

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE L. CLAFLEN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Thank you, Mr. Claflen, for coming to Bishop House for this interview, which is being conducted on March 21, 2000, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, by Sandra Stewart Holyoak. I would like to begin by asking you when you were born.

George Claflen: I was born on June 18, 1921.

SSH: Can you tell me, please, about your father?

GC: Well, my father was born on December 16, 1878, in Providence, Rhode Island. Did you want me to tell you more?

SSH: Of course, please.

GC: Well, he was, ... I think, the third child in a large family, and both his mother and father died at an early time, but, the two older ones were taken over by uncles and brought up by them. ... My father was left to take care of the rest of the younger kids, there were about six or seven of them, and he got a job and worked. He couldn't finish school. He worked and supported them until they could support themselves, and then, he somehow got to be an accountant, I don't know, a payroll auditor, at any rate. I'm not sure. He wasn't a CPA, but, he was a payroll auditor.

SSH: Did your grandparents emigrate to this country or were they native born?

GC: Everybody on my father's side came a long time ago. Robert Maclachlan came to this country in the early 1600s, from Scotland, as a Scotch prisoner of war. It is quite probable that Robert was one of the Scotch soldiers captured by Cromwell at the Battle of Dunbar. In the records of the town of Wenham, Massachusetts, there is an entry on November 4, 1661, that Robert Mackclothlan was accepted as a townsman. On my mother's side, my grandfather, William H. McCormick came to this country from Ireland as a small child in 1850, plus or minus.

SSH: I was just curious if there were other family members, other than these two uncles, to take in any of the family.

GC: I don't think so, but, I'm not sure.

SSH: Do you know what your father did for a living while raising his siblings?

GC: Yes, he worked in a butcher shop, cutting meat, and he did other ... things. That's the one that I remember most, that he told me about, 'cause he learned all about meat while he was doing that.

SSH: Can you tell me a bit about your mother?

GC: My mother was Irish, and ... she was born in 1880, in East Providence, and she was in a big family, too, and her mother died when she was very little. She had an aunt that moved in, ... her father's sister, and brought them all up. We called her Auntie, and a lot of them I got to know, of my mother's generation, my aunts and my uncles. They were all great and it was a big family, a big, happy family, except that ... one of them had gone to World War I, and survived that, he came back and got the flu. [He] died of the flu.

SSH: That epidemic was devastating.

GC: It was.

SSH: Your father's nationality was Scottish. Is that correct?

GC: Well, his nationality ...

SSH: I should say his ethnicity. [laughter] I am sorry.

GC: His ethnicity definitely was Scottish, but, he's American. ... We always think of ourselves as American. We ... didn't start thinking of ourselves as Scottish until we began hearing about it, and everybody else has some ethnicity, and ... we thought of that later, you know.

SSH: Did your father have any stories about growing up in Providence, Rhode Island?

GC: He had a lot of stories. The ones I remember concerned the dogs that he had. They were bulldogs and they were different than the bulldogs of today. ... The way he described them, they were much similar in appearance to pit bulls, but, they were nothing like that in temperament. He said they were family dogs and ... he was very happy with them. They had them around the butcher shop, too.

SSH: Did your parents ever tell you how they met?

GC: No, I never knew exactly how they met. I often wondered that. Why we don't know, I don't know.

SSH: Had your mother's family also been in the United States for a long time?

GC: I don't think so. I think her father came over in the potato famine from Ireland and she was first generation here.

SSH: Were you raised a Protestant or a Catholic?

GC: Oh, I was raised Catholic. My father was a Catholic, although the family was not all Catholic. Most of the ones that survived that were older than him, and one younger, were all Protestant. ... He never explained that. ... Maybe he had to be Catholic to marry my mother. I don't know. [laughter]

SSH: Was your mother's family from Providence, also?

GC: East Providence.

SSH: East Providence.

GC: Across the river.

SSH: Okay, and then, you were born in ...

GC: 1921.

SSH: In New York?

GC: I was born in the Bronx, in New York, right.

SSH: Were you ever told the story of how your family got to the Bronx?

GC: Oh, yes. The Bronx was a very nice place then and my father, at that time, was a payroll auditor for a large engineering company. He worked for the Aetna Company, but, he was sent out to these large engineering companies and he'd get transferred. He'd worked in Philadelphia, and he'd worked in Boston, and he happened to be working in New York when I was born, and that was at Queen Anne Hospital in New York City, the Bronx.

SSH: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

GC: I have a sister that just passed away on December 20th, 1998, and I had a brother. ... My sister was older than me by two-and-a-half years. She claims it was two, but, it was about two-and-a-half. [laughter] ... My brother was the oldest of all of them. He died, I think at the age of three months. I'm not sure from what.

SSH: You talked about being close to your mother's family. Did you travel to East Providence or did some of them come down and stay where you were?

GC: Every summer, we went to Providence. ... We really stayed in East Providence, but, we went to the whole area, every year. That was when we were growing up. That's why we were close, yes. They would occasionally come to us, but, it was rare for them to come down.

SSH: How long did you live in the Bronx? Your resume says that you were educated in Linden, New Jersey.

GC: I lived in the Bronx for four months, and, for my mother, ... a doctor recommended, for her health, that they should move to the country, and he came on the Pennsylvania Railroad, and it looked good at Linden, he stopped off, and they ended up buying a house in Linden, and they

didn't know, at the time, that Standard Oil was on the other side of the tracks. [laughter] It wasn't anywhere near as big as it got to be, but, it did [pollute the air]. A lot of people didn't like Linden, downtown, because the smell would come occasionally, when the wind blew ... from the east. It would blow and you'd get the whiff of these oil refineries, but, ... I never got it as a kid. I never noticed it. ... It was woods all around us and green and it was a very nice place to grow up.

SSH: Did you and your sister play together or separately?

GC: We didn't really play together much. We got along very well, but, we didn't play together. ... That two-and-a-half year difference, her friends were a little older, mine were a little younger, but, we discussed things together. We were pretty close, but, ... we never played together. ...

SSH: Could you to tell me any stories you might remember about growing up in Linden?

GC: Well, there was ... a development, and it was called Berlant Park, and it had been developed by a man named Furber, and Furber Avenue was right near us, and his property was very near us. He had a tremendous yard full of grass that was quite a distance from his house, and we all always played football and baseball there, [laughter] at Furber's Lot, we called it, and they never minded. They were glad to have us play there, most of the time.

SSH: Did your mother work outside the home or was she a housewife?

GC: ... She had gone to business college, and she worked, up until she got married, and then, with my father moving around, she never had an outside job again, that I knew about, never while I was alive for sure.

SSH: It was rare, in her day, for a woman to go to college. Did she ever talk about that at all?

GC: She talked a little about it, but, she expected us to go to college right from when we first started, as little kids. We knew we were going to go to college, both of us. ... We didn't know why, but, she said, "You're going." [laughter]

SSH: Did any of her sisters and brothers go to college?

GC: Well, she went to a business college and ... another one definitely did, my Aunt Irene. She was a teacher, a school teacher, so, she had gone to college, and another one, I think, probably went to a business college, but, there were three sisters. There was Aunt Irene, Aunt Essie, and I should have called her Aunt Jenny, but, she was the one that came and lived nearby. She lived in Orange, New Jersey, and we called her Nanny, because she was so close, and I think she probably did, because both of her kids ... went to college. So, she probably went to a business school.

SSH: Did your mother or father ever talk about World War I, or any of the experiences that they remembered, other than when they spoke about your uncles?

GC: Well, my father didn't talk about it, my mother did. My father had been in the Spanish-American War, but, he didn't actually see combat. He got as far as Florida and the war was over, but, my mother tells me that he tried very hard to get into World War I and he was too old. He was forty-something by then, forty-two, I guess. At any rate, they wouldn't take him. It bothered him a lot, because he had stayed in the National Guard, and he was very oriented towards the service.

SSH: Really? Do you remember anything about his National Guard service?

GC: No. It was all over ... by then.

SSH: He was only in the National Guard until after World War I, and then, he ended his service, is that correct?

GC: Well, ... he was in the Rhode Island National Guard, see, and we lived in New Jersey, and so, he ... was not active anymore.

SSH: You said that your family moved around a lot. You were born in the Bronx, then, at four months of age, you moved to Linden. Was that the end of your family's moving around?

GC: Yes. We never moved after that. That's the house he died in, and my mother lived another nineteen years, but, she couldn't stay in the house, and, after she left the house, she went to live with my sister for a short time, and then, she had to go to a nursing home. ... She would get lost and things like that. So, the house was sold. That was about 1960, I guess.

SSH: Was your family active in the church?

GC: Yes. ... My father wasn't active. ... He contributed to the collections and he went to Mass on Sunday. ... I guess he went to communion once or twice a year. ... My mother was very active. She was in the Rosary Society and she was very active and really gung ho for the church, the priests, the nuns.

SSH: Did you go to Catholic school or did you go to public school?

GC: Well, I went to both, as it turned out. There was no Catholic school when I went to kindergarten. I went to Number 1 School in Linden ... through kindergarten, and then, the Catholic school started. So, I went through the eighth grade in the Catholic school, St. Elizabeth's, and, after I graduated from there, I went to the Linden High School for four years. ...

SSH: Was there a Catholic high school that you could have gone to? Did you need to make a choice?

GC: It was in Elizabeth, it cost more money, and Linden High School was a very good high school, so, I was happy to go to Linden High School.

SSH: How did the Depression affect your family?

GC: Well, they kept most of the hard stuff away ... from me. They didn't tell me. ... During the Depression, my father never lost his job, but, he would tell my mother, ... not us, and then, she would tell us, "Well, Dad got another ten percent cut," and he got quite a few cuts in salary during that time, but, ... he never mentioned that.

SSH: Was he still working for Aetna at the time?

GC: ... He worked for Aetna until he retired.

SSH: Okay. Did you see any evidence of the Depression's effects on your community?

GC: Yes. Well, I knew about the WPA, and people were out of work, and it was all very gloomy to hear about, but, it was a little different, because I felt we were rich. My father had a job, you know. ... I didn't think about being rich, I just assumed [we were], you know. We always had good food to eat and clothes to wear, but, ... I knew there was a Depression.

SSH: What about your parents' families, your extended family? Were they impacted at all by the Depression?

GC: Oh, yes. ... My uncle, the one from Orange, ... Hennessey, his name was, he was married to the one I called Nanny. He had a business, had a laundry business, and he went broke, and it affected his family a lot, because they had a big house, but, ... he took whatever he could get, and he lived a long time, but, ... the Nanny, the one I told you about, she died when I was about six years old.

SSH: Did your sister ever talk about the fact that she was more aware of what was going on, since she was two years older?

GC: ... She didn't talk about that. At the family table, we would talk about things like politics and that sort of thing, and she ... was more aware than I was, because she was two years ... more advanced, but, she didn't talk about it ... in that way.

SSH: Later in life, did you ever compare stories?

GC: Not really, no.

SSH: What kind of politics were discussed at the dinner table?

GC: [laughter] Well, the one that I remember the most was when Al Smith ran against Herbert Hoover, and our family, of course, was all for Al Smith, and Hoover was an engineer. In that way, my father wasn't really anti-Hoover, but, as the campaign went on, ... he stayed strong for Al Smith and was very disappointed ... when he lost.

SSH: Did you discuss any of the anti-Catholicism that was prevalent during that election?

GC: Oh, yes. ... There was a lot of talk about it, a Catholic, at that time, could never be elected President, but, that didn't worry me that much.

SSH: Were you active in the church as a young man? Did you serve as an altar boy?

GC: I was an altar boy, yes, that's about it, and, of course, I went to the Catholic school. I studied catechism and all that sort of thing, along with the rest of the [class]. It was a very good school, by the way. We had terrific teachers that were nuns. They were Dominican Nuns and they were great.

SSH: Does one nun stand out particularly in your memory?

GC: Well, there's two that stand out. The first one that stands out the most was a Sister Michaelleen. I had her for third, fourth, and fifth grades. She got promoted right along with us and she was really great. She was just a young person. I figure, now, she must have been about nineteen or twenty when she first started there and she was a great teacher. Everybody loved her.

... My first grade and second grade teacher was Sister Stanislaus, and she was an elderly nun, and we had about, oh, maybe, sixty-two kids in the room, and she taught first and second together, and I never thought much about it, you know. [If] that's the way it is, that's the way it is, but, after that first summer, after first grade, as I was getting ready to go back to school, my mother says, "Sister Stanislaus says that you're going to [the] third grade. She says you don't have to go to second." So, I wondered why, but, what I had done, apparently, was, I had listened and put my hand up. [laughter]

So, then, I got to skip that grade, and I got right to be with Sister Michaelleen, which was a big break, because she was terrific, and then, I remember, when I was getting confirmed, Sister Michaelleen came to me and said, "It would be a nice thing," ... you have to take a name for Confirmation, "Have you decided what it's going to be?" and I said, "Well, not yet, no." She said, "Could you take the name Stanislaus?" and I said, "Well, sure." [laughter] You know, that's all right, and that made Sister Stanislaus very happy, because ... I didn't really see her that much, but, I could tell that Sister Michaelleen and she talked about things, and she was always checking. [laughter]

SSH: What were your favorite subjects?

GC: I liked most of them. The math was the best, but, I liked history and I liked geography, English. I liked them all. [The] English that we had there, they concentrated a lot on grammar, diagramming sentences and everything. ... It was really a good foundation for logic, logical thinking, I thought. They were good teachers.

SSH: Did you walk to your elementary school? Did you come home for lunch?

GC: I walked to school. It was about a mile-and-a-half away. I walked everyday. I guess, sometimes, no, I even walked in the rain, but, I had a bus that I could take to grammar school. It was ... three cents a ticket. ... They gave us a book of tickets, but, mostly, I walked home and I walked if I could. I did a lot of walking in those days.

SSH: Did you walk with your sister?

GC: No. [laughter] ... I would have. It wasn't that I wouldn't, but, I don't think she was a walker, you know.

SSH: Did you take the long way home?

GC: Well, to grammar school, it was ... closer to three miles to walk home. ... I took the regular way. [laughter] I didn't add anything to it.

SSH: Some people have told us about the trouble they got into while walking home from school.

GC: Well, there were little things like that. There were some places where people were antagonistic, but, that never bothered me.

SSH: Did you have any pets at home?

GC: Yes. I had one dog, and I loved the dog, and then, I only had him for about three or four years, and he disappeared.

SSH: Did you have any other responsibilities around the house as a young man?

GC: As a young man, I did. By the time I got to the second part of high school, I guess, I had to do things like paint the house, cut the grass, cut the hedge.

SSH: Who was the disciplinarian in your family?

GC: There didn't seem to be any disciplinarian. I mean, ... we just got along, you know.

SSH: When you went to high school, what were your favorite subjects? Did you have a mentor in high school?

GC: Let's see, well, the ones that I remember the most were the English teachers. They were very good, and the ... first year of math was just mediocre, but, later, the teachers were great from then on, sophomore, junior, and senior years, and [the] physics teacher and chemistry teacher were very good. Coach Cooper taught Phys. Ed., and he was the football coach, basketball coach, and all that, and I remember him very well. ... They were good teachers, then. They were very good teachers.

SSH: Did your class size change at all when you entered public school?

GC: Well, you may have the wrong idea about the Catholic school. After the first year, the class size was half that. ... It was about thirty in the class from then on and the public school was pretty close to that. I didn't notice any big difference in that.

SSH: What were your extra curricular activities in high school?

GC: Well, I spent a lot of time trying to make the football team. [laughter] The first time I went out was when I was a sophomore. They wouldn't give me a suit. They said, "You're too small." The next year, I went out and I could tell they didn't want me. They gave me a bunch of old rags and said, "Here, here's your suit," and they thought I wouldn't come back, but, I took it home, and my mother worked on it, got it fixed up, and that was only for the JV team.

So, I come back, and, now, the suit fit, and she had it all right, and they weren't paying too much attention to me, but, I was an end, a left end, and there was this one fellow that was playing ahead of me, and, well, we got to one game and he didn't show up. I don't know whether he was sick or what. They put me in and, for the rest of the time that year, I was the left end for the JV team. They called them the bone crushers and they called them the bone crushers because that's exactly what they were not, [laughter] but, we played other teams.

... The one big experience I remember there was, well, the first time I scored a touchdown, two touchdowns that I remember, then, but, we were playing Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a big school. It was Thomas Jefferson in those days, the whole city, but, it was all boys, and then, the girls all went to Batten. That's the way it had been divided up, but, Linden played them every year, even though Elizabeth was a much bigger school. We played them a JV game over ... at their field in Elizabeth.

... We started out, and we were beating their JV team, and they pulled them out, and they put in the first team substitutes to play against us, and, of course, that turned the game around, and I was the last one left in there. The other guys were getting hurt and, finally, I got hurt. [laughter] It wasn't too bad, but, it hurt, but, our coach wasn't paying any attention, and the officials stopped and said put me out of the game, [laughter] but, what was happening was, they were so much bigger by then, these first teams, and they kept running around my side, and I would, somehow or other, catch a foot, or an ankle, and they were getting burned up ... at me for some reason or other, and then, they all landed on me at once, and my whole back got twisted, but, I played the rest of the games. ... They got me some sort of a barrel that they put around me and I played the rest of the [games] with a barrel around me. [laughter]

SSH: Was this for the JV team?

GC: Right.

SSH: Did you return the next year and try out for varsity?

GC: Yes. [laughter] I was pretty confident, 'cause I'd done pretty well on the JV team, but, I got a shocker of a shock. First of all, I was a week late, because we were up in Rhode Island, and we came back, and they'd already started, and I noticed this fellow who had been an All-State tackle for two years and was a senior. As far as I know, I thought he had graduated, but, ... he's there. I'm wondering, "Well, that doesn't affect me. I can play next to him. That'll be good," but, what I didn't realize was that Coach had a lot of guys to play tackle and this guy was an All-State tackle for two years. He could play anywhere. So, he played my position and I didn't make the team, the first team. I was a substitute, probably just as well, because my mother and father came down to watch the first game and they couldn't stay. [laughter] They'd say, "You're liable to get killed up there," and they went back, but, I got in for a little bit, but, towards the end, I began losing interest, you know. Like, at half time, ... I was with the guys that didn't even come into the dressing room. We were left to play out on the football field with the team practicing out there. [laughter] You get kind of tired of that ... when you're a senior, and so, I just dropped out then. ...

SSH: What other activities were you involved in during high school?

GC: Yes. ... In basketball, I didn't make the team either. In basketball, I became captain of the inter class basketball team and I played basketball each year. While I went to Catholic school, we ... never played any of that. You had to learn a little bit about it. ...

SSH: Oh, really?

GC: The daughter of my relatives from Orange, New Jersey, was thirteen when I was born, but, ... her mother was dead. She had insisted that she was going to be my godmother, and she always saw that I got sports things, and, pretty soon, ... [when] I got to the high school, they found a backboard and we had a backboard, and basket, and basketball, and all that, outdoor basketball. I don't know if you've ever seen them. They have lips on them and everything. I had that to practice [with] at home. ... I got fairly good at it then, and the kids all came and played in the yard, but, baseball, I didn't make the team there, either, but, I played softball all the time.

SSH: Were you involved in any other after school activities, other than sports?

GC: I was involved in a couple of musical things they had. ... I didn't have much of a part, but, I was there, you know.

SSH: Did you play a musical instrument?

GC: No, I never did.

SSH: Did anyone in your family play an instrument?

GC: My mother could play the piano, and she tried to teach me, but, I always wanted to go out and play football, and we had a player piano, and I could play that, but, I learned to play a little

bit just mostly by myself, with one hand. I could get the tunes. I never got the chords right, and I liked it, but, I didn't have enough time to fool with it. I regret that a little bit. ...

SSH: Did you have a best buddy?

GC: Well, the buddies that I had in grammar school, a lot of them went somewhere else, and none of them were in my class anymore, and so, I had a whole new bunch when I went through high school. I ended up with a group of people, ... none of them were in my neighborhood, actually, but, they were less far away. ... We had like a little gang. We were called the Dukes, I don't know why, and we had a softball team, and we played in the city league, and all that sort of thing, and they were really good friends.

SSH: Were you involved in the Boy Scouts?

GC: No. ... Catholics didn't have a Boy Scouts at that time and it was run just by the Protestants. So, I didn't even attempt to be in that.

SSH: Did you belong to a CYO?

GC: They didn't have that name, but, I didn't belong to anything like that. I don't remember a CYO at that time.

SSH: In high school, did you have any part-time jobs in the summer or on weekends?

GC: Cutting people's lawns, things like that, but, ... not full-time, no full-time job.

SSH: In high school, you said you had been in Providence and that you were late in coming back for your junior year. Did you continue to travel to Providence after that? I guess that would have been senior year.

GC: That was my senior year. Once I went away to college, I didn't do it. ...

SSH: You mentioned that your parents expected you to go on to college. Did you have a college picked out? How did Rutgers come into the picture?

GC: Rutgers was the only one that got any serious consideration. Most of the fellows were ... going to Rutgers. ... I began to realize, then, that some people had more money than we did. [laughter] A few of them were going to other places, and we took tests, and ... that was it. I was going to go to Rutgers.

SSH: Did you qualify for a scholarship with these tests?

GC: ... I didn't have a scholarship when I first went. I qualified later for them. ... They weren't tests that you had in those days. There was no SATs, none of that stuff. ... There was a state

scholarship, but, there was an income provision, and they weren't sure I met that, and so, I didn't have that one, and that was a good scholarship, but, eventually, I got one. ...

SSH: Was your sister attending NJC at the time?

GC: Oh, yes.

SSH: Was it difficult for your parents to have two children in college at the same time?

GC: It was. That's why I commuted the first two years. The first year, I commuted with a kid who'd bought a Model A Ford Coup for thirty-five dollars, and he, and another one, and I, we drove back and forth in that car all that first year, and the second year, I took the train. Then, my sister graduated and, after that, I was able to live there. ...

SSH: Did NJC require its students to live on campus?

GC: No.

SSH: Okay. Did she live on campus?

GC: She lived on campus, yes.

SSH: This person that you commuted with in the Model A, was he also in the Class of 1942?

GC: Oh, yes. He was from the high school. We were all from the high school and we all took engineering. ...

SSH: Oh, really?

GC: ... The three of us.

SSH: Did you work that summer after your senior year, before you came to Rutgers?

GC: Yes.

SSH: What did you do?

GC: Well, I worked in a five and ten cents store for a while, and then, after that, I developed a series of lawn jobs for the summer, that I cut grass, did that kind of stuff, and I worked around my house a lot.

SSH: Did you do this with your friends or by yourself?

GC: That I did by myself.

SSH: With your sister already at NJC, had you checked out the campus before coming to Rutgers?

GC: Oh, I'd been to the campus, yes.

SSH: How did that come about?

GC: She made arrangements for some of her friends, when they were having a track meet, for me to come down and be there. So, I had been on the campus once or twice before I got there.

SSH: In the summers, your family traveled to Providence. Did you do any other traveling as a family?

GC: Oh, yes.

SSH: Where did you go?

GC: ... Sometimes, when we went to Providence, we went further, and we went up through Maine, and up into Canada, and we'd been to Canada, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts. We'd been to Massachusetts quite a few times, because some people that we're related [to] were up there, Connecticut, of course, and we traveled to Washington, DC, Maryland, and Delaware. That's about all we had traveled at that time.

SSH: Did you travel by car or by rail?

GC: [laughter] The first few times we went to Providence, we went by boat. We'd get the boat in New York City Harbor, and we'd go up the Long Island Sound and into Providence, and it was overnight, so, we didn't lose any time, and we didn't have a car until 1929, and then, we got a car. It was an Essex. Do you remember the Essex?

SSH: No.

GC: Essex Terraplane. Yes, they were big. They went out after a while. ... So, then, we drove from then on to Providence, but, before that, sometimes, we had driven with the aunt and uncle that lived in Orange. They had a Maxwell and we drove up in that. Then, after my father got the car, we sometimes drove with them in two cars, that sort of thing. You didn't make it all in one day, necessarily, at that time, but, if you did, you got there very late at night.

SSH: Did you stay in motels along the way or did you camp out?

GC: I don't remember there being motels. We didn't camp out. We had these like tourist homes. ... I guess, now, you'd call them bed and breakfasts, but, there was no breakfast, so, it was just a bed. [laughter]

SSH: It is interesting, today, to hear about the kinds of facilities that were available for travelers back then.

GC: They weren't great, but, we were just [looking for a place to stay]. I'm sure there were hotels around, but, we never went to a hotel. ... There were no motels in those days. They came later.

SSH: When you came to Rutgers, did you know which major or field you wanted to enter? What did you become involved in?

GC: Well, my teachers had all recommended that I should go into liberal arts, with the idea of possibly, eventually, going into law, it was kind of vague, and I tried to explain that to my father, and he would say, "Well, what's liberal arts?" [laughter] ... You know, I never could explain it very well, because I didn't know what ... liberal arts were. They didn't make that clear, but, as the summer went on, my mother kept saying to me, "You know, dad thinks you should take engineering," and I'd say, "Well, they all told me to take liberal arts. That's what I'm going to take," and, finally, just about a few days before I was to go down there, my mother said, "Dad says, 'Take engineering or you don't go.'" So, I went down and changed it. I had signed up for the other [curriculum]. I had to change it all, and I signed up for civil engineering, and it worked out very well. I think he was right, as it turned out, but, making those decisions for your children is supposed to ruin their lives, but, it didn't ruin mine. It worked out fine. [laughter]

SSH: Do you remember how you went about applying to Rutgers?

GC: I'm trying to remember. ... They sent papers and, possibly, some people might have come from there with papers that you could fill out and do it. I think they did it up in Linden High School and they sent it down.

SSH: When you got here, you knew what your major would be. Did you have to meet with someone to change from liberal arts to civil engineering?

GC: No. I just went to the desk and said, "I'm not taking that. This is what I'm taking." ... You know, I was very naive, and I assumed ... [that] they had to get approval of the Engineering School, but, whatever it was, it was no problem, and they changed it, and it was fine.

SSH: You said that your commuting buddies were also engineering students. Did that make it easier for you to commute as a group?

GC: ... Yes. Well, that was a big help, because, ... as engineers, we had much longer schedules. Most of the time, we fit together, and so, it was good. We could all leave and get there at the same time.

SSH: Did you visit your sister at NJC?

GC: No. She arranged a couple of dates for me, but, I didn't visit her there. You know, I would see her at home, when she was home. ... She was a very active person in college. She was involved in a lot of extra curricular activities and things like that and she had a job there, too, that she worked at.

SSH: What did you do on the weekends?

GC: We frequently had Saturday classes, Saturday morning classes, and ... we did homework. Basically, that's what we did.

SSH: Do you remember a professor or a class during your first two years that really sticks out in your mind?

GC: First year, Dr. Kirk was an English teacher, Rudolf Kirk. I remember him, because he was very much an Anglophile, and I gathered that during the first semester, when I got I think a 2, and I thought, ... "He likes the English a lot. When I write my themes, I'm going to write all about pushing England." [laughter] I ended up with a 1 in English, which very few people got, because he was a real hard to understand guy, a nice person, but, [not too clear]. So, I remember him, and there was a Dr. Van Mater, who was a chemistry teacher, who was very good, and the math teacher was good, ... Galbraith, and then, in my sophomore year, I had Brasefield for calculus, and he was tough, real tough, but, it's good to have a real tough calculus teacher, and, in engineering, the best teacher I ever had was a man named Frank Mirgain, who later became the head of the department.

SSH: Since you picked such a difficult major, did you have time for any extra curricular activities? Did you go to the football games?

GC: Well, I went to every football game, especially the one when we played Princeton in ... 1938, sixty-nine years after the first game, and we beat [them]. That was a great game. I still remember that game.

SSH: What do you remember about it?

GC: What I remember the most about it is, we were behind, 18 to 7, at the half, and Princeton looked so big, compared to us, and then, I remember, in the second half, we had an end named Moon Mullen who was very tall, and I remember the big hands sticking up in the end zone and catching the pass for one touchdown, and then, later, and the quarterback was Gottlieb, and he was a good passer, and we had Bill Tranavitch, who had been a very good sophomore, but, was now a senior, and, now, his legs were bad. He'd been hit a lot, but, he could still back up the line a lot, he could still block, and those are the ones I remember, but, this Moon Mullen, twice, a big hand went up in the end zone, and the second time was when we scored that touchdown, and we won the game, 20 to 18. It was a real miracle to beat them.

SSH: That was in your freshman year. It must have been really exciting.

GC: Oh, it was very exciting.

SSH: From reading the old *Targums*, I get the sense that attending football games was almost a requirement for freshman. Did you have any sense of that?

GC: No, I wouldn't miss them, you know. I was football oriented.

[Tape Paused]

... There was a game before that we played right out here on Neilson Field and I learned something at that one. We played NYU.

-----END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE-----

GC: ... NYU people came running across [the field] and the Rutgers people came running across. I didn't know what they were running across for, but, I noticed, and I hung back a little bit, and I noticed people were going [Mr. Claflen makes a punching sound], and I said, ... "I don't want to fight with these guys. I just came to see the game." [laughter] So, I worked my way out of that and it eventually broke up. I learned then, you don't follow a bunch of people that don't know what they're going to do. [laughter]

SSH: We will not call that a tradition, but, were there other traditions that were followed at the football games?

GC: Oh, yes. ... We sang "Loyal Sons" after the games. Whether we won or whether we lost, we stayed there for that, and, basically, there were traditions, but, I don't think we had any knights riding around on horseback. ... In fact, we weren't the Knights, then. We were something else.

SSH: Chanticleer?

GC: Oh, yes, the Roosters. [laughter]

SSH: As a freshman, were you involved in an initiation or was that only for the fraternities?

GC: That was only for the fraternities, right, and ... I was invited to apply to [a few], but, I couldn't see ... asking my father. I knew then that my father was stretched a little bit, and I wasn't going to get him to spend any extra money for something like that, and neither were my friends, none of us.

SSH: After you moved to Rutgers, did you join any on campus organizations?

GC: Well, I belonged to the ... Ford Hall group, and Wessels, and I played intramural sports, like basketball and softball, things like that, but, nothing else.

SSH: Did you attend the dances?

GC: I don't think I attended them until I was a junior. Then, when I lived there, I got to them.

SSH: Were you dating NJC women at that time?

GC: [Yes], but, I hadn't met Cecilia, yet, didn't meet her until I was a senior, and the one ... that she came with me to was my senior prom. I met her in November of 1941.

SSH: How did you meet Cecilia?

GC: I was in my Ford Hall dormitory, and it was my senior year, we were in a suite, and ... my two roommates were electrical engineers, ... not the same ones I commuted with. They still commuted, but, they would come and visit us there, but, one night, this fellow came, I think it was a Sunday night, ... he was a commuter and his name was, ... I've been trying to find him for years and haven't been able to find him, Jimmy Roets, spelled R-O-E-T-S, and he got to talk to us, and he said, "Why don't we go out and do something?" He had a car, which was nice. Well, my two electrical engineer roommates, they couldn't go. They had too much to do, so, I went, and he said, ... "Why don't we go up to the Newman Club?" which was the Catholic club. I said, "Fine."

... When we got there, it was a dance going on at Sacred Heart. It was at the basement of the Sacred Heart School. ... Do you know where that is? Okay, and this Jimmy Roets introduced me to her, but, he said, "George, this is Cynthia," and he didn't say any last name, and she didn't say anything, but, so, we had this dance, and we danced a couple of times, and then, I knew that she was going home with a big fellow that was a football player, by the way, Sy Klosky, his name was. I knew his family, but, later.

... At any rate, I thought, "She's pretty nice. I ought to date her, but, I don't know her name." I asked Jimmy Roets, "What's her last name and how can I get a hold of her?" ... He said, "Well, she goes out with a fellow name Jack Ambos," who was in our class, another engineer, "and you could ask him." So, I got a hold of Jack. I said, "Jack, I met a girl named Cynthia while we were at the Newman Club, and she lives in Highland Park, and ... I hear you go out with her, or went out with her." "No," he says, "I don't go out with any Cynthia. Describe her a little bit," and I did. He says, "Oh, yes, you must mean Cecilia Blundell. She lives at 22 Riverview Avenue, Highland Park." I said, "Oh, thanks, Jack. I'll give her a call." [laughter]

I didn't know what to take her [to]. I didn't have any money or anything. So, I took her to a swimming meet [laughter] and we walked over, and back, and all that, down the end of First Avenue in Highland Park. It was quite a walk, and, later, she invited me to the Christmas Dance, and ... I took her to that. We walked there. I walked over to her house from Ford Hall. Then, we walked across the bridge, and ... up Burnett Street, and over to Douglass, ... where the dance was, and then, when it was over, we walked back again. [laughter] ... We got back again and we walked to the dorm. You know, I was a walker. I loved to walk, and just never thought much

about it and she didn't, then. She has bad feet now, a little bit, [laughter] but, that's how we met, and, right after that, it wasn't too long after that, ... the war started.

SSH: After you moved on campus, did you work during the summers or did you go to school during the summer?

GC: I did not go to school during the summer. I had miscellaneous little jobs, but, then, in my junior year, I got a job at the Raritan Arsenal, and I worked on a construction project, and I stayed down here, and I lived in a house around here, and that was the only time, and so, the first two years, I didn't. I tried to get jobs. See, I was living at home the first two years, and I would go, and I'd apply, and get the job, and then, they say, ... "Are you going to college?" and that was the wrong thing to say. I'd say, "Yes," and they said, "Well, if you're going to college, ... we need you for the whole year. We can't take you just for the summer," and I never could hit one in those days, ... a real job, so, I had to take the makeshift things, like the five and ten cent store and things like that.

SSH: When were you first aware of what was going in Europe and the events that led up to the war?

GC: Well, we were pretty much aware of it though these two groups of people. There was one whole bunch agitating ... not to get into the war, stay out of it, and there was another group that was agitating to help. So, we knew there was a war on, and we also were beginning to be pretty sure, most of my friends at least, we're going to be in and we're going to go. ... We had that feeling, so, it came as no big shock. Well, it was a real shock ... when they bombed Pearl Harbor. We didn't expect it to happen that way. We thought we would be in Europe right away.

SSH: What kind of discussions went on in your family concerning Roosevelt's pre-war policies, such as the New Deal?

GC: My father didn't approve of anything he did. [laughter]

SSH: Really?

GC: I never understood really why. I mean, he disliked Franklin Roosevelt a lot, but, he didn't disagree with him on the war at all. ... In fact, my father had told me, for years he said, "You know, we shouldn't be shipping all that scrap iron over to Japan. It's going to come back and it's going to haunt us," and I didn't think ... that that would be the case, but, it turned out to be the case. It was a big mistake to ship it all to them.

SSH: Were there any other discussions that you remember? It does not sound like you were home very often, except in the summer.

GC: Right. Well, we kept track in the summer. I had a chance to see papers in the summers and I knew what was going on. He brought the *New York Times* home all the time and we had the

Elizabeth Daily Journal. So, we were pretty much up on the war, and we would talk about it, and talk about what happened, what was happening.

SSH: Just for clarification, he was commuting into New York from Linden to work for Aetna?

GC: Everyday, yes. That was real hard. He didn't have these calculators they have today. He had these tremendous pages and pages of numbers that he would be adding up, columns of six and eight digits, back and forth, and, sometimes, I was able to help him with it, but, he really didn't want help. He wanted to do it himself and, just a few years later, it was so easy to get calculators to do all of that. ...

SSH: What other activities did you participate in on campus?

GC: Well, I got a job here, an NYA job. I had [that] for a while, right away, and that, plus the work, engineering was four labs a week and a big schedule, so, there wasn't too much outside stuff I was able to do.

SSH: You did not receive a scholarship for your freshman year. However, you were awarded one afterwards. Was that scholarship based upon your grades at Rutgers?

GC: No. ... I just applied for it, and I'm not sure [why], but, they gave me one.

SSH: Do you remember attending chapel?

GC: I didn't go. [laughter]

SSH: As a commuter, were you exempt from mandatory chapel?

GC: Well, I didn't go when I lived here, either. [laughter]

SSH: How did you get around that? I understand that they took attendance.

GC: Well, they did, I guess, but, ... I told them, "I'm Catholic and I don't go to that," and the funny thing is, one of my roommates, Kennedy, his name was, he felt he had to go, because they said so. He went to both, but, I couldn't see going to both, so, I never went.

SSH: Do you remember any of the concerts that were held on campus?

GC: I remember there were concerts, and I may have seen a part of some of them, but, I never was gung ho on them. Anything that took all that time, [I didn't do].

SSH: Did you ever think that maybe your father might have been mistaken in wanting you to change majors from liberal arts to engineering?

GC: I never thought he was wrong. No, I didn't ever think about it. This is it, you know. This is what I'm doing, and I never thought he was wrong, and it turned out, I'm pretty sure, I began to think he was right. [laughter]

SSH: As a commuter, did you have to take ROTC?

GC: Yes, I took ROTC for two years.

SSH: Did you consider applying for advanced ROTC?

GC: No. I had thought of it. ... I had always thought I would take the advanced course. ... I had this class with Professor Lendall, who was the head of the department in my sophomore [year]. It was advanced surveying class. Professor Lendall, he was head of the department, and he always came fifteen minutes late, and he always stayed fifteen minutes at the end, and the next class I had was ROTC, and, at first, I'd just come in late, and they'd say, "Oh, you're late. You get demerits for that," and this and that, and I explained that to Professor Lendall, and nothing changed.

... This was before I made up my mind [about] what I was going to do, and I'm getting heat up there, and so, ... what I would do, as it was time for me to leave, I would pick up my stuff, and go to the door, and put my hand on the doorknob, and Professor Lendall, then, he didn't address the class, he turned to me and he addressed the whole lecture to me. Now, I've got my hand on the door. The minute he turned his head away, boom, I was out [of] there ... and I got up there. Sometimes, I still got ... demerits.

... It was getting to be a real hassle and I thought, "I don't need this." This was now ... '39, '40, and ... there was no sign of us being in the war, and I thought, "Well, what am I doing, going all through all this for? The heck with it. It's all that extra time. I'd like to do it, but, it looks like it's just too much," and so, I just ... didn't apply and didn't go for the advanced stuff. I thought it was a mistake later, because, when I went into the service, naturally, I didn't have a commission, but, on the other hand, I don't know, things worked out, and I eventually got a commission.

SSH: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

GC: Yes. [laughter]

SSH: Can you tell me that story?

GC: Yes. I was in Ford Hall. I was lying on the bed, trying to read something and listen to the Chicago Bears. I forget who they were playing. I don't know whether it was the Washington Senators or the Giants, one or the other.

SSH: The Giants, I believe.

GC: Was it? and they broke into the game and said, “Pearl Harbor’s just been bombed,” and I couldn’t believe it. ... My roommates were in the other room there. They were working. I said, “Did you hear that? Pearl Harbor’s just been bombed by the Japanese,” and, of course, pretty soon, everybody stopped doing whatever they were doing, and people were walking up and down the halls, and we’re all thinking about, “Well, this is it. We’re going to be in it,” you know, and so, ... I remember. You’d never forget that, I don’t think.

SSH: I know that there were a number of German U-boat sightings and attacks off the New Jersey coast prior to Pearl Harbor. Did you and your classmates know about these attacks at the time? Were you concerned at all that the Germans might trigger the United States’ entry into the war?

GC: Oh, we heard rumors about that, but, we didn’t take it [seriously], you know. We weren’t too concerned about that.

SSH: After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, were you concerned that they would attack the East Coast in some fashion?

GC: Well, it was three days later, Hitler declared war on us, anyway. Then, we all knew for sure that we were going. That’s what we were concerned about, when we’d get over, how we’d get over, that sort of thing.

SSH: Were you here for the convocation held on the morning after Pearl Harbor?

GC: I kind of doubt it. I may have been. I don’t remember.

SSH: Did you talk to your parents after you heard the news?

GC: Well, not until Christmas. [laughter] That was December, ... and then, at Christmas time, we talked about it. My father told me he thought they were going to do that. [laughter] He was right.

SSH: What kind of advice did they give you?

GC: They didn’t really give me advice. They expected me to pass the subjects, and get the work done, and they really never gave me much advice. ... I understood that they expected me to not get into trouble, get the work done, and things like that.

SSH: Did the semester of Pearl Harbor end in December or in January?

GC: I think it ended after Christmas, so, it probably was early in January, because ... Christmas holiday was nothing. You always had work to do, get papers finished and things like that, but, then, they cut the term short for graduation. Instead of a June graduation, we graduated May 10, so that we could all get out quicker.

SSH: Did you decide to enlist? What were you advised to do? What did you decide to do from December until graduation?

GC: From December until graduation, I tried to get a commission, or ... get into an officer training type thing, sign up for that, but, the draft number was such that they said, "No, ... we can't do anything. You'll be in soon." So, it didn't work out.

SSH: Were you talking to recruiters on campus or in the local area?

GC: No. I went to New York. ... The Navy had an office in New York. I tried to get in there, 'cause I had had an appointment to Annapolis at one time.

SSH: Oh, really? Please, tell me about that.

GC: Well, see, my father always wanted me to go to West Point, and ... I never got an appointment for that, but, this congressman in Elizabeth ... sent a notice out that he was taking people for examinations for Annapolis. So, I mentioned that to my father and [he said], "You know, son, you better take that," and I had, really, no real desire to get into the Navy, particularly, but, I went there, and I took the test, and I wrote some ... papers. It was a big, long test. I was a freshman when that happened. ...

Well, as it turned out, I did pretty well on the test, and I got the appointment, but, we knew ... I was in trouble. ... One thing we knew and one thing we didn't know. We knew that my teeth were not perfect, you know. I had a malocclusion. Well, my father immediately got me going to an orthodontist. ... See, that was in February, and I didn't have to go down there until almost summertime, and, by then, some work had been done. I had the braces and everything.

... I went down and they said, well, I passed everything but two things. He said, "You have a malocclusion and we can't take you if you have a malocclusion." ... I said, "Well, you don't have to worry." I said, "My father's paying for this," but, in addition to that, ... I had a deviated septum, and they said, "We can't have anybody with a deviated septum." ... I had just about enough money to hitchhike home with [laughter] and I didn't feel too badly about it. My father did. He thought that would have been a great opportunity, but, that was before I had met Cecilia. So, I don't feel badly about it at all, because I never would have met her if I had gone there. ...

SSH: You had already met Cecilia when war was declared. Did the two of you talk about what you thought might happen? Were you making any plans at that point?

GC: Yes. We talked about that I would be in it. I was going to take a job, but, I was going to be in it, with no question about that. ... We figured everybody would be in it and she would do the same. ... Some of her friends went into the WAVES, but, she didn't, and, ... you know, she did her thing and got a job.

... I don't know when we decided to get married. It wasn't immediately, but, pretty soon, ... we felt that we were always going to be, but, we didn't put it into words until I don't know just

exactly when, but, ... eventually, we did. I was in the ... service when we decided, and then, we got engaged, and, eventually, we got married.

SSH: You mentioned that they accelerated your last semester. What other changes did you note at Rutgers in your senior year?

GC: ... The only change I saw that last semester was the speed up, ... graduating sooner and school closing sooner, and then, I began to feel that ... other people were going to be coming into school, a lot of people were going to take other stuff, but, I was more interested in [other things], you know. I was going to graduate, and I had a job that I was going to in Indiana with DuPont, and the only reason I was doing that was, ... in those days, it was still a depression, and they had this rule out that, if ... you had a job and you went off in the service, you could get the job back, and I think that's one thing my father and I talked about, and he said, yes, I ought to at least have a job, so that I'll have one when I come back.

... It turned out to be with DuPont. They sent people here to interview, and I went out there to Wabash River Ordinance Works, and I lived ... near Terre Haute, but, in Clinton and Rockville, Indiana. They were very quiet places.

SSH: Had you had any hands on experience in engineering before you went to DuPont?

GC: I had a summer job on construction down at the Raritan Arsenal and I had done some map making work for private people, things like that.

SSH: Were there any internships in the engineering program at that time?

GC: No, no.

SSH: Were any of your friends motivated to quit school and enlist after the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

GC: Some of my classmates did. None of my friends did that, because they figured they were going to be going quick enough anyway, and they wanted to get things straight, ... and they were coordinating ... how they would get to the best places, that sort of thing, but, others, ... a lot of Rutgers kids did go down. One of them was in the Oral Archives, that Wally Kaenzig, I guess you heard his whole thing, and he went down there. They all went together, but, they hadn't apparently been in the ROTC at all. They just went down and enlisted, and, somehow or other, he got his commission, and he ended up as a colonel, and did very well.

SSH: You had tried to enlist in the Navy OCS. Did you consider the Marine Corps?

GC: Well, the Marines were part of the Navy ... and that part of the Navy didn't push me toward the Marines. ... The Navy had a civil engineering department. That's why I was particularly interested in that, and I tried to do the same thing with the Army Engineers, and I was

unsuccessful with both of them, and I couldn't do too much of that, because I'm still taking all these courses and wanted to pass. It was a bad time to flunk out, you know.

SSH: Obviously. [laughter] Did you have a regular graduation?

GC: Oh, yes, yes. That was a regular graduation, right.

SSH: Who spoke at your graduation?

GC: [laughter] I don't know.

SSH: In that case, I will not ask you what he said. [laughter] How much time did you have between graduation and reporting to Indiana?

GC: ... I think the next day after graduation, I got a train and I went out there.

SSH: Did your folks come down for your graduation?

GC: Oh, yes. My mother and father were there, and my uncle and his daughter, my godmother, and my sister, they were all there.

SSH: Was your sister working at this point?

GC: Oh, yes.

SSH: What was she doing?

GC: She was a buyer for Macy's. It was Bamberger's, at that time, in Newark, but, it was owned by Macy's, and, eventually, they dropped the name Bamberger's, which was a real traditional name in New Jersey.

SSH: You had done quite a bit of traveling as a young man, but, were you shocked at all when you got to Indiana?

GC: ... Indiana was not a shock. It was ... a very quiet place. ... These towns I lived in closed around eight-thirty at night, and there was nothing to do, and they had fixed me up ... in a rooming house. ... They expected you to be around in the evenings.

SSH: Really?

GC: Well, there was nothing else to do. If you weren't around there, ... you were in trouble. So, the after work stuff was just the absolute pits, nothing, and the work was about the same. ... I went there to do a job, and they were nice to me, but, they wouldn't let me do anything, and the only job they gave me, now, I'm fresh out of college, ... was planning and scheduling for this big project.

... You know, I worked at it, and, since I've spent my life in construction, I know that what I did was nothing, but, I did what they were telling me. I made these charts and showed them how many laborers, how many carpenters, how many ironworkers, and things like that, that they had had, and, more likely, it would be so much in the future just that kind of thing. It was pretty vague stuff, and they didn't even help me with that, and I'm sure they didn't use anything I gave them.

... I couldn't understand it. They wouldn't let me out to walk around the job, to see what's going on, and it was really driving me mad. ... I couldn't figure out what it was all about or why they were like that. They were mostly Southerners and I ran into an architect that was out there. ... I got to talking to him and he said, "Oh, you don't know what that's all about?" I said, "No." ... He said, "You went to ... Rutgers, didn't you?" I said, "Yes." He says, "Anybody from the East, they think, knows much more than they do, because the schools are better, and they're afraid, if they tell you anything, you'll take their job."

I said, "I can't believe that. They seem to know what they're doing." I had no way of judging that, because they would just come in once in a while and say something, but, I never was out there where they were working. So, I couldn't wait to get out of there, and get into the service, and get out of it, because it was such a drag, ... you know. [I thought], "No matter how bad things are when I come back, I'll never go back there."

SSH: How long were you there for?

GC: I was only there about five or six weeks.

SSH: Then, you entered the Army.

GC: The Army had called, and I had so much time to get back, and then, I went in the service, and I never felt badly about that at all. ...

SSH: Was there anyone else there who was in the same situation as you, right out of college and being held in limbo?

GC: There may have been, but, I wouldn't get to know that, because that thing was closed up, and you didn't get to know that, and I'm out in this little place that gets to go to bed at eight-thirty. [laughter]

SSH: Skipping ahead, did you ever work for that company, or with it, in any respect after that?

GC: ... As a contractor, I worked for DuPont, and, see, as a contractor, it's not the same as working for them ... on their personnel, and, by that time, they didn't do their own work. They just used contractors, which I think was a good move for them, being the way they handled things. [laughter] I don't know what they did with all those people.

SSH: When you came back, how much time did you have between leaving Indiana and reporting to your next post? Where did you report next?

GC: Well, I think I got back here about a day before I had to report, and ... I reported at Linden, ... at the city hall, I guess it was, and they had a bus, and they took us from there to Elizabeth. ... In Elizabeth, they put me in charge of a group of people going on a train down to Fort Dix, and I got down to Fort Dix, and then, ... there was no more being in charge of anything, [laughter] not that that amounted to much. ... We spent about two weeks there, learned a lot of little things, like, don't volunteer. [laughter] If they ask if anybody is a college graduate, don't raise your hand. [laughter] I did. I raised it.

SSH: Please, tell me about that.

GC: Well, all of us that raised our hands for that, we got the garbage detail, revenge, [laughter] but, I didn't worry about it. It was pretty putrid stuff. We had to take these cans of slop, and pick them up, and dump them, and different things. ... It wasn't great, but, you knew it wasn't for long, and then, we were out of there.

SSH: What was your Fort Dix experience like?

GC: Well, they gave you uniforms and they tried to tell you a little bit about marching and things like that. It really wasn't much. ... It was a short time, and then, we went to basic training. ... I got to know a lot of people, and there was a lot of them who worked in the construction industry that weren't college graduates, but, I thought, "Gee, all these guys and I, we're probably going to be going to the engineers," but, they wouldn't tell us where we were going. They put us on a train and the train went right through Fort Belvoir, which was the headquarters for all the engineering, never stopped as we went right on through to Fort Eustace, Virginia. ...

It was an anti-aircraft artillery base and we got basic training in a combination of infantry training and anti-aircraft artillery. I got that, that was fine, and I got shipped out to Camp Davis, North Carolina, and got into a group that was forming, and nobody knew anybody there. ... Everybody was from somewhere else. ... I had seen a poster on the wall about aviation cadets needed for meteorology, and go to a university, and, ... if you have three years of engineering, that's your only qualification you need. I thought, "Gee, that sounds good to me." I applied for it and I got some indication that ... I was going to get it.

... Then, we got a notice posted that we're all being shipped out, we're going to Louisiana, and, of course, the rumors were, "We're going out as infantry replacements, but, we don't know what." You know rumors, you can't go by rumors. So, I knew, if I ever got shipped out, they'd never catch up with me for this appointment. So, I went in to see the commanding officer, who was a major. He was a real Southern fellow and I explained it all to him. He was very serious. He never smiled or anything. ...

When I got finished, he said, "All right. You can go. ... I'll see what can be done." "Oh, sure." [laughter] That's what I thought, but, two days later, he had my name off the list, and another

couple of days after that, ... the appointment came through. So, I realized that you can't generalize about people, and whatever I thought about Southerners, I changed my mind completely, [laughter] and then, they sent me from this place down to Boca Raton for a month of military training.

See, all of the people coming in for this were just kids that were in their junior year of college, or just finished it, and ... this is their first time in the service, and I'd been there quite a while now, so, I felt, ... "I don't really need this military part, but, I'm going to be gung ho. I'm not taking any chances here. [laughter] I want this thing to work," and I did, and for that month, we had a lot of physical training. We had great food and we lived in this Boca Raton hotel. Of course, we were stacked up, eight of us to a room, [laughter] and you marched everywhere, and you sang everywhere, and all that sort of stuff.

... Then, we were going to be shipped out. We didn't know where, either to one of five universities or there was one unfortunate possibility, you might get the GI school, which I got. ... It turned out to be a GI school. ... There was no university, but, they sent us to Grand Rapids, and they put us up in a hotel in the middle of Grand Rapids, and it was ... very nice. We had a good thing going there and it was hard work. We did a lot of marching. ... We took the weather courses and everything. ... They were very well taught, I thought, but, about half way through it, word came down, they shipped us to Chanute Field, and we were going to continue it there. I guess the lease ran out or they had room for us at Chanute Field in Illinois, which is not too far from the Illinois University campus, and, there, I was doing great, and all of a sudden, one day, I didn't feel good. I always feel good. I never get sick, but, I didn't feel good at all, and I went over to the medical department, and they checked me, and they said, "You've got acute appendicitis. We have to operate, right away." I said, "Well, what about [training]?" [They said], "Don't worry about anything else. We've got to operate, right away." So, they did that and it was an interesting operation. They gave me a spinal, and they had this lamp over top, and on the lamp ... was a shiny, little rim around it. I watched what they did.

SSH: Amazing.

GC: It was interesting. I was glad to see that they were pretty competent, 'cause you never know in the Army.

SSH: Right.

GC: ... Then, I went back to the room, and the officer came around, and it turned out [that] he was a high officer, but, ... I asked him, "How will this affect my [classes]?" You know, I only had three or four weeks to go. He said, "Oh, you'll be washed out, automatically," and I said, "Oh, gee," you know, but, ... I learned, by that, don't believe everything you hear.

Now, I had the operation, and it was over a weekend and two or three other days, and they let me loose to go back to the barracks where the cadets were, and they'd been going to class. ... The weekend was only ... part of Sunday. The rest of the time, they went to class. All that time, they were taking a long range forecasting course, but, I go back to barracks, and they have these

military people that teach you the military part, they call them tack officers, tactical officers, and I went in, and I'm looking at the bulletin board, and I see my bed, and I've got demerits, demerits, demerits on my bed.

... So, I went to the officer, I salute, and I said, "Sir, did you realize that I've been in the hospital and my bed's got demerits all week?" He said, "You've been in the hospital?" Right away, I said, "Yes, sir. I've been in the hospital. I had my appendix out." He said, "I didn't get any report on that." He said, "Mister," that's what they called us, ... "best thing you can do is just keep your mouth shut, do whatever they tell you, and don't say anything about these demerits or anything else. Just get to the class. ... Do this." I said, "Well, I still have ... to live over at the hospital for a little while." He said, "That's all right. Just do what I tell you."

So, that's what I did. I just kept my mouth shut and did it. So, I come out, I go to class with the rest of them, and I go back to the hospital, but, as far as the hospital is concerned, I'm not a bed patient anymore. ... So, now, ... not being a bed patient, I got to mop the floors, clean up around the hospital, [laughter] while the other cadets are resting and doing their homework, you know. ...

SSH: How were you able to make up your studies? You were busy mopping the hospital floors.

GC: At night, while they're in study period, and, see, I don't have time for that. At any rate, at the same time ... I went back to the class, I find out that this is a review. They've just finished the course in long range forecasting. I've missed the whole thing, and so, I'm taking notes like mad, but, when I'm finished, I go up, there's a colonel teaching the class, and I said, "Colonel, I don't think it's really right. ... I've been in the hospital, and I had my appendix out, and I missed the whole class," and he said, "Well, did you pay attention to the review?" and I said, "Well, yes, I paid attention. I took a lot of notes." He said, "Well, let's see how you make out. If you can't do it, why, we'll see ... what possibilities there are, but, you've really got to pass this course." [laughter]

Well, I get the test and the test is thirty-four questions, true/false, multiple choice type questions. Well, that's good, and a lot of them, you could just figure out, and so, I took the test, and I went up afterwards, and he said, "How did you make out?" I said, well, you turn your papers in, "I got thirty-three right out of the thirty-four." [laughter] It was the best I'd done in any of the courses, but, I had listened real hard to that review.

So, there was nothing for him to do, so, again, he didn't want to say anymore, and I didn't say anymore, so, then, pretty soon, I get discharged from the hospital, I'm back in the barracks, and it's all like I've never been away, and, about three weeks later, I graduated. You know, they fitted us for uniforms, and I went home, and I always remember, my father wanted to meet me. I was coming on the train. I had a delay enroute, ... they called [it] that instead of a leave, and my mother said, "He ... wants to meet you. He wants to carry your bags." [laughter]

-----END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE-----

SSH: This continues an interview with Mr. George Claflen on March 21, 2000, in New Brunswick with Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Please, continue with your story.

GC: Right. Well, my father, I told you that's what he wanted. My father met me there and I said, "You don't want to take this bag, Dad." "Oh," he says, "Let me take it. Let me take it." He took it for a little bit, but, in the end, I got it back, and, pretty soon, I was carrying his bag, 'cause he was not real well, but, at any rate, it was great. He wanted to be there when I got off the train and that worked out well.

SSH: When you finished with the meteorology course, were you commissioned then?

GC: Yes.

SSH: Okay. Were you a first lieutenant?

GC: No, I was a second lieutenant then. Later, in Europe, I was promoted to first lieutenant.

SSH: You were a second lieutenant in the Air Corps.

GC: Correct.

SSH: Okay. I think the tape did not record that part. You had gone into the Army, but, you were part of the Air Corps.

GC: And, the Air Corps was part of the Army, then.

SSH: Okay.

GC: You see, the Air Force didn't start until after the war ended. President Truman started it.

SSH: Even though you were in the meteorology school, you were still part of the anti-aircraft group, correct?

GC: Oh, no.

SSH: No?

GC: They transferred me out of the anti-aircraft, into the aviation cadet program.

SSH: Okay.

GC: ... I was an aviation cadet in the Air Corps, not for flight training, but for meteorology training.

SSH: What were your orders once you left Chanute?

GC: I was to be stationed at Dover, Delaware, at an air base there. ... They had a big airport, but, I was there only for, maybe, a week or two weeks, and I got transferred to Phillips Field, at Aberdeen Proving Ground, and that's where I spent most of my time as a meteorologist.

SSH: How long of a delay did you have in New Jersey while enroute?

GC: I think it was six or seven days.

SSH: Did you get to see your family and Cecilia again?

GC: Right.

SSH: Is that when you proposed?

GC: I think that it had been before that.

SSH: Did you start making wedding plans or were you worried that you were going to be sent overseas?

GC: We did make wedding plans, yes, and I don't know when the date was set, but, it was set for April 15th of 1944, and it turned out [that] I couldn't make that. [laughter] By then, I had finished my tour, ... well, not quite finished it, but, I'd finished part of my tour at Aberdeen, and the reason I couldn't make it, I was sent down to a staff weather school in Florida for a month, and they just said, "You've got to go. That's it." So, I had to go there and we had to call the wedding off.

I wrote a letter to the commanding officer of the weather school, which was in Long Island, and I said to him, "I was supposed to get married on the 15th of April, and you transferred me, and I had to miss the wedding, but, it's now scheduled for ... May 13, ... and I just want to know if you can just let me stay there until I'm married. [laughter] Then, I don't care, you know. Do anything you want." [laughter]

I got a letter back from him. I had sent him a personal letter. ... He sent a letter back to me and says, "I'm sorry to hear about the terrible mistake you're about to make," and he said, "But, if you want to go ahead with it, we don't have any objections. However, ... if at any time before May 13 you change your mind, just let me know and I'll have you out of the country in twenty-four hours." [laughter]

SSH: Oh, gosh. That was very supportive.

GC: Well, I took it, I think, the way it was intended, as humor.

SSH: Were you in Florida when you wrote this letter to Long Island?

GC: ... Yes, I think it was. It was either that or just before I left to go there.

SSH: How long were you stationed at Aberdeen Proving Grounds before you went to Florida?

GC: Well, from the end of November of '43, ... the first time I went to Florida, until it was April 15th of '44.

SSH: What were your duties during that period?

GC: Well, I was a weather officer and the Phillips Field part of Aberdeen was very special. It had one real function that they performed there and that was the calibration of the Norden bombsight. ... It's a bombsight that you sight through with your eyes to drop bombs, and every airplane that dropped any bombs had to have a Norden bombsight, so, there was lots of them to be made, but, they had to be calibrated before they could be used.

So, at first, they're manufactured, and then, they have to be calibrated by planes flying at different elevations, dropping, and seeing what happens, and, that way, they could calibrate that particular bombsight, so that it would always do that at that height, ... depending on wind directions and a lot of other things, but, basically, that's what it was for, and so, ... it was a constant thing, because they were losing these bombers all the time, and losing the bombsights, and it was a big job.

... The problem for the weathermen was, anywhere else, they want to know, ... "What kind of clouds are we going to have?" you know, and, "Is it going to rain or snow?" There, if you told them it was alta cumulus clouds, they'd say, "Well, is it going to be at 9,000 feet or 11,000 feet? We've got to know," you know, and so, it was a little tough. It was a lot harder to do and, most places, it doesn't matter that much. ... So, in that respect, it was a tough place to be a forecaster, but, it was a good place to learn. You know, you had to work pretty hard at it.

SSH: How would you describe the group that you were with?

GC: Well, I was on detached service to a permanent group of regular Air Corps people, ... most of whom were either permanently there or they were people who had been returned from Europe from combat and were put there, the pilots, and the commander had been a master sergeant there. He was now a colonel. He was a colonel in the Reserves, and he was in charge, and he was very good, too.

SSH: Had these pilots finished their twenty-five missions and come back?

GC: Yes.

SSH: Did you interact with them at all, hear any stories?

GC: Oh, yes. When I first went there, the first part of the time I was there, all of the pilots and I lived in the top of the hanger. ... It was fixed up like a dormitory type thing, and we lived there

together and talked together, and so, I knew quite a bit about them, and, of course, they always talked about the weather when they were going to fly. So, yes, I had a lot of interaction with them, got to know them.

SSH: How many meteorologists were there at Phillips doing the same thing that you were doing?

GC: When I got there, there was a station weather officer who was a first lieutenant, and I was the only other officer, and there were either two or three, I think it was three, ... enlisted men who were forecasters, also. They were really meteorologist forecasters, but, ... for some reason or other, the way the Army works, they hadn't been able to get commissions, and so, they were enlisted men, but, ... they were all good.

SSH: What kind of security did you have at Phillips? Was it tighter than at other bases because of what you were doing with the bombsights?

GC: It didn't appear, to me, to be much tighter, but, it was very isolated, and, to get out, you had to get away from Phillips Field, into Aberdeen Proving Grounds, and that was fairly tight, but, the Norden bombsights weren't really a secret. People knew about the ... Norden bombsights, and what we were doing there wasn't newly creating anything, but, we were calibrating them to do their job, and I don't think there was much secret about it.

SSH: Okay. How big was the school in Florida? Did you know you would be coming back to Aberdeen?

GC: The first time I went to Florida, I knew I was coming back. ... It was a big base and a small part of it was devoted to this school.

SSH: Was it a good school?

GC: ... Yes, it was a good school, and it was training to be a station weather officer, primarily, ... a staff man in a weather office, and, if I had gone on to do that, eventually, why, that would have been a lot of help to me, but, as it turned out, I got into something else.

SSH: What other experiences do you remember from your time at Aberdeen?

GC: I had one experience that was really ridiculous, but, [as] it turned out, when I got there, I walked into the station weather office, and I met the station weather officer, we shook hands, and he said, "Okay, ... I'm going for the weekend. You're in charge." [laughter] ... He lived in Baltimore. That was his home, so, he was really a commuter. ... So, I talked around to the different people, the men that worked there, and, while I was there, that weekend, the colonel came in and he said to me, "Lieutenant, ... next month, on either," he gave the dates, "Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, there's going to be a group coming down from Washington to inspect one of the calibration tests. They want to check it all out and I'd like to know which of those three days would be the best." ... I knew that there's not much of a chance of ever getting that right,

but, a couple of things they taught us in weather school, they said, “If they ask you for a forecast, don’t tell them you can’t do it, you’re a weatherman, and don’t tell them it may be wrong. ... Just give them your best information of what it’s going to be and tell them that. They don’t want to hear all that other stuff. They know all that, you know. They know,” and the other thing they said was, this didn’t apply to that particular case, but, they said, “The last thing you do before you write your forecast is, look out the window,” you know, [laughter] but, that’s what whoever spoke at our graduation told us, though, but, I remembered both of those, and so, I didn’t say anything about how impossible it was, or how hard, and I didn’t tell them that I had missed the entire long-range forecasting course, [laughter] but, they have a great library of maps ... [that] goes back sixty years or so. So, I went through the library and picked out for the time of year that he was talking about, and I looked for maps that were very close to what the map was [for] that day, and I found five that were pretty good. They were almost the same, and I followed them, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, and thirty days, and I checked off what happened in each of those. Three times out of five, it snowed on the twenty-eighth day.

So, the Colonel came in on Monday morning and he asked me, “Well, what do you say, Lieutenant?” I said, “Well, actually, it’s academic,” I said, “Colonel, because it’s going to snow Friday and the field will be closed Saturday and Sunday.” [laughter] He didn’t say anything, [and then], he said, “Are you sure of that?” I said, “Well, you can never be one hundred percent positive, but, that’s my best opinion from the work I’ve done on it.” [He said], “Okay.”

So, pretty soon, the word is out, all through the place, “This new weather officer is telling us what it’s going to be thirty days from now.” [laughter] The station weather officer comes in, he says, “What have you done?” He says, “You can’t do that.” I said, “Why can’t I do that? I learned in weather school, they ask you for a forecast, give them the forecast. That’s what you’re there for,” and ... he said, “I’ll go talk to them.” I don’t know what that meant, but, at any rate, now, I can tell that everybody is counting the days. They wanted to see what’s going to happen [laughter] and the most ridiculous thing happened. It snowed on that Friday and the field was closed. [laughter] You know, it was like a hitting the lottery type thing, but, for a while, they thought I was really great, but, they found out I was not Superman.

SSH: That has got to be one for the record books, I would think. How often were you called to do that kind of long range forecasting?

GC: No other time, never. [laughter]

SSH: Okay. What happened after that?

GC: Well, I came back from Florida, and got married on May the 13th, and we went into New York. We had a short honeymoon, and I had just enough money to get back to the base, and she went home. [laughter]

SSH: Did she go to stay with her folks or your folks?

GC: She stayed with her folks and I went back to the base. ... When I got there, I had spotted another one of those posters on the board that said, "We're looking for photo interpreters, photo intelligence officers, and, ... if you've had four years of ... civil engineering, people involved with mapping, why, we need them very badly, right now." [I thought], "Oh, here's a chance to get out of here, go get in." You know, I didn't want to spend the whole war in that hanger and have it over and not even ever been in it. ...

SSH: When you say, "In it," do you mean overseas?

GC: Overseas. So, I applied for that, and I got that, and then, I went back to Florida to take that course, and that was pretty much set, that if you passed that course, you weren't coming back to Aberdeen. ... I studied very carefully. I learned about Japanese camouflage, and then, we graduated, and, eventually, I found out [that] I was going to someplace cold, wet, and windy. You know, they don't tell you where. Well, that could be the Aleutians, it could be somewhere [else]. I never thought that it meant Europe, but, it was Europe.

Now, we didn't go right away. It took a lot of time. First, we went to somewhere in South Carolina, Greensboro, South Carolina, for a short time, and then, we went to somewhere else, and, eventually, we went to Kansas, and I was stationed in Coffeetown, Kansas, for a while, but, it was all preparation for going, and, finally, I came back to Camp Kilmer, and, from Camp Kilmer, I went to New York, and I went on the ship the *Mauritania*. It was a British passenger ship that had been reconverted for troops, and I think it took us seven days, and we zigzagged all the way across the ocean.

SSH: You were alone. Your ship was not in a convoy?

GC: No convoy. No, that boat went too fast for a convoy.

SSH: When was this?

GC: That would have been, oh, I don't know, early '45, I think, sometime in early '45.

SSH: Okay.

GC: ... We got to England. ... While we were on the ship, again, we were up in the expensive area, but, we were all stacked up, eight to a room again, but, down in the hold were all these young kids. They were airborne replacements, and they were ... the roughest, toughest young kids you ever saw in your life, and they were rambunctious. They were getting into fights, and, of course, the airborne officers needed relief, so, we were sent down at various times to take their place for a while, and we had to keep order and things like that. They weren't bad kids, I mean, and then, just as we're about the fourth or fifth day out, it got real rough, and, now, down in that hold was a miserable place to be, and, ... like anybody else, they got sick down there. You know, they were like kids, and it was really bad, but, it stopped, and they immediately got ... better. They were in terrific shape and they were great kids.

... We got into Liverpool. [laughter] I always remember this. We no sooner got into Liverpool and, boom, over the side they went, most of them. They just took off, the enlisted men, and, oh, the officers were all upset. They had to go after them and we were down there, I was down in the hold, telling them, "No more to go," and to wait for them to come back. Well, pretty soon, they started coming back, and you'd find them in a hammock, be reading the paper, the English paper, and they'd say, "Yes, we had bacon and eggs, we had this or that," [laughter] you know, and they all got back, and it was very interesting to see that. People were very worried, but, most of us felt, ... "They'll be back." It wasn't like they were going to desert or anything.

... We never saw them again. They went different places and I don't know what happened to them. They were airborne troops. They probably didn't spend a lot of time waiting to get in. They probably went in right away and who knows what happened to them?

SSH: When you came off the *Mauritania*, where did you report to?

GC: They sent us to a little, English base, an American base in England, and we were there for, let me think, about two or three days, and then, we went to Paris, and another short term in Paris, which was very good. We got there at a very good time. They'd been liberated a short time before and Americans couldn't do anything wrong. They found out, later, we could, [laughter] but, we didn't do anything wrong, and it was very nice, and then, from there, I was stationed in Maastricht, Holland. I had ... to go through Belgium to get there and I was stationed there. Now, we were under heavy, heavy work, ... twelve hours a day, seven days a week, and we were billeted out in Dutch homes, and, for one reason or another, I guess, they picked me to be billeted with a Catholic priest, and he was a nice, old gentlemen. He felt that he had an obligation, that when I was there, that he should be teaching me Dutch, [laughter] and, of course, ... at seven days a week, twelve hours on and twelve hours off, I was pretty tired, but, I tried a little bit. I never learned much Dutch. ... That was it. It was quite a grind.

... We were turning out these targets for Patton's Army, and then, the Ninth Air Force, we were part of the Ninth Air Force, would then bomb these targets before he got there, hopefully. Sometimes, occasionally, he got there first, and we didn't bomb them, of course, but, ... I think we did a good job of picking the right targets for him. They were looking for ammunition dumps and they were looking for camouflaged equipment, anything that the Germans [were stockpiling]. We had control of the air, then, and the Germans had good camouflage. We had to kind of look through it with these stereoscopes and I think we did a good job. Patton sure went like hell, you know. He really went right through

SSH: How many other photo intelligence officers or enlisted men were involved in your group?

GC: ... In that particular group, I think there were about twelve.

SSH: How sophisticated was your equipment and your base?

GC: ... We had a good space and the stereoscopes were, ... what do you call it? They were up-to-date, right up-to-date. Everything was fine and the maps that you were looking at, or photos

that you were looking at, were spaced, you know. They had been taken at high elevation, and you were putting two together, and you had a pretty good way of finding out exactly where you were. Now, the photographs don't tell you the cities. You got to work that out and everything, but, I thought it was very good, and we all worked hard, and I think we got the right information.

SSH: Did you ever go up in the planes that were taking these photographs?

GC: Never there, not during the activities in the war. I had gone up in the airplanes in Aberdeen. There, you'd get a ride up. ... They have a tradition. Anybody new, they'd put you in the nose. They had B-25s, they'd put you in the nose of the B-25, and then, they'd go down low, over the water, as fast as they could. [laughter] ... They did that to everybody, but, I got, several times, a chance to fly there. ... I flew, after the war, in small planes, ... after the war had stopped.

After Maastricht, now, ... it was getting late, and we were moving fast, and I was moved. ... They had just taken over the German air base in Wiesbaden, and they said, "You're going to Wiesbaden. You've got orders to go," and I said, "Fine. How do I get there?" you know. "You go down to the airport and get a ride," [and they put] their thumb out. [laughter] ... Of course, they didn't want to take you, particularly, but, they did, and I got on a plane, they called it a DC-3 in those days, but, it was like a C-47, two engines, and it would have just the benches along the sides, steel benches, and the little place where you could sit, and the middle was all wide open, you know. So, we got on. There was nobody coming with me on this particular trip that I knew, but, other people were going for other reasons.

... I noticed that they all sat a little distance away from each other. Nobody got close to each other and I, pretty soon, found out why. The next thing they did was, they loaded all down the middle of the plane with bombs in crates, and that was fine, as long as they stayed perfectly level, but, when the plane would dip for a turn, "Boom," they all came over. [laughter] Well, if somebody was sitting next to you, you had to turn and get your feet up, or you'd get your feet crushed, [laughter] but, that was a free ride. You didn't pay anything for it. [laughter]

... We got into Wiesbaden in the middle of the night. Nobody knew anything about where I was supposed to go, or where to go, or anything. ... They never heard of the 20th PID, nothing. So, they said, "Go find a place to stay." I found an empty barracks, nothing there but a concrete floor. I used that for the night, and then, in the morning, I got around, I could find people, and I got over to where I was supposed to be.

... The Germans, before they left the airbase, the last thing they did was disable the whole water system. They had no fresh water and the people that I was with [said], "Don't worry about it." They said, "Right down the road, there's a little champagne factory, where we could get champagne for thirty-five cents a bottle. You don't need the water," [laughter] and they were right, but, we had a little trouble getting cleaned up. ... The town of Wiesbaden was famous for its baths and I did get down there. I was able to take a nice bath. They were very nice to you there. They have attendants that come and hand you your stuff and everything. ... They're very informal there. ... The attendants take care of it all and you just get in. [laughter]

SSH: When you were going into Maastricht, out of Paris, what did you see? What were the conditions like? As you went into Wiesbaden, did you have any interaction with the civilian population, other than the attendants in the baths?

GC: Well, we had some civilians that worked on the base and ... they had women that worked in the barracks, and cleaned up, and all that sort of thing. There wasn't a lot of [interaction], but, we could get into town a little bit, but, ... people were very respectful, you know. They'd step out of the way and all that. You know, I think, ... Germans tend to be that way. They do what they're supposed to do, and there wasn't much interaction, but, there was no hostility, either. I think they were kind of glad to see us, but, a little bit afraid of ... what we were like. There wasn't a lot of that interactivity.

... Then, eventually, the war ended there. No, wait a minute, that was in Kassel. I was out of Wiesbaden, up in Kassel when the war ended. ...

SSH: Okay. Is this V-E Day or V-J Day?

GC: V-E Day.

SSH: Okay.

GC: ... We thought it was May 9th, it turned out, people will say now it's May 8th, but, we were last to know. That was the worst day for danger for me in the entire war. Everybody had a gun and they were shooting them all over the place, up and around and [everywhere]. Somehow, nobody got hurt. I never understood it, but, they didn't, you know. It was quite a celebration, and, of course, they all had their champagne, too. [laughter]

... Now [that] they weren't doing anything, what they needed me for, the photo intelligence, now, but, I'm still a part attached to this ... 363rd Tac Recon. There were P-51 Mustangs ... with photo cameras and .50 caliber machine guns, so, we did both. So, naturally, I got a job to run the PX, [laughter] post exchange. Yes, what are you going to do, just sit around and do nothing?

... That turned out to be a lot bigger job than I thought, because, pretty soon, we found out that the government had made arrangements for the DPs. Do you remember them? displaced persons from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. That's where most of them came [from]. They came ahead of the Russians. They may have been Russians or they may have been Latvians, Lithuanians, or Estonians, whichever, but, they didn't want to be ... caught by the Russians, and, somehow, they got through, and ... they came pouring in, and they had no place to eat, and so, we were ... to service them with the kind of things we could do at the post exchange, other things. They got in other places at the base, but, ... that was one of the jobs to do, and I enjoyed that job, and, out of that, I got the only commendation I ever got. What happened was, now, we're finished. I had gotten to know the Army bases around. There was the Fifth Armored and the ... other groups that were around there that would come in, occasionally, and we had lots of stuff. The Air Force always took care of their own on that. They had all kinds of things. They had a lot of junky stuff that they had bought for I don't know what reason.

... At any rate, we got word that the Corps of Engineers were coming in, and they were going to take over, and I was in charge, so, I was very cooperative, and I made arrangements, so that we could turn it all over to them. They would run the post exchange. The Colonel had told me to do that and we had everything laid out in inventory in the whole place. ... We got all finished and they said, "You know, after we take over, we can't service you anymore," and I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "Well, once we take it over, we just take care of [the engineers.]" I said, "You're not going to take care of the displaced people?" "We're not going to do anything but take care of ourselves when we take it over." I said, "Okay."

I knew that they didn't know where the quartermaster was, where I made the arrangements, so, the next morning, I had a couple of enlisted men, but, I went up, and I'm in the officers' club, and the only other person there at five o'clock in the morning was the Colonel, and [he said], "What are you doing here?" So, I told him what had happened and I said, "They don't know." I said, "I'm going down to the quartermaster, and I'll get it changed back again, and it'll be ours for a while." He said, "You do that, ... and then, we'll take everything that's good and we'll send it up to the Air Corps in Berlin, other places. We'll call in the Fifth Armored, we'll call in everybody, and we'll leave them all the crap." [laughter] So, that was my job, to do that. That's what I got a commendation for. I did just that.

We went off in the early [morning]. It was very dark, you know. We had two trucks, big trucks. We went down, and, pretty soon, you could tell they were following us, and I told them that, "We've got to lose them. I don't want them here at the same time we are," and ... we did, somehow, get to the quartermaster before they [could], 'cause they didn't know where they were going and we knew exactly how to get there. We'd been doing it. Well, I went in and I told the quartermaster, it was an enlisted man, ... "You know this thing I had turned over to them? Now, they tell us they're not going to service us, and they're not going to do this, and they're not going to do that, and I'd like to get that back." He reached down, and he got the papers that I'd signed, and [Mr. Claflen makes a ripping noise].

SSH: He tore them up?

GC: Tore them up, and then, they came. Well, now, they find out what's happened. So, we said, "Well, you don't have it anymore. ... You're not getting it, but," I said, "if you want to be cooperative, we could, maybe, work this thing out, because we've got a big load here. You want to carry some of it back for us, fine, but, you're just doing it for us, now. You don't have it." So, they were there and what were they going to do?

So, we brought the stuff back, and, now, we've got it, and the Colonel waited a little while, and then, he outranked the major that was in charge of the engineers, and told him how it was going to be. In the meantime, I got a hold of the Fifth Armored and all those people coming in on getting the stuff.

... The biggest thing was the Coca-Cola machines. That went ... right up to Berlin. Then, I had cigarettes, chocolate, candy. Candy was a big thing there at that time. You could do anything

with candy and cigarettes. Everybody was mad for cigarettes and we unloaded them all, got rid of all that, and we had all this junk that had accumulated. That's what they got. [laughter] I don't know how they ever made out, because we moved out pretty quickly after that, and he left orders, "You've got to handle the displaced persons and you'd better do it." ... So, it all worked out.

SSH: Why do you think there was no cooperation? Why were they going to do that?

GC: You had some peculiar people [who] ended up being able to make decisions like that. ... That wasn't typical. The Air Force was very loose and informal. ... The infantry wasn't like that. ... The Corps of Engineers, they seemed to be pretty sticky. They weren't friendly or anything. ... I thought it was funny. I always wanted to be in the engineers and the only experience I had with them was a disaster, for them. [laughter]

SSH: Where did you go from Kassel?

GC: After Kassel, we were assigned to a project back in France. ... We moved back into the Paris area, Criel, a little bit north of Paris, and then, ... later, we had to move to the south of France, and our mission was a very secret mission. Nobody knew anything about it, except everybody but the Americans. [laughter] I mean, they see [that] we had these little planes they used up in Alaska for the short term flights. We had them and guys leaning out with cameras, taking pictures. [laughter] Everybody knew what we were doing.

... We'd made a grid and got all these little bridges, culverts, and anything that might be a target for the next war, if we ever were invaded, so that they would have all the pictures of everything that was there, and the French didn't care. [laughter] ... Our people took it pretty seriously. ... You know, it was a job we had to do. We did a good job of it. ... I was in charge of that. Then, a guy came over from [the States], had never been overseas, just got there, a captain, and, of course, he immediately took charge, and he was a little bit of a stiff, but, I guess it wasn't too bad.

... We did that until we covered the entire area of northern France and central France, and then, we went down to the Marseilles area, a place called Istres, and we moved in there, and we covered the south of France, and we were just about finished with that when ... I got to go home.

SSH: Were you still trying to accumulate points? Were you worried about being sent to Japan?

GC: I was sure I would go to Japan, because ... I didn't have a lot of points accumulated by being overseas and I hadn't been over there that long. The eighty-five pointers were supposed to go home right away, forty-five to eighty-five would go next, and, below forty, ... you didn't know what they were going to do, whether you were going to stay or whatever, and it sounded good. They had it all figured out, and then, the war ended in Japan, and that changed things, because, now, the eighty-five pointers, we don't want them to go to Japan, and the forty-five to eighty-five ones were the most likely ones to go. We'll send them to Japan, but, the best way to get to Japan is to go back to America, and then, to Japan. Well, there was a short time between, ... from May

to September, that [the] war ended, and, now, these guys are home, and what are we going to do with them? They discharged them and these eighty-five pointers were ... upset over [that]. [laughter] That's when they had the riots.

SSH: Did you witness any of those or did you only hear about them?

GC: I never personally saw a riot. I saw a lot of irritated people, and I heard them talking, and I saw pictures of the marching in Paris. It was called a riot. I didn't see any violence. They just marched, and they didn't do any damage or anything, but, they called them riots. [They were] nothing like some riots we had here, later, but, I didn't blame them, you know. I was very sympathetic. ... It's too bad, but, I did know that it wasn't deliberate, that's the one thing, [laughter] and they meant well, and, eventually, they got home.

SSH: What was Marseilles like, compared to the rest of Europe?

GC: Well, it was one place you didn't want to walk around alone in, not because of any anti-Americanism, but, just because they had a lot of criminals there, [laughter] like we might have in a bad spot. ... When we moved from Criel down to the Istres area, you know how the Air Force moves. There are two kinds of officers. There's pilots and ground officers. Well, the pilots have the planes and they fly down. The ground officers are put in charge of the trains. ... I was in charge of the train to go down with all the stuff, the enlisted men and everything, and, naturally, I had a lot of things on my mind, and ... all my stuff got stolen. [laughter] ... I survived that, you know. You got more stuff. They issued more, all the clothes, footlocker, and all that sort of stuff.

SSH: Did your training prepare you for your experiences in Europe or did you feel that you were left unprepared in some incidences by your training?

GC: Well, I was glad I had the training that I had had, because I was the only weather officer that carried his carbine around all the time. I mean, they gave it to me, I'm going to have it, and I kept it clean and ready. I never used it, never had to use it.

When I got down to Istres, it was a BOQ, bachelors' officers' quarters, and there was this American with a thick, German accent who was a photographer, and he was patriotic, it was nothing like that, but, he was a screwball, and he would take out his gun, and wave it around, and threaten [people]. ... A medical doctor, who was a captain, went up to him, ... and he pointed the gun at him, and we had a West Pointer who didn't live in the barracks, a major, he lived in a special office at the end of the barracks, and I figured, "Hey, I'm not going to have this guy be pointing a gun around. I don't know who he's going to shoot." So, I waited until he went to sleep, and I got the gun, and I took it over to the major, and I told him about it, and I gave it to him, and I thought something might happen. Nothing ever happened about it. I don't know, I think he gave it back to him, [laughter] but, we didn't have any more trouble and that's the only thing. That's the closest I ever came to anything. ... I'm very happy that I didn't have to face anything worse, but, I was ready if it happened. I thought I was, anyway, you know.

SSH: Did you come back by boat or did you fly back?

GC: Oh, yes, coming back on a long boat, *General George O. Squire*. It was one of the ones that was made in mass production, a little bit bigger than the smaller ones, but, ... it took a long time. I think nine days it took them to get back.

SSH: Did you come back into New York?

GC: Yes.

SSH: How long did you have to wait before you were discharged?

GC: Well, they unloaded us in New York and we went to Kilmer, I think it was. That's where we left from. I think we went to Kilmer, and maybe we had to go to Dix, too, but, it wasn't too long. It was a couple of weeks, and I signed up for the Reserves, but, ... that worked out all right. You know, Korea came along a few years later, and, ... by then, now, I had a son, and a house, and things like that, and Truman just goes ahead and extends my term for three years or more. I said, "He's got a lot of nerve doing that." I signed up for five, but, at any rate, one day, I got a letter from the Air Force.

[Tape Paused]

SSH: You were telling me about the letter you received from the Air Force.

GC: Well, they were telling me that I was over the age, that, now, I wouldn't be needed anymore.

-----END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO-----

SSH: What was your homecoming like?

GC: Well, people were glad to see me. [laughter] I was glad to see them. ... Cecilia and I immediately went into New York for our second honeymoon, and, while we were there, I had a call from my old friend, Professor Mirgain, who was now temporarily in charge of the Civil Engineering Department, and he said, "Have you taken a job, yet?" and I said, "Not yet." [laughter] ... He said that he needed someone to teach highway engineering, because ... a lot of roads were going to be built, and it's just a three month course. He could only guarantee three months, but, it would be three hundred dollars a month. Well, that's pretty good, so, I accepted that, and I took that job and felt pretty good, having a job that quick.

... After that three months was up, why, they approached me to stay on as an instructor for a year, and I did that while I was trying to figure out what to do, and I took other jobs. We started a small surveying business with a couple of friends, on our own time, but, that kind of mired, didn't work into much, and I taught a course that summer, ... between teaching the regular courses. I taught a drafting course. I was an assistant in the drafting course. I wasn't the head of

it. I did that. I did anything I could do. I wanted to make as much money as I could. ... I worked for a civil engineering firm in New Brunswick. I worked in their office that summer, too.

SSH: What were some of the differences and similarities between the pre and post-war Rutgers campuses?

GC: Well, we came back, and the campus was loaded with people who had come from the service, and a lot of them were older, and most of them were hard working, and wanted to get everything they could out of it, and graduate, and get a job, and I just had one or two characters when I was teaching, but, nothing real serious, but, I could see that it wasn't for me, anyway. I had never meant to be a teacher. I have nothing against them. I admire teachers, but, what I wanted to do was be in the construction business.

... My son ... was coming along, and he was born on December 21st of that year, 1946, and ... I just knew that I had to get a job with more money, get a house, do things. In the meantime, we had just stayed with her mother and father and I knew that that shouldn't keep going on like that. They were great, though.

SSH: Do you know of any activities that either your family members or Cecilia's family members were involved in concerning the war, such as bond or scrap drives?

GC: Cecilia's father was in a lot of volunteer group things. ... My father was in his middle sixties and was an air raid warden in Linden, New Jersey.

What I remember, though, is that, this was before I went overseas, they had rationing of meat, and I was staying with my mother and father for part of that time. He went to some market that he knew about in New York and ... he brought home buffalo steaks. You know, they weren't rationed, and, oh, they were great, and I had them for breakfast, 'cause we never knew how long I'd be there, and, of course, they tried to do everything they could for me ... at that time, and always, really, and, ... most of my time, I was anxious to get ... away and see Cecilia. [laughter]

SSH: When you were working for the PX overseas, after V-E Day, were you aware of any black market activities?

GC: I was not aware of any black market activities, but, I did know that people accumulated cigarettes to get special favors, and candy. They were big things to have. ... I saw a lot of things, not near my PX, but, on trains that I was on, traveling. I saw what they could do with cigarettes and candy, but, I never saw any black market. This was just regular Americans. [laughter]

SSH: Did you ever use any of your GI Bill benefits?

GC: No. I took some courses, but, it was too complicated to [use the GI Bill]. All I could get was a textbook. I don't think they paid for any of it. I took two courses the year I taught, one in Columbia, advanced mathematics, and one at Rutgers with Professor Johnson, who was a great professor, in advanced structures, but, the tuition, I don't know what it was at Columbia, we just

paid it, and, at Rutgers, there wasn't any tuition. ... I thought the GI Bill was great, but, I already was a graduate and I really didn't need it that much.

SSH: When you were teaching, did you have "traditional" students, recent high school graduates, or veterans in your classes?

GC: ... I had both.

SSH: Did you notice any differences in each group's attitude or in how they approached their course work?

GC: Well, it's hard ... to generalize. ... Most of the veterans, not all of them, I had a couple that were different. ... I don't know that I would even call them veterans, but, they'd been in the service. The ones that I'm talking about, the ones that had been in the service and were out of it, they were like I told you before, but, some of them thought that they were entitled to certain grades, and all that kind of stuff, and were a little obnoxious about it, and that was not the case with the others, with the younger ones, that I knew of. Well, maybe one or two of them, too. I don't know. ...

SSH: Where did your career take you after Rutgers?

GC: From Rutgers, I went with the Utility Construction Company, which was a New Brunswick company. It was an old New Brunswick company that built highways, roads, bridges, and did site work. ... They also had concrete plants and black top plants and they did a lot of paving, concrete paving and black top. It was just what I wanted, and I went to work there in, I guess, June of '47, yes, ... May or June of '47, and I worked there for eight years.

It was a very strange company, as it turned out. The original owners, ... one was an engineer and one was another businessman, and they were great, but, they had had [it] for some reason, and they sold out to a textile magnate, a big shot in the textile industry that owned the company, but, didn't know anything about construction, and ... he left two employees in charge of the company. that ran everything, three of them. Two were always there and one was there about little sooner than me, but, the two, ... the treasurer, he ran the office downstairs and the engineer, ... that was the president of the company, was a former contractor who had gone broke.

He was a nice man, but, I could see it wasn't a place that was going to go, and I'm there, and I'm doing fine. They treated me fine, but, I found out what happens to somebody that has to take a rap for something, and it was the third one, who was a professional engineer. ... He had worked for, oh, a couple of years on the Turnpike, headed up all our work on the Turnpike, and he worked six, seven days a week, long hours, and he had, unfortunately, made a deal that didn't work out, and, when they found out it didn't work out, they blamed him. They didn't take any responsibility for that.

He had just finished all this work and he'd gone on vacation. They had to call him up while he was away and tell him. When he came back, it was a secret. Nobody knew what had happened.

... I went in to [see] him that day, and I was making suggestions, like I usually did, and he said, "Well, ... just do whatever you want to do, 'cause you'll do it anyway," and I said, "Well, what do you mean?" ... He said, "Well, this is a very difficult thing for me." He said, "I can't work this way much longer," but, he said, "I'm not here. ... I'm not working for them. I'm just here to clean up a few odd things and I've been let go."

... He told me what it was, and it was something I knew that it shouldn't have happened, but, at any rate, he did go. ... He showed me some more things that I could do, and things like this, very nice to me, and he left, and he went somewhere else, but, he was never the same, but, when he left, I was, like, in charge of everything outside, because the others ... didn't do that, and it was a great experience for me, and, after a while, I could see that the company wasn't going anywhere.

The textile big shot came in one day and was talking to me. He asked me a few things, "Did I have anything to recommend?" and I said, "Yes." I said, "I think we should buy some equipment, because we're renting it all, and it's costing us a lot of money, and some of it that we own is old." I said, "The truck crane we have out there is older than I am and that's too old to be out there working with people." He said, "Well, ... I'll talk it over with," and he gave their names. ... "I follow whatever they tell me," and I figured, "Well, it's time to start looking. They're not going anywhere and they're not going to buy any new equipment."

So, sooner or later, some people came around from a company called Hess Brothers, and they were two partners, two brothers, and they offered me a job [that] paid a lot more money, [with an] opportunity to own part of the business, work on a commission basis, and so, I took it, and I left, and a year later, the Utility Company ... closed down and went out of business.

SSH: Well, good for you.

GC: It was a shame, ... you know. The company would have been a good thing, but, I could see, as long as this guy in New York was going to make the decisions, [it would fail]. I didn't feel badly about it, because it gave me an opportunity to be in charge of things much sooner than I might have another time, and I took advantage of it, and ... I felt very happy about that. I was a close friend of the man they let go. I couldn't really ever take that too well, but, I saw right away ... what it was. They wanted other people to make the decisions, in case they went wrong, you know. They could blame them and get rid of them.

... I thought, "Well, this is my chance. I'll make the decisions," and that's what they wanted. On each bid, I would show them what I did, not the two of them, just the engineer [who] had been a contractor, and he'd say, "Well, it's probably too cheap, but, ... you've got to learn your lessons. You go ahead and use that price," you know, and he kept saying that, every time. Every once in a while, he figured one and it was a disaster. [laughter]

SSH: How long did you stay with the Hess Brothers? Were the career opportunities there much better for you?

GC: Yes. Well, I stayed with them for thirty-five years. The career opportunities were perfect. ... They were in bad financial shape. They didn't know how bad they were. They showed me their books, and they looked like they were pretty bad, but, at least they were solvent, but, the more I looked into it, what they were calling, "receivables," turned out to be payables, and jobs they thought they had finished, the people were suing them, ... and then, they had a lot of claims that they ... didn't think they had any chance of getting paid on, but, it was too late. I'm there, and so, we're down at the bottom. Well, that's the best place to be, when you're down at the bottom, and I really got into it, and I settled up with the people where they had, as it turned out, ... walked off jobs. Well, you can't do that and people had built up charges against them. Well, I got them settled. ... One of those companies wanted to hire me, after they settled, but, I was happy with what I was doing, and then, we got some of the claims that were owed to them from another company, and we got on our feet, and we built up into [a large firm]. Eventually, we had, like, thirty, forty million dollars worth of work a year, and out of what was really nothing when I got there, and I was paid well, and they lived up to their agreements, and it all worked out fine for me.

SSH: Were you involved with any professional organizations?

GC: Oh, yes. I always belonged to the New Jersey Professional Engineers' Society. ... We have a chapter, the Raritan Valley Chapter. I was the president of that back in the ... late '50s, and then, I got active in the Associated General Contractors of New Jersey. ... I did labor negotiations for them for quite a few years. ...

SSH: Between the union and the Associated General Contractors (AGC)?

GC: Right, and, let's see, in 1983, I was president of that, the Associated General Contractors of New Jersey, and then, I was involved in an organization called Project Build. ... It came out of negotiations and out of the National AGC. I was active in the National AGC, too, and it was for union labor and contractors to stop being so adversarial and get together, and we called it Project Build, and we worked together on it. It was very successful and I was a co-founder of that, along with a union leader who was the head of the Statewide Carpenters' Union, George Laufenberg, his name was. Unfortunately, he passed away, a real nice man, and I negotiated with the operating engineers, the iron workers, the laborers, and all of that sort of thing.

... Then, I got interested in the Professional Engineers' and Construction, which was a part of the New Jersey Professional Engineers'. We called it the Functional Section, and I became the chairman of that, eventually, and, one year, I got the award for the Engineer Constructor of the Year. ... So, I was always active, professionally. I still am.

SSH: What do you do now? I know you have retired, I assume from Hess Brothers.

GC: Oh, yes. I'm retired from Hess Brothers and I just do this arbitration of construction disputes. It's a limited field. It's not labor-management, like I thought, ... sometimes, I thought I might get into that. I found out that was all done by lawyers and it was case oriented. Construction disputes are based on the contract, and the arbitrator arbitrates what the contract

says, and I like that, and I get to know more people. It keeps me in the field a little bit, but, ... you know, it's part-time and it's nice to have. ...

SSH: I find that interesting, because, when I was looking in your yearbook, I saw that you worked with the Ford Club and, in the description of the Ford Club, it said that the club's purpose, in part, was to negotiate what was needed between the students. I think that your career has come full circle. [laughter]

GC: [laughter] I can hardly remember much of that. I don't seem to remember that too much. ...

SSH: I have the quote written down here, "Neutral students living at Ford work on mutual problems and possible solutions."

GC: Okay. I'll have to confess, that was not a big part of my time at Ford Hall. [laughter]

SSH: You just shot my whole theory. [laughter]

GC: I probably did something like that for a short time. ...

SSH: How do you think your training at Rutgers prepared you for your time in the service? Do you feel that you left here prepared to use your talents or did the Army just pick you at random?

GC: I think I was very satisfied with the preparation I had at Rutgers. I don't think anything prepares you exactly for it, but, ... it prepared me to be resilient and go with the flow, you know. ... I'm very happy with the Rutgers part of my [life], you know. I had a little problem with the ROTC, but, it wasn't their fault, it was just [that] they couldn't handle that kind of thing. I'm very happy with Rutgers for what they did for me. It didn't cost much to come here, and I learned a lot, and I got a chance to do what I really wanted to do, which was run big construction.

SSH: It played right into what you became professionally.

GC: Right.

SSH: I know that you have been actively involved with Rutgers since you graduated in 1942. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

GC: Well, right after I graduated, of course, I went in the service for four years, and, when I came back, I worked there. So, after that, my involvement with Rutgers wasn't too much. I got notices on the reunions, but, I was always busy. I worked a lot of time, and even weekends, but, when I worked on the weekends, it was the kind of work [where] I could take my son with me, and take him out to the jobs, and he was very interested, and he would climb on the equipment and everything. ... I'd show him what's being done and everything. It was an education for him that I think helped him and it didn't mean that I lost that time so much on the weekends with the family, but, I did, sometimes. Sometimes, I had to work all night on estimates and bids like that. ...

I didn't get really active again until maybe the fortieth reunion. I started coming to the reunions, and got to re-meet people, and, gradually, got more active, and those that had been doing the heavy work wanted to stop doing it, like Bill Bauer and people like that, and Moss, and I had always known them, but, it wasn't that we were close friends, but, I'm very friendly with them, now, ... and Tom Kindre, I always knew, and so, I just sort of was the only one willing to do it after a while. [laughter] It wasn't a big merit achievement, you know what I mean?

SSH: You are a member of the class that originally sponsored this project, so, you have been with us from the get go. How do you feel about the project now, five years later?

GC: ...Well, I think it was a great project, you know. I contributed quite a bit of money to it, too, but, after it finished, when I got to be president, and when we had a new goal to go to, which was something else, ... I didn't want to leave the Oral Archives, but, I wanted to get working on what we were after, which was a different thing, ... increase our memorial scholarship, which was not really big enough, and that's our goal now. That's what I'm after now, but, I still think the Oral Archives was a good thing for Rutgers and ... it changed a lot as we went through it. It didn't start out to be what it turned out to be, with the Internet and all of that. Well, you feel pretty good about it.

SSH: Did your son attend school at Rutgers?

GC: No. My son went to MIT and my son was very bright. He had a National Merit Scholarship and he chose MIT, because, [did] you know they were the oldest school of architecture in this country, at MIT? They were, but, he chose them because they were the only school of architecture that required two years of physics and he thought you needed two years of physics. [laughter] ... They don't require that anymore, but, he did very well there, and he's an architect, and he's ... also a full professor of architecture at Temple. He did graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and received Masters degrees in Architecture and Urban Planning.

... He has an office downtown and he's doing two jobs all the time. I think he's doing too much, but, he just wants to, and ... he's moved into a new office, and he's very happy with it. It's a good sized office, but, it's a small firm. He has two young architects working for him, and, of course, he's still doing work up at Temple and down there. So, he very frequently calls us around eleven o'clock at night and he's still in the office. ... Last year, 1999, he was made a Fellow in the AIA (American Institute of Architects).

SSH: You have lived in New Brunswick since you returned from the war and got married. I know that you have been very involved in community affairs. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

GC: Right. ... Well, early on, I wasn't ... too involved. The first big involvement I got into was with the Board of Education in New Brunswick. I was asked to be on the board, and I decided I should take it, and I did that, and the first thing I did there was, they immediately appointed me in charge of negotiations with the teachers, and I had some good experiences with that. I got to

know the teachers and I was able, I thought, to get away from an adversarial position between the board and the [teachers]. We never had a strike while I was there, and we had arguments, but, we didn't have strikes that affected the children, and I got along with the heads of the Teachers' Association, because I thought, that's the job, to get along with them. We hired different people to administrate. Some of the ones we hired were great. Some weren't.

... It was a rough time, because, well, let me explain something. When I was on the school board, New Brunswick was still a receiving district for students from Milltown and North Brunswick, and the students from Milltown came in at junior high level and stayed through the twelfth grade, and North Brunswick came in at ninth grade level and stayed through the twelfth.

... It was a good school, and my son went through there, and he did very well there, and he had a lot of friends who went through Milltown, friends from North Brunswick, friends from New Brunswick, but, ... he got out of there in 1964, and, when I went on the board, it was 1970, and there were a lot of changes by then, and, in fact, I was no sooner on the board, and I was down at Atlantic City, at a Professional Engineers' convention, and I read in the paper, "Big Riot At New Brunswick High School, The Cafeteria People Hurt," and I thought, "Oh, my God."

So, it was a problem and we knew what the solution was. The solution was that, well, at least the New Brunswick Board thought it was the solution, ... the three schools should be regionalized and we had had a promise from the then Commissioner of Education. His name was Marburger. ... It was a similar problem up in Morristown and Morris Township. Whatever way that went, if it went regionalization, ... he would order it for New Brunswick, Milltown, and North Brunswick, and time went by, and his term was running out. No decision had been made in Morristown or Morris Township and people went to court.

... The Supreme Court of the State of New Jersey ordered Commissioner Marburger to make a decision, and he decided to regionalize it, and they did. It's working out pretty good, I understand, but, it caused such animosity in the Legislature that he had no chance of being reappointed. ... The suburban people just didn't want anything like that, and ... he couldn't be commissioner, and he wasn't reappointed. The next commissioner was tactical. He was an old timer and had been in the Department of Education. I think he was pretty good hearted, tried to do what he could, but, he wasn't going to make any decision.

... Now, the climate was different. There's no way we were going to get a commissioner to do that, even though we'd been promised that. So, we decided to go to court. Through our board attorney, we filed a case, and we started it, and North Brunswick and Milltown were very much opposed. They didn't want any part of it. There had been some violence in the schools, which was not, as most people assume, ... all caused by the black students in New Brunswick, which was not the case, although not that they were any angels.

... There were problems with the kids that came from Milltown. There were problems with the kids that came from North Brunswick, some of the kids. Most of them were nice kids, on both sides. Most of the black kids were nice kids, but, the ones that are looking for violence usually find a way to get it going, and so, people got afraid that their children were going to get hurt,

from the suburbs, from those New Brunswick kids, and even though we had joint meetings with the boards of Milltown and North Brunswick, and we tried to work out problems with them, they were ... not going to come. They were going to fight every inch of the way, and then, a surprising thing happened.

We were in the middle of the fight, and, now, my term is running out there, and an election is coming along, and New Brunswick had a great candidate. He was Acting Mayor Aldrage Cooper. He was six foot-eight inches tall, the son of a Rutgers professor, star basketball player at the University of Connecticut, and a vice-president of Johnson & Johnson, ideal for what we needed in New Brunswick at that time. He believed in law and order. You know, keep order, keep things right, and he lost to a young lawyer named Mulligan, Richard Mulligan, and things changed. Mulligan no sooner got elected, ... or even before he got elected, he said that he was opposed to regionalization. ... That meant that he had to appoint the board members, so, I knew that this was a good time to leave, and I did, [laughter] and the case went down the drain.

I made one last stab at it. When I was going, the commissioner, another commissioner now, of education appointed one of his assistants, no, he didn't appoint, the board appointed one of the commissioner's assistants to be on the board, and they were going to have this vote. So, I'm now off the board, and I go down to the meeting, and I spoke, and I said that they shouldn't give up this regionalization. They ... should fight for it. It was important, and that we have the case, and we shouldn't give it up, and then, I said to her, it was a woman, I said, "And you shouldn't be voting on it. ... You have a conflict of interest," and, [as] it turned out, she did vote, and it carried by one vote, and they dropped the case. I don't know if we would have won it, eventually, or not, you never know those things, but, that was the last time I went to the board meetings. [laughter] I had some real rugged meetings at the board, and people were always saying, "You should have the police here," and I said, "We don't need any police. We're taking care of it."

SSH: You were president of the board for a while, correct?

GC: I was president for two years, maybe two-and-a-half. ... The previous president got ill. I became a vice-president, I think the second year I was there, and he was still president, but, he couldn't do everything. He missed a lot of meetings. He wasn't right, and I took over for him, and he got back on the board. He got better, later, but, then, after that, he didn't want to be president any more, and I was president for that time, and it was tough, ... dealing with them, because of the preconceived notions they had of the cause of all these problems, and we didn't achieve what we wanted to achieve. It was a disappointment to me.

SSH: Did they regionalize?

GC: No.

SSH: Are there three separate high schools now?

GC: In a way. North Brunswick has its own high school and New Brunswick does. Milltown ... [is] a sending district to Spotswood. Which is really not great, nothing compared to what we had in New Brunswick when they were all together, but, they didn't want any part of New Brunswick anymore, you know.

SSH: I know that serving on a school board can be a very thankless job.

GC: Oh, I got a lot out of it, I thought. I met a lot of people, a lot of teachers, administrators, opposition. One of the biggest troublemakers we had was a fellow named, well, I won't say his name, [laughter] but, afterwards, I found out he was a tennis player and we played tennis. [laughter]

SSH: What other community activities have you been involved with?

GC: I'm involved with my church, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, pretty heavily now. Since I retired, I'm very active in that. I'm president of the Holy Name Society, and I founded a snow removal fund for them, and it's accumulated enough so that we have quite a bit of money now, and we can pay for it. It was a problem. If we had a big storm, we would have gotten wiped out, but, we're in good shape, now. We're still going and it's a HNS account. The Church doesn't have that. It's the Holy Name account, and they wanted it that way, and the priests have changed, they go from one to another, but, they still like that snow removal fund. I was just down there yesterday. ... The money is all invested in one year CDs now. ... One comes due December 20th and the next one ... comes due March 20th. That way, we can pay the bills when they come. ... That's when the snow comes, in December. By the 20th, we have the money to pay it, and what we don't pay then, the other one comes due March 20th, we can pay the rest of it, and we're in good shape.

SSH: Are there any other activities that you are involved in? You sound extremely busy for a retired man.

GC: Well, I'll probably be re-involved in the widening of Route 18. Mostly, it's going right through our neighborhood, not through our neighborhood, it goes past our neighborhood, and ... they plan to put noise walls and things up, and some of our neighbors are very adamant about it, but, they fought it off. It's not going to start until 2003. So, you don't get too excited, but, they're going to have a meeting again this month and show us what they're going to do again. ... In fact, I have a little set of plans they've sent to me, a small plan that doesn't tell you everything, just gets you interested, you know. I'm always involved with that.

I, once, for the city, participated as [a plaintiff]. They needed some uninterested person to make a suit. ... I was very involved in ... trying to prevent the Sears & Roebucks from coming in. Our backyard was the College Farm and, for whatever reason, President, what was his name? ... His name slips me [now]. Everybody knows his name, a tall fellow. ...

SSH: Bloustein?

GC: Ahead of Bloustein.

SSH: Mason Gross?

GC: Mason Gross sold the farm down there, behind us, where Sears is, right after he had made a speech about how we're supposed to hang on to things that are beautiful, not let it be destroyed, but, at any rate, he sold that. We fought that for quite a few years. We were able to get something out of it. We got big mounds around it, so [that] we can't see it, with trees on top of it, and got a road closed off, so [that] they wouldn't come through our neighborhood, things like that.

... Years later now, ... Sears won that fight, and they could have a store and an auto center, and that's all that could be on there. ... Sprint wanted a subdivision, and the planning board in New Brunswick said they could, and the board of adjustment said they can't, and people in our neighborhood said, "We don't want them there, because whatever they have will affect our TVs, and our reception, and everything. That's not a place for it. There is a place for it that's good and it's not here."

... So, the board of adjustment was to sue the planning board, but, they found out that the court wouldn't accept that. They had to have an independent person sue for them, and they asked me, would I do that? and they said, "We'll take care of all the bills, we'll furnish you the lawyer, but, will you sue?" ... So, I did that for them.

... I'm the chairman of the ... Residential Maintenance Committee, for complaints about not just residents, but, about all kinds of building complaints, but, we try to get them settled, and we don't have to meet a lot, but, I'm the chairman of that and have done that for quite a few years.

SSH: Let me ask you this final question. How do you think World War II affected the man you are today?

GC: Well, I felt that it was a big help to me. I benefited from being in the service at that time and I saw how things had to be done. You know, I learned how to get things done and I think it was a big help to me, as much as Rutgers, you know. It was right for me to be there at that time, in that war.

SSH: Thank you again. Please, feel free to add anything we forgot to discuss to your transcript when we send it to you.

GC: Okay. I'll be in touch with you if I get a ticket. [laughter]

SSH: Okay.

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Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/5/00

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/6/00
Reviewed by George Claflen 6/00 and 7/4/00