RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH SAMUEL A. CHRISTIANO

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview with Samuel A. Christiano on March 13, 2009, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Carolyn Christiano …

Kevin Christiano: … Kevin Christiano …

Stephen Christiano: … Stephen Christiano …

Samuel Christiano: … Samuel Christiano …

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: … And Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you all very much. To begin, Mr. Christiano, could you tell me where and when you were born?

SC: I was born in Orange, New Jersey, May 25, 1922.

SSH: We will begin by talking about your family background. Let us begin with your father.

CC: Yes, where was your father born?

SC: He was born in West Orange, New Jersey, in 1899.

CC: What was life like for him growing up in West Orange?

SC: Well, he was in a family of seven brothers, one sister. My grandfather was an immigrant that came from Italy in 1882, settled in West Orange, and they were all raised in West Orange. He went to West Orange High School and he left after his sophomore year to enlist in the Army at sixteen. My grandfather found out that he was at Fort Dix. My grandfather hired a horse and wagon to go down and get him, take him home, because he was too young. So, when he was seventeen, he enlisted again and he served in France, with the 29th Division in France.

CC: What did he do in France?

SC: He was with [the] motor supply train. That's what they had them [do] in those days. It was all trench warfare, so, somebody had to bring up the supplies, up to the trenches, and he was one of them. His brother was in the same unit that he was in.

SSH: Doing the same type of service?

SC: Same thing.

SSH: Had they enlisted together?

SC: Yes, they did.

CC: Was his brother older or younger?

SC: Older. He had two brothers in the Navy and this other brother in the Army with him, four of them. My grandfather was the first one in West Orange to have four sons in the service, World War I.

CC: What were your father's thoughts on World War I? Did he talk about it a lot?

SC: No, he didn't talk about it, except that he was a lousy soldier. [laughter]

CC: How so?

SC: Well, the first thing, it was the Virginia National Guard and New Jersey National Guard--that's why it became the "Blue and Gray Division"--and the Virginians didn't go for the New Jersey boys, because the Civil War was still in their background. So, they had a lot of trouble that way. They had their basic training in Anniston, Alabama, but my father was a piano player and he was so good [at] playing the piano that they went to the YMCA with a truck, one of these old-fashioned trucks, and took their piano and moved it into a tent next to his, so [that] he could play for them, until they got caught. Then, they moved to New York to go overseas and my father went to his brother and said, "We ought to go home and see our family. We may not see them again." So, my uncle said to him, "We're going overseas. You can't leave here." So, he said, "Look, I'm going. You want to come, fine. If you don't, I'm going." So, he went and, when he came back, he was put under arrest and he spent the troopship--when everybody's above deck, he was below deck. When everybody was below deck, he was above deck. He had it like a king. [laughter] Then, when they landed in Le Havre, France, they're marching up now to the frontlines and he had people carrying his pack, carrying his rifle. So, the Captain came to him, said, "You have it too good. Carry your own stuff from now on." [laughter] So, he entered as a private and he left as a private.

SSH: Did he talk at all about any other interactions within "the Blue and the Gray?"

SC: Yes, he was trying to make friends with these Virginians and it didn't work. So, finally, he went up to one of them, said, "Why are you giving me the hard time all the time?" So, he said, "My father told me to stay away from the Yankees." [laughter]

SSH: Great story.

CC: Where was your mother during World War I?

SC: My mother was born in Alberona, Italy, and she came to the United States a year old and she was born in 1899, too. She lived in Orange, my father lived in West Orange and they met and they got married and started raising a family, moved to West Orange.

CC: When did they meet?

SC: I was only a year old when we moved to West Orange, so that was--I was born in 1922, thereabouts, '21, I mean, I remember now [laughter]--and a year later, they moved to West Orange.

SSH: Are you the oldest of the family?

SC: Ma had my brother. He was younger. My brother served in the Navy in the Pacific.

SSH: Were there any stories about how your parents met?

SC: Yes. My grandfather built a building in this Mechanic Street in Orange, a three-story apartment building, and my mother lived on the first floor and she was sitting there, looking out a window. My father came walking by and he went up to the window and she stuck her tongue at him and that started the romance. [laughter]

CC: Can you describe your parents' schooling a little bit?

SC: My mother, I think, went to the fourth grade, and then, had to go to work. My father was a sophomore in high school when he enlisted in the Army.

CC: He never went back to high school after that.

SC: No.

SSH: What was your father's profession after the war?

SC: The main job he had was a construction inspector with the state highway department. He had that for twenty years, and then, he left that and became a building inspector in the town of West Orange for another ten years, but that's where he worked. My mother worked, too, during the war.

KC: He worked down here, too, didn't he, near the end, your father?

SC: Oh, he worked down there in the Bishop Campus, after he left the town. He worked down there for a year as an inspector, when they were building the Bishop Campus there.

CC: The dorm I lived in, Brett Hall, he probably helped to build.

SC: Yes. If it falls down, Carolyn, you know he didn't do a good job. [laughter]

SSH: That is a great story.

CC: He retired as a building inspector in what year?

SC: 1958, I think.

CC: I know growing up in West Orange was a lot different for me than it was for you. What was it like growing up in West Orange then?

SC: Oh, it was a nice suburban town. It was a white, Republican town, solidly so. It's all changed now, but, in those days, that's what it was. We had a WASP town, really, is what it was, and we fit in, a little Italian community where I grew up.

SSH: There was a little enclave of Italians.

SC: Yes, three or four streets, and these people came from the same village that my grandfather came from.

CC: Which village was that?

SC: Castle Grande in Italy, is a town about fifty miles east of Salerno, in the mountains, and Aunt Margie came from, her family came from, the next town.

CC: Really? Aunt Margie is your …

SC: My sister-in-law.

CC: I know West Orange prides itself on once being the home and working place of Thomas Edison. You were around when Edison was still alive. Can you describe how he affected the town of West Orange?

SC: Well, I only saw him when he was dead. I was in the fourth grade when he died and the teacher took the whole class to go--Edison laid in state in his laboratory. The teacher took the whole class to view the body and the lines were blocks long. That's the first time I saw anybody dead and we walked past the casket. He didn't say anything to us, [laughter] but he was a tough taskmaster for the people he worked with. Very few of them liked him, because he really cracked the whip and they didn't appreciate that. [Editor's Note: Thomas Edison passed away in October 1931.]

SSH: Did you learn this later in life when you talked to them?

SC: Yes, well, everybody knew that in town. His lab is still there, just the way it was when he died, has his apron and everything hanging on a hook. It's a national monument now.

CC: Was he the main employer in the town?

SC: I think he was. He built a factory, made batteries and made other stuff there, too, but that's where he invented the phonograph, the motion picture camera. He had built the Black Maria, where you film motion pictures and, to get the light, this rotated on a track, to get the sun, and that's still there. It's nice to see. It's the place to go.

SSH: In your later years, did you go back to look at some of the artifacts?

SC: Oh, yes, Edison's lab? Yes, I've been there, but I've never been to his home. He had the home, where he's buried, in fact, in Llewellyn Park, which is an exclusive gated community, one

of the first gated communities in the country. He has a mansion there and he's buried on the grounds. I've never been up there. One of these days, I'm going to get up there. It's open to the public. The government owns all these buildings now.

SSH: It is a national park, you are right.

SC: Right.

CC: Did the death of Thomas Edison affect the town of West Orange at all? Were the factories still open after his death?

SC: The factory, that kept going. In fact, he had his sons live there. One of his sons became Governor of New Jersey, who was a Secretary of the Navy at one time, Charles Edison, had another son, Theodore Edison, he had a daughter, as I recall. So, that's all I remember of that. I never met them personally.

CC: Did any of your family work with Thomas Edison?

SC: No. I did; I worked for him.

CC: What did you do for him?

SC: I worked in the factory. This was just before the war, World War II, and I was going, at that time, to Rutgers--really, I started there in the summer--and then, I didn't come back to Rutgers because I didn't have enough money. So, I worked in this factory for ten hours a day, for forty cents an hour, and my job was to set electrical controls for altimeters. We were making these for the British and we had to put the controls in hot oil and, when it reached a certain temperature, the electrodes would seal the temperature, the thing that I was working on, at that temperature, and they put that in altimeters in airplanes. So, I worked there for ten hours. Then, I switched to Fordham Law School. So, I was still working there and I was going at night to Fordham and I lived two blocks from the factory. So, I'd walk home, take my overalls off, put some decent clothes on. My mother would make me a hero sandwich and I'd eat that on the train going to New York, to Bartlett Street, in the Woolworth Building. That's where the law school was in those days, the Woolworth Building. I'd be there at six o'clock and I was there until eight, four nights a week, and I'd get the train, ferry boat, the train home. I'd be home at nine o'clock.

SSH: What year was this?

SC: That year was '41, 1941.

CC: Can you describe your brother a little bit?

SC: My brother? Now, my father, let me get back to him--he could play the piano, the organ, the saxophone, the clarinet, the banjo and guitar and never took a lesson in any of them, but my brother was the musician in the family. He played the saxophone, the clarinet and he had a dance band. In high school, he used to play for the CYO dances for five bucks a night, and then,

he played, Saturday night, in a tavern with his band, had a five-piece band, but that helped him during the Navy, because he enlisted in the Navy, he became an aviation ordnance mate. He was stationed at Floyd Bennett Field in New York. So, he would come home all the time. So, then, his dance band played at the officers' club. So, the commanding officer of Floyd Bennett Field told him he could spend the whole war there, because they needed his band. So, my brother said, "I didn't join the Navy to be at Floyd Bennett Field all my career." So, they shipped him to the Philippines. In the Philippines, he started another dance band. So, that was his key to success, was the dance band.

CC: What did you and your brother do for fun? What did West Orange have to offer for entertainment?

SC: Not very much in those days. It was during Depression days and nobody had any money; at the time, had less money. They would have dances on Saturday night at the playground and that was the whole entertainment, and then, Friday nights, had the CYO dances, where my brother's orchestra played. That was the entertainment and we had the football games, of course. That's another thing--our high school, varsity sports, had football, basketball, golf and tennis and that was it. Now, they have everything under the sun.

SSH: What is your earliest memory of growing up in West Orange?

SC: Well, I have nice memories. It was a nice town.

CC: Was it extremely depressed during the Depression? Was there an amusement park at Crystal Lake?

SC: Crystal Lake had an amusement park. In the summertime, we would cut through Llewellyn Park, this private enclave, and climb a cliff and go to the swimming pool for fifteen cents. We'd spend the day at the swimming pool. That was a Wednesday or Thursday. I don't remember the date now, but, then, one of the town commissioners, a fellow by the name of George McDonough, he had what they called " McDonough Day," where he rented the whole park. They had a merry-go-round, everything there, and we would go there free. They'd give you a box lunch and everything else for McDonough Day. That's how he got votes. [laughter]

SSH: I was just going to say, he was reelected every year.

SC: Yes.

CC: What did you and your parents think of President Roosevelt?

SC: Well, my parents were Democrats at that time.

CC: Were you a Democrat also at that time?

SC: Yes, but the first time I voted, when I was overseas, it was an absentee ballot. Somebody had sent me an absentee ballot, so, I used it.

SSH: Did you see evidence of the Depression's effects in West Orange?

SC: Well, I'll give you a good example. Right across the street was a black family and my mother was very close to the woman. Thanksgiving Day, we looked out the window and their furniture's being put out on the curb. They were being evicted from their apartment on Thanksgiving Day. In those days, they put your furniture right on the curb. Today, you can't do that. You evict people, but you have to put their furniture in a warehouse. So, my mother went over to her, [asked] what the problem was; so, she owed so much money in rent. So, my mother said, "Look, I'll lend you a month's rent." She said, "It won't do any good, because I'm going to owe more than that," and my mother was friends with this woman for years. In fact, one night, when my brother was an infant, my brother had whopping cough and she sat up all night with my mother to take care of the baby, terrific family, but he was out of work. They had nothing.

CC: Did your father have a steady job during the Depression?

SC: All during the Depression, he had a steady job.

CC: Did your mother work?

SC: My mother worked during the war. She worked in a basement and made crystals for walkie-talkie radios for the war effort. She was doing her part.

CC: She did not work during the Depression.

SC: No, she didn't work.

SSH: Did you see any evidence in West Orange of the WPA projects?

SC: We had a CCC camp. The Civilian Conservation Corps was an organization set up by the government to take kids off the street. They lived in barracks, they wore Army uniforms and they worked in the South Mountain Reservation, building trails and things like that. It was one of these make-work things, to keep them out of trouble and give them a buck, but WPA, I don't remember any of those projects. It was a joke around, WPA, if you worked there, you took bank presidents, were shoveling dirt, just to have something to bring home, a paycheck. [Editor's Note: The Civilian Conservation Corps was an agency that was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which employed young unemployed males in outdoor conservation projects from 1933 to 1942. The Works Progress Administration, or, after 1939, the Works Project Administration, another New Deal agency, employed millions on public works projects like buildings and roads, as well as in specialized areas, such as the arts, from 1935 to 1943.]

CC: You agreed with the New Deal policies.

SC: Yes. I didn't know anything different in those days. You've seen a repeat of it today, with the Obama policies, basically the same thing.

SSH: Did any of your friends become part of the CCC?

SC: No, not my friends, no. The big thing for kids in our area was caddying in the golf course. I caddied myself, everybody in the neighborhood caddied. We used to get a dollar a round and a quarter tip, for four hours.

SSH: How old were you when you started your first job?

SC: That was my first; I was in high school then. Then, after high school, I got a job as a water boy and a flagman on a highway construction job on Route 4, putting in a safety island from Paramus to the George Washington Bridge. I got three bucks a day for that.

SSH: Was that big money back then?

SC: Fifteen dollars a week was then nice, if you had a job. The other thing was, you didn't work when it rained. That was bad, because you lost three bucks, and then, the next summer, I worked in an asphalt plant. I had to be Down Neck Newark, down near Ballantine's Brewery, six o'clock in the morning. So, I would start at four o'clock from West Orange to get two busses to get down there for six. I only worked until two o'clock in the afternoon, but I got three-fifty a day that summer, and then, in the spring and the fall, I'd be caddying.

SSH: You talked about how your mother and father had to leave school early to go to work. How important was it for your parents that you and your brother go to school?

SC: It was important, well, so much so, I was the first member of my family to go to college. At the end of the war, my brother started, with the GI Bill, and he went one semester and decided to quit and get married. My father was devastated and I remember him going up to my brother's future wife, asking her to encourage him to stay in college, and she came back with the answer, was, "Well, that's his decision to make." That finished it. To my father, college was the big thing that he wanted us to do.

SSH: How important was the Church in your family life growing up?

SC: No, it wasn't. I went here to Rutgers and I couldn't come back, because I didn't have any money. I switched to Seton Hall, where I could commute, and I earned enough money caddying to pay for my tuition, books and everything going to Seton Hall commuting, but that was the only connection with the Church at that time. Seton Hall was a Catholic school.

CC: You did not go to church every Sunday, like you do now.

SC: Then, no, I didn't, really. I went, like, five years never going to church. My parents didn't go to church, either.

SSH: In high school, what were some of your favorite activities?

SC: Oh, activities there, well, I was on the stage crew for the senior class play, but the other thing was the going to basketball games and the football games. We made it an act of faith to go to all the games. Even the away games, we went to.

SSH: Was there a teacher in high school who encouraged you to pursue a college education?

SC: Not exactly. I had other teachers that encouraged me, but I didn't really have a teacher that I held hands with or anything, but I had the principal. (Fredrick Reimer?) was our principal. He wore high-button shoes and he had a little change purse where he'd open up to take out coins. So, when I applied to Rutgers, with four other students in my class, we were the only ones [who were] going to go to Rutgers from my high school, which was a class of three hundred students …

CC: My class was bigger. [laughter]

SC: And you had to fill out the application in your own handwriting and it was, like, a five-page application. So, one day, he called me in his office, he said, "Sam, I want to see you after class." So, he talked to me in his office from maybe three o'clock in the afternoon to five o'clock and he would ask me each question on the application. I'd give him my answer, "Okay, write that." I'd give him another, "No, don't write that," and that went on for the two hours. Then, when he got the five applications, he didn't have a car, he took the train from Newark to New Brunswick and submitted the applications to the admissions director, giving him a sales pitch to get us into the school, and we all got in.

CC: Did you all go?

SC: Yes, we all went. Then, we got an invitation in March--now, we're going to go in September--from Theta Chi Fraternity to spend a weekend here. I remember, one of the West Orange students was in Theta Chi and, in those days, they're looking for members and the five of us had to spend a weekend at Theta Chi. After that weekend, boy, I couldn't wait to start college. [laughter]

CC: Do you remember what you guys did that weekend?

SC: I liked the food.

CC: Did you feel as though the Depression had any effect on your education at West Orange High School?

SC: No, the only effect of that is, no money to go to school.

CC: In high school, did you feel like the classes were overcrowded because they could not pay more teachers?

SC: Well, it wasn't like it is today. It was different. The atmosphere in high school was--I don't know how to describe it--all academics. There was no fooling around or anything like that. Nobody got into any trouble.

SSH: This principal, Mr. (Reamer?), was he a Rutgers graduate?

SC: No, he was Columbia; I think he'd just got an award from the Columbia alumni. We had a math teacher, George (Drew?), her name was. She was a girl, but her name was George, and she got sick and she was out, like, a month. So, the gang I used to hang with, we were dead-end kids, decided that we ought to go visit her and, if we're going to visit her, we ought to bring some flowers. So, we each chipped in a quarter and got a bouquet of flowers and we went to her house and spent an hour with her. She was all elated and, needless to say, we all got nineties in that course. [laughter]

CC: There has always been a "down the hill"/"up the hill" dichotomy in West Orange between the predominantly blue-collar down the hill section and the more white-collar up the hill community. Can you describe that a little bit?

SC: Well, in the first place, West Orange ended at Prospect Avenue. If anybody knows anything about Prospect Avenue, Prospect Avenue runs north-south and it's at the top of the hill. The whole community was on the side of the hill, but everything west of Prospect Avenue were farms and golf courses. So, nobody moved up there. There was nothing there. We had a ridge. You could see the New York skyline from this ridge and one of the people that lived on the ridge was General [George B.] McClellan, from the Civil War fame. Yes, he lived there on the cliff.

KC: Not when you were there, Dad. [laughter]

SC: Not when I was there, no, but he was one of the famous people that lived in West Orange; we had a few of them.

CC: Were there any that you knew personally?

SC: No, I didn't know anybody.

KC: You knew Brendan Byrne.

SC: Yes, but Brendan Byrne was Governor. He was a classmate of my wife's. I married a girl that graduated from West Orange High School a few years after I did.

CC: Did you meet my grandmother in high school?

SC: I met your grandmother--no, I met her at a Veterans of Foreign Wars post meeting. I was the first World War II commander of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post. So, they had a big celebration. We had all World War I veterans in the post and we had a few World War II, but only a handful. We had even a Spanish-American War veteran in the post in those days. So, I was being inducted as the first World War II commander of the post. So, there was about maybe

a hundred people there for the induction ceremony and we had junior vice commanders being inducted, the whole officer corps. So, during the meeting, I looked down, I saw this stunning redhead sitting out there and I made up my mind, right then and there, that it was the girl for me, just like in the movies. So, now, the meeting was over and everybody was milling around and having refreshments and everything. I went looking for her, couldn't find her. I said to one of the fellows, I said, "Who was that redhead out there?" "Oh, that was Pete's sister." Pete was the junior vice commander. "She left with her mother." So, shows you the kind of impression I made--she didn't even wait to meet me. [laughter] So, I figured, "I have to meet her someway. I just can't call her up." In those days, you didn't do things like that. So, I decided that I'd put her brother in charge of the poppy drive. Now, this is the end of April and the poppy drive ends on Memorial Day. So, I put her brother in charge of the buddy poppies. So, I called him up a couple of days after the buddy poppies sale. I said, "Pete, how are you doing with the poppies?" He said, "Sam, I have the house filled with canisters. They're in the dining room, they're in the living room, they're in the kitchen, they're in the bedroom. I'm going crazy trying to count this money." So, I said, "You want me to help you?" "Yes, come on over." I was going over to meet his sister; I didn't care about the buddy poppies. That's how I met her.

SSH: What year was this?

SC: That was 1948.

SSH: How difficult was it to break into the World War I veteran-dominated leadership?

SC: Oh, well, yes, there was opposition to my getting elected, because they felt there were other fellows that were there longer than I was and that they should be the commander. So, I got elected, though I won with enough votes, but there were people there that didn't think I should have it.

SSH: In high school, how aware were you of what was going on in Europe?

SC: Oh, I used to follow it all the time.

SSH: How did you?

SC: They'd have maps of the German Army sweeping across Europe and they'd have maps there. I remember one map where they were on the shores of the Dnieper River in the Ukraine. I happened to, after, later on, I took a trip there one time, I saw actually where they were there. We'd followed it like that.

SSH: Was this in history class or civics class?

SC: Oh, no, we just did, just everybody--you listened to Edward R. Morrow broadcasting from London. In fact, one time, he was broadcasting and he said that, "It's a sad Thanksgiving Day for the British people." So, my father turned to me and said, "Who's he kidding? They don't celebrate Thanksgiving in England." [laughter]

SSH: Did you know about what was going on in Japan and China?

SC: All we knew in Japan was, basically, they were buying all our scrap steel and that we're having trouble diplomatically with them, but nobody that I know of even conceived of Pearl Harbor. That came as a shock. [Editor's Note: Japanese forces attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, thrusting the United States into the Second World War.]

SSH: You talked about being part of an Italian enclave. What were the discussions about Mussolini like? [Editor's Note: Fascist Benito Mussolini was Prime Minister of Italy from 1922 to 1945.]

SC: Oh, they thought Mussolini was great. Oh, the immigrants there, best thing that ever happened to Italy, they thought, at that time.

CC: Did you have any family in Italy?

SC: No, no, I had no relatives in Italy. My family immigrated so far back that we had no relatives there, but, anyway, the people there, they all thought he was great. You know the old saying, "He made the trains run on time."

CC: Was there a particular newspaper you read?

SC: Well, I didn't read it, but they had the Italian newspaper, *Il Progresso*. My grandfather couldn't read and write English. In fact, the only way he wrote his name, he'd trace it, to write his name, even though he ran two taverns. He used to get the paper every day, *Il Progresso*, the Italian-American paper. I think they still publish it, Italian-language paper. That's how he kept up on the news. [Editor's Note: *Il Progresso* was an Italian-language newspaper published in New York City from 1880 to 1988.]

SSH: Did you think the United States would get involved in the war?

SC: No, in those days--well, in retrospect, when you look back, Roosevelt was actually pushing us into war. We were giving the British fifty old-aged destroyers. We're giving [them] all lend-lease, military supplies, everything. What surprised me is that the Germans didn't attack us before the Japanese, because we did everything to push America into the war. That's the way I feel today, anyway. [Editor's Note: The "Destroyers for Bases" agreement was a deal between the United States and United Kingdom to trade fifty World War I-era destroyers for land-rights to Brtish bases in the Western Hemisphere, made in September 1940.]

SSH: Did you feel that this was something that would be imminent?

SC: No, it was going to be imminent. You had people who would join the RAF [Royal Air Force] to learn how to fly, Americans, groups of Americans that flew for the British before we got into the war. No, we were headed there, there was no two ways about it. Nobody was objecting, really. You had the America First group, with Charles Lindbergh, people like that,

but, basically, nobody was yelling at Roosevelt to stop. [Editor's Note: The America First Committee, founded by R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., then a Yale Law student, in September 1940 became the most prominent of the isolationist organizations in the pre-Pearl Harbor period, due to the stature of its spokesperson, famed aviator Charles A. Lindbergh, an outspoken isolationist.]

CC: Did you know anyone with Communist leanings?

SC: Well, when I worked for Edison Industries, we had a union, a Communist union. It was so Communist, they had a newspaper, they published it in red, red ink. It was a Communist-controlled newspaper, which was common in those days, but you had the closed shop then. You had to join the union or you couldn't hold a job.

CC: Where did you live when you attended Rutgers College?

SC: I lived in Hegeman Hall. First, I couldn't get a room. All the rooms were taken. In fact, I remember one of my classmates lived in a funeral home, rented a room in a funeral home. I commuted for a month, with my Model A Ford, with a rumble seat, until I got a room. One of the students was leaving and I got his room. So, I got a room in Hegeman Hall, private room no less.

SSH: When you were commuting, did you have any other people riding with you?

SC: When I started, no, but, later on, one of the fellows would take three or four people back to West Orange. We paid him, I think, a quarter a trip, for gas. Gas, in those days, was fourteen cents a gallon.

SSH: You came to Rutgers in the Fall of 1939.

SC: Right.

SSH: Did you have an initiation, since you were not living on campus?

SC: No, no, we all tried to get on campus, but there was no housing.

SSH: You did not have to wear a dink or anything.

SC: Oh, we had a beanie cap. The freshman had to wear a beanie cap.

CC: Did you have to go through any freshman rituals?

SC: No, we didn't. The fraternities did, though, the people being initiated to fraternities. I remember one of them on College Avenue.

CC: Was that Zeta Psi?

SC: It was a fraternity house, I don't know the name of it now, a fraternity house with a tower and a little railing. These kids would have to go out there and they would have to call out the hours. While they're calling, they're getting whacked on the rear-end with a paddle and they're yelling, "Two o'clock, three o'clock," whatever it was. That was part of their initiation. [laughter] It wasn't my initiation.

CC: Is there a member of the faculty that you remember the most?

SC: Well, I had a history professor, McNall Burns, his name was, George, I think it was--I don't remember his first name now [Edward]--but he was voted the most brilliant member of the faculty at that time, and he was brilliant. He taught a history course from the time of Christ right up to the date. He had a set of index cards that he lectured from and, each time, he'd start right where we left off, terrific man, terrific course. I remember him standing out and I remember, too, a math professor. I took analytic geometry and I don't remember the professor's name now. We had twenty-six kids in the class and "D" was a passing grade. About ten of us got "Cs" and everybody else got a "D" in the course. One of the problems was, in analytic geometry, you could do a problem several different ways and, if you took the long way, you got the right conclusion, but you couldn't finish the test. So, he'd tell you, "Just mark down the steps you would take. Don't do the calculation," nice fellow, but I don't remember his name now. That course impressed me, too, how tough it was.

CC: Did everyone know each other around Rutgers?

SC: Oh, yes, in the dormitories especially. There was one kid in our dormitory--not kid, a student--his father was a barber in Flemington, New Jersey, and I don't remember his name now. This poor guy studied--I never saw a person study as hard as he did. He'd be up all night, studying for a test, all night long, take the test. Out of a hundred, he'd get twenty, he'd get thirty--that was the grade. This poor guy couldn't take a test. I don't know how he got out of high school, but he studied. It wasn't because he didn't study. The poor guy, I think he studied too much. Somebody should have taken him aside, given him a little instruction on how to handle tests. All you had to do was take good notes and you had it.

CC: Did you have a major at Rutgers?

SC: I studied political science, was my major.

CC: I understand you were part of the crew team. Can you elaborate on your experience?

SC: They had six freshman managers and they had about three sophomore managers and junior and senior managers. We used to go, every day, down to--they had a bus that took us down to--the river, down to the dock. We would take care of the boats, the sculls. They had a terrific crew here, and I see it's abandoned now, but it was a nice sport in those days. So, we would work down there all day long, oiling the hinges and all that stuff. At the end of the year, they were going to select two freshmen to become sophomore managers and I was one of the two selected [to] become a sophomore manager. That meant that I would spend a month at Poughkeepsie, New York, in June, getting ready for the Poughkeepsie Regatta, which would

have been a nice thing, but I was leaving, so, I couldn't take advantage of it. That broke my heart, not to be able to go up there for a month.

CC: At the time, it was mandatory to participate in ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] at Rutgers.

SC: ROTC was mandatory the first two years.

CC: What did the ROTC training consist of?

SC: Oh, we took just map reading and things like that, drilling, and so forth. We used to drill behind "the Barn," they call it now. That was the gym. We drilled behind that.

CC: How many hours a week did you spend on ROTC?

SC: Two or three maybe, at most. You had a uniform, Army uniform, and everything, but that was it. After two years, if you stayed in the ROTC, you got, I think, fifty dollars a month, something like that, which was big bucks in those days. That wasn't until you're a junior or senior. Then, you got commissioned. In fact, that class, 1943, had a lot of casualties on D-Day, because these people were in the infantry.

CC: Did you know any of them?

SC: Oh, yes, I knew them, because they were in my dormitory. I left before they graduated, but I knew them.

CC: What was one of your memorable experiences at Rutgers?

SC: I liked going to the football games, the basketball games.

CC: Could you tell your ice-skating story?

SC: Oh, my ice-skating, oh, boy. [laughter] I shudder when I think about it today. Cold January night, dark night, across the lake, across the river, rather, in Highland Park, there's a lake--I don't know if it's still there. People were ice-skating. So, I said to the fellow in the next room, I said, "You have ice skates here?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Why don't we skate across the river and go skating over there?" never realizing that the Raritan River is a tidal river, goes up and down. I don't know whether the ice was under water or it's a space between the ice and the water. So, anyway, eighteen years old, we were stupid--that's the answer, the only thing I can think of. [laughter] Eight o'clock, like pitch dark now, nobody knew we were going to skate across that river. So, we started and, to get started, about ten feet to the shore, it was all flakey, because the ice would go up and down. So, we managed to get on that. We got on the ice and we started across. Now, we're in the middle of the river, pitch dark, nobody knows we're there, "Crack, crack, crack," under us. Every time I took a step, I heard another crack under the ice. "Oh, my god, man, we're going to drown." I said to this other kid, "Skate as fast as you can and get off the ice." So, we did that. I think the only thing that saved my life--when I was discharged from

the Army, I weighed 139 pounds. My discharge paper has it right on there. So, now, I'm four years earlier, I weighed much, much less and that probably kept me from going through the ice. If I went through the ice, I would have floated out to the Raritan Bay and out the ocean. Nobody would never have found us. Now, we're on the other side of the river. We finally made it. We're not skating back, but we have to get back. So, we took off our skates. We walked along the railroad bridge, along Albany Street, Pennsylvania Railroad. We're walking on the outside of the railing. It's about a foot path, not a path, but a place to walk. We're hanging on the railing, in our stocking feet, to come back to Hegeman Hall. What an experience--how the hell I lived through that, I'll never know. [laughter] My guardian angel was looking out for me.

SSH: Do you remember your friend's name?

SC: No. He probably remembers mine, though, because I talked him into it. [laughter]

SSH: What do you remember about the football games that year?

SC: I remember all the games. I went to every game, and basketball games, too.

SSH: Was there a famous football game in 1939?

SC: '39, they played in a league with schools like Lehigh, Lafayette, schools of that type. We had a guy, "The Train," they called him, Tranavitch, his name was. He was a big fullback. I lived in a dormitory with football players, but most of these football players, in the spring, were on the crew and that's how they built up their muscles. They weren't lifting weights in those days, but they worked out on the crew. They're all big, husky fellows. They had a 150-pound crew, too, for 150-pound people.

SSH: The 150-pound football team?

SC: The crew, too, but I knew these fellows, because I lived in a dormitory with them.

CC: Where did the football games take place?

SC: In the stadium where it is now, yes, at the stadium now, but it wasn't as big as it is now.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SSH: We have been looking at the *Scarlet Letter* yearbooks. We found Mr. Christiano in the Quad photograph.

SC: I'm in a few other ones there, too. I don't remember the names of the clubs.

SSH: Please, continue.

CC: After you left Rutgers, you went to Seton Hall.

SC: Right.

CC: In 1940?

SC: Yes.

CC: You studied political science at Seton Hall.

SC: Yes.

CC: What made you so interested in politics?

SC: It wasn't so much politics; it was just generally political science. It wasn't really Democrat, Republican or anything like that. Then, I took chemistry, physics, courses like that.

SSH: Like a core curriculum?

SC: Right.

SSH: The reason you left Rutgers was that you could not afford to live here.

SC: I still remember sitting in our living room, my parents telling me they didn't have enough money to send me back. I was crying, I remember that, because I figured only a couple bucks more they needed and I could come, but they couldn't afford it.

CC: Did you work while at Rutgers?

SC: I worked in the library. They had a program, National Youth Administration, another make-work program, like WPA. That job in the library, my job was to go through the stacks--this was a job where you didn't replace a regular person, a regular job--and my job was to go through the stacks and put the books in the Dewey Decimal system order. I think I got sixty dollars an hour, for ten hours a month, so that I got, like, six bucks a month for that job, which was a lot of money in those days.

CC: [laughter] Sixty cents; you said sixty dollars an hour.

KC: Sixty cents

SC: Sixty cents an hour. [laughter] In those days, you bought a meal ticket for the cafeteria for five bucks and you got five-fifty in meals. For five dollars, you ate all week for that five dollars. We had classes on Saturday morning, too. So, it was a six-day deal. You needed meals for that, but we ate the five bucks, for a five-fifty meal ticket.

SSH: Where was your dining hall then?

SC: Winants Hall. I don't know where it is today, but Winants Hall in those days.

CC: Do you know where that was located?

SC: I think it was next to Queens, wasn't it?

SSH: Yes, it is on the Old Queens Campus.

SC: Yes. Then, Bishop Campus, I had that history course in that house there on Bishop Campus [Bishop House]. Most of the buildings were in that [area]. I studied Italian; that was in another house. A lot of houses were used for classrooms in the neighborhood. Then, on Stone Street, that's where I used to splurge with a drug store; I remember getting a milkshake for a dime. That was a daily ritual. Then, on a Friday night, there'd be four or five of us--well, let me go back. We had a fellow that lived next to me in the dormitory, his father was state highway commissioner. He had passes for any RKO movie in the state and, at that time, there were three of them in New Brunswick. So, he would give us the tickets. So, all we had to do was pay fifteen cents for the tax to sit in the balcony, to go to the movies, but, before we went to the movies on a Friday night, we'd go to a pizzeria and get a dish of spaghetti for thirty-five cents and we'd split a pizza pie. That was our big deal on a Friday night.

SSH: Did you ever go to any of the mixers with NJC?

SC: Yes, they had them, from NJC--we used to call it "the Coop," the chicken coop, where the chicks were [laughter]--New Jersey College for Women, used to be in those days. They had joint get-to-know-you type mixers.

SSH: Was it strictly supervised?

SC: No, it was just--they'd have a dance, be yourself. That was all.

CC: Did they have a curfew?

SC: No, no curfew. Then, they had hayrides. I remember a hayride in the fall, in an old farmer's wagon. You're sitting with the hay in your teeth and everything. [laughter] That's what we did. It's not like the kids today; they'd laugh at you today.

SSH: Did you go home most weekends?

SC: I went home a lot of weekends. I used to hitchhike from here to West Orange.

SSH: Did you really?

SC: I'll never forget, one time, I was standing on the Albany Street Bridge with a suitcase with a big "R" on it, so that people knew I was a student, and I got a ride right away one time, within blocks of my house, one car. In those days, it was all right to hitchhike. You didn't worry about getting mugged or anything. You wouldn't dare do it today. Then, the other trick they used to use, you'd take the train to Newark. You'd get on at New Brunswick. You'd buy a ticket to

Metuchen, which was eight cents, and you'd stay on the train until you got to Newark, for eight cents. [laughter]

CC: Did you ever get caught?

SC: No, no. They knew we were students, the conductors. When I went to Fordham, I commuted going to Fordham, from Orange to New York, and I had a ten-trip ticket. The conductor would punch the trips and my ticket was so dog-eared--he was punching the same hole all the time. It was just about falling apart. He saw I was a student, so, he was giving me a break.

SSH: When the draft was initiated, you were still too young.

SC: No. Yes, I wasn't--the draft was too young for me.

KC: You were too young for the draft.

SC: [laughter] I was too young for the draft, right. Well, they had a draft in 1940, before we got into the war. It was a one-year draft and people were drafted for that. [Editor's Note: The Selective Service Act of 1940 required all twenty-one to thirty-five-year-old males to register for the draft. These age parameters were expanded to eighteen to forty-five years of age after the United States entered the war.]

SSH: You were still too young.

SC: Yes, I was too young. When I graduated from high school, I'd just turned seventeen. My birthday was in May. If I'd graduated much sooner, I'd have graduated at sixteen.

SSH: You did not miss any semesters when you went to Fordham.

SC: I finished with Seton--in those days, you didn't need a degree to go to law school. In fact, some law schools, you could go right from high school. So, Fordham required two years of college. So, I figured, "I'm not going to go for my degree. I don't have the money." So, I'd start law school and worry about the bachelor's degree later on. So, I started there at night and I was working, as I told you, at this factory, at Edison. I went one year to Fordham, and then, the war broke out. So, now, it was in September of 1942, I was going to start my second year. See, at nighttime, at Fordham, with a four-year course, you went days in three years and, once you went nights, you couldn't switch to days; if you went days, you couldn't switch to nights. The courses weren't interchangeable and they had that rule, which, to me, was a ridiculous rule. So, now, September, I was getting ready to go for my second year at night and the war broke out in December. So, all my friends were in the service, getting drafted and everything. So, I walked in the recruiting station and enlisted and I got that over with.

CC: What were your feelings when Pearl Harbor occurred? You were at Fordham.

SC: No. Yes, I was at Fordham, but I was home then. I remember doing my homework and I had the radio on, doing my reading of these law cases. I heard an announcer come on that Pearl Harbor was attacked. They thought at first it was a group of pilots who were not controlled by the government, was a radical group making the raid. So, it wasn't necessarily, "We're going to go to war with Japan," but, later on, they realized it was the Japanese government doing it.

SSH: Later on that same day?

SC: Yes, the same day.

SSH: What was the reaction? What did you do?

SC: People were stunned.

SSH: Did you go talk to friends?

SC: I don't remember that, but I remember people were actually stunned, that the Japanese would do that. Then, don't forget, we were negotiating with them at the time. That's why Roosevelt said, "The day that will live in infamy," because nobody expected it during the negotiations, that we were going to get attacked, but you could see it coming, because we were pushing the Japanese against a wall, with an embargo and all that stuff. It didn't sit with the militarists in Japan. [Editor's Note: The United States and Japan held peace talks in Washington, DC, from November 20, 1941, to the day of the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941.]

SSH: Was this discussed at the time or did you realize it after?

SC: No, it was just a feeling. That's all that was. Nobody really talked about Japan, other than they were buying our scrap--never realized it was going to come back with bullets.

SSH: Did you have any inclination to enlist then?

SC: No.

SSH: Did any of your friends?

SC: Well, when my friends started going into the service, getting drafted and everything like that, (Henry Mitchell?) said I could have a nine-month deferment, because, if I started at Fordham, they would let me finish the term. So, I figured, "Why start? Let me get it over with. I'll go in the service." I walked in the recruiting station and enlisted.

CC: How long after Pearl Harbor did you enlist?

SC: Well, it was September in 1942, Pearl Harbor was December of 1941, so, it was nine months later.

CC: You enlisted just to get it over with.

SC: Well, not get it over with--I just wanted to do my part. [laughter]

SSH: Did you ever entertain the idea of going into any of the other branches?

SC: No, I just wanted to go in the Army, not the Air Force particularly, because the Army Air Force was part of the Army at that time. You'd enlist in the Air Force separately; enlisted in the Army, and then, you got a battery of tests, and depending on the tests was where you went. [Editor's Note: The US Air Force was established as a separate branch of the US Armed Forces in 1947. Prior to that, it had been subordinate to the US Army as the US Army Air Forces and, prior to 1941, the US Army Corps. World War II era veterans tend to use all three terms interchangeably.]

SSH: You had one year of ROTC here at Rutgers.

SC: Right.

SSH: Did you participate in anything like ROTC at Fordham?

SC: Oh, yes, if I'd stayed at Rutgers, I would have gone the four years with ROTC. No, I enjoyed ROTC.

CC: Did you do any ROTC after Rutgers?

SC: No, no, no place I went had ROTC. Law school didn't have ROTC.

CC: I understand you did meteorology for the Army.

SC: Right.

SSH: Because of your testing, the Army chose that for you.

SC: Well, what they did, when I enlisted, I was sent to Fort Dix for three or four days.

SSH: This was in September.

SC: September. Soon as I enlisted, right to Fort Dix, and I spent three or four days there, taking a battery of tests. They'd give all kinds of tests and I could've gone to radio school, airplane mechanics school, weather school, you name it. The only school I couldn't go to was the radio school, because I couldn't tell the difference between a dot and a dash; so, no radio school for me. So, I selected weather school and, sure enough, they gave me weather school. They sent me out to Chanute Field--oh, first, I went to Atlantic City for my basic training, believe it or not, on the boardwalk.

CC: What did that consist of?

SC: We drilled on the beach and drilled on the boardwalk and lived in the hotels. I lived in a hotel with seven fellows in one room, the Hotel Dennis, which is now part of Bally's Casino. They didn't tear the Dennis down; they tore all the other hotels down. So, I lived in the Hotel Dennis for three weeks, in this room with seven other guys, but, after one, two, or three days, five of them were gone. It was just another kid and myself in the one room, really nice, and we'd drill on the boardwalk. We used to go roller-skating in Ventnor. They had dances on Friday night at the high school. It was a nice town for soldiers--the only place I've ever been where, in church, they wouldn't take your money, if you were a soldier. They'd pass the plate, then, "No, we can't put any money in the plate."

SSH: You were in the Air Corps at that time.

SC: At that time, right. That was a basic training center for [them]. They had Atlantic City, they had another one in Florida and around the country, but I ended up in Atlantic City.

SSH: Did you tell your parents you were going to enlist?

SC: Yes, I talked it over with them. My father did the same thing, so, not much he could say. So, "Good luck," that was it.

SSH: Did he tell you what to look out for at Fort Dix?

SC: I remember, when I was going overseas--when you're a weatherman, you travel individually, you don't travel in a division or anything like that. When I went overseas, I was sent up to Presque Isle, Maine, the tip of northern Maine, the potato country, for a plane. I'm only a corporal now. I'm going to fly over. All these other generals and everything had to go with troopships, but they needed weathermen so badly that they were flying us over. So, we flew from Presque Island, Maine, over to London--over to Scotland, really, was Prestwick, Scotland, we landed, after we turned back twice.

SSH: Did you really?

SC: Mechanical trouble.

SSH: Back to Maine?

SC: We started, the first time we left--I was up in Maine for two weeks, waiting for an airplane. I didn't want to fly, to be honest with you. The airplane came up from New York and it had brake trouble in New York they had to fix. So, it was late getting to Maine. We were supposed to leave at seven o'clock; we didn't leave until nine o'clock.

KC: What type of plane was it, Dad?

SC: It was a DC-4, a four-engine plane, the first one with the tail off the ground, a Douglas airplane, with the tail off. At the time, planes had tail on the ground--this, the tail was off the ground, a four-engine plane. Well, I'll describe that for a minute. We were going to take off

now and the pilot gave us a little lecture. We had bucket seats, thirty men, and our barracks bags in the aisle, sitting along the wall. So, the pilot said, "I want to tell you right now, we're not going to have any heat on this plane. This plane has gasoline heaters and I want to save the gasoline for the engines. So, we're not going to have any heat." We were going to freeze, because we're going up by Greenland. So, next thing was, "We have no parachutes or life rafts, because, if we go down in that water, at this time of year," this was in May of '43, "you'll only last thirty seconds in the water. So, we don't need parachutes and life rafts." This made me feel good. [laughter] This is after I graduated from weather school now. So, now, we take off. This is at nighttime and we're flying over Newfoundland and we go through a snowstorm, through a cold front. The plane's bouncing like a top and I threw up. I don't know whether I threw up because of fear or turbulence or what, or both, but, anyway, I was sick and freezing. So, the pilot comes over the loudspeaker, "We have to go back. The gyroscope isn't working right." We went back there, to Maine. They fixed it. At midnight, we took off again. Now, we're headed for Newfoundland, Gander Bay in Newfoundland. We landed there and we stayed overnight, took off the next morning for Prestwick, Scotland. They put sandwiches on the plane, but I wasn't going to eat anything after that experience over the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Now, we head out towards Scotland, and these are not pressurized airplanes, so, we're only flying, like, ten thousand feet. You look down, you see the whitecaps of the waves. Then, you look out of the window and see the propellers turning and you wonder how long they're going to turn before they wear out. So, we're going hour after hour from--well, let me go back. We're out an hour-and-a-half and we had to turn back. Now, the radio wasn't working right; something wasn't working right. I said to myself, "This plane's jinxed. I should've been on a troopship." So, we land, went back to Newfoundland, took care of that and we took off again. Now, we're headed for Scotland, but, while I was up in Maine, for two weeks, there was snow on the ground then, that time. I was reading the Air Force magazine and it mentioned about the North Atlantic flight, where planes are four hundred feet over the waves because of icing conditions. Germans are sending out radio beams from Norway and confusing the pilot. The pilot gets on that beam instead of the Scotland beam and, first thing you know, he doesn't have any fuel to get to Scotland. Planes didn't make it and were crashing. I'm reading all of this before I took off. So, now, I was on KP duty, on a Sunday afternoon. A guy came running down, "Sam, Sam, get your stuff. You're leaving tonight." That's how much notice I had. So, I got my two barracks bags, my life's possessions, went down to the office by the runway and waited for the plane. I'll never forget, I looked out the window and I saw a woman there with two little toddlers. One of the fellows going overseas with us was a fellow from New York and he was married and had two little kids. There they are, they went up to see him for his two weeks up in Maine and they're crying on the tarmac and we're taxing off. So, anyway, hour after hour--the flight from Newfoundland to Scotland was eleven hours. Now, from New York to Scotland is six hours, and we were halfway there from Maine practically. So, anyway, hour after hour, I'm looking at those propellers. Oh, when we took off, it was nighttime. This is the first time I ever was on an airplane. I look out the window and there's four feet of flame coming out of the engines. I said to myself, "This plane's on fire," saying to myself, but nobody's saying anything. So, I get up and I went to the other side of the plane and look at those two engines--four feet of flame there, too. What was happening, when the plane takes off, the pilot makes a richer gasoline mixture and that's what was coming out in the flames. It wasn't on fire or anything, it was the exhaust, but I didn't know that.

CC: How long was your training?

SC: Weather school?

CC: Weather school combined with basic training.

SC: Well, our basic training was only about three weeks in Atlantic City. Normally, if you were in the ground forces, you spent about, I think it was like twelve weeks in training. We trained for three weeks. All we did was march, that's all. Then, they sent us to school, but the weather school was ten weeks. From October to January was my class, six days a week. You woke up at five o'clock in the morning and you cleaned up and everything. Then, you went to breakfast, which was around nine o'clock. Then, after breakfast, you drilled until noontime and, from noontime until one o'clock, you had lunch. Then, from one o'clock, you marched to the classroom, big classrooms, maybe five hundred students in a classroom. The class runs from two in the afternoon until ten at night, six days a week. That went on for ten weeks.

SSH: This was at Chanute in Illinois.

SC: Talk about a blitz course. It was all weather. The whole thing was all weather.

CC: Was there a lot of physics and math involved?

SC: No, no, but, to get in weather school, they looked over your [resume]. Most of the people there had a few years of college--there were very few of them that weren't--or college graduates, for that matter, and they mainly studied meteorology. You had to learn how to Teletype, use a Teletype machine, send up the air balloons in the area, see how to work them and everything. It was a really [intense course]. I probably could have had college credit for that course after the war, if I wanted to get it, because it was from two o'clock in the afternoon to ten at night. Then, by the time you got back to your barracks, it was eleven o'clock at night. Then, you're going to get up at five o'clock; forget about studying. [laughter]

SSH: Did you ever get into town?

SC: We had the one day off, which was during the week, it was not on the weekend, and it was nice, though, Rantoul, Illinois, where the town was, next to Champaign. I used to go [to] the University of Champaign--Illinois, rather--and walk around the campus, wishing I were there, [laughter] but we spent the day there. You got a bus from Rantoul to Champaign, which was a little Greyhound, maybe a fifteen-minute ride. Then, we'd eat in town, get a decent meal, then, walk around the town, and then, on holidays, like Thanksgiving Day, you could sign up and have Thanksgiving dinner with some family. They'd invite you to their home, and then, we had …

SSH: Did you do that?

SC: No, I didn't. I wasn't interested in fraternizing. Well, I was worried about being home. So, I spent from October to January at Chanute Field.

SSH: Were there any memorable occasions there?

SC: Well, we had the holidays, like, I was there Thanksgiving, I was there for Christmas. On Christmas Eve, I had to go to the base headquarters for some reason; I don't remember now what it was. It was snowy, snowed there all the time, and cold, bitter cold place in the middle of Illinois and the dirt was all black mud. You'd get mud on your shoes, but, anyway, I went to the base headquarters for something. Now, I'm on my way back to the barracks and it was maybe a twenty-minute walk--it was a big base--from the headquarters back to my barracks. I was walking past the post exchange and they had *White Christmas* on the jukebox. I could hear it outside, the snow was blowing in my face and the tears started to come. I was thinking of home, Christmas Eve, what my parents were doing, my brother. So, that started the tears coming down, but that was the first time I ever really got homesick. Then, we went back to the barracks and we had a little celebration, Christmas Eve, in the barracks. There were mostly Jewish fellows in our group. They had to celebrate Christmas, but you could be invited to a family there for Christmas dinner, if you wanted. People were nice there. [Editor's Note: *White Christmas* is a Christmas song made famous by Bing Crosby in 1942.]

SSH: Were there other forces training there at Chanute as well?

SC: Oh, yes. In that booklet there, you'll see it, they had airplane mechanics. They would put engines on test blocks and run them for hours; days, they'd run them. They had the sheet metal workers they'd train there. They trained photography, everything at Chanute Field. It was a big base. It's closed now, incidentally.

SSH: Was there any interaction with those people?

SC: No, no, you didn't. The ones studying airplane mechanics, we didn't bother with them, they didn't bother with us.

SSH: Did you have any choice when you graduated?

SC: Oh, yes. This is the only place in the United States Air Force where you picked your own base. They asked the men where we wanted to be stationed. They gave three choices; they gave them. So, I gave them Newark Airport, Grand Central Station in New York, which had a weather section, and Fort Dix. So, I got Fort Dix, which was perfect. I was a commuting soldier there, coming home every weekend. At Fort Dix, we ran the weather station there, which was just a shack by the runways. We'd run it twenty-four hours around the clock.

CC: Who was this broadcast to?

SC: No, we were running a weather station there. In Fort Dix, they had a submarine patrol, antisubmarine patrol, B-25 bombers that went up and down the coast looking for German submarines. See, you didn't have pipelines, the oil pipelines, then. So, all the oil came up in tankers. In fact, when we were in Atlantic City, they had a brownout on the boardwalk, because the lights in Atlantic City were silhouetting the tankers and they were getting torpedoed. So, we

had flights that went up and down the coast looking for submarines and we'd get the weather information for that. We'd get it for the base. Every airbase has a weather station.

CC: How long were you at Fort Dix before you went overseas?

SC: I was at Fort Dix from January to May. In fact …

CC: Of 1943?

SC: '43, at Fort Dix. I applied for Artillery OCS school and I was accepted and I was supposed to leave in six weeks for Fort Sill, Oklahoma. So, one of the fellows who had been there a long time said to me, "Sam, you made a big mistake." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "They just got [through] training you as a weatherman. They're not going to send you to Fort Sill and start all over again." I said, "What do you mean? I already accepted." He said, "Sam, you're never going to see Fort Sill." Within two weeks, I had my orders sending me overseas. I never did see Fort Sill. He was right; he knew what he was talking about.

SSH: Were you keeping track of how the war was progressing?

SC: Oh, yes, yes, but myself, personally, I've never had any qualms about whether we were going to win or not. It was just how long it was going to take.

SSH: Was morale very high?

SC: Yes. That never entered my mind, that we would lose the war.

SSH: Even in 1943, when you were going over?

SC: Oh, yes, my attitude is, "They bit off more than they could chew when they attacked us." No, I never had any qualms at all we were going to win.

CC: Were you in England?

SC: I arrived in England in May of '43.

SSH: You landed in Prestwick, Scotland.

SC: Right, Prestwick. Then, they assigned us, thirty of us now, assigned us to airbases in England.

SSH: Were there mostly weathermen on the flight?

SC: Yes, it was all weathermen. There were thirty of us, all weathermen, all enlisted men. There was a corporal, there was a sergeant, there was this and that, but all enlisted men, thirty of us, and they came from all over. It wasn't just Fort Dix. They came from all over. When we got over to England now, we landed in Prestwick and I remember we stayed there overnight. I'm

walking around Prestwick and that's where Tam o' Shanter Inn, from Robert Burns [(1759-1796)] fame--Bobby Burns, they call him there--he was a local resident, a poet. Anyway, they had assigned us to different airbases through[out] England--this kid goes to one base, this guy another base, another base, never calling my name. I'm the last guy. He says, "Christiano, we're going to send you to the 'country club of the ETO,'" European Theater of Operations, the country club. "All these other fellows are going to mud holes," new bases, bomber bases, especially. I'm being assigned to the Fourth Fighter Group, which was the number one fighter group in Europe. They were Eagle Squad members, fellows that were in the RAF, and then, they transferred to the American Air Force when we got in the war, and this was a former RAF base, had brick barracks, movie theater, ice cream machine.

KC: What was the name of the base, Dad?

SC: Debden, Debden Aerodrome, outside of Saffron Walden. Saffron Walden was outside of a railroad station called Audley End; it was a railroad station with no town. You got off the train, then, you had to take a shuttle train into Saffron Walden, but they used to have a truck to bring us there, take us back to Debden. This base was halfway between Cambridge and London, so, when you went on a leave, you either go to London or you went to Cambridge, either one. So, we arrived there and we had sheets in the beds, brick barracks, I told you, a movie theater. We had a Red Cross club--a British Red Cross club, because it was a former British base. When we got there, there was no weather station, because the British were leaving. We were taking it over. So, they sent us to Saffron Walden, where there was a wing headquarters, and you see these places like this in the movies, where people have a big table and they're pressing things on the table to show the German Air Force, where the attacks were coming and everything. That was in that wing headquarters and we were sent to their weather station to learn British terms. We spent two weeks with these British meteorologists, working with them.

CC: Was there any competition with the British?

SC: No, no, they were helping us out. No, we were on the same team, so, they were helping us out. They were very nice. There was no problem with them, not at that time. Later on is something else, but, at that time, we were new there. There weren't many soldiers there in 1943, the beginning of '43.

SSH: Were you given any instruction on how to interact with the British people?

SC: They gave us pamphlets. We had pamphlets, that there was a town there, in the area, and we got along fine with the [locals]. See, it's out in the country, a little different than London. Out in the country's different. In fact, at Thanksgiving, or Christmas rather, we invited all the children from the local village to come to our airbase for Christmas dinner and a Christmas party. So, all these little kids came, we showed them the airplanes and everything, take them to the weather station. They thought [it was] the greatest thing in the world. In fact, one kid, after he had the turkey dinner with the cranberry sauce, said to his parents, "The Yanks put jelly on their meat." [laughter]

SSH: What was teatime like while you were training at headquarters?

SC: Teatime? Teatime, the work stopped. The British stopped the war for their tea and crumpets at four o'clock in the afternoon. I never saw anything like it in my life. [laughter]

[TAPE PAUSED]

SSH: Okay. Can I put this back on?

SC: Yes.

SSH: We took a break. I was asking about the Big Bands that came to Rutgers.

SC: I remember, when I was here, we had Gene Krupa for the sophomore prom. After he was selected, there was almost a revolution, because Gene Krupa bangs the drums all the time and the students wanted some slow dancing and that type of music, Guy Lombardo type. They're all upset that the committee had engaged Gene Krupa. So, he wrote to them and told them that he can play that kind of music, too, and, when he came, he did play that music. They were all satisfied with him, but he was the bandleader then, I remember.

SSH: Did you see anyone like that at a USO show?

SC: Well, when I was in England, I saw Glenn Miller's Band.

SSH: Did you?

SC: He came to our base. If you see the movie *Glenn Miller's Story*, you see one scene there where the band is playing in a park and a flying bomb was going overhead and the band kept playing. Well, I was there that time. [Editor's Note: The German Fieseler Fi 103 V-1 guided missiles acquired the nickname "buzz bombs" for their distinctive engine noise.]

SSH: Were you really?

SC: Well, I was there when that flying bomb [came], and nobody left and the band didn't stop playing, either. That bomb came coming towards us and it kept going past us. It could've just as well landed on us. That was a big, big thing, the flying bombs there in London. There were seven thousand between June and September. I have pictures there of flying bombs.

SSH: How often was the area you were in hit with these bombs?

SC: Well, out in the country, out in Debden, for instance, never. In fact, you could hear the air raid sirens sound in the village, because the German planes were flying over our base on their way to London, but they never attacked our base when I was there. It had been attacked when the RAF was there, but not when I was there. I didn't get into any of that until I got to London. I got stationed in two places in London where they were having regular air raids, regular plane air raids, then, later on, the flying bombs, which were worse than the other things.

SSH: When you were on leave in Cambridge, what did you see them doing to help protect the buildings?

SC: Not so much in Cambridge; in London, though, they had things like that. In fact, in London, they had barrage balloons with cables dangling over the Thames River. So, in fact, I have a picture of them, so [that] the Germans couldn't strafe the city, these steel cables hanging from the barrage balloons. It was a standing joke with the GIs that they should cut the barrage balloons and let the island sink. [laughter]

SSH: It was holding them up.

SC: British didn't like that. After all, this is their homeland. [laughter]

SSH: Did you walk around Cambridge, the university?

SC: Oh, yes, I went to King's College, I used to go to, and they had a mural, if my recollection's correct, an El Greco mural, in the chapel in King's College. Then, I saw the room where Lord Byron lived when he was at King's College, Tennyson. Then, we'd all go--they called it, they had a name for it, wasn't a rowboat. It was a flat boat, like a rowboat.

SSH: Punting?

SC: That's it, punting, on the Cam River, where it was like a stream, the river, a way to kill an afternoon there.

SSH: How were the stained glass windows protected?

SC: I don't remember at Cambridge, but I remember, in the village, when I got stationed in Teddington, where the Air Force Headquarters was, the people had the tape on their windows, because the blasts from the bombs or the flying bombs would shatter all the glass. They would have tapes, all kinds of designs, on the windows. Then, they had heavy blackout curtains, because every night was a blackout, whether there's an air raid or not. It was an automatic blackout and their newspapers, instead of having a weather report on the front page, there'd be, "Tonight, 5:05 is blackout time," and you had to close those curtains at that time.

SSH: When you were training at the British Air Force Headquarters, you said you were only there for two weeks.

SC: Two weeks at Presque Isle, Presque Isle, Maine, Atlantic City, three weeks, Atlantic City.

SSH: No, once you got to England.

SC: Right.

SSH: How long did you train there?

SC: Right, that was a couple of weeks.

SSH: Were you housed there?

SC: Oh, no, it was the next town. I have pictures of it here. Now, that aerodrome was the Fourth Fighter Group, which was the number one fighter group in Europe, but, as I said, most of them, at that time, were former RAF pilots. Here it is, right here.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SSH: Let me turn this back on.

SC: Okay. What happened in England about writing home, before an invasion, no mail went home and my parents didn't get a letter for three weeks at one time. They inquired about it and they're finally told that, after the invasion started, that they had stopped mail and that was the reason they didn't get any letters. I used to send V-mails. These were letters you wrote on a certain form, and then, they'd photograph the letters and they sent the film to New York and processed the film in New York, then, mailed them out. That way, they saved shipping space. That was another thing over there. In the wintertime, the only food the British could really grow at home were Brussel sprouts in the winter. We ate Brussels sprouts morning, noon and night. To save shipping space, you could only get one package a month. That was another thing.

CC: Were there any restrictions on what you could write to home?

SC: What you could get from home?

CC: What you could write.

SC: Oh, yes, every letter was censored. It'd be censored. Somehow, I saw the letters after I got home, with blacked out here, blacked out there--oh, every letter was censored.

CC: Did you keep a diary?

SC: If you didn't like what's happening at your base, you had an option. One of your officers was censoring the mail. So, if you didn't like the guy, [if] you're going to tell your parents you didn't like him, you didn't want him reading that letter. So, you had a special envelope that you could take, that was not V-mail, it was a regular letter, and that was sent to a different place to get censored. So, you could say what you wanted in that letter.

SSH: I have never heard of that before.

SC: Oh, they had them. [laughter] I mean, it didn't mean that you used them for that, but that's one; I never used them. I didn't have any problems, wherever I was stationed.

CC: Did you feel that the higher ranks were demeaning towards you?

SC: No. In fact, most places where I was at, I was the youngster in the place and the senior officers took a fatherly interest in me. I remember, when we're stationed in England, they were going to send eight men to Sweden. Now, Sweden was a neutral country then. This is the Air Force Headquarters. Sweden was a neutral country. So, the major who was in charge of our group took a liking to me. So, he called me in his office; Normandy had just started. So, he says, "Sam," he said, "we're going to send an advance group to Normandy, going to leave a group here in London, but I'm sending eight men to Sweden and I want you to go to Sweden. The war'll be over for you. You'll live in an apartment house, you'll wear civilian clothes, you've got real restaurants," said, "a vacation." So, I said, "Do I have a choice?" He said, "Yes, you have a choice." I said, "I'd rather go to Normandy than Sweden." So, I went to Normandy, [laughter] but the fellows that went to Sweden, they lived it up there.

KC: What were they doing in Sweden?

SC: I never did find out what they did there, and I didn't care, because I wasn't going. [laughter] Of course, I didn't know how they got there. That's the other problem--Sweden was on the other side of Norway and Norway was occupied by the Germans. I found out later, they went from Africa to Russia, then, the back way to Sweden, but I got a choice. The war'd been over for me.

SSH: What time of year was this?

SC: This was in '44. We moved to Normandy in '44.

SSH: How long after the invasion?

SC: I would say maybe about two months after the invasion, but there was still fighting in Normandy. Normandy, the breakout didn't come until August. [Editor's Note: In Operation: COBRA, July 25 to July 31, 1944, the Allies broke out of the Normandy hedgerow country at St. Lo. The attack commenced with a massive strike by nearly three thousand fighter-bombers, medium and heavy bombers. Miscommunication between the ground and air forces led to some US Eighth Air Force aircraft bombing Allied positions, resulting in hundreds of casualties, including US Army Ground Forces commander Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair.]

SSH: When did you leave Debden?

SC: I left Debden--I was there eight months in Debden, with the Fourth Fighter Group. We had a colonel, the Fourth Fighter Group, twenty-three years old, full colonel, commanding officer of this fighter group, but he was an RAF officer. So, I was there eight months.

KC: (Chesley Peterson?), right?

SC: Yes, (Chesley Peterson?), his name was. He died a few years ago. In fact, the CO after that just died last September, ninety-one years old, but what was the question again?

SSH: You were telling me about Debden.

SC: Oh, I was there for eight months, and then, I could see myself spending all the war years in Debden. I figured, "I'm in Europe, I want to see something. I don't want to just see England." So, they needed somebody to volunteer to go to Northern Ireland, at a weather station there. So, I volunteered to go to Northern Ireland. So, the day before I'm leaving for Northern Ireland, they changed my orders. They sent me to a bomber repair base in English Midlands, which was a mud hole. I mean, it was so bad, they closed the base a month after I was there. They had crews--well, because it was a bomber repair base, there was a lot of truck traffic. These trucks are carrying engines and things like that. They would pull off the road, make their delivery, and then, pull back on the road and all the mud would come back on the road. So, they had special crews, their whole job was to clear the roads of mud. That's their whole job during the war. You wore your overalls, you never wore a Class-A uniform, because of the mud. We lived in Nissen huts with a little potbelly stove. It was a terrible place. Now, I'm saying to myself, "I left the country club of the ETO and I end up here," but, fortunately, it worked out all right, because they closed the base a month later, but I had one experience at--Little Staughton was the name of the base, outside of Bedford in English Midlands. Air raid sirens sounded. You could hear the German planes overhead. Their engines were different than ours; they made a different noise. I had just taken a reading of the cloud coverage and I used a spotlight. They gave you an instrument called a clinometer, which is like a milk bottle, and you looked through that milk bottle with crosshairs, and then, they had a spotlight you shown up on the base of the clouds. From that, you could tell the height of the clouds. After a while, we could even guess and get it right, but, anyway, I'm back in the weather station now and the air raid sirens go off. I hear the German planes and I say to myself, "I wonder if I turned off that light." So, I ran for the light switch and I pulled the switch. I turned the light on--it was off. [laughter] So, now, I shut it off and I duck under the table, waiting for some bombs to come down, but they were more interested in bombing London. They didn't care about us, out in the Midlands. [laughter] Under the table I went, but, anyway, after a month there, I got stationed in London. The ideal place while you're in England to get was London. If you were in London, you had it made. So, they sent me to Heston Aerodrome in London, a suburb, where Heathrow is now. Heston was built into Heathrow. So, I was there for a month or two, I don't remember now, but, then, we were getting bombed now, real bombs, and then, flying bombs later on, but, at that time, I remember one night--now, I couldn't go in an air raid shelter, because I had claustrophobia. All I could think of was all that dirt coming in on me from a direct hit. So, I would get under a tree and I would crouch under a tree with my helmet on. The shrapnel coming down from the British aircraft shells are bouncing off the tree, was a little like acorns from an oak tree. So, I'm shuttering underneath, I'm watching the fireworks. They had antiaircraft guns, that the barrel was three times the length of this room, banging away. The noise was terrific, searchlights everywhere--it was like the Fourth of July, only death was coming down. [laughter] Then, after an air raid, you'd walk around the town--this was right in the town--you'd see red flags, were unexploded bombs. That never bothered me, though. I was never fearful of getting killed, but, one night, I did, was fearful. They ringed the field with chandelier flares, the only time I ever saw them. I never saw them before or since. These were--you remember, in the old days, they'd take a photograph or a group picture and the photographer had a flash, a big puff? That was magnesium he's using and these chandelier flares were like candles, magnesium candles, made like a chandelier with a parachute over them. So, then, the heat from the chandelier would keep the parachute suspended in the air and they had the fields ringed. It was six chandelier flares. You could read a newspaper, it was so light, and I'm under the tree, "The hell with this, I'm going

to the air raid shelter." So, I ran to the shelter and I was in there about five minutes. I couldn't stand it; I got out again. I went back to my perch in the tree there, but, fortunately, nothing, no damage was done. I don't know why they [were there]; they must have been taking pictures of something, the Germans. That was the only time I really felt that I could get killed, and then, the flying bombs, what we did there--that was really bad. Here's a picture of a flying bomb. I have one right here.

SSH: Wow.

SC: All that is is a thousand pounds of blast, no shrapnel, and it has a stovepipe--see that stovepipe? That's a jet engine. The flame would shoot out that engine. You could see it coming by. It'd be [Mr. Christiano imitates the engine], like a motorboat. You look up--here, it's coming right at you or going by you. The one night, I counted fifty-four between midnight and noontime that covered the whole area. That's how many they did. They were coming in formation, coming in the rain, everything, and they came from Normandy and the German-French coast with, like, a ski chute, only reversed. They came up a chute and they went right over and it had a gyroscope on there. They weren't accurate at all, but they did a lot of damage. They were coming. So, what we did, we took our barracks and we sandbagged our barracks halfway up, about six feet. Then, we folded the legs on our bed and we put little bricks under our bed, so [that] the springs were about six inches off the floor. We had the sandbags, so that if we got hit, the blast wouldn't affect us, but they had slit trenches outside, if you wanted to go to a trench. A lot of fellows didn't get up, because, if you're going to go get up every night, you'd be up all night in the air raid shelter and everything. So, we didn't bother, most of us. We just slept and trusted, faith.

CC: Did you interact with any of the people that were living in London at that time?

SC: I had a girlfriend in London.

CC: You did?

SC: Yes. She used to ride two hours on public transportation to get [to London]. I used to meet her under the clock at Waterloo Station, in the middle of the waiting room of [the] big terminal. She used to meet me there because it would take me two hours to get to her where she was at. I met her at a roller-skating rink, Alexandra Palace in Northern London. I used to go roller-skating there. That's where I met her. I dated her for a long time.

CC: What was the morale like?

SC: Huh?

CC: Over there …

KC: When did you get to Bushy Park? Did you get to that yet?

SC: I got to Bushy Park in March of '44. That's where we're being bombed with the regular airplanes, and then, in June of '44, right after the invasion …

KC: No, but, at Bushy Park, you were at the Air Force Headquarters, right?

SC: Yes. That was no longer the Eighth Air Force. That was the Headquarters, United States Strategic Air Forces in London, and that included the Eighth Air Force in England, the Fifteenth Air Force in Africa, the Twelfth Air Force in Italy. [Editor's Note: Mr. Christiano transposed the locations of the Fifteenth and Twelfth Air Forces.] I worked as a crew chief in the weather station there, weather section. It was a hundred men in the weather section there and our colonel's one of the men who made the D-Day forecast for Eisenhower. He moved down to Eisenhower's headquarters. One of my jobs was, whenever I got a ship report in on the Teletype, we'd go into his office on the scrambler phone and phone Portsmouth to give him this latest ship report, weather, because you didn't have any reports coming in over the ocean. So, they were like gold, those reports, but he was down there, Colonel Yates, D. N. Yates. He just retired--just died, rather--a few years ago as a lieutenant general in charge of a weather section. This fellow was a West Point-er, a pilot, command pilot, and a weatherman, all rolled into one, and he was our CO [commanding officer], nice, nice fellow but strict. I was a crew chief. I ran--we had four sections and the cryptography section--that was my job then. We got weather reports from all over the world, coded. We had to decode them and send out our stuff coded. One thing we couldn't do was take--we used to get reports from Sweden. We weren't allowed to take the Swedish reports and send them to Russia. Swedes didn't want Russia to have those reports and, one time, one shift made a mistake and sent them to Russia and the Russians wanted to know why they didn't get it all the time. [laughter] This was an international incident, that the American ambassador and everything [had to handle]. So, the Colonel called the four of us into his office and wanted to know whose shift was on when that was sent. Fortunately, my shift was off duty that day, so, I wasn't involved, but all hell broke loose for them. When I first got to Debden, I had to be cleared for secret information. So, my uncle was a police lieutenant in West Orange at that time and they, Army intelligence agents, went to West Orange to check me out. They went to the police station to check me out and my uncle was on duty then. So, he called up my father and said, "Sam in some kind of trouble? There are people here inquiring about him." [laughter] I'd just arrived in England. My father said, "I don't know. I didn't hear anything." So, now, my father's worried that people are coming to the police station looking about me. [laughter] Well, we had to be cleared for secret information. The reason was that the British had broken the German weather code. So, we were getting weather reports from Berlin, all over Germany, temperature, cloud coverage, the whole bit. So, we made the weather map up with a piece of tissue paper over the Continent, because the invasion hadn't started. We would plot these weather stations on the tissue paper, and then, plot the rest of the map in regular ink. So, when the forecaster got that, he drew his lines, and then, took off the tissue paper and burned it. So, when a pilot looked at that, the Continent was blank, but we had reports from Berlin, cloud coverage, temperature, everything, but we only got that--about every four or five days, we'd get that. To be covered for that, I had to have clearance from the big shots. Then, I was only a corporal. [laughter] So, that was at Debden, the Fourth Fighter Group.

CC: At Debden, there is a picture of you here in front of a plane. You were describing the mud. Can you describe what they placed down?

SC: What picture are you looking [at]; you looking at an air raid shelter there?

CC: It is you in front of a P-47, this one right here.

SC: Oh, no, that was flat, but Debden …

CC: It looks like they put something underneath you.

KC: What was that on the tarmac?

SC: It's a steel [mat], because the weight of the plane would go down. In the revetments, they had these mats, steel mats, with a fire plate. In that time, when I was there, we had Thunderbolts. Later on, they got Mustangs. Before I got there, they had Spitfires, but the thing at Debden is, the runway had a lump in the middle. The fighter planes, they've got to get forty-eight fighter planes in the air as fast as they could. So, they would go down the runway two at a time. They would be staggered, one on one side and one on the other side, but they were staggered, two down the runway, two more came down, until they got them all airborne. Bombers are different. Bombers are slower, so, they'd have a different set up altogether, but the fighter planes were--they got them in the air quickly. That trouble, as they go down the runway, then, they get up to the hump. Then, they're going down again and you couldn't see them anymore. Then, you'd see them up, going up in the air. One time at Debden, though, we had a problem. There was no night flying there, with the American forces. The British had the skies at night, British and Germans, [laughter] but, anyway, we had them [in the day]. We gave a clearance for a mission and, about three o'clock in the afternoon, fog came in. You couldn't see your hand in front of your face and we've got forty-eight fighter planes in the air. From our control tower, you could see three British airfields. That's how close they were. So, I ran right away to our Teletype to see what they were reporting. They were reporting the ceiling's zero. So, I don't know what was happening to their planes, but the British didn't do much flying in the daytime--it was at night for them--but we had forty-eight planes [aloft]. They've got to bring them down and you can't see the field. So, what they had was a mortar right by the control tower. When you heard the planes above, they would fire this mortar through the clouds--they're low hanging clouds--and it would explode on the other side of the clouds. The pilots could see it, at that spot where the control tower was, so, they could judge from that where to start making their descent to come in to land. The whole forty-eight got down that way, keep firing that mortar up in the sky, so [that] they could see that thing. I thought it was going to be a real catastrophe. When I was at Little Staughton, that bomber repair base, bombers used to land there when they were all shot up. Rather than go back to their base, they would land at our base. You'd hear this big bang when they'd hit the runway, coming in with no wheels, skidding down a runway. Some exploded at that time, too. There'd be ten men killed on that plane, but that was part of it.

CC: Did you lose any of your friends during this time?

SC: I saw one fighter plane that crashed; it was just a ball of smoke, black smoke.

CC: Did you know who the pilot was?

SC: No, I didn't know, at that time.

CC: Did you lose anybody really close to you?

SC: No, but one of the people that did get killed was Governor Lehman's son. You remember Governor Lehman of New York, was a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt? [Editor's Note: Herbert H. Lehman was elected Governor of New York in 1933.] His son got killed at our base. He got killed in a plane crash. Lot of pilots were killed in crashes. In Debden, they lost most of their pilots not in aerial combat, they lost them strafing German airfields. That was very dangerous, to strafe the fields, but, man-on-man, they beat the Germans all the time.

SSH: Did they talk about that in the clubs?

SC: Oh, yes, that was the first thing, when the planes came back from a mission, how many this pilot got, how many that--it was a contest. It was like a baseball score, "Who shot down the most planes?" Here, look in the beginning there, there's a newsletter; no, no, go back to where you were, in Debden.

CC: Oh, in Debden.

SC: I have a thing I took off the bulletin board; keep going.

CC: This one?

SC: Yes, read it.

CC: "Three FW 190s [Focke-Wulf 190] and one ME 109 [Messerschmitt Bf 109] were destroyed by pilots of the Fourth Fighter Group today while providing support for Fortresses attacking a target in Holland. Two enemy aircraft were shot down by First Lieutenant E. D. (Eddie?), 335th Squadron, and one by Lieutenant F. D. Smith, 335th Squadron, and J. A. (Goodson?), 336th Squadron. All of our aircraft returned safely. Three more enemy aircraft were destroyed on the same show by another American fighter group."

SC: It was a contest. I took that off the bulletin board. What's the date of it?

CC: June 22, 1943.

SSH: I have never seen one of those reports before. Was it official?

SC: One day, though, they put belly tanks--see, the Thunderbolt had no range. The Mustang won the war, because it could go to Berlin and back and beyond, but these planes couldn't go far once they crossed the Channel. The Spitfire's even worse. So, they put belly tanks for gasoline under the plane and the first time they went out on a mission like that, the Germans are laying off them, expecting, sooner or later, they have to turn around and go back, because they're going to

be out of fuel. So, the Germans didn't go near them, but they kept coming now, because they had the belly tanks. They attacked the German squadron. They shot down--this group shot down--eighteen German planes on that mission, because the Germans were surprised.

SSH: What would be a typical day for you as a weatherman?

SC: A weatherman, well, there were two times; well, at Fort Dix, we [had] a shift change every three days. So, you'd be on a dayshift from eight o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the afternoon. Then, the afternoon shift started at five o'clock to midnight. The midnight shift was twelve o'clock back to seven in the morning. Then, you had three days off and that went around the clock like that. Well, when I was at Debden, it was two-day shifts. Every two days, you'd change the shift, you had two days off, but in the daytime was a busy time, so, you had about three men working on this. There were only ten men at a weather station, one officer and ten enlisted men, for around the clock. So, on the dayshift, you have maybe four men working, then, the afternoon shift, maybe three men, but the night shift was only one man. Twelve o'clock to seven in the morning, you worked by yourself.

SSH: What would you be doing?

SC: Be plotting the weather map, the upper air chart, getting all this information off the Teletype. Then, we'd send our information out.

SSH: Were you sending it or were you giving it to someone else?

SC: No, no, I put it on the Teletype myself.

SSH: You did it yourself.

SC: So, we had one Teletype at the weather station. When I was in the Air Force Headquarters in Saint-Germain, thirteen Teletypes ran twenty-four hours, never stopped. We had two repairmen working full-time, keeping them going. We had six shortwave radio operators sending stuff on the radios.

CC: Were these messages going to the observation towers?

SC: They were going to other airfields. We sent them down to Headquarters, down to Fifteenth Air Force in Italy, Africa rather, over into Italy, same way, send them to the United States. They'd send us their stuff. We had to decode their stuff and we had to encode our stuff.

SSH: When you were there in 1943, when did you think the invasion was going to happen? Were you seeing the build-up?

SC: Oh, yes, I knew what was going to happen, because I was working on it. Everything changed at that time. I would say maybe three weeks before the actual invasion happened, we knew the date. Day was going to be June the 5th. Now, our colonel, this fellow I told you about, he and another officer from our group--I'm trying to think of his name, I don't think of his name

now--then, there was an RAF group captain; the RAF man was a civilian forecaster, climatologist, really. Because my colonel was a colonel, they made this guy a group captain in the RAF to equal our colonel in rank. There were three men were sent down to Portsmouth and Eisenhower wanted a composite weather report. He didn't want, "Well, here, we'll make the forecast." You had the Americans in Bushy Park, Teddington, London, you had the British at Dunstable, then, you had the Admiralty with their forecasters. So, you had three forecasting centers making the forecast and the problem was that our forecasters never agreed with the British. Now, here, the British lived there and we're interlopers there, telling them what to do. So, it wasn't a "happy camper" deal.

CC: There was a conflict with the British.

SC: Because they had different ideas. First place, you can't forecast English Channel weather more than twenty-four hours in advance. They needed weather for cloud coverage, they needed weather for wave height, they needed all that stuff. The British are saying one thing, our group was saying something else, the Admiralty is saying another thing, because they were interested in wave height. So, there was friction there, a lot of friction, so much so there was name calling after a while.

CC: Was anybody right about the forecast?

SC: Yes, we were right; the Americans were right. The forecast was for June the 5th. June 5th was no good. So, Eisenhower didn't want three different weather reports for the same day. He wanted the weathermen to get together and come up with a composite one and that's what they did. So, they had practice sessions with Eisenhower about two weeks before the invasion, and then, when things got hot, he would have, Eisenhower would have, his daily reports two or three times a day. Our people were down there. We'd get them information from our headquarters in London and radio it down to Portsmouth, or telephone, rather, and then, they would give it to Eisenhower when they got together with the other groups, which they never got together with them. So, it was one thing. We insisted on our group being the forecast and Eisenhower went for that. So, Eisenhower was there with this General Montgomery and all these other people and our weatherman would get up, Yates would get up, and give what we thought was the forecast. While it wasn't a unanimous decision, they felt that was the best. They told him June 5th was no good, June 6th would be all right, but you had to have enough days afterwards, so [that] they'd get some supplies on the shore.

KC: I thought [James] Stagg gave the forecast, the RAF guy.

SC: He said he did. That's the British fellow. [laughter]

KC: Okay.

SC: I could tell you what our [CO], this fellow Colonel Yates, what he called one of them, but I won't put that on the record. It was that bad. [laughter]

SSH: Where are you in all of this?

SC: I was back at the headquarters. I was doing the encoding and decoding of the weather messages as they came in.

SSH: You were at Bushy.

SC: Bushy Park, which is a suburb of London. It's where Henry VIII's palace is, at Bushy Park, Teddington. They have a park next to the castle, palace. We were right in the park; we lived there right in the park. They had a tamed deer running around the place. It was right on the subway line. This is an ideal place to …

SSH: You were sent to Bushy from where?

SC: Heston.

SSH: From Heston, okay.

SC: It was a strange thing, when I was at Heston, when I worked the night shift, there was a medic right next door. He worked the night shift by himself and the flying bombs were landing at that time. So, a flying bomb hit the weather barracks over at Bushy Park. Nobody was killed, because nobody happened to be there at that time, but they destroyed the whole barracks. So, when I was transferred from Heston, one section in London, over to Bushy Park, another section in London, I left Heston and a bomb hit there and that kid was killed, the one I used to spend the night talking to each night. He got killed and, if I were there, I would've been killed. So, if I were at the other place, I would've been killed, but I had a charmed life there.

CC: Most of the events that happened while you were at war were just based on fate.

SC: That's it.

CC: That was purely it.

SC: I had the angels with me. Then, when we went to Normandy …

KC: Well, before that Dad, SHAEF was at Bushy Park, too, right?

SC: SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] was next door, Eisenhower's headquarters, right next door to ours, and, every morning, I would deliver the weather report to the war room. There'd be a guard in front of the war room and I'd hand him the weather report for that day.

SSH: Was this the war room that was underground?

SC: No, it was above ground.

SSH: Was it above ground?

SC: Yes, it was above ground there. It was a cement brick block building. In fact, all the buildings were block, above ground there.

KC: You never saw Eisenhower?

SC: I never saw him, but I saw …

KC: You saw Tedder.

SC: I saw Tedder. A flying bomb hit our camp, so, we all went to look at the damage, with a big crater. I'm trying to--take about five of these rooms and as deep as this room, blown out. I picked up a piece of the flying bomb there. It was still hot when I picked it up, "Whoa," like pewter, all in a bundle. I carried that around for months and I finally threw it away, [laughter] but I'm standing there looking at the damage and an RAF officer [is] next to me. This RAF officer was Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder. He happened to be Eisenhower's deputy. If anything happened to Eisenhower, he was going to be the commander in the invasion, standing right next to me. He was looking over the damage, too.

CC: Did you exchange words with him?

SC: No, no, "Look at the bomb throw," no, words like that, but that was it. I mean, we didn't shake hands or anything, [laughter] but he was the number two man in the invasion. That's the closest I came to a celebrity.

CC: Did any celebrities visit the bases you were on?

SC: Oh, yes, we had Bob Hope, came to Debden. I had to work the night shift that night. So, it was ten o'clock, I'm trying to get to sleep and he's got a little stand right under my window. Yes, he was there and Frances Langford and Tony Romano was his group and he was cracking these one-liners. I said, "The hell with it, I'm not going to get out of bed. I can hear him here in bed." So, I listened to him in bed, but I still remember one joke he pulled. He said, "If women's skirts get any shorter, then, they'll put rogue on four cheeks." [laughter] I still remember that joke.

KC: Yes, he was a little racier when he was with the troops, not when he was on radio or TV, I think.

SC: He would be that way; he wouldn't say that on TV.

SSH: Not then.

SC: But, then, we had Glenn Miller, came at Debden, with the flying bombs going overhead. Nobody left. Then, I went to an exhibition bout in London, in Teddington, with Joe Louis and Billy Conn, put on an exhibition boxing match and it was only for GIs, unless you invited an Englishman. So, an Englishman came up to me--we're right in the town--asked if I would take him to the match and he would pay me. I said, "Come on, I'll take you. You don't have to pay

me, I'll take you." So, I took him as my guest to see Joe Louis fight Billy Conn for a few rounds. That's about all the celebrities I saw that I remember now.

CC: Was the morale different among the British soldiers and the British people?

SC: Yes. See, here's what happened--we had money, they had no money. We had food, they had no food. So, they were envious of the American soldiers. So, at a bar, if a fellow had a few drinks in him, then, all hell'd break loose. I remember one fellow, one time, he had a five-pound note. That was a lot of money in those days. "This is what I think of your goddamn money," he took the bill and he tore it up and threw it in the air, five bucks in the air. Then, there was another time, when I told you about cutting the barrage balloons, let it sink. So, that was a little friction there, but it was more jealously than anything else. The cab drivers wouldn't go to a British person because the Americans tipped more. So, a British person couldn't get a cab. A GI wouldn't walk across the street; he'd take a cab to go across the street. [laughter] The British resented that, but, when they invited you to their homes, now, they didn't have any food. Everything was rationed, like a pound of butter for a month, things like that. So, if you got invited by a British family, you'd go to the mess hall and the mess sergeant would make a package for you. I remember, one package was a can of grapefruit juice and a pound of butter and things like that. You took that with you, so [that] you didn't eat up all their rations, but they were nice enough to invite you, even though it was going to cost them a lot on their rations.

CC: Did you ever go?

SC: I never went, no.

SSH: Did you go to the family of the woman that you were dating at that time?

SC: I never met her family, because she was on the other side of London. I dated her for about three months there, and then, I got shipped to Normandy. I had a deal with her that if I had to leave suddenly, I'd call her sister, who worked in the telephone exchange. I tried to get her sister; her sister wasn't there that day. So, I left to Normandy and I wrote her a letter and I knew the letter wasn't going to get to her, because I didn't address it right. There was a certain way you had to address a letter for the censors and I never did that, because I didn't know what it was at that time. So, I never saw her again, or heard from her, for that matter. She never knew I was in Normandy.

SSH: In the weeks leading up to the invasion, were there practice runs? Were you forecasting?

SC: No, I wasn't doing that, but the people that were down in Portsmouth--Portsmouth was the invasion headquarters--they were down there and they were practicing with Eisenhower, briefing him on the procedure and everything. So, when the time came, they knew what to do and we would send them the weather information, the forecasts and things like that, and then, they'd stay down there. They lived in a tent, no less, in the park. These are big shots making the invasion and they're living in a tent.

SSH: I know there were several different practices taking place.

SC: Right, but, in London, now, so, you had our group, which our group was called Widewing, that was the codename for our group, and you had Dunstable with the RAF, I've forgotten what their codename was, and you had the Admiralty with the Navy end of it. They all had forecasters and they were all British, except our people. Now, we're there from the United States and we're going to tell them how to run the show.

CC: Did you know D-Day was on when it was actually occurring or did you hear about it later?

SC: Oh, we knew it, the day it was going to be, ahead of time. We're getting all that information and, on the ship reports, now, the ship reports would come through--it was a rarity to get a ship report--and I had to make sure those Teletype machines [worked], that there wasn't a ship report in there that anybody missed. Whenever I'd get one, I'd go right to the Colonel's office with a scrambler phone. In fact, he had a tape recorder on the phone. When you scramble, you get the other person on the other line, which was a Wren [Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS)] down in Portsmouth, a British Wren in the Navy, a Navy woman. Then, you say, "Scramble." She pushes a button, you push a button--nobody can tap that line. That's out of the code business. I would give her the ship reports and they'd thank me profusely for sending it in, because weather moves west to east. So, you had Ireland there and nothing beyond that. So, if you got a ship report, they were like gold, when they would send them, because the ships were, the convoys were, radio silent.

SSH: Did you see people moving out, going south, in the weeks before to get prepared?

SC: No, but that was what was happening. What was happening, the roads were being mobbed, the little country roads. See, they had big depots where they had all these tanks, trucks, everything, all these supplies, and, when it came time for the invasion, they hid the roads that go down to the coast. You had the ships coming down from Scapa Flow in Scotland, coming down through the North Sea. You had the other group coming down the Irish Sea, all convening at Portsmouth for the invasion. In fact, Steve was just mentioning the other day, about the Fourth Infantry Division, was one of the invasion divisions, they were rehearsing the invasion at a beach in along the English Channel.

KC: Slapton Sands.

SC: Wherever it was, and a ship got torpedoed and 750 men lost their lives there, more than they did when they landed in Normandy for the Fourth Infantry Division. So, you had to be blind not to know the invasion was coming.

SSH: That was one of the things that was really covered up.

SC: Right; not only that, I remember, when we got to Normandy, you hear messages on the radio, "Hello, Rolo, this is Armory," and they would say something. This was the French Underground contacting one another. It was all a big secret, but it wasn't a secret. If there were any Germans there, they had to be blind not to know something was going to happen--they didn't know the exact date--when they see all the supplies coming down to the coast and everything.

Then, when it did happen, Hitler thought it was going to be at Calais, was only twenty-one miles, never dreaming it was Normandy. He wouldn't release the *panzer* tanks from Calais and that gave us a foothold. If he'd released the *panzer* tanks then, it may have been a different story.

CC: What were the feelings after the invasion? Was there any celebration going on?

SC: What happened afterward, they got bogged down in Normandy and there was no way they could fight their way out of Normandy with all the hedgerows. Hedgerows are these hedges, that's what they were, just hedges, and apple orchards in Normandy, farms, dairy farms. A tank couldn't go through a hedgerow--that's how tight it was. So, they were bogged down in Normandy. So, the ground generals wanted to use the Eighth Air Force to bomb the German lines and they didn't want to do that, because they were bombing German cities and they didn't want to waste time doing tactical work, which the Ninth Air Force did that, but they didn't have the bombers we had. So, it was decided that they would bomb the German lines at St.-Lo, which is down the foot of Normandy. They did bomb that and they blasted a hole right in the German lines, but they killed a hundred American soldiers. An American general was killed in those air raids.

KC: McNair.

SC: That's the name, McNair?

KC: Lesley.

SC: But, they made a dent in the German lines where Patton poured through it, and then, he was on his way.

SSH: Are you aware, as a weatherman, that these operations are taking place?

SC: Oh, yes, because we had--I'll give you an example. When I was at Debden, I worked in the weather station at night. I'd have the radio on and I could hear--this is a shortwave radio--you could hear the German radio stations going off the air. So, I could follow the RAF going out to bomb the German cities. I knew right where they were going, because the radio stations, after each one's getting closer, that station was gone.

CC: Did you have any communication with people other than weathermen? Did you have communication with anybody else in the military?

SC: No, just the weathermen. We didn't mingle with anybody else. We were all by ourselves. We're only ten men.

SSH: You were in Bushy Park and you were sending weather down to where?

SC: Africa, Italy, the United States, all over.

SSH: How long were you there before they transferred you again?

SC: I stayed with that outfit until the end of the war, the headquarters. This was the Strategic Air Force Headquarters. I was with them until the end of the war

SSH: They moved from Bushy.

SC: We moved from Bushy Park; we moved to Normandy. Then, from Normandy, we moved to Saint-Germain-en-Laye, a suburb of Paris. Saint-Germain's where Mary, Queen of Scots, grew up, in that town.

SSH: From Bushy Park, how were you transported? Did you take all your equipment with you?

SC: Oh, this is funny. It was a hurricane that day. The field was closed in, the field where we had to take off from, but this weather officer was a command pilot. A command pilot doesn't need a weather clearance; he can do what he wants to do. So, he got the General's plane, a five-passenger Beechcraft, two-engine plane, the General's private airplane. He got that airplane to fly us to Normandy.

SSH: Who goes and what goes?

SC: Yes, this officer picked them out. So, I was one of them selected. So, I said, "Wait a minute, we're going to fly to Normandy all by ourselves. Supposing a German plane picks us up? We're dead ducks." "Don't worry about that. We'll be over in Normandy, everything's okay." It's a hurricane; the field's closed in. We're in a hurricane, had a dirt runway where we're going to fly it from, six inches of water on the runway. "We'll go." Pilots are a world by themselves, nothing, no danger at all to them. So, we're going to fly and what am I going to say, "I can't go?" My option was to go by landing craft. I had to wait ten days for a landing craft and get seasick crossing the Channel. So, the five of us went on the plane and he's flying by himself. Usually, it takes two pilots on a two-engine plane; he's flying himself. We took off. The water's splashing, down the runway we went, dirt runway, and off we go. Now, we're headed for Normandy and you could see down the shell holes and everything, where we were flying. We landed on a landing strip just hacked out of the woods and at the end was a little radio shack. About eight o'clock at night now, I remember, a farmer there was with his horse and wagon. He saw us there, didn't know what was happening. So, now, we have no place to stay. It's eight o'clock at night. So, the fellow in the radio shack says, "Go down the road about a mile. There's an evacuation hospital. They'll put you up for the night and give you something to eat. In the morning, we'll send a truck down for you." "Fine." We get down there, mess sergeants gave us something to eat, gave us a bunk. Now, these hospital tents hold forty men. They're big, long tents. "SO, three guys can go in there, one guy in that one, one guy in that one." So, they sent me with one fellow. I look in the tent--they're German prisoners, wounded German prisoners. Now, I'm not sleeping with those guys. "So, all right, try one of the other tents." So, I went to the other tents, where there are American wounded, and I spent the night there. About three o'clock in the morning, I had to urinate. So, I went out to the latrine. I get over there, there's a German solider there. Now, the latrine was just a ditch with a little screen around it and this guy's on the other side of me. I look up and there's this guy standing there. He's got his arm in a sling and I had a rifle. I thought, "I'm going to take my rifle. I don't know what the hell's out

there. I'll take my rifle." I had a twelve-round clip with a carbine, but I had no bullets in the chamber and I look at this other guy, "This guy makes a dash for my gun, there's going to be trouble here." So, I put a round in the chamber and you could hear it click. He knew--he heard the click. He didn't know whether I was going to shoot him or not. I'm seeing whether this guy's going to get excited now. He's liable to make a stupid move and I'll have to kill him. So, I'm watching him like a hawk and he's watching me like a hawk. Now, to get back to the tent where he was at, he's got to walk around me. So, I walk on the other side of the latrine. He's saying, "Comrade, comrade." When the Germans surrendered, that's what they said. "Yes, come on, come on, comrade. Go that way." There was no problem, but I didn't know it was going to be no problem.

CC: Did you ever hear about what was happening in the Pacific Theater?

SC: Yes, we had the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper. That came out, I think, every day, *Stars and Stripes*, and Bill Mauldin's cartoons.

CC: Was your feeling towards the Japanese different than what you felt towards the Germans?

SC: I think there was. You know the old saying, during the Indian Wars, that, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian?" The only good Japanese were the dead Japanese. That was the way they felt at that time, after Pearl Harbor.

CC: Did you feel that way?

SC: I didn't care. I wasn't interested in the Pacific. I had my own problems. [laughter]

SSH: When you were first in Normandy, how long were you there for?

SC: I remember being there about two weeks before we moved to Saint-Germain.

SSH: Did the General's plane stay with you?

SC: It stayed there. What happened, I said it was a hurricane, the plane had ropes down and you had a corkscrew that you screwed into the ground to keep the plane from flipping over. We left the plane; I don't know what ever happened to it. They came, a truck came, and picked us up. The next day, it took us to Granville, which is near the Gulf of Saint-Malo on the western coast of Normandy, about halfway up the coast. We were there for about two weeks before we moved to Saint-Germain.

SSH: Were you forecasting in those two weeks?

SC: Oh, yes.

SSH: You had equipment with you on that plane.

SC: Oh, yes. We would send out weather reports and everything. We did all that, for two weeks. In fact, off the coast of Granville were some islands. There were German soldiers on those islands and they just left them there and on the cliff overlooking the islands were machine-guns, American machine-gun emplacements, in case they came ashore. They were Germans, so, we figured, "Let them stay out there." They let them [stay] out there.

SSH: What did you do during that time?

SC: Doing the regular, old thing we did in London.

SSH: Did you have the same set of duty stations?

SC: Well, we didn't have--there's not much equipment then. We were only there for two weeks when we moved to Saint-Germain. When we got to Saint-Germain, you could see Paris in the distance. We were right on the Seine River. We moved into a camp, a French camp that the Germans occupied. We moved into their barracks. The Germans left so fast, I have German medals home that the guy left in the barracks.

SSH: Really?

SC: A German solider, and we stayed there for …

SSH: Did your equipment come with you to Saint-Germain?

SC: No, we got equipment there, too. No, the equipment came, but it was coming from the States, because we didn't have a lot of equipment/

SSH: How effective were you in your forecasting?

SC: Oh, we were doing all right there. We were in Saint-Germain and, in Versailles, Eisenhower was, his headquarters. These are close towns. I was there from September to the end of the war. In fact, here, at the end of the war, this picture, what we did at the end of the war …

CC: Hang out on the beach?

SC: That was a swimming pool in the next town.

CC: Really?

SC: War was hell. [laughter]

SSH: Where were you housed when you were in Saint-Germain? You were in barracks.

SC: Oh, now, let me tell you this story. We're right on the town again and these officers, the weather officers, were in this big baronial mansion and on this estate was a one-family servants'

quarters. So, one of the officers came up to one of my buddies and said, "Why don't you fellows move into the servants' quarters? Got a whole one-family house to yourselves." So, we did. I have a few pictures of that.

SSH: Had the family been evacuated out?

SC: Yes, yes, they were gone.

CC: There was this strong feeling of camaraderie.

SC: Well, with these guys; I lived with these fellows.

CC: How long were you with this certain group?

SC: Oh, to the end of the war.

CC: You were with them from the beginning.

SC: Oh, that's Normandy; that's a picture of Normandy. There's a picture of Normandy and the apple orchard. I was eating green apples. I got sick as a dog eating green apples, but this is our house in Saint-Germain. The fellows I lived with; here's another picture, Carolyn.

CC: Were you with them since the beginning of the war?

SC: Oh, yes, I was with them all the time. I was with them while we're in England.

SSH: It is not just guys we see here.

SC: Those people at the pool were WACs [Women's Army Corps members]. We got WACs near the end of the war. Yes, those girls are WACs.

CC: Did you date any of them?

SC: Yes, one WAC.

CC: You did?

SC: Here's a picture of the air raid shelters in Debden.

CC: Did they have an affiliation with you guys? Did they work alongside you guys?

SC: Yes, they worked with us. At the end of the war, a lot of guys got shipped out and they got replaced with WACs.

CC: What did you guys do?

SC: They did what we did, same thing.

CC: They did weather stuff.

SC: Oh, yes.

CC: They were trained to do that.

SC: Yes. They were trained, yes.

CC: Wow.

SSH: Is this you sitting with one of the Frenchmen?

SC: No, the guy on the left was my mentor and the fellow on the right was Lilley, this was Leon Hirsch, came from Upper Peninsula Michigan. This fellow came from Boston. There were two that I lived with.

SSH: I was just going to say, he does not look like he is in uniform. He looks like a native.

KC: Yes

SC: Well, there was a little park there. Here they are here, those two fellows, on our way home. We're at Iceland or Greenland at that time.

KC: They don't look like they're in uniform, Dad.

SC: They're in uniform.

KC: That's a uniform?

SC: Yes, here they are. That's the outside of our place. You see the window on the left, on the top? That was my room; I had a private room there.

CC: It looks really nice. Was it on the estate?

SC: Yes, it was nice.

CC: Did you cook for yourself or did they have cooks there?

SC: No, we had to go to a mess hall. We had a stove, but the only problem was, in the stove, you couldn't boil any water, because the gas was only on a short time. Then, you'd put a pail of water on to try to boil it and the heat was dissipated before it could reach the boiling point. It wouldn't boil. We had to do our own laundry. So, we used to take a bar of soap, laundry soap, that Octagon Soap, cut it in half and take it to a woman in town. She'd wash and iron our clothes and we let her keep half the bar of soap. That was her pay.

SSH: How much interaction did you have with the people in France?

SC: Oh, we had a lot in France, in Saint-Germain.

SSH: Did you?

SC: Oh, yes. We had the women doing the laundry and the people would come and see us at our place. In fact, along the cliff in Saint-Germain were these big estates. In one house, the man invited two kids to go live with him, live with his family, had a piano there. They had a butler. These fellows slept in a twin bed. Butler would come, light the fire in the morning and they would eat there and everything. They lived there until the end of the war, except one fellow was going back to England. Once you got to France, you couldn't go back to England, but we had a shuttle bus [aircraft], because we had an echelon unit in London. So, we had a shuttle flight going back every day and we could fly on that to go back to London. So, the owner of this house, mansion, asked this fellow to buy coffee for him. You couldn't get coffee in France, but you could get it in England, because the English drunk tea. So, he gave him fifteen hundred dollars to buy as much coffee as he could carry. So, the guy got to England and he never came back. He took the money and went back to the barracks and lived in the barracks. He spent the money instead of buying the coffee. [laughter]

SSH: So much for French-American relations.

SC: Yes, and the guy lived in this mansion. He lived with a butler and everything and this jerk takes the money and runs.

SSH: Oh, dear.

SC: It wasn't fifteen hundred; I've forgotten what it was. It was a big sum of money, though.

CC: You were friends with a lot of these Frenchmen.

SC: Oh, yes.

CC: You used to go out with them.

SC: We used to go to--like, every night, we'd go to this little café, the only café with no food. The only food they had was potato soup. So, we'd get a bowl of potato soup with a little white wine in it and spend the night there. Then, we had another place where it was a little more. There were a lot of WACs there and they had a little more action. So, we just fraternized that way.

CC: Were there theaters open in France?

SC: Yes, but I went to the theater and I got scabies. Scabies are little ticks and I caught scabies in that theater. They get under your skin and your skin, at night, swells up like a mosquito bite

and itches like that. The only cure is, you had to go to the medics--everybody had them--you had to go to the medics and they'd give you salve. You'd put it on your head to your toe, twenty-four hours apart, two applications, and that would smother them. So, I've still got the ticks under my skin, but they're dead. [laughter]

SSH: Tell me about the weather forecasting. You were just doing weather forecasting for the Air Force, not the infantry.

SC: Oh, no, they got our reports, too. The generals of the ground troops got our reports. Whatever base we were at, he got our reports, too.

SSH: It was not so isolated that it was just for the Air Force.

SC: No, it was for the whole world, practically. We did that. It was nothing. You just made an extra copy for them and, if you were stationed there, the commander, you wanted him to have that.

SSH: When you finally got to Saint-Germain, I am guessing it was sometime in August.

SC: No.

SSH: September?

SC: We got to Saint-Germain in September, beginning of September.

SSH: Beginning of September?

SC: Right in the beginning of September. They had just broken out of St.-Lo at that time. Paris wasn't liberated then. That came later; that came about a week later. [Editor's Note: The liberation of Paris began with actions by the French Resistance on August 19th and ended with the surrender of the German garrison to the Second French Armored Division and the Fourth US Infantry Division on August 25, 1944. The next day, the Second French Armored, its commander General Jacques-Philippe Leclerc and Free French leader Charles de Gaulle led a parade down the Champs d'Elysees. Another parade of Anglo-French forces along the Champs d'Elysees was held on August 29th.]

SSH: Were you there? How did you travel through France?

SC: We came into Saint-Germain. Now, this was a five-hour ride from Normandy to Saint-Germain on the Red-Ball Express. They made a road going one direction and they had another road going the other direction, to the front lines, and they were just one truck after the other bringing supplies up to the front. So, we came by. We had to pass these trucks in these little two-lane roads, was a tight fit, but we go through these little French towns and the villagers would throw apples to us, but the only trouble was, it's like throwing baseballs at us. We tried to catch one; you're trying to duck more than anything. If you got hit by one, you'd get hurt. They thought they were doing us a favor throwing us apples, "Bang." So, five hours it took us to get

to Saint-Germain and we moved into this camp where the Germans had just left, but these mansions, [Gerd] von Rundstedt, the German commander of the Western Front, he was in one of these mansions. So, our officers took over his house. They had his maid. His maid took care of them. [laughter]

SSH: When you were there, were you aware of how the front was progressing?

SC: Oh, yes, yes, because you had the *Stars and Stripes* every day, practically every day. They had it right in there.

SSH: Were you ever called upon to do extra duty because of the Bulge in December?

SC: Well, we had the Battle of the Bulge. [Editor's Note: The Battle of the Bulge, also known as the Von Rundstedt Offensive or Ardennes Offensive, was the failed German attempt to break through the Allied lines in the Ardennes Forest in Luxembourg and Belgium launched on December 16, 1944, and which lasted into late January 1945.]

SSH: What did they call it then? I know that is the name now.

SC: The Battle of the Bulge, big snowstorm hit Paris and the whole front. So, they were fearful now that the German's would send paratroopers to attack Eisenhower's headquarters and our headquarters. So, one night, they call us all out with our rifles and everything. We had to make a perimeter track around the base. They were expecting German paratroopers. I don't know what triggered that. We're out there freezing. So, one of my buddies says, "I'm going back to bed. If any shooting starts, I'll come back." [laughter] So, we're there, sitting under a tree, waiting. You hear a noise out in the woods--probably a deer, but you didn't know if it was a deer or a German. You didn't know what it was. So, one guy was going to take a shot, "Don't take a shot. Everybody will be shooting and you don't know what you're shooting at. It's probably some animal out there," and that's what happened. Nobody took a shot.

KC: How was it referred to, though, Dad, the Battle of the Bulge? What did they call it at the time it was happening?

SC: No, it was the Bulge, because that's what it was. It was a sag right into our lines that was about twenty to thirty miles deep.

SSH: With this snowstorm, the weather was the worst it had been.

SC: The weather, I'll give an example. One of my fellows I lived with came in my room, said, "Sam, look out the window," look out the window, foot of snow on the ground.

KC: A foot?

SC: It was cold. It was so cold. We had a potbelly stove in the living room, but nothing upstairs. So, on the walls, the moisture would freeze, a sheet of ice on the walls. So, what I did, I took my overcoat, put that down on the bed, my blankets. I was freezing and it was an extra

mattress around, about two inches thick. I put that on top of me--I was still freezing. I got up, I got dressed. I got up, I went downstairs and lit the fire in the little potbelly stove and sat by that. It was cold.

SSH: Was it coal or wood you were burning in the stove?

SC: Oh, that was another thing--you couldn't chop down a tree. We took a truck and went out. We got a tree that was on the ground and chopped that up, but down the road from where we were at was the headquarters building. So, somebody got the bright idea, "We'll all go down there and get some coal." So, at midnight, we went down to the headquarters building. The guy let us in, went down into the basement with cardboard boxes. We're filling them with coal and I'm up at the top and these guys went down into the coalbin. They're covered with coal dust and two officers walk in and we're stealing the coal. "What are you guys doing?" "We're just getting some coal, trying to keep warm." "All right, go head." So, they've got their face covered with [coal dust], couldn't even say they were doing nothing. [laughter] So, we brought the coal back to our house.

SSH: You were there until the war ended.

SC: Yes.

SSH: How long?

SC: Those pictures I gave, yes, was it June? I left there in July.

SSH: July 1945?

SC: Wait, here's another picture. You'll see what I'm talking about, something here.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SC: They were entitled to send three men home.

SSH: Okay, go ahead.

SC: All right, I'm coming home. The war is over now. It's July, beginning of July, and our headquarters is entitled to send three men home, fly home. So, they took the three oldest men, that were there the longest, and I was one of the three, so, the three guys I live with, and I have a picture here with them, someplace.

CC: Is this them?

SC: Yes, this was on our way home. I'll tell you where that was taken; let me look at it for a minute, Carolyn. I can tell by the ground, this is in Iceland. We were staying over in Iceland. The three of us, we lived together, we were sent home together.

SSH: Where were they from, the two other guys?

SC: One was from Massachusetts and the other was from Michigan, but, coming home, now, we came on a two-engine plane, a Curtiss-Wright. It was like a C-47, but was a C-46 b[Curtiss C-46 Commando], with only two engines. So, we couldn't fly nonstop. So, we took off from Châteaudun Airfield, from the middle of France. Holyhead, Wales, we got weathered in there for a week at Holyhead, Wales. We took off from there to Iceland. These were six-hour flights; overnight in Iceland. Now, we are headed for Greenland and, midnight, we're coming from Greenland. It looked like the plane's going to scratch both sides of the mountain wall and we land there on a landing strip that's one-way. You're supposed to land against the wind. There is only one landing strip. You came in over icebergs and we landed there for overnight and, believe it or not, there were mosquitos there, mosquitos in Greenland, stayed overnight there. Now, we flew over to Goose Bay, Labrador. We took off in Gander Bay, Newfoundland, and back to Goose Bay, Labrador; from Greenland to Labrador, another six-hour flight. Then, we would take it overnight, and then, take another flight from there going to Bradley Field, Connecticut. We got over Boston when it was severe thunderstorms. I was saying to myself, "I lived the whole war--now, I've got to die here." So, we turned around and went back to Grenier Field, New Hampshire, and made an emergency landing in Grenier Field. As soon we put the wheels down, rain came down in buckets. If that happened while we were in the landing path, we wouldn't have made it. So, we landed and we spent a night in Grenier Field. I was going to call home, but everybody was looking for phones and I said, "I'll call tomorrow morning." So, it was eight o'clock in the morning, I called my mother to let her know I was coming home, first time she heard from me in two-and-a-half years.

CC: The war was over at this point in the European Theater.

SC: Yes, we got to Grenier Field, and then, got a train to Fort Dix.

SSH: You got a train. You were not getting back on that plane. [laughter]

SC: I got a month's furlough. Then, I went from there, my furlough, was at Seymour Johnson Field in Goldsboro, North Carolina, a month there. Then, I went a month in Atlanta, at the Army airbase for a month. I'll tell you about Atlanta, Southern hospitality. I was alone, sitting at Grant Park, a big park in Atlanta, about six o'clock at night. "Where am I going to go tonight, see a movie or something?" I was figuring out where to go. A girl came up to me, "Would you like to go to a party?" "Yes, I'd like to go to a party." She didn't say what kind of party or anything, but I didn't care. "Yes, I'll go to a party." "Well, stay here. I have to get another GI." She went around the park and got another fellow and we got on a trolley car and went to the end of the trolley car line. Her father met us there and took us to his home. He had a barbeque and we had a barbeque party at their home with some of the GIs. They had a son that was in the Marine Corps. To this day, I don't even know their names--Southern hospitality.

CC: Was your transition from the war to the home front a difficult transition?

SC: Oh, yes, a big difference, like night and day. In fact, when I was home for that one furlough, I went to Newark. There was a USO club in Newark. "So, let me go down there for a

night, see what goes on." So, the hostess came up to me and started talking to me, "Where you from?" I didn't want to say West Orange. "I'm from Detroit." [laughter] I didn't want to tell her it was five blocks away.

CC: Many soldiers had this invincible feeling when they returned home, this feeling of euphoria. Did you experience this?

SC: Oh, Carolyn, we had no question we were going to win. Anyplace, I was at, it was just win, that's all, and how much it was going to cost to win it. That was the only thing.

CC: When you got home, you had this feeling that you could do anything now. Sometimes, that was very misleading.

SC: Let me tell you--I don't have it here--I have a letter home that I got from our CO, that made the forecast, sent a letter to all the weathermen, thanking us for our service and everything else. It was a form letter. Still, it was nice to get the letter. I still have it home.

SSH: What did you do when you found out the war was over in Europe?

SC: See, when we came home, we had a choice …

SSH: I meant in May of 1945.

SC: You were still over there in France and we had a choice of staying there or going home and taking the chance of getting sent to the South Pacific, because the war with Japan was still going on. So, we decided we'd take our chances. So, we came home.

SSH: What was the reaction like when the news came that the Germans had surrendered?

SC: I was in Paris on V-E Day. I was in Times Square on V-J Day.

SSH: Tell me about V-E Day in France.

SC: It was just like Times Square, the people were celebrating, the lights were on all night now, a big celebration. The streets were mobbed.

SSH: How long before May of 1945 did you think that the war was really over?

SC: You could tell because of the air raids. At the end of the war, our planes would go out without fighter escorts. The German Air Force was wiped out.

SSH: How soon did this happen, that you were aware of?

SC: I would say about maybe March of '45. I figured it was won, just a matter of time, because Germans were surrendering all over.

SSH: Were they?

SC: The Russians were at Berlin's door, we were the other way, knocking on the door--you could tell it was over. It was just a matter of time.

SSH: How did the GIs in your group feel about people like Eisenhower?

SC: Oh, they thought he was great. It wasn't so much Eisenhower, it was Patton. Patton, they didn't like.

SSH: Really?

SC: They called him "Blood and Guts" Patton. "His guts and your blood," that was the joke. One time, he was reputed to have said that he wanted the troops to take a certain target and he either wanted that target taken or he wanted a truckload of dog tags in reply. He was a tough taskmaster, but he got the job done.

SSH: This was information that was coming to you as a GI on the front at this point.

SC: Oh, no, they all had reputations. General [Omar] Bradley was a soldier's general, different personality completely. He and Patton didn't hit it off. Patton didn't hit it off with any of them.

SSH: You were hearing this in Europe.

SC: From other GIs.

SSH: What about Montgomery?

SC: Oh, Montgomery, nobody liked Montgomery. He was a prima donna. It took him a week to decide what he wanted to do. He cost us a lot of lives in the Falaise Gap. Right after the breakout at Normandy, we had the German Seventh Army trapped. We had wings on both sides and he was supposed to close the Gap. It took him forever to decide what to do. In the meantime, the Germans are pouring out. We would have had the war over then. [Editor's Note: The Battle of the Falaise Pocket (or Gap) took place between August 12 and August 21, 1944. The plan called for Patton's Third Army to capture Argentan, which it did on August 13th, and the Canadian First Army to capture Falaise. However, fears of friendly-fire incidents led Allied commanders to halt the Canadians, which allowed much of the retreating German Army to escape, although the Germans suffered heavy casualties, ten thousand deaths and fifty thousand men taken prisoner.]

SSH: What about divisions within France?

SC: France, with [Charles] de Gaulle, of course, he was another prima donna, but, no, we had no problem with them. I'll tell you about the French people. People said the French don't like us--a fellow's on a bicycle, he stopped me on the street, gave me a bottle of perfume. When we got to Saint-Germain, the little square in the town, I'm walking around the square, a woman came out

of a little store, asked me if I was British or American. I told her, "I'm American." She called me behind the store and gave me a bag of peaches. I hadn't had a peach in sixteen months at that point. Now, I have a problem. I have a bag of them. If I go back to the camp, I have to share it with everybody. I ate them myself. [laughter]

SSH: What kind of perfume did he give to you?

SC: I don't remember the kind, but I'll tell you something about perfume. There was a girl back home, would send me terrific packages. So, I said to myself, "Let me buy her a bottle of Chanel No. 5. You could get Chanel No. 5 very cheaply, because the perfume was cheap, it was the bottles they had trouble [getting]. You'd get a gallon of it for what you'd pay for a bottle today. So, I said, "Let me send this girl a bottle of Chanel No. 5, thank her for all the packages she sent me." So, I went to buy it and I saw another bottle, cheaper perfume, but the label struck me. The label said, in French, (Cuir de Russie?). I went down and I sent her that one. That's the one I sent her, only because of the label.

SSH: Was perfume readily available?

SC: Oh, yes. I bought perfume for my mother. I don't know if you know about French perfume, but I sent my mother a bottle of Chanel No. 5, a bottle of Tabu by Dana, Worth by Long, Shalimar by somebody else, all the famous [ones]. They still make these perfumes. I sent them to my mother and what she did, she waxed the tops and, up until a few years ago, after my mother died, she had never opened those bottles. I gave them out to some friends of mine. She kept them. The bottles were the thing, the shortage, not a shortage of perfume. I mean, it was cheap. I mean, I'm not talking about cologne, I'm talking about the perfume.

SSH: Were these decorative bottles?

SC: Bottle like that, like a cigarette pack, size of a cigarette pack.

SSH: How did you pack it up and get it home?

SC: Oh, you could mail that home.

CC: Did you have Styrofoam or anything?

SC: No, no, I took it home. This was after the war. The war was over then.

KC: You didn't mail it, you took.

SC: No, it was near the end of the war, but, no, I took it home.

SSH: What about the black market?

SC: Oh, we had one fellow that worked for me operating on the black market. What he would do, I'll give you an example--cigarettes were like gold. You'd get a carton of cigarettes for fifty

cents, you could sell it for fifty dollars to a Frenchman. British money, twenty-dollar bill, American twenty-dollar bill, you'd get three times that in French money. See, the people didn't want the French money. It was no good. Well, what they did one time, to help stop the black market, France called in all the money and they issued new money. So, you had ten days to turn in your old money for new money and I still had my money in my cartridge belt. That was my piggy bank. So, I turned in my money, I got the new money, but, inadvertently, in one of the other cartridge pouches, I had a five hundred-franc note, which was worth ten bucks. I still have it; I forgot to turn it in. So, I got stuck ten dollars, but this guy was operating on the black market, selling American money. I don't know how he got the American money, because you couldn't write home and say, "Send me some American cash. I'm going to cash it in." So, he used to take it and go to a jewelry store and buy gold, diamonds, rings, things like that. He got caught and he went to jail, on the black market.

SSH: When the war was over, did you see displaced persons?

SC: What happened there, I was in Belgium at that time.

SSH: You were transferred from France.

SC: Yes, I got up to Belgium for about a month. So, now, the war is over and I was coming back to Paris. So, we had our barracks bags in this railroad car and the railroads were all shot up. So, these were all antique cars. They could just about go. We had all our barracks bags in there and there were some displaced persons in the car, too. So, this captain said to me, he said, "Sam," said, "I don't want to leave the barracks bags with these guys there. You and another fellow stay there all night long," and we did. We're sleeping on the barracks bags, watching these fellows, but there were two or three displaced persons that were going back to Paris, too. It was my first contact with them, but, then, right then and there, the celebration was going on in Paris. So, I went to Paris.

SSH: Were you able to converse with them?

SC: No, we didn't associate with them. You don't know what kind of disease they may have had or what, stayed away from them.

SSH: Did you pick up any French? Were you able to converse in French?

SC: I had high school French, I had broken French. You could get around. I went to a hardware store to buy a washing board, so [that] I could wash some clothes. You know what a washing board is, Carolyn? So, I go to the store and I'm saying--how the hell did I put it?--I don't remember now what I actually said, but the owner didn't understand me. So, I'm going like this, "Clothes, clothes, like this." There were two ladies there that are howling. They're laughing like anything. [laughter] So, he went back to the counter, he came back, he had a washing board. "That's it," I bought the washing board, but these two ladies, they were howling.

SSH: When you got into Normandy and Saint-Germain, were there French people who were really having trouble finding food?

SC: Oh, yes, they were starving.

SSH: Did your group help them?

SC: What they did, Sandy, I'll tell you what they did. Now, we were at headquarters, Saint-Germain, in a girls' teacher college. What picture is that, Carolyn?

CC: It's a picture of you.

SC: That's after the end of the war. Oh, no, that's in Normandy. So, we had our headquarters at a girls' college, teaching college, and we had a mess hall there. Outside the mess hall, we had the garbage cans, where you dip your mess can in the boiling water, and then, go into another, about three dips. So, there'd be French people there with little pails. They would come and pick out of your garbage half of a pork chop, do something for fat, and they would take it home and eat it. The fat, that's the only fat they had to be able to fry things with, whatever they got out of our garbage cans. Then, as far as coal, they'd go in the woods and pick up twigs and acorns, things like that, to get warm. You couldn't chop down a tree. So, that's the only way they would survive, but they were starving. They'd come there into our mess hall and whatever they could salvage out of our garbage can, which was pretty good, if you like eating somebody else's food, but they were there. Then, if you smoked a cigarette, I didn't smoke, but, if you smoked a cigarette, throw the butt down, three Frenchmen would dive for the butt, because they liked American cigarettes.

SSH: Let us talk about the celebration at the end of the war in Paris.

SC: Oh, they were dancing in the street, everything. You couldn't move. It was just mobs of people. Same way with Times Square, it was the same way.

CC: Did people get hurt?

SC: Everybody, and their pubs were jammed with people, streets jammed with people, you couldn't move.

CC: Any fights or anything?

SC: You couldn't move.

SSH: Was it just US troops there?

SC: I was alone. At that time, I was by myself.

SSH: Was it just US troops there?

SC: Oh, it was everybody, the Frenchmen, yes, troops from other countries, too. Near our base in Saint-Germain, we had Senegalese troops and they wear these flowing knickers-like. They carried knives. We were warned, "Don't fight with them, because these are knife fighters."

SSH: What were the Senegalese doing there in Saint-Germain?

SC: They were troops there, fighting the Germans, French troops.

SSH: Was that when you first got there?

SC: They were there with the French. Oh, there were all nationalities. When I was at Heston, on the other side of the field was a Polish fighter group, all Poles. I went to Mass with them on Sunday. I'm looking--I'd just arrived there the Saturday--I'm looking for a chapel and this car comes by, "Where are you going?" "I'm looking for the chapel." "Come with us." I went with them. I was the only GI in the chapel, all RAF blue and one khaki uniform, was mine, and they were singing hymns. At that time, in the Catholic Church, we didn't sing hymns. The place was rocking.

SSH: Did you go to church often when you were in Europe?

SC: I never missed a Mass, except for the time in Normandy when I ate the green apples. Cardinal Spellman was coming to our base to say Mass. So, my buddy says, "Sam, you going to come? Cardinal Spellman's saying the Mass." I said, "Send him over here and give me the Last Rites. I'm dying." [laughter] I had an upset stomach. Everything that goes with green apples, I had it.

CC: Did you keep in touch with any of the people you served with after the war?

SC: I kept in touch with those three fellows I came home with, in touch with them.

CC: How long after?

SC: Up until about 1980, we got Christmas cards from them. In fact, I visited two of them, but, up to 1980, I got Christmas cards from them and I just think maybe they died.

SSH: They went back to their homes in Maine and in Michigan.

SC: Right. The only contact was, every Christmas, we'd exchange Christmas cards, except the fellow in Boston, I'd visit him. My twin daughters went to Boston College, so, I had dinner with him and his family. Then, the other fellow there, he was from Rochester, I was up in Rochester on business. I dropped in and looked him up.

SSH: You came back to the States and were transferred to North Carolina.

SC: Yes.

SSH: From North Carolina, where were you sent?

SC: Atlanta, Georgia.

SSH: How long were you in Atlanta?

SC: A month, a month there and a month in North Carolina, and the war [ended], they sent me home.

SSH: Did you at any point think that you were going to be sent to the Pacific?

SC: I didn't know and I didn't care. I mean, I was glad to get back from Europe.

CC: Did you think, "What if they send you over?"

SC: Well, Carolyn, the war's going to end anytime, even in Japan.

KC: Really? [laughter]

SC: I mean, we were firebombing Japan. What was the last big battle, Iwo Jima?

KC: Yes, but the atom bomb stopped Japan. [Editor's Note: Hiroshima was the target of the first atomic raid on August 6, 1945. Nagasaki was attacked on August 9, 1945. V-J Day was declared on August 14, 1945, in the United States and August 15, 1945, in the Pacific.]

SC: I know, but you're right; if it wasn't for that, we'd still be fighting there. They didn't surrender.

KC: You didn't know that then, though.

SC: No.

CC: What did you think about the atomic bomb?

SC: If they had it, they should've dropped it sooner. A lot of people disagree with that, but I don't.

SSH: In North Carolina, were you training someone or being trained?

SC: No, I was working in the weather station, doing what I always did.

SSH: Anything different in Atlanta?

SC: As long as you had airplanes, they needed weathermen. They can't fly without us. So, in Atlanta, same way, I worked in the weather station. In Atlanta, where Atlanta Airbase is now,

Hartsfield Aerodrome, on one side, we were on one side and the civilian planes were on the other side of Atlanta. Atlanta was nice. They were nice people there.

SSH: Were you starting to make plans for what you would do when the war ended?

SC: Well, I was going back to law school. I knew that.

SSH: You knew that.

SC: Yes, there was no question about that. Now, I had the GI Bill, so, I didn't have to worry.

SSH: When were you made aware of the GI Bill?

SC: I don't remember it now, but what did happen, I told you, Fordham wouldn't let you switch from one division to another. I had completed one year at night. So, now, I had a choice--continue with three more years at night, because it was a four-year course at night, or start all over and go days for three years. I started all over and went days. So, that's how the GI Bill helped, paid it all.

SSH: Where did you stay?

SC: Home, I lived home.

SSH: You came back home.

SC: I commuted from West Orange to New York with the railroad, like I did when I was going at night. I stayed home.

CC: Did you work?

SC: No, I used to caddy, but I didn't have to. I was dating my wife then. She was expensive to take out. [laughter]

SSH: You were discharged when?

SC: Discharged October 29, 1945.

SSH: Had you already started school at that point?

SC: No, I didn't. What they did to accommodate GIs, they started a September semester in January. So, I started in January, went all summer to make up that year.

SSH: What did you do from the time you got discharged until January?

SC: Hung around the house.

SSH: What about the 52/20 Club?

SC: No, I never took part in that, because I didn't need that, because I had the GI Bill. The 52/20 was for people not going to college; this was unemployment. You got twenty-two dollars for fifty-two weeks and a lot of them used the whole time up.

SSH: Was your brother still in or did he get to come home as well?

SC: My brother was in the Pacific and, when he came home, he landed in San Francisco and he called my mother. My mother had a private phone and he didn't have the number. So, he had to call one of the neighbors to go get my mother to come to the phone. Otherwise, she wouldn't have known he was back in the States.

CC: When did he return home?

SC: I can't think of whether I was home there or not. I don't think I was home then.

SSH: Where was he stationed in the Pacific?

SC: Cebu in the Philippines, Cebu City. He said the people, they eat fried bananas. They weren't bananas, they were plantains. He thought they were bananas. [laughter]

CC: You always wanted to go back to law school.

SC: Yes.

CC: Did the war influence that at all?

SC: No, no, made it easier, because I had the GI Bill. In fact, I hadn't graduated from Seton Hall at that point. So, I wanted to take a few courses at Seton Hall. I only needed a few courses to get my undergraduate degree, but I needed their permission. So, I went to the woman that ran the show there at Fordham. I wanted permission to take some courses at Seton Hall. "No way. If you've got time, study law, the hell with Seton Hall."

CC: You never really got a bachelor' degree.

SC: I didn't go back.

CC: You just have your law degree

SC: I got my law degree, but I'm about maybe twenty credits short of my bachelor's.

SSH: You can go to school with Carolyn.

CC: You can finish my senior year with me.

SSH: You knew exactly what you wanted to do, but what about some of the other GIs?

SC: Really, they didn't talk about that. It's a funny thing, very few of them talked about their families, like, we had one fellow that came from the Appalachian area of Tennessee, another fellow came from Atlanta, but they never talked about their families. A lot of them are married. The ones who were married talked about their families, like this one fellow there, that fellow from Boston, he got married and, thirty days after he was married, he was sent overseas. He used to write his wife a letter every night, sat down and wrote a letter to his wife, and what the hell do you say in this letter? I write one line to my mother, "Dear Mom, everything's fine." That was once a week. He's writing a three-page letter every night.

CC: I know a lot of GIs would talk about their mother's cooking. Was that a common theme?

SC: No. Well, I'll tell you about my mother's cooking. My mother sent me a package, spaghetti, box of spaghetti, tomato sauce jar, tomato sauce, she made the whole thing for a spaghetti dinner, when I was living in Saint-Germain. We went out and bought a couple loaves of French bread, we had a spaghetti dinner, and my mother cooked it back in the States.

SSH: Were there things that you asked for that you could not get there?

SC: Yes, I liked--what was it?--a few things I liked that they sent me, that I couldn't get over there. I don't remember right now. See, what happened, my uncle worked in the post office. You could only get one package a month. I was getting them every week, because he would take the packages that people wanted to send me and write different return addresses of people he knew, then, mail them. I was thanking people for packages that they never sent me. [laughter]

CC: What did you do after law school?

SC: After law school, I tried to get a job. The director of the Columbia University placement said jobs for new lawyers, at that time, were worse than during the darkest days of the Depression. I had a job--a chance, an offer of a job--with Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, a trial attorney, twenty-five hundred dollars a year. My wife was making more money than that as a secretary. So, I had trouble getting a job. I worked for a law firm in the daytime--I didn't work for them, they gave me a free office--where I served my clerkship. So, I'd work there until about two o'clock in the afternoon. Then, I went home and I put on my overalls and I worked for General Motors in Clark Township, roller-bearing plant. I worked a steady night shift there. So, I went to the law firm in the daytime, night shift at General Motors, and I made a dollar that way. My wife was secretary to the president of Colonial Life Insurance Company. So, I never saw her. I'd come home at night, she's asleep; when I wake up in the morning, she's gone to work. So, we didn't see each other until weekends, but that was another story. I dated her for a whole year, two times a week, and she had a boyfriend, another guy she dated for a whole year, two times a week. She had four dates with the two of us, every week for a whole year, until I gave her an ultimatum, that either he goes or I go, "Make up your mind." I figured I'm the guy that's going to go--he got the bounce, not me. So, we got married, but that was funny there. I was so mad at that point, "Why am I wasting time with her for? She doesn't want to get married, just

wants to date." Broadway shows, he would take her to Broadway shows, I'm taking her to Broadway shows, the whole bit, and I'm broke all the time, taking her out.

CC: Ten years after the war, did the war seem far away at that point?

SC: Oh, Carolyn, it's like yesterday right now, just like yesterday.

CC: You never forget.

SC: I can remember all that stuff, even what we were eating.

SSH: How soon did you join the veterans' organization?

SC: I joined in February of '46. My father was a member.

SSH: Did he encourage you to join?

SC: No, he didn't care. We had a nice group, post we had. We had a bowling team, we had a baseball team, we had everything going.

SSH: At any point in the war, did you meet anybody from Jersey that you had known?

SC: Oh, yes. I met the playground director right around the corner from where I lived on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. This fellow was a World War I veteran, he was single and he was in the Army again. I met him on the Champs-Élysées in Paris and he didn't have a place to eat, because you needed a pass; they got a pass. "Come with me, I'll get you something to eat." So, I took him with our group and we squeezed him in, but I met him. In fact, he's really the only one I really met that lived right in my neighborhood, the little Italian neighborhood. He was the playground director.

KC: You met your cousin overseas.

SC: Oh, yes, I met my cousin. My cousin was at Warton. It was a big supply depot and he was stationed there, working on airplane engines, things like that, and that was outside of Manchester. I had a furlough and I went to see him and they had a headline, local paper, "Cousins Meet in England."

SSH: Other than when you had scabies, did you ever need to use medical facilities?

SC: Not me, but this other fellow from Boston got yellow jaundice. He was in the hospital with yellow jaundice.

KC: You never got venereal disease, Dad? [laughter]

SSH: What about the film? Everyone talks about the VD film that was so frightening.

SC: You had two films to watch. One film was on the Articles of War, what happens if you desert. You deserted, they put you against the wall and shot you. The other was a VD film and in *Yank* Magazine--you got a magazine every month, *Yank*--it was a comic strip, *Sad Sack*. So, Sad Sack went to this VD movie and you see him like this--he's sitting there with his handkerchief, he's wiping his forehead. Then, he's wiping his face. Next screen, he's doing this and doing that. So, now, he's out in the company street with his buddy and his buddy said, "I want you to meet my girlfriend." He puts on a rubber glove to shake hands with his girlfriend. [laughter] That's what the film did to him. It was a VD film, what happens if you fool around.

CC: After the war, were there any particular movies that stood out for you?

SC: We used to have movies at Fort Dix. They had six movie theaters at Fort Dix.

KC: No, you mean movies about World War II, that you think that rang true?

SC: Well, no, I watched a lot of those; well, I still watch them now, see *Twelve O'Clock High*, movies like that.

SSH: Do you think they accurately portrayed what you saw?

SC: *Twelve O'Clock High* did, yes, *Twelve O'Clock High* was.

CC: Do you think …

SC: You see *The Longest Day*, a movie like that. *Saving Private Ryan*, I thought that was a little overdone, but, no, they do a good job.

CC: Did the war have any influence on how you raised your children?

SC: No, no, that had nothing to do [with it].

CC: How about Korea and Vietnam?

SC: Yes, well, I didn't like the way they were fighting the war. To win a war, General Nathan Forest, a Civil War general, said, "The man that wins is the one that gets there the firstest with the mostest," and we didn't do that in Korea and we didn't do it in Vietnam. We just matched them man for man. We had this overwhelming strength--instead of using it and get it over with, we're doing it piecemeal. We're doing it now right in Iraq, the same thing. Now, they used a surge. See what happened with the surge--we're winning now in Iraq. You've got to get there with the superior strength, that's how you [win]. Same with the Air Force--we shot down the German planes out of the sky, because there were three of us against one of them.

SSH: Did you stay in the Reserves when you got out?

SC: I was applying for a commission as a captain in the Judge Advocate General's section of the Air Force Reserve. I had the forms on my desk, I was filling them out, when the Korean War broke out and I put them right in the basket.

CC: What were your feelings during the Cold War?

SC: The Cold War, I was worried about the Cold War, because one little misstep, we would have had an atomic war, which is very serious, especially that Cuban Missile Crisis.

SSH: You talked about how the memories of the war are still with you so vividly.

SC: Yes, right.

SSH: How do you think the war impacted the man you are today?

SC: I don't think it did any change. No, I don't think …

KC: Really? [laughter]

SC: You're living with all these men, I don't see any change in me--maybe it's there and I don't know it--but I'm not like you read about now, people committing suicide and things like that. No, it didn't affect me that way.

CC: Do you think it was because of the way World War II was fought?

SC: Well, you take the Air Force now. The Eighth Air Force in England was the greatest air armada the world [had] ever seen. Two thousand bombers was nothing for them. You don't see that today. Now, a fighter plane, for instance, two fighter planes are fighting each other, they're shooting rockets at each other. They could hardly see where the rocket's going. Otherwise, it was all one-on-one, right on top of them. Then, it was two-on-one, things like that.

CC: In class, the other veterans in the interviews say that if they had the chance, they would fight again in World War II. Do you have that feeling?

SC: I would go right back to the recruiting station. I'd go back right now. I'm too old, that's the only trouble.

[TAPE PAUSED]

KC: At the very end, Sandra was asking you about the effect the war had on you. If I remember correctly, when I asked you that question one time, you said that it may not have been about you personally, but about people you knew, that a lot of people were coming from small towns and from very limited experiences. They had grown up in one place, they had never really traveled, they had never seen much of the world. Then, in the space of six months or a year, they were thrown into this battle and they were transported halfway around the world and they got to see a bigger picture of what the world was like. Don't you think that applied to your experience?

SC: Yes, because I didn't go anywhere, either. The biggest trip I ever took was Washington, DC, before I went overseas. I'd never flew before. I studied European history, so, I knew a little about the history of these places, but I never went anywhere.

SSH: Do you think it expanded your horizons and gave you a more cosmopolitan view?

SC: Oh, yes. North Carolina now, I was going to go in a restaurant and I see the sign, "Colored Only." This is at the end of the war, they still had the discrimination. They had discrimination right in Orange, New Jersey. Black people had to sit in the balcony in the movies, right up North here.

SSH: Did you ever see any of the African-American troops in Europe?

SC: Yes, I saw them there. What happened, they were segregated to begin with. The English girls, what they claim anyway, that these black soldiers told them they were really white, but they were injected with something that made them black, for night fighting, and then, when the war was over, they'd be white again. I heard that a dozen times, because the English girls went out with the black troops. They didn't think anything of it. Over here, it was a no-no.

KC: When I see people like my father and other people who served in the war and other people who didn't serve in the war, I can see a big difference in their perspective. I think they have a larger perspective on things. Their horizons were broadened. Maybe they didn't want their horizons to be broadened, but they got broadened, and I see people who never served, maybe not through any fault of their own, they have a more limited view of things.

CC: Sometimes, almost even ignorance.

KC: Yes, yes, and it has nothing to do with education or anything. It just was an experience that they never had and I could see that just in talking to them and seeing the way they act and the way they think about things.

SSH: Do you think it was because he was stationed in Europe and got to meet people like the people from Morocco and the Senegalese?

KC: I guess if you were in Europe, you had more of a chance to meet others, as opposed to being in the Pacific, if you were just on an island somewhere.

SSH: Would you think that the same wider vision applies to both?

KC: I think the fact that you're in the service, you're with other people, other people from other parts of the country, even if you're stationed on an island in the South Pacific, you're with other people. You're with Southerners, you're with people from California, and I think that changes you, because you're with other people and you have to live with those people. I think that, not so much meeting other people from foreign countries, but seeing people, living with people and having to work with people from different backgrounds, different from your own.

SC: That's true. You're living with a group of men morning, noon and night. You're eating with them, you're living with them, you're going out with them, you're doing everything with them. They're like brothers to you. They talk about, "Don't tell," and all this stuff with homosexuals--I could truthfully say, I spent over three years in the service, I don't think I ever met anybody that was homosexual, nobody. They may have been there, but I didn't know it.

SSH: Did what you had seen in the war influence your view on the Civil Rights Movement?

SC: Oh, yes, I felt sorry for the black troops. Here, they're fighting--I'll give you a better one. I went to a VFW convention in St. Louis, Missouri, 1949 about. So, they had the annual parade that goes for hours. They had a post from Chicago, a black post from Chicago. The parade disbanded in a park and they had Coca-Cola stands, things like that, but, if you wanted a beer or something like that, there were taverns around the park. This black post from Chicago, they disbanded there, they headed for the bar. They wouldn't serve them because they were black. They couldn't get a beer. Now, they'd just got done fighting for their country. Chicago was okay, wasn't okay in St. Louis, couldn't get a glass of beer, hot day, ninety degree temperature, but they were segregated over in Europe. They had their own Red Cross club, they had their own everything. It was a funny thing--at the end of the war, you got sent home according to the number of points you had. You got so many points for the years of service, so many for being wounded, so many for having a family home. So, I was sent to a black unit to write up the scores. So, I had to interview these people, "Were you wounded?" "No." I could tell that from his record. "Do you have a family?" "Oh, yes," he said. "You have children?" "Yes, I have two children." "Are you married?" "No, I'm not married." Nine out of ten of them had children, but they weren't married. It's like now, like today

KC: Even then, yes.

SSH: What was the unit that you were working with? Do you remember?

SC: The longest one was the one in Bushy Park and Saint-Germain, Headquarters, United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe. That was the official title of it. I was with them for a whole year.

SSH: No, I meant the African-American unit that you were logging the information for.

SC: Well, they had served in France. It was in France. They were frontline troops.

SSH: Were they Army?

SC: Oh, they were Army, but they all had illegitimate kids, the whole gang of them, surprised me. That's the first time I--you see it today, now, it's nothing today, with the illegitimate kids--but, over there, that was something strange in those days, for me, anyway. They all had them. I don't know where they came from.

SSH: I want to thank your entire family for coming today. I look forward to seeing you in May. Thank you so much.

SC: Oh, nice being here, reminded of old times. I don't have my ice skates.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 12/18/14
Reviewed by Samuel A. Christiano 1/10/15
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 1/20/15