

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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Interviewee: Leonard J. Panaggio

Interviewer: Dr. Evelyn M. Cherpak

Subject: World War II Veterans

Date: August 15, 2005

EMC: I'd like to thank you, Mr. Panaggio, for coming in today, August 15, 2005. It's the sixtieth anniversary of VJ Day, a very appropriate day for the oral history, and it's taking place in my office at the Naval War College. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you where and when you were born.

LJP: I was born February 26, 1919, in Newport, Rhode Island.

EMC: Did you have any siblings?

LJP: Three brothers and one sister.

EMC: When did you graduate from high school?

LJP: 1938 class.

EMC: And what did you do after you finished high school?

LJP: I was working as a clerk in a chain store. And then I went to work for the construction quartermaster's office at Fort Adams. After that particular project terminated, I came over here to work for the disbursing office at the Naval Base.

EMC: Right at the Naval Base. You were in the thick of military efforts here in Newport, Rhode Island. Where were you on December 7, 1941?

LJP: I was sitting in a house on Bristol Ferry Road in Portsmouth with a man named Mr. Temple. Mr. Temple and I were friends. We always said we were going to have a game of checkers and we didn't for two or three years. That Sunday we finally got down to it and had checkers, and halfway through the checker game they announced the Pearl Harbor thing.

EMC: And what was your reaction to that?

LJP: Just couldn't believe it. Couldn't believe it, but we had to because that radio wasn't joking. And announcements kept coming, new bulletins, new bulletins.

EMC: Do you remember what the reaction of the people of Newport was?

LJP: Shock. Couldn't believe it, although I think part of our reaction was tempered by the fact that we were really involved, and I think that was part of the fact that we were shocked, but on the other hand it was just—I used to hear it when I worked in the grocery store.

EMC: Oh, really?

LJP: Oh, you're going to be in a uniform in a couple of years. This was even before 1939.

EMC: For heaven's sake.

LJP: It was something that people knew, the way things were going in Europe.

EMC: The war had started there in '39.

LJP: Well, before that when Hitler was taking over the Sudetenland.

EMC: Did you decide to enlist, or were you drafted?

LJP: Number one, I thought I was going to be a big hero. I was looking for a commission like a lot of us were. And I wanted to go to the Maritime Academy.

EMC: Why did you think about the Maritime Academy?

LJP: Because I was looking for a commission.

EMC: You were looking for a commission.

LJP: And actually I think that we all were, and I had gone through a lot of paperwork, but the draft board informed me that the War Department was not honoring volunteers, so called, for the Maritime service. And one of them said, one of the three men at the draft board, everything happens for the best. I think it did.

EMC: Good, so you were drafted then into what service?

LJP: The branch was the Army Air Corps.

EMC: Now did that consist of the planes and the pilots? Is that it?

LJP: No.

EMC: What is it?

LJP: At Fort Devens we were processed. And the day I was there it looked like most of us were going to the Air Corps. Everything to medics. In other words, they were processing a couple of thousand men a day, I'm sure.

EMC: When?

LJP: Fort Devens.

EMC: When was this, though?

LJP: 1942.

EMC: '42?

LJP: March of '42. But what I'm saying is the day I was there it was mostly Air Corps. Three days later I was on the train. It took us an awful long time to get to Mississippi.

EMC: Is that where you were?

LJP: Keesler Field. It's still active.

EMC: That's where you had your basic training?

LJP: Yes.

EMC: And how long was basic training?

LJP: About six weeks.

EMC: And what did that consist of?

LJP: Marching.

EMC: Oh, really?

LJP: Manual of Arms I guess, basic training. That's all it was. It was getting use to the idea that you were in the Army and obeying orders and things like that. I made it through. No big deal. It was hot. It was stuff and sandy down there, and we had to take our shoes off and put them on pegs so they would be upside down. Finding nothing, inside the next morning.

EMC: Wooden barracks, I imagine.

LJP: No, tents.

EMC: Tents?

LJP: I sent a postcard to a friend of mine here, showing Keesler Field with nice barracks and brass. I said, "Don't believe this."

EMC: I'm going to copy down the name of Keesler Field in Mississippi.

LJP: I went back there about fifteen years ago. Lt. Governor J. Joseph Garrahy temporarily assigned me to his staff to pitch for the national annual conference, St. Germain. And I went to Keesler Field. I couldn't believe it. Beautiful, beautiful new buildings. I couldn't believe it.

EMC: You were in kind of a makeshift type situation.

LJP: We were pioneers.

EMC: After your six weeks training down there, where were you sent?

LJP: We were sent to Macon, Georgia, and we took over what was called the Herbert Smart Airport, S-m-a-r-t. It's supposed to be a municipal airport, and there were three groups, depot groups. They had depot groups training there—the thirty-four, the thirty-seventh, and thirty-sixth, broke off. We were Headquarters Squadron, Repair Squadron, and Supply Squadron and medics and chemicals and so on, trucking, fourteen hundred men.

EMC: What was your rate?

LJP: I was still a private.

EMC: You're still a private. And what was your job there?

LJP: This is where it all began. When we arrived at night at the airport, I mean at the grounds, there were a couple hundred of us. We lined up, and the sergeant came up, first sergeant, and he told us to fall out tomorrow morning in our fatigues, which we understood. Fine. That evening two or three of the men who were there, basic party, it was just like a—what do you call it? Cadre. So two or three of these men came through. Anybody here from so and so? Anybody from New England? These two walked into the tent where we were and (all newcomers) and what did you do? I said I was this. He looked at me and said, "What do you do?" I said, I work for the War Department, the Navy Department". "What are you doing here?" Clerical. Tomorrow morning you report at headquarters in uniform. Two others also were selected. So that next morning when we got up everybody is in fatigues, except three guys. And the sergeant turned over and said, "What MMM-MMM-MMM-MMM are you doing like that? Who says so"? He said, "Sergeant So and So." "What do you mean?"

He said, "We have to report to headquarters. We're going to be clerical".

EMC: Oh, good.

LJP: And I became a clerical, and that was the beginning of a career with the service. Now there we did some training, and I'll tell you what my training was. Let's see. I had one afternoon of bayonet, one day with five rounds of prone, five rounds of sitting, five rounds of standing, one burst of a machine gun and another day a gas chamber. And that was just about it. We were building up a group. Each week we had additional members come in, new officers reporting, and so we had to do it that way. I had applied for officer candidate school. I passed, but my commanding officer said, "No, you're not going to go." And that was it.

EMC: You were too valuable.

LJP: I will always remember that.

EMC: Too valuable to leave us.

LJP: Well, but again the result—the end result everything happened for the best. We were very fortunate to be sent where we were.

EMC: How long were you at Macon, Georgia, doing your work there?

LJP: June, I think, until June. Then we went to Charleston, South Carolina.

EMC: June of '43 you were in—

LJP: '42, '42.

EMC: '42.

LJP: I was drafted March 4, 1942.

EMC: Okay, March 4, 1942 is the draft.

LJP: Yeah.

EMC: And then you were in Macon. And then after Macon?

LJP: Ten Mile Station. Charleston. And we were there until early November.

EMC: November of '42?

LJP: Yes.

EMC: Now were you doing the same thing in Charleston?

LJP: Clerical. I was the clerk of the supply squadron.

EMC: Why did they shift you around so much?

LJP: Ask them.

EMC: I just wondered.

LJP: When I worked in construction quartermaster's office, I used to have to make duplicate blueprints. And I learned how to do that which was an asset for me because you have to take a certain kind of paper the engineer's office had. Then you take the carbon paper. And you reverse the carbon,

so you were typing on the back of the paper. And you reverse the carbon, so you were typing on the back of the paper. That made a very strong impression, the original and it's backup. Then you went to the engineer's office with copy, and they made a blueprint process, but it wasn't blueprint. It was nice sharp print. And the sergeant major said to me one day, we going to have three copies. Three copies of the table of organization for each squadron with, no strikeover, no erasures, and then he said, "I want this in a week". So I said, "If I get this done—this was like Wednesday morning—I'd like a weekend pass". "Sure, okay." I said, "No, I'm serious".

EMC: Conditions.

LJP: He couldn't believe it. And I understand that a letter did come down from someone in Washington praising the neat job.

EMC: That's great. So you finished by Friday?

LJP: I did everything they wanted me to do. I cut dog tags. I did everything.

EMC: Oh, sure.

LJP: The Chaplain came to me, one day and said "I need a little information sheet from you. I want to call it the Sky Pilot. I said, "You've got it, Chaplain".

EMC: Very cooperative. That's the way to be.

LJP: I knew I was just able to do these things. Public relations—I opened the Public Relations Office at the overseas base. I interviewed Yugoslavian officers and VIPs.

EMC: You did that on your own hook?

LJP: No, I couldn't go in open public places.

EMC: No, no.

LJP: But I mean I did it. I mean the office was open, and eventually someone took over. But I went here and there and whatever they wanted me to do.

EMC: Oh, I see, so you shifted around.

LJP: I was still the squadron clerk.

EMC: I see. Okay. But you did whatever they asked you to do.

LJP: If they needed something, yes. And when the base paper was established about six weeks, the man who was editing was transferred. So they asked me to take over. I said, "Fine, I'll take over." I kept it for over two years.

EMC: Where was this?

LJP: Casablanca.

EMC: That's something else.

LJP: The last base was Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

EMC: So how long were you in Charleston? Do you remember?

LJP: June through early November.

EMC: Okay, June to November, that's a short time. And then after that?

LJP: Camp Kilmer.

EMC: Camp Kilmer, like Joyce Kilmer, the poet. Okay, in New Jersey.

LJP: We were there until about the 12th of December.

EMC: That's a very short time.

LJP: That was temporary.

EMC: November through mid December '42, and what were you doing there, the same thing or just getting ready to go abroad?

LJP: Turning in old shoes, making sure everything was in good shape, I mean it was more like housekeeping for us.

EMC: Okay, for your unit.

LJP: We were trying to be as liberal as possible with passes, not to go home, long distances but go to New York. Forty minutes from New York. A lot of them went to New York every night. Not everybody. We had a little personal leave, but I had as the chief working with the squadron, I had to issue passes and gave out eighteen passes a night. There was always a nineteenth pass.

EMC: Was that you?

LJP: We saw wonderful stage shows.

EMC: Really?

LJP: I loved them.

EMC: That's fantastic. Did they have any USOs and canteens in New York? They must have.

LJP: The Stage Door canteen was there. And the USO had a place. But I saw Danny Kaye in a show, and I forget the title, but it was about soldiers. But he wasn't really that well known at the time. I saw a show with Ray Bolger.

EMC: I see.

LJP: He was a great dancer. I saw stars in shows, and I figured, let me see them.

EMC: Very good. Did you get free tickets to these shows? Was that part of the deal?

LJP: No.

EMC: Because I thought they did. I thought the canteens—

LJP: There could have been. I know that if you went to the USO they always had an office in Grand Central or Union Station, Washington. You should go there. And they would probably have some passes. And the one in Washington—my best friend was in the Marine Corps in Quantico and we really didn't know what to do in Washington that day. And we went to the little office, and "oh, we're looking for a Marine and an Air Corps man. There was a party going on at Chevy Chase, which was really country at the time. And so we were taken out there. They'll be some people there. You can go to a party and meet some nice people and young lady there. And then the secretary of Senator

(inaudible) of Ohio had couple of dates after that, too.

EMC: You weren't having a terribly bad time.

LJP: Oh, yes.

EMC: --in these places. Did you have any time to socialize in Macon or in Charleston?

LJP: What please?

EMC: In Macon, did you have any time to socialize and go out on the town?

LJP: I didn't like Macon. It was a small city.

EMC: Very Southern.

LJP: That doesn't bother me. I liked being down there. I didn't care for the city. There was one hotel, The Dempsey, and the new lieutenants from Camp Wheeler were sent on detail at nighttime to make sure they would salute officers. And those poor men would walk around that hotel outside. They never got their hands down because we knew that they had to return to the civilian salutes. And then about a week later I looked at a roadmap, and I saw a place called Milledgeville, which was the colonial capital of Georgia. I didn't know much about it. I went to the Grey Hound Station. "Does the bus go through Milledgeville?" One day a friend of mine from Brooklyn and I went to Milledgeville. Beautiful city, beautiful little town, green grass, also the home then of the Georgia State College for Women.

EMC: Right, and the WAVES were trained there, the storekeepers.

LJP: I don't know about that part. But I said this is where I was. And I met a nice young lady.

She graduated. She passed me on to one of her sisters taking summer courses.

EMC: So you had—

LJP: I wasn't a slouch when it came to meet people.

EMC: That wasn't.

LJP: That's not my way. I mean, yes I had some, too. When I had a chance to go to Atlanta—well, a weekend. I went to Atlanta for the 4th of July weekend. And the city was crazy with military personnel. Everybody was there. The Henry Grady Hotel and others were filled. I asked someone if there's another hotel out there. Yes, the Atlanta Biltmore is the residential area. I checked in. And I was really the only one enlisted person there. All the guest were majors and captains and families. There was no problem. I checked out, and the manager said you are welcome anytime. Come back. Two dollars and forty cents.

EMC: How nice.

LJP: For the best hotel. And here these guys are knocking themselves out trying to bunk into a room, maybe paying twenty dollars. That wasn't for me.

EMC: That was clever of you to find that place.

LJP: I said there must be something else. I went to Grant Park. I was always looking for something.

EMC: --to do?

LJP: --to do, but something that I would like to know more. I went to Stone Mountain. They were still working on General Lee, carving on the side of the mountain. I went there by trolley car. I was just in downtown Atlanta.

EMC: That's true.

LJP: I mean that's what I was after. What am I doing here and why can't I make something part of what I am doing?

EMC: That's very good of you. That was very clever.

LJP: I even went up to New York City a couple of times while in the service. I went down to City Hall, and I viewed the beautiful paintings there and they had commissioned offices there. And I saw Bessie Fielding again whom I had met in 1940 during my first visit to City Hall. And she was so darn nice, and I wrote to her several times, and she'd write back. I went in there and she was pleased to see me in uniform.

EMC: Very welcoming.

LJP: These are people I wanted to know, if I had to. She said a new painting was due to be displayed.

EMC: That's great. You did some educational things then with your leave time. You were back at Camp Kilmer when you're preparing to go abroad. Did you know where you were going? Did they tell you?

LJP: No, the only thing was in June when we were at Charleston. A top secret message came in and the commanding officer, the executive office, adjutant master sergeant and I were the only ones

to read it. It said when you are blah, blah, blah, you will be attached to the Twelfth Air Force. Now in November of '42 the invasion of North Africa occurred. The Twelfth Air Force was established in Algiers. On the way over, I did not sleep in a bunk. I slept in my swivel chair in my squadron office in the ship.

EMC: Really?

LJP: I wasn't going to sleep on the bunk. I put my barracks bag on it.

EMC: Where did you leave from?

LJP: Staten Island.

EMC: Was it a liberty ship? What kind of a ship was it?

LJP: No, it was a freighter, a Dutch freighter.

EMC: Really? Isn't that interesting. And how many men were on it?

LJP: About two or three thousand, at least fourteen hundred of us.

EMC: Going to—

LJP: Going to Morocco.

EMC: Going to Morocco, but you didn't know you were going there?

LJP: Well—

EMC: You kind of knew, maybe.

LJP: On board, in addition to our group, there was the headquarters unit of the Army. It was the Ninth Infantry. General Stroh was on board. I think he was. So we had that group. We were very well protected. The *Texas* or *New York* and the cruiser *Philadelphia* were our big ships, and there were a lot of destroyers. I think we lost one ship, a tanker.

EMC: Really?

LJP: That was a really a bad time as U boats were sinking ships every day.

EMC: Yes, very very much so. What month did you leave in?

LJP: December

EMC: December. December of '42.

LJP: We arrived the day before Christmas.

EMC: Really?

LJP: And we didn't know what we were doing. We really didn't. We were there.

EMC: And you landed at...

LJP: Casablanca.

EMC: Casablanca, okay.

LJP: Then we had to sleep on the street, a side street off the main road.

EMC: Sleep on the street?

LJP: Yeah.

EMC: Took a—

LJP: We put everything we had down, put down the blanket and put the pup tent over us for cover. And that was it. We slept in the street. We had guards from our unit who volunteered. The next day was Christmas day, and the Arabs came. And we had oranges and eggs, which were very good, and we were very happy to have them. And we had been issued six cans of ration, Vienna sausage, etc. If you're hungry, you ate it.

EMC: You ate it.

LJP: But the Arabs came, so there were fresh oranges and fresh eggs. And it was always known that any—at that time—when the Twelfth Air Force was built up. It was built from the Eighth and the Ninth, I guess, in England. Of course, the bombers came down, but they couldn't return. They couldn't get back. But if they came down later on and refueled, then went back to England, which they would, if the pilot or the crew didn't take back some oranges, they were—you remember a movie called "Yank". Richard Gere was in it.

EMC: No, I don't.

LJP: It was very good, and he was a cook, a mess sergeant, and he fell in love with a woman whose family owned a little variety store. And the sign in the window said oranges tomorrow, and a line of ladies you couldn't believe, with net bags, in line to get the orange, one orange. That's how

prized an orange was. That's why I say any man that came down from England when he was going back he would take back oranges.

EMC: Oh, sure rationing in those days.

LJP: You could put an awful lot of oranges in a bag. And, of course, they would appreciate it. Then about a month later the adjutant called me in his office and said, "Pack up, you're going to be going in detached service".

EMC: Where were you staying at this time? Did they finally set you up in a base?

LJP: No, we stayed in the same area, but then we got into the field. We had to find out what the property was. After all, who was there? It was land. Could we go on that land? You know, we were respecting the law. But we had a field there, and we put our pup tents up.

EMC: So you stayed—

LJP: And eventually we moved—at the end of Rue de Mazagan. Anyway, at the end of the Rue de Mazagan, there were stadiums, and each stadium had a stand, a bleacher area. There was actually a covered area. And I don't know how. There were no supporting posts. It could hold hundreds of people. Another outfit had a stadium below us and one across the street, three stadiums there. And they were great, because the facilities were there, rest rooms, our medics set up their infirmary there. It was a sports area and you had to have a facility like that. So again we were very lucky. We did establish an infirmary in the city, in a beautiful, beautiful villa. There's where things happened, in the stadium, and eventually one of our men built a theater; it had a stage. He built the stage in his spare time. And he would show sixteen millimeter films. He had two projectors. And he knew how to look

at a screen and that dot on that film would tell you the next projector would have to go. He would link up with thirty-five millimeter projectors. I don't know how he had got them or where he got them. But we thought it was the best theater. He called it the Radio City Music Hall in North Africa.

EMC: So did you show movies?

LJP: Yes, we had Ella Logan. We had Joe E. Brown. We had all these from the stage.

EMC: Oh, you mean in person?

LJP: Yeah.

EMC: So USO?

LJP: Yeah, USO. But he built this little theater, and I don't know—he never got a Legion of Merit of anything like that. I can never understand that. But anyway, he deserved it.

EMC: Was that inside the stadium?

LJP: It had the seating area.

EMC: Sure.

LJP: You look at the projection booth. There was the stage. Ella Logan came there. Joey E. Brown came there.

EMC: So you had entertainment.

LJP: Yes. Anyway a month after we arrived at Casablanca, the adjutant said I was going on

detached service. And he said, “you’re to go to be a hotel manager at a hotel.” The hotel was about six miles away. It was the resort village of Ain Diab.

EMC: Could you spell that?

LJP: A-i-n, Ain.

EMC: A-i-n?

LJP: Yp D-i-a-b. A small resort village, which I think is now more of a resort than just a little village, beautiful beach, El Hank Lighthouse. Beautiful El Hank.

EMC: Right.

LJP: And beautiful, beautiful beach near the three story hotel. There was a sergeant there. He was the senior of the two of us, but we had a billeting officer. We had to have a billeting officer. The woman who owned the hotel didn’t want us to use GI trays, mugs, flatware etc. She wanted her dining room to look like it should be. We had linen. We had tea cups, which were not replaceable if they were broken, and so on. And one day I was sitting at the desk, which was post number one, and an officer came by. He’d been up at Tunis. He probably had been eating fried spam or cold spam. So he came by , and he asked what’s for dinner tonight, so I said, “Spam, sir”. Of course, actually it was a six pound roll of luncheon meat. Army specifications, I guess, was probably spam.

EMC: What they called it.

LJP: So what do you suppose—he said, “Oh”. Then I said, “Spam tonight , sir”.

EMC: Under glass or something?

LJP: A regular under cover, probably silver plate.

EMC: Very elegant.

LJP: And tomato sauce with cloves on top. They ate those six pound loaves.

EMC: Palatable anyway.

LJP: Well, it was. Our mess sergeant was there. And we had a Spanish chef in the hotel, so he knew what to do with food.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: That was the best seven month of all my service.

EMC: Wow, you were lucky to be detailed there.

LJP: Seven months. Then we gave it to the RAF.

EMC: The Royal Air Force, so you were out of there then. Did you live at the hotel?

LJP: Oh, yes.

EMC: You'd had to.

LJP: We had a room, but the days were like 6:00 in the morning until 12:30 the next. We had to prepare entertainment for them, show movies. We would run bingos for them. They would be really new fliers, or we would be hosting men coming back from Tunis for engine checks of their planes

and repair work. Sometimes it would be two day and we got very friendly with them. We knew who we were. We were enlisted men, but these are people our same age, twenty years, twenty-two. And instead one of the base colonels came down and thought the enlisted at the hotel had a soft job and wanted to go through some training. So we went out the day after, and we went around a big rock, walked through sand, and so on. And when I got back the billeting officer was impressed. He saw us marching through sand and said, "That will toughen the calf muscles. "We soon set up a volleyball area and said, "why can't that be our exercise." "Oh, great, he said, "body contact". Well, the officers versus enlisted man, no rank, Joe, right, Dave, back at the hotel, sir. We had good relationships. And I have a diary at home. Lieutenant Pearson, Lieutenant So-and So, and I played poker tonight. Enlisted man playing poker.

EMC: That's interesting that you kept a diary. That's great. A daily diary?

LJP: With a pinup section in it.

EMC: So you have a good record service.

LJP: It's going to Brown University.

EMC: Really?

LJP: It's a journal book.

EMC: A regular journal book.

LJP: No, no, no. I've got memories. I made notes. I have a lot of newspaper clippings, a lot of these men were at the hotel. Remember Terry and the Pirates?

EMC: Yes, I've heard of that.

LJP: Flip Corkin was Colonel Philip Cochran. And Milt Caniff, cartoonist, and Philip Cochran were friends. So he perpetuated Philip Cochran in Terry and the Pirates almost exactly live in a cartoon. Cochran was an ace and running back to Casablanca. He was exposing himself too much to the enemy. Another young Ace named Momeyer both became (inaudible) so Flip Corkin or Philip Cochran as in the cartoon—gunbelt slung down and a wide open shirt, and if you saw him coming you'd salute. He'd wave off the salute. I could go to him, and I did one day. I said, Colonel, "Can I borrow your car?" "Of course, be back here by four." That may have been an unusual request for a sergeant.

EMC: For heaven's sakes.

LJP: That's the way things were.

EMC: Very relaxed.

LJP: And no pressure. We were still enlisted men with a hundred officers, about fifteen of us. We had two buildings to house the guests—the large Hotel Suisse and the smaller La Reserve.

EMC: And you worked very hard.

LJP: It was a long day, and another man I met there was Tom Mark Harmon, the great University, of Michigan football player. Mark Harmon of the TV'S NCIS was his son, another name, Vincent Sheehan, the author. General Cannon was a dining guest. We knew our place when they came in.

EMC: But you met all those people.

LJP: We met all of them, and then when we got back to the group—

EMC: So after seven months you were—

LJP: I had to go back to duties as the Supply Squadron Clerk.

EMC: --back to your group.

LJP: In the squadron.

EMC: What was your squadron basically charged with doing?

LJP: Supply.

EMC: In other words, we had the supplies. They needed a part for this, the request was filled from the tons of material in a large hanger. Sometimes orders were huge.

EMC: Okay, so you distributed these things.

LJP: Well, the supply for it.

EMC: Kept track of them.

LJP: And issued them.

EMC: Issue, right.

LJP: In fact, when we were loaded for Salerno. We were alerted for that, and we were told that

we had one night out and one night in. And what happened we were told to “get your watches out of hock and your laundry. Our alert ended two days later. There was similar depot group in Oran. They did not have base duty. We had a base function. It would have taken two weeks to transfer the base to an incoming commander. You know no one is going to accept a base without knowing what he’s accepting. He’s responsible for it. So the outfit in Oran went in place of us. One of them had kept us there. Casablanca is a very modern city, wide boulevards. Fighter craft went over as deck cargo covered in cosmoline, protection from sea spray. They did not have their engines, wingtips, or tails on. They were in four or five fuselage. Our repair squadron men would go the port and hitch tractors to them and draw them through the city of Casablanca six miles to the airport.

EMC: For heaven’s sake.

LJP: There were boulevards. They were clear by about a foot each side. So we did all of that, and we serviced bombers coming to let them—put their kits in, put their guns on, pilots, test fighter craft and also had the bombers, B-17s, B-24s, B-29s, A20s, B17s. I mean the ordinance department had a lot of responsibility.

EMC: I would think.

LJP: They had guns on there. We lost people that way because a pilot would try to buzz an area, so he’d go out over the ocean; water movement was very difficult to discern as it’s coming up, or is it going down. And one plane flipped a wing on a wave and lost everybody. We lost people just the same. But we had all those things doing. I had a payroll sign up and I had to go down, seek out our group’s men at work in different buildings and have them sign the payroll. We always brought pastries back to the camp.

EMC: The French bakeries there.

LJP: I went all over the city doing what I had to do and the hotel was gone. Now when I got back to the base, I took over the newspaper, which I did in my spare time.

EMC: A volunteer effort.

LJP: Yes, it was a regular base paper.

EMC: Right, but you volunteered on it.

LJP: Well, they asked me to do it.

EMC: Oh.

LJP: Whenever they wanted something done—

EMC: You did it.

LJP: And believe it or not there was a thing called Camp Newspaper Service. The Camp Newspaper Service was something like the Associated Press for the services. And we were getting precut stencils of cartoons like Miss Lace and Ms. Wolf. Milt Caniff did Miss Lace and Sansone Wolf did. We had to scotch tape these precut stencil cartoons on the back of the stencil. We never thought they would adhere as the stencil was being so slippery, but they did. I used to sketch things on these stencils. But I'd get up, like 6:00 on Saturday morning for the BBC news for the front page, rush in advance to the operator of the mimeograph machine. And the Camp Newspaper Service in 1944 ran a contest for the best mimeographed base paper. Out of hundreds of mimeographed base papers, ours

got honorable mention, number 3!

EMC: Great. What was the name of your paper?

LJP: Depot Dope.

EMC: Okay, Depot Dope.

LJP: D-e-p-o-t D-o-p-e.

EMC: Right, that's a clever name.

LJP: While I was there doing that, I could go and greet people. In fact, a lot of young people don't know. Remember John Garfield, the actor?

EMC: Yes.

LJP: John Garfield was part of a troupe of Eddie Foy Jr., son stage performance of Eddie Foy and the Seven Little Foys. John Garfield was in that troupe along with a well-known Vaudeville actress Louise Allbritton, and another young lady, beautiful young lady. And I was assigned to take care of these people for the day. More to do, Panaggio. You know what to do. Take them around. Show them here. Garfield was a big star of motion pictures. He had a cousin in the outfit, so he stayed a few days. He would be in our campground pitching ball, catcher's mitt, or something. He was just a great guy. Bogart came. I got his autograph.

EMC: Humphrey Bogart of Casablanca fame.

LJP: The last two motion pictures I saw at Camp Kilmer, were Casablanca and Road to

Morocco.

EMC: Isn't that ironic?

LJP: Going back to an earlier part of our talk here, I said 12th Air Force. On the ship there was a room—a compartment and a chapel. Jameson said your room is in compartment number. Now, I'll give you a key. In that compartment were hundreds and hundreds of books. And more National Geographics than you can count. And I would take them to my desk and officers on board the ship. "What are you looking for, Panaggio?" We're going to Dakar, you know. I said, "No". Why are you looking at this thing about North Africa. I knew I said I think eventually we might be going north, won't we? We thought there would be a feint and go toward Dakar. But strange as it may seem a lot of our men were detached to those places for days at a time.

EMC: That's what they thought.

LJP: So we were based in Casablanca. We had men going up to Tunis during the active days.

EMC: Because that was '43 when they finally freed Tunis, in May of '43.

LJP: --to get parts from aircraft that were shot down. This was how desperate they were getting. That's why I say when you're read An Army at Dawn. Here I was—Casablanca safety? No, I wasn't. We would have been pushed back into the ocean. I mean really it was that close. Here we were.

EMC: You were mentioning—they kept saying you were going to go to Dakar or Leopoldville.

LJP: Or Tunis.

EMC: --or Tunis.

LJP: In fact, there were enough of them going up as officers, but they wanted to get a table of organization for the first salvage squadron, salvage because we weren't getting parts faster from Wright Field in Ohio. Things were close. But during the time I was editor of the paper, I met a man named Joseph Cale, who people very seldom know. He used to be like a heavy in most movies. He was a gangster type. But he was as soft spoken as could be, and he was from Malta, a place called Rabat in Malta. And there was a Rabat in Morocco, as you know. He was over there as a USO performer. A brother lived in Rabat, Malta.

EMC: I've been there.

LJP: Through the hotel we have to do arrangements with civilians. If there was at City Hall to obtain permits to purchase a surplus of vegetables and fruits, then the military could purchase them as long as the civilian population was taken care of.

EMC: I see.

LJP: Don't forget. All this produce would rot. So we'd get that. We'd have to go to city hall and get these permits or get the okay. We had to get beer and bring beer and other necessary things like that. All through that we met the civilians. And a lieutenant—a retired French lieutenant colonel invited us to his home, where I met my first blonde overseas. And she became my favorite person at the time. I'd go to the house, and on Easter Monday a lot of young French, aspirants, the equivalent to our second lieutenants. This is where I met a young lady that I married.

EMC: At this party? Isn't that interesting? Now what was her name?

LJP: Monique.

EMC: And her last name?

LJP: Rouger, R-o-u-g-e-r.

EMC: R-o-u-g-e-r, Rouger.

LJP: Her father was a colonel, and he was sent to Casablanca in 1937, because he had been to Algiers before. So had she. She had been born at Versailles, down the street from the palace, of course.

EMC: Right.

LJP: She was born there, and her father was chief of staff in '37 in Morocco. When the war broke out in '39, he was immediately transferred to Syria where his friend Marshall Weygand was in charge. That was Vichy.

EMC: Vichy.

LJP: A lot of Vichy.

EMC: I was going to ask you about that.

LJP: I really never got too much information from my father-in-law, except he was one hell of a nice guy. He had been through World War I, wounded, taken prisoner, escaped. DeGaulle, I understand escaped. They knew each other. And my father-in-law joined De Gaulle, Free French, and we have a nice picture with DeGaulle taken in England in 1942. I think where some

British soldier is showing De Gaulle other French officers, a piece of ordnance. That part of the picture is cropped. I think he is probably, the ranking officer under DeGaulle. We have a few memos that DeGaulle sent to my father-in-law. And one time my wife was visiting her family in Avignon.

EMC: Avignon?

LJP: DeGaulle came to visit that day. They were great—he was great for meeting and, bringing retired French officers together. And the square was filled. My father-in-law was in the front row. After DeGaulle spoke, “Rouger, I’m glad to see you”. Monique was there with him. We had, I guess, a very nice life.

EMC: I’m very interested. How did you converse? Did she speak English?

LJP: She spoke English.

EMC: She did?

LJP: Oh, yeah. She had a good education. I mean private schools.

EMC: And she was there during all this time when her father was being shifted around from Morocco to Syria.

LJP: He was smart. He left them in what we would think comparative safety in North Africa. Yes, there was Germans there. But my wife said they never made themselves obnoxious. In fact, the hotel that we had—we had to requisition after the invasion. And when we were in there cleaning out drawers in the bedroom we were finding clipped parts of old maps, German maps. In fact Bill, another

sergeant, found a field marshal's cap in one of those.

EMC: Good souvenir.

LJP: We don't know who it was or Rommel or what. But anyway, they were there I suppose to make sure that things went to Germany when they needed them. It was great wheat country. And there were so many facilities. There was brewery there. I mean there were so many things going there. But it was fruit, a lot of fruit and wines were vinted there. But you had a really great place to be if you had to. Now, even though they were rationed they were not starving. I'll put it that way. Nothing was easy. I remember seeing all these women going down to the market with their net bags hoping to get something, and one day before I was married I had a day off, and I was at a café and couldn't help but realize what was available at the markets and shops. They were from the city's Mers-Sultan section.

EMC: Could you spell that?

LJP: M-e-r-s Sultan, S-u-l-t-a-n. So I had a couple of wines at 11:30. And going from my own life here, the people are creatures of habit. As I would do this, the same women, same time of day going down to the market. And gee, that looks like Mrs. Brown. That looks like Mrs. Jones. They were between the grocery store. One day I'm looking at the corner, and there's a civilian man there, and he's getting his shoes shined by an Arab. I said gosh that looks like the lawyer Arthur Carrellas from Newport. I finally got up and I walked over to him. I said, Arthur, how are you? Through the side of his mouth he said please, I am on surveillance; get out of here. I'll see you later.

EMC: Really so it was—

LJP: It was Arthur Carrellas.

EMC: For heaven's sake.

LJP: He became a judge.

EMC: Isn't that something.

LJP: As I said people looked like people back home. This was my second, solid year of being there and seeing people. Arthur was there, and his office was at the airport. We understood he could wear a uniform up to a rank of a major as civilian.

EMC: Kind of hiding in civilian clothes.

LJP: Yeah, and he was also attached to Air France, and I think somehow he was involved with making sure it happened. The plane did go to Lisbon. So I guess he probably assisted in the screening of people, too. And then when Corsica was liberated my mother-in-law went to see her other daughter there. She was living in Corsica at the time. The family was an interesting family to know.

EMC: Did they accept you?

LJP: Of course, they did.

EMC: As an American, I mean, you know how the French are. They're not too keen on the Americans.

LJP: I don't how I got this beautiful bride. I really don't. I never met her father until later. And I looked at my future mother-in-law and said, "Je desire marriage avec Monique. Que, que, que, was

her response.

EMC: My heavens—what, what, what.

LJP: But I'll tell you this was after the Salerno battle. When I went that night that I was supposed to go off, as I go on the bicycle to drive right away, for some reason, I looked back, and I saw both their heads peaking out the door, the gate. And I cried my head off. I'm leaving a family--a family over here, the only girlfriend I had here and a third family, and they've been so nice to me. I was crying my head off.

EMC: You didn't know if you'd see these people again.

LJP: That's true. I'd like to eventually, but I mean they were people who did so many nice things for me. They were good people. One sister was there. And her husband was a captain at the time. He turned down a promotion to the rank of general because he had to do something he did not want to do. He had to take charge of a prisoner, and they were somebody's good friends.

EMC: He defected to the other side or something.

LJP: Not necessarily that, but I don't think it was defection so much. It's just he did not do the right thing, the honorable thing. I don't know. Anyway, but he would come back from for he had a Moroccan company of infantry and fought in Italy and France. A few times he would come back on furlough, and we would know every time he was a furlough--nine months later another child.

EMC: Oh.

LJP: And he died a few years ago. He's the one who gave me the books.

EMC: I see.

LJP: He was a wonderful man.

EMC: Was it a large French family?

LJP: He had children up to--alphabetically he had children who lived through H (French names) and Isabelle, the last one, died.

EMC: And did she have any other sisters?

LJP: Her sisters are all gone. They were three—there were four girls. And then, but they were a good family. As I said, you asked the question. They accepted me. I don't know about acceptance so much as they didn't take advantage of us. I brought them cigarettes. But I mean they didn't care.

EMC: They were not that fussy about it.

LJP: They weren't. I mean they gave me more than I gave them—dinner every night.

EMC: So you were there quite often.

LJP: Oh, yeah, I had a little room there too after I was engaged. There was a row house, and there were three and a half floors. And on that half floor was a small room, with a small bed. It was comfortable, had a wash basin and bathroom down the steps. But what I'm saying is they made life so easy, and of course the infirmary that I told you about. They got a villa and my group converted it to an infirmary around the corner from her. So I'd stay there sometimes. I turned myself in at the

infirmery even thought I was not sick.

EMC: So when were you married, and where were you married?

LJP: Married July 12, 1944 in Casablanca.

EMC: In a church?

LJP: Oh, yes, Notre Dame de Lourdes.

EMC: That's great.

LJP: Notre Dame de Lourdes.

EMC: Now. L-o-u-r-d-e-s.

LJP: L-o-u-r-d-e-s.

EMC: Okay, now did you go away at all? Or you couldn't possibly go on a honeymoon?

LJP: We had a honeymoon.

EMC: Oh, you could?

LJP: Sure, we went to a place called Ifrane, I-f-r-a-n-e, beautiful resort in the Atlas Mountains.

EMC: That sounds, fantastic. So when you came back—now could you live together, or did you have to live with the regulation that you had to be in camp every night.

LJP: I paid no attention to it. We had the best room in the house. The mother was beautiful,

wonderful, her mother's room concerned. There were two bedrooms in the house and she gracefully gave hers to us.

EMC: So you could live in their house. You didn't have to live on the base?

LJP: Oh no, no, no. There were no quarters. We had nothing like that. There were no quarters.

EMC: You didn't have to go back to the tent then?

LJP: I'm sorry.

EMC: You didn't go back to the tents or anything?

LJP: Well, yes and no. I mean we were not supposed to be off the base.

EMC: I didn't think so.

LJP: But the last day there, her mother gave us the bedroom, and one day the commanding officer came up to me. I was back in my chief's clerk job. Panaggio, are you staying down there with your wife at night? I said, "Yes, Sir". You can't do it anymore, he told me.

EMC: Right.

LJP: I said, yes.

EMC: So they didn't really watch you that carefully.

LJP: Well, they did, but on the other hand I guess they were looking at why this privilege for me. I was the second one in the group to be married. When it was all over, about forty of them got married.

EMC: To French girls?

LJP: Some Spanish.

EMC: Whoever was there; I mean whatever population was there.

LJP: There were all populations.

EMC: A mix?

LJP: No, I'm saying there were people from all over Europe.

EMC: Right. I would think.

LJP: I would go down to the city of Casablanca and we'd see consulates, Sweden, Netherlands, Spain, Portuguese. So you had a lot of people who were there, and English. In fact, up the hill from the hotel were an English couple.

EMC: That's good.

LJP: Like today, look at the news today, and they're showing somebody in Baghdad, and he speaks English.

EMC: They do.

LJP: And over there it was the same thing. Everyone of the girls that I met through these families, all could speak English. I think Monique spoke the best of all, but they all could speak English.

EMC: Very educated.

LJP: I got a note from one of them. She was a very nice girl, who lived in Rabat. We kept corresponding all these years, and we saw her twice on visits to Paris, and I still hear from her, and she wrote to me in English. And it was not perfect, but she knew what she was saying. And I knew what she was saying.

EMC: Very interesting, very cosmopolitan then.

LJP: I always wanted to be as I told you before someplace where I read. I could get an education. I had to. When I met this young lady, I just told her about how she lived in Rabat. Her father was a lawyer. And he took me to a little archaeological museum. And the director was very nice. He showed me around and said next week I go to Volubilus, Roman ruins in Morocco. They said you can come with me and spend the week if you wish. And I'm back, and I don't think they'd let me go for a week to Volubilus. But I mean that's the way that those people were that I met. I mean they shared. They did things. And, in contrast, I had gone aboard the U.S.S. Texas, which was in the harbor to return a film to the chaplain of the ship. An enlisted sailor, said, I could go to the canteen and get some coca cola syrup. We could get seltzer war to with the syrup. So I'm walking toward the aft of the ship, and a commander said, "Where are you going with that? And I said, "I'm taking it to the airport". He took it away from me. Now there's the contrast.

EMC: You could have made your own Coca Cola.

LJP: Well, it would have gone back to the group. I mean you cannot drink all, but I'm saying that here are these nice people, and people sharing with you. And here is this man. No, you can't

have it.

EMC: He probably wanted it for himself.

LJP: I can see he was taking care of his crew. He was doing his job, no question about it. But I just thought it was--I looked back, and he took it right away from me. It would have been a treat. We weren't getting Coca Cola.

EMC: Did you ever have a chance to meet your father in law when you were in the service?

LJP: No, I met him in 1951. His service took him to England, twice and back to Algeria and command an infantry training center for the invasion of Southern France. He was busy, and then, of course, he went to France right after the liberation of Paris.

EMC: He did.

LJP: And became a member of the Military government.

EMC: I see, and did the family still stay in Morocco?

LJP: Nope, when I came—when I was told the ship was going to take us whatever day it was-- November 8th, everybody that lived in Casablanca families had already gone back to France.

EMC: Okay, so this is '44.

LJP: '45.

EMC: '45.

LJP: And mamma—I never called her mother. Monique's, whom I called Schuski, she was the only one left, and the day she went home, she went to France. The house was all cleaned out. And the next day I was gone. We were very lucky the whole family was gone.

EMC: And were you discharged in November?

LJP: Well, yeah.

EMC: '45?

LJP: We got back. We got to Hampton Roads and then Fort Devens.

EMC: Where was your wife?

LJP: She was here.

EMC: She came to the U.S.?

LJP: She came here in September '45.

EMC: She came at the end of the war.

LJP: There was a transportation officer. You said your wife came to Newport in September '45.

EMC: You said your wife came to Newport in September '45.

LJP: There was a transportation officer in Casablanca. And we were going there once in a while to ask for any transportation for her.

LJP: I was going to say, "Any ferries in Jamestown?" I was staff sergeant. It was a very small

post exchange. We could get some soups, tuna fish, some staples, which were very nice to have. So one morning we went in there about 11:00. And we said, "Lieutenant, is there a ferry to Jamestown?" He looked at both of us, picked up a telephone, said a few words and looked at my wife; be ready at 12:30. So it meant that we had to know by 12:30 if we could go on board that ship. They had to also get another girl who could also say she could, but they didn't sail until 4:00, but you had to be there. So I rushed back to the base. I got her home. I got back to the base. They gave me a jeep. I had to go to the bank. I had to go to American Export Line for the ticket. I had to go to the consul general's office to get a visa.

EMC: My heavens.

LJP: And somehow or another I appreciated that because it was done so quickly. I'm thinking how close that family was to each other. They loved each other. Her mother was a wonderful woman. And I was thinking, supposing we went back that day and said, "Mom, I'm leaving on the 15th of September". Now it's two weeks away. Everyday it's on the mind of Mom, so now her mother is busy helping her pack, helping her with things that she needed. Do you have this? Do you have that? You know, so at 4:00 the William H. Carter Liberty Ship pulled out of Casablanca, the captain riding aboard and a few miles out he said, "You have to get off now".

EMC: What kind of a ship took you off?

LJP: An Arab Dhow and I was set up on the front hanging on with a very narrow part of that boat. I was trying my best to wave back.

EMC: My heavens, that's quite an experience, three miles out of the ocean.

LJP: It was an experience. I mean the Dhow is a very narrow boat.

EMC: I know what they look like. I've seen them.

LJP: They reminded me of Monique's mother who went there the first time in 1920. Casablanca was a very modern city. But the harbor is man made. And when she went there the first time to the harbor, she was beached. And that city developed. In fact, on one furlough that we did have as a married couple, in January, we went back to Fez.

EMC: That's exciting.

LJP: We went to Palais Jamais hotel which was a very, very nice, good hotel.

EMC: You said you went to the Palais Jamais on a holiday.

LJP: We went there on holidays, true. We made reservations from Casablanca, direct distance dialing to Fez. Now that's 1944. Remember France, which was developing Morocco, was putting in all of these things. In 1939, they had to concentrate on the war. They were at war. They had no reason to do all this kind of stuff. And breakfast was in the dining room. Another thing was the apartment housing, the tallest were about fourteen stories. You could go in, and you press the button for light, and if the elevator is not running—and they were rationing electricity, of course. But night time the electricity was usually back on. You go in and you press a button. The light would go on. And you had to walk. The elevator wasn't running. Now that's a long walk for some people, fourteen flights.

EMC: Wow.

LJP: What you would do? Every floor you get by just kept pressing that button because the light would go off eventually by itself. I mean these little conveniences that made it a little easier to make life pleasant. And here you are, direct distance dialing. All the rail system was either electric or diesel and no steam engines. So I mean that was quite an advance. The New Haven railroad didn't get diesel until, I believe until after the war. We didn't get it. We weren't that far ahead. We had electric trains out of New Haven, yes, but I was thinking how pleasant it was to be Casablanca never knowing where we were going to be tomorrow.

EMC: But you stayed there during the duration of the war.

LJP: After the war finished, yes, of course.

EMC: The duration.

LJP: But they were still there when I left. Because the streets were wide, when Salerno couldn't do it and Anzio--little old towns. Marseilles couldn't touch it. You've been to Marseilles. There are now narrow streets. They're narrow streets. It's an old city. We were the nearest to the United States as aircraft. We became part of the Middle East, Persian Gulf and China, Burma, India Theaters. We were serving aircraft for all of those.

EMC: For all those areas.

LJP: Bombers would leave this country for Florida, to Brazil, to Ascension Island, Leopoldville, to us. What I'm saying, there was no other way they could get there. The Pacific was too wide. And the war was still going on out there. Sure you could capture an airport, but then you had to have facilities. How were you going to take care of ten or twelve bombers coming in that you didn't expect.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: I'm not a military tactician but it's just that I'm looking for--this is what kept us in Casablanca, wide streets. Now that sounds stupid.

EMC: You could ferry those aircraft.

LJP: Maybe this sounds like a stupid statement, but the streets were wide. What do you mean the streets were wide? That was it. When I was doing some public relations I have a picture that I was using, and an aircraft magazine, showing that—I directed it to have taken—showing even a narrow street where airplanes were going through. Take a picture; here go a couple of guys waiting to get to the airport lying on a wing.

EMC: That's something.

LJP: But that was the only thing that could be done. I was saying, my gosh, how lucky we were in that respect, but we were fortunate that God took care of all of us. Now you mentioned John Labas.

EMC: Right, yes, my uncle.

LJP: Very nice guy. I know John, sure.

EMC: Isn't that amazing. Now he was in the same outfit.

LJP: He was in the same group.

EMC: The 37th Air Depot Group as you were.

LJP: I know which squadron. He was probably in repair squadron, right? I was surprised they didn't make him the mail order boy. He worked for the railroad postal office back in Connecticut. The man in charge back in Burlington, Vermont, was working for the postal. He was in charge of the mailroom. He was a guy that—even John wasn't working there because there were always two people working there. I'm surprised, but maybe John liked it where he was. Who knows?

EMC: Maybe he did. He didn't move. Did you celebrate at all on VJ Day?

LJP: No.

EMC: You didn't over there? You were there.

LJP: Oh, yes, in fact the VE was the more important one.

EMC: Oh, really, for you?

LJP: At the hotel. And the VJ--my wife and I went to one of the rooms in the house which had an open field area, and nice section to wait to see all the fireworks. And, of course, they weren't fireworks.

EMC: Flairs or something.

LJP: Perhaps shooting off cannons. And in my diary at home I have a picture that was taken from a Life Magazine and showing the one night air raid we did go through. We were bombarded at night and just a barrage. The enemy attacked Casablanca in three waves. You can't believe it. And it's an amazing picture. I have to put that in my diary. Speaking of Life Magazine, one of the people that I did an interview with was Margaret Bourke-White.

EMC: Really?

LJP: Yeah.

EMC: This was for the newspaper?

LJP: Newspaper. I started with her. She was very receptive, and as I been interviewing her, and we got to the staircase for the commanding officer of the base. I said, "Thank you, Ms. Bourke-White". Oh, no, she says, "We're not through, are we?" I said, "I've got to be". I said, "We're going to the colonel's office." She looked at me, and she took my hand and said, "Come with me." There is a picture of me interviewing her in the colonel's office. She's with a Navy commander by the name of Wyatt. And the colonel is standing behind the Navy commander. And he had this look on his face, "When is this guy going to get out of here." I mean only because she happened to mention Sergeant Panaggio had to finish his interview. I'll just be a minute or two.

EMC: You really had a flare for writing then.

LJP: I liked that.

EMC: You did because of your continuing involvement with the newspaper here.

LJP: Well, there was a morning newspaper in the city called Newport Herald. And down there they printed it at night time, naturally. I would go down there and watch them go to work. I learned how to set type. So if I had to set type, I did. I went down to New York—the last time I went down I was a civilian. And I took a steamboat out of Providence. I got a job at Hallmark. And this was November, and there were people who has ordered their Christmas cards, and you print in

their names. Now we were handling gold imprint and silver imprint. And I knew how to spell. I was made very, very unwelcome with this group of people. Men were here setting type. And I knew how to set type. The girls ran the machine, the print machines. So the names would be printed in gold or silver. Oh, let's hit that Newport guy, from the millionaire city. This is what I was getting. I took that everyday. And, therefore, when I was hired, Mr. O'Brien was in a beautiful, striking New York office that I was going into. Very nice, "yes". She, the boss of the job said, "you can set type?" I said "yeah". So I went upstairs, and I set type. Friday at noon time a woman up there, a very nice woman. She came and said, "you can't come back." So she gave me my pay, and she said Mr. O'Byrne would like to see you. So I went to him. And he said, "I'm letting you go not because you're not doing the job. He said, but they are taking care of you upstairs, meaning the gang. But what they were doing the girls were taking my print, my type and changing it one character so everything was misspelled. Not all the girls were doing it.

EMC: That's nasty.

LJP: So gold filled or whatever it was—and it was very expensive. At that time he said to me, that is a waste. If there was some place I could put you right now, I would. But you cannot go back upstairs."

EMC: Wasn't that awful. Wasn't that terrible.

LJP: So all of my life I just tried to be in the right place--

EMC: ---at the right time.

LJP: --at the right time or create something out of almost nothing.

EMC: You certainly did with that newspaper. I wanted to ask you about your final discharge from the Army Air Corps. Now you said you came back in November '45? You shipped out from Casablanca?

LJP: We got back to Hampton Roads, and then about the 18th of November I guess I went to Fort Devens for the discharge. And that's where they discharged me.

EMC: Okay.

LJP: They gave me a ticket, which I have in my book because I didn't use it. My mother came up with my wife to get me.

EMC: Oh, yes, it's not that far.

LJP: Well, it's a little ride, and of course in a 1937 Wyllis – Knight. But they came up. And what do you suppose she asked me that night at the Service Club, while a big band was playing and the daughter of a colonel and use to military life. What did you do during discharge processing? Well, I said I had to listen to some officer telling me to reenlist. I should reenlist.

EMC: Oh, dear.

LJP: Did you? I said, "no." Why not? Well, I said, "you have enjoyed the privilege of an officer?" I said, "I'm still a sergeant." I said, "I'm a staff sergeant, you know?"

EMC: Uh-huh.

LJP: I said there's nothing wrong with being an enlisted man. This is a different

life.

EMC: Right.

LJP: Now I wasn't trying to be funny.

EMC: No, not at all serious.

LJP: But the thing was there's no promotion eventually in schools to advance you, so you would get a commission. Maybe the second time I'll be three years down the road or more. Who knows? But if she knew of any other war brides that were here, and they married an officer, yes, I suppose she'd go to the officers club, but I couldn't go.

EMC: So that was the end of that.

LJP: She understood.

EMC: Sure.

LJP: I think she was a little disappointed, but I said look at the moving you've done. You have been to Algiers. You have lived in Morocco. You lived in different places in France. I think your mother must be tired of moving. But you were young. I mean to you moving was an adventure. Taking a steamboat from Nice or Marseilles to go to Algiers or wherever we have duty. I said it's quite a jump from enlisted man to an officer.

EMC: Absolutely. You made the right decision. Can you comment on the significance of your Army Air Corps career? Did it change your life in any way?

LJP: I think it made me sure of what I could do.

EMC: That's good.

LJP: It made me sure of it. They say they couldn't fire me. If I did a bad job, unless you goofed up bad, you still kept your rank. But I told you whenever they wanted something done, seek me out. I'm not saying I was a hero in the war, but cutting dog tags with a machine was very noisy, but it got me out of the group where I went down to Charleston Hospital to do that job, to do the three copies of the group's table of organization. No erasing, no strike over, copy was to be immaculate. All 1400 in the group were recorded. My work was perfect thanks to my experience working in the Engineer Office at Fort Adams. I mean I got into areas where I've learned things and as I said, it made me feel good if anybody said, "can you do this?"

EMC: Yes.

LJP: Hotel management.

EMC: Something you had never done.

LJP: No, but I still was confident I could do it. We had about fifty help in the hotel, Arabs and mostly Arabs and nothing there. Good. We liked them; they liked us. Fine. The dining staff was mostly Arab. And the housekeeping was Arab. But they knew what to do. Many of us would never raise a voice with them. The only time I ever heard anyone unhappy was one of the Arabs dropped a teacup in Madam Della Maria, the owner of the hotel. She couldn't stop yelling at her because you couldn't replace it.

EMC: That's right.

LJP: But she insisted that we use that dining room the way it should be used. And again being exposed to that kind, talking to her. Taking telephone calls from one officer all I remember is a female voice, English speaking and asking is there anybody there from the Fifty-Seventh Fighter Group. It was lunchtime. Gentlemen, there's a call here for anybody from the Fifty-Seventh Fighter Group. Sorry, maam there's seventh. How about the Three Nineteenth Bomber unit? I asked if there was someone from the Three Nineteenth Bomb Group. Tell them a Red Cross Nurse is on the line. Again, Maam, no response. A Red Cross nurse had to speak to someone. You could hear all the chairs going.

EMC: So they all--what a riot.

LJP: Well, it was, but I mean it was fun. I got reprimanded verbally one day. I went up to the lounge room so called, and the officers were there for some reason. And I had to make an announcement. And I said, "You men." The Billeting Building Officer took me aside and said, "Do not do that again." I said, "What's that, Sir?" He said, "They are gentlemen". I said, "You're right, Sir."

EMC: That was one slip.

LJP: But in the hotel we had a bar. We had to make sure that the bottles were still there. I mean there were things we had to do. I had to check rooms and make sure the blinds were closed at night time. We were afraid that an enemy submarine could surface, and lob a shell into that hotel. There were a hundred bombardiers, navigators, pilots in there. Airplanes you can make but these people had to be trained. We lived with that fear. We had two or three alerts. We got a dozen

men, two of them were medics, Geneva Conference. They didn't have rifles. We had one submachine gun. I had a rifle. My post was the roof. The sub machine gun guy was sitting on the front door. Who are you going to resist? We would laugh. But that was the way we had to do it. And as I said, we did that. And we told the officers that there's an alert; stay in your rooms, but no they'd have to come up to the roof to see what was going on, and one major said, "there's a landing craft out there, landing craft." I'd say, "Please go to your room."

EMC: Yes.

LJP: Living with officers wasn't easy.

EMC: Right, right.

LJP: But on the other hand there was a lot of young ones who could be so funny and approachable.

EMC: They were your age, as you said.

LJP: Major Miller, he probably experimented with something. We got the call when he was at sea that he was going down and a few minutes later, "I'm going down." He washed somewhere into the ocean. Another officer, another major, was killed by an automobile in Casablanca. And it's not easy sorting his belongings. These are the unusual jobs. It was a variety of jobs that I had to do or we had to do. And everyone of those somehow fit into civilian life somewhere. Now I don't think I'm ever going to do any sorting out for my family. But these were people I didn't know, knew only at the hotel.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: But these jobs had to be done.

EMC: And you had to do them. I'd like to ask you--did your wife adjust easily to life in the United States?

LJP: Yes, I think she did very easily because she was young, which is a big factor.

EMC: Oh, yes, how old was she when she came here?

LJP: 18.

EMC: She was quite young.

LJP: Old, I was 25.

EMC: You were a little bit older?

LJP: Yes.

EMC: So she was very young when you married her.

LJP: She adjusted very easily.

EMC: So was she 18 when you married her?

LJP: 18.

EMC: Whatever, but she was quite young.

LJP: I think that was a big point right there. Yes, she was very family oriented.

EMC: Right, the French are.

LJP: But she adjusted. And she made friends, and there were about a dozen or so maybe a little bit more war brides at that time. There were some from France. There were some from England. And she went to a night school class with them at Rogers High. Old Rogers. And she became a citizen almost right away. She spoke so easily. In fact, she was helping the teacher to teach it with some of them. I don't say she was teaching that way. She would probably have to translate something the teacher probably didn't say the way the French girls understood it. So she did that. And she got to like it. Her people, they came from France, or they were French born. And she adjusted quickly. She became a mother quickly. We didn't want to have any children over there because it was difficult. There was a new hospital near her house. But everything was stripped. In fact, her sister had to go there. We visited her sister. We couldn't go in. We could have electric light. We couldn't have a match or a cigarette as oxygen was in use. Everything was defense. But I remember one time--she graduated from this private school. The director said, "You stay here. You're going to be on our staff." She's got a brain. Believe me. So she was on the staff, and the director was a woman who was able to adopt a nice little boy. And I could only visit the school at Easter break. So I went to school. It had beautiful classrooms. Then I went into one room and it's like an amphitheater for a laboratory. And there are chairs at the front row that were very small chairs. I said, "Who sits there?" Students. I said, "What are they doing?" She said, "Taking chemistry." I said, "Chemistry?" She said, "Yes." "How old do you think I was when I started English?" She was 12 years old when she started learning English. She said in the school were German professors, Spanish professors, English professors, from those countries. But to show you how these people were so attached to each other, this little boy—I

don't know what happened. I know where it was. It was like a chimney, but it was easy to climb up. And he started to climb up and fell backwards on his head, and right away they needed to get ice packs. At that time the people in Casablanca were getting less than a cubic foot of ice a day. With the heat over there, the ice didn't last very long. I remember the ice coming to Monique's house. And right away she was wrapping it up in paper, taking the bike to take to the hospital to give it to that poor kid. Others were doing it too.

EMC: How they helped each other.

LJP: They did.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: And you couldn't help but admire that. You asked about VJ Day there. Yes, I. My best friends were lost.

EMC: Really?

LJP: A marine corporal, Okinawa, in Navy Air, in a navy airplane. He was in the Royal Canadian Air Force first and then transferred to the Navy and my best friend was a navy pilot. My best friend was a Marine corporal. The other one, a graduate of the Naval Academy, lost on a submarine. I have his letters to this day from Annapolis, and his father was Frank B. Thomas who was commander of the USS North Carolina. Frank and I got to know each other here in June. You couldn't have a better friend. But I just look back, and I lost my three best friends.

EMC: Isn't that terrible.

LJP: The guys you could complain to and say “You made it”.

EMC: Yes, well you were very, very fortunate then.

LJP: I was.

EMC: You were very fortunate.

LJP: I was fortunate, fortunate to meet people that I met along the way, even in Charleston, I met people who were friendly and very interesting. At the USO one of the woman said. (She went by the book, no dates). “I want you to talk to my father.” And there nice houses there. I spent a Sunday afternoon with her father.

EMC: Just very friendly people.

LJP: They were. But I mean they could size you up. They knew if you were going to be a pain in the neck or what, or were you taking advantage of something. But I’m just thinking about all the people I met. I went to Georgia State College of Women and the girl I dated there, and then she graduated. Her sister came right over. Her sister was going to attended summer classes and invited me to visit her at the college. Her sister invited me to their house for the weekend. I went there for the weekend. I mean everywhere I went I was very fortunate in meeting people who were hospitable and friendly.

EMC: That’s great. I’m afraid I’m going to have to stop.

Second Oral History

9/28/2005

EMC: This is the second oral history interview with Mr. Leonard Panaggio. Today's date is September 28, 2005. The interview is taking place in my office in Mahan Hall at the Naval War College. Mr. Panaggio, I'd like to ask you when and where you were discharged from the Army?

LJP: Army Air Corps.

EMC: I mean the Army Air Corps. I know you don't like the Army.

LJP: I love the Air Corps part of those three words. Anyway, about the 25th, just before Thanksgiving at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. They gave me my railroad ticket to come home, but I got the railroad ticket in my pocket because my wife and my mother came and got me.

EMC: And you came back to Newport, I presume?

LJP: Back to Newport.

EMC: And what did you decide to do with yourself after you got out of the Army Air Corps? You needed a job.

LJP: I came back to return the Navy Disbursing office. The last job I had before I was in the service, and I think it was twenty-eight dollars a week. And while I was gone they gave me a no promotion area, which was unusual because people who were still here had two promotions, doing the same kind of work I was. But I'm not holding that against them because I really had no intention of coming here, and I knew that—it would be drop offs. And the first would be there to stay. The last would be the first to go. I actually grew up in the Newport Historical Society. And Mr. Brigham, the librarian, had a hard job running the joint, paid \$15. I'm going to go over there and see what else I could do. And then I started a weekly newspaper.

EMC: On your own?

LJP: It was tabloid style. It was called Newport Topics and had a couple of people for reporters. I hired an advertising salesman.

EMC: Did you have an office somewhere?

LJP: At my house.

EMC: Your house, okay.

LJP: We did okay. Somebody else reared their ugly head and wanted to compete with me. So what I was doing covering the news that the other papers left out. For example, a lot of that time we had a good fishing industry here. How many times would a fish land in this particular week, and boats and shipyards, getting ready for Memorial Day, things like that. Who was building what? And people were very happy to see that. And by August the competitors I met decided to talk. The competitors were among the friends who started the paper with me. Well, they saw what they thought was a good thing. So I sold out to them. And I got a check every week for a year, which was alright with me. And then I went on a GI training program at the Historical Society for 18 months studying museum administration and library science. Now being specific, administration would really be a longer thing, and library science was just what that word said. It was enough to give me an eighteen month course.

EMC: Where was it held?

LJP: Historical Society.

LJP: And the (inaudible) never did it because I grew up in that place. I did volunteer work as a kid.

EMC: You did? So you were always interested in history.

LJP: Always, so anyway, after the course, I had applied to Brown University. Brown accepted me.

EMC: For an undergraduate degree?

LJP: To go to college. And they knew that I had worked with the Historical Society, and that made me feel good. They said they were going to pay me five cents more an hour to work in the special collections because of the training I had there. Now during that time at the Historical Society, I went to a conference up in Springfield. And I had to pay my own way. Most of the thing is networking as we know it today. I came back from the job. One day the curator who was the speaker at the conference sent me a folder. It's old Sturbridge Village. I looked at it, and I didn't quite understand and did hear you say tavern and a barn. I said I didn't know how it was related. And here is the folder showing the layout of the common, and the buildings around the common. The tavern was built. There was a big barn built. The Grist Mill was operating and outlines of other buildings that were going to be built, like a church. I wrote back to him. And I said, "You need publicity." They've been open for two years. I said, "You need publicity." In 1947 I went up there for an interview with Mrs. Wells, who was acting director. The Wells Family owned the American Optical Company. Mrs. Wells was a great lady, and I interviewed twice, and the second time it was J. Cheney Wells. Her husband's father's brother. J. Cheney Wells and his brother Albert Wells made

the collection and they established the Wells Historical Society at Southbridge Massachusetts. We had meetings at the Publick House, and then on the way out there was snow on the ground. And everything was so bright in the sun, and she said to me “I think you’ll have a Happy New Year”.

EMC: That’s good.

LJP: Now the week that Brown accepted me was the week that Mrs. Wells called and asked, “Can you begin next week?” So I resigned then.

LJP: I sometimes regret that I don’t have that sheepskin on the wall, but I don’t know. Whatever the job was I did it. The job was put the place on the map. That’s a little boast. I know. But they had been open for two seasons, about twenty-six thousand people in two years. The first year I was there thirty-three thousand visited that wonderful recreation of a New England Village of 1840. That’s not a big figure, but that’s more than they had in their first four years. By the time I left, four years, later the attendance was just under 100,000.

EMC: How long were you there?

LJP: Four years, exactly for years. We were just on the verge of a hundred thousand.

EMC: Wow, that’s a lot. Did they build up the village during that time?

LJP: The village was already constructed. The church was completed while I was there. We were planning on a covered bridge coming in. It’s quite a set up there. It’s a beautiful place, and I enjoyed it very much, but museums in those days were pleading poverty when it came to a raise. So I mean I had worked—I had given—this is a fun figure—three hundred and sixty-five talks while I was there, from Nashua New Hampshire to Trenton New Jersey.

EMC: So you went around on the speaking circuit?

LJP: I was, not only that, but I had to promote programs. For example, because the village roads were dirt and gravel I promoted the Glidden tour. The Gliddens of the prior to the World War One era were among those who were out driving their car campaigning for paved highways. So I went to the Veteran Motor Car Club Association meeting in Boston, and I said, can you come to the village and have miniature Glidden tours go right through the village on dirt roads?

EMC: Glidden Tours?

LJP: Glidden--

EMC: G-l-i-d-d-e-n?

LJP: Yup. Anyway, there was not a sanctioned thing for the VMCCA had already made the program for the year. It was for anybody who wants to go can go. And I had the first event of its kind at the village. I had about twenty-five—at that time, 1949, I guess, if you get twenty-five antique cars in one place at that time it was quite an accomplishment. And that was part of it. The time came to re-enact a Glidden Tour and all the vehicles, the oldest being a 1903 tiller-drive Oldsmobile, drove through the villages sandy roads and around to the Common. It was a success and repeated again and again. Then I thought it proper to stage a militia muster. Members of the Artillery Company of Newport and the Worcester City Guards sent detachments for the muster. On July 4 we staged an event celebrating the Declaration of Independence on the Common. We'd preface that with a rider on a horse coming in, then would come in stagecoach and out would come—all real stuff. The passenger who proclaimed that we have the Declaration of Independence. I actually saw people

weeping. I mean that was so realistic.

EMC: Sounds very interesting. You did a lot of travel.

LJP: But go and come back.

EMC: Locally. But you promoted the place.

LJP: That was my job and I met a lot of nice people through that (and it didn't have anything to with my life). It was just nice people to go to. For example, going back to your nephew in New Britain.

EMC: My uncle.

LJP: I'm sorry.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: John—there's a church in the square of New Britain.

EMC: Oh, yes.

LJP: There's a church there.

EMC: There was.

LJP: Maybe I--.

EMC: Congregational?

LJP: I don't know. I think most of the churches in Massachusetts are Congregational.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: --at least around here.

EMC: Right, right.

LJP: But anyway, a lady called up. Now I had to use the American Optical Company projector. It was in case which was about two and a half feet long by three feet deep and about almost a foot wide because it had various kinds of lenses. If you use that projector and put it on here, and I could put a whole picture image that's huge, or I could take another lens and probably reduce it to nothing. But all that way, I had a screen to carry, literature to carry. And besides I had a show. So, the lady, from New Britain called me at the office and said would you come here this afternoon. There's going to be a place in front of the church, and they'll be signs there saying no parking between signs. The police department always worked with them on that and I could park between the signs. I mean in New Britain, all the spaces were taken. I mean that's how people could be. And I don't know if I had a chance—I asked the editor of Family Circle Magazine that I'd like to write an article about do's and don'ts of speakers. And that was the obligation to the speaker, because the speaker had his obligations, too. But what I'm saying there was so many things I could do. For example, I remember that you go to these pot luck suppers, which I tried to avoid. But anyway, at Ware, W-a-r-e, Massachusetts, I went to a supper there that night, and two of the people from that church that belonged to the church and there was a big crowd. And when it was all over—dinner, the women in charge, the president said okay, let's clear the table. I had noticed that there wasn't one plate that looked like the plate from the right, or the left, or across. You brought your own plates.

And you had the bag under the chair, and reached in, which mean that of all the places I would go to give talks, it was amazing how many women were in the kitchen all the time getting something, even if it was just tea. So they would rebel and say we don't enjoy the program. We're in the kitchen all—even though they would rotate. So this place eliminated the kitchen completely.

EMC: That's interesting.

LJP: These are things that could be done to make life easier for programs and the people involved.

EMC: Why did you decide to leave after four years?

LJP: Pleading poverty. I mean they increased my rent. You know, they put us into a larger house, which I didn't like because I lived down by the Grist Mill which was very nice. We were very fortunate. Our children practically grew up there. It was a very nice place to bring them up. But I'm saying pleading poverty was one thing, and I thought that--

EMC: Time to move on?

LJP: Not exactly. I think I could have been there for the rest of my life. Mrs. Wells didn't serve as director. She served as director for a year and half. And she began to sign her letters acting director. So I went to her one day. I said Mrs. Wells-- I said you're not an acting director. You're the director until you hire a professional. She accepted that. I mean these are things that were looked at. You're not acting. You're performing. You're doing your job. And I liked her very, very, very much.

EMC: So where did you go next after you left?

LJP: I was first Public Relations up there. I came from Rhode Island and wanted to be the state's

tourist director.

EMC: Now did you apply for the job in Rhode Island, or did they come to you?

LJP: One day I was home for a weekend here in Newport. Armand Cote, the Secretary of State at the time, was giving a talk at Battery Park. And that's not the place to do these things.

I didn't realize it. I said to him, "Mr. Cote, we're celebrating May 4th, Independence Day, I guess it was." We didn't promote these days, did we? And he was doing tourist promotion for the state because at that time the secretary of state's office was handling tourist promotion.

EMC: May 4th or July 4th?

LJP: May 4th, Rhode Island Independence Day.

EMC: Rhode Island.

LJP: The secretary of state's office was handling tourist requests and information. They got a roadmap, and they got a piece of literature. That was about all. One day I'm sitting up there in good old Sturbridge, and a letter came. Now he did not have to do this. I said, "No". I got a letter from him saying that the State of Rhode Island General Assembly had passed legislation to create the Rhode Island Development Council which was part of the Governor's Office with the obligation to promote tourism, the tourist promotion division in addition to the industrial promotion, research and so on. So I applied for the job. And I was interviewed.

EMC: Great, and did you live in Newport during this time frame and commute to Providence?

LJP: The word commute is not correct.

EMC: Drove.

LJP: No, I needed the car. Commuting would be commuting. I needed a car. I'd have to go to the airport to pick up someone, to show him around to go to Cranston Rotary Club, for example, to give a talk. I needed a car at my disposal at all times.

EMC: A state car?

LJP: No. But I'm saying I needed a car. I could get so and so is coming to the airport; go and pick them up, will you? And I would pick them up. That's the way it was.

EMC: So you gave talks throughout the state as part of the job.

LJP: Any place. Anyway, I did what I had to do.

EMC: How large was your staff? Did you have a staff?

LJP: Oh, yes. I had nine people. And in the summertime there would be more at the information center and things like that. The New England states had an office in New York, which I had to keep an eye on. We opened in Cleveland for a little while and closed down after a few years. We also had the Rhode Island building at the Eastern States Exposition, of which I was the manager.

EMC: Oh that's a lot of responsibility.

LJP: I would be at press headquarters, you know, everything you needed, and that was it. I did my job. I really did. Whatever was required, that's what I said before. I even cut dog tags for my air wing group.

EMC: Sounds like an awful lot of responsibility and work.

LJP: It was.

EMC: --and work to promote the state.

LJP: Well, it's a small state. Let me remind you of that. Of course the salaries were small then too, better than I always had. I really hated to leave Sturbridge, but it was just one of those things that the opportunity presented itself. When we came home the children were happy to some degree. Now they're more grown up. They liked the beach. They liked the tennis courts, which we have access to here. It worked out nicely.

EMC: When did you come back? What year did you start?

LJP: '52 in Rhode Island.

EMC: I retired in 1983.

EMC: So you've been retired for twenty years.

LJP: While I was there my job was to assess what the good things were. For example, I went around this state with every place, looking at every place and every village. I took pictures. And among the assets the state had was the Navy.

EMC: Interesting.

LJP: I was on committees for Davisville, the Seabees. I was on committees over at Quonset Naval

Air Station. I gave talks over there. And one talk I think I ever gave in a tux was at Quonset to a VF, one of the air units. And it was a very formal night. I gave my talk with slides. But I was honored to be sitting next to the first, I believe, the first acting Afro American who made the rank of captain. The name was Captain Parham, P-a-r-h-a-m. And it was a wonderful evening. And I was on various committees over there. Now here I was not on Committees as such. I was involved. We used to go out and visit the ships when they were out there in the bay. And here they are at the piers. Can't we do something about that? A man by the name of Rowley Wilson--I think it's R-o-w-l-e-y Wilson from Ohio, a Naval Reserve commander, was sent here for six months to serve as PR. I went to see him. I said, "Commander Wilson"--I said, "I want to have a couple of ships open over the weekend to the tourists". Even then the word security was involved. I realize it's security, but there's a known date that people will come. And the other thing is this at that time the officer candidates were here, and that was a school of thousand candidates, and they had brigade review before graduation. Sixty-five or sixty-six companies, maybe eighty in each company. But it was a tremendous ceremony. I said, "Why can't that be open to the public?" And I said, "Why can't we do the same things they're doing at Annapolis, change the flag." So the first year he said to me, "I'll think about it; I'd like to get back to you; I'm going to talk to people about it." Everything was okay. You're in. That was it. So I said, "Great". Now there weren't lines of people naturally going onboard ship, but weekends it was nice to know that was another place that you go, especially with probably youngsters. And the brigade reviews. I don't know how successful they were or accepted that they were. They were continued until the OCS was decommissioned. The first young lady that changed--took the flag from the passing group to the receiving group was Miss Congeniality of Miss America. She was a Rhode Island girl, very, very, pretty girl. And another, a lieutenant commander, I think in charge of something, he worked with me and the young lady to get

this thing done. And I was on the Rhode Island Naval Affairs Commission and we always were pleased that Admiral Welch at the War College attended our meeting. And at that meeting that group, we're trying to figure what can we do over here at the Naval Station, Naval Base, and we learned, for example, of the brigade review and that the Navy League gave a sword to the highest ranking graduate, whatever they did, and our committee suggested recognition of Chaplains School. We were there. That's all. So we decided we would support the Chaplains School, which we did. I don't know how it was done but a lady from the General Assembly, a representative from Newport, was in charge, was the chairman.

EMC: Was that June Gibbs maybe?

LJP: No. I know June. She and I were good friends. No, this is a lady by the name of O'Rourke. I can't remember her first name, O'Rourke. We had a couple of retired Navy captains on it and we're not just necessarily Newport but a committee. We're always happy to have Admiral Welch meeting. But anyway, the Chaplains School was as I said just here. So they were supported. Now that committee eventually dissolved after about five years. My wife and I decided to do what we could to keep that whatever it was going, without too much of a fuss over it, submit a check every once in a while to the chaplains Pluralism Award at each graduation. We had to continue, as I said, they didn't take it away from us. So we would run up to twenty years, and even more. So we have had our involvement, even on the personal side as well as the business side.

EMC: Now what involvement have you had personally with the Navy here in Newport and the Naval Base?

LJP: Friends you make. For example Captain or Commander Jack Gibson of the USS Keppler, a

Destroyer—I said to him one day we have a May Day breakfast. The traditional breakfast goes back to 1867. Rhode Island Johnny Cakes, sausage, apple pie and so on. And why don't you have breakfast on board the Keppler. He did. Of course, I'd meet them at various homes, people homes in town.

EMC: Sure.

LJP: --and get to know them.

EMC: You must have been quite busy socially here and with your work in general, a lot of nights taken up?

LJP: Oh, yes, a lot of nights. When do you suppose most meeting are held? And when do you suppose most meetings are held? And when do you suppose most meetings are held on the weekend? I lost a lot of Saturdays and Sundays.

EMC: I'm sure. Did you volunteer with the Naval War College Museum over here?

LJP: I was involved here when Anthony Nicolosi was here. They had some receptions. I remember pouring a little champagne in glasses for people at receptions. Nothing ever hurt. It was just the thing you thought you should do. And just like the day you were there with the book signing.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: I mean somebody has to be the host, and the host has to have assistance, and there were about, we had about eight or ten also on that volunteer committee, and it was amazing some of who they were. One of them was a beautiful ship model maker, another served on dirigibles and was an

expert on balloons from Lakehurst, New Jersey. I mean they all had something to offer. And they all had things to loan to some of the exhibits that Mr. Nicolosi would arrange.

EMC: Have you written any books on the Navy or pamphlets on the Navy in Newport?

LJP: I did one. When Goat Island had been developed. But one day there was a big sign erected right at the top of the end of the causeway and to the left. It talked about Goat Island. And I was called upon to be the principal speaker. And the two Navy captains there and others—we talked about the history of Goat Island. And I think the Sheraton Hotel at that time took the talk and printed it. I don't know where it is. They printed it. If I can find a copy, I'll send it to you.

EMC: Please do, because occasionally we get questions on Goat Island.

LJP: I'll try and find it. But I have always been somehow involved with the Navy. And I enjoy it. When I went out there as a kid on the ships—we used to sell Liberty magazines. Alright. Five cents a piece. I made two cents on each. The *Milwaukee*, was my favorite cruiser. That's the one we gave to Russia for the war. No, loaned to Russia, *Milwaukee*, and I think the coxswain had a lot to do with going on the ship as far as some paper and magazine sales were concerned. And the coxswain whose name was Bond from a long time ago.

EMC: Now where was the ship tied up? Was it over here?

LJP: No, no, no, in the bay.

EMC: In the bay. So you had to get out there on a launch or something.

LJP: Oh yeah, loved it, loved it. In fact, if we had nothing else to do, at 1:00 we'd go down to

Government Landing at the time. And the launch would come in, and then they'd have a visit, and then we'd go on board the launch. No questions. We went on board up to the *Milwaukee*, and my favorite battleship was the *Mississippi*, and that was when she came in here in 1931. She had cage masts, and she was the Idaho class. Idaho, *New Mexico* and *Mississippi* they were all modern masts. And *New Mexico* and *Mississippi* came in 1934, all big ships. And modernization made them look so formidable by comparison to some of the few commissioned during the 1920s. I made sure. And I liked being near the ships. There was something interesting about ships. They were different. Yes, light cruisers were all the same time. But they were here. But battleships came usually: New York, Texas, the Arkansas, the old Wyoming on midshipmen cruises. But it was fun. It was wonderful just to be out of there and aboard a ship.

EMC: You couldn't do it now with security and all the changes.

LJP: Well, that's why I said to Commander Wilson—I said I realize security, but people know—when you have an example here now with all the ceremonies here, and the firework displays and the band concerts, hundred and hundreds of people, never mind maybe fifty people visiting a ship on Saturday afternoon. So what I'm saying is there's a lot of difference. So I've always had an interest with the Navy.

EMC: Right, you have, and you've written about the Navy in your columns, the Grist Mill. When did you start the Grist Mill, and how did that happen, come about?

LJP: The Grist Mill began and we commenced by three people and staff in 1933. It is supposed to be the second oldest newspaper column. The one that's older is one of the Washington Merry Go Round. That was older by about three months. I could contribute three people

down there, and they're still doing it, different people. But one day about maybe 1965, I was asked to do a column. I said, "Yes". But I had to be very careful though. I still had a job with the state.

EMC: Would this be a conflict of interest?

LJP: It could be, if I started promoting hotels, restaurants. I had to avoid that. And I would mention hotels, for example, Hotel Viking. A stage and movie favorite, Will Rogers, came here. They had one performance at the Casino. He was invited to stay with Governor Vanderbilt in Portsmouth. He refused all invitations as an overnight guest to stay at the Hotel Viking. That was permissible. I wrote a book under the sponsorship of the Savings Bank, Bank of Newport. I went to the boss first and there was no conflict here. I wrote the book on the history of Newport, and I got an okay for that. Now I was very careful. My job was too important.

EMC: Right, right.

LJP: --to be fooling around promoting something. And so I was very careful.

EMC: And how often did you write for the Grist Mill when you began in 1965? Was it weekly?

LJP: Probably once a week then. But I also bylined articles. I had a lot of byline articles. And they changed it to two columns a week, but I did a lot on the Navy. I like doing the Navy articles. We're going to see another one pretty soon, about old torpedo boats hitting each other, and all of a sudden a torpedo went this way .

EMC: So you're still writing?

LJP: Oh, yeah.

EMC: And how often does the column come out?

LJP: Twice a week.

EMC: Twice a week, still, so that really keeps you extremely busy.

LJP: I like being busy.

EMC: I know. Do you have to think of new ideas constantly?

LJP: No, as I say, I have all these notes on index cards. And I happened to come across this little entry about the city of New London and steamboat with this bomb on board. Back to the dates of that period, I looked at the newspaper, and we developed the story. Now I have to have an introduction to it. And what I did say that today people are very concerned about how they travel on public transportation. But we are told to go on about our business just the same. Then you lead into the story. Then you're throwing the line. Today's headlines are almost similar to what we were seeing, baggage, give up your weapons. So you develop a story around that. And, as I say, it's not always easy. In fact, I was disappointed yesterday on something I was looking up, and not enough information that I needed right now, and I put it aside until maybe by luck would come across it somewhere else. But you know, I can't go wrong with the index cards, which are some of the sources for column.

EMC: No, have you ever repeated stories?

LJP: No.

EMC: You've never repeated anything? That's amazing.

LJP: I think that if I repeated anything it was probably a paragraph of a good article that I needed.

EMC: So you have to come up with fresh ideas, new ideas, new incidents.

LJP: Yes.

EMC: That's quite something.

LJP: For example, when the destroyer Jonas Ingram was assigned here, the name was well known here in the city and in Navy circles. I think he was very much involved with athletics. But he knew he was here. I found out when he was on the base. He eventually was at the Naval War College, and was a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient. Whenever a new ship was coming in and it was named for someone known in Newport, I would do that when I could and there were several instances that I would do a column on the person for whom a ship was named.

EMC: So you have to do research in the local libraries.

LJP: I do that. About every Saturday morning I went to the public library. What I do there is scan the papers to make notes. Then I would go to the Daily News and right now we're enjoying kitchen privileges there by the use of its microfilm library. Now instead of having to scan all through and write this stuff in longhand which takes time, I go there. I pull up the microfilm and make a copy and go to a copy machine and enlarge that so it's easy to read. I take it home. It simplifies the work.

LJP: For a long time I was writing everything out in longhand.

EMC: Do you have a computer at home?

LJP: Nope.

EMC: You have a typewriter?

LJP: IBM wheelwriter 5, one of the last ones ever made.

EMC: Just like that. So you haven't gotten into computers. You should. I mean it would be so much easier for you to correct online.

LJP: I understand that. I understand. But there's a correction tape. It's easy.

EMC: We have the same one here.

LJP: Which one is that?

EMC: That's an IBM Lexmark, I think.

LJP: I think that's older than mine.

EMC: It's got a correct tape, too. So it works.

LJP: I'll tell you it's a fast machine.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: You look at a key.

EMC: It moves.

LJP: Really.

EMC: You have to be careful.

LJP: I know that the Daily News wanted to give me a computer, I said where am I supposed to put it. My room is all taken up.

EMC: You have a study perhaps where you've got your material.

LJP: --the stuff.

EMC: You have to do your work in the cellar?

LJP: Yup. It's finished and workable, but it's still damp down there. But I have lots of things down there including a lot of (end of Side B). Mention of the Navy Juniors.

EMC: Can you tell me who they were?

LJP: I remember some of the names. It was Steinwachs and Zimmerman, and my best friend out of that whole group was Frank P. Thomas, Jr. His father was commander of the *USS North Carolina* in World War II. Frank was an exceptionally wonderful guy. We went down to Annapolis to see him in 1941. He lost his life when he was in the Pacific. He was a good friend. Steinwachs—I can't remember, William. He as another good guy and Richard Zimmerman. Zimmerman communicated with me a long, long time. He lost his first wife by sicknes, I guess. He is married. He came up here every year to visit, and during the years in high school here he was a Boy Scout, and he liked Camp Yagoog, Rhode Island. He would come up here, and he had to get special permission from his own council where he was living to spend his two weeks camping at Yagoog. I thought that was kind of unique that someone would think that much of something in Rhode Island. He was that way. And we

went to dinner a few times when he came up here, and we saw him once down in Virginia. He came from a nursing home, an assisted living type place for Navy people. That was the last address we had. But our own Boy Scouts and even my little troop well, I think of the den. In my patrol were two Navy juniors.

EMC: The den.

LJP: The flaming arrow patrol. Gordon Hutchins was in that one and he was at the Torpedo Station. Another's surname was Broadbent. And I forgot who the other was right off the top of my head. We had about twelve of us, and we'd sit around a circle and talk. And it was wonderful. This kid was in Coronado. Where's Coronado? And Coronado is in California. We learned from these youngsters.

EMC: They had been around.

LJP: They had been around, and, of course, they were here. And I'm not saying we were completely stupid about things. I mean this is just an illustration of what the conversation would be, where they would like to do this. What did they do over there? What do they do differently here?

EMC: A learning experience.

LJP: And there was Margaret Woods. Her father was the commander of the Naval Hospital, and we would go there and have little parties, very good parties, nice parties, of course. But I mean that was it. We went to their houses. But of all of them Frank was my closest friend. I liked him an awful lot. He was a good man, and I understand that he had done his tours on the subs. And waiting around and he was given desk jobs to do and one day the usual walk-in. Hey, we need

somebody for an engineer on a mission.

EMC: And that was it. That's a shame.

LJP: It was the USS Growler.

EMC: That's a shame. Can you tell me, given your experience and your long residence here, how Newport has changed over the years, and what do you think of the changes? I've been here thirty years. And I have seen immense changes in the town. But you've been here a little bit longer.

LJP: Well, I don't like what happened in the Thames Street area, tearing those houses down. We lost the government landing.

EMC: Did you like the cleaning up of Thames Street?

LJP: No, No.

EMC: Why? Because it was full of bars, and it was a blood alley type of place. Wasn't it?

LJP: That wasn't true. Blood alley. That was a terrible thing to associate with sailors. But I don't remember. I went down to the Daily News at night time, down on Thames Street. And I only saw one fist fight that you could hear at night time. Yes, there are a couple of cafes down there, but they were there. I don't know police records. I really don't. But I did not like to see the word "blood alley" associated with sailors. There are civilians some where in there, too. Somebody had to provoke somebody. But I didn't like Thames Street--if I remember one of the places I'm talking about was on the side of Thames Street they didn't tear down. But what they did on the right hand side--here you got these ranch house type strip malls with apartments above them opposite buildings from 1880 and

1890. There's no balance in there. We lost the Government Landing, which was part of redevelopment. I don't know how many acres, but they had a nice building at the water's edge, almost colonial in appearance with a nice little tower. The officers had their section. The enlisted men had their section. The enlisted men had their section. The officers had rafts where the gigs would come in. The enlisted men had a pier, and they would go up steps to their launches. But there was grass that was kept well. The lanterns and lamps were torpedoes with lamp poles. And it was quite a piece of property. And we lost that.

EMC: Where was it located? It wasn't here when I was here. I know that.

LJP: The foot of Church Street. Then it would spread out and go to Market Square. There is a hotel there. So what I'm saying is we lost it. Now in redevelopment they did not tear down, fortunately, the building we call the Brick Market The historical society has been using that.

EMC: Right.

LJP: That's a nice good size building from 1760.

EMC: It's beautiful.

LJP: At the other end of the redevelopment area, which they did work on, they tore down a building almost the same size of the Brick Market. The Newport Trust Company. They had a pediment on top with a spread eagle. It had marble inside. They tore it down. What do they have there today? A parking lot.

EMC: Oh, yes, the beautiful banks have all gone with the wind.

LJP: Now to me that was about the same size. I'm not a professional planner, but we have planners in my office at the State. And we'd have our meetings and hear what's going on in my division and this division and so on. This to me would be the nicest thing you could have done to do that. Those two buildings complemented each other. That was the end of it. Nothing further south was being developed. The waterfront. I don't know what the fisherman think. We had a state pier here for them. But it used to be nice to go down to see fishing boats. People used to like the water. I could walk to the waterfront up there. Nobody ever bothered you. You go down to the shipyard, the Newport shipyard and William Manchester Shipyard. As long as you didn't mess around with something (you shouldn't touch or machinery) they didn't bother you. We use to go crabbing. We used to get crabs and take the crab to some guy who sells fishing bait. It was nice to make fifty cents, sitting down on the next dock. But I mean that is what it was. I don't like these new buildings. And that's all there's to it. They may be pretty, but they belong in another era. When you're looking at buildings built 1888, 1890 on one side of the street and the other—

EMC: And Newport has had an influx of tourism as a result of some of these changes.

LJP: Well, I've got to look back and say.

EMC: And with the advent of the bridge in 1969.

LJP: It all helped. Tourism, though, was not a stranger. In fact, The New York Times before World War II would have a Sunday section, which was very social and almost every other week the front page would be about Newport society, and Southhampton next week and maybe some other place. But we were not unknown. The transportation wasn't all that easy in those days. People came here and thousands of them would come here in one day from the steamboats from Providence and

Fall River, even from New London and New Bedford. There would be two thousand people in the streets here. The beach was a big attraction. Newport Beach was a big attraction. The people, the mill workers from Woonsocket, Pawtucket—they loved coming down here. Worcester policemen loved Newport. I don't know why the Worcester policemen took to Newport, but this where they would come for their vacation. We weren't unknown.

EMC: No, but it was just a little more difficult to get here if you were coming from the west on the ferry. That's the way I first came to Newport, on the ferry.

LJP: We had two ferries before the other bridge was built. We had two ferries. But the Mount Hope Bridge and the Stone Bridge didn't come well, the Stone Bridge was there. Mount Hope Bridge didn't come until 1929. But, on the other hand, it was not a big industry for Rhode Island. And the thing was that people came and took a ride around the Ocean Drive, and what could they—they couldn't go in any mansions, but they would go by them. Ooh, you know, the Current Topics Club used to sponsor garden tours of the mansions when they were really beautiful gardens, never mind these secret garden tours. They were well kept. They were manicured. They had all kinds of flowers. And their proceeds served as fundraiser for milk, I think, for kids and stuff like that. It was very well done. People came because we had that one claim that we are the oldest resort in America, the first resort. Wolfeboro, New Hampshire says they are, but we'll fight them anytime.

EMC: Don't you think high society in Newport has sort of diminished.

LJP: Yes, indeed a lot of the mansions were converted into condominiums and apartments. But I'd rather see them do that than torn down, which was the ultimate--the role for The Elms was to tear it down and put forty house lots in it.

EMC: They're lucky they didn't do that. The Preservation Society got organized.

LJP: Yes. But I think post World War II for Newport, the Breakers, Countess Szapary opened it for the Preservation Society to raise money. That to me was a good thing.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: Because even after the war, in 1946, I was asked to be a local escort on Cooks Tour buses. and that was an easy five dollars for forty minutes. It was a great pay.

EMC: It certainly was.

LJP: We'd go around the drive, and I would point out Trinity Church. Then I went on with the tour. By that time I was doing a course at the Historical Society, which was part of my job. I then did a tour on Ayrault Street, number sixteen. And at that time the women were maybe 35, 40, 45 years old on the bus. And I'd say I'm leaving you here, but before I go I want you to know we stopped here because if you look to the right that's the house Van Johnson lived in.

EMC: Who's Van Johnson?

LJP: Van Johnson the great--

EMC: Oh, Van Johnson.

LJP: Yes, yes. Oh gosh they would have—yes, that's where he lived? I mean this was something.

EMC: A big deal.

LJP: Then I did that for two years. And I turned it over to my brother, who got a nice job out of it, the Nova Scotia tours and things like that, and I did another one. But there were twenty motor coach tours in Newport that year. Now you're getting three thousand. I worked with a man out of New York about 1953 or '54 called Bingel Tours. He had a little place in New York, and I went down to see them, and we got to be friends. Sandy said, "Book me". They started to come up. Then the others came up. Then, of course, today you have a lot of independently owned charters, and it's good to see. A lot of them nice new busses and air conditioned. What a difference in today's traffic.

EMC: It is. It's vastly different. Can you tell me how you're involved in the Newport community today? What are you affiliated with? What organizations, clubs, whatever?

LJP: I am a member of organizations, but I don't get to them very much. Rose Island Light-house Foundation, Newport Historical, Preservation Society, Hereshoff Museum in Bristol.

EMC: What about the Redwood?

LJP: Oh, Redwood, of course, Newport Library. But I mean I'm not much for clubbing. I belong to Quindecim, a retired men's dinner club, which is nice. If the museum were more accessible to the public, the Naval War College Museum, I would be there more frequently.

EMC: They're having a Trafalger exhibit upcoming, and you can go see it now. They're in the stages of putting it up. It's up on the second floor.

LJP: I want to go over there to see John Hattendorf.

EMC: He's not here, unfortunately. He went to Washington today.

LJP: Again?

EMC: Again, he was gone last week for three days. Now he's gone again to the Secretary of the Navy's Committee.

LJP: He was in England for a while, wasn't he?

EMC: Yes, he was in England for about three weeks. But Bob Cembrola is there. I know that. He's the one that put the parking sign out for you.

LJP: When I was over there for the PG 265 reunion where I was master of ceremonies for that. In fact, I mentioned to him the Sea Classics Magazine column for the month for a museum. I mentioned that to him outside the museum.

EMC: You do a column?

LJP: Yes, Sea Classics Magazine.

EMC: What is it?

LJP: Classics. Who has it here? Barnes & Nobles has it.

EMC: Sea Classics Magazine--okay, so you do a column for them?

LJP: Yes.

EMC: Just any topic or seafaring topic?

LJP: A museum. Maritime Museums and what they do to attract visitors.

EMC: A museum.

LJP: That's it. You know, I promoted that for them. In other words, I stopped, and I didn't think the editor would go for it—museums, where you've been, because mostly the articles were written by retired Navy people of rank or enlisted, Merchant Marine, Coast Guard, and the museums. They just got through a survey magazine of their readers and found out that Sea Mail, which were letters to the editor, and museums were two top subjects.

EMC: Favorite subjects of the museum.

LJP: I was pleased, but I couldn't figure that one out. They like to read what's going on in the museums. And Lake Champlain Maritime Museum or Ventura Country out there in California.

EMC: New Bedford?

LJP: New Bedford, of course we're going back, I joined sixty-three years ago. Greenwich, London, Maritime Museum sent me their news. I used that. I went to the USS South Dakota memorial right now. I had some stuff from before from Chesapeake Bay Memorial, Cape May, and other places.

EMC: Mariner's Museum. Then you're getting an awful lot of mail in your house.

LJP: Not always because what happens is that a lot of these museums have nice collections, probably building a side but not a big thing. So they don't have any staff. So they don't have a public a public relations or media relations staff. All they have is volunteers. They go what's this Rhode Island address here. Well, if, they're sitting in Iowa and they figure the people in Davenport should

know what's going on elsewhere.

EMC: Oh, they've got to understand that's important.

LJP: So I have to have myself reinstated. I've written four or five organizationsthis past week.
Where are you?

EMC: You're writing for Sea Classics, is important for you.

LJP: But I was very pleased that that column was 69%, a top figure 69%. And that was encouraging. I did an article on the Chicago Science Museum, the new 505 German Subs building. I remember seeing it outside for years when I went to Chicago. I did that article. I did one on the Philadelphia Art Institute, which had a maritime exhibit, Monet and the sea. But I saw they were having Monet, a maritime thing. And the Sea Classics did use a copy of a painting of the the Kearsarge and the Alabama done by Monet.

EMC: Isn't that interesting. You're very involved. Are you writing for anybody else?

LJP: No.

EMC: Just those two.

LJP: Just the people.

EMC: That's enough. Sea Classics and the Grist Mill twice a week here in the Newport Daily News.

LJP: As I said, when I saw that it was the Sea Classics Magazine, I didn't think the editor would

bother.

EMC: They do have museum news. They have it in Naval History too, because I wrote a little bit on the Historical Collection, and it was in June's Naval History. So that's the kind of thing they have.

LJP: Well, it's a specific organization.

EMC: It certainly is.

LJP: But the leadership of Sea Classics would be a mixture of everybody. A man who was probably just a Seaman, First Class to an admiral. I'm sure it is more center of the role leadership. But I try to make something from what I get. For example, the museum in Lexington, Massachusetts, which is run by the Scottish Rite National Heritage Museum.

EMC: Oh, yes.

LJP: They have some good programs. And for example they had a woman speak there a year and a half or so ago on the OSS in World War II, and she was involved in it. It's not a Navy type thing per se, but I thought it was interesting to put in because the museum was sponsoring that type of talk. They've also had the war posters. They've also had the Associated Press pictures that they thought the fifty best during World War II. I don't care if it was Army, Marines or what. It was amusing, and it was of interest because a lot of people, even if you look through the obituaries today—he was in the Navy during World War II and Army in Vietnam or vice versa. And they just transferred an old branch of service, so there are a lot of men and women who probably have interesting careers, two branches of service or maybe more. I don't know It's not unusual to know that. So I do what I can and the best that I can.

EMC: That's for sure. Now your wife was very involved in Newport. Wasn't she, too? In the Preservation Society?

LJP: Yes, she was there for forty-two years as public relations director.

EMC: Oh, really, so she was kind of in the same business.

LJP: She became interested in my chosen field. I would take her with me if the host of the talk would say bring your wife. I didn't have to call for the next slide please, next slide. She knew exactly what word I was going to say. She started to report for The Worcester Telegram, local reporter, a French gal. Here's a gal from France. And she contributed to this house. Believe me. She was a good mother. She never neglected them in any way in favor of doing something else. They came first. She was a reporter for The Worcester Telegram and went to Europe in 1951, and we went to meet the publisher with a suggestion of reading back some articles. He said, alright. He said you can send back information or articles, but I want no tourist articles. They had a tourist section. So we sent back. And she sent back, and we were working together on an article on St. Cyr, which was the Military Academy in Versailles which had been bombed. And it had been moved to a place called Coetquidon in Brittany, a very damp place to live. I believe that she sent back the first article on that institution, because after that about four or five publications like the New York Herald Tribune had it and Life Magazine had it. I will put you down in St. Cyr. Life Magazine had it. I'm not saying we did it, but I'm pleased that she was one of the early ones to write about St. Cyr after her father went through that; her brother in law went through that; her other uncle went through that. We also sent back an article comparing the way of life in Brittany to the Monte Carlo area.

EMC: Wow.

LJP: The kids in Brittany were on bicycles or can of milk to take down the store; the kids in Monte Carlo having Bal Masque and things like that. A good life. She sent back four articles, and all four were used.

EMC: Isn't that something?

LJP: Then she became a correspondent for The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Philadelphia Bulletin and the Social Spectator Magazine. She learned. She's a brilliant woman.

EMC: And she had to write in English.

LJP: Yeah.

EMC: Isn't that something. Well, I mean it's hard.

LJP: I depend on her to help me a lot too because she knows if I split an infinitive. I let her proofread some of my stuff. She went to private schools, a convent first and private schools, and her English was taught by an English teacher. The person in school who taught German was from Germany, Spanish was from Spain. I mean that was it. So she knew English, and someone tipped me off. The daughter of this hostess of party that we were at is speaking English better than I do. I said, "oh, yeah."

EMC: Isn't that something? It's amazing.

LJP: I didn't think I'd ever marry a girl from over there. Naturally if you were going to be that way. But we got married and she has been an excellent, outstanding wife.

EMC: That's great.

LJP: Sixty-two years now.

EMC: Wow.

LJP: Yeah.

EMC: Very good. Are you children here in Newport?

LJP: Yes.

EMC: Okay.

LJP: My son is very much involved with the Newport Yachting Center. They do a lot of buying of beverages for the restaurants and caterers in Newport, for that company's Boathouse in Tiverton, and Castle Hill resort. My daughter is teaching at Middletown High School.

EMC: That's great.

LJP: She took that masters degree to protect her job. So they gave her that, and she's teaching fashion marketing. I don't know what it is, but she's teaching it.

EMC: She's got a job anyway.

LJP: She's got a couple more years to go, and she can retire.

EMC: That's great.

LJP: So we're lucky with the children staying here.

EMC: Yes, they're local.

LJP: But both came out of college. But we've been very happy. We've done everything we had to do. And my wife does keep busy. She does Christmas in Newport. She was president for fifteen years.

EMC: Really?

LJP: And she still works with that committee. In fact, she puts the calendar together. In fact, she is working on it now. It has to be printed pretty soon.

EMC: Yes.

LJP: It's amazing how many telephone calls she'll get asking for advice or assistance.

EMC: She was very, very involved and still is in the community in that regard.

LJP: Yeah, she is. But she did a good job at the Preservation Society because of her professional approach to her work. The Breakers, when they opened in 1948, was the first big post-war break for tourism in the state. Some crazy figures I have said the Automobile Association of America said that the tourist value to Rhode Island in 1950 was eighteen million dollars. That wasn't very much money. Today it's—well, they say it's almost four billion.

EMC: That's amazing.

LJP: When I was promoting there was one hotel in Newport.

EMC: Viking.

LJP: That's right. But by 1970 they built—what is today the Hyatt and The Newport Harbor opened as the Treadway. The Howard Johnson came on and built it, and the Ramada Inn used by Roger Williams University part-time. All that began at that time. There were twenty-five golf courses, private and public in 1952. Now there are about fifty-five golf courses.

EMC: Here?

LJP: Yes.

EMC: In Rhode Island.

LJP: Yes.

EMC: In Rhode Island.

LJP: This is what I was up against. What did I have? We had a lot of places called cabins. We still have cabins, not many, but there are a lot of cabins. People like them.

EMC: That's how people traveled in those days.

LJP: That's right. This is what I did. Cabins were attractive to some people. Most people didn't like them.

EMC: --or tourist homes.

LJP: We didn't have too many bed and breakfasts.

EMC: No, but they called them tourist homes. That's what they called them.

LJP: Guest houses.

EMC: Guest houses.

LJP: Or tourist homes. So Len Scaldri, who was then the manager of the Viking Hotel, he was president of the Rhode Island Hotel Association. Somehow he made a survey. The largest hotel in the State was the Biltmore in Providence at that time. He learned that out of all the hotels, motels, cabins, 55% had a shower or a bath or a combination of both. A lot of hotels had that room at the end of the corridor to put your towel over your shoulder. Alright, take the Hotel Biltmore rooms which had all complete bath facilities out of that percentage, and we were reduced to 35% of our rooms having bath or shower or both. I mean this how primitive we were to a degree. This all had to be done over. We were looking at everything we could to develop this state. We had a thing called motel seminar. We invited people who were involved that knew we were in the new movement of motel development, and they came, and we had people come from New York, New England, and New Jersey to come and tell us the methods and all a bout developing tourism.

EMC: Oh, sure you needed the accommodations.

LJP: You needed them, in order to develop.

EMC: Absolutely.

LJP: I was on a convention committee in Providence for years. I never saw a convention center built until after I was out. We were looking at convention centers. We were looking at everything that

was needed to develop tourism and it would cost a fortune for a lot of people who were involved. We didn't do it all. I never said I'll take credit for all that. Trinity Rep came online. Naturally we publicized it. We would be crazy if we didn't. I mean Providence Performing Arts Center—that would have been torn down—beautiful, those beautiful theaters of that era, 1930. Sure we helped them and our assistance as requested. They were having a program to get funds. We had May Day breakfasts. I was criticized by our paper for wasting time promoting May Day breakfasts. My answer was yes, people like the example of Cape Cod. A lot of Cape Cod's uniqueness exists on the local supper, the club supper. A lot of people like those roast beef dinners that the fire department is putting on. So I said May Day breakfasts. It's not a lunch or a dinner. This is a morning meal, a big meal for five bucks, six bucks, you can't do that any place else. I said who's coming up here? I had two—at that time Sinclair Oil and Esso had their own tourist promotion offices in New York. They sent people up to the May Day breakfast. And a man I developed a friendship with from The New York Times came. That's who was interested in May Day breakfasts.

EMC: Because they can get people--

LJP: But I mean I was criticized for wasting time for morning May Day breakfast. I knew what people were doing. I went to May Day breakfasts. I enjoyed them. I just wish they had them every morning. But everything--that was my job. I went around to see every hotel, campground and took pictures of everything I could. In fact, one picture I took of Harrisville was used by Allegheny Airlines for a poster.

EMC: So you really worked very hard to promote Rhode Island.

LJP: I did.

EMC: --during this time, thirty-one year time period.

LJP: One of the pictures I took was used in a National Geographic book. It was the Slater Hill in Pawtucket, and the trouble with taking pictures of the State in Pawtucket across the river is you always had the tower of the City Hall interfere. I had to lay down on my stomach hoping that one of them wasn't high to get a picture without that tower. I've got pictures from Toronto, Atlanta, Los Angeles. I did everything I had to do.

EMC: To promote the State, and it worked.

LJP: I was the press officer for the American's Cup Races, the State Press Officer, for the first Tall Ships visit in 1976 and press officer for the Storm Trysail Club, which still has biennial races at Block Island.

EMC: What is the name of that club?

LJP: Storm trysail, t-r-y-s-a-i-l Club.

EMC: I would be in charge of press headquarters assigned to their race committee. But they would be out in the water, and I would take pictures during a couple of hours during the day around the island, maybe sail boats off in the distance, people watching them and so on and so forth. Those pictures are going to the Trysail Club this year. They want them.

EMC: Sure.

LJP: They must know and they do know that they're not looking at Rosenfeld or Dan Rooney type action pictures. This is a documentary. What was the island for the years 1965 through 1989? It has

changed a lot since that time. The yachts that were involved probably no longer exist, or they changed in appearance. The people involved are gone. I think they're going to have me give a talk with the slides.

EMC: Do you still give any talks in town?

LJP: If people want me, I'll do it. I've done one on weathervanes.

EMC: Really? Yes.

LJP: Signs, like the kind seen outside English tavern. I did the three crowns and seven bells.

EMC: And talks on Newport, of course, you could give.

LJP: Yes, I have one titled this is Newport. But I'm not pushing them. But the thing is I'm looking through a lot of these slides. Where can they go? My children are not interested in them. Yes, I could throw them away.

EMC: No.

LJP: But if somebody wants them--

EMC: Newport Historical.

LJP: Well, there'll be some going--Storm Trysail belongs to the Trysail Club.

EMC: Yeah, but if you have any of Newport I would think the historical society--

LJP: They'll get that, and the Middletown Historical Society.

EMC: Right.

LJP: I've got quite a few pictures taken of Portsmouth and Middletown. See when I came back here after the war, my wife—I got married in Casablanca. And she got here two months before I got home, which was good. She didn't have to go on a war bride ship to New York with two thousand women on board. So anyway, first thing I started to do was show her around the area where she was living, Little Compton, Sakonnet Point. I've been taking picture there. And I'm not the greatest photographer in the world. I never used a light meter. I hate all those gadgets. Then I got the job with the state. Lots of the times she went with me. And she would be a model in the distance somewhere. And Radio City Music Hall about twenty-five years ago had to salute to America. And every state sent its own color slides. I was quite pleased when eight or nine of mine were shown. Big screen and Radio City Music Hall. We made it. We're on Broadway. It sounds like I'm boasting. But I'm not.

EMC: No.

LJP: You asked me about work, and that's what it was. It had its good days and bad days. I always try to forget the bad days.

EMC: Right, that's good.

LJP: Everyday was a good day, but most of the people on my staff were good people, hard working. If you asked them to work something, they would have it. If I said, I need that tomorrow, they would have it for me. I mean it was—there are people I wish I didn't have to have.

EMC: There's always those.

LJP: Generally speaking, they were dedicated. The secretary needed a job. It was a second income at that time to buy a house. And so we respected them for that. And, of course, a couple got married when I was there, so we went to their wedding. I mean it was family really, and that's how we had to look at it. John was a good friend of mine; Mary was a good friend of mine. But I liked everything. The state was good to me. Both sides of the political side were good to me. And a democratic governor, a republican government. Thirty-one years and no other state travel director lasted that long.

EMC: Oh, that's great.

LJP: A lot of them are political.

EMC: Political appointees.

LJP: Yeah.

EMC: But you were a civil servant, so to speak.

LJP: I was a paid civil servant. Yes, I was appointed by Governor Roberts. And I was living in Massachusetts when he appointed me.

EMC: Right, right, when you got the job. But you were a native of Newport.

LJP: I was living in Massachusetts. I was voting for a man who named Finney. People look and ask who got you your job. I say I got it.

EMC: Through Governor—

LJP: I had no obligation. Senator Murray who was a judge and a Newporter. So I wrote to her from Sturbridge and I said I wanted that job, and she wrote back to me saying she had given my name to the governor. But she did no more—and that was more than I expected.

EMC: That's great.

LJP: But she didn't know. If I could have the opportunity, I would move back to Rhode Island, and here I was four years at Sturbridge. I had developed a track record. She had given my name to the governor. She didn't say I have talked to the governor, and I think he should hire you. None of that. Just a very simple letter. And I appreciated what she said.

EMC: Great.

LJP: She may have had some influence. I don't know. But Governor Roberts and her were down. But I was living in Massachusetts.

EMC: If you don't have anything more to add then, I think we can conclude. You've covered the last years from 1945 pretty much to the present, and I want to thank you very much, Mr. Panaggio, for consenting to be interviewed for the Oral History Program. I'm going to have this transcribed by our transcription company, and then I will do some editing. I'll go over it and go over the tape. Then I will give it to you, so you can fill in any blanks that are needed.

LJP: I'll have to go someplace where--I don't have this equipment.

EMC: Oh, you'll get a paper copy.

LJP: Okay.

EMC: You'll get the paper copy, and then we'll send it back to the transcriber and she'll make any changes. So thanks.

LJP: We'll get rid of the ah's and oh's.

EMC: The ah's and the well's and the oh's and all that. Thank you very much.

LJP: Thank you.