

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK N. CLARK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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LEBANON, NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 25, 2009

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on September 25, 2009, in Lebanon, New Jersey, with Frank N. Clark, sometimes known as Frank N. Clark, Jr.

Frank Clark: Right.

SH: Thank you, Mr. Clark, for having me here today. To begin, would you please state for the record where and when you were born?

FC: I was born on July 21, 1923 in Nesquehoning, Pennsylvania.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please, continue. Where and when were you born?

FC: Yes, I was born in a very, very small town in Pennsylvania, approximately a hundred miles west of my present residence here in New Jersey, Lebanon, New Jersey. It was a coalmining town and [had] considerably fewer than a thousand people, mostly first and second-generation Americans. There were about seven churches in the town. Three or four of them were Roman Catholic, ... because of language, naturally, and other denominations. ... We were churchgoing people in that town. ... Our life was very simple and enjoyable.

SH: What was the name of the town?

FC: The town was Nesquehoning, N-E-S-Q-U-E-H-O-N-I-N-G, one word, Nesquehoning, Pennsylvania. It drew a little fame during World War II because one of the residents was on the same plane that was downed in the Pacific with Jimmy Rickenbacker. I think it was Jimmy Rickenbacker, or Eddie Rickenbacker. I forget the name now. ... It was either Jimmy or Eddie, but, anyway, they floated in the Pacific for months and months, in the very, very early stages of the war, and he was aboard that plane. [Editor's Note: World War I ace and aviation industry pioneer Eddie Rickenbacker was onboard a B-17 that was forced to ditch in the Pacific Ocean in October 1942. The crew and passengers, including navigator John J. DeAngelis of Nesquehoning, survived in rafts at sea for over three weeks before being rescued.] ... The town got a little notoriety, and that's about all I can say, but, anyway, my family moved from that town, in 1939, to Cranford, New Jersey, where I commenced high school on the 1st of September.

SH: Why did you move to Cranford?

FC: We moved to Cranford because my father was a railway postal manager, and he carried a revolver. He was in charge of the--oh, just like we have a post office here in town--he was on a railroad car, attached to a passenger train, and that was actually a little post office. You could hand them a letter and they could mail it for you, if you happened to be by them, stopped in a community where trains usually stopped to take people on and off, but we lived beyond the initial point where my father's responsibility was. We were five miles further west. Naturally, my father was born there, and so, that's why he wanted to stay there. It was only five miles away, so, he figured, "Hey, they'll never know." [laughter] So, anyway, they were beginning to

catch up with him, and my older sister was now going to graduate from high school. ... He thought, "Well, I'll move out of this little town. There's nothing up here. I'll get down closer to New York City, where it looks like New York City's really going to be the place to be, ... and I'll be well within the government's demand that I live in this bracket of [the postal territory]." So, my parents made that move on August 1, 1939, and I was matriculated then into Cranford High School to begin my junior year. ... Lo and behold, of course, September 1st was the start up of World War II, in Europe. ... One of my classmates was a student who came over from France that very summer, preceding me, probably around maybe June or July. He came over because his father, fortunately, worked for an American corporation and they moved him back here to be safe.

SH: Really?

FC: And the kid's name, I remember to this day--is the only French that I do remember, maybe--his name was Roger Ferrick, ... something like F-E-R-R-I-C-K, but, anyway, he always got an "A+" in the French language courses. [laughter] Little did I know that I was going to need to know almost as much as he did about it, about French, but, anyway, Roger moved over because he was in danger, and his parents came over. So, that was the first time that I was really, really cognizant of, "Hey, the world is really changing around [us]. It's not running as well as it has been," according to my knowledge and experience. "Hey, there's a problem." ... So, anyway, though, that was in ... September of 1939. Then, as I graduated from high school, in 1941, I matriculated at Seton Hall University in South Orange as a daily student, as against being a resident, in place. I only had, oh, ten miles or so to travel each day and I was able to do that. There were not as many cars on the road at that time as there are today. ... Anyway, I matriculated there and I, of course, had to register with the Selective Service, as demanded. I think it was around that time I had to do it, and I complied. [Editor's Note: The Selective Service Act of 1940, passed in September 1940, required all twenty-one to thirty-five-year-old males to register for the draft, beginning that October.] I registered with the local draft board, and then, I sort of forgot about the war. Now, here I was, I graduated with a kid that just came over from the war zone and, now, I'm not only a freshman at Seton Hall University, I'm a sophomore at Seton Hall University, and, really, I don't know diddly-do about what's going on in the war. I don't know [why], because I didn't see it in the papers that often, maybe. ...

SH: What about Pearl Harbor? Do you remember where you were?

FC: Oh, yes, yes, Pearl Harbor. I remember, I was riding in a convertible coupe on Route 22, in the vicinity of a Stewart's Root Beer place. We stopped to get a nice mug of cold root beer, in a mug with a handle on it, and maybe a pint or a pint-and-a-half of a beverage that our parents wouldn't approve of, [laughter] and we had the radio playing and we heard about a news flash. It was some time in the afternoon--it was after twelve o'clock, noon, that we heard this--and it was announced that Pearl Harbor [was attacked]. ... Right away, I'm trying to think, "Pearl Harbor? Yes, that's Honolulu. Yes, gee whiz, ... gosh, what a terrible thing." ... So, yes, I was taken by surprise that the Japanese had the audacity to attack us. I always figured that, "The Japanese, who are they? people [who] live far over, and so on. How do they ever think that they could take us on, a nation this large, this big, with them, a little, tiny island?" So, that's when I became aware. Now, everybody's patriotic, oh, gosh. ... That was on a Sunday, December 7th. That

was on a Sunday. Monday, December 8th, I'm in the kitchen. We had been at early Mass that morning, in St. Michael's Church in Cranford, and we're back home. ... At breakfast time, lo and behold, the President is on the radio, talking about the attack the day before, and he is asking Congress for a declaration of war. [Editor's Note: The President at this time was Franklin D. Roosevelt.] My mother, having experienced what war sometimes does do to people--she had several brothers when World War I was still waging and one of them was very, very seriously gassed in World War I. ... He passed away with it very, very early, and she knew how horrible he was affected. So, my mother wasn't in agreement with the President at that stage, because, as she said, "He's asking them to take my son." I was one of four, with three sisters, hence, my mother's disappointment. Well, anyway, as the war went on, everybody was feeling patriotic here and there, and there and there. A couple of neighborhood friends of mine, boys my age, two of us got together one day and we decided that we were going to enlist. He was a German. He was born in Germany. His parents came over, oh, perhaps maybe five years prior to 1939. ... So, he was pretty much Americanized. The only thing that wasn't Americanized was the name, and I remember, his name was (Egon Heller?). Well, I [had] never heard of those names, not in Nesquehoning, where you were either Irish, Italian, English or Hungarian. [laughter] I'd never heard of an (Egon Heller?), but, anyway, (Egon?) and I, we were going to enlist. ... His expectation was, "We're going to do it in the Army." Well, somehow or other, before we'd reached that point, the two of us go together. I had gone to the Marine recruiter and I was turned down.

SH: No; why?

FC: I was turned down because I had very, very poor color perception. I just could not find the different colored numbers that were hidden on a circular impression, like a saucer size, that had a number hidden somehow in there, if you tilted your head one way or the other, this way. [Editor's Note: Mr. Clark is referring to the Ishihara Color Test.] I couldn't. I tried my best to find that number that was there and it's like trying to find the Heinz "57" number on a lid of something. [Editor's Note: Mr. Clark is referring to the number "57" found on bottles of condiments made by the H. J. Heinz Company.] [laughter] Little did I know that that was a blessing, because ... the battles that the Marines fought were somehow always tougher than what the infantry [fought in], that I was going to end up in anyway. So, nevertheless, I was disappointed. So, then, (Egon Heller?) and I went in. We enlisted in the Army. What else could we do? and then, as we were not called up yet, after enlisting; it had something to do with, "Well, they don't need people your age." How old was I then? Well, let's see, [it was] probably around ... 1943 that I enlisted, and I wasn't called up until the following June, ... because they allowed me to finish that year in college. ...

SH: This would be at the end of your sophomore year.

FC: That would be the end of my sophomore year, yes, and so, I remember, in June, the day I was to leave Cranford and go away from home, for the first time in my life, overnight. I headed to Fort Dix in the bus the following day. I had to finish--I felt obligated to finish--the job that I had been doing, and I was painting the wooden roof of my parents' home in Cranford. It had cedar shakes on the roof and I was painting them down with an oily solution. ... I had a rope tied around my waist and the other end of the rope was tied around the chimney, [laughter]

because it was such a steep incline, but, nevertheless, I finished that and I could go off satisfied that the job was well done. So, anyway, I head to Fort Dix. ...

SH: What did your parents think of your decision to enlist?

FC: Oh, they accepted it, yes. They accepted it, ... because they knew that a lot of other young boys were going, and, yes, they were very receptive. They could see the merit or they could see the plus, the positive side, of what was right and what was wrong. So, they thought it was something in the right direction. So, yes, they were acceptive. ... So, after I was in Fort Dix, with ... (Egon Heller?), I think that's right, I think we both went down to Fort Dix together, I was put on a train that was going to take me from Fort Dix to Camp Fannin, Texas. ... That was up in the [region], I guess, sort of more to the north and inland from the Gulf [of Mexico]. I forget now just where it was, but it was in farm country, where they grew an awful lot of watermelons. [laughter] ... It was very hot, but, anyways, [I was] in Camp Fannin, Texas, and he went to another post where the Air Force was. ... With him being German, born in Germany, they sensed that, with his knowledge of the German language, it was maybe preferential that he be maybe an interpreter. Well, that's what he thought, ... but he was never used that way. Instead, they sent him to the Asian [Theater]. I'm trying to think. ... They changed the names of those places--Bombay, no, Bombay was India--where the Air Force [was], where the Flying Tigers were. [Editor's Note: The Flying Tigers were a group composed of volunteer American pilots that flew for China and protected them from the Japanese in the earlier part of 1942.] ...

SH: Was it in China, the CBI, the China-Burma-India Theater?

FC: That's right, Burma, that's right, they sent him to Burma and me to Texas. ... He used to write to me and he would say that, gee whiz, he has now traveled over almost half, more than half, the world, from Germany to America and now over to Asia. ... He was assigned to the Air Force, to the ground crew, radio, and, of course, I went to Camp Fannin, Texas. ...

SH: What were you being trained for at Camp Fannin?

FC: At Camp Fannin, that was strictly an infantry basic training post. It was an expansion of, supposedly, an additional infantry base, training base, because most of the cadre came from, I think it was Oklahoma; I forget the place in Oklahoma. Most of the cadre, which were the instructors for Camp Fannin, they came from this Oklahoma base after Camp Fannin was built, because they had a great demand for infantry. ... After they got it built, why, there was maybe a little lesser demand. [The] Pentagon was doing [the] thinking and they don't always think right, I guess, in hindsight, although they may have been trying to do their best, I'm sure, but, then, what made me just say this is, instead of me being put on a train right away now to Camp Kilmer and overseas, they sent me to Michigan. ... I was sent to Michigan to attend Michigan State University, where I was going to become an expert in [a specialty]. ... This is because of my two previous years of education at Seton Hall, that I was of a type that maybe I could, with my relatively poor color perception, ... interpret aerial photographs. Can you imagine that? [laughter] or photographs taken by others besides necessarily the Air Force, if I could detect what's beneath the shadows and the colors of the leaves that's there--I don't know, something wacky. They sent me there and that was to learn surveying, so that I could look at a pole and I

could see the shadow of the pole extending out so many inches, or fractions of an inch out from there, [and] I could determine the width of the land, to see where there's a road or a house, based upon the height and the sun and the time of day. All these photos would have this information on it, and I was given a course in surveying, so that I would know how to report and write like surveyors write, something like that, but, nevertheless, that was what I was going to do. Oh, my mother was delighted. She was so delighted I didn't follow my Uncle Joe to France. So, now, I'm out at Michigan State and I think it was only a matter of time that that lasted. All of a sudden, [it ended], and it wasn't because of the Asian section of the war, which the Marines were predominant in. ... The Marines were very seldom involved in Europe at that stage, because they had enough on their plate, unless they were onboard a ship, you know. Marines were always onboard ships. ...

SH: Was the program that you were in at Michigan State called the ASTP Program?

FC: Yes, yes, that's right, and I forget what the ASTP [was].

SH: I think it was the Army Specialized Training Program.

FC: Army Specialized Training Program, that's right. So, I was going to be a specialist; colorblind me, I was going to be able to interpret aerial photographs. Okay, so, now, there, of course, I was alongside of guys that were [in the] Air Force. I could tell from their uniforms that they were Air Force, and I could tell ... those that were Army, and so, anyway, after that, it was interrupted. I was then sent to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, was where the Mississippi River almost starts, and Camp McCoy was near Tomah, Wisconsin, but the camp was called McCoy, Camp McCoy. I remember, they had coal stoves in every barracks. It was freezing cold and the smell of coal and sulfur, and so on, and so forth, was always with you. [laughter] It was preferable almost to breathe frozen cold air than it was to breathe the warm air inside, but, anyway, after Camp McCoy was done, that was a refresher course in basic infantry. ... That was preparing you for the colder climates somewhere. Looking back, I can say that, but, up until then, I had no idea whether I was going to be moved to the Pacific or overseas, didn't know that until the train stopped. [laughter] I didn't know whether the train was going east or west. Well, some of the guys I was with, they went to the West Coast and I, of course, was sent to camp ... down in Virginia. A. P. Hill was a location where a lot of military people in-between their assignment to Europe went, even if it was only for a week or two. It was depending upon transportation. You would go there, to A. P. Hill, Virginia. That was A-period-P-period-Hill, named after somebody prominent in the military over the centuries and, of course, there, it was for the heat, and so on, of a hot climate, but, nevertheless, I ended up going to Camp Kilmer. [Editor's Note: Fort A. P. Hill was named in honor of Lieutenant General Ambrose Powell Hill, a Virginia native who was a distinguished Confederate commander during the Civil War. The fort was used as an Army training and staging facility in World War II.] Well, I was delighted. Hey, ... I am so naïve. [laughter] ... I'm a guy talking, hey, I always knew when I had enough beer when I was at a PX [post exchange], I always knew that I was going to go to Mass on Sundays, my first day of not having to do anything but sleep a little bit late--no, I wanted to continue on with the lifestyle that I took [from home], as I was taught by my parents. ... Yes, so, I went to Camp Kilmer and, every night, I was under the fence. I would crawl under the fence every night, [laughter] because Camp Kilmer was less than ten miles, maybe, from where my parents lived.

[laughter] Well, naturally, hey, there was my home calling and the roads that we have today in the vicinity of Camp Kilmer just weren't there. Camp Kilmer is gone. Camp Kilmer has changed, is, I think, part of Rutgers University today, ... but, every night, I would crawl out from underneath a fence that was in a different section of Camp Kilmer. [Editor's Note: Camp Kilmer, used as a staging area for the New York Port of Embarkation in World War II. Much of the original land was transferred to the surrounding townships and entities such as Rutgers University.] ... I would then walk to a spot where I could find a telephone booth and call my parents in Cranford, and my father'd come out and pick me up, without a pass. [laughter] Well, when I say every night, it's every night that I could get away with it. If there was some duty I was on or something, [I could not], but countless times that I was there in camp, [I did], and, mind you, usually, you're only there maybe four days, for about four days, until the ship comes in to the harbor, and then, it's okay. ... Then, when my father is taking me back, he had, usually, a terrible time to find that same section of Camp Kilmer that I crawled out from under and I knew it was safe to come out [back into camp] without getting into trouble, you know. [laughter] I had a terrible time, but I didn't worry about it, [laughter] and that was one of the pleasures that I had, let me say this.

SH: How long were you at Camp Kilmer?

FC: I think I was there maybe four days.

SH: Okay.

FC: And then, at Camp Kilmer, I took a little "rinky-dinky" railroad line, not knowing where I was going, east, west, north or south, and it was usually close to dusk, at night, that we would leave Camp Kilmer. ... We'd be switched, because you can imagine all of the defense equipment and munitions that were taking preference to the passenger train that we were on. To get to there, you know, it was almost like, gosh, ... just by leaps and leaps and leaps and backups, and so on. It took us forever to get from there to where we were going. I had no idea that we ended up in Jersey City. [laughter] I never knew that New Jersey was that big, and then, the next morning--no, no, that night, that's right, that night, was probably early in the morning, darkness, I guess--lo and behold, I walk up a gangplank. It's the *Queen Elizabeth*, and I thought, "Oh, boy, oh, boy, cripes, this is a brand-new ship, *Queen Elizabeth*, wow," going like this. [Editor's Note: The RMS *Queen Elizabeth* was launched in 1938 and converted to a troopship at the onset of World War II.] It was distracting, you know. Here I am, I didn't need a ticket. [laughter] ... Well, I was very positive about it, yes, and so, I got on the *Queen Elizabeth*, and never thinking of, "Hey, I'm going to be homesick," or this or that, or, "Hey, I'm getting closer to danger," or this or that. ... Hey, I'm of an age where, really, ... I'd lived in two communities, one for sixteen years and another one now for maybe five or six years, Cranford, from 1939 to 1943, yes, four years, ... because I lived in the community, where I was interested in things that youth were interested in. I was interested in wholesome things. You know, I can say that, shucks, hey, I didn't even know where the hell a baby came from, you know. I was that naïve, because my mind was filled with wholesomeness, because the friends I had were wholesome and you are "birds of a feather flock together," sort of. I didn't shoot craps onboard the *Queen Elizabeth* going over to Scotland, like, God, everybody else seemed to be doing it. I didn't gamble. I didn't have the money to gamble. I was saving my pay. Most of it was going home. I was paying my

GI insurance, and what'd I need money for? I told them, "Sure, send my money home. I'll finish my education with that when I get back," very positive. ... Of course, now, I'm on the *Queen Elizabeth*. Hey, now, I'm in a room, perhaps the size of this room here, maybe not this big, but almost this size, if anything to the smaller side, all the way over, and there must have been thirty bunks in there, from the floor up, three ... high up, and I don't remember which bunk I had. I knew that I didn't want to be on the bottom, because if anybody wet the bed or this or that at night, I didn't want to get wet. [laughter] So, I always managed to try to get an upper one. Now, that was in the stateroom. The first night out, I had that room. The next night out, those that had the rooms got the deck, and then, you would go back to the rooms. They shared the pleasantries and the unpleasant things. I made a decision that, "I am not going to have a stateroom with[out] freedom from fear of getting wet by somebody having had too much beer above me and can't find the exit down. I'm going to stay on the deck, but I'm not going to stay on a section of the deck where the latrines overflow. [laughter] I'm going to stay on a section of the deck where the latrines don't ever flow that high," and that's what I did. I stayed on the deck so that I could have my own spot to jump at as it gets near bedtime and have my sleeping bag there, or my stuff, my duffle bag, yes, because I'm not going to go through having to sleep in an area where [I might be affected] when those latrines, that were emergencies [temporary latrines] put up ... on the deck, were full of used beer, yes. [Of] course, I don't think they were getting beer from the ship, but, anyway, it was a lot of fluid and it was very uncomfortable, it was dirty. [I did] as best I could. One of the men who was on that ship was a second lieutenant. He was in the Army Transportation Corps. ... He was from Westfield, which is the town right next to Cranford. He must have made twenty-five or thirty crossings of the Atlantic, back and forth on that *Queen Elizabeth*.

SH: Really?

FC: That's right.

SH: Did you meet him then at that time?

FC: No, no, I didn't. It was afterwards that I met him.

SH: Did you meet anyone on the ship going over that you knew?

FC: Yes, yes. ... See, I was going overseas as a replacement. I hadn't trained with any division where I had associates. Everybody was new to me on that ship, ... but I got down into the bowels of the *Queen Elizabeth*, where they were baking bread for the next meals, and so on, and so forth, and I made a friendship with those men down there. ... As lousy as the meals were onboard that *Queen Elizabeth*, I didn't have to worry because I was eating bread baked by Americans and not by the British. [laughter] Now, the British had one way of looking at things and the Americans had a different [way], but the American recipes ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Okay.

FC: That's it.

SH: Were the meals on the ship prepared by the British?

FC: Part of them, I think, must have been. ...

SH: The crew was British.

FC: That's right, the crew was British, yes, and the crew, I can still see the crew that were on that ship. You know, they were experienced men that knew what the *Queen Elizabeth* needed to be done, and served and worked ... to get that boat over, and so [that] it can make [the trip] back and forth, yes.

SH: Zigzagging.

FC: They were, like, permanent cadre on that, yes, and they all carried a little [game]. I'll never forget it. They carried a little thing made up like out of ... an old kitchen table covering [that] was generally called, ... in my area, anyway, it was always called oil cloth, [which] was on your kitchen table. It was something that was waterproof, to some degree, and it would take care of the average, normal spills that you could wipe up without having to stick it in the laundry. Well, they had a little flexible thing like that. Today, you'd liken it to a piece of vinyl film, maybe yay thick as a sheet, maybe, but small, oh, how big? maybe sixteen or eighteen inches square, and it looked almost like a checkerboard, but it was called, I think it was called, "Kings and Queens." ... It was a gambling thing that these guys used to throw dice at, and I can still see these guys, Americans, we were, ... on the deck. With the latrines overflowing, day and night, on that deck, they'd be down on the deck throwing dice, and there'd be a British seaman there with this thing, that was his, and he's robbing the Yankees of their money. ... He knew the rules, but the Americans didn't know. You know, he was good at it. He was professional, and I could see those guys still. They just grabbed the money as they were winning it. They were earning it from the dummy Americans that were [playing]. Some of those guys did pretty well, yes, and I think it was "Kings and Queens" or "Kings and Queens and Anchors," or something like that, but, anyway, it was that little thing, right, [Crown and Anchor]. Every time you'd see one of those guys walking around with that thing folded up, under his arm and his hat, you know, "Oh, God, he's going to go looking for more money, more American money that he can send home." ... Of course, when we saw the *Queen Elizabeth* that we were on, we knew then, of course, that we were going to Europe. The first day out, we had a large blimp protecting us against submarine activity, and then, the rest of the time, we were alone. We had no idea what harbor we were going to or were we going to go [to one front or another]. Well, we knew we weren't going to land at France [laughter] and didn't know anything. "Maybe it's going to be to Ireland," we thought. ...

SH: This would have been in early 1944.

FC: That would have been in, [not] early '44; that would have been in September of '44.

SH: D-Day would have already taken place.

FC: D-Day had already taken place and, of course, their demand for infantry replacements was very, very high. [Editor's Note: The Normandy landings began on June 6, 1944, commonly known as D-Day.] ... I guess it took us, like, five days, maybe, I think, because we didn't take a straight line. We had zigzag, zigzag, zigzag, and we had freedom to walk about [the ship], and I don't know how guys could ever remember the room that they had onboard, with the twenty-seven or thirty guys that would be sleeping in that room, with their bunks above each other. I don't know how they ever found those places again, because they were down below deck. ... Here I was, staying always up on top of the deck and, to kill time, I would walk all around that boat and I would examine the lifeboats. I was amazed at them, and there were big poles up in the bow of that ship, big poles that were horizontal on the deck, and I'm baffled. I'm wondering, "What in the world are these?" They looked like telephone poles, but I found out what they were. When, eventually, we got to our destination, I saw them raise them up vertical and they then lifted out cargo, brought it up from the hold, so [that] they could get it swinging into a truck or something on the deck, on the dock. [Editor's Note: Like a mast, but shorter, kingposts are vertical poles often utilized to support booms for loading cargo.] Anyway, I, at times, walked up to the [bow]. Now, this is the *Queen Elizabeth*, fastest boat going, and I walked right up to the front of the bow to see what's all about that bell. They had a bell up there, and I could even put my hand on it and move the [clapper], clank it, you know. That was put on by Lloyd's of London. That was printed on there, "Lloyd's of London, *Queen Elizabeth*." That told me it was insured, [laughter] and something that's insured is well taken care of. [laughter] ... So, I would think, "Hey, well, wherever we're going is going to be safer than being where we are right now. That's why we're moving so [fast]," but, then, I would notice, though, the lifeboats and the extra life jackets that were all over. There were twenty-five thousand of us on that boat, I heard, twenty-five thousand, and we ate two meals a day. We ate a breakfast and a dinner. Lunch, forget about it; there was no third meal, and, once you had eaten your first meal, if you liked it, you were in the minority. [laughter] If you didn't like it, you were in the majority. So, what would you do? Well, the majority that didn't like it, they wanted to be the first to get seated at a call for the dinner bell. [laughter] So, we would be the first or second in line for the supper, after having gotten stung. ... Sometimes, if we got stung for supper, well, then, we were going to be first in line for breakfast, and that's the way it went. [laughter] ... Now, how I ever made it, [I do not know], because my mother always treated me like the prince, the only boy, and I earned it, because no matter what my mother wished, I did for her. I had great respect for them both.

SH: Were you the oldest of the children?

FC: No, I was third in line.

SH: You had two older sisters.

FC: Two older sisters, and one younger. ... Oh, yes, that's right, my mother sort of had the four of us in, like, four or five years, you know, and I was even faster. [laughter] So, anyway, yes, ... now, we're still onboard the boat going over and ... we're looking for prediction signs of, "Where are we going? We going to go into the Mediterranean, or where are we going to go? Are we going to go into Iceland?" big surprise then. ... Now, we went up between Ireland and Britain and, of course, then, the British guys would say, "Well, you're going up to Glasgow, in the top."

So, that's where we went. We landed at Glasgow, and then, at Glasgow, then, they took us by train down to lower Britain, and where we would then wait for transfer over to France, ... but the poles then went upright. That was an education. [laughter] I thought, "Gee, whiz;" hey, never gave it a thought, you know, ... because, certainly, experiencing all these things, it was so new. Hey, I was never on a boat before, only a ferry boat, [laughter] and that was over before you'd be able to finish a cigarette, you know. [laughter] ... Here, gosh, here you had meals and meals, but some of the people ... were servicing ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

FC: ... Into Glasgow, yes, we found that, and then, we went down by train. I could tell when we crossed over from Scotland to Britain, because I had asked a [British person on the train]. Now, mind you, we had American officers in charge of our behavior onboard that ship, because there were always fights and arguments, you know, and they knew how GIs fought, and so on, and so forth. So, they suppressed a lot of that stuff before it got too bad, but ... there are enough Englishmen on there, though, that took care of what the ship needed. Now, in our travel down, we likewise had British escorts replacing many, many Americans that were on the ship. They didn't need as many Americans, because there was a lot of British. ... Of course, these trains weren't that long, ... so, they needed fewer people. So, we had a closeness to both American and Englishman. So, I'm asking, "Where are we at now? When are we going [to arrive]?" "Oh," he said, "well, we're going to go down here to lower Britain," and then, [I asked], "Well, just when? How?" "Oh," he said--I remember one of them, when I asked him a question--he said, "You're in Britain now." He said, "Can't you smell it?" [laughter] I'll never forget. He shook his head to the side. It's that kind of territorial back and forth, you know. You could tell he was very, very [more] slanted towards Scottish things than he was to British things, [laughter] ... but, then, we got down into Britain. We were put in a base and, now, we were in air raid territory. ... We were in a base where they issued passes out. Even though it was a replacement base, they issued passes for people to go into the village, and so on, and so forth, and some of these replacements, I think, did, although I couldn't really be sure, because I remember it being [crowded], having no place to be yourself. It was almost like being on a ferry boat where you got your two feet on the ground and you can't go here or there, because there's a couple other guys [there], and nobody owns any of this stuff, so, be glad that you have a spot to put yourself. So, I was contented with that, but the other guys were probably looking for "education" or something, in any different respect, but time went fast in there. We were there a couple of days.

SH: Do you remember which village you were housed in?

FC: I don't remember the village. I don't remember, but I have a hankering that it was close to Southampton. ...

SH: Did you go into the village?

FC: I never went into a village, no. Hey, I had no money to go in there, you know, and I had no desire to, you know, hey. ...

SH: Were there any air raids while you were there?

FC: Yes, yes, there was an air raid. We didn't get a lot of the niceties that maybe we had been accustomed to, you know. Like, the meals were meals, something to put in [your stomach], and a lot of it'd be taken care of, and then, it'll exit. So, regardless of what it was or how it tasted, it wasn't that [bad], but, anyway, ... there was no training, but I remembered that we were issued weapons at that base. ... Our biggest desire, at least in my [mind], was to get something that almost resembled something that was back at Camp Fannin or at Camp McCoy, the quality of that, and that would relate around to jam, jelly, cheese, or something like that. So, there was an air raid. An alarm went off and, of course, all the lights had to be, "Psst," dimmed, and there were some explosions, all in that area, because we didn't know what [was around us]. You know, with Britain being a very, very small place, where they have factories and people living, and so on, and so forth, they had to really change their territory's appearance to make room for these military bases. ... They had to really sacrifice a lot of parks and tear down buildings and let these [military forces encamp there]. So, we had no idea what was adjacent to us, whether it was troops that they're looking down [at] as targets or factories. God knows there must have been [many targets]. It was a really, really hodgepodge, you know, of [targets], but, anyway, one night, the air raids went off and the doors, where the [food], some of the food, was stored, were blown off, you know, were lost. ... Of course, at night, who's going to see you, you know? Of course, there's fire, yes, but who wants to get that close to the fire, you know? So, there were a lot of guys that were looking for something that they could quickly get their hands on, never have time to even really read the label, [laughter] you know, hoping that maybe it was going to be a large can of orange marmalade or strawberry jelly, or something, or even a tub of butter, maybe, big. ... So, that was the fun, "What are we going to have tonight? If they come over tonight, what are we going to get tonight?" [laughter] because they wouldn't be able to repair that thing just like that, you know. ... Anyway, we got on [a train], we go down to Southampton, I think it was Southampton, and we got on a relatively small British vessel. ... We had no idea what this vessel was about. All we knew was that it was relatively small--bigger than the ferry boat, maybe. Yes, I think it was bigger than the ferry boat, but they loaded us up at night and we crossed the Channel. ... We landed at a floating dock and, I remember, we went over the side. It was run by the British, all the way. I don't remember that there was a convoy. I don't remember on that, but I'm sure there must have been. ... We weren't the only ones on there, I'm sure, but we landed, I guess, sort of like very, very early in the morning. ... We went into what had been Omaha Beach, and we could see the German defenses that were still probing up out of the water. You know the angle iron that was welded here and there in the form of "Xs" and this and that? [Editor's Note: Mr. Clark is referring to antitank obstacles known as Czech hedgehogs.] We could still see that, very prevalent, and the huge, mountainous climb that those poor guys had to face when they landed on there. ... Oh, yes, we had to then ... get off onto that dock, ... from the boats to the dock; well, I have to back up. We went from that boat to a smaller boat. That's right. It was more like an LST, or something like that.

SH: Like a landing ship?

FC: Yes, like a landing ship, and then, that landing ship got us into what was like the dock. ... Then, we had to walk up the hill. I remember it, we had to walk up a long [incline]. We didn't go up straight vertically, we had to go winding, and not necessarily because ...

SH: Do you think this was in September?

FC: That was in September. ... I would say that was probably, yes, the end of September, that that was. ...

SH: You wound your way up to ...

FC: The top of where the hedgerows started and where the attackers on D-Day had spent most of their first two days. We could see the horrible change in the Earth's structure at that point. We could see that, that it was a mountainous climb, really, from the magnitude. I had never envisioned that was that great at Omaha Beach and, of course, down more towards the east of France, how high the cliffs were where the Rangers went in that day, how the land went from sand level to rock, and so on, and so forth, and then, up to those cliffs; what a miraculous landing it was, that they were able to [make it]. [Editor's Note: Mr. Clark is referring to the Second Ranger Battalion's assault on Pointe du Hoc.]

SH: Did you see a lot of the damage? Were there vehicles abandoned?

FC: No, no, but we saw tremendous stockpiles, tremendous stockpiles of things moving by motor truck. It looked like everybody's busy doing this and that, like ants, on [the beach]. Everything was moving, cargo was moving and we were marched as a little click, unit, replacements, [led by] a guy with a clipboard. He had all these names down, [so] that we didn't get lost, and then, ... after we got up there, ... I guess we got into motor trucks, yes, and they had to move very, very slowly. Meanwhile, we could see the hedgerows and how they were really death spots for the defenders to pass on to the American troops. We could see the hedgerows. We could see how they were so bad and tough, and miraculous that they ever got through there, because they were tall. They were high. By God, they were that way for hundreds and hundreds of years, and the roads were so low and these things were so high. ... So, yes, we could see that, and then, they put us on trains, on a train, and that train took us, like, all over, switches, turning around, this way and that way. ...

SH: They had gotten the trains back in working order.

FC: Yes, yes, they had trains working in the eastern area of France, because, I remember, we had a train that got us down ... to a section on the eastern coast of France, ... and that town or city had a huge church. It had a very, very huge Catholic church. I'm trying to think of the name of the [city], began with a "C," and it was notoriously famous.

SH: Chartres?

FC: That's it, Chartres. Of course, I haven't used that word in years, Chartres. That big, circular stained window, that was still intact.

SH: Was it really?

FC: It was still intact. That's right. Apparently, the Germans, for some reason, didn't willfully destroy it, you know, or they were saving their bombs for something else that had precedence, but, yes, Chartres. We could see that from the train passing by, and then, of course, because that section of the railroad was operational; who knows? We only went a short distance on that, because that was railroad, but, then, the rest of the way was by truck, ... but the roads, by truck, were being used for munitions, and this and that and more. We were there, just waiting. "Fellow, you'll get your [turn]. Don't be in a hurry to get where you're going," you know. [laughter] So, that's the way they treated us, yes.

SH: Did they take you into Paris?

FC: No.

SH: You bypassed it.

FC: That's right, we completely bypassed [it]. We went right from the hedgerow country down, went east, away from the fighting, to the east coast, towards the east. It had to be, to get to, I think, Chartres, which was southwest of [the main line], considerably far away from the action. ... Then, by motor truck, then, they were hauling us to ...

SH: Had you been assigned to a division at that point?

FC: No.

SH: You were still heading towards the replacement depot.

FC: That's right, and then, after that, we arrived at our final destination by motor truck, and I can remember being dropped off at night in an area, not knowing just where it was, but I knew that it had to be over pretty close to the German border, because we could see night activity of fires.

SH: Really?

FC: And almost like you would see lightning here in the distance--you know, takes forever for it to get here, you know. ... I can still see the receiving officer of the regiment walking in the distance, and he's signaling to everybody to, "Keep moving, keep moving. No need to fall down. I'll fall down first and you do it then." [laughter] That was the word we got, and we were very, very close to Liege, in Belgium, and, of course, Liege was a stone's throw from Aachen, [a city in Germany, close to German/Belgium border]. ... In Liege, I can remember walking down the street, because a truck stopped and he stopped by a bakery and ... the people were back in there again. [The] bakery's operating in all the damage around it and all, and I was able to go into a bakery and get a piece of bread so long, you know. Somebody had money in our group and they got the bread and I got a chunk of it, you know. ... Boy, that was so welcome, to be able to eat a piece of long, skinny bread, nice and fresh like. [laughter] I also remember hearing, in the distance; well, I didn't hear it. I didn't hear the explosion, but I heard about it from the officers in charge of the replacement detachment that I was in, indicating that it was a "buzz bomb" that had

failed to reach its target and prematurely landed. [Editor's Note: A "buzz bomb" was a V-1 rocket.]

SH: How close were you to that?

FC: Well, I didn't hear it, so, I wasn't too close to it, but the officers indicated [that it had hit]. I remember, we were in a factory building for sleeping purposes that night and all we had was our rifle and a duffle bag, and so, we had to watch out for that, ... because, in your duffle bag, you've got everything, all your valuables, in there. ... You don't want to get a mixed up duffle bag, you know, [laughter] get something with nothing but dirty socks in it. ...

SH: Did you just carry it with you at all times?

FC: Yes. ... When you get the pattern, yes, and you always kept [track of that], because that's where you had everything. Yes, that's where you had your pencil, that's where you had your razor, ... but that, I remember it. I didn't hear that explosion, but that was the thing that they indicated, because that thing [assembly area] was apparently in the glide path of where it was going over to the British Isles, having been released from--whether it was Holland or that section of Germany, that point that came in--and I remember that. ... Then, I learned that it was Liege and, now, shortly after Liege, then, and Aachen, was the Hurtgen Forest, [a forest along the German-Belgian border that was the site of a prolonged battle between US and German troops from September 1944 to February 1945.]

SH: When were you assigned to the 28th [Infantry Division]?

FC: I was assigned to the 28th around the 1st of November, if I can think of [it].

SH: That was just prior to the Hurtgen Forest.

FC: Yes. ...

SH: Did you see the Siegfried Line?

FC: Yes, yes, I saw the Siegfried Line, yes.

SH: Were you already assigned to the 28th?

FC: To the 28th? Well, the Siegfried Line in that area was a couple of rows of Siegfried Line, so that if you got through one, [I] mean, you don't know it, but there's another one or two down here, which was a certain section of that Siegfried Line. It was more than one line. It was maybe another line after, and then, another line, ... but I can remember being able to walk by one of those, and they were all so different. The structures, in some cases, the pillboxes were just [small], but, in other cases, they were massive.

SH: Really?

FC: They were massive, and then, I remember when we were assigned. We were apparently assigned to the regiment, and then, the regiment then saw to it that we were assigned to the companies, and I was assigned, I remember, to Company A in the First Battalion of the 112th Regiment. ... One of the most awful things that I saw, too--of course, now, the front line was always advancing, and then, backing away, and then, advancing a little bit more the next day, and then, staying maybe over night, but it was never steady forward or stay [put]. It was always in a state of flux, and we were replacements. I guess, out of the group that were onboard that truck, I think about almost half of that truckload went to the 112th Regiment.

SH: Really?

FC: Yes, that many, almost half that truck. Now, that truck would hold maybe twenty-five guys.

SH: You think that would be indicative of what they had lost prior to that.

FC: That's right, ... with our baggage and our rifle, you know, and, when I got to A Company, we were assigned the task then of taking care of some cadavers that were there, that they were getting ready to evacuate and pull out and they didn't want to leave them. So, we were there [to] put together and transfer those guys from the ground, where they were just covered with a tarpaulin, and put them into a truck and take them back with us. ... Then, after a couple of days of that back and forth, if we weren't advancing and somebody else was doing the advancing, we were then taking training and practice on how to take a pillbox and how to cooperate with the engineers who would normally be there to set up charges of dynamite, that they might be on duty, to associate you the next time you're out to go into combat.

SH: Were you in the forest? Were you near villages, like Vossenack or Schmidt?

FC: Vossenack and Schmidt, yes, yes, Vossenack and Schmidt, ... oh, my goodness, they were shooting galleries, tremendous losses.

SH: You were there for that.

FC: Yes, tremendous losses, tremendous losses there. Farmhouses galore--you didn't know there was Germans upstairs, because that's how they would sort of trap you, you know. They'd be quiet. You would have no knowledge of what was upstairs unless you went up, and a lot of times, with the heat of the battle, you know that you can't do everything that you want to do, you have to do what the team wants you to do and you have to follow what they do. You can't forge off and look about--you have to [stick with the team]. ...

SH: Were you one of a few replacements or were there a lot of replacements in Company A?

FC: Well, in Company A, there must have been at least eight of them, at least eight.

SH: How were you treated as replacements?

FC: Well, we were treated almost on a basis of, "Hey, we're glad to see you," but nothing really bosom-ly or buddy-like, you know, because some of them, they didn't even know enough to say, "Hey, I'm So-and-So." So, I was assigned to a squad of twelve men and I don't think I even knew the guy's first name. All I knew is [that] he was a sergeant.

SH: Really?

FC: That's right, he was a sergeant. ...

SH: Were they still predominantly made up of the Pennsylvania National Guard?

FC: Oh, no. ... They had guys from all over. They had guys from Philadelphia. Well, of course, ... that could have been [Pennsylvania National Guard]. ... I remember, there was one guy, I think, in the group of replacements that was from Philadelphia, from the Philadelphia area, ... but, no, the Pennsylvania National Guard, ... those guys were consumed and worn out. ... Yes, they were getting them from all over. ... No, there was no tie-in and we never knew the names of the guys because there were so many other things crowding out closeness, to get familiar, from getting to know who that guy is. Oh, he had a nickname, maybe, or so. ...

SH: Did you have a nickname?

FC: No, I didn't have a nickname. Well, of course, usually, I was called "Clarkie," or something like that, or "You." [laughter] You know, yes, "You do this," and ... there was a very, very limited amount of closeness. All we knew is that we were Americans and we were all in the same pot, and it's all a tough assignment and a limited amount of this or that.

SH: When you were traveling across France, did you ever get off the train or truck in a village? How did the people treat you?

FC: Well, we did at Liege. I remember there especially because the bakery was there, and the people that were in that factory building, that were part of the replacement cadre, they knew that place. So, we, on occasion, would maybe see somebody that had come back into the area, civilians and all. We had no contact time. No, it was, "Hey, we're out of that building and we're going to go over and get bread while we can. This is a treat for you, and one of the few 'nicey' nice things that they could do," and who knows? It came about only because, "Hey, your next movement from here closer up is late to get you and take you. So, take advantage of it."

SH: How often did you get a hot meal?

FC: Well, a warm meal. [laughter]

SH: Okay, I take that back.

FC: That's right, a warm meal. Well, it would be whenever your kitchens could come up as close as they dare come up. ... They would come up a certain distance, far enough back, I think, say here, where we're in, oh, let's say from [the] main street out here, which is like ...

SH: Quarter of a mile maybe, not even that far?

FC: Yes, maybe a quarter to half a mile, they would be, on occasion, but, then, that's where the food would be prepared, then, would be put in large containers that were, how big? I would say like an old-fashioned galvanized steel tub; oh, no, maybe ... not quite that big, maybe something twenty inches in diameter or so, and maybe that high. They were heavily insulated. That's why they'd be so big, to hold some food, and because the insulation took up so much space, to keep and retain that heat, ... but the contents were small, and you would get something like that. Your food would come up in those cans. ... That would be brought up special, while your kitchen is still back there. These would come up in small loads, like a truck, a jeep, a jeep with a trailer. ... From the German line, German positions, you would be, yes, as far as Route 78 is from here.

SH: Like a mile.

FC: Yes, yes, and because that would be the safest [spot], because, see, you were all gathering there and that's [dangerous].

SH: What about getting your mail and sending mail?

FC: I never received any mail.

SH: Really?

FC: I never received any mail. I never received any mail from home, because I was constantly on the move, constantly moving, never received any mail. I remember, see, Colleen, who is here--Colleen is my second wife. My first wife died.

SH: I am sorry.

FC: In 1983, and Colleen's husband died in, I guess it was around 1989, or something like that, and she was my first girlfriend when I was in high school.

SH: Your wife?

FC: Colleen.

SH: Colleen was.

FC: Colleen was my first girlfriend. ...

SH: When you were in Cranford?

FC: When we lived in Cranford, she was my first girlfriend, and I remember the night I was leaving Cranford, on my last sneak out from over the fence, because the next day, the boat was coming and the train was going to take us into New York. We were saying good-bye and I did

not wish to make any commitment to Colleen ... in my leaving and seeing her that evening, because I knew what I was going to be facing. ... After the war ... and after we'd been married, Colleen had said to me that she had, on some occasions, sent me some things from home, which I'd never received, you know. We were always on the move. Ammunition had first choice and, if we weren't carrying enough ammunition in your cartridge belt and in the slings holding all the extra cartridges, we were carrying mortar shells, we were carrying metal cases containing the machine-gun ammo. That was necessary, because the more of that you had, [the better], even though somebody else was going to be shooting it. You were a body, you were better than a donkey, because you could move it and lift it, then, put it down, pick up something else, and so, we were always carrying stuff, not ... for our immediate personal use, but for the good of the mission, yes.

SH: You did not even get letters from your sisters and your mother.

FC: No, no, I never got any, never got any.

SH: That is awful. Were you writing letters home?

FC: I wrote letters home, yes, when I could, at night. Yes, I would write, and, of course, they had to be approved and ... you could never indicate anything that was gory. ... There were barriers to what's permissible and, many times, it was not necessarily how the day went, you know, see, because I guess they never knew ... if the Americans were always going to see that mail or that somebody else was going to see that mail. ... Would it safely get out and would it be safely picked up or would it get lost?

SH: Was the Red Cross or the USO a presence at all?

FC: No, I didn't see [them], not until much later on. ... No, I never encountered the Red Cross. I had a shower once or twice.

SH: Did you?

FC: Yes; never saw the Red Cross or any entertainment. ...

SH: When was the first time that you were actually in combat? What do you remember about that? Was it the Hurtgen Forest? Was that really the first time, when you were assigned to Company A and to this patrol?

FC: ... Yes, that's right. It was the noise, the confusion, the noise, and the rapidity with which you have to move. ...

SH: Did you feel well-trained at that point?

FC: Well, our training was basically based on, I would say, a rough idea of what it's going to be and it was very, very different. It wasn't like the books indicated. It was close, but closeness only counts in dancing. [laughter] ... You couldn't pattern it. Everything was a surprise. Every

action was different. What was successful today, that you were able to do and preserve yourself, you were lucky. It's so noisy ... and it constantly changes. You can get a wave [a forward surge] up this way, and then, all of a sudden, there's nobody following you and there's nobody in front of you, and so, now, immediately, you've got to react and do something different. You've got to wait until the smoke clears, you know. ... I guess the training was ... about the best they could offer, ... see, because they trained us not necessarily for work in the Pacific area, where it was water, Marine landings, and so on. We were trained like make-believe, and the make-believe wasn't as it actually was, no.

SH: What was the interaction like between the officers and the enlisted men?

FC: Very close.

SH: Was it?

FC: ... It was very close, because they were [with us] in a given action or attack, or even a pull back, and they never used the word "retreat," it was always a "pull back." "We're being pulled back today, but we're not retreating. We're going to pull back and give the areas that we have taken over to somebody else, and you tell them what you know about that," but the officers were [there]. I think there were an awful lot of officers lost. Their life was always in extreme danger, because they had to be exposed.

SH: Did you lose your commanding officers?

FC: ... Oh, yes, yes, indeed. I would say that they were right up there with the enlisted men in order of loss, because so many of them had just about the same amount of training as we had, [in addition] to the responsibilities of an officer, what he has to do, and in addition to him being responsible for carrying the message down that he hears. They're constantly having reviews, as officers, with fellow officers in your company, and they relate ... what battalion is telling them. Then, they come back and relate to us. Those officers were so busy. They had very, very little time to themselves. Oh, they were hit just as severely as we were. ... A lot of them were young. ... Well, the junior officers, yes, I mean, a lot of these guys were ASTP. [Editor's Note: The Army Specialized Training Program was a program that enrolled soldiers in highly accelerated college courses in areas of study such as engineering and foreign language.]

SH: That is what I wanted to ask you. You were in the ASTP Program and you had had two years of college. Did that set you apart from some of the other infantrymen?

FC: Oh, no, no. The fact that I'd come in as a replacement, there was never any thought that, hey, I was different from them.

SH: Did you ever consider applying for Officer Candidate School?

FC: They had made it known, towards the tail-end of our ASTP training, before they sent people off to ... what was going to be their destination. Usually the bigger built person, ... and the taller, the "bigger target" man, was usually suggested to be the ASTP guy to go to [OCS]. ...

SH: Really?

FC: Yes. Now, that was my experience, yes. That's what I saw, ... because I can remember, when there were some guys that were destined to go to the ASTP, I was asked to help them ship to their home a carbine.

SH: Really?

FC: Yes, that's right, something that they really shouldn't have, you know--steal from the government. You know, it wasn't personal. [laughter] That's what he wanted. He wanted a carbine, and I would pack it and take it to the US Post Office and mail it home. ... Oh, yes, that was that, but those that were selected to go out were done by your company commander ... during your basic training or during your final training, his good judgment of who he thought had the right razzmatazz voice to be heard, "Come on, fellows, we're going to do this or going to do that," or the most "quarterback" guy, you know, bigger stature, looks like he could take the punishment. He's got legs on him like that. [laughter] ...

SH: Telephone posts?

FC: Yes, that's right, ... and their judgment was rather quickly, I think, accomplished, you know, ... but most all those guys who were, I guess, going to take [officer training]--I don't know how they ever worked the officer training camp. I think, always, most of those guys got into line duty, rather than Air Force or engineering officers, like the artillery, guys would be [assigned to].

SH: What had been your major at Seton Hall? What were you planning to study?

FC: I was studying to be a chemist, and I had no idea what I wanted to do, you know. ...

SH: I just wondered if there was any thought that you would be put in the Army to do something that would be related to what you had been studying.

FC: Yes, that's right, yes, and, in chemistry, that was a pretty tough decision. I had hoped that I could have become a doctor, but ... I didn't really recognize--well, yes, yes, I can tell that I knew I had an imperfection in color perception when I got my driver's license. ... I couldn't always tell whether the top light was [red], but I always learned that the top light was red. [laughter] ... Up in Nesquehoning, though, in that era, the lights were horizontal. [laughter] A lot of the towns in Pennsylvania, the traffic lights were [horizontal] ... and you couldn't [tell], you know. [laughter] It was a real tough thing, but, here in New Jersey, it was a snap, you know, and I turned [sixteen] down here. I could have gotten my license in Pennsylvania, because all you had to do was be sixteen and I was sixteen on July 21st, but, two weeks later, I was going to be living in New Jersey. [laughter] So, my father wasn't going to have me get ... a Pennsylvania license, when [he had to deal with] all the things about moving, and this and that, and the car. ...

SH: What do you remember about rationing before you left for the Army? How did that impact your family?

FC: The rationing system that was established had [few hardships]. Well, life at home with the family during ... those [years], what was it? '41 to '43, during those two years, there was no hardship. There was no denial that I could see, [that] stood out, so that I could remember it, excepting for the fuel, gasoline, fuel, not so much for heating oil or anything like that, but, no, that was about the only thing. I never heard my mother say she can't do this or that because she can't get the meat, the pork chops, or this or that, or you can't get this kind of beef or chicken or cheese. I can never remember anything along that line. It was the gas, the fuel.

SH: Was your sister in school or was she working?

FC: My oldest sister was one of the influences, too, to get my father to move from his birthplace down to somewheres between, and obey what the government was telling him he should be living in, because there was nothing for her to be hired as [as] a woman, excepting teaching, and he wanted to give her a broader way. ... Then, the broader way could come from her going to a place where she could either become a girl in business or in teaching. ... He always recognized that, in teaching, there are so many impediments to teaching, because it depends upon the school board, and this and that, and their historical favoritisms by fellow men, who are no different than anybody else, but, yet, they have the power of government behind them. They happened to be there first, in that position of control. ... [He felt this way] because he had a sister that was a teacher and she had a terrible time in teaching. He didn't want ... my sister to be a teacher, and she was held down because of animosity towards your faith, or this or that, or your political [beliefs], see, because they were all political. They were almost all English people, descendants of English people, who had the easiest jobs in the coal mines. They wouldn't do the digging, but they would run the lift that dropped the miners down into the mine where the danger was, and then, they pull it back up. ... They're the guys that ride to the bank instead of walking to the bank, because they've been able to afford a car.

SH: Were the ones going in the mine the Irish, the Italians and the Hungarians?

FC: That's right. There was always [those divisions] in that little town. ... I remember, I had a friend of mine, one time, lost his life in the car. He was in a car that went under a tractor-trailer, speeding. The driver of the car and the passenger in the front were killed. ... When that one boy was being waked, my father drove me to his home, where he had lived, and the wakes were done from the home. My father drove me to that child's home and I could go in. My father didn't encourage me to go there, but I wanted to go, because all my friends [were there]. We were pals, you know, played baseball together, with each other. ... I went and I can remember, my father drove me to the front of the house and he sat outside in the car and waited for me to come back out, because there was a difference in denominations. ... There was that much animosity between the Catholics and the Protestants in that mining town, that even on election days, there were effigies of the Democrats, [laughter] who were usually the Romans [Roman Catholics], hanging from a pole. I can remember seeing them.

SH: My word, really?

FC: Yes, that's right. I can remember seeing them hanging from the light pole, [laughter] you know, an effigy, ... because the mentality level of so many of the miners and groups was such that they couldn't see that it was, "Hey, that's the way life is. Either you earn the right to be able to live like an Englishman or live the life of an Irishman, a Hungarian, an Italian," which is the other groups, you know. [laughter] So, it was that way or that way.

SH: What about the unions? Was it unionized?

FC: Well, no. I don't think the unions were that strong, really, when I was growing up in that town. I guess, really, the unions didn't pick up strength until, I guess, the mid to late '30s. The automobile people, and so on, and so forth, brought this [to bear], but, from this little town level, ... it was based mostly upon political party and faith.

SH: How did your father land the job with the railroad then?

FC: Well, I'll tell you, my father grew up with a family named (McDonald?) and ... there were two men and a lady in the (McDonald?) Family, children. My father was pals of the youngest one. ... My father, from visiting that home, the (McDonald?) home, the older brother always liked my father, because my father was ... a type of a person that he thought his brother should be associating with. ... Lo and behold, the brother, the youngest one, that my father's pal was, he went on to the Catholic seminary. His older brother worked for the government and he worked in the Post Office Department and he had grown into a job from luck. I don't know how he ever got the job. His name was John. He became Dr. (McDonald?), our family physician. He had a job in the Post Office Department and he liked my father and he thought, "Gee, now, here's a man that has a lot of values that our family sees of importance, and he's a coalminer in a dangerous job. He has a family to support. Gee, ... I've saved enough money in this job, in the US Postal Department, that it's specialized," he said, "he could become a railway post office manager, and he'll no longer be dependent upon coal being sold before he'll get a check. This way, he'll have a check every two weeks," in the Depression, like that. He said to my father, he said, "I'm going to go to Hahnemann Hospital Medical School in Philadelphia. I will teach you how to pass an examination [so] that you could have a job just like I'm leaving." He said, "I can't hand it to you," but he said, "I can teach you what the job entails, what you have to know, and you'll take the tests and examinations and you'll pass it, hopefully, and you'll have a better livelihood for your family." My father listened to him. The youngest brother, my father's friend, he went on to the priesthood and Dr. (McDonald?), ... John (McDonald?), the older one, went to [medical school] and he graduated as a physician. He then became the family physician, [laughter] and he was late when I was born. ... My mother said, "You're not getting paid for this delivery, because you were late." [laughter] She was joshing with him, but, anyway, my father and that doctor [had this relationship]. ... When my father got the job, my father had to go to New York and he had to take a test. ... My father showed me the testing. I used to see my father, he had a square, and this square was about three or four feet, each side, and maybe, in thickness, maybe three or four inches, and it was all wire shelves, wire, vertical shelves. So, he had little cubicles and [there was] a little tag underneath. Each tag, underneath it, had a city name in the United States. They had Los Angeles, Tallahassee, ... Boston, Albany, here, and the requirement was, for you to be the postmaster on that car, when that train pulls into a railroad

station, [you had to exchange the mail quickly]. ... There are men there with a cart that is yea big on either end and just a couple of wheels in the front and he has to push that thing. Now, back in the '30s, they did that, and they'd throw those mailbags in. As soon as that train pulls in, they'd throw those mailbags in. Boy, oh, boy, oh, boy, they got that bag going almost in [an instant], because they know that mail's going to come out of there and they want to get all of that out, so [that] they have room for that. [laughter] The guys inside there are competing, too. They want to be the first out and they know when the door's going to open. So, they would open that door, and there'd be a second man in there, be throwing them out, and, eventually, these guys would lose out. So, that was the [requirement], they had to [move fast]. Now, they had to sort that mail out that was in those mailbags before that train got into the next town, and that wasn't [easy]. It was a slow train, really, but it wasn't the fastest and you had to really, laboriously, get that in, open it up on a table. The table would be not as wide as this, but almost, but at least as long as this. ... There would be mailbags on the side and they'd have a name on it, on the end of a rope, and that rope then would be, "Whoosh," pushed down, and this is all extra rope here now. ... That's attached, and that metal thing that goes down locks it in its place. So, these things are flying in and you get hit in the head with them, but they have to stand and sort that mail out, Philadelphia, Boston, this and that. You have to memorize just where those things are, and my father was good at it [laughter] and he got the job, even though we were beyond the territorial expectation, because if ever he missed that train in the morning, he could get [the next stop], always catch it at the next stop. He'd be there. If you miss at the first stop, at least you have the second stop that you could get to, whether it's by horse or car or walking. If you're out beyond it and you missed the first car, how [were] you going to catch it? You don't know where it's going to be. So, that was how my father ... got that job, and Dr. (McDonald?) was the family physician. ... Every Sunday, after Mass, my father would go up to see Dr. (McDonald?) and they would sit down and [laughter] they would talk politics, they would talk finance, they would talk. They were mentors to each other.

SH: Were they both Democrats?

FC: They were both Democrats, yes.

SH: Had your father's parents emigrated from Ireland?

FC: Yes, yes, they had come over from Ireland, yes. ...

SH: Specifically to work in the coal mines.

FC: That's right. My father's people were originally from Scotland. ... From animosity between Catholics and Protestants, they migrated from Scotland to Ireland, and then, came over by boat to New York, as miners, and settled in that area which was Nesquehoning. ... Yes, that's what led the family to come over from Scotland, and so, my father had immigrant parents and, of course, he had two sisters and one brother. My father had two sisters and one brother, and the one brother was blind, lost his sight in the coal mines, with an explosion, premature explosion. ... He lost his eyesight and managed to maintain a living. He moved to New York City, the wife came, and he had a newsstand and sold newspapers. Like, they stopped, I guess. After the war was over, ... that disappeared. ... I don't think you ever see news[stands]. Well, I guess you still

see newsstands in New York, but ... 8701 Fifth Avenue was his address in Brooklyn, I remember that, and it was in the Bay section; [I do not remember] what they call it, [Bay Ridge]. I forget, but I can remember, as a kid, walking from their home in Brooklyn, apartment house, it was, down to the waterfront, which was where the ships came in to New York Harbor. ... I can remember walking there as a child, maybe five, six years of age, to see the fleet coming in. ... With the sailors, I still have a vision, or at least I think I still have a vision, of seeing the sailors all lined up in white, showing off their uniform as they pulled [in]--this is peacetime, you know--and going to [New York Harbor]. I can remember that. I'm trying to think of the section of Brooklyn that it was. ...

SH: What about your mother's parents? Had they also immigrated?

FC: My mother's parents were also immigrants, and they went further into Pennsylvania. They were from, ... let me say the Pottsville area, Pottsville, Pennsylvania, still [the] anthracite area, but sort of fading away. See, anthracite coal is found generally only in a narrow width of Pennsylvania, and it's mostly in the, well, if you were to say it's the first [third], the most eastern third of Pennsylvania was anthracite. ... The rest of it fades away to soft coal, and so on, but, yes, it was the anthracite [area]. ...

SH: Had they emigrated from Ireland as well?

FC: They had emigrated also from Ireland, and they were happy to stay as miners. ...

SH: How did your parents meet?

FC: My parents met at a dance. It seemed that everybody traveled by trolley car, and the distance between where my father lived and was growing up, it was approximately maybe twenty-five miles apart from the Pottsville area. ... They met at a dance and, of course, [laughter] I remember my father--no, I guess it was my mother--many times, would say that her luckiest day was that she went to that dance, because my father also went to that dance and that's when she first met him. ... The reason why she was so attracted to my father [laughter] was that of all the young men that she danced with that night, he was the only one that didn't have liquor on his breath, and she was aware of what imbibing leads to. So, he hit a homerun by not having had liquor on his breath, and she thought, "Now, there's a man that's going to be able to support me and my family." ... My mother was not accepted to be my father's wife by his two sisters, because--no, no, my father had three sisters, that's right, my father had three--because my father was their chauffeur. [laughter] He had a car. He had a good job, didn't work in the coal mines, "And this woman is going to now come ahead of us. He's not going to be our brother, that 'Tom, Dick and Harry' that can take us to this, that and the other," and they resented that, they really did, all excepting one, to a lesser degree, and she was the oldest. The oldest one never had that attitude, and I remember her name was Kate, but Mary and (Ella?) were the younger two. One was a teacher, and (Ella?) was the teacher. Kate was the one that my father always accepted. He always accepted her as the matriarch of the family.

SH: Really?

FC: Yes, he always had the greatest respect for her, and like loyalty between a son and a mother. [laughter] In later years, I can remember, when I went to church, if there was something going on at church and I was there, say, and not with my parents or as a family, ... and I didn't behave in accordance with the standards that my Aunt Kate had--that would mean, to satisfy Kate, I'd have to have been sitting like this.

SH: Very stern and pious. [laughter]

FC: Yes. So, a report got home that I was otherwise--my hands weren't joined, and so on, [and] so forth, and my mouth was moving, I was talking. [laughter] ... I said to my father, I said, "Well, if she was saying [prayers] and reading her prayer book, she wouldn't have noticed me." I no sooner got the "me" out and I felt the fist. That was his sister, who helped him mature, replaced his mother, who had passed on, and she was the matriarch of the family that was holding them together and I could never say anything that way. ... His sister Kate would usually come down to the home that we lived in up there, and it was about, ... I'd say, a good half to three-quarters of a mile that she had to walk from where they lived to where we lived. She would come down with a little paper bag with something in wax paper for my father, a portion of what they had at home for my father. ... She would stay maybe an hour and visit, and then, she'd go home, but she's the only one that tolerated my mother, even though my father now had another lady to make room for in his life. She'd always had a little treat for him. She never baked anything to be an extra piece for me, my mother ... [laughter]

SH: Really? [laughter]

FC: Yes, or me and my sisters. If it was a cherry pie, if I went down to her house and climbed up and got two pots full of cherry pie, she would select the biggest pot full of cherries as theirs and I could take the other one home to my mother. [laughter] [The sisters] got the biggest one, no, but that was it, yes, but she accepted my mother ... as okay.

SH: Kind of. [laughter]

FC: Yes, that's right, ... but my father always took care of her. ...

SH: Had she married and had a family?

FC: No, no, she had never married. She remained a spinster and my father would go down to see her very frequently. In fact, there were times when there would be a railroad or a trolley car strike and she couldn't get to [work]. She worked in a silk mill in the next town and she couldn't get [there], travel back and forth. My father used to take her. I can remember as a boy being in the car with my father, waiting for her at quitting time, like four o'clock in the afternoon, so [that] those girls would have a chance to get home before it got dark, that worked in that silk mill, ... yes, but there was a great bond between my father and his sister Kate.

SH: [laughter] Great stories.

[TAPE PAUSED]

FC: ... Yes, so, I was saying, ... my father always had the greatest respect for his two sisters, and there was three sisters. He always had the greatest [respect for them], because he was the man of the family, you know. ...

SH: His father had passed away early.

FC: His father had passed away, yes, and his mother, and so, because my father didn't; well, ... I don't know what age my father was ... when I was born, but I don't remember. ... I think he was older than thirty. I think he was older than thirty when I was born. I might have had that in here, though.

SH: You may have, yes.

FC: I may have, but, nevertheless, my father's values were always high and reasonable and he was loyal.

SH: Did your mother come from a large family?

FC: Yes, my mother came from a fairly large family. I remember, my mother had Joseph, who was gassed in the war, World War I, she had Joseph, Raymond, William, (John?), Cecilia, Elizabeth and another sister that died very early in her life. So, she was one of seven, yes, ... and how did she fit in there? My mother fit in there around, ... I think my mother was ... the third or fourth in there, yes. ...

SH: Are you the first of the grandchildren, so-to-speak, who was college educated?

FC: We had no cousins, because none of my aunts or uncles had children and they never married. Well, I think one of them married, Joseph married, but they never had children, after he came back from World War I. They never had children, but, let's see, yes, I had one cousin, a girl, and, oddly enough now, she got a job in the post office in Nesquehoning, only because of politics. There was a Democrat there in that town who had a lot of say, because he was in a town with a lot of nationalities and they looked up to him as a very good protector of everybody's welfare, you know. He had an insurance business. He was an immigrant himself, from Czechoslovakia, I think it was, but he purveyed himself as, portrayed himself, rather, as, "I'll see to it that you have life insurance. Should you die, your family will get some money. If you get to own property, you'll be able to protect your property in case of a fire or any damage," or this or that, flood or so, and so, they looked up to him because he was on their side, looking out for their welfare. He was a teacher to them, and then, doing business, they'd have side conversations of, "How can I help you otherwise?" you know. ... If you have a sickness and the mines aren't working, he'd slip them a little money. So, he was very highly regarded. So, he was the one that had the say of who was going to be the candidate presented for a job in the post office. So, he appointed my cousin, a girl, very, very pretty girl, redheaded Irish girl. ... One of his elder sons was escorting her around. Well, naturally, his father was fairly well-off and he had a big family. ... There was a grade--in parochial school, there was always a (Coumer?) ... in the class. There

was always a (Coumer?) in the class, like the Kennedys, you know, and he was "Mr. Politics." So, that's how (Ellen?) got her job there. ...

SH: Was she your father's niece?

FC: That's right, my father's niece, yes, and she would have never gotten that job there, excepting through the (Coumer?) Family. ... So, anyway, they married, they did, and her husband survived World War II because he was shipped to Greenland.

SH: Really?

FC: That's right, he was in the Army, in Greenland, to prove that it's green, you know. [laughter] ... After the war, he got a job with a food purveying company that would sell wholesale foods to hospitals and he used to sell them even to the Clinton Diner up here, before it became Clinton Diner, on the railroad tracks, you know. ... He sold to the hospitals up in Morristown, cases and cases and cases of Heinz foods or Campbell's, or this or that, and he was always a good provider to his family. ... They were childless, so, they adopted two girls that were sisters and they treated them all very well, and, now, they're both expired, of course. ... When I'd be traveling in my work, I went through that territory. I would always stop and visit them, and, also, I was charged by my father to always, when I'm up in the Nesquehoning area, to go back and make sure I rap on the door of ... Dr. (McDonald?). ... As far as being a mentor, now, [laughter] I'll tell you the story--my mother, one time, had to go to the hospital for a hysterectomy. I don't know what age I was, but I was maybe very, very early teens, or not even a teener yet, but I can remember going down to the hospital. ... I went down to the hospital to see my mother and I knew where the candy for Christmas was hidden, because she went to the hospital between Christmas and New Year's. I remember where the candy was hidden and it was hidden in the basement, in an old piece of furniture down there, and it was so dark in that basement that you'd never know what was inside that cabinet, excepting air. ... Anyway, I found it and, on the trip we were taking down to the hospital in Palmerton, which was maybe a thirty-mile drive or so, thirty, forty miles, I had been stuffing my face with it. ... [It] consisted of a hard shell over peanut butter content, and peanut butter, my mother could smell it. [laughter] So, we all come in, we're all coming over to kiss Mom and Dad, kiss Mom and Dad. My turn to kiss Mom--Mom grabs a hold of me by the neck. She says, "You bugger from hell, you found the candy, huh?" [laughter] Nobody else knew [the location of] the candy but my father.

SH: However, you got found out. [laughter]

FC: Yes, she found out, yes, ... but to go back up, though, from that, my father'd be up to see Dr. (McDonald?). They'd talk politics. ... The doctor ... used to play the stock market, because he had a little left ... over at the end of the month. It was a dollar a visit in his home or two dollars if he came to the house. Imagine that? and, if he came to the house, invariably, he gave you the prescription medicine, because he had it in a bag and, usually, it was nothing like prescriptions today, you know. I mean, in those days, there was prescriptions that you could say and pronounce, but, today, my word, you [cannot]. I remember, just this morning, I was ... writing down my prescriptions that I take, as Colleen insists that I do, and I had to write down hydrochlorothiazide. That's one of the medications, hydrochlorothiazide.

Colleen Clark: I think you're going to write a book.

FC: Yes, I did. [laughter] ... My father stopped this one time into Dr. (McDonald's?) and Dr. (McDonald?) always had a toothpick in his mouth and my father's watching that toothpick. It's traveling all over his mouth. ... My father says, "Gee, Doc," he always called him "Doc," [laughter] he said, "Doc," he said, "it looks like you're under stress this morning. What's the stress?" "Oh," he said, "Lil, my wife, has got to go to the hospital." "Oh," my father's eyes popped up, "oh, yes?" "Yes," he said, "Frankie," he said, "Lil's got to go to the hospital and, you know, Frank," he said, "that's where all the germs are." [laughter] My father had to agree with him, but what my father relayed to me, though, [was], he said, "You know," he said, "I didn't get any sympathy out of the Doc when your mom was going in the hospital, but," he said, "when his wife was going in, though, boy, oh, he's all up in arms." [laughter] ... That's how different people look at different things, you know. I remember my father saying, "Oh, he was all upset," he said, "When your mother was going...

SH: No problem.

FC: ... A matter-of-fact."

SH: Did you and your sisters all go to parochial school?

FC: Yes, yes. We all went to parochial school, yes. ...

SH: When you moved to Cranford as well.

FC: When we moved to Cranford, we were all out of elementary school, so, we were in high school. I came into Cranford as a junior and my sister came in ... to Cranford as a freshman, you know. So, there was no Catholic high school.

SH: The two older ones were already graduated then.

FC: One of the older ones had passed on. She died as a young girl, when maybe I was five years of age or so. Yes, she had ... a leaky valve in her heart, which I think that one charity organization in South Jersey, I think they are, they take care of that now, matter-of-fact, like it was cutting your fingernails. Yes, she had a very, very bad heart and always wasn't getting the circulation. I was trying to think of the name of that. ... I know of a fellow graduate, woman, from high school with me. She had a daughter that went to that hospital and that was "apple pie," corrected.

SH: Wonderful.

FC: Yes, but my sister died of that, yes.

SH: Did you go to parochial high school in Cranford?

FC: No, there was no parochial high school in [Cranford]. Well, there was none in Westfield, yet. ... There might have been one in Westfield, but, see, with us coming down and not knowing the area, my father didn't [find one], and a difference [from] today, he had a lot to move and relocate, get my older sister to [her] education, to live with my aunt and uncle in Brooklyn.

SH: What did she go to school for in New York? Where did she go to school?

FC: Washington School of Secretaries, which was like Catherine Gibbs, for business, typing. Colleen went to ... the same school.

SH: Really? [laughter]

FC: That's right. She went to work for the telephone company.

SH: The Bell System?

FC: The Bell System, yes, and Washington School for Secretaries, where, when you graduated, you knew how to type and take shorthand and act like a lady and know how to dress and know how to speak and spell. ... So, you put up a year or two doing that and, now, ... you can work on Wall Street and meet a lot of nice people, and so, that was what they did, yes. They all used to ride the train, and Cranford was selected because that was within a reasonable distance to New York. ... That's where the girls always wore white gloves, going in on the commuter train in the morning, you know, yes. [laughter]

SH: Amazing.

FC: Yes.

SH: Where were you encouraged to then go to college? Did someone begin mentoring you to go to college?

FC: Oh, I think the last semester of my senior year, [laughter] and I did so well in the chemistry group and my father had a very good friend who was a druggist in Nesquehoning named Ed Campbell. ... Ed Campbell was the druggist and my father would always go up there when he had a day off. ... He would go up and they would play cards in the back of the drugstore, while the drugstore's open, but he could always hold up the game to go in and take care of ... the need, and then, come back to the card table, but they had social, friendly games. There was never money on the table or IOUs, but it was a case of four friends getting together and reviewing the politics, and who knows more about what goes on in town besides the postmaster? The druggist would, yes, and so, my father would always go up there. ... My father thought, "Well, you know, he made a good living as a pharmacist. Maybe I would get good marks and become a pharmacist," but I had the handicap of color perception and it was very tough for me to even consider medical school, because, later on, when I was discharged from the service, I was discharged with fifty percent disability. ... I could have gone to medical school and they would have paid everything for me, and even given me money besides. They did. That's how I finished up going to Seton Hall. I had a subsistence of a couple of hundred dollars a month and, with the

skies wide open, I was very, very limited. ... If I was handsome, I could have been ... on television once in awhile and talk about a new item that's available. I wouldn't have to worry about, "Hey, look down the throat; ... does it look like a different color?" Today, it's all different. That's how things change.

SH: It is. Technology has really changed.

FC: That's right, and I was aware of that. ... The drugstore, I got to know ... my father's friends and I remember it, my mother would say to me, "Go up to Campbell's Drugstore and tell your father to come on home and, on his way home, stop and get this, to get that," and so, I'd get up there and I'd meet them. I'd meet his friends. He'd introduce me to his friends. I'd see them time after time after time. ... One of the steady card players at Ed Campbell's drugstore was an immigrant ... from Germany, and the other one was, I think, a man from Czechoslovakia who was a bus driver for the school system up there, and he had a garbage business. ... Ed (McGinley?) was always sort of big and whiskery. ... Oh, yes, so, the one fellow had a weakness for, maybe he would take jokes to heart, exactly to heart, and they'd get on to all different subjects. ... If one person was [the] kind to bait the other guy, (McGinley?) would say, "John," John (Cotner?) was his name, the German, he'd say, "John," he said, "I just heard that there's a new invention." He said, "You know how tough it is to clean a goose? When you kill a goose, you know how tough it is to get the feathers out? Oh," he said, "this guy figured out a way of taking the electric cord, and you know how those two wires are coming out of there?" He said, "Well, this guy would poke one wire in this arm [goose wing], one wire in the other and plug it in," [laughter] and he said, "All the feathers'd come off." [laughter] ... John (Cotner?) would take it to heart as fact and he'd get all upset. With his broken language, he'd say, "It's a shame. That man ought to be arrested that did that. He shouldn't have done it. Cruelty to animals, that's what it was," and with his voice and his language, you know, ... little simple things like that. [laughter]

SH: However, they all had a good time, right? [laughter]

FC: They all had a good time, and they weren't talking about women or anything else like that. ... Hardly even worth mentioning, but, again, it was [that] everybody lived a simple life. There was never talk of investments and this or that. It was just a fun game. ...

SH: You talked about how it was so divided because of the religious divide. Were there others, like the Ku Klux Klan or anything like that?

FC: No, there wasn't, no, no, there wasn't, not up that way, but, you know, down this area, there was, especially in New Brunswick.

SH: Really?

FC: Yes, yes. ... I heard of that from a woman that lived in this development, whose husband was a retired chief of police of Edison. Her family were "Ku Kluxers" and they admit it today like it was something. "Well, so what? Who wasn't, you know?"

SH: Is it okay if we jump back to World War II?

FC: Sure.

SH: We were talking about what you encountered. One thing I wanted to ask, because you had always so faithfully gone to Mass, were you able to continue doing that even after you got into the service?

FC: Oh, yes. ... In all the military posts that I was in, in the States, every Sunday, that's where I went. ...

SH: Were you able to do that when you got overseas?

FC: When I got overseas, that happened once, I think, and it was when I was in Liege, and I remember that because it was completely different from over here in America. There were no kneelers. You stood or sat. There was no kneelers, ... but that was just on one occasion when it was possible to be allowed to go off on your own and do this, yes, because you were really a valuable person to get that far, to go into what you're going to get into and where somebody's going to be counting on you. We don't want to lose anybody. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Should I turn this back on?

FC: Yes. So, in all the elementary schools that I was in, there was a mix of everybody and anybody. ... You know the frame of mind of people then versus the trend that it seems to be today, which we get mostly from, unfortunately, TV; we don't get it from the newspapers, because the newspapers, usually, will print only what's fit to print, but, on television, it's what isn't fit to say, you're going to hear it there. ... That has a bounce on people, where, years ago, a child could sit there in a Catholic school and be treated as a person, and not to convey them to be this way against what they are. ... They had good exposure, not negative exposure, and, of course, that rubs off in both ways. That way, everybody ends up with a memory of, "How were they treated by people that were in my majority versus our [minority]," yes. That is so tough to come to today, you know. I know a professor from Rutgers, Christopher Uchrin. I think he has mostly been dealing with water management, or something like that, and he's been teaching there for, what? ten years, more, fifteen years, more. How old is he? Oh, he's maybe sixty, and he lives in town here. His wife was the former mayor [of Lebanon]. ... Colleen came home one day and said to me, "Frank," she said, ... "I was talking to a woman who's running for mayor." "Oh," I said, "good, good; who is she?" She said, "Well, her name is Lisa Uchrin, U-C-H-R-Y-N, Uchrin, R-I-N, Uchrin, and she's running for mayor and she's got these 'vote for her' signs," and I said, "Give it to me," because I hate the Republicans around here, and, yet, I'm a Republican. I hate the Republicans that are in here, because I even had to sue the town here, for our little community in here, to get what's entitled to us. We were not getting garbage pickup without extra cost. We had to pay for it. Lighting in our courts, we had to pay for that. Snow plowing in the courts, we had to pay for that. Leaf pickup, and so on, we have [to pay for it]. Every other town all the way around here is getting that and we're supposed to be getting it by

state law. I dug out all the information we needed, going all the way back to when this thing was opened up in 1983. ... Yes, 1983, well, that's when it was passed by the town to build it. Then, it took [until] '87 before it started to materialize. ... So, there was a number of years that we were paying this. So, I forced the town into a settlement where we would go back six, seven years, "And you can give us that money every June," and that's what they did, every June. We just got the last one this past June and, now, we're as good as any other little community, yes. ... Then, I ran on the council, because [of] that Democrat wife of Christopher Uchirin, and I succeeded him then as chairperson of the Democratic Party here. ... I just mailed in a report to the election commission, which I have to do as the chairman, [laughter] but I'm a Republican. I'm the "wolf in sheep's clothing," ambidextrous, yes.

SH: There you go. [laughter]

FC: But, there's no money involved. Every year, I say, "These are blank. There's no credit. We have no bank account. We've received no money; we spent no money. We're doing better than the Governor." [laughter] ...

SH: No debt. [laughter]

FC: No, no, but, anyway, she has learned that when her son was in elementary school here, the animosity between the Democrats and Republicans was so great that it was reflecting a little on her child. So, she pulled him out and stuck him into a parochial school in Clinton, where she's paying like fourteen thousand dollars a year

SH: Is that not amazing?

FC: Yes, and, again, she's very, very satisfied with her child's performance, the subjects he's getting, and so on, and so forth, and he's away from this, because up there, the lay people that teach and the sisters, they don't have that [bias]. "Business is business. We're here to teach and not to corrupt," and, yes, so, she's very happy. In fact, every once in a while, she'll walk around here with her dog and she always refers to me as her hero, because I always supported her when she was mayor, on everything. In fact, there's a big suit coming up in the Superior Court. There is a woman who lives in Blirstown. She's a former municipal clerk in Lebanon Borough. She was dismissed summarily by the Republicans because she was right on the edge. She was neither "fish nor fowl." She was right where she had to be, and ... she's now selling real estate, since she was dismissed, for Weichert. I'm trying to think of her name now, ... but they lived in Blirstown. ... Her husband is, I think, ... a civil engineer. Yes, he's a civil engineer, has his own engineering company tied in with all these different municipalities where he was the civil engineer to respond to court cases, and so on, involving any number of towns. He had such a good name in it. ...

SH: When you came back and went to school, you majored in chemistry. Then, did you find it easy to go back to school after having been in the military?

FC: Oh, yes, yes, I found it very, very easy to get back, to continue, yes. I had no post-traumatic stress or anything like that, although, in the meantime, my mother had passed away before I came back from service. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

FC: I was just saying to Sandy that when I was about maybe three or four years of age and living in Nesquehoning, I was in a two-family house, side by side. On one side was my family and the other side was the Dorsey Family, ... the musicians. ... The mother was the organist at St. Ann's Catholic Church in Lansford and the father was a music teacher and bandleader in Lansford High School and Tommy and Jimmy were taking saxophone lessons. ... Since the home that they lived in ... [consisted of] the kitchen and the basement, dining room and living room on the second floor, third floor was the bedrooms, right, they would practice their saxophones on the ground level, which was the second floor, because it was on a slopy hill that they were built. ... The mother [was] losing her hearing; gradually, she couldn't tell which of the boys was playing the saxophone. So, they solved it by putting Tommy on the trombone, [laughter] and Jimmy kept on the saxophone. So, then, on a Saturday night in the summertime of parents sitting on the front porch, they were just chatting and Tommy Dorsey borrowed the father's car, one of the few cars in town. ... He was seen driving off, with his permission of the father, and, moments later, maybe a half-hour later, the father spies him coming home, greeting [them], "Hi," and the father asks the question, "Where's the car?" ... Before the son could say, "I smashed it up and it's in a ditch," the father swung his hand around and hit him in the face. He wanted the truth, [laughter] and then, he had to tell him, and the father said, "Well, you smashed my machine, that's what you did." They called the cars then machines, because there weren't that many and they were relatively new. Now, what time? Hey, that ... must have been around 1925, 1926? There weren't many cars on the road then. So, cars were really prized possessions. [laughter]

SH: Did your father suffer much in the Depression on the railroad or was his job pretty secure?

FC: Yes, my father's job was secured, yes. That's right. The only thing that put my father's job into jeopardy was the automobile industry, or I should say the trucking industry, taking over rapid service in mail deliveries, where you could get things done quicker by having many, many trucks going in all different directions with mail, as against a train in one direction at a time. ... That way, jobs that my father had were being eliminated. So, it was just like within a year or two that that policy was coming into effect before my father's retirement was due, yes. ... It was a great job, though, took a lot of hours in the morning, ... had to get up at around four o'clock to leave in time for the train, to start out at around five o'clock, get in Jersey City around eleven o'clock, maybe eleven-thirty, and then, twelve-thirty, turning around and going back the same way, backwards, and, on the way back, take care of the continuing mail. ... Yes, so, now, that was all taken over by trailer trucks and it no longer was any wonderful job. ... [It was good] because the pay was every two weeks, ... reliably and very handsome, ... but the time was [demanding]. I know many is the time we didn't have dinner until, oh, maybe as late as eight at night, when we were really hungry. We'd have our dinner much earlier, of course, but my father wouldn't eat until eight o'clock at night, his dinner, and he'd be up at, easily, four o'clock in the morning to be down and out of the house, breakfast eaten, in time for that train to leave at, say,

five o'clock, five-o-one, [laughter] period. ... Yes, so, that was all gradually coming about. Now, today, you see all mail trucks carrying [mail], yes. They can go in any direction.

SH: Did the trucking industry change that before the war or after?

FC: After the war, after the war, yes, because that's when a lot of large military vehicles were available for hauling and things, of course, were beginning to simmer down, and, yes, that wasn't until [after]. I would say the timing on that thing was probably some time in the '50s. Maybe about ten years after the war, that came about, yes. ...

SH: Was your father an employee of the railroad?

FC: Federal Government. That's right. The railroad rented [out] a full-length [rail]car. Half of that car was the baggage department, which was for freight, things beyond the letter size. That was all private. That wasn't government, that was public industry--Railway Express was the agency--and the back of that car was the other half, US Post Office, yes. ... At that time, with it being the height of the Depression, there was so much theft of money, being put in an envelope and tucked off to this person, that person, that mails were being pilfered. [Editor's Note: The Railway Express Agency was an agency owned by the railroad industry that transported the nation's packages and freight, a forerunner of FedEx and UPS.] So, to safeguard that, people had to send ... money by registered mail. We didn't have checkbooks ... at that time. So, a lot of ... registered mail was being lost, which never was supposed to be, because US mail was supposed to be, "I hand it to you, it's your responsibility, you hand it to her, ... it's her responsibility to handle that and, when she gets rid of it," so, it goes around. Everybody, it's hand-to-hand reception, guaranteed, none of this third party [involvement], "Oh, yes, I gave it to someone." No, that's why there's locks on those things, on those mailbags. Every bag [that] goes in and out has a lock on it and that's why they know it wasn't "Tom, Dick and Harry" or an accidental release, and you have to sign a number, and so, ... that was the main way that big funds were transferred. ... As a result, my father carried a revolver, six-shooter, and he always trusted me. He kept that in a large valise [an overnight bag] that he had. In that large valise, he had, oh, all his papers and notes, his razor, his whatever. ... He didn't wear the holster off the train, but, when he got on the train, he had to have that on. Once he stepped in there, he had to have that on right away. ... In some places, when the town wasn't big enough to have a post office, they would have an arrangement with the post office that, alongside the railroad, there would be a steel beam and an arm hanging out and they would hang the mailbag from that. So, as the train went by, the train would pull down a lever and a hook would come up and, as it went by, it would hit that rope and that [mail] bag would wrap around this mailbox tool and they lowered it right into the car. That way, they didn't have to stop the train. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: I thank you both very much for a lovely lunch and for having me here. I look forward to a follow-up session. Thank you.

FC: Yes.

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

Reviewed by Sylvia Pokrzywa 12/1/10
Reviewed by Matthew Zarzecki 12/1/10
Reviewed by Allison Bittner 12/1/10
Reviewed by Mark Kannell 12/1/10
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/22/11
Reviewed by Frank N. Clark 6/21/2014