An Interview with Gilbert D. Yarchever

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

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Table of Contents

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; graduated high school 1937; living through the Depression; encountering prejudice when applying for work; mention of Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria-Hungary, granting mother's family the last name of Kurfeerst; description of Seder; taking government exam, moving to Washington, D.C.; recalling atmosphere of anti-Semitism; activities in Washington....................................1-10

Recalling December 7th, 1941; preparing to go to Africa as administrative assistant; remembering search for birth certificate; taking passage on an armed merchant ship; the long journey to Africa; searching in Asmara, Alexandria, Damascus, Baghdad, Basrah, and Haifa for the major he was assigned to; anecdote about Lawrence of Arabia; helping Dave Krashevsky smuggle Jewish refugees into Jerusalem; serving as court reporter for British forces; assigned by Colonel Lieber to act as position classification analyst; negotiating with Arab sheikhs to pay native laborers to work on road; anecdote regarding Madam Litsus, pianist; mention of Yaffa Eliach and Elie Wiesel and their efforts to start the Holocaust museum..11-20

Connecting with a survivor 60 years later; torpedoed and sunk in the Panama Canal; working six months in Panama before finding passage back to the States; working with Jack Small (Munitions Board) in D.C.; mention of Herman Wouk; joining the Navy; assigned to the *San Clemente* in charge of supplies; back to New York to join wife after mustering out...21-30

Recalling duties as onshore patrol while serving on the *San Clemente*; discussion of Kamikaze pilots; more concerning Jack Small and the Munitions Board; story about Werner von Braun; meeting Herschel Aurbach, to whom von Braun had surrendered; moving with family to Panama; lengthy discussion of efforts to solve wage problems on behalf of Panamanians; early return to States because of wife's illness; working for Department of Army, then assignment in Japan; details on life in Japan; moving the job to Hawaii...31-40

Further comments on job in Okinawa and Hawaii; short description of wife's point of view on all the traveling; details on job description; family recreation while abroad; lengthy discourse on assignment in Alaska; wife's contribution to Alaskans and Hawaiians; changes seen in Hawaii; seeking education in most job assignment locales; setting up the EXCEL program at UNLV with Mrs. Harris and Stephanie Smith; further explanation of job duties on the West Coast and the tortuous path through Sacramento, Hawaii, and Chicago before retiring to Las Vegas in 1977..............................41-50

Anecdote about Korean assignment; deciding to retire in Las Vegas; purchasing condo in Regency Tower; discussion of art collection; involvement in consultant work; traveling the USA and abroad; working with the EXCEL program at UNLV; participating in choir activities; marriage to second wife Edythe; award for work in Korea during JFK's administration; last anecdote about helping others in his career.........................51-60

Preface

Gilbert Yarchever was one of nine siblings, born and bred in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He describes the way his mother's family was granted the last name of "Kurfeerst" by Emperor Franz Joseph (of Austria-Hungary), explains the Seder (the Jewish observation of the exodus of Hebrews from Egypt), and tells what it was like to survive the Depression.

Gilbert describes the jobs he held after high school and the government examination he took that led to his lifetime of adventure and travel. He moved to Washington, D.C., in 1940 and kept himself busy working for the government and taking classes at George Washington University, as well as working part time at Hecht Department Store and as a freelance court reporter.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Gilbert was sent to Africa on a merchant ship, helped smuggle Jewish survivors into Jerusalem, and was assigned the task of negotiating with Arab sheikhs for laborers to build a road. In the years after that, he worked in Europe, Panama, Alaska, Japan, and Hawaii and describes many of the jobs he was responsible for and many of the individuals he met. He also married and had children, kept up with university classes whenever he could, and collected art objects and paintings.

Following his retirement in 1977, Gilbert and his family came to Las Vegas and bought a condo in Regency Towers. He did some consulting work for a couple of years, and then he and his wife began traveling around the states and going abroad. He was involved with UNLV's EXCEL program, the music department, and the Las Vegas Art Museum. (He and his second wife Edythe presented the first major exhibition on Holocaust art at the museum.) These days Gilbert often donates pieces from his art collection to churches, synagogues, and charitable organizations.

This is Claytee White. It is April 3rd, 2006. This is the Oral History Research Center at UNLV. And today we're interviewing?

Gilbert D. Yarchever.

Okay. Gilbert, we are here today because of your interesting life. But first tell us about your childhood, where you grew up, how many were in the family, just about your childhood.

Well, that's interesting considering that I just received a call from my grandnephew regarding the birth of my great grandniece. And it's been a big family. I was one of nine siblings. My mother, who was a very wonderful lady, married my father following the death of his first wife who had eight of the nine children and took them over and took care of them and, of course, the family. I was the baby. I was the baby of the family.

Despite the fact that they had a new mother, I was more or less -- I never even thought of having what you would refer to as half brothers and a half sister. There were seven boys and myself, which made eight, and my one sister. She was the second oldest. And, of course, she was like a second mother to me because with everything my mother had to do, she was the one that really took care of me.

I had a nice childhood. I was brought up in what I'd like to say was very free of any prejudices because I was brought up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where we had all races in the school. I never even heard of discrimination, per se, until I went to Washington -- and that's another story -- where I was absolutely shocked to find that when I got on the bus to go to my first morning of work there, I went to sit in a vacant seat in the back and was told I couldn't sit there; that I had to sit up front.

And I said, "Well, there weren't any seats up front." They said, "It makes no difference. Then you'll have to stand. But you can't sit back there." I said, "I don't see why not." And I sat down in the seat.

And this black gentleman got up to me and said, "You're going to have to move." He said, "You're not really supposed to be here." And I said, "I don't understand what you mean." And he said, "Only the blacks can sit back here. The whites have to sit up front," which was kind of a turnabout, to put the blacks in the positive and the whites in the negative.

But at any rate, getting back to my childhood, I was fortunate to have some wonderful teachers at both my grade school and my high school. I graduated cum laude with a four-point average as you would refer to it today, of which I'm very proud. Of course, I don't know why because I never really had to study. Somehow or other, I always seemed to know the answers. That's what brought me to the forefront, I guess, in my future career with the government.

So tell me about your education once you finished high school.

Well, I finished high school, Taylor Alterdyce High School, in February of 1937. It's an interesting story as to why it was a mid semester and why it was actually in '37 instead of June of '36. I guess I was about four years old -- or three or four -- when I used to follow my brothers to school. And in those days, you know, approximately 80 years ago, people didn't worry too much about their children, you know, being away. At the community, you knew everybody in Hazelwood, which is where I was brought up, a suburb of Pittsburgh.

I wandered into the kindergarten class because there were a lot of kids in there, of course, and they were doing things that most kids of five or six would be doing. And even though I was four, I sort of felt, well, you know, it was fun. So I went in. The teacher just acted as if I belonged there. And I attended it. Believe it or not, I used to go to kindergarten every year for two years. I would wander into the school and walk in there and so forth. Most people knew the Yarchever family, too, and teachers knew.

So there I was one day, and it was coming up around Christmastime or our Hanukkah time. And my teacher came over and said, "Gilbert, how old are you?" And I said, "Six?" And she said, "Well, I think it's about time you went into first grade." She said, "We have to get your registered."

So she registered me. And, of course, it was in the middle of a semester. I couldn't go right into first grade then. So I wound up going into first grade in February, where I should have gone in there the September before. But at any rate --

So your parents didn't catch that?

Well, no, because they knew I was there and they didn't think anything of it. I mean, all my brothers were going there and so forth.

So I went on to Taylor Alterdyce. Actually, I went to a junior high, Gladstone Junior

High, where I was preparing myself basically for business. I wasn't too sure about whether I would be able to go to college because it was the Depression. My family was having considerable difficulties because my father was quite a philanthropist, although we were not wealthy people.

But we did have our stores. And in those days, people just ran up a monthly credit bill. And then at the end of the month, they'd come to pay their bill and that would be it. Well, of course, when the Depression happened in '29 and '30, people couldn't quite pay their bills. My father would never turn them down. He would also see that they got what they wanted. And he said, "Well, you'll be able to pay someday." And as a matter of fact, it got so bad that many of them would come to my father because he did own the properties, and they couldn't borrow any money from anywhere unless they had a signer for collateral.

A co-signer.

And my father did. He just went right ahead and signed off for them because he kept telling my mother, "Well, you know, they have to eat." Finally, we reached a point where we just lost everything because then the creditors began to close in on the notes that he had signed for other people because they couldn't pay.

But then we had to move to this much smaller house -- we had been living in a large three-floor house. The first floor at the front was one of the stores. We had two stores.

What kind of stores?

They were fruit and vegetable, but we also had meats and all sorts of condiments and that. It was a regular grocery store. And all of us helped out in the store. I mean, we all worked.

I'll never forget after we moved into this very tiny house, which was literally right in the back of the railroad tracks. The railroad tracks ran behind us. But somehow or other, we sort of managed.

There's a very interesting story about my mother, God bless her. She never said anything. But come Passover time when we had to get special foods, my father had to go to a certain place to buy all these kosher foods that were specific for Passover. My mother said, "Well, Joe, here is the money for the things. You go and get the stuff." And he said, "Well, what money?" She said, "I've been saving it. I knew we would have to have it." And she said,

"A penny here, a penny there, and there was enough to start buying some of the stuff."

He came home about an hour or two later and he walked in. And she said, "You want me to help you?" He said, "No, no." She said, "Well, where is the food?" He said, "Well, you know, Smule (phonetic)," which means Sam, "down the street, his horse just died." And she said, "Well, what has that to do with getting the food?" He said, "Well, how can he work to make some money for food for his family?" She said, "Joe, you didn't." And he said, "Well, I had to. I couldn't leave the man there. He has to rent a horse. We'll manage somehow. We'll manage somehow."

But those were the kind of things that I think motivated me for all the future endeavors that I got into after I graduated from high school. I had received a scholarship to two universities. I couldn't accept them because they were strictly scholarships for, of course, the tuition, but they didn't include the cost of the books and certainly didn't include the cost of where you were going to stay. You know what I'm talking about. So I had to forego those. But I did take an examination, a federal examination, because I knew at a certain point for a certain reason that I was not going to be able to get much employment in Pittsburgh. And I'll tell you why.

When I graduated -- as I mentioned before, I graduated cum laude -- I had a major offer from Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation. I went over. I was interviewed. Oh, it was fine. Everything was wonderful and so forth and so on. And I was told to report on Monday to go to work.

Well, I got up Monday. I went to the office and walked in. And I said -- oh, I forgot. He told me on Friday, he said, "Now, stop by the personnel office and fill out whatever forms they have because they're going to have to know all the things for payroll and the records."

So I went down and I filled it out. There were a lot of questions, some of which you can't ask today if you're being employed. Well, those questions were there. So when I got in Monday, I was told when I walked in and started to look around, they said, "Oh, Gilbert" -- already I was Gilbert, not Mr. Yarchever as I was when they were interviewing me -- "I'm sorry to tell you this, but the job's been filled." I said, "It's been filled?" I said, "Friday it was practically closing time, and you told me I was to report Monday for the job." I was told, "Oh, well, we didn't know that they had already found someone." And it suddenly dawned on me why

because, obviously, my religion was identified on the form. So what I said before about non-prejudice, I meant it within our own family and within my own associates and so forth. Sure, I was subject to anti-Semitism, the same as all of us were back in those days that were Jewish.

Now, what about the last name? Was that a Jewish last name?

No. Yarchever -- well, there are two names. There's Kurfeerst and Yarchever. Kurfeerst was my mother's family name.

Would you spell that for us, please?

K-u-r-f-e-e-r-s-t. In Europe it would have been K-u-r-f-u-e-r-s-t, Kurfuerst, which means first of the crown. And I'll tell you a story about that.

And by the way, my father and my mother were first cousins because my mother's father -- I mean, my mother's uncle was my father's father. And my father's mother was an aunt of my mother. Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that's right. Anyhow, however it sounds -- it's kind of complicated, I know.

But the name Yarchever stems from a title sort of like a governor or what have you, a person who sort of is the so-called mayor or main person for this particular community in Europe where he was raised and lived before he came to the United States in 1907.

My mother whose name was Kurfeerst, her name was given to her family by Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria, Hungary, because one of my ancestors apparently had thwarted an assassination attempt on Franz Joseph's life and he got word to the proper authorities that this was going to happen. And, of course, they presumably apprehended the culprits that were about to do this. As a result, Franz Joseph wanted to give him something.

Well, I must presume that my family was relatively well off, the Kurfeerst family. My great-great whoever it was, said, "Well, really what we would like to have is a name," because back in those days people -- even non-Jews did not have last names. They were either John the son of so-and-so, which ultimately became Johnson and so forth and so on. Only the aristocrats had what was the equivalent of a last name, although even they didn't because if you will go through history, you'll see that most of the people are so-and-so of a particular area. Like right now our very dear friend is the Contessa de Pamri. Her name is Ester. So she's Ester de Pamri,

Ester of Pamri, of that area.

So my ancestor apparently said, "Well, what I would like to have is a name." And the emperor said, "Well, I will give you a name that can only be given to the successor of the crown, the first family of the crown. You will be called Kurfeerst."

And today our good friend Don Katzberg who is, of course, a great-great-great-great grandson of Queen Victoria and a nephew of Franz Joseph happens to be, by coincidence, a very close friend that we met quite a number of years ago. As a matter of fact, there's a picture of Franz Joseph as a young man, which has been in our family for many, many years. But I don't know if we can get that or not. That's when he was a young man, Franz Joseph. So that's the story of the names.

Okay, great. You know what I'd like to have you do -- and this is for audiences that are non-Jewish. Even though we know the history of the Passover, can you explain the celebration?

Yes. The Seder, of course, is a celebration of the liberation of the Jews from Egypt. During the time of the exodus, as you would refer to it, from Egypt, there was no time to prepare food as you normally would. You know, taking sometimes a day or two in advance for the making of bread, which in those days you would let rise and remain for a while and then put into the ovens. Sometimes it took days to prepare meals and so forth. The Seder itself -- Seder means an order of things -- contains foods that were symbolic of the time when Moses was leading the people of Israel out of Egypt in the 40 years when they were traveling day after day after day.

I have a cute cartoon on the refrigerator that has a woman talking to another woman about the amount of time. And there's Moses and we still haven't come to the area yet. But he's a man. Would he ask directions?

That's good.

So at any rate, the Seder is to remind us of the trials and tribulations that we went through during the period of our slavery in Egypt and to celebrate, in a way, the freedom that we finally managed to obtain as a result of God's intervention.

So after trying for the job at the steel company, what did you do?

Well, while I waited, I decided to take a government examination, which was then known as -- how was it -- clerical administrative examination, which would cover just about everything including, by the way, shorthand and typing, which I had taken in high school and was, if I must say so myself, quite good at. I began to earn some money while I was in college as a court reporter. So I took the exam. I don't remember the score, but it had to be very, very high because I received more telegrams from Washington and from other states, government activities, than you could shake a stick at. There must have been a dozen or more telling me to report, that they had decided to employ me, et cetera, et cetera, and please contact them.

Well, among them, the Corps of Engineers had a position of an administrative assistant secretary. It sounded good and it was in Washington, D.C., where I knew I would be close to several universities -- American, Maryland and George Washington University -- and I could go there at night. So off I went to Washington.

But in the interval between the time that I had graduated from high school and then went on to Washington, I worked in a couple of relatively minor jobs. I went to one as sort of a gofer and wound up being a dispatcher for the Bendix Corporation in terms of their calls on repair service and all that.

I remember I also worked for a friend of my father's who had an auto agency, and it was to deliver automobiles to the various purchasers. And it was the year when the automatic shift came into being. And all I knew was the regular shift. They showed me how to work the shift. I did all right until I got downtown in the middle of Pittsburgh. And somehow or another, I don't know, the engine stopped or whatever it may be. That would happen regardless in these cars. And I couldn't start it. At that time it was relatively new. And I wasn't aware until they sent one of the mechanics down after I had tied up traffic for hours in the middle of Pittsburgh. He got in there and pushed the gear forward into neutral or park and then started the car. Well, I didn't know you had to take it out of gear in order to start the car. Well, I still worked for him until I got the word from Washington to come in.

Then when I got to Washington, it was wonderful, of course, my experience. But my family wanted to make sure that I retained my Judaic origins. So they had investigated and they were the ones that found a kosher boarding house for boys in Mrs. Siegle's Kosher Boarding

House for Boys in the District of Columbia. So when I got into Washington, she had met me, Mrs. Siegle. She was a widow with two girls, two daughters, who were the only girls in the house, young children. The rest of us were all boys.

It was nice. She had about four bedrooms. In the smaller bedrooms there were two fellows, and in the larger ones there would be three. And she had the most delicious breakfasts and lunches and dinners, always. We had breakfast and then she would pack a lunch for us. Then we would get home and have dinner.

All of that I remember very definitely because it impacted on my salary, which at that time was just $1440 a year. I paid $40 a month for room and board. It was all kosher. Then subsequently, I moved somewhere else later on. But that was to "pyro" as she called it, a classier section of town.

I had been promoted a couple of times in that short time and wound up being an administrative assistant to the deputy chief of construction for the Corps of Engineers. Of course, I always had in my -- oh, I didn't tell you.

When I graduated from high school, I really wanted to get into the service because I knew what was happening in Europe. You know, it was in '39. I knew it was happening, and I wanted to get in there. Perhaps I could do something. And when I applied for the Navy, they turned me down because they claimed that I had to go home for six months and eat carrots to improve my eyesight. Well, there never was anything wrong with my eyesight. And, of course, that still was, unfortunately, a mark of prejudice that existed with respect to the anti-Semitism.

So which year did you move to Washington, D.C.?

I moved to Washington, D.C. in early 1940. I remember it had to be either December of 1939 or January of -- no. Wait a minute. In 1941, I'm sorry. I think I moved in 1940. My father had just died in, I think, 1939.

So how did your mother, then, and the rest of your family feel about your leaving Pittsburgh and going to Washington, D.C.?

You know, we get wrapped up in our lives. As far as my brothers were concerned, "Yeah, okay, okay, just take care of yourself and make sure you're okay. Oh, boy, we got a politician now in the family." You know, that type of thing.

So were you the first of the nine to leave Pittsburgh?

Actually, yes. Yes, I was, because not too long after, some of my brothers moved to Phoenix and to Los Angeles during the early 40s.

So 1939, Hitler invaded Poland --

Right.

-- starting World War II.

Right.

What was the talk in the Jewish community? Hitler had already started tremendously abusing the Jewish population.

Right.

Was there talk in the community?

In Pittsburgh there were somewhat what you would call drives to collect monies to send. But most of the people in Pittsburgh that had families in Europe were already sending as much as they could and so forth and so on. I know my father had a cousin in Europe. Later on we found he had a half sister. That's another tragic story.

There was a certain amount of awareness, but it wasn't as defined as it became in the later years, in '39. There was some sort of hints about it. But, of course, there was so much anti-Semitism at that time. And Roosevelt was often the target for some of these bigots that would refer to him, "Oh, Frightened D. Rosenberg." You know, that happened.

So the Jewish people kind of didn't say too much about it because there was a feeling -- didn't want to get into a war. And there was an undercurrent of "we're not getting into the war because of the Jews," that type of thing.

When I got to Washington and then began working at what they called Buzzard's Point, which was the Corps of Engineers -- later on we moved into the Pentagon before it was finished; we were the very first group to move into the Pentagon -- there was a greater understanding of what was going on in Europe but not so much with respect to the Jews, but with respect to Hitler himself and his modus operandi, if you want to call it that. I could call it something else, but it wouldn't be nice for television.

Yes. That's right.

So what was the difference between your life in Pittsburgh and your move to Washington, D.C.? How did it change?

Well, I became more -- I don't know -- more aware of -- I don't know if there was sort of more of a social commentary that had come out, really. When I was in Pittsburgh, I had friends, Jewish as well as non-Jewish. And we had our little parties. But, generally, it was like a regular...

But when I got there, I suddenly was exposed to a lot of things. I was always a very avid reader. And, of course, I was always reading The Post.

(End side 1, tape 1.)

It was very exciting because in Pittsburgh, I mean, we all knew the Heinz factory and we all knew the Mellon Institute and the Carnegie Museum and we had field trips there and so forth. But in Washington, D.C., gosh, we had the National Gallery of Art, we had the archives, we had the U.S. Capitol. There was so much to see and do. And I was so excited. And then, also, there was a park. That was Rock -- I can't remember the name.

Rock Springs.

Rock Springs Park was right alongside the side of 16th Street where I had moved to later on. And there were tennis courts right across the way, and I was able to get up and 6:00 in the morning, 5:30 or 6, and go over and play tennis and then get back. It was a different life, you know.

But my time in Washington wasn't that long because it was in November and I had only been about a year away from home. At the time I was working for the government, I was taking classes at George Washington University, working part time at Hecht department store and also working as a freelance court reporter. I mean, that's what you did in those days. When you were trying to help out your family at home and you found yourself with a little more expenses than $40 a month, you needed some extra cash. And we worked and didn't think too much of it. It was just that.

I had a wonderful mentor there. He was the colonel, the deputy chief of construction. He took a great interest in what I was doing. He said, "You know, we've got a position for a legal assistant. You're taking law. It's an assignment that is outside the country. I can't tell you

anything about it other than you would be working outside of the United States."

And I thought, gee, that's great because I was a Swiss Family Robinson family and, you know, Treasure Island, all that sort of stuff. And going abroad was something that -- really, oh, that's great. So I said, "Well, yes, I'd be glad to go."

So I was filling out some of the papers and all. Then along came December 7th, and all hell broke loose because it was on a Sunday. I remember I was studying some of my class material. I got a call from the colonel. He said, "Can you come to the Pentagon today?" I said, "Of course." He said, "Well, we're going to be working around the clock, and I need you very badly." So I immediately got on the bus and took off for the Pentagon.

So what was the atmosphere like in Washington, D.C. on that day?

Oh, it was -- I mean, people were just aghast for one thing, and they were angry for another thing. And the people were crying. Other people were saying, "Oh, that's the Nazis" -- not Nazi, but they used some offensive words about the Japanese, which we all knew they used in those days, for a good reason.

When I got to the office, there was a lot of work waiting for me to do, a lot of supply material to work up to get going because we had already been aware of the fact that the next day Roosevelt was going to declare war. I took just a few minutes out to contact my two congressmen and senators from Pennsylvania and asked them if they could arrange for passes for the hearings tomorrow when the president spoke. And I still have those passes. I was there when --

When he went before Congress?

When he said, "This is a day of infamy." Uh-huh, I was there at that. As a matter of fact, there are a lot of historical times when I managed somehow or other to be there.

Why did you even think that that was going to be such an important speech?

Well, wouldn't you?

Yeah.

I mean, we're declaring war. And we knew the war was on in Europe. We knew all the efforts that were being made to stay out of the war, but we also knew some of the things that were being done for Great Britain in order to be of some assist despite the opposition. And there

was tremendous opposition in those days. Things were said on the House floor that would never be allowed today, discussions that were held regarding the Jewish problem. And the things that some of these senators and congressmen would say about the Jews...

Even not too long ago, there was a certain person, a very high level position -- as a matter of fact -- I'm not going to mention names -- but at one point in time, and this is just a few years ago and it's in one of the books written about him where he said he used this word beginning with F, "F the Jews. They won't vote for us anyway." And that was at a time when -- it was a Republican, of course.

But be that as it may, that began to kind of -- it was bad. It was really bad. And, of course, not too long after, through a various number of interesting things that happened, I was off to what I found out later was the Middle East and wound up in Basrah. And my getting there was quite an interesting story.

You're going to have to tell us that story.

So after you were able to go to Congress the next day to hear the president's speech, how long was it -- now, you were getting ready to go as a legal assistant?

Right.

Okay. So now, did that job hold?

Oh, yes, because at the time Lend-Lease Program had been established. And this was tied into Lend-Lease. It had to do with building the road from -- actually, from Manejapur, from Basrah, from Khorramshahr -- these are all area on the Persian Gulf -- the road up to Russia for the shipping of critical materials to Russia because it would go to Tehran and then be ferried across to Baccoo -- I mean, carried to Baccoo, the port, which the Russians would use to obtain the material.

So for about a month, I was involved in getting papers ready and so forth. And one of the interesting things was I had to get a passport, of course, but I had to have a birth certificate. And I had never been asked for a birth certificate before. So I called my mother and asked her if she had it and so forth. She said, "Well, I don't know. I don't think I have the birth certificate, but let me see what I can do. I said, "Well, that's all right. Don't worry about it. I'll write to Harrisburg because they would certainly have a record of a birth there."

And my birth date was December 18th. So I wrote to Harrisburg. And they wrote back and said, "You were never born. We have no record of you being born on December 18th. We have no record of a Gilbert Yarchever being born December 18th." So I called my mother and told her that. And she said, "Well, I'll go over."

Now, I was born -- oh, what do they call it -- the home for fatherless children because they had the best maternity hospital in Pittsburgh. My mother had been very ill and my father -- because most of the children were born at home -- and my father did not want to take chances. So he called the home and told them that she was very ill and she was ready to deliver. And they said, "Bring her right over."

Of course, she was married. I mean you know, I have the certificate -- marriage license. And it was more than nine months.

Anyhow, so I was born in St. Rosalia's Foundling Home. That's what it was, St. Rosalia's Foundling Home. And they said, "Unfortunately, we don't have the records. But Sister Anna Mary, who is still living, might have it because she kept her personal records of all the births."

And so my mother went to Sister Anna Mary, and sure enough she looked it up. I was born on December 16th. And I got the time and everything. So she wrote out the necessary affidavit and a copy of her record and so forth, and my mother got it to me.

That's why it took almost a month before I could even arrange for passage because all my records had to be changed from December 18th to December 16th. Washington was not happy about that. Of course, my birth date changed to December 16th.

That's interesting.

But that's the reason for the long delay. But by that time and since Pearl Harbor had happened, you couldn't get commercial passage across the Atlantic. You had to have a reason. This was classified. And I was a civilian.

So what they did for me, they arranged for -- and I didn't know this. This was apparently a classified agreement between President Roosevelt and the Civil Service Commission. They had arranged to have me identified as going on military leave with a card that certified I was a member of the armed forces. But I was still a civilian. And I didn't know about this. All I knew was I was getting this card that I could use in the event of capture, you know, if something

happened and all that sort of stuff.

So off I went through the assistance of the company that I had to be assigned to because I couldn't be assigned as a government employee. I had to be assigned as a civilian worker because at that time Persia or Iran, as it is called, was neutral. And they could have contracts there, you know, for the allied powers, but they couldn't have military there at that time or anybody that was working for the military. They did have some military officers there who simply were there to oversee the contract. That was Foley Brothers. So they were the overseers for the government for the contract. But they were not there as a military person, you know, for military purposes.

So, finally, between us we found passage on a ship going out of Seattle. I had to travel cross-country. I was given a whole sheaf of travel vouchers. I was given an account at Chase National Bank in New York with letters of credit. And off I went.

This was a merchant ship. There were I don't know how many on the crew, but there were only six of us that were passengers, all civilians. All of us had to participate in the training exercises for the defense of the ship. It had a four-incher on the stern, and it had several 36-caliber machine guns for airplane attack.

Now, what do you mean by "four-incher"?

A cannon. I wasn't even too sure of what it was except I was trained to be the hot man on it.

Explain that.

Well, that's the person that stands behind the gun and catches the shell of the missile that's being fired. And you had to wear these great big asbestos gloves and catch it. Then you tossed it overboard. Then you came back to catch the next one.

There were five of us on that gun crew. One was -- he had a Swedish name. He was in World War I. He knew what he was doing. He was the one that did all the sighting and everything. Then, of course, there was the loader, and there was the standby and myself. And up comes this submarine and starts to shell us on the surface. And we shipped a lot of shrapnel.

I have a letter from him, as a matter of fact, which resulted in -- ultimately, because I was a member of the Armed Forces at the time -- in my having been awarded the Bronze Star for

having been under fire and all that sort of stuff.

One of the shells that were fired went right into the submarine and it was gone. So we sunk the first submarine in American waters. As far as I know it was the first submarine. It's on exhibit now, by the way, because they managed to bring it up after the war sometime. It's in Aruba as a tourist attraction.

So you sailed from Seattle around --

And down and through the canal and down through the Caribbean and then on across to Africa. We put in at this -- I can't remember the name of the port, but it's supposed to have been the worst city in Africa. It was very filthy and so forth. And we were there for a number of days while they repaired the ship because some of the shrapnel and some of the shots had damaged the ship. But we were able to make it across. We zigzagged which took us an awful long time to go because that's how the ships would travel in order to avoid the possibility of attack. And we got there.

We were there for about a week or two while they did all the repairs on the ship from the firing, and then went on down to Cape Town, South Africa, and then went up through the Mozambique Channel to the Suez Canal. And that's where we off-boarded in the Suez Canal. I went to Asmara because that's where I had been told that the major, who I was to work for, would be located. When I got there, I found out that he had gone on to Alexandria. So I went on to Alexandria. You know, you manage to find ways to do things.

That's right. So what transportation?

Well, after I got off the ship, of course, there were buses that took me around. I got up to Asmara. There I got the bus back to Alexandria. The rail station there was SMACH, S-M-A-C-H, I think, on the Suez Canal. And when I found out he wasn't there, that he had gone to -- I think either Haifa or Damascus. I can't remember now which was first and which was second. I think it was Damascus first and then Haifa.

But be that as it may, we got to Damascus, to Syria. At that point I found out that he wasn't there. He was in Haifa. So I managed to get to Haifa, but that was on the Nairn bus. The Nairn bus was driven, as I found out later because I was reading Lawrence's -- something of wisdom. I forget. The name of the book had something of wisdom *[Editor's note: <u>The Seven</u>*

Pillars of Wisdom]. And it told all about his travels. I had brought it with me to read. It was a fairly big book.

And the driver saw me reading it. And he said, "You know who's in there?" I said, "Well, yeah, it's Lawrence of Arabia." And he said, "No. Who was his guide?" I said, "Well, I'm not sure. I probably read it." He said, "Did you ever hear of Black Jack?" And I said, "Well, yeah, now that I mention it. Yeah, he was mentioned in the book." He said, "That's me."

So I met Lawrence's guide when he was in Arabia. He was kind of an old man. He said, "Come on. You're interested in this. I'll let you drive the bus for a while." So I drove the bus for a while. Of course, it was over sand, but he knew where he was going. There was no road. I couldn't understand.

You just traveled across the desert?

He knew exactly where to -- huh?

You were just driving across the desert?

Yeah. And he knew where to go. We stopped two nights. We had these huge metal barrels, which would have normally been filled with oil. They were emptied. That's what he used for his fire. He had a top to it. Then we'd stop in the desert, and he'd cook a meal for us. We would have some stuff. We would lie down and go to sleep. Then we got to Haifa.

Then at Haifa, I think there was either a train or a bus. It was not -- no. I think it was camel. Yeah, we had camels going from Haifa to Baghdad. When I got to Baghdad -- because by that time he was in Basrah -- I was told he was in Basrah. I kept going from place to place to keep up with him.

So I was on the train, and it was a train -- at the time the former king there had been deposed and they were literally slaughtering people. Some of the workmen on the train -- and I like to talk to people -- would tell me stories about what happened while I was on the train. And this is the train and this is what happened and all that.

When I got to Basrah and found he had gone down to Bombay, I said forget it. I don't know why he went to Bombay because actually Basrah was the place where the road was actually being started. There was a geologist there by the name of Pazwell, whose books are still being used. Poor man, he died of whatever the germs you get from eating food that was not

properly fertilized while we were there. It scared us to death. We made doggone sure we washed all the celery that we had.

But anyhow, while I was there, I was very fortunate, I think. There was another young Jewish man there, Dave Krashevsky. He was working with the (indiscernible), which was the underground for what was then Palestine. Jews were brought in. He took me over to this camp one night where there were lots of Jewish refugees and survivors that had managed to get through Russia. Some of them in camps in Russia were being let out and being sent down to Ahwaz, sort of a staging area, where they would be then sent on to North Africa. North Africa was accepting them. No other country was accepting them.

That's when he got me involved in smuggling many of the refugees and survivors into Jerusalem. There still were some British that were sympathetic with the Jewish plight. And the underground had managed to work with them so that we could get through the lines and get them through.

So what was that like? Did you feel like you were in danger all the time doing this work?

Well, you have to remember Rommel was in North Africa. We weren't exactly far away. So it was always the case. As a matter of fact, one of the -- and I also served with the British forces while I was there because they needed a court reporter. So they appointed me as a court reporter for the British forces. Somewhere I have a card as a member of the British forces, also.

There was a lot of sabotage going on. I remember Brigadier French who had his legs shot off as a result of sabotage on a train that was going to the Middle East -- from the Middle East, I think, or to the Middle East and carrying supplies. And these were saboteurs from the Axis Powers, you know, the army and the North African people who knew that we were working on shipping stuff up to Tehran for the Russians who had converted to the Allied side. And so we were always in danger of some type of sabotage at any given point.

I remember, believe it or not, I was taking Arabic testimony phonetically. And then I would type it out phonetically, as it sounded. Then an Arab translator would translate it into English. It was very interesting.

It had to be.

Yeah.

So now, did you ever find the person that you were supposed to go to work for?

No. No. He apparently had gone to Bombay and decided to go back to the United States from there. So I wound up being -- actually, because they knew what I was -- see, there was a small military contingent that were officers, no enlisted personnel at that time.

So Colonel Lieber, who was the commanding officer of what was called the Persian Gulf Service Command later on, sort of talked to me. And I told him what I -- and he said, "Yeah, I knew Lee was supposed to be here and he took off. But do you want to go back, or do you want to stay here and do some work?" I was already involved in this smuggling thing, so I said, "No, no. I'd rather stay." Because thank God I found a way in which I could help. He said, "Well, we need somebody to negotiate with the Arab sheikhs for indigenous personnel to work on the road. He said, "We'll have a translator assigned to you. You can set up the jobs and so forth."

All of a sudden, I found myself doing what I found out later was the work of a position classification analyst who was writing up job descriptions for different workers and identifying -- well, the amount of pay they earned was done by a number. I had developed a number to be of a certain salary, so to speak, or a certain level of salary. I didn't even identify the amount because when we negotiated with the Arabs, we would negotiate with them for so many personnel for a total amount of such-and-such. And it was up to them to make the payments because you didn't just hire people the way you do today there. You hired them through the sheikh who was the head of the particular group of people that we were seeking laborers from and so forth.

I found out very quickly how to bargain, very quickly, because the first time I started and I mentioned how much we would pay, he said, "Ah, no." He mentioned an absolutely outrageous price. And I said, "Well, I can't go beyond this price." And he said, "Well, you've got to." You just don't settle on the first amount. It's just not --

Oh, I see. It's part of the --

It's the culture. And when I was relatively unsuccessful, I went back to Colonel Lieber, and he said, "Well, let me tell you, start at a third of what we suggest and keep going back and forth." And that's how I learned how to bargain.

Wow. Yes.

I want you to describe to me the smuggling operation and how it worked.

Well, it was relatively simple. There were sort of heads of the people there. We left it up to them to decide whom. We could take just so many. What we would do is we would, as they say, moonlight trucks from the construction company.

And you were taking people from where to where?

From Basrah into Jerusalem. Yeah. Driving across. It would take over a weekend to get them there and then for us to leave. We had an administrative supervisor by the name of Kaznitz who knew what we were doing. And if I didn't get back in time on a Monday or a Tuesday, he knew why. He wouldn't make a big deal of it, you know. And I would make up for it by hustling and making sure I got more than the number of jobs done. And, of course, I also did a lot of clerical administrative work while I was there because you didn't go and negotiate every day.

But it was just loading them on the trucks, checking them off, and making sure they knew they were not to try to look out or anything like that. I remember some of the people that we got --

(End side 2, tape 1.)

So go ahead.

So anyway, I had met her. We talked because we got to know the people there and what they did. There were some very, very absolutely magnificent scientists and doctors and so forth. When I knew who she was, I said, "Well, you know, we have a piano over in our bunker." We lived in bunkers, which were German bunkers that had been evacuated by the German soldiers whenever the Russians turned over to the Allies. And Iran, at that time being neutral, had of course told the Germans to leave. So these bunkers were just levels of floors with no walls. And they were concrete. And you had cots and showers.

But no walls?

No walls, no. There were just posts to hold up the thing. There were offices on the first level. And the second level is where -- and then there was also a third level -- where workers like myself were quartered. It's like sleeping out in the open, really. And, of course, there were no enemies. You had to be friendly when you live like that.

And I remember when it got really, really hot, and temperatures used to go up to 130 -- and we would take our mattresses and lug them over to the showers along with our sheets and let them get soaking wet and drag them back to the cots and throw them on and jump under the wet sheets in the thing and try to fall asleep before they dried. That was our air-conditioning.

But Madam Litsus, her name was. I asked her if she could play for us because we did have a piano there. There was kind of a little social area that was set aside where we had our meals and so forth. She said, "How can I go like this?" She said, "Here I am I'm wearing a sack and men's shoes. I could never play. I used to be known as one of the best dressed women in Europe. And for me to go like that, I couldn't do that." I said, "Madam, don't worry about it. We'll take care of that."

And, of course, I got a couple of the guys. We went into town, and we found a place where we found a nice dress and shoes and all that. She played for us. But it was so pitiful. Here was a woman with such talent and so lovely. And, of course, by then she was, you know, emaciated and so forth. But she still played so beautifully. I loved getting her over there into Jerusalem.

I don't know what happened to any of them. But I do understand, by the way, as an aftermath -- and this is a recent incident that occurred -- there's a wonderful woman called Yaffa Eliach who was the person that got the Holocaust museum in Washington started. She had gone to *(President Jimmy)* Carter and then to *(President Gerald)* Ford and got their permission and okay to build a Holocaust museum. Subsequently, it was taken over by this group led by Elie Wiesel, who, you know, like everybody else they take over. But she was really the one.

She has always been doing things like this that have to do with Judaism and so forth. And right now she's involved in building what we call a shtetl or an original typical Jewish town, which are very nice with a synagogue and the library and the school and so forth for a Jewish community such as there was in Krakow over in Yakalog and in Kashmir.

So Edythe became very close to her because of her work. And as a result, I did too because of Edythe's work. And she has recently decided to do something on what they call the Jews from Tehran and writing about their having been able to be smuggled into Jerusalem. And she came to visit us. She was here on some other thing and wanted to see us and had actually

come, as she put it, for my birthday. Two beautiful ties, she got for me.

Oh, wonderful.

Anyhow, we were sitting in the kitchen, and she's talking about this 90-something-year-old man who had been one of the Tehran survivors, you know, that they come from Tehran. There were quite a few of them. But this particular man was in Jerusalem and she was talking to him. And he brings out a picture of a young man on a horse. And he shows her the picture. And she says, "You know, that looks a little familiar. I'm not too sure." He said, "Well, I have the picture. He was one of the men that helped us escape. But I don't know his name."

And my wife who was listening said, "Just a minute." And she brings out this picture, which you've seen, of me on a horse. And she said, "Is this the picture?" And he said, "Oh, yes, that's the man. Who is he?" And she said, "You're sitting by him."

Isn't that amazing?

I don't know who the man was. But she said when she gets back to Israel, she's going to tell him who I was.

That's wonderful.

So I presume I will hear from him. I don't know. But, oh, isn't that funny how --

We're talking about how many years now? This was probably 1942, around this time?

It was 1942 when all of that was being done. So that's 60-some-odd years ago. How the past ties to the present, doesn't it?

Yes, it does. And I tell my students in history classes all the time about that connection.

So how did you feel? You're a civilian. You had always wanted to be in the military. And now you're doing this kind of work for your people. How did that make you feel?

Well, elated. It made me feel like my father must have felt when he did things for people.

Okay, yes.

I guess that carried on. And subsequently, of course, when the Russians began and Iran, once Pearl Harbor had happened, began to indicate an acceptance of military because we were at war, some troops began to come and take over the Persian Gulf Service Command. Colonel Lieber was still there. But there were military troops. And I knew, well, I've done everything. There were no more coming through. As a matter of fact, they all had come through, as many as could. The camps were being sort of dismantled.

So I said I want to get back and I want to get into the service. So I found myself going back. That's when I was on the ship that was torpedoed and sunk when we were going through the canal on our way back. And I wound up being saved, of course, in a lifeboat and working for Frederickson Air Corporation, who were building dry docks number two at the Panama Canal, as the administrative assistant to the project manager.

So now, when the ship was torpedoed, where were you taken?

To Panama.

Okay. So you were taken to Panama.

Yeah, to Panama, to the U.S. Panama area. There was no way of getting passage at that time unless you had priority. And even then, you had to wait sometimes weeks before there would be space on a plane going back or what have you. And Governor Edgerton, who was there, knew that I wanted to get back. He got me finally after six months working there as I did because there was no point in being there and just sitting waiting. I offered my services and they were, I guess, glad to have me. So six months later, I was on my way back.

When I got to Washington after all this to report here I am back -- and believe it or not, at that time I was so naive. I had travel orders from Washington, which allowed a nine-dollar a day subsistence in lodging allowance. When I got back, I put in for my travel and lodging from Washington to New York because it was the company that paid for my travel. It was all reimbursed by the government to the company. But it never dawned on me that I was supposed to be getting nine dollars a day regardless of what I was getting until I came back. So when I came back, I had put in for something like I think about three weeks or four weeks of travel and that was it when I could have put in for two years as I found out later. But anyhow, that was water under the dam.

How did you correspond with your family during all of this?

We were able to write letters, which were severely censored, very severely censored because nobody was to know where we were and we were to be very careful about how we described the area we were in and the people we saw. And I have a three-page copy of a letter I wrote to my mother. I'll never forget it. I have the copy of it. I still have it. And it was rather picturesque talking about the Arabs and their way of dress and their way of singing and everything and the funny things, some of the things they did which to us were funny, which I'm sure to them we do things that are funny.

Of course.

When I finally got a letter from my mother, she said, "It was so good to hear from you, but you didn't say anything. The paper was all cut up."

Oh, so they had cut up all of that.

Yeah. But when I got back to Washington finally, they didn't quite know where to put me. Jack Small, I think his name was, was the head of the Munitions Board, which was the beginning of the Defense Department. There was no Defense Department. It was Army, Navy and Air Force. And they said, "We'd like you to work with Jack Small. He'll have something for you."

So there I was in the munitions board. And I was asked by Jack to work out a system of control of critical materials because a lot of the steel, particularly, was being sort of horded by the big companies and the little companies weren't getting enough steel to fabricate the things they had to fabricate. So I sat down and I worked out a system of daily inventorying all of the companies that were using it and all of the orders that came in and so forth and so on.

When I think back on it, I don't know how the hell I ever did all of that, but I did. And I had contacts with all the steel mills and so forth because they had to come through me for an okay on the requisitions from the different companies. And, of course, here I was holding all the records. And every time they would call and tell me about a requisition, I would look it up and I'd say yeah or no, hold that shipment. They have enough to handle and so forth and so on. It was exciting and so forth.

And, subsequently, I did get into the service. And I'll tell you about that after I tell you

what happened.

I knew Herman Wouk, who had written "The Winds of War" and "War and Remembrance," as a result of going to services in Palm Springs where my brother lived. And when I would be back on occasion, I would go there and I'd go to services and I would talk to him. And, of course, in his book -- and I can't remember whether it's "Winds of War" or "War and Remembrance," but one of the two pieces -- he had mentioned something about this captain who was the hero, you know, Navy captain, coming to the Munitions Board to check on materials and so forth. And there he found this -- he wrote in his book -- this young whippersnapper. And he described him as a young whippersnapper from Harvard.

And I told Herman, I said, "Herman, I never went to Harvard. I know who you were writing about." He says, "I know who I was writing about. It was you." He says, "I know the name. But," he says, "You know, it doesn't sound right to say you were from George Washington University. Harvard sounds better."

But anyhow, at the time I wanted to finish, of course, the job of getting it all set up and so forth. I've always been the type of person that if I've been given something to do, once I finish it, I don't like to stay and keep managing it. I like to go on to something else.

So anyhow, about six months later when I felt I had pretty well whipped that system into shape, I went down to the recruiting office in Washington. I told them I wanted to enlist in the Navy. "Oh, well, let me check you out." So they said, "We'll have to check your government records and all." I said, "Oh, okay."

So the next day when I came back, they said, "We can't take you. You're in a military exempt position. You're too important here as a civilian." I said, "Look, I'm not that important. I want to get into the Navy." They said, "Well, we can't do anything. You're military exempt. You're classified as such."

So I figured, well, how do I do this? So what I did that weekend, I got on a bus and went to Pittsburgh. It was on a Sunday. The recruiting office was open. I went into the recruiting office and I said, "I want to enlist." They said, "Oh, okay. How old are you?" I think at that time I was 25. He said, "Well, you know you don't have to. We are exempting anybody over" -- I think it was 24 at this point in time. "You don't have to." I said, "But I want to." He said,

"Okay."

So he took all the information, and I got a physical while I was there. And he swore me in and said, "Well, you're in the Navy now." He said, "Report back Thursday" -- or Wednesday, I think it was -- "and you'll take the bus to Great Lakes for training."

Well, I reported back on Thursday. He was furious. He said, "We've checked you out. You can't be in the Navy." I said, "The hell I can't." I said, "You've sworn me in. I'm in the Navy." I said, "You'll have to discharge me, and I'd like to know what kind of a discharge you can give to me. You can't give me a discharge because I haven't even done anything yet." So he said, "Well, I'm getting hell from my supervisors." I said, "Look, you'll be all right." I said, "Please." He said, "Well, all right. I was simply asked if you would do it voluntarily."

So I got on the bus. I got to Great Lakes. And, of course, we went through the usual business of getting off and being told where we would go and also being given the uniforms that we were to wear and everything. Went through all that, that particular morning. We were told, "All of your companies or whatever it was that we were to be assigned to are going to be posted on the board. You go over and look. And when you're called, when that company is called to come into formation, you're to report there."

So I'm looking and looking. I can't find my name. Suddenly, this guy way, way down at the end -- we all got to know each other, you know, and so forth, the Pittsburgh guys. He said, "Hey, Yarchie" -- they called me Yarchie -- "Hey, Yarchie, here's your name."

I went down. Here was my name, one name, under the caption admiral's office. Admiral's office? So I went to -- I guess it was whoever was in charge of the bill that I was on. And I said, "What does this mean?" He said, "It means you go up to the admiral's office." I said, "Why?" He said, "I don't know why. That's where you're being assigned." I said, "Well, don't I do training and all?" He says, "Well, probably, but you're supposed to report there first."

So I went up there. The old man there said, "Oh, yeah, Yarchever, we've been expecting you." He said, "The admiral's in, but let me check and see if he wants to see you now." I said, "What's that for?"

So anyhow, I walked in. I was in uniform and, of course, I didn't know what to do. So I just stood there. He said, "Sit down. Sit down." He said, "Boy, you've really been places,

haven't you?" I said, "Well, yeah." He said, "Well, it's wonderful. I'd like to have you up here to help us out." I said, "Don't I get" -- he says, "Oh, you'll learn that. If you did what you did, you'll learn it. You just report up here every morning and we'll chat."

So you didn't have to go through the basic training?

No. For the six weeks or five weeks, however long it was, I was sitting up in the admiral's office, which is way up in the tower, looking down at all these guys knocking themselves out on the ground.

Now, why the Navy of all the branches at that time? Weren't there three branches? We had three.

Oh, I don't know. Well, I've always loved the ocean. When I was young, we used to go up to Euclid Beach in Cleveland where they had the dance bands in the old days, when they had Tommy Dorsey and so forth, and we'd go up and dance. We had a sailboat up there that was owned by a friend of mine, and we used to go out sailing. I just loved it. I love the ocean.

Somehow or other, digging a trench...

Yes. I understand that part.

But believe me, we had chores that were just as bad onboard ship. When we scraped the barnacles off the side of the ship that was not easy, either.

Oh, yeah.

And when we were attacked and all, it wasn't very pleasant.

So where were you once that five-, six-week basic training ended?

That's another interesting thing.

So now, how were you prepared to do the work?

Well, what happened is when my six weeks were up, most of the guys there were being sent overseas to different staging areas or for additional training elsewhere. And I was sent down to Bunker Hill Naval Camp or whatever it was called. It was Bunker Hill.

Is that San Francisco?

It was an air station. When I got down there, they assigned me to be a tower control officer. Now, I wasn't an officer. I was just a seaman, really, although I think at that time when they assigned me, they put me in as a third-class petty officer and they said, "You'll get training

on the job." I said, "But why am I being assigned to be a tower control?" I'm not even too sure I knew what that meant. And they said, "Well, you've done a lot of flying." I said, "Flying? I've done a lot of flying? The only flying I ever did was when I flew from Panama up to Texas to Dallas." They said, "Well, whatever it is, the kind of experience they have down here, they felt you would be most useful as a tower control officer." So I got my training and all that sort of stuff, and I was a tower control officer.

So now, is that anything like an air traffic controller?

Yeah, same thing. We had what they called IFR and CFR, which is contact aviation. And the other was for instrument. You know, you guided them in whichever way it called for. If they were coming in, say, on a beach craft, you used instruments and so forth. If they were coming in on a little -- I forget what they call it -- the very small planes, you guided them in by visual contact.

And then you had four positions. One would be the position of standby. One would be the position of observer. One would be the actual tower control officer. And another would be the recorder. I happened to be on standby position at this particular time when this new fellow was on the tower guiding this formation of British air cadets in. He gave them some order. I don't remember how the order was given. He said something about coming in, in formation, which normally would have meant one comes in while the other circles, and then the next one comes in and the others circles and so forth. And whatever order he gave, they came in one after the other and piled up one after the other. And there were terrible, terrible accidents. It was really bad.

And I thought, oh, my God, if I were on that position, I would die. I don't want this. So I told the officer in charge there that I wanted a transfer. He said, "Well, we can't transfer you." I said, "Well, I will not go up on the tower. I will not do that. I will not be put in a position of having people's lives in my hands when I really don't think that I am capable of handling it." He said, "Well, why don't we put you in charge of the officer's mess?" He said, "You'd do good over there."

I volunteered, of course, continuously for overseas services. And, finally, I got myself over to Treasure Island where I was being prepared to go to the Pacific Theater. And I wound up

in Tibabao, which was the formation area, and ultimately assigned to a ship, the *San Clemente*. It was an old marine scow that had been resurrected and was being used as a flagship.

So I get onboard and we report. Then I'm told I'm to report to the captain. So I reported to the captain. He said, "Oh, great, you're here, finally." He said, "Commander So-and-so is leaving tomorrow. You're going to take his place." I said, "Commander So-and-so, I'm going to take his place?" He said, "Yeah, it's the lieutenant commander in charge of ship supplies and stores and also the post exchange stuff. You'll be in charge of that onboard ship and also the stuff that's being shipped to the troops that are going out."

So I actually got a cabin. By then, I was a petty officer second-class seaman. I was put in the cabin. It was right next to the crew's quarters, which is where he had to be because he had to be by the so-called commissary or whatever you want to call it. It was not exactly like a -- well, yeah, it was fixed as an officer's cabin. It was its own room. It had its own bunk. Well, actually, it had two bunks. And it had chest of drawers there.

But you had that all by yourself?

Yeah, yeah.

Wow. And everybody else had two or three people to a room?

They didn't have rooms. No. The ship's sleeping quarters were just long hulls with --

Barracks almost.

Barracks, yeah. No. Everybody knew everybody. I was on there until the end -- you know, about a year later when the armistice was declared and the war ended. I went to the captain and said, "How soon will I be able to go?" He said, "That depends on the number of points you have." And he said, "Let me get your records." And he looked at it. He said, "Oh, my God, you can get out right now. You have points since Pearl Harbor."

So I got back. And that's where I began to work as a position classification analyst. That's when I did the von Braun jobs and so forth.

When you say you got out, where did you go? Washington?

No. Initially, I was sent to San Diego to the hospital there because some of the shelling that had occurred when I was involved had burst a lot of the vessels in the facial area and it caused some nasal problems. They would not discharge me until I was fully checked out. So I

was in the hospital for about two weeks while they went in there. They did a sub-mucous resection and stuffed stuff up in there. Then put me on a troop train going back to New York.

By the way, when I got back from the Middle East, I had married. It was a wartime marriage, so to speak. And when I came back, my wife was with her family in New York. So I went back to New York.

Now, what was that wife's name?

Her name was Belle Rita. Belle Rita Maggot. Like I like to say -- and if she ever sees this on the air, she'll know exactly what I meant -- she taught me how not to choose a wife.

Oh, I see. So now, what was it like in New York after all of this adventure?

Oh, I was only there for about a week or two -- actually, only a few days -- and went to Washington to turn myself in, so to speak, because I had job rights after service. I was supposed to be assigned to my old job, which had to do with this business of position classification. They felt because they noticed that in my work in the Middle East that I had defined positions and all -- and that's where I was assigned to Army Map Service and subsequently to -- oh, by the way, the first job I had at Army Map Service, come to think of it --

(End side 1, tape 2.)

When I received my assignment to Army Map Service, to the office, they were in the process of setting up what was called the UNIVAC, which was the forerunner of the computer system. It occupied practically the entire basement of the Army Map Service. I was sent there to write up the job descriptions and evaluate them for the people who did the board work because at that time there were big boards that you put all this wiring in that had the information on. You shoved them into drawers and so forth. So that's when I really got into position classification and really learned the art of position classification.

At that particular point in time, naturally, I was in it for a while and then I was interested in higher positions if they were available and wound up being assigned to the office of the director of civilian personnel for the Department of Army in Washington.

Okay. Now, did your wife leave New York to come to Washington with you?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, because part of my going down to Washington was to find quarters for us. And we lived in an apartment that was formerly the home, the town house, on DuPont

Circle that was occupied by Lincoln's son. Was it Todd Lincoln? I guess. Whichever one it was. *[Editor's note: Robert Lincoln was the only son of Mary Todd Lincoln and President Lincoln to survive past childhood.]*

And my last question before we stop for today -- you had gone to school prior to all of this back at George Washington.

George Washington.

How long did you --

Well, that was only for that one year and at night.

So that one year.

Yeah. When I got back, by the way, I began going back to school.

Okay, good.

I began going back to night classes.

Well, good. This is a great stopping point. This has been so interesting. So thank you so much for today.

Well, I hope I didn't bore you.

Oh, no.

(End side 2, tape 2.)

This is April 7th, 2006. I'm Claytee White, and I am in the home of Gil Yarchever. Did I pronounce it right that time?

That's correct.

Oh, okay. Great.

However you pronounce it, as long as you call me for dinner.

Okay. Now, you wanted to talk about while you were on the ship serving in World War II. That's where we're going to start today. So give me the incident that you were just talking about.

Well, as you know, I was assigned to Bunker Hill. I think I discussed that before. And finally got overseas and was in the Philippines. When I got there, of course, on the Island of Tibabao, there was some shelling by the Japanese on the Philippines still, and there were still snipers in the old city in Manila. It seems the records that I had of my work in the Middle East,

which apparently had been designated as military service, even though I was a civilian, followed me wherever I went and I always got this type of, you would call, preferential treatment, maybe not so much preferential treatment, utilizing me in a way that they needed to utilize somebody.

So after we finally were assigned the ship that we were to go on from the staging area in Tibabao in the Philippines, I was assigned to the *San Clemente*. And that's where I had the cabin, as I discussed before. I was assigned as ship's supply officer. It was quite interesting considering that I was just a second-class petty officer.

But be that as it may, the interesting thing there was all of us had to do certain types of shore duty such as shore patrol. And here I was, my turn came up to be on shore patrol. I was provided with the holster and the gun and everything else, none of which I had ever been taught to use. But I managed to figure it out in case I did. We went down to Manila primarily to check on the sailors who were having a good time. And some of them who were having too good a time wound up needing assistance in getting back, if you know what I mean, to the ship.

And I can remember there were just a couple of planks from the shore to the boat that was to carry some of them back to their ship. And here I was trying to sling some of this dead weight of soldiers who had passed out over my shoulder and going over that Pasig River on a plank. That was kind of tricky considering that there was a very, very strong current. If you fell into that Pasig River, you were not likely to be found again. That was the last of my duties, thank goodness, as an onshore patrol.

But then at the time that the armistice was signed and the war had ceased and we all were ready to get out, I went to my commander or whoever it was I had to report to at the time and asked when I would be eligible for discharge because I had no intention of remaining in the service, although I felt it wonderful to do my job and do my duty. Still, being in the service was not my cup of tea. I am not very good at taking some orders that I disagree with. And that doesn't go in the service.

So anyhow, I was told at that time, he said, "My God, you have enough points to have gotten out at any time you wanted to." Apparently, all my points had been counted from the time that I had been assigned to overseas service. So off I went.

You had asked a question earlier about how we felt about the bombing, the nuclear bomb.

And before you answer that one, I also want you to talk about how you felt about kamikaze pilots.

Well, kamikaze pilots, you know, when you're in the service, you don't think about individuals, per se. You think about the type of action that's taken. Your question was regarding?

How did you feel about kamikaze?

Kamikaze. You didn't have time to think about kamikaze when they came at you. You just get to your station and you start firing. But I was never, fortunately, under attack by the kamikaze type that just used their planes as a missile, not concerned with the suicidal action. I don't know that we felt much different about them than we felt about the bombs that were dropping on us that weren't kamikaze. They still were missiles that were directed toward our destruction.

And as far as nuclear bombing was concerned, frankly, those of us -- at least the ones I knew -- were happy because they felt that that was the beginning of the end. We were well aware of the fact that taking this action was not something that anybody wanted to see, a whole city, of course, being destroyed and people being killed. But at the same time, compared to the numbers of lives that might have been lost had the war continued to the extent it might have without having this type of bombing, it could have greatly exceeded the number that were affected by it.

So our feelings were one of some degree of satisfaction that something was taken to end this thing, although we felt reasonably sure of victory in the ultimate...

Thank you.

And now, as you're getting out -- you mentioned two names already that I wanted you to follow up on for me. I want you to talk more about Jack Small and the story that goes with him.

Well, it's not a story. The munitions command or munitions office, as it was called, was headed by Jack Small who was a civilian appointed by the president. It was primarily involved in an overseeing of all matters pertaining to the war, and it included a combination of Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard personnel with the idea that ultimately there would

be a unified command, which ultimately became the Department of Defense. This was what would be referred to as the nucleus of the Department of Defense, the Munitions Board.

I see here that somewhere I had a description of the duties that I had with Jack. This is where I was involved in -- let's see -- this is where I was basically involved with the matters of the control of critical materials. And I was just reading that. I can't remember where I saw it.

At any rate, in my particular capacity, I set up a system to control the distribution of critical material. When I was assigned to the Munitions Board, they were having considerable problems with the distribution of critical materials such as steel. And I was assigned because of, apparently, my management work that I had done from time to time previously to set up a system of control. It was compiling a variety of facts and then getting all the information regarding the major firms and their inventories and so forth and so on.

To make a long story short, I did finally set up a system whereby -- and it was almost on a daily basis, despite the fact that there were literally hundreds of small businesses and, of course, there were quite a few very large businesses like Jones-Laughlin Steel Corporation, the Carnegie Illinois Steel Corporation and so forth. The manner in which I set it up resulted in the ability to contain the degree of stockpiling that some of the larger companies were doing with respect to their use of materials to the detriment of those materials being available to the smaller companies. I had actually developed a system where it became equitable.

So it was very satisfying, very gratifying. But that was a time when I decided that I wanted to get into the service, and that's the time when I pulled the steps that I did in order to get in.

Okay. Now, when you got ready to get out of the service, you were almost as adamant about getting out as you were about getting in.

Oh, yes.

Why was that?

Well, it was simply because, like I say, I guess I was always ahead of myself in terms of what was the right thing to do. And in the military service, of course, you take orders. Not that I didn't follow through on the orders I was given, but there were times when I was very unhappy about some of the orders because I felt that there were things that could be done better or

differently. And to think of myself going through life in positions that would require strict obeisance to the direction of people that I might not have confidence in or might feel were giving erroneous orders was not my cup of tea. I just was not the type of person that could work in an atmosphere of doing things that I felt may not have been the right things to do or the best things to do.

Okay. When you came back to the United States, we know that eventually you went back to Washington, D.C.

Right.

But now, at some point you were also in Panama. Give me the sequence of events.

Well, I came back and I was working. When I came back, I worked in the War Department, Chief of Engineers, doing classification of wage administration work, setting up position descriptions. And it was at that point in time -- that was in the period '46, '47, the aftermath of World War II -- one of the groups that I was to set up positions for was that of scientists who were working on, you know, things like nuclear research labs and so forth. And there were a number of obviously foreign-speaking scientists that were being interviewed about the jobs they had to do. And it was my job to write up the positions and then evaluate them for pay purposes, you know, and grade purposes.

And one of the individuals I did, which I found out later on when I saw his name, was *(Werner)* von Braun. And I thought nothing of it because truthfully I didn't know who von Braun was. There may have been some publicity about him during the war in papers. But to me he was just another scientist. I was not aware, obviously, that he was a Nazi officer working. So I went on doing my business.

Then many, many years later after I retired, I met a very fine gentleman, who is long since deceased, Herschel Aurbach. And it turned out that he was the individual that von Braun had surrendered to because he was in the intelligence service at the time in Europe. And von Braun had come to him because of his fear of being conscripted by the Russians. And he wanted to get to us first rather than wait for somebody to get to him.

So we talked about that. And I said, "von Braun, yes," because by that time I was aware of who von Braun was. When I was interviewed by George Knapp for participation in the von

Braun saga along with Herschel Aurbach, I commented when he asked the question, if you had known who von Braun was, that he was one of the Nazis that had been brought in to work for the U.S. government, what would you have done? And I said, "I would have told him to take it and shove it."

And the interesting thing was that, you know, these types of interviews, particularly for news, is about a blip out of the hour or two that you would normally have. And here I'm watching anxiously the broadcast. And it comes on and there I am. And there I'm being asked the question that I just indicated. And that was it. So on television I was asked the question, "What would you have done?" And I said, "I'd tell him to take it and shove it." Period.

And that was it?

That was it. But it was interesting, though. That was many, many years later.

But I did my work there. And, subsequently, I wound up being requested by a gentleman by the name of Nicholas Williams, who was a very senior officer in the civilian service of the department, if I would be willing to undertake the position of major director of classification and wage in Panama with the Caribbean Air Command headquarters. That was at Balboa in the Canal Zone.

And, of course, having been overseas before -- you know when I came back and I was in Washington, I began to become a little jaded by -- it was somewhat confining. And going abroad again sounded real great. And, of course, by then I was married, and my wife and children (at that time one son) came with me. We wound up in Panama.

And I found out that it was more than just a matter of being a classification analyst. I found out that the principal reason for going down there was because they were having tremendous upheaval within the community, actually within Panama. The mixture of the two payrolls, the indigenous employee rolls and the American rolls, had affected Panama's economy over the years. The two types of salaries were different. Americans were paid differently than the indigenous, native employees because Panama's economy was different than that of the United States. And you went by each economy in the saddle sheet wages.

So I was asked to review the situation and see if we couldn't straighten all this out because a lot of the Panamanians were on actually what we called the "Gold Rolls" because in

the old days the Americans were paid in gold and the Panamanian citizens were paid in silver. So they called them the "Gold" and "Silver" rolls. And I had to go through the process of setting up a separation of the two and getting many of the Panamanians who were on the American rolls taken off and put on the Panamanian rolls and so forth.

Well, when it was finally finished and everything was done -- and I had set it up so it was a grandfather-clause-type thing where whoever was transferred to a position, which in terms of title and grade would be the same, but it would be a different salary level, was still permitted to retain the salary that he had been earning or she had been earning. It was not taking anything away at that time. But, of course, as they progressed, they would have to progress under the native system that was established.

So the first thing that happened was an immediate presentation of an appeal on behalf of all the Panamanian workers. It was probably the first complaint of discrimination that had been submitted. That's the basis upon which they made it. That was quite a long time before Civil Rights, which happened in the 60s. This was back in the mid 50s.

So upon receipt of the letter, the commander of the Panama Canal, which was a Corps of Engineers general, sent it actually to the office I was in to research it and come up with a decision as to what to do about the complaint or appeal, if you will.

Well, I spent about two weeks studying the treaty between the United States and Panama. One of the portions of the treaty specifically stated -- and this was the piece that the complaint was on, too -- that the Panamanian citizens would be afforded treatment equitable to that provided to the U.S. employees. And having researched that, I knew the general approach to the preparation of wage tables.

And the preparation of wage tables was to review the average salaries paid in private industry to employees of like positions and then come up with, you know, a table of wages. And it was to be based on the economy of the country, what was being paid in Panama for similar positions for the Panamanian citizens, what was being paid for American citizens in America.

Well, this was equitable treatment because you were treating them the same as you would treat Americans. You were using the same process for the Panamanian citizens as you were using for the Americans.

So I prepared the decision, sent it up and, of course, it was signed off and approved. Subsequently, the appeal did go to the Supreme Court along with my decision. I don't have the papers here. I wish I could find them, but it's long since -- way, way back. But, apparently, the Supreme Court used almost word for word my decision in rendering their decision. And it probably was the first decision on class-act discrimination.

Wow. That's great. How long were you in Panama?

I was in Panama for just a little under two years. Unfortunately, my wife had become ill and I had to return prematurely. I believe I was either contracted for a total of two years or three years at that time. But I did return to the United States at that time. Then, of course, we went back first to New York where I stayed for a few days with my family and with my wife's mother. Then I went on to Washington to see about getting whatever position they had for me since I did have re-employment rights under the contract.

Right. And what kind of job did that lead to?

I believe that's when I was assigned -- let me read here. Yeah. That's when I was assigned to -- I'm trying to get this straightened out here. Yeah, that's when I went back into classification and was working for the Department of Army when a gentleman by the name of -- doing the same work that I had before I left for Panama, basically. There was a position open in what was at that time the position of field operations officer with the field agency of the Department of the Army. That was a position that was to proceed to various and sundry activities, camps, posts and stations; review their management work; and then make recommendations regarding improvement in their operations and so forth and so on.

So I was there for a time when I was asked to take the position of a member of a group that was going overseas. One group was going to the Pacific Theater and one was going to the European Theater to review the status of what was called Noncompetitive Positions of U.S. Citizens Abroad in order to determine their eligibility to be converted to permanent positions. Practically all of the positions that were set up right after the war, where civilians took positions in the occupied areas (instead of going back to the U.S.), were considered noncompetitive because they weren't required to take tests or anything. They simply were employed. And nothing wrong with that, except, of course, it didn't carry any of the benefits of a competitive

position, which would result in retirement and all that sort of stuff.

So I went over with the first team to Japan. We surveyed the positions in Japan and in Korea. It was just shortly after the Korean War had ended, just very shortly after, in Okinawa and various places in the Pacific area.

At the time, the head of the personnel activity in the Far East was looking for additional personnel, and particularly for a chief of classification for his office. After I finished there and came back to the United States, they were just forming the group going to Europe. Of course, this was a different group from one of the different field offices. But I was the one that was asked to go with them to the European Theaters, well, because I already had the experience of the former. And so off I went to Europe.

In the meantime, I received this offer along with the offer to -- a gentleman by the name of Phillip Bohart, who was a personnel director -- to take over those jobs in the Far East. And I accepted and went overseas at that time.

One of the interesting facets of it is that it was still not too long after World War II had ended and they still had restrictions on family travel. So civilians and military, as well, could not travel concurrently with their spouses. They had to go over and be assigned quarters and have a place for their family.

Well, I said, "I'll go, but only if my wife can go with me." And they said, "Well, the policy is this." And I said, "Well, then you'll have to change the policy. Otherwise, I'm not going. I'm not leaving my wife to work over there and try to find quarters and so forth and so on."

And they actually did. They changed the policy. And I was the first civilian permitted -- actually, the first civilian, as well as among the military, to be permitted to travel concurrently with my wife.

They had quarters that were assigned to the male officers in the Dieche Hotel I think it was. And our other quarters to which there were spouses and families assigned -- these were the ones that would come after -- well, I said, "I'm not going to stay over there. You know, that's not my cup of tea." It really wasn't. It wasn't a very nice place. And, normally, I would have been assigned to the Dieche Hotel.

So I said, "I want to be assigned to the Dieche. I want a room there." And they said, "Well, we can't put you in the same room. They're all single rooms. But we can put you there, and your wife can be put in another room."

And it happened to be on a different floor. So every morning when I would get my toothbrush together and my things, because in Japan your rooms are small and your beds are small and the bathrooms are small, so I would use my quarters for sleeping, but then go up and visit with my wife or she would come down. Usually, every time we would get in, there were some of the maids in the hotel come in with their whispering behind us. But we were married.

Okay.

(End side 1, tape 3.)

Okay. So Eighth Army.

Yeah, well, I remained with the command and was doing work over there when it was decided that the headquarters of the U.S. Eighth Army -- it was called U.S. Eighth Army Rear because it was the headquarters. The forward area was still in Korea since there still was occupation there and so forth. And, of course, there was still occupation in Japan, as well.

So they had decided to move the headquarters of the Eighth Army, which was the command Army servicing the Pacific, to Hawaii. So they got ready to move and because of the type of work I did, I was asked if I would go over in advance to start working on some of the jobs that had to be converted and some of the jobs that had to be looked at because they were duplications of what was being done there.

Well, I didn't want to have what we call a riff action because morally that would have been pretty horrible. So when I went over, I set up means by which I redid all of the jobs that were in the local command in the Pacific. It was called the U.S. Army Pacific, but it wasn't really a headquarters. The headquarters was really in Japan. It was just an office that administered the Army facilities in Hawaii, basically.

So in reviewing it, I managed to more or less interface many of the jobs that we were going to move from Japan to Hawaii and interface them in such a way that, first of all, they were vacancies that I was able to fill and provide for individuals that might have been lost. Then there were other positions that I was able to adjust so that when the other people moved back, there

was not even one appeal from any of the employees in Hawaii because none of them had to lose their job.

And then when I came back to Japan, to my office there, because this was just a temporary-duty thing for about two months in Hawaii, which was nice too, but it was a lot of work -- but when I got back, everybody was getting ready to leave. They had their orders and so forth. And there was nothing for me. And I went to the commander and said, "What's going on here?"

"Oh, you're going to have to stay here because there's just too much here. We can't lose you." And I said, "I'm not going to be lost. I want to be part of the command that moves. I can perform my duties from Hawaii, as well as from here." And they said, "Well, we feel that you would be better placed if you stayed here." And I said, "Well, I'm not going to stay here," because here all my colleagues and everybody were being moved and I was the only what you would call the major position in the headquarters staff that wasn't being moved because they felt that they had a need for me to be very close to both Korea and Japan.

Well, how did that make you feel, being needed like that?

I really didn't feel -- I felt that I don't want to be here among a lesser organization, even though I have this responsibility; I want to be back where the staff is so that I have also the benefit of their advisory opinions and so forth and so on.

And I kept insisting. And finally they said, "Well, okay," because I said, "Look, if I'm going to have to stay here and be separated from the major command headquarters physically, I'm going to think about re-initiating my rights to return or find another position." And they said, "Well, all right, we'll set up the office for you in Hawaii."

It so happened that since all the arrangements had been made for the so-called staff to move, the only way they could arrange for me at that particular point in time was to go back with General White who was the commanding general of the U.S. Army Pacific. So I went on his plane with him. It was very pleasant. In those days, of course, it was a prop flight. We traveled -- I'm trying to think of the old famous airline that did the Pacific.

But at any rate, they were beautiful, beautiful planes. All the seats were really better than first class is today. And what they had done because I had a six-month baby -- my daughter was

born in Japan just six months before we were to leave. My wife had prepared all the things for her. We had come with her big pram, you know, the English baby buggy to get onboard. And they said, "Well, you won't need any of this. The airline has the formula for your baby. We knew what it was. We got it from the hospital. We have all the food for her. Everything is prepared. You don't need the pram because we have quarters for the baby." And I sort of looked and said, "Well, that's all right."

And they took all this stuff we had brought. And, of course, they put it in with the baggage. We got onboard. And sure enough, at the bulkhead they had taken out one row of seats in the front on the one side and they had set up hooks and had a crib hanging on the bulkhead. Of course, they had our seats there along with the seat for our daughter, who was a baby who didn't need a seat. She was in the carriage. It was quite luxurious, actually, going back to Hawaii -- or going to Hawaii.

Now, how long were you there and what was that work like?

In Hawaii?

Yes.

Well, it obviously called for a tremendous amount of traveling. Some of the things I did, particularly in Okinawa, were very interesting because they had an office there. I'm trying to think of the name. It was the Okinawa command office set up for the purpose of teaching and training the Okinawans how to take over. Little by little, they were bringing them in and then would take out the officers who were doing the work.

But, unfortunately, it didn't quite happen that way. It seemed like this office just seemed to grow instead of diminish. It kept growing. And, unfortunately, as you know, in later years the Japanese took over Okinawa. I was very disappointed in that. But at the same time, I would go over periodically to review the management and make my recommendations, which were always rather pointed at this particular thing.

So when I got back, at one point I had decided that there was a position in Okinawa that would have given me control over all of the activities in Okinawa. And I had told the commander there in Hawaii (the gentleman who was in charge of all placement) that I would prefer taking over there. And he said, "We can't. We can't afford to lose you." He said, "We

don't have anyone that can handle the overall job of labor relations and so forth," because there were some labor relations problem I took care of in Hawaii, which were also very interesting at the time when they were having a longshoremen strike in the United States and Hawaii was going to enter into it and I got involved in that and managed to resolve that so that they never did go on strike in Hawaii.

But be that as it may, when he refused and said, "I have someone else set up to go there," I said, "Well, you better find someone to set up here for me because I'm leaving." And I checked back with Washington and told them I would be available for whatever, you know, thing they might have for me to do. And, of course, fortunately for me, they said, "Oh, yeah, we have a couple of places here," and all that sort of stuff. So that resulted in my going back to Washington.

How did your wife feel about traveling to these places? She was in Panama with you, in Hawaii with you. How was that for her?

Actually, it was very simple. I would come home and rather tentatively feel her out by telling her about this position I had been offered and the jobs that they wanted me to do. And she would simply look and say, "Well, when do we pack?" She was very good at that.

My wife had lived abroad. She had been married before to an Air Force officer and had lived in Europe during wartime. She was very heavily involved in many things, including volunteer service with the Red Cross at one of the major hospitals in Berlin where she served as the only civilian individual that was allowed to go into the neuropsychiatric wards to treat the patients or help treat them. She was always in the forefront for so many things like that. Really a very wonderful woman.

I see. So we're probably now about 1949, 1950, maybe?

Well, let's look here. That was a time when I had gone back and was asked to serve at the Department of Army reutilization planning group, which was the Holsher Committee of the House and Senate. I believe Senator Holsher had established the committee on the reorganization.

Now, is that the same as the Marshall plan?

No. That was simply a reorganization of the Army.

Oh, of the Army, okay.

See, the Army was composed of several generals' organizationsG1, G2, G3, G4, et cetera. There was a supply group and there was the engineer group and there was the signal corps, you know, that type of thing. They felt it had gotten too fragmented and they wanted to bring it under single control, which they called the Material Command. So they established one or two separate commands. And Material Command took over most of the corps-type work, the signal corps, the Army of Engineers and so forth. And the Combat Developments Command was established to take over all the training data, the preparation of manuals and so forth and so on, 126 schools across the country for training military personnel in active warfare and all that.

That's where I met General Daley, who was ultimately appointed as the commanding general of the combat developments command. That led to his wanting me to be his -- personnel director is actually what he wanted me to be for the command.

As I think I mentioned earlier in my discussions where I had established the position and was told I would have to go through the career system and all that sort of stuff, I developed a separate position that was general in nature. It actually covered the entire spectrum of both personnel management, as well as personnel planning and so forth and so on, anything that had to do with the civilians, which took it out of civilian personnel, et cetera, and placed it into a general series. It included budget management and so forth, which is not normally the function of a personnel department.

So off I went.

Now, doing the kind of traveling that you were doing at that point -- well, not really traveling, but living in those two areas that are kind of exotic and exciting to us -- what kind of recreation did you and your wife and your family have?

Oh, lots of it. Where we were overseas, we had access to all of the military facilities. I mean, there were tennis courts. In Alaska there was skiing. During the summer there was fishing. We had a lot of entertainment available to us. These were not isolated areas.

Now, Alaska is not one of those areas that I ever think about as being exotic. I think about cold.

Oh, it's wonderful.

So tell me about Alaska.

Alaska in the summertime, late spring, summertime and early fall -- in Anchorage is where we lived -- the weather was beautiful. And in the winter, even though the temperatures would go way down, the only thing you basically worried about was the wind. There were times when it could be below zero. And it was very dry. You went out sometimes just in your shirt sleeves to pick up the paper or what have you. Your hands weren't going to freeze right over, you know.

It would be a little different if you went up to places like Fairbanks where you could have temperatures in the summer that ranged up as high as 80 and 90 degrees -- in the summer, yeah, 80 or 90 degrees. But in the winter, it could go down as cold as 140, 150, 160 degrees.

What do you mean?

In the winter. And in places like Fort Freely, which was north of Fairbanks, they had all their underground utilities and everything. And in the very depths of winter when the weather was down to an almost immediate freezing point as you got out, you used all the underground tunnels to go from place to place. You rarely ventured outside, although I did go to what they called "Cool School" along with other general staff officers and military personnel where you learn how to survive in weather like that.

So tell me the lowest temperature you remember.

Oh, I would say probably maybe 30 below.

Thirty below, okay. But it was okay just as long as you didn't have the wind?

Well, it wasn't okay if you stayed out there for any length of time. But you didn't worry that much. But the wind-chill factor was the thing that you concerned yourself with mostly. In Anchorage we would bundle up in the extreme cold, put on facemasks. And the radio would always come on in the morning for the school children to let us know what the wind-chill factor was so we would know how to dress the children.

Okay. Now, after these assignments away from the mainland, then you go back to Washington?

When I was finished in Alaska, I had of course been working -- prior to that, I was at Fort Belvuire, which is near Washington, as you know. And I lived in Washington, D.C. That's

when I went to the job in Alaska. When I returned from Alaska, I had decided that I wanted to -- I didn't have to leave. But I had had wonderful experiences there. I had created a number of very major programs, one of which was under an appropriation that had been provided me by Senator Kennedy under the auspices, of course, of Congress to establish a job-training program. We were paying a fortune in Alaska for trained personnel, skilled and semi-skilled personnel, to be brought in for what we call the "Old Country" or the Lower 48.

We had a tremendous number of native Alaskans. They were Americans because they were U.S. citizens. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was pretty bad. I mean, all they were interested in was just keeping them confined just as happened here earlier. While we offered some training to them in terms of school teaching and so forth, it was basically to get some of the people that could go back and teach other kids how to read, write, and all that.

So I set up this program actually for the entire area of Alaska. It wasn't just for military. It was for civilians as well, for civilian companies and all that. At first, I insisted upon having what you would refer to as sensitivity training for supervisors who were going to have these people coming so that they would be --

So you were well before your time. People are having those again today.

Oh, I developed sensitivity programs with the Labor Department a long time ago. I had them up there before we even thought about bringing in some of the natives for training. What I liked to do, what I wanted to do on a voluntary basis, of course, was have these natives quartered with the families of either the supervisors or the coworkers that they were going to be working with.

That worked out very well. We had no problem with that because my wife, as I told you, anywhere she went she was on the soapbox for this cause or that. We got to Alaska. Of course, she was on the soapbox for the Alaska Aleutians and the Eskimos and so forth. She was the one that developed the welcome program, the Native Welcome House, and had that built where the natives could bring their handicrafts and everything and sell them directly to tourists and so forth. I can remember how she was the one that the police would call, almost invariably in the middle of the night, to say, "We got one of your people in jail," because they would come to town and they'd get a little inebriated, and say, "Come on down and see if you can do anything

with them." So she would go down, and she would take them over to the welcome house and see they were quartered and all that and get them squared away.

She was quite something. She did the same thing in Hawaii for the Hawaiians. I belong to the Aloha Society, as a matter of fact, which believe it or not, you know, is still seeking secession from the United States because they feel their country was taken away from them.

But be that as it may, she was a great companion just as Edythe is now to me. I've been very fortunate.

Yes, you have.

Hawaii, Panama, Alaska, have you been back to those places --

Oh, yes.

-- in later years?

Oh, yes.

What kind of changes did you see from that end-of-the-war period --

Well, of course, in Hawaii, we were there before statehood. I remember we stayed in a cottage right across the street from the Royal Hawaiian, which is now lost in a great big shopping mall and everything else. The big Royal Hawaiian Hotel. And next to it the Moana Hotel, which is gracious, the oldest hotel, built before the Royal Hawaiian. We would get up early in the morning, five, six o'clock. The smell of the flowers and the birds...and we had that big English pram for our daughter. We would just go around the corner to the Jolly Roger and have a nice breakfast or something until we could find a house that we could live in.

Hawaii just was unbelievable. I loved it. But then along came statehood. And all of a sudden, things were changing. It was getting crowded. Concrete buildings started to go up, high-rises all over the place. People used to say, "My God, you know, Hawaii would never have sunk under the lava rock that it was built upon, but at this point with all this concrete going down, it's going to sink."

At any rate, I didn't like the transformation. And, of course, you know, what Hawaii is like now. It's still a lovely paradise, depending on where you go. It's not really the same.

Okay. You've seen a lot of changes.

Tell me about your schooling. With all this traveling, how did you ever go back?

Well, fortunately, being in the types of positions I was in and because of the type of people I worked for, I was able to take a two-month sabbatical. Naturally, I was put on a temporary absence, which resulted in the pay being stopped for a period of time. For five years, I went to the executive center at Berkeley where we had marvelous classes in all types of things, such as management. Many times one of the Presidents of the United States would come down and speak to us. I went to Cornell University for many of the labor courses, which I would do as a result of taking an appropriate period of leave to go there. I even took several weeks of courses at the Kings Point Academy, which was the submarine area.

In Alaska, of course, I had plenty of opportunity because we had both the AMU, Alaska Methodist University, and we also had the University of Alaska. As a matter of fact, I was on their steering committee in terms of preparation of some of the curriculum and things like that. But at the same time, I attended as many courses as I could.

Degree-wise I've had enough credits if you wanted to take into consideration all of my experience and training. But I was never concerned about a degree, per se. I was simply concerned about learning. And I never stopped learning. I don't remember ever during all my periods -- even here in Nevada after my wife died and I was sort of in limbo for several months, I decided, well, I'm going back to the university. That was my first thought. Of course, I immediately enrolled at the university and found myself taking classes there. Believe it or not, I took a year of computer science, none of which I recall, and art and history and music and so forth.

After being there a year, I found myself visiting with the wife of -- this was when my wife died -- visiting with the wife of my former doctor who had died. She had gotten in touch to offer condolences, and we got together a few times. And the next thing I knew, we decided to set up this program known as EXCEL at the university, which you're familiar with I'm sure. It was a combination of interest on the part of Mrs. Harris, who had gone up to Harvard to establish a chair after the death of her husband (it was there that she became aware of a similar program being conducted at Harvard) and another woman that she was acquainted with, Stephanie Smith, who had attended some of the classes there. When she got back here, she called me and asked me if I would be interested in assisting and perhaps conducting some courses. I said, "Sounds

great." Of course Stephanie, who had attended some of the courses, was there with us. She was invited to be with us. The three of us were the ones that actually set up the program.

Wonderful. That's exciting. Well, when did you come to Las Vegas?

I came to Las Vegas following my retirement in 1977. I had developed these terrible things with my feet. I had to go in for surgery. It was getting to the point where I couldn't really attend to my duties. At that time I had taken over my last position, which was that of the chief appeals officer for the United States.

That's another story that had to do with my departing from Alaska. I had been called from Alaska when they established the Army office for discrimination appeals, mainly, that I began to get involved in adjudicating administrative complaints and appeals of discrimination and some contract malfeasance cases. So, subsequently, the same gentleman who --

(End side 2, tape 3.)

And by the way, when the agency was originally established, it was based upon a study that I had made some 20 years before at the request of the Department of Army. I was to develop some type of system whereby appeals generated within the Army by civilian personnel could be adjudicated in a more timely fashion by someone other than the ones who actually created the problem. And it so happens now, even in some instances, people will complain or appeal something and the first area that they have to go to submit it is the very area that, you know, created the problem.

So I worked on this particular type of thing, setting up an independent agency that would be under the auspices of the Executive Office of the President that would have the final decision authority on all complaints of discrimination and cases that had to do with government sponsorship or supervision. There was to be a process by which the individual would submit the appeal to this particular agency which would go in and conduct a full-fledged review, conduct a hearing -- it was a regular administrative law-type operation -- and make the decision. And the only other area the individual could further appeal to would, of course, be the Supreme Court.

So it lay dormant for many years, the study I made. But then when I got the call from Paul Mahoney, who was the gentleman that was asked to start the ball rolling on this, and was asked to come in and either administer or at least take over some of the offices or what have you

of this new organization that they were looking towards setting up, I said, "Wonderful."

And that's when I went ahead and took over the position. And I had to set up all the offices and get a staff together and everything. I said, "Well, I don't want to leave the West Coast." I said, "Even though I have to leave Alaska, I don't want to leave the West Coast." They said, "Well, if you don't want to come to Washington and serve as a participant, we are setting up an office on the West Coast, probably in San Francisco." And so I said, "Okay." They said, "But you'll have to go down there and see if you can find offices, and then you're going to have to start recruiting a staff, and we will be hiring attorneys and all that."

So I went down to San Francisco. The rental offices there were horrible. The prices were unreal.

I may not have told you about the situation in Korea where I saved the government some $9 million.

No, you haven't told that story yet.

Well, that's another story. But I was always interested in curtailing costs, but, at the same time, not at the expense of getting the proper job done. But this was ridiculous, you know, with all the government-type areas that might be explored.

So somebody mentioned something about, "Why don't you go to the capital, to Sacramento. They have a government mall there, and I'm sure they have buildings there where offices can be obtained, either state offices or federal offices."

So I went there. They were just in the process of building this building on Governor's Square, which was just about three blocks down from the capitol. And it looked absolutely perfect, just a perfect place for it. It was being administered under the GAO, you know, General Accounting Office. I had available to me whatever appropriation I figured out would be necessary to pay for the rent and do all the decorating and everything and so forth and so on. It was a wonderful experience.

I found a lovely home there in Sacramento. I was fortunate enough to be able to get a number of people that I had known and who on paper were very well qualified for the positions of hearing officers. There were always a score of administrative judges that were available in the area for part-time availability. That's where it started.

Good. How did you get your appointment so that we now refer to you as "Judge"?

Well, what happened was the Civil Service Commission was so enamored by the work that was being done by the Army for these same things that they decided that they would like to establish it government-wide and it would be administered by administrative law judges and it would be staffed by attorneys, full-fledged attorneys, and so forth and so on. And they wanted me to take over one of their major offices in Chicago because the chief appeals officer in Chicago had suffered a heart attack.

I truthfully was getting ready to retire in Honolulu. I had pretty much had it, and I wanted to retire and possibly go into some consulting work and so forth and so on. So I got the call about taking over his position because they had nobody available and they knew I had had this experience as hearing officer and, in effect, administrative law adjudication and so forth. All of these appointments of the heads were being made by the Executive Office of the President. And that's how it happened.

And then you had to move to the Chicago area?

Yeah.

So how long were you in Sacramento?

I was in Sacramento for approximately two years. Then I took over the office in Hawaii because a gentleman there had suffered leukemia and was going into, unfortunately, a cancer situation that was fatal. I went over while he was still there and took over that office in Hawaii. I had a lot of cases overseas there, a lot of cases in Japan and Korea and so forth.

Those Japan and Korea cases were handled from Hawaii?

Yeah, from the office in Hawaii. Right from my office in Hawaii. Just as I wasn't endearing to the big corporations when I was in the Munitions Board, I wasn't endearing to the various military offices in the Far East because I had to make decisions that were not necessarily in their best interest as far as they personally were concerned.

Okay, yes. Now, before we talk about going back to Chicago -- because after Chicago you come to Las Vegas, don't you?

Yeah. That was an unfortunate situation. I had developed this problem with my feet. And since I had originally decided to retire anyway and I had only told them I'd go back for two

years --

Okay. Back to Chicago for two years?

To Chicago for two years because, truthfully, I really didn't want to stay in service any longer. It was enough. But I did say, "Okay, I'll take over," because they could not find anybody in that short of time. The only person they assumed would be available would be Gil.

Like I say in some of my writings, I was a troubleshooter. And whenever there was a problem anywhere, they would say, "Where's Yarchever?" A lot of these things, it's difficult to discuss positions because they really resulted from problems in different areas that I went to, even though it was simply a change in assignments, so to speak. I never had to look for a job.

Yes. It doesn't sound like it.

No.

Tell me about the troubleshooting opportunity you had in Korea.

Well, that was very interesting. I don't know whether I mentioned this or not. But at that time I was still doing my labor relations work and so forth in Hawaii. There is an Army/Air Force wage board in Washington. They were looking for someone to go over and conduct this wage survey in Korea because of some of the problems they were having, particularly with the impact of the U.S. civilian and military people in terms of the economy of the area and the country. And it also was complicated by the fact that Syngman Rhee, whom you may have heard of --

Yes. He was South --

He was South Korea, right. He was doing some things that weren't really in the best interest of the country, as you may have been aware since he was literally kicked out of Korea at one point. So they decided instead of sending somebody from the Army/Air Force wage board who knew nothing about what was going on in the Pacific, they would pick someone like me to go.

So at that time I was a member of the U.S. Army Pacific. The person who had administration over all of the military and activities, including the United Nations' actions in Korea, was this general. I won't mention names. He came under the jurisdiction, of course, of the commanding general of the Pacific in Hawaii, but he did not come under the jurisdiction as

the commander of the United Nations. He was the United Nations commander. In effect, he made it clear that he wasn't going to have anybody from this general's command coming and telling him what to do.

So I can tell the story now because I think both of them are dead. It was kind of a feud, if you want to call it that. But in effect, he was saying, "I'm not having anybody come over from the Pacific to tell me what to do."

So as a result, when the commanding general advised Washington, they went to the Defense Department because Army/Air Force wage board was part of the Defense Department, and went to McNamara and said, "We've got a situation here. Can we have him appointed as a member of the Department of Defense under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Defense?" Very obviously, even though he was the United Nations commander and came under the auspices of the United Nations commander, he wasn't about to countermand something that came from the Secretary of Defense.

So McNamara said, "Fine, tell him that he's coming over as my personal representative with all the appropriate accommodations and whatever for" -- what do they call it? -- "protocol purposes that are accorded to me." And, of course, as a Secretary of Defense, as is the case with all secretaries, they are afforded what you would call five-star protocol status. So I went over as a five star.

That's wonderful.

After Chicago, after the troubleshooting in Chicago, how did you decide to come to Las Vegas?

Oh, that was interesting. At that time I was looking to have an operation on both my feet. I still had a place on Argyle Drive in Washington, D.C. So I had decided, since my wife's uncle was a podiatric surgeon or a surgical podiatrist, whatever -- that I would go to Baltimore where they were residing and have it done there. And the time would have been almost in the middle of winter because I wanted to retire as near as possible to the end of the year for tax purposes and other purposes.

As it turned out, my doctor, who was my uncle on my wife's side, said, "You know, it's going to be rather difficult for you because remember, winter's here with the ice and the snow

and everything, so it's not the most favorable time to have the surgery." I said, "Well, you know, we have made a number of visits from Chicago to Las Vegas."

It so happened that my daughter was going to school in New York at the time at Hebrew Union College. She was a little naive, although she had been in show business. And that's the reason she went into the cantor because she didn't like show business and what happened there. So I said, "You know, why not Las Vegas?" It's halfway between Hawaii, which is where we expected to go back to --

To retire one day?

Yeah. And New York. So we got some recommendations for doctors here. It resulted in our moving to Las Vegas initially on a temporary basis because we anticipated being there only until our daughter graduated and then we would go back to Hawaii.

We had called some friends down there about some recommendations of a place. One of them had gone to Regency Towers, which is the first high-rise that was built here. They sent back schematics of the apartments and everything and the price and everything. And we decided, well, let's not go back and rent for several years. That's not a good thing to do because you have no equity return and all that sort of stuff. And we had been used to owning our own homes by then. So we bought this condo at Regency, which was very nice. And we were happy with it and began to enjoy Las Vegas and never left.

Now, just looking around this room and around your home, you have wonderful artwork. How did you start the collection? When? How did you get interested in art?

Actually, I think I was interested when I was very young. I used to save all sorts of things, a picture that I thought was beautiful in a magazine or something like that, you know. So here I am with lots of memorabilia and so forth. I guess I may have had an eye for good art, at least I've been told by a number of art critics. I simply began collecting. And over the years I've managed to acquire pieces that, frankly, I could afford them at the time I bought them, but I could never afford them now. It gives me great pleasure because of that that I have so much that I can afford to give.

As you know, we gave some marvelous series of Native Indian chiefs done by Roy Purcell to the university. We have a couple of pieces -- I don't have one in here -- that eventually

will be going to the Performing Arts, the ballet pieces. One is on the wall in the bedroom and another one is -- yeah. And we've given to churches. We've given to synagogues. We always give to the charitable organizations when they have their galas as an auction piece. Just now we gave a beautiful Harold Aldridge piece that I wrote and got the appraisal for. It's rather pricey. I gave it to Scheff & Childes for auctioning off at their big affair they're having next year for the children. It's very gratifying, of course.

At our ages we're looking toward the idea of what are we going to do with all this? You know, it's true. A lot of it will go to the children, all of it if they want it. But, unfortunately, my daughter has had enough. She says --

She already has enough of it?

Oh, she says, "Daddy, please don't send anymore."

Wow.

She said, "I don't have room for it. I love everything, but if you can," she said, "Use it to give to people or if you can sell some of it...Everything I really, really wanted, I have." Because every time she would come down, I would tell her, "Now, you go over everything here and take whatever it is that you want." So she's taken a lot of the pieces that both her mother and I had selected.

One of them is extremely valuable, as a matter of fact. There was a vase. I forget the name of the very famous crystal manufacturer. It's about 150 years old, a similar one of which recently sold at Sotheby's for $175,000. My wife was a collector also, my deceased wife. She had a very fine crystal that was 300 years old, Spanish crystal, and that type of thing, like that one piece that's hidden over there by Winters, which is a very famous artist. She was very good at that, too.

Wonderful.

And a lot of the pieces that my daughter wanted, a particular type of very fine bone china, only one set ever made in Japan for -- what do you call it…presentation purposes? -- that was a chocolate annealed around the edges and trimmed in platinum. I managed to get this at a show one time where they were displaying a very special set that they had hand made. Things like that. So a lot of those things we've managed to get her to take.

Oh, that's wonderful.

I must tell you a story very quickly. I remember in Washington, when I first went to Washington, and I passed this art gallery on Connecticut Avenue and I saw this little oil and absolutely fell in love with it. And I went in. I wanted to buy it. Now remember, I was on $1440-a-year salary at that time. And it was $25. I couldn't afford $25. And I hated to leave it, but I did. Later on, I found out through -- because I did try to get it again quite a few years later at this gallery when I was in Washington. "Oh, we remember that piece, yeah, that was years ago." I said, "Yeah. Whose was it? Who was the artist?" I was told, "Oh, it was a man by the name of Chagall." It was an original oil by Chagall.

Twenty-five dollars.

Twenty-five dollars. But, of course, remember that was back in 1941. A lot of things like that would happen. But then I began to be somewhat discriminatory in my selection. I use that term advisedly. And I would only look for pieces such as the Zanellas that are up, that you see, and the one behind me, which is on Limoge porcelain, and this one over there, which is also a Zanella. And behind it is a Calder. Up above it is a Picasso of his wife and several periods of the artist series by Dali which are very rare. One up there is by van Gogh and next to him Toulouse-Lautrec. And I have another one down below which is a da Vinci and one other there of Rembrandt and Michelangelo.

So it's just in your -- you know, you just enjoy it. And I love to show them to people. They're always welcome to come and see them.

That's great.

What kinds of things did you do once you moved here? You came for an operation. Once that was over, what kinds of activities --

Oh, I became involved in consultant work. As a matter of fact, the first thing that I knew -- once I retired, I was getting all these letters, especially from Washington, D.C. consulting firms and government firms, the government as well.

As a matter of fact, the very first one I received was on the Three Mile Island incident, if you remember. And I was asked by the Department of Nuclear Affairs to go up to Chicago to the -- Oregon -- I can't remember -- wherever it was that was associated with that and to do a

study to determine the cause and whether it had anything to do with basic administration and so forth and so on.

So I did that particular thing. It was very well received. Then right after that, the Department of Army -- or Air Force -- I can't remember which -- asked me to do a consulting job up at China Lake. So I worked on that. And there were a number. I went into a number of consulting jobs.

Then I began to say, "Well, what am I doing? This is crazy. I retired to stop working, and I'm working harder now than I did before I retired." And that's when my wife and I began to do a lot of traveling, and I mean a lot of traveling. We traveled across country back and forth because of our daughter who was in New York then subsequently, after a couple of years, she took some student pulpits in some of the areas that we visited. We loved driving. We've driven every major north and south and east and west route here in the United States.

Good, yes.

And, of course, we've gone abroad. We went abroad several times, the Netherlands and so forth.

Okay. So what activities here in the city did you become associated with?

Well, of course, the university with the EXCEL program. I worked with them for a couple of years. I conducted one of the first four courses for EXCEL. It was to be four courses, but then one of them fell apart. It was a course in opera that one of the members with us was going to conduct, and it just faded away. But I had contemporary art history that I conducted. Sig Stein did one on Russia. Then there was one done on loneliness by Shirley Harris, which had to do with geriatrics and so forth. Then, of course, you know how it went on.

Then not too long after, I became involved with the music department and particularly with Douglas, you know, the director, Doug -- I can't remember Doug's last name. *[Editor's note: Dr. Douglas Peterson.]* He's a director at the university course and also the music department. I used to do some music. I sang. He redeveloped my voice. I was surprised at myself. I remember when we did Verde's "Requiem" at Ham Hall. I was on the stage in that. Then we also did one of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas at the Judy Bayley Theater.

Fantastic.

So I got involved in that. Then along came the art museum, Las Vegas Art Museum. And I was one of the original board members that set up the museum. Edythe and I were the ones who gave the very first major exhibition there on Holocaust art. What we did was to recruit approximately 15 relatively major artists across the country to do an original piece. It turned out to be a real break for the art museum because it brought in many, many people. It was the beginning of the art museum itself.

Oh, that's exciting. How did you meet Edythe?

Well, while I was -- would you call it widowhood? -- I got a call from this friend of mine whose grandmother knew my mother in Pittsburgh. She said, "Gil, I know that Marian's been gone for a while now. Are you dating?" And I said, "Well, yeah." Sure I was going out with someone. And she said, "Well, I have someone I'd like you to meet." And she mentioned her name, which was, of course, Edythe. And I said, "Yeah, okay, I'll get in touch with her." And I sort of let it go.

Then I got another call from Dee that Edythe was going to be at --

(End side 1, tape 4.)

I knew she was going to present Paige, who was the man who originated the story -- who gave the story. I went to the temple to hear him, and she was presenting him. And when I saw her, I just knew. I walked up and gave her my card and I said, "I think you know who I am. I'll be calling you." And that was it.

And from there on, you know, it's been an absolutely wonderful life. She is an absolutely incredible lady.

That's wonderful. So how long have you been married now to Edythe?

We were married in 1994. We had met each other early in '94, and we married several months later in a religious ceremony, which was very authentic. We have a contract, which we call a ketubah because, you know, like most people at our ages, we have a lot of things that you have to get squared away before you go into a marriage. And four years later, we had another ceremony that was conducted by Rabbi Axelrod, which was what you would call a civil marriage where it was recorded as far as the government was concerned.

But our marriage in 1994 was just as official as any could be because when you marry

under the laws of Judaism, you have to sign, as you do, a marriage certificate, a ketubah, which warrants your respect and your responsibility and your marriage vows and so forth. And those marriage vows, believe me, are a lot stricter than they are whenever you get them in a regular civil marriage.

Wow.

Where it just says do you take her? Do you take him? You're married. It ain't so --

Okay. This is more serious.

Oh…

Did you have a relationship with John F. Kennedy?

Only to the extent that I did this job in Korea. And it was very interesting. You've read about it. As a matter of fact, I was going to take a portion of my biography, which is somewhere here. And you had read it in outline form. I may still have it here. I'm just going to read off one or two of those sentences.

Yes.

If I may?

Yes, please. This is a good time to do it.

Yeah. And I will read those. Let me get to it here. As we say in Yiddish, it's on page gimmel, which means it's on almost any page.

Yeah. Well, right here about my last official position as a chief appeals officer. And here's a quote from one of the honors that was rendered me -- or actually, for my responsibilities. "Identifies and analyzes complex issues and conducts hearings that may have far-ranging impact and widespread public interest, his commissions contact with the United States Attorney, members of Congress, the Executive Office of the President and others relative to appellate matters."

Then it goes on to talk about the award that I received from the government for my work in Korea. It reads as such: "The unusually perceptive and highly professionally approach demonstrated by Gilbert Yarchever in guiding."

Then it goes on to describe the work. Then it continues: "Prompted not only the total acceptance of findings by all echelons of the United Nations, the United States Department of

Defense, the United States State Department and the Republic of Korea government, and has contributed immeasurably to the cessation of critical comment by Korean labor groups, as well as the Korean government, vis-à-vis the United Nations and military forces in Korea. The improved relations of the United States government with Korean employees, their labor unions and the Korean government resulting from findings which incorporated a fully sensitive appreciation of local custom and practice have added substantially to the bold work of defense in Asia against the enemies of freedom."

That's interesting. Thank you so much for reading that to us.

Gil, I'm just looking at my list. And I think we have covered almost everything. Are there any other comments that you'd like to make?

Well, no. We are skimming the surface, of course, of all of my work and some of my background and a few of the other things. I could go on and on about little personal situations that occurred over the years. Some are funny, some are tragic, and some are unbelievable. But that would take another 25 hours or so. But the important thing, I think, is the satisfaction I get from the feeling that I have contributed in a little way to the betterment of many people. That is the whole thing in a nutshell.

And I think it can be summarized -- is this still going? Let me summarize it by something that happened in Hawaii when we went there on vacation. We had taken this room at the Moana Hotel at my request because, you know, it's the old hotel, the big hotel. It's a national treasure in Hawaii, et cetera. They had built a new tower.

When we got down there, we were assigned to one of the rooms in the new tower. I was not exactly thrilled because I wanted to stay in one of the old vintage rooms that overlooked the banyan court and Webley Edwards and his Hawaiian music. This may be beyond your time period. But Webley Edwards used to play all of the stuff from Hawaii to the United States. I was looking forward so to that when I was returning to Hawaii from Alaska on a vacation.

And when I found we were in that room, I was a little dismayed when in walks the housekeeper. She walked in and she looked and looked again. She said, "Mr. Yarchever." I said, "Yes." She said, "You don't remember me?" I said, "Well, refresh me." And she said, "I was a laundress at" -- what the devil is the name of the base? -- Fort -- God, the memory when

you get this age. But it was where the headquarters was for U.S. Army Pacific in Hawaii. She said, "They had sent a number of us reduction-in-force notices. I was going to lose my job." And she said that this was at a time I came over and was interfacing a lot of things.

And I looked at her. And she said, "You said to me, 'You're not going to lose your job, don't worry.'" And she said, "After everybody came and they all took jobs and I still had my job, I was able, because I was working there, to send my son to college and to law school." She said, "He is now very successful here in Hawaii. And I owe it all to you." And I said, "Oh, my gosh."

Then she said, "You are not going to stay in this room. I am going to talk to Jimmy Cockett. He's the manager of the hotel. And we will get you a room that is properly the room that should be yours." And she said, "You and your wife and your daughter go out and stay away for a couple of hours. We will take care of everything." So we said, "Well, okay."

So we left everything there, our clothes and all the stuff. We had already unpacked some of it. We went on our walk around. Beautiful, you know. We got back and got to the desk. And I said, "Do you have the key for my room?" So anyhow, he gives me the key. And he says, "Oh, I see they've changed your room." And I said, "Oh." And, "Oh," he says, "You're over in the large guest room over the banyan court. Do you know how to get there?" I said, "I think I do," because I had been there before.

And, of course, it's at the head of this beautiful winding stairwell. You go up to this upper level, and right in front of you is the door. It's not a suite, per se, but it's a big huge room. I open the doors and, ah, there's the ocean, there's this, there's that and everything. And there was the bed -- it was a king-size bed, by the way -- covered with leis, all types of leis. You can't imagine. They were the most beautiful leis, some made with synthetic pearls and some with what we refer to as Kukui shells, Kukui nutshells. We just gasped. It was so beautiful.

Wow.

Now, those are the kinds of things that epitomize just exactly how I feel about my life.

That's wonderful.

It's just a bunch of roses and a bowl of cherries without pits.

That's great. Thank you so much, Gil.

Well, you're certainly welcome.