

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH REID WALTMAN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview with Mr. Reid M. Waltman on November 8, 2006, in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. Thank you very much, Mr. Waltman, for coming all the way from Texas to talk with me today.

Reid Waltman: Well, it's ... a pleasure.

SH: To begin the interview, could you tell me where and when you were born?

RW: I was born right in this house, actually, at 121 Fern Avenue, Lyndhurst, New Jersey, on June 10, 1922.

SH: Thank you. Please tell me a little bit about your father and his family background.

RW: My father's background is from the Millville, New Jersey, which is South Jersey, Waltman family. The Waltmans came to the United States and were glassblowers in the town of Millville, which is near Vineland, and my father grew up there with his siblings, ... my Uncle Harry, my Aunt Cora and my father, who was Paul Ralph Waltman, but he went by just Ralph Waltman. ... He was not one of the most studious persons and he would rather play baseball than go to school. So, as I recall, he had some high school, but did not finish, although his brother, my Uncle Harry, went through college and Columbia Law School, and that's the background. ... Then, my dad worked for a company called Dix, D-I-X, Dix Company, and they were in the clothing manufacturing business. ... He rose to be a vice-president in that company, until the Depression, when everything, of course, fell apart, and we suffered quite a bit from [there being] no job for my father. ... He eventually ended up in New York City, during the Depression, working for the Lily of France Company in New York City, because he ... had a trade, which was as a garment cutter, and that allowed him to get back into the work force.

SH: Please tell me about your mother and her family and background.

RW: Well, my mother was Irish. I failed to mention that my father's family was of, basically, German extraction, and my mother was Irish and she was born in Brooklyn, New York, and they met because of my ...

Joan Waltman: The Bronx.

RW: The Bronx, okay, it's the Bronx, instead of Brooklyn, excuse me, and my mother was a seamstress and this is what kept us going all through the Depression, with my father basically unemployed or doing certain, not long-term jobs until he went to work for the Lily of France Company, and my mother did a lot of sewing and she was the breadwinner through most of the Depression.

SH: Had her family come over from Ireland generations before?

RW: Yes. ... They'd come from Ireland.

SH: Her mother and father?

RW: Her mother, and as a result of the Irish famine, as I recall.

SH: Did she have a large family?

RW: Yes.

JW: ... Six siblings, six sisters.

RW: ... Six sisters, she had six sisters. Of course, that meant I had six aunts and six families around here, basically in Northern New Jersey.

SH: They eventually all came from New York to New Jersey.

RW: Yes, my mother and dad having married in 1916, and then, moved to Lyndhurst, and then, the other members of my mother's family were part in Lyndhurst and part in the surrounding areas, East Rutherford and the surrounding communities.

SH: Do you know the story of how your parents met?

RW: Not unless my sister knows it. [laughter]

SH: For the record, we are in the home of Miss Joan Waltman. Thank you.

RW: Joan, can you fill in anything about how Mom and Dad met?

JW: Well, they met at work.

SH: They were both working for the same company.

JW: Yes. That was when my father was a manager at the Dix Company.

SH: Down in South Jersey?

JW: ... No. This was in New York. He had moved from Millville. He had moved from Millville to New York City back in the, I would say probably around 1910, 1912, something like that. ... He boarded with an Irish lady ... on 14th Street in New York, and so, he met my mother through work, and I think he had a bit of an affinity for Irish ...

RW: ... Young ladies ... [laughter]

Joan: ... Immigrants at that point, because he would go down, at the boarding house owner's request, to the ships to greet the Irish ... immigrants, on behalf of this lady. ... He would bring them up to the boarding house and I think he was probably her favorite tenant at that point, [laughter] but he met my mother at work. ... They started going out after a period of time and, as my brother mentioned, they were married in 1916 and they moved to New Jersey in 1919.

SH: Thank you. How did World War I affect your father and his work?

RW: Well, he was not in World War I. My Uncle Harry was, ... his brother, but my dad was not in World War I, and, of course, not having been born yet at that time, I don't know exactly how it affected him. ... [laughter]

SH: I am mostly asking for the memories that were shared with you, stories that were told around the dinner table.

RW: Well, I think some of that rubbed off, because I was very into soldiers, toy soldiers. In our basement, here at this house, I had a, at least, four-by-eight board in which I had all kinds of soldiers and played soldiers at that time. I even made my own lead soldiers by pouring lead into molds and I had also on this table a train set, a model train set. So, those are always fond memories of what I had done there.

SH: Did your father ever talk about why he had not served?

RW: No.

JW: ... Because he had a child in 1917, I don't think they required service. So, he would have had to have been a volunteer and, as a new groom, I think he felt his initial application was to the family.

SH: Please tell me about the members of your family. I have met Joan, who I assume is your younger sister.

RW: Yes, and I did have an older brother, Ralph, Jr., but, unfortunately, he died when he was six years old of a ruptured appendix. ... This was always a problem in our [family], in growing up, that we, as a family, had to watch that, when I went sleigh riding or something, that I didn't do something that would cause a similar accident. ... Back then, they just didn't have the means of identifying appendix problems fast enough and, when they were diseased and ruptured, then, there was a loss of life rather quickly.

SH: What was it like to grow up here in Lyndhurst? Please describe the area, if you would, and some of your early memories.

RW: Well, it was a great place to grow up. At that time, when I was just a youngster, the area just west of us, just west of River Road, was still a swamp and it had cattails, water, swampy water, all kinds of animals, muskrats, and ... was just a great place to grow up. ... I would play down there quite a bit with my friends and there is a pipeline that runs through the area. It was a water pipeline, ... bringing fresh water from out west, and that would give you access ... from River Road into the swampy area and it was just fantastic. Then, the river, the Passaic River, was dredged and all of the sand was poured on and covered up all of that swamp area. So, it was completely gone, but that didn't stop us from having a tremendous amount of fun, because we, ... my boy friends and myself, created a nine-hole golf course on the area down there. We used,

of course, tin cans for the holes and we made a green. It wasn't green, it was sand, but we would smooth it out and we would play golf on that new area, and then, there was a pile of very large rocks, oh, bigger than this room, that had been dredged up and piled on the shore down there and that made a great place to climb and be right next to the river, and I also did crabbing in the river. We would catch crabs, and then, from the previous swampy area, it had just everything, snakes and pollywogs and frogs and, of course, the muskrats were gone now. ... The area is now a beautiful park, but, then, it was a tremendously great playground and one of the things that I remember is, ... this was something environmentalists wouldn't like, but there were willow trees that grew very rapidly down there in the sand area and, as boys would be, we would have one of the boys climb out on the big limb, and then, we'd cut the limb down and ... let him ride down on it. [laughter] It didn't seem to affect the tree growth that much, but, looking back on it, why, we were a little bit destructive, [laughter] and then, as I got older, the Lyndhurst Swimming Pool was available, which ... was part of the meadow down there and had a pretty good pool area, a swimming pool for the city.

SH: Did you belong to the Boy Scouts?

RW: No. I did most of my time with my boy friends. I had a boy friend who was into all kinds of animals and growing things. He lived about four blocks down ... south on River Road and we roamed the whole area. Now, you may or may not be aware of the marshland to the east of us, which is the Hackensack Meadows, and it's called the Meadowland. Well, there were garbage dumps being started there and I and my boy friend would go there, and my mother would have been very upset at the things I did, but my boy friend had a .22 rifle, and so, we'd go there and we would shoot rats on the dump. ... That's when I and he located some gun cotton from the Kingsland Explosion, which I have told you a little bit about and my sister has this fabulous report on. [Editor's Note: On January 11, 1917, a fire destroyed an artillery shell factory in Kingsland, New Jersey.] ... The Kingsland Explosion of the ammunition dump, ammunition factory, occurred in 1917, but, ... in the 1920s, I could still find gun cotton, that, when we dried it out, we would then put it in a can and ignite it and it would blow the can up twenty or thirty feet. ... All during this time, I was into what might be called today intramural sports. It was not organized by any organization *per se*, school or otherwise, but I played baseball, down near the swimming pool, and I played football with a lot of the boys. We'd get up a team, and then, we'd challenge anybody from the area that would play us and some of the boys that I played with became high school players. I didn't, at the time, but the community of Lyndhurst is, and was, probably, at that time, maybe forty percent Polish and forty percent Italian and maybe twenty percent Anglo-Saxon. So, we would challenge any of the other groups from another area to play down where you came in to Lyndhurst. That's where the playing fields were and we would play either baseball or football. I also played just with my boy friends, some basketball, but I wasn't as good a basketball player as I was in playing football and baseball.

SH: Did you also have an after school job?

RW: This is one reason I wasn't in any of these other organizations, like the Scouts. Yes, I got a paper route. When I was old enough, ten or twelve, I was trying to earn a little money for our household and I did go up to the local grocery store and got a job there for one day. I didn't like it at all, and so, I got a job delivering the *Newark Star-Ledger* newspaper and I had a big paper

route. ... It was something that I look back on as being a wonderful experience, because, as I mentioned, the ethnic groups in our area, they were generally poor and it was always a struggle to get them to come up with the weekly or monthly amount due for my delivering the papers. ... Of course, I had to collect the money, because the way the paper route worked, the company got their money first, and then, I got whatever my share was going to be when I collected it. So, if they got behind one, two, three weeks, it was a problem. I'd have to hound them and be sure that I got after them, and they had all kinds of tricks [laughter] in which to get the paper delivered, but not pay for it. It was just the Depression era, and I do remember being in the 1938 hurricane that came through this area and I was delivering papers on my bicycle during that hurricane, because I never missed a delivery. I delivered the paper no matter what was going on and there's a little story about that, delivering the paper, too, because we didn't have that much money to go out and buy a bicycle, but my uncle, my Uncle Harry, had what at that time was a racing bike. It's not like the current racing bikes, but it did have different sprockets on it, so that it would go relatively fast. Well, I was still a small boy, so, my dad had to put blocks of wood on the pedals, so that I could ride this two-wheeler. It had much thinner tires than the current ... bicycle tire, the balloon tire, which may be, what? two inches or so wide. These were thinner tires and it was a fast bike. It was a big bike and I used that for my route. I fastened a basket on the front and I had over one hundred to one hundred-and-thirty newspapers that I had to deliver, all during that period, and the experience, as I said, was just great, because it gave me a sense of direction, of, "I had to do it." I had to collect the money [laughter] from people that didn't want to pay for the paper that had been already been delivered to them, and then, I got to meet all kinds of people and see how they lived and their surroundings and it was a great experience. ... The money I saved from that, along with what my mother had saved from the sewing that she had done, was what put me through my first year at Rutgers.

SH: Before we get to Rutgers, you talked about how difficult it was to collect what was owed to you for the newspapers during the Depression; what else did you see in Lyndhurst as a result of the Depression?

RW: Well, ... it was not quite total poverty, but it was poverty. It was the fact that people didn't have the means to, oh, get around and find jobs. ... I relied on my mother to put food on the table, along with what I had earned in the paper route, until my dad started working again. ... It was quite a traumatic experience to go through from 1930 to 1940.

SH: What about the New Deal programs, like the WPA [Works Progress Administration] or the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]?

RW: Well, I knew about them. ...

SH: Did any of your family members take advantage of them, or any of your friends' fathers?

RW: No, not that I know of. It's rather interesting; you mentioned CCC. My wife and I, BJ [Betty Jo] and I, we just went to her family reunion and we went to a state park in Texas where all the buildings had been constructed by the CCC and they were very well constructed. ... We enjoyed being able to go to these cabins. ... I knew that this was going on, but I'm sorry, ... my

family was not involved, as far as I know. My dad was trying all the time to make a living and my mother did all the work that was required to get us enough money to eat.

SH: In school, was there a subject that you were extremely good at or interested in?

RW: Not really. I took a course that was more classical at the time. ... Looking back on it, I wished I had taken a scientific curriculum, but I didn't. I had four years of Latin, two years of French and, of course, English and mathematics, but not as much science, and I was really, later, more inclined to the scientific end. So, I had a great education at Lyndhurst High School, but it really wasn't the right curriculum for what I eventually ended up doing.

SH: Was your family involved in church activities?

RW: My mother was a Roman Catholic and my father was a Lutheran, and so, I was raised as a Roman Catholic. ... There's many interesting stories about this, because our Roman Catholic church is about a mile due east of us, on Ridge Road, and we had to walk to church on Sunday, oh, and Saturday was supposed to be catechism, and the other thing that happened was, right across from the Roman Catholic church was the Ritz Theater and, as a child, we wanted to go to the Saturday afternoon matinee. Well, in order to get there, we had to walk across the street from the Roman Catholic church and Father McDermott was standing on the steps of the church and he would shake his finger at us as we went and tried to go to the matinee. So, we even went and would go around the corner and come in the other way, in order to avoid Father McDermott, [laughter] because Father McDermott was very, very strict. Now, Father Boyle was a more jovial priest and he was one that we could talk to and everything, but Father McDermott was so stern that it was a problem and we'd have to sneak in the theater to see our westerns, our Saturday afternoon matinee. [laughter]

SH: Since you took the classical course, does that mean that you knew that you wanted to go to college and that you were going to try no matter what?

RW: Try no matter what, and, at that time, the counselor said that was the ... type of course that you should do to try to get into college, yes.

SH: Even with the Depression, your parents encouraged you to do this.

RW: Yes, and I was thinking of my future. All the time during high school, I sent away for the *Department of Agriculture Yearbooks* and these books were about three or four inches thick and it had all kinds of things in there about, oh, forestry and soil conservation. ... It got me started thinking about what I might want to do in high school, that I would like to prepare for, and I was quite interested in forestry, through my reading of ... these *Department of Agriculture*, that's US Department of Agriculture, *Yearbooks*.

SH: They really focused your desire.

RW: It did. Looking back on it, I'd say they did.

JW: How about huckleberrying? How about going up to Mount Hope?

RW: Oh, yes. Well, my going up, with part of my mother's family, up toward Mount ...

JW: Mount Hope.

RW: Mount Hope, and what, that's sixty miles from here? ... I get used to Texas. It's west.

SH: Near Rockaway, New Jersey.

RW: Rockaway, yes, and my dad and I would go pick huckleberries and blackberries in that area. ... It was a hilly and valley area and I remember my grandmother's home, more of a cabin, that had a very steep slope behind it, down into a little bit of a grassy area, and then, wooded area. ... Through my reading of the Department of Agriculture books, I was thinking about conservation, how would I stop the erosion of the hillside that I was witnessing there and what means I would use to try to do soil conservation.

SH: Your father's mother lived in Mount Hope.

RW: ... No. It was my mother's family, Mother's side. ...

SH: Your mother's grandmother.

RW: My mother's grandmother, yes, and my other grandmother on my father's side was in Millville.

SH: Okay. I wondered if they had moved from South Jersey.

RW: Yes. No, that was my mother's side.

JW: ... The grandmother and ... some of her other children were in iron mining jobs, working in the iron mine area.

RW: ... Northwestern New Jersey is and has been a mining area for a long time, iron mining, going all the way back to prior to the Revolutionary War.

SH: The Mine Hill area of New Jersey actually derives its name from the iron mines there.

RW: Right, yes. There's Iron Mountain, in fact, yes.

SH: Right. Did anyone in your family do any of the zinc mining further up?

RW: No. They didn't do the zinc mining, although I'm very, very familiar with it, because, through Joan's effort, ... BJ and I and she, we toured the New Jersey Zinc Company mines. ... I'm getting ahead of myself, but, when I was at Rutgers, we were not allowed to go to the New Jersey Zinc mine. They wouldn't allow visitors.

SH: Really?

RW: No. So, it was only recently that I have been fortunate enough to go through it.

SH: You were a senior approaching graduation in 1940.

RW: I graduated in 1940, February of 1940.

SH: Why February?

RW: Well, ... I had apparently skipped ... the equivalent of one semester and they had a graduation in February, and then, one in June. They had two graduations at that time in the high school.

SH: At that point, had you already made your applications to universities or just to Rutgers?

RW: ... You know, 1940, we were still coming out of the Depression, so, I had to find a college or university that I could go to and afford. I told you earlier that I was interested in forestry. Well, Cornell would have been the choice and I couldn't afford the tuition, but I could go to the College of Agriculture at Rutgers, which was a land-grant college, and I could ... have a tuition of just sixty dollars a semester, whereas the others were in the thousands, and so, I just had to make a choice. I knew that I did not want to become a farmer. That was not my idea, but I thought, again, of the soils aspect, either soil conservation or some research in soils. So, that was ... going to be my major ... at the College of Agriculture at Rutgers.

SH: Did you visit Rutgers prior to your entry?

RW: Yes, and I saw that I could be at Rutgers and go to the College of Agriculture there.

SH: Did your parents or a teacher in the high school go with you?

RW: ... There was a counselor who advised me, and several ... other of my classmates were going to Rutgers, but not in the College of Agriculture. So, I knew about Rutgers, which, at that time, of course, was not the State University, but I knew enough about it to know that it was an old and fine university.

SH: What about what was going on in Europe in 1939? Was that something that, as a high school student here in Lyndhurst, you were aware of?

RW: Yes. We were aware of it. We were aware that, by 1939, World War II had actually started and that ... the Japanese were already invading Manchuria and that there was starting to be a world conflict, but, as far as being, say, an isolationist or not, I was neither. I was just a boy growing up. I had just managed to ... graduate from high school.

SH: You talked about the ethnic groups here in Lyndhurst. When Hitler invaded Poland, was there any reaction among your Polish friends?

RW: Well, there was, and I'm recounting something now that I just recently read. My sister had given me a book about the three Lewandowski brothers, [*Three Gold Stars* by R.J. Rosamilia], who ended up going in the service from Lyndhurst and all three being killed, and I had this book from 1997 and I only found it in my library a month ago. ... I started reading it and it's all about what you were just mentioning and reading the book was just like my living it, because they were contemporary with me. The oldest boy was two years ahead of me, the youngest one was two years behind me, so, part of the time, they were in the high school with me. ... There was a lot of concern about what had happened when Hitler invaded Poland and the rest of the war. It was only later that I got the history of the earlier part, Czechoslovakia and that part.

SH: What about Italy? You also said that there was a large Italian population here in Lyndhurst. Was there any talk about Mussolini?

RW: Most of them were saying that he was crazy, that they didn't sympathize with him at all.

SH: Was there any *Bund* [the German-American *Bund*, a pro-Nazi group] activity here?

RW: Well, there weren't that many Germanic people here and, of course, we were of Germanic descent, but I don't know of a whole lot of that being here in Lyndhurst itself.

JW: I think it was more in South Jersey, where it was a bit of the problem, but not here.

SH: What did you do from February 1940 until you entered Rutgers as freshman? I assume you entered in September of 1940.

RW: Yes, I did. I went to work for the Lily of France Company in New York City, as a stock boy, and I got all kinds of flak from my friends, but ... it was a little enjoyable to kid them, because part of my job as a stock boy was to take the corsets or brassieres ... down from the stockroom to the showroom, where the models were. ... Of course, the kids all thought that was something great. There was nothing to it, but ...

SH: ... It made a really good story.

RW: [laughter] It did, but I would ride the Lackawanna Steam Engine over to Hoboken, and then, take the ferry over and go to work in New York City, while I was waiting to go to college.

SH: Can you tell me about your first few weeks at Rutgers? Where were you housed?

RW: Well, I never was one to think about being in a fraternity, so, I was not interested, ... and it was just, also, a monetary thing. I lived in a dorm in the Quad, the old Quad. I don't know whether it's still there or not. ...

SH: Do you remember which dorm you were in?

RW: It was the one on the south side, but I don't know the name.

SH: Leupp or Pell.

RW: Yes, that sounds familiar, but I did some crazy things when I was there, that, looking back on it, were very foolish. I loved to ice skate and, while here, in high school, I would walk over to what was called the Mill Pond, which is northwest of here, but it was quite a ways to walk to get to the north bridge. What's the name of the ...

JW: Well, it was the bridge across the Passaic, before Route 3.

RW: Yes. Did it have a name?

JW: I don't think it did.

RW: But, anyway, it was further to walk, so, I would go up on the railroad bridge, the Lackawanna Railroad bridge, and I would walk across the Passaic River on that railroad bridge, and watching out for trains. ...

JW: Yes, watching out for trains, as if you could do anything if they came. [laughter]

RW: And there were a couple of times the "A" train came along, and so, I would hunker down on the bridge and let the train go by. Well, as I said, I loved ice skating, so, at ... the end of the first semester at Rutgers, I wanted to go ice skating and I did the most foolish thing, perhaps the first foolish thing of my life, which was, I crossed the canal to the Raritan River, and then, I put my skates on and I skated across the Raritan River. ... It's a tidal river and the tide had moved blocks of ice, like ice flows. There were some sticking up, but no open water, and I skated across the Raritan River to the pond that was on the other side. That was a good skating area and, looking back on it, that was just absolutely crazy. So, the next, less worse thing, perhaps, was, I would go down to the railroad bridge. Well, this railroad bridge had four tracks on it, ... between Trenton and Princeton and Newark, and I went across that bridge to go there, rather than walk down to the highway bridge, and I went several times that there were two to three trains on that bridge at once. It was scary, but, you know, you're young and stupid. [laughter]

SH: You had to sign up for the draft before you came to Rutgers.

RW: No. I signed up for the draft on June 30, 1942.

SH: You would have been twenty. I thought you had to sign up for the draft at eighteen.

RW: Well, I don't know why; maybe because I was in college at that time, I don't know.

SH: You did not have to register for the draft then.

RW: That's right, until I was called up for the draft.

SH: Okay. I thought you had to register for the draft before then.

RW: No. June 30, 1942, I went down to Newark with my mother and we signed up for the draft.

SH: You talked about some of the crazy things that you did that first freshman semester. As an incoming freshman, chapel was mandatory.

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SH: Please, continue.

RW: By this time, I, of course, ... had had Communion and Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church, but I was getting very disillusioned with the Roman Catholic Church. I didn't go for the dogma of the Church, and so, going to the chapel didn't bother me at all, as far as that was concerned. I was prepared for it in my own mind.

SH: Can you tell me about the convocations and mixers they had for Rutgers College students?

RW: Well, I was not much of a mixer and, looking back on it, I missed certain things. I had never learned, in high school, nor in college, to dance. I was shy and I regret those things now, but I did not attend very many of those functions. ... Of course, going to the College of Agriculture, some of my courses were all the way, from the dorm to the Ag School, on the other side of town and it took quite a while to get over there, and then, get back, and then, do my studying in the dorm. I, as I mentioned earlier, was not really interested in fraternities, so, I didn't try to get in any of them.

SH: Was there an initiation for all freshmen? Did you have to wear the dink?

RW: Probably. That's not a memory that has come back to me.

SH: What about ROTC?

RW: I joined up immediately and I had two-and-a-half years of ROTC.

SH: You had signed up for the Advanced ROTC, but it was interrupted because of the war.

RW: Yes, and there's a story about that, too, because I'd talked to one of the military officers, after Pearl Harbor and after I ... had gone back to my sophomore year, and he was recommending that all the men stay in the ROTC program, and then, advance and become officers. Well, the ROTC program at Rutgers was Army and I was really more interested in the Air Force. So, I talked to him about it and there was no way, he said, that I could get in the Air Force. Well, I ignored him on that. [laughter] ... After my draft and signing up, I went and enlisted as an aviation cadet.

SH: What do you remember about Pearl Harbor? Where were you? You would have been a sophomore then.

RW: Yes. On December 7th of '41, I was in the dorm and we just heard the excitement of somebody letting us know, that it came on the radio, that we had been attacked at Pearl Harbor. I knew a little bit about Pearl Harbor. I wasn't tremendously knowledgeable, as a lot of people were not. I mean, I knew it was our naval base in the Pacific, but that's about all I knew about it, at the time.

SH: Did the administration at Rutgers give you any advice as students? Were there people who wanted to run out immediately and enlist? What do you remember about that?

RW: Well, there were fellows that were very enthusiastic about immediately enlisting. The general thought was, "You should go on with your studies until you're either drafted or you enlist," and there wasn't a whole lot of pushing to do it, you know, one way or the other, but the idea was, "You're in college, you might not get called up, so, go ahead and get your education."

SH: Was it difficult to stay focused on your studies once that happened?

RW: When I finished my sophomore year, and then, went back in September, and that would have been September of '42, yes, it was very, very difficult to concentrate. I'd had one or two courses that interested me at the time. I had taken a course in climatology at the Ag School and there was an Austrian professor and it was very difficult to understand him and everything, but I enjoyed his course and I got an "A" in it. Well, I took a second course with him and, suddenly, there were over a hundred GIs in this new course, in a big lecture hall. ... It was hard to concentrate, because these kids were really not interested in the course. They'd been ordered to attend it. They couldn't understand the professor. ...

SH: These were the ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program] cadets that had arrived on campus.

RW: Yes, and I did like the course, but, ... again, with all the military men there, it was very hard to concentrate, and I was getting very, almost kind of upset at the fact that I really should be doing something in the war, ... rather than just staying in ... college, with everything going on. ... Of course, as you know, the first years of the war were very dramatic, with our losses all over the world, and particularly in the Pacific, with the Philippines gone and Bataan and Corregidor, and it was hard, very hard, to concentrate.

SH: Did you keep up with the news through the newspapers and newsreels?

RW: Newspaper, and whatever was available at Rutgers at the time.

SH: Radio?

RW: Yes. I kept up on it. ...

SH: Did you have a job when you were at Rutgers as a freshman and sophomore?

RW: Not during the school year, but in the summer. In the summer, I worked all summer for the Entomology Department, I think at the Ag School, and, the previous summer, I had spent on a farm, and I knew, with that, that I didn't want to be a farmer.

SH: Where was the farm?

RW: It was in Jersey, in the central part of New Jersey, at a gentleman farmer's farm, and I took care of chickens and turkeys and I'll never do that, ever again. That was the worst job in the world, to take care of those animals.

SH: Did you stay in the same dorm with the same roommates through your first two-and-a-half years at Rutgers?

RW: No. I had two different roommates. The second roommate was a young fellow that had a family who was in the potato farming business in New Jersey, but I had different roommates.

SH: Do you remember their names?

RW: No. I don't know. After sixty-some years, I remember a lot of things, but not that.
[laughter]

SH: Do you remember attending any of the musical programs?

RW: Yes. I remember Paul Robeson coming to Rutgers and I did attend those, yes.

SH: Did you attend the football games?

RW: Oh, yes. I was a sports fan at that time and I watched Rutgers lose to Princeton constantly. ... My famous story that I tell all my friends is that Rutgers and Princeton played the first intercollegiate football game and ... Rutgers won and, sixty-nine years later, we beat them again.
[laughter]

SH: Were you there?

RW: No. That was 1938. We didn't beat them the whole time I was at Rutgers. We lost 14-13 or 7-6 or something like that. It was enjoyable, but we didn't win with our archrival, because I had been looking at Princeton, couldn't afford to go there, but I had been looking at it before I went to Rutgers.

SH: Did you take advantage of the clubs on campus?

RW: I don't think I did. I don't remember, now, a single club that I was involved in.

SH: Do you recall Ag Field Day?

RW: I don't remember that. I was more interested in getting my grades. I mentioned earlier that I had taken this classical course in high school. Well, I found, when I went to Rutgers, that I had no chemistry at all. Here, I was going into freshman chemistry, and then, I had botany and biology. ... I think I had one course in that in high school, but, here, ... I had a lot of catching up to do, because I was now in a more scientific course at Rutgers and I didn't have any science courses in high school.

SH: Can you talk about your favorite professor, or even professors that you did not find so favorable, before you left for the war, in those two-and-a-half years?

RW: Well, ... unfortunately, the professor I did not like, I remember. I don't remember his name, but he was a calculus professor and, in my opinion, he was an absolute terrible professor. My roommate at the time was extremely good in mathematics. In fact, he was majoring in math, and he and I both flunked, or got a "D" in calculus, because this professor could not get calculus over to any of his students. He was terrible. I don't remember the other professors, other than that. You know, I had a lot of hard work to do, but I did well in the science courses, because I had to spend a lot of time on them and do a lot of labs.

SH: You had no favorite professors, no one who stepped forward in your eyes.

RW: Not that I remember, no, other than the climatology professor.

SH: After you and your mother went to Newark for your enlistment, were you sent back to Rutgers for that final semester?

RW: Well, let me correct you; my mother went with me ... for the draft, but I enlisted in Newark by myself, and that was in October and I was told ...

JW: He was probably afraid that she wouldn't want you to do that. [laughter]

RW: I was told to go home and wait to be called up, and so, I'd finished my semester and, as I recall, I finished it early in, that would be the first half of my junior year. ... Then, I was, oh, what's the word for it? I was disturbed about the war and knew I had to go in, because I had enlisted. So, I didn't want to go back to school, to Rutgers, and I got a job in Newark at Ballantine's Brewery as a chemical tester, and I have to tell everybody it wasn't "taster," because I found out that at Ballantine's Brewery, there was ten minutes "beer time" every two hours, and that was a union rule. ... I had a room that was a long lab, it was probably as long as from the door all the way through the kitchen, that I did the chemical testing of the beer. One of the things I had to do was to go to the production line and take the beer, or ale, right off the production line, at thirty-three degrees Fahrenheit, and bring it back to the lab and test it for alcohol content and for CO₂ content. ... When I was finished, I had a bottle that had been opened. There wasn't anything to do but pour it down the sink, and these guys would come by and knock on the door or windows and want me to give them this cold beer, that was not pasteurized. It hadn't gone through the pasteurizer yet and it was a struggle to get them to go

away, because, here, they had their ten minutes, but they couldn't wait and they wanted this ice cold beer. I worked there on the kind of swing shift, three to eleven PM, until I was called up.

SH: How difficult do you think it was for you to get into the Army Air Corps? Many men were turned down.

RW: Well, yes. Well, I had good grades. I had taken these courses in climatology and that would be of interest, and I had this Army officer on the Rutgers ROTC program that said I couldn't get in, he didn't think I could. ... That made me more determined than ever that I was going to do it and prove to him that there wasn't any reason I couldn't get in.

SH: If you had not gotten into the Air Corps, would you have gone into one of the other services?

RW: Well, I would have had to, but ...

SH: No, I meant like try to get into the Navy.

RW: Yes. Well, see, we have the Teterboro Airport right up here and my dad had taken me around to various airports, like Teterboro and one I remember out in the Oranges, where there were flying circuses that had come through, and that appealed to me, to be in flying, and so, my heart was set on being in the Air Corps at that time.

SH: Was there a romantic notion to being in the Air Corps?

RW: Oh, yes, because of World War I, and I had read ... stories and knew about our World War aces' flying, and so, yes, that was a romantic thing, but I also didn't want to go in the trenches of World War I. That did not appeal to me at all. [laughter] I wanted anything but that and I had no desire, one way or the other, to go in the Navy. I just didn't know enough about it.

SH: What about Lindbergh? Had he been an influence on you as a young boy?

RW: Yes, and, also, we went down to see and visit Lindenhurst [Lakehurst], where the dirigibles were based, and so, I knew about the United States dirigibles and the German ones that came over, the *Hindenburg*. So, it was always a little bit romantic about it, versus slugging in the trenches.

SH: You were determined to get into the air.

RW: I was determined, in spite of the ROTC, and it's a good thing I did, because it was bad advice that this officer had given these fellows. Turns out that the fellows that stayed and thought they were going to go on and get a commission as ROTC, they all got called up as privates in the Army and they never were allowed to go the full time and graduate and become officers. So, I got out and ... was able to get in a program that did allow me to have a chance to be an officer.

SH: Are you part of the Black Fifty from the Class of 1944?

RW: What is that? I'm sorry.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: We talked about your job at Ballantine's while waiting to be called up, the fact that you found it difficult to still be on campus at that time and your determination to get into the Air Corps. Can you take us from there?

RW: Well, it was just a part-time job as far as I was concerned, because I knew I was being called up into the service, but it was interesting for the work I did there. ... Then, on January 26th of 1943, I got a letter from the Army Air Corps, at that time, saying I should report on the 29th of January to Atlantic City for my call up, and, of course, ... I had enlisted to be in the Aviation Cadet Corps and that's what I was looking forward to.

SH: You reported for basic training in Atlantic City, correct?

RW: Well, this is what I found out when we arrived. The day I arrived in Atlantic City, they had just taken over the Haddon Hall Hotel as a military facility and they really were not equipped at all to expect us. The first thing I found out was that I was not an aviation cadet, I was a buck private, and it was quite a shock, because an aviation cadet got seventy-five dollars a month and a buck private got fifty dollars a month, and that first day, as soon as we arrived, I was put on KP, kitchen police, for twenty-four hours straight. ... I have never washed so many big pots and food containers as I did in the kitchen area, as we fed twenty thousand people that day, two meals a day, totally chaos, because they were all civilians and they were just being rushed through. ... I ended up working a full twenty-four hours and totally exhausted after that, was issued my military uniforms. Of course, it's the middle of winter, and we got orders, then, to get ready for the next day and they were going to march us. Well, we lined up, with our wool uniforms on and long Army overcoat and, not a beaked hat, but the regular private's hat, and they started marching us on the boardwalk, in platoons. Well, we marched down and we were going south, so, the left side of our uniform froze solid, from the ocean spray, it being that cold, and they turned us around and marched us back and the right side of our uniform froze. ... They did that for about two or three days and realized that we were just covered with ice, that maybe that wasn't such a good idea. So, they marched us to a field in the northwest part of Atlantic City and I have a vivid memory of that, because I could see fellows around me with noses turning white and ears turning white. They were getting frostbitten. The idea of taking these raw recruits and putting them through this terrible winter condition was just the worst thing that could happen, but that's what we did for a month, was basic training as buck privates, and then, the month was up and we found, to our further shock, that the entire program for aviation cadets had been changed. We were the first class of Aviation Cadets to have to go to this basic training and, now, we were being sent to college, and so, they piled us in a train and we ended up at the University of Vermont, at Burlington, Vermont, further cold. ... The first thing that happened when we got off the train, I remember and I can see it still, is, we're lined up at the train track with this whole group of fifteen hundred or more, or, at least, maybe two thousand, of soldiers, and the doctors that were there, took one look at us and said, "You're all quarantined." There

was meningitis, there was pneumonia, colds, and, here, we get taken into the University of Vermont, into the dormitories that the girls had just been moved out of, because they still had colored toilet paper in the dorms, and we could see the girls being moved, but we couldn't go anywhere near them. We were quarantined for the whole time that we were there, because of these sicknesses. We were sick. ... I wasn't, but, I mean, it was terrible. ...

SH: Did you have classes?

RW: We had classes in courses that the Army thought would be of interest and I had arrived there about the ... 1st of March, so, in the middle of it. ... Toward the end of my stay at the University of Vermont, they started us on pilot training and ... I did ten hours of training in a Piper Cub, with an instructor, trying to learn how to fly, and the rest of it was basic courses in, oh, ground recognition and a few other things like that, and we were still buck privates. We were still getting our fifty dollars a month and we finally ended up with being taken from that training to; we were going to be shipped to another station.

SH: Everyone there was going to be a pilot. That was the goal at that point. No one was already divided into other specialties.

RW: There was no division. We were all being trained to be in the Army Air Corps, which later became the Army Air Force.

SH: Were your instructors civilian or military?

RW: They were mostly civilian. We had very little military there. This was a college training program that they felt we needed. Many of the boys had come from high school and didn't have any college. Of course, I had two-and-a-half years of college at that point.

SH: Were you in uniform? Did you march to and from class?

RW: We were in uniform, in the Army olive green uniform and olive green jackets and overcoats.

SH: You were there for three months.

RW: We were. I was shipped to Nashville, Tennessee, on June 15th, so, all told, it was three months. It was the beginning of March to June 15th.

SH: Where were you sent to in Tennessee?

RW: Nashville, Tennessee, was the Army Air Force Classification Center. We were to go there and be tested, all kinds of testing, to find out our aptitude, our efficiency, our ability to be either a pilot or the other functions that were going to be assigned.

SH: How did you do? What were some of the tests that you recall?

RW: Well, frankly, I don't think I was a hot shot fighter pilot. I don't think I had ... quite the ability that was necessary, but I had all the other qualifications to be a navigator and they liked my testing and my college training.

SH: Right from Nashville, you began to pursue what was necessary to become a navigator.

RW: ... Yes. Well, I was sent, then, from Nashville, as soon as the classification period was over and all the tests were run and everything, and they said, "Okay, you are not going to be a pilot, you are going to be a navigator. We are going to send you to pre-flight school at Monroe, Louisiana, for pre-flight in navigation," and Monroe was already an advanced navigation school, but we were pre-flight, which is before that advanced stage.

SH: When you got to Tennessee ...

RW: Monroe, Louisiana.

SH: Louisiana. Were you dealing strictly with the military, as far as your training?

RW: Yes. ... In Nashville, it was all military.

SH: What about in Louisiana?

RW: Yes. It was all military and, as soon as we left Nashville, we became, finally, aviation cadets and we were now entitled to our seventy-five dollars a month.

SH: Did you have a chance to go home on leave when you left Vermont or did you go straight to Tennessee?

RW: No, went straight to Tennessee

SH: Then, straight to ...

RW: Monroe, Louisiana.

SH: Can you tell me what Louisiana was like for a young man from Lyndhurst, New Jersey?

RW: Well, it was a cultural shock. One of the first things was that we had to walk on boards that were in-between the classrooms, because it was wet and swampy, and the second cultural shock was the food that was served. We were served a gooey, terrible mass of something that they picked up with a ladle and threw on our plates, and it turned out to be boiled okra and, of course, to this day, I'm not very fond of okra, although my wife will fix fried okra, but boiled okra, that was the most horrible looking and tasting stuff of my life. So, there were a lot of cultural shocks.

SH: You arrived in Louisiana in time for the summer, I would assume.

RW: It was June, yes.

SH: The temperature rises.

RW: Yes, yes, and it was hot and it was damp and it was ...

JW: Humidity

RW: Humidity, correct.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: We were talking about Louisiana and the cultural shock.

RW: Right. The pre-flight courses there were designed to instruct the student in what to expect in navigation, but it was also one hundred percent military training, to be in a body of troops and to obey orders and marching. ... We marched to and from everything, to cadence, ... somebody keeping track of the rhythm, and that we were military looking, had lots of inspections. You were introduced to real military life. It was not a country club atmosphere at all.

SH: You were housed in barracks.

RW: We were housed in barracks and bunks. ... Also, all of this is a cultural shock, from a civilian used to a house and bathroom facilities in contrast to latrines and the other things of Army life.

SH: Did you do any KP duty?

RW: ... We were not required. As aviation cadets, we were now no longer required to do the KP, but we did start having training in aircraft recognition. One of the key things that the military of that era wanted us to be able to do was to identify all military craft, both European, the German, Italian, and the Japanese military, with these flash cards. It was constantly drilled into us to identify the various aircraft, whether they were fighters or bombers ... or transport planes. We were just constantly having courses and hour after hour of flash cards. "What's this?" ...

SH: There were only navigators in your group.

RW: That's right.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You were talking about the navigational school.

RW: Yes. This was pre-flight and we knew that there was advanced navigation being taught at Monroe, Louisiana, but we were in an earlier stage. We were in pre-flight and we had to show

enough aptitude in this and do the courses to actually pass it. Otherwise, you could get flunked out. So, I finished up with the pre-flight, and then, we were shipped to another station and this was the end of July. To our shock, we found that we, as aviation cadets, would normally have gone on to an advanced navigation school and gotten our wings and second lieutenant bars, but this new program they'd started with, all the way back in Atlantic City, had now progressed to the point where we were going to go to gunnery school. We were shipped to Tyndall Field in Panama City, Florida, for gunnery school. Well, we were the first class of aviation cadets to go through there and, when we arrived there, there were enlisted men, as gunners, going through and there were officers going through, including some of the famous movie stars, they had gone through there, but there ... had never been an aviation cadet class there. So, we had an enlisted man's club and we had an officers' club, but we did not have an aviation cadet club and we were left out. We never, the whole time we were there, had any of the facilities that would normally have gone to us. ... If you went to this school as an officer, you would have been able to go to the officers' club. We were prevented from either one, but it was a very interesting session. We started out with pistols, the Colt .45, and we graduated to a shotgun, and then, I'll run through some of them. First, then, the Thompson submachine gun, we fired all of these at targets, and then, we were to go on the machine guns, the .30-caliber and the .50-caliber machine guns, but, first, we had to go through skeet shooting. ... Although I had handled a .22 and a pistol, but not a pistol very much, my mother did not want guns in the house, ... I'd never shot a shotgun before. So, we had training and ... the purpose of it, of course, was to show the gunner that you had to lead the target by following the clay pigeon enough so that you could hit it. I enjoyed that tremendously and I was good at it. I was good at all of the weapons, even though I hadn't fired that many before, but I loved the skeet shooting and, first, it was stationary skeet shooting, and then, they took us on a railroad track in a car, well, it was a modified jeep, and we had to go along the target range with the shotgun, and then, at different angles, they would fire the clay pigeons. ... It might be off on the left, it might be off on the right or it might be not, essentially, straight ahead, but at an angle, and we had to lead the target and hit the clay pigeon and they were rating you on your ability to do this. I enjoyed that very much. So, we gradually got used to using all of the weapons, from the pistol on through the Thompson submachine gun, the shotgun and rifle, and then, we advanced to the machine gun and we went in a twin-engine aircraft which had a turret gun on it and we were to fire at a moving target. ... This was a long sleeve on a tow rope behind a single-engine airplane and that guy was taking his life in his hands, [laughter] because, occasionally, his tail would get shot up and the idea was that we were supposed to record our hits on this sleeve with a machine gun, and I did fairly well. I wasn't a bad gunner at all, [laughter] but the crucial point of the whole gunnery school was, at the very end, we had been working with the weapons, taking them apart and putting them back together again, but our passing grade was whether we could take a .50-caliber machine gun, which is a huge weapon, and take it apart and put it back together blindfolded and, if you failed that, you failed the entire course and you were sent back as a private. So, it was a very grueling test, but, of course, I successfully did it, to put all the pieces back together in the machine gun, and so, I graduated from gunnery school, still as an aviation cadet. By this time, I should have been an officer, by the way the former program had been, but that's the way things are in the military.

SH: Did you get any leaves, off base, in Louisiana, Tennessee or Florida?

RW: Well, there wasn't very much, but I have to admit that there must have been some time off during this period, because the only social activity that I could find was female companionship ... with nurses going to school, either in nursing school or were already nurses in Nashville and other stations. So, I apparently found that that was my quickest way to meet young women, as I was not into dances

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

SH: This continues an interview with Mr. Reid Waltman on November 8, 2006, in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. When we turned the tape over, we were talking about gunnery school in Panama City, Florida.

RW: This was Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, and I was telling you that I finally graduated there by putting the .50-caliber machine gun together blindfolded, taking it apart and putting it back together. So, I could graduate and go on to the rest of my aviation cadet training, which was now to be the advanced navigation school at San Marcos, Texas, San Marcos Air Force Base in Texas, which is between Austin and San Antonio, in the center part of Texas. ... I graduated from the gunnery school on November 11, 1943, yes, '43, so, I must have some leave, and then, in the beginning of the year, I was sent to San Marcos and started my advanced navigation training, and that was to be a very intense period of about four months of advanced navigation. We had a combination of ground school during the daytime, and then, as we learned more techniques of navigation, we would then go into a twin-engine Beechcraft aircraft to do our navigation. We were to be excellent in the four types of basic navigation: which were pilotage, which is looking at the ground and seeing objects on the ground that you can recognize, and then, know where you were by seeing those features; and then, there was dead reckoning, which was the type of navigation where you start out at point "A" and you know your distance that you're supposed go to and you know your airspeed, you figure out your ground speed, you know your wind direction, whether it's a tailwind or a crosswind, and you factor in all those different parts, and then, you can ... calculate where you are and know when you're going to arrive at a target area or a particular point; and then, there was radio navigation; and the final one was celestial navigation, and that's using a sextant to shoot the stars and figure out your position, or shoot the sun to figure out your position. Now, celestial navigation is a lot more difficult in an aircraft, because, when you take your star shots and figure out your position, your aircraft is moving all the time and you can be a couple of hundred miles ahead of where you were on the map by the time you figure it out. [laughter] ... We had all of this training, and then, we were sent up in an aircraft, like I mentioned, a Beechcraft, and there were several navigators onboard, like four or three or four, each one doing a separate phase of navigation on this particular trip. Now, I'm talking about my first trip in the airplane and I had to do the celestial navigation. The idea in celestial navigation is to shoot your stars, and then, you're supposed to ... figure out a triangle position, so that you are in the center of the triangle. Well, being on an aircraft, it moves, it vibrates, it's very difficult to stay steady and keep the bubble and the sextant straight. ... We were flying from San Marcos to Lake Charles, Louisiana. My triangle ended up being beyond Lake Charles and beyond San Marcos. [laughter] It was so big that I was somewhere in-between, and the other navigators didn't do any better, because the pilot finally got on the intercom and he says, "Well, boys, do you know where we are?" and these other guys didn't really and I ... hadn't done any better. ... He said, "Well, we're thirty miles out in the Gulf of

Mexico and I'm going to turn around and use the beacon, the radio beacon from Lake Charles, and we're going to go back." [laughter] So, that was a real good lesson as to what you had to know and, also, how to do it, but I got better as we went along. ... You had mentioned earlier about weather. ... Let's see, this was spring and we were having difficulty with flying weather in San Marcos. ... So, the instructors decided that we had to get the hours in and they took us on a trip out West. ... Of course, this was a total adventure anyway. San Marcos was the furthest away from New Jersey that I'd ever been, but here I was now, in this plane, navigating out West, and one thing does stick in my mind, is that we didn't and weren't going to be flying with oxygen. So, we were right at about twelve thousand feet, but we were going over the Rocky Mountains. ... Some of the peaks were above us and I can still remember looking out the windows, and can see myself looking out the windows, and seeing the mountains on either side of us, which I had never seen before in my life, but we got our time in by going out West and flying around in New Mexico and southern Colorado and doing a good bit of navigation. That really helped.

SH: What type of aircraft were you training on?

RW: This was a twin-engine. It was designed specifically for navigators as a training ship. It was a twin-engine Beechcraft and it had the dome on the top, so that you could do the astro shots, and then, it had side windows that you could look out, so that you could do your pilotage and the other types of navigation, and it was fixed up for three or four navigators on the trip. ... Of course, there was ground school all the time, aircraft identification constantly, like we did in pre-flight, and the fundamentals, all the time, of the different types of navigation that I have just related, but examples of them all the time, how you used them. ... There's various techniques that the navigator can use, because, ... if you can figure out your longitude, you can go to a point on the longitude, and then, turn on that longitude and go directly to your target or home base or whatever it is, which is a technique that [means] you're not going straight to your point, but you're going at an angle, and then, you turn on the longitude. Like, if you're going to Honolulu, if you knew the latitude there, and then, the longitude, you could fly out in the ocean until you hit the right longitude, and then, turn and go south and you can't miss coming on to your target. These were things that we learned in the navigation school.

SH: Were you clocking hours to get to a certain point to graduate?

RW: Yes. It was hours of training and there had to be a certain number of flying hours, actual target examples that we had to do, equivalent to a lesson. It was so many lessons that we had to accomplish in the air to be classified as an aerial navigator. You could still know all the tricks of navigation, but, if you didn't know how to apply it in the air, you would not be an aerial navigator. It's so much different to be a navigator on the ground or on a ship. A ship might be going ten or twenty miles an hour and it's really easy to then figure out your position on a ship, but, in that same time in an airplane, going at three hundred miles an hour, in that hour, you're three hundred miles away. ... I'm making my war diary right now and I'm going to include some examples of what not to do. There's a famous story, I don't know whether you're aware of it, from a history of the B-24 called the *Lady Be Good*. It was an aircraft that was based in Africa and it went on a mission over the Mediterranean, and then, came back, and the navigator was obviously not a good navigator, when I finish my story, because he did not recognize the

shoreline of the north coast of Africa. ... He was trying to rely on a radio beacon and he passed over the beacon and didn't realize that. When you're doing radio navigation, the beacon noise increases as you get toward the station, and then, if you pass over it, it is loud, and then, it decreases. Well, somehow, he didn't recognize that and he continued flying into the Sahara Desert and they got so low on fuel and they were lost and the pilot ordered the crew to bail out, thinking they could walk to their destination. Well, they didn't know they were three hundred miles into the Sahara and they bailed out and the plane continued on auto pilot and didn't actually crash. It ran out of fuel, but it came down in a little bit crumpled condition. I mean, the propellers were bent and a few things, but the crew was then on the ground and they didn't know which way to go and they started out in the wrong direction. We know this because one of the crewmen kept a diary, and they all perished in the desert. ... This was 1943. So, in 1956, an oil exploration crew on the ground discovered the wreckage of the plane, and then, the United States Government, through the grave retrieval group, [Graves Registration], investigated and they eventually found all the men on the ground at various spots, found the plane, and then, found where the men were and found the diary. ... That's how they pieced this story together, the root of which was a bad error by the navigator. He should have recognized both the shoreline and the radio beacon and not gotten lost.

SH: Looking back on your training, did you think that you were well-prepared?

RW: Oh, I thought I was quite well-prepared.

SH: Even though you were still an aviation cadet.

RW: Yes. At that point, when I finished the course, I felt very confident that I was a good navigator, considering the fact that I didn't know where I was on the first time out, and then, when we finished our total number of aircraft flights, I was pretty good.

SH: Did you have a choice as to which aircraft type you would then serve on? Could you request something?

RW: No, no. We were being assigned. At that time, we didn't know it, but, at that time, we were experiencing terrific losses in aircraft in the European Theater.

SH: You were not being told of this.

RW: We were not told anything about that.

SH: I wondered if this was discussed in class.

RW: You were all just assigned. We were needed as replacement crew members for all the losses that had occurred. I have some literature over here that shows that there was actually a one-hundred-percent loss, over a year, of personnel from the bombing missions. ...

SH: Were they primarily flying from England at that point?

RW: They were primarily from England and started to be from North Africa at that time, but we were assigned to go to an overseas training unit. We didn't know whether we were going to be in twin-engine planes or four-engine planes. We were, of course, not pilots, so, we weren't going to be in a single-engine plane and we were assigned to Casper Air Force Base in Casper, Wyoming, for our overseas training and I have a cousin who also became a navigator, but he was assigned to the troop transport command. So, it was just whoever assigned it. ... I know that we didn't have a choice.

SH: What did the overseas training in Casper consist of?

RW: ... Well, first, after we left San Marcos; by this time, I had graduated from San Marcos and I was now a second lieutenant, instead of an aviation cadet, and I had my navigation wings and my observer wings, because I was both a navigator and an observer. ... My graduation from San Marcos was; let me pause a moment.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: Then, a four-month training, I graduated on April 22, 1944, as a second lieutenant and I did have a leave at that time and I did come home. I was to report to Casper, Wyoming, but *via* wherever I wanted to go. So, I came to Lyndhurst and that's when I came to Rutgers.

SH: You talked about having to borrow the family car.

RW: Right. You want to hear that?

SH: Over the wonderful lunch Joan Waltman served, we discussed rationing on the home front.

RW: Well, I did get home. Here I was, a brand-new second lieutenant, with his flashy uniform and the Air Force hat and my wings and my second lieutenant bars, and I thought I'd go down to Rutgers and see what the Ag School [College of Agriculture] was like, also, with the intent of maybe meeting a young lady that I had had a few dates with prior, when I was at Rutgers, and her name was Bonnie Morran. So, I drove the 1928 Studebaker down and was on whatever the street is, College Avenue, that separates New Jersey College for Women, as it was called then, [currently Douglass College], from the Ag School and there were a group of young ladies on the sidewalk and they saw me in uniform and I stopped and I was going to ask them ... whether they knew this young lady, Bonnie Morran. ... One of the young ladies came over to the car and said her name was Dorothy Penn and asked, what was I looking for? and I told her I wanted to try to locate Bonnie Morran. Well, she didn't know Bonnie Morran, but she said, "I can possibly help you look her up and why don't we have a drink together?" and we went back up to the Corner Tavern and I was a very shy person, still, even though I was a second lieutenant and everything else. I was still shy of gals and I didn't know what to order, as far as a liquor drink. ... I'd never drank in the service and we never had liquor in the house, except for medicinal purposes, here, and, oh, I had a whiskey toddy once in a while, when I had a cold, here at home. So, the only thing I knew was a rum and Coke. So, I ordered a rum and Coke and this very young, sophisticated woman, I'm scared of her, [laughter] but, anyway, I got her name and address, and then, found out she was about to graduate, and her name was Dorothy Penn and she was Class of

'44. She was a journalist student in the School of Journalism and she then was within several months of graduating and I came home and spent the rest of my leave here in Lyndhurst. Then, I went, ... by train, out to Casper, Wyoming, but, first, I had to stop in Lincoln, Nebraska, at the Lincoln Air Force Base.

SH: Were you flying or on a train?

RW: No, this was the train. At Lincoln Air Force Base, I had to go through high altitude and oxygen training and be qualified again ... as an aerial navigator. In all of our training prior to this, we had never gone much above twelve thousand, thirteen thousand feet, where you barely start to use oxygen, but, if I was ... apparently going to be assigned to a four-engine bomber that flew at twenty to thirty thousand feet, I had to have training for high altitude. It was, like, we went into a chamber, a high altitude chamber, and they simulated the altitude of where we would be flying and some people could not take that and they'd be flunked out of that. So, that was part of our training for just a very short time, maybe less than two weeks, and then, I went to Casper, Wyoming, from there, and that's the beginning of my crew training. I met my crew for the first time and I was assigned to a B-24 bomber and there's ten men on the crew.

SH: This is in Casper.

RW: This is in Casper, and my pilot, who was the first pilot, he was the commander of the B-24, his name was Chuck Culpepper, and his co-pilot was Bob Brown, and the other officer, because there's four officers on the crew, was Bill Owen, the bombardier, and I was the navigator, and then, we had ... six gunners that were assigned ... to man the other guns on the B-24. You had a nose turret gunner; you had an upper turret gunner; you had two gunners in the waist, one on either side; you had a belly turret gunner and you had ... a rear turret gunner at the rear of the aircraft. ... We were then to train together as a crew and to become proficient as a crew and do some flying, not only some navigation, but some bombing runs, to drop dummy bombs and to practice flying in formation with other ships, because, by that time, we knew we were going to be flying with a squadron of other planes and had to learn how to fly in a squadron formation.

SH: How many planes, or ships, as you call them, were stationed in Casper at that time? Were they all training at the same level or were there different stages?

RW: There were classes. We were a class and we came in at a certain time, and then, we'd go through all the training at once, and then, proceed to a point of graduation.

SH: The class would be made up of your crew.

RW: No, it would be made up of a number of crews.

SH: The class had different crews. How many crews were in a class?

RW: Okay. There'd be about sixty crews, so, we're talking about six hundred men total, because there's ... ten men per crew, or ten men per plane, same thing.

SH: The class would then fly the same missions, all these different crews

RW: Well, it was scheduled, ... because you couldn't have everybody flying at once. Like, if you're doing a bombing mission, and being out in Casper, Wyoming, we had to do our bombing on a bombing range in the nearby desert area.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please, continue.

RW: Training at Casper, Wyoming, was intense. We just trained and trained. We did navigation trips, we did bombing trips, to give the bombardier training in finding and locating a target with the help of the navigator, and then, trying to hit the bull's-eye. We were still low altitude training. We were never more than twelve thousand feet above the ground, although Casper is five thousand feet in elevation anyway, but training was very intense, ground school all the time, repeating all the things that we had learned through pre-flight and advanced training, and then, continuing with these simulated missions and flying, trying to fly in formation with other planes. So, it was just a very active program all the time. We never got off the base at all. I can remember, to this day, waking up early in the morning to the roar of the four-engine B-24s being warmed up, so that they would be ready for our missions later, after we had been briefed, and it was a distinctive sound that sticks with you, when you have forty or fifty aircraft revving up. The story I'd like to mention was, the only time that we got off of that base as officers was when our pilot had arranged for us to have an overnight pass, which went from late in the afternoon to six o'clock in the morning. Well, he was from Texas and he had apparently arranged or knew that there was a chicken shack in Casper, Wyoming, along the Platte River, that was a good place to eat. This was my introduction to fried chicken, biscuits and honey and we just had a ball there and we spent most of the night eating and talking and just being away from the base for a few hours. This place had a colored cook and she knew how to make fried chicken. Well, that was a delight for me. ... The second incident that I do remember is that we were going to fly some training bombing missions and I wouldn't have a whole lot to do, because I, we all, knew by this time where the bombing range was and the pilot could fly there. So, I volunteered to take the aerial camera, which was a large camera, oh, maybe a foot-and-a-half-by-two-feet long, and take pictures of the bomb run, ... when the bombs dropped, and the only way to really do that in a B-24 was for me to go to the waist, ... on the rear hatch, right behind the waist guns, in the floor of the plane, and sit down with my feet outside the plane. Well, being young and stupid and not thinking about it, I did not have a parachute on and I did not have any straps to connect to the sides of the plane and I sat on that hatch, open hatch, and looked down and took my pictures. ... Everything was fine until we hit an air bump and my seat, my rear, went up in the air and, fortunately, it came down on the same spot, because I have thought ever since that I could have gone out that hatch and I'd have been gone, because I did not have a parachute on. [laughter] So, again, Casper was intense, intense training.

[INSERT: The only other break from the constant training routine at Casper was a trip that Chuck Culpepper, Bob Brown and I took to Lincoln AFB, Lincoln, Nebraska, in a B-24 to pick up a brand-new, shiny B-24 without any type of paint job, to ferry it back to Casper AFB. This trip only required the two pilots, Chuck and Bob, and me, as navigator, so, neither the

bombardier, Bill Owen, nor any of the crew were required to make this trip. It was a big break from our training and a chance for me to do additional navigation training and to get familiar with pilotage, dead reckoning and radio navigation away from the Casper, Wyoming, area.

We had an overnight stay in Lincoln, with no chance to get off the Lincoln AFB, but it was a big break in our routine. The next morning, we climbed into this brand-new, shiny plane and ferried it back to Casper AFB. This trip gave me more time to cement the relationship between pilot and navigator, which I believe is and was a very important function to establish in a combat crew, from the first day on through combat missions. We had to rely on each other to stay alive—the pilots to safely fly the plane; the navigator to get us to the target or position and back again; the bombardier to accurately drop the bombs on the target; and gunners to protect the plane from enemy fighters.

There is a tremendous bond established in a bomber crew of ten young men, all relying on each other for a safe return from combat duty, which, in our case, was flying fifty combat missions, eight hundred to one thousand miles over enemy territory, and returning safely. This bond all started at Casper, Wyoming Air Force Base.]

SH: Where was your crew from?

RW: Well, the pilot was from Hale County, in the Panhandle of West Texas, and, actually, the bombardier was from Eastland, Texas, and I was trying to locate him just recently and found that he ... actually was born in Eastland, Texas, which is about sixty miles west of Fort Worth. The co-pilot was from Visalia, California, and, of course, I was from Lyndhurst, New Jersey, and then, the gunners were scattered all over. One gunner was from Mobile, Alabama, the other one was from Philadelphia and Davenport, Iowa. So, they were just scattered, but we became a crew at Casper, Wyoming, and there's quite a bond between a crew when you go into combat, because you're all depending on each other to survive in aerial combat missions and that was the purpose of our training there.

SH: In a crew like this, how much hierarchal discipline is maintained between the officers and the enlisted men?

RW: ... As far as the crew, there wasn't any, other than we looked to our pilot as the captain of the crew and the enlisted men looked to the officers for assistance, but the Army kept the officers' quarters separated from the enlisted men's quarters, so, we were never bunked together, so-to-speak. Well, I finished my training, overseas training, then, at Casper, Wyoming, and I was qualified then, as an aerial navigator, to proceed to overseas with my crew. I graduated from Casper, I think it's the end of June, and then, I did get a chance to come home again and all I did was make rail trips across the United States, because my orders were, leaving Casper, Wyoming, ... to report to Lincoln, Nebraska, at a certain date, and so, I traveled by train to New Jersey, and then, from New Jersey back to Lincoln, Nebraska, and then, I got on a troop train at Lincoln, Nebraska, and went back to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

SH: Did you really?

RW: [laughter] All I was doing was going back and forth across the country by train.

SH: What did you do to kill the time when you were traveling?

RW: ... Train travel then, as far as the military was concerned, you were on just a regular car. There were no bunks or anything else. You just slept where you could and the troop train wasn't any better. Troop train went a little longer, because it went different places. We never knew where we were really going, but we ended up in Camp Dix, in New Jersey.

SH: Camp Kilmer or Fort Dix?

RW: Fort Dix, I'm sorry; no, Camp Kilmer. We did Camp Kilmer first.

SH: The whole crew came from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Camp Kilmer.

RW: Right, yes. They went their separate ways on their leave, but they all came back to Lincoln, Nebraska, and then, turned around and got on the troop train and ended up at Camp Kilmer, and then, we were only at Camp Kilmer a day. Here I was, just been home, crossed the country again and ... we were quarantined, in effect. We were not allowed to use the telephone or tell our folks that we were going.

SH: This was in August of 1944.

RW: Well, yes.

SH: You graduated on July 29th. The D-Day invasion had already taken place. Did you hear about that? How did that filter down to the men training to go there?

RW: ... As I remember, it didn't. We knew that we had invaded, but that's about all, but we got, then, orders at Camp Kilmer to go to New York Harbor and board a Merchant Marine troopship and this was, we found out later, ... a great event for us, versus a Navy troopship, because, coming from the States, we had fresh fruit and vegetables. Instead of being all lumped together, we actually had tables with tablecloths and had two seatings per meal, to divide up the officers, and we had three meals and, as I said, we had a great time going over.

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship?

RW: No, I don't. It was a Merchant Marine ship and I don't remember the name of it, but we did go in a convoy and we had all kinds of vessels around us and destroyers and we had no submarine alarms going over, which was a blessing.

SH: When did you find out where you were going?

RW: When we arrived in Liverpool, England, and that was in August and we came into the seaport of Liverpool and, naturally, by that time, we figured we should be going to the Eighth Air Force. So, they took us by British lorry to an airfield and we were put up in what I would

describe as very similar to a one-story motel, but made of stone, and it had rooms, and then, doors going out into a yard area. ... The reason I'm mentioning this is because, when we woke up the next morning, we heard this terrible, just terrific, roar and it was our first experience with war, because we dashed out to see what this noise was and there was a twin-engine Mosquito bomber, British Mosquito bomber, ... buzzing the area below treetop level and he came right in front of us, and then, went down the line. ... We looked and were horrified to see that there was a telephone pole down the line and, being flyers, we knew he wasn't going to make it and, sure enough, he saw it and lifted up and the tail of this plane hit the crossbars on that telephone pole and that plane spun up in the air, and then, turned and came down and crashed in a big plume of flames and smoke and we realized that there's a casualty of war right there. Of course, ... he shouldn't have been buzzing, but that's what young pilots do.

!@#\$%

SH: Was that the first crash you had seen?

RW: First crash that we'd seen, and it was an introduction to war, right then and there. Well, that same day, after the crash, we were notified, "Somebody had made a mistake. You're not going to be in England. You're going to go to Italy," and so, they put us on trucks and we went through London and that was our second experience with war, seeing London just bombed, ... with the buzz bombs and all the rest of them, and ... just street after street looked like it was destroyed. We didn't spend any time in London, but we had enough time to see the destruction.
...

SH: Was it only your crew that was being moved?

RW: ... Several crews, and they trucked us to the southwest coast, the Cornish Coast of England, to a seaside resort named Newquay. It's spelled two different ways. It's N-U-Q-U-A-Y, and then, there's N-E-W-Q-U-A-Y, but it was a British seaside resort and they told us, ... "You're going there and you're going to be there a short while and you will be transported by a converted B-24 bomber, converted into a transport plane, to Italy." Well, we got to the coast and were billeted there and the weather turned bad and we should have been there a day, but we were there more than a week. At one point, we got on a plane and took off, and then, ran into bad weather and the pilot turned around and came back. ... Since we were now sort of stranded in Newquay, England, being a sea resort, there were some young ladies around and I met a British young lady by the name of Betty Reid and we just became a little bit friendly and she was able to get me some Irish silver, silverware, that I could then send home to my family. ... Then, I turned around and had my family send her some lingerie that was in very short supply in England, and this is a picture, right after the war, of Betty getting married to a young British officer.

SH: Lovely woman, beautiful dress and flowers, wow.

RW: Yes. ...

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

SH: You were talking about the ATC.

RW: The ATC, which I said was, "Allied," it's wrong, it was the Army Transport Command, provided us with a ticket to go to Naples and I have a copy in my files. It is a one-way ticket from London to Naples, Italy, and we went on this converted B-24, which had bucket seats, and we flew from Newquay to Casablanca, stayed overnight in Casablanca and flew on to Tunis, Algiers, and stayed overnight, and then, flew from Algiers to Bari on the southeast coast of Italy. This was our real introduction to war, as we flew into the seaport of Bari, because the entire harbor was just littered with sunk or half-sunk vessels, ships of all sizes. Troopships, ammunition ships, merchant ships were just sunk all over the harbor and, when we got on the ground and inquired about it. ... We learned it was a *Luftwaffe* air raid that had caught the Allies by surprise in ... December of '43 and I got there in September of '44 and they hadn't had a chance to do a whole lot with the harbor. They could get ships in, but it was one of the most successful raids of a seaport in the entire war, whether it was Pacific or European, other than Pearl Harbor, of course. ... It was just incredible to see all these ships. You could look down and see the sunken ones, and then, the ones that were still sticking above the water, and there's quite a report, there's a whole book on the subject of the air raid on Bari, that I have in my files. ... From Bari, we were trucked north to our field, which is the 459th Bomb Group field at Giulia, it's spelled G-I-U-L-I-A, Giulia Field, Giulia Torrie Field, which was a former olive and grape orchard that the Army had taken over to make an airfield. The whole area was in what is called the Foggia Plains, because it's the only spot, still, at that time, in Allied hands that was flat enough to have several airfields, because the whole backbone of Italy is mountainous and very few spots are suitable for an airfield, as we needed a series of them with all the bomb groups that were there. So, we came into the 459th Bomb Group and I and my crew were assigned to the 758th Bomb Squadron. ... That was another introduction to war, because, when we got in the squadron and were assigned a tent, we had to live in tents the whole time we were in Italy, there was one crew member in the tent. He was a lieutenant, second lieutenant, that was a navigator and his crew had gone on a mission and he'd been sick that day and he didn't go and they didn't come back and they were all missing-in-action, (MIA). ... We found out that, in the official squadron diary's report, that they only could put four crews up. There should have been sixteen crews to that squadron and they could only put up four when we arrived, because of losses, combat losses, and the fact that men had reached their fifty mission limit and could be sent home, and so, the squadron was decimated, as were the other squadrons. There are four squadrons in a group and four groups in a wing, and there's a number of wings in the 15th Air Force and we arrived there and find that, "Gee, there's one lone guy in this tent and his crew is missing and there's nobody else around. All the rest of the crews are not in their tents. They're gone." It was quite an introduction to combat. Our crew arrived, on September 9th and I flew the first combat mission on September 24th. So, between September 9th and the 24th, we practiced and practiced and the first thing that all of the crews and the pilots were told is, "You don't know what you're doing. You are not flying close enough. You've been taught to fly formation in the States; that's not the way we do it here. We go wingtip-to-wingtip and you tuck your wing right next to the other guy and you're not doing it," and they'd practice and practice and practice us. ... We'd come down exhausted, and then, three o'clock the next morning, we'd be up again practicing.

SH: Were the planes delivered? You talked about how many crews had been lost. Did you have to wait for more planes?

RW: No, we didn't have to wait for planes, but, typical of military action, the new crews were given the oldest plane, but they were getting us replacement planes very quickly.

[INSERT: During World War II, over 19,000 B-24s were built all over the central and western United States, some by Ford, in the Detroit area, others at St. Louis and at the original Consolidated Aircraft Company plant in California. As a result, there were replacement planes available, but we did not always have the newest model available to us. My first two missions were in older B-24H models, as were the eighth, ninth and tenth missions. I even flew my twelfth mission in a B-24G model, a rather old model. There were many modifications made in the B-24 from the original models, which did not have a nose turret, but, instead, had two individual .50-caliber machine guns in the nose, one to be manned by the navigator and the other by the bombardier. Thank goodness that was changed to a nose turret, manned by a nose turret gunner who, in our crew, was also the assistant engineer. Hogan, the bombardier, and myself, as navigator, had far more to do on a combat mission than man .50-caliber machine guns.

We were always glad to fly in the newer B-24J and B-24L models, as the improvements were very beneficial. For instance, the J and L models had larger nose side windows, which made my job easier to view the ground for better pilotage navigation. This, also, provided a better view for my observer duties, which had to be reported back to the mission briefing officers. It, also, was a little scary to be able to see the clouds of black smoke ahead of or alongside of you from bursting German flak shells.]

... The first mission that we flew, I don't remember a tremendous amount about it, but it was all the way up into northeastern Hungary and we bombed a railroad bridge and it was successful and we had some flak, no fighters, and we came back. Now, the second mission was all the way to Greece, and this is a map here of my missions. We were down here in Foggia and the first mission was up into Hungary, and then, we flew all the way over here to Athens. At that time, the Germans were trying to retreat out of Greece and they had a whole series of ... three-engine transport planes, like our Ford Tri-Motor plane in the United States, and these were Fokker planes and they were moving troops out of the airport in Athens. ... So, we bombed the airport with fragmentation bombs. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please, continue.

RW: Well, the next series of missions I flew were up to a railroad bridge in northern Italy called Ora, O-R-A, and that was my third mission, and then, the fourth mission was, again, to Hungary, to Gyor, G-Y-O-R. The fifth one was back up to north Italy, and then, the sixth mission, there's a story about that mission. It was an all-out effort by the 15th Air Force. You have to realize that there are two main bomber air forces in Europe, the 15th and the Eighth Air Force in England, which, because of its location and because it got all of the movie stars and whatever, had all the reputation. ... If their maximum effort would be twelve hundred planes put up and they bombed parts of Germany and it would be in our Army newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*, it'd be blared all over the headlines of the front page, and, on the back page, in one paragraph, would be, "15th Air Force Puts Up A Thousand Planes," and that's all we got, was a paragraph. Well,

the mission that I'm referring to was to Bologna, in the Po Valley of Italy, and it was this maximum effort by the 15th Air Force to knock out the communications around Bologna, the ammunitions stores, the railroads, and so, we had a thousand planes up that day. ... Of all the things that could happen was that our bomb group, which, as I said, had four squadrons, was the last group that was going to go over the target, and then, our squadron was the last squadron and our plane was the last plane. We were "Tail-End Charlie," the last of any of the planes. I could look ahead and see the sky just full of B-24s that had preceded us and the flak that day was just black. ... The sky was just covered with flak and you're looking ahead and you're anticipating going over the target and you're thinking, "How we going to get through that?" It's just tremendous flak. We got on our IP, which is the initial point, ... where we turned to go on to the bomb run, and we approached the target expecting to be just shot at tremendously and we started our bomb run and got our bombs away and there was no flak. The only thing we could think of was, with the other thousand planes ahead of us, they had run out of ammunition. ... We sailed over that target without a single shot being fired at us, from Bologna, oh, ... this is great, and we turned, which is called "rally." We rallied to the right ... to get out to the Adriatic, to get away from additional flak areas, and then, we could proceed back down to our home base. ... Everybody's happy on the plane and some of the enlisted men are talking on the intercom, saying that they're taking off their flak suits, and I looked ahead and we were just approaching the shore. ... I saw some barges out in the water and I was just not thinking about it and, all of a sudden, we had a series of flak burst that were right at our level, right next to us. There was a flak barge out in the water that was shooting at us and, here, all the guys had taken off their flak suits and were essentially unprotected. ... So, I hollered to the pilot to turn and get us away from there and we turned and the rest of the mission was uneventful, but being shot at, at the last minute, was scary.

SH: After having sailed through the first one. Were there other missions that stand out in your memory?

RW: Yes. The next one was, again, up to Hungary, and then, on ... November 11th, which was Armistice Day, ... I almost lost my life. We were to bomb the town of Graz in Austria, which is a very well defended target, but the day that we started out was a terrific, cold day on the ground. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: I made a mistake and looked down the mission list a little too far. The target for November 11th was Linz, Austria. Now, Linz was as bad a target as Vienna or Munich. It was a very severe target, but our problem this particular day was not so much the German defenses as it was weather. The weather was so cold that morning when I got up that I put on every stitch of clothes I had, long johns, and then, the uniform, and then, all the winter equipment that we used in the plane, because it was bitter cold.

SH: You had to fly over the Alps, too.

RW: Yes, and we're at twenty-some thousand feet. So, we were approaching the target area and ... we now had to go to twenty-eight thousand feet, which was the highest we'd been at altitude,

was almost the limit of the B-24, loaded, and it was sixty-below-zero outside, or in the plane, too, because we were not heated, except for our heat suits. ... For some reason, I was on the flight deck that day, instead of up in the nose of the airplane, where my position was, I was doing navigation up there on the flight deck and the main engineer, enlisted man, who was in the upper turret next to me, said he wanted to come down from his turret. ... The pilot kept saying, "No, it's not what you should do as we're approaching the target. It's bad. Stay there," and I looked over and I saw that the engineer had attempted to come down from his turret, and so, I went over to him and where our oxygen tube only allowed you a certain length of distance. ... I got to him and there was something wrong. He was not functioning. So, I managed to pull him down and saw that he was unconscious, lying there, and I couldn't reach him with my oxygen mask. So, the best thing I thought to do would be to give him my oxygen mask, pull him over and give him my oxygen mask, and then, I'd take an oxygen mask and what we call a roll-around bottle [a small oxygen bottle] and put that on myself, and then, try to revive him. Well, I did that. I took my oxygen mask off, put it on him and that's the last thing I remember. You can go out so quick, that it turns out the engineer was already dead and I was going unconscious. Well, fortunately, the co-pilot had been looking back and he saw what was going on and he got a walk-around bottle and he came back. ... The next thing I knew was, I was being shoved in the co-pilot's seat. The plane was diving. We had been at twenty-eight thousand feet. I ... could see the altimeter. It was spinning down at fourteen thousand feet and going down. The pilot is yelling at me, "Where are we?" and we had been going north when all this happened and I looked out and I saw the head of the Adriatic Sea. ... We were going south and our problem was, we were rapidly getting down to twelve thousand feet and we were going right over Trieste, Italy, and I knew, at twelve thousand feet, that the Germans had all kinds of anti-aircraft guns that could hit us at twelve thousand feet. ... So, just realizing it, I yelled to the pilot, "Turn," and gave him a heading to turn and he turned and, right off our wing, there was just flak. It hit, went right at our altitude and our position. We would have been hit if we had not turned. Well, I gave the direction to go down between the Fiume Peninsula and the Yugoslavia coast, ... so that we could head down toward the Adriatic Sea that we had to still cross to the Italian side. Meantime, we had a dead engineer. The pilot is ordering the nose gunner to come from the nose turret, he was assistant engineer, to get back and determine what our gas situation was. We had to make the decision, "Are we going to continue? Are we going to bail out over Yugoslavia and hope we get the Partisans to pick us up, or what are we going to do?" because this trip up to Linz, Austria, had been long and hard and we knew we'd used a lot of fuel and we didn't know what our fuel status was with the main engineer dead. ...

SH: Were you still loaded?

RW: And we still had our bombs on board, ... because we had dived out of the formation by that time, near the target. The tail gunner had also, during that time, reported that he was losing oxygen and he had to get out of his turret. It was a terrible day. So, the new engineer got back and said, "Well, we might have enough gas, but we don't have enough gas to go back to base." So, the pilot asked me what we should do. I said, "Well, I think we can go to the nearest airport that's in our control, under Allied control, which is Ancona, over here on the Italian coast," and so, we made the decision, over the intercom, that we would try to get to Ancona, rather than bail out. ... We started down and, by this time, we had skimmed down close to the turbulent water. We were right over the water surface, maybe fifty feet. It was such a bad day that there were

numerous water spouts, tornadoes on the water of the Adriatic, and, with our limited fuel, we had to dodge those water spouts and still keep on course over to Ancona. ... Meantime, we got the radio operator from the waist to come up and get on the radio and start a mayday call. ... He was calling, "Mayday, mayday," and we were trying to reach the Ancona Field, which we knew was under British control. Well, they would never answer us. We needed wind direction, so that we could make a safe landing, and we're calling and calling and calling and dodging these water spouts and I'm keeping the plane on a heading to get to the field. ... Finally, the pilot said, "I can't reach him. They're not answering." ... He spotted the field and crossed the coast on the north side of the field. It had just one east-west runway. He crossed on the north side and made a right-angle turn, going south, and then, turned and went back east and said, "I'm going to land." The wind was so bad that the plane was crabbing at a forty-five-degree angle to the field and we're just going down the field sideways and the pilot made the most beautiful landing you have ever seen in your life. We touched down. We taxied and started taxiing and rolling to the end of the field. We got to the end of the runway and all four engines quit. We'd run out of fuel totally and we were listed as missing-in-action for that day. They put us up at the field and fed us. ... There was a US Army liaison officer there and we asked him, "Why didn't the British acknowledge our mayday and help us?" and he shrugged and he said, "Well, you know the Brits; there's competition between the Eighth Army and the Fifth Army," the Fifth Army is US, the Eighth Army is Britain, "and they just don't want to help."

SH: Not even for a mayday call?

RW: No. So, we stayed overnight there, and then, ... got fuel and flew back to the base with our engineer onboard. ... By the way, his name was Sidney [Sigmund S.] Karpinski, a Polish boy, and he was more trained than anybody on the enlisted man crew, but he forgot one thing and that was that you had to constantly squeeze the throat of the oxygen mask to break the ice loose that would form from your condensation. We'd been told this. We're told it in the States, we'd been told it over there, but he forgot and didn't do it and, when he tried to get down from the turret, he had no oxygen. His mask had frozen up and, as a result of that incident, the 15th Air Force put out a bulletin on what had happened to us, which was terrible, but we got back to base the next day, no longer missing-in-action, and then, they flew us to Bari the next day for a funeral for our engineer. It was rather traumatic, and I have a whole bunch of letters. Do you remember any of this, Joan? ... What happened was that, ... after the incident, a write-up occurred in the Visalia, California, newspaper of the actions of the co-pilot, and so, his family then called here, to my mom and dad, and sent telegrams saying that they'd heard from their son, Bob, that we were all right, because my folks, I'm sure, didn't know what had happened. ... By censorship, I wasn't able to let them know, but I did send a cablegram saying we were all right. I couldn't say why. We were afraid that the missing-in-action report would have gotten to the family and we were worried about them.

SH: Where was Karpinski from?

RW: He was from Connecticut and I vowed then that, ... when I got back to the States, I would go to his family and talk to them, and I did that when I got back, but that was a bad November 11th. I was unconscious and could have died right then. I was very, very lucky. Soon after that, we flew a couple more missions, and then, we did get a rest. We were sent to the Isle of Capri

and we had about an eight-day rest area [leave] there and I was able to see the Blue Grotto and I bought a silver bell that was the Capri Bell and it's on one of my pictures of me when I got back. ... I gave that to Joan and I think she still has that. It was nice, because it tingled as you walked and you could strut along with your uniform and your wings and ribbons and have this thing tingling. When we got back from Capri, we started some training and we couldn't understand what was going on. Here we were, thinking we were real combat veterans and, during the time that I'm referring to, we did have a whole series of missions in which we came back alone. We'd get shot up over the target and we'd lose an engine. Well, when you did that on a B-24, you couldn't keep up with the rest of the formation. As I talked about earlier, you had squadrons in a group, and then, several groups, four groups to a wing, and you'd ... most all go to the same spot, same target. ... Once you left the formation, you were by yourself and I had to be on my toes all the time as a navigator. Some navigators just didn't pay attention. They knew the lead navigator of the group was going to take them there and they didn't worry about it. Well, I felt that I should know where I was at all times and, boy, it turned out to be beneficial, because, once you left the formation, [laughter] you couldn't look at the group leader and say, "Come on, help me." There was nobody to help you and you're up six hundred, seven hundred miles up in enemy territory and you had to get the plane back. Well, you couldn't just say, "Well, I want to go from Point A to Point B," because the areas that you had to go and fly on were some that you had to avoid, the flak towns. So, you couldn't go just from A to B, as I said. You had to try to get the route that would go around a flak area. See, here's a map of a route going from down here at the target and you're going up here and you have to avoid these areas, and then, when you get up here, you had to avoid this area, and then, you get to what's called the IP, the initial point, and then, you turned to go to the target. Well, once you're there, you can hopefully come back, but you've got to avoid these flak areas. So, it was always important to know where you were at all times, and there were ten times in a row that we had to leave the formation and come back alone.

SH: Really?

RW: I think this had something to do with our later selection. We had to start this new training and we didn't understand what they were doing. ... Sometimes, we'd fly a mission, and then, they'd say, "Okay, you're going to go fly a night mission, a practice mission." Well, we'd been eight hours flying and tired and they'd say, "Oh, you're going to practice at night." Well, what was happening was, we were approaching the bad winter. Now, the winter of 1944-45 was one of the worst in Europe. It was the period of the Battle of the Bulge and we were not able, as a group or an air force, to get the planes up to the targets, because of bad weather. Our United States' approach was daylight bombing by formation. ... You hopefully could do it visually and see the target, although we did have the radar, later, that was called "Mickey," that we could bomb by "Mickey" or radar, but there were many a day in November that we got up and went to the flight line and revved up [our] engines, and then, the recon plane would come along and report, "Everything socked in. You can't fly. You can't go." So, my record shows that, after the November 11th [mission], I made just two more missions, on the 18th and the 19th of November. ... All this time, you were going out to the flight line, but not taking off on missions, because they were cancelled, scrubbed, but we were doing this strange training. Then, on November 25th, we found out what it was all about, and my record is not as accurate as it should be, because, on the paper there, we were told, on the night of the 24th, "You're going to fly a

solo mission in bad weather to Munich and bomb Munich, in Germany, with a single plane, in order to keep the Germans off guard,” and we were briefed that, that night, that the Germans had night fighters. See, we ... never flew combat missions in the nighttime with the US [Air] Forces.

SH: Did you have fighter escorts?

RW: No. This was a single plane.

SH: No, I meant on your prior missions.

RW: With formations, yes. We had some fighters, yes.

SH: Do you remember the name of the fighter unit?

RW: ... At one point, later in our missions, they were the Tuskegee Airmen. ... I was interviewed by the US Park Service for a memorial that they're setting up for the Tuskegee Airmen, because we did have the escorts of the P-51 from the Tuskegee Airmen.

SH: However, that was after.

RW: That's after this.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: There were nineteen thousand odd B-24s made in World War II, the greatest number of aircraft of any kind made in Allied [nations] or [the] United States, and there was far more 24s made than there were B-17s. They were made all over, Ford in Michigan, in the central United States, St. Louis, Fort Worth, Texas, and then, San Diego, California, and of all those nineteen thousand planes, there's only one or two flyable ones now, and I visited one of the flyable ones recently.

SH: Let us go back and talk about this mission that you were being trained for. You had just found out that Munich was the target.

RW: We get out to our plane, which turns out to be a brand-new B-24M, “Mickey” ship, and the “M” stands for model, it doesn't stand for the “Mickey” end of it, and we find out, ... through our briefing, that since we're flying at night, there could be German night fighters and the German tactic of night fighting was to have a twin-engine plane, twin-engine bomber, fighter-bomber with a light in the nose, a searchlight in the nose, that they hope to illuminate the opposite enemy aircraft, and then, there might be some German ME-109s that were following the night fighter. So, we were to be on the alert for this, but our plane was completely covered on the inside. All the windows and everything were blanked out. ... I was to do the navigation, and then, we had a “Mickey” navigator, who ran the radar equipment, and we took off, went up, terrible weather. Just as soon as we got off the ground, it was in the clouds and they told us, “You're going to have clouds all the way to the target and you're going to have the radar, ‘Mickey’ operator, identify the target and you bomb the target.” We got up where I knew we

were over and past the Alps and coming toward Munich and, all of a sudden, the plane shook. The tail guns had been fired and, when they do, they just shake the plane and everybody's saying, "What is this?" on the intercom and the tail gunner said, "I see a light. I see a light," and he fires again, another couple of bursts, and so, I peeled away some blackout material on the window and looked out. First thing I saw was the ground, the second thing I saw was the stars; we were completely out of the clouds and what our tail gunner had been doing was, he's been shooting at a star. ... At that moment, we were approaching our IP and the searchlights came on and I have never seen so many searchlights in my life. We were bombing Munich, a very big target for the Germans, and they had six hundred ... searchlights looking for us, and here we are, a lone plane, but, fortunately, ... from our IP, we were on our bomb run and I picked out, from the ground, the target. I could identify the river and the marshalling yard and we made our bomb run and there were guns firing at us and searchlights on us, and then, ... as soon as those bombs were away, I told the pilot to peel off and gave him the direction to get out of there, because we wanted to get back into the clouds. Even though it was bad weather, it was a terrible thing to suddenly come out in the clear blue, well, not blue, because it was dark, but open sky. I could see the ground, I could see the sky and the stars and that was our introduction to solo missions. ... One crew out of each squadron was selected to fly these solo missions and, for some reason, we got selected from our squadron to be the guinea pig of going up. [laughter] ...

SH: You got all that practice.

RW: Yes, we had all that practice. ... Because of this, we were not flying with our formation and we were not catching up to the rest of the guys who were flying, because we were still on the ground, flying practice missions. Then, in December, December 12th, we were sent on a daylight bad weather mission and, this time, we were going to go to Blechhammer, Germany, which is about as far as you can go. It's on the Polish-German border and is right near Oświęcim, [the town that contained Auschwitz and gave it its name], the infamous labor camp and death camp. ... This was daylight, this first time. We'd flown one other nighttime mission, but this was daylight. ... Again, we're supposed to be, on our mission, ... in clouds, bad weather, that was the idea. We got up, oh, within a hundred miles of our target and we broke out in the clear, ... again, above the clouds, but a lot of clouds below us, at something like twenty-one thousand feet. So, we went up to twenty-two thousand feet and headed toward the target and I looked off to the left, which would have been west, and I saw a whole squadron of German FW-190 fighter planes and I knew that if I could see those small planes, those fighters in formation, that they could see my big B-24 skimming along there. ... We were prepared to dive into the clouds if we had to, but, as I watched them, I watched them vector away from us, and then, dive into the clouds and the only thing we ever figured out is that they didn't have enough fuel by this time to really stay up very long. ... They were low on fuel and they didn't attack us and we found out, ... later, that several of the other solo planes were attacked by the FW-190s, but we were not. So, we proceeded up to our target and we bombed it by "Mickey" radar, and then, turned around and came home, and that was eight-and-a-half hours of flying. ...

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

SH: This continues an interview with Mr. Reid Waltman on the 8th of November, 2006, in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. Please, continue.

RW: I was describing my position in the B-24 aircraft. My position, normally, would be in the nose of the aircraft, behind the nose turret gunner and the bomber/aimer. The bombardier would be underneath me, and then, the pilots would be on the flight deck, but I would have to ride facing backwards, because my table was behind me. ... In order to do my work, my position required that I stand for eight hours, on an ... eight-and-a-half hour mission, and have to stand the entire time, to plot my course and keep us on course.

SH: Did you stand during take-off and landing?

RW: No. That was the other difficult part of a B-24. I'd be on the flight deck, behind the pilots, during take-off, but, then, there is a very narrow passage, about a two-foot-by-two-foot wide passage, that is underneath the flight deck that leads up to the nose. ... With all our flying gear on, there was no way we could have our parachute on. We'd have to drag the parachute behind us and crawl up to the nose of the plane, and then, put the parachute on, or, first, put our flak suit on, and then, the parachute on, and the nose wheel, having been retracted after take-off, was right in our way, but that was our exit, also. If we were to get out of the plane, the only way we could, at that time and position, would be to go out through the nose wheel hatch, because there was no way we could climb all the way back to the flight deck, and then, get to the bomb bay, which is the other exit.

SH: How were you able to stand for all that time? In the movies, the planes are always shuttering and shaking.

RW: Well, it would, and it was also that you had flak bursts that moved the plane around. It was just a long, strenuous time and I, like the rest of the crew, came back from a mission exhausted, particularly ones, say, up to Blechhammer oil refinery, near Oświęcim, Poland. I'd come back exhausted and we had gotten up at three o'clock in the morning and we'd get back to the base at five o'clock in the evening and try to get something to eat and just go to bed.

SH: Did you get the proverbial shot of whiskey when you got off the plane?

RW: No, we never had that. [laughter] We got a doughnut from the Red Cross lady and that was the extent of our recuperation. I might continue with our missions, solo. I flew a total of probably six of these solo missions and we didn't get official credit for a lot of them. Through the typical military SNAFU [Situation Normal, All Fouled Up], the solo missions, ... although they were more dangerous than some of the others, we were not even credited with those missions and you had to get what was called thirty-five sorties, that's thirty-five times over enemy territory, and you might get double credit for a mission to Vienna, which I bombed three times, and Moosbierbaum oil refinery, ... northwest, actually, of Vienna. I bombed that six times. You could get double credit for that. So, you could end up with fifty missions, but you still had to have the thirty-five sorties before you were allowed to go home. ... Because of our training, and we had six weeks of training for these solo missions, and the bad weather, we were there longer. As a crew, we were longer on station there, at the 459th Bomb Group, than most of the other guys, because the other crews, flying formations, finished up and went home and we were still there. [laughter] ... I mentioned our trips to Vienna and Moosbierbaum. It was

typical, what you see nowadays in the movies or on video, of the groans that would come up from the crew when we went for a briefing and here was the map that said, "Vienna." Now, Vienna had over six hundred anti-aircraft guns and they also had flak towers. In some of my archives, I have pictures of the flak towers in Vienna that are still standing to this day. They were concrete structures that were almost ten stories high and they enclosed all of the crews, ammunition and everything, with the flak guns on the roof. So, they were higher and more protected than any of the German anti-aircraft guns and these towers were deadly, around the target areas of Vienna. Vienna was probably our worst one, at Vienna and Moosbierbaum, which is close by, and then, Linz was another one, and, okay, I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself. I have one other story I'd like to tell, ... because I just happen to see Brenner Pass there [on the map]. Everybody is, perhaps, familiar with the name Brenner Pass, which is a pass in the Alps that connects northern Italy and Austria, and I was flying one of my early missions to a town in southern Austria. It was a clear day and I was ... able to look out and see our formations flying and I knew that we were coming toward the Brenner Pass from the south and that we would make a sharp right turn to get to our target, over here in Austria. ... I knew that the turn was coming up and I was telling the pilot, "We're going to turn," and I looked out to the left and there was another one of our squadrons. Now, whether it was the 757th or 759th, I don't remember at this time, but there were seven planes in this other squadron flying along, out on our left side, and I could see Brenner Pass ahead of us and I was anticipating everybody turning. ... We started to turn and I looked out and those seven planes went straight ahead and I couldn't believe it. Oh, I was actually yelling, "Turn, turn," and, at that moment, the Germans opened up on that seven-plane squadron and hit four of them. ... While I was looking, one minute, there were seven planes, the next minute, there were just three flying and those three finally made the turn. Now, why they didn't turn, I don't know. Everybody else made the turn and it was kind of sickening, to look out and see those planes hit. ... Because the Brenner Pass was high in altitude, their guns were at higher altitude and closer to the planes, ... to our planes, and they should have turned, but they didn't.

SH: The Brenner Pass itself was heavily fortified.

RW: Heavily fortified by the Germans, because, ... as one can look at the map, ... it's a route from Munich on down into Italy, a very heavily traveled military unit area for the Germans to bring their supplies in, through the Alps.

SH: Did you ever bomb the Brenner Pass?

RW: No, we did not. We bombed very few anti-aircraft sites. Our squadron bombed over in France, when ... the Southern French invasion took place, ... and we bombed troops in Yugoslavia, but we never went after a small target like anti-aircraft guns, not with our B-24s. That was left to the twin-engine bombers, to do that type of target, but, finally, after doing these solo missions all through November and December and January, we finally got into February and the weather began to open up and be suitable for formation flying again. So, we started to fly a number of missions and my schedule shows that I went to southern Austria and to Moosbierbaum and to Linz and to Weiner Neustadt and to Vienna a number of times. We might conclude my missions with my last mission. By the decision that you could earn your fifty mission credit and go home, through various differences, such as that the pilot, when he first

started flying, he got a couple of practice missions, combat missions, in before the crew did, we ended up with different numbers at the very end and some of our fellows were finishing up. Our waist gunner, Charlie Mercier, had taken a photographic course in the Army and he was one of the guys that took the aerial photographs, and so, he flew more missions than the rest of us.

SH: He would sign on to another crew.

RW: He'd sign on to another crew, or they would assign him to that, and so, my pilot had more missions than I did and it got to the very end and we were kind of getting divided as a crew. Chuck finished up his missions ahead of me and the bombardier did, but the co-pilot didn't. He was behind me in missions, but, anyway, my last mission, I was assigned to fly with a totally other crew and it turns out, now that I'm recalling it, that the crew I was flying with was our next-door ground neighbor, in the next tent to us, and the co-pilot, Charlie (Carroll?), lives in Dallas. ... I have since visited him and gotten together with him and we realized that we were on that same mission, but we went up to southern Austria to bomb a town called Amstettin. We got up there with ... all these planes flying around and the main target, the primary target, was cloud covered, so, our group turned off to go to an alternate. ... We had made a bomb run where the Amstettin [target] should be, but we turned away and flew to a secondary target and we made a bomb run on it, but it was cloud covered, and so, we turned away from that. ... Here I am, on my last mission, and all we're doing is flying around southern Austria, with planes all over the sky, and we turned around and there's one more target, a secondary target, that looks open. So, we line up for that and we start our bomb run and I'm looking down at this target and it is open. It's not cloud covered. I can see it and I think, "Okay, we're going to make it now." We're on our third time around and, just as we're getting ready to release the bombs, I look at the target ahead of us and the target explodes in front of my eyes. Somebody is bombing it and, just at that moment, ... we got our bombs away. ... We're going from south to north; there's another group, at our same altitude, coming from north to south and there are planes passing each other, ... B-24s, just skimming along at the same altitude. It was just a wonder that we didn't collide, because there were more planes all over the sky. You'd look out and there was just planes going by on the side of us, scared to death. Here I am, on my last mission, I want to get this over with. ...

SH: You had released your bombs.

RW: Yes, we had released our bombs. They hadn't hit the ground yet, but this other group had, and they'd come from the north and they bombed the same target, and so, we finally turned away and got home and I got my last mission in.

SH: Phew.

RW: That's right.

SH: Can you tell me about coming home?

RW: This was in March. My last mission was March 16, 1945. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

RW: There is a story, present-day story; there was a gentleman that I met through another man, I never have actually seen the guy, but he was on the ground, as an individual, up in Hungary when we bombed their town, Szombathely, Hungary, and he said, “You know, it was terribly scary.” He was maybe fifteen years old or so and all these bombers come over and, all of a sudden, the bombs are coming down on his town. [laughter]

SH: That is one oral history I hope they are doing over there as well.

RW: But, I finished up, as I said, March 16th, and I didn’t have to fly any more missions. My entire crew was finished, except the co-pilot had a couple of more missions to fly, and he ended up, somewhere around March 25th, flying his last one, but our procedure was, once we finished up our missions, we’re to be sent to Naples, Italy, for a kind of a reassignment and to be shipped back to the United States. Now, we came back, finally. I was stationed for several days in and around Naples. We got on a Navy troopship and it was so much different than our Merchant Marine troopship we went over on. The officers’ bunks were five high. The enlisted men’s were six high. You were fed two meals a day, Navy chow, on aluminum trays, with the food slapped on the tray, compared to our fruit and vegetables and table cloths and everything on the voyage going over, but we were glad to go home. There were two little incidents that happened onboard ship. ... We ran into a storm. I don’t call it a hurricane, but we ran into some kind of a storm, and I was down in the bunk area, which was quite a few decks down in the ship, and I could have sworn that the bow of the ship went down and the stern of the ship went down at the same time, because it seemed like that center that I was in was just bending and creaking. ... It probably is not physically possible, but I swore that both ends of the ship went down at the same time and it was terrible, but I had another little incident. We were so crowded in these bunks. ... Our officers’ caps were the peaked ones with the United States’ emblem on the front, which had a screw that was about a quarter-inch [long] that went through the fabric, and then, into the hat. ... You had to really crawl into this bunk and, somehow, I had forgotten to take off my hat and I was wearing it, because there’s no place to put anything, and I hit my head on something hard and I broke through with that screw into my scalp. ... You know how your head bleeds? I was bleeding like crazy and this corpsman came along, ... at my request, and cut some of my hair away, a patch, and then, put a bandage on it. Well, here I come into Boston Harbor, and all these people around and everything, and I don’t know why I had my hat off, but I had it off, because I probably had to duck under something, “Oh, that poor boy, he’s wounded.”

SH: You went through all this other stuff.

RW: I go through all this other stuff and I get on the train to go from Boston to New York City, to Grand Central Station, “Oh, look at that wounded boy.” [laughter] By that time, I was so tired of telling my story of my doing it myself, I just let it go. [laughter] I was “the wounded airman.”

JW: Purple Heart.

RW: Yes. [laughter] Oh, it was comical. I came into Grand Central Station on V-E Day.

SH: Did you?

RW: Yes, May 8th, and didn't know what all this celebration was all about. I didn't get any of the hugs and kisses that they show in the newsreels, but there was quite a bit of commotion going on. ... I was assigned to go to Atlantic City and they were going to decide what they were going to do with the officers. Well, I went through several days of discussion and was supposed to have a thirty-day terminal leave and, one day, I'm still at Atlantic City, one day, they came along and say, "We have a surplus of officers. We would like you to go back to training in a B-29 and go to Japan, or you can get out of the service." Well, I actually did think overnight about this, because the war with Japan was still going on. V-E Day had just occurred and I was very patriotic, and then, I thought, "Hey, if I get out now, I can go back to school. I can go back to Rutgers and I can start again and get my education finished and I do not want to go back into training. I've had enough training. I'm a combat warrior. [laughter] I don't need to be trained anymore."

SH: "I got it, I got it."

RW: And, of course, we had no idea that the atomic bomb had been perfected and it was going to be used and it was quite a decision, because, "Were we going to get out and be around when everybody else was still fighting?" Here we were, 1945, the war had been going on since '39, how long was it going to last? We didn't have any idea.

SH: You are in 1945 now.

JW: '45.

RW: Yes, '45. Yes, I had come back in '45. So, I thought about it and thought about it, and then, I finally decided, "If they're going to retrain me, I'm going to get out." So, I said, "Yeah, I'd like to get out." So, they said, "All right now, you have to get out. We have to prepare you to get out. We have to go through a bunch of physical things," and they said, "Well, you've got some impacted wisdom teeth. We're going to take them out." Well, I thought, "Oh, okay, I'll let you do that." That was a bad mistake.

SH: You are still ...

RW: I'm still at Atlantic City. I go in to [see] two dentists, Army dentists, and they turned out to be pretty near butchers, because they got in and they couldn't get these wisdom teeth out and they ended up taking a hammer and a chisel and breaking my wisdom teeth to get them out. I was going to go home that day and I was still in their dentist office at four o'clock in the afternoon, while they were doing all of this, and then, they finished and I was able to get on the train to come up to Lyndhurst. ... I had a sore mouth, I was swollen, I was miserable and, immediately, my mom and dad said, "You've got to go to the dentist." So, next morning, I went to the dentist here, my local dentist, and he said, "What did they do to you?" and he started picking slivers of bone and teeth out of my gum. ... My thirty days of leave was kind of miserable, [laughter] because these guys had taken my wisdom teeth out. It was terrible and I finally got over that, after, oh, four weeks or so. I had to then report back to Fort Dix, New

Jersey, and be separated from the service and that's when I got, finally, out of the military, at that point, although I went in the Reserves.

SH: Did you stay in the Reserves?

RW: Well, at the time, they didn't ask you whether you wanted to be in the Reserves or not. This was 1945 and, of course, the war was still going on with Japan. ... In 1946, I did join the Reserves and was a Reserve officer and was in the Reserves down in Texas, after I finished my two degrees at Rutgers.

SH: Were you called back for Korea?

RW: Yes, I was. I was in the inactive Reserve in Tyler, Texas, and you would think that the active Reserve, who had been being paid during their Reserve training, and all I did was attend a few meetings, ... would be called up. I was at work with Continental Oil Company, and I had failed to tell you that, because there's so many long stories here.

SH: We can go back.

RW: No, but, I mean, I came home and I did marry Dorothy Penn.

SH: You were no longer afraid of her. [laughter]

RW: And we were in Tyler, Texas, and I was working for Continental Oil Company and ... got called up to the office and they said, "You have orders to report for duty," and I said, "What are you talking about?" ... I got home and there were orders for me to report to California, on such-and-such a day, to go to the Fifth Air Force in Korea and to be a bombardier-navigator on a twin-engine B-26 bomber. Well, I'd been flying four engines. ... "You are to report to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio on such-and-such a day." Well, this was not good news. [laughter] I had children and I was not that interested in going back. So, I checked on the availability of any deferment and I found out that I was in a critical industry, the oil industry, with Continental Oil Company. I was doing an essential job, which is a geologist, and I was entitled to a deferment. So, I proceed down to San Antonio, to the air base, and, like, the thirty other guys, there were thirty guys coming in in the morning and thirty guys coming in [in] the afternoon, they all thought they had a story that would get them a deferment. One guy had a business, another man was a preacher, and they went through us and gave us physicals and various things. ... To make a long story short, they decided that my eyes were no longer 20/20, 20/40, and that they were going to take me in as a laundry officer or a mess officer or one of these others. ... I said, "If ... I'm going in, I'm going to be in the fighting end. I'm not going in unless I can be in my former capacity," and they said, "Oh, well, we can't do that. You have to go as a laundry officer," and I said, "I have these papers here from Continental Oil Company that show that I can get a deferment." "Okay, well, you have to meet with the delay board," and that's the next day. Meantime, twenty-eight of the guys that had come in the thirty-man group were gone. Even the preacher was sent to Germany, and these other guys are gone. ... They didn't even get to go home. They were told, "Okay, you've got a business? That's tough." Gone, and so, here, I meet the delay board the next day and it turns out I'm meeting a major who is the delay board. ... He

is a lingerie salesman in San Antonio and he got annoyed that he got called into San Antonio to be on this board and he was going to send everybody out and we argued for several days. ... I forgot; they had one guy that didn't go, yet. He had high blood pressure and he was on the table, lying down until the blood pressure went down, and then, he was gone. So, I was number thirty, still there, arguing, and three days went by and he kept saying, "You're going." I said, "No, I'm not. Here's my qualifications." Finally, he broke down and said, "Well, I'll give you a three-month delay." Well, I knew I was entitled to a six-month delay. So, I said, "No," because, with the three-month delay, they could still call me up. I said, "I have the qualifications here. I'm going to get a deferment or I'm going on active duty as a flying officer." He said, "No. All right, I'll give you your six months." It was six days that I stayed down there [laughter] and it wasn't but about seven months later that the military came out with the regulation that anybody with my qualifications that had a deferment could actually get out of the service, and so, I resigned my commission, because that was nonsense. I was willing to go and fight, even though what they were going to put me in was dangerous. You'd read in the newspaper about the Korean Conflict, ... that our fighters were knocking down the enemy just right and left, but, then, in the bottom, there'd be, "Oh, we lost six B-26s today," [laughter] and that's what I would have been flying in. So, that ... ended my military career. [laughter]

SH: You came back to Rutgers, as you said, while the war was still going on. How did people react to seeing a young, able-bodied man, though you had this wound on your head, back at Rutgers? What was the campus like, as opposed to the campus you had left?

RW: Well, I know my personal feeling was one of trying to get into civilian clothes and feeling terribly awkward, walking around and thinking, "Do those people think I'm 4-F or somebody that has shrunk in their," shrinking, whatever the word is, "[shirked] their duty?" It was an awkward feeling to get out of uniform, particularly when the war was still going on. Again, we had no idea whatsoever that there was the atomic bomb and that, you know, the conflict might be over, ... but my idea was to get back and start finishing my education, get married.

SH: You came back to Rutgers prior to the atomic bomb and the war's end.

RW: Yes. I went back in September. ...

SH: The bomb was dropped in August.

RW: Well, that's right. It would have just occurred. You're right on the timing. It was August? Okay, yes, it wasn't very long after I had that went to Rutgers. ...

SH: Did you start school during the summer session?

RW: I think I started in September, early September.

SH: Had the campus changed at all?

RW: No. It didn't. My whole approach changed. My first year back, first thing was that Rutgers honored my military service and gave me a whole semester of credit. So, I went back as

a senior and one of the courses I took was geology and physical geology and that changed my whole life, because I loved it and I could see that that ... was then going to be my career, but I ... still had to double up and talk to the professors there and they were interested in having me do graduate work there. So, I had to take extra courses, even as an undergraduate, in order to be prepared at all to go into graduate school in geology, because I had ... only those two semesters of geology when I graduated, 1946.

SH: You were on the GI Bill.

RW: Yes.

SH: That must have made it a lot easier.

RW: Oh, it did, it did, and I had savings from the Army and I was able to use the GI Bill and I got married and we lived down on 6 Kirkpatrick Street in New Brunswick, in a third floor apartment above a doctor's office. [laughter]

SH: When you first came back, in September 1945, were you housed on campus?

RW: That's a question ...

SH: I believe you got married in 1948, when you finished your Master's.

RW: Well ...

JW: No, '46.

RW: '46, I got married in '46.

JW: You must have put down the wrong information, [on the pre-interview survey].

RW: Okay. [laughter]

JW: That's wrong, I think.

SH: Okay. I just wondered if you were housed in the dorm again, in the Quad, with the eighteen-year-old students coming in.

RW: I think I was for that senior year. It wasn't until I left, until I got married, and then, moved off campus. ...

SH: Was Dorothy, your first wife, working in journalism?

RW: She was a reporter for the *Albany Times*, a Hearst newspaper in Albany, New York. ... She had done a number of feature stories during the war in which she rode in an Army tank and did a number of very excellent feature stories, but she was having trouble with the Hearst chain

of newspapers, because she was independently minded and they wanted you to follow their line and do what they told you to do, which was always, later, to me, ... very interesting, to find out that newspapers are not unbiased. [laughter]

SH: You finished your Master's in geology in 1948, then, went to Texas from here.

RW: ... Yes, but I was a graduate student and I taught a class, a geology class, during the time that I was in graduate school. ... I remember making, ... oh, I guess you'd call it the equivalent of a term paper in geology, as a graduate student, before my thesis, and I chose a subject that interests me very much. It was that, through reading the literature, I could see that the continent of Africa and the continent of South America had once been joined. They fit together. Well, I presented this term paper and I almost got laughed out of the geology profession. ... The geology professors, they didn't buy this one iota. That was, ... say, 1947, and it wasn't until the late '60s and early '70s that continental drift became a proven fact and none of those professors would believe it at that time. It was just that they did not believe it, but it was obvious to me. There was a Dutch geologist who had been in South Africa and he compared all the rocks and the botany of both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and he was convinced that they, at one point, were together and, of course, he was right, but nobody would believe him.

SH: Would you like to talk a little bit about your career and your family?

RW: Yes, I would, but I want to add one thing about my military career with the 15th Air Force. As I mentioned earlier, the 15th never got the publicity that the Eighth did, Eighth Air Force, but there is a very interesting history, ... if you would like to read it at some time, articles on the 15th Air Force, because we did lose about twenty-five thousand airmen in our campaigns there and there was a total of perhaps fifty thousand airmen lost in Europe, with the Eighth Air Force and the 15th Air Force, and, when you think back on it, that's a tremendous number of people involved and people who lost their lives.

SH: Was there any time when you were flying that someone said, "I just can't go up again?"

RW: Not in our group. I've heard of some of them who, ... when it got close to their thirty-five missions, couldn't take it anymore and some of them, obviously, got sent home, but it wasn't in our group at all, that I knew about.

SH: You recalled landing in another base, then, making your way back. Did that happen often?

RW: That was the only time we landed in another base, but I've mentioned that, many times, we had to come back where everybody else had already landed and we were struggling to come home.

SH: You talked about how, at one place, you thought you were going to have to ditch.

RW: Either ditch in the Adriatic or jump out of the plane in Yugoslavia or try to get over to [the coast or the Partisans.] ...

SH: Were you given instructions on what to do if you had to ditch or if you landed in hostile territory?

RW: ... Well, we were taught the positions and everything to ditch, but the one thing that we knew was that the B-24 did not ditch very well. ... In my bomb group association, the 459th Bomb Group Association, there are whole sections devoted in here, in their history book, which is the history of our bomb group, to the planes that did ditch.

JW: Title, title.

SH: *Coffee Tower*.

RW: *Coffee Tower* is the name of the book and the author is Lyle McCarty, one of my fellow navigators. ...

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

SH: Please, continue.

RW: Now, one of the things that I found most disappointing was that I did not keep a diary of my World War II experience. We were told by our superiors not to keep a diary and, being a good military officer, [laughter] I didn't keep one. ... When I started to get interested in, "Gee, what did I do in World War II?" I looked at some of the archival material that I might have, and then, I remembered that I had been writing home letters, to here, to my folks, my mom and dad, and to Joan, during the periods that I was over in Italy. Well, where were the letters? Well, within the last year or so, Joan has found twenty odd of these letters. ... Unfortunately, the ones that have survived start with around the November 11th bad mission and go on until I finished. Somehow, the September and October letters ... have been lost. I know I wrote the letters home, but I don't know where they are, but, as a result of that, I'm now trying to recreate, as a war diary, from these letters, some of the stories that I have related here today, that I, again, regret I didn't write down and have available on a daily or a weekly basis when I was over in Italy. ... One thing about those letters, they had to be written on very thin paper, because of weight limitations, and I wrote them in ink on both sides and, when Joan found them, they were almost impossible to Xerox and photograph, because the ink had bled through. So, I have laboriously retyped all of those letters, because I'm not a typist, and I'm starting to create my war diary now, but, as you mentioned earlier, until I got with the 459th Bomb Group Association, oh, less than seven years ago, I never talked about any of this to anybody. My son, Biff, who had been in the Naval Academy, and then, went on and got his wings as a helicopter pilot in the Navy ... at Pensacola; he got me interested in recording my things that I remembered and got me interested in the bomb group association, which I didn't even know existed. ... I've been fortunate that, in this bomb group association, I have become a vice-president and I've been able to obtain a lot of data and archival material that I have put on two CDs, which I have contributed to the Rutgers University Oral History [Archives] program.

SH: Thank you. When you were in Italy, what kind of interaction did you have with the Italians? What did you see? What kind of conditions were they living in?

RW: Well, their condition in southern Italy was terrible. It was extreme poverty. The nearest town was Cerignola and the only distinction that Cerignola had, and has now, is that it had a cathedral that is written up in *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. A local man, who had made some money, donated the money to create this cathedral and it is a landmark in Cerignola and it was used as a point of origin for us, because, when we would come back from a mission, if we could see that cathedral sticking up, we knew we were right close to our base, but the town had been shattered by war. The railroad station had been bombed and shelled. The houses were, a lot of them, destroyed. The people were extremely poor and we, unfortunately, couldn't trust a lot of the Italian laborers who did come around, because they were so poor that if they could find something, they were going to pick it up and take it with them. ... However, there is a story about the young lads, oh, anywhere from fourteen to sixteen, maybe, who became like orderlies to our squadrons and they would do chores for us. Now, we had, in our tent, ... an Italian boy that we could give our laundry to him and he would take it to his mother and she would wash and press it, and then, we would either pay him or give him cigarettes. ... He also brought us fresh eggs and, typical of the military, we were having fresh eggs at our mess in the squadron and an order came down, "No more fresh eggs." Now, why? I don't know, but they wanted to stop us from getting fresh eggs and we had about a week of powdered eggs, and then, we just said, "The heck with this," [laughter] and we went back to getting our fresh eggs from them, a little Italian boy, and they were great. Now, there is a young man, should say there was a young man, who had become acquainted with almost all of the groups around Cerignola and his first name is Mario, last name, Capocefo. ... Mario was one of these boys that came out to the squadrons and he'd learned English by being with the men of the various squadrons, and there's a picture of Mario with my co-pilot's son's wife there on a visit not too long ago and this is another picture of Mario and another one, and Mario ... went on to become a success in the restaurant and hotel business in Rome, because of his experience with the American troops. ... He just loved the Americans around there so much that he set up a war museum in Cerignola; there's the photo of the cathedral that you can see there and this is a photograph of our war room in the winery, which was ... our home away from home. ... By the way, we started out with our squadron being in the olive grove and we were told, "Don't touch those olive trees. Any tree that was lost cost the US Government five thousand dollars." So, we did not touch any olive trees, and then, along came a new commander of our bomb group and he was a West Pointer and he said, "I can't have these guys scattered out all over." He moved us into a company street. Everybody was lined up, instead of our being scattered in the olive orchard, and so, ... we had to pick up, lock, stock and barrel, in the middle of flying combat missions, and move our tent. Well, there's lots of stories that I, unfortunately, don't have time to go into here, but, when we first got there, the tents had no floors, no windows, and winter was coming on. So, we had to scrounge and requisition and steal and I'm talking about stealing; there was a dump, a pile of boxes of the fragmentation bombs, and they were lined with tin. Well, they were guarded with a soldier with a rifle and I got my co-pilot to distract the guard and the bombardier and I dragged off enough boxes so that we could make a chimney for our stove. ... Our stove consisted of a fifty-five-gallon drum that we cut in half with a hammer and a chisel, no saw, just a hammer and a chisel, and then, we fed one-hundred-octane gas into that and we had to have a good chimney, because the flame went about four feet above the tent, [laughter] but you had to have something. It snowed in the winter. It was muddy, rainy, cold, and it wasn't like in England, where you were in a barracks or some other Quonset hut or some other nice thing. We were in a tent.

SH: Just briefly, could you tell me about your family? I know it is late

RW: Yes. Well, Dot and I got married in 1946 and we ended up with a child immediately, Barbara Scheirer, and she was in the apartment with us ... at Rutgers, and then, when I finished, ... got my degree, Master's degree, in '48, I got a job with Continental Oil Company in Tyler, Texas. So, we moved down there, and then, we had Biff, he was born as my first son, and then, later, my ... younger son, ... Barry. So, we have Barb, Biff and Barry as children and I worked as a geologist with Continental Oil Company, got a little disillusioned, with no progress, and so, I went with a company called American Metal Company, with headquarters in New York City, but they had a potash mine in Carlsbad, New Mexico. ... So, I became chief geologist for Southwest Potash in Carlsbad, New Mexico, and then, I moved from there to Denver, Colorado. ... Typical of what happens in big companies, they got an efficiency expert that they wanted to evaluate the company. I was the only one doing potash, as a salt expert. Potash is a salt that you use in fertilizer, mostly. ... I was trying to expand the company's potash reserves and I had done a lot of work in Saskatchewan, Canada, and had discovered, through my oil experience, that I could use logs from oil wells to find potash, because it's radioactive, and this expert, I mean, efficiency expert, comes along and he said, "Well, really, that work should be done out of the Toronto office, because that's Canadian. It's in Canada." Well, the Canadian guys were what we call hard rock geologists and I was a soft rock geologist, sedimentary and whatever, oil and sedimentary, and those guys had no idea of what to do or anything else about potash. Well, I got disillusioned with that kind of thing. They were going to take my great specialty away and have some Canadian who didn't want it be in charge. So, I went back to the oil business and was with an independent there, and then, I went with Davis Oil Company and did a lot of work in your territory, in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming. [Editor's Note: Mr. Waltman is referring to the fact that Sandra Stewart Holyoak is a Wyoming native.] ... Then, I was a pretty good geologist, both as out in the field and as in the office, so, Marvin Davis wanted me to open an office in New Orleans for Davis Oil Company and I did. I moved down. It was another traumatic experience, because I had to take my daughter, who was going into her senior year, and move her to New Orleans and I didn't realize it, but New Orleans schools were terrible and they were segregated. The girls were all in one school and the boys were in another and my daughter didn't like that at all, [laughter] having been in Lakewood, Colorado, and it was quite a time, but my daughter then went to the public school there, because, at that time, I was a firm believer in the public school education. I had gone through all public schools. Well, it became obvious that that was not the thing to do in New Orleans. So, I had both my boys go to the Episcopal schools in New Orleans and Biff, through just his scholarship record and desire, and by doing what I could to get him appointed, I got him appointed for a slot at the Naval Academy, and he went to the Naval Academy. ... He started in 1968 and graduated in 1972 from the Naval Academy and most of his contemporaries ... had been to a private school catering to the military academy type people beforehand and he came straight out of high school. So, I gave him a tremendous amount of credit for doing it and surviving. Just recently, we looked at a movie on Annapolis and what they had to go through and I'm just thinking that I'm not sure I would have been able to have accomplished that, but he did, coming right out of high school, instead of having two years of preparatory school. ... By that time, ... I was over ten years with Davis Oil Company, and then, I moved to Colorado, Denver, and went back in the oil business in the Rocky Mountains. I liked the Rocky Mountain geology and I did a lot more work there, and

then, Dot had medical problems. She had high blood pressure and heart problems and, unfortunately, she passed away with a heart attack. ... By that time, I was getting into the feeling that I really wanted to be on my own, rather than working for a company. ... When I first started in industry, I had the idea that you stayed with a company forever and you go through and, if you do good, you rise up in ranks. Well, it turns out there's all kinds of politics and everything else going on and you may not be able to do that and that was what I found in working for various industries and various companies. ... I decided that I would like to go and be on my own and go find oil and gas. So, after Dot passed away, I had been doing some work out of Denver in Texas, and so, I got into drilling gas wells in north Texas, because, at that time, the gas price was starting to increase and natural gas was becoming much more of a product than it had been before. For so much of ... my earlier career, you couldn't do anything with the natural gas. It had no essential value, most people thought, and it was either flared or you only got less than ten cents MCF [per thousand cubic feet] for the gas, but, suddenly, the price started to go up, and so, I started my own company in Texas and moved down to Dallas and in the Addison area north of Dallas, a suburb. ... I started one company with five thousand dollars that I put into it and I built it up, so that, although I had quite a bit of debt in the company, I sold it for fifteen million dollars. Now, that might sound like a lot, but I didn't get that much out of it, because I paid off all my investors, I paid ten million dollars to the investors, and then, there was certain other things I had to, you know, eventually do, but it was a good success and, when I sold the company, ... by this time, the gas price had gradually gone up from ten cents, twenty cents, to seventy-five cents to a dollar, and so, it was something to look for, ... instead of just straight oil. ... When I sold the company, I was looking around for something to do and there was a company in downtown Dallas that was a New York Stock Exchange company, but they were having some problems and I interviewed with them and I got the position as exploration manager with them and started up a whole new career for myself and the company, because, within two years, I had tripled their reserves. ... You talk about political problems in companies; I didn't know it at the time, but the company had gone into the coal mining business and they had a coal mine in northern Kentucky and the president of the company was also a coal miner. ... He really wasn't interested in the oil and gas business, although that was everything that was there, debt-free, ... it was holding the company together, and he had large debt in his coal mining company. So, he ended up selling off the major oil field that this R. L. Burns Company had as their major production to pay off his debt. He sold half for thirty-six million and another half for thirty-eight million to pay off his coal mining debt and, even though I was making more reserves and everything was good for the company, he really didn't want to continue the company. [laughter] So, we eventually parted ways and I was a consultant for them for another year, but I really wanted to get back into what I wanted to do, which was being more independent of these company problems, political problems, mostly, within companies. ... I formed a company with a neighbor who was living next-door to me in Addison and we started drilling wells in Kansas and Oklahoma and that's where the company called Texokan comes from, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, and we were doing all right with that. ... That's about the time, '85, that I met BJ, at a Christmas party, New Year's Eve party.

Betty Jo Waltman: New Year's Eve.

RW: New Year's Eve party, that neither one of us wanted to go to, and I agreed to escort the young lady that was the receptionist in our building and the party was being given by a fellow

who was in the building, a young fellow that BJ happened to know, who ... had been in the insurance business. ...

BW: Oh, it was aircraft insurance, USAIG [United States Aircraft Insurance Group].

RW: Yes, and so, her friend, BJ's friend, wanted her to go to this party, this New Year's party, and she tells me that she was very reluctant to go.

BW: I didn't want to go. It was going to be a bunch of young people there, you know, and I didn't think I'd have all that great fun.

RW: And I wasn't going as a date or anything; I just was escorting this lady. ... I wasn't doing anything and I liked the young fellow that was supposed to be giving the party. So, we got to the party and he wasn't even there. He was out ... being a DJ in a band that night, on New Year's Eve, but his brother was there and, somehow, I met BJ there. ...

BW: Yes, and I had this most wonderful punch. I'd never tasted it before. It was fruit punch and Everclear, you know. [laughter] I discovered Everclear.

JW: More than fruit in it. [laughter]

BW: Oh, it was so good.

RW: ... After the New Year' Eve [party], one or the other of us got the flu and it took a little while for us to get together and I asked her for a date and we eventually got together. ... We lived together for a short while, and then, we got married and our honeymoon was a combination of ... looking at geology in ...

BW: Albuquerque.

RW: Albuquerque, New Mexico, northern New Mexico, which is really a fascinating area to do, and then, within a very short time, we had this ...

BW: We went to England.

RW: Oh, yes.

BW: We went to England, and then, we went to China, all in the same period, you know, bang, bang, bang.

RW: The English trip was interesting. We had been getting investors to go along with paying the money for these oil wells we were drilling and, suddenly, right before Christmas, we always got our money very close to the end of the year, because, at that time, there was tax advantages, too, and we suddenly found that we were missing an interest in the leases that we had purchased, that there was a family that had split off. ... One of the heirs was in England. He was in the Air Force at the air base in England. Well, we were getting ... ready to start drilling this well. A

contractor'd been ordered and he was going out there. I didn't have an interest in, signed up. Well, you can't do that. So, I hopped on the plane with BJ and we went over to England and signed this fellow up, and then, had a nice couple of days, [laughter] about a week, in England to pay for our efforts to get him signed up. BJ went out with me on many of our wells and was there for the toughest time with these current wells that we're drilling in the south of Texas and wherever. You didn't do like you did in the Rockies; you didn't have samples that you looked at and knew exactly where you were. You drilled down and tried to use, say, a mud log or something to evaluate whether you had any oil or gas shows, and then, you had to run electric logs. Well, ... at the total depth, then, we'd start running the electric logs. You'd be down there and you'd be there all day, all night, on into the next day, and you wouldn't have any sleep. ... We were in a tool pusher's trailer and BJ'd be in there, sitting in a chair, and she'd be dozing off and I'd be looking at the electric logs as they came off the Schlumberger truck, because that's when you made your decision. ... It was terrible, because you'd be up for forty hours, forty-eight hours, and you'd be making your decision ... when you were just exhausted, [laughter] and then, you had the thought of, "Gee, I've got all these investors; ... you've got to do the best job you can for them," and we did. We made a number of new discoveries down there ... with Texokan Energy Corporation. Then, the oil business fell flat in the late '80s and our whole forte was getting investors to go in and we drilled the wells and we'd keep an interest. Well, there wasn't any more investors, because the price of oil dropped and all this kind of stuff. So, we decided that we would see if we couldn't go in the gold mining business and we just picked up stakes. ... My partner had a motor home and we started a caravan and we went out to Nevada and Utah

BW: Traveled all over, hunting gold mines. It was different. It was a huge experience.

RW: We went out and actually panned in the streams. ...

BW: We found gold. ...

RW: ... Finally, we set up a gold mine in northeastern Utah, on the Green River, right near the Dinosaur National Monument, and it was an area called Horseshoe Bend. The Green River actually made a full horseshoe bend. We'd go up on this ridge and you'd look off to your left, going south from Vernal, Utah, and you'd see the Green River, and then, you'd hit the rise and you'd look off to your right and there was the Green River, because it had swung all the way around, and that's where our mine was, on the south part of that Horseshoe Bend, and we had a big operation there. We moved, oh, thousands of yards of gravel on a twenty-four-hour basis. We had four crews running twenty-four hours a day. ... It was placer mining. We were mining gravel for the gold that was in it and we had a washing plant, and then, a series of sluices, and then, we had centrifugal bowls from the first series of sluices, that the black sand would go into these centrifugal bowls and we had mercury in the centrifugal bowls, and then, we had sluices on the other end of the bowls and we would recover the black sand and gold from both the centrifugal bowls and from the lower sluices. ... We operated the mine with my partner, Dennis Setliff, being the equipment man. He ran the part of the operation, managing the four shifts of workers, big bulldozers and 988 front-end loaders and the three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar washing plant. I did all of the processing of the gold, with BJ. We lived in a trailer that was, oh, about five miles from the mine and I would take the residue from the sluices, which was a

combination of black sand and gold and mercury, and then, I had a small centrifugal wheel that we re-concentrated the black sand, and then, we would get what's called amalgam, which is a combination of mercury and gold together. It lumps together.

BW: It's really impregnated. It was strained from the mercury.

RW: The gold is impregnated in the amalgam.

BW: I took it and put it on a wheel, and then, he would take it and finish the process of it.

RW: And then, I would put the impregnated amalgam in a retort and retort off the mercury, recovering the amalgam that was left, and recover the mercury that we'd put in for further use; and then, take the final product and put it in kilns with crucibles. ... We'd put soda ash and other products in to make a glass that would make the gold fall to the bottom, because gold is heavier than anything in there, and we'd make a button of gold out of all of this and gold was, oh, 420 dollars an ounce about then. ... I would go into Vernal, which was thirty-five miles, forty miles away, and take these buttons of gold and box them up at the post office and I'd ship them, sixty, seventy thousand dollars worth of gold, down to a fellow in Fort Worth, who then reprocessed it to a refined position. What I was sending him was about ninety-two percent gold, and then, he would make ninety-nine percent gold out of it and sell it and credit our account with that gold.

BW: It was pretty, but you could tell, people, when they had gold fever, and I'd sit back and watch. [laughter] ... I never got it, but, you know, it was still hard work. ...

SH: Very practical and pragmatic. What do you do now? Are you retired?

RW: We're retired. I'm eighty-four years old and I do a lot of things on the computer. I do our investments and we're not traveling as much anymore. ...

BW: We're slowing down. [laughter]

SH: No more digging wells, no more gold mining.

RW: Right.

SH: You are not going to look for the "Lost Dutchman's Mine."

RW: ... You haven't heard the stories. We have thousands of stories.

SH: Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today.

RW: Well, one other thing before we finish. We have to tell you what happened to our gold mine.

BW: We had claim jumpers.

RW: Yes. My partner, Dennis Setliff, turned out to have an aneurism in the back of his head that was very dangerous and might have killed him at anytime. So, he left and went back to North Carolina and BJ and I continued the mining. With these sluices, we couldn't go through the winter. We had indoor and outdoor carpet in the sluices and they would catch the gold. Well, about December 10th, it would get so cold that we'd lift up the carpet and it would freeze in the air. That was time to quit then, until we'd go back in March, and so, the second or third year that we were doing this, Dennis got this health problem and he was, you know, a healthy, big guy, but we didn't know whether this was going to kill him or not. So, BJ and I happened to come back to the Dallas area and ... we'd just barely gotten there from driving back when I got a telephone call from Vernal, Utah, and a friend of mine up there said, "Have you sold your mine? I just saw your equipment go down the road towards Salt Lake City," and I said, "No. What are you talking about?" He said, "Well, after I saw that equipment go west, I rode out to your mine, the thirty-five miles out there, and there's nothing left. All your equipment's gone."

BW: It was a tremendous amount of equipment.

RW: We had 750,000 dollars worth of equipment out there, and so, I immediately got on the phone and checked and, sure enough, somebody had stolen all of our equipment. They were claiming, what happened was, exactly, ... there was a crooked lawyer in Vernal who had convinced ... these other two parties that, if they had a quick sheriff's sale, they could buy all this equipment for nothing, after they'd stolen it, put half in the sheriff's yard and the other half in Salt Lake City, which is one hundred-and-fifty, two hundred miles away. They could have this quick sheriff's sale and they'd own it for nothing, and then, they could reassemble it and go back to taking over this mine. Well, when I found this out, ... I called and got the best attorney firm up in Vernal and BJ and I started back up to Utah. ...

BW: I was driving and he was dictating, and he dictated the whole way to Vernal.

RW: Two days.

BW: And, when we got to the attorney's office, they gave me a machine and a room and I went in and took a whole week to type what he had dictated. You can tell; he can go on for days. [laughter]

RW: And we then started a lawsuit against these people, because they were actually claim jumpers. They had stolen our equipment.

BW: He should write this book, *Sundown Friday*. ...

RW: Yes. To make it short, after the first week or so of testimony and everything, the judge says, "Well, I think you," the defendants, "you've got to do something, put this stuff back, and so, I give you an order. On Friday, you've got to have it back." They didn't pay any attention to him.

BW: They fled out. They went into hiding. ...

RW: They were hiding. So, Monday came along and I reported to both the lawyer and the judge, “Nobody has done anything,” and the judge was mad. He said that, in effect, ... “You’re in contempt of court.” ... So, when the trial went on, we got the judge to see that these were crooks and he said, on maybe a Tuesday or a Wednesday, he pointed his finger at these defendants and this lawyer, this lawyer had gotten up and was blustering and all, and he pointed his finger at him and he said, “I want that plant back in operation by sundown Friday.”

BW: He was furious.

RW: He was furious. ... We knew that we’d have to get these people some help, so, we had our Mormon foreman, who had two wives and twelve children ...

BW: I ran into more crooked ... Mormons than I’ve ever imagined. He had two wives, he had twelve kids, you know.

RW: We got him to work with the crew to put this plant back. ... We were just looking at our video that BJ took of the attempt to put this back, and she had taken this because we wanted to show that they really weren’t doing it correctly. ... There was about ... eighteen hundred feet of pipe, aluminum pipe, big, like this, twelve inches in diameter, that was ... from the Green River to our plant, and we had a pump at the Green River that we pumped the water up to our plant. Well, these characters, when they took it, they used a forklift, which, if you know, it has prongs on it, they just went underneath this pipe, a sixty-foot length, and lifted it up. Well, BJ took these pictures of all the scrapes and all the holes that these guys had put in this pipe. So, sundown Friday comes and they’re going to attempt to set this up, to get out of all of this, and I wish you could see it. We may have to make you a copy. It was like Yellowstone, with geysers. We were pumping water through this pipe, but it never got eighteen hundred feet up to the end. It was coming out in geysers all over and I showed this video in the courthouse, to the judge, and I said, “This is what they did and we want our money out of this pipe. We want the ten thousand dollars.” They had only put up ten thousand dollars earnest money, or whatever it was called.

BW: Whatever they call it.

RW: If it had been twenty, we’d have gotten twenty; that’s all they had. I said, “We want that, because look at it, Judge. This pipe is worthless. ... You ordered it be back in operation. It can’t be back in operation this way.” He said, “No question about it. ... My order is that you forfeit that ten thousand dollars.” [laughter]

SH: The Wild West lives on.

RW: Yes.

SH: Thank you so much.

RW: Sandra, I have enjoyed the interview very much. ...

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Reviewed by Matthew Lawrence 2/25/07
Reviewed by Joshua Kratchman 2/25/07
Reviewed by Thomas Swift 2/25/07
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 5/23/07
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 5/31/07
Reviewed by Reid Waltman 6/21/07