

Interview with Robert Richardson
Interviewer: Leigh Anne Howard
March 20, 2008

Interviewer Notes: The interviewee signed the consent form after the interview because of the nature of the interview.

Transcriber Notes: Jane Richardson, Robert's wife, is also present at the interview.

Q: Just to start I'm here with Jane Richardson and "Bob" or Robert Newton Richardson, and it is March 20th of 2008. I am in the library here at Mooresville [Indiana] and we will start the interview. So just to get going before we start talking about your service, can you tell me where you were born? Where you were raised? Where you are from? Some of that kind of basic family information.

A: Basically, I was born in Bridgeport, Indiana. South Bridgeport, Indiana that's in Marion County. Of course, in 1921 most of your births were at home, so I was born at home. I walked to Bridgeport School. It was mile each way. Bridgeport was through the eighth grades, the first eight grades. By that time, they'd established the bus service to Decatur Central, and we actually live in Decatur Township. So, then I started Decatur Central High School and spent four years there. Well, the summer after I graduated, I worked for a German gardener for some time. I worked with an electrician wiring houses. I was all set to go with him and spend about a year maybe in undergraduate type work, but eventually I went to Purdue University. I enrolled in the fall of 1939, and as I tell everybody I was a slow student. I started in '39 and graduated in '48, but in the interval I worked 18 months with Allison's while I went the two years at Purdue. Then 18 months at Allison's.

Q: Okay, and what's Allison's?

A: Allison Engineering. They built the Allison airplane engine. Used in the 13-39, I mean the P39 and I don't know what else. Two types of engines they built. Actually, I was classified as Mechanic Service Tech so I would actually run the front ends to test the engines and did whatever adjustments were necessary to bring it into specifications. Then Uncle Sam bid for me to go to work with him.

Q: Okay. So, you got drafted.

A: So, my number became 3509A535, and that number has lived with me for what more than 50 years now.

JANE: More than 60 now.

A: Yea, more than 60. (laughter)

Q: So, you were married then?

JANE: No.

Q: Okay.

A: We knew each other before I went to service.

JANE: We actually lived a half a mile apart, but when he was in high school, I was in grade school. So, he was not important.

Q: Okay. So, you were from the Decatur area as well?

JANE: Yes. Decatur Central was the high school I attended; I also lived in Bridgeport, IN.

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A: Yes. She was a half a mile south on Bridgeport Road. So, from there, I went to have my physical, and they declared me limited service because I had flat feet.

Q: Okay.

A: Of course, they asked me if I had any objections to service. I said, "Not really." So, they preceded to process me and shoot me through the system.

Q: You're the first person who's talked about being asked if there was any objection to service. What do you think they were getting at there?

A: Well, my religion was Quaker which opposed violence. I don't know if it was psychological, or they felt that giving me an opportunity to object on my flat feet. Once you get in the service with a heavy pack and a heavy rifle well those feet flattened right down. In fact, they offered to pad my arches up with just some foam, well not foam but something of that nature. Not like the arch supports available now days. I didn't really go that route, but anyway. From then, I went to basic training at Clearwater, Florida. I had a pretty good IQ, so they gave me an option of cryptography school since I was involved with thousands at the Air Force. I learned indirectly my first cryptography assignment would be up there in the straits off of Alaska, where you go inside in the fall, and you don't go outside until springtime.

Q: So, you were in Alaska?

A: I would've been.

Q: Oh, you would've been?

A: Yea if I had accepted the cryptography because that's what they wanted immediately. So, I choose the air force, and I also explored the possibility of army specialized training program. They said I was an excellent candidate for that. What they did was send you to a college, gave you four years if you needed it, in my case it'd be an additional two years to get the degree. So, I went through the basic training, and they had to apply for the ASTP for me, but it hadn't come through. So, they assigned me to the rifle range as an instructor as a fill-in for the time. Eventually we got fired by the rifle range master because we'd leave at Clearwater, Florida, and it was a 40-mile trip to the rifle range, and the transportation were following their orders where you don't leave until 7 O'clock. Well, the range essentially opened at seven and being the instructor, you should be there at seven. But it went along for a while, and he cancelled the whole deal. He said he'd get his instructors elsewhere. So, I was assigned to another training school in Gulf Port, Mississippi. It was probably a three-month school or something of that nature. The basic things which I was already trained at Allison's. I went down to the final at 100% on all phases of it, and the final end phase was engine testing. Well, I was just a little too smart for my completion. He said, "Well, you're not allowed to go to the test cell to check anything." I proved I knew what it was, and I told him. He said, "Well, you have to write that down in detail." Well, I didn't have it in the form that he preferred so he gave me about an 85%, I think it was. Otherwise, I'd been off to officer training school because they took one of each group and sent them to officer's training school and made them engineers for the air force. So, well the very first thing I did that they told me to was... they gave me a captain's name when I went to this basic air force school at Gulf Port. Well, I went to this captain, and I was checked with him on that ASTP, army specialized training program, to see what my status was.

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He checked in, and he said, "For some reason they are very, very slow on that right now. I don't know what's going on." I later found out my cousin was in the coast guard and he was signed up for ASTP. He went to Georgia Tech, and he had three semesters, I mean three years in, and they cancelled the whole program. He ended up over in Germany with the field artillery.

Q: That's a big switch,

A: You're not kidding. So, I was forced not to get in at the time. I would've been in over finishing up the German war.

Q: So, you were doing some of these extra schools, sort of waiting for that training program to kick in. That's what was happening?

A: Yes. Apparently so. But it did focus toward my eventual position. They sent me to aircraft engine school in Pratt-Whitney in Michigan. I was training on what they call an AR-2800 engine. I don't remember if it was a Pratt-Whitney or what, but it had nothing to do with the B29's because they had the different engine. So, after spending my time up there, I was assigned to a B-29 field training unit at Victoria, Kansas. Of course, they were trying to get a force together of B-29's to move towards the war. What we had to train on was very difficult because it was five degrees above to 15 below there in Kansas. We'd get them to run maybe once a week or something. So, we weren't accomplishing anything in training or towards moving B-29's into the field.

Q: So, you were training to repair them? Or you were training to fly them? What were you actually training to do?

A: To repair them. So, actually, eventually I went to the port of departure which was at Hampton Roads, Virginia. I took my final physical there, and they said, "You'll never go overseas with your limited service." The doctor sat up in the bleachers, and we walked down through the middle of the auditorium or the field house. When I got out, I was off the limited service.

JANE: And now we go with Mary Beth [Reese, their daughter] out to Outer Banks and go past where he shipped out.

Q: Okay.

A: So, I shipped out on the east coast there.

Q: And you told me on the phone that you took a boat.

A: Yea, it was a victory ship. I don't know if you've had any acquaintance with them or not. They are welded in two sections, the front section and the back section, and then welded together. In my trip going to India, I saw one of those vict01Y ships that had split in the middle and it was still floating because each section was independent and then welded together.

Q: Okay. I would've expected it to just go crunch.

A: It was a pretty rough ride. We had some severe storms crossing the Atlantic. Well, you'd look out like this when we could still get the hatch open and see the top of the waves. So, we were rolling over, and those waves were much higher when we were down in the trough. We had one little skirmish with an

undersea submarine, but he wasn't close enough to do any damage, and he may have not survived because they really threw the cans, as they called them, the depth charges at them.

Q: You never found out what happened to it?

A: No and not being in the surrounding ships we did have... I don't know what we had probably 26 or so ships in the group. Then, we had air coverage and also these fast-moving surface vessels that scouted the areas all the time.

Q: Did you have tasks that you had to do on the ship? Or was this just transport for you?

A: This was essentially transport. Now I still had, I don't know if I had a corporal or a first class private still. I think I had a corporal's rating by then. The only time I was called up for KP ¹duty, well all the privates were all sick bad enough that they couldn't do it. So, I did KP and this was in a storm and I did KP. That's the only time I ever did KP when I was in the service. I think we served about six or nine people that day.

Q: That was a lucky day for KP duty.

A: I don't know how many we had, a couple thousand probably, on the shipboard. It was bad enough that we lost... they got either four or six-inch outlets onto the deck that's covered with a cap. They lost a couple of those caps so every time they'd roll over the deck would be awash, and that water was floating our tables and everything else down below. It was quite a clean-up job.

Q: How long did that take? Do you remember?

A: That's the thing. I followed the book to the T and didn't keep a running account. That's one thing they didn't want because if the enemy captured you, they didn't want any information on it. B-29 was in its infancy, and they were trying to keep it a total secret. As I mentioned to you when we were in Naples harbor onboard the boat the Germans were flying, high flying, I suppose they were, I'd hate to say how high up in the air. It was well out of the range of the 20-millimeter shells that were on that ship and yet it was the British, it was an army reserve unit of some sort as the navy, were operant. They were just shooting up there at those airplanes and they couldn't get halfway to them. Those shells came back down the harbor, and they'd explode on impact so the next morning after it was all over with the unit was paid a visit by the harbor police to our captain and instructed that was a no, no. Fortunately, no one was injured either on the ship or with the shells coming down.

Q: So, you went from Hampton Roads to Naples?

A: I was still by boat, and our ship was still usable, but it did have leakage and stuff, so they were headed for dry dock. I don't remember what the red line on that ship was, maybe 12 knots or something and he was doing 18 knots. He didn't want another night in Naples harbor.

¹ "kitchen patrol" work done by military personnel

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Q: Well, I think so after I'd been hit. And you said on the phone that boat jumped up 30 or 40 feet or something like that?

A: Yea about 20 feet because the bombs went almost all the way to the bottom. Then, the shrapnel from the bombs came up, and they destroyed anything on the deck structure.

Fortunately, they were about a hundred feet out on the bow of the ship each way. Had they been shifted just a little they would have sunk us. But, the amazing thing about that harbor, all the welding and everything is going on it was loaded with boats being repaired and so forth. Five minutes after it was over with well it was lit up again.

Q: Wow. Quick recovery.

A: And we did see ships sunk in the harbor there. They had made some hits. One of them was a hospital ship fully marked and all that.

Q: So how did you hear about Tokyo Rose?

A: Well, on our PA system on the boat they called the conversation, and they picked it up on our radio station. She said that they were totally eliminated, the whole force. She said, "We didn't get the pilots, but we got all the supporting people."

Q: Okay.

A: Of course, their whole idea is to destroy your morale. It didn't faze people, they just laughed about it. But the captain of the boat, he wanted to get out of there. He didn't want to spend another night there. So, I think that's when we left his boat, and we stopped in the Mediterranean there on the North African coast. We were there probably four or five days. We were waiting for a ship, troop ship and support, to escort us on down. Now when we went through the Suez Canal and headed on toward the Red Sea, I don't think anybody went with us. The Suez Canal is just a narrow canal, and it was amazing. They had to dredge it because the wind shifted the sand and also any ships that were hit, they were drug out and piled up there, a lot of lost ships in that area.

But, it's amazing to look out from the Suez Canal and those mountains of sand that's shifting. You see a lot of the (pause) the humpback...

JANE: Camels?

A: Yea camels traveling in patterns up there. We also saw some flat boats. They were much, much bigger than our boats that we use on the Ohio and the like of that. They were carrying bananas and all kinds of fruit. It was just stacked board to board, and the people lived on top of that with their chickens, dogs.

Q: That's cool.

A: But, it's entirely different over there. We hope that food that's shipped in is treated better now days than it was back then.

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Q: With the chickens living on it? Me too! Were you able to get off the boat in Naples? Or North Africa or any of the stops?

A: North Africa we got off the boat, and we camped out. That's the place that I told Jane that I had three blankets assigned to me, wool blankets, and that heavy overcoat that's wool and what else? I had something else and at night I had those on top of me, and I was still shivering. Then in the daytime by 9 O'clock why you had the heat rash. It was amazing to see the olive trees with big ripe olives on them. But they warned us, "Don't eat them even if you can wash them. Don't eat them because they are not going to taste like you think they would at home." And they are very bad tasting food at that stage. So, we were there four or five days, and we boarded another ship and that's when we went through the Suez Canal, the Red Sea.

JANE: Do you need your map?

A: And then that took us through the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea over to Bombay, India. We were there two nights, I believe. I think we just camped out on the beach. It was beautiful and wonderful weather. Florida doesn't stand up to what we saw there in the nice warmth.

Q: What time of year was this?

A: Well let's see; it was about February or March, wasn't it? I pretty sure one of my letters I sent home to Mother, she kept them all, and I haven't been able to go through them all, but anyway, I'd said that we were somewhere at sea, and I believe that was February the 2nd.

Q: Okay.

A: But, as the trip from India or...

JANE: From Bombay?

A: From Bombay we went pretty well northwest, no northeast. Actually, our base or new airfield was northwest of Calcutta, about 100 knots.

Q: Okay. So how did you get across there? On trucks?

A: On train.

Q: Oh, on train. Okay.

A: Yea and their trains are compartmental in that one train car is divided up into half. You can't go clear through the train car and there is no connection with the adjoining cars.

Q: So, you are really stuck there in your own world. In the small space.

A: So, with that big of force of people, they just had to stop the train for chow time, got out the garbage cans and started up their... I think they had propane or something.

Q: Was it all army on the train? Was that the only thing on the whole train?

A: Yea the whole train. There were no civilians or anybody else on it. They had a force of engineer and maybe one other. I don't remember if they had a caboose on there or not. But they got down to speeds of less than five miles an hour in the mountains there and some of the G.I.'s acted smart. They'd jump out and run alongside the train. No problem. They could run faster than the train at times. But anyway,

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for the mealtime, well they'd stop the train, unload the train, make up their coffee and big garbage cans. Then we had box rations. Of course, that was for expedience on time also used to box rations. We prepared our water. Nothing was sanitary over there. I mean they said, "Never let a beggar touch you." Or, "Never touch a beggar." Disease was everywhere. They develop some immunity to it, but a lot of them don't.

Q: So, you were carrying everything with you on the train that you needed. All your water and the whole bit.

JANE: Did you get off at Bombay? And were you able to shop or anything? Because you brought back some things?

A: Well, that was from Calcutta.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the living conditions at the barracks.

A: It was actually a concrete slab and... what is it where they use cement on the outside? Like they do down in Mexico they use wire and then put...

Q: Like adobe?

A: Yea adobe type and then a thatched roof. Then they use just a... for their bed (rustling of papers) I'm trying to find the name. Charpoy is what they call it.

Q: Charpoy?

A: Yea it was a bed. It's a wooden structure, and then it's interwoven with string to support your body.

JANE: String or rope?

A: Well, it's similar to string.

Q: You didn't have a feather mattress to put on top of that rope or string though.

A: Oh no, no. You didn't really want too much because if by any chance a scorpion would get in there you were in trouble. Generally, what you did, you took your shoes and all your clothes right in the bed with you. And you brought your mosquito net down and tucked it right underneath of you.

Q: Okay, so you were completely incased.

A: On a night why you'd shine a light, and there are scorpions running all over the floor.

Q: Wow. How many of you were in a barrack? Were they big old open barracks? Or were they divided?

A: No, it was just open, like a pole barn. I suppose we had 100, maybe more. We'd almost have to have more because we didn't have too many of those barracks. We did have one side story, maybe I shouldn't get into it. They had an Indian trader that went by the name of Cho, and he knew how to show he was the dumbest thing you could ever think of. I don't know how but they finally caught him using a short-wave radio sending out information between nights.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: So, he was picking up tidbits of information. I never knew... I just waved to him and went on.

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Q: It's strange that he would be allowed that close to the barracks, but I guess because he was Indian.

A: It's because they used Indian help to sweep the barracks and do things like that so that's the reason, he was so close. He brought in bananas and other things. I-le knew what he was doing and played the dumbest... I mean how could he do that?

Q: So, you lived in adobe-like barracks; you ate water buffalo.

A: Yea and sometimes. The British were in charge of distribution of food. We sent a lot of good flour over there, but we never had the opportunity to see it. We had this loaded with specks, no telling what was in it, with the flour. At one time, we did have some meat, red meat, and unfortunately the ribs where very big bones that fit in horses.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: It has a different flavor, you could tell that, but that wasn't mixed in all the time, but it was occasionally. The whole system was food distribution, and somebody was making a killing on it.

Q: Did they boil the water for you then? How was that purified?

A: Oh, they used chemicals generally.

Q: Okay.

A: And you just absolutely couldn't drink water anywhere, so they had these big pouches, I don't know what they call them that had water in them. Probably held about 50 gallons. That's where you got your water.

Q: You said that you thought the mail was pretty good. You sent things back, or letters back to your mother.

A: At times the turnaround was four or five days.

Q: Really? wow!

A: It did get down to pretty steady at about 12, but that's pretty good.

Q: Yea that's very good.

A: And one time I got three week's mail at once. She was real religious daily on mailing.

Q: She wrote a letter to you every day?

A: Every day.

Q: wow.

JANE: His mother was...

Q: That's awesome. Especially in an era where everything is by mail.

JANE: She was always devoted to her family. Wasn't she, Bob?

A: Mm-hmm.

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Q: Do you still have the letters that she wrote?

JANE: Yup. They are spread all over our bed right now while he was trying to go through them.

A: Yea and most of them I got. I don't know what she did with all those.

JANE: The letters? They're still in here, aren't they?

A: Yea but, most of those I wrote to her.

JANE: Well, they might still be in the bedroom. They are still all over the bed.

Q: Well, it's just amazing that you were able to hold onto them while you were serving. I-low long were you over in India?

A: Well, I was in the service two and half years.

Q: That's a lot of letters to haul around.

A: Actually, as I said I don't have too many of her letters. Most of these are letters I sent back to her. I'm gleaming information from what I said when I first went over there. When it was strictly hush, hush they wouldn't let us say anything. When I was going from India to Mariana Islands, Tinian [Island in the Western Pacific] why I said somewhere on the boat I knew where I was moving and where I was going at that time.

Q: Right so she would know you were actually changing location, but not where.

A: I didn't have any way of keeping track even though I filled out daily charts on airplanes. I didn't keep track of time. That's hard to believe, isn't it?

Q: So how long were you actually near Calcutta before you made the move to Mariana? The Mariana Islands?

A: Well, we must've been there quite a while because we made the move to Mariana Islands, we were headed to Melbourne, Australia, and that was about March, I think it was, of '45. I sure wasn't aware that the war was closing down that fast, but nuclear action really changed things.

JANE: But you were there when they loaded the atomic bomb.

A: Well, I saw the weapons carry that had them boxed in. Just a little thing. We wouldn't have paid any attention to it because any weapons you were carrying thousand-pound bombs or something like that. The nuclear bomb was fairly small.

Q: So, it was at your airfield?

A: It was not at our airfield, but it wasn't our group that delivered it. I think it was the other airfield. We had two airfields on Tinian.

Q: Okay so that wasn't a bomb that was in India. That was a bomb that was at Mariana?

A: Yea at the Mariana, Islands.

Q: Okay so how did you get from there?

A: From the Mariana, Islands?

Q: Mm-hmm.

JANE: Here is your map.

A: We went by boat, left Calcutta, and as you may see by the map, it's a long way around there. Clear down here around Australia across the equator up there. Apparently, we crossed the equator over here, but I wasn't aware of that. But, when we crossed it over here why we went through the formal dividend they initiated into, oh what do they call that?

JANE: I don't know. You told me, but I don't remember.

A: The deep. Anyway, on the shipboard they got a big tank full of water, and they walk you out on the plank and you go to the bottom and they fish you out.

JANE: How long were you at Tinian? Do you know?

A: Couldn't have been too many months. I was there probably a month, about two months after the war was over.

Q: So how did you hear the war was over? You said that you didn't have an idea that it was drawing to a close.

A: Well, I'm talking about before the atomic. After the atomic we were aware that things were closing up real quick.

JANE: Wasn't it on Tinian where the caves and all were?

A: Yea, now on Tinian they had a lot of natives that the Japanese persecuted, and once we took over. They had a lot of cane fields, sugar cane fields, so they finally just had to cut strips through them and so forth. Of course, we didn't have the advantage of dogs or anything like that. Then it got down where we got them out of the cane fields...

Q: These were the prisoners of war?

A: No, they were not prisoners. They were still killing if they get a chance to kill.

JANE: This was also the Japanese themselves.

A: Japanese yea. And they did not have weapons, maybe just a knife or something like that. Unfortunately, we lost quite a few soldiers that would go into the caves looking for souvenirs, and finally we just had no choice but to block the caves and use flame throwers. There was an adjoining island that we could see quite well and had a big hill on it. After the war was over why the native population in other areas, we went over there with megaphones and told them the war was over. They didn't believe it. They wouldn't come out. Finally, I don't know how, but we finally convinced them and asked all of them to go on the road up over the hill, and I don't know how many hundreds of people there were hiding on that island all along. But I would never take chances on anything like that. The biggest chance I took was when we got there. We hadn't been swimming or anything, so we went down and all jumped in. The pilots and we even had a general with us and we were all swimming. Here come the MP's¹ because that's out of bounds. I lined up and gave my serial number. So, I was with a pilot and he gave him his serial number, and I just gave him my serial number. The other G.I.'s said, "Oh, you're crazy. You'll get a black mark on that." We never did hear anything about it. But, part of it was [safety]; well number one you die if you get roughed up by that coral, and in the tropics, you just can't cure it. They

¹ MP- "military police"

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had to send them back to the States to make them well. So, there was direct physical [danger] as well as the caves weren't too far from where we were swimming.

Q: So, what was your job on the island? Was there an airfield there?

A: Yes.

Q: There was. Okay.

A: We were carrying on what we had been doing before. The only thing, we were going direct from Tinian with our bombardment to Japan.

Q: Got it. I'm with you.

A: So, it was more organized. I went down to the Seabee's¹ dock, I'd ride a Jeep down, and every once in a while, it was the pilot who would carry one carburetor, and he could carry one person. He was carrying two carburetors you had to go back with the jeep. I'd come back with autopilot. So, we were getting good parts and keeping the planes up.

JANE: Did you have to build your own barracks there?

A: We built our own through help from the Seabees. Why we had lumber and so up this chair high was all lumber, and the rest was tents. So, we had pretty good living conditions. In China we had eight through the first time. China where we were had ice on the water at times. We had breakfast deluxe over there. We chipped in and paid for it and didn't make the quarter master pay for it. It didn't cost us more than a nickel at breakfast, or something like that.

Q: Probably worth it at that point.

JANE: I said I would want to make that trip quite often.

Q: I think that would be worth it. So, you were there then when the war was over? On the islands?

A: Yes.

Q: Then what happened? Did they fly you back or did you have to take the boat back?

A: No, I had to go back by boat.

Q: Okay. Did you come directly back, or did you have stops along the way?

A: Went the long, long ways back to the west coast. (Rustling of map) I had went all the way around the world by then.

Q: Okay. So, you just kept going. Then, you landed in San Diego.

A: I think it was San Diego. In California. That was the longest train ride I ever took from there to Indianapolis.

JANE: Well, tell her about making the phone call to Mother.

A: Mother's on a party line.

¹ Seabee- comes from the initials "CB" which in turn come from the term "Construction Battalion"

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JANE: Back then there were lots of party lines.

Q: Okay. And this was when you got back to San Diego?

A: Yea. I wanted to call her and let her know I was back and so on, So our neighbor answers the phone, and she was a super nosy type anyway, but I said, "You let Mom know that I've called her." Never did.

Q: So, you took a train from San Diego back to Indiana. And at that point had you talked to your mom or any of your family members or was it a complete surprise?

A: No, I talked to them. I was going to show you something. Anyway, we were processed two days there at Camp Atterbury before Thanksgiving. They said, "We can't finish you up until the day after Thanksgiving. You're going to have your Thanksgiving here." So, I think there is about 60 of us that deserted for one day. When I was in Ypsilanti, Michigan I did not have any leave time from the time I left home essentially until I got back.

Q: And that's what two years?

A: Two years. They gave me one, what they call a rest. I can't remember where it was, but they put us on a boat there at the island, and we went fishing for half a day.

Q: Yea, that's relaxing. Then okay, so you were eventually discharged, then, while you were at Camp Atterbury. Then you came on back to Bridgeport.

A: Then my dad convinced me to go back and talk to Allison's. I wasn't really there, but it was a good thing I did because I worked three or four months probably then I went back to Purdue.

JANE: Well, it wouldn't have been that long. Purdue started in January, and you got home at Thanksgiving.

A: Yea, but anyway I worked at Allison's two summers then. They gave me leave of absence to go to Purdue.

Q: So, you were able to take advantage of the G.I. bill.

A: Yea I had the Gal. bill, so I wasn't working 60 hours a week just on a job. I went to Purdue with \$50 in my pocket. That's all I had period.

JANE: The first time.

A: The first time. My tuition was \$50.

Q: Well that worked out really well for somebody.

A: So, I had to get a job pretty quick. I had about three jobs at Purdue.

Q: This was the first time or the second time?

A: First time. Second time I took it a little easier, and my grades responded accordingly.

JANE: He graduated.

A: I graduated in 1948 then.

JANE: One weekend, and we got married the next weekend.

Interview with Robert Richardson
Interviewer: Leigh Anne Howard
March 20, 2008

Q: So sometime in the time you were at Purdue, the second time is when you started dating again.

JANE: Actually, when he came home, he was going to a ball game, and his sister was going, and her little girl was sick. My folks had been down with the flu, and I had been taking care of them. Well, first his mother called because she knew that the folks were down and my sister. She asked if Bob could get some groceries when he went for her and later... was it Mother or Jean? It wasn't you that called and asked if I would go to the ball game with him because nobody else was available.

Q: That sounds like a story to me. That sounds like a fix-up.

JANE: So, I asked Mom and Dad, and of course we had a boiler with hot water, and I could stoke it. One sister wasn't sick, so they said she could look after them until I got back. So, we went to the ball game, and then all of us started going. My sisters, and his sister, and Hershel to the ball games and that's how eventually we started dating. So, we went together for two years or whatever you call it.

A: (Rustling of maps) Here is an area I served in.

Q: Oh, right down here.

A: Yea.

Q: What other stories, memories, things we should capture for posterity? I told you it would only take an hour and fifteen minutes and we are at an hour and half. So, I don't want to keep the rest of your evening. What was it like being home after living with scorpions?

A: It's like being in another world. I bought a car while I was working at Allison's and despite the fact that my sister would run the wheels off, too, whenever she could get the gas for it. So, I still had it, and my brother-in-law signed up for a new Chevy and for some reason they said they promised it for nine months and it came through in about four months. In the meantime, his job was going to furnish him the car. In fact, I went to New York with him to get his car, and I took over the total on the car there and it just worked out pretty good. I did stay with Allison's. They offered me a job originally in their chemical lab, and I wasn't too enthused in what they had. It was more or less sampling the coal. So eventually I ended up in their engineering test lab, engineering design I guess they call it. Believe it or not, I was doing environmental testing for mold because there are federal specs they have to conform with. You wouldn't dream that mold will ever touch metal, it won't and never will, but they had to meet the specs. So, I set up a lab for them on growing mold and testing it on their parts and accessories.

JANE: Tell them what your degree was in. You never even said you finished Purdue.

A: Chemistry.

Q: Yea. How do you think, or do you think serving in the military affected the way that you see things today? Not necessarily military things but maybe just life in general.

A: I think it has a settling effect, that you mature faster. I felt as things come along why it was just part of the process. I wasn't in day-to-day battle or contact battle or anything like that.

JANE: Do you appreciate your freedom more?

A: Oh, yea and there's nothing like our government and our country.

Interview with Robert Richardson
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March 20, 2008

Q: Is there anything else that either of you would like to add to the interview before I cut off the tape and set you free?

JANE: Well, because he went to Purdue, we have four children that have gone to Purdue. Electrical engineer, chemical engineer, Mary Beth's is a science degree, and a son that just thought he had to go to Indiana. Well, he didn't like the work he was in, and he went back to Purdue and has a science degree in computer science. We have one grandchild who graduated and two more at Purdue. His starting there and your Dad had two years at Indiana University, so you can see where things can link.

Q: Well let me hand you this data sheet to fill out, and I'm going to leave this running while you do that in case you think of anything else. Like I said, I appreciate you all taking the time even though it took a little longer than I said it would, but I hope that's okay.

JANE: Well, you know we told you some things. You had revived his memory because some things I heard today I hadn't heard before.

Q: Good, good. Eventually I'll get this typed up and you will get a copy of it. It just takes me a while. If you will fill out this form, it gives me some contact information. This is the consent form. That allows us to use it. So, if you will fill those two pieces out. That will take care of the paperwork for this day. Is Mary Beth coming up for the holidays or anything?

JANE: Well, she was up last weekend for a swim meet, and Brandon got back from Clemson. He's on the row team which you probably know. So, they were there last weekend, and Samantha didn't swim in the afternoon, so we came home and fixed dinner, and I said, "Well if I'd made my rolls we would've had Easter meal." But Brandon wants his folks to come up this weekend to have Easter at our house like we usually do. So, we're on call.

Q: There you go.

JANE: It's a long drive and lots of gas.

Q: Gas is more expensive here than it is in Evansville, and I thought Evansville was crazy. I'm not... I'm on leave right now to do some research. I'm not teaching. I have a break from school which is probably a break for all my colleagues, too, because I have a big mouth. So, I'm able to stay home and do my work this semester which has been nice. So, I haven't been in a lot of contact with people.

A: I'm sitting here not thinking.

JANE: Well, the job at the university is so much nicer than Mary Beth's last job as far as her families concerned.

Q: Yea her office is right across from mine.

JANE: Oh okay.

Q: So, you know we don't always teach at the same time, but usually there are a couple of hours during the week... (End of tape)