

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Roger Amidon Interview

Conducted by James Newberry

March 21, 2017

Transcribed by Shelby Reed

Born in Ohio in 1928, Roger Amidon served as part of an occupational force in Nagoya, Japan after World War II. His military unit helped to restore power to the city, where many Japanese remained homeless a year after the war. Amidon repaired radio teletype machines on the night shift and spent much of his free time traveling around the country. Amidon recorded his oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in March 2017.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: This is James Newberry and I'm here with Roger Amidon.

Roger: Right—

Interviewer: On Tuesday, March 21, 2017 at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. And Mr. Amidon, do you agree to this interview?

Roger: Yes. [nods]

Interviewer: Well, thank you so much.

Roger: After persuasion. [laughs]

Interviewer: [laughs] For agreeing to sit down with me. Uh, Mr. Amidon, what is your full name?

Roger: Roger Hallman Amidon.

Interviewer: Okay and what's your birthday?

Roger: One Twenty Nine Twenty Eight.

Interviewer: Okay. Uh, so where were you born?

Roger: Elyria, Ohio.

Interviewer: Okay and what sort of place was Elyria?

Roger: What sort of place? It's a uh - used to be a relatively small town. It was when I lived there about 21 22 thousand and it's a pretty good size now it's probably uh fifty thousand now. But that was seventy, eighty, eighty nine years ago. [laughs]

Interviewer: And what were your parent's names?

Roger: My dad was named Hugh. H-U-G-H, Hugh. And my mother was Sigrid. Good - good Scandanavian name.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Roger: She was the youngest of uh five girls - the uh only one born in this country. Her four sisters were all born in Sweden. They were all older than she was.

Interviewer: So they immigrated here?

Roger: Uh - his - her parents did. Yes. And she was born here.

Interviewer: Do you know why they immigrated?

Roger: Yeah, my uh grandfather got a job in one of the steel mills. [pause] Which - uh - was was a promise for him. He went to - they emigrated to Pennsylvania and then eventually found their way to Elyria to a different steel mill. And uh - about uh - about two months before he was scheduled to retire he got fired. Which was standard practice back in those days, they didn't have to pay any of your retirement.

Interviewer: How did your parents meet?

Roger: [pause] I'm not sure. Uhm. It was when my dad was in the Navy in World War One and uh I don't know how they bumped into each other to tell you the truth - uh - I - uh probably never asked.

Interviewer: So tell me what did your parents do for a living?

Roger: My dad worked as a self taught mechanical engineer for the steel mill as long as I can remember. And uh eventually he became uh- he's a proud owner of two or three patents and he

capitalized on those by being an entrepreneur of his own. And a uh - primarily in uh the construction business.

Interviewer: And what sort of inventions?

Roger: Yeah, one was a uh - was a three wave thing about so big [gestures with hands but we cannot see] when used a standard pipe could go three different directions at the same time this way [hand gesture] this way [hand gesture] and this way [hand gesture]. It was pretty - it was unique for its time. But it uh- outlived its usefulness and it became a dead horse like everything else. And he had uh- a uh- a patent on what he called a skull separator. The skull is the slag at the bottom of a ladle when they are making steel out of iron. And uh- it's an iron base and they add all the goodies, the charcoal and the lyme and all the other stuff that goes with it and blow the impurities out through the open hearth in the old system. And uh - when they tap it - liquid iron - er liquid steel into a pretty good sized ladle and in the bottom there's what's called the skull - skull separator. At the bottom of that thing is a uh small, relatively small 'bout maybe about that big [hand gesture] and it was filled with concrete because of the limestone and the other ingredients that were used in the making of the steel. 'Cause the steel goes to the top and all the junk goes to the bottom and it becomes a real problem to bust those things up because they're pretty good sized hunks of concrete. So a skull separator was nothing more than uh - uh - a kind of like a fence like that that sat at the bottom of the thing that was used by every steel mill in the country.

Interviewer: Now did your mother work outside of the home?

Roger: When the depression hit my dad lost his job and my mother went to school for - she went to the Cleveland College of Massage and that was before they changed the term masseuse became vilified. She was an - an - expert at Sweedish massage and physical therapy. And she had a good business for- for quite a while after she got going.

Interviewer: Can you describe your childhood home?

Roger: Yeah, it was easy. I was the only one there. [laughs] My- my- dad worked for the steel mill and my mother had her massage practice going so I had the house - I pretty much had the house to myself. Uh we moved a bunch of times. I went to five elementary schools and two high schools. Finally, I graduated from the last one. [laughs]

Interviewer: And which one was that that you graduated from?

Roger: I graduated from North Ridgeville High School.

Interviewer: Okay, so you said that the mill was closed during the Depression?

Roger: Yeah, he - they uh they- cut the engineering staff from fifteen down to one. And the only survivor of the engineering department was the chief engineer and my dad was number two [holds up two fingers] and so he got cut too. I know what that feels like 'cause the same thing happened to me some many, many years later.

Interviewer: So was your family sort of relying on your mother's income?

Roger: 100 percent. Back in the uh it- it- it- started in the late 20s and went all the way to the 30s and into the early part of the 40s when they moved out of there - her practice gradually diminished, well, she was getting a little older and she - we moved - we moved out to the farm in 1943. And that put an end to the massage business and the course the working for a steel mill - had gone long gone by that time and we had fifty acres of farm and I was the only worker until we hired a guy. Yeah we got a- a guy he- he would have been about 70 when we hired him and uh- he could work twice as much- as long as I could. He was something else. Old Gus. Yeah, the first job I had was putting uh - if you are familiar with farm you know what hay looks like when it's growing. It gets about so high it has to be cut, gathered, put into piles and transported and you do this all by with one person - me. We had a miscellaneous dogeared collection of implements that were all horsedrawn and we converted them to tractor drawn, so when I wanted to change something on whatever I was using at the time- the mower or the rake or whatever- I would have to stop, get off, change the implement, get back on the tractor, and move on. It was a lot of fun.

Interviewer: So how did your family get the news at this time?

Roger: How did they get what?

Interviewer: The news - the news of the world.

Roger: I haven't the slightest idea.

Interviewer: Now did you, uh, know of the war in Europe?

Roger: Oh yeah. Yeah, uh we- uh the- the war in Europe started and it didn't really- it didn't and we weren't really concerned with it. That belonged to the British and the French and the Dutch and the Belgians as far as we were concerned. And uh cause we were still living in an isolationist atmosphere in the country back then in the late- in the late late 30s that would be when Hitler

took on Poland it was 39. 1939, and uh went forward from there and uh- when the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor, my dad was guilty of making a statement he says, "I'm glad it happened right now because I'm too old and you're too young." Wrong. Both answers are wrong. He got involved in the - it was an auxiliary to the coast guard and what it did it took a bunch of guys who volunteered and having had some water experience it was- and as I said we lived close to the lake, Lake Erie and they took over all the patrol duties for the able bodied Coast Guard men who were then transferred to oceangoing trips and it was it - he worked- he would be on duty for- I uh-hh- think like a whole Friday, all day Saturday, and all day Sunday and the next week it would be Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

Interviewer: How did he feel about that?

Roger: Oh he loved it. I mean he never - they never shot at anybody either. They never had any spies crawling the beaches of Lake Erie but they patrolled the beach and they used to go on rescue quite often. Some idiot out there with his sailboat or runabout or whatever would either run out of gas or run out of knowledge one or the other [laughs] and have to be rescued.

Interviewer: So with him doing this patrol I mean- what happened on the farm? Did you - did you keep up the farm?

Roger: Oh yeah, yeah- we had the- yeah, after I graduated, I was still on the farm when I graduated- I was glad to get out [cough] excuse me.

Interviewer: So how would you say the war affected the sort of small community that you were in?

Roger: Well shortages were primarily they - we didn't suffer because my dad had a critical job and got a C stamp for gasoline. Everybody got an A stamp. Which I can't remember the exact details but maybe four or five gallons a week or something like that. And uh- we had an A stamp for both cars- one was a 1931 Austin and the Austin was the predecessor to the Bandam and the Bandam was the predecessor to the Jeep. Uh going by generations. And uh that little bugger- the engine was about that long all 4 cylinders. And uh- pretty neat- pretty neat little car. Looked like a model A Ford was what it looked like. I don't have any pictures of that thing- wish I did. I may have somewhere stuck in something - but I don't have. And uh we had a R for rural because of the farm so we didn't suffer from the gasoline problem which was the primary motivator, anyway and my dad had the C stamp for the critical job working in the steel mill in the engineering department and uh- the only only problem we had was with the occasionally with food. We raised chickens and we found a grocer in town in Ridgeville, he would be happy to trade beef for chickens, so we would trade him chickens and get beef that was pretty good for wartime. That

lasted until I was drafted and then I was gone. I was actually- I was kinda happy to leave the farm if you want to know the truth. That was an honest days work, yes sir.

Interviewer: How did you get the news that you were drafted?

Roger: How did I get the news? I had a well- we all had to sign up. We had to register and my registration came out 1A. And uh- I think I probably got a postcard saying “show up at the town hall” that’s it. No other explanation and I went there to the induction center - didn’t even go home.

Interviewer: So what was this 1A classification?

Roger: GO.

Interviewer: So you say you went straight from town hall to the induction center. Where was the induction center?

Roger: Cleveland.

Interviewer: Okay, were you still in school at this time?

Roger: I was out of school, I had already graduated. In my second highschool it was rather interesting, I went from uh- uh a potential graduating class of the first class of about three hundred to a graduating class of about 26. That was a culture shock. 4 boys and 22 girls. Yes. Nothing ever transpired with any of us 4 or any of the 22 believe it or not - it never happened.

Interviewer: This was in Ridgeville?

Roger: Mmhhh. That was fun. I thoroughly enjoyed high school. I hated highs chool when I was going to Elyria. But I thoroughly enjoyed it. I played football for one thing. My son was a lot better than I am- I was, but uh I played anyway.

Interviewer: What were your plans after graduation?

Roger: Uh, well. Uh- go to school if I can get it in. So I did for about 3 months. Then I was drafted.

Interviewer: Where did you go to school?

Roger: Bolder Wallis. I really wasn't a right type student. I got there through politics. 'Cause my grades did not support college education.

Interviewer: What do you mean politics?

Roger: My uh - a friend of my mothers knew someone on the staff on the registrar staff at Bolder Wallis and that helped immensely. That's how I got in. That's how I got into the school but it only lasted until I was called up.

Interviewer: So the induction center was in Cleveland?

Roger: Mmhmm.

Interviewer: And what happened there?

Roger: Not much. Uh- uh you uh you obviously are alive and you get measured for height and weight and so forth and you go from there to Camp Aderbury, Indiana. That's where I went next. And was- that was all the same day.

Interviewer: So we were talking about the induction center in Cleveland and you said you went from there to...

Roger: Aderbury, Indiana with no one who's non stop. We just went from there to the train depot [woopsht noise]. Aderbury, Indiana was about uh- oh probably five or six hours by train maybe more I can't remember. That was a full blown Army installation. I was inducted to the Army at that point. Got shots the first day, uniform the second day, and the third day I was on KP. Yeah, yeah, kitchen patrol- that's right uh- because my name was early in the alphabet. I was- I was in every succeeding chain that I ever served on KP. I got to fly the clipper and the clipper is the dishwasher. It's a monster - not like the cute little thing that slides under the counter that we have today. Monstrous. Course the dishes were plates or trays, not dishes. And that was- the third day I came home from back to my quote unquote home in the barracks and like I said been in the Army for three days and uh we all gathered outside the uh- orderly room for- for uh- mail call and you're there for three days and not going to expect any mail. And uh- shipping orders would come out. Well, I didn't get any mail, but I was on a shipping order. I was in the Army three days and didn't even know what it was. You have to answer with your serial number so I fumbled around and got my dog tag out and read off my serial number. I hadn't the slightest idea what it was and it said I was going to go to Biloxi, Mississippi. Where the heck is that? I haven't even the slightest idea. I don't even know where Mississippi is. For sure. And uh- we went from uh- Aderbury and over to Louisville and after a slight delay we got the LNM special from Louisville

to Mobile. There were four of us, and four of us hung together for quite a while as a matter of fact. Us four we were all scheduled for project Mike Field. And we had a lower berth on that train going from Louisville. I mean I was first class, we didn't understand that. It was a culture shock if there ever was one. We went uh-. There was a vehicle that met the train and took us from Mobile to Biloxi. Put us into this beautiful [cough] pre-war barracks and there were four people there. Us four. Nobody else.

Interviewer: Who were the three other guys?

Roger: Uh- it was Joe Brady, who lived in Canton. Joe Whibler lived in Cleveland and Howard Hocick lived in Chicago. Those three guys. I have those three guys. They uh- Whibler I have no knowledge of, but I kept in touch with Joe Brady and Howard Hockick for years and years and years and unfortunately they are both deceased now.

Interviewer: So what is going on in the war at this point in your travels?

Roger: It was winding down. The shooting has stopped. This Project Mike that I was talking about earlier on that never happened. Which was supposed to be a travelling show. We had dancers, we had singers, we had a military style band and two dance bands. I was in one of the dance bands and uh- playing my trumpet and the whole thing fell apart. But I presume I don't know.

Interviewer: Tour the states?

Roger: Yeah we were going to tour the states first then we were going to go everywhere- Germany, England, wherever there were troops that's where we go where we were supposed to go. We never did.

Interviewer: Why?

Roger: All we got was after we accumulated about another 20 guys in the barracks- The captain called us together and said, "I got some bad news for you guys. I've got some good news and some bad news. The bad news is Project Mike is cancelled." Politics I'm sure, budgetary restrictions- actually it was a duplication of what special services was already doing, so I suspect politics but who knows. And uh - "The good news is that you get to start basic training. Were going to make soldiers out of you." Well, there is a big difference between Air Force basic back then and Army basic. When you are crawling on your stomach underneath the barbed wire and there's a machine gun shooting over your head, the machine gun for the infantry is .50 caliber, the machine gun for the airforce is .30 caliber. That's the only difference. We had a whole cadre

for theoretically teaching us guys was all infantry so we got infantry basic training which included uh- very much familiarization with the M1 Carbine which was the standard sidearm for air corps

Interviewer: Was that in Biloxi?

Roger: Yeah, then they decided to close Biloxi down as a basic base and moved us all to- we had been there about 6 weeks already- and they moved us to- I've got to stop and think [pause]- it was part of Texas near San Antonio

Interviewer: Amarillo?

Roger: And started all over again. We repeated the first 6 weeks then went on. And finally got out of there. Then I went to communications school. Why? I don't have the slightest idea. I got myself a nice cushy job in uh- uh through more politics through uh- Joe Brady got me a job in the office while I was waiting for shipping orders and I was taking pay envelopes and putting them with shipping orders off a list and so they packed their packers so that personnel package would stay with the money package on the correct shipping list and the third- the third I worked there for two days and the middle of the second day, I got- I found my name on a shipping order so I lost my cushy job. I went to school then in Bellville, Illinois which is a suburb of St. Louis really, but it's across the river in Illinois and that lasted I don't know how many weeks I can't remember.

Interviewer: And what type of school was it?

Roger: Communications repair.

Interviewer: What were you learning there?

Roger: My speciality was teletypes. I didn't even know what a teletype was, and uh- it was- we had the state of the art teletypes and uh- very new to the program back at this stage of the game uh- was referred to as a RTT radio teletype. No wires which was pretty fantastic, and we learned those two. Essentially the radio portion would be alright and uh- I thought it's nice that I've been to school I'll never use it and the first job, the only job I had overseas was that job, maintenance and repair of teletypes.

Interviewer: So, when you were in that school you really- you didn't know what you would be doing with it?

Roger: No idea.

Interviewer: How did you feel going through all of this training?

Roger: Bewildered mostly. I enjoyed it because um- the first three months of school, before I got drafted, I ballooned up to about 230 pounds and by the time that I finished my days in San Antonio I weighed 160. And I dropped about 4 or 5 pant sizes.

Interviewer: So you were feeling good about your physique?

Roger: Yeah, and when I finished school in uh- in uh- there I was wandering around and I came across one of our swimming pools and there was a lieutenant there. They were getting ready to open the school there and I said, "you got guards?" he said, "I need guards." I said, "I have a junior life saving, senior life saving, and water safety instructor all Red Cross." He said, "show me the paper." And I phone called home, packaged up the papers, ship it down here, it is- and I had a job for a week and I came out on orders. [Weeeeet noise] Overseas.

Interviewer: So how did you feel when you got that order that you would be going overseas?

Roger: Uhhhh there is a feeling that you get you don't- you aren't in control of your own life this is one of the things is somebody else is controlling your life and you kinda walk around in a bewildered state going where they say that's all and the less- the less you know about what's going to happen the better off you are, you learn that pretty quick. Keep your mouth shut and your ears open, that'll get you most everywhere.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you shipped out from?

Roger: Yeah, San Francisco on a ship. They were still using convoys then and we were on the- I came across when I looked at the pictures, we were on a transport then admiral Hughes transport. It was pretty good size, built to carry 1,500 and we had 3,000 on there. So crowded and we went through the remainder of a typhoon and we got sick. Everybody got sick. It was pitiful. Even the old hands, the sailors themselves who ran the ship, they got sick too. I don't know who was what on the boat, but then as I remember there was no news article, but there was a commentary somebody made- a commentary that we lost a destroyer in the storm I can't either approve it or disprove it- it just happened.

Interviewer: So what did the end of this typhoon look like?

Roger: [laughs] It was just big waves we didn't go up on deck. No way. We stayed in the compartment, you put your lifebelts on. We were told to get in our bunks and put our belts across like seatbelts today and belt yourself on into your bunk and I said, "you know if this ship goes down we are going with it." There was no expectation of going off. They probably had life boats for probably 100 people and we have 3,000 [laughs].

Interviewer: Did you have one?

Roger: What, lifeboat? I don't remember if I did.

Interviewer: Did you get sick?

Roger: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what happened?

Roger: It was like the worst case of flu you ever heard of. You're working both ends, that's self explanatory. I won't illuminate that.

Interviewer: Okay, if you are in your bunk, can you get up and go to the latrine? I mean how are you doing that?

Roger: You just lay there - by that time, you stop throwing up because you haven't eaten. You just couldn't get up. I mean, I was one two, I think I was third from the bottom and that made me one, two, third from the top also. There were five bunks in a row.

Interviewer: So you were smack in the middle ?

Roger: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were they on chains?

Roger: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Roger: Chained to a wall. They had been refitted. They would normally carry two. They carried five. There were normally two bunks that came down like this [gestures with hands] then they

had five, but it didn't make any difference. We didn't clean the compartment anyway, we just kinda shoveled it out.

Interviewer: How long was this journey?

Roger: Let's see, we made two or three- we made a stop in the Philippines and the next stop was Yokohama. I think it was 12 days, 12 or 13 days, pretty good time going over the Pacific. There is an interesting, I think it's interesting, comment about- when I was little I always wanted to grow up and go to sea. Me and my one of my cousins were always going to be in the sea cause reading books about sea stories, we thought that was pretty neat. So it turned out that my dad was in the Navy but never got out of Charleston in the First World War and he only went to sea on Lake Erie in the Second World War and my uncle was in the Army in World War 1, all my cousins, save one, were in the Navy, all my buddies were in the Navy, and all my relatives were in the Navy. Not me. I'm in the Army Air Corps. Big deal. I got more sea miles then all of them put together cause they never left the land. I was the only one that crossed the ocean and, boy, the Pacific is an awful big place, and in thought I felt that really quick like.

Interviewer: Well, tell me about post-war Japan, what did you find there?

Roger: Well, I got put into fifth Air Force headquarters in Nagoya, Japan. Nagoya is- was then initially prior to the war, was probably the third or fourth largest city in Japan. [cough] Uhm- it was picked by the airforce because they had a super airport uh- they could land anything including B-29 if they wanted to bring them in there and um- that's why they picked Nagoya. In Nagoya we had our working arrangement was up in uh- the second or third floor of the Nagoya- what used to be the big bank building. I can't remember the name of it but it was a good building and one of a few in the whole city. The majority of the city of Nagoya were small businesses and uh- with the exception of one area that was operated by Mitsubishi that was one of the many locations where they build the fighters the zero fighter which was a super airplane and uh- my uh- my cousin tangled with some of the zeros cause he used to escort B-29s going over to bomb Japan. Anyway, Nagoya itself there weren't that many buildings I got- I got some very poor pictures taken from the top of our building. And you see what it looks like out there- there's a building here, and a building there, and a one down there, and one over there, and one over there, and that's it. Everything else was gone. Uh- all the small- the small- small business and residences were all paper and wood and Nagoya was bombed by uh- 500 pound bombs and incendiaries uh- which were very effective. They weren't- they weren't the 1,000 pound blockbusters or- or obviously not the nuclear, 'cause they haven't happened yet. They well- they had happened and it was still off limits.

Interviewer: You said you saw a building here, and a building there, was there destruction or had it been cleaned up?

Roger: Both. The destruction, a lot of the destruction was still there and the clean up was in process. Well, the smaller places were easy 'cause they burned- they burned down totally. The bigger ones when I first got there, we were in the hospital and uh- for sure it was only a week 'cause we were waiting to get quonset huts built, they were under construction when we got there. I have a picture of the hospital and the only damage it took was one bomb had come through and messed up one wing and we were living in the other wing of the hospital. And it was right across the street, a very narrow street from the Mitsubishi assembly plant, where the zeros were and they obliterated the zero plant and the only mark on the hospital was a bunch of busted windows and that one bomb crater. That's it. Those guys that flew over in the 29s really could- really knew what they were doing. It was pinpoint bombing.

Interviewer: So this is where you worked on the radio teletype. Okay, and this was a large business building?

Roger: Yeah, it was an honest to goodness steel and concrete building with two subterranean floors that we found out. We never used them but they had them. They had one drawback, all our lighting in there. We were in a closed classified area with cryptography and a few other people and no outside windows, we had fluorescent lights. Our US fluorescent lights, which are designed to operate on 60 second surge. Japanese used 50 second and makes a flicker like this and this [hand gesture]. Oh it's hard to work, messes up your eyes. If I was smart the government would be paying for my glasses all these years for screwing up my eyes.

Interviewer: What were your working hours?

Roger: I got lucky I was from midnight to eight in the morning, which was good, because a couple good reasons. We came off shift at eight in the morning, we didn't have to stare at powdered eggs in the mess hall, we would go back to the kitchen and have the cooks make us eggs and bacon and toast and whatever and we would eat in the kitchen. We got good food. I mean there was about ten of us all together one of- I got good buddies with one of the guys he was the sole person on that shift for uh- it was an enormous carrier and carrier is the elec- so called electronics that powered all of the teletypes and the radios and everything else. They were monstrous things. He looked after all those, but he was by himself on third shift, so he and I got to be buddies.

Interviewer: What sort of repairs did you do?

Roger: They were usually caused by the 50 cycle current. They we- do the- we'd bring one in for- we'd always have a spare unit to go in so uh- we would go and get a bad one back and we would run a test on it to see if it was mechanical or electronic or electric really there were no electronics involved. There wasn't such a thing back then.

Interviewer: You said you did a lot of travelling around Japan?

Roger: I went to Korea once, Bokaido once. I went to uh- uh I can't remember the name of the city but it's the one with the big buddha. I didn't take my camera. I can't remember. Osaka? It could be Osaka. Most of the cities were smaller than Nagoya, but they were in the same shape that Nagoya was. There was building here and a building there and a building somewhere else. That's it I mean it was- it's no wonder they surrendered. It wasn't entirely the nuclear bomb that did it. They were pretty devastated to start with. There were people living everywhere. In boxes, if they had any. No boxes if they didn't have any. There was one about a quarter of a mile or half a mile from our quonset hut- there was a ravine and it was full of people. Uh- they were all refugees from someplace some part of Nagoya they were refugees from. There were refugees everywhere. Uh- you hear the- the interesting- the trucks that they used were wood burning trucks. They burned wood and I don't know- it's a low grade steam operation really, but there was no gasoline, no butane, no nothing, it just was gone.

Interviewer: What about your interactions with the Japanese people?

Roger: Uh- the interaction obviously was militarily, we didn't do anything. We had no contact whatsoever. But by the same token, it was safe to walk down the street. There were no gangs running around hellbent on revenge, so to speak. Uh- they would that was uh- it was orderly. There were MPs everywhere, so you didn't have to look very far to find a cop. You didn't find any Japanese cops. There were such a thing, but we didn't see them.

Interviewer: Did you have any communication with family and friends back in the states?

Roger: Yeah, I'd get letters back and forth from my girlfriend.

Interviewer: Who was that?

Roger: My first one. The first one before I shipped overseas. She graduated a year behind me in another high school and I figured that was a sure thing. We were going to be us rather than friends and it didn't happen that way. I came back from overseas and one of my buddies picked me up at the train station and he asked me about my girlfriend and he got out of the Army about three weeks before I got out and he asked me about my girlfriend and I said, "there's nothing to

know.” He said, “Yeah there is, she has a friend [SWEEEEPT noise].” And that was the end of that. So, on to number two. That was in college.

Interviewer: What can you tell me about getting word that you would be going home? How did you feel about that?

Roger: [laughs] It was real strange. I was out in the- as I said I worked from midnight to eight and I had all day if I wanted to use it. But who needs sleep you know? There was too much to see. We did a lot of that and about going home. We were out in the yard and I was playing basketball with a bunch of guys and a kid from the orderly room came out and he said, “first sergeant wants to see you.” So I- I knew that I couldn't go over there bare chested and shorts and sneakers. I couldn't do that. You have to walk in the orderly room. You have to be class A shortly after the cessation of hostilities, all of the chicken stuff came back, you had to do this, you had to do that, you had to do something else. There was no loose operation like there was before. So, I'm back to the barracks, jump in the shower, put on my class A uniform, walk to the orderly room, and the officer isn't there. And the kid said, “I know where to get him. He's with his hooch.” What the heck is that? Well, I learned. Well, we got him on the phone and I told him my name and he said, “Oh yeah, you're going home.” I said, “when?” He said, “you've got to be in Yokohama by about 10 o'clock” - huh? - “you've got to catch a ship.” So, I bummed a ride to the railroad station and through the use of the MPs, I got onto the right train, got to Yokohama, got off the train at Yokohama, bummed my way to the uh- shore and found my boat. The admiral or the general Pope was his name- was the name of the ship and it was a twin sister to the one I came over on but no storm and 37 days at sea. We stopped at every island in the whole Pacific Ocean. We stopped at- we stopped at Wake, we stopped at Guam, we stopped at Hawaii, we stopped all over the place to pick up bodies- what we were doing primarily. And a lot of bodies came home for burial, rather than stay where they were to get buried. The ones in Hawaii stayed there. I had a chance to- I convinced the compartment commander that I had some uh- people I know in Honolulu. He thought, “well so does everybody. Everyone has a friend in Honolulu.” I said, “No, this is forreal.” I convinced him I said three days in Honolulu before the ship goes on again and we went from Honolulu straight back to the States in uh- warm uh- summer- summer uniforms and it was cold in San Francisco.

Interviewer: So how long were you in the Pacific all together?

Roger: Uh about - you mean overseas?

Interviewer: Yes.

Roger: About ten months.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your service there?

Roger: We did a job. With our help, they got their own lines of communication back. Uh- our linemen and our guys that would have gone to install telephone poles 'cause there weren't any telephone poles left. They didn't bury underground like they do now. They were strung out like they all above ground telephone and power and everything and we were instrumental. I, personally, wasn't involved with it, but our group was of first communications squadron there were I think there were 30 of us altogether

Interviewer: So you were classified 4E when you came back?

Roger: Yeah, 4E yeah.

Interviewer: What does that mean?

Roger: Prior military service.

Interviewer: And what did it mean for you in subsequent years?

Roger: I wouldn't get drafted for Korea. I was able to avoid that. I didn't want that. I didn't enjoy it in the reserves or anything either.

Interviewer: And you went back to school?

Roger. Yeah.

Interviewer: And what was the school again?

Roger: Bolder Wallis.

Interviewer: Okay, and so were you on the GI Bill? Were you in the GI Bill?

Roger: Yeah, it worked great.

Interviewer: How did you get the money? I mean, how did that work?

Roger: They mailed- they sent the money straight to the school I'd never see it. Matter of fact, I came across a receipt for a quarter- a quarter tuition and lodging was 126 dollars. It's almost unheard of. It's for a quarter, which is what, twelve weeks?

Interviewer: Did it cover anything else?

Roger: Books, yeah.

Interviewer: Did it cover everyday spending money?

Roger: No, you had to work for that. I did- I did that. I worked for..

Interviewer: So, when you came out of college what sort of work did you do initially?

Roger: Through a friend of a friend of a friend I got a job. With a real small company. I was the- I was the office staff. The whole thing- I did correspondence. I did accounting. I did shipping. I did a little bit of everything that's involved in the longing. The company did about- I'm trying to remember now what their gross uh- what their gross was. Probably uh- around 5 or 6 thousand dollars a month. That was pretty big for back then and uh- I was there. I had to drive thirty miles one way to get to work, but I was glad to do it back. I found a job. Every job that was around had at least half a dozen applicants. Doesn't make any difference, I went another route also then they decided to move out of the building they were in, which was an old building uh- this was an investment casting company. I don't know what that infers, but it came from the field of dentistry. That's how they make false teeth or implants or whatever you need in your mouth. False teeth for a bridge or what have you. These teeth are cast, an impression is taken, and the industrial side is exactly the same, the impression is taken, a pattern is developed out of wax and the pattern or the wax pattern is put into a- a case of the dentist and the small industrial this relatively small- I forget the dang term of it now, but it's a small almost like a can and its full-full of stuff that looks like plaster of paris. What's done is this thing is put in there. This pattern is put in there. The can is filled with this investment, they fire it, and the wax burns off, and leaves a cavity. Into the cavity they pour whatever metal they're going to use, whether it's tin or its gonna be something sophisticated like beryllium nickel or beryllium copper or any of the stainless steels that will be cast in that hole. Then the cast is removed, the powder is removed, and the part comes out and requires nothing, no machining, no drilling, no filing, no nothing. We made parts for like rotors for aircraft fuel pumps. You cut your fingers on the blades, they were that sharp. Just as sharp as the sharpest knife you ever had. Whatever the pattern was from this little company that's what you got whatever the pattern was.

Interviewer: So, I know you worked at several different places, but can you - I want to jump to your move to Georgia. Can you tell me why you moved to Georgia?

Roger: Yeah, that's pretty easy. Uhm- I like I say, I worked for this one company after three other ones and uhm- uh- was pretty, relatively happy while the politics were changing and I got an offer to join a representative company agency- of industrial agency. They had carbine among others [cough] and I knew all of them. There was no problem. They hired me. I quit the other one. I quit first and they hired me. Also, I formed a division of fabrication and I got me- I got a couple of welders in there. We did fabrication plus representation. I did both and I thought, "man, I'm really, really going along" at the end of the second year. I had a little conference with the uh- bookie the CPA that we used and I got a chance to look at our books, which was that I wasn't allowed to do before. But, man, we turned a profit. Wasn't that neat? We turned about a 10,000 profit. So knowing that I had a big smile on my face and I went to the Christmas party, everyone is getting bonuses, I open my envelope, "unfortunately your division suffered a \$12,000 loss." They put a management fee of \$12,000 on the company. That's politics on the top, so in other words they wiped out our profit margin. There was no such thing as a management fee before. I was the manager. I wouldn't charge - all I got was my salary. I was the only manager we ever had. Well, three months after, I got fired. They went out of business. Completely. By that time, somebody tells me when you lose your job or you get fired or whatever happens don't keep it a secret, tell everyone you know. Him, him, him, her, her, her, tell everybody. Contact everybody you know. Tell everybody that you need a job. And uh- as a result in and contact your ex-employer. So, I did. The company I went to before I went with the agent. That involved a move to Pittsburgh. Anyway, I was happy to leave Pittsburgh and come down here. The agent- the new boss man at the same company had a big thing against rehires. He didn't like rehires at all. Well, one way or another, I got hired back and not in Cleveland anymore. Atlanta. And the eight states to go with it. Jeez. I used to think the 26 mile drive to work was long now when I got a 300 mile to south Florida [laughs] 'cause I had all of the southeast.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your family?

Roger: I've got three boys or- two boys and a girl. As a matter of fact - I just came across something yesterday. My oldest son graduated from Union. He went there to play football. I don't remember if I told you that and he also graduated from Junionia College. He thrived on the small college aspect of it, but it wasn't a stepping stone anywhere, unfortunately. But he eventually wound up working somewhere. My second son went to Georgia Southern and graduated cum laude. And my daughter went to two years at Georgia Southern and two years to [pause] can't remember the name of the place- uh- it's an art institute, commercial art institute in Atlanta. Can't remember the name of it - that's where she graduated from. She has a degree in

fine arts and wanted to do cartography, or she does watercolors and uh- oh shoot, she does oil and acrylic. Her personal preference is acrylics. She's um- she's pretty good artist, but she's also [laughs] she drives the school bus now um- they have my oldest son has my great- my great granddaughter - my granddaughter is now 37 years old. I came across that yesterday because her birthday is May the first. And uh- that happens to be May Day, which is also my dad's birthday and since I have an appointment on May the first and that's how the whole thing came about the fact that she's 37 years old. That kinda shakes you a little bit.

Interviewer: Well, let me ask you, Mr. Amidon, you had some hesticany coming here today, so I just want to ask, do you think it's important to share your WWII experience?

Roger: Oh yeah I- I- still think it's uh- I contributed to an effort that was due at the time. I profited by it- by being able to go to school which was pretty fortunate cause I was able to finish school with the uh- manage that I had [cough] and uh- put that all together uh- yeah it was a good experience I think.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much, we will end there.

Roger: That's a good spot.