

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD G. WAGNER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Richard G. Wagner on January 29, 2004, in Cranford, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Jason Hutchins: Jason Hutchins.

SI: Mr. Wagner, thank you very much for having us here today.

Richard Wagner: You're welcome.

JH: Would you like to tell us a little bit about your family, about your parents?

RW: Well, I was born in Newark, New Jersey, on August 5, 1922. My father died when I was six months old, a tender moment right now, because it was just about eighty-one years ago this time of the year that he passed away. My mother moved in with my grandmother and they, in turn moved in with my aunt. So, my childhood family consisted of my mother, my aunt, my uncle, my grandmother and my aunt's daughter; [she is] my age. I went through the Irvington public schools, first grade through twelfth grade. That was the time when they didn't have kindergarten. I was a reasonably bright student. I only spent seven years in elementary school, rather than eight. My interest, mainly, through high school, was in music and, in fact, that's where I went to school; I went to State College of Trenton and majored in music education. I graduated from high school when I was fifteen, which was a little unusual at the time, and I graduated from college when I was nineteen. I say these [things] because these all prepared me for entry into the service, very early. I was one of the youngest Naval officers graduated from midshipman's school. I am a single child in a sense, [in] that [I'm] the only offspring of my mother and dad, but, as I mentioned, I grew up with my cousin, who was my age, from the time I was two, so, she became my sort of substitute sister. I had lots of friends in high school; [I] still see and hear from one of them. I grew up, I thought, ... [in] a very normal, healthy, wonderful childhood.

SI: Where did your interest in music come from? Was it in the family?

RW: No. It was not. My mother found out when I was five years old that I could carry a tune and I picked up the piano very easily. So, she found a music teacher for me and it was a very successful experience for me. It was much more of a successful experience, ... because I was not a really good musician, but I was certainly interested in it and [it] carried me through a lot of times.

SI: Was there any particular type of music that you were interested in?

RW: I played classical music. [I] still play almost every day, on the piano. [I] still play publicly, occasionally, but it's been an abiding interest in my life all through my life.

SI: What was the town like?

RW: In Irvington?

SI: Yes.

RW: I lived right on the edge of a farm. ... [For] those of you [who] are familiar with the Garden State Parkway, [it] goes through the Union Toll Plaza. If you look to the west, you will see the Tuscan Dairy silo there. Well, that was indeed a dairy. It was one of two dairies in that area. We were on the Union line and I used to go into the farm. I went through the farm in order to go to school, which was a very, very reasonably rural area in Irvington at that time. Route 22 was nearby, but the rest of the area was dairy farmland.

SI: When you were an adolescent, did you have to work on the farm?

RW: I never worked as a child, but, during the summer of my fourteenth year, one of my good friends, who was two years older, worked at a bank in Newark and they needed a summer replacement. As a fourteen-year-old, I went down there as a messenger and I worked that summer, my fifteenth year summer, and my sixteenth year summer there. I also delivered the *Herald Tribune* and the *New York Times* to my classmates in Irvington High School in my last two years. I was in the band, the orchestra, the glee club, the choir.

SI: It sounds as though Irvington schools, particularly the high school, were high quality.

RW: Irvington is and was a middle-class town, maybe even a working-class [town]. My father died before I even knew him, he was a butcher. My mother worked for the Aetna Casualty and Surety Company as a secretary. I had nobody in my family go to college before I did. The school, as far as I knew, was a good school.

SI: Later on, when you were in college, did you feel as though it did not prepare you for anything?

RW: No. In fact, I went to college on a scholarship because of the test that I took. I had a four-year scholarship there. Tuition was two hundred dollars a year. Board was two hundred dollars a year. There were eight hundred students at Trenton State College at the time. Think about that; we're talking about different times, aren't we?

SI: Yes, it is a bit different. [laughter] Books cost two hundred dollars if you are lucky.

RW: Yes, okay, there you go.

SI: Did you always aspire to become a musical educator?

RW: No. I didn't think of it until we started to talk about careers as a senior and the vice-president of Trenton [State College] came to our career day and he told us all about it. "Gee," I thought to myself, you know, "I've got a lot of music background here. Maybe I'll think about that." So I decided that I'd give it a shot. [I have] never regretted it. Incidentally, we're talking about the height of the Depression now. We have to have a feel for this. There was some encouragement from my house for me to go to work, not only because of my youth but also because the family needed some money. I, to this day, am indebted to my uncle, [and] my

mother for giving me that opportunity, not that it was that much money. Even then, it wasn't that much money, but I wasn't earning anything, either, [I worked for a] couple of summers.

JH: What sort of professions did the other adults in your household have?

RW: My uncle was a butcher. My grandfather was a butcher. The women were housekeepers. There were no professional people in my family.

SI: Do you remember how the Great Depression affected your family?

RW: No, other than being very careful about we spent. We always had good food. [A] butcher family always had the best food, in fact, but, no, we had an automobile and during the war, we had gas rationing. We couldn't use our cars very often. ... You could if you were in business.

SI: How did the Depression affect Irvington in general? Was it hit hard?

RW: The only thing I recall was that many men who are unemployed. Actually, some men used to camp in the back of our house on the dairy farm. We would see fires at night, about, maybe, [a] thousand feet or so from our house during the summer months, and they would stop by and ask for something to eat or some money. That was the only evidences of that I can recall, of hardship, unless you went down by Newark Airport. There was a regular camp with sheds where they lived, where many unemployed men [lived]. I had some cousins who were out of work, young men who couldn't find jobs. One joined the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps, but, no, I was not aware. Knowing children as I do, [when] you're a child, you think that's what the world is like. I accepted it. There was no real hardship. We went away for a two-week vacation each year.

SI: Speaking of what you knew as a child, in the 1930s, Hitler was expanding his empire in Europe and the Japanese were fighting in China. How much did you know about these events?

RW: With a name like Wagner, you must know I have some German background. My grandmother was born in Germany. I lived with her. My uncle, who was the only man in the house, was born in Germany. I lived with him. I was really shocked when the United States was thinking about going to war, because I thought, "hey wait a second, what will these fellows do over there? You know, come on, these are nice people you are talking about. You are not talking about devils." I had quite an internal fight with myself as to whether I should even join the service, that combined with the fact that I had very strong religious training. I went to Sunday school in church every Sunday from the time I was five until the time I was through high school, ... Sunday school and church; sometimes, [I went on] Wednesday night. [I] had bars down to here for satisfactory attendance at church. I was accepted as a pre-ministerial student by Elon College when I got to be a senior. There were some questions whether I was going to go into teaching or whether I was going to go into the ministry. I had a terrible time deciding ... whether to be a serviceman or not. I guess it was the summer of '42; I had some real tough spots in my own mind as to what was going to happen. The thing that did it, of course, was, I was drafted. That ended it and that brought it to a head and I decided, "Well, if I was going to be

drafted, the next best thing would be to go [in] to the Navy.” My mother said, “Don’t go [in] to the Army.”

SI: Your father was in the Army.

RW: My father was in the Army. So, I went to New York and I found out that because I had four years of college, I might be eligible for a commission. So, I opted for that. [I] almost didn’t make it, because I didn’t have any math in college. In fact, after my sophomore year in high school, it was nil. So, they said, “If you go to NYU and you take a course in spherical trigonometry and solid geometry and get Bs in both subjects, we will take you.” So, for three months a year, while I was teaching up in West Essex County, I went, every Wednesday night, for four hours, from September until Thanksgiving, got Ds in both subjects, great. One week later, I got a notice, “report to Columbia University as midshipman.” That’s how hard up they were for officers. I mean, you know, men were coming in to the service like mad and they were just trying to [find officers]. They were really ‘sucking wind,’ as they say. I always felt that way, all the way through my service. I thought, “Well, I’m in here just by the skin of my teeth,” but I decided that was it and [to] make the best of it and I was very, very lucky.

SI: When you were making your decision about going into the service, did you explore options such as becoming a conscientious objector or a chaplain?

RW: No. ... I went over to a church in New York City, I was so naïve, [laughter] and I wanted to talk to the head minister. That’s all there was to it. My minister, he was on the fence. He couldn’t make up his mind. I went to him for counseling [and] he wasn’t sure. The fellow over there said, “Look, your generation is going to be the generation that has to do this and you’re going to say to yourself, when you are an adult, I was a part of it or I was not.” I realized that ... my faith wasn’t ... quite strong enough to say, “I should go into the ministry in order to get out of the service.” I thought to myself, “What a heck of a way to go into the ministry. You want to be a minister, you better believe all the way, not part way.” So, I decided that that was what it was. I just decided, “I’m not going into the ministry. If the Navy takes me, I’ll go.” That was my personal decision.

SI: Did you have conversations about this with your friends?

RW: Oh, sure. They were being drafted left and right, absolutely. A couple of my friends became officers, too. I went around with a crowd of fellows that were reasonably bright and they, both my good friends, became officers in the service.

JH: In retrospect, do you think that minister was right in the advice he gave you?

RW: The first one or the second one?

JH: The second one.

RW: The second one? Yes. I have since, of course; I don’t know whether you spoke to your chairman [Editor’s Note: Mr. Wagner is referring to Professor John Whiteclay Chambers, II,

Chair of the Oral History Archives Advisory Board] there, but I've since absolutely rejected war as a way of solving problems. It was a year ago now [that] I was in Representative [Michael] Ferguson's office, trying to say, "Hey, you give these guys a chance to find these weapons of mass destruction before you go." [Editor's Note: Mr. Wagner is referring to the Iraqi War, 2003.] Of course, that wasn't the way the politicians thought at the time and now we're in what I consider something that we shouldn't have been in, in the first place, but, it's my own personal feeling about it. War is not a solution to a problem. It's a sign of failure, that you haven't found the right way to do it. That's my thinking; sorry about that. ... I could go into that a little more deeply, if you want me to, but it's almost a joke on the human race, that [at] the time when they need to solve some problem, they call on the most idealistic of the species to solve it, okay? That was what I was; that's where all men are, in my judgment, to go into the service. It's a very idealistic [time in your life]. ... In a way, your years between eighteen and twenty-four, you're locked into those years for the rest of your life. You talk to people, older people, and they'll tell you what happened between years eighteen and twenty-four faster than they'll tell you [about] what happened between twenty-eight and thirty-four, thirty-eight and forty-four, or forty-eight and fifty-four. Am I making myself clear? It's almost a joke on the human race that this happens. So, you have this tremendous appeal. If you read these letters over, [Editor's Note: Mr. Wagner is referring to his wartime correspondence with his family] you'll see how wonderful [it was]. It was so wonderful, fellows, that on April the 12th, I'm going back to England, where I was, as a small boat officer, on the north shore in North Devon, and I'm taking my wife and my son, who wants to see where pop was. These were the idealistic [years] and there I was, in a war. I mean, am I making a crystal clear picture about the wonderful experiences you have? You [Editor's Note: Mr. Wagner is talking to Jason Hutchinson] probably had some of these [experiences] that you never would have had ... before if you hadn't been in the service and you look forward to maybe some more of those, if you're going to go into the Navy, but you think to yourself, "What for?" It is because the older people just failed in this thing, that operation, a failure we're working on. No matter how you look at it, it's a failure of diplomacy. If you can solve the problem by coming together with other people, compromising; it's not that easy. I'm making it sound very simple and I'm aware of the simplicity of it, but ... that's how I feel.

SI: To go back to when you joined the Navy could you walk us through your first few months. What was it like to enter the Navy?

RW: It was wonderful. I was in midshipman's school in Columbia University, in a winter not unlike this winter, and we marched from class to class. I met men who I still correspond with to this day, sixty years later. The idea of [being] in a uniform was great. I will not deny it. I was the choir leader at church on Sunday at Riverside Chapel. I was going through things that never would have happened to me if it hadn't been for the service. My wife-to-be loved my uniform; I mean, come on guys.

JH: She was your hometown sweetheart.

RW: Not quite. I met her at a summer camp and I dated her slightly afterwards. She was only a senior in high school, but, well, for four years of letter writing and coming home and seeing her, that's what happened. ... No, there wasn't one experience I had that was unhappy. No

assignment that I had was the wrong one. I mean, D-Day and Normandy, they were harrowing experiences, but I knew [why] I was there. I had opted for it, didn't have anybody else to complain about, lucky as all hell, okay?

SI: I have heard that the training was very intense in midshipmen's school.

RW: It was.

SI: Compressing all that training into three months.

RW: Yes, there's no question about it, but it worked. I couldn't swim before I got to midshipmen's school and the question came up, "Can you swim or can't you? If you can't swim, you will have to stay on Saturday afternoon, when everybody else goes in and learns how to swim." I learned, while he was talking, how to swim. I just jumped in the pool and the other side that I had to get to was over there, and some miracle happened. I got over there and it was the way I learned to swim. It works that way. It was either swim or stay out Saturday afternoon. That's an option; great discipline, the service. That's another thing. ... The incongruity is that it met me, and it met all my colleagues, at a time in their lives when they liked this. The end was wrong, but the means to the end were wonderful. Travel; I'd never been to Virginia before when I went down to Little Creek, you know, training. Never did I think I'd go to England, never. [I] spent a year in a resort town, where, if I wanted to stay in this hotel that we were staying by in England, it would cost me about 150 dollars a night to stay there. I mean, it was gorgeous. I write about [it in my] letters, but I told my wife [that] I never realized what a wonderful place this was.

JH: You indicated that your day of enlistment was December 7, 1942.

RW: That's right; one year after Pearl Harbor.

JH: Is there any reason why you enlisted on that day or is it just coincidence?

RW: No. A couple of things happened when I joined the service. I absolutely gave up my own [will]. I realized, when they gave me my uniform, [that] I didn't have to worry, from that day on, about what I was going to wear, I didn't have to worry about where I was going to eat, I didn't have to worry about where I was going to sleep. The Navy, incidentally, supplied that beautifully, more so, I think, than some of the other services. That was a big come on to me, no question about it. So, as far as where were going to go or what day it is, that just vanished.

SI: How did you wind up in the Amphibious Forces?

RW: I was a music teacher, that's why. Somebody up there looks at records, you know. If I'd had any kind of science training, if I had any previous training with water, if I'd been a math teacher, any kind of science, but no, no, no, art teachers, music teachers, counselors, psychologists, they were questionable and I understood that. I knew it. Amphibious was a brand new service. That was an innovation, the idea of a flat-bottomed boat. I mean, the skipper of the first ship I was on said he spent all of his life trying to keep away from land and, now, he was the

captain of a ship the purpose of which was to hit land. You don't get real Navy men, a real sharp Navy guy, who's going to eventually get to be captains of battleships and cruisers and destroyers, into the Amphibious Force, but that was where I was. That's all there was to it.

JH: What was Little Creek like in 1942?

RW: We went on to Chesapeake Bay every day. The routines of a small boat, coxswain or a seaman, were so simple. You had a thirty-six foot boat, and you took that thing out every day. You had some soldiers in it, sometimes; sometimes, you just went out by yourself, so [that] you can learn what the signals were. This meant horizontally, this meant straight ahead in a line. It was kind of boring, but it was only for April, May and June, and then, we shipped out right away and went over to North Devon, England. That's where the training was for the troops that went into Normandy. Every two weeks, we get more troops and all they had to do was learn how to go out in a small boat. We took them for about a six or seven mile ride and they got used to getting their feet wet in water on Ilfracombe Beach.

JH: You crossed the Atlantic on an LST?

RW: Oh, no, good question. No, thank God. We went on a Liberty Ship, what they called the troopship. I was the blackout officer from the time we left Bayonne until the time we got to Glasgow, Scotland. I slept during the day and I went to work at night. I was responsible for a group of about eighteen or twenty fellows who were stationed throughout the ship as lookouts. Periodically, we had general quarters and, oh, here it is, submarine coming, bothering us, but we made it to Glasgow in about a week.

SI: When were you assigned to the 282?

RW: April the 6th, 1943. It was almost nine months of training at this base in North Devonshire, a little town called Instow. It was at the confluence of the Taw and Torridge Rivers. They came together; one came out of Barnstaple, [the Taw] the other came out of Bideford, [the Torridge]. They came together and, every day, we just took our small boat [out]. We loaded up in the harbor with the men, took our small boats out through the channel and went over to a beach, dropped them off and came back. That was the exercise. The interesting thing was that the rise and fall of the tide there matched the coast of France. Now, you say, "What ... big deal?" A big deal it was; it went up and down, I had forgotten whether it was ten or twelve feet up and down, but, during high tide, you had to take a ferryboat across. [At] low tide, you could walk across, especially on moon time. It was just a stream, a little creek, when it was low. So, we had to do all of our training in-between tides. We had to go out with the going out tide, come in with the incoming tide, or else we had to spend a lot of time getting to and from, and then, as I say, after a while, they decided, after eight or ten months of doing that, you got enough training to last you forever. So, we were then dispersed along the southern coast of England, ... St. Mawes. Falmouth and Dartmouth. ... We had one drill that was on Slapton Sands. Did you hear about that? We never did hit the beach and, it was years later [that] I found out why we didn't hit the beach, because two or three of our LSTs were sunk. One or two were badly damaged. They didn't want to go any farther. There were some German U-boats ... out there

just picking them off. ... That was the only exercise of real under fire [training] we had before Normandy.

SI: It is a famous case, because it was kept so secret.

RW: It was years afterward, the story I've heard, and I was at Slapton Sands later. I went over in '69 with my wife. I wanted to see what this place was like in real life, not just the service. They said that even the doctors who handled this were sworn to secrecy. They were not to tell anybody why these guys were all blown up. So, that was a pretty bad exercise.

SI: You mentioned that the Amphibious Forces were a very new service. How did that play out in your training? Was there a lot of developing tactics as you went along?

RW: The tactics were so simple. If you're going to take a boat, [a] thirty-six foot boat with a flat bottom, and you're going to go into the beach, you had minimal signals. I mean, it was like being a Second Class Boy Scout. The hard thing, and this was where we lost men, was coming back off the beach into the surf, because, if we didn't make that interval, if we didn't make that turn fast enough to get [the] bow into the oncoming wave, the boat just would roll over. I'm sure the officers in the Navy, upper officers, had to think this thing through pretty clearly, but it wasn't that difficult to do. If you're thinking about the training we got in midshipmen's school, it was kind of a laugh, in a way, because the stuff we were learning were, "What are red and black buoys?" I had ... [to] laugh about math, because the way we shot stars was to look it up in the telephone white book. You know, you get the angle and you look it up until fifty-six degrees, "It's Tuesday, you know, January the 15th. Oh yes, here's where we are on this line, somewhere on this latitudinal line." You had to get a couple of these together and you got a little mark on this. That was what was navigation and small boat men didn't even have to do that. They were always within sight of land. So, it was pretty simple. We had a crew of four. We only really ... needed a crew of one; that's somebody who understood how to work the engine, it was a diesel oil engine, and the fireman. The other was a coxswain who had to pilot the thing. I was an officer; I was in charge. Normandy, I only had three boats [to be] in charge of. In training, I had as many as ten boats, but they really beefed us up at the invasion of Normandy.

JH: Did you have any inclination that the invasion of Normandy was coming up?

RW: Oh, sure, absolutely. If you lived in Southern England in those days, you'd wonder whether the land was going to tip with the number of Army trucks that were around. It was supposed to be in June, I guess you know, June the 4th, but the Channel was so rough, we all turned around and went back for twenty-four hours. ... We knew what was coming. We were just thrilled we were in Devon. We weren't in London, where they were getting, you know, hit with buzz bombs.

SI: What was it like to live in England for those eight months?

RW: It was great. I met a girl, she was a telephone operator. They had a USO there and I went to the USO and I danced with her. [I] said hey, "You're available?" She lived in Barnstable. I took her to the movies several times and during those eight months, I bought a bicycle, rode

through some of those places. It was wonderful. I went to church on Sunday night, before Christmas, and I went up to the organist and I said, "Gee, that was very nice, reminded me of home. Thanks an awful lot." He said, "What are you doing for Christmas dinner?" I said, "What am I doing? Nothing." He said, "Why don't you come to my house, you and your friend, Ray." I said, "Sure." Ray and I met his family, I met his daughter. I went to a New Year's Eve party with their friend. Her name was Barbara Fulford from Frithelstockstone and I corresponded with her until she died a couple of years ago. I mean, like I said, it was crazy ... that this thing came together this way, and, you know, [you were in] over your head. [I] lost how many ... friends of mine, Pete Hughes. The ship, the 282, was sunk. The last entry in this book [the ship's log] is July the 31st, because the ship was sunk on August 15th. That's the way it went. [Editor's Note: Ensign Peter T. Hughes, the *LST-282*'s gunnery officer, was killed in the bombing on August 15, 1944, during the landings in Southern France.]

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Can you tell us how you came to be assigned to the *LST-46*?

RW: When this ship was sunk, I went to the commanding officer at the beach in Southern France and I said, "I'm a survivor of *LST-282*." He said, "Well those survivors," he said "are being given R&R in Naples, Italy." So he said, "Your best bet would [be] to try to get back to Naples, Italy," and so, that's what I did. I found a ship, through him, that was going back to Naples and four of my men and I got on that ship and headed back. I had about three weeks R&R in Naples. Then, finally, I got an order from the commanding officer of the naval base in Naples saying, "You're going to go to *LST-46*. It's in Oran, North Africa." So I said, "Okay." I got a plane and my four men and I went. We went to Oran and got on *LST-46* and that ship was the one that brought us back to the States. That was during the winter of '44-'45, and that ship was assigned to go out to the Pacific. That's where I went next.

SI: Was there any official training when you returned to the States?

RW: The LST had about eight officers. They have a supply officer. There was a first lieutenant; he took care of the work crew. I was the boat officer. There's a navigation officer, communications officer, steward, and the captain and the executive officer. So, with a small group of officers like that, you really learned on-the-job what had to be done. Eventually, I became the executive officer of that ship, *46*. ... As the war progressed and some of the captains of LSTs were discharged, ... I was assigned to become the captain of this LST right here, [Editor's Note: Mr. Wagner is pointing to a picture of the *LST-712*] but that was over a period of a year-and-a-half, maybe. There's no additional training, no.

SI: One thing that I have heard from my grandfather and other LST veterans is that, on a small boat, there was a thin line between the officers and the men.

RW: Absolutely. Sure, the men that worked for me wondered about my effectiveness and all I could do was the best I could. I never felt it. I didn't even feel there was a line between me and the people above me, but that's my [feeling].

SI: Did you maintain the kind of strict discipline that we associate with life on a battleship, where officers do not eat with the men?

RW: No, the answer is no. Onboard ship, in a way, yes, because the men ate in one galley, [and] we had a small room, not half the size of this room, where the officers [ate]. There were only eight of us and there was a crew of sixty or seventy, but, no, there was a line and I was aware that the men felt it. I still see the coxswain. I was out to Wisconsin last year and met Paul Koeppler. He remembers. If he harbored any feelings or the line was there when [he] was in my crew, it isn't there now, I could tell you that, but I'm sure it was there, and especially when you're getting a young looking guy. I was twenty years old and I was commissioned. That's young. These guys were only seventeen or eighteen, because they did the same thing for enlisted men in the Amphibious Force. [There were] a couple of guys onboard the LST who I had to teach how to read. I read letters for them from home. One guy [came] to me with tears in his eyes and said, "If I told these guys to read these letters [from my girl], they're going to make out with her themselves." So, okay "I'll read them." These were not giant brains we're talking about here.

SI: What about your fellow officers? Were they college graduates?

RW: All college graduates, except the commanding officer of the 46. He was a regular Navy man. Just like the *Caine Mutiny* story, he still kept some feelings about being an enlisted man, because he came up through the ranks. They were nice guys, every one of them. It was a good experience, [the] LST.

SI: Were there any difference between your three ships?

RW: Essentially the same; coffee was different in each ship. It was essentially the same.

SI: What was life on the ship like, in terms of your quarters, your food, the creature comforts?

RW: I suppose you could compare it to some [of the] regular Navy ships, that [it] was pretty bad, but it was basic. I was not used to [it]. Again, [as] a Depression baby, my standards, Trenton State College is not Harvard, Yale, [or] Princeton, you know, and we had some cooks [that] were good, some weren't so good. As I said, the coffee was always a little different. I got used to it within three days and liked it just as much after the third day. Creature comforts were great. I didn't like the saltwater showers we had, but that was something that we had [that] I never got used to but I don't remember complaining.

SI: Does anything stand out about going on liberty? We talked about England, perhaps in Italy.

RW: Oh, yes, there are loads of experiences. I remember buying a charm in Italy before the invasion, a cameo for my mother, but it went down with the ship. I lost everything when the ship was sunk. Well, I went back to the same place. I bought the cameo because a fellow came up [to me]. I was looking in the window of the jewelry shop and the fellow said "Do you want to buy a nice cameo, cheap?" I said, "Yes." So, he took me up to his apartment and his father was working [on] cameos. Well, three months later, [I] came back to Naples for rest and

recuperation. I said, "Gee, I wonder if I could find that guy." So, I went back and he came right back to me. He was still hanging around the same jewelry store. [He] took me back up and said, "Hey, hey how you doing?" Oh, yes, I had lots of experiences. I saw the Pope while I was there and Pompeii. Were right near Vesuvius.

SI: I know it erupted during the war. Were you there at that time?

RW: No. The kids in Pompeii at that time were selling lava from the smoke of a volcano. As I went around the streets of Naples, there was dust on the gutters [that] had piled up and these kids were just taking plastic toothbrush holders, ... scooping it up and selling lava, you know. Lots of funny things like that happened, skillions of funny things.

JH: You mentioned in your pre-interview survey that you took a month of leave Stateside in 1945. Was that after V-E Day?

RW: No, I came back from the service [and] I went back to my job at Essex Fells in Cedar Grove. I only taught for a week, and then, I couldn't stay any longer. I took some time off then.

JH: You said you visited with your sweetheart.

RW: That was in '44, '45. That's when the *LST-46* had a month off.

JH: I was going to ask what that month at home was like.

RW: Oh, boy, I'll tell you, when I got [back] and I came into New York, Newark, rather, ... the biggest thing, of course, was the lights, unbelievable. You see, I lived in a blackout in England, for a whole year almost. ...

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

SI: We were talking about when you were on leave.

RW: Yes. I just couldn't ... get over that and crazy little things that I remember. We had a mantle at home and everything in the Navy had lips on it, especially on an LST. We used to have lips on the edges of everything, so that when the ship rolled, you know, your silverware wouldn't roll off. ... I'd look at the mantle at home and think, "Oh, boy, I hope that stuff stays up there." [laughter] It didn't have any lip on it. Those are adjustments you make when you're coming from Navy life, and making decisions again, ... all over again. You have to decide what to wear and when you're going to eat and who's going to make it and you've got to do some things yourself.

SI: You were ordered out to the Pacific. Jason commented on this the other day, that it seems like a long trip on an LST.

RW: It was thirty days to go from Sasebo, Japan, to San Francisco, at eight knots. We were with six or seven other LSTs. I was always at the end, because my serial number was the lowest.

That's where the Navy comes in, you know; you go by rank. That gave me the privilege, when one of the ships saw a floating mine off the coast of Japan, to go over and sink that mine. So, the last ship, you know, got the duty. So, we did [it]. Actually, we thought we were going to blow it up, because we fired all our .20-mm guns at it, and it didn't. It just got so full of holes, we watched it go, "Blub, blub, blub." Then, we had to go speed up to ten knots to catch up with the rest of the convoy. That's the trade off, movies with other. We always had movies onboard, so [that] we can come alongside another ship and, just like on a clothesline, we'd send the movies back and forth. I played a lot of chess, a lot of bridge, oh, boy.

SI: Did you ever encounter any rough weather?

RW: When we were in Okinawa, we got into the tail end of the invasion there. A typhoon warning was made, ... we had to get out of the harbor. The ships in the harbor are a danger to each other more than anything else. So, that was a rough time and we actually outran the typhoon. We were on our way to Formosa, now Taiwan, anyway, so, the captain decided that if we're going to get out of the harbor, we might as well just keep on going and that's what we did. There was another time we were in the Mistral in the Mediterranean. That was a sad time, because we were bringing home some French nurses who had been out of France for about two or three years and the Mistral came in. We had to wait before we could get into the harbor. We had some rough weather, but [the] Atlantic is not the easiest one. [The] Pacific is what "pacific" means, pacified, except when the typhoons came.

JH: On your way out to the Pacific, you went through the Panama Canal. What was that like for you?

RW: Absolutely, great. It's the first time I saw it. Yes we went up and down the locks there, came along the west coast all the way up to Washington, Bremerton, Washington. Do you think I'm telling you the stories? Does it sound like I'm making this up?

SI: No, no.

RW: Because sometimes when I say this, [I think], "Did this really happen to me?" but your memory, as I said before, it's crystal clear. I used to wonder how my uncle could tell the price of pork chops, you know, in 1910, how he remembered what they were then. Well, he was a young man.

SI: When you went out to the Pacific, where was the first place you hit land?

RW: Oh, Hawaii, because you had to go to Hawaii to refuel. The next place, I think, was Saipan. You had to go there to refuel, then we went to the Philippines. I was at the Philippines on V-E Day, celebrated in the harbor there.

SI: What was that like?

RW: Well, the one thing the Navy doesn't do so well is get on land. If you're based on land, it's okay, but, the rest of the time [you are on a ship]. I can't tell you much about San Diego; I can't

tell you much about San Francisco; I can't tell you much about Washington, and so, I'm in the harbor, the water is the same and we only see the top of it. [The] Philippines is a big nothing to me. Subic Bay, I remember, now, the name of it, and the place that we landed on was called Tacloban, the first time I ever saw a jail, an open-air jail. ... Women [were] standing outside these fences, looking in at their inmates, waiting for their loved ones to get out, I guess; I don't know. The most exciting time, of course, I guess, [or maybe] the most unusual time, was going into Shanghai, China. We took the troops from China who were not able to go back to their homeland once Japan occupied the major cities. So, we took a group of Chinese soldiers back to Shanghai and that was quite an adventure. We did get ashore a couple of times there.

SI: What happened during the trip?

RW: Well, we were going down, this was the Yangtze River, before it goes into the Wangpoo. Wangpoo goes down into Shanghai, but we were on the Yangtze River and, apparently, each ship had a pilot onboard and apparently, the pilot on our ship wandered out of the channel, the swept channel, and we hit a mine. That mine made a loud noise. One of the fellows onboard our ship just assumed right away that the ship was going to sink, so, he took precautionary measures; he jumped overboard. We know that because people saw him. In fact, the other sailors on the deck threw life rings after him and he caught on, came onboard. We kept going, but I remember, to this day, the Captain looking at me and saying, "According to Navy regulations, Mr. Wagner, you as the executive officer, are the one designated to see what the extent of the damage to our ship is." So, I thought, "Well let me see." It came from the starboard side or whatever it was, and I worked my way down and, since we were in the war zone, all of the compartments were double locked, double-dogged. I had visions, at that point, that I was going to open up one of these compartments and there was going to be a rush of water coming at me, but what happened was, the mine never broke the surface of the outer skin of the ship, just made a hell of a noise. It shook the ship and some things fell off the walls, you know, and some glass was broken in the galley, but that's all. A kind of an interesting thing, years later, I was sitting at a table [in England] at an elder hostel and I heard this fellow at the table [next to] me tell the story about how when his ship was going up the Yangtze River, the ship ahead of him hit a mine and it blew the guy right off the ship. I said to my wife, "I can't believe this. I cannot believe it." I didn't know the guy. I don't know who he was. I went up to him and said, "Excuse me, are we talking about maybe the same trip?" We matched stories, you know. I said, "I got news for you. That was my ship and the guy was not blown over." This is a footnote in history.

SI: What kind of operations were you involved in in the Philippines? Was it just re-supply?

RW: I think we were waiting there to find out what was going to happen. V-E Day preceded V-J Day by a couple of months, maybe, and the question was, I'm sure, going on [in] the minds of the Navy department, "What are we going to do with these ships now? How many do we need, and so forth?" and it's actually from the Philippines that I was given notice that I was going to be the commanding officer of *LST-712* and I went to Manila and I said to the commander in charge of personnel, "Sir, the Navy might want to reconsider what's going on here." I said, "I'm a music major. I'm not sure I'm up to doing this job." He said to me, "What's your number, mister?" And I said, "Its 225428," and he took out a list? [and said], "You're the captain." That ended that. Then, I had to work my way to find out where that *712* was and I went island

jumping on other ships. I'm going to repeat what I said at the start. To me, as I say this, it sounds romantic and it was romantic, and I knew it, but I would not want anybody else to have to go through that. It's a huge gamble, but, of course, when you're young, you gambled. You understand what I mean? You gamble when you're young. "It's not going to happen to me." I thought it was, but I just hoped it wouldn't, you see? "Oh, it's going to happen to somebody else; it's not going to happen to me," but it does.

SI: How did you adjust once you were in charge? Did you try to build a bond with the other members of your crew?

RW: [Do you mean] there at *LST-712*? I realized, right away, I looked at the crew, these guys were my equal. It was no way that I was going to make believe. We were ordered to go to Japan, to pick up troops to take them back to San Francisco. This is a great, great order to get. We got up there and it was a blizzard. ... We were supposed to fuel up and I watched two LSTs ahead of me go up to a tanker and come in and just before they came alongside, they went up, like that, with the wind. They had to go get to the end of the line. I watched the second one do it. I thought to myself, "Oh, doesn't take an ... Einstein to figure out that I'm not going to do it that way." So, I actually came in, probably broke the laws of navigation, at a much more horizontal angle and I let the wind take me back down and I got a line over. Well, the cheers went up in the crowd. That's the kind of thing that instills confidence and, to this day, I think that was a turning point in my relationship to the other people on that ship. They felt, "Well, maybe this guy, maybe he's young, but maybe he has the touch." I don't remember any uprisings or anything like that. I know one thing, I was probably a little harder [on them]. I knew that when we got to Honolulu, there might be some fellows who were a little bit anxious to get drunk and stay away overnight or something. So, I said to the chief steward, I said "Is there an extra room in the storage. So, we're cleaning out the storage area of food, "Is there a possibility of creating some sort of a brig down there?" Well, for the last week before we got to Honolulu, the word got out that the Captain was creating a brig onboard. We never had a brig onboard before. I don't know, I like to think that that had some impact. I also had a big chart up in my office in the Captain's office, and people came in and out of that, as to where we were every day, so [that] the men knew, they could see by my drawing a line, how close we were getting there. You know, things like that, I like to think, helped. We had, to my knowledge, no uprisings or anything like that. Now, you might get a completely different story from some other people, believe me.

SI: What was the extent of your involvement at Okinawa?

RW: We came in about the twentieth day. All I can recall was one specific air raid. We were equipped, on the tail on the stern of these things, with a smoke machine. All it was was a giant steam kettle. Which I don't know whether it has some other chemical in there that created the smoke, and so, when we were in this air raid, we dropped the anchor in the back and that swung the ship around, so that the entire ship, from the stern, was anchored. Well, when you set off this smoke machine, it covered the ship. That's the only memory I have. ... We could see that some of the bombs of these *kamikaze* planes were going into some other ships and we could see the burst of the plane. The plane burst on fire; on fire [meant that] you had to assume it hit something to do that, but ... that's the only thing that happened. Did it happen again? You grit your teeth and say, "Gee, I hope it doesn't come to us, and it didn't. The only time our ship was

damaged, incidentally, was in Normandy, because the coast was so lined with obstacles that in one of our ship's beaching, the 282's beaching, got a big gash in the rear and we had to go into dry-dock in Southampton and have that repaired. ... One of my small boats, in going into Southern France, one of my crew complained of getting hit by a bullet. You know, the first thing that comes to mind [is], "Come on, what are you talking about?" Well, sure enough, the bullets went across the beam and hit some armor protection, ricochet, hit him in the groin. That's the only danger that I can remember. I was in London when they had air raids, on liberty.

SI: What was that like? Were they near you?

RW: No, I stayed in a hotel in London, and I remember, when I went in the hotel, I saw a sign, "In case of air raids, please come ... [and] meet in the lobby of the hotel." So, by golly, at two o'clock or three o'clock in the morning, when I heard the air raid siren go off, I went out of the hotel room. I thought something was a little funny. I got to the elevator; nobody else was there. I thought, "Gee, I'm not the only guy on this floor." So, the elevator man came up and kind of looked at me funny. I was in my pajamas. He took me down. He said, "Where are you going, sir?" I said, "There's an air raid going on." He said, "Yes, so?" I got out at the lobby; nobody else there. So, I said, "Okay, I'll go back up." I mean, that was ridiculous.

SI: Do you remember ever coming into contact with other military personal, such as British Navy personnel or anything like that? We talked about your musical interests. Did that ever come up? Did you play on the ship? There were probably not many opportunities to play on the ship.

RW: No, we had no musical instruments, but I did conduct Sunday services, occasionally, onboard. [I] always managed to find some other guy who knew the *Navy Hymn*, or *Stand Up for Jesus* or some other common Christian hymn.

SI: Was there a mix of different backgrounds on your ships?

RW: Yes.

SI: Religious and otherwise?

RW: I don't remember seeing; I don't know whether any people, the officers, I don't remember meeting a member of the officer [corps] who was a Jew. I don't remember any Jewish officers; yes, maybe. He was from Buffalo. His father owned a dry goods store. He is the only Jewish officer I remember now.

SI: Did religion come up often?

RW: No. I wrote a number of letters to my wife that had religious overtones, because, as D Day approached, I was scared, no question about it.

SI: Was anybody doing anything like, what we see in the pictures of Eisenhower, talking to the troops and trying to build up morale? Was anybody trying to do that to you?

RW: Oh, yes, oh, yes. On June the 1st or 2nd, all the officers who were on LSTs, small boats, were ordered to go to the naval academy there. That's Dartmouth, [it] is the Annapolis of the British Fleet, and, there, we were sent to a classroom and there was Admiral Moon, and what was the phrase he used? Something I remember he said, something about coming back or something; I said, "Yes, I think he knows more about what's going to happen than I do," but that was a pep talk. He wanted to make sure that we all knew that the country was depending on us and he gave us a pep talk. I was in a state of practically [being] comatose, because I knew what was going to happen and I sat and listened to him. I say, "Here it is; this is it fellows." That was a definite pep talk. There were thirty [of] us that were in that room. We were the guys that were going to go out front.

SI: When did you know that Normandy was the actual target?

RW: Oh, I think we knew as we left Dartmouth. I'm pretty sure the skipper knew. We actually led our group because the Admiral was on our ship. I don't know why, but he was. We had the Fourth Division, as I remember it.

SI: Which beach were you assigned to?

RW: The first time, we anchored off Utah, about eleven miles, and we didn't go in until late that day and we didn't go in all the way. Do you know what a pontoon is? Well, we carried into Normandy a pontoon, must have been about forty feet long, two big pontoons. They were short ones, but tied together, and then, when we dropped them off, they were tugged in near the beach. ... They extended that out for maybe two hundred or three hundred yards.

JH: A floating dock.

RW: A floating dock. So, we did not beach the LST the first time we were in Normandy. Fine, we had enough going on ... the beach. They don't have to have the Navy, you know, clogging up there. So, we beached that time. You know, it's interesting to read, because, well, the whole timing of it is right here [in the ship's log]. It tells you what was happening. The other two times we went into Omaha and we actually beached and that was an eerie thing, because, again, the tides come in and, out and when we went in on the tide, ... by the time, we finished unloading, we had no water around us. Well, there, we still have some water. You see where the water is, but we're high and dry and, eventually, that water went farther out and one or two nights we spent [there]. That was an eerie feeling.

JH: You were vulnerable.

RW: Yes. I mean, fortunately, the Air Force, as you know, they kept things pretty clear.

SI: When you are involved in such a huge event, do you just see your little piece?

RW: That's all, well, not at six o'clock on D-Day morning. ... It was a clear day. I saw the battleships, the cruisers, you know, I mean, the planes overhead. I mean, it was like 4th of July

times 500,000 going on. I watched the beach, you know, “Boom,” all the flares. There were a lot of flares. Some of the planes did nothing but light up the beach, so that it was [an] easier target for the planes that were bombing the beach. I knew it was a big operation. That was all within five or seven or eight miles. So, you can see that, you know, out at sea.

SI: Letters were obviously very important to you. What kind of morale effect did they have?

RW: If you see some of these letters, I’ve always, not always, but most of my letters say it was great to get letters, or, “I haven’t had letters from you for a while,” you know. It was a big thing. I lost most of my letters when the ship sunk. My wife kept every one of them.

SI: Most people do not. Was it also therapeutic for you?

RW: Oh, yes.

SI: How did the censorship restrictions affect you?

RW: I was a censor, you know. The officers censored the men’s mail. I suspect some officers, [did not censor themselves], since nobody else was going to censor those letters, but, you know, straight arrow, Boy Scout, Eagle Scout, [I did] one time, and she’ll tell you, too, one time, I tried to tell her where I was in England and I said something about the apples behind the door. Well, we were in Appledore, see. ... [Editor’s Note: Mrs. Norma Wagner enters] This is Shaun, Norma, this is Jason, but you never knew where I was?

Norma Wagner: No, you said that some of apples behind the door and I never thought to look on the map, and he was in Appledore. It never dawned on me and it didn’t make any difference.

RW: But, I was very conscientious. We had letters we had to cut out, actually rip it with a razor or scissors to cut things out of letters that would indicate where we were.

SI: You mentioned that there was a lot of boredom onboard the ship?

RW: Oh, yes.

SI: How did you deal with the boredom?

RW: I played a lot of bridge, cribbage. While we were in the harbor, like in Honolulu, we dropped the anchor off the bow there on the other side and we’d lower the ramp. It was a diving board and we’d dive into the water. That was a real recreation whenever we were in warm waters, no problems, but we got a liberty ship, our little, small boats were the things that carried men ashore wherever we were, when we had liberty.

SI: Do you remember any black-market activity, either in the States or overseas?

RW: I was in town, in (Southcom?), and an officer came in. I said, “Can I help you with your bags?” He was new. I picked up his one bag. I said, “What have you got in this bag?” He said,

"A couple of bricks." I said, "What are you doing with a couple of bricks?" And he said, "I was stationed in Scotland and there was this beautiful fireplace there and I was sending a brick back, every so often, to my wife, so [that] we can build that fireplace, rebuild that fireplace, at my home." He said, "You know what happened? I was transferred before I had a chance to finish sending them back. So, that's the rest of the bricks." Now, that's not quite the black-market, but I saw a lot of stuff like that happening. That bothered me. So, I don't know what other guys were doing, but that was a mess. That's the only evidence I had that there was any hanky-panky going on.

SI: You mentioned that you had a very good relationship with the English civilians. Did you notice any tensions between the Americans and the English? Were you warned about them?

RW: No. The Americans had so much more than the Brits did. They had more money, you know, they drank more, they ate more and there was some friction there, but the people that I met, the ones that came to me [were fine]. Again, maybe the officer's uniform made them feel that I might be more responsible than some other American GI Joe, not even a private's thing on them, you know. I had no feelings at all. We were there, you know, for eight months and, boy, in eight months, you certainly got to know some people, especially when they invite you to their homes. That's a pretty close bond and Dick Blackmore did invite us. Nancy Blackmore came over here and stayed with us for a couple of days after the war, his daughter. She was a schoolteacher, as I was.

SI: You were still in the Pacific when V-J Day happened.

RW: Yes.

SI: When did you first hear about the atomic bomb?

RW: Oh, boy. That was kind of good news for us, because we just figured that would speed things up, when was it, five or six days before then, or it was a couple of weeks? I've forgotten the timing there.

SI: Yes, a very short time.

RW: Short time. No, we thought that was a great day.

SI: Were you scheduled to go into Japan?

RW: We did. As I say, we weren't scheduled to go there for any fighting, no, not at all.

SI: Before the war was over?

RW: No. I think they had more ships there than they needed at the time we got there. The war in Europe was over. We never got an assignment to do anything. We stayed two or three weeks without an assignment.

SI: Do you remember any celebration on V-J Day?

RW: Oh, yes. Well, flares went up, you know. Navy has flares, just usually for emergencies, but they shot them off there.

SI: There were seven months between the end of the war and when you were discharged in April of 1946.

RW: Yes. I came home before April. I had sixty days leave. I was physically home by the end of February, I think.

JH: I want to go back to the atomic bomb. When you heard about it, did you really understand the depth of it?

RW: No. All I knew is that it was a pretty big bomb and an awful lot of people were killed and it looked like that might end the war. The emphasis, as I remember it now, was good.

JH: How did you feel when you found out exactly what the atomic bomb entailed?

RW: I don't remember at that time. Later on, of course, you know, you realize what a mess that was.

SI: Did you give any thought to staying in the Reserves?

RW: No way, no way. Well, I got married right away, not right away, but in November of that year. ... No, I didn't. I really did not like military life, in spite [of] the fact of what I'm telling you. This was the big difference between what military ... life [was like] and what happened. It was wonderful in one respect, but it was not [for me]. The regimentation is not part of my life.

SI: When did you first learn about the GI Bill?

RW: Oh, the GI Bill, yes. I got my Master's degree on the GI Bill. That was a big help and, also, a doctorate in that. I didn't quite make it, but I went for, Norma, what was I, about six years at Rutgers?

NW: Oh, longer.

RW: Yes, it might have been longer. See, I was forever going down to Rutgers, yes, eight or nine years, six credits at a time, three credits, six credits.

SI: Was it mostly night classes? Were you working at the time?

RW: Oh, yes, absolutely. I was teaching school the whole time. Eight years, I taught school.

SI: Was it difficult to get a job right after the war?

RW: I don't know how other people got it, but the head of the music department told me that there was a job opening up here in Cranford, music [department], and she recommended me. ... I came and I applied for it and I got it, grade seven through twelve, vocal music, and I lasted two years here. From here, I went to East Orange, taught there for six [years] and it was during that time that I did heavy work at Rutgers and got a Master's in administration and supervision. I went down to South Jersey as a school principal down there, and then, came back to Cranford as a school principal, stayed the rest of the time.

JH: What was Rutgers like in the post-war period? Where there many veterans using the GI Bill?

RW: Oh, yes, absolutely. All the courses I took were [with] veterans, every one of them. I went down [to] Newark here for a number of courses, I didn't go all the way to New Brunswick, and it was [a] long haul, you know, teach all day, then, go down there and, sometimes, I had a four o'clock class. Most of the time, it was after school, four to six, or four to five-thirty, and come home late for dinner here you know. I was raising a family at that time. My first child was born in '48, but most of the GIs were very glad for it. I thought they were very good. We had not only the GI Bill, but we had FHA mortgages, which were a big help. That four percent mortgage, you know, we bought a house in Chatam on the GI Bill.

SI: Could you summarize your career? What were the challenges? What did you enjoy about it?

RW: No, it was a time of growth, of maturity. There's no question about the maturation factor. I think it was true and ... the appeal of the service is that it's a place where you're with a group of people who are maturing.

SI: I meant your career in education. You mentioned that you were a school principal.

RW: Well, I started out as a music teacher and, after a while, I realized that, during the summer, I always had the problem of getting a job, and so, I found out that I was pretty good at directing summer camps. So, for three years, I directed the *Herald-Tribune* Fresh Air Fund Camp up in Connecticut. ... That's where I got the idea, ... knowledge of child behavior, particularly, and my ability to get along with kids. Psychology was my best course at Rutgers, at the graduate level. It seemed to me that would be the direction I should be going in the career, so, that's the direction I took. It was hard to get a job as a school principal in those days, because it would have been better had I been a regular classroom teacher, but I found ... [a] district in Southern Jersey that the principal had resigned just before school started in the fall, and they needed a principal in a hurry. In those days they thought, "Well, he's got a Navy background. He's had some leadership skills as a Navy officer and he ran a summer camp for three years from Newark, so, maybe we can take a chance, and that's where I started and I stayed there five years, and then, came back up here to Cranford.

SI: How did the nature of education changed during the course of your career?

RW: Oh, the big change in education and, in fact, in our culture, in my judgment, has been the advent of television and mass communications. There's no question about it. ... As I grew up, in our youth, we were not as dependent on getting our kicks, so-to-speak, in packages for us by sitcoms or the movies, you know, and so, we had to ... do more on our own. Now, that has its good and bad features. If you were a reasonably able person, [a] reasonably able people, they make-do. They learn how to make-do and I suspect you guys are in that position, still. I don't know how you defend it, but that affected education in this respect, to get back to your question; I think the change, as from a principal's point of view, is that children are not as adept at getting along with their peers as they used to be. They used to either have to get along with it or find ways to do it. When we played ball when I was kid, you made up teams and some of them were good guys on the team, some were good as ballplayers, and some were not so good. Well, they had to compromise, here, somewhere, or they wanted a team, but, now, things seem to have come to a point where you have your teams already made up for you in the Little League. You don't have that, but ... I'm not one of those people who say the old days were better than these. I'm not in these days, so, I'm going to be very careful not to criticize education, that, "They don't know anything about it. That's not the way to do it." I get a little uptight when people say things are [not] like they used to [be], they were better then. They probably weren't any better, they're just different. ... The biggest thing that I think education does [today] is provide a variety of experiences for kids and it focuses on individual learning problems. That, we did not have when I went to school. The dumb kids were in the class, the teachers didn't know what to do with some of them, but, now, the focus [is] on how children learn in different ways. That was coming into my knowledge as I was leaving, the idea of taking kids out for special education, for example. That was an important, good progress, in my estimation, and finding the kids learning different ways. Some learn through their eyes, some learn through their ears, ... some learn through the group they're with, some learn from each other. All these things, I think, are much better. So, it's a mixed bag. I wouldn't say it's better or worse. It's just a lot different. I get a little bit upset sometimes with what I call the "Me generation," and there was a seventeen or nineteen page ad, of all things, in the *New York Times Magazine* section put out by Hewlett-Packard and all ... [it had] was "You, and, it," called my attention to the amount of advertising that's directed at "You." I don't remember anything like that when I was a kid. If you advertised the product it usually was what the product did, but, now, it's, ... "You can be better, if you use this [product]." Well, that "You" has been interpreted by a lot of people as "Me" and it's [a] very insidious thing. That bothers me more than any change in education. I think advertising has done that and some advertisements are just plain lies, I mean, just outright lies. "The most well-known eye surgeon in the world is in the Metropolitan area, is Doctor so-and-so." Well, the reason he is well-known is because he is on the air telling everybody about who he is, but that's my only gripe, as an old man, is advertising and the idea that we have a fourth branch of government called corporations, but that's another thing. We used to have only three, you know, the Presidency, the Congress and the Court. Now, we have the corporations. They have a lot, too much, to say about what's going on, too much power, in my judgment. So, you want me to tell you who I am? I'm a Democrat, there.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to say?

RW: No. I don't know whether I've answered the questions that you've asked appropriately. I tried. I gave it a shot, anyway.

SI: We will now conclude the interview.

RW: Fine.

SI: Thank you very much for having us here, and tolerating us.

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