

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Jeanne Grushinski Rubin

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: August 22, 2014

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is August 22, 2014. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Jeanne Grushinski—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Grushinski.

TS: —Grushinski Rubin, and I'm in New Born—New Bern—

JR: New Bern.

TS: —New Bern, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Now, Jeanne, thank you so much for letting me come and talk with you today. Could you—

JR: You're welcome.

TS: Yes. Go ahead and state your name the way that you'd like it to read on your collection.

JR: Jeanne Grushinski Rubin.

TS: Okay.

JR: J-E-A-N-N-E G-R-U-S-H-I-N-S-K-I Rubin.

TS: Okay. Well, Jeanne, why don't you start out by telling me a little bit about when you were born and where you were born?

JR: I was born April 17, 1918, in Stirling—S-T-I-R-L-I-N-G—New Jersey, and it was a small community; four townships comprised with about two thousand people.

TS: And what—

JR: That was Morris County, New Jersey; the north-central part.

TS: So it was just a small, little suburban community at that time?

JR: Yes.

TS: Now, what did your parents do as a living when you were born?

JR: Well, that was—very shortly was Depression time. There had been a silk mill there, the Schwarzenbach-Huber Company, and that's where Dad worked. Mother also went to work there until the time that I was born, and then she still was working so it was really a neighbor—an aunt that took care of me while both of them worked in the silk mill. That moved away at a short time. My dad had trained in the silk industry and thought that rayons, and those kinds of fabrics, were just atrocious.

TS: Right.

JR: It had to be pure silk. And they used to make their own designs and so forth and—

TS: Now, both of your parents were from Poland, right?

JR: Both of them were from Poland and—

TS: They had immigrated over here?

JR: —immigrated here prior to World War I. So actually, now I have no relatives on my dad's side—

TS: No?

JR: —in the States, because once the war started none of his brothers or sisters—he had three more brothers in Europe and two sisters that were not able—none of them were able to come.

TS: No?

JR: And besides, they didn't have the money.

TS: Did they make it through the war?

JR: But they made it to—through the war. There are various stories about—

TS: Sure.

JR: —the whole family, and one of them was they were taken from their own farm—all their stock and—and they used to do the work independently so that—as a farmer they had geese and ducks and a little bit of everything, and cows, and a couple horses, but all this was taken away from them.

TS: Now, did they—were they on the side of the Russians or the side—or the Soviets or the side of the Germans?

JR: None of them.

TS: None of them?

JR: They were on the side of an independent Poland.

TS: Oh, they were in—So—Right.

JR: And that's what they wanted back again.

TS: Right.

JR: Actually, [Andrzej Tadeusz Bonawentura] Kościuszko [Andrew Thaddeus Bonaventure Kościuszko]—Kościuszko in Polish, and [Kazimierz Micał Władysław Wiktor] Pułaski [Casimir Pulaski], were from Poland and they were in Washington's Revolutionary War.

TS: What I'm saying is, when the war happened, which country did they end up being part of?

JR: They were not a part of any of those countries.

TS: Oh, they weren't. Oh, okay. They were [in the center?]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: The mili—They had a small military contingent—

TS: Yes.

JR: —which was based in Eur—in England.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: And that's—

TS: So they fought for that—

JR: That's what those that went into the army, if they got away from Poland.

TS: Right.

JR: However, those that didn't get away, out of the country, if they could stay civilian, why, they stayed as civilians.

TS: Right.

JR: And that's what my uncle that really inherited the farm later, because the others went out into the city. They were just independent of anything. It depended on which area—For instance, as I said, my father was from the area that was under the domination of Russia.

TS: Right.

JR: And so, they—And of course the Nazis were there, because at that time we were allies with Russia.

TS: Right.

JR: So the Nazis required that they report for identification and for security reasons in the morning at five o'clock, and they had to do it—They didn't even have a bicycle.

TS: Right, right.

JR: And the—And in the evening again.

TS: Well, we could probably keep going on that story.

JR: Right.

TS: Let's go back to your story.

JR: Yeah, okay.

TS: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

JR: So we lived in Stirling—

TS: Right.

JR: —and the house we lived in had no indoor plumbing and no electricity; we went around with a lamp at night.

TS: Oh, you did?

JR: We got to bed early. And I was the only one for nine years, so I did a lot with my dad. I went fishing with my dad, and did every—well, into sports—

TS: Kind of what we'd call a tomboy?

JR: —locally. Well, in a way, and still not quite what I'd consider a tomboy. A little later on. But we all played together. We all played ball together.

TS: Everybody in the neighborhood?

JR: Yes, right. We went skating in the small pond in the wintertime, and we went swimming in the—to the Passaic River, which is the origin of the Passaic River, and that's where we learned to swim; no lessons for swimming. Then when my brother came along that was nine years later.

TS: Nine years later, okay.

JR: A matter of fact, teaching him to swim, it had a muddy bottom and I slid and dunked him, so he—he got up—and he probably was about two years old or so, and he said—and this was in Polish because our language at home was Polish, for which I'm very grateful because it held me in good stead when I had to take Latin for nursing and so forth.

TS: [chuckles] Right.

JR: And so, he came up and he said, "What'd you want to do, drown me?"

TS: [chuckles]

JR: But that—We never took any kind of lessons for skating or for—

TS: No? You just went out and did it?

JR: That's right, yeah.

TS: Yeah, learned by—

JR: And climbed the trees and—with everybody else, and—

TS: Did you enjoy your childhood?

JR: Very much so.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Very much. It was—And the families that lived, more or less, together, since they had worked in silk mill—

TS: In the factory.

JR: There was—There were two buildings, four families each, and, naturally, the people that were living there were very close together, and it just so happens that my dad, the Grushinski's, lived upstairs, right hand side, and the Skrobacz's[?] lived right across the way. My cousin Wanda, well, she was nine months older than I am and is still in Passaic, New Jersey.

TS: She's still—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Yeah, but she has a—

TS: She's still alive also?

JR: She has a caretaker now.

TS: Okay.

JR: And then downstairs, the only other—another cousin, the only other non-Polish person—

TS: Right.

JR: —was a Hungarian—

TS: Okay.

JR: —and her husband died shortly of tuberculosis, which was [unclear] at that time.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Rampant, I'm sure. Right.

JR: But, for instance, her son, Henry, then when we were schoolmates, we were classmates, and he later got a scholarship to Dartmouth [College] and was on the football team at Dartmouth, but it was by scholarship—

TS: Yeah.

JR: —because he certainly didn't have the money.

TS: Didn't have the money.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Well, give people a sense of what it was like to grow up. So you were born in 1918, so you're growing up in the twenties and thirties, right?

JR: Yes.

TS: And so, you're—

JR: Well, yes, I went to school—my first grade—we had no Kindergarten—first grade was in a building which was a wooden building next to the Presbyterian church which was in town. There were two churches there, the Presbyterian and the Catholic. And so, that's where we went to first grade. And then the second grade—

TS: Now, did they have all—

JR: —the school building—

TS: Okay.

JR: —the school building was a four room brick building.

TS: Okay.

JR: And so, when I got to second grade we had a room all to ourselves. Evidently, there were many, many second graders so we had a room to ourselves. Then third grade and fourth grade were together, and fifth and sixth were together in a third room—

TS: Right.

JR: —and seventh and eighth were together—

TS: Okay.

JR: —in a fourth room.

TS: That one second grade was just really large [unclear].

JR: Right, yeah, yeah.

TS: It's interesting, as you went along it seems like it still stayed pretty large.

JR: And I still have a picture—

TS: Yeah?

JR: —of that class, yeah.

TS: Did you like school?

JR: I loved school.

TS: What'd you like about it?

JR: Because—Well, there again, we got to know everybody else in the whole township, and we—it was something new and different and I just—I guess I was curious about the outside world, more or less.

TS: Yeah. Now, did you learn English in school, then?

JR: No, we learned English at home.

TS: At home, okay.

JR: My parents—

TS: Okay.

JR: My parents, unlike today, they learned English, and the principal taught English to out of country people, or to foreign-speaking people.

TS: Right, immigrants.

JR: Because there were groups of Italians, mainly Italians, and the Polish and Slavic.

TS: In the area that you lived in?

JR: Yes, right. So they went to school and they learned English.

TS: The adults?

JR: And they became citizens.

TS: Yes.

JR: There was a man, I don't believe he was really a true mayor, but Raymond Allen was his name, and he was—convinced everyone—he would drive them to Morristown, which was the county seat, to get their citizen pap—ship papers.

TS: Yes.

JR: And every single one of them became citizens—

TS: Well, we had a different system back then.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: —and voted. Right.

TS: At that time there wasn't the restrictions yet on the immigration.

JR: Yes.

TS: That came later, and things like that.

JR: Right. Right. Right.

TS: Well, that's very interesting that you had a lot of different Italians, and the Slavics [Slavs], and Hungarians.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Then along with the Polish. Now, was there a particular—

JR: And there were some—also—some from Switzerland—

TS: Okay.

JR: —and the Scandinavian countries. It was quite a mixed community.

TS: Yes, it sounds like it.

JR: But the main portions were this—not just Polish but Slavic.

TS: Right.

JR: From Czechoslovakia and from Hungary.

TS: Eastern?

JR: Yes, from Eastern Europe.

TS: Eastern Europe.

JR: Yeah. The milk man was—

TS: [chuckles]

JR: —a Russian—

TS: Yeah?

JR: —and we used to go—

TS: Did you pick up on the—Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead.

JR: We would, at that time, pick up the milk in a milk can, and we'd swing that can around just hoping the top wouldn't come off.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: But gravity does its—

TS: Yes. Did you have a favorite class, like a grade—like a subject that you liked to learn?

JR: I had a favorite teacher.

TS: Yes.

JR: Ms. Paul[?] was a gym teacher, so I just admired her, and I loved sports. I—Even though I was not a very tall youngster I entered all the races and all the athletic events, and we used to compete against local communities. I remember running short distances; I was very good at that.

TS: Pretty quick?

JR: Yeah.

TS: You were pretty quick?

JR: Yeah, right.

TS: I can see that. Now, how tall—how tall are you in your—

JR: [chuckles] Well—

TS: —in your fighting years?

JR: I went—I went up and down.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: I went up to five [feet] three [inches].

TS: Okay.

JR: But as osteoporosis took over—

TS: Right.

JR: —I'm down to about four eight now.

TS: Okay. Yeah.

JR: Yes.

TS: So when you went in the service you were about five three then?

JR: Yes.

TS: I'm just trying to think about what you—

JR: Yes, my IDs of that time are, like, five three.

TS: Now, did you have any other siblings besides your brother?

JR: No, he was the only one—

TS: Okay.

JR: —and he was nine years younger.

TS: Nine years younger, right.

JR: And I guess I always felt, like, that motherly instinct.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Because in later years when I was in nursing, I took him into New York to see the first plays that he saw, and to take him to some museums and places, yeah.

TS: I have a brother who's nine years younger than me so I can understand—

JR: Yeah.

TS: —that difference, how you feel. Well, now, when you were—So when you were growing up you did go through the Depression, so you were about—in your—getting into your teens a little bit. What do you remember about that time?

JR: It didn't seem to us that it was too bad. We heard from friends and relatives from the city that were much worse off than we were. But we always had a garden—

TS: Okay.

JR: —so mother would—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Did you have a shared garden or was it just your family garden?

JR: It was a family garden; this house that we lived in with the four families. And at that time, who knew if we were on the right land with the garden?

TS: Right, nobody was checking.

JR: But we had a garden, and mother would do the canning, and we would go picking berries; we would go for all day trips and then that would be canned, and so forth. Dad, he at one—been also part—at the time had gone to a friend that did have a butcher shop in Maspeth, Long Island [New York], and worked in the butcher shop. So he was the butcher when it came to slaughtering the pig.

TS: Yes.

JR: So they had pork. And it seems that the winters were much tougher at that time.

TS: You mean harsher weather?

JR: Yes, yeah. And so, that—Dad would do the slaughtering, but they'd buy the hog and divide it among the families that were the closest to each other.

TS: Right.

JR: And they would have meat during part of the time.

TS: So you didn't really feel a lot of the differences that some families felt that maybe had had gone—lost their source of food and income. But did your parents continue working?

JR: Well, I remember when Dad was on strike, and he was—there were small silk mills that—when Schwarzenbach-Huber came down to the Carolinas actually, at that time, where it seemed that to—the wages were less so that they were still able to function in these states. He went to—There were small, private places that opened up, and, of course, that was the time then when many, many people—that's why—I remember what a problem they had in Pennsylvania with strikes and with the horrible working conditions in the mines, which we never had in New Jersey. So we survived, except we were also very, very—We did not throw a stocking away because it had a hole in it. I still have a mending [unclear].

TS: Yeah.

JR: As a matter of fact, yesterday when Jill was here helping me with some of my—

TS: Is that [Jill Mayer \(WV#0557\)](#)?

JR: Jill Mayer, yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: And she—I said, "Do you know what this is?" She didn't know what that was.

TS: [chuckles] The darning ball?

JR: She didn't know. And even to the day—So that even to the day when I got married, and my first husband and I were both going up to Columbia [University] to school, and he was working part time, and I would turn his collars.

TS: Okay.

JR: Which is unheard of today. Did you ever darn a sock?

TS: I have.

JR: You have! Oh, good for you. Glad to hear that. That's because you're from Michigan.

TS: [both chuckles] I think that's because we had a large family and my mom had a—

JR: Right.

TS: —little basket we'd put our socks in—

JR: Yes.

TS: —and then we'd—Yes, we would. I—Yes.

JR: And also, to this very day. But it's strange, even though my brother is only nine years younger than I, some of his concepts in married life then—I never took anything out on payment—for payment; I never bought a car if I didn't have the money for it.

TS: Paid cash?

JR: Paid cash. My dad didn't build his house until he had enough, and then at that time I finished nursing. [chuckles] So it wasn't the parents helping the kids the way it is these days. The kids stayed independent and helped the parents.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And I was very happy that I was able to do that. My brother helped my dad with the building of the house. The neighbors helped, whether it was a man or a woman. We got together and helped each other to do those things.

TS: Yes. I bet there were some pretty good potlucks.

JR: Oh yes. Oh yes, yes, some good kielbasi and sauerkraut.

TS: Oh, my goodness. I bet.

JR: [chuckles]

TS: Now that's making me hungry.

JR: Right, right, right, yeah.

TS: Well, tell me a little—a little bit about high school. How was—How was it—So after you—when you went high school, what years would that have been? Do you have any—

JR: Oh yes. Well, before we get into high school, I just wanted to mention—

TS: Oh sure.

JR: —my ideal teacher.

TS: Oh, please.

JR: That was Ms. Paul. She was the gym teacher—

TS: That's right.

JR: —and that's what I tried to—to think of it, "Oh, I'd love to be a gym teacher."

TS: So you had that, kind of, in your mind, to do that?

JR: I had—I sort of had that in my mind. But—And she just—And I loved the activity within that program.

TS: Right.

JR: So.

TS: So you kind of have your heart set on, then, that's what you thought you want to do?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: So it—That was something that I was thinking about.

TS: Okay.

JR: So when I got to eighth grade we had no counselors—

TS: Okay.

JR: —but the principal, Mr. Applegate, was really the counselor.

TS: Okay.

JR: And so, he said, "Well, you know, there's two jobs for a woman," or perhaps three. "For instance, become a secretary—"

TS: Yes.

JR: "—without going to school any further; take your commercial course and learn typing and—" which I did; I took—I was able to type, and very little shorthand, but the typing I used to do. And then it's either teaching, and it was impossible for us, living in Stirling, to travel anywhere. There were railroads but it cost money to travel by that. Or live at the school. Well, we didn't have money to live at a school in a dorm. So the other thing was in nursing. But I also enjoyed, like, playing with dolls. I don't know if children—if little girls play with doll too much these days.

TS: Sure they do.

JR: They do?

TS: Yeah.

JR: Yeah.

TS: They don't just have dolls to play with, though, they have so many other things that—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Right, too many things to play with.

TS: That's probably true, Jeanne; that's probably true.

JR: But I always enjoyed—And, for instance, we had—I had a little dog when I was a youngster, and, oh, I had a little cat. It was a male but I liked the name Betty, so that was my cat Betty.

TS: A boy named Betty.

JR: Except Betty went tomcat and didn't come home one day, and we went to look for Betty and that was the end of Betty, so we had a grand funeral.

TS: Oh no.

JR: Yes, yah.

TS: He got in a bad fight?

JR: And later I looked for that under a tree, right near home—

TS: Yeah?

JR: —but I could never find where we had buried Betty.

TS: Oh.

JR: So—But—And with Mr. Applegate's consultation, and so forth, I had decided to go into nursing.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: To go into nursing?

JR: But—So when we got through with eighth grade, they had built another building, which had four rooms on the ground floor and four on the upper. But there we were going into ninth grade, the students before us used to travel to Summit, New Jersey, which was a different county—Union County—we were in Morris County—so in the 1930s, then their number of students increased and they said, "We can no longer take your students. You will have to go to your own county."

Well, Bernardsville, which was much closer though, only about five miles away, or six, their standards were very high, and so they were going to take us. So we struggled through ninth grade. We were the first class in that school to go have ninth grade, and they had made a room in the basement for us ninth graders, because the rest was elementary school.

TS: Right.

JR: And so, it was a commercial course and the academic course, they called it at that time. And so, we had to—and for nursing, which I was aiming to do—I had to have Latin; two years of Latin. So we took our first year of Latin there and it was so bad that when we got to Bernardsville, who had very high standards, we could—we took second year but we had to retake first year after school, and the teacher at that time stayed, and we were lucky that there was the [Delaware,] Lackawanna [and Western] Railroad that did communicate between Bernardsville and Stirling, so that whether it was for athletics reasons staying after school or whatever we would be able to take the train back. Or we would hike and—

TS: Yeah? How many miles was it?

JR: Well, that was only about six miles; seven, eight miles maybe.

TS: Only.

JR: Yeah.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: But hiking was very easy because you'd thumb [hitchhike] your way home.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And at that time, oh, everybody was friendly and was glad to pick up—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You didn't have a worry about picking up strangers and things.

JR: That's right, there was no problem. Yeah, so—or—

TS: What kind of cars did you get to ride in?

JR: What kind of—

TS: What kind of cars?

JR: Mainly a Ford or a little bit—sort of a pick-up or something like that.

TS: Sure.

JR: Yeah. But the car—most of the cars were Fords.

TS: Yeah?

JR: Yes. Yeah. And my dad's first car was a Ford.

TS: How did he feel when he got that? Was he pretty proud?

JR: Oh, he was quite the man in town, because we had been very frugal and he had enough to buy a used car from someone locally; he was—like, owned the grocery store in Stirling, and all-purpose store, really.

TS: Yeah?

JR: And so, yes. So dad, in that little community, within that building, he was the first one to have that.

TS: To get the car?

JR: To have a car, yeah. Oh, I've got a lot of pictures of that too. [chuckling]

TS: Oh, I bet you do. I bet you do. Now, so tell me a little bit more—then, so through high school, was that—were you ok—did you enjoy it? Did—

JR: I loved it.

TS: Except for the Latin.

JR: And I—Well, I didn't dislike Latin.

TS: It just was tough.

JR: And knowing another language, I do think it helped me in Latin.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And I guess I was a pretty good student because I managed with the Latin, and I took French as a second language, actually.

TS: Did you? Oh, you were a high achiever, were you?

JR: Well, it seemed to me that that's what the requirements were—

TS: Maybe they were.

JR: —at that time.

TS: To take two languages?

JR: Yeah. Yes. Yes. And athletics, too, and I used to stay after school for that purpose too. I remember in Bernardsville, high jump. Here I was, a small squirt of—I don't know what I was then, how tall, but that was second year high, and I came second in Bernardsville.

TS: In the high jump?

JR: Yeah.

TS: That's pretty impressive, at any height.

JR: And so, I enjoyed—

TS: Was it running, mostly, that you liked to do for the athletics?

JR: Well, swimming.

TS: Oh, swimming too?

JR: But free style swimming, I don't know the proper way to swim to this day.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: But I've loved swimming. Every time—To the days in Florida when we had indoor pool and the—I could go at ten o'clock at night and have the pool almost to myself.

TS: Nice.

JR: Yeah, wish we had it here but—

TS: Well, tell me, then, how you got—Did you go to a nursing school, then?

JR: Wait, so that was—That was Morris—That was Bernardsville.

TS: Okay.

JR: But then the third and fourth year of high[?]

TS: Oh, you had another school you went to?

JR: —we went—had to go to Morristown—

TS: Okay.

JR: —because that finally was Morris County. Now, we lived fourteen miles from Morristown and we went by bus.

TS: Okay.

JR: And in the wintertime, sometimes the—We would have to practically take turns and run around the bus to warm up because it would be so cold. And there again, for—to stay—my brother played the—He was musically inclined, even though I might have been but there was no money to pay for lessons.

TS: Two[?] people, just one.

JR: But—So he was in the class band and all. But there again, even though it was a longer distance and in different direction than Bernardsville, there was a railroad that you'd have to take into Summit, New Jersey, change there to the Peapack-Gladstone Line, and finally get where—home from school.

So at any rate, our third and fourth year of high school were in Morristown. That's where we graduated. We had graduation on a football field with seats and so forth, so—And we were very happy at Morristown, and I still belong to the alumni [association?] there.

TS: Oh, do you?

JR: As a matter of fact, in Florida we had reunions of—of the—Florida—Morristown High School alumni, and until the year before I left, I guess, they didn't have any—a reunion, but we used to have reunions.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And at one time it was a couple of hundred, because Florida seemed to—Well, people from up north seemed to gravitate down there.

TS: Yeah, that's true. Tired of the snow.

JR: Yeah. And some of those professors too. Teachers I remember very vividly. Mr. Osborne was a chemistry teacher, and he—I remember him because his father had been the principal in Stirling and he's the one that taught the immigrants English, and so he was very kind to these foreigners—

TS: Right.

JR: —in the new school. And then Percy Kaelin[?] was an English teacher, and I can still see him pacing up and down, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, [unclear]" Oh, I forgot my spat.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: My Shakespeare, this—Yeah. At any rate, he's another one that stands in my mind as an outstanding teacher.

TS: Excellent.

JR: Yeah. And I still have my—

TS: Yearbook?

JR: My book.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah. I'll have to show you my picture.

TS: Well, I would love to see them. Well, not yet though, we're going to keep talking about the—we're going to get into the military here.

JR: Oh, okay.

TS: So what—You—So did you nursing school, then, after you went to college?

JR: After I went to college?

TS: I mean after you went to high school. Did you go to a nursing school?

JR: Well—

TS: What'd you do next?

JR: I was planning to go to nursing.

TS: Okay.

JR: So I went to—turned in applications to a lot of different schools.

TS: Yes.

JR: And I got this one from Bellevue [Hospital School of Nursing], in New York, and didn't know that Bellevue from a hole in the wall. I didn't know what a good education I would be getting if I went there, but one of the criteria was that after the first year we got a stipend of twenty dollars a month, and that kept me in books and uniform. So I—But in the meantime, I had to make a hundred and fifty dollars in order to get into Bellevue.

TS: The tuition and everything?

JR: Right.

TS: Room and board and all.

JR: So I got a job in a five and ten [five-and-dime is a store selling a wide variety of inexpensive household and personal goods] in Summit [New Jersey], which was—by the Lackawanna Railroad it was, oh, just a few minutes ride, but you had to pay for the car fare. And that was not—I didn't like working in a five and ten.

TS: No? Why didn't you like it as much?

JR: No. And so, I quit that job, and it just so happened that there was a silk mill in Plainfield [New Jersey], and my dad and several people from town worked there. And one of the things that the—several of—actually a couple of the girls in the same building where we lived worked, and the brother of one of the girls, he had an old jalopy. And so, I applied and I was hired there, ten dollars and week, and that's what it was in a five and ten but, you see, here, driving to work with Stanley, there were a bunch of us, and I don't remember what he charged but it wasn't very much. And besides, we would sing all the way going and coming, and people don't sing the way they used to sing before.

TS: No?

JR: We—No.

TS: You haven't met my sisters. [both laugh]

JR: Well, I think that's wonderful. And so—And besides—Stanley used the harmonica; he played the harmonica. So while driving he—Because traffic was almost nil—

TS: Right.

JR: —at that—six miles driving into Plainfield was nothing. So we had a good time. And I was a spinner in the silk mill for a while, but I was the last one to be hired and this was still the Depression, so I was the first one to be laid off.

TS: Let go, yes.

JR: So that didn't last very long. Well, I thought I better get myself a job that's going to get me that hundred and fifty bucks, so I—Another cousin, she was working as a live-in in Westfield, New Jersey, which was a more affluent community. And so, I—I got a job very easily there, living-in with this family. They had three boys. The youngest was not yet five, and so he was a darling child.

TS: You were, like, a live-in nanny there?

JR: And—Well, I was a little bit of everything.

TS: Okay.

JR: I took care of all their lunches, and I took care of [unclear] just about 100%.

TS: That's youngest—the youngest one?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: And I did the cleaning in the place, and I did the cooking, and I did the serving. I—

TS: And you liked that job better than the five and dime?

JR: Yes, I did. Yes, I did. Yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: Be—Especially because I got twenty-five dollars a month, and that was just about clear[?] money.

TS: Right.

JR: And so, I shortly—And then Bertha, my friend that helped me, she—that's what she was doing. I—That was in Cranford, New Jersey. She was working in Westfield, which was a town just above there, and married a cop from there, that's what she did. So—

TS: How long did you work in this job, earning money for school?

JR: Well, it wasn't too much. I worked for another family, the Dans, which were—that was closer to home. And she used to lend me her old Packard on Thursday afternoons, [unclear] nights but days off, [unclear] afternoon off. And so, I would drive home madly over the hill to see the folks, yeah. And so, that was—

Well, in the meantime my brother was born and—No, he was going to school by that time.

TS: Right.

JR: My mother had to have surgery, so I had to delay—I called my application off temporarily. And so, I was happily working there when I got a letter from Bellevue: Did I want to be considered for the class that entered in 1937, in February? And I can recall mother watching me read that letter and she said, "You really want to go, don't you?"

And I said, "Yes." And so, they were very happy to let me—

TS: Yeah.

JR: —go away from home.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Were you helping to take care of her or were you just there for—

JR: Well, not—no, she was fine. She had her surgery and—but—and she, herself, was working at that time as a—cleaning homes and so forth.

TS: Okay.

JR: Because it was a—that kind of community. The people that lived up on the hill, they're the ones that you could work for and get your money.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Got hired.

JR: Right, right.

TS: So you got into college, then, in the fall of 1937?

JR: Not college. At that time it was—

TS: I'm sorry, nursing school.

JR: It was a three year diploma.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yes. We had to have—pass a swimming test. We were just talking about that the other day. We had to pass a swimming test and a tennis test.

TS: Tennis?

JR: And I didn't know how to play tennis from—I didn't know—

TS: It sounds like you're pretty athletic though. Did you figure it out?

JR: Yes. Yes, I did. I was.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I was. And that's held me in very good stead.

TS: Yeah?

JR: I'll tell you.

TS: Staying athletic and—

JR: Yeah, yeah. And so, I—Oh, I passed my swimming test, even though it was doggy paddle.

TS: [chuckles] You just had to get through it, right?

JR: I could stay up. It may not be the right technique but I could stay up fairly well.

TS: Now, did the—did the war start then—I guess it—right around the—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Well, so I went in to nursing in '37.

TS: Okay.

JR: And I graduated in '40.

TS: Okay.

JR: And at that time, when I went in to nursing, we did not have an eight hour day, and if you were on night duty you did your night tour, and if we had classes during that time you went to your classes, and that was it, and it was twelve hour day.

TS: You didn't get a lot of sleep.

JR: Maybe that's why now my sleeping habits are, really, not very good.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: I can sleep in spurts.

TS: Yeah?

JR: I can sleep for two hours and then I can wake up and get going, and then I pass out, practically, for lack of sleep again, especially since my surgery.

TS: Yeah?

JR: So—At any rate.

TS: So you finished in '40.

JR: So—Yeah, we—And in nursing we could not stay out later than ten o'clock.

TS: You had a curfew.

JR: We had to stay—live-in, and as freshman you had to have lights out at 10:00 [p.m.]. So we listen—tried to listen to one of the—I don't know—[Maximillian Adolph Otto Siegfried "Max"] Schmeling or [William Harrison "Jack"] Dempsey or some—one of boxing—

TS: Oh, matches.

JR: —bouts—matches.

TS: At night on the radio or something?

JR: With the radios, trying to be so quiet, and the housemother caught us, so. We had individual rooms.

TS: Okay.

JR: And they looked over—across the street was a municipal lodging house and all these men walking around with their shorts [unclear], but we had to have our shades down.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah.

JR: But there was one entrance into the nursing school, and you—If you were on night duty they knew who night people were and you could, naturally, go and then get back in the morning, but you didn't dare stay out overnight. It was a year before we could have an overnight to go home. But my first time—my first vacation after entrance—I had to have my tonsils out. At that time, everybody had to have their tonsils out, whether it was good, bad, or indifferent. So I had my tonsils out and couldn't wait to get home because my vacation was being wasted away. But I still had to stay overnight [unclear].

TS: Oh, you did?

JR: Yeah. Oh yes.

TS: Now, were you aware of the war that was going on in Europe at this time, or even in the Southeast—I mean, in the East?

JR: Well, we were—

TS: In Asia.

JR: Because that was actually toward the end of my training.

TS: Yes.

JR: But we were aware of it because we had relatives that were involved.

TS: That's what I thought. So you—

JR: And so, our communication was very, very limited. Naturally, it was just letter writing, and our—some of our relatives were involved. But we had our own problems, really, and—so that actually it was being concerned—being concerned for relatives and being sympathetic with what was going on at the other end of the world.

TS: Right.

JR: But—

TS: That was mostly what your concern was, was for the people that you knew and your family?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Yes, I think so. I think so.

TS: Well, what about when Pearl Harbor happened? You had finished school.

JR: Yeah, and I was—

TS: Where were you at then?

JR: I was on duty that day, Sunday, and when the—over the radio, the blaring and so forth, that there had been an attack on our ships in Pearl Harbor. And you know? We don't think of the Philippines as also being attacked that same day.

TS: Right.

JR: But I found that out very definitely. We went again with a World War II museum group to the Philippines just a year ago, April, and my friend from Charleston convinced me. Usually I was trying to convince her to go to different places because of the traveling that I did with Elderhostel, too, and all that. But that was her thing and so we went. So yes, Pearl Harbor is—sticks very well in mind. Actually, I had a date with a sailor.

TS: Yeah?

JR: And naturally, he had to stand me up because he had to report to his ship.

TS: To duty?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Oh, on that day.

JR: And so—But then I thought, " Well—" I was going to consider the army because they were making up what they called the Bellevue unit. I had graduated from Bellevue and was working there, and I felt that this Bellevue unit was what I wanted to be with. One of the Bellevue nurses, Thelma [J.] Ryan, was going to be the chief nurse of—

TS: Somebody that you knew.

JR: Yeah. I didn't know her as personally as I got to know her later, but—And the doctors were all from Bellevue, and third division, which was New York University, they were the doctors that had taught us the basics during our training.

TS: Right.

JR: So we were very close to NYU. And so, I wanted to go into the army—

TS: Okay.

JR: —into the unit, but—

TS: What happened?

JR: —they were so slow in getting organized, and then they were stationed—I believe it was Meade—

TS: Fort [George G.] Meade?

JR: —in Maryland.

TS: Maryland?

JR: Every time I'd try to get information as to when they're going. Actually, I drove down there to ask, "Well, when are we going to be moving?" And nothing was happening, so I got impatient.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And I had joined the [American] Red Cross and was active there through the time that I had an assignment with the hurricanes in Florida. I felt that if they weren't going to do anything with army that I wanted to go into the navy. The army—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So then you started looking at that.

JR: Yeah, yes. There was no air force at the time.

TS: Right.

JR: Although, I was with a group of women that we met not too often on—That was a short time and it went so fast that I almost forgot about the time that I was a member of that flight group.

TS: Yeah. This is in later years? Oh, the—

JR: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah. So at any rate.

TS: So you decided to join the navy.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: I decided to join the navy.

TS: Okay.

JR: Had my physical in Brooklyn and—at the naval hospital there, which later was the last duty station I had as a regular—as regular navy [unclear] when I came back from overseas, yeah.

TS: So that would have been—Let's see, I'm trying to see the date that you—September of '42, okay, that's when you joined up originally.

JR: Yes, yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: So at that time I—

TS: Did you go to some sort of officer training or anything like that?

JR: Well, I was living at working at Bellevue, but my home address was still Stirling, New Jersey, so I was actually at the naval hospital in Philadelphia.

TS: Okay.

JR: That was my first assignment, and that was for six months. We had drill and calisthenics and so forth.

TS: So, like, a basic, sort of, training for officers?

JR: Yeah. Yes. And Ms. [Helen J.?] Lord was the chief nurse there.

TS: Now, how was it? Was it—the training, how did you feel? Was it all—Was it hard?

JR: No, no. It wasn't any different than some of the athletic things I had been participating in. We lived at the Ben Franklin Hotel, in town, and that was for anybody that had the shift from eight—seven o'clock in the morning on the wards.

TS: Okay. Was it a nice hotel to stay in?

JR: Oh, yes.

TS: Oh, was it?

JR: It was just wonderful, yeah.

TS: I just have to turn a little here.

JR: But anybody that was going to be assigned to any clinics and so forth—I don't remember how long I had ward duty there. But at Bellevue I had also been in ENT [Ear, Nose and Throat], which had surgery right there on the floor, and the whole thing all the way through. Where cataracts [patients had] to stay in bed—lay in bed with sandbags at the side of their head for ten days or so.

TS: Very different; very different, isn't it?

JR: Very different.

TS: Well, now, Jeanne, let me ask you before you go on, why did you decide to join the military service at all? Why didn't you just do work in a hospital or something, continue doing that?

JR: I just felt that there were so many people that they were asking for to help in this war effort that I didn't care about leaving home. Of course, I had—I was a graduate from Bellevue, which was in New York, and I lived in New York, which at that time was, well, just an hour away from my hometown.

TS: Right.

JR: But even when I was going into Bellevue, into nursing, my mother thought, "Oh my gosh, where is she going into that ci—that horrible city," which—even though it was only an hour way. But it was—It was just something that had to be done, and my parents did not, in any way, object.

TS: No?

JR: No.

TS: Did any of your friends?

JR: And perhaps—perhaps it was because we were, in a way, connected with the war in Europe—

TS: Right, the family.

JR: —that we felt this is part of something that we can do for the family too.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah. We al—Even though there were just my brother and I as—until I went into nursing—well, by the—I was eighteen, so he was just about—

TS: Nine or—

JR: Seven. Yes, nine.

TS: Yeah? Ten or nine?

JR: He was under—under ten years old. And so, we actually had a room together because we didn't have that big of a—of a house.

TS: House, right.

JR: Yeah, we lived in a part—

TS: Well, tell me a little bit about the—when you—So after Philadelphia, where'd you go after that?

JR: Well, I—Betty Bray and I got orders for Pensacola.

TS: Okay.

JR: Had no idea where Pensacola, Florida was.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And neither did mother. She thought, again, where am I going. And of course, [a] plane was out of the question. We didn't fly because we were no priority, and there was very little flying at that time, it was train. And we sat up just about the whole way because there was no such thing as having a sleeper.

TS: Right. Were you also kind of curious about what was going on?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: And besides—Yeah. So everybody sat around and sang and so forth, and so there were people going here, there and everywhere in uniform, and so we were just another group of them.

TS: So you headed on down to Pensacola on a train?

JR: And we headed for Pensacola. When I went into the navy I didn't feel that this was anything—and I still don't feel that it was a great heroic thing to do. I feel that the pressure and the work that's being done now by the women is much worse than what we had to do. It was just what everybody else doing. It was just—You went as a group, and when we got to Pensacola there were about eight of us that came from different cities, different states, and we all were such a closely knit group that we kept in touch with each other. One was from—Papi[?] was from a Greek community in Boston [Massachusetts], and she was rooming with—with Picard. Picard was from New Orleans, [Louisiana] and she was actually working for public health, so in later years, even though she didn't stay for the navy—in the navy, why—her time in public health and—which she went back to, held her in good stead.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And then my roommate was from Michigan, and I hardly knew where Michigan was from.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And so, Budge[?]
—Budge and I were assigned—because she came that same day, and Betty roomed with Ruth Golden, who was from New York, and Betty, whom I had traveled with, she was from Pennsylvania.

TS: So you had people from all over?

JR: From all over. And so, we—Budge and I were assigned out in the balcony, no air conditioning at that time, double decker beds, but she had gotten there first so she had the lower bunk, so I had the upper bunk. But that didn't faze us, it didn't bother us. And so, we were a happy bunch there.

TS: What kind of work did you do there?

JR: I don't remember the first things—area I was assigned to, but we had some SOQ [Sick Officers' Quarters] areas, and we had the regular floor areas. And of course, the men, which it was mainly men at that time because the WAVE[S] Corps [United States Navy Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service] started later on during the time I was in Pensacola, because I actually had to take a coup—fly with a couple of them to Bethesda [Maryland] because of some psychiatric problems.

TS: Oh, you had to escort them there sort [unclear]?

JR: And—Yeah. So when that—that time when we got to—when I did have to take this patient, which was one of the times, but when I did take a—I checked in with the OD [Doctor of Optometry] in Bethesda, and lo and behold, it was a doctor that I had worked with in ENT at Bellevue.

TS: Yeah? How about that; small world, huh?

JR: Very small world, yeah.

TS: Was that your first plane ride?

JR: Yes, it was; yeah.

TS: Was it okay?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Were you worried about it at all?

JR: No.

TS: No?

JR: No. And of course, there were so many planes in Pensacola that—no. That was a great station, everything was right there.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I mean, the bowling alley was right there, the movies was not only there but then there was [Fort] Barrancas, which was the army just across the fence that we used to go to, and bowling that we—horseback riding.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Did you do dates?—Oh, that sounds like fun.

JR: Swimming, and we had an indoor pool. Of course, the ocean was—The bay was right there. And horseback riding. The retired Coast Guard horses, they had a stable there that the cadets—because, of course, it was a great learning—place for the cadets.

TS: Did you do any dating here?

JR: Oh, as much as we wanted.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And it was always with groups, though.

TS: Okay.

JR: Always in groups. But there, of course, was one special person.

TS: Yeah?

JR: And that was a boy from my hometown. He was in flight training. He's the one in uniform in there. And he—his father was actually the manual training teacher back home, and my brother was a very good scout and he was—Mr. Denninger[?] was a skipper, we used to call him; that was the scout master. And so, my brother was very good friends with Johnny. He was about a year younger than I am, and at that time you didn't usually date people that were—

TS: Different ages?

JR: —men that were younger than—

TS: No?

JR: But—

TS: You went for it anyhow. [both chuckles]

JR: But—Yeah. And so, of course, the Officers Club, you could—especially Saturday night, if you didn't have a date, it wasn't for long—

TS: [chuckles]

JR: —because somebody would go through the whole, "Anybody want to go to the O [Officer's] Club tonight?"

TS: Right.

JR: And we always went—as I say—as a group.

TS: In a group, yeah. Now, did you date this Johnny for a little while?

JR: Yes, yes. Yeah. And then the—that picture's the day that he got his wings [earned aviation badge].

TS: Okay.

JR: And then we were deciding whether to go to New Orleans and get married, or he was to get some leave—he was going to be with the fighter squadron—and so we decided to wait. And so, then he was in [unclear] and he was in Green Cove Springs, Florida, and during night flight training he was killed.

TS: Oh no.

JR: Yeah.

TS: During training.

JR: Yeah. Yes.

TS: That must have been very hard.

JR: Yeah, it was. It was very traumatic, and still, it was something that was happening so much.

TS: Right.

JR: Because we—Some of the girls, we have a date one night and the next day he'd be a patient in the hospital, or perhaps have been killed, yeah. So that was the first close realization of death.

TS: Kind of jarring, I'm sure.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Right.

JR: And so—And at that time I wanted to have somebody from family, sort of, closer, and this happened in March, and so during Easter vacation I got up enough money to have my brother come down to Pensacola for—

TS: To stay with you?

JR: —for a week during the time that he had vacation from school.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I didn't believe in cutting classes or cutting time. As a matter of fact, the only time I missed during my school years, in first grade I ran away because one of the boys was picking on me, and in second grade I had—got the mumps, so I had that. And I tried to hide it. I remember I tried to put my head down and—

TS: Yeah.

JR: —but the teacher seemed to notice it and I was told I had to go home, I couldn't stay. So I missed school.

TS: Missed a couple days.

JR: But after that I had perfect attendance.

TS: Now how long were you in Pensacola?

JR: So I was in Pensacola until '44, yeah; until July of '44. So that was about a year and a half.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: A year? Okay, a year and a half.

JR: A year and a half.

TS: And then where did you get orders to after that?

JR: Oh, and Pensacola, I must tell you about Ms. Morris[?].

TS: Okay.

JR: She was our chief nurse there, and she was wonderful, she was just a doll. She was from New Hampshire, and that was the time when "Pistol Packing Mama" was popular, and Ms. Morris was sort of a buxom lady and she'd sit in the chair on the porch there [in her unclear?] and say, "Well, I'm your pistol packing mama."

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And whenever we had a party she was part of it.

TS: Yeah.

JR: She was just—She was just wonderful.

TS: A good role model?

JR: As a matter—Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so, the time in Pensacola was really very, very impressive and really—I guess that's where I really got to love the navy.

TS: Yeah?

JR: Yeah. The camaraderie, the working together, as I say. I'm the last one that remains of that group that we were real close. And any time on Saturday that we would want to go to New Orleans if we were off, why, it would always be with a group.

TS: Right. So you stayed together, kind of—

JR: Yeah.

TS: —no matter what you did.

JR: And of course, money was usually short—

TS: Yeah.

JR: —but it seemed that if someone was a little short, I always had a little bit of something to loan to them. And then in New Orleans, Picard—Pic—[unclear] Picard that had worked there with the U.S. Public Health Service, she knew some of the places and knew a little bit about New Orleans.

TS: I see.

JR: And so, sometime—she met somebody—we met somebody in town, I guess on Bourbon Street or something, that—well, where should we stay, because nobody had a room.

TS: Right.

JR: But some—she found somebody—

TS: Yeah?

JR: —that had a room, and so all of—and we'd play cards or sit around talk. If they got tired of going out and [unclear]—hitting the places on—in town, you could go and you'd lie down just to—with your clothes on and take a nap.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I guess that's another reason why I can just sleep at the drop of a hat.

TS: A hat.

JR: So there again, the closeness and the camaraderie of—

TS: And you—really the first time you've been away from home for any distance.

JR: Yes. Yes, because no one traveled.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Did you get homesick at all?

JR: I didn't have time to get homesick.

TS: Right. Yeah.

JR: No, because we, naturally, had everything there, and I worked on maternity for a while, and there that was a busy place. And we had the boys—we always called them boys rather than men at that time—from a lot of different countries that were being trained in Pensacola.

TS: A lot of our allies?

JR: Yeah, yes. The British.

TS: So you met people from not just all over the country but from all over the world.

JR: Right, right, yeah.

TS: I see.

JR: And—Yeah, I remember especially this one, he was from Ireland, and he had the mumps so he had to be there on the isolation, and I remember then he left me one of his insignia—

TS: Oh.

JR: —that I—again I—I think I gave that with the rest of the things, too, to the World War II museum.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Right, [unclear] New Orleans.

JR: Because I tried to get rid of as much as possible—

TS: [chuckles]

JR: —at that time.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Now, where did you—Where were you stationed next? Where did you—What were your orders to after Pensacola?

JR: Oh, from Pensacola, we got orders to San Leandro, California. San Leandro wasn't open yet.

TS: Okay.

JR: It was where—Oak Knoll [Naval Hospital, also known as Naval Hospital Oakland], in Oakland, California, was the U.S. Naval Hospital, and that's where we actually had to stay in Quonset huts, and there was a group of us that got orders there so we all traveled together by train. And one of the ones that were—was in charge, she was a—we were all lieutenants JG [junior grade] by then, and so she had a time with us, because every time we'd stop—We'd go back and forth in a freight yard somewhere, and I don't know how and who kept track of time, but we never missed a train.

TS: Right.

JR: But there we would be, back and forth. In New Orleans, they said, "Well, let's go into town," and here we were, in our night things, but they—"Oh, put a coat over yourself—"

TS: [chuckles]

JR: "—and let's go into town," or something. And when we were in Texas there was an army base nearby, and my friend Dorothy—my very close grade school friend from home, from Stirling; little old Stirling—here we were in Texas, her husband was stationed there; San Antonio.

TS: Right.

JR: And so, there we were in the freight yards. And then we, evidently, got word that we were going to be there until a certain time, even though that time could be changed. But there was a five and ten nearby, and she and I had both worked in the five and ten originally in Stirling.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: At the five and ten?

JR: And she was. She just lived about a—what would be a city block or two. So we were very close. Later on I was a bridesmaid when she got married, and then knew her in Pensa—in Florida.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And so, she was working this five and ten, so I managed to—I don't know how I found out where it was and stuff, but I got to the five and ten and I saw Dorothy for a real fast visit.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And that's why you just took these opportunities, and how they ever worked out I don't know, but they seemed to.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Yeah, but they did. Yeah.

JR: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Now, what were you doing in California? What kind of—

JR: So—

TS: Actually, Jeanne, do you want to take a break for a minute?

JR: No.

TS: No? Okay.

JR: No.

TS: Alright, well, you're rolling. [both chuckle] Okay.

JR: So we—I was—That was a—Oh, yes, and then when we got to the border—we got very close to the border there and—

TS: The border with Mexico?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah, and so we wanted to go over to Mexico. Oh course, we couldn't do that.

TS: No? They didn't—

JR: So we did behave ourselves.

TS: Okay.

JR: But we did buy, I remember, a great big stalk of bananas and brought it back to the—to the train and all that. I thought we'd never get out of Texas.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: But we did and we got to San Leandro.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So wait. When you visited—When you visited your friend, it was—you were just getting off the train and you'd had a stop. And so, that's how quick that visit was; it was just from—

JR: Oh yes. Oh yes.

TS: Okay.

JR: It was just a—just a hello and goodbye, practically.

TS: Interesting.

JR: But we saw each other, and from our hometown.

TS: Neat. Okay.

JR: Oh yes.

TS: So you just—Now, you had stopped along the way and then they—did you stay overnight as you were going across the—

JR: Oh yes, yes.

TS: Okay, because you didn't have a sleeper car or anything.

JR: I don't—I don't remember much about that at all.

TS: Yeah, well, it was only seventy years ago. I don't know what your problem is.

JR: [laughing]

TS: I think you've remembered every other detail so I think we're doing okay.

JR: Yeah.

TS: So okay, go ahead and get to California and tell me how that was.

JR: Yes, we got to California and stayed in San Leandro, and there were about a hundred and fifty of us in double decker beds.

TS: Okay.

JR: And for all these females, six toilets, six wash basins, but we all managed to get on duty on time.

TS: Oh yeah.

JR: And it was up on the hill, and in order for the bus—because we were just setting it up. We were doing everything from stamping blankets, and stuff like that, to polishing stuff to—we didn't do the carpentry, we had the—

TS: You're pretty much putting it all together—

JR: Yeah, the nurses were doing everything.

TS: —with the supplies. Okay.

JR: Everything, with the corpsmen.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah. As a matter of fact, even to the point where—to make a little extra money we used to go into—There was a fruit packing place and we had to sort peaches, so we did that all together and then pooled our money and maybe went to town, but always got back when we were supposed to be on duty.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Yeah. So since we were so close—actually, as the bird flies to San Leandro, whereas the bus had to go way up and then round and round and round, and sometimes broke down, so we could run up that hill and we could get there just about the same time that the bus would get there.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: But then that's where we were—actually, when I was in Pensacola and working in the laundry, and I was at the mangler [a mangle was a machine that wrings water out of wet laundry]—

TS: Yes.

JR: —when I got word that Johnny had been killed.

TS: Oh.

JR: Yeah. So the nurses did a little bit of everything, regardless of whether it was setting up the hospital or—

TS: Not just hospital work.

JR: Right. Yes.

TS: Lots of—Lots of—Jack of all trades, sort of thing.

JR: There were SOQ—And of course, in Pensacola that was—

TS: What's the SOQ stand for?

JR: Sick Officers' Quarters.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah. Yeah, what did the army call—I mean the air force—call it?

TS: I don't even know. [chuckles]

JR: How long did you stay in?

TS: Just six years.

JR: Six years, yeah.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And—

TS: Sick bay, that's what I remember; sick bay.

JR: Oh yeah. Well, sick bay for the call[?] during the day—every day that they would have in a certain place, because the men would have to—by that time, of course, there were also women—

TS: Yes.

JR: —as I said, from Pensacola. I had to fly a couple of them to Bethesda.

TS: Right, the two—

JR: But in—We would have convoys that came in with the men that were sick, and of course, some of them were physically sick, some of them were both physically and mentally sick. And so, there they—since it was geared—and you see, I trained at Bellevue so that my training for San Leandro, because that has a reputation of being psychiatric but it is a big city hospital with one-third of the patients are psychiatry—is psychiatric.

TS: Now, were they—Were the patients coming in from the Pacific?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: From the Pacific. And convoys would come in, and it was usually at night, and we would have to have these men just sit around, wait around, until we got to them, but it seemed to me that it went rather fast because—

TS: Yeah?

JR: Yeah.

TS: What kind of conditions would you see?

JR: They used to call them Asiatic.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: So it really was too much, too long, exposure, too—situations.

TS: [unclear] combat.

JR: Combat. And some, not even combat, but waiting; hurry up and wait, type of stuff.

TS: Did you—How did you treat—How did you treat the soldiers at that time for that?

JR: Of course, a lot of it just for—there were so many that it was with a lot of the new medications, that some proved good and some not so good.

TS: Right.

JR: Yeah.

TS: They didn't have as much accessibility to the kind of treatment today.

JR: Right. Right. Yeah. Right.

TS: I was just wondering if they used any, like—if they really had some—like, shock therapy and things like that.

JR: Well, at Bellevue, my training there was when they had the hot tubs and the patients in camisoles, and really, like Snake Pit [unclear]—and that's where, actually, [*The*] *Snake Pit* [1948 film that tells the story of a woman who finds herself in an insane asylum] was filmed, at Bellevue.

TS: Is that right?

JR: Yes. But no, this wasn't—they weren't—that they had to be retrained and stuff like that.

TS: Okay.

JR: But they were just really exhausted and—combat fatigue and operational fatigue.

TS: A place to recuperate, really. It might have been what they needed.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Right. Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Well, because we didn't think about post-traumatic stress disorder in those terms—

JR: Well, now that's what they call it.

TS: Yes.

JR: That's what they call it. And as a volunteer in Florida—I was volunteering in the social service department—and the director of social service there, Cheryl Valdez[?], she did a lot of lecturing stuff and I helped her with a lot of that stuff. And it was all very interesting so I—I still enjoyed it to the—to the Wednesday before I—in November before I came here, in December.

TS: Yeah. Well, now, after—Go ahead, I'm sorry.

JR: I was going to mention something about—Well, I—

TS: I'm sorry I threw you off your track there.

JR: That's alright. Yeah, but—Oh. So it was usually at night that we'd have these convoys come in.

TS: Okay.

JR: And the nurse that was in charge—we called it the ramp tramp; it was just a corridor, and off that main corridor would be the wards where the patients would be. And to get to and from San Francisco was the train, and then we still had to take a bus. And so, of course, we would like to—when we were off and we would like to get to San Francisco, and it was very tight squeeze to get back though by two o'clock. And our chief nurse there, if there was any one person in the navy that I could very happily have done without. I could put it much more—much stronger than that but that'll do—

TS: She wasn't your favorite person?

JR: —since you're recording it. [both laugh]

TS: Well, I can see, like, your eyes changed on that one.

JR: But that was Teresa Duggan[?].

TS: Yeah.

JR: She was a chief nurse, and she required that we, graduate nurses that had our RNs [registered nurses] long ago, that were officers in the military, she was still treating us like, 'You have to be in by two o'clock.' And one of the—

TS: Was that two o'clock a.m.?

JR: Yes.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah, but that's if you had the time, and regardless, even if you were working the next day, we were able to get on duty on time.

TS: Right. So you thought it was a little bit too excessive.

JR: Well, she was trying to be—I don't know—possessive and—or whatever.

TS: Controlling?

JR: Yeah, definitely. And the thing is, she knew when—Well, the nurse that was on duty was in charge, also, of waking the cook up at, like, 4:00 in the morning or something, and so

she had access to the kitchen and to the nurses' quarters, and Teresa decided that she wanted that nurse to report to her in the morning during morning report, who came in late. And the thing is, because these were all wooden structures, and the clop, clop, clop of the heels, she knew that somebody, somewhere, was not quite telling the truth if they said no one came in at two o'clock.

TS: Why weren't they taking their shoes off? [chuckles]

JR: Yeah, right. Right, right.

TS: That might have—

JR: Yeah.

TS: So she got upset that everybody wasn't being reported properly.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Oh, she was—she was—so she—then—and I think that—so she—At any rate, she and I did not see eye to eye.

TS: Did you get in trouble?

JR: No, not really.

TS: Just the personality and how she treated you.

JR: Yeah.

TS: You felt like you weren't a child anymore.

JR: That's right.

TS: Yeah.

JR: That's right. Which the others felt, too.

TS: Right.

JR: And actually, she then became the chief nurse in Puerto Rico, and my dear friend Papi, whom I knew at Pensacola, she was getting married and she had Teresa there as chief nurse. She wanted some time off to get married and Teresa, for whatever reason, I don't

know all the details of that, but she did not give Papi the time off. Well, she got married but she did—wanted a—

TS: The honeymoon.

JR: Yeah, I guess so. And this was after hostilities had ceased, because this was when Teresa was in Puerto Rico as chief nurse.

TS: Later years?

JR: Yeah. But there was another—Papi, who I think naturally was a fair sided person, but she also had no love lost between them too. So at any rate, that's enough about—

TS: Teresa Duggan.

JR: —because that was really, if anything—

TS: Yeah?

JR: But other than that—As you can see, I really loved the navy.

TS: Yes. Oh, I can see that. Now, where did you go after—You were stationed in—

JR: While I was in San Leandro—

TS: San Leandro, that's right.

JR: —a bunch of us—a bunch of us from there and from Oak Knoll, down below—because we went to the same officers' club.

TS: Yes.

JR: We didn't have a separate one up in San Leandro. There was a reservoir there that we used to go and it was a nice place way up on the hill, and you could see the fog roll in at 2:00 in the afternoon, and in the morning—it wasn't clear until 10:00 in the morning, so I didn't care for the weather there. I would never have chosen San Francisco.

TS: It's a little different.

JR: But about two hundred of us got or—APO [Army Post Office] numbers so that we knew we'd be going overseas into the Pacific somewhere. Then this did not happen for a little while because the bomb was dropped. So after that, the ones that were out there, the reserves, were just aching to get back home.

TS: Right.

JR: They were just aching, and those of us that were regular knew that we'd be shipped out there—

TS: To replace the—

JR: —which we were.

TS: Okay.

JR: Which we were, in no time flat.

TS: So you were—

JR: And right now—

TS: Okay, we'll take a little break.

JR: Yeah. [chuckles]

TS: Alright, let's—How about we do it that way?

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, Jeanne, so you—

JR: We're traveling overseas now.

TS: Now you're traveling overseas? Okay. So we took a short break there for a few minutes and now we're back. You had said that you and about two hundred other nurses—people—

JR: Well, no, because that's the number that—before the bomb was dropped.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: So at this point, actually, there were just—from San Leandro there were only three of us—

TS: Oh, okay, they changed that after.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: —that got orders—got orders for Okinawa—specifically for Okinawa [Japan].

TS: Okay.

JR: But to get there we were really island hopping. We had to stop at Kwajalein [Atoll], Little Johnston Island [Johnston Atoll], and some of these little—some of the islands on route to get to Pearl [Harbor]. And then when we got to Pearl we really worked at the hospital there before—because we were waiting for transportation to Guam. And then from Guam we did the same thing and—until we got to Okinawa.

TS: Now, how was this trip, because you were on a ship—

JR: Yes.

TS: —and it was like a transport ship, or was it—

JR: It was either transport or military sea transport.

TS: Okay, so had the—I forget what months you're talking about here.

JR: Well, we left—

TS: So the war's actually been over now, right? The war—

JR: Yes.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah.

TS: So the war—Victory's been declared, both in Europe and in the Pacific.

JR: Right, and my first orders were for Fleet Hospital 116 in Okinawa.

TS: Okay. So how—Now, this is completely different from what you've been doing before, if you're on a—

JR: Yes.

TS: You want to talk about how—what you thought about all this?

JR: Well, when we got to Oki—to Okinawa, which was from Guam—the last stop was from Guam to Okinawa—the whole culture of Okinawa was different than it is on the other

islands; definitely Japanese. And we lived in Butler Huts [pre-fabricated steel huts], and I have pictures—

TS: You have some pictures of those?

JR: —of the nurses' compound.

TS: Okay.

JR: And it was fenced in, Marines were on guard, lights on all night, because there were still Japs in the hills. We lived in these Butler Huts, which had room for four, and we each had a corner, it was just one big room though. We—And we ate in the mess hall.

TS: How was a Butler Hut different from a Quonset Hut?

JR: It's not one of these—

TS: It's not rounded?

JR: It's a regular structure.

TS: Square?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: But the outhouse—There was a little walkway and there was, like, a separate outhouse right out there, so you did—you were exposed to the outside at that point, and it was near a hill so you—We couldn't see the entrance gate, but of course, there was much greater exposure there.

TS: Right.

JR: But—And we slept under nets.

TS: Nets?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Keep the bugs away?

JR: Right. And—

TS: Was it pretty humid?

JR: I don't remember the weather as being too bad.

TS: No?

JR: Yes. But I don't know. I didn't think the—I never minded it without air-conditioning. I didn't mind it in Florida.

TS: But you hadn't really—Had you been in air-conditioning before? I mean—

JR: No.

TS: —was that something you were used to?

JR: No.

TS: So you didn't know the difference, right?

JR: That's it. That's right. That's right, yeah. And the weather didn't seem to—We could not go out without two armed escorts, and—

TS: Did you ever go anywhere?

JR: Well, there was a place that they called, like, the club. And there again, the chief nurse, she was a wonderful person, wonderful. There was one nurse there by the name of Miriam Altee, and she was like the exec [executive] for the chief nurse there. So—But to finish with Okinawa, we—it was—we could wear any kind of socks or shoes, whatever was available, and there was a lot of army stuff available so I—They didn't mind us wearing those things. And we wore the seersucker—

TS: Did you—Okay, the seersucker.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: —seersucker uniforms. Yeah.

TS: So still the skirt?

JR: Oh, yes, there were no pants.

TS: No.

JR: No pants at that time. Yes.

TS: Now, I wanted to ask you, so you're relieving some of the women that had been there before, is that correct?

JR: Yes.

TS: Did you get to talk to them at all to see about their experiences, which would have been a different if—

JR: Well, you see, I was in Okinawa such a short time, because I was only there a couple months, yeah. Yonabaru, that was an air field, and Awase was a fighter base, and around Awase is where there was a crash that a commentator—At any rate, we never did get there because then—Within those two months we got orders for Saipan [Northern Mariana Islands].

TS: For Saipan.

JR: Because it was—The hospital was being disbanded, but in the hospital then at that point, we would get families; they would come in—The whole family would come in. One person might have something wrong with them and—because the casualties, you see, they were all quickly—rapidly shipped to Guam, which was either like a holding area or [unclear].

TS: You mean the cas—our casualties?

JR: Our cas—Yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah. But the real bad ones had already been sent away.

TS: Okay.

JR: So you see, we really didn't—we got to go into Awase, into where the fighter base was, and Yonabaru was the airport, and—

TS: But most of the—like you say, the casualties had been already shipped out so you weren't doing any nursing of the soldiers—or the—

JR: Well, we were, whatever had to be done, or the present—whatever—

TS: I guess things still happen, right?

JR: —might happen, yeah. Or if it was just something else rather than casualties—war casualties but just ordinary day to day—

TS: Accidents.

JR: —accidents and sick bay—

TS: Illness.

JR: —for—Yeah, yes.

TS: Well, what did you think about when the bomb was dropped—the bombs were dropped on Japan? What were your thoughts at the time?

JR: I was still in San Leandro then.

TS: Right.

JR: And it was really a wild time. I'm—We were all happy about it because it meant that not that many of our men would be killed anymore. And so, I knew Hans [Albrecht] Bethe, he was a scientist that was working in Alamosa [Los Alamos] and I knew that after the war there was this, sort of, anti-bomb thing.

TS: Just the controversy over it too.

JR: Yeah. But I felt that—I never felt that it was not justified.

TS: That it was the right thing to do to end the wars?

JR: Because I thought it was wartime and that that was it. That was—yeah. And with what was—We didn't know exactly the things about Europe that we know now, but whatever we did know about it, we felt that—and what the Japanese had done to us, that this was justified. Not that I completely believe in tit for tat, but there was no—absolutely no strong feeling about anything on that—along that line.

TS: So you agreed with this—

JR: It was a part of war; a part of war.

TS: I was just wondering about that.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: I've been to Hiroshima and Nagasaki since then.

TS: Yeah?

JR: And in Nagasaki there was a priest that was—because, of course, the bomb there was dropped beyond the city limits, a little farther in from the city. Of course, many people were affected in the city but the bomb itself was dropped—in the city. And we happened to be walking around and there was a priest there and he happened to be Polish, so somebody said, "Oh, Jeanne, come on, you have to speak to this priest over here." And—Because he did not speak English. And so, there's another advantage, you see.

TS: That's right.

JR: I've had that happen. He said that the people knew—they didn't know exactly—no one knew exactly what was happening, but they were told to evacuate, to leave the city. Very few did because they wouldn't believe, or couldn't leave, or whatever.

TS: Right.

JR: But there was information that had come out that something big was going to be happening, and so he said—and he was there at the time and so he did leave with a group of people that were leaving. They wanted a chaplain to be along with them. And so, he did go with that group, but he said then, just about all of them came back and did what they could in rebuilding and working together to alleviate the situation which existed then.

TS: Right.

JR: Yeah. And so—But—

TS: Well, do you want to take your break for dinner?

JR: Oh, I guess we better.

TS: Okay, because we can stop here and then we can move on to your next—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Yeah, I guess we better.

TS: —island hop that you go to.

JR: Yeah, because we're not in Okinawa very long.

TS: Okay.

JR: Maybe I'll show you those—the pictures from Okinawa when we come back.

TS: Okay, I'll go ahead and stop the tape now. Okay, that sounds good.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, we took a little dinner break and we're back here.

JR: Okay.

TS: And so, I have the tape recorder back on, Jeanne.

JR: Oh, yeah, there's duplicates.

TS: Well, that's okay. We can go through those.

JR: Here again is—

TS: Yeah?

JR: —is the one of John Seabrook.

TS: Okay, I'm going to take these away from you so you can talk [chuckles] —

JR: Yeah, okay.

TS: —because you're going to keep looking at them.

JR: You're right.

TS: And so, you're—

JR: Here's the—

TS: The bag for them?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Well, we had—So you had been in Okinawa, now you're in Saipan. Why don't you talk a little bit about Saipan? You were showing me a lot of these pictures.

JR: Yeah.

TS: And you had talked about—

JR: It was a dispensary—

TS: Okay.

JR: —and that's what it's listed as in that—the discharge—

TS: Okay, the discharge papers?

JR: —dis—Dispensary 116 was Okinawa and this was base dispensary—Oh.

TS: Yeah, I think it's on this. No, it's right here: Base Dispensary Saipan, right?

JR: But there was a number.

TS: Yes.

JR: And it has it in those—

TS: It's okay, we can add to the transcript too. It's okay. So your—One of these here. So how was it? Did you enjoy being on Saipan? It looks like you had a lot of fun.

JR: Yes, yeah.

TS: You had—You said this—

JR: We had a great chief nurse and just a good team. Here.

TS: Oh, this one right here?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Doesn't have a number, it just says: U.S. Base Dispensary Saipan.

JR: Oh.

TS: That's alright.

JR: Okay.

TS: So you—

JR: Yeah, because the fleet hospital—fleet hospital was 116.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah, and base dispensary, that was in September '45.

TS: Now, some of the pictures you showed me, you spent a lot of time with some of the guys at the Signal Corps and they had built, like, a dance floor—

JR: Yeah.

TS: —in the—kind of out of trees and [unclear] things up.

JR: Yeah, and just the floor was, sort of, leveled off and it was, like, in a banana grove. I remember I sent my mother one—

TS: One of the pictures?

JR: —and she said, "What kind of jungle are you in?"

TS: [chuckles]

JR: "What kind of jungle are you in?"

TS: Did it seem like you were in a jungle?

JR: Yes, it—yes.

TS: Did it?

JR: Yes. Right, right, right.

TS: And then you had—going through my notes here—You had a couple pictures of your friends that you were with a long time. Let's see. Who was Salty? Salty was the charge nurse?

JR: Salty was the—yeah.

TS: Charge nurse?

JR: Chief nurse.

TS: And she was Miriam Altee?

JR: Miriam Altee.

TS: Altee.

JR: A-L-T-E-E.

TS: And then the other one—

JR: She's the one that died of cancer.

TS: Right.

JR: [unclear]. She was being treated, actually, but she never talked about it much; she'd, "Well, I'm off to the doc[tor] again."

TS: Right.

JR: And that would be about it.

TS: So she was the one you said was kind of crusty too; like, she would swear and—

JR: Yeah, she—

TS: —smoke the cigarette—

JR: She would—

TS: —and carry the .45?

JR: Right, right. And she knew the admirals, she knew—as I said, she could come up and—"Hi, Jim," to an admiral, and real buddy buddy like. She knew them all. She knew them all. And they all accepted her because that was Salty.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Yeah. And she would go aboard a ship and see what she could get for us at the nurses' quarters.

TS: Right, to help you—

JR: Because we sometimes—we would make our own breakfast, because the main mess hall for the hospital was where we were supposed to eat, and the bread there—I never ate bread there. This one doctor would pick up bread and put it, like, toward the light, and he would pick out the weevils that were in—And they were in the flour; you could see them in the flour. But that's the flour they made the bread with, and that was it, but that's when I really got away from eating bread.

TS: Yeah?

JR: Yeah. And so, we frequently—especially, like, breakfast, we would eat—take a quick bite of something in the nurses' quarters. We had a little place that was—a stove and a refrigerator and stuff, but we also had—on top of the Quonset hut, there was—where the—it came in and the curve came over to the—to the building that was straight up and down, and there would be a ledge there and frequently—not—well, not frequently but—We had seen several times rats running along there, and one time I was in the kitchen by myself and I see this rat. Well, I took a broom and I whacked and did throw him off there, but then I was really scared because he was attacking me; he was just about ready to go up that broom handle; he didn't run away.

TS: No?

JR: And I did kill him with—but I was really whacking; I was afraid.

TS: That he was going to come and bite you?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: That he was—Yeah. Yes. And mice—We would have mice run across the bed in the middle of the night; I mean, it was not unusual, but what's a little mouse, you know?

TS: Different than a rat coming at you, huh?

JR: No rats, no rats.

TS: You also had some pets, right?

JR: Yeah.

TS: A couple different pets.

JR: We had—Gizmo was the monkey and Archie was the dog, yeah.

TS: Now, how long were you on Saipan?

JR: About a year.

TS: Oh, you were? Okay.

JR: Yeah, from May to—May to May of '46 [1947?].

TS: Now, were a lot of the troops just coming and going? Were they mostly there and then getting ready to go home? What was their situation, of all the men?

JR: The injuries we had were mainly those that occurred right then, but—like some—They'd had a fire in one of the galleys, because there were several different companies there, and so they had their own mess halls and their own quarters and so forth.

TS: Okay.

JR: And so, anybody got—that was injured in any way, they would come to the dispensary—It was called a dispensary but we had overnight.

TS: Okay.

JR: And also, the other group that we had there, there was a—right on the beach, right along the water, was the stockade, and we had Japanese peop—POWs [prisoners of war].

TS: Okay.

JR: And so, of course, if they became ill—had something—they came up to us.

TS: You treated them as well?

JR: Yeah. And there was a Marine—a doctor that was navy but he was attached to the Marines at the stockade, so he would come and he—then I saw him in Charleston; he was on duty in Charleston.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Like, years later?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Ran into him again.

JR: But taking care of the Japanese, the first time, I kept thinking that it could be one that in one way or another was involved with the attack upon the Americans. And still, afterwards you just took it for granted; you just—It didn't make any difference. It was hard to communicate with them—

TS: Right.

JR: —but you did it and it wasn't—

TS: So at first you had a little bit of anger?

JR: Yes, yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah.

TS: And then after time—

JR: Yeah.

TS: —they just became another patient?

JR: Right, right.

TS: Now, you—How many women were at the dispensary that—How many nurses?

JR: Just three.

TS: Just three?

JR: Yes. So, as I said, we had to cover, and it was called a dispensary but we had overnight—

TS: Right.

JR: And so, we had to cover twenty-four hours a day, and so sometimes we had duty for—every day for a month in order to be sure that we had coverage.

TS: Oh, right.

JR: But as Salty used to say—She'd make out a schedule, but then if we wanted to switch with each other, or whatever else, why, we could switch, but just so that we had the place covered.

TS: So somebody was always there.

JR: Right.

TS: [unclear] make sure. And it seems like you all got along pretty well.

JR: Yes, yes we did. Yeah, we did.

TS: You got to travel—It's interesting to look at those pictures because it's so pretty there. I mean—

JR: Yes.

TS: Oh, but they showed the one of the cyclone—

JR: Yes.

TS: —damage. You went through a cyclone?

JR: We—That's when we evacuated the whole hospital and took them up into the caves; took the patients up to the caves.

TS: We you afraid?

JR: No, no, but this one doctor sure was.

TS: Yeah? What did he do?

JR: There was this big reefer—big refrigerator that—well, it was certainly at least half as big as this room, and he would—You were able to get in there, and he would go into that reefer.

TS: Why did he want to go in there?

JR: He felt that was a safe place to be.

TS: Safer, yeah?

JR: But if we needed him for something he would come out.

TS: He would come out.

JR: Yeah.

TS: But he was kind of afraid of the—

JR: Yeah.

TS: —what was going to happen?

JR: Yeah. He thought as long as he could be in a safer place, I guess he just felt that he was going to do it.

TS: Now, you showed me pictures, too, of a—you were golfing?

JR: Oh, yeah, they—as I say, it was green; the green was [chuckles] —it could have been green, it could have been brown, we didn't care. But we'd just go out there and hit the ball—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Hit the ball?

JR: —with some kind of irons, not knowing one from another anyhow.

TS: But just to have some fun and do some—stay active.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Now, one really interesting picture—where a couple of them you had were of the Suicide Cliff in Saipan.

JR: Yes.

TS: Do you want to talk so—people who are listening to your transcript, or read your transcript, may not know what that means.

JR: That's where the civilians, actually, were told by the Japanese that the Americans were going to come and kill them all, and so they just went right over the cliff. Yeah.

[Suicide Cliff is a cliff above Marpi Point Field near the northern tip of Saipan, Northern Mariana Island, where hundreds of Japanese civilians and Japanese soldiers committed suicide by jumping to their deaths in 1944 in order to avoid capture by the United States]

TS: Just threw themselves into the water?

JR: Yeah, yes. We did go into caves, and I had some old, like—I had a teacup, one of those one without a handle, just a—and a couple of other pieces of—some utensils and stuff like that, that were in the ca—that we found in the caves.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: —where the Japanese—

TS: Kept them?

JR: They were Japanese, and the Japanese had just left them there or whatever.

TS: Did you guys grab them and keep them?

JR: The utensils?

TS: Yes.

JR: Yeah. Well, yeah.

TS: Did you bring anything else back from your tour?

JR: Not too—Well, like, these bracelets—some of these bracelets that I have.

TS: Yeah?

JR: I didn't, but they were given to me by some of the guys that had bracelets made—

TS: I see.

JR: —from different types of materials there that was available. And so, out of monotony they had to have something to do. A couple of them have my name on them and Saipan written on it. And those book—that wooden—on that bookcase next to the—

TS: On the shelf?

JR: Next to the dictionary there.

TS: Oh, I see it, okay.

JR: That, and a few at the top of that, that's carved, and that was done—as a matter of fact, it has Saipan written on it.

TS: Yeah.

JR: So that's—

TS: I was wondering, you had said something about bringing back some swords or something?

JR: Oh, yes, they were from [unclear]. They were Japanese, and at the time they said, "Oh, they're hari-kari swords," but actually some of them I think were even Japanese swords that were like decorative things but used for—used for their protection.

[Hari-kari is a common misspelling and mispronunciation of the Japanese method of ritual suicide Hara-Kiri, or seppuku, meaning to cut or slice the stomach or abdomen]

TS: Right.

JR: And when the Japanese were captured all these things were just thrown in a pile that the flyboys—so the flyers that were going to these islands—were able to pick up and bring back or—

TS: Just put them on the planes?

JR: Yeah; just do with them what they wanted because there was no such thing as inventory.

TS: [chuckles] Right. Now, you had women in your work—in your quarters that worked there for you?

JR: The Chamorran.

TS: Yeah?

JR: Chamorro girls—the native girls—and they were so cute and they all looked so young. And so, they worked in our quarters but they went home for overnight.

TS: Okay.

JR: Because they always lived close enough to us. For instance, Saipan isn't a big island anyhow, and the hospital was up on a hill. Well, at first, when we first got there the dispensary was close to the water, but then they moved us up—about halfway up the hill. And so, we had them work for us but they would go home overnight.

TS: Every night?

JR: Yeah, they didn't stay with us.

TS: Now, did you have—Just looking here—Oh, the name of that plane that—that plane that was called Ms—

JR: Ms. Happy Bottom?

TS: Ms. Happy Bottom, right.

JR: Yes. I think that was either a [Consolidated] PBV [Catalina] or P—I think that was a seaplane, which is an observation plane.

TS: Okay. So they—Could the guys name their planes whatever they wanted to, generally?

JR: Evidently.

TS: [chuckles] Evidently.

JR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

TS: So you took care of service men from—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: Yeah, I—Saipan was eighteen miles long and five miles wide.

TS: Yes.

JR: Yes.

TS: So your time there, did you feel like you were being—So the war's over, and now, how much longer do you have to stay in?

JR: Well, I was regular navy so I was in.

TS: You were in?

JR: I was in the navy and that was it.

TS: Yeah.

JR: So we stayed like a career person.

TS: They didn't have it, like, with the other—the WAC [Women's Army Corps] where it was, like, in until six months duration after the war?

JR: No, because they were reserves.

TS: They were reserves.

JR: Yeah, they were reserves. But that's why we were sent out to the Pacific, to relieve—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: To bring the reserves back?

JR: —to relieve the reserves. The reserves came back, but we were there to stay as long as—and at that time they did not have any time listed as how long your tour of duty was.

TS: No?

JR: No. No, you were regular navy, you were a career person, and it didn't matter where you were, how long you were. Now I think it's all different.

TS: Yeah. Well—So your—Did you—When you left Saipan, what was your next station after that?

JR: Brooklyn.

TS: Oh, well that would be a change of scenery.

JR: Yeah, Brooklyn—

TS: How did you end up in Brooklyn?

JR: That was my orders.

TS: Okay.

JR: I had done a tour of overseas duty and we—they needed less and less people out there so we were able to be relieved to go back to the States.

TS: So this was 1947 that you got—came back.

JR: Yes.

TS: Okay.

JR: And then I—See, I got married in '48, the next year.

TS: Oh, you did? Okay.

JR: And that's when I had to retire.

TS: You had to retire because you got married.

JR: Yes.

TS: And they made you get out of the Nurse Corps—

JR: Right.

TS: —when you got married. What'd you do in the meantime? How long were you in Brooklyn? Almost a year, it looks like.

JR: Yes, about a year.

TS: What kind of work did you do there?

JR: Well, I was—Seems to me I had maternity quite a bit.

TS: Oh, did you?

JR: Yeah. In Pensacola I was on the maternity ward, and one of the sickest people I saw there was a gal that was pregnant and had diabetes, and she was a real sick looking—but in Pensacola we were giving [open] drop ether, we were doing just—

TS: What's that?

JR: For anesthesia during delivery.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah, just put a mask over and drop ether on that, and yeah.

TS: Okay. So you were your own anesthesiologist?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: And we weren't trained—Yeah, we were not trained in any kind of anesthesiology.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: Yeah.

TS: So you met your husband in—

JR: We just, sort of, did what there was to do.

TS: Right. Well, there had—The rule books hadn't been written all the way yet, right?

JR: Yeah, right; that's right.

TS: Kind of, like, you were trying to figure some things out.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Yeah. So in Brooklyn you were in the maternity ward, and then you meet your husband.

JR: No, I met my husband in—after I went back to work, because I did go back to Bellevue to work.

TS: Okay.

JR: Civilian nursing.

TS: Okay.

JR: And that's when I met Marty.

TS: Oh, I thought you said you got married and you had to get out.

JR: Well, I got married in the forties to Walter.

TS: Okay.

JR: And he was the one that came back from the Pacific.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Your first husband.

JR: Yeah, my first husband.

TS: Okay, and then he passed away?

JR: He passed away, yes, and I was a widow for quite a few years before—Well, I met Marty and, as I said, we worked together for quite a few years before we became real good friends.

TS: Yeah?

JR: And he had already been married. His wife—He was divorced because his wife, she went to India to the [Sri Aurobindo] Ashram at Pondicherry for seven years at one point, and when she came back she said, well, she's going back again. And by that time, their son Peter was already married, and so if anything Peter encouraged his father more than anything else that—

TS: To get a divorce?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Well, what encouraged you to go back into the navy reserve, then, after you got out? Why did you go back into the reserves?

JR: You mean when I first got out as regular?

TS: Well, did you go in the reserve when you were—when you got out? Were you in the reserve when you got out as regular?

JR: No.

TS: You were out out, all the way?

JR: Yeah, I just resigned and—No, I guess I was in the reserve but—

TS: Like, an inactive reserve?

JR: Right.

TS: Okay. And then when did you become active reserve again?

JR: In, like, '59.

TS: Fifty-nine?

JR: Yes.

TS: Why did you decide to do that at that time?

JR: Because I wanted to become more active in the military, and Marty had—I mean Walter had passed away by—No, fifty—No, not—it was for—a need for some kind of concrete activity that I was happy doing.

TS: Keep you busy?

JR: Yeah, yes.

TS: Because you've been stay—I mean, you're fairly active.

JR: Yeah.

TS: This one [document?], on the backside it talks about where you were here.

JR: Yes.

TS: So you were—you were at a lot of different places. Did you remain a civilian, and then you did your—

JR: Yeah, I was—

TS: —your reserve duty. You've got a lot of places listed there, which we probably can't go through all of them.

JR: Okay.

TS: But was there a highlight of something that you enjoyed?

JR: Yeah, for instance, here where I have military activity I was already in the reserves.

TS: Okay.

JR: So this is training duty that I did every year in the reserves.

TS: Right, to keep act—to keep your reserve status.

JR: Yeah. And even if it was more than two weeks, supposedly—I don't know what it is now but now you get pulled in, it's more than—

TS: Than you did at that time.

JR: Yeah. But—

TS: Well, I was wondering what you were doing during Vietnam. Did you do anything out of the ordinary or did you continue just your regular—

JR: No, I did my training duty every year.

TS: Okay.

JR: But I was never called to an active status.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah, yeah. So these are all the—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Well, let me ask you—Yeah, there's quite a few. And then you ended up in a few different places. I was going to ask you a couple questions that are about—you've answered a lot of them that I have listed down here. I just want to talk about some general things.

JR: Yes.

TS: Were you ever afraid or in personal danger?

JR: No.

TS: Not at all?

JR: No.

TS: How were your relationships—relations with the people you worked with, whether they were doctors or nurses or corpsmen?

JR: All except for Teresa Duggan.

TS: [chuckles] That's the one person that just, kind of, rubbed you the wrong way.

JR: Corpsmen, we always—Everybody respected the next person, and as I said, with the corpsmen we even did go sorting peaches, and then we'd—we didn't go into San Francisco, we'd stay somewhere near where we worked maybe, which, again, Teresa did not approve of.

TS: Well, we'll give Teresa a little break right now.

JR: [chuckles] Yeah.

TS: Now, what—In your—What did you think about the Roosevelts [President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt] at that—Do you remember thinking anything?

JR: We just—I suppose the politics just didn't enter into our—we weren't aware of the political angles.

TS: For yourself personally?

JR: And we felt that Roosevelt was doing a great thing with, for instance, the CCC—

TS: Right, Civilian Conservation Corps.

JR: Right, right, yes. That was a wonderful way of finding something for these people to do; what they would feel they were still being paid for and get them off the streets. That's what they should do now.

TS: Did you have any heroes or heroines from that era?

JR: No. As I say, I felt that some of these chief nurses were as much heroes as—

TS: You have a lot of admiration for some—

JR: A lot of admiration for them, yeah, whether they were as rough and ready as Salty—

TS: [chuckles]

JR: —or whether they were as sweet as the—actually, the first one I had in Philadelphia, she was a very proper person and all, but certainly admired her. And, for instance, at Bellevue we had gotten to the point where you could wear a handkerchief in your uniform pocket; that we did a lot of crocheting or tatting or something like that and you could stick that in your pocket if it was white embroidery or white—

TS: So add a little feminine touch to your uniform in that way?

JR: Yes, right, right. But I was assigned to, as I said, the clinic in Philadelphia fairly early for a new person in the navy.

TS: Yes.

JR: And at that time we weren't even called ensigns, we were simply given—we didn't have the insignia.

TS: Right.

JR: Yeah. But—So Ms. [unclear] came to me with a very sweet smile on her face and she said, "Ms. Grushinski, in the navy we do not wear those handkerchiefs in our pockets." Believe me, I never did it again. And I didn't resent it, I didn't feel [unclear]. I thought, "She's right. That's—" Well, my father was quite authoritarian.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And we never answered my father, and what he said just went, and I guess having that kind of a background, as I say, I didn't resent it. I still thought she was a wonderful person and didn't feel at all hurt about it or—

TS: Right.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Well, did you—Do you think that—of yourself as an independent person, even before you went into the navy?

JR: Looking back, I'd say yes, and still, I didn't ignore rules and regulations.

TS: Well, you don't have to ignore that to be independent, though, right?

JR: Yeah. I felt that before—well, even before going into nursing I think I was sort of a, well, introvert.

TS: Oh, you think so?

JR: But somehow that got out of my system, probably very, very early in my contact with other—Yeah, I felt that—being second generation I didn't feel, at first, that—quite in place—in the proper place with some of the things, but I think that wore off very fast.

TS: You eventually learned your way—

JR: Yeah.

TS: —and things like that. Do you consider yourself a pioneer at all for that era; leading—for other women in the military and in the navy corps—Navy Nurse Corps?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: No. It was a time that everybody was doing the best they could with the situation that we were faced with in America and—even though, like, it was my first language at the time—Polish was—but I certainly wouldn't for a minute think of myself as—even thinking about being disloyal to America.

TS: Right.

JR: It was a time when everybody did their part.

TS: And you felt like that—you were doing your part as well.

JR: Yes.

TS: Now—

JR: And feeling very good about being able to do it. So I can sort of understand why, in certain situations, men would go into a situation where who knows what the outcome will be, but they did it, and you just didn't think about it—

TS: At the time?

JR: —the situation when you were in that situation, yeah.

TS: Now, are you—Can you remember any of the music you listened to or bands or anything like that?

JR: Oh, sure, yeah. All those big band songs and—I have tapes of—That's what I had on that recorder—

TS: Yeah?

JR: —and I have a recorder there that—the Legion is going to get it.

TS: Okay.

JR: But it isn't working, and the guy in electronics, he did try to do something about it, but I don't even care because that's good enough.

TS: That one just works [unclear]?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Do you remember the names of any of the ones you listened to? Benny Goodman or—

JR: Well, yes, yes. Benny Goodman and—Well, see now that you're asking me—but—

TS: That's okay. We can—It's something we can write in on the transcript.

JR: Yeah. My—The bottom drawer there—

TS: Is full of tapes?

JR: —is full—Yeah.

TS: [chuckles] Do you still listen to the—

JR: And the classical—semi-classical.

TS: Okay.

JR: For instance, that little radio.

TS: Yes.

JR: I'll have this city channel there—

TS: And tune it in.

JR: —station.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And I can turn that on for an hour, so that if I leave in the meantime it'll shut off, and that's a [unclear] make, and I've had that—I shouldn't say it so it doesn't go bad on me.

TS: I think you've had it more than ten years. [chuckles]

JR: Oh, I had it back in New York.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Which was more than thirty years now.

TS: Yeah, it looks like it has—it's in good shape there.

JR: And it still—it's got a good tone, that little one that's right next to the—and that one I played—I have a tape of organ music and—not organ, oh, harp.

TS: Harp? Okay.

JR: Harp. And that's supposed to be very—so when my husband was—he was [unclear] in the hospital, in Holy Cross [Hospital] in Florida. When he had his first stroke he recovered very, very nicely, but the second one was catastrophic. My sister-in-law, his sister, would say that—because she would visit him sometimes. She loved—She was a card player, loved to go—in Florida, and afternoon she'd have a game of cards, in the evening she'd have another game of cards, with another group.

TS: Right.

JR: But I was not that kind of a card player.

TS: No?

JR: I used to like cards but I couldn't—

TS: Not over and over again.

JR: Right, right, yeah. And so, sometimes she'd go and be—stay with him from noon until it was time for her to go to the game or some—a couple of hours, and I would come in in the meantime. And she said, "Oh," she says, "He knows it's you. The expression on his face and all." She says, "He knows—"

TS: Yeah.

JR: "—who you are." And then I'd stay until night shift came on, because the evening shift was when they had the least amount of staff. And the therapists would have given me instructions of how to carry out whatever therapy we were concentrating on. And so, I would do that, I wouldn't be sitting around just for [unclear].

TS: Right, no, I can't see you sitting around at all.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Well, do you—What do you think about now—about the roles that women play in the military? It's been quite expanded a lot.

JR: Well, it sure—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Do you think there's anything they shouldn't be doing?

JR: It sure has. This is what they have chosen and I think that this is what they should be doing.

TS: So the idea of, like, women on submarines and fighter pilots and—

JR: Right.

TS: That's fine?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Even in the combat roles that they—

JR: Right.

TS: That's okay?

JR: Yeah, if this is—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: What about that whole—Go ahead.

JR: This is what they went into the military for.

TS: So that's okay?

JR: Right, yeah.

TS: Now, the other controversial, kind of, topic is the idea of homosexuals in the military.

JR: Yes.

TS: When you were in were you aware of any that were in at that time or—

JR: No, I don't think I know anything about homosexuals at that time. [both chuckle]

TS: Well, what do you think about it now that they're welcome in the military? [unclear] open.

JR: Well, that too. I know it's a question with a lot of different answers, but it's—I think it's wrong for the people our—that are with these people are vehemently—and are aggressive against them. If this is what our government is allowing—well, times are changing.

TS: Well, some people would say if they can do their job, what does it matter?

JR: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

TS: Yeah, different—but a different kind of military than the one—

JR: Yeah, definitely.

TS: —than you were in.

JR: Definitely.

TS: Do you think your life has been different because you signed up for the navy?

JR: Yes, yeah.

TS: Yeah?

JR: Yeah.

TS: I think I'm wearing you out. [both chuckle] We only—There's only a couple more questions.

JR: I think meeting people as different as Salty and some of the others, and then Ms. Marcie in Pensacola, they were different, and still I feel their hearts were in the right place.

TS: Yeah. So you feel—

JR: And it has nothing to do with religion. But they were—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But you meet people from all over the world and all over the country.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Get a, kind of, different view of their perspective and [unclear].

JR: Yeah.

TS: And from all different types of backgrounds—

JR: Yeah.

TS: —as far as, like, economics and things like that too.

JR: Right. I know that—Like, Catholicism has some definite—Are you Catholic or are you—Yeah, so—Are you against—

TS: Against what?

JR: Like, certain types of birth control and stuff like—When it first started at Bellevue, that it was accepted, then whoever was on duty had to sign that they of their own free will are working there and all.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: And I was a supervisor at that time, I didn't work right in the OR or anything, but I could imagine—and we—there were cases of where one of the nurses—and at that time I was supervisor of the prison ward, and this one nurse was attacked by a bunch of hoodlums in New York, not too far from her apartment actually. And so, it was not a matter of—because this was right after it occurred, and I certainly wouldn't blame her for—I would feel that it was a perfectly legitimate thing to do. If it happened to me I would love to have a child but I would really hate to have a child out of a situation like that.

TS: Oh, so she was sexually assaulted?

JR: Right.

TS: Okay, I see. So—

JR: And the prisoners on that—They didn't get that guy at that time, but they all have their own ways of getting to know what's going on.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And they said that—I don't know if it ever happened, I don't know if any of them ever did get to him, but they said, "We'll find him." And this was the prisoners that would be getting out of the ward; "We'll find him."

TS: So they deal with it in their own way.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Well, would you recommend military service to any young man or woman today?

JR: Yes, definitely. Yeah.

TS: Well, two more questions. What's patriotism mean to you?

JR: A loyalty to the things that we swore we would uphold, and a feeling of defending anyone or—a multiplicity of what we had come to want to be loyal to and want to uphold and want to—

TS: Like, certain values—

JR: Yeah.

TS: —that we all share?

JR: Yes.

TS: Well, I don't have any more formal questions.

JR: Like I said, even though I was brought up with—

TS: The Polish background?

JR: Right, right, but I certainly would not say that I would go along with anything. For instance, if I was Russian, and I have known some Russia friends that—and so, they could not see Communism as something that they would—the teachings of Communism and the principles of being Communist as being something that they would adopt.

TS: They didn't—They rejected it.

JR: Right.

TS: Because they were Americans.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Right.

TS: With the Russian background.

JR: Even though their parents were—

TS: Were from there?

JR: Right.

TS: Yes. That's interesting. Well, I don't have anything more to add. It has been a long day and you—

JR: [chuckles]

TS: —have had a lot of energy, but I think we're sapping the strength of both of us. Do you have anything that you'd like to add that we hadn't talked about? We'll go over some of the things that you're going to donate but we can do that off tape.

JR: No, I don't think—I think we've pretty much gone—

TS: We've covered quite a bit.

JR: We've gone over these things, yeah.

TS: Can you say where it was—where—even in war time, where you had a favorite—where your favorite place was?

JR: Pensacola.

TS: Pensacola? Yeah.

JR: Pensacola. It was that feeling with meeting new friends that then you became very loyal to, and worked together with, and enjoyed it all.

TS: And those friendships lasted a lifetime.

JR: Yeah, right.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And the military in general, and just, like, meeting Marie two years ago—

TS: [Marie Senzig \[WV#0549\]](#)

JR: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

JR: Two years ago at the navy nurse reunion—

TS: Right.

JR: —and casually saying, "Oh, yeah, I was in the navy and now I live in New Bern." And here I am searching for somebody in New Bern that will have some kind of a—Sure, I want to be closer to family, but there are other relationships, and she has been—she and Jill and the American Legion guys. So there's something about being in the military that—

TS: It's like family?

JR: Yeah, absolutely.

TS: Even when you just met Marie and you met Jill here.

JR: Right.

TS: It's just—You just have that connection still, right?

JR: Yes.

TS: Well, that's great. That's probably a good place to end it, don't you think?

JR: Yeah. [chuckles]

TS: Okay.

JR: And these Legion guys.

TS: They were pretty welcoming too.

JR: They come in here, and Nancy, who's the wife of one of them, and she'll tell one of them, "Well, Jeanne needs such and such, and—" or, "She's in such and such a position." And then they come in and there's no question but they're here to help.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And of course, I, always having been independent and trying to figure things out for myself, especially after I had the fracture—

TS: Right.

JR: —and I couldn't do these things.

TS: Right. It sounds like one of the times in your life that you've been limited.

JR: Definitely.

TS: In all these ninety-six years. [chuckles]

JR: Definitely, yeah.

TS: It probably was hard for you.

JR: Right, yeah.

TS: Well, it's been great to meet you and speak with you tonight, Jeanne.

JR: Well, we've got to go through those clothes.

TS: I know, we will. Well, I'm going to turn the tape off for now, so let's do that.

[End of Interview]