

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK DAUSTER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Frank Dauster on October 31, 1995 on Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and ...

Susan Tong: Susan Tong.

KP: And I guess I'll like to begin by asking a few questions about your parents, and maybe starting with your father. Your father was a German-American, first generation.

FD: Well, he was born here. His parents were both born in Germany. He was born and lived, until he was I guess an early teenager, in a godforsaken little town in Pennsylvania coal country. And he quit school when he was twelve to go pick slate under the coal-breakers. And I've been back there. I'll never go back there again. The coal dust is ingrained into everything. There's no grass, it's just horrible, still. Just awful. But, I rather recently found out something I hadn't known about his mother. I knew that my father's mother had been married previously and my father had some half-brothers and half-sisters. But what I found out recently from my brother who had found this out somewhere was that my grandmother had come over to this country as a young woman from Germany with a friend, and they set out for California. Now this has got to be ... 1880s, somewhere. And they set out for California. The courage of two young women doing this is just astonishing. They got as far as Iowa, met a couple of farmers out there, I suppose in between Indian skirmishes, I don't know. She married him. They wound up in Pennsylvania, he was working in the coal mines and was killed. So she married my grandfather and after he was given up for dead the third time in a coal mine collapse, she said, "That's it, I'm leaving. I'm taking the children. You can do what you want." So somehow they wound up in Bloomfield. But I remember my grandfather, who had blue marks all over his hands and all over his head, and his neck. And I ... thought he had been tattooed, but they were scars from where coal had fallen down and cut the skin and the coal dust had just gotten ingrained. Of course, there was no medical treatment so he had these blue marks all over. It was horrifying.

KP: You may well have ended up, growing up in a coal town, if your grandmother had not said it was time to leave?

FD: Oh yes, yes. I could have wound up growing up in a coal town, Mahanoy City or Ashland, or the town my father was from, which was called Locustdale, which is a little tiny place. I wouldn't have lasted there very long, ... that's not my thing.

KP: Your father, did he speak German?

FD: No, no. No, my ... grandfather and grandmother, both spoke German and accented English. My grandfather also spoke French. There were German books in the house, I know it's--I don't know what they were, but as I grew up as a child, I remember seeing them. I don't recall seeing anything in French. And I don't recall ever seeing my grandfather or my grandmother read. And I don't know if they really read English or not. I just don't know. My brother probably knows that.

KP: How did your family end up in East Orange?

FD: Well, when my grandmother decided that she was leaving the coal country, I don't know how they got to Bloomfield. They came down to Bloomfield. And I don't know how they got there. I have a vague recollection of having heard that some friends from Pennsylvania had moved down here and they had some kind of connection. But I don't know whether that's true or not. At one point, my father who was sixteen was working in a factory. He was the only employed member of the family. He was supporting the whole family, which was both his parents and a variety of siblings. And eventually my grand[father], well they had a little mom and pop grocery store for a while. Eventually my grandfather got a job as caretaker of the football field for Bloomfield High School, up in Foley Field. And they moved over to East Orange, but we lived a hundred yards from the Bloomfield border, you know. I don't know why they bought that particular house, it was probably the best thing they could get at that point. And that's where I grew up. And, of course, it's now directly underneath the Garden State Parkway. So as I drive down the Parkway and go past it, I keep remembering that old John Barrymore film, I don't remember the name of it, where he is running away and at the end he looks at the house he's been trying to get and he says: "Good-bye my house," and I feel very much like that.

KP: Like your whole world growing up is gone without a trace.

FD: Well, yeah. From ... my house, from several houses up, right down to the end of the street, the corner grocery store, the whole business is just gone. The lumber yard, where we used to sneak over and run around and jump off stacks of lumber and so on is gone. And the field where we used to play softball, down on the corner is still there. But unfortunately, it's now a high rise housing development. It's very different.

KP: ... How did your parents meet?

FD: My mother was a friend of my father's sister-- ... they were girlfriends. I don't know how they met, but they were girlfriends and they met through that connection. And my father eventually asked her to go out with him. And my mother was a very shy person and this took a lot of nerving herself up. But apparently things proceeded fairly rapidly, because they were married ..., he was, I don't know, 24 and she was 22, or 25 and 23, something like that, relatively young. And they stayed married until he died, which was unfortunately much too young. He was only 53.

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

FD: Very, very badly. My father was out of work for nine months. We lived on the second floor in a house, which was owned by my grandfather, who lived on the first floor, with one of my uncles, who was unmarried. And basically, my mother took care of the whole house, and did all the cooking, all the laundry, and all that sort of thing for everybody. And while my father was out of work, I guess my grandfather, and through his pension and my uncle who was working, provided the groceries.

KP: So your grandfather got a pension from the coal company?

FD: No, from ... Bloomfield. I'm assuming he got a pension, either that or my Uncle Joe was supporting everybody. I don't think he made that much money. It was very difficult, I know we wore hand-me-down clothing and that kind of thing. Of course, you know, I really ... didn't perceive a lot of this. I didn't think I was poor.

KP: Yes.

FD: You know. As I think back to what we ate, we ate a lot of hard-boiled eggs and potatoes together, and that kind of thing. What I would consider now to be really, you know, sort of poverty level food. It was fine, I liked it. So that there was no real impact on me or on my brother.

KP: You never were in danger of like losing a place to live?

FD: Not that I know of.

KP: Yes.

FD: Not that I know of. I know that my father, well rather odd. My father had worked for Driver-Harris, a steel corporation, up in Harrison. And Mr. Driver left. Driver-Harris for whatever reason and started a new company. And he took three men with him and one of them was my father. And he took along a man to be director of sales and took my father and one other fellow to basically set up the shop and run it. And it became a multi-million dollar corporation over a period of time. And my father had the opportunity to go to Toronto and another opportunity to go to Paris to be basically shop foreman. My mother flatly would not leave.

KP: Really?

FD: Oh yeah. She was very, very timid about that sort of thing. [To] leave the area she grew up in was very threatening to her. And my father never really did become terribly literate. He could read and write, but his handwriting was difficult to read to say the least. Maybe that's where I get it from. And his reading never got above cowboy magazines, you know. So he never really had the opportunity to ... get out of the factory.

KP: But it sounds like he was fairly skilled at what he did?

FD: At what he did, he must have been pretty good, yes.

KP: To get the offer to set up a shop in a new plant.

FD: Yes, and it became a very large corporation. During the Depression, Mr. Driver went to Paris, that was when he went over to see about setting up the French branch. And he was gone for nine months and he left another man in charge of the whole operation. As soon as Mr. Driver got on the boat, everybody he brought in was fired, and the man left in charge replaced them with

friends, relatives, and what have you. So my father, quite literally went out and pounded the pavement for nine months, looking for work. And this was in the height of the Depression. It was very tough, he couldn't find anything. And eventually, someone cabled Mr. Driver in Paris and told him what had been going on. He caught the first boat back, came in and sacked everybody who had been brought in and called all the old men back to work. He was rather an enlightened man, although he was very anti-union. My father was very anti-union, which is sort of strange, considering his background. But, Mr. Driver was very loyal to his employees. He was very curious.

KP: In what way?

FD: It was the old paternal set-up.

KP: In other words, he took care of his employees.

FD: Took care of his employees, he'd make sure that they had jobs, he made sure that there was always a turkey at Thanksgiving. All this traditional paternalistic stuff.

KP: Occurred there?

FD: Absolutely. ... And the children of employees were offered jobs. I was offered a job there. I don't know. No, no thank you, no. It was great, but this is hell, you know, it looked like Pittsburgh, flames shooting out of things and so on. I'm not going to work here. ... And young Mr. Driver, who wasn't so young, and who died some time ago ... but when my father died, Mr. Driver turned up at the funeral and there was a big bouquet and that sort of thing. So the old paternalistic, traditional way of dealing with your employees, but it worked.

KP: It sounds like your father really bought it.

FD: Oh absolutely. Absolutely. Yes, indeed.

KP: Were there any attempts to organize his factory? Did you know of in the 1930s?

FD: I know there were some. I don't know anything about them and I know he was dead set against it. Rather odd, ... I have trouble trying to figure out his politics, because he was a right-wing radical in so many ways.

KP: In what ways?

FD: Oh well, he ...

KP: How did he feel about Roosevelt, that might be one way to start?

FD: Didn't like him, didn't like him. Didn't like him at all.

KP: Did he like Hoover or Al Smith?

FD: I don't recall his talking about them. I know that he was anti-union. He was a man who suffered from ethnic prejudice on the abstract level, and got along just fine with people on a personal level.

KP: So for example, did he have any black co-workers?

FD: He worked with ... blacks.

KP: Black workers and that was no problem?

FD: Didn't bother him in the slightest. As a matter of fact, when they were first married, they lived in Irvington, where I was born. And, at that point, it was rather curious, but at that point, there was rather more integration in housing than people realize. And the people who lived next door were black and my parents got along fine with them. They were good friends. This abstract level was a problem for him. On the personal level, there was no difficulty. We had one black family on my street when we were growing up. The father was an undertaker. There were several daughters who were school teachers. And very, very popular and very respected people. And we had a long walk to grammar school. And on a hot summer day there was always a pitcher of lemonade out on the front porch. And somebody from the family was always there, giving lemonade to the children in the neighborhood. And at one point, many years later, someone moved into the neighborhood and didn't like this idea and started a petition to try to get the black family to move. A counter petition was started requesting that this person leave the neighborhood and it all died. Very odd. ... Any case, as I said, my father had these abstract prejudices, but no personal prejudices.

KP: In other words, he did not act on his prejudices?

D: No, no. I mean he didn't belong to any nut organizations or doing anything silly or anything like that. He liked to talk a lot about stuff like that, but basically his inclinations were pretty good.

KP: What about Father Coughlin, how did he feel about Coughlin?

FD: Oh my grandfather loved Father Coughlin. Well, my family was Catholic, my mother was not. My mother's family was Protestant and my father's family was Catholic. Which was a cause of some tension in the family, because I was expected to go to mass, but nobody else did. And I resented this deeply. But, oh my grandfather insisted that I sit and listen to Father Coughlin every Sunday afternoon with him. And I really didn't understand what was going on and found other ways to amuse myself while all this blathering was going on on the radio. But again, ... my grandfather I supposed suffered from these abstract prejudices. But he had good friends who were Jewish. You know, it's, I think a typical working class kind of thing, where you've got abstract problems, but personally you get along. I don't know.

KP: I'm curious. Given Father Coughlin and growing up Catholic, what about the Spanish Civil War? Did you know anything about the Spanish Civil War at the time? Did any priests or your parents or anyone care, in a sense, care about it?

FD: Nobody in the family, no, no. By the time the Civil War started, let's see, I must have been twelve or thirteen, I guess. It was what '38, '35, I'm trying to remember now.

KP: Yes, I need to remember.

FD: I should remember the dates on that, but I can't.

KP: It is, I think 1936 through 1938.

FD: '36, somewhere around there. Because I remember, I had a teacher that year who was very Catholic and who raised all manner of uproar if she had discovered that I hadn't gone to mass, you know. Public school I might add. But, she was rather pro-rebel in that particular circumstance. It took me a little while, but I remember figuring out that maybe these were not the people I should be rooting for. Which reminds me of something, I see what you mean about how people talk more than they think they're going to. Reminds me of something I hadn't thought of. Our local parish priest, well actually not the parish priest, at that point. He was the second in command, Father S., Eugene S., who had played semi-pro sand-lot baseball with my father when they were kids together. So they'd known each other a long time. And Father Sullivan was up at the parish and tried to get my father to ... switch my brother and me to parochial school. My father said, "No, they're doing fine just where they are." So we stayed in, we did not go to parochial school at any point. Praise the Lord.

KP: It sounds like you look back on growing up Catholic with a little ... ?

FD: ... hostility is the word, I think.

KP: Yeah, or ...

FD: Yes, yes. Yeah, well, I ... don't know that I felt hostile about it at that point. I resented the fact that I had to go to mass and nobody else in the family did. And I kept thinking, even though I was pretty young there were some double standards here for adults and non-adults. I intensely disliked one of the priests, who, my mother was a Protestant and I will never forget his remarks about Protestants burning in hell, which turned me off utterly. And I was only, I don't know, ten years old, or something of the sort. I just was never turned on by it, I never liked it. I resented getting my wrist whacked with a ruler, which you know, you had to line up because you were taking all these communion classes and this kind of thing. And all this stuff about nuns rapping you with a ruler, absolutely true.

KP: No, you are not the first to mention the rapping, especially in parochial school.

FD: Well that's why I was glad I didn't go to parochial school. I resented, oh the fact that we were in, I guess it was confirmation class, and one of my classmates ... was named Marsha. And the priest came along, meeting each of us and he was introduced to Marsha. He said, "Marsha, Marsha, what kind of Saint's name is that?" You know humiliating the girl for no purpose. And a nun quickly said, "I think it's Marcella." "Why don't they call her Marcella?" That sort of thing, just irritated me from the beginning. And of course, I suppose I was conscious of the fact that my mother being Protestant, there was ... something wrong here.

KP: Did your mother go to services?

FD: No, no, no. No, she was a Lutheran originally, but nobody in the family went to church, except my brother and me. We didn't like it. We were forced into it and didn't care for it. And later, we, at least I joined the CYO, when I was in high school, because I had good friends who were Catholic and then so we went to CYO basketball games and things of that sort. And Father S. was the advisor. But I was getting interested in history at that point and I recall I asked at one point, "Well, how did the Church justify the conduct of the Borgia Popes, and so on?" He said, "We don't talk about those things." And I said, "But look, they did ..." He said, "We don't talk about that." And at that point, I thought I maybe was in the wrong place.

KP: Really, he just said that we do not even talk about it?

FD: We don't talk about it. Well maybe he meant we don't talk about it to teenagers, I don't know. Whatever he meant, it was the wrong approach, at least as far as I was concerned. 'Cause that was really a major step in ... my slow slide away.

KP: A lot of people talk very fondly of growing up in East Orange, particularly the school system.

FD: Yeah, it was a pretty nice town. It was--we lived in ... a blue collar section of town. You know, with the factory on the corner and the lumber yard across the street and all that sort of thing. There were no professional people in the street that I can recall, except for the undertaker up the way. As a matter of fact, the role model that was trotted out for all of us was a man across the street, who lived in a very small house. Smaller than ours, but he worked for the Prudential and he got four weeks vacation every year. And I was sort of aimed at the Prudential, all my life. I got pointed in that direction and I actually wound up working there.

KP: The Prudential really had that aura?

FD: Oh yes. It ... really had people faked out, you know. Then, I went and worked there and found out what it was like. That's when I first conceived my hatred for Princeton. When the president, you know you had to be a Princeton alumnus to be the president of Prudential. And at Christmas, he would come around to each of the many, many, many departments and personally hand each person his Christmas bonus, a five dollar bill in a sealed envelope. And even at that point, I thought, this is degrading and demeaning. Who's this clown? Why are we being subjected to this? I mean this is, you know. He didn't even have the grace to do it with the kind

of, I don't know, human compassion that my father's employers had. This was, he was doing us a favor. It was lord of the manor all over again.

KP: So your father's employers did not have that lord of the manor attitude.

FD: Not at all. Not at all. No, no.

KP: Was this when you really got the sense that ...?

FD: I got the sense with the president of the Prudential that he was going to have us all dragged away and fed to the dogs if we didn't act grateful enough. I didn't like it. No, I did not like the place. I was very happy to get [out.] ... I was actually happy to get into the army, because it got me out of the Prudential.

KP: How long were you with Prudential?

FD: Oh, I worked there from September of '41, until going into the army in May of '43. Then I worked there again for a couple of months, when I got out of the army to save enough money to come to college.

KP: So college was not really in the works for you when you graduated high school? Or was it?

FD: No, no. My father really wanted me to go to college. But I was very young. I was sixteen. I was barely sixteen when I graduated. And very, I suppose, alienated is the word, but ... not in the normal sense. I was too young to know what I wanted to do and I was frankly too bright to do what I was sort of expected to do. I was very discomfited in high school, because ... I was not performing up to what I could have performed. And my teachers knew that, and some of them tried to do something about it. And I was just too young to really ... I was fifteen as a senior, and then being offered the chance to do an individual research project in English all year, instead of going to class. Now that was--I think it was a terrific idea, but I didn't know how to handle it. And it was not presented to me in a way which made it comprehensible or attractive to a fifteen year old, so I turned it down, you know, that sort of thing. My father would have liked me to go and well, in our neighborhood in those days if you went to college, you went to what was then Newark Tech, which is now New Jersey Institute of Technology. But I was beginning to catch on that maybe science was not my thing. I had always thought it was going to be. Oddly, I went to a high school reunion three years ago, and bumped into somebody, a ... young woman, not anymore, who had been a classmate of mine all the way through, from ... first grade, right on up. And she said, "E-gads, you wound up a Spanish teacher, I thought you were going to be a scientist." And I thought, "Gee, so did I." But I figured out that that was not it. No, I just decided that was not what I wanted to do and by that point, clearly military service was in the offing. And I just decided that I was gonna wait. Get military service in and then see what happened afterward.

KP: How crucial do you think the G.I. Bill was to going to college? I mean this is sort of getting ahead of the story a little. But do you think you would have gone to college without the G.I. Bill?

FD: For me?

KP: Yeah.

FD: Absolutely fundamental. Absolutely basic. I got two degrees and part of a third, out of the G.I. Bill. Oh yeah, yeah. It ... makes the army worthwhile, even though I didn't much care for the army. There are lots of things I don't much care for, as you can see.

KP: Just to follow-up, because you had worked at Prudential for several years, and sounds like you had some choice words about it. How did you get the job at Prudential? This beacon that had been shined at you.

FD: Oh lordy. Well, I graduated from high school and a fellow who lived across the street came over to see me. Just, I think the day before I graduated, or something like that. And told me they were looking for somebody who worked in his office, he worked for the Heinz Company in Harrison. They needed somebody over there as a mail clerk. Was I interested? I said sure. So I went over and was interviewed for the job and took the job. I worked there for three months, the boss was an absolute tyrant! I do not relate well to tyrants. I just didn't like it terribly well. And, I just went to see whether I could get a job at the Prudential to sort of get my mother off my back a little bit about it. And I got the job at Prudential. Didn't like that either. I was doing things that I found excruciatingly dull. They continued to be excruciatingly dull.

KP: What did you do for them?

FD: Oh well, I was a mail clerk. I ran a mail trip to New York. I picked up mail at various offices within the building, you know, and took it back and sorted it. I was working for a while at a department called ordinary register. And that was a department (laughs) where they had what would now be computer files. We didn't have computers then, so they had these large steel-bound registers, which had a habit of falling off the shelf and hitting you on the head and on the shoulder and so on. It was literally, you know, they'd fall off and whack you. And it was very bad, they were very heavy. But all the information on policies was in there. So each of us was assigned to a bank of these things and a telephone. And we got telephone calls all day long, giving us the policy number, who's the beneficiary, is it paid up, you know really inspiring questions. There were also mail requests that came in, little forms that came in with various kinds of information, check would you fill all those in. Pretty dull and the company hired an efficiency, a time and motion expert, an efficiency expert, okay. Who decreed how long a phone call should take, how long each kind of form should take, and so on. So what you did, you kept a record of each form and how many phone calls you answered. And at the end of the week, you totalled all those things up, and you multiplied them by the corresponding factor for each thing. And you were supposed to come up with at least 100 percent of the time that you had worked that week. And their own man said, "You know 90 percent efficiency is the most you can

possibly hope for. We were supposed to do 100 and if you went up to 120 or something like that, the chances were you might get a raise sometime. I thought, "No this is not for me." I also had a problem. I had an accident, while I was working for the Prudential. I got caught in the elevator door and my right leg was rather seriously damaged. And I was under medical orders not to spend time on my feet. And they kept funneling me over to stand and do this stuff. And I kept pointing out to my superior, I wasn't supposed to be standing, and I was having circulatory problems. And it, you know, it was again, you know, a large, impersonal, tyrannical, bigoted company in which Jews, Blacks, Orientals, etcetera, did not work. It's that simple. You didn't work there if you belonged to one of these groups of people.

KP: How did you know that they were that bigoted?

FD: Because, there was nobody there. You know, if you work in a company in Newark, admittedly, Newark's ethnic make-up now is not the same as what it was. But Newark has always had very, varied ethnic make-up. And when you work in a large company in Newark, where there are thousands and thousands and thousands of people and you never see a person of another color of skin going in or out. You begin to understand. And if you realize that there's nobody working there who has what might be called a Jewish name. There was one fellow in our office who had one Jewish parent, one Christian parent. He and I talked about this.

KP: At the time?

FD: Yeah, he said he thought that he sneaked under some kind of guideline, because he had one Christian parent or something.

KP: Yeah.

FD: It was a bizarre place to work.

KP: How did the war effect Prudential? You remained at Prudential for a sometime.

FD: Ahh! You'd be amazed how many Orientals appeared working for the Prudential, as soon as the war came, because they were losing men. They also had very curious notions, married women couldn't work there. You know, if a woman worked there and got married, boom, out. She had to leave. Things of this sort. Which meant, you know, you couldn't hire spouses and so on. Well, along came the war and people, guys started going into the army, and they started hiring all these people who previously had been unhireable. They started permitting married women to work there and so on. It's all sort of weird.

KP: Growing up, what did you know about war, say in the late 1930s and 1940s? How closely did you follow things?

FD: Well let's see. I was sixteen when it started. Obviously, I was aware of it. I was a couple of years younger than most of my classmates in school so that they were being drafted. My

cousin went into the navy quite early, and things of that sort. So that we were, at least I personally was very aware of what was going on.

KP: How did you and your parents view the coming of war, say in 1938, 1939, and 1940? Did you think the United States should get involved?

FD: I don't know about my parents. I didn't always talk to my parents about things like this, because fairly early on I realized that we were on a couple of different wave lengths about a lot of things. And I don't know why, I've always been very individualistic. I don't know why, I don't know how one gets this way. But, I didn't agree with my parents about a whole lot of things. I personally felt, as I think back to it, that it was something we had to do. Pretty clearly what was going on was unacceptable. Now this may or may not have been influenced by a civics teacher I had in high school, a man name[d] Moe Frankel, bless his heart, a good man. He was also a football coach there, was a line coach. He was a good guy. And we discussed things like this in class and Moe made pretty clear that he felt that sooner or later we were going to have to get into this, if we were going to put a stop to what was going on. He knew a lot of what was going on that I think others hadn't caught onto yet. And I wasn't very happy about the idea of getting into a war, but it also seemed pretty clear that we were going to have to. And ... I was a Roosevelt supporter in a very anti-Roosevelt family. Maybe just out of sheer contrariness, I don't know. I think my parents frequently felt that was it.

KP: Did you idolize Roosevelt?

FD: Oh, I don't know that I idolized him. I thought he was a lot better than the rest of the people around.

KP: Where were you when Pearl Harbor occurred? Do you remember?

FD: I was at home. We were listening to the radio, which was something we did a good deal of in our family. A lot of our time together was spent in ... the living room, after what my parents called supper. And that sounds snobbish. I don't mean it that way. But I ... as I'm talking, I keep thinking to what extent my nomenclature for things has changed over the past years. And I hadn't even realized that quite this much. But we frequently just sat and listened to the radio, you know. **Green Hornet** and **The Shadow**, and stuff like that. It was terrific, much better than television, much more fun. And we were listening to something and there was a ... news bulletin that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. And my reaction was, "Oh, oh, we are in for it now." And we clearly were, yeah.

ST: How did members in your family react? Was there a discussion afterward?

FD: I think shock, and in my mother's case, fear because her immediate reaction was that her husband was going to have to go. Because my father wasn't that old and there was a point relatively early where there were discussions of drafting men in that age bracket. He had been just a little too young for World War I. He was just about ready to go when the war ended, so. And along came World War II, and it looked like they were going to come and get him. And my

mother was pretty panicky about that. And I don't recall my father reacting particularly. I suspect he probably thought they weren't going to come and get him and he was concerned about other things.

KP: What about you and your brother? You were going to go.

FD: Yeah, I was sixteen and my brother was thirteen. And I thought, well sooner or later, here I go. And at that point, they were taking seventeen year old volunteers and things of this sort. But, as I recall, the volunteers were all for the navy and I wasn't about to go on a boat.

KP: Really, you had no desire to serve in the navy?

FD: I just figured I don't want to be some place where I have to swim. And so, I waited until ... I guess, I turned eighteen. Just about the time I turned eighteen, they cut off enlistments, because ... if you enlisted you could pick your branch. Everybody was enlisting and nobody was picking the infantry. So they stopped enlistments and did it all by drafts. And when I was eighteen, it was I guess three months later, two months later, I went for my physical, I got my letter, went for my physical, I left in ... May of '43.

KP: Let me let Susan ask some questions to make sure she gets chance.

ST: I guess we should pick up from there. You went into army ordnance?

FD: Yeah, I was taken down to Fort Dix. And they give you this army general intelligence test, or whatever they call the thing. And I do well on standardized tests. I don't know, it's a gimmick, you know, it's a knack. My kids do it too. They knock off SAT's and things like that, you know. It's just shocking what they do to them. And I scored very high on the test and they didn't know what to do with me. And the result was that as people were being shipped out of Fort Dix, I wasn't being shipped out. They were being sent to the infantry and the artillery and I was still in Fort Dix.

KP: How long did you stay?

FD: Oh, I was at Fort Dix for a couple of months.

KP: That long.

FD: Yes! And as a matter of fact, I was at Fort Dix when they stopped, for some reason, I don't remember what it was, but for some reason nobody was coming in. They had stopped the draft or stopped actually bringing people in for a while, for a week or several weeks there. So people were going out, but nobody was coming in. The result was that I pulled KP every other day for two weeks. I had one pair of fatigues. One! They almost literally stood up at night. They had so much grease in them, but I had no chance to get them cleaned, you know. So I wasn't really happy about that either. But, then I was told to get my stuff together, that we were going to be traveling. And they took about fifteen of us, put us on a train, took us down to Trenton, or I

guess over to Trenton at that point. And I called home, you know, illegal, but I found a phone. We all did this. The sergeant who was in charge, you know, conveniently disappeared into a coffee shop, until we all had a chance to make a phone call. I called home and said, "I'm getting on a train. All I know is that we're going west. I'll let you know when we get there." We wound up in Wisconsin, where I was put in the ordnance company, where ... I got basic training. And we were in a headquarters' detachment of an ordnance battalion, where they had plans for me to do exactly what I did while I was in civilian life. I was going to be a file clerk and all that kind of thing. And I said, "No, no, no." (laughter) If I had ... wanted to do this, I could have stayed home and done it for more money. Because I had to work fairly hard to persuade the army doctors that I could maneuver enough with my game leg ... that I should go in the army. But actually it didn't ...

KP: You almost did not get in then?

FD: Oh yeah, I had to work hard to persuade them. They didn't want to take me. But I was so ready to get away, you know, one way or another, I ... really wanted to get away. This was a point where kids go away to college. And I, you know, I was ready to get away and I didn't have that option at that point, so.

ST: Was that the first time you were out of the East Coast? I don't know if you traveled out of New Jersey while you were growing up.

FD: No all our travel had been as far west as Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, you know. As far south as Atlantic City, sort of thing.

KP: What did you think of Wisconsin?

FD: Beautiful! It's beautiful, loved it, loved it. It's ... gorgeous countryside. And the people there were really quite nice. I met a couple of local families. They were very nice. Very well treated. One family kept inviting me for dinner and I kept saying, I was going out with their daughter, and she kept saying they'd like you to come to dinner. I kept saying, "... I'll have dinner back at the base." She finally said, "My parents are getting very offended." I said, "Well look, there's food back there. I know that they're on rations." And she said, "No, no." It turned out her father did everybody's--he worked for the post office, and he did everybody's income taxes and he got paid off in duck, chicken, you know. So I had very nice Sunday dinners from there on. No, Wisconsin was fun. But I didn't want to be a file clerk. And, so I was transferred to another unit, where they made [me] a weapons mechanic. I don't know which was stupider, me for turning that file clerk job ... down, or the army for trying to make a mechanic out of me. I'm not impressed by the army. (laughter) I'm not impressed by a lot of things in life, but especially by the army.

ST: Was there any special training that you had to go through to be a mechanic?

FD: Oh yeah. I was simply assigned to the weapons section, the small arms section, where, you know, I watched what the other fellows did. And then I was sent to Aberdeen Proving Ground

for a six week, eight week, something like that, special course, where you, you know, disassembled guns and put them back together, test fired them, and all that sort of thing.

KP: What type of weapons had you worked on? Learned how to repair and service?

FD: Everything up through a fifty caliber machine gun. Beyond that, it was classified artillery and that was a whole other section. When the bazooka came along, we were told that we were responsible for servicing bazookas, as well. I don't know if you've ever seen a bazooka. It's a kind of primitive rocket launcher. It's a long hollow tube. Its got two handles and its handle's got a trigger. And that trigger ignites a rocket, which is up in the tube and we were not supposed to fool around with the ignition thing. All we ever did to fix a bazooka was take a big metal thing and a long rod and we would poke this big metal thing through the tube of the bazooka to make sure there were no dents in it. Because, if there were dents in it, the thing could go off prematurely. But yeah, I ... fixed guns. As a pacifist now, I fixed guns then, you know.

ST: You said that you traveled throughout the western United States. Where else did you stay? Were you in Wisconsin most of the time?

FD: Well, I was ... thinking on the way here this morning, they're gonna ask me this. And I was trying to sort out my travels in the army and they got a little picturesque, because my unit was based in Wisconsin at Camp McCoy and then at Fort Riley, Kansas. And then while I was away on detached service, they were sent to a base and I can't ever remember the name of it, in Salina, Kansas, I can't think of the name of it. But I was put on detached service, I was assigned to an inspection team, which traveled around. We were in the Second Army. And it--we traveled around the Second Army area, performing inspections of equipment. A ... weapons team, an artillery team, an automotive team, and so on. And we would go into a base and stay there for three weeks and someone selected specific units for us to inspect. And we would simply go in and inspect all the weapons in that unit. And it would probably take a day to do it. And the next day, we go to some other unit. We weren't terribly popular, because we found all kinds of intriguing things, such as weapons with so much rust in the barrel, you couldn't see through them and the man responsible in an absolute panic, because the company commander wouldn't let anybody clean those guns. As soon as they were fired, they were locked up. And he kept telling the company commander they have to be clean. "No, no, no, no. Nobody's going to fool with those guns." You know, the poor man, he's the corporal, he's responsible. Well, I think we got one company commander sacked on that one. Army efficiency was fascinating. But we did a lot of fooling [around]. We were in, oh lord, Camp Forrest, Tennessee, Camp Rucker, Alabama; Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

KP: So, you were doing this in 1944?

FD: I was doing this in 1944. Yeah.

KP: Did you ever think you would get overseas?

FD: Oh yes. I knew we were going to go. We had a company commander who couldn't wait. Oh, he was just so eager to go. When I was transferred from the headquarters' detachment to this line company, I was interviewed. Nobody ever interviewed a buck private for transfer into a unit. That's insane. He interviewed all of us, and ... the first question he asked was: "Well, what do you think about going overseas?" And oh boy, you know. As ready as I'll ever be, you know. Then we went overseas. I think he probably requested it. He wrote his own recommendation for promotion and was turned down and wrote it again and was promoted. Very strange man.

KP: Was he regular army?

FD: No, no.

KP: He was World War II Army.

FD: He had run a hardware store or something out in Ohio. There was a fellow in my section who had been in, who was from his home town and who said things like, "Just wait 'til we get back, I'll fix him." He was not a popular man. But, of course, I was put on one special job. Most people don't know about this. I recently met a man who was a retired general, and a military historian. And he and I discussed some of the things that had happened to me in the army and he ... really doesn't want to believe some of this stuff. But we were, my whole unit, which was supposed to be getting ready to go overseas, was packed up in Wisconsin and shipped out to a place called Devil's Lake, North Dakota, where we were put to harvesting wheat. And we harvested wheat, for I guess a couple of months. We were farmed out on local farms, where the farmers were allegedly paying the army, going--I don't know what the going rate was. But they were allegedly paying the army on the basis of an eight hour work day. And we weren't being paid anything, you know. We were drawing our army pay. Problem was that these guys ... were working ... sunrise to sundown. And for three weeks, we lived on one particular farm. We slept in the hay loft. There were no facilities of any kind. We washed, when we got up in the morning. And this was in September and there was a bucket of water outside the barn with ice on the top and we broke the ice and washed. Then we went in and had breakfast. Then went back to shave. We always managed to get a kettle of hot water, so we could shave. He refused to take us in to pick up our mail. He refused take us in on pay day. That got a little rich after a while. And being the rabble rouser I am, finally one day I said, "I have had it. This guy is ripping me off and I'm not going to take this anymore." So I walked over and said, "Look, I don't work fourteen hour days. I'm sorry, I don't do this. I'm not a slave." He said, "We're all working on it." I said, "Look, when that sun hits the horizon over there, that's it. My pitch fork goes into the ground and I stop." And he called me a communist.

KP: The farmer?

FD: The farmer, yeah. And this is a man who was getting fourteen hours a day out of us and paying the army for eight hours, you see. And the sun hit the horizon, I put the pitch fork in the grass and I said, "That's it, I'm done for the day." And fellows from my squad who were working, they were terribly nervous about this. They thought we were going to be, you know,

jailed or shot so something. And I thought, "This is, you know, enough." And it worked. After that, we quit when the sun hit the horizon. But most people don't know that this ever happened.

KP: How many units were doing this?

KD: One that I know of, just mine.

KP: And where were your commanders? Did they just apportion you to different farms?

FD: Yeah, yeah. They were entertaining the local war widows.

KP: I mean you were in ordnance squad, which is a technical specialty. You would think in terms of allotment of manpower that you were too valuable to use for this type of work?

FD: One might, one might. Yes, I frequently have. My general military historian friend really couldn't understand this stuff, there was something wrong here. No, it happened. It seems they had a very strange way to treat people you were sending off for special training. But ... that's just the way the army works. We had a motorcycle mechanic, who had been a cook in his civilian life. We had a cook, who had been a motorcycle mechanic in civilian life. Now, they both had been sent to special training school. This does cause one to question the rationales behind these things. However, ... it wasn't all dreadful. There were a lot of times when we laughed, we had a lot of fun. Things that in normal civilian life, you wouldn't even notice can provoke hilarity. You learn to adjust to a very, "primitive" I suppose level of living. You ... live in a way that you would never live outside. That's the way you kept your sanity, I guess.

KP: I just wanted to go back to basic training.

FD: Of course, of course.

KP: Because it sounds like you had been stuck at Fort Dix longer than almost anyone I know was there?

FD: I was there, I'm trying to remember exactly how long I was there. And, well, I know I was in Wisconsin in June. I went in, in May 11th, I guess. So I must have been at Fort Dix, four to six weeks. I know it was at least four weeks and I, something in my memory tells me it was four to six weeks. And it wasn't basic training, it was just slogging around. You know, marching, then marching some more. And then KP, and a little more marching. You know, it [was] totally pointless.

KP: When you got to Wisconsin, what did you think of your sergeant and basic training in general?

FD: They were very decent people. I was very fortunate. The non-coms in our unit, maybe because of the kind of unit it was, it was headquarters' unit, small. But the people, the non-coms there, and most of the officers were really very human people, who gave us, I thought a very

adequate basic training. Which, you know, was more marching. And, you know, port arms and all that sort of nonsense. But, map reading, the whole, you know, the whole military basic training kind of [thing]. They did it very effectively and did it very well. And--no, I liked the people in the unit. I ...

KP: It sounds like you had a very favorable basic training, I guess.

FD: Yeah, yeah.

KP: Because a lot of people really hated it.

FD: No, my experience in basic training was really not bad at all.

KP: And how specialized was it for what you were to do? Was it close to basic infantry or was it more geared toward ordnance?

FD: Oh no, it was ... basic infantry training. Because the unit that I was in at that point, the headquarters' unit, did not do any of the actual ordnance repair. It was the administrative unit for the battalion. And so we got standard basic training, and then we were going to be doing, you know, clerical type work, that sort of thing. I had been picked to be company clerk, well actually battalion clerk, which was, you know, sort of the head paper shuffler for the whole battalion. And I simply couldn't cope with that, I really couldn't. From one perspective it was stupid, from the other perspective it was very smart, 'cause that unit went over earlier and got shot up.

KP: Really? If you had stayed with that unit you might have run into trouble?

FD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They got shot up. At least one of my fellow recruits was killed. One of the sergeants got his back broken. And those are the only two I know about. And I heard that sort of round about. But I was probably very lucky that I did get out of there.

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

ST: In your war experiences, in 1944, you applied for the paratroopers. How did that come about?

FD: This is one of my stupider moves.

KP: One of the things people have said is: "Don't apply for anything."

FD: Yeah. Never, never apply for anything. I'm an acrophobe, I don't like heights. I've never have liked heights, which makes life difficult for my wife and ... you know, people. We just got back from a couple of weeks in France and our friends were all set to go on the Luberon, I said, "I don't go there, you know." This is dumb, but it's just the thing I have. And at that point, when I was nineteen, I said, "Well, I'm gonna find out whether I can whip this thing." So I applied, and another fellow and I applied for the paratroops, which created some tension with my family.

They weren't very enthusiastic about it. And I applied while I was on this special detached service traveling around. By the time the papers got all the way up and came all the way back down again, I was off detached service. I was back with my regular unit. And our company commander at that point, not the man who had been company commander previously, a different man. This was Captain Deegan, who was okay. And Captain Deegan called me in and said, "What are you doing?" I told him what I had done and why. He says, "Absolute nonsense! This is disapproved." And that was the end of that.

KP: You think it was probably a good thing you did not make it, given your fear of heights?

FD: Never mind my fear of heights. Given the casualty rate among paratroopers, it was probably a very good thing. It was a ... stupid thing a nineteen year old did.

KP: Just to back up a second. You actually remembered your two captains, Captain ---, was he the former hardware store owner?

FD: I believe it was [a] hardware store, yes.

KP: Yes.

FD: He was a terrible man, terrible man. Really a terribly man in every way.

KP: Did he come in through the National Guard route?

FD: I think he was a National Guardsman. I'm not sure, but I believe he was National Guard.

KP: How much of your unit was National Guard? You'd mentioned you knew someone from his hometown?

FD: Most of them were not National Guard, they were draftees. Fairly early draftees, because I went into the unit in '43 and they'd already been in for a year and a half, two years. One man had been in the first group that were drafted. Oh, poor John was, well he spent six years in the army. By the time he got out, he was in the army from the time he was twenty-one 'til he was twenty-seven. You know, ... that's tough. But most of them were draftees and they were from Florida, North Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana. Amazing numbers of illiterates. I mean absolute total, not functional, total illiteracy. A fellow who had gone down to take his exam with me in East Orange was rejected because he couldn't read very well. I had a man in my unit named Charles L., from somewhere in North Carolina. And Charles L. didn't know how old he was. And he couldn't remember his serial number. I mean this wasn't borderline retarded, he was very retarded. He was very large and very strong. And very badly coordinated. So they used him to do all the heavy dirty work in the artillery ... section. When you have to take a cannon apart and you take the block out, there's a big heavy metal thing that has to be taken out. He was the one that took it out, and put it down, and picked it up, and put it back in again. You know, that sort of thing. Whenever we were inspected, he was put on some kind of duty, which would keep him

far away, where nobody could ask him a question like, "What's your serial number soldier?" 'Cause he couldn't answer it.

KP: How did he get through the war? Did he get through the war?

FD: Yeah, he got through the war. People sort of watched over him. But, we had ... a lot of people, who were ... at best semi-literate. We had one poor fellow who, it took a long time for me to get to meet him when I went into the unit, because he was in the stockade all the time. He had a beautiful young wife, who kept telling him, "Don't go back, don't leave me." So he would stay with her. And the MPs would come and haul him away and put him in the stockade. As soon as he got out of the stockade he was gone again. And he--they got him out of the stockade when we went overseas. The MPs brought him and put him in the unit and put him on the train and off we went. And I was the one who had to read the letter from his mother telling him that his wife was living with some other guy. We had one fellow, who was 34 years old and learned to read and write in the Philippines. We were over there at the end of the war and he decided it was time. And he by God learned to read and write. He learned to write his own letters home--34 years old.

KP: Did you teach anyone how to read and write?

FD: No. No, it was bad enough having to read some of the letters.

KP: In terms of just the grammar or writing style?

FD: No, in terms of telling, reading a letter to a guy and telling him that his wife, after he's gone to jail, I don't know how many times for her. The instant he got on the troop ship, she was gone with some other guy. And that was difficult. He was a nice guy. Not very smart, but a nice guy, you know.

ST: When did your unit travel to Europe?

FD: Oh, let's see. We left for Europe, oh it must have been September of '44--went to England. We were in England, chronology gets a little fuzzy after this many years.

KP: It was after D-Day, significantly after D-Day.

FD: Yes, yes, yeah, yes. Fortunately. We stayed in England for a couple of months and then went across the channel. And we were in a camp outside Rouen for about two weeks, where it never stopped raining, where I caught pneumonia. Then we climbed in our trucks and we went up ... through Belgium, just through Belgium, and then Holland, and then up into Germany, on the Dutch border, where I was in the hospital for pneumonia. And I was sitting in my bed one day and an infantry colonel came in with the medic in charge of the hospital. And the colonel said, "Okay, which ones?" And the medical officer said, "Bing, bing, bing." And then the colonel said, "Okay men, get your stuff. We're going." This was the Battle of the Bulge and they were pulling everybody who was ambulatory. And I still had pneumonia and a fever, they

figured they couldn't take me. But they got all these guys. Most of them were venereal disease patients. And they were hauled in the infantry. And when I got out of there, we were, we went up to a place called Pattensen, which was outside Hannover. We didn't go there directly, we went there, one of these things where it's, you know, you ride for a day and you stop at a town then you ride for a day and you stop in another town. And that was all weird because that was Patton's wild rush toward the end. And we didn't know where we were, we didn't have maps. We got into one town where we were supposed to stop, because what we did was leap frog. You know, an ordnance outfit, we were leap frogging with another unit. Fellows we had known before, as a matter of fact, at Camp McCoy. We would move up and then the next time, and as the line moved up, the front moved up, an ordnance company behind us would leap frog up. So you didn't have to pick up everybody and move 'em. Except that, that's fine if you know what you are doing. But we pulled into one town and somebody came out and said, "Hot water. Showers." Well 150 men were stark naked in about two minutes waiting for the showers. And then the mailman came up in his jeep and said there's an SS company in that town right down there that you can see. He had just gone to get orders from head, to pick up the mail [from] headquarters. Had gotten to this town and realized what was there, turned and got out again. A lot of that happened. And the company commander said, "Okay you have five minutes to be dressed and on the trucks. We're leaving." And we got out. We were in another town, where we were in what was supposed to be ... occupied, pacified town--small city really. And to our amazement, here came the infantry division. We were ahead of 'em.

KP: You mean you got to the town and then infantry came?

FD: We got to the town and then the infantry division came through. Now what had happened was that some infantry company or squad or something had gone through, dropped three or four fellows off and kept on going so that technically the front was ahead of us, but, you know, there were a couple of guys up there. And we were in that town, that was very strange because we were in ... the town, but there were German soldiers in the woods all around. And two or three of them would come in every day, ... we'd be working in the trucks, doing the repair work, and somebody would say, "Here comes one," and you look out and the guy'd be coming in like this with his rifle up in the air over his head. And they wouldn't surrender to us, they would only surrender to the infantrymen.

KP: Really, why?

FD: Don't know. I don't know. Which was fine with me. But, they would come in every day. There was a German military hospital in that town and I was supposed to walk guard across the street from it one night. And for some reason, I was assigned to walk guard with a bazooka, remember that thing I described before. I was walking guard with a bazooka and the other side of the street was a German guard with a loaded rifle. I don't know which of us was more frightened.

KP: So this is a German military hospital, being guarded by still an armed German?

FD: By an armed German.

KP: What was the logic behind that?

FD: I haven't a clue. I mean, I have no idea.

KP: I mean, it was a captured town too, so.

FD: I have no idea. I don't know why he was there. I know he was scared and so was I. And one night, we were awakened, because there were parachutes dropping. Just a couple, not many, just a couple of parachutes. And we all got out and jumped into our emergency defense positions. And I got down behind the machine gun I was supposed to be manning and so on. And we waited for a while and nothing happened. And they said, "Okay, well, double the guards. But everybody go on back to bed." We never did find out what that was. But every morning, our officers went over and counted the people in the German military hospital, the patients. Every morning there were more. German soldiers were coming in at night. And they were bandaging them up and putting them in bed and saying that they were wounded. It was very peculiar really, very strange. And we were working one day in that town, and somebody came running around and said, "Okay we're leaving. Pack everything up. You got a half an hour." Oh my God again, what now! Well it turned out that a German division had been trapped. This was going on a lot, you know ... I used to get newspapers from my parents, you know, they'd clip out the news of what was going on in our part of the world and sent it over. And I'd look at it and I'd think, "Oh man, that says, this is pacified." Uh-huh! There are 700 soldiers out there in the woods and we're in a pacified area. Okay, fine. But we were in a theoretically pacified area, but there were German divisions, kind of loose back there. And one division decided to make a run for it. And they came-- they were coming down the road, right over us. So as we were getting out of town, and there were civilians, God the poor people, going in every direction, walking into town, walking out of town. They didn't know what to do. And American tanks were coming in.

KP: To meet the division that was trying to break out?

FD: Yes. And what the German division did. Their commander for whatever reason, if he had just gone right straight ahead, he would have rolled over everybody in front of him, because he had practically nothing ahead of him. For some reason, he cut north and he ran smack dab into two American armored divisions and they just wiped him out. But things like this went on all the time. We had one of our trucks go out one day to do some repair work and they were told to take a particular route. And it was a big heavy wrecker truck. And they went along this road, there were a bunch of soldiers, along the side of the road, and they suddenly realized these were German soldiers. And there were two guys in the truck, the driver and the assistant driver, and they had a 50 caliber machine gun and a ring mount in the truck, you know. So you could stand up and shoot at things. And the assistant said, "What do I do? Do I shoot at them?" The driver said, "God no!" They just went right ahead, and went right through town.

Well, we were going one night in the rain, there was one two-day period, where we were loaded up and we were supposed to leap-frog up one town. And we didn't stop for two days and two nights, because we'd get to where we were supposed to go and then there was an MP that said,

"Keep on going." This was really when Patton was just rolling and nobody knew what was going on. ... We got to one intersection, in the woods, road intersection in a pouring rainstorm, with one American MP and a German soldier, drunk as an owl. And he said, "Please take this guy. He wants to surrender to me." We said, "What are we going to do?" And he said, "Look. The woods are full of 'em out there. If his friends get the idea that I'm keeping him here against his will, I'm ... dead. Please take him." So we said, "Okay, come on." And they sat him on the boom on the wrecker truck. And he rode the boom in the wrecker truck, singing, raining. That was the night we stopped to stretch our legs, take a ten minute break in a little town. We were standing, talking. And it was I suppose three o'clock in the morning, something like that. And a little old lady came out of a house and came over with a tray, with cookies and milk. She offered them to us and said something in German. And one of the fellows in the other truck was standing there and he said in German, "No mother, we're Americans." She went, "Ahhh!", dropped the tray and ran back in the house. It was ... not the way newspapers here presented it. It was so disorganized and confused, we had no idea what was going on. We just kept going and going and going.

KP: When you read a book about the Battle of Bulge it looks like a series of clear movements.

FD: Yeah. Well, this was after the Bulge. This was when it was ending. When ... basically Germany was getting ready to quit. But I know I was-- one more thing while I think of these things, one more thing. I was ... up at the Rhine, the day of the ... crossing of the Rhine. When they had massed-- we were supposed to go up and do some inspection work on a unit's weapons. And somehow, they had kept the crossing of the Rhine so secret that our company commander didn't know about it. Then we got up there and reported. And the company commander up there said, "Just stay back out of the way. Don't touch anything. Just stay back out of the way." They had everything that would shoot, that was bigger than a machine gun, lined up along the river. I've never seen or heard anything like it. It was a constant roar. They had tank destroyers they were using as heavy artillery. They had tanks they were using as artillery. They were just, as fast as they could load them and shoot them, they were going [off]. We went across there two days later, and it was flat, just flat. But they were-- the sky was full, literally, that's a, you know, an old cliché, metaphor, but the sky was absolutely full of airplanes, gliders, paratroop planes, bombers. It's unbelievable. Talk about a vision of hell. I think that was my first step toward becoming a pacifist.

KP: Really, seeing this mass of destruction.

FD: Just awful, just awful. And the destruction. And understanding why it was going on and that in a sense, I suppose it had to go on, because of what the other guys were doing. But it was ... awful.

KP: You mentioned you were not exactly in combat on your survey. But how close did you get to harm's way? I mean, it sounds you were sometimes in the thick of things.

FD: I got shot at. Not frequently. Closest was one day I was ... riding with the mailman. Well he had to go in, drop stuff off at headquarters and we were riding along and all of a sudden, there

was a sound of a bullet. You don't mistake it, you know what it sounds like. Now we all got to know what it sounded like, because we all had to work in the pits out on the firing range. And you can hear what the bullet sounds like when it goes over. And we heard it and Ham, the fellow driving, Hamilton said, "Oh oh!" And wham. And we took off out of there like a rocket. I said, "Does that happen very often?" He said, "Once in a while, yeah." That's a little unnerving. I never shot at anyone. I was in a number of situations where I could very easily have been shot or I could very easily have had to shoot at somebody. And it never quite worked out, for which I am very thankful. We were classified as a combat service support unit, which meant our primary function wasn't combat, but we could be called upon for that if need be. And we were in combat zones. There were, you know, occasionally a German plane would fly over, even at that late date, or something of that sort.

KP: Did you miss any combat? As a result of your hospital stay, was your unit in any combat that you missed, especially during the Battle of the Bulge?

FD: No, no. No, I was in the hospital. And my unit was not. ... They were up too far north.

KP: Really to be used.

FD: To be involved in that, yes. Fortunately. But, there's a kind of disorganization about the whole war, which simply astounds me. ... The theory of everybody in my unit was that we won because the Germans were even more disorganized than we were. Because, you wound up ... in strange places and strange situations. We had one man in my unit, whose name was John Martin, which wasn't his real name. John was an Austrian Jew. John was in his early forties and had volunteered. And called himself John Martin, because it wasn't going to do him any good to be caught by the Germans and use his real name. And I thought, a thoroughly nice man in every way. And John was ill and went to the hospital and our unit took off. And John didn't know where we were, but he just got up when he was better, got his clothes, and he didn't get his papers. He just took off out of the hospital and he found us. And he walked across a big chunk of Germany, but he found us. One of my closest friends fell and broke his nose one night, while under the influence of grain alcohol, I'm afraid. And so we took him to the hospital and they got him sobered up. And he said, "If they leave me here and you guys go away, we get separated, I'll find you and I'll get you all." We said, "Well, we promise, we'll get you, we'll get you." And while he was in the hospital and the unit was due to go, the three of us went to Captain Deegan and said, "We've got to go get Goldie. We promised him. We can't leave him there!" The captain said, "You've got half an hour." So we jumped in a jeep, went, signed him out, brought him back, and off we went. You develop a kind of intense family loyalty with people you wouldn't even know outside. These are people, I was thinking about this before on the way over ... [here]. My family, while I was in the army were people with whom I would never ever have come into contact. And they were people with whom I had then, let alone now, almost nothing in common. But, you never know when that guy's going to be watching your back. You better make sure he stays healthy, you know, even for an outfit where we didn't really expect to do much shooting.

KP: You were still in harm's way a lot.

FD: Yes, and you develop ... an intense relationship with people. And some of them are very strange people. Very strange.

KP: You mentioned the woman who came out with the milk and cookies. How much contact did you have with civilians, while you were doing all this leap-frogging and staying in towns?

FD: None, none, none. Well, a few of the more aggressively, erotomaniac people in my unit, trying to find a discreet way of putting this, managed to find compliant, local ladies. But while all this was going on, we had very little contacts with civilians. Once the war ended, we were outside Hannover, and the war in Europe ended. And we stayed there for, oh I don't know, another few weeks. There was an awful lot of activity going on out in the cornfields. A great deal. I don't know. Prostitution out of ... economic misery, frustration, because there hadn't been any men around for a long time. I don't know. And I don't get moralistic about it, because it's such a totally different kind of world, and such a totally different kind of life that I don't think you can make judgments about how people lived.

KP: It sounds like you and your unit were fortunate in not having had to walk a lot. You drove much of the time.

FD: Yes, we rode around a lot. We didn't do much walking.

KP: How were your basic needs met, for example, your rations and your other creature comforts. How was that compared to say your infantry line? You mentioned one day, you almost got a hot shower, but there were S.S. up the road.

FD: Yeah, but there weren't a lot of creature comforts. No, no. Showers tended to be cold. Food wasn't very good, K-rations and all that kind of stuff, and you know. Some of 'em weren't too bad.

KP: In a given week, how many hot meals would you get?

FD: We got hot meals most of the time. That is there were ... hot meals prepared by the cooks most of the time. Because we were usually in a relatively stable situation. We didn't spend all our time jumping around like that, it just seems, at this point, as though we did. But we got hot meals. Now the caliber of the meals wasn't always sensational. It got a lot worse when we got to the Philippines. But ...

KP: What I am most struck me about your army record is how you ended up in the Pacific. Very few people got to see both combat theaters.

FD: Yeah, I'm one of the lucky few.

KP: I mean a lot of people expected to go, but they were in the states or they were in Marseilles and then the war ended. But your unit actually made it over to the Pacific.

FD: Yes.

KP: How did that come about?

FD: ... I was discussing this with my military historian acquaintance recently. This is a gentleman I met, we were in France and we were with some friends who have a friend who's a retired general and military historian who spends his summers in Avignon. And we were in Aix and so we drove up to Avignon and had lunch with him. He and I were talking about this. And he claimed this only happened to two or three units. I don't know. I know that when the war ended we were sent down to a staging area outside Marseilles. And we were shipped from there to Manila. There was protest, obviously. The regulations stated that any unit which was classified as combat could not be trans-shipped without leave in the states. They got around that by simply removing the word combat. We were reclassified to a service support unit. So here we were a non-combat unit with two battle stars. So we were shipped over-- 40 days on board a tub.

KP: And you went through the Suez Canal?

FD: No, we went through the Panama Canal. We spent the Fourth of July locked below decks in the Panama Canal because somebody on board ship had done something to displease the captain. We did get to shore in Panama, under military police guard. We were taken to see a Walt Disney movie.

KP: What was the movie?

FD: It was a Donald Duck movie with that ... color thing with, about the Three ... Companeros and all that kind of stuff. On the way there, there were a bunch of German prisoners of war, not under guard, who were laughing hysterically at us, because we were under guard. One military policeman drove his motorcycle over one fellow's foot, because he stepped out of line. You know, I don't have very favorable memories of the army, generally the army's attitude toward ... soldiers. So, well, we weren't terribly happy about the business. And then we got to Manila and we were sent down to a place called Batangas and stayed there until the war ended.

KP: You had been fighting for a good part of winter.

FD: Well, I don't know about fighting, but we were sure cold.

KP: Yeah. I mean you really were in frigid climate.

FD: It was cold. England was cold. That was the worst winter they had in England for years and years and years. It was ... just brutal. And we spent, I guess two weeks in Rouen, waiting to be shipped somewhere. It didn't stop raining for two weeks. I caught pneumonia. We were ... freezing. ... It was really, really very bad.

KP: And then you get sent to a tropical climate.

FD: Yes, where I caught a little dysentery. But you know.

KP: It sounds like an obvious point, but did they issue you new clothing and so forth?

FD: Yes, they took the heavy stuff away and gave us light stuff.

KP: At least, the army did that right.

FD: Yes, they did that right. They also pulled one nifty little thing. We got there and we were being given quinine to impede the onset of malaria. Except that there was a shortage of quinine, it turned out what we were getting was atabrine. And atabrine is very interesting. It defers the onset of malaria, it doesn't prevent it. So we discovered that we were being given something that would keep us from getting malaria until we got home. So we stopped taking the atabrine. And the base commander discovered this and a ruling came down from on high that at each meal the cook was to see it that each man received and swallowed an atabrine tablet. Catch 22, I'm telling you. All those movies about the army are absolutely true.

KP: How did you see the war as different in the Philippines and the Pacific versus Europe? Do you have any observations? Because, it must have seemed like a very different war, or maybe it didn't?

FD: ... It was a very different war, in that we had a lot more contact with the Japanese, because the war was far enough along at that point that there were Japanese prisoners of war all over the place. There were also, in our area, there was still a lot of fighting going on in other areas not far away. There were a lot of unpacified, shall we say, Japanese out in the woods. There were unpacified Japanese on little islands for 30 years, you know. And one day, for example, I was standing in line and there was ... an Oriental gentleman, in U.S. Army fatigues standing in front of me. And I, at that point in my life and probably still, could not really distinguish Filipinos from Japanese very readily. I'm sure that this can be done very simply, but I wasn't functioning in those terms there. And this Filipino soldier was in front of me until one of the Filipino workers who worked for us came up and said, "Jap." So I tapped him on his shoulder and said, "You Jap?" He said, "Me Jap," which was about the English most of them had. And I yelled MP and they came and took him away. But this kind of thing happened fairly regularly. My own experience of the war was different in the Philippines in that I had a lot of contact with the Japanese. Because ... by that time I had gotten to be a tech-sergeant and I was in charge of a big dump of supplies. The war was cranking down and they were bringing in material, you know, in shiploads. It wasn't needed. And so these enormous crates of stuff were being brought up to this huge empty field, dumped there. And my guys had the responsibility of opening up the crates, making sure that what was in there was what was on the bill of lading. If they were weapons, they had to have all the--what they called the cosmoline, which is a very thick grease--have all that stuff cleaned up, taken off, the weapons inspected, recosmolined. I mean it's just ... make work, you know, it's busy work. Recosmoline and put it back in the crates and close them up.

Well we had a lot of Japanese prisoners of war, doing this, you know working for us. And one of them was very clearly not just an ordinary soldier. He was an older man with a beard. And there was extraordinary deference to him. And whenever-- and I deliberately did this on several occasions, just to test it. I deliberately pointed at him and told him to do something. And one of the others would always jump over him and do it. He was very clearly an officer, probably a high ranking officer. I didn't do anything about it, because I thought this is not my business at this point in time. One of them was a staff sergeant in the Japanese army. And when this job started I was a corporal. And it just ground him that he had to take orders from a corporal. He knew enough about our system that he knew I was a corporal and he outranked me by a couple of ranks. And it just bothered him terribly. And he did what I told him to do, but he did it slowly, reluctantly, and half-heartedly. Then I was promoted to staff sergeant and suddenly we were equals. But he acted like he was my buddy, like we'd gone to high school together or something. Very strange. And a week later I was promoted to tech sergeant. They decided to get our table of organization up to standard or something, so I was promoted again. Suddenly I outranked him. Well, he didn't quite shine my shoes. But at that point, I smoked a lot and every time I took a cigarette out, he was there with a match. It was amazing. It was like having my own servant. I was very, very taken by this kind of, or very shocked really by this kind of ... rank consciousness.

KP: A real hierarchy.

FD: Oh, yes. And we knew that the non-coms in the Japanese army, for example, were allowed to beat and hit privates and things of this sort. And that officers were allowed to do this to non-coms. But to observe this kind of hierarchial sense going on, very strange, very strange.

KP: Because one of the things that's common after interviewing you and others is how the American G.I.s really did not like hierarchy.

FD: No, no, no. Well you got a heavy dose of hierarchy.

KP: I mean you got a heavy dose, but there was often a lot of resistance.

FD: Oh yes. A lot of-- well, yes.

KP: Resistance often not when it counted it when you were in the battle zones, but often behind it.

FD: No, well. I was never in a situation where I had to defend an officer's life or he had to defend mine. I think if push had come to shove, I would have done that, certainly. But just under ordinary living circumstances, I resented the kind of unnecessary, not mistreatment or abuse, but arrogance, shall we say. At one point, when I was tech-sergeant, I was twenty years old. I was a technical sergeant, I had been in the army for two and a half years. I had a squad of about a dozen or fifteen men working for me, directly under me. I had, I don't know how many Japanese prisoners of war working for me and I was personally signed out for millions of dollars of material out on the field, you know. If anybody [had] stolen that stuff, I would've been in the

army for the rest of my life, trying to pay it off. And we got a new platoon lieutenant. 'Cause what had happened was, that the people who had been in the unit originally had a little more service time and they were being sent home. Those of us who had come in later had to wait. So my platoon lieutenant went and I got a new ... platoon lieutenant who was brought in. And I was called over to headquarters and introduced to my new platoon officer, who was fresh out of Officer's Training School, who may have been 19, if that. And who was very impressed with his own importance. And (laughter) the first sergeant who was a friend of mine, said, "Would you show lieutenant", whatever his name was, I can't remember, "to his quarters, Frank?" [I] said, "Okay." [I] said, "It's over here sir." And he said, "Get my bags sergeant." And I thought we are not going to get along. So I picked up his bags, went over, and I showed him his quarters and I threw his bags in the middle of the floor and said, "Here you are, sir." And I walked out. And I spent the rest of my time, I was only there another three weeks I guess, maybe something like that. I spent my remaining time there, in my jeep, doing things that had to be done, running errands. Most of which were totally necessary, because you can't open crates and close them again, if you haven't got claw hammers. We didn't have any claw hammers. I spent two whole days driving around that base, tracking claw-hammers down, 'til I finally found them. But also, you know, overseeing what was being done by the guys and when I saw the lieutenant's jeep coming, as it came around one end of the big tent, I went out the other end and waved bye lieutenant got an errand, you know. I didn't want anything to do with him, who needed that nonsense. Yeah, we didn't have a lot of liking for that kind of hierarchical structure.

KP: In the Philippines, you mentioned you had contact with all these Japanese prisoners of war. Did they fit the image you had of the Japanese? At the time, Americans had placed very sinister, connotations on the Japanese, viewing them as almost sub-human? And here you are really up close with them and to the point of supervising them.

FD: I did not understand them. They just did things that I did not understand. They were clearly coming out of a cultural context that was completely alien to me. And I didn't think the Japanese were sub-human. Because I knew enough about the 447th or the 448th, or whatever it was, tank battalion and the Nisei, and so on to have a lot of respect for these people. These were first class fighting men, they were also apparently first class people. So I didn't have a problem with that. I had a problem with the Japanese army against which we were fighting, because they had done things that were very unpleasant to say the least. And my reaction to them was that I did not understand their behavior. This sergeant, for example, and the way he reacted. In fact, one day I was out in the field and there were Japanese prisoners of war all over the place and there were guys, you know, armed American soldiers to make sure there was no problem and not all of these PWs worked for me, they had a lot of different people out there. And one of them suddenly just got up and started to walk away. And he just walked off the field and one of the guards called to him to halt. And the fellow kept going and the guard fired over his head and he broke into a trot. And the guard killed him, he had absolutely no option. This is what he had been ordered to do. I'm glad I wasn't that guard, I'd have had a lot of trouble with that. But this is a man who knew what was going to happen to him, he absolutely knew what was going to happen. But for whatever reason, he just decided to do it that way. Maybe there were personal reasons, and maybe this was cultural, I don't know. But they had a lot of, the Japanese had a lot of trouble with that sort of thing. And I've been reading things in the paper just recently, oh this whole

business of the Japanese organizing the housewives and civilian women into prostitution battalions, because these ravaging American soldiers were going to come in and things of that sort. The American army was not composed of angels, but it wasn't quite like that. And the Japanese government's real unwillingness to acknowledge that any of these unpleasant things ever happened. That's the feeling I had when I was dealing with Japanese prisoners of war. We were coming from such totally different places that we really weren't going to understand each other.

KP: Do you have any regrets that you did not go to Japan as part of the occupation?

FD: No, I was ready to come home. My brother went. He did it for our family.

KP: Where were you when the atomic bomb was dropped? Where you on the Philippines?

FD: I was in the Philippines, yes.

KP: And how, what were the reaction of you and your men in the unit? Did you expect to be part of the invasion of Japan or were going to remain in the Philippines?

FD: Oh, we expected if there was an invasion, we were going to be involved in it, if the war didn't end first, yes. By that point we'd all been in so long, that we really didn't know if we were ever going to get out. 33 months doesn't sound like that long a time, but when ... that's in the army, that's a long, long time. And when you've got five years, like some of the fellows in my unit, I think they ... anticipated spending much of the rest of their lives in the army, at least, psychologically, you felt that way, you know. So we were all sitting around saying, "God. Just to go home, get out of this." And then we heard about the atomic bomb. And I don't recall there being any moralistic discussion about whether we should have dropped it or not. The reaction was, we've got to put a stop to this, we've got to ... end this. And there was this, as I recall, a considerable approval of what President Truman decided to do. With hindsight, whether that was the best possible decision, I don't know. I'm glad I never had to make it. What a lot of people don't know is that the invasion was already in training.

KP: Yes, that has been the general sense I have gotten from the interviews.

FD: It was getting to go, yeah. ... One of my closest friend[s] was in the invasion force. And he was in a reconnaissance troop, those were the guys who go ahead of the infantry, you know. And he was charge of quarters for his unit one night, and the company commander had inadvertently left the estimated casualties for the first wave, which they would have been in. And the estimated casualties for his unit in the first 24 hours was 700 percent. That means that as fast as you funnel them in there, they're going to shoot them. So I, from everything I have heard about it and I'm not a military historian, for everything I have heard about the invasion would have been such a horrendously difficult task that the number of people killed would just have been appalling. That doesn't mean that I'm very happy about atomic bombs.

KP: You mentioned that you became a pacifist partly out of your World War II experience.

FD: Well, ... I'm a semi-pacifist, I guess. I don't believe in violence. I like football, but that's as far as I want to go. I'm very unhappy about war and I've gotten to a point where I don't comprehend people who think war is a feasible option, Malisovich, and people of that sort strike me as being on some sort of other planet somewhere. At the same time, I don't come right out and condemn President's Clinton's suggestion that perhaps we might have to do something in Bosnia. My personal feeling is that it's a waste of time and effort, because they've been doing that in Bosnia for at least a thousand years. That part of the world ... is apparently clinically unable to deal with the notion of difference. But, you know, I'm a pacifist who worries about things like that.

KP: How did you feel about Korea and Vietnam? Both at the time and even now looking back retrospectively?

FD: I didn't have strong feeling about Korea that I can recall, although I couldn't help wondering why we were there. It didn't seem to me, to be a really sensible thing to be doing. I don't recall how quickly I became totally opposed to Vietnam, but it was very rapid.

KP: Rutgers became quite a center of debate over Vietnam and this is also part of the reason I have asked you about.

FD: Oh yes.

KP: Bill Bauer who was in ceramics and who was a bit of a hawk has reminded me about the history department and Vietnam.

FD: Well, ... he's in ceramics. I think you could have found a dividing line somewhere around the Ceramics Department. Everybody who was hard science was pro-war, everybody who was on the other side of that line was anti-war. It was very peculiar.

KP: Really, hard scientists supported the war.

FD: Yes, the hard scientists tended to be much more hawkish. Whenever we had ... those horrible faculty meetings, it was scientists against non-scientists. It was very strange. But very early on, ... I decided the Vietnam War was absolutely absurd, that we ... were fighting on the side ... of tyrants and crooks. That doesn't mean the guys in the other side were any better. But, I just didn't think we should have been there. And I had two sons. And we sat down and talked all this over. And both boys said they would not go to Vietnam. And Helen and I said, "Fine. That's your decision and we support it totally. And if you go to Canada, ... we will do everything we can to help you." And Bob said, "I will go to Canada ... if they decide to draft me." We said, "Okay, fine." Well he got a student deferment and I thought, "Fine, that's all right with me." Student deferments from one point of view are quite possibly improper, but I'm not going to conduct warfare about that. And then when Nick got to the appropriate age, and we said the same thing to him. He said, "No I won't run. I'll go to jail, but I won't run." I said, "Okay, it's your decision." Well, fortunately things ended and he didn't have to go. He didn't have to make that decision. But I don't know, I think it's just that the army struck me as being so chaotic and

disorganized and somehow the whole experience was so unnecessary in human terms. That I just don't see war ... as a viable alternative. I don't understand people who do, I really don't.

KP: When did you finally get to leave the Philippines? You were discharged at Fort Dix and it must have been a strange homecoming.

FD: ... Yes, it took us, I don't know, I think about a week ... to get out of the Philippines to get home. Well, let's see. I was discharged, as I recall, on the 12th of February, which was a week after my 21st birthday. Good lord. And I was at Fort Dix for a couple of days, several days, I can't remember exactly. It took them forever to process the paperwork. And it took us, I suppose a week or so to ... get home on the troop ship. But I'll tell you, that was a nice feeling arriving in New York Harbor. And there were boats out there and tugs tooting whistles and what I didn't realize was that my mother and my aunt were on a boat that was right there. They'd come out to see our boat come in. That was a nice feeling to get there.

KP: So you really did have the welcome home?

FD: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, there were a lot of boats out in the harbor, waving and tooting horns, and all that kind of stuff. It was nice.

KP: This is a standard question and I think I know the answer, but had you given any thought to staying in the military?

FD: Let me tell you precisely what happened, okay? ... My military historian friend got very exercised when I told this to him, because he claims that: "It never could happen!" The base commander out at Batangas, decreed that everybody had to sign a written, witnessed statement as to his reasons for not re-enlisting. Because they were offering all kinds of things, you know, to get people to re-enlist, because they needed people for the army of occupation and so on. Well, the conditions for signing the statement, were that it had to be witnessed by an officer of your unit and disliking the service was not an acceptable reason. Okay. I mean, talk about hierarchy and tyranny. So I went in and my platoon lieutenant was the officer and he said, "Okay sergeant, why aren't you re-enlisting?" And I said, "Sir, I could stand here and tell you things all day long, but I hate the damn army and I can't wait to get home". And he said, "Okay," and he wrote down family responsibilities. I was barely, I wasn't even 21 at that point. I wasn't sending any money home on an allotment. I wasn't married. Family responsibilities, I signed it, he witnessed it, I mean, you know. That's why I didn't re-enlist, because I couldn't stand that kind of, I don't know, of absolute lack of comprehension on the part of people on high as to what it was like to be somebody not on high.

You know, ... all these things, **Catch Twenty-Two** and **M.A.S.H.**, they're true, they're true. There was a baseball league in the Pacific, when the war ended. There was a team in Luzon and there was a team in some place else, and ... there were teams that were at these bases. And the base commanders' egos were all caught up in these things. There were a lot of professional, major-league baseball players playing on these teams, okay? Well, came time for the playoffs, for the championship, and one of the teams that had been defeated, you know, that wasn't in the

playoffs had several very good major league baseball players on it. They mysteriously were transferred to one of the other bases, and played on that team and that team won. Does that sound like **M.A.S.H.**? I don't know who wrote **M.A.S.H.**, but I think he must have been in the army. It was just bizarre. I think back with real affection about some of the people I knew in the army. I have never for one instant regretted that I got out, not once.

KP: Did you ever meet any of the people after you got home? Did you ever go to any of the reunions?

FD: We never had any reunions. I met two of them, totally by chance. One day I was driving along, going back when we lived in Raritan Gardens, when I was a student here and I saw a fellow who had been in my unit. And I picked him up and drove him to South River, where he lived, but he was never a friend of mine, particularly. And one day at a football game, I bumped into a guy who had been a good friend of mine, a fellow who had been my first sergeant there at the end, and who later became fire chief in Newark and fire chief up at Cambridge. But no, it ended somehow, and I think it ended, I think we all wanted it that way. We exchanged, a couple of us exchanged Christmas cards for a few years, but that was about it. I think we wanted it to be over. You had to get on with your life. It was a totally different kind of life. You know, I came back and went to college.

KP: Yes. On another day, after we transcribe this interview, I would like to do a follow-up interview on your Rutgers years, because you were here for a while. But I guess this is good place to end given your appointment.

FD: Okay, fine fine. I better go. ...

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

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