RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS R. DAGGETT

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Thomas R. Daggett on November 2, 1994 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick with Kurt Piehler and

Mike Estevez: Mike Estevez.

KP: I guess I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your family, starting with your father. Your father went to Harvard?

Thomas Daggett: He went to Harvard, graduated in 1907.

KP: Was he the first in your family to go to Harvard or go to college, or had his father gone to college?

TD: I'm not sure. I think his father was a college person, but I'm not certain.

KP: And your father became an engineer?

TD: Yeah.

KP: Did he always teach or had he been in a commercial business?

TD: No, I think for a couple of years after he got out of college he worked for, ... I guess it was still the AT&T Company. ... Then he went into teaching at the University of North Carolina, and he taught there from I think it was about 1910 until 1929 when he became a Dean here at Rutgers.

KP: What was it like for a "Yankee" to go down to the University of North Carolina to teach?

TD: Well I'll tell you, my father and mother were both born and raised in Massachusetts. And my mother used to love to tell the story of the time she went into a butcher shop down there in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and ordered-- she called it "Cahlves liver." And the butcher said, "What?" She said, "Cahlves liver." He said, "What do you mean?" She ... stamped her foot and said, "Calves' liver, damn it!" (laughs) My mother was a little bit of a woman. She was funny.

KP: Your mother, did she ever work outside of the household?

TD: No.

KP: Was she active in any clubs or other organizations?

TD: Not that I know of. She was a church person, but that's all.

KP: That's all. She never joined any civic organizations?

TD: No, no.

KP: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

TD: I had two brothers and three sisters, of which one brother and one sister are left. The brother incidently went to Rutgers. He graduated in 1938, I think it was, in engineering. And he had various jobs.

KP: You were born in the south?

TD: Yes, North Carolina.

KP: And how long did you live in the south?

TD: Nine years.

KP: Nine years.

TD: I had my ninth birthday shortly after we moved here.

KP: You in a sense were born a southerner, although your parents were very proud of their Massachusetts roots. What was it like, the transition, between the two parts of the country at a very early age?

TD: I didn't have a whole lot of trouble. Of course, I was in fourth grade, and you know it didn't make a whole lot of difference. People used to tease me about my southern accent for a while, but I lost that after a while. (laughs)

KP: Why did your father leave the University of North Carolina?

TD: To become Dean of the Engineering School here at Rutgers.

KP: So he had been a professor at the University at North Carolina and this was a promotion?

TD: Oh yeah.

KP: What attracted him to Rutgers? Were there other reasons for accepting the position?

TD: The salary to begin with I'm sure. Which turned out to be almost a disaster because shortly after we got here, of course, the stock market crashed and his salary was reduced. I think his beginning salary was something like 10,000 dollars a year, and it was reduced to something like 7,500-- and with six kids! One of which, lets see, one was in college at the time and the others were in various stages of education.

KP: You mentioned before we started the interview that you in a sense grew up on the Rutgers campus. You might want to describe it, because you were the son of the Dean of Engineering.

TD: Well I was telling Mike while you were on the phone that in those days the children of professors were free to use the gym and the pool and what not. And I used to swim in the old Ballantine pool which was down here in the corner of George Street and Hamilton Street. And that burned down, and they rebuilt just the pool, and we swam in that a lot. I used to walk over here from Highland Park every afternoon. And then they built the new gym up on College Avenue, and we swam up there and played basketball and what not. And as I said, I was mascot of the wrestling team at that time, (laughs) so I wrestled quite a bit.

KP: You saw Rutgers in the late 1920s, just before the stock market crashed, and then you saw Rutgers-- you in a sense grew up with Rutgers in 1930s.

TD: True.

KP: How had the stock market crash affected Rutgers, from a sort of a kid's perspective?

TD: I'm not sure I can answer that. I'm sure it had an effect. Probably a lot of men-- at that time, of course, it was just a men's school-- a lot of them couldn't afford to go, because there was no money. And, of course, I was able to go, because I didn't have to pay tuition. But as far as I know, I don't know that it was ...

KP: You didn't see any visible-- fraternity houses that looked a little deteriorated?

TD: No, no. Of course, I wasn't paying much attention to fraternity houses in those days or anything else.

KP: How important was athletics to Rutgers when you were growing up? Did you sense that that was important?

TD: It was important, but I'm not sure it was as important as it is today. In those days, of course, you had what I guess-- we called it the little three: Rutgers, Lehigh, and Lafayette. Of course, Rutgers outgrew both of those schools. You know, ... it was exciting with the athletics. .... We had a very good basketball team there in those days, because we played with the board. Beyond that I just don't remember too much.

KP: Most of your friends, were they also sons and daughters of faculty members?

TD: Well, my best friend, his father was the chairman of the Music Department at then NJC. And he and I grew up together and did everything. We were inseparable.

KP: Did most of the Rutgers faculty live in Highland Park?

TD: I would say a lot of them did, but not most of them. I know I remember one of the professors in the Engineering school lived out here in Middlebush. And the others, I know one

who lived in Highland Park. In fact, his daughter married my brother. ... But, I don't know anymore there.

KP: Did your parents expect you and all the other children to go to college? Was that a big deal?

TD: Yeah, they did. Unfortunately, only two graduated. As I think I told you, I didn't graduate. I don't know how much of this I told you, but I started off in engineering. What I really wanted to do was to major in music, because I've always been a music lover. In fact, I sang soprano in Christ Church choir here in New Brunswick for many years. ... Well, at that time, Rutgers didn't have a full music course, and I tried to get into the women's college. ... Of course, in those days-- because they did have music courses, but they weren't taking male students. So, I started off in engineering. I got to my mid-year Chemistry exam, and in 35 minutes I had done all I could do in a three-hour exam. So I got up and walked down to my father's office and said, "I'm changing courses." He sent me to the university psychiatrist, (laughs) and I'm not sure what he did for me, but I wound up in the journalism school which as it turned out was really my field after I got out of the service. Partially my field I should say. It's not really my field. But I did do a lot of writing and what not.

KP: Had you gone into engineering because of your father?

TD: Yes.

KP: He really wanted his sons to become engineers?

TD: Well, I'm not sure that he-- he didn't talk me into anything. But, I guess I thought of that as a ... good thing to do, so I did. I soon learned it wasn't my cup of tea.

ME: I may be jumping a little ahead here, but after the war began while you were still here, did you notice a general change in the overall atmosphere or attitude of the people on campus?

TD: Well yeah. I think everybody was very concerned about the war obviously. And I was fortunate then, that when I left school, I had passed my surveying course in engineering. It was a required course for freshman engineering. And I got a job as a surveyor with a construction company. And my first real assignment with them was-- we laid out the rebuilding of something like 50 miles of railroad at the old Raritan arsenal out there in Edison. And then we finished that job, and I went with-- I told you we were doing work for Camp Kilmer, and well, after we got laid off there or fired or whatever you want to call it ...

KP: You got laid off because you went on strike?

TD: Because we were on strike. And I was out of work for a couple of weeks, and I got a job. A fella that I had worked with at the Raritan Arsenal called me one day and wanted to know if I wanted to work down at what was then, well it's now Fort Dix. But, actually, it was then Fort Dix, but they didn't have an air base then. And so we laid out practically all of the runways at

the now McGuire Air Force Base. I wouldn't say all of them, because ... it's expanded a lot since we were there, but the original runways.

KP: So you saw in 1945 the military buildup in a real concrete way.

TD: Oh sure, sure. Well not 1945, I wasn't even here in '45.

KP: No, in 1940.

TD: Yeah, in the '40s.

KP: In the 1940s you really saw the buildup.

TD: Oh yeah. Oh yes. Just the rebuilding of the Raritan Arsenal and adjoining Camp Kilmer. You could see what's coming.

KP: When did you lay out Camp Kilmer? Was it before Pearl Harbor?

TD: Yeah, it would have to be. It would have to be. Because, let's see, '41. Well, I can't remember to be sure.

KP: No, that's okay. Going back to your years at Rutgers just a little bit more. You were the son of a professor, well a dean even. How did you feel as a student going to Rutgers? It's both a curse and a blessing.

TD: It was. It was more of a curse than a blessing. I kept feeling that everybody was looking at me through my father's eyes, and I think that was one my downfalls in college, ... I guess. I don't know. It just didn't sit with me.

KP: On the other hand other students who hadn't grown up here knew professors as professors, and you knew them in very different roles.

TD: Yes right. Sure, sure.

KP: Did that make it harder in a sense?

TD: Well I thought it did. (laughs) Whether it really did or not, I don't know.

KP: But you felt that at times-- would you have preferred to go elsewhere?

TD: Oh yes. Actually I wanted to go to the University of North Carolina. But, with the six children and that meager salary of my father, that wasn't possible. And, you know, it's funny, I've often thought-- it never occurred to me to try to work my way through school.

KP: Really?

TD: I probably could have, but it just never occurred to me.

KP: Because a lot of your classmates did, in fact, do that.

TD: Yes.

KP: But your family, and you never thought to do it.

TD: No, no. No, my brother, my one sister, and one brother, both of them were still living together-- the other one just never graduated from college out of the six children. It took my brother five years, but he did get out. Then, after the war I did for a while. I went back to night school at Rutgers Newark. I was working in Newark. But, at that point I had two children, and it was a little more than I could handle. (laughs)

KP: You switched from engineering to journalism, and how much course work did you do in journalism?

TD: I don't even remember. As I say I got fed up with everything so I left. (laughs)

KP: How did your parents feel about you leaving college without finishing your degree?

TD: They never said much. I'm not sure, I know why. I would have thought my father would have had a fit, but as I remember, he didn't say anything.

KP: You think he might have thought you would just go back in a year or two.

TD: No, I think because the war was coming along I don't think he thought that at all. And, of course, in those days I was in love too, and I'm still married to the same woman. (laughs)

KP: How did your father feel about the coming of the war, World War II?

TD: Oh he was terribly upset. Of course, he thought Hitler was a maniac, as we all did. But you know, it did upset him.

KP: In the sense that he did not want to see the United States go into another war?

TD: Right, right. I don't remember-- I was married and had a child-- wait a minute. No, I didn't have a child. In fact, I wasn't even married, but when Pearl Harbor took place I was about to get married. In fact, I was married three months later. I am trying to remember the details there. I can remember ... my wife-to-be was living in Chatham, and she ... had a roommate foisted on her, a young woman from Hawaii who was there as an exchange teacher in Chatham. And they just didn't hit it off. And eventually she left. But I remember being up there with them on Pearl Harbor. In fact, I had a little Ford Coupe, no back seat or anything. And the three of us were in

this car and on the radio we heard about Pearl Harbor. And this girl was so upset, because she was of course Hawaiian. And it took a while to calm her down as you might expect.

KP: Do you know whatever happened to her family? Was her family okay?

TD: No. She left and I don't even know where she went when she left. As I say, she and my ... wife-to-be didn't hit it off. ... So my wife lived alone for a short time. Then we got married, and I moved in with her. (laughs)

KP: Your wife went to what is now Douglass, New Jersey College for Women. How did you meet her?

TD: Well that's interesting too, I think. She sang ... in the choir there, and I sang in Glee Club. ... We had a joint concert, and at one of the rehearsals I was sitting next to a fella-- I'll remember him to my dying day. His name was Stetson Holmes. We were both second basses. And I looked across at the sopranos, and I saw this young gal over there that I thought looked pretty nice. So I said to him, ... "Boy that's a pretty nice looking gal. I'd like to meet her." He said, "Oh, I know her. I'll introduce you." So over he goes, and ... he found out her name. I don't know how he found out her name, because he didn't know her, but he went up to her and he said, "Hello Mary Ellen. I want you to meet a friend of mine." So that was my cue, so up I came and one thing led to another. (laughs) Four days later she asked me, "Who's he?" So it was through the Glee Club ...

KP: That you met.

TD: Oh yeah. So I've always had a soft spot in my heart for the Glee Club. As a matter of fact, I was in a meeting about the Glee Club just this morning. ... We go to a church in Bernardsville, and our minister is a Rutgers graduate, and he sang in the Glee Club as well. ... A lot later than I did, but he's arranged for the Glee Club to come up to do a concert at our church on December 2. And he asked me if I would coordinate the thing, so that's what I was doing this morning.

KP: So that's how you know Bob Moss, from Glee Club?

TD: Well Bob Moss' wife was my wife's roommate.

KP: Oh okay.

TD: So we've been friends for years. That's right. I've forgotten it was Bob that introduced us at the game a couple of weeks ago.

KP: Well as soon as you said Glee Club I knew the connection.

TD: Yeah, Bob's been trying to get me to join the Alumni Glee Club. He's been very active in that. But ... I just don't want to get tied down like that. ... I've been tied down enough over the years. I won't be tied down anymore. (laughs)

KP: There was quite a controversy in the late '30s at Rutgers-- well more at the New Jersey College for Women-- but it involved Rutgers, over the case of the German professor in the Douglass German department. Do you remember any of that? I believe his name was Hauptman.

TD: Bruno Hauptman?

KP: Yes.

TD: He was the guy that kidnapped Lindbergh?

KP: No, Frederick Hauptman.

TD: Oh. No, I don't remember that. I remember Bruno, but ... (laughs)

KP: Yes, I always call Frederick, Bruno. But you do not remember the case at Rutgers?

TD: No I don't remember that at all.

KP: You mentioned that you were a surveyor before the war, and you were living at home. When the war broke out, you also mentioned where you were. When did you receive your draft notice or did you try to volunteer?

TD: No, well yes and no. And I don't remember how I did this, but I was supposedly preassigned to the Army Air Force at the point when I would be drafted. So I was not going [to] sign up myself. I don't remember how this worked, but I was supposedly preassigned, and I was to take my basic training up in Westover Field, Massachusetts. So I was drafted, and I was put on a troop train. And instead of going to Massachusetts, I wound in Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. (laughs) I never did find out what happened. But anyhow, I took my training with the 373d Engineering General Service Regiment. And we were there until October, I guess, of 1943. I was drafted in July. And ... we were shipped up to Camp Myles Standish in Massachusetts where we were to be shipped overseas. And somehow I managed to get pneumonia. ... It was the best thing that ever happened to me, because my outfit shipped out without me. I went over as a replacement, and I understand that they eventually were wiped out in the Battle of the Bulge. I can't confirm that, but that was my understanding. So had I not gotten pneumonia, I probably wouldn't be here today. But I went over as a replacement, and as I said, it was the best thing that ever happened to me, because I was in a little replacement, or a little camp outside of Crew, I think it was, in England. And I got a call to get sent up to a little town of Huyton, which is about twenty miles north of Liverpool, and I was assigned to an area engineer office. And I was doing liaison with the British forces. In effect, what we were doing was setting up and supplying the installations to receive American forces as they came over prior to D-Day. And I stayed there-- well we moved the office once to another place in Huyton, but I was billeted with a family there, and I didn't get along with that family, so I got moved to another family ...

KP: When you say you did not get along, what do you mean?

TD: They just didn't like Americans. Why they ever took me in the first place, I don't know. But they didn't like Americans. ... We never really had any arguments but I just ...

KP: It was clear you were unwelcome.

TD: Yeah. It was clear I really wasn't welcome. I was there for about a month, I guess. And, of course, it was difficult in those days too, because you had a total blackout, and I often didn't get back from the office until after dark. And I walked, because it was only a few blocks. And you couldn't see your hand in front of your face a lot of the times, and I remember one night walking right into a lamp post that wasn't lit, of course. But then I moved in with this family in a little town on the other side of Huyton called Prescot. And this was very interesting. I think-- as a matter of fact, interestingly enough, I was overseas for two years, supposedly fighting the war, but I never had a weapon the whole time I was overseas. I think I was the only soldier in the American army that didn't have a weapon. But I never had one. I never needed one. Although when I first went to England, it was in the days of the paratrooper scares. I often said if they landed where I was, I'd have to throw rocks at them, because I didn't have anything to shoot at them.

KP: You were just never issued one?

TD: Never issued one. But I moved in with this family in Prescot, John and Mary O'Brien. Boy they were as Irish as Patty's pig. I had a great time. As I say, I worked in the office. I had a jeep then, and I drove to the office and drove back and parked the jeep in front of the house. ... I sang in the choir at the local church. And that was interesting too. My landlord and landlady, of course were Irish-Catholic, and the Catholic Church and the Church of England were side by side in this boom town. And of course, the Catholic ... service being shorter, John O'Brien was always out of church before I was. We'd always go to the eleven o'clock service. So he'd wait for me at the gate at the Church of England where I was, and we'd head for the local pub which opened at noon. In those days the pubs were open from noon to two, and then again from seven to ten. So we'd head for the local pub, and we'd close the pub at two. But in the meantime his wife Mary would have ... dinner ready at one, and of course we were always late getting there for dinner, and we were always in the dog house all afternoon. But then we'd take her out to the pub at seven o'clock Sunday night, and we were out of the dog house. (laughs) So, as I say, it was a great way to fight a war I tell you.

But there again we were doing liaison with the British forces. There were three of us ..., three Americans in this office and a couple of British soldiers. My boss was a major. I was a staff sergeant. And then there was a corporal there. But we just worked in the office and went to visit the various installations that we were setting up and making sure they were set up right.

KP: So you would plan everything down from where the sites would be to what would be in them?

TD: No, they would give us the sites, and then we would do the rest.

KP: You would figure out what equipment you needed.

TD: And you know arrange for the supplies to be brought in and that sort of thing.

KP: Which was a massive undertaking.

TD: It was. And somebody had to do it. And I figured it might as well be me. (laughs) I wasn't at all unhappy about it.

KP: What were the problems that you encountered in trying to set up these sites? Because obviously it required a lot of cooperation.

TD: Well, mostly transportation really. Getting the materials there when you wanted them. You know we had to rely pretty much on the British trucking industry. We did have some of our own, but they did it. And they had these great big-- we call them trucks, they call them lorries. And they didn't go very fast to begin with, and it was a good thing, because most of the streets were so narrow they shouldn't go fast anyway. But that was probably the biggest problem we had. I don't think there were any others. ... I'm sure there were others, but ...

KP: But none stick out?

TD: No.

KP: What was the level of cooperation between the British and the Americans? How well did you work with them?

TD: We got along pretty well. Another interesting thing I just remembered, the first building that our office was in had been a boy's school. And there was a swimming pool in the back yard. And they used it-- of course, in those days they didn't supply water, they kept it in case of a bombing attack, and they would use it to put out fires. Well this didn't bother us a bit. It was dirty when we got there, and we said, "Boy, we're gonna fix this up so we can swim." So we drained it, and the local fire people just blew their stacks, I tell you. (laughs) I thought we all were going to be court martialed. But we filled it up again, and we swam in it, and we had a great time. (laughs) You know the others were just routine stuff mostly.

KP: You had married before you went overseas.

TD: And had one child.

KP: And so you even had a child.

TD: We were married in '42. ... Our older daughter was born in '43 in April, and I was drafted in July of '43. ... So, I hardly knew her for two years. But then we had three more after I came home.

KP: Did you and your wife correspond during the war?

TD: Oh sure. Only by letter though. ... We had-- I'm sure you've heard of the v-mail.

KP: Yes.

TD: It was little bitty letters. Well they were big when you wrote them, but they reduced them in size and sent them over. You could hardly read them. My handwriting was not the best. In fact, I could hardly read it myself half the time. My wife had problems reading my mail. ... And it was very sporadic. You know I'd go along for a week or ten days and not get anything. Then all of a sudden I'd get ten letters. And it was the same with her. ...

KP: Backing up a little, you ended up in the engineering branch. Did that seem sort of surprising to you given understanding of where you would serve? Do you think that you ended up there because of your surveying background?

TD: No. I think it was just pure luck. I just happened to be at the right place at the right time. And they needed somebody there, and I guess they figured I could do it.

KP: You'd gone through R.O.T.C. when you were at Rutgers.

TD: Yes.

KP: Had you been approached about Officer's Candidate School?

TD: No. If I had been, I would have turned them down.

KP: Really, you did not want a commission?

TD: I didn't want any part of it. In fact, I would have stayed out of the service entirely if I could have, but I didn't want to be a draft dodger so ...

KP: When you say you wanted to avoid war.

TD: I shouldn't really say that. I was not anxious to get into it, but I knew that at some point I had to. I was resigned to it.

KP: You did your basic training in Louisiana. Now you had lived in the South, but what was the difference?

TD: Not that south! (laughs) ... Of course, it was in the summertime. And if you've ever been in Louisiana in the summertime it's hot. I'll tell you, it is hot. And it was interesting. We had a lot of Mexican men there in the service. I was what they called a tool corporal at the time. ... We would do projects, road projects and things like that, and I was the tool keeper. So ... we lived in tents, and I had a great big tent full of tools. And this one young Mexican fella, I'll never forget him, something went wrong in his head. And I looked up one morning to see him on his hands and knees behind crawling up between the row of tents with a great big knife between his teeth. And he came into my tent. I took off, I'll tell you. Well, they clobbered him and disarmed him, but ...

KP: Why do you think he was after?

TD: I don't know what he was after. I never found out. But whether he wanted some tools-- I don't think he was after me, because I never knew the guy. But when I think about it it's funny now, but it wasn't funny at the time. (laughs)

KP: In your unit there were large numbers of Mexicans.

TD: They weren't in my unit. They were there in the camp.

KP: In the camp.

TD: Yeah.

KP: Were they in separate units?

TD: Yeah, they were all over.

KP: They were grouped together.

TD: That's a huge camp. It was at the time. I don't know whether it is now or not. ... There was an awful lot of basic training going on there: infantry, engineering, you name it. ... But I don't really know what outfit they were in.

KP: Your sergeants, were they regular Army?

TD: I don't think so. They had just been in longer than I had, that's all. (laughs)

KP: So they were not grisly veterans of twenty years.

TD: Yeah.

KP: You were not a militarist.

TD: No.

KP: What was it like to adapt to military procedures?

TD: You had no choice. You adapted or else! (laughs) ... You know, especially after I got overseas, I often said if I could have had my wife with me, I would have been on top of the world! (laughs) Of course, I missed her, and I wanted to be home, but beyond that-- like I said nobody could have had a better way to fight a war than I did.

KP: In Louisiana, did you have any black troops in your training camp?

TD: I don't remember. I'm sure we did, but ... I don't really remember.

KP: Yeah.

TD: Because there were plenty of them in the service.

KP: In the 373d, where did most of the people in your unit come from?

TD: All over.

KP: There was no one group or area represented?

TD: No, there was one fella I remember from Mississippi, and he was determined he was going to get a section eight if you know what that is. It's a mental discharge. And he put on the act like you wouldn't believe, and he eventually got it. He got ... ousted. And whatever happened to him, I don't know, but he left the unit, and I assume he got out of the service.

KP: When you say he put a section eight on, what did he do?

TD: Oh he would carry on. He would rock back and forth in his chair and say, "Oh I hurt," and he would go on like this. All kinds of crazy things.

KP: And you knew this was an act?

TD: I knew it was an act, sure. (laughs) But they didn't.

KP: Did he tell you that he was going to get a section eight?

TD: No, but it was obvious what he was doing, because I would see him when he was perfectly normal. (laughs)

KP: You mentioned that you contracted pneumonia before your unit shipped out from Massachusetts. How was the medical care you received. How good was it?

TD: I told you I was in the hospital for a few days, and interestingly too, the doctors told me when they discharged me that they found out that my regiment had moved out without me and shipped out without me. He said, "Oh, you could have gone with them." "That's fine with me doc!" (laughs)

KP: So you were put in a replacement pool, and how then did you make it to England? When were you assigned to England? How long did you have to wait?

TD: Oh, not long. I landed in England on Christmas Eve of 1943. And oddly enough I got home Christmas Eve of 1945. I was very lucky there too, because I was due to go over to the Far East and-- this was in August-- and the war ended, and I was right there ready to go, and I shipped over to Southampton and home. So it was great.

KP: How did you travel between the United States and England?

TD: Going over I travelled in a convoy. I was on a troop ship really. ... We were packed in there like sardines. But they were in convoy. There must have been twenty ships in this convoy, and we had battleships and what not escorting us. It took us fourteen days to get over there, and that was the worst fourteen days of my life. Just, you know, the fear of being sunk by a torpedo or something plus the discomfort. We had about eighteen inches between layers of bunks. I literally, I could-- ... from my bunk to the ... bottom of the next bunk-- that's all the room I had. And it was so crowded and the food was terrible!

KP: What did most people do to pass the time?

TD: You didn't have much to do. We played poker. We used to play penny-ante poker. That's about all we did, ... because there wasn't anything else to do. There wasn't enough room to do much. There were so many of us on the ship.

KP: Did you ever go above deck for fresh air?

TD: Once in a while. But you know, we couldn't do that too much. In the first place it was pretty cold, and there were just so many of us that you really couldn't.

KP: Did you know your assignment before you went to England?

TD: No. We landed in Glasgow, Scotland and were immediately put on a troop train and went down to-- as I said I think ... Crew, England was the name of the town. And then we went into this camp, and I was there for a short time. ... They called me and said "You're going here," and they took me there, and that's where I was. ... I had no inkling of what I was going to be doing or anything else.

KP: You had a very important job in the war. Did you ever think you missed something by not getting over to the continent?

TD: I did get to the continent. New Year's Eve of 1944-- wait a minute ...

KP: 1945.

TD: '45, excuse me. We were shipped from Southampton, and we went over to Antwerp. We landed and went up the Scheldt Estuary there and then to Antwerp. Again, not knowing what we were going to be doing. But to tell the truth, I don't even remember what I did there in Antwerp. Not much. A couple of weeks, and then I was shipped to a little town called Mons, M-O-N-S in Belgium. And there I worked for a town major doing the same thing. Pretty much the same thing. But I lived-- I was billeted in a Red Cross club. I had a private room, and as a matter of fact, I had a detail of German POWs that I had to keep busy. And I remember I set up one in my room. He was a tailor, and he fitted all my uniforms to me. And I'd take off my uniforms at night and drop them on the floor, and he'd come in in the morning and press them and hang them up. (laughs) I was there ... as I say until I came home.

KP: Before talking about what you did in Antwerp. Apparently you did not have very much to do in Mons.

TD: In Antwerp.

KP: In Antwerp. Going back to England, did you ever come under any rocket attacks when you were in Europe?

TD: Not in England. In Antwerp we did, with both the V-1s and the V-2s. That was scary. The V-1s particularly, because you could hear those coming. You'd hear the engines shut off, and you knew they were coming down, but you didn't know where. So you usually took cover if you heard the engines shut off. But then the V-2s, the rockets, they didn't worry me too much. Well they worried me, but not that much, because you never knew they were coming. All of a sudden there was this big explosion, and that was it. But that's the closest I came to any real warfare if you will.

KP: How close did the rockets come? Did you ever have any close calls?

TD: Oh sure. We were in a great big barracks there, this brick building, and this one fella that was there with us always wanted to run out and see where these buzz bombs were going. So we heard one coming, and he ran for the door. But in the meantime, the thing shut off and went down and landed right outside the building, blew the doors in and knocked him ass-over-head back into the room. He really wasn't hurt, but he learned not to go out again like that. (laughs)

KP: So it came very close.

TD: Oh yeah. Oh yeah they landed all around. But we always took cover when we heard them coming. Of course, as I say with the V-2s you didn't worry about them, because you never knew. But the V-1s, you listened and if you heard them shut off-- you get so you know from the sound

when they shut off, you have a pretty good idea where they're going to come down. And so you acted accordingly.

KP: How did the civilians react in Antwerp? How did they deal with it?

TD: Pretty much the same way. They were all very good. The Belgian people-- and maybe this had something to do with why I was sent to that particular job, because I spoke French. I can't speak it a whole lot now, but I did at the time, and I was fairly fluent. And so I was able to converse with the people. ... In Antwerp, they spoke what they called Walloonese, which is a version of French I guess, but ... as I say I did a lot of liaison with the ... Belgian forces.

KP: In your role as liaison with the British, did you have any sense of the differences between the resources of the two countries? A lot of soldiers have commented and other people in the military have commented just on the abundance of goods the Americans had.

TD: Well yeah, because they were delighted. They were always after us to give them stuff that we got from home or from the-- those that lived in the camps were able to get a little of the food from there. But I had-- living with this family, I had a regular ration book that my landlady used to buy the food that I ate.

KP: So in other words you ate many of your meals with your host family.

TD: Oh I ate all of them. ... Unless I went out for some reason, but generally speaking I ate all of my meals there.

KP: So in many ways you were living in an English household.

TD: Oh yeah.

KP: Although with Irish.

TD: I lived just like a civilian. As I say, I sang in the choir and just as I was at home. (laughs)

KP: What did you think of English society?

TD: I am very fond of the English. My wife and I go back there. We were there last year, and I think we've been there seven or eight times in the last twenty years or so.

KP: Besides your big move between North Carolina and New Jersey, had your family travelled much before the war?

TD: No. No my father and mother never travelled very much. Once in a while I went to-- I was going to say they went back to Massachusetts, but I don't think they did, because you didn't have airplanes in those days, of course. ... [tape ended, interrupted interview]

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

TD: ... Black women who were our servants in Chapel Hill. Of course, I think ... in those days they probably got about five dollars a week a piece. And one of them practically raised me the whole time I was there. And I loved her just like my mother.

KP: You in fact had what we often term a nanny.

TD: Yeah.

KP: And your family had two servants in North Carolina.

TD: Now in those days ... as I say, you paid them about five dollars a week, and they were happy to get it, because ... I don't know what my father was making down there in Chapel Hill, but not a whole lot. And with six kids and his mother and father living with us at the time, it wasn't a whole lot. (laughs)

KP: So in other words when you moved north, one of the things you lost were your servants. Did you have servants in New Jersey?

TD: ... For most of the time we had a servant-- oh, I don't remember when the last one left. But most of them-- well I shouldn't say most of them. One or two of them lived in. We had a big old house here, a three story house with three bedrooms on the third floor and this servant lived in one of those bedrooms. She was great. Matter of fact they were all great. We had good people.

KP: You were very close to the one who raised you.

TD: Oh yeah.

KP: Did you stay in touch with her after you moved out?

TD: No. I never heard from her again.

KP: What about the family in England that you lived with?

TD: I corresponded with them for a while and the first time we went over to England after the war-- and I can't tell you when that was, but it was a number of years afterwards because I didn't have any money. But we went over there, and we went up to Prescot. And I looked high and low and asked all over for them and nobody knew anything about them. I've never found them. But subsequently we met other friends there. We have a lot of friends over there now.

KP: So you got to know this community very, very well.

TD: Oh yeah. ... I was an honorary member of the local Conservative Club! (laughs) That was good too, because as I think I mentioned the pubs were open in the evening from seven to ten.

Well, ... if John and I, my landlord and I, got to the conservative club before ten, we could go on drinking beer until as long as we wanted to stay there! Otherwise, you were cut off at ten o'clock! (laughs) So it was fun. As I say, I think everybody in town knew me, and I knew most of them.

KP: And most of their sons were off in the service. So you were one of the few ...

TD: The people I lived with had a young son who was about sixteen, maybe a little less. He was too young to be in the service. He was a nice kid, but not very smart.

KP: What differences did you see at the time between America and Britain, having a very close-up perspective? What was very similar to, say Highland Park, New Brunswick and what was different between the two communities if you had to compare them?

TD: There wasn't whole lot that was similar. It was a totally different life. Of course, life here was, in effect, more relaxed because you weren't worried about bombing. There everybody was worried ... not only the bombing, but they were worried about the paratroopers. ... Because, of course, in those days we hadn't come anywhere near containing the Germans, and they were still-- of course, London and Liverpool were taking a terrible beating at the time. Of course, I was only, at that time, about 30 miles-- Prescot was about 30 miles north of ... Liverpool. And Liverpool took a terrible beating. But I-- the crazy things you do. Well not crazy, but I used to enjoy going into Liverpool in the daytime and wandering around the churches there and looking into the headstones in the graveyards, because you know, you see people who died in 1320 and that sort of thing. And this fascinated me. That was mostly all I did. ...

KP: So you saw a lot of the devastation close-hand.

TD: Oh sure, sure.

KP: What about the British standard of living? How battered was it during the war?

TD: Battered. You had the ration books, and ... you couldn't get much. Even if you had the ration coupon, it just wasn't there. Especially fresh vegetables. I think I ate more Brussels sprouts in one year there than I have eaten in my whole lifetime. It seems to me about every other meal we had Brussels sprouts! There were two of us living there.

KP: So what would your typical meal be? Obviously Brussels sprouts would often be on the menu. What would you eat in a typical meal?

TD: A lot of chicken. ... Very little meat. Occasional pork. Practically no beef. Like I say very little fresh vegetables. Potatoes.

KP: What about oranges?

TD: No. (laughs) I don't think they even knew what oranges were in those days! But, and surprisingly I stayed really pretty healthy there. I wasn't sick at all there. I don't know why, because the diet was so bad really. My wife was a Home-Ec major, a dietician, and she had a fit with the diet I had over there!

KP: You would write to her and she would question it.

TD: Oh sure. Sure.

KP: Were you able to ever draw on a PX for extra food?

TD: No.

KP: So you really depended on your British rations.

TD: Well I ... occasionally got to a PX and was able to buy cigarettes and things like that, but no food.

KP: What about things like cigarettes. How common were they? How hard were they to get if you did not go to the PX?

TD: Well you could get some of the English cigarettes, but they weren't in big supply, and they were terrible. ... I was a smoker in those days. I haven't smoked now in over 30 years. But they were pretty bad as I remember. They used to call it this crude expression. They used to call it horseshit and splinters. (laughs)

KP: You mentioned you were an honorary member of the Conservative Club. Did you follow British politics at all? Did you have a sense of what was going on?

TD: No.

KP: You were more for the social end.

TD: It was strictly social as far as I was concerned. (laughs) ... I was friendly with a lot of the people, but I didn't pay a lot of attention to their politics.

KP: What were the British attitudes toward the war, and what did they think would happen to Britain after the war? Did you have any sense of this? Or were people just so focused on the war.

TD: A lot of them didn't like the Americans. Because so many of the American soldiers would come over, and they had a little more in the way of chewing gum and things like that that they'd get at the PX. And they were able to attract the girls, and so the British people didn't like that. ... So I'd say that generally speaking, they didn't-- they were appreciative of the Americans being

there, because they knew that we were sort of their saviors, but I don't think they liked us very much.

KP: In your community, do you think you were liked partly, because you were on their rations?

TD: Oh I think so, yeah.

KP: And you were also married, so you were not chasing the girls.

TD: Yeah. ... I was, as I say, I was just a member of the community. And I tried to be that way. Of course, I've been that all my life and still am.

ME: I was just interested in knowing, I remember earlier in the interview you said that your father was very upset about the war coming and when his son was finally drafted-- How did your parents and your siblings react to your going overseas?

TD: I'm not sure I know. Obviously my mother was not happy about it, but I don't think there was any great reaction, because there was nothing you could do about it. You knew that the war was there and that was it. There was nothing you could do.

ME: They saw it as inevitable that you would eventually go?

TD: Oh sure, sure. Oh I knew that sooner or later I'd be gone. It was just a question of whether it was East or West. I guess you'd say East or Far East. (laughs) And I didn't want any part of Japan or China or the Philippines.

ME: What sort of opinions did you hold of the Japanese before the war, during the war, and then even after?

TD: Well of course we all hated the Japanese during the war. But since then I have no particular feelings for them. We have some neighbors who are Japanese. They couldn't be nicer people.

KP: You mentioned that you preferred East over Far East.

TD: Yeah.

KP: Why the preference?

TD: Well, I think partly because I spoke French and knew that I could converse. Everything I'd heard about the Far East, the heat and the islands and that sort of thing, just didn't ...

KP: You mentioned that after the D-Day landing, you were reassigned to Antwerp. And you were a liaison with the Belgian government. What did you do? What kind of projects did you do?

TD: Again the same sorts of things. Equipping installations. I'm trying to think of some of the other things I did. That's a little hazier in my memory for some reason.

KP: In Antwerp you lived in the barracks.

TD: In Antwerp, yes.

KP: As opposed to someone's home.

TD: And then when I went to Mons, I was in this Red Cross club which as I say was like living in a hotel. ... My office was about a block from where I lived. And I became very friendly with one of the residents, one of the natives there. And for the life of me I can't think of what he did there. He had some kind of a business there in town. But they used to invite me over for dinner occasionally. I enjoyed that. I don't even remember their names now to tell you the truth. All I wanted to do was get home at that point.

KP: In Mons you mentioned you had a detail of German POWs that you had to keep busy. What kind of assignments did you give them?

TD: Well, obviously I had a contingent of guards to guard them when they were outside. ... They did things like organizing the materials in the installations and that sort of thing.

KP: How many were you in charge of?

TD: I think there were six as I remember.

KP: Did you get to know any of them, ever talk to them in any significant way?

TD: No. You'd think I would know this guy that I had in my room, but I don't remember ... any more about him other than that he was a tailor, and he used to take care of my clothes.

KP: So you spoke French, but you did not speak German.

TD: No German. ... In order to improve my French, I had a secretary who spoke English about as well as I did, but I wouldn't let her speak English. I wanted to speak French to her. (laughs)

KP: You were in Antwerp and Mons. How badly battered was Belgium from the occupation and the war?

TD: Antwerp was badly battered. Brussels, I was in Brussels for a few days, that was badly battered. Mons was not too bad for some reason. ... Mons was a small town, and there was a larger town called Charleroi if you're at all familiar with Belgium, which is not terribly far from Mons. And that was a somewhat bigger town at the time. So there was more going on there I

think than in Mons. They didn't bother us too much. Of course in those days too, we pretty much had the Germans on the run, and they weren't doing that much.

KP: What about the occupation? Did you ever know what happened? Did people ever talk to you about what had happened with the German occupiers?

TD: Not too much, no. Not that I recall anyway.

KP: What about the attitude of the Belgians toward the Americans?

TD: Oh they loved us. At the time-- I'm not sure they do now, but they did then.

KP: So you were very much treated as a liberator.

TD: Oh yeah. Yeah they thought we were great. Because in effect we did liberate them. When I say we, I didn't, but the troops did.

KP: You had mentioned that there were a lot of black troops in England. Did you have any contact or any responsibilities for them?

TD: No I didn't have ... much contact or responsibility with any of the troops. Simply because I was busy doing my other work. I would occasionally encounter them in a pub or something, but beyond that I didn't really know them.

KP: When you said that you encountered them in the pub, would there ever be any fights or anything?

TD: Not that I recall. No. And there were all kinds, black, white, you name it. There were never any real problems, because I think we were all a little bit apprehensive about what was going to happen to us, and we were all not very happy about being away from home. So ... there was sort of a comradery there.

KP: So you were very eager for the war to end?

TD: Absolutely! (laughs) Yup. V-J day-- or V-E day, of course, was the biggest, but V-J day was a much bigger one too. So I saw myself getting home soon.

KP: Where were you when V-E day broke?

TD: I was in Mons, as I remember. Yeah, I would have had to be in Mons. ... At this point I don't really remember too much about that day. I don't know why. You'd think I would, but I don't.

KP: Do you think of the war as an interruption in your life?

TD: Oh sure.

KP: Had you ever given it any thought that you would stay in the military at all?

TD: Not one bit. In fact, they had a deal with the post office where any soldiers that came home could send their uniforms back through the post office back to the Army at no charge. And I got home, and I took all my uniforms. I bundled them up and took them to the post office and said "Here. Take 'em!" (laughs) ... After that I was kind of sorry I didn't keep a couple of the jackets, because they were nice warm jackets. But no, I didn't want anything to do with them. I was-- I spent about-- well just about six weeks looking for a job, and I finally got one, and I went from there. I spent the rest of my working days with New Jersey Bell.

KP: In terms of your World War II experiences, is there anything we forgot to ask you about that? Any vivid memories that you have either in terms of the voyage home?

TD: Going home was quite a trip. We were shipped to Southampton, England. From there we were to be shipped home. And we were put on board the original aircraft carrier *Enterprise*. I remember this very well, too, because I thought, "Oh man this is going to be a nice smooth trip." Well it turned out it was anything, but. We turned back to England two or three times because of the weather. And they literally-- and I mean this-- they literally welded 12 inch I-beams on the forward end of the flight deck to break the waves as they came in the flight deck. ... And the water just bent those things over like they were hardly there. So that was quite a trip.

KP: Did you get seasick?

TD: Oddly enough, no. Because I did going over, but I got smart coming home, and I kept food in my stomach all the time. If you keep your stomach full, you're not going to get seasick.

KP: Really?

TD: And so I did, and I grabbed bread and everything I could get my hands on. (laughs) And I didn't get sick at all going home. That ship was just like this all the way. I never wanted to set foot on another boat. (laughs)

KP: And you arrived back in the states, when?

TD: Christmas Eve.

KP: In what port?

TD: New York.

KP: So you landed in New York harbor.

TD: Yeah. And was immediately sent to Camp Kilmer.

KP: So you didn't get to go home right away?

TD: No. They were very lax in those days. And we got settled in the camp-- and this was in the morning or afternoon I guess by that time-- but I called my wife to tell her I was home. And I said come down to Camp Kilmer, and I'll get out somehow, and I'll meet you. So there's a road that goes from Stelton Road over to Lake Nelson, and I knew she would be coming that way from Lake Nelson toward there. So I walked right out through the gate. I had a card in my hand [that] I waved at the guard, and he said, "Go ahead." So I walked out, and I walked down the road. And this was at night, dark as pitch, but my wife spotted me in the car, and she stopped. ... She said-- in fact we were talking about it the other day-- she didn't know how she recognized me because ... it was dark, and you couldn't see very well, but she did. ... So I went home and stayed home until the next morning and then went back to camp. Went through the fence. (laughs) Nobody paid any attention to us though. Then a few days later we were discharged to Fort ... Monmouth. ... My wife came down and met me and took me home. Happy day. (laughs)

KP: You made some use of the G.I. Bill to go back to college. Had you wanted to go full-time or it was just not a possibility?

TD: I would have liked to yes, but ... it just wasn't in the cards. ... My wife lived alone all through the war with our one child. She did a little substitute teaching, but not very much. ... I don't remember what the ... government gave my wife as a dependent when I was out, but whatever it was it was barely enough to keep her alive. When I came out-- and I had my 300 dollars mustering-out pay-- and that was every penny we had to our names. And that was I say the end of December. In the end of January, we were living in a two-family house in Chatham. The house was sold out from under us, ... and the new owner wanted our apartment. So we were in effect, we were evicted. And we had to scurry around and fortunately through the G.I. Bill, I bought ... a two-and-a-half family house in East Orange. ... [I] paid 12,000 dollars for it. It had a 12,000 dollar mortgage on it. I gave a 100 dollar deposit on it with the stipulation I got it back at closing! (laughs) And I did. And that turned out to be a good investment. We lived there for a while, and we rented the whole thing out and moved to Chatham and rented a place for a while and then back to East Orange. ... I was working for New Jersey Bell at the time, and I became manager of the business office in Nutley, and I was commuting from East Orange to Nutley. It took me about a half an hour, I guess. And we decided this was crazy, so ... we bought a house over in Nutley about a block and a half from my office. ... I could walk to work. We moved into that house on June 29, and on July 1 I was transferred to Newark! (laughs) I had been to my boss ... a month or so before, and I asked him how long I'd be there. "Oh," he said, "You'll be here five years." "So, okay, I'm going to buy a house." "Okay." So I commuted to Newark from Nutley for a while. ... Then we-- let's see, it was 1955. I was made manager of the business office in Pleasantville, New Jersey, which is way down there near Atlantic City. So, we moved from Nutley down to a little town called Linwood. We were there for seven years, and then we moved back to Newark where I was in the public relations department and was there for the rest of my career. That was in 1962. So we moved to Basking Ridge at the time, and we've been there ever since.

KP: You had your entire career through New Jersey Bell after the war. Did you intend it, or did you think you might go to another company?

TD: Oh I had no problem with it. I loved my work. ... Well I loved everything I did with New Jersey Bell. I was on the staff for a few months, and then I was made assistant manager of the old Newark south side business office. If you know Newark, you know it was on Avon Avenue. And we were living in East Orange, and I commuted to there. And then I was-- I forget where I went from there. I think I went back to Newark. And then I went to Nutley. But ... I enjoyed my work thoroughly. In Pleasantville I had ... about 25 people working for me down there and a couple of supervisors under me. ... Not much day to day supervision to do, it was more public relations work that I was doing. And that's what I did up in Newark after I got transferred back there.

KP: When you started with New Jersey Bell telecommunications were very different. What was it like when you first started with New Jersey Bell?

TD: You didn't worry about competition at that time. You were in competition for the dollar. That's all. ... I was delighted. I felt very fortunate that I got the job that I did. I had not set my heart on New Jersey Bell, but I just happened to apply there and got the job ...

KP: So you just applied and had no sense that you would spend your career there.

TD: I walked in one day and filled out an application, and a couple weeks later I got the job. ... The time after I moved back up north back in '62, that was really the best time, because I was pretty much on my own most of the time.

KP: And what would you do in your different jobs?

TD: My title was Community Relations and Education Relations Manager. And that put me in contact with every educational institution in the state. I dealt with Rutgers, Princeton, you name it, all of them. And in those days, we had a lot of programs that we loaned to these institutions. ... So I would negotiate those with the people. Then I made-- oddly enough, as a little side career, I made three motion pictures for them. ... The first one I did was in Newark. It was teaching ... the young kids in the Newark school system how to apply for a job. That was interesting.

KP: What year was that?

TD: It was about 1963 maybe, around there. ... What I did was to contact a film producer in New York and engaged him to actually do the filming, but I supervised the whole thing. I wrote and re-wrote a lot of the script. ... We did most of our shooting at the old South Side High School in Newark. ... I enjoyed that. It was very popular for a while. Then later on I made two films about the state of New Jersey. One, on New Jersey as it existed at the time, and that we did about 1970, I think. ... It was just like a travelogue is what it was. I used the same film producer again. Then in '75 I got the idea with the bicentennial coming up, we should do a history film.

So they gave me 85,000 dollars and said, "Do it." So I did! And as far as I know that film is still used in the public schools. ... We won a couple of awards, an international film award, and it was, as I say it was New Jersey history. Little anecdotes about New Jersey History.

KP: Did you write that one too?

TD: I edited it.

KP: Edited it.

TD: ... What I did, I hired the same producer. ... Have you ever heard of John Cunningham?

KP: Oh yes. Yes.

TD: ... I engaged John, and he wrote the script, and I revised it as I wanted to. And we went from there. ... We did really well with that. As I say, ... I think it's still used to teach New Jersey history, I think it's used in the fourth grade. I think it still is. It was at the time. In the fourth grade the kids were required to study New Jersey history, and so the teachers just ate this up. ... I think I had 250 prints of this film at one time, and they were busy all the time.

KP: One of the things I remember from my parents' phone bill was the little thing that New Jersey Bell used to put in it.

TD: "Tales of New Jersey."

KP: "Tales of New Jersey."

TD: That's the name of this film.

KP: And were you responsible for that?

TD: No.

KP: No. That wasn't your department?

TD: But we used anecdotes from that in the film. No, we had another guy doing that. I used to write an occasional anecdote for it, but ... not very often. I did other writing. ... I used to produce a couple of publications, ... intra-company publications. But not a whole lot. I used to do some--well another one of my assignments, which for about five years--we used to in those days put on open houses in our various installations and central office facilities to show people what the telephone business really was about. And I did that whole thing. I coordinated that whole thing, and I wrote the invitations and the programs and what not for that. We would have 15 or so of those a year, all in the state. I used to ... give out helium filled balloons to the kids. And I can remember one year I had a tent show. I had quite a job convincing the town fathers in Atlantic City, but they let me put a tent on the boardwalk. Right near the steel pier. And it was a 40 by

60 foot tent that we filled with exhibits and people would come in. And I don't remember how many big tanks of helium I went through, but I had balloons from one end of the Atlantic City boardwalk to the other. (laughs) Now, as I say, I had a great job.

KP: You retired just as divestiture was coming. What are your thoughts about divestiture and the break-up of the Bell system?

TD: I think it was the worst thing that ever happened to the telecommunications industry. You don't know what you're doing anymore. At least with us you knew what you had. And I don't think it's any cheaper than it was either. I haven't really compared, but I just think that it was better ... for the nation as a whole to have a unified system.

KP: What advantages did you see coming out of it? You said that you knew what was going on. What advantages did you see versus what has happened since?

TD: Well as I say, it was just all unified. ... I could-- I had no problem doing business with people in Houston, Texas or San Francisco or anywhere, because we were all part of the same ...

KP: System.

TD: ... System. And we used to ... share ideas and that sort of thing. ... Now I suppose they do some of that. But I don't think they do nearly as much. But there again I was lucky. I was going to retire in January of ... 1984 and September '83 was when they were really getting ready. The divestiture took place January 1 of '84. ... They gave me the golden handshake, so I retired in December of '83. And for two years I made more money not working than I would have made if I worked. ... I had my pension. I had ... a year's pay spread over two years plus my social security, so I made out like a bandit.

KP: And you were going to retire anyway.

TD: Yeah, I was going to retire the next month anyway. (laughs) ...

KP: Your position, was it filled again after you retired?

TD: Briefly, briefly. It's not there now though I'm sure. I shouldn't say it was filled. Another fella absorbed what I was doing. Because they were then still-- they were already beginning to cut back a lot of stuff and a lot of that sort of thing. If you recall, companies like mine used to give away little favors all the time. Key chains and things like that. ... I bought all of those for the company. I used to spend about 100,000 dollars a year on ... things like that. ... So that was another part of my job. ... I did most of my business with the same outfit, because they were always cheaper than anybody else. But it kept me busy too.

KP: Recently New Jersey Bell as a corporate entity has gone out of existence. What are your feelings on that?

TD: At this point I don't care. As long as my pension check gets there every month, I don't care. (laughs)

KP: Do you think something is being lost by losing that statewide identification?

TD: I think so, yeah, yeah. I think the service today is not nearly what it used to be. When I was the business office manager, for example, if a telephone service representative's desk rang three times, she was in trouble. They had to be answered like that. [snaps his fingers] And if she had to leave the line, if she had to excuse herself, then she had exactly 60 seconds to get back to the line. And they had ... what we called observers. ... These women, from a distance, ... they would sit at a switch board, and they'd be able to monitor these calls and listen in to everything. And they would time them. ... So I'd get a report, and if we were wrong, ... I'd have to bring the girl in on the carpet. So ... in that respect, I think the service was better. ... I had ... to call AT&T just the other day, and I couldn't believe how long they kept me waiting. First, it must have rung six or eight times before they answered, and then they put me on hold. And it seemed like-- of course it always seems longer than it is-- it seemed like five minutes, but it was probably a minute and a half. But it seemed like five minutes. As I say, I just don't think don't think the service is anywhere near what it was.

... Plus ... I had a man working for me who-- he was my outside man-- and he use to go and visit customers. And if we had a problem collecting a bill, he'd go out and collect the bill and that sort of thing. And we had some customers that were difficult to say the least. I had one woman in May's Landing. I'll never forget her either. She had nine illegitimate children. She was on welfare and what not, but she used to run a telephone bill of 85 dollars a month. And I had the bill delivered to me, instead of delivered to her. And I'd get the bill, and I'd give it to my outside man and say, "Here. Go out and collect it." And if he didn't get it that day, the service was off just like that. She knew it, so she had the money there on time. (laughs) Where she got it I wasn't interested in. (laughs)

KP: As a business manager, did you see any differences between North and South Jersey? Between say Nutley and Pleasantville?

TD: Yeah. I would say that ... the life in South Jersey was a little more relaxed than it was in North Jersey at that time. I'm not sure it is now, but it was then. But in those days again, I'm not sure they still do this, but I ... had to belong to a ... local service club. I was in the local Kiwanis club down there, and it was sort of interesting. When I was transferred down there, my wife had a fit. She didn't want me to go down there. But after we had been there about three years, she got to love it. And then we had a fit when we were transferred back up. Because, at that time I was first vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce. I was first vice-president of the Kiwanis club. We had started a church down there a new Episcopal Church. We had been going to church in Pleasantville which was six miles away. We lived in Linwood, and so my wife wrote the bishop in Trenton one time saying she felt there ought to be a church down that way. And he wrote back and said, "Yeah, I agree with you. And you are just the person to do it." So he sent one of his henchmen down to talk to us. And we organized the whole thing, started the church, and that's now a thriving church. I was the first warden of the church which is the highest lay

person in the church. And we had our first service there Christmas Eve of 1961. And January 1, '62 I was transferred to Newark. (laughs) So you see we were a little bit upset. But we had a good time doing that. We had about 20 people I guess that worked with us on it. We bought an old Tudor mansion in Somers Point, right on the main drag. And I had a friend that was a realtor. ... He knew that I was looking for a place, so he called me there. ... We looked at it and fell in love with it. And we all did the renovations ourself. We built a little apartment up on the second floor for the minister that was coming, and the Chapel in the living room. As I say, now they subsequently built another church on one side of it, and that got too small, and now they have a big church on the other side of it. They have got the whole block. (laughs)

KP: So you have quite a sense of accomplishment.

TD: I do. I do. I think that I have been very fortunate in my life, and I have done a lot. ... I've been involved up here in Basking Ridge. I've been mayor twice and on the governing body for ten years and other things in town.

KP: You worked for New Jersey Bell in the 1960s in Newark at a very difficult time for the city, and you were also involved in community relations.

TD: I was driving up Market Street in Newark one morning, and I didn't realize that the riots had really started. ... I had to stop at a light at Broad Street, and all hell broke loose there, and I couldn't get out of there fast enough! And shortly after that-- after things calmed down-- I went to my boss and said, "Don't expect me to work overtime, because I'm not going to do it." ... In those days our office hours were 8:30 to 4:30. I left on the dot at 4:30, and I caught the 4:39 train out home every day if I was in Newark. A lot of times I wasn't in Newark, ... because I traveled all over the state. If I was there I left. ... Since then Newark is not a bad place at all anymore.

KP: No, in fact, I lived there for three years just recently, so I'm very familiar the city. I have often walked by the New Jersey Bell headquarters. Both in the Gateway and also on Broad Street.

TD: ... Well, I was there on Broad Street there for a while, and then they moved us. They rented space down at the corner of Bridge Street is it?

KP: I know which office.

TD: ... on the second floor there. I was there for a number of years. In fact, that was where we were when I retired. So as ... I think back, I've had a pretty good life. Ups and downs of course, but I'm not complaining. (laughs)

KP: You did not have a great love for the military it sound like. How did you feel about the Cold War and the Korean War and the Vietnam War? What you think about the them when they were being waged?

TD: I didn't think we should be in Vietnam in the first place.

KP: Even back in '65, '66?

TD: ... The Cold War, that just happened I think. I don't think there was much you could do about that. Now, ... the Haiti business, I was terribly upset about that. I don't think we should be there at all. Haiti is of no strategic importance to us, and I figure it's none of our business really. Only from a humanitarian standpoint. And ... I was afraid that some of our troops would be sent down there, and they'd be killed. But I couldn't see any of our troops being killed there for that country. And I don't think that the peace there is going to last any particular length of time anyway. I think things are going to go right back to the way they were, because it's been the history of Haiti.

KP: None of your children made the military a career, except for one son who went into the National Guard.

TD: He was in the National Guard, but he got out as fast as he could. (laughs) Actually he served, I think it was one three-year hitch. I don't really remember for sure how long he was in, but I think it was one. But the other one didn't want any part of it.

KP: So, in many ways you are glad your sons did not have to go into the military.

TD: Yeah. ... I know we have to have a military, but it seems to me that there are plenty of young men who want to be there. Let them do it. ... Maybe that is the wrong attitude, but (laughs) I can't see making them do it. Then, of course, we don't have a draft now anyway. I don't even know whether-- do you still have to register?

ME: Yes.

TD: So they know where you are I guess.

ME: Oh yeah! (laughter)

KP: Do you have any other questions?

ME: I just had one last thought. You mentioned earlier that you seemed on the edge of going to the Far East. I guess we can assume it was brought to an end by the atomic bomb. Do you attribute the atomic bomb to your earlier return home?

TD: Oh I think probably, sure. I think that brought about the quick end to the Japanese ...

ME: Were you happy about it?

TD: Absolutely. Yeah, I felt sorry for the people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but ... I looked at it this way-- a lot of them would have been killed anyway as would a lot of our people, so I figured it was kind of a wash. But we benefitted.

KP: Thank you. I enjoyed our interview.

TD: Oh I've enjoyed it. It brought back a lot of memories. I think I've covered everything about my life.

KP: I also know your daughter from Drew University. Not very well, but I definitely knew her.

TD: It's funny how she went to Drew. She had wanted to go to the University of North Carolina too, and they wouldn't take her, because they had already taken somebody from Basking Ridge. And in those days they would only take one.

KP: So your family has had an long term relationship with North Carolina.

TD: ... Actually this was in August, and she went to the guidance counselor [who recommended Drew]. ...

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

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