Now, North Bergen is a town. It's not [the] North Jersey [county of Bergen]. You understand. He worked, and it was hard work, very hard work. He had that heart attack. He had two of them, and then they let him go. That's what happened when he died; he had a heart attack. No, he didn't stay in the Army. He was always talking about how the government had promised a bonus to all people that were in the military. We're still waiting for the bonus.

MG: There were no GI Bill benefits for him.

RT: Any what?

MG: GI Bill benefits.

RT: He never took advantage. They didn't have any. I know when I got out, you know, there's education benefits and the VA [Veterans Administration] loan for the house. This would have [had] to be a VA, I believe, loan with a lower rate than normal. No, he didn't have any benefits. I don't think there was even life insurance. I don't remember, but I don't think there was any life insurance either. [Editor's Note: In 1944, Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, commonly known as the GI Bill, which provided educational assistance, readjustment allowances, and low-interest loans for housing to veterans. Nicknamed "52-20," readjustment allowances, or unemployment benefits, provided twenty dollars a week for a maximum of fifty weeks to help veterans during the time between discharge and reemployment. However, less than one-fifth of the potential benefits were claimed. ("History- VA History," va.gov)]

MG: Do you know if he saw combat oversees?

RT: No, thankfully. Oh, what happened, I find this interesting that when you say something or I do, I remember, I was going to say, I think it was '44 and then he got out in '45. It was just about the time that they were going to [invade Japan]. The war in Europe had ended. Germany surrendered. He heard or he saw that they were going to be shipped out to Japan, because that war was still going on. They hadn't surrendered. Then, [President Harry] Truman dropped two atomic bombs, and then the Japanese surrendered. Then, they came home. If that hadn't happened, would he be alive? Would he have gone to Japan? Would he wound up being killed? When people say, "Oh, that was terrible?" No, it ended the war. How many thousands of U.S. soldiers were saved? Marines, Navy, how many were saved because that war ended in Japan, because he dropped the bombs. The first bomb, they didn't surrender, but then the second one, they said, "This is bad news," and they surrendered. I say it was good. It's a shame that thousands died, but how many thousands of U.S. people were saved because of that. [Editor's Note: Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945. On August 6, 1945, the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. On August 9, the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on

Nagasaki. On August 15, Japan surrendered to bring World War II to an end. The formal surrender agreement took place on September 2, 1945.]

MG: Did your father speak German?

RT: He understood it. Oh, another story. He understood it enough, not fluently, but he understood enough. I remember another story that he said over there in France with the German prisoners. One German prisoner was saying something in German, and they called my father in and said, "Do you know what he's talking about?" He wanted a knife and fork to eat with. They said, "No, we're not giving him a knife and fork. He's a prisoner." [laughter] He'll wind up killing a guard or something. He was able to interpret for them what the guy was saying. He understood enough. He couldn't like I'm talking now [makes noises imitating speaking fluently in a language]. He couldn't do that, because he didn't know that much of it. He only finished, I think it was, the sixth grade, but he was very smart. He knew so much of what was going on and what happened in the world, the history and all that stuff. It's a shame. Today, I don't believe they teach that in the schools, history and geography. Even penmanship, I didn't know this, but how do you hold your pen? [Editor's Note: Molly Graham demonstrates how she holds a pen.] Yeah, that's great. That's the way it should be. [laughter] The penmanship. So many people, I don't know how they do it. They wrap their fingers around the pen. That was another thing, the school, we had penmanship. That's what I learned. You had a straight pen when I was in school in the lower grades, and then you had the ink well, if you know what that is, and then penmanship. That's pretty close. They don't have that in school anymore either, penmanship or history, geography, all those things. [Editor's Note: The State of New Jersey requires all students in preschool through twelfth grade to learn social studies, including geography. Curricula in school districts must meet the Learning Standards for Social Studies established by the Department of Education.] I don't think that's good. I think they should still have those courses, especially history. Like they say, was it [George] Santayana, if you don't remember history, you're condemned to repeat it, yeah. It's true. I'll probably be gone, but for the younger people.

MG: You were very young during World War II, but do you have any memories of seeing footage or hearing news of the war?

RT: Not really. Just that when it was over, newspapers and the headlines, the war's ended. My Uncle Fred had taken my sister and myself to a movie. Then when we came home, there was a note to come over by my Aunt (Tilly?) and her sisters and her daughter's apartment in Union City, and my father was there, sitting in his uniform, because he had come home. I don't really remember anything about the war. I was like, let's see, [I was born in] 1939, I was about almost six maybe when it was over, yeah.

MG: Remind me of your sister's name.

RT: Eileen, E-I-L-E-E-N.

MG: She was born three years before you.

RT: Yeah, 1936, July 29th.

MG: Were you close growing up?

RT: Yeah, we were. I mean, the normal brother-sister fights, that kind of stuff. [There were] not fights like this [physical fights], but, you know, like that [verbal fights]. We got along very well. She, in a way, took care of me. They say that about a sister who will watch over her brother, you know, that kind of stuff. She died in 1993. She had a brain tumor, yeah.

MG: Tell me more about growing up in Union City and what you would do for fun.

RT: Not an awful lot. I worked after school. I always wanted to work and get money. I remember I started working when I was twelve in a furniture store across the street. He would dust and polish the furniture and put the handles and the doors and stuff. I was twelve and thirteen. Then, I think when I was fourteen, maybe fifteen, I worked in a liquor store delivering after school and on Saturday. I played some baseball, some football, a little bit. I never really cared about sports. Even today, they talk about different sports and such, the guys I play cards with once a month and who won this and won that. I just sit there. I never cared about sports. I didn't do much. I worked. I worked in the liquor store until I was eighteen. When I was graduated, no, I better not say that, I graduated from high school, and then I was working after that a full-time job. Then, I got that little card when I came home from work one day. My sister was crying. It said, "Congratulations, you've been selected by the government for the Army."

MG: I want to ask you about that.

RT: Yeah.

MG: First, I want to ask you a little bit more about growing up. What would you spend your money on? Would you go to movies or buy candy?

RT: Yeah, both of them. The movies [were] a quarter or something. It was a lot cheaper. Also, in Union City, I forget which movie theater it was, but they had soda. It was Boller, B-O-L-L-E-R. I don't even know if they exist anymore. Sometimes they would have a special at the movie where two Boller caps, see, you had to buy the soda, but you saved the bottle caps, and you got in the movie for free with the two Boller caps. I guess the company must have paid the theater for two bottle caps. Yeah, I'd go to the movies, and sometimes I'd play stickball or kick the can, softball, I guess, hang around the school yard. That was before I was working in the liquor store. I didn't really do much with the sports. [Editor's Note: Frank X. Boller established the Boller Beverage Co. in Elizabeth, New Jersey in 1886. His son, Frank, a graduate of Rutgers College in 1908, took over running the company that produced a variety of carbonated beverages until it went out of business in the 1990s. ("Glimpse of History: A beverage most everyone remembers came from Elizabeth," by Greg Hatala, *The Star-Ledger*, September 2, 2013)]

MG: Tell me about the neighborhood you grew up in and the kind of families that lived there.

RT: Mostly German or Italian, I think Irish, but mostly German or Italian. The neighborhood was, I thought it was okay. I remember working, when I worked at Equitable in New York, and one day a guy drove me home, and he said, "I thought Union City was really a bad area." I never thought of that. Maybe it was, but you know when you live there, you grow up. It had bars, but I never thought of it as a bad town or bad area. Now, I understand it's not so great.

MG: When did it become known as Little Havana?

RT: That's a story. [Fidel] Castro overthrew [Fulgencio] Batista in Cuba in July [January] 1959. I remember it was in the summertime, yeah, July. I remember we didn't have air conditioning, so we had the windows open with the screens. It was at night. We heard all these horns blowing. People were yelling [makes the sounds of people yelling]. We didn't know what it was all about. We looked out the window and saw the cars going by, and they were waving their hands and screaming and yelling. We found out that Castro had overthrown Batista. Do you know what that's all about? Of course, the people in Union City, the Cubans that were there, I lived on 36th Street, and the numbers, like First Street, Second, Third, and the Cubans lived in the Twenties. There weren't that many. That was like 1959. That was that. Not much happened after that until '61, when I got this card, "Congratulations, you've been selected." That's a whole other story, too. What happened was I went in and then I [was on] active duty for two years, and I come out in '63. Before I went in, most of the Cubans lived in the Twenties, 21st, 28th, 29th Street. In the stores, there were some signs up, like "*Se habla Español*," you know, we speak Spanish. When I came out, you might find a sign that said, "We speak English," because there were so many now. The Cubans got more and more and more and more. It became known as Little Havana, because there were so many Cubans. Miami Beach too became Little Havana, because I was down there in the late '50s. In Union City, it became more and more. Now, it's just ingrained. That's Little Havana. It's called Union City.

MG: Do you how Union City became a place for refugees to settle from Cuba?

RT: No, no, it's interesting. I never thought about that. No, I don't. Like I said, the initial [group], some of them in the Twenties, the street number, and I guess once somebody settles [from] a group, "Come on, come to Union City," because they're there and they know about the town and they know about the country and so they all [come], more and more and more. [Editor's Note: Outside of Miami, the largest Cuban population in the United States resides in Union City, New Jersey, which is also known as Havana-on-the Hudson. (Yolanda Prieto, *The Cubans of Union City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015).]

MG: You mentioned going to the movies, and I am curious if you remember any that you saw.

RT: Oh, gee, some movies in the '50s, '60s growing up. I don't remember. I don't remember which ones [I saw]. I bet you if you said a couple, I'd say, "Oh, yeah, I saw that," but I can't think of anything now. What I do know is that when you went to the movies, maybe I was a teenager, I guess, they started off, you know, to start the day in the afternoon, there were always two feature films and one short, so you got your money's worth. They always started off with, they would show on the screen the American flag, and they'd play the National Anthem and you stood up. That started the day and then the two feature films and the short, so I guess for two

Boller caps or a quarter maybe. Sometimes, we'd sneak in. Don't tell anybody. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tunnermann whispers]. There was a door in the back of the one movie that somehow if one guy went in and opened the door, then the rest of us would sneak in the theater for free. [laughter]

MG: I think the statute of limitations has passed.

RT: Yeah, I think so. I don't have to worry about that. [laughter] The same with the ferry, you know, the ferry boat that we used to take to New York a lot of times on the Hudson River.

MG: Where would the ferry take you in New York?

RT: 42nd Street.

MG: Okay.

RT: 41st Street, 42nd Street over there. The ferry left from Weehawken. Do you know where that is?

MG: Vaguely.

RT: Weehawken, Hoboken, Jersey City, they're all along the Hudson River, Weehawken, they're all along the Hudson River, West New York. The ferry, I think it was ten cents, and go over to around 42nd Street in New York. Now, it's called Imperatore Ferry. It's more up to date and modern. This was the old ferry boats and we'd go over there, which was another thing. We used to sneak on the ferry a lot of times too [laughter] to save the dime. We'd go over there, not every day, but a bunch of the guys late in the afternoon and we'd walk along the Hudson River, looking at all the cruise ships that were docked that happened to be there. That was these big, giant ships, you know, the cruise ships. We used to take the ferry across. I think on the way back, we'd have to pay. You couldn't really get in a back way. We used to have to pay ten cents. [Editor's Note: Arthur Imperatore Sr. is the founder of NY Waterway, the ferry service between New Jersey and New York City.]

MG: Tell me about some of these friends that you were hanging around.

RT: Have you ever heard of the song, "Who wears short shorts?" [Editor's Note: Mr. Tunnermann sings the Royal Teens 1958 hit single "Short Shorts."] Do you?

MG: Yes. [laughter]

RT: Okay, well, one of my friends, Larry Qualiano, we were in high school together, and we used to run around together and different things. He was part of that Royal Teens, that band, group. He played the saxophone. He was one. I think there was more than one that played the saxophone over the years, and he was one of them, Larry Qualiano. My sister, I remember, ran into him years later. I didn't know that much about it with the Royal Teens. There used to be a show on television *American Bandstand*. Have you heard of that? One day, I remember

watching it after school, and they said the Royal Teens. This Larry Qualiano was there, part of that. Who was the guy that was in charge of that, *American Bandstand*?

MG: Dick Clark.

RT: Dick Clark, thanks, yeah. I said, "Whoa, gee, there's Larry." That's how I [found out]. Years later, my sister ran into him, and he said it was the greatest time, because they traveled all over this country, I think even Canada. That was the only song they really had that was popular, "Who wears short shorts?" I have that actually. My daughter got it for me, and my granddaughters like to hear that play. "Who wears short shorts? We wear short shorts," [Mr. Tunnermann sings]. There's nothing to it, but it became number one for some reason. Larry was selling life insurance, and he said it was so great because they traveled all over and they had people following them and the girls. Yeah, the Royal Teens. [laughter] That was one of the people I knew. The rest of them, you just kind of go away [and do not keep in touch]. One guy, we kept in touch, and for many years, he had worked for Equitable. He moved to Florida, and he passed away last year, yeah, cancer. We got Christmas cards, birthday cards and then email sometimes. Other than that, I never [stayed in touch] with the guys. Oh, wait, one other, a fellow named George [H.] Ramming. He played basketball in high school, and he got a scholarship to Dartmouth. He played basketball at Dartmouth, and then that's all I knew about him. Years ago, at work, where I worked, I worked for Bristol-Myers, and one of the guys that was there, somehow we got in a conversation about something. He said something about this guy George Ramming was his boss at SeaLand [shipping company]. I said, "Well, I know him." I said, "He was a big guy." "Yeah," he says. He was bigger than me. He was like six-four or something. He's big. He left and he started a consulting business, and that's about all I [know], yeah.

MG: You mentioned television, and I am curious when your family got a television in the home.

RT: Yeah, okay. My Uncle Fred, because he had been working and he had some money, bought us a Philco. It was a console. It was a twelve-inch screen. [Televisions] got bigger and bigger, and nowadays, they also got smaller and smaller, like the iPhone. That's a little TV, right. He had the TV and then he had a record player, the seventy-eights, and a radio, a Philco radio. That was '46, but don't quote me on that one. I think it's '46 that he bought that, so that was the first one.

MG: Uncle Fred lived with you.

RT: Uncle Fred and Uncle George, my mother's brothers. They lived with us in Union City. They never married or anything. Uncle George was the one I said who used to drink. He wasn't nasty or anything. It was just that he liked to have beer. I just laugh about The Tombs. My mother had to go pick him up, because he was arrested for Prohibition.

MG: Do you know how long he was in jail for?

RT: I think it was only for a couple of days, maybe one or two days or something. I guess he called or somehow my mother found out, and she went down there in Jersey City [New York

City] and bailed him out. I don't think anything ever came of that either. They didn't have to go to trial or none of that stuff. Oh, back to the trial thing with my father with Hell's Kitchen, he was proud of that. He got called for jury duty one time, and he got called onto a case. It was about some young guy or something. He said that they were all discussing whether he should be guilty or not guilty, and he said some guy on the jury, when they were in that room to discuss all that, said he felt he was guilty. My father said no. They guy said, "Listen, I grew up on the Lower East Side." To him, that was a big thing. My father said, "Well, I grew up in Hell's Kitchen." The guy showed up, and he said he didn't say anymore. [laughter] See, so the Hell's Kitchen, like I said, my mother used to say, "Gus, stop telling people that." He was proud of that. [laughter] I don't think he lived over there in Hell's Kitchen too many years, because he was young when he [moved]. Just before he died, here's a thing too in 1977, a few months before, two or three months, he had gone from [where] he lived in North Bergen at the senior citizens' apartments, and he had taken the bus over to New York to the Port Authority, where the buses go and all. He walked down towards the area where he was born. He remembered where he was born in the Hell's Kitchen area. He wanted to see it. I think about it, too, the premonition stuff, because a few months later, he died. It's like he wanted to see where it was, remembering as a kid. Of course, it was all changed from 1906. It's 1977.

MG: When you would tune into the television or radio, what would you watch or listen to?

RT: It's interesting. You're ahead of me, because I was just about to say something about the shows we watched. The biggest show we watched, most of the country watched back then, was *The Ed Sullivan Show*. You've heard of that.

MG: Yes.

RT: There's another story, too, something with my sister and Ed Sullivan in case I forget. I will forget. Yeah, mostly Ed Sullivan on television. That was on Sunday night, eight o'clock, I believe. Then, on the radio, which really was more radio than television, because everything was black and white, and on the radio every Sunday, around five o'clock I believe, they had all these radio shows, like the [*The Adventures of the*] *Thin Man, Mr. and Mrs. North, Inner Sanctum*. I think they lasted a half hour maybe. Some of them became television shows years later. Yeah, that was mostly on the radio. Those shows were scary. Ed Sullivan was a big thing for television. Then, like I said, *American Bandstand* after school, that was like at three o'clock or something. There wasn't that much. Let me jump ahead and come back. When I was in the Army, like I said, it was '61 or '63 with the active duty, it might have been '63, but I'm not sure, I got a letter from my mother that my sister was going to be at *The Ed Sullivan Show*, not going to be on the show, but she was going to be at the show. It was Sunday night. I remember going in what they call the orderly room in the back where I was [stationed at Fort Gordon]. I was sitting there by myself, and they had a television. I think they only got three channels. I was watching it, and there's *The Ed Sullivan Show*. He always liked to introduce people, different teams and such. There was some basketball team, I don't remember the name, maybe the New York Knicks or whatever. The camera faced the team, and they all stood up. Right in front of them was my sister and brother-in-law. No one was around. I said, "Hey, my sister," but there was no one there. [laughter] Anyhow, that was that story. I saw her on television on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

MG: You grew up during the Cold War.

RT: I guess that's what you'd call it. [In] '39, World War II [began in Europe and ended in 1945]. So, World War II was going on when I was young, four or five or six years old. Then, in 1950, you had the Korean War to [1953], and then me [entering the Army] in '61. I guess, yeah, that's considered the Cold War.

MG: Did you know anyone who fought in the Korean War?

RT: I do actually, but this is not from then, from more like today. There's a fellow that I worked with and we played golf. He had a friend, and he was in the Korean War, yeah, George.

MG: Was it something that you were following along at the time?

RT: No, no..

MG: What about the Cold War and fear of nuclear war? That was on a lot of people's minds in the late 1950s.

RT: No, I never really thought about it.

MG: You did not do duck and cover in school.

RT: I think they did, but I'm not sure. I know what you mean. You went under your desk. Well, if it was a nuclear bomb, that wasn't going to do any good. If they drop a bomb, nuclear bomb especially, under your desk isn't going to help. I don't remember really doing much with that. We had the fire drills and all that stuff. Growing up, that was in the '50s. They had atomic bombs, because that's what they dropped on Japan, but I don't think they had nuclear, did they, in the '50s, late '50s. [Editor's Note: The atomic bomb, also known as a nuclear bomb or nuclear weapon, produces a devastating explosion through nuclear fission, which is the process of splitting the nuclei of atoms. The United States developed the atomic bomb in the Manhattan Project during World War II. In 1952, the United States tested the first hydrogen bomb, a thermonuclear weapon that derives its energy through the fusion of hydrogen nuclei into helium.]

MG: There was a fear of nuclear war.

RT: Of that happening.

MG: Yes.

RT: No, I never thought about it much. I had no fear. Maybe it was good in a way not to be afraid.

MG: Do you remember what was going on with McCarthyism?

RT: Oh, yes, yeah. When I'd come home from school, I used to turn on, I think it was at lunchtime, actually. See, where I went to school, grammar school and high school, I was only a couple blocks from home, so I'd come home for lunch. I remember turning on the TV, and it was McCarthy and the Communism, "Are you a Communist?" My goodness, a lot of people got really in a lot of trouble because of that, if they thought you were a Communist or not. What'd they call it? The McCarthy-Army hearings, that was the name, you know, if you were a Communist. I really didn't understand it that much. I remember it was just something to watch. [Editor's Note: In 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy's claims that Communists had infiltrated the State Department sparked a Red Scare that sought to uproot Communists in government and society. The witch hunts of the McCarthy era relied on innuendo and unfounded accusations, tactics that earned the ire of President Dwight D. Eisenhower after McCarthy alleged that Communist spies were operating at the Army's Fort Monmouth. When McCarthy launched an investigation of the Army in 1953, the Senate countered with an investigation of McCarthy. The televised Army-McCarthy hearings in the summer of 1954 exposed McCarthy's unscrupulous fear-mongering. Soon after, the Senate censured McCarthy, and he died from complications related to alcoholism in 1957.] I always think about this, too, with books. All my life I've loved reading books, and I felt there was a purpose why. A lot of the books that I read would lead me to other books, which people like today I would see or hear and how they were very important books in reading. I think that helped me. It helped me in many ways. It helped me in that, I would write, where I worked at Bristol anyhow, policies and procedures, and it helped me with spelling, with sentence structure and punctuation. I think it was from reading all those books, and the books I read were all classics. It was just that I didn't know the difference until years later, I would [hear], "That was a classic. That was a classic" of so many books.

MG: You were a big reader growing up.

RT: Yeah, yeah. I really didn't care that much for school. Even at work, too, even college, I went to Pace in New York. You've heard of Pace downtown. When I started, it was Pace Institute and then it became Pace College. Then, when I got out, I went in the Army. See, I went at night. I told people it [went] from PI, Pace Institute, to PC to PU. That's my joke. [laughter] I went to Pace. What was the question? [laughter] You were saying something.

MG: I asked about being a reader.

RT: Oh, reader, yeah. I never really cared much for the schools. I rather read on my own and learn. I don't know why. I just felt I could understand it better. I didn't care for teachers telling me, but I had to. I remember it was the ninth grade, algebra, it just came to my mind. There was a teacher, and I remember him saying, standing in front of the class, "This is zero, and if I go to the left, that's minus, and if I go to the right, that's plus." That's the only thing I remember. I had a lot of problems with geometry. Even at work, you ever hear of COBOL, the [computer programming] language, COBOL, C-O-B-O-L, you know they have all these different languages for computers. Well, that one stands for Common Business-Oriented Language. I took at that time, they called it EDP at college, "Electronic Data Processing," and they taught [IBM] 1401 Autocoder. I did pretty well. People said, "You can't take those computer courses. You've got to be a great math whiz." I said, "I'm going to try, and you don't have to be." It's a lot of baloney. COBOL was the language that I got a book, and I taught myself. I actually wrote a

COBOL program for the general ledger system that was still running when I left. Now, it's all changed, I'm sure. It was more me on my own learning. The books I read were a lot of books of classics.

MG: Are there any that stand out to you that were favorites growing up?

RT: Not favorites, no, just that there were so many books. I have a lot of them. Vicky's got a lot of them. I've got a lot of them upstairs. I don't know why, it's just coming into my mind. When I was in the Army, there was a book I read, [*An*] *American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser. It had to do with a fellow, like an American tragedy, and that's to succeed, he was very cruel. It was a good book. There was a lot [books]. I can't really pinpoint one or two to help. I felt like it helped with the sentence structure and punctuation and spelling, but I've noticed now spelling is starting to fade away a little bit. I'm not sure in some things, so I look in the dictionary.

MG: Tell me about the schools you attended. I know maybe school was not your favorite thing, but were there any parts of it you enjoyed?

RT: No, not enjoyed. You had to go to school. You had to learn. In Union City, there was Washington Grammar School. The high school was Union Hill. Pace was the college. That's a story, too. I find it interesting how your life is affected by things. I got a job right after high school with a place called Duro-Test in Secaucus. They made light bulbs, fluorescents and other lights, mostly for out in Las Vegas in the west. I was only there about four, five, six months. I went to Florida. I left that job, and I went to Miami in Florida, Miami Beach. Then, when I came back, I got a job at Equitable, Equitable Life Insurance [originally called Equitable Life Assurance Society] in New York. It was right across from Penn Station at the time. The job I had in there was like pick up the mail, drop off mail. There was one vice president, who was with the vice presidents and directors, and he had a job, something with numbers and papers. I remember going into a conference room, and you had to separate these papers with the numbers on them and add them up. I remember it did it, and I did it really fast. Numbers always came easy, and I always remembered things with numbers very easily. He told me that I was the first person ever to do that job so well and accurate. I remember him saying to me, "Do you ever think about going to college?" I don't know why, but that's what he said. I said, "Well, no, my family can't afford it." Equitable had just started a tuition aid program. You go in the evening, and they help pay as long as you have a passing grade. I said, "Well, where would I go?" He said, "Maybe you want to take accounting because you work well with numbers." He said he went to Pace Institute at that time. I said, "Okay." That's downtown by City Hall Park. That's how I got started.

MG: Was that after your service?

RT: No, that was before. I graduated in '57. It was 1958, yeah, '58 or '59, and then I transferred to a different department at Equitable. Then, I left Equitable, because I wanted to get into accounting. He spoke to me. He said, "I can get you into accounting." It's funny how you do things. I said, "No." I went to work for American Can in accounting. Then, I got that card.

MG: Getting back to school a little bit, do any teachers stand out to you?

RT: No. [laughter] People always talk about that on the radio I hear, they speak to people and, "Oh, yeah, I have my favorite teacher in the fourth grade." All I remember was someone in the third grade, a Miss (Bird?). She said, "How would you like to take a trip around the world?" I thought, "Oh, wow. I wonder if my mother will let me go. Let's see, I'll have to pack a toothbrush." I just remember this. She said, "We're going to take a trip around the world through our geography books." What a letdown. I thought we were going to go around the world. [laughter] That's the only one I remember. I didn't have any teachers that, "Oh, gee, she was my teacher that changed my life," or none of that stuff. I wonder if that's true stories that people tell. Probably is. No, there was nothing there.

MG: Were you involved in any clubs or extracurricular activities?

RT: No, because I worked after school.

MG: There were some other things I was curious about in your home life. Was any part of your parents' German culture seen in the house? Would you cook German foods?

RT: Oh, yeah. My mother cooked German foods. There was something she made. It was Graham cracker cream pie. You ever hear of that? No. It's something with Graham crackers and tapioca and vanilla. It was really good, very sweet. I always talked about it. My granddaughter's gymnastics class, a woman there, a few years ago, because I don't remember how she made it, and this woman, where my granddaughter was going for gymnastics, said something about that. Her husband knows someone or sister, somehow there's a relationship, and that woman remembered that recipe for that. She made that. I loved that. That was Graham cracker cream pie. My mother made a lot of the other stuff with the sauerkraut, pork chops with sauerkraut, stew she made with letting the meat cook all day and it was very tender. I can't think of any other things. [She made] another thing with the pie, too. She made something with the plums, Italian plums. They're different than the big, round plums, and she made something with apples, something with apples, too. She made some kind of pie. *Sauerbraten* [pot roast], that's the word. You've heard of that. Yeah, she'd make that. A lot of the things, I think she kind of learned on her own, because her mother had died when she was twelve. So, a lot of things she kind of learned on her own.

MG: Would your parents ever speak in German if they did not want you to hear what they were saying?

RT: No, none of that, no.

MG: Were they politically-minded at all?

RT: Not really. I'm pretty sure they voted Democrat. I'm pretty sure, but I'm not positive. It was kind of like you voted the way your parents did maybe. It went on without thinking much about it. They didn't get involved in any politics or anything. I always remember they were going to vote one day. There was somebody there near where the voting place was, and a guy

gave them money to vote, of course, for him. They kept the money, but they didn't vote for him. Other than that, they didn't get involved in politics or none of that stuff.

MG: You said earlier that you would go to Catholic Church. Do you have memories about church services and confirmation, things like that?

RT: Yeah, well, in the Catholic religion, you have communion when you're younger and then confirmation. We used to have to go, my sister and I, on Sunday after church, you'd go to classes, catechism classes, and they would teach you the prayers and about the Catholic religion. We used to go on a Friday also. See, the grammar school that we went to was right across the street from the Catholic Church, and we used to go on Friday to catechism classes, I believe, on Friday. After church on Sunday, you had to go out the front of the church, out the side door, and over into the school. I remember thinking, "Oh, my last chance to escape." [laughter] You walk from the church across a little alleyway into the school, but [I] never escaped or anything. I think that lasted about an hour. They taught you the prayers, and the nuns would yell at you. You've heard stories about nuns with the ruler if you didn't do good, the nuns would hit you with the ruler. I had a teacher, actually, jump back to the grammar school in the seventh grade, Miss Alexander. You went in the classroom, and the door was in the back of the classroom. Then, she said when you go inside the classroom, you had to turn to the right and go to the front and then go left. I remember my seat was in the second row, and then I had to walk all the way up that way and then sit down at my desk, because if you went left, you were a leftist. That's what the Communists like. [laughter] Years later, "What's she talking about?" All I had to do is walk ten feet maybe to my seat. No, I had to go around this way to the right. Miss Alexander, that was our introduction to leftists and Communism. She was kind of tough. If you were talking or something while she was talking, she would throw something at you. Today, you know, it's strange, they'd probably wind up in jail, even if you call them [Communist]. What would that be, racist or something? Who knows with this politically correct stuff? Don't get me started on that.

MG: Is there anything else we are missing from growing up, childhood, early education?

RT: Not really.

MG: You were graduated in 1957.

RT: That's all right. You'll get people, "What are you talking about?" [laughter] Yeah, 1957. Oh, that was the thing. We started school in January. They had January classes, and I graduated in January. It was very small for that reason. I think there were like twenty-five kids in the class. When I worked in New York at Equitable, I remember talking to a secretary there, they were from Brooklyn, they had like four hundred. I said, "The whole school." "No, just the class," [she said]. [In] Union Hill [High School], the whole school only had four hundred kids in it maybe. That was January. My sister was before me, but right after I was graduated in January, I think that was it. I think then starting that next September, you went from September to June. I started in January, because my birthday's in January, and we graduated in January. I don't know why. They had enough teachers I guess.

MG: Something I did not ask you about in terms of your high school years was what you did for fun or on a Friday night, things like dating.

RT: Not really. I dated this girl throughout high school, but Friday night was the same as a Tuesday night. There was nothing special about Friday or Saturday or any of those nights. Yeah, I dated a girl from high school throughout high school. I went to Union Hill. She was [at] Weehawken High School. She was captain of the cheerleaders. We met when there was an accident, interesting. When I was finished with high school, we kind of got separated.

MG: What do you mean there was an accident?

RT: In Union City, we had what you called the Hudson Boulevard, and on one side was Union City. The other side was North Bergen. I was walking with my friend, and there was a car accident. There were people standing around looking. There were these two girls. I was about fifteen. I went over and I start talking to them, (Brenda?), yeah, (Brenda?). I start talking to her, and then we walked them home. The next night or the night after, I went down to where she lived, and we got talking. That was my adventure into that world. That lasted through high school. The interesting part with the computer and Internet, Facebook, some things have come up from her. My daughter put my pictures on there and my family and such, and there's actually a picture of her on there with me and some others. I think that's so great. That's why I've got to get that thing fixed somehow, because it's really great. That was about it. Then, the Army.

MG: What did you want to do when you graduated from high school?

RT: I didn't know. I didn't have any [thoughts] like, "Oh, yeah, I want to be a doctor," no. I just went to work, and that was that. That's why I say how your life gets affected by people, that one man that said, "Why don't you go to school? Equitable helps pay for it." That got me into accounting.

MG: What was that experience like, being a student again, going to Pace?

RT: Well, it wasn't too long after I got out of high school, and it was at night. [Some college graduates] have a reunion. What reunion? I didn't know anybody. You go at night. That's so different than during the daytime. You don't make friends really. You're working, and you go to school for a couple hours at night. Especially in Downtown New York, nobody went out afterwards. It's not the same. Where did you go, Rutgers?

MG: I went to Bates College in Maine for my undergraduate degree.

RT: Oh, okay. You went during the day.

MG: Yes.

RT: Yeah, see, and you had friends, and you did stuff together. Going at night, again, it's different. Most of the time, the class is from six until nine, an hour or two each. I'd take a couple of courses every year, so it took me a long time. I got it done.

MG: Did you finish before you went into the Army?

RT: No, no. I started in '58, '59. I got called in [by the Army] in '61. I got out in '63, active. I went back to school, yeah.

MG: Were most of the other students working?

RT: Oh, yeah, sure, most, I think most. Some weren't. I remember some of them talked about they wanted to get finished, so they went during the day and they also went at night. Most of them were working. You wore a suit. Most of them come in in work suits and ties. They didn't have any air conditioning. I remember these big fans, you know the six-foot fans. You might have seen them in pictures. They had the big fans. It was hot in the classes. I remember in accounting classes one time they opened the windows, but still it was hot. Somebody said something about taking off their jacket. We learned a lot because the teachers who were teaching usually worked also, and so they would tell you real life experiences, not just their academic experience, but their real life. I remember he said, "Well, there's some women in the class. Let's ask the women. Is it all right if the gentlemen take their jackets off?" Oh, good, so we did that. Now, when I come out [of the Army] and I went back to school, what a difference. Guys are sitting in the class in short sleeves or Bermuda shorts on, it was so different, doing what they want. They'd get up and walk out. It was different.

MG: It was not that many years later.

RT: No, that's it. Just a few years, it made that difference. Things change. Just like today, compared to, say, five years ago, how things have changed. It's a shame a lot of the stuff, though, with the protests and the riots and all that stuff.

MG: Do you mean later in the 1960s?

RT: No, I mean today, protesting and the riots. It's not good. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tunnermann is referring to the civil unrest that erupted after the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland at the hands of the police.]

MG: Were you living at home when you were going to Pace?

RT: Yes, yeah. I was married in 1966, so I was still at home until then, yeah.

MG: Tell me this again about this card you got in the mail and maybe a little context for why you would receive one.

RT: I don't know why. I guess the government just sent the thing. All I remember about it was I'm pretty sure it was just like a postcard kind of thing, and it said, "Congratulations. You've been selected, and you have to report for the Army." At that time, it was 1961. On May 1, 1961, every year in Russia, Soviet Union, they called it at the time, they had a May Day Parade, May 1, who was in charge there, was it [Nikita] Khrushchev, I think it was Khrushchev, had made a big

deal about the million-man Russian Army. President [John F.] Kennedy, who was the president then, said, "Okay, we're going to build a million-man army." Well, I was part of that million-man Army. After, of course, when I think about it today, I'm glad it happened then, because this a whole story if you want to get into my part of the military, I got this notice because the government was drafting people left and right, really, with the way I heard the stories, and most of the time in this area of New Jersey, you went to Fort Dix. Do you want me to talk slow?

MG: No.

RT: You went to Fort Dix, which is in South Jersey. Because he was drafting so many people, my friend and myself, we got called to go for our physical the same day. It was out in Newark. We went there. That was October 18, 1961. Then, I got a notice that I have to report in November for active duty, and it was because of this buildup of the Army. There were so many people being drafted that by November, I went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina for basic training.

MG: Instead of Fort Dix.

RT: Yes. In December, my friend got called. He went to Fort Dix. Then, the next month, which would have been what, January, I guess, they were sending for basic training Missouri, Fort Leonard Wood, it was called in Missouri. They were switching from one to the other to the other, because there were so many. There wasn't enough room in one, in like Fort Dix, so I wound up in Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

MG: How were they determining who received the draft notice?

RT: I have no idea. The government did that. With my father, I think it was because supposedly they needed more, and they were running out of people, running out of people.

MG: A few years later, there would be a lottery.

RT: Yeah, they had lottery thing, but they didn't have it when I was [drafted]. Yeah, that's right, the lottery. I remember people saying how they didn't get called. Their number was such-and-such. I remember I thought, "What are you talking about? A number." I didn't have a number. I don't remember. When did that start? They didn't have any kind of lottery number. [Editor's Note: After the Korean War ended in 1953, the draft continued on a more limited basis during the rest of the 1950s and early 1960s. Draftees served in the U.S. Army for two years. Military service during that period was also governed by the Reserve Forces Act of 1955, which tried to build up the Reserves and National Guard by encouraging volunteers. The law mandated a six-year service commitment, with a combination of reserve and active duty time. During the escalation of the Vietnam War between 1965 and 1968, an average of 300,000 men were drafted per year. First drawn on December 1, 1969, the lottery determined the order in which men born between 1944 and 1950 were called for military induction. The nineteenth date drawn would have given all men born on that date the number nineteen.]

MG: How did you feel when you received that letter in the mail?

RT: You know it didn't bother me really. My sister was upset. Like I said, she was crying. I guess throughout my life, it's pretty much the same. I just do things, and that's that, you know, part of my life. I never thought much about it. Even this thing with South Carolina, that was different. What happened to Fort Dix? When we were going out, the day we got called, it was the day before Thanksgiving. That's when I had to go. We went out to Newark again. I remember the guy saying this, "You men will be going to Fort Jackson, South Carolina." I thought, "Wait a minute. What happened to Fort Dix? My family's going to visit me." That was the reason. It was the day before Thanksgiving. I spent Thanksgiving in Fort Jackson. We went down by train. They used to send you by plane, but a plane crashed a month or two before, so they were sending us by train. I remember we went to Washington, D.C. from Newark. We went to change trains, and then we went to this Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Thanksgiving we spent in the fort. I always remember the sign on the wall. It said, "Take all you want" for the food, "but eat all you take." I got out, just to add to that, the day before Kennedy was killed on November 22, '63. I remember being at home, walking in Union City with my father, and somebody come out of a store and said, "The president's been shot." "What? What? That's not true." Everybody was in the store looking at the televisions that were on when Kennedy was killed. It's a total of six years [I spent in the Army], and it's two years active duty. Then, it was supposed to have been two years active Reserve, where you meet once a month and then you go two weeks [of] summer camp and then two years of inactive Reserve. Because so many people were drafted and we were all getting out, the Reserves were full, which worked out better. Four more years of inactive, I didn't have to go to meetings. I went to two weeks [of] summer camp I think it was the following year, which was neat too, because I ran into some of the guys that I was in basic training with. We went to Camp Drum in New York State. I didn't have to go for meetings or none of that, because it was just too many. They were full. Oh, before I went in actually, about being drafted, I remember thinking, "Well, what I'll do is if I get a notice, I'll go join the Reserves or the National Guard." Well, that was full, so there goes my plan. [laughter] In a way, thankfully, I went in when I did, because [when I got out in '63], Vietnam was really getting heated up then. I know I have a friend and other people I ran into [who were drafted during the Vietnam War]. I have a hat, Vicky got it for me, a U.S. Army hat, and it's so nice. People say, "Thanks for your service." They tell the stories. There's guys that said they were in, a lot of them, like a friend of mine was in, too, in '68. So many people that I ran into, men that were in in '68, and they went to Vietnam. They had something they called Agent Orange. You ever hear of that?

MG: Yes.

RT: Yeah. My friend, he says how they would drop that to defoliate the trees, and of course if you're there, it's all coming on you. About five years ago or so, he got prostate cancer, and now has trouble with his heart. Other guys I've spoken to too that were in, it seems like they were all [there in] '68 and they all went over. They had the same thing. They're having problems now. They have to go to checkups every so often. The government pays for it all, but still how many have died because of that Agent Orange? Again, I'm thankful that I did not have to go over, and actually I was in earlier, '61 to '63, so I avoided Vietnam. Who knows if I'd be sitting here talking to you, because of that Agent Orange? [Editor's Note: The chemical defoliant Agent Orange, which the United States government used in Vietnam to clear jungles, causes a number of serious health problems in humans, including cancer.]

MG: What were your first impressions of the South? Had you been down that way before?

RT: The South, oh, more stories. I went to Miami Beach, but no, other than that. It was South Carolina for basic training and then to Georgia, Fort Gordon in Georgia. Again, you have no control over it. Do you know what GI stands for when they say about the GI? Yeah, it's Government Issue. I was a government issue. [laughter] That's how important you are, well, you are, with a gun and shoot. Government issue, that's what GI means. So, anyhow, I was a government issue. I went to Fort Gordon then after basic training. I remember they took me to what you call a repple depple, a replacement depot, and I was only there for one day. I got called out the next day, "Tunnermann?" "Tunnermann." They got me in the Jeep and they drove me, it wasn't too far, a couple blocks or something. I got out, and I had to go into what they call orderly rooms of a little office building. That was it. It was a military police training company. I think there were eight of them. Actually, that's where I stayed the rest of the two years. I was a company clerk for the military police training company.

MG: What was the full title of the military police unit you were part of?

RT: It was Company I, I don't remember, Company I, Fifth Battalion, Fifth Regiment or Tenth Regiment, I think, because it went from company to battalion to regiment and then the total fort. I think there were eight companies that were training for military police. I had to bring in typewriters, they didn't have computers, typewriters, and I think the cycle lasted two months for the trainees. Then, they graduate, and then a new one would start. Usually, we didn't have much of a break in between, a week or two, and that was my time there. Interesting stuff too, the people I met.

MG: I want to hear all about this.

RT: I remember when I was getting out. I was packing up, and a guy says, one of the trainees says, "Oh, what's happening? Where are you going?" I said, "Well, I'm going home." "Oh," he said, "I would give you five thousand dollars if I could switch with you." I said, "You can't switch with me." You start out as a private, then private first class, and then I was a specialist fourth class, which is similar to a corporal, but when you're in the administrative, it's a specialist. I was specialist fourth class. This guy wanted to switch with me and give me five thousand dollars. [laughter] I processed two, at that time, they were called homosexuals. Gay meant you were happy. I processed them, not together, not that they were together. The one guy, he was just a homosexual, and that was that. The other one I felt sorry for, I really did, because he realized something was different when he was younger. I had to get the psychiatrist report from the hospital. He had to go see the psychiatrist, which the feeling was that they were mentally ill and you had to go see the psychiatrist. The story was that he felt something was wrong, because he was more attracted to [men] than girls. He didn't like that, and he didn't want to be attracted to [men]. He wanted to [be attracted] to girls. He got married, because he thought that would help how he felt. Then, he had a baby. He thought that would help, but it didn't. He still liked [men] better. They should have processed him in basic training, but I found out other things from other guys that had problems. They would pass it off, "Well, go to your next station. They'll take care of you." They should have taken care of him in basic training. He got married,

and that didn't help. He had a baby, and that didn't help. Now, he's going to get out. I felt sorry for him.

MG: Was it discovered that he was gay, or did he have to let someone know?

RT: He was homosexual. Yeah, he was gay. He discovered it. He realized when he was young.

MG: How come it came to the attention of the Army?

RT: He brought it up. That's what I'm saying. I just got a notice that I have to process him [out of the Army]. I guess he saw someone. Like I said, he went to the psychiatrist in the hospital, and I had to get that report. I felt sorry because he didn't want to be that way, but he just couldn't help it. He joined the Army, because they had that saying. I think they still say it, "Join the Army. Make a man out of you." He felt like that would help make a man out of him. Different meaning though, make a man out of you, not that you're gay, it'll make a man out of you, but make a man out of you, you're not going to be a little boy. He joined the Army, and that didn't help either. I never knew what happened, of course, after. I didn't keep in touch with him.

MG: You said you processed him.

RT: I had to do all the paperwork and all.

MG: Out of the Army.

RT: Yeah.

MG: Because he was gay.

RT: Yeah, I did all that paperwork. Everything was like three copies, duplicates, and the typing. With the military, with the typing, I had to do every day what they call a morning report to see if there was any changes. They had special wording. If you make mistakes, you can only make three mistakes, and then you had to do the whole thing all over. I got good at [fixing mistakes] with a razor blade and chalk, where if I made more than three, I'd scrape the letter and I'd chalk it over and that kind of stuff. Then, I had to bring that to a special place, headquarters, [where] they processed all the rest of them. With him, I brought those papers, and he went to a different company. Then, like I said, I don't know what happened. I'm sure he got out, but I don't know what happened to him. I felt sorry, because he wanted to change and he couldn't. Gay wasn't a word then.

MG: What were your impressions of the South and Jim Crow segregation laws and things like that?

RT: Okay, yeah. Interesting, the stories, you remind me of things. Fort Gordon was outside of Augusta, about twelve miles. I used to go into Augusta, take the bus in and walk around and get

something to eat. A couple times I went to a movie. I remember a movie I passed, *Dr. No*. Did you ever hear of that?

MG: Yes.

RT: Yeah, James Bond. I thought it was some kind of documentary, and I didn't go see it. Years later, I said, "Oh, that was that movie." In Augusta, there was a bathroom outside. It wasn't in a building. Above that entrance, there was no door, it was just a cement entrance, said, "Colored only," and colored was a word that was used for what became black, what became African American. So, "Colored only." Years later, I thought, "I wonder what would have happened if I went in there and got caught or something. Would I have been in trouble because I wasn't colored?" Vicky said, "Why didn't you take a picture?" I didn't have a camera. "You should've brought a camera." "For what?" At that time, you don't think about stuff like that. Colored only. I'm sure they took that down. It wasn't a sign. It was like right into the cement, like painted. So, yeah, I used to go into Augusta a lot. That was the South. This is another thing I think was interesting. My Uncle George died August 24, 1963, so that's a couple months before I got out. I got out in November. I flew home for his funeral. I flew what they called military standby. You got it at a cheaper rate. On the plane, I'm sitting next to a woman, and that was around the time that Martin Luther King was going to give his speech. She said to me, "What do you think about this speech?" I didn't think much about any of that because in the military, even then, you had the mixed. There was a guy in my company, we used to be together, (MacAfee?) from Chicago, (Willy MacAfee?), and he was black, I guess you would call it, although he was colored at the time, black. You had a lot of blacks in the companies. The military was integrated. So, I said all I knew was something about they weren't allowed to go to school. I think that's when Wallace in Alabama was keeping the kids out of school. I said, "I don't see any problem," again, because of being in the Army. There was no segregation. She was a buyer for a big department store in Atlanta, Dillard's, I think was the name. She said to me, "If you let them up, there's going to be a lot of trouble." I didn't think much of it, because, like I said, of being in the military. In high school, there weren't any coloreds at the high school I went to. Even in Union City, I don't remember any. It was the Cubans. What she was saying, it was kind of foreign to me. What do you mean, if you let them up? What does that mean? That was pretty much the conversation, because he was going to make his speech then, Martin Luther King. I think that was in August. [Editor's Note: On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. gave the "I Have a Dream" speech in front of a crowd of 250,000 people. The speech took place during the March on Washington, a week-long civil rights demonstration in Washington, D.C. King first gave the "I Have a Dream" speech earlier that summer in Detroit on June 28, 1963. Weeks before, on June 11, 1963, Alabama Governor George Wallace attempted to stop desegregation at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa.]

MG: There was a lot of activity in 1963.

RT: When was he murdered?

MG: Not until later.

RT: '68, was it? [Editor's Note: Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968.]

MG: Yes.

RT: Yeah, I think so.

MG: Did it surprise you witnessing this kind of segregation in the South with separate bathrooms and facilities?

RT: Well, just there [in Augusta], not in the Army, not in the military, not only Army, I mean, Marines, all that stuff. It did not surprise me. Here I am with (Willy MacAfee?), who liked to play dice, he always liked craps, and others. In fact, the one guy, when I went into that company, I was telling you when they dropped me off and I went in, the one guy I worked for that day, he was there for about a month or so and then he was transferred, he was from Jamaica, so he also was black. There was no segregation.

MG: What would happen if you and (Willy?) would go into the town for a night?

RT: Nothing, nothing, I guess, because I was white. I don't remember really seeing a lot of black people in Augusta, but I'm sure they were there. It never stood out, because, again, I didn't feel anything about that. Do you know what I mean? So, I never said, "Oh, look at that black guy. Oh, look at that one." No. I think it was mostly white people walking around in Augusta.

MG: Did you want to tell me more about training in South Carolina?

RT: Well, you just put up with it. You've heard stories. In the Marines, they always call them drill sergeants or drill instructors. I don't know if those guys are always trained to be nasty. In the Army, you had the same kind of sergeants and all. One time I remember we had some kind of class. A lot of the times I fell asleep when the classes were on. If I sit down somewhere and I don't have anything to say, I can fall asleep. I remember one time in one of the classes, where I was dozing off, and all of a sudden, the lieutenant came by, I didn't know it was a lieutenant at the time, and whack, hit me on the head, because I was falling asleep. [laughter] Another time, I was holding a rifle. We had to go from one place to another and put your rifle down. I don't know why. I went to put my rifle down, and I guess I wasn't fast enough. He grabbed it, and I didn't let go. He [said], "Give me that weapon. Give me that weapon." He grabbed it, and he went like this. Do you know what a rifle looks like with the stock? In my face, like that. "Go ahead, get out of here." Again, you just do all this stuff. Hopefully, you get along. You had your name on your shirt and on your uniform, your fatigues, Tunnermann. I used to say if you can just stand there and kind of hide, you just get through it and that's that. Other people have done it, and I felt like I could do it, too. That was a couple of things. One time we had some kind of a class, and they called me out to do the crawling underneath the barbed wire. They'd bring over new recruits, and I'd have to crawl to show them how it's done, in the dirt. I think it was like four or five times, because they'd have just so many guys. I think it was a couple hundred guys in the company. I always thought about it afterwards that I wonder if they picked me out on purpose or what, and I had to crawl in the dirt. It wasn't the greatest thing.

MG: What else about basic training, day-to-day stuff, eating, and sleeping, things like that?

RT: In the barracks, they had the bunks with the lower and the upper. As you walk in, they say, "Go, there. Go there. Go there." So, I took an upper one. Sleeping, you're up, I think, around four in the morning. Usually, you ended the day around three, four, five. Eating, you eat breakfast. You ate what they gave you or you didn't eat. You've heard of SOS ["shit on a shingle," or meat stew on toast]. That was okay. I thought it was good. It was cold down there in November, December, January in South Carolina. I would eat that if they had it. It was hot, and toast and creamy stuff. They sell that in the stores a lot now. They called it creamed chipped beef. [laughter] Like I said, it was hot, cereal, coffee. Then, you didn't eat again until lunchtime and then at dinner. Every time you went to go to eat, you had to go through the pull-ups. You had to do [pull-ups] this way, not this way, but this way.

MG: Overhand.

RT: Yeah, I think it was ten. One time when I didn't do it, I think I did about seven or something, I looked, I didn't see anybody, so I dropped down. That was another one where I moved up and whack, "Give me ten for each one." The lieutenant saw that I dropped down and counted them. So, I had to have ten for everyone I didn't do, and I think it was seven, so I had to do thirty. I didn't do thirty, but then the platoon leader said, "He's not here. Come on." I felt like others survived it so I can too.

MG: How long were you in basic training for?

RT: That's eight weeks. The same with the MP training, it was eight weeks.

MG: Where was the MP training? Was that in Georgia?

RT: Yeah, that was in Fort Gordon, Georgia.

MG: What did that training entail?

RT: Well, I had classes on MPs and what you do, the law, military police laws, and you had the forty-five. I went out one time to the ranges where they were firing, and I fired the forty-five, the pistol. That was the basic weapon of the military police. Also, I took care of the mail too for that company. What was good about it was that I carried my pass in my wallet, so when I finished my day's work, I could just do whatever I wanted, go to town, because I had that pass. In a way, I had it good, once you got finished with the basic training stuff. Like I said, finding out years later about Vietnam, I was lucky that I didn't have to go over.

MG: It is interesting that both you and your father were military police.

RT: Yeah, I know, yes, you're right. They made him an MP over in France. His basic training was in Macon, Georgia, Camp Wheeler I think it was called. You're right. Then, he went in the MPs over in France. I didn't go to France. I went to Georgia. Down South too, with the people

where they spoke, “Oh, this is blue.” “Oh, no, it’s kind of gray.” “It’s blue or gray, one or the other,” right. You’ve heard that, one or the other, no?

MG: I do not know what you are talking about.

RT: In other words, if I wanted to say what color is this? Well, it’s blue. No, it’s gray. Well, it’s blue or gray, one or the other. You ever heard that?

MG: No.

RT: Down South, they would say, “It’s blue or gray, one,” and I remember saying, “Wait a minute. What’s the rest of the sentence?” You’ve never heard that, or the other.

MG: I have heard the phrase "one or the other."

RT: Yeah.

MG: Okay, they would just say one.

RT: Yeah, that’s it. It was blue or gray, one. I just said that, because I didn’t know what else to point to.

MG: Okay.

RT: One, and I used to say, “What do you mean, one? Where’s the rest of the sentence?” “Y’all,” of course. “Y’all come see us now.” You know what that means [contraction for you all].

MG: Yes.

RT: It’s like goodbye. It was pretty neat stuff.

MG: Were you being taught about nuclear weapons at all in the training?

RT: No, I think nuclear is more later on. Nuclear, I didn’t hear much about that.

MG: Was Vietnam on anybody’s radar at that point?

RT: Oh, yeah, it was beginning. There’s a wall, a memorial to the Vietnam vets. A few months ago, Vicky and Chuck, Chuck is her husband, found out about it. I went out. It’s the traveling wall [Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall]. They have one in Washington, the permanent [wall, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial]. This is the traveling [memorial]. It’s black. I don’t know if it’s granite or not. They travel around the country. I went down. It was out by where they live in Bridgewater, in that area, and it has all the names of the Vietnam vets who were killed or missing in action. I drove out there and I met Vicky and Chuck and the kids. There were guys there, and they were explaining it all. They gave me a booklet, a timeline of Vietnam. I didn’t

realize that Vietnam really started in the late '40s, but we weren't fully involved until the '60s. It was going on while I was in, but I didn't know really much about it. Like I said, when I got out, I was glad that I didn't have to go over. [Editor's Note: In the late 1940s, President Harry S. Truman's administration provided aid and military advisors to France to squash the Vietnamese fight for independence. Following French defeat and with the Cold War fueling anti-Communist policies in foreign relations, President Dwight D. Eisenhower supported President Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam with training and equipment against Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Vietminh of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north. About 800 U.S. military personnel were stationed in Vietnam by the late 1950s. Under the presidency of John F. Kennedy, American troops in Vietnam reached 16,700 by the end of 1963. In response to an alleged naval confrontation between American and North Vietnamese forces in the Gulf of Tonkin, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on August 10, 1964, which authorized President Lyndon B. Johnson to wage war in Vietnam. Under Johnson, the numbers of American troops in Vietnam increased from 80,000 in July 1965 to 385,000 in 1966 and to the peak of 543,400 in 1969. (Thomas G. Patterson, *American Foreign Relations: A History Since 1895,* pgs. 340-349)]

MG: Were you told anything about what was taking place there in the early 1960s?

RT: In Vietnam?

MG: Yes.

RT: No, no, no.

MG: When did it become something you were aware of?

RT: It was after I got out. I can't give you a date. I can't think of a date. It was maybe just something you happened to see on the news. I think they were talking about how many were killed each day, the media, as they say. I think it was a total of fifty-something thousand [over 58,000] guys that were either killed or missing in action. You always think about that too, the ones that are missing. Are they still alive in Cambodia or Laos or Thailand? That they became prisoners and they're still there. Probably not though. I think a lot of them would have died by now.

MG: After your MP training, what was your assignment?

RT: The company clerk.

MG: Did you stay in Georgia?

RT: Yeah, in that training company, MP training company.

MG: Tell me a little bit more about that experience and things you remember from that time.

RT: The training company?

MG: Once you had your MP duty.

RT: See, I didn't go through the MP school. They made me, what do you call that, active duty, on-the-job training, OJT. I did very well on the tests. I don't know what the scores were, but I did very well on the tests. Instead of going to advanced training in anything, I went right to this company, and I became part of that company, on-the-job training. I didn't have to go to school. I learned right there. I went out to the ranges one time. They said, "Do you want to fire the weapon, the forty-five?" the sergeant said to me. I reported right to the first sergeant, who was the top sergeant. There were different ones I had, and the last one I had before I got out, he really liked me. I always felt like I didn't have to worry about having a problem with some of these other sergeants that were kind of nasty, because I was part of [headquarters?]. It's like you're the boss, and you report right to the boss and people won't bother you because of that kind of thing. I was in the orderly room with a couple of lieutenants, first lieutenant, second lieutenant, over the two years that I was there, and then the captain, what was his name, (Hallerman?), and the first sergeant in there. When I went out on the ranges that day, I wore that helmet, and these guys came walking up and they saluted me. I said, "No, no, no, I'm a specialist." You only salute an officer. So, I was part of that, but I didn't go through MP training. I wish I would have, actually, but if I would have gone through the training, officially, they might have shipped me out somewhere. I remember saying to the first sergeant would I like to go to airborne school, you know, the paratrooper, and I said, "Do you think they would send me out to a different company?" "Oh, yeah." You finish that, and then that's it. Off you go. I was a company clerk in a military police training company.

MG: You mentioned processing those two men. What were your other duties?

RT: Every day, I had to do, like I said, it was called a morning report. It was a report of any changes. If there were no changes, there weren't any, but any changes where some new people came in, or some new people went out. Maybe they were shipped out somewhere. Then, I would have to turn it into headquarters with all the rest of them, and then they processed them. Everything was controlled. The government really had to know where everybody was. What else? The rest of the day I pretty much sat around. I'd go over into the mess hall maybe and get a coffee. I didn't march the troops or anything. That was others, a corporal. They would march the troops, the classes.

MG: You had said that there was a story in the Army that had to do with your Uncle George. Is that the story you told about this funeral?

RT: When I was in the seventh grade, there was a guy in the class who was running numbers for someone. You know what they are. For the lottery, they had the numbers where it was at the racetrack, and it was the last three numbers at a particular race track. (John Delarose?) his name was. The name alone sounds like mafia. I was playing a number. I remember it was a nickel a day. I never won. I remember the number I played. It was eight, two, four. I'm in the seventh grade, right. What am I? Fifteen, fourteen years old. Eight, two, four. Like I said, I never won. My uncle died in 1963, August 24. Now, of course, you think, "Oh, that's a [coincidence]," but who knows? Why did I play eight, two, four? That was the story then when I got on the plane to

come home to his funeral and that woman saying, you know, "If you let them up, they're going to be trouble." Whatever the store was, she was a buyer and she was going to New York. She said that to me. I think it was because Martin Luther King was going to make his speech around then. She [asked me] what do I think of that? What do I know? I'm in the Army, mixed in, integrated.

MG: Did you hear the speech when it happened?

RT: Martin Luther King, well, yeah, I heard it on the television..

MG: How did it make you feel?

RT: It didn't bother me, because I guess, again, it's because I wasn't segregated in the Army, so just get along with everybody. It didn't make me feel anything. Today, things that go on today bother me, the protests, and Black Lives Matter and that garbage. White Lives Matter too as far as I'm concerned. The political correctness today is totally out of hand. I have books that I'm reading, again. One of them is on political correctness and another one too on the schools, [*Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth* by Ben Shapiro] it's called, and the colleges. I don't know about when you were in school. Did they have a lot of that with the professors and they would teach what's right, what's liberal or conservatism? It's a shame what's going on. A lot of people don't even know what's happening. My one granddaughter, she's sixteen. She'll be going to college probably next year or something. They're home-schooled, but she'll be going probably next year. I know my daughter and son-in-law, they know enough. They're very, very smart. Don't be influenced by these professors. You hear about somebody wants to have a conservative group or even a Republican group in school and they get in trouble. Younger people are afraid to say anything because they'll get in trouble maybe or fail them. It's a shame. That's my feelings. I'm not liberal.

MG: You stayed in Georgia until November 1963.

RT: Yes, I got out and the next day Kennedy was killed.

MG: What was coming home like?

RT: That was an experience. [laughter] Not good. A lot of things happened when I think about it, gee whiz. Again, flying military in the uniform, you get that for a cheaper price. That first sergeant actually drove me to the airport. He liked me. I wore my uniform. I got all dressed. I got my duffle bag with all my stuff in it. He said, "How are you going to get to the airport?" I said, "Well, I'll have to call a taxi." I hadn't really thought about it, actually, because they always took care of you. He said, "No, you're not." He said, "I'm going to drive you." I said, "Okay. The airport was outside of Augusta. So, I get on the plane. This was not the one with the woman, you know, "Don't let them up." The next stop would have been Columbia, South Carolina. We land, and then they make an announcement that the plane is leaking fuel. We can't take off. [laughter] We have to get a different plane. I go into the airport, [because] of course, we had to all get off the plane. There's another plane, but it's pretty much filled. I got shoved off. That was the thing when you fly standby. You wait, and then you're lucky if you

get a seat. Finally, I get on a plane, and I flew to Washington, D.C. I miss the flight to Newark by five minutes, and this is around now nine, ten, eleven o'clock at night. I had to call home, because I had already called and said, "Well, could you pick me up at the airport?" but earlier, because I figured that's how [long it would take] from Georgia to Newark. I called; my father and my cousin [were] going to pick me up. At around midnight, they shut the airport down. All the lights go out. Well, they had, what do you call those lights, you know, just the generator. Some people were cleaning the floor. It was myself, and there was a guy, he was from Boston. We were talking. He was from, I think, it was the Air Force. He was also waiting. The next flight to Newark was [at] three o'clock in the morning, and I was afraid of missing it. I would fall asleep, wake up. A friend of mine, the one I was telling you about that we got called the same time but he went to Fort Dix and all, he was stationed in Washington, D.C. I didn't know his phone number. I found out after he got out. He stayed off base with some other guys in an apartment. It was right by the airport. I could have called and at least had somebody to talk to. Around three o'clock in the morning, I finally got another flight to Newark, so I landed in Newark finally. It was around three-thirty in the morning. So, that was my experience getting out. I guess because I was on my way home, getting out, I didn't have to worry about not being there on time. My father and my cousin picked me up. Then, the next day, like I said, we were walking down the avenue in Union City where the stores were and hearing about Kennedy being shot. We didn't believe it, like, "Is this a joke" kind of thing, the president. To tell you the truth, I don't believe that [Lee Harvey] Oswald was by himself, I really don't. Did you ever hear of *The Manchurian Candidate*? Oh, you have.

MG: I have seen the movie.

RT: You did, yes. You're one of the very few. Most people have never heard of it. That's what I believe it was. I think he was brainwashed, and it was like that telephone call triggered something and there he went and shot [the president]. The grassy knoll, I was in Dallas years later, and that grassy knoll, I went there. There's no way that he could have done that on his own, I don't believe. Now, who was it? Was it the mafia? Was it the Cubans? Because the mafia was against Kennedy's brother [Robert F. Kennedy] because he was the [attorney] general, and he did something that involved the mafia. The Cubans, it might have been them because of Bay of Pigs, you know, that was a whole fiasco. There's a lot of theories. [Editor's Note: On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed while traveling by motorcade through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. The Warren Commission investigated the assassination and concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone when he shot the president and that Jack Ruby acted alone when he killed Oswald in police headquarters two days later. Richard Condon's 1959 novel *The Manchurian Candidate* tells the story of a soldier who is brainwashed into becoming an assassin for a Communist conspiracy. In 1962 and 2004, film versions of the book were released.]

MG: Where were you when that happened, the Bay of Pigs invasion?

RT: Where was I?

MG: Yes.

RT: I was home. I was working.

MG: Okay. You had not gone in yet.

RT: It was before or after.

MG: I thought it was 1961, because it was right when Kennedy became president.

RT: Oh, okay. I didn't go in yet. I went in in November 1961. It was before. When I tell this to Vicky, she'll say, "Go look on the Internet." Everything's on the Internet. It was around then. [Editor's Note: On April 17, 1961, 1,500 CIA-trained soldiers invaded Cuba's Bay of Pigs in a failed attempt of the United States to overthrow the regime of Fidel Castro.]

MG: Is there anything else we are missing from your time in the Army, maybe friendships you formed there?

RT: I did, actually, with one guy, Heaslip. Everyone is by their last name, you knew their last name. His was Miles P. Heaslip, H-E-A-S-L-I-P. He was from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I always used to kid him, MPH, miles per hour. He got out a couple months after me, because we kept in touch with letters back and forth and back and forth and then that stopped. Yeah, he kept saying I should come down there for Mardi Gras and I could stay with him and his wife. Her name was Betty Jo. A lot of the women down in the South had two names, Betty Jo, Betty Jo Heaslip. She had moved up to outside of Augusta, and she was working for a car dealer while he was in the Army. I don't think they had any children, no. Years later, I went on the Internet, and you can look up people's addresses and phone numbers, Whitepages, like a telephone book.

MG: Yes.

RT: Whitepages or something.

MG: Whitepages.com.

RT: Dot com. [laughter] See, for you, it's a common thing, but to me, it's still kind of foreign. I looked him up, and then I called. I don't think he really remembered me, because I said to him, "In the Army, we were." He had two strokes, and he had cancer. Then, I looked up about less than a year later, and it said that he had died, on the Internet. He had two brothers. He wanted to get into police work, but he said he had a business, something with mechanics or cars. I guess he never got into police work. That was the only one really.

MG: Is there anyone else that you have kind of tracked down or reconnected with because of the Internet?

RT: No. Well, I told you about that girl. About others, stuff comes up on Facebook, people I know. There's someone I worked with. It's kind of neat. I never heard about it until Vicky and Chuck. I don't know how it works. She puts pictures up of me. I get comments about them. I see stuff on there about the animals. It gets me so mad that I make comments about that, nasty

people, evil. Some of the other things I say, Vicky says, "You shouldn't say that. You're going to get yourself in trouble." I just [make comments] about politics, the government, too much control. They control our lives, and it's getting worse and worse and worse. I think about Michelle Obama telling the kids what to eat in school, and they said that the kids didn't want to eat the stuff that she said, salads. They were bringing stuff from home, so her whole plan of telling them what they should eat, the schools were losing money. It sounds good, okay, they're eating better foods, but it's also controlling your life. They're controlling more and more. That's, in a way, with the military, the Army, you're controlled, government issue. I'm not against authority, but I also want to have control of my own life.

MG: Sure.

RT: In the Army, you don't really. An example, let's say, thankfully, it didn't happen, but when I was down there in Georgia, if orders had come through from Washington, that I'd have to go to Vietnam, I would have had to go. I didn't have a [choice]. "Oh, I don't want to go." Definitely, they control your life. Even just going in, you were drafted. I had to go. There was a guy, I remember, in basic training. He came to this country from Hungary. He got a notice, and he didn't follow it. He didn't want to come in the Army, and they went and got him. They sent MPs. They got him, and he was arrested. Then, he wound up in basic training. I remember there was another guy, too. We went to Newark, and he had a whole envelope full of x-rays of his back. He was going to get out. You're not going to get him. Yeah, he was down there, too. [laughter]

MG: I want to get back to when Kennedy was shot and what impact that had on your family and then the mood of the country at the time.

RT: Well, on the family, nothing really big. He was shot and killed. Of course, I had just gotten out. I did not have a job yet, so I was able to watch it on television every day, the funeral. You might have seen pictures of the horse-drawn carriage with the coffin in it. How did they do that? They had one horse. There's something about the horses that's special. I was able to watch all that. We didn't have any problem with, "Oh, he's been killed." [Lyndon B.] Johnson took over. That was another thing. Maybe it was Johnson that was involved. There's all these theories.

MG: How long did it take you to get back in the rhythm of your life, working and going back to school?

RT: Well, finding a job, actually, my company commander down in Georgia, he was a captain, and he had been a teacher in Florida, high school, teaching Americanism versus Communism. I don't know why he decided to come into the Army, but he was a captain. He said to me his brother is in New York. He has some kind of a business where it was freighters that travel to the Middle East somewhere and that he, at that time, was going to be a millionaire and if not, he's going to go back to Florida, the brother. He said look him up, give him a call. He gave me his phone number, and he said, "Maybe he can get you a job." I did, and that didn't work. I went on my own. At that time, you can go walking around, that's what I did, in New York with a newspaper in my hand and stop in these different companies I'd see and, "Do you have any openings?" I got a job. Now, you have to go through all these levels [of interviews] and

resumes. At that time, I could do that, and I got a job with General Motors in New York in accounting. It was in December, so it wasn't too long after I got out. Then, I started school in January.

MG: You finished your accounting degree.

RT: Well, yeah, yeah, it was an accounting degree. At Pace, they called it a bachelor of business administration, BBA. When I was there, I also took some courses in EDP, I told you, electronic data processing, that's what they called it then. I taught myself afterwards the COBOL. There [were] four courses, and you got a certificate. One was that programming, which was [IBM] 1401, which didn't help me at all. I got a job in accounting, and then from General Motors I went to work for, where was I, Equitable, then American Can, General Motors and then Bristol-Myers. It was always in accounting, and then I was also a systems analyst. General Motors, I was in New York. Equitable, I was in New York. American Can, New York. Bristol-Myers was right on the other side of town [in Hillside], which was nice, because I walked to work. I didn't have to pay New York tax, city tax, non-residence tax, and a commuting expense. The Bristol-Myers [job] worked out, and I was with them for, I think, twenty-eight [years]. [Editor's Note: In 1989, Bristol-Myers merged with Squibb, creating Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS). The pharmaceutical company is headquartered in New York City. (bms.com)]

MG: Where were you living at that time, still in Union City?

RT: No, no, no, no, because I had been married, and I was living here in Hillside. Well, we were living in Union and then in Hillside here. We moved in this house in 1972.

MG: Was that when you started working?

RT: Bristol-Myers.

MG: Bristol-Myers.

RT: Well, prior to moving in this house, [I worked at Bristol-Myers]. I started with them in '68. I think it was '68, '69, yeah.

MG: Tell me how you met your wife.

RT: Down the shore. [laughter] Do you call it down the shore?

MG: We did not have a Jersey Shore.

RT: You had the beach.

MG: Where I grew up in Maine, it was the beach, yes.

RT: Yes, because when I worked in New York, that's what the girls would tell me there, and they're going to the beach. I said, "Yeah, well, we go down the shore, and then we go to the

beach." They said, "Oh." It was down the shore. I worked at General Motors, and myself and this other guy that worked there, we used to kind of go around different places in New Jersey. We went up to Lake George [in Upstate New York] one time and traveling around. One time, he said something about Steely Dan Band. Does that sound like a band?

MG: Steely Dan is a band.

RT: Steely Dan, and we went down [to] I think it was Belmar, I believe. It was at night. We went in this bar, and Steely Dan was supposed to be there. I don't know if [they] ever [were]. I'm not sure. I found this out. My wife actually told me years later. She said she was down there in this bar with her friends, a friend or friends, I'm not sure. She said to her friends, I had lost a lot of hair by then, she said, "See that bald guy coming in the door. I'm going to marry him." Isn't that interesting? Yeah, and she told me that years later. That's where I met her. I remember I talked to her, "Your phone number?" She played hard-to-get stuff, "It's in the phone book." [laughter] She lived out here in Hillside. I never knew where any of this was. I never heard of it.

MG: It is a little similar to your parents.

RT: Oh, at the cemetery.

MG: Then, moving to the hometown of your mother. Your father moved to Union City, and you eventually moved to Hillside.

RT: Oh, I see what you mean. Yeah, he had gone to Queens, but then he came back.

MG: Tell me a little bit more about your wife. What was her name and can you tell me a little bit more about her background?

RT: Her maiden was Kubick, K-U-B-I-C-K. (Veronica?) is her first name. I called her Ronnie. Everybody did. My name is Ronald, so they called me Ronnie. We used to have discussions. How do you spell Ronnie? I always thought it was for me, I-E. No, that's a female. R-O-N-N-Y is supposed to be the male. I don't like that. I like I-E. She didn't go to college. She went to high school here. She grew up here. She went to high school. She worked at Baker & Taylor [book distributor]. It's something to do with books and maps, (Hamilton maps?). For Kean, you know Kean University over here, she worked for them, and she worked at a bank over here also as a secretary. She never had a yearbook or any pictures of her when she was younger. About five, six months ago, I got something in the mail. A girl who she knew and grew up with was in real estate, and she still was. She sent pictures of a house they were selling, and on the outside of the house, it said Kubick, which was her maiden name. I sent her an email and said how she passed away in December of '14. She called me, and we got back and forth a couple times. I said, "Do you have any pictures?" She sent me some pictures, just recently in fact. She had to dig them out from the attic. I thanked her, because she had pictures of my wife when she was younger. My wife was her maid of honor when she got married. That was nice that she sent the pictures. That's about it.

MG: What year were you two married?

RT: '66.

MG: Is there anything memorable about that day with the wedding?

RT: No, it's a wedding, it's not memorable.

MG: It is not memorable.

RT: Well, it's memorable, but you said is anything memorable? We got married, and what can you say?

MG: Was there a honeymoon?

RT: Oh, yeah. We drove to Lake George. That was in New York State, and we went to Thousand Islands. Then, we went to Quebec, pronounced Quebec [with a "k" sound], not Quebec [with a "qu" sound], Quebec. I was graduated. I'm being pesky now. [laughter] We went to Quebec. At that time, there was a, I believe in UFOs, I do, I really do, and at that time, you ever hear of Betty and Barney Hill. [Editor's Note: On the night of September 19-20, 1961, Betty and Barney Hill, upon returning to New Hampshire from a trip to Niagara Falls and Montreal, allegedly experienced a close encounter with an unidentified flying object in Lincoln, New Hampshire.]

MG: Yeah, from New Hampshire.

RT: Oh, yeah, wow, boy, you're really are, seriously, very [knowledgeable]. Most people don't know anything about these things. That was right, New Hampshire. When we came back from Quebec and came across the border. I said to my wife, "You know if I see anything," it was at night, "I'm going to have to stop." "No, you're not." We had a big discussion about that, because if I saw something in the sky, I was going to stop and go see what it was. Now, we didn't see anything.

MG: You knew about the Betty and Barney Hill story at that point.

RT: Right, I did. It was up in that area, right.

MG: Yes.

RT: New Hampshire. That, to me, is a fascinating story.

MG: I agree.

RT: The one big thing that always sticks in my mind is that when they asked her about, she had asked someone on that ship about where are they located, and he said to her where are you located. She didn't know. Of course not, how do you tell. She pointed out some stars or

something, if you remember, that years later, they found those stars. They saw those stars, NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration], and they hadn't known about them. All that stuff, I really do [believe]. I do believe that something, God, you want to use whatever word, created the universe. There's more than one universe, too, I believe. There's many universes. I say to people, I have told them in the past, guys I played golf with, I said, "Imagine He created all this universe, billions of stars, billions of galaxies, and this is the only place that's going to have life. What a waste." That's what I believe in.

MG: Talk to me about living through the Vietnam War years and all the protests.

RT: Well, okay, yeah, you're right. The protests against the war [were] mostly college students. I remember I was going to Pace. At that time, they were building a new building for Pace, I think it was still called college, or maybe it was university, right across the street really from where I was. I was on Park Row, and this was right there across the way. They were also building one up in Pleasantville, New York on campus. There were protests going on. One time I was in class, and the teacher made an announcement. He said, "Well, they're having a protest in (Shabanabber?) Hall on the tenth floor or eleventh floor. If you want to go, you can go." I didn't go. The class ended. Then, I was on my way out and going home. It was at night. I said, "Oh, heck." I got off the elevator, and I went to see what they were protesting. These young guys were all up on the stage, signs and yelling. Some guy stands up in the audience, suit and tie on, so it wasn't a kid, and he says, "You're going about this the wrong way." "Oh, boo," they all booed him. Somebody said on the stage, "Wait, let him speak." He said, "About four or five blocks from here is Wall Street." That's how close we are. He said, "You should go there and shut down the stock exchange. That will get the attention of the world." "Yeah, yeah," they're all screaming, "Yeah, yeah." He left. I said, "Isn't that interesting." He got them all excited about this, and then he left. Who told you to do that? I don't know. They didn't do it the next day, but the thing is I thought that was interesting for him to come up with that and just take off, plant the seed kind of thing. There were protests, I don't know if they were in City Hall Park. I'm not sure. I know the guys that were working on construction, they were against the protesters, I remember. Yeah, it must have been in City Hall Park, because they were against them, the guys in construction. Then, I don't know if it was the next year or earlier or later, the construction guys were all protesting also against Vietnam. It's a shame, because the people, thankfully it wasn't me, but the ones that were drafted that went over there, were sent over or even volunteered that they wound up coming back and they were spit on and things were thrown at them and eggs and treated them like dirt, and all the thousands and thousands that died, and their families and how they felt because their sons and daughters were booed or treated like dirt. That's changed now. Now, when they see people coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq, they clap for the people. Or like me, with the hat that I wear and [people say] thank you for your service.

MG: It took a little while for that to happen. Probably not until the 1980s were the homecomings and the memorials built.

RT: Yeah, yeah.

MG: What were your feelings about the Vietnam War while it was happening?

RT: Not too much. It was a war that was going on. I wasn't involved really. I felt we should be there. It was that we were there because of the Chinese Communists.

MG: The domino effect.

RT: Yes, boy, oh, boy, I'm serious, Molly, you are very good, very good, wow, yes. I believed it and into Cambodia, Laos and into Thailand, sooner or later, they're to Hawaii and the West Coast of this country. McNamara, secretary of defense, I think he came out with a book and said that was all a lie. Again, fifty-something thousand died or missing. It was all a lie. [Editor's Note: After the Chinese Communists led by Mao Zedong won the Chinese civil war and established the People's Republic of China in 1949, the domino theory dominated policy-making in American foreign relations. The domino theory rested upon the assumption that once one nation became Communist that Communist revolutions would sweep through the Asia, toppling one nation after the next like falling dominoes. Robert S. McNamara served as the secretary of defense from 1961 to 1968. During that time, he oversaw the escalation of U.S. military operations in Vietnam. In a 1995 memoir, McNamara said that the Vietnam War was "wrong, terribly wrong." ("Robert S. McNamara, Architect of a Futile War, Dies at 93," by Tim Weiner, *The New York Times,* July 6, 2009.]

MG: Was it ever an option that you would be called back in, or had you already served your time?

RT: No, I served. I guess I could have been, because my time was from '61 to '67, six years. I got called for summer camp, I told you, in '64, I believe. I got called to go up two weeks in New York State. Yeah, I did, because I saw some of the guys from basic training there. I remember them saying though when I got out that you were active duty Reserves, and in my case because there were so many, it was four years of inactive Reserve duty, but that you could be called, because you were still part of the Army until '67 when it was officially [over]. I got a card. I think I was [4-A]. [I was] not 4-F; that was when something was wrong with you. [I was] not A; I was A when you could be called [available for military service]. Whatever it was that I couldn't be called anymore.

MG: Was there anything else you wanted to say about this time period, going through the civil rights movement, the Vietnam years.

RT: Oh, civil rights movement, no, not really. It's just that the past few years with these complaints from Black Lives Matter kind of thing, and it's like give me, give me, give me, give me [pronounced as "gimme"]. Because of slavery that the government should give black people money, you know, because of slavery. They had nothing to do with slavery. They weren't around. That was their ancestors. It's like give me, give me, give me, and I think a lot of the younger people, not only black but white also, feel like the government should support them, and, "I'm just going to sit back, do what I want to do, play with my iPhone and you send me a check every month." I get a check because of Social Security, but that's different. I worked and supported and paid for that. Actually, I've collected more than I put in, but I put in for twenty, thirty, forty years of putting money into Social Security. The younger people today, because of

people like Bernie Sanders, socialism. That doesn't work. It's been tried in Europe; it doesn't work. Karl Marx, [Friedrich] Engels [authors of *The Communist Manifesto*], it just doesn't work. You see that when they have these rallies. A lot of the younger people cheer when Bernie Sanders speaks. Free education, all kinds of free stuff. Well, who's going to pay for it, Bernie? Where are you going to get the money to get it free? I'm sorry, but I don't care for Hillary [Clinton] at all. To me, she's another extension of [Barack] Obama. Yesterday, Hillary was riding the subway in the Bronx and putting the card through the subway, she had to do it five times. It wouldn't work. They're all trying to make an impression on the New Yorkers. She was there. [John] Kasich, I think, was over in a matzah factory in Brooklyn. To me, you can see through that. It's so obvious. I remember when Hillary was running for the Senate years back, and she insisted she was a Yankee fan. No, she's not a Yankee fan. I feel like why don't other people see through that. Today, I'm a Yankee fan, but tomorrow. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tunnermann is discussing presidential candidates in the 2016 Democratic and Republican primaries.]

MG: Can you tell me a little bit about how your working life unfolded? You were at the same company for a long time. Can you talk about the years you spent there and how things changed over time?

RT: Well, I worked for different companies, Equitable, then American Can, General Motors. It was about every four years, I decided I wanted to go work somewhere else. The last one was [Bristol-Myers], mainly because I got married and we were living here. Then, we had our daughter, and I figured I better stop changing because with the baby but also because of living here and Bristol-Myers was here. I could walk to work and not have to commute and [pay the] non-residence city tax in New York. I started with pretty much the same salary as I left General Motors, but because of all that, I didn't have to worry about that extra taxes and commuting and the time also. I keep looking because the birds are out there. They're probably looking for something. There's a lot of cats I have here. I take care of cats. I [am] a caregiver for the cats in the neighborhood here, and I feed them. A lot of times they look in the back door, and they knock. They do, with their paw. I have the one. He's downstairs.

MG: I think I saw him in the living room before.

RT: You're kidding.

MG: Black and white.

RT: Yeah, wow, I'm surprised. He came up. I didn't see him. Really? Wow, nice. There's a little story there that's kind of funny. He's a male. What happened was he showed up, well, about three or four years now, three years ago, I think, but very, very tiny. My wife was alive at the time. We couldn't determine if it was a male or female. It was really small. I brought it to, up the hill up here, there's a People for Animals it's called, and they do spay and neutering really cheap. They have vets that volunteer to do it for a very, very low price. I brought her up there, and they always ask for the name. We thought of Annie from the show in New York. It used to be Annie. I said, "Annie." You have to pick them up by the end of the day. They called me later on in the day, and they said, "You can pick her up now. You might want to change her

name. Annie, no, it's a male." I still call her Annie. She gets scared and she always runs downstairs. I'm surprised she came up though. You saw here, black and white, yeah, wow. I'm sorry, so off I went.

MG: That is okay. I was asking you about your working life.

RT: Then, I worked for Bristol-Myers. Part of Bristol-Myers Company was Clairol, but they sold that off. Drackett, they made mops, brooms, stuff like that, sold that off. Ban, Bufferin, Excedrin, that was all Bristol-Myers. I think they still have that. It was good. I got in with this other guy who started a new department, and it had to do with systems, the computer stuff. Like I said, I wrote that program in COBOL. It does exist, because someone I know, his wife works for some company, I forget what, because they have a lot of old programs and nobody understands COBOL. She does, because she went to school for it, and she's able to interpret it for them when there's errors and stuff and they want to update. I did all that and then systems Analysis, and we wrote policies and procedures, this department that I was in with this guy. That's why I feel like the reading, and I told you all the books and the syntax, the sentence structure and all, the reading has helped me with writing the policies and procedures. It was good. I managed to keep the job. They went through these downsizing things. I retired when I was fifty-five, because I was old enough to collect most of my pension. [The last year] I had to go to Connecticut every day. I knew someone, a vice president, and he got me a company car. So, it wasn't too bad, but I had to drive up to Connecticut every day. Because it was a company car and I think because I knew I was going to be leaving, it made it easier. They were going to combine Clairol and Drackett and the products division, where I worked, into one thing up in Connecticut, consumer products. Then, they sold Clairol. They sold Drackett. That whole thing fell apart in Connecticut. I got out just in time. About a year after I got out, that's when everything just fell apart, this big scheme they had. I was driving up there every day, and like I said, the company picked up the tolls and the gas and I had the company car. That was kind of nice because of knowing I was going to be leaving. Bristol-Myers was a good company to work for. I managed to stay there, like I said, for twenty-eight years.

MG: When did you start your family?

RT: Vicky was born in 1969, so '68. My wife had a lot of problems too when Vicky was born. My wife had some kind of infection. I remember talking to the doctor, they thought she might not live. Thankfully, she did. Vicky, when she was about a year-and-a-half old, she had an infection in her inner ear, and she had to have an operation. I remember the doctor operated under a microscope, because, remember, this is 1969, 1970 maybe, 1971. Then, it wasn't too long after that that they said they wouldn't even bother with that anymore, because they had all kinds of antibiotics and the advancements. I've been thinking about that, too, where years ago when people died from things today they won't die. People said the good old days. Yes, except for medicine, I feel like. The hearts, they can operate and replace a heart. There are good things, and there are bad things, too.

MG: Tell me about some other family memories, maybe trips you took or things that stand out to you.

RT: My sister, I told you, she died in '93, a brain tumor. She lived nineteen months. They operated, and they thought they got it all. It shattered, and you only need one cell. Then, it grew again. The doctor said to my brother-in-law that he wouldn't put her through that again. My wife died from cancer. This is something that I don't know in your personal life, but they're showing it on television recently a lot about talcum powder. Have you heard of that?

MG: Yes, the connection between talcum powder and ovarian cancer.

RT: That's what she died from, and she used talcum powder for years and years, Clubman it was called. She got ovarian cancer. She had an operation. It was on July 3, 2013. She had an operation. The doctor called, the surgeon woman, said she got everything. She took out her ovaries, took out her uterus, she took out other things. Everything was fine with the operation. However, it was in the liver also, and she couldn't do anything. It was stage four. She had to go for chemotherapy, and she was. She was doing well. There was some kind of number. It was three thousand. Then, it was down to four hundred. Then, it was down to fifty. She said she'll have to keep chemo for the rest of her life. We were going up to Overlook Hospital up in Summit. It bothered her, the chemo. It made her kind of sick for a couple of days. Then, something happened where it traveled to her esophagus, and it was blocking the foods and that from going down. Then, hospice came in. I took care of her. The hospice people gave us all kinds of pain pills, four, five of them you take every four hours, every six hours, morphine taken through the mouth. She, (Ronnie?), my wife, she made up these cards, and I kept track of it, what to give her when, pills, and morphine and such, but she really couldn't eat. Two or three months maybe she lasted. She just went to sleep, yeah, sad. There's a story, too. I don't know if I should tell you this stuff. This is going to be published. Is it?

MG: You will determine what will be published.

RT: Yeah.

MG: If you would like me to turn off the recorder, I will.

RT: No, no, no. It's just that I don't always feel how people take things, like we talked about UFOs. People might say, "What's wrong with that guy?" You do. [laughter] When she got sick, she told this story. When she was ten years old, she lived in Hillside all her life, and her grandmother had died. She remembers hearing her voice, and she believed it was her grandmother. I believe this stuff, too. I continue to exist. This shell that I'm in goes away. So, she believed it was her grandmother, and her grandmother had said to her, "You're going to live until you're seventy-two." She was ten. She said, "Oh, wow, seventy-two." When you're ten, that's like forever. She died when she was seventy-two. That was December. Then, in March, she would have been seventy-three. I believe. Like I said, there was no real pain, because she had the pain pills. Even the hospice woman said that she felt like I did an excellent job, she said. I said, "Well, thanks," because I gave her the pills on the different times. I think she was glad. She wrote me a note, and it said, "Sorry that it had to happen this way," and there were a couple of other things. We all have to go, but we don't know when. We all hope in a way, it's just go to sleep and that's that. You don't wake up. Thankfully, that does happen. With some people, they just die.

MG: Tell me a little more about Vicky and how her life has unfolded.

RT: Well, she got married in 1996. This fellow she [married is] Charles. They call him Chuck. She has two daughters. One is sixteen, like I said. She's going to be driving next year I think. She got her permit, but you have to have an adult with you. She drove my car, but I had to be with her. I remember when she drove. Somebody came out of a street real fast, and I said, "Look at that fool." [She said], "Grandpa, I've got in under control." [laughter] The other daughter is twelve. I have it written down on the calendar, because I keep forgetting. The other daughter [who is] twelve, she'll be thirteen in July, and then (Raven?) is sixteen. She'll be seventeen in September. I think when she's seventeen, then she can drive on her own, I believe. I'm more nervous than anything. Then, she'll be going to school, too. They're still trying to decide, but probably to Raritan [Valley] Community College for two years and then switch to Rutgers. Chuck, he has a consulting business. There's the blue jay. He's looking for his peanuts. [laughter] I've got to watch them, too, because the cats watch. He has a consulting business for Ethicon. He consults for them. That's part of J&J [Johnson & Johnson]. It's out that way, too, by the Bridgewater area. They're doing well. I'm glad.

MG: Looking back on your life, what has stood out to you?

RT: Nothing extra, extra special. I think about a lot of different things, and like I said how that one guy at Equitable had said to me about going to school and how things worked out. The Army, of course, that was quite an experience. Of course, I lived through it, and I didn't, like I said, have to go to Vietnam, which I didn't think about until afterwards, Vietnam, and how that all happened, too. Two years active, the job I got down there in Georgia, which was okay. It wasn't really strenuous. The basic training was a pain, but that's the way that is with the sergeants. I always remember too with reading and words and spelling. In the Army, a lot of the sergeants would say, if somebody complained about something, you might have heard this too, "I could care less." Have you heard that? Yeah, but I felt like telling everybody, I never did, because I didn't want to get in trouble, but that means you care, I could care less. It means you care. You mean you couldn't care less. You don't tell these guys, these older guys, and I'm a punk kid, twenty-something years old. That was an experience, things like that woman on the plane, if you let them up, there'll be trouble. Augusta, going into town. My big deal was I bought myself a transistor radio, which back then was something brand new. I was able to pick up at night Cousin Brucie [Bruce Morrow, radio host] from New York.

MG: He had a funny voice.

RT: Yeah, yeah, and it kind of made me feel like I was home, because Cousin Brucie. It was at night. I guess something about the air or whatever. The transistor was about this big. The jobs I worked, and most of them, they were okay. Of course, I worried about when they had the downsizing and [if I would have to] get a job and my family. Political correctness, this was something that happened a year or so before I left, but it was in Hillside here. We used to have a meeting once a month. It was what they called a closing in accounting, what entries, debits and credits you have to make to close out the month, did you have a profit or you don't have a profit or you have too much of a profit. Companies don't always try to make, you know that, right, as

much as you can. If you have too much, well, then let's get more expense. You don't want to have too much, because you don't want to have a spike this month. We had this meeting. We used to keep track of the journal entries. We're sitting in there, and it didn't start yet. Somebody said, "Well, who's going to be the scribe?" I said, "I'll be the scribe." "Lisa," I said, "will be the scribette." Oh, my God, what did I say? Ten to twelve people, "You can't say that. You're going to get in trouble." The controller was there, "I'll talk to him later. You can't do that." One guy finally says, "You could lose your job." This other girl, who kind of liked me in a way, says, "Oh, Joe." I said, "Joe, I am losing my job," because I was going to Connecticut. Then, they all shut up. Political correctness, I could not say scribette. Why not? What's wrong with that? I don't know how you feel. It's gotten a lot worse than that. You can't say this. You can't say that. You're going to get in all kinds of trouble. Nothing bad, I don't feel it was bad. I guess that meant there was a separation between a male and female, scribe and scribette. Anyhow, that was that, [laughter] another experience. In high school, like I said, I didn't go in for sports or anything. I worked in a liquor store. That was interesting delivering, because I walked. I didn't drive. I used to deliver in Weehawken. Do you know where that is?

MG: Vaguely.

RT: Along the Hudson River there, big houses, big homes with the wraparound porches. It's a pretty wealthy town. I used to deliver there, and I'd get a tip, a quarter or fifty cents. I'd put that in a can and save it, and then I wound up going to a store and buying myself a coat or something, a jacket. I remember one time I went to one house, the first time, and I rang the bell in the front. A woman came out, "You don't deliver in the front. Deliveries are in the back." Okay, that was my experience with the people with money. It was like the scribette thing. I was wrong because I went and rang the bell in the front, jeez. What else? Along the Hudson River. In that area, of Weehawken and Union City, they had Boulevard. One was the East Boulevard, which of course in is the east. Hudson Boulevard was on the west of Union City. After Kennedy got killed, everything was being changed to Kennedy, and then it was Kennedy [Boulevard] East and Kennedy [Boulevard] West. My sister had two girls, two daughters. They grew up. My sister named the one Jacqueline because of Jacqueline Kennedy, and she was born in December '63. He was killed [in November '63]. Girls were called Jacqueline. It's interesting, too, because Jacqueline had two girls, and her sister, (Janice?), had two boys. I don't see them too often though. They live up in North Jersey. We used to get together once in a while in a place up in Paramus on Route 17, a hamburger place there, and we used to get together once in a while. I haven't seen them in a couple of years, because I don't like to drive. I was telling you on the phone. I, for some reason, get very nervous now about driving, especially on the highway, like on the Parkway I would have to take. I go in town here [to] a store, the Acme. It's not too far. I go once in a while to see my daughter and my granddaughters. I have to take Route 22. I wish I wasn't this way, but I'm very nervous about driving now.

MG: I do not blame you. It is crazy out there. The drivers are hectic.

RT: Yeah, and kind of nasty, too. I'm just real nervous about it. Once in a while, Vicky and Chuck and the kids will come here. They were here about two weeks ago. That's always an experience, too. [laughter] They like the cats. The cats are outside. The cats will run up in the garage. The garage is outside. I had cut a hole in the bottom of the one door, because it's

separate, so they live in there. I have the boxes in there, cardboard boxes, and I cut holes in them and then we have blankets, small blankets, from friends and Vicky, and in the winter, they stay in there. Then, I feed them in the morning and around now usually. They come here. They bring me food sometimes, too, which is nice. That's about it.

MG: Is there anything I have forgotten to ask you or anything we are missing?

RT: I'll think of it after you leave.

MG: I do not mind coming back and getting it on the record.

RT: No, no, no, no, it's okay. I don't think there's anything, but I'll just remember it and I'll say, "Oh, [shoot], why didn't I tell you that?"

MG: I am open to coming back if you have other things you want to add to the record. I think it is important to get it down. I do not mind coming here.

RT: Oh, thank you. I really enjoyed this. I'm so glad that this happened.

MG: Me too.

RT: Like I said, I like to speak, and I go on and on and on and on a lot of times. It's fun, and it's fun talking to somebody, because I'm kind of by myself. Vicky calls me every day, which is nice, to see if I'm okay. Also, she got me, you see it on television, one of these things you press a button. I have that, so when I go out, I hang that on me in case something happens. It somehow connects with someplace, and then they have her phone number. They can call her, and they also have where I am, wherever I am. I think about that, too. What happens if I collapse here, I hope not, but if I collapse here, how are they going to get in? The door's locked, unless they break the door. They always show you on television, you ever see it with the, "I've fallen and I can't get up." Then, next, they show somebody helping her. Well, how did they get in the house? Like I said, maybe they pick the lock. I won't think about that.

MG: I do not think you have to worry about that.

RT: Who me? I don't know. I hope not. Like I said, I don't want to go to a hospital. I told Vicky that, too. I really don't. Thank God the only hospital I've ever been in was, here's a story, years and years ago, tonsils were something that they took out, whether you needed it or not, and my sister and myself, my mother took us down to Jersey City, Jersey City Medical Center Hospital, to have our tonsils taken out and the adenoids. It was so crowded that I had to go home, and my sister had hers done. Then, my mother had to bring me back the next week. I remember I was in a ward with a lot of other kids. I was young, six, seven, eight, ten maybe. I remember I was laying in the bed, and somebody came down after being operated on, screaming. I said, "What did they do to you?" [laughter] What it turned out was that when he was being [administered] ether, that he tried to fight it and then went to sleep. When it wore off, he was still fighting, and that's what he was screaming about. I got kind of nervous. What did they do

to you? [laughter] So, I had mine done, too. I don't think they do that anymore. Tonsils they felt weren't necessary, so we'll take them out. What else? I guess that's about it.

MG: Well, I will turn this off, but I want to thank you for all the time you spent with me and sharing all these stories. This has really been a treat.

RT: Thanks for coming and listening to me going on and on and on. You sure you don't want any water.

MG: I am okay. I will turn this off right now.

RT: Okay.

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

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