Robert L. Pomeroy
Veteran

Michael Aikey
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New York State Military Museum
Interviewers

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Latham, New York

RLP: …had water on the knee and he thought the doctor had come to see him, and the doctor was very cantankerous about this because it was early in the morning, and he came in the buggy, because it was 1915 and that's the way the doctors traveled during a wartime–there wasn't enough fuel and so on. He said, "Where is your wife?" which infuriated my father. He said, "You came to see about me." And he said, "Where is your wife?" He just kept… He said, "She's upstairs," so the doctor went on upstairs, leaving him, and he said, "That damn quack doesn't recognize a crisis when he sees one." [Laughs]
MA: Male priorities.
RLP: Yes, you're right.

MA: We're interviewing Mr. Robert L. Pomeroy at Latham Headquarters. It's June 8, 2001. Interviewer is Michael Aikey; videographer is Wayne Clarke. Mr. Pomeroy, where were you born?
RLP: I was born on a farm on the outskirts of a village called Convent, because there was a big, large Catholic convent there, and trains stopped there but there was nothing else there.

MA: In New York?
RLP: No, New Jersey, on the outskirts of Madison, New Jersey.

MA: And you went to school in the early years–where?
RLP: Well, I tried to get into school then, at least when I was about three years old, because I figured that's where everything was at; suddenly all the family–I had a brother and two sisters–and they were off to school and I was left at home with… We had some servants in those days; it was taken for granted you had to have somebody to care of a new arrival in the family. But I was never allowed in. From that time on–I guess I did manage to get in one time and was thrown right out. From that time on, I spent my life going to schools. I once counted sixteen schools that I had been to, from the first one in Shanghai. In Peking, we had tutors–there wasn't a proper school in Peking.

MA: What did your father do?
RLP: My father was a–hard to tell what he did. I think he was a member of the New York bar, but he had started off in college–had finished high school and started off in college. He met my mother, who was a singer and on the stage in New York, and she was from Florida, and he fell in love with her. He decided–in those days you had to quit school, he was at Princeton, and he had to or he wanted to, I don't know which; he was very rich. His grandfather, I later found out, had been a Civil War profiteer and was smart enough to see that cotton was going to be a big thing and he was in St Louis. He had been there long before the Civil War, and as soon as the Civil War was obvious, the steamboats–fewer and fewer people went up and down the Mississippi–and he chartered these boats. He had made a lot of money already on the Gold Rush, not mining, but outfitting miners and people going west. So, he chartered these boats, sent them down, loaded them up full of cotton, brought them up, made warehouses and loaded them into warehouses, and then from that time on he was making millions sending cotton across to England, to Europe. He died when my father was a baby; and his father, my father's father and mother, also died when he was a baby. He had had travel in his blood. He had been born in America, had been immediately taken overseas because his father, my grandfather was a diplomat. He was First Secretary in the Embassy in Paris and was made Ambassador to Egypt, and so my father got used to traveling even as a baby, obviously, and it was in his blood, and he spent the rest of his life traveling. I don't know how many times he went around the world, but he took us around the world when we were old enough to go.

MA: Now where did you go to high school?
RLP: High school in Lawrenceville, New Jersey and Washington, and I had a tutor. Whenever we traveled and he decided that we had to get out of school, then he would get a tutor. We had one tutor that was absolutely fabulous. And when it finally came to taking college board exams, I had no trouble at all because of this guy who had been a friend, our tutor, Mr. Standing, outstanding man–well, with a name like that. He had been an assistant to Madame Montessori who, as you know, was a great innovator in education and taught me Algebra, Geometry, and Latin, and I stopped Greek–I didn't like the alphabet–and English History. And then I got from my father–my father was a great historian as far as American history was concerned and he insisted on my, at the age of fourteen, reading Wilson's A History of the American People. I've always loved American history more than English. I always found the English history a little bit too involved with all those kings and queens. So, otherwise I went to school in Cleveland, Ohio–two schools there, one out in the country and one in town, the University School, which my father had been to. Strangely enough, when I went to University School–that was the first year of high school–the headmaster had been one of my father's teachers, and I thought, "My God, this is like having some prehistoric monster in the house." I couldn't believe that anybody had known my

father, that my father had ever been a child. And then Switzerland, Italy, France, wherever we were. These were more or less high school, because I ended high school in a school called Hun School in Princeton, which was a very good school and they guaranteed to get anybody into college.

MA: Where did you go to college?
RLP: I went to about as many colleges. I went to American University for a short time, just when it was opening up. I went to George Washington University to take several courses and to assist in… because one of my loves was ornithology, natural… and we had a farm–we lived on a farm and had animals and shooting and stuff like that. I took courses at another big university in Washington, D.C., Georgetown, and Santa Barbara,
where we had an uncle, an aunt and a first cousin.

MA: About what time period was this?
RLP: Now we are getting to the thirties when I was going to college. I'd go for a year and then wander off because somebody would say… The word would go around that the family was going to Italy because my sister, like a damn fool, she was sort of a snob, and she wanted to have a title–I'm sure that's the only reason she went to Italy–to get a title, which she got. She married a Baron. So, she was the Baroness, and they had a big palace in Catanzaro. Nobody's ever heard of Catanzaro, I don't believe. It's right down on the toe of Italy. Her boyfriend up to that time had been a chap by the name of By Wrigley, and I'll tell you everybody in the family, at least us kids, wanted her to marry By Wrigley because when he came to the house, he always had two pockets full of chewing gum. And he owned everything in the world. He owned half of one of the shipping lines, he owned Catalina Island. Later on, I found out what a wonderful place Catalina Island was, but, unfortunately, she didn't see the beauty of By Wrigley, but actually she did. I have a lot of letters from them. He was always asking her to marry him.

MA: What was Italy like in the thirties?
RLP: Italy, well, when I became really familiar with it, although I had been in school there in Rome, and of course, in Rome, in school all of your friends were Americans, a few Italians, but mostly Americans, either foreign service, or other families you know. One of my best friends was–I haven't seen him since that period of time–was a chap by the name of Lawton Collins, and his father was Military Attaché at the American Embassy. I think that Lawton went to West Point. I know he went to West Point because his father and his grandfather did, and one of his great-grandfathers was in the Civil War, I believe, a General in the Civil War. He had a brother born there and this chap was the one who navigated around the moon while the others landed. He didn't land. What was his name? The Collins. He was an astronaut. I'd liked to have met him again. Lawton, I think, was in the Invasion of Normandy, and maybe he was killed there because

you don't hear from him later. He had the nickname of something that sounded like Lawton but isn't–it will come to me–Lightning Joe Collins, his name was Lawton Joseph Collins. He was a General and I believe that he may have [unclear] –either that, or he was in the Navy, I'm not sure which. And that's why they picked out this Lightning Joe, because nobody could remember Lawton.

MA: Around 1939, where were you?
RLP: In 1939, I was in Rome. My brother and I had started a newspaper in New Jersey. This is 1936 and we ran that until 1938 and then we decided that we were losing money. I wanted to go to Paris and he wanted to… I got a job on the Herald Tribune, and the Paris Editor of the Herald Tribune–which was called in those days, it was called the Paris Edition of the Herald Tribune. At any rate, I was working in New York. The Editor, Eric Hawkins, came over to America and I asked him for a job and he said, "Well, we've got one of the reporters going to Spain to join," whatever it was, the International Brigade of, not the Lincoln Brigade, something or other like that. He said, "If he goes, then there'll be an opening, but I can't assure you. So, if you're going over, look me up in Rue de Berri," I think it was, just off the Champs-Elysees, "and we'll give you a try." Which is what I did. I got a freighter across and I tried to work my way across. Although I had been an able seaman, they weren't taking anybody at that time, so I paid the… I think it cost $80 to go by freighter at that time. Very well taken care of, very good food, and I made some good friends on that trip. One of them was a composer who is now an American and he's quite well known–sort of terrible modern music, clashing and banging and stuff like that.

MA: What's his name?
RLP: His name Johan Franco. He was Dutch. I've run into people who say, "Hey, really, Johan Franco." So, I got to Paris and I got this job. Jim Lardner, who was the guy just before me, had just left. He was one of the sons of Ring Lardner, who was a writer, a very good writer, in New York. So, Jim went down and was killed very shortly after that outside of Madrid, and I stayed on and then they weren't doing too well.

MA: What kind of reporting were you doing?
RLP: I was working for a very interesting guy whose name was Sparrow Robertson. He was one of the original lost generation. He was a sports writer and I was working for him on the paper, and he was about that big [holds hand up to shoulder height]. Just general reporting–if there was a ballet dance or a fighter who came in town–I can't remember who they were now. I use to keep clippings of stories, but I lost a lot of them during the war.

MA: What was the feel of Paris then?
RLP: Wonderful, wonderful–very, very, very few tourists, practically no tourists at all. And this was before the war; this was in '37. Actually, you asked me about

'39. By that time, I had gone down to Italy to see my sister who was married and living on a farm in glory, and having servants all over the place, and as far as I could see, didn't do much, but having parties and house parties and a lot of interesting people down there.

MA: Was there a concern about Fascism?
RLP: Fascism. Yes, some of your friends, Italians–I spoke Italian already because I had been to school in Italy; we lived there, we had a house in Italy, in Rome. But some of your friends, especially in places like Calabria, like Catanzaro, which is the sort of main area, among your friends there were people who were in confine. That meant that they had to report. They were completely free, they were given housing, they were given a daily stipend, but they had to report once a day. They had to go into the Questura, which was the mayor of the town, and report, and then they were free to do whatever they wanted to do. They were political prisoners. They were either newspapermen who had written against Mussolini, or in one way or another, teachers who were not toeing the line of Fascism. But they weren't in prison or anything like that. There were no concentration camps. There had been one bad scandal of one of the members of the House of Deputies–it was a little bit like Beckett and one of the Henrys, Henry II, I believe. Mussolini had supposedly said, "I wish somebody would get rid of him," or something or other like that, and they murdered him. He was murdered. His name was Matteotti. Otherwise Fascism had its world. My brother-in-law, Marincola, the Baron, was a member of the party. Everybody was a member of the party. That meant a little thing like this [points to chest], you know a button, but otherwise you used them. As a newspaperman, I was offered a job in the United Press while I was down there, which I took. I stayed on until we got in the war.

MA: So you were working for the United Press in Italy?
RLP: Yes, in Italy, in Rome.

MA: What type of reporting?
RLP: Reporting everything. The UP just covered our main clients, well, we had clients all over America. But our real main clients, the ones who just could never get enough, were the South American countries. Brazil, Argentina, Peru, all of them took our service. They liked it because we gave a lot of Latin. We covered their embassies. The AP was more substantial. I guess they had a bigger international staff than UP. It wasn't called UPI, now it's UPI, United Press International, if it still exists, which I'm afraid it doesn't. And I had a boss who was a sort of an original lost generation, although he had been in Paris a long time, and he covered everything. He covered the Ethiopian War, which my brother went over and covered for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. Have you ever heard of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle? It was famous. At one time, it was a very outstanding paper edited by Whitman–Whitman's first name, it's on the wrong

side of my brain–Walt Whitman. I stayed on there covering when the war started. By that time, my brother, who is much more interesting–he should be here instead of me–he had gone to Washington, gotten on the Post and then decided he wanted to go back to China because we had a friend out there who had a newspaper–JB Powell–who I guess wrote to him and said, "If you come out here, I'll have a job for you." He went out there and became City Editor of Powell's newspaper. Powell had a hell of a time with the Japanese. Now that's jumping ahead, because that was after Pearl Harbor. He had a hell of a time. He was put in prison and he had to have both of his feet, just the feet, amputated, because they got gangrene.

MA: Now you're in Rome, you're reporting for the UP.
RLP: With a boss by the name of Reynolds Packard, who was an absolute tyrant, but a great friend; we, you know, got along very well together.

MA: What was living in Rome like at that time?
RLP: Well, it was interesting, because you were surrounded by newspapermen from all over Europe, from Germany, from Poland, from Yugoslavia, from, even Russians, although Russians–no, no, no Russians, not then, because the Russians had broken diplomatic relations with the Italians, at least from the time that the Italians got into the war. They didn't get into the war immediately. But, it was interesting.

MA: What did you think of Mussolini?
RLP: As a kid, I was sort of carried away by Mussolini in a sense. This guy on a horse, he was always around on a horse. The only time I was ever, sort of, in on an interview with him, which was not an interview at all, he came out and we were invited–all of the newspapermen in Rome, just the Americans because the English had already gone, this was after they got in the war. He had given us an interview because there had been a story that he was not well and that he needed doctors' help and so on, and the doctors were treating him for something or other that they hinted might be cancer or something like that. He invited us to his big villa, Villa Torlonia, but anyway, that's where he lived. We all had to go out there and wait around and he came out and had a game of tennis with somebody else. He seemed to be pretty good at tennis. Then he went away again, didn't say anything and came out on a horse, a beautiful horse, and did some jumps and stuff like that, and he said in German–he didn't speak English, although he spoke English. He said, "Do I look ill?" in German, "Bin ich," and so forth. I never spoke German. You'd see him occasionally when Hitler came down for the signing of the Tripartite Treaty and that sort of thing–you'd see them all–him and Mussolini.

MA: Did you cover that?
RLP: No I didn't; that was before I got onto the United Press.

MA: Did you get a sense that Europe was moving towards a major war?
RLP: A war? Well, the war had started. When I was with the United Press, I was there when it started. When the Germans invaded Poland, and the Declaration of War of the British–they were at war–and the French, so…

MA: Now, how was your sister and her husband faring?
RLP: Well, he was all for it, and she wasn't, but he was, and one time she was going to go home, but then at a certain point you couldn't go home, back to America, because of the U-boats and there was no such thing as commercial air. That started during the war. Early in the war, there were those big flying boats going to, mainly I think as far as Europe was concerned to Portugal, carrying probably diplomats and maybe very rich businessmen.

MA: So you were working for UP for how long in Italy?
RLP: I think about three years.

MA: Ending about when?
RLP: Six months after we got in the war.

MA: So early '42 you came back?
RLP: Early '42, the diplomats and newspapermen were repatriated. It was an exchange, and the same ship that brought the Axis diplomats and newspapermen… In the meantime, they had thrown us in prison. So, I'm almost a certified citizen of Rome, because the legend, the story, is that there are two ways to become a Roman. The one is to be born in Rome, and other one is, there are three steps somewhere in Rome, where if you take those three steps, you are automatically a Roman citizen. This is tongue-in-cheek. The three steps are the three steps that go into the Regina Coeli. The Regina Coeli is the name for the main penitentiary in Rome. "Queen of the Sky" is what it means, Regina Coeli. And we were thrown right into jail, in bars, you know, because the rumor had come back that the Americans had put all of the foreign Axis newspapermen in jail, so it was a reciprocal thing, according to the Italians and they threw us in jail.

Change in tape

RLP: She had two sons, one of them was in the Air Force. Well later on, because he was rather small. And the oldest one was a racing driver, and there were two men on the teams.

MA: What was his name?
RLP: His name was Peter and I'll give you a few of the names. Everybody in the family had to have their names on the new young Baron when he was born.

Evanino Pietro Marincola; the others were, Eugenio for my father. I don't think he even remembered all his names.

MA: What was the last name? How do you spell it?
RLP: Marincola [spells name].

MA: When was he a racing driver?
RLP: This was, I think it was maybe a little bit later than the war. Yes, because during the war he was in school. So, this would have been about when I went back. Well I went back during the war and he was racing in Calabria. That race went all over the country, a great big loop.

MA: The [unclear]–they postponed it during the war.
RLP: They postponed it during the war, so it would have been just after the war.

MA: Now, when you were in Rome, was there a press conference with just Goebbels that you attended?
RLP: There was supposed to have been one with Goebbels, and I very nearly got myself into a lot of trouble. This was when I was working as a newspaperman. Why Goebbels was coming down, I don't remember. I guess he was–occasionally between Italy and Germany, there was a lot of contact. This was just after the fall of France, and it suddenly occurred to me, out of the blue, that if Hitler had, instead of insisting on the Armistice being signed and France divided up into two sections–one section that would be unoccupied France, and the government would have to move out of Paris because the Germans were going to stay in Paris… It suddenly occurred to me, "You know this is the end of the war." If Hitler comes out and withdraws from France completely, and before they had started the blitzkrieg of England, and says, "As we have always said, we have no demands on France or England and the war is over," that it would have put England in the position, and I've had a lot people discuss this with me, but I've asked a lot of high ranking military people in the British Army, that that would have been the end of the war. Churchill, no matter how much he could talk, he could not sell the British on having another expeditionary force in France. It would have been impossible. But, it had to be, in my opinion, it had to be something that the Germans had to do in this case, to just step away. The French hated the English at that particular moment; they hated the English more than anything else. I mean they really were livid about things. They thought the English had turned and abandoned them. One French diplomat, I can't remember who it was, or it may have been a newspaperman just before he left, because this was right at the collapsing point. They were very strange. They allowed newspapermen to go wherever they wanted to go; as far as the English and the French. A friend of ours went up to Switzerland, because he said, "That's going to last only one day." I think they only had one day to get out. So, this idea of mine was that when Goebbels was going to give an interview–because Hitler

never gave an interview that I know of, well, you know, going way back maybe he was interviewed by people when he was just beginning, but during the war he never gave an interview–Goebbels was going to come to… We had a room about probably about half the size of this, that the newspapermen would go to for a weekly press conference. We could talk to, usually it was Starachi, who had been in the Ethiopian War and was the Minister of Propaganda. But this time he was going to introduce Goebbels. I said, "Why doesn't someone…" Herbert Matthews was the New York Times correspondent, and he was sort of the dean because he had been there longer than anybody else. "Why doesn't one of us, or just me–I'll be glad to do it, if nobody else wants to, but I wouldn't do it unless we all agree that it would be an interesting question to ask–to ask Goebbels, has it ever occurred to Hitler to withdraw and leave France completely the way it is, just withdraw all troops from France?" And Herbert Matthews, after that, that sort of ended that conversation… Everybody got into the conversation, you know. On the way out, Herbert said, "Pom, come on upstairs with me; I want to talk to you a bit." And when we got up into his office–because we were all in the same… Press offices were all the same except the Associated Press–they had their own office–but otherwise we all had offices there; the Japanese had offices there; everybody had offices there. Of course, this was long before the Japanese got into the war. He said, "You know, it would be a very bad idea," and I said, "Why, do you agree that it would be the end of the war?" He said, "It would probably be the end of this phase of the war, no doubt about that, but unfortunately this war is going to go on until the bitter end." He was very persuasive. Anyway, I knew that for a young reporter, I was in my early 20s then, the youngest in Rome, and I certainly wasn't going to… This was a political thing, it was an interesting thing, but it was a political thing.

MA: Did you cover the death of King Alfonso XIII of Spain?
RLP: Yes, I did. That was the death watch. He had lived for years. I knew him very slightly, but it didn't make any difference because he was in a coma, I think. He had a suite, not in the main part of the hotel which was an old-fashioned hotel with doors mainly, and I guess there were other suites, but not like his. His was sort of halfway up a mezzanine; it was quite a big outfit that he had there, and his sons and daughters and everybody like that were there, and the Tortolonias or whoever the royal family–the princes of Rome who were married into the family. You just went there and spent all day there, waiting for this guy to die. I knew his doctor very well. He was sort of one of the… now what was his name? I can't think of it now, but maybe I will. At a certain point, he came out and he said, "It's going to be a very short time. Do you want to come in?" He had occasionally let me come into the room, and there were these ghost-like figures, the members of the family, and he… Dr. Colozza, I'm sure it was. When you say, "I'm sure it was," it means, "I'm not sure at all!" [Laughs] At a certain point, he said, "He's gone." He said, "If you want to get out of this room, you better get out right now." I had a telephone open to the office. In a way, it doesn't seem to be important, but a

death watch is a very important thing, especially Alfonso, who was so well known in all of the South American countries. They had been having masses for him, and at the Vatican they had masses for him.

MA: So you got the scoop on this?
RLP: Yes, I never thought of it as a scoop. I don't know whether I got a byline. I knew that I got a lot of bylines because people would write me and say, "We saw your name on such and such a story and so on and so forth." And, of course the UP was sort of scattered around as to where your stories got and didn't get. It was something like a twenty-minute scoop which was, in an international thing, considered good enough to put on the back wire from the office in New York.

MA: What was your relationship with some of the Axis journalists?
RLP: It was all right. It was okay. They didn't speak any English and I didn't speak any German, so we got along in Italian which was like some sort of a comedy, but we got some interesting news from them. When the Germans went into Yugoslavia, we got some background news. There was no sort of–I hope you didn't get the impression that I was the only person there; we had probably the largest staff. The New York Times had only two people there on their staff. They had Camille Cianfarra, who was later killed on the Andrea Doria, and Herbert Matthews. They were the only two, but they were… Cianfarra knew everything that went on in the Vatican and the Vatican was a big news source. And we had Italians who would give us this information. We had a big staff. We had a bigger staff than any other American outfit.

MA: Now you were detained for how long?
RLP: Six months. We were actually in prison for a relatively short time. It was a lark, and it was, sort of, in a way, a lot of fun. It was winter time; this was almost Christmas, and cold–that old prison had no heating system at all to it. They didn't even have any glass in the windows. They had steel shutters, so you couldn't see. You could look down like that [bends head down and peers through hands as if through slats] standing on a bunk or something. The bunks, the beds, were supposed to be folded up, blankets all folded, and you weren't allowed to lie down on the bed, on the bunks. There were three bunks to a room, and the cells were about this big–like from here across like that [sticks right hand out and points to the left side of the room] –and a door, and the door had a little trap door that you could pull a cord and that would ring a bell, and flap down something or other outside. You couldn't look outside. Then a guard would come along and he would open it up to see what the problem was. Pack and I were both good chess players, very enthusiastic chess players, so I rang the bell and the guy came and I said, "Would you bring us a chess set?" He said, "A chess set. The idea of … You're here in prison; you're not to play games." Slam, closed the door again. I said, "What the hell attitude is that? There's a table here; what are you supposed to do on the table?" I said, "You're supposed to write

something." So, I pulled the ring again. They came back, somebody else came back, no, I guess, maybe the same one. He said, "Now, what do you want?" I said, "Paper and pencil." I said, "Ink, paper and a pen," and he said, "All right," and he closed the door and went away. Then the door opened immediately. I thought, "My God, this guy's got ink and paper on a shelf someplace here." He said, "What do you want it for?" I should have said I want to write a confession or something or other like that, and then they would have brought it to me. Instead of which, I said, "I want to make a chess set." [Laughs] And then he closed the door and didn't set the mousetrap again–that you would pull a string and ring a big bell. So, there was nothing you could do. But it was cold in there. Once a day, you were fed once a day–two loaves of delicious bread, like that [holds hands about three inches apart], two of them, round lumps of bread, and a bowl of soup, spaghetti and vegetables, and I suppose meat, but it was really good. You ate it all. There was Packard and myself, and another character who had no business being there at all. We figured out that he was a bank robber, a bad bank robber.

I got into prison a day after everybody else. They had gone around from the Questura, which is the central police station, and they had gone around to my digs, and I had been out with a girlfriend and hadn't gotten in, and when I did leave, I didn't even know that anybody was being arrested. And when I did, I went to my sister's house. Then the next morning the Italians–this was at night, the night after Pearl Harbor. The Italians weren't too concerned about anything like that. "We'll arrest them tomorrow." So, my sister had come up from Calabria, and I think somebody flew her up. I think somebody flew her up, a friend of hers, who was a pilot, an Italian Pilot, flew her up. I'm not sure how she got up, or maybe by train. She found me at her house in Rome. They had a house in Rome. She said, "Why weren't you arrested?" I said, "Why should I be arrested?" She said, "Herbert Matthews and everybody's in jail." I said, "Well, they're in jail and I'm not. I was wandering around yesterday." She said, "I'll bet I know with whom." I said, "Look, I was just wandering around. We're going to leave undoubtedly." At any rate, then, oh yes, I guess the police came to her house. The Questura has everything down. They know everything about everybody, and they came to her house, and they said, "We've got to go," and then, the irony of it was, they wanted to take a street car to the prison. I said, "What if I haven't any money for a street car?" They said, "Do you have any money?" I said, "Yes, I have some money." They said, "Okay, we'll take a taxi." And they made me pay for the taxi. And that's when I walked up the three steps. When I got inside, I was checked in. Packard had spent, according to his story, had spent the night in a bathroom, in a toilet, because at a certain time of the night, the clocks closed the… This was an old-fashioned type of prison. I mean it was made like a star, and bars all over the place and certain sections were closed off like a safe in a bank. Maybe we do that; I've never been in a penitentiary in America so I don't know what they do. So that kept–if there was a riot of some

sort–it kept everybody from getting in on it. And so, they left him in a bathroom, locked him into a toilet, and he said that it had an automatic flushing machine and that he couldn't sleep because it flushed all night long.

MA: When you heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked, what where your thoughts?
RLP: Well, I'll tell you what. One of the true stories of the war, was that somebody was by a teletype machine–I know who it was, but I am not going to tell you–and he called to someone in the next room and said, "Where's Pearl Harbor?" because he had seen that it had been bombed and he didn't know that it was an American base. It just came, "Pearl Harbor bombed, and so on and so forth." If you didn't know where it was, you'd say, "Where the hell is Pearl Harbor?" And the guy in the next room said, "I don't know, I never met her." [Laughs] Now that is a true story and now it's finally gotten throughout the whole world.

MA: Was this a well-known journalist?
RLP: I can't say. At any rate, it was a guy who didn't know much about the world, or that particular part of the world.

MA: Most of the people we've interviewed, veterans–that was the first thing they thought, "Where's Pearl Harbor?" That was not unusual.
RLP: Probably there were questions asked like that all over America.

MA: So, what did you think?
RLP: That Pearl Harbor had been bombed? And that we were in the war with Japan? Well I'll tell you what, I immediately thought about my brother, who was out there. He, in the meantime, had been in China for five years, something like that, and by a whim he had joined… First of all, when the war first started, I went to the British Consulate which was on Piazza [unclear], right in the center of Rome–not the Embassy, the Consulate–and he went to the British Consulate in Shanghai, and both of us tried to get into the British Army because America wasn't in the war. We exchanged letters. We both had exactly the same experience, that the Consul was a stuffed shirt. First of all, the Consul would say, was very willing to sort of say, "That's a great idea," and wanted to send me back, and advised him to go back to London, to get on a ship and go back to London, because nothing's going to happen right away and they were right about that because nothing did happen right away. And then they said, "But you're not British, are you?" British could be anything, South African, Australian or whatever, so they really should have known right away. I said, "No, I'm American." That's what Eugene, my brother, said. They said, in a rather haughty way, "This is something that we can take care of by ourselves. It's very nice but this won't be very long." You'd think that after seeing what they had done to Poland… Poland had collapsed when England and France got into the war as far

as anything more than just a few troops, a token force. But at any rate, he got into–what they were recruiting for was the British Indian Army–and he went out there and was commissioned in the British Indian Army and came out of it a Captain, I think. And he was sent down to Malaya and he was hoping to be sent to the desert. They should have sent him with the Indian contingent to the North African desert, but they didn't, because he spoke Italian perfectly.

MA: Now you were in prison for a short period of time?
RLP: In that prison, I think maybe about a week. Then we were sent to Siena. This type of internship… We were put in the best hotel in town. Each of us had a room and bath. We had one club room, it was a nice big club room with tables. And we ate down in the dining room. And they had very good food, even though the bread was rationed but that was all over Italy. If you went out to someone's house, you took your loaf of bread with you or you didn't eat bread. And the same thing if you went to a restaurant. I can't remember if you took your bread, actually I think you took your little ration coupon.

MA: Was the UP concerned about getting you out of Italy?
RLP: To a certain extent. But it was in the hands of the State Department. And the State Department–at first when we had somebody come up from the Embassy to interview us, because we knew them all, they came up with the jokes of, "You know the difference between the diplomats and the newspapermen?" We said, "No." "Well, the diplomats get out." [Laughs]

MA: When were you exchanged?
RLP: Well, they had to wait for the submarines. That was the main thing. The Axis and American diplomats got together and chartered two ships, the Drottningholm and the Gripsholm. Well, ours, the Atlantic, was the Drottningholm, and the Gripsholm was Japanese, and the Japanese allowed the newspapermen to get out, strangely enough, once it was established that that's the way they were going to get their people back. A lot of their people were all a bunch of spies.

MA: Were you accused of being a spy at that point?
RLP: Fortunately, I avoided that. I could have been in a lot of trouble because I had been at a cocktail party, and this guy came up, and he claimed that his father had been killed. His name was Vanni Quilici and his father was either, I think, either Dino or Gino, I'm not sure, but the name was Quilici. He had been with Balbo on a plane, a bomber, that was shot down over Tobruk when the Italians were still… His son, Vanni, claimed that they had intentionally shot down Balbo's plane with everybody on it–everybody was killed–because there's no doubt that Balbo was very anti-Mussolini, there's no question about that, but to the extent of being an agent for the British was something else again. Vanni Quilici said, "We've got a group and we're going to assassinate Mussolini in September." He

said, "We want to get in touch with the British for them to send someone out here to work with us." I said, "Look, I can't get in touch with the British for God's sake. I have no contacts." I was in Rome. This was before all of this other thing happened. So, he said, "Well, there must be some way of getting in touch with the British." I said, "Yes, there is, but it's very tricky." He said, "What is it?" I said, "I'll tell you what, I'm not going to tell you what it is, but I will see what I can do. But as far as you're concerned, I've said no." Then he told me where to meet him, and he would introduce me to the other people. Which I did, I went down because he also said, "I'm not sure that they're going to agree with this." I went with him down to an apartment, and to my amazement, here in this apartment, were a lot of guys cleaning guns and field stripping, and to have a gun–these were all military weapons–to have a gun in Italy during the war, it was practically suicide. We had met at a cocktail party given by a friend of mine who was a pilot in the Italian Air Force, and there were Germans at this cocktail party, and at one point when he saw that Vanni had come up and was talking to me, he said, "Don't listen to a word he says, he will get you killed." This is what this guy said in a loud voice in Italian. Fortunately, the Germans didn't understand any Italian, but you couldn't depend on it. At any rate, in this apartment, it was typical underground thing. There were girls there, you knew that nobody would keep their mouth shut, and they could have gotten themselves killed. Actually, they did. They did. In September, by that time I was in America, and I had heard there had been an attempt on Mussolini. Mussolini had been liberated and all of that had happened and he was up in the Salò Republic. That's where Mussolini was and where they wanted to kill him. They hashed it and they were all killed. I guess, his brother managed to get away.

Change in tape.

MA: How many got killed?
RLP: I don't know which ones went. They got it cut down to a manageable…

MA: You didn't get into any trouble for this meeting?
RLP: No, I went to the Embassy. I saw the Assistant Attaché whose name was, I think, Mike Russo. He was a naval officer in the American Navy. It might have been Russillo, but I don't think so. Because later when I was in the Army, there were all sorts of Russos and Russilos and stuff like that, but I'm pretty sure this was Mike Russo. And he said there was a Military Attaché, but he said that he discussed it with them, and he said that he was the one that would make the contact–the Military Attaché for some reason or other would not make the contact–which he did. He had to meet these people; up to this time he hadn't met them. I had to be the [unclear] because they wouldn't have known whether he was legitimate or not. They were in a very dangerous position, these young Italians.

MA: Weren't you in a fairly dangerous position?
RLP: Well, I never sort of felt it, no, no. It was rather exciting you know, a lot of fun. That was sort of the end. He told me later, we went back on the ship together, on the Drottningholm, and he said, "They're a great bunch, but they're going to get themselves in trouble," and we later heard that they did. But I had gotten some interesting information from one, and I gave that to them. That was, I think, on Rommels' last attempt, last offensive, and when I got out, when I got to go to Lisbon, I sent that story out and got a byline on it.

MA: Now when you were finally exchanged, you went where?
RLP: To Siena.

MA: And from Siena you went?
RLP: From Siena at a certain point, months later, one time I wanted to get up to Switzerland and I started walking. I walked about twenty miles. The only direction I knew would be to get to the railroad station. Siena is on a little spur line from the main Rome-Milan line that went on up into Switzerland, so I was undecided. First, you had to go to a little town called Chiusi, where the spur line went off to Siena. It must have gone beyond Siena, but I don't know where, probably Piombino or someplace along the coast. A train stopped going back to Siena and somebody leaned out of the window and said, "Hey Pom, what are you doing here?" And I said, "I'm just taking a walk," and they said, "Come on in, and we'll talk about it." My sister was on that same train. She had come up to visit us, which she did every now and then. This is the Italian sister. They inveigled me to get on the… They said, "You're not going to get to anyplace.' I said, "I'm going to Switzerland," and they said, "You're not going to get anyplace. You're going to be arrested in Chiusi, and they'll take you down and put you back into the Regina Coeli." Anyway, I went back to Siena, and they had brought up news that things were moving and the reason why we hadn't gotten on sooner. The Drottningholm would have gone under any circumstances, but everybody didn't want this thing hashed. Even the Germans didn't want it hashed. It was going to go across with all lights on and with, I think, the name, Drottningholm, brightly lit up on both sides of the ship. They had to notify every single submarine, every U-boat and get a confirmation. It was easy enough to notify them because they had radio contact in one direction, but only in one direction, and to get confirmation–when they came in for repairs, for supplies, for anything like that, then they could give the U-boat, such and such had received the orders. Then the [unclear] was just a [unclear] whether they saw us, whether any of them saw us, it would have been interesting to have known afterwards. They must have; if they had gone anywhere near, they would have seen us; they could have seen us from twenty miles away. And we had a very nice trip across. Then, that was about April or May, we were sent down to Rome, we were put up in the Grand Hotel–that's where Alfonso XIII died–for a few days. We could see old friends, we could wander around town, they didn't mind. Then we were put on a special

train that was supposed to be a sealed train that you were never supposed to get off until you got to Lisbon. I remember going to Marseilles, and running out to get some newspapers to see what the hell the French were writing about, and I brought a whole bunch of newspapers back and very nearly didn't get on the train. The bloody train was moving when I got back. So, I could have stayed in unoccupied France. Because Marseilles, I think Marseilles was, or Toulon, one of the two–Toulon had been absolutely devastated by the British and the French when, towards the end of the war, the Germans occupied unoccupied France and then they scuttled everything. At some point, they scuttled everything.

MA: So you got to Lisbon.
RLP: Yes, we went through Spain, which was really tragic. Children begging for bread, not for money or anything like that, every time you stopped at a station for any reason at all. And they were sticks–they were so thin. And then we got to Lisbon, and the world was brightly lit and the shops had everything. And the ship had come in and I went down to the ship to see some people that I knew who were coming in. He said, "What are you doing here?" I told him, and I can't remember who he was now, but I wanted him to take a suitcase of food to Jo and people–you know they didn't have anything, they didn't have any coffee, they didn't have any soap, they didn't have all sorts of things that vanished in Rome early in the game. I said I wanted him to carry this suitcase. He said, "Rome's got everything." I said, "Don't kid yourself; there's nothing in Rome. You better get a suitcase and load it up. Because it's an opportunity." He said, "No that's propaganda." I said, "Come on, it's not propaganda. I wouldn't bullshit you. This is a fact. Get everything you can. If you can take a trunkful, take a trunkful." I sort of half convinced him, but I never knew afterwards. Josephine said it was heaven; he brought the suitcase to her. She said everything tasted–the coffee, the tea and the sugar–everything tasted of perfumery. I said, "What do you mean it tasted of perfumery?" She said, "Well, we said we wanted soap and you put in a lot of soap and it was the most perfumed soap imaginable, but we loved it. The coffee was fine, everything was fine. If you had given us more, it would have been even better." But I've often thought that at that point, I shouldn't have gone back to America.

MA: Why's that?
RLP: Because I knew that my brother was a prisoner of the Japanese, and the stories that came out from Italians of what the Japanese were doing was such that, egotistically, I thought, "I can get him out of that bloody–one of those." We knew that they were concentration camps and that they were working. We didn't know about the railroad. He was not the type who would take that type of prison life. He was one of the very few. Some Australians tried to escape. They were recaptured and they were killed. He should never have done what he did which was to take another person with him, and this other person was younger and wasn't as tough as he was, and you can't divide food up when you're on a thing

like that. He had picked a route that I would never have taken. I would have worked along if I had gotten in, and I could have gotten in, because, strangely enough, although the Kachins, there were tribes that would get you wherever you wanted to go in Burma, and this was between Thailand and Burma. We had friends–business acquaintances of my father's–who were Thais. At any rate, I didn't, I just went along and figured it was… I didn't think about it. Probably if I'd had any money with me, I would have… because The Indian Ocean, there were still ships going along the Indian Ocean. But at any rate, I didn't. And he didn't make it.

MA: So you came back to…
RLP: I came back to America and I worked on the UP for about a few months. I wanted to get into the American Army. I was twenty-six then. In the Air Force, I wanted to get in the Air Force. That's all I really wanted. This is when I joined the Air Force. I couldn't get into the regular Air Force. I wanted to get into combat if I could. But I got into the Glider Corps. I had a friend, a great friend, who was the head of the whole goddamn Glider Corps–a guy by the name of Lewin Barringer. I think he was a Colonel. He was the one who talked me into it. He said, "It is great. Your training is going to be fabulous. You're going to have regular Army training, so that if you ever get out of it, you can go right into… If for any reason, anything happens that you want to get out of it, I'll see that you get out. But in the meantime, you can get your training and if you get your training, the world is yours, and you'll have a good training and you'll end up in Twentynine Palms, or someplace like that, in California, where you'll be flying sailplanes. I've seen to it that that's going to be on the agenda because that's… You know gliders are no fun at all. They tow you up and then you have to come down. But sailplanes are the greatest thing." He had done over 100 miles, which is a century, which is the thing with sailplanes you want to accomplish, ridge-soaring, back and forth or whatever.

MA: So you joined the Air Force?
RLP: I joined the Air Force I think in the Summer of '42, and went to Martinsburg, West Virginia–Winchester, the airport. Every day we got into a little old school bus, the group of us, and went to Winchester, Virginia where we did our basic flying in Cubs–a lot of fun, absolutely terrific. Then we were sent out to Roswell, New Mexico, a strange place to be sent, and that was getting cold. I don't know when it was. I was in Washington in September because I heard about this abortive attack on Mussolini. At any rate, Roswell, New Mexico was the coldest place I'd ever been. From there we went to Albuquerque which was fine. Then we were about to be sent to California, all ready to be sent for advanced training on–I don't know what, but much a better plane than the Cubs–when they called us in to a big auditorium. All over America they were being told this thing. That was that there'd been an accident in the Caribbean, and all of the top people in the American Glider Corps had been killed–the ones

who were interested, including Lewin Berringer. They were disbanding–sixty thousand glider pilots were being disbanded. Now, that may be wrong, but that's as I remember it, the trainees–the ones who had gone all the way through would remain in the Glider Corps, but not us, and we couldn't get into anything else, flying, you know? I thought at least we'd be able to get back into the Cubs in [unclear]–at least you're flying. So, you also had a choice of Honorable Discharge, where you're completely out, you're free. You got a beautiful certificate that you had served your country, and so on and so forth, and I got a hop from there with another friend of mine who was doing the same thing. We had heard that you could get into the Canadian Air Force. Age didn't matter. Later I found that my brother-in-law went over there and got training–this was Peter, Migs' brother, and he was killed. The British never seemed to me… They were so pigheaded they stuck to these two planes that they had–the Wellington and the Lancaster–a great big floppy thing that couldn't outfly a dodo. Well, anybody can outfly a dodo. They couldn't.

I decided to go to Canada. Friends of mine, Per Burke Hendrickson and Bunny, were up in Canada, because he was a Norwegian or something like that. I guess he went up there and got into the Canadian Army and went over to England from there. But at the time, they were living up in Canada, whether they were getting their citizenship or what, I don't know what they were doing. They said that they would put me up and they would say that I was a Canadian. And I went to the Canadian Military Attaché and he told me exactly what to say, and to swear where I had come from and so on and so forth, and who to see and it'd be fine. I thought, "This is great." This other friend of mine, we were all ready to go and I had–coming back from Rome I had brought a batch of letters to somebody or other's brother-in-law or something like that. And he had been trying to get in touch with me. He finally got in touch with me after I'd come back from New Mexico. He said, "You must come out to lunch with me at the…," the club in Washington. There are three clubs in Washington, booze, brains, blood. [Laughs] You might know my father was in the blood one because he was not a doctor, as he should have been. Social–that was the Metropolitan Club. The other two–the brains in Washington was the Cosmos Club, which I would have loved to have been a member of, and the booze was the Army Navy. But anyway… So, at the Metropolitan Club. This was a Colonel who had just come back from Casablanca, and had made the necessary contacts with the French of North Africa to get into–not the European Theatre because they couldn't get into the European Theatre because it was a small group to sort of do liaison work. He was the one who was an OSS member. He said, "This is going to be the greatest thing in your life. Canada, you don't want to go up there; it'll take them so long to train you, the war will be over." He didn't tell me OSS. He just said, "I've got an organization that you'll really like." That was in the bar. We went into the dining room and there was another guy there. This other guy wanted to know… I think everybody else vanished and I was with this guy alone. This guy was the head of

OSS Italian SI. I would rather have gotten into something else because this turned out to be the Mafia. They literally had recruited the Mafia from Sicily. [Laughs] Well, they had gotten the American Mafia to go into Sicily to set up their outfit there. As I spoke French and Italian, I was sort of in a slightly different… Although there were more people, Italian American, than there was anybody else in the OSS. We were trained in a place called the farm in Baltimore, and you talk about ridiculous ways of, but I guess they were necessary. We had to go individually to a railroad station in Baltimore. I don't think it was the main railroad station in Baltimore, but I don't think I would have recognized that either, and there we met a character who was in a checkered sports jacket and had carried these, had a thing of races that were being, you know… This guy had–it was all coded, what he would say and what I would say. Somehow or other I got mixed up in the … Either I got mixed up or he got mixed up in the train that I was supposed to take, and I got a train that was going to go to a station called Caldvor, and there was no such station called Caldvor, there had never been, but there was now. You could see the paint was new. But I got off at this station and there was nobody there to meet me. There was a light on in a window of a house there and I went and I knocked on the door. This was an alternative thing if nobody was there to meet you, what you did. You'd see a light and you'd go to the light and you'd knock on the door and you'd say, "Caldvor sent me," which seemed ridiculous because the station was named Caldvor. And the guy inside there would say, "Just wait outside for a while; I've got to make a phone call." Pretty soon a big black limousine drew up and someone inside, all dark–I mean it was really–I don't think that Ian Fleming ever wrote anything as ridiculous as this. But it worked. Pretty soon I was at a farm and this farm was, nobody knew where it was, no one knew where the devil it was. I've asked a lot of people. They said they went to the farm or they didn't–there were several of these training areas. The training area–it was pretty good. We had demolitions, we had a radio, we had just about everything that was necessary. We had to keep notes, we had an examination at the end. We had to map read and find our way to certain locations.

MA: How long did the training go on?
RLP: I think it went on about three weeks. It was very thorough, very thorough.

MA: About how many people were in a class?
RLP: In a class? There weren't very many. I think probably about six or seven, and a number of them didn't make it. Some of the guys were never seen again, literally never seen again. One guy was Polish who didn't speak English. How the hell–what he was supposed to get from the training was never… But I guess, maybe he was, although the OSS wasn't supposed to work in America but maybe they worked in… Maybe he talked Polish; maybe, I don't know what. But they were sending people all over. They were sending them into Germany.

MA: Did you know it was the OSS at this point?
RLP: Yes. Well, I knew it by the time I got through that. But I had never heard of the OSS. Maybe it wasn't the OSS when I first saw them, because when I first saw them the Drottningholm came into New York City, New York Harbor and I was interviewed almost immediately by a guy who was from the Coordinator of Information. The COI preceded the OSS, and I think when Donovan came in, it became the OSS. I'm not too sure about that. And they did a very, very thorough interview. It must be in the file someplace.

MA: After your training, what was the next destination?
RLP: Well, after that training, that's when we were indoctrinated back into the Army. We signed a voluntary induction and we went to someplace, I think maybe it was Fort Dix. I know I was separated at Fort Dix a couple of years later, but I'm not sure where I went from there. But there wasn't much wasted time. As soon as we got into the Army, we had a PFC who spent his time shouting at us, saying that we would never be any good. I couldn't blame him; I'd never done any really basic training you know. I mean in the Air Force I wasn't given much; we drilled. When we were in Kirtland Field in Albuquerque, we did drills and I guess we fired guns. Not much. In this training course, we did a lot of… The whole cellar of this house was turned into a sort of dugout, and where we were, we would wander through this maze of places and every now and then, a German soldier would pop out and you had to get two bullets in him–not a real soldier anyway, a cutout and you had to get two bullets in him in two seconds or something like that–which two seconds lasts long enough when you've got a 45 in your hand. But I'll tell you what–I've been deaf ever since. [Laughs] Why they didn't have any kind of ear plugs…

MA: Did you get to meet Donovan during this training?
RLP: I met Donovan overseas. I didn't meet him there. I met him after I had done a fair amount of behind-the-lines work. At any rate, they sent us down to Newport News, Virginia, and that's where we got on a ship. It was terrific. We had a convoy. I wouldn't have missed going across on a convoy for anything in the world. As far as you could see there were ships; it was really fantastic, and every now and then you would see a column of smoke in the distance, or a fire if it was a little bit closer. And we were told that they had been torpedoed. They weren't fooling. They had gotten in the middle of a convoy. Can you imagine that? And for a while, I wasn't even in headquarters very much. I guess I was in headquarters a little bit. Yeah, I guess I was in headquarters. That's where this guy that I had met first at the Metropolitan Club–he was the head of SI, Italian SI, Special Intelligence. There was SO, Special Operations and I was SI.

MA: The convoy landed where? Where did you end up landing?
RLP: Casablanca.

MA: And from Casablanca you went to?
RLP: We went by train to Algiers. There we were turned over to parachute school and small arms–enemy arms–and enjoyed them both. Then they started peeling us off. And you never knew where… Most of the other people who came over with us, I never saw them again. I was put on a submarine, a French submarine, if you can imagine anything more amazing, and they ate very well and they left us off at Ile-Rousse in Corsica.

Change in tape

RLP: Paddy Leigh Fermor. Does he ring a bell?
MA: No.
RLP: Well he was in the same time, but he was in the British… They sent him to Crete from Egypt. Probably in the English equivalent of a motor gunboat, MGB, with an assignment which we would have loved–with an assignment to capture the commanding officer. I mean, talk about a real operation. Paddy lives in Greece now. I had friends who knew him. My wife and I found a place, a little fishing village which was absolutely a gem, untouched. This was long after the war, and the kids, Eugene and all of our kids, came down there and loved it. Beautiful beaches. It was not on Crete, it was on the Peloponnesian, one of the fingers of Greece itself. Paddy Leigh Fermor, they succeeded, they got the General and it took a great operation, and they stole his car with him in it, and they had to go through about four or five checkpoints, and they managed to do it and they were picked up and they got the General back to Egypt. You know what, it was so secret that nobody had thought, "What the hell are we going to do then?" In other words, these were all brilliant amateurs, civilians, doing a job, but with no military sense enough to say, "Why are we doing this?" because generals are a dime a dozen. The Germans had a commanding officer in there undoubtedly the next day, flew somebody in to take over and who had been trained to take over. But what happened–I used to ask him about various different things and he would tell, but reluctantly, and I couldn't understand why he didn't talk about it. He was a writer, he writes very good books, and I have several of them and whenever he comes out with a new book, I always get it. But he never wrote about this, this operation. And I had to piece it together myself–and he never said a word–by asking other people about Crete and about this, that and the other thing. I found that the Germans had located fairly easily the people who had helped him–obviously, he had to be helped–and they had wiped them all out. And he realized that there's so much jealousy in the military. The military doesn't like the civilians interfering, which is quite normal, and the result is that they don't take it seriously. If they had been ready to move with parachutes and so on, they would have gotten Crete back. If they considered it important enough to get it back, they would have gotten it back. Actually, the Germans, Hitler, was never interested in North Africa. In a way that was his weak point. If he had gotten North Africa completely, and the Suez Canal, the

morale effect would have been terrific. They would never have really gotten into Italy. Well, all of these things were Churchill's weak point. Hitler and Churchill could have been twin brothers, you know? They were both gamblers; they both had ideas that weren't going to work at all. If you're a gambler in the war you are either going to go down to nothing or you're going to be top man. The only thing I was about to say about Paddy Leigh Fermor–the reason I led up to it–was that Paddy told a lot of people, he said, "You know, Pomeroy's a great character, but he talks too damn much." [Laughs]

MA: So, you finally arrived in Corsica.
RLP: And there wasn't anybody else there, nobody to tell us what to do. I think there were three of us. One guy's name was Chester Macaroni. We all looked up to Chester because Chester had gotten to Corsica ahead of us. We were camped while we taking parachutes and small arms fire training–we were camped in a pine tree about twenty miles outside of Algiers, and one night a car came up and a Marine got out. I think he was a Captain, and he said, "Is there someone by the name of Chester Macaroni here?" And we were all sleeping in pup tents and they said, "Yeah, hey Chester, someone's come to call on you." And they said, "Get your stuff and come down, you're going to Algiers for a few days." So, Chester went down there, and there was a British Officer there and he was introduced to him–I think he was a Colonel, maybe not, maybe he was a Captain or a Major–and he said, "Come along with me," and he was never given any briefing or anything of the sort of what he was supposed to do. Chester went with him. Chester was the kind of guy who never talked. He just wasn't a great talker. He never asked questions or anything. He got on a plane, a British plane, I think a Wellington, because they went out through the bottom. Everybody sitting around as though they were going to have a game of cards or something. That's what Chester said, and one by one, they were tapped on the shoulder and down they went. He had had parachute jumping but he had never gone through a hole in the floor, but it seemed like a perfectly good way to go. [Laughs] They got down below, and they got into a big field and they buried their chutes, all correctly done, and lined up, and the commanding officer said, "Now," he said, "You see that villa up there, that house up there, just go up. First of all, explain that we are Americans, and that we have had trouble with our plane, and we are now going to try and get back down the line." We already had landed at Salerno. "And, also ask them if they have any extra food. We'd like some bread," and so on and so on. So, Chester marched up to the house and banged on the door–the door was open–and Chester walked back down. He said, "Where are we?" They wanted to know where we are, and Chester said, "I don't know where we are. I couldn't understand what they are talking about. They're all Italians." There was silence and this Major said, "But your name is Chester Macaroni." [Laughs] He said, "I was born in America, my grandfather came over." That's what happened. And the same thing happened to this guy in Crete that nobody had planned

anything–the heart of it was to have an interpreter. And you can't go on the fact that his name is Macaroni. What about Yankee Doodle, for Christ's sake?

MA: Was this typical of OSS operations?
RLP: No, I don't think so. The OSS should have damn well known who spoke Italian, because there were very few who spoke Italian. A lot of them spoke an Italian that was not understandable. They spoke Sicilian; I can't speak Sicilian; I can't understand what a Sicilian is talking about. I have a hard time understanding Calabrasian–what they are talking about–and I used to go down there all the time. There are a lot of dialects in Italy and they are quite different. That is the sad story of Chester Macaroni. This Major said to one of his other men, he said, "Take him out and shoot him," to Chester Macaroni, "Take him out and shoot him, we can't be wasting food on him." And they said, "No, no come on now, look." And Chester was enormous. He said, "I thought well, maybe I better kill him." Chester told us later, "After all, I'm not sent here to be shot without a trial." He said, "They loaded me down with everything they had to carry, and they had a hell of a lot of heavy stuff." And I could believe it. I was on a trip with him and we had to carry boxes of C-rations up a mountain like that [gestures straight up with arm] and Chester would just walk on ahead.

MA: So you're in Corsica. What was your first assignment?
RLP: Nothing, nothing. Found a place to live and settled down. We had a radio operator so we were getting a thing from the headquarters. And there was a fight going on at this time between the Italians and the Germans, because the Germans were sort of fed up with the idea of the Italians. The surrender had just taken place, and so I figured, I guess, maybe the Germans were just pulling out or had just pulled out. There were dead people around, you know, soldiers, and they were already beginning to smell. And the Italians, when we went in, no after that, there was an Italian command and we were told to stay away from the Italian command because we weren't sure whether they were for [unclear] or whether they were operating with the Germans. So, we stayed away from them. We stayed on the outskirts of town. I thought that the idea was to find out where the main Germans were, and we found out from the locals that the main Germans–nearest ones–I think Capraia, they had a garrison, and Elba, where anything that was being done was being done in Elba. So, I thought, "Well, we've got to get across to Elba." So, I went down, I borrowed a car, a funny little French car, all the things were French. This was about as long as from here to there [gestures a few feet with hand]. I took one guy with me, Zampagni–there were two brothers that were in the OSS, Mario and Paolo Zampagni–I took him with me and we drove down to the toe of Corsica to where there was a fishing port. I figured, "Well, I can get a boat from there and we could get across to Elba." Corsica was ideal because Corsica spoke French and Italian. The Chief of the–there was a sort of the harbormaster–he was an official. He had been in the underground. Corsica had a good, well organized underground, anti-German and

anti-Italian, because the Italians had really taken over Corsica. They wanted Corsica, as what they were going to get from the war. One of the..., they were going to get Tunisia and Corsica, they were going to get a lot. Mussolini was going to get a lot of stuff from the war, if they won the war. We got down there and we made arrangements for a boat, and we would come back on such and such a certain date, and we wanted them to take us by boat across to Elba. No problem; it's only forty miles away. There are a lot of places to land. And then we went on back and wrote up that operation and by this time, the OG group was moving. And OG is not Oh gee, its Operational Group, OG. They started off by going in to call on the Italian commander, and I wasn't on this. But they went into the commander's office with submachine guns, Thompsons, at that time. We had nine-millimeter submachine guns, specially made for the OSS, which used nine millimeter parabellum ammunition. They went into his office, he stayed at his desk. First of all, they spoke to the adjutant, and he went and said, "The Americans who've come here want to speak to you." The commanding officer of this American group, the OG group–I think his name was Paddy, I'm not sure–but he said to his men, he said, "Look tough." This is his idea. "Look tough." They went in, they didn't salute, they stood in front of this guy who may have been a general or at least a full colonel; I think he was a general. And they said, "General, we're taking over your position." He didn't move, he just said, "Captain, have you no manners at all? In front of a General, you don't salute, you light a cigarette in front of him? Now look, if you want to talk to me like this, go and send your commanding officer in here." This guy, the American, this tough member of the mafia, someplace, God knows where, said, "Come on, let's get the hell out of here," and turned and walked out. My feeling was he had made a damn fool of himself, but he should have put a round in his thing and said, "Look, General, you're coming with me or you're not going anywhere," and killed him. Because as far as we were concerned, they were being the enemy and if you were being such a clunk as to act like that, you would have had to carry it all the way through. Because otherwise the Army as a whole, the Italian Army, was like that [gestures with shaking hand], it was ready to join the Germans who were somewhere in the offing, I think, getting ready to–this was in Bastille which was a big harbor–getting ready to get on their boats and get the hell out. They just went back to saying what a bunch of, you can't trust these Italians and something like that. These were Americans, but they were Italian.

So, we went on our own happy way, we had our own headquarters with five people in it, and we went on preparing for the great invasion of Elba. By this time, a PT formation had come in. Probably about a week went by. The trip down south, in this little car, took a long time. I think two or three civilians showed up, just plain civilians. We were all in uniforms because we were in the Army. And these two or three civilians showed up, and one of them was an actor, Wayne Nelson, a very nice guy, and the other one was an arctic explorer by the name of Tom Stoneborough. There were no other civilians, but they came with

authority over all of us. Me and everything. They had seen the report that I made on trying to find a boat. And they knew that the PTs were coming in. They said, "Listen, we'll do it by PT because it's much faster. Your boat, if it's got anything, it's got a little motor in it," because I had said that they used sail, or you know, maybe an outboard motor or something like that. But they said, "You've done some reconnaissance on the thing–where to land and so on–but we're going to do it more thoroughly. We are going to send over a plane," which they did, "to take obliques." As they flew in, they take possible landing places. "We'll line up a PT boat." Actually, I think the first boats that went in–the PTs were under strict orders not to make any landings. We managed to get through the Italians. By this time, this General, who had eaten out one of the OGs–not the commanding officer, but one of the top men–he had been helpful with us, and given us one or two what they called Maas boats, which were very fast, very maneuverable, but smaller than PTs, and they carried torpedoes. After all, the Italians invented the torpedo boat in World War I, and just after World War I they used a lot of them in taking over what later became Yugoslavia, the Adriatic. They used PTs but they also, they had–it was a very dashing sort of thing. We more or less modeled our PTs, I believe, on the Italians, but we made them much stronger and we had a hell of a lot of really big torpedoes on them. So, we were pretty well set up. We knew where we could land. We knew a good deal about it. We went over on trips with the PTs to take a quick look at them. Then we put in a team. We put in a team of two men and a guide–an Italian who knew the countryside and really knew it well. I think they were in a week. We had outlined a system. They said, "How are we going to be particularly useful?" I mean information would be good to know–what the Germans were doing there–but so far, no actual advantage of just that. So, we lined up, and these two civilians, Wayne Nelson and Tom Stoneborough, were very active in this–a system of putting in a very small team. I think that was on the second time. This two-man team with the guide got into a cave. When I went in, the first thing I did was get them out of the cave, because I thought, a cave, if anybody cheated on us, there was no way to separate, to get away, if you're in a cave. This cave was probably too well known. It was the only cave I ever saw in Elba. So, it was probably well known by every shepherd, and any picnickers would have known where the cave was. So, what we went in for, changing that situation, we got in a lot more supplies, we brought in telescopes–we had binoculars, but we didn't have telescopes–we got in a naval telescope that you could see miles away. One of the things that they wanted to know was how the Germans were moving so many supplies down to Monte Cassino. They were getting a lot of supplies in, and they didn't know how they were getting them in because the railroad had been bombed all the way up and down, and the trucks–the roads had been damaged. From there on down, the Italian supplies had been taken and stolen or one thing or another. So, we decided we had to find out how. And we found out. We found out that they were using what they called F-Lighters. They were barges, and they were run by a thing that was really–they didn't have outboard motors, they had automobile

engines with a long shaft and a swivel, and you ran them like an outboard motor except that you could lift, they were in perfect balance, you could lift them up and skim, just skim. The outboard motor, you know, you have to have a certain amount of water around it. These you didn't have to have any. The engine was just a small automobile engine; a long shaft with a propeller on it. That's what they used to move. And they were very maneuverable. They could turn on a dime. They could get out of sight, you know, but they could carry a lot of materiel. But we figured they were vulnerable at the same time because they had to come out and move down the coast. The way the Italian coast is, a lot of it's very shallow and didn't give enough draft. Oh, yes, then the destruction of them was the most important thing. The Air Force moved in with light planes, B-25s, stuff like that, and were geared to move as soon as we gave a–we used an open code, what was called a crack code, just two letters, to give the type and number and position of these barges, or any other kind of ship there was, but mainly barges. That's what they were using. They didn't have enough ships to use them any other way. And the planes would leave; it was really a lot of fun from our point of view, not from the Germans' point of view, but the planes would be ready to go the minute they got the message from us of where they were and how many they were. They would get over before the German supply ships–barges–were in safe position which, first of all, they would be in a convoy of them and that was where they would try to divide up immediately, and we did a lot of damage, a lot of damage, with that. So much so that they went back to patching up the railroads. But actually, we'd see the bombers come over flying low, and the Germans–I guess they were pretty well tied up with the Cassino trying to keep the Americans out of bypassing the [unclear]. So, altogether I think we had, I think they were seven, each one was called an arctic, arctic missions, and I think there were seven of them. The very first one was a sort of sounding out of what we could do. I wasn't on that one. I was on it from the point of view of being in on the planning. But from then on, I was on arctic mission and never wanted to leave it. I loved it. It was so safe. Once you got ashore, you could do anything you wanted to. One time, we'd run out of food, we were always running out of food, and we decided that we really should go back. For some reason or other we had to go back. I had a radio operator on that trip. There was no point in having more than a radio operator and one person. The radio operator didn't work too well because he couldn't get through all the time.

MA: So that was your main thing in Corsica?
RLP: Yes, that was the main thing in Corsica. Then they sent us over to Bari. And we got to Bari just at the time when they were having one hell of a German raid. Then they sent us up to infiltrate Siena, back in Siena, but that was more or less the end of it. Then they decided to send us out to Kunming, China. Actually, I got to China on the 10th of August, when the A-bomb went off.

MA: Do you have any memories of incidents on Elba?

RLP: Trying to get, with my radio operator, trying to make contact with a PT boat which had come over to pick us up.

Change in tape

RLP: Well I can't put a name to him. He was young Yugoslav, who was very keen and had been in the underground and loved demolitions. He would take one of these little things that they called red devils–they were little hand grenades, little grenades. The Americans knew them as offensive grenades or defensive, now, I'm not sure which was which. But one grenade was the British Mills bomb, and they came in a box like that, and were very heavy and were deadly. And, they were as deadly to you as they were to the enemy because when the damn things went off, you had to be practically underground to be able to survive it. The thing was literally a deadly thing, whereas the Italian one, which was called the red devil–was what we later got, I think in Okinawa, not us, but the Americans used them in Okinawa–which was a much more, a bomb that if you threw it, it would be deadly, but at the same time it would not kill everybody around it. This young Yugoslav–one day he came into the mess hall, and asked the cook, who was also a member of the OSS, and asked him if he had a pair of pliers. The cook turned around, and he had one of these bombs that he was taking apart, and he said, "No, I haven't got one, and get the hell out of here with that; get out of here," and he said, "Okay, okay, don't lose your cool." He walked out and, boom, the thing had gone off. It took off about that many of one hand [motions that two fingers were gone] and more or less the same on the other hand. He just sat down and he said, "I think we better have a…" This was on the mainland, fortunately, where we lived, our quarters there, and so we gave him what we could–wrapping up his hand and so on and called… The Army was all around us then. We had the Army; we had doctors and so on and they took care of him and he was all right, in a sense, with fewer fingers, but with enough fingers to go. He went on an operation after that.

MA: Missing fingers?
RLP: Yes. He went on an operation. I think that it was a mistake to have allowed him to go on an operation, but he was very keen on it. I never heard what happened to him. But he was a survivor, so he probably got through it somehow or other. We had a number of different people. We had an Italian–why we used him for anything? This was an Italian, a young priest, who wanted to get into Italy. This was still when we were in Corsica. He wanted to get into Italy. While the main part of the war was still going on and we had several sorts of nuts like that who wanted to do good works, which wasn't in the program. We really weren't ready for doing good works, but if that's what he wanted to do, and if he was willing to tell us what was happening at different points, we would use him. But there was no great feeling that we were going to get much use out of him.

MA: So, most of your work was information gathering?
RLP: Yes, that was the main thing. These were peripheral operations like that and we were very soon… I think we had an interesting operation with the Germans who were… They knew that the war was over and they were doing certain operations. We were, for instance, one of them was a command operation to stop… We had various different activities on… I can't remember most of them. It was an interesting operation but it didn't really amount to much.

MA: Was this with German military?
RLP: The Germans had gotten sort of fed up with the way that we were running…

MA: Is this in Italy?
RLP: Yes, we were in Italy then, but we had various different people who were not really… I remember one particular operation, we had a radio relay because we were so far away from the action against a bunch of guys who were–I really can't remember what the hell we were doing there. I can't remember why on earth we had a small, little fight going on with the Germans. The Germans attacked a group of us.

MA: This was that radio relay station on an island and they sent a landing party?
RLP: That's right. They came ashore and they screwed us up a good deal and killed a lot of us.

MA: And then they went away?
RLP: They went away. They took off. Why they did this, I can't remember now. All they did for us was to kill off as many people as they could, and they killed off a few, but it didn't prove anything. Then they turned around and went back. By this time, they were pretty sort of broken up.

MA: That was that thing you told me where somebody got shot and got the heel of their boot shot off?
RLP: I was on top of a building. It was a building that was… One guy was killed because the Germans said, "Look, the war is almost over; you might just as well surrender." The war wasn't over. "You might just as well surrender. You'll be taken out as prisoners and so on." I was on top of a building, and the only thing I was there for was to test a radio to see whether it could get messages on a very simple little radio. The Germans, who marched up the hill and killed a couple of guys, they never even did any damage to the radio that I had. We had a radio–the only way to get a message to the mainland was to have a small radio.

MA: A relay radio?
RLP: Yes, it was a relay radio. You couldn't get a message on that particular island–there were a lot of different islands–but on that particular island we

couldn't get a message through to the headquarters in… But at any rate, it was unfortunate–the operation should never have been used, because it wasn't… The Germans came in, they put a lethal bomb that they sank. They just lowered it into the water and it set off the next day and killed everyone except one–we were all on land; we were up on the hilltop. The people were killed on this thing. Killed because, the Germans had left and it went off. It was a magnetic mine and it did a hell of a lot of damage to everybody except one guy who is still, or until just a few years ago, he lost one leg and remained in the OSS, the CIA. I never saw him again, but I think that he is still with the CIA. Then we were sent into the mainland, and operated there for a very short time because then we were sent back to America and they wanted to use us for…

MA: This was before you went to China?
RLP: We went to Catalina Island and we were trained there. We went to various different training out there. We went to a number of–these were training operations.

MA: What were you supposed to be doing in China?

Break

MA: I want to find out what happened…

Break

RLP: Yes, he came over for a while. The only time he ever went.

Change in tape.

RLP: My wife, unfortunately, left me, not divorced, I wished she was, at least she'd be alive. But about halfway between Florence and Rome. Lovely country.

MA: Sounds charming.
RLP: I bought this house, we bought it, not wanting it, and the guy who owned it was about to die. We had another house nearby, and we had wild animals and so on, in big cages, which we got from the zoo in Rome. We got deer and sort of a bighorn sheep, a wild sheep of Europe, that they had too many of. Because when I was in the Foreign Service, I was always getting animals. We had every kind of animal you can imagine, lynx, antelopes and bush tortoises and things like that, and when you couldn't get rid of them–the lynx for instance, we couldn't get rid of it–we took out into the bush, forty miles outside of Mogadishu, and let it go, and three days later it was back in the house. So, eventually you had to give them to some zoo, where they would be taken care of and they wouldn't be skinned immediately, because that's all they thought about if you had a cheetah, or a

leopard or anything like that. They'd get used to human beings and somebody or other's going to end up a leopard jacket.

MA: I thought cats were a problem.
RLP: A lynx is so beautiful but, at the same time, we were scratched all the time, because they've got such needle-sharp claws. They don't even mean it, but they wop you occasionally. It was lovely having the animals. A lot of people had them. But what I did in my office was the doors were open to anybody who had animals. Because I wanted to see what they were. I'd give them a few piastras for having brought them in. But I couldn't take them. One time a guy came in with a basket of three cub lions. You can't take them. You take them and in eight months they're like that [motions to show a couple of feet from the floor]. And there's no way of just getting your house full of animals. Well, our house was halfway between Rome and Florence.

MA: Sounds charming. Tuscany is one of those places I'd love to visit.
RLP: Well, come on, come on. I go there every summer. Eventually, I'll be staying there. I've got a furnace, but it's a wood burning furnace and I thought, "Oh, I'm in the middle of a forest," but you spend your whole time stoking the furnace with wood. So, I'm converting to either electricity or gas.

MA: How old is the house?
RLP: Nobody knows. Probably a couple of hundred years, something like that, it was just a farmhouse.

MA: Where we left off… You were in Corsica, and you had just gone to mainland Italy.
RLP: I had just gone to mainland, I never told you how we got away. We got away because the PT boat never came. It finally pulled out. In the meantime, I had taken my radio operator who couldn't swim. I'd taken him back and I told him to go back to our camp, which was halfway up a cliff and perfectly safe there, as long as the patrols didn't have dogs. So, I wanted to get back out and make contact with the PT boat because I could hear it, but it always pulled away from us and I couldn't understand what their problem was. The Germans had already gone, the German E-boat had gone, and there was just this "barumph, barumph" that you could hear in the distance of this PT. It wasn't very far away. But they didn't know whether it was a trap, and that I was trying to lure them in or what, so they just stayed out. I took this hard, little, one-man escape boat which was a fighter plane. It was the seat of a fighter plane, and it turned into a boat, and I took it out with the little paddles, and finally I found myself about five miles offshore with a breeze coming up, an off-shore breeze coming up, and I suddenly heard way off in the distance the PT going, "ERRRRRRR," and as you listened to it was headed back for Corsica which was forty miles away. And I had to get back before dark and this was still dark, and I had to get back before dark, and this

hard, little rubber boat was leaking. You'd look back and you'd see a long line of bubbles because this was in the springtime and the phosphorescence of the water was warm and I thought, "My God, you can see this from the air," but fortunately there was no activity. So, I finally managed to get back a little bit north of the only town there. There were about ten houses. A patrol slept there. I knew the times of the patrols, and I wanted to get past that town where they were sleeping, before the patrols started up because then the patrol was between me and our camp. So, I made it. I got back to shore, on a perfectly safe shore, because it was well beyond the town. But, it was a race between me and the patrol, which I later found out from Eugene, because he had looked it all up. I think that he said that there was an SS battalion of Lithuanians or one of those three little countries that had joined with Germans because they were anti-Russian. Here I was in between the town, the patrol which was about to go out, and my camp. So, I didn't want to lose this rubber boat even though it was not perfect–at the same time it was a way of moving from one place to the other. I wrapped it around myself, and I walked right through the main part of town. It was dusk, it was just pre-dawn, the sun wasn't up. The Apennines would keep the lights, real lights. When I went by the place where the patrol was, a guy came out, and I crouched down, and threw a bucket of water out, turned around and went back in again. And I just kept right on going. Nobody paid any attention to me. What they thought, they thought, somebody doing something or other–early morning chores or whatever. I got back, I got ahead of the patrol and then I went into a bush and stayed in the bush, very thick, what they call macchia. Later during the day, nobody was around because the patrol would go from one little village like this, probably ten miles along to another village, and then they'd stop and have something to eat.

MA: Was the patrol squad-size, ten-twelve?
RLP: No, they were about six. I don't know what their plans were. There weren't that many on this part of the island. This was the western part of Elba, and the Germans in force were on the eastern or the central part. One of my assignments was to find out where they had their main strength. I got back with the radio operator, and saw that he was all right and told him that I was going to be gone for a day or so. He had plenty of K-rations, that's what we really liked best of all, it sort of had an even thing. I told him he couldn't smoke; well I always told him he couldn't smoke because that's one of giveaways when you are in that kind of operation.

MA: Were you in uniform at this point?
RLP: Yes, I was in uniform. So, I had some protection, but not enough. They had an order that uniform or no uniform, if you had a camera, if you had weapons, if you had grenades, and we had all of those things, you were considered a combatant, in other words an illegal combatant. And if you spoke Italian, and had contacted the locals, that was another thing. But they knew they

weren't supposed to do this. They weren't supposed to kill off the people, but they did, and they knew it was wrong because they would invariably club you to death so nobody could say they had heard firing or that sort, you know, and they never kept any records. They never gave you a trial or anything like that. Actually, some of our chaps did get that. And then they would bury you in an unmarked grave and in the case of these–I think maybe I told you about six of them going in to blow up a tunnel, and all six of them were killed and buried under, I think, an olive tree. I can't remember the name of this General who was executed for that, but he was the commander of that area and he had given the order to do it. The people who actually killed them never were, as far as I know, were not prosecuted on that offense, maybe they were on some other offense.

MA: Now, how long were you on Elba?
RLP: Oh, off and on. There were seven arctic missions. Some of them were long–a month, two months–I guess the longest time was six weeks, and the last one was the longest one. I had this operator and we had two radios. A handy talkie that was about– you've probably seen those, they were quite chunky things. They didn't have the batteries that lasted very long. The only time I ever used one was to contact the PT boat when the PT boat was fairly close. They were talking on their handy talkie to a boat that they had sent in to make contact with us, and I was trying to say, "Get the hell out because there's an E-boat about a half a mile away," and either before or after that conversation, I gave a signal with a flashlight. Well, I was behind a rock–I got down as far as I could and put my hand up. M was our signal for a real alarm–to get the hell out. And I gave two of them. I gave them an M, and waited a few seconds and gave them another one. When I was halfway through the other one, this sudden wonderful display of tracer bullets… The Germans had beautiful tracer bullets. They were in all colors. I don't know what they meant. They don't look as though they're coming toward you; they look as though they're going up in the air like that, until they get right over you and "wheeeeeeet" and that is when the PT–the PT took off like a shot. They came in under electric power, but they made noise, I don't know why. A high-pitched squeak, that's all it made. They then cut into their gasoline engines and they just vanished. The E-boat strangely enough, it had a lot more power than it was using. It turned and it went around; there's a long peninsula at that particular point on the island. When you look at the western end of Elba on a map, there's this peninsula that goes out. It's like a finger pointing, really, toward Pianosa, which is a little island, maybe six miles off the coast. They went around the point and vanished towards this town. The next day I went down, moving just at night, and got a wonderful position above this town to see–I had to find out where the marine mine was. We'd gotten that information from our own 63rd fighter wing, I think it was. It was based on Corsica. But we didn't know exactly how far in it was, and how far down a beautiful beach, which has now got villas all along it. But we had to know where that minefield was, because the French were going to make a landing there. I was lucky. Where I was, I could

see that whole area. I couldn't see where the mine was, there weren't any markers, but I could see the boats go out, and the boats went out a certain distance. I marked it on my map, because I was looking right down the beach. Then they would get to another point; I had to calculate that, and then they would make a right turn and go right out to sea. So, that minefield was right along there. And later on, this I found out later on, when the French made their landing, they did it with [unclear], I think, or Senegalese troops. They lost a lot of people, because they went right in over the minefield. They had sent in another team, and the other team had figured it out as being not a marine field, but beach mines, and there were beach mines. There was barbed wire further in, so they wouldn't have been disrupted, and there were beach mines. They just went right in both of them and they lost some landing boats on the shallow minefield outside. I've never read a report on it. It would have been interesting, but it was very much of a secondary thing. The French did it–attacked Elba–mainly, I think, as sort of, well they had to train their men, the men had never had any combat at all, these Africans, although they were good soldiers. And I was in a beautiful position, because I could see what they were doing. I had to guess at it. There was a concrete mole that went out to make a sort of fisherman's sort of safe harbor in a storm, and this concrete mole had crews digging into the surface of it, in a pattern, and I put that down in my report and they had that. The British put a small commando raid in there, and I said, "It looks as though there are probably mines on the surface of the mole, so stay away from that." And they went right over that. They went up on one side and over, and they lost a lot of people on that. In this place where I was, there was an old vineyard. I never saw a house up there–there must have been a house someplace, or not necessarily, the town was right below it and they probably came up and worked all day long. A vineyard and olive grove, all overgrown, so it was perfect. I could move around inside it.

One time a patrol, a rather small patrol, with nothing but dogs came. They never released the dogs and the only reason they didn't release the dogs, I believe, was because between me and the patrol which was only probably about–the patrol was on the path; the path was below these terraces and between me and the patrol, the dogs were tearing to get free–there was a little boy with a herd of goats, and whoever the soldiers were, I don't know what group they were, they didn't want the dogs to get carried away with chasing goats. And I was above them, scared, really scared, because dogs are the one thing that I always thought if the Germans had used patrols, we wouldn't have got anything. So, all I did was to wait and pray that they would keep them on the lead. I had grenades, I had a 45, I had a machine pistol, one of our type. I never heard that anybody else had them. They were specially made by the Marlin Company, or so I was told, for the OSS. They were very nice, they had a wooden stock, they were blow back, they just were easy and they took nine millimeter parabellum which was all over the place. That's why we had them. I could have killed the dogs, at least killed two or

three of them, but that was not what our mission was all about, because that would have ended the whole thing. They would have had to have sent in many people before they could have finished me off.

Then, strangely enough, the Germans were putting in a mortar. It was quite a big mortar, sort of a block of mortars–behind, there was a pine wood, which is undoubtedly still there because it was very nice–along this beach, this beautiful beach, and they had maybe half a dozen mortars that were zeroing in on where I was. I thought, at first, "My God, they've gotten a flash from the binoculars." This was in the morning, and I had been all night long there, perfectly comfortable, waiting for the morning so–I got some photographs that they never came out–so that I could see what they had in the way of defensive things. They had two or three barbed wire emplacements along the beach, but in from the beach, but I thought that was what I would be able to find out. But what I did find out was that they had a number of mortars, I think maybe eighty or eighty-eight, some pretty big ones. And they started firing where I was. I thought, "Jesus, they've seen me." And I did the best I could. There's no place on a terrace that you can really get. If the terrace had been toward the village, it would have been all right because I could have been as far back as I could get on one terrace, and just pray that they will have the wall on the terrace of the one I was on as a certain amount of blockade. Just before they started firing, a car came up–one of the little Volkswagens, an early Volkswagen, you still see them around, they're called the Thing.

MA: Kubelwagen.
RLP: Kubelwagen, that's what they were called, I never knew what they were called. I must say, I thought, "Jesus, if I only had nerve enough", because there was nobody in it. It was down below me, and someone came up and started shouting in German–what I thought was shouting in German–and I thought, "My God, there must be another patrol behind here that I'd never seen. And he's giving instructions." And what I had to guess at, was that he was seeing if there was anybody working there, and telling them to get out because he got back into his car and drove away. Then after about half an hour or fifteen minutes, we started getting mortars, and the first mortar shell that came up I thought was a pack of hounds. That particular type of mortar that they had, I guess when the shell was rotating coming back down, it sounded exactly like a pack of hounds [makes howling sound, then boom], and above you, all the branches of the trees were falling down on me. Sort of brush, really, and I think I was more scared in that that than anything else because you could hear the stuff cutting through the woods, and then the branches all falling down on top of you. But they didn't. They kept on firing for a while. I figured out that they were seeing if they had the range if anybody came over–if a group of troops tried to attack from that side. The people who were defending that particular piece of beach–it was fairly important to defend because it was the only place that landing boats could land

because everything else was rocky. They were just testing to see that the mortars would be effective. That's what I put in my report, anyway.

So, that just about finished our mission. When I came back from that, we were ready to leave and we were short of food–the radio operator and myself–and when I'd come back from trying to contact the PT boat which had finally taken off, I knew they weren't going to try to come back until there was another dark of the moon and the moon phase was changing then, so I decided I had to get out by myself. There were fishermen's boats in the other town–the town that I had gone through in the morning. I came to these boats, but there were no oars. And they were big, probably about fifteen feet, heavily made boats–with no oars, you didn't have a chance to do anything. There was no way of getting across. Nobody in that village had a boat with power to it. So, the last thing that I did, operationally and observation, was to find out where the hell they left their oars. Which I did. I went up to where I could see the boats, and I watched for about three days there, and I saw them pull their oars up and go halfway up the hill and put them in a stone shed that had chestnuts in it, where they dried chestnuts because there were a lot of chestnuts on Elba. So, when the time came, Sunday, we took off, went down there. Their system of moving these boats, they were very heavy; they had stones about so big that were cut in a trough, and they would roll the boat up, put one of these under the keel, and then two people could work it down until you got it down into the shingle, and into the water. We had a lovely calm day, calm night for this and got off at about 3:00 at night. Pushed out and started rowing. And that was when we got about five miles out, dead calm and a breeze started up, blowing us back in towards Elba. We came back in. By the time we got back in–it took us five hours to get in–by the time we got back in, the light was strong. We had been drifting down, which was north of where we had stolen the boat, and we came right into a cliff that just went up like that [motions up above head with two hands]. The only thing that I could think was that we would have to abandon the boat because the cliff, you know, it was really amazing looking at it. First of all, we had another set-to with another problem which was a plane. A plane came down; it was not a fighter plane–it couldn't have had any machine guns in it. It was a Storch, which was an observation plane that could go very slowly and land on a dime. We were probably a couple of miles out to sea when this happened. He came in, and my radio operator didn't know how to swim, and yet he couldn't stay in the boat. He had to get out of the boat if this plane had a machine gun or any kind of a gun or was dropping grenades. They must have had a radio and called in to a patrol boat, but that would have been… I knew where the nearest one on the northern side of me was, which was quite a big town, Marciana. There were two Marcianas–Marciana Marina, which was where the patrol boat was kept, and Marciana Alta, which was nothing but a few houses. And when I came in, when I got about from here to the wall, I suddenly saw that there was about this much [lifts hand equal to back of chair] that I couldn't see from the water. There was about this much rock, you know, as though there was

a beach. Well, there was a beach there, but you couldn't see it from the water. From the water, you saw nothing but this cliff. So, I knew that we could get ashore and I, at first, I had the feeling that…

Change in tape

RLP: The plane came over. We had shelter halves, we had taken all our equipment from the camp except the radios. The radios were too heavy and they didn't work anyway. So, we had hidden them, and we came back later on, after Elba was taken, to pick up our equipment. I took the shelter halves' lines, tied them onto the gunnel, tied them onto his belt, and I figured that I was all right. This was before the wind had come up. This was just about after we had gone out, and we were still going out, and I was hoping to be able to get across before morning–to get the forty miles across. I had cut the shelter half to make a sail. I told the radio operator, I said, "Look, if we are fisherman, we're going to be sitting here. We're not going to worry about the plane. It's gone by. Maybe another one will come. They're used to seeing these boats out here, and they won't pay any attention unless you or I do something that is out of line. We had the guns underneath–these little machine guns–underneath the shelter halves. So, I told him, "Don't do anything like that. But if they start shooting, go over the side. You're tied on, you've got six feet of line, stay down as long as you can and then come up–just your head–breathe, and get the hell back down again. He was saying he couldn't hold his breath. I said, "It doesn't matter, you will learn to hold your breath in a very short time because it's a matter of our lives." The plane went way down, it circled around, it turned around and came right back in the same line. They just went straight on back, and we never saw them again. What they were doing, what they did–I just figured they didn't have any guns. The sorties usually didn't. We'd seen them before. They would fly within a few feet of the ground–you could see the pilot in them and everything. We had now made our landing. We made our landing, we took some of these–sort of slate–on this beach, and managed every wave that came, because this storm we were in was lasting. I knew that we couldn't get off–it was a head wind as far as the western side of Elba was concerned. What we did then, we pulled it up as far as we could, we got it right up to the cliff, we put rocks around it, we got brush–there was a lot of brushwood around, fortunately–and we made a sort of camouflage of the boat, because the boat was brightly painted; this is the damn thing about it. But when we got through, by about 8:00 in the morning, we heard a patrol boat coming, and it came right down along this coast and it was loaded with troops, as many as they could get. It wasn't an E-boat; it wasn't one of those great big ones–they couldn't get in that close. But this one did, and I said, "They're going to see us and we're going to be sitting ducks here," and instead of that, they went right on by. They never hesitated, as though they didn't care, or we had done a good enough job, or they were looking up. We weren't looking at them because I have always had a feeling that if you look at people, they're going

to see you. And in another case, in the same situation, when a patrol passed within from me to you practically, it was a six-man patrol, only one had a machine gun. He had the typical little machine pistol, 42 or 41, one of those categories–a very nice little gun. But he was very good, he turned around, walked backwards, looking up at the hills, always looking up at the hills and never looking right at us. This was well before, this was in another mission, but always on that western side of Elba, and they didn't see us and we had no way of … We had our guns ready. I think we had two machine pistols. The others had 45s and grenades and so on. But we were not on a combat mission. They didn't know that we were there. They knew that we had landed–they didn't know whether we had taken off again after that landing. But they rather suspected that we were still there. And I tell you, things like that start the adrenaline going, and you think a little bit faster. On that occasion, Chester Macaroni said–this is going back–said, "Hey, they are GIs." Because their voices were around the corner, and I knew enough German to know the hell they were–they were speaking German. The difference between the Italian, which is more of a sing-song voice, and German, which is more guttural, but not English, if you knew a little bit of German… That's when we sort of did a melt [laughs] and it was effective. First of all, our uniforms were foul, having been in them… This was wintertime. One of the missions that came in to supply food for us, brought Christmas cards for us–can you imagine anybody being as dumb as that? The patrol boat went on by. Later on, in the afternoon he came back. By that time, we had checked up to see that everything was good, and these flashes of color were well covered over with the shelter halves, so the colors wouldn't show through.

That evening the storm kept on going. We knew we couldn't get away. In the evening, suddenly there were lights coming down the hill. We thought, well, we're in a better position now, we've got our guns, we had left the boat completely and had gotten up the cliffs as far as we could and it would have been almost impossible to have found us at night. In the daytime, they could have found us if they had found the boat. But these people who came down weren't Germans. They had a lantern. They came down–they were farmers, fishermen. I don't know who they thought we were, but they must have thought we were Germans, because they said, "Your friends are up there." I figured out immediately that they thought we were Germans, because we didn't look like anything in particular. I said, "No, they're no friends of ours," and they sort of nodded and they said, "We'll help you." They said, "We'll come back. You stay here. You'll be all right." I said, "How long will this storm last?" They said, "One more day. One more day; it will be finished and it will be dead calm. You'll have two days of calm and then the storm will be from the opposite direction." I said, "Well, we'll see if we can get away." They said, "What do you want?" I said, "We haven't had any food for two or three days. But that doesn't matter, we aren't hungry." I said, "Better not to come back, because we may be gone. It would be bad to come–we wouldn't want you to come back in the daytime, and it would be bad to come

back. Somebody might see you." And he said, "Yes, but we'll be very careful; we won't say anything." So, they stayed away all that night, and they came back the next night, and the next night we had already pushed the boat into the water. The calmness that they said we would have was absolutely perfect. We pushed the boat into the water, and as soon as the sun was really well down beyond Corsica, which has very high mountains and the darkness came on rather quickly even though this was spring time, we took off. We took off at probably at about… We saw the lights–they started coming down again and we couldn't take a chance on who came down and I felt that they had a spotlight now, an electric torch–they wouldn't have had an electric torch–and I certainly didn't want to take a chance. In every village, there are some people who are one way and some people the other way, and the other way would have gotten in touch with the Germans. We took off even though it was a bit choppy, but not too bad, and pushed the boat back into the water and took off. The lights were up like that [raises right arm its full length] and gradually they were working down as we took off. I kept thinking, "I'll count to a hundred, if I can get to a hundred by the time…" These were very heavy oars, they were oars about that big around [makes a circle with two thumbs and forefingers], and long oars too, and this kid couldn't even row. Fortunately, I'd been brought up rowing, and so it was no problem to me and I'll tell you this adrenalin–I didn't have to eat anything. We rowed–I counted 100 strokes–and on 100 strokes the lights were gradually getting out. In the dark, the moon was just a crescent moon–even though the moon is not much–at the same time you could see a blob. A boat is quite a big thing. A 16, 17-foot boat, or 14-foot boat–was quite a big thing to look down on in the water because the water always reflects star light and so on. But nothing happened. No gunshots. No nothing. When we finally lost sight of them, I guess we must have been maybe a mile out–I don't know how far out–but we couldn't see their lights anymore. And we rowed, and gradually the great mass of the hills, because there are two big mountains, one is Monte Giove and the other one… Monte Giove is, I think, the tallest one, and the next tallest one–we were camping on that one for a long time. At any rate, there are two big mountains there and by sunup we were halfway across. We had done twenty miles. We had had a little bit of sailing, but not much, but one of the things that we found was, I think, a broken oar that acted as a mast, and we got to Elba at 2:00 in the afternoon the next day.

MA: Elba or Corsica?
RLP: Corsica. We went right into Bastia; right in, right over the minefields. It didn't make any difference because the mines were six feet down, and we were drawing about sixteen inches at the most. The PT boat was right in the main basin of the harbor of Corsica. I went up, got a phone–all of these guys whom we knew, they didn't know us. When I got back from calling up our headquarters–they were coming with a car for us right away–when I got back there, the French had moved in and arrested my radio operator, and they were

reluctant to give him up. They thought, "We've captured…" I don't know what they thought he was.

MA: What was your next assignment?
RLP: Well, the next assignment was to write up this report which was always a nuisance. I had kept a diary, which I wasn't supposed to keep, and Tom Stoneborough, one of the two civilians–Wayne Nelson and Tom Stoneborough–and Tom Stoneborough tried to keep the diary. He said, "I have to keep that." I said, "The hell with you. You want to write it out, you write it out, but I'm going to keep that diary," which I did. I've still got it.

MA: Really?
RLP: Yeah. The other assignments were–Washington wanted me back. They wanted to send me to Catalina School for beach reports, which is very interesting because the direction and angle of the waves coming in tells so much about how far out a storm is, and when you're put on an island, what they want to know is the depth of the islands coming up for landing craft and so on, and if it is unoccupied by Japanese, which several of them were. But I never went on one. Instead of that they sent me into Kunming. Well, they sent me first of all into Burma, very briefly, and I was going through Burma when the word came–I don't know who brought it, maybe somebody heard it on the radio–that the two atom bombs had gone off, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

MA: What did you think of that? Any impression?
RLP: Well, I didn't realize the… Later I thought that it was unnecessary. All they had to do was set one of them off in Tokyo Harbor, in the water there. I didn't know that it would do much damage to any human beings, maybe a few fishermen, but not a town. I never realized why they picked these two, which I always thought were residential towns–Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

MA: Once V-J Day came, what happened to you then?
RLP: I was in Kunming; I was sent down to Hanoi. I was put in charge of the SI desk at Kunming because I spoke French and everybody in North Vietnam, and, well, in South Vietnam, they all spoke French too, but the British, that was their section–Saigon. I think the 37th parallel, that they divided up Indochina into two things. I don't know where the French were supposed to be. I guess the French did send in troops, yes, they had troops there. They were sort of stubborn; de Gaulle was a very stubborn man. If he had realized that Indochina was going to go independent, it would have made all the difference in the world as far as the French were concerned. Everybody wanted to return to what had happened at the beginning of the war. The Dutch were sending troops down. And the British wouldn't let them. The Dutch got as far as Bangkok and they wanted to go into Indonesia. And the British basically had in the backs of their minds that they

were going to take over all of these other colonies, and especially Indonesia, which we knew had a lot of oil in it.

MA: So how long were you there? You're still in the OSS?
RLP: Yes, still in the OSS. Well, we'd gotten a report that my brother had been killed. So, the first thing, as far as I was concerned, the thing that I really was interested in, was to verify this and find out where his body was. I wasn't terribly enthusiastic about this assignment in northern Vietnam. It was interesting. I finally sent the last–I believe it was the last–parachute jump of the war. I didn't go in on it. I wish I had. But at the time, somebody had to be on the desk in Kunming. This went in mainly for a prison camp–to liberate a prison camp–which was a sort of primary, of most importance at that time. We were afraid the Japanese would kill off–in some of the isolated camps–they would kill off all the prisoners. They did massacre a lot in the Philippines. And the Philippines was a great operation, but their operation came, I think, from maybe one of the aircraft carriers. I don't know where it came from. One of the islands, mainly. It was very successful. It was Rangers; would that have been Marines?

MA: Army.
RLP: They were equipped for it. We were equipped for a different type of thing. We sent in, I would think, thirty people. We notified the Japanese that they were coming and that they would jump in, and that we would expect a certain type of reception, which we got. They came out and they presented their arms. At that time, they were allowed to keep their arms. They were a scruffy looking bunch. All our men jumped. Some of them had never done any jumps before, but I had the right to authorize them to do that. Because a lot of the agents that we sent in jumped without any previous training. Well, they had to, you know, because there just wasn't time to send them back for training.

MA: So you were in Indochina for?
RLP: I was in Indochina for probably about four months.

MA: And after that assignment?
RLP: I think when that operation ended, I was sent down to Bangkok. There had been a team that had gone into Bangkok and had been met by the Thais. The British considered themselves at war with the Thais, but we didn't consider ourselves at war with the Thais, which seemed to be all right. The Thais gave one of their royal palaces up to our men who went in. How they got in, I'm not sure. I don't know how they got in. The Thais were in control of all of northern Thailand up to the Burma Road, which of course we were in charge of. The Japanese never really made any effort to do anything except to bomb the Burma Road and bridges and stuff like that. That wasn't my operation. This was after the surrender, and I was given a free hand to see if I could find my brother's grave, which I did. I found that through a Catholic priest who had been there

throughout the war, and a Siamese who had actually been in touch. He had been given the assignment by the royal family to see if he could do anything. This Siamese was really a sort of underground spy for the royal family. They were very much anti-Japanese and they didn't like the arrangement that had been made with the Japanese to allow them to come in, allow them to keep prisoners, and to build their railroad. I did some reports on the situation in Thailand, and I found what everybody knew–that the navy and the army were at swords' points of the Thais. My brother and a young man by the name of Howard, I think a Lieutenant or something like that, were almost at the road, when a Thai patrol under a Lieutenant… The Japanese had put out an offer for 1500 bots, which was really about $150, for these two, whoever brought them in. This young man later became very high up in politics, in the army clique. Sometimes the army would be in power, and sometimes the navy would be in power, and there'd be a coup, sort of palace rebellion, between the two. And this young Thai Lieutenant had collected the reward and turned them over to the Japanese. I got the information from this Thai underground operator, and he was shot, but he wasn't killed. He was shot, I think, three times, just before he told me this. Nobody knows who shot him–obviously, either the Japanese or the Army, and the Army was afraid of–we had already started to move in troops, as guests–more or less guests, the way I was, that's why I came in on that thing. I was sent, as I was OSS and the OSS was in control, to what was known as the Rose Palace, which was a lesser royal palace, a very nice place. We had our own living quarters, our own food, a pavilion–everything was in pavilions. It's still there. The last time I went back, I guess I rented a car and drove right into the palace. Army officers had taken over. They didn't bother me at all. I went to where the dining pavilion was, it was about this size, with an enormous table, everything about that high off the ground [indicates about three feet high] with cushions to sit on, and low tables, because no servants were allowed to have their head, ever, above any member of the royal family. The officers were almost all members of the royal family. How they had so many children, God knows how, but they did. Now the servants, after the war, they didn't have to crawl around on their hands and knees the way they had previously, in order not to get their head above some young prince.

This is where I ran into the other OSS people who were there; the head of the mission was Jim Thompson. He was a famous person who remained there–remained as a civilian and he developed the Thai silk industry. It was upcountry; they'd always made beautiful silk. Jim was a very aesthetic young man and he changed their whole colors. He went in for sort of pastel colors, absolutely fabulous. When they made The King and I, that movie, you know, he supplied all of the silks for that. He made a fortune on it and lived there and had a beautiful house there. I guess about, oh, how long has it been, I don't know, but at a certain point Jim–in the worst part of the summer, Bangkok is impossible, full of mosquitos, and terribly hot, and rainy season and so on, and everybody either goes to Katmandu or they go to someplace in India, or they go to what they

call the Cameron Highlands in Malaya which is cool, high hills–Jim went down there. I think he had a girlfriend with him; as a matter of fact, I knew his girlfriend; I think she was there. There were these little houses, sort of cottages, just for the summer heat throughout Malaya. He vanished. Jim vanished. Nobody's ever known what happened to him. They heard him. They thought he'd gone out for a walk. There's gravel around these houses and they heard the crunching of gravel, and some people said they heard a call. But nobody's quite sure about that. At any rate, he's gone. I've always suspected that he was killed, because the last time I saw Jim… I went out there–I was in Okinawa, I was working for the Army, and I went out to Bangkok. My wife and I went out there. Had she been to Bangkok before? I guess not; this was her first time. Her father was sort of Governor of Malaya at a certain time before the war. There was a career colonial service. The last time I saw him, Jim said, "You know, the case of your brother is still very much alive here." That meant that he… He was always talking with newspapermen. Not the Imperial Hotel–what's the hotel in Bangkok, the old one, when we were kids we stayed there?

Change in tape

RLP: It's right on the river.

MA: Do you think this was a political?
RLP: I think it was a political thing. They sent somebody down there. It was right on the edge of the most beautiful jungle where there used to be these gibbons. In the morning, you'd hear the gibbons really sort of almost singing [imitates singing gibbons]–like that; as kids, we used to love it. Some people said, "Well, he could have been taken by a tiger." I don't believe that. Jim was not that adventurous. You hear a tiger occasionally and when you do, the last thing you do is take a walk in the jungle. But he could have gotten lost. It's very easy to get lost in any forested place. He could have slipped and fallen down a… Those hills are very steep and the animals around there would have eaten him up in no time at all.

MA: Now, the war is basically over. What did you see as your future? Did the OSS have a post-war role?
RLP: They wanted me to write part of the history, and I didn't want to. I sort of thought well, Russia would be the place to learn something about. My particular boss was a Director of CIA. At this time, it was changed–under Truman it changed to CIA, Central Intelligence Agency, instead of Office of Strategic Services. My boss was then the first Director of the CIA, and his name was Lester Houck–a guy about 6 feet 10, or something like that, smoked one cigarette after another. He died at the age of–I think we were more or less the same age–I don't think he could have been over 50, certainly not 50. He would smoke one cigarette after another.

MA: What was he like?
RLP: He was a great guy. He was an archaeologist and a great guy.

MA: Good boss?
RLP: Very good, yes. One time when I was back in Washington, he said, "What do you know about Lake Baikal?" I said to him, "Well, you obviously think that's where the Russian nuclear station is." He said, "How did you know that?" I said, "You wouldn't have asked me if Lake Baikal wasn't very interesting." He said, "What are you going to do now?" I said, "I'd like to study Russian." He said, "How are you going to go about it?" I said, "I don't know, I'll find a Russian and do five hours a day, and according to Berlitz it will take 700 hours, and at 5 hours a day it will take so long." He said, 'You're going to study Russian." He said, "Where do you want to study?" I said, "Wherever there are a lot of Russians." He said, "Where do you think there are a lot of Russians?" I said, "Probably in Rome. They can't work their own religion except in Greece, and they'd have to learn Greek, so I think that they're probably in Rome." He said, "Okay, go to Rome and study Russian five hours a day and study something else too." I said, "I've already got it." He kept saying, "What else are you going to study?" From the age of about–when I first went to Rome as a correspondent, I had a very good friend who was the Director of the American Academy in Rome at that time. He name was Fairbanks. His son and I went to school together. He was an artist, a very good artist. I liked his paintings and everything, and he gave me a lot of pointers. He died shortly after that. People die conveniently for me. He left me all of his paints and his easel, which was an absolute gem of an easel. Great big, old fashioned easel, I don't know who it had been, certainly been a lot of good painters. Everything, the works. I took up painting. I was probably the worst painter in the world, but at the same time, I just liked it, you know. My boss at that time–I was a newspaperman then–and my boss, Reynolds Packard, was a character and a real bastard; I mean the worst type of bastard you could imagine. But he played chess and I played chess. We got along well from that point of view, and I told him what I thought of him whenever it occurred to me. So, we got along. He had known my brother strangely enough. My brother had been a correspondent for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle in Ethiopia during the Ethiopian War. He got himself into all kinds of trouble there. The Italians wanted any number of correspondents. They had Herbert Matthews, who was a great one. They had a number of different… They would give them transportation down there. They would facilitate their sending cables out. And Packard was down there. I sort of had a girlfriend who was Russian. The most beautiful girl I've ever seen. The only person who looked like her and I have a photograph of her somewhere. She was Polish, but she had been brought up in Russia. I think her father was in the embassy or something like that. So, I got Russian pretty well, sort of mixed in with some Polish slang.

MA: So, you're in Rome?
RLP: I'm in Rome studying five hours a day Russian.

MA: You're employed by the CIA?
RLP: Yes, I think I was, I'm not sure.

MA: They're paying you to…
RLP: They weren't giving me much of a salary, but they gave me all my expenses.

MA: So, you're studying Russian?
RLP: I went to the Rome Academy of [unclear]. You had a professor and he was the one who gave you assignments and criticized your work.

MA: After five months of learning Russian, what did the CIA expect you to do?
RLP: I never found out because I fell in love with my present wife, his mother [points to son] and Eugene's mother. The CIA's idea was, you just worked for us because you know, after all when you're an agent, you're an agent, and you go where we tell you to go and you have all the expenses that you need–if you want a car, you have a car, and you want a plane, you want to learn to fly, you want to learn helicopters or whatever, which I did. It was a great life until I fell in love. Then I decided I had to do something more serious. So, I went and got into the Foreign Service. I got into the Army, first of all, and we did five years in the Ryukyu Islands.

MA: What was your..?
RLP: I was in charge of five cultural centers, very nice cultural centers. We had a staff at each one and I had to go around. First of all, I was in charge of one down in the southernmost island of the Ryukyu.

MA: Part of the occupation forces at this point?
RLP: But I was working with the natives. Our center was just to show them that America was a sound country, a country that worked with other people and that was the land of the future for them.

MA: Did you have a commission or were you a civilian with Army?
RLP: I was a DAC–Department of Army Civilian. I had a good rating. At that time, I think I had about $11,000 a year, which was more than I had ever made before. When I left, we decided we really should be in the Foreign Service and we wouldn't have trouble because we had several languages, both of us. When I left, they did something that was supposed to have been, and I think it was, an honor to me. The commanding officer there in Naha, in the Ryukyu, asked what is known as a name call or something like that, and so I could go to various, Samoa, other places, Philippines, but to come back, which I found very… In the

meantime, I had been offered a job–sort of more cultural, more interesting to be in different countries. I was supposed to go every two years, and we were with the CIA for about seven years, and then decided that we wanted to do some writing. We wanted to live in Italy, and we were getting older and we had a family. At that time, they were sort of thinking of sending us down to Africa, and I had seen as much of Africa as I wanted, so I resigned. A hard thing to do when you are making $11,000 a year, and then suddenly you have nothing but what your family had left you which wasn't very much.

MA: So this was about when?
RLP: 1961, 1962. I think '62.

MA: So you're looking back at your OSS experience?
RLP: It was great, it was a lot of fun. To me, I felt safest when I was behind the lines. That was when you could vanish into a crowd. There was one time they were about to send me to Elba–not to Elba, God knows I never want to see Elba, actually Elba is a beautiful island. They were going to send me to Genoa and I don't know what I had to find out in Genoa. The OSS quite rightly didn't tell you what they were interested in until they had you ready for the place. That would have been much [unclear] because I would have been in civilian clothes, out of the Army. Before I went in, I signed up for the Army you see, what they called voluntary induction. I'd already had the Air Force. I loved that. I was hoping that I could really fly. In retrospect, I don't mind that I didn't fly. I found that after the tremendous, wonderful feeling of being alone in a plane or a helicopter has gone, it's not… I think a jet would be fabulous, but I was too old for that.

MA: What did you think of the OSS as an organization? Was it well run?
RLP: No. The CIA or the OSS?

MA: Well, start with the OSS, then also the CIA.
RLP: No, I think they were in too much of a hurry. If they had started it ten years before it would have been great, but when they started it, and given the assignment the way they were, and Donovan's real idea was to get in there himself. He was an action man, and a good intelligence organization should be a quiet place and should never have people like me.

MA: Why's that?
RLP: Well, because I was having too much fun. And also, a more mature person, an older person–when I went into the OSS I was twenty-four, twenty-five, something like that. I just loved it. This was the thing, you know, you could do all the things that you're told you're not supposed to do

MA: And get away with it?
RLP: Yes. [Laughs]

MA: And the CIA?
RLP: I think the idea of the Army having its own intelligence is a lot better than depending on the CIA. The CIA doesn't really know what the Army wants. The Army, the Air Force, the Navy–they have entirely different interests. They should each have their own intelligence. Then there should be a political intelligence, also, for the State Department and that isn't an intelligence organization.

MA: So in 1960 you quit the Foreign Service?
RLP: I quit the Foreign Service, I was offered a position in the CIA as a mole with my family. I thought, that's not … I don't know, it might have been interesting. Maybe I'll go back there. I've done a few jobs for them; I've never asked for any pay–the things that interested me, but I don't think I'd do that anymore.

MA: So for the last forty years?
RLP: I've been writing, I've been investing in real estate and doing a very good thing of it, you know. Buy a house, and I was buying houses for $5,000. We bought a house in the Bahamas for $5,000, when nobody wanted to go there. The same thing in Italy. My wife and I have owned, at one time, four apartments in Rome. We never paid more than about $1,000-$2,000 for them, in the old part of Rome which is the most attractive part, I've always felt. Once we bought a big apartment, that was probably about this size [points to room in which he is seated], all divided up, in an old palazzo in the old part of Rome, in a 16th century building. We bought that for eight million lire which, at the time was about $6,000. It was as big as this area, like this with terraces–fantastic. We bought if for about, well, I can't remember exactly, but I think maybe $6,000 or something like that, and sold it for $200,000 a few years later. With that we bought a house in the Roman–where he was born [points to son] –Campagna. He's a Roman citizen; he was actually born in Rome. He was a baby when we had that house and we had it fixed all up. It was a sort of tower. Lovely place, with vineyards and olive groves.

MA: What kind of writing have you done?
RLP: A bit of everything. I wrote for the New York Daily News. I wrote a novel. These are not ones that I'm particularly proud of; they were mystery stories and they were short stories. My wife, on the other hand, wrote some very good books. My idea was to write as fast as possible and get it over with. For the past three years, I've been working off and on on

two books. One of them is Take the Helm Now, and it's for women to get themselves in Washington because men have trashed our country. I feel that men have trashed our country. I think they've trashed the finances of it, from Roosevelt on down. I think that they've trashed the politics of it. I don't believe

we have any business allowing anybody to spend one hundred million dollars to get into the White House, because I believe that that creates corruption in politics. There's not a single President after Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower, those three, who has left the job without having millions of dollars, and I think that's wrong. I think that war is wrong. I think that Johnson–the Vietnam War was probably the most corrupt thing that ever happened and he knew it. I don't like to say–this makes me sound a little bit as though I'm anti-Semitic–but I think that what happened in Israel was completely wrong. I think that dividing the country up was perfectly all right. They had such a bad deal throughout the world. There have been too many people who were really anti-Jewish, not just anti-Semitic. I'm more or less anti-Semitic because I think the whole bunch of them–what Israel had done to itself, and they're just taking the rest of the half that had nothing to do with it, with the land that was granted by the United Nations' mandate to Israel. It was plenty of land, unless they want to take over the world. I don't know whether they want to take over the world or not. I think the Palestinians have as much a right to half the land, probably more of a right to half the land. You might say well, two thousand years ago the Jewish had it, but they had it for a shorter time than not had it, and after all, they took over somebody else's land, which we did, and which is normal and unfortunate, but it's normal.

MA: This has been an adventure. Thank you very much.
RLP: Come on over and see Italy and Elba.
MA: Thank you very much, Mr. Pomeroy.