RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH CLIFFORD ELLING

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVEW OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Clifford L. Elling on November 12, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and Eve Snyder. I guess I'd like to begin with asking you a few questions about your father. You listed on the pre-interview survey that your father was of German descent.

Clifford Elling: Right.

KP: How far back does your family go on your father's side in the United States?

CE: To his parents. My grandparents emigrated from Germany to the U.S. on both sides of the family. Three of the four of them, the decade after the Civil War. And the fourth one had come over earlier in the 1840s. But, originally, all four of them came from Germany.

KP: Did your father speak any German?

CE: … Very little. Ungrammatical. Just what he remembered from around the house as a child. But he had some curious phrases and mannerisms that he used half seriously and half as jokes. It was not what you would call a true German culture at home though.

KP: What about your mother? What was her background?

CE: Her parents came from Germany. Her father was from the Munich area and her mother was from a village outside of Ulm, which is near Stuttgart in Wurttemberg now part of Baden-Wurttemberg, which is not all that far from Munich. Curiously enough, I do not know if they were married in Germany and then came here, or if they met in Philadelphia and married there. My mother's father was a baker and he had a bake shop in what is now called "The Jungle," … North Philadelphia, 30th and Lehigh. And it is the kind of neighborhood where you do not want to stop for a red light. If you're in the middle of the block and you see a red light, you instinctively slow down to give it a chance to turn green before you reach the intersection because it's dangerous to be sitting in a stopped car.

KP: So you mentioned you did not know how your parents met whether…

CE: No. Both of my, three of my four grandparents were dead before I was born. I only remember my paternal grandmother, and she died at the age of four. My age of four. So grandparents are not a real factor in my life. Except I'm busy being one now.

KP: Do you know what brought your father's family to Somerville?

CE: I know he got his first papers in Stroudsburg, so he was up in Northeastern Pennsylvania. And he came … I do not know exactly why or when he came to Somerville. I suspect it was in the early 1880s, because my father's oldest sister was born around 1881, I think. So he was already settled in Somerville, and had married. It could have been late 1870s. He came over during the Franco-Prussian War to escape military service, which was rather common in those days. Military service had some frightening connotations in central Europe that it has since lost.

There's connotations of slavery involved. And he went to Marseilles in 1870 or 71, which was probably a rather difficult thing for a German to do, and sailed on ship, I think to Philadelphia as a ships carpenter.

KP: Was your, … your father was a plumber and a plumbing contractor…

CE: That's right.

KP: Was your grandfather also a plumber?

CE: No, he was not. He was a jack-of-all-trades, again typical of immigrants in this country. He had a little farm about twelve acres. He raised his nine children on it. Mostly they lived on turnips all winter long. I remember my father saying when I was a child that he couldn't look a turnip in the face because that was all they had to eat in the winter when they had bad weather. But he worked on the county road crew, he worked on the farm, he did carpenter jobs and he wove rugs and sold them. So he did a little bit of everything he could to bring in money. With nine children, you could imagine that was quite a struggle.

KP: How did your father mind the profession of being a plumber?

CE: Served an apprenticeship. Went to work as a young … he had to leave school as a high school freshman, which was very typical in those days to help support the family. The girls could finish high school, but, the boys had to go out and bring in money. My father and his twin brother, and their older brother, all had no more than nine years of schooling. The girls became … entered careers like nursing, and teaching. They had more of an opportunity to finish high school. They had twelve years of schooling. Incidentally, curiously enough, Paul Robeson, of course, a few decades afterwards grew up in Somerville also and through his own determination and with the help of his family he was able to finish high school and college. And I often think what people talk about abused minorities that, in the experience of the time, over the years, it was not the minorities who suffered as much as the white people, in so far as lost opportunities were concerned. Maybe it was his own particular genius, contributed to it, but, Paul made out considerably better than any of the men in my fathers family. And many other men in Somerville, in that era. It wasn't really until the 1930s just before World War II that it became common for everybody to graduate from high school. I'm sure you know this from your records, I'm not telling you anything.

KP: Your father served in the National Guard …

CE: That's right, with Pershing.

KP: and he was a part of the Mexican Expedition.

CE: Chasing Villa. Villa, I guess, you'd say in Spanish.

KP: What did he ever say about his experiences?

CE: Oh, just dust and dirt. And army routine. They never saw him. It was a very frustrating campaign. They always arrived … Villa would raid a town and he's shoot it up and burn a few buildings and rob the bank and disappear with his men into the hills. And Pershing's column would come along two or three days later and there was nobody there and nothing would happen. And this was typical of that campaign. The triggering incident was Villa had raided across the border into New Mexico and shot up and burned the town of Columbus, which is down, below Las Cruces, west of El Paso on the Mexican border. I've never been there, but, I know where it is on a map. And uh, Wilson's response was to mobilize the National Guard, and send them off into the hills, facing now what you'd call the "Mexican Bandits," who were really revolutionaries and bandits, both.

KP: How long was your father in the National Guard for? Did he stay in the National Guard …

CE: I don't know when he enlisted, but, at the end of that campaign, he was honorably discharged. And WWI was already imminently on the horizon or had already started. But he had completed his service so he went to Philadelphia and got a job in the shipyards. In the old Hog Isle shipyard, which was right along side of the Philadelphia naval base. By this time he was a journeyman, a skilled plumber and steam fitter. And steam fitters were in great demand. He worked personally, on all the old battleships constructed at the time, the *Pennsylvania*, the *Arizona*, the *Utah*, the *Nevada*. On Pearl Harbor night, when they had all the news reels and pictures of the ships burning and sinking and keeling over he cried because they were all his personal babies. He knew each and every one of those old, uh battleships from the inside out.

KP: How long did he stay at the shipyard?

CE: Well, about three years. 'Til around 1921. It was in Philadelphia, of course that he met my mother. She was a Philadelphia girl. And 1921 he came back to Somerville, where he had been born and raised, and started the plumbing business. Few months later, his twin brother joined him and they were married the next year, 1922.

KP: And what did your … what type of business did your father … did your father go out in Somerville and start his own business, or did he work for someone?

CE: I'm not, I'm sorry. I don't follow the gist of your question.

KP: Did your father work for someone in Somerville, or did he start his own business?

CE: No, it was his own business. He had worked for others while he was learning the trade. First he had worked in a shop in Somerville, then he came down to New Brunswick as a journeyman and worked with a contractor named George McVey, who had a shop on Albany Street, on the hill where J&J World Headquarters is now. And it was at that time that he joined the National Guard, and of course it was from that job he was called for duty in New Mexico. And then after the shipyard experience, after the war ended, he transferred to the shipyards in

Camden, for a year or so. The navy yard had already stopped building ships and he worked in Camden on merchant ships, and then came back to Somerville in 1921.

KP: So your father during the war, WWI, was working on navy ships.

CE: Yeah, yes.

KP: As of … being in … when he came back to Somerville he had his own business. How successful was his business?

CE: It was immediately successful because part of his calculation and planning, which he knew, and only a local boy would have known, is that there were very few plumbers at the time in Somerville. The town was [a] growing county seat and the population was already up around six thousand people. The one or two plumbing shops that preexisted were run by elderly gentleman, who wanted to ease off, and were already semi-retired anyway. So, he sensed a void there. And even with a ninth grade education, he was astute enough to seize, recognize and seize an opportunity.

KP: How many … Did your father employ anyone in his business?

CE: Yes he did.

KP: How big did his business become?

CE: By the time World War II, which is when I first really became familiar with it, it was employing about forty to fifty people. So I would say given his educational background and given the fact that while in the twenties helped him off to a good start, and in the thirties it was all he could do to survive. He was a successful business man. He did seize the initial opportunity. He did grow and expand when the opportunity was there. He did survive the hard times.

KP: Your father sounds remarkably successful in the thirties when it was much more … in the twenties it was much easier to be successful.

CE: It was. Everybody could make money. In the thirties, there were years where we only had meat on the table like two or three times a week. But, of course, there were many families that who didn't have that.

KP: What made your father so successful in such a difficult period in the 1930s? Do you have any …

CE: Prudence, caution, working ten or twelve hours a day, six days a week. Trying to avoid … at the start of the Depression he got stuck with a number of major bad accounts. You know companies that were putting up new buildings and went bankrupt in the process. And, of course the contractors were sitting there with a claim on a half -finished building. So they had to bank

more money into it, in order to finish it off and get any money whatsoever out of it. They operated as a group corporation. An apartment house and hotel restaurant facility all the way through the thirties. And in '38, '39, they considered themselves very fortunate to break even and recover their original investment from 1929, 1930 period. Then, of course, a few years later with the war years, these facilities boomed and if they'd held onto them rather than sell them, they would have made fortunes. But nobody has a crystal ball that works that good. In 1938 it was a little hard to see, you know, what the future held.

KP: You grew up in Somerville.

CE: Yes, I did.

KP: You had no brothers and sisters.

CE: Right. Only child.

KP: What was it like to be an only child?

CE: Not having any comparisons, it's a little hard to say. I never experienced any feeling of deprivation or loneliness. To me it was just a normal childhood.

KP: It strikes me as it's so different, from particularly your father's family where he was one of nine.

CE: He was one of nine. My mother was one of three. But on the other hand, in the twenties, the one child family was rather common. Those things go in cycles, and there was an era right after WWI where families shrank dramatically, and it wasn't until after World War II in the fifties, that the big family came back in style again.

KP: What did you do for fun growing up in Somerville?

CE: Well, I particularly remember… we lived on the edge of town, out near what is now Route 22, which did not even exist as a cow path until after 1934. In fact, I remember when it was originally laid down. The cement mixers going through after the grading crew. On summer evenings, when there was a lot of daylight, all the kids in the neighborhood would go up and have a wonderful time crawling all over the equipment. The scrapers, the graders, the steamrollers, which were really steamrollers in those days. You know, they didn't have diesel equipment yet. Steamrollers, some of them were operating on gasoline, but, a lot of them were still operation[al] on steam. And we'd climb all over them. We weren't big enough to shift the gears or do any real damage, but, it's the kind of thing you remember. You know, it's fun. We also had a brook right behind the house, which we would swim in, fish in, catch sunnies, catfish, build dams endlessly. Being the son of a plumber, who had a construction shop, with all sorts of tools and equipment was a big plus as we grew up. We could always borrow shovels and saws, and hammers and every season we'd go out and build dams and tree houses and what have you. One year we even succeeded in rerouting the brook for a stretch of about three hundred yards.

There was a big loop that had formed in a swampy stretch and we built a dam across the inlet of the loop and opened up what had been an old previous channel. Cutting straight across the base of the loop and rerouting the brook and then proudly went down and told the borough engineer that his maps were no good. They didn't show the brook as it actually was, but, he didn't appreciate it, in the least.

KP: Did you go to the movies at all when you were growing up?

CE: We surely did, all over the place. Court Theater in Somerville was locally known as "The Itch," because if you scrunch down in your seat so that your view of the screen was obstructed by the back of the seat in front of you, you could see the cockroaches crawling back and forth in and out of the upholstery. Down here in Highland Park, out on Raritan Avenue, there was a theater, I think it was, they called it "The Jersey," and they had on weekday afternoons, they had triple features for 8 cents.

KP: So, it sounds like you went to some triple features.

CE: Yep, we enjoyed them all.

KP: How active were your parents in the church?

CE: They, my, they were both active. Not extremely so, they were not Sunday school teachers, but, my father, it was a Reformed church. The one that is now part of the courthouse complex in Somerville, the First Reformed Church, which is since merged with the Second, and now is known as the United Reformed. But it was the original church in Somerset County. Its original location was in Finderne, and that building was burned in '79, 1779, by Simcoe's Raiders operating out of New Brunswick, the same time they burned the old, original courthouse at Millstone, Somerset Courthouse. Somerset County is the only location in New Jersey where you get an automatic judicial exception for the first on ninety-five years of the county's history because all the courthouse records were burned, they don't exist. So that when you're tracing deeds back, you only have to go to 1779, even though the county was established in 1684. It was split off from Middlesex. Why that would have been under King Charles II, New York, that was at of course (New York, New Jersey, that year?). And the preamble to the charter states that uh the reason for creating a county was because the farmers in the upper regions of the Raritan manure their fields in a different fashion, from those in the Middlesex area, Perth Amboy and New Brunswick. So that is the reason behind the Somerset County's charter. It states it right there in the preamble.

KP: Were you involved in any clubs? Were you a Boy Scout growing up?

CE: Yes, I was a Boy Scout briefly. It did not catch, you know, I wasn't that captivated by it. I enjoyed Sunday school, I was a Boy Scout. I really became an active joiner my high school years. I was on the debating squad, in the band. I was never an athlete because I was so poorly coordinated. I had rheumatic fever, at the age of six, which of course is the background of my curious army service; limited service.

KP: Yeah, we were going to get to that.

CE: Sure, but, it also influenced my early life, in that I couldn't exercise and grow up in a normal sense. You know, learning to throw a ball. Most people learn at the age of eight or nine, and if you can't do it until your thirteen or fourteen, you're so lousy at it, that you're going to turn your back on it and pursue other pursuits where you can compete equally, uh which I think was my instinctive reaction. I wasn't going to waste my time being a laughing stock. So I started off in those areas, music, debating, high school dramatic, uh where everybody was starting from scratch at the age of say, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, rather than trying to catch up from what I'd missed at the ages of six, seven, and eight. There wasn't thought or spoken out, but, in retrospect, as I look back and when I think that was probably my reasoning.

KP: … Do you have any teachers that stick in your mind from high school or elementary school?

CE: I remember them, well, all the way back to kindergarten. I loved my teachers, I enjoyed school, and I was good at it. I was Phi Beta Kappa here at Rutgers, and to me, school was a pleasure. And yes, I remember practically every teacher I ever had.

KP: … Were any particularly good that you remember or very influential in you …

CE: Here at Rutgers …

KP: … Or actually in high school or …

CE: Oh, at high school, yes. I remember good teachers in every field, particularly in history. My third year history, um, Modern European History, … geometry and algebra teachers, I remember them. Latin and French, English, particularly fourth year English. I remember a teacher named, Miss Cranston because she not only taught fourth year English, but, she, uh, was a faculty advisor to the school newspaper. I was the, I wasn't the editor in chief, I was the second in command. I was the managing editor they call it. And I had a course called Journalistic English, which in retrospect was a wonderful course because it taught you the basic fact, you know that the first, paragraph should contain all the basics of the story and everything that comes after that is detail. You start off with the facts.

KP: Did you know very early that you were going to college because you father had repeated …

CE: Yes, I expected. My father had not finished high school, but, he wanted me to go to college, my mother did also, and I wanted to go to college. So, it was pretty much accepted, all the way through school that I would be going to college.

KP: And, because you were in college prep, uh, in college prep in high school.

CE: Yes, I was. In high school, yes, I was in college prep course. That's why I had the, uh, foreign languages. If I'd been in the general course, that would have not been a factor in my background, the Latin and the French.

KP: I'm curious, your mother worked for a time for the Pennsylvania State Board of Censors …

CE: Censors …

KP: … Before she married …

CE: … Married my father, yeah.

KP: … How long had she been with the Board of Censors?

CE: I don't really know, um, but, she used to reminisce about seeing the old movies. See part of their job, as the name implies, was to review films, and license them for display in Pennsylvania. This was back before the Supreme Court, got interested in, various basic, various basic Bill of Rights factors. And, a lot of states, Pennsylvania wasn't alone. Massachusetts, I think was the last hold out in that field. Massachusetts was famous for their censorship both books and films. But, at, in the by the year of the first World War, I think it was rather common in, many of the major states.

KP: What did she say about the movies she saw, her experiences?

CE: Well , just that she remembered the famous names, chiefly. People like, Gloria Swanson, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., film like "The Perils of Pauline," you know, "Robbing the Banks," the old western, "Let's Head Them Off at the Pass," …

KP: Did she ever talk about movies ….?

CE: "Birth of a Nation,"….

KP: Okay …

CE: D. W. Griffith. That was one that really stuck in her memory.

KP: Did she ever remember seeing movies and then having to censor or saying this talks …

CE: If she did, she didn't discuss it in that vein. She talked about the movies and the people, not so much about the results of the work. She, of course, was a clerk-stenographer, so that she was not taking part in the discussion or debate on the censorship …

KP: uh huh.

CE: … Per se. She was there doing office work as a teenager.

KP: Did you mother ever work again outside of the household when you were growing up?

CE: Yes, during World War II, she went back to work …

KP: Where did she …

CE: She went to work at my father's office, which at the time was a one-girl office. She handled the telephone, the typing, the filing, the bookkeeping and the payroll. The payroll was a new experience for her at that time. And it was in the construction trade's tradition, it was a cash payroll, no pay by check. In fact, we didn't really have pay by check until the mid-sixties because of union, resistance on the subject. The unions were afraid that they'd be stuck by bankrupt contractors. Contracting is a good deal, like running restaurants, in that it's a risky business. And the companies come and go very easily, and every year there's a number of bankruptcies. In fact, I have, not myself, I was active thirty years in my State Trade Association and by the time I retired and gave up all my committees, I would say not one in ten companies that was an active, contractor at the time I started was still in business.

KP: So the …

CE: So the turnover continues. It's a very risky business. Lump sum, competitive bidding, is the norm, and what you're doing is you're making a commitment that you can do a job that's described only by plan and specification for X dollars.

KP: And sometimes you can't …

CE: And some times things go wrong.

Eve Snyder: Did you work in your father's office when you were young or did you just borrow his tools?

CE: I started off when I was in high school. My first job was sweeping and cleaning then I progressed to taking inventory. And from there to loading and unloading trucks, putting away tools and material. And I did not really do any office work until after I finished school. This school, meaning college after World War II.

KP: Your parents were Republicans in many ways a very Democratic era.

CE: Yes.

KP: What did your father and your mother think of the New Deal.

CE: Somerset County was solidly Republican at that time, as it is today. I think the only time the Democrats ever carried … Hoover carried it in '32. What does that tell you? The only time the Democrats ever carried it was in '36. The famous race when Roosevelt beat Landon, and Landon

carried only two states, Maine and Vermont. There used to be an old saying in pre-pollster days, "as Maine goes, so goes the nation." Because in Republican years, it was always true. Maine was staunchly Republican and when the Republican would always carry Maine anyway, and if the country was going Republican the saying made sense. But after 1936 Fred Allen, who was one of the greatest comedians of the era, quipped "as Maine goes so goes Vermont." And that put an end to the old saying. You never heard it much after '36. And that also put the "Literary Digest" out of business. You're historians, so you're probably familiar with the old "Literary Digests." And they had an unscientific poll, polling their readers and they predicted that Landon would beat Roosevelt. And the results were so embarrassing, that with in less than a year the magazine folded.

KP: What did your father think of the Roosevelt Administration, particularly the New Deal?

CE: Too much government. You never get by with deficits. Spending too much money, giving away money to people who did nothing to deserve it.

KP: Did he have any government contracts? Either for the … or the state?

CE: Yes, sure. In fact, in the middle thirties there was a government agency known as the PWA, not the WPA. The Public Works Authority, which financed the construction of schools, and public buildings. For a time that was the backbone of the business. In construction you must realize that markets change with each decade and a contractor can not have a little niche or specialty that will last forever. In my experience in the fifties, we were building public schools because that was part of the population explosion after World War II. With everyone having big families again, there was a tremendous demand for classrooms. In the 1960s our best customer was Princeton University. Even though I am a Rutgers man, for ten years I made my living off of Princeton. And if we did one building there we did thirty-six, most of them being renovations by modernization, rather than new structures. We did six jobs alone for instance, in Firestone Library. One of which was the Dulles Library Wing. Did I tell you about that story?

KP: No, no.

CE: It was built after the death of John Foster Dulles, who had been secretary of state in the Eisenhower cabinet. He gifted his papers in memorabilia to Princeton to preserve for use by future scholars and historians. And they built this lovely, lovely wing as an addition to Firestone to house the papers. And the technical problem from the point of view of heating, ventilating, and air conditioning was that they chilled water mains, two six-inch mains, supply and return, welded construction, to accommodate this wing, had to pass through the ceiling space above the rare book and manuscript vault, where Princeton had at that time [the] Guttenberg Bible that belonged to Lee Bristol, who was associated with Westminster Choir School most of his life. And he owned one of the original, complete Guttenberg printings of the Bible, which is valueless in the sense that nobody knows how to price it. They also had the navigational charts from Columbus' fourth voyage to the New World. The charts he used to chart his way. And our problem was how do you weld, in a space above these priceless treasures, without endangering them? Because in the process of welding, as I'm sure you've seen take place, sparks fly all over

the place. Sparks of metal, which would burn a hole in anything like that before you would have a chance to get them out. And our insurance company walked away from us and said, "You're crazy. We are not even going to talk to you about it. We refuse to underwrite the risk because we don't even know how to begin." So how we solved the problem was to cut each length of pipe in half. The pipes come in twenty foot random lengths, not exact, but, averaging twenty foot. And we cut it all into ten foot pieces which we could hoist up into the air in a corridor outside this storage vault, shove it on roller hangers into this space above the ceiling for ten feet, eight feet say, and leave a couple feet stick out and weld on the next ten foot piece and do the welding out in the corridor, not in the vault. And then shove in another ten feet and weld on another piece. Now it meant doing twice as much welding as the job required so that our labor expense, or mechanics time, doubled for that portion of the job, but, we did get it done and we had no competitors. We were the only company that bid the job. But the solution was "how do you get it done"?

KP: Did you know Mike Hill, or C. Harrison Hill, because I think he was around Princeton at that time?

CE: Yes, he was. And I think I knew him at Princeton. He was in the maintenance department, yep, before he came to Rutgers.

KP: In Somerville, there were two things that Ray (…?) told me about that stuck in his mind. One was the Hall-Mills murder case. How old were you when …?

CE: The murder actually took place in '22, and I wasn't born until '24. The trial was in '26 and I was two-years-old. So what I know I heard from my parents. But they often used to reminisce about the trial and the people involved, the famous characters, the pig lady, the minister's wife and her brothers. I didn't realize at the time, I've only heard recently, that they were apart of the Johnson family, of Johnson and Johnson. Mrs. Hall was a Johnson by birth, and her brothers were the ones suspected of killing the minister and his girlfriend at her request. The choir girl, they slashed her throat from ear to ear. It was a rather lurid, gruesome-type of murder for the time. And no one was ever convicted because of lack of evidence, they could never really prove anything. It was in pre-scientific days and there wasn't much evidence to begin with. The bodies were found out in Franklin Township, that's why the trial was out in Somerville, rather than in New Brunswick. It was a New Brunswick case, but, the bodies were found in what was then known as DeRussey's Lane, which was a little dead end dirt, scrabble road which is now Franklin Boulevard. It runs from Canal Road down to Hamilton Street. And Major (…?) they found the bodies spread out under an apple tree. Did Ray tell you all of this? Yeah, I'm sure he did. He's older than I am so I'm sure he has some personal memories, so I won't waste your time on more details. But, yes, it was one of the famous trials of this century.

KP: He also had some memories and you might be a little young for this, but, of the Ku Klux Klan in Somerville. Do you have any memories?

CE: I remember my parents talking about it again. There was a rabbit farm which had a big rambling wooden structure, out on what is now Brown Road. You know where Hoechst Roussel-Celanese is located on 202 206 north of Somerville?

KP: I think roughly.

CE: Yeah, the old road to … Now you have to get off 287 and go on the old highway, which is US 202 206 and about four miles north of Somerville there is a big pharmaceutical plant. Brown Road goes up and over the Wachung Ridge, across the street from it. And this rabbit farm, was known as the old Wanamassee Country Club, was the site of Ku Klux Klan rallies in the twenties. I don't remember that usage, but, I do remember as a little kid hiking around that mountain and finding a lot of artifacts from bootleggers, prohibition era. See, prohibition was with us till '34 and I was about ten-years-old then, hiking around Mountain Top Road, Crimm Road, (Papen?) Road, all of which were dirt lanes at that time. Coming out of Somerville, the blacktop ended no more than a half a mile north of town, on North Bridge Street, like where the Bridgewater post office is now and everything beyond that was dirt. We used to love it in the summer, because while the surface was real hot, as soon you dug your toes down in it, it got real cool. The heat did not penetrate and when your feet were hot and burning, you could always cool off in a hurry by wiggling your heels and toes and getting down under the surface. But all over the top of that mountain, we would find things like cardboard boxes of bottles, smaller ones with caps and labels. And signs of fires, you know where the stills have been set up.

KP: Which must have been very exciting as a kid to find all this paraphernalia

CE: Yes. As a ten-year-old kid, you find all this paraphernalia. You start looking around, in the woods, thinking they're right behind you. We also loved to explore a lot of old mine shafts. Going back to Revolutionary days, and primarily in the years between the years of the Civil War and the 1900s, a lot of copper was mined in the Wachung range. And there were still abandoned mine scuttles and shafts around when I was a kid that hadn't been sealed off or had houses built over them. Everything is real estate development now. But we could crawl into these openings and go back as much as four hundred feet from the entrance into the side of the hill with candles and flashlights, which is a wonderful thrill for a little kid.

KP: Also rather dangerous too.

CE: Also rather dangerous, yeah.

KP: But very thrilling.

CE: But you don't think of the danger, you think of the thrill.

KP: Your comments reflect … in many ways Somerville was the seed of what was a rural, rural county … farms and …

CE: It was. Somerset county in the 1930 census was sixty-five thousand population three hundred square miles and most of the people lived in the old boroughs, North Plainfield, Bound Brook, Somerville, Bernardsville, Manville, Raritan. A township like Bridgewater, which covers thirty square miles, when I was born had two thousand people in it at the census of 1920. And you know, the census as I was growing up, the census of 1930 was up to three thousand. But you know, it was essentially a farm community. And it didn't really start to develop until after World War II. Curiously enough though, if you're a census buff, I'm sure you noted the relationship between the counties in New Jersey hasn't changed that much. The 1930 census, Middlesex County was about two hundred and twelve thousand, Somerset was sixty-five, which was roughly a three to one ratio. It still is. Middlesex is still a little over seven hundred, Somerset is two sixty, so while they've both grown tremendously, they've grown proportionately. Morris County, 1930, was a hundred and ten thousand, Somerset, sixty five which is like a five to three ratio. Morris County is about up to four hundred and forty thousand now, Somerset, two sixty, still the same five to three ratio. So the growth in suburban, outer fringe suburban New Jersey has been spectacular, Monmouth County is right in there, too. But the relationship between the counties hasn't been moved, it's been spread out among all of them.

KP: That's very interesting. I didn't realize that.

CE: Yeah, yeah. You have to be a census buff to dig those things out, which was another hobby of mine. But it's true. You go back and look at the figures and relationships and you'll see it there.

KP: When you were growing up, you mentioned being the editor of a school newspaper, of your high school newspaper, the managing editor. How much did you know what was going on in the world though, in general in the late thirties, early forties?

CE: I would say more than the average student because I was scholarly and I enjoyed reading. And at the time I read newspapers every day and news magazines. I was acutely aware of Hitler's career, vaguely with the march into the Rhineland, and much more so after the annexation of Austria. The collapse that … the Munich Agreement, the seizure and collapse of Czechoslovakia, start of the war in Poland.

KP: So you followed that?

CE: I followed that. And of course I followed the Accords …

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CE: … which would be 1936, 1938 start with that era.

KP: Did you have any sense, before Pearl Harbor that the United States might be getting into this war? Either against Japan or against Germany because you were aware of both.

CE: Well, yes, in vague, general terms. No, in the sense of imminence or immediacy. In my recollection, everyone pretty much thought if we got involved in the war, it would be our decision. You know, nobody expected a sneak attack except possibly the high officials in Washington. They say Roosevelt had some indications, and if he did he certainly didn't publicize them or express any fears or concerns about them. You know, right up until Pearl Harbor Day, we were debating about sanctions against Japan for their role in China. We were talking about cutting off oil shipments and things like that. That was the newspaper headlines. And you also have to remember that not too much news, reliable news was coming out of continental Europe at the time, which was completely dominated by the Germans. They … there were relatively few unoccupied countries such as Spain, Portugal, Switzerland [which] were fearful enough of Hitler's shadow, so that they in effect enforced Nazi censorship. And spies could sneak in and out through …, but, so far as regular news channels were concerned, forget about it. There were stories about mistreatments of Jewish people in concentration camps. But it would be buried on like page twenty-seven of the *Sunday Times*. And it was published as unauthenticated rumors coming out through Geneva, say[ing] that things are happening. Until the Nuremberg Trial, after the end of the war, nobody had a real good picture of what was happening in Germany after the start of the war. Now the events before the war, John Gunther's book Inside Europe, fascinated me, and he wrote about the personalities about the chief politicians and rulers of the day. And like Laval in France, Franco, Chamberlain, Mussolini, Hitler and his associates. And it was a very good, very well written book, but, again it was talking about the people more than it was with what was happening. Crystal Night was written up, you know, as a brief news story. These things…

KP: Do you remember reading these stories at the time?

CE: I remember them being discussed afterwards by people like John Gunther, but, I don't remember seeing much about it in the papers when it happened, not as a news story. In fact, it received more publicity after we got involved in the war as a reason for why we should have been hating Germany all along anyway. You have to whip up spirit and develop morale and all of these stories were brought front and center after Pearl Harbor more than they were before.

KP: It sounds like you've saw the series of "Why we fight" … did you ever see that … in the forties, the army series by Frank Capra.

CE: Yes, yes, I did and they did a very good job.

KP: Do you remember when you first saw it?

CE: I was in an army hospital for a few months in late '43, early '44, and that's when I saw it, out in Utah. A place called Bushnell General Hospital, which was in Brigham City, on the border, just in Utah, but, only a stones throw from Idaho, north of Logan.

KP: Did you have any memories of the Bund in New Jersey, the German-American Bund?

CE: I remember reading it, they had a camp in Sussex County. And there was a man named Fritz Kuhn, that name rings a bell. Do I recollect that accurately?

KP: I'm pretty sure that's it.

CE: … who was a leader and he … Hitler, and be organizing rallies up there in the hills and woods. *New York Times* would send a reporter out and write it up, and he didn't like it. But there wasn't much they could do about it. And most people thought of it as something odd, unusual, you know, how could people be so stirred up about things like this? They considered these people sort of like weirdos.

KP: You didn't know anyone from Somerville who was in the Bund, did you?

CE: No.

KP: You were in high school when Pearl Harbor occurred.

CE: Pearl Harbor.

KP: Do you remember where you were?

CE: I was in a milk bar out on what is now Route 22. Slurping milkshakes and the news came in on the radio.

KP: At the time, how did you think that this would effect your life in the means of Pearl Harbor?

CE: Tremendously, because I knew I was the right age and the right generation. I was the generation who spent three, more than three years in the military, but, without ever being old enough to vote. I went and enlisted at Rutgers in the Enlisted Reserve Corps on November 11, Veteran's, Armistice Day, it was called then in '42, we were called up for active duty in March of '43. So after Pearl Harbor I had approximately a year and a few months to finish high school and start at Rutgers. I got credit for my first year because of being called up, even though I left in the middle of the second semester.

KP: When you were applying to colleges, did you think of other schools besides Rutgers?

CE: Sure. I applied to schools like Temple, NYU, North Carolina. I went to Rutgers because I was able to get a state scholarship. It helped a lot financially. After the war, with the GI Bill of Rights, it lost its meaning, but, at the time it was very important.

KP: Do you think you would have been able to afford college without the state scholarship? Do you think your father would have had enough money to send you?

CE: Probably, as a commuter. I would not have been able to afford room and board in New Brunswick. And, of course, the curious thing is after the war, I lost that privilege anyway

because the campus became so crowded, they issued rules that anybody who lived within one hour traveling time of New Brunswick by public transit could not live in a frat house, could not live in a dormitory, and they could not live in an approved rooming house anywhere in the city limits. So you had to commute.

KP: You selected Rutgers … when did you decide to become a business administration major?

CE: At the start. Yeah, that was my initial choice.

KP: Why business administration?

CE: Because I wasn't really too sure of what I wanted to do. I was interested in economics, I was interested in statistics, but, I realized at the time that economics was considered more of a theoretical science than it was a practical way of earning a living. And my father and mother were eager to see me go to school. They also emphasized that your education must be practical enough to permit your earning a living in the thirties. This was very important and that sort of ruled out true academia. I think I would have enjoyed being a history professor for instance, or an economist, but, at the time, they were not viewed as avenues as earning a living.

KP: When you started college in September of 1942 did you … how long did you expect to stay in college? What were your expectations, or hopes?

CE: At the time, we joined the enlisted reserve corps. November, of '42, we were told that we could remain in school until we finished our education and then report for duty. The urgency of the situation was not fully realized in the immediate first year. I think it sunk in on official Washington gradually, you know, the desperate need for men and resources. By the time the war ended, they said that over fourteen million people had served in uniform at one time or another. And this was at a time when the official population was at something like one hundred twelve or one hundred and fourteen million. So that's more than one out of ten were in uniform. And today's terms that would be like thirty million people. Before World War II, I think around 1940, the gross domestic product was like forty billion dollars at a time when the minimum wage was around twelve or fifteen cents an hour. Now afterwards, I read that at the height of the war, I think the year of the biggest expenditure was '43. '42 was getting tooled up and '41, you dismissed because there was only one month of war for the US. '42 was sort of getting organized and tooled up and '43 was the mass production year, '44 was the fighting year. But the US government spent one hundred billion dollars in '43 at the time when the GDP was forty billion, so that's like two and a half times of one year's GDP went into the war effort.

KP: You mentioned …

CE: But at the beginning they didn't realize what they were getting into.

KP: But you had some hope that you would finish your college career.

CE: Sure. Well, that was the official promise. Yeah, and young people were still naïve, and credulous enough to believe official promises in that era, particularly. And now-a-days … of course, everyone becomes a little more cynical with life and experiences. But now-a-days I think young people have acquired a little more cynicism long before they finished high school. They've stopped believing the government. You know the old joke, "the three biggest lies ever told," do you remember that one? And the third one of course, is, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help you."

KP: How disappointed were you that you couldn't finish your education?

CE: Didn't bother me that much because of the war was urgent and I realized that I had to do it.

KP: You mentioned that if you hadn't gotten the state scholarship, you probably wouldn't have been able to live away from home. I guess you enjoyed the experience of living away.

CE: Even if briefly.

KP: Briefly. You lived in …

CE: Hegeman.

KP: Hegeman.

CE: On the quad, which was fairly new at that time.

KP: Yeah, it was almost brand new. What do you remember about your dorm, and your roommates?

CE: We had a lot of fun together. I remember the card games. I remember running around and wrestling, horseplay, short-sheeting beds, throwing out balloons with water. You know the usual stuff that goes on in dormitories.

KP: Did you join any clubs or activities the first year while you were here?

CE: Just the band. I played in the Rutgers Marching Band. I tried out for the glee club, but, I wasn't good enough. I didn't pass muster.

ES: What was the camaraderie and the marching band and how much did that effect your …?

CE: Well, I had been four years in high school marching band before that so it was not a new experience. Rutgers Marching Band, at the time, was not nearly as well disciplined or well organized. In fact, it was rather chaotic. Marching is a very kind term to apply to it. They couldn't even walk in step. Of course, the army took care of all that. But my own personal experience, after the war ended I could not resume music because I played the clarinet, a reed instrument. And you have to develop a disciplined muscle lip for it, and three and a half years

away from it wrecked my lip so I was flat all the time. And I was so busy with so many other things involved with rushing through school that I couldn't take the time to discipline myself to get the lip back, so I gave up the band as a veteran.

ES: Are there any stories you remember about the marching band?

CE: Well, I remember in Somerville high school, my original reason for joining the marching band was to get a free seat on the fifty yard line down in front.

ES: So did you get to see a lot of Rutgers games while you were here?

CE: Yeah. Every home game for the season. Rutgers at the time was playing schools like Hampton-Sidney, which you probably never heard of. Played Princeton, lost every year. In the late forties when I came back, Frank Burns was there and the team started picking up a little, and had a much better record.

KP: Do you remember any of your professors that stick out at your first year at Rutgers?

CE: I remember Eugene Agger who was head of the economics department. I think his daughter married Abe Fortas, who was …

KP: Supreme Court Justice…

CE: … Supreme Court Justice in LBJ's years. I remember my English professor, I can't remember his name, but, he was a young student assistant, and a very interesting fellow to talk to. He had a brash, "here is mud in your face" attitude. He was not impressed by institutions or ivy or anything. He knew English inside and out and was a master of it. But taught it in a flippant fashion, which made it a lot of fun. I had to take remedial English as a freshman, … on basics like grammar, even though I had done very well at high school standards, at that time were not all that good as they are now. People can go all the way through twelve years of school and not be able to put a sentence together. I know this because I taught ten years at Kean College night school and I'd have students give me a sentence without either a noun or a verb, which is pretty hard to do if you stop and think about it. And I was told to mark with a curve, you know ten percent of your students have to be the best, ten percent the worst, and everybody else is spread out in between. And if nobody knows more than forty percent of the material that doesn't matter. I hope that's not true at Rutgers.

KP: No, no. You're not the first who has told me that story from Kean, unfortunately. You were in the ERC …

CE: The Enlisted Reserve Core.

KP: … And I know they had put a lot of emphasis, we at least have read from the *Targum*, on physical education and ROTC training, it was taken much more seriously than before the war.

CE: Yes, it was. ROTC, Rutgers was a land grant college, and Rutgers, and ROTC was compulsory. I forget for how many years. The first exception for, after the war, was for veterans. It was realized for men who were discharged veterans from three or more years of war service, a ROTC service doesn't make sense. And, of course, that was the reason they changed the Constitution on voting rights, too. To tell men who had spent three years in the military, that it was perfectly all right for them to serve and even die for their country, but, don't come around to vote until your twenty-one, didn't quite gel. So you know those changes all came in after the war.

KP: Do you remember anything about your training, your ROTC training here at Rutgers?

CE: Yeah. It was out on the old athletic field on West George Street. What did they call it, Nielson Field? And that's where we used to run around the track. We had the old spit and [polish] routine you know, take care of your uniform, polish your shoes, stand at attention, learn how to march and drill. We never fired guns or anything like that, we just used them for formation drill. How to wear your hat, at what angle to solute at. It was pretty basic. Of course, I was an incoming freshman, so you'd expect it to be so. And in the winter, that was in the fall with the good weather, we were outside, and in the winter months, in January and February, they moved us into the old gym, which is the Student Center on College Avenue. They gave us lectures on how to size up the terrain, on how to evaluate positions where you could see the enemy, seize the high ground, don't build your latrine uphill from your well. Most of which was basic common sense.

KP: Yeah. Do you have any memories of Dean Metzger?

CE: Not really. I did not know him that well. I remember President Clothier better. Robert C. Clothier was a very impressive and striking man.

KP: A lot of people that we have interviewed had said that what was strange about the war was that Rutgers was in real turmoil because one week people would all of a sudden be gone because they were called up for service.

CE: Yeah, right.

KP: It may have not been noticed to you because it was an accomplished fact, but, the people who were out in the early '42 remember … the courses changing …

CE: I remember after Christmas, in the fall not so much, but, in January and February, the last two months before the Enlisted Reserve Corps was called up, why other groups were leaving regularly, especially upper classman. And, yes, there was a lot of turmoil and a lot of doubt, as you see people in the dormitory or in class one week and they'd be gone the next. And everybody was talking about it. From New Year's on, everybody was really thinking that the promise of four years in school really didn't mean too much. And they were beginning to realize that we would all be gone. But nobody knew exactly when, or under what circumstances.

KP: When you were at Rutgers or in high school, before the war, before going into the service, did you go to any dances or any other activities?

CE: I was very retarded, socially.

KP: So you never went to any of these dances?

CE: I honestly can't remember going to any before the war. After the war, of course, was different, I'd had three more years to mature. But before the war, no, I do not remember much of a social life at Rutgers except in the dormitory.

KP: Before we talk about the war, is there any memories you have of your first year at Rutgers that stick out? Either in the classroom, the band, in chapel?

CE: I remember the town. Seeing the stores. New Brunswick was very busy then. There was a lot of bustling stores, not only on George Street, but, down the hill by Bayard, Paterson, down to Nielson. There was a thriving shopping district all through there. I remember you could go into McCrory's which, no it wasn't McCrory's, it was Newbury's. J.J. Newbury had a big store just off the corner of Albany and George that southeast corner. And you could get a turkey dinner there for twenty-five cents, which was a good deal, sitting at the counter, you know. And you get some slices of turkey on top of a little pile of stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, lima beans, cranberry sauce on the side and a cup of coffee and a piece of pie, twenty-five cents. I also remember, I'm trying to think of the name, it was a jewelry store, it has since moved up to Somerset Hills, there in Bedminster now, and I can't think of their name, Simms, but, they were in New Brunswick at the time. I remember going there, I was always breaking my watch crystal. I had a watch with a glass crystal, the plastic ones hadn't come in yet. And in Hegeman I had a metal desk. It was my fist experience with a metal desk, and I'd be raising my hand to grab something all the time and my wrist would hit the underside of the desk, and I was always shattering the crystal. I think I got about three replacements watch crystal for the few months that I was at Rutgers. The old J and J building on Broad Street, of course, it was a mill building at the time, and I remember walking past the hot air exhaust which felt good in cold weather, but, they'd be blowing lint and dust out all over the place. You know that people were not that concerned with pure air and environment in the forties, it didn't mean much. In fact the summer before I went to Rutgers, after I graduated high school, before I came down to New Brunswick, I had a summer job at John's Manville, which was a big local plant in my area, of course busy with war production. They all were at the time. And I worked in a building where they made asbestos fabrics, and my job was to take the raw, crushed asbestos fiber by the armful and stuff it in to the carding looms where they prepared lint for weaving into thread. They used to make things like brake linings, and fire proof clothing. So as far as I know, I never developed asbestosis, but, I guess I'm one of the fortunate ones because a lot of people did.

KP: Oh, yeah … from limited exposure. How did you get the job with John Manville?

CE: … It was very simple. You didn't have to know somebody or stand in line, if you were warm and vertical, you were welcome, just like the army. And I earned forty-four cents an hour which, for unskilled, teenage labor in 1942, was a fortune.

KP: Did you work at all while you were at school here?

CE: No, not during my school days.

KP: When did you learn that you weren't going to finish your education, that you were going to be called up to active duty? When did they …

CE: No more than a week or two before it actually happened. I think around the first of March.

KP: How shocked were you?

CE: Well, as I said, so many had been leaving before, and the rumors were flying thick and fast so it …

KP: It wasn't a complete shock?

CE: No, it wasn't a complete shock, no.

KP: You were called up and you had been listed in the Enlisted Reserve Corps. You had been initially to Atlantic City which was an ...

CE: Well, first Fort Dix, and then to Atlantic City for airforce basic training. My barracks was the old Marlboro-Blenheim Hotel on the board walk. I was assigned to what had been the wedding suite, which sounds like a lovely location, except when you're in the army. Each morning you had to scrub your bathrooms. And this wedding suite had … you walked through a doorway into a center hall, this is all tile, of course, floors walls and everything, and straight ahead is a recess with a raised tub in it. And on one side there is a second recess with two wash basins and on the third side is another recess with two toilets in it. And five of us were assigned to this facility and the problem was that instead of cleaning a regular conventional hotel bathroom with three fixtures, we had to scrub up this semi-apartment every morning, which was a duty above and beyond the call. I never had a real basic training because I was quarantined, which was a funny story in its own right. One of my roommates came down with meningitis. The quarantine kept us from basic training duties, kept us from serving on KP, but, it did not keep us from a pass and the freedom to go into town and go to the movies all afternoon. The army was worried about infecting their own people, but, not anybody else. So the length of the quarantine was three weeks, so I spent three weeks sitting in the movies. And when my basic training ended I was shipped onto the next step, routinely as though … because I had been there, but, I never fired a rifle or done anything that you're really supposed to learn in basic training, which came back to haunt me later. So, but, I did move on after that anyway. Reported to East Texas to a town called Huntsville, which was essentially a shrine. It was Sam Houston's last home, it was his retirement home. It was the site of the Sam Houston's State Teachers College,

Sam Houston Museum, Sam Houston Home, Sam Houston Highway, Sam Houston State Forest, Sam was the boy. And we went to school there, army clerical school which was essentially learning how to fill out the morning report as a company clerk. And all the paper work associated with the military. By this time, from Atlantic City on, I had been assigned to what was known as the Army Air Corps. It did not become a separate defense establishment of equal rank until after the war. During World War II, there was the Army Air Corps, which was the bulk of the flying personnel. But there was also Naval Aviation, Marine Aviation, they were all separate.

KP: When you were at Fort Dix, how long did you remain at Fort Dix?

CE: About ten days. Eight or ten days.

KP: How did you end up in the Air Corps opposed to …

CE: Arbitrary, it depends on mostly draftees and also volunteers were shipping in and out everyday. Fort Dix was just preliminary processing. And where you went really depended on whose particular call for men had reached the top of the pile. And each day they shipped you off to various locations for various purposes as the requests surfaced.

KP: Had you wanted the Air Corps?

CE: No, I hadn't really given it any thought because I had no idea at all. I had not volunteered for any particular branch of the service because I had not spent that much time thinking about what I would be doing. But of course at that time, there wasn't yet that much familiarity with all the various technical aspects of the war. In other words, if people thought of going in the Air Corps, they thought of being a pilot, they didn't think of navigators or bombardiers, much less radar technicians and air plane and engine mechanics. You didn't volunteer for the multitude of specialties that occupied ninety percent of the people in the air force because there wasn't that much awareness yet of these opportunities and openings.

KP: You mentioned your being in Atlantic City …

CE: And, of course, there weren't that many people who had familiarity with it. Aviation in general was very new, and there weren't that many people from civilian life had any background whatsoever in it. Radar was brand new. It was a British development earlier in the war, but, it had only been around since like 1940, and we're talking 1943, March, so, no, people did not volunteer to be radar technicians in 1943. They just weren't that familiar with it.

KP: You mentioned you only had seven days of basic training. How far into the cycle had you gone? I guess you learned how to march.

CE: Oh, yes. In fact, we did a lot of marching at Fort Dix, even before I got there. We could not march on the board walk, though. That was a "no, no" because of wooden structure. You know harmonic vibrations would have wrecked it. So it's like crossing a bridge, even in the Reserve

Corps, the ROTC, we marched from campus over to the stadium for military drill, when we went over the old Landing Lane Bridge we always had to break step because if we marched on a structure like that, it would have ended its life long before it actually did.

KP: You mentioned that not finishing basic training had come back to haunt you, in what way?

CE: Well, because after my schooling in Texas, I was assigned to a depot repair squadron in Utah, Hill Field outside of Ogden. I was getting advanced training there. This was a fourth echelon unit, which had the capability of rebuilding bombers. So, naturally, it was not a front line unit. It could strip a bomber down to component parts and put it back together again. Which was desperately needed because in the early days of the war, in the South Pacific particularly, I remember reading that the B-17 flying fortresses that took part in the Coral Sea and Solomon campaigns, early battles in New Guinea, there was no facilities there or in Australia to repair them once they were shot, they had to come back to California, or Utah. They didn't even have repair fields in California, Hill Field was the closest. So four engine bombers would limp back on three engines, island hopping very slowly, because, you know, they were crippled and it would take them like a week to reach Utah for repair and get them back to the field of combat was time consuming. This was at a time when there was a shortage of all sorts of equipment, especially bombers. B-17 was brand new, just coming off the production line. So they developed these depot repair squads which they could send into the field and which would be stationed no more than one hundred miles behind the front. And we had the capability of cranes, lifts, welding machines, trained mechanics, inventory of spare parts, to literally rebuild a bomber, or any other similar piece of airforce equipment. I was in training with that unit, and during the course of it, there was a call for volunteers, and I volunteered, being unmarried. Most of the other men, who qualified for this particular assignment, were married, so the unmarried fellows stepped forward and did the chivalrous thing, being teenagers. We volunteered and were sent to Sioux City, Iowa. The first time into a unit which was moving out immediately and needed replacements. And it was there that I was questioned, and discovered, you know that I never even fired a rifle. So they thanked me and shipped me right back to Utah and criticized my unit there for not having found out before shipping me. They said, "Next time you send us a volunteer, make sure he is qualified, basic qualifications." So then, after I got back to Utah they did rush me through basic training, and I did go out into the firing range, and all that.

KP: You did basic in Utah or did they …

CE: Yes, this was like in October. I left my basic training in Atlantic City in April, but, I really didn't complete it from the learning point of view until October, while the other stops were in between.

KP: Where was this unit that you volunteered for, where were they headed to go?

CE: Hill Field. Oh, the unit I volunteered at was Sioux City Air Force Base.

KP: And they were to ship out …

CE: And they were to ship out.

KP: To, do you know where?

CE: I don't know where.

KP: Oh, you don't know where, there was specific …

CE: I don't even remember the number of the unit at this time. No, I don't know if they went to Europe or the Pacific. The unit I was with, in Utah, I did trace afterwards because of my job in Washington. And they went to first Tunisia and then into Italy. And spent the war with the Fifth Air Force which was based in Italy.

KP: You mentioned that you went to Fort Sam Houston, and in Texas …

CE: No, no it wasn't Fort San Houston, it was Huntsville at San Houston's State Teachers College. The reason I'm correcting you is because there is a Fort San Houston. Its somewhere around San Antonio, isn't it?

KP: Yeah, I think so, but, I'm not positive.

CE: I'm not sure of that even.

KP: Being that you were in clerical school for how long?

CE: Six weeks. Yeah.

KP: Six weeks. And what did you learn?

CE: How to fill out morning report, how to handle carbon paper, how to maintain files.

KP: It sounds very bureaucratic.

CE: It was, and it was meant to be. You know the army … in other words it was learning the army system for keeping track of company reports. The morning report was the basic, essential form which contained a wealth of information. How many men were assigned to the unit, how many men were on duty, how many men were on active duty, how many men were on sick call, on and on and on. You know it had to be filled out each morning and submitted by each company in the brigade, to the brigade commander. It was his information each day of the status of the troops under his command. I say with emphasis who was there and who was capable of performing. That was the real purpose of it. To see how many we have, and how many are useable, are there enough on hand and useable to make for a functional force.

KP: You've seen, in a very short time, several parts of the country. You've spent some time in Texas, you spent some time in Utah, and, briefly, because you went to Sioux City, Iowa. What did you think of these parts of the country? Had you traveled much before the war?

CE: I was fortunate enough to have one sightseeing trip with my parents in 1938, when I finished the eighth grade, they took me out West. We went to Colorado and the Grand Canyon. So I had been to some of these places before.

KP: But I take it you have never been to Texas.

CE: I'd never been to Texas, and of course, I'd never met people really. When you go through sightseeing, you meet the people in the bus terminals and the restaurants and hotels, but, its not the same as living in a town as a soldier, and meeting the people that way.

KP: What did you think of the people from Utah, and the Texans and the other people that you met in those first few months?

CE: The Texans seem loud, brash, and crazy to a kid from New Jersey, you know. They're very different culture, particularly at that time. I can remember seeing a head line in the *Houston Post* one day, "Texas alone can defeat Hitler," and that was the attitude at the time. And Utah, of course, was just the opposite, much more clannish and reserved. The Mormon culture had not yet spread across the country. And they weren't sending missionaries around the world and signing up new members. They were much smaller and much more confined to Utah, and somewhat withdrawn. And I was impressed by the way they dominated the economy in the state. Everything was owned by the church. There was a cooperative called ZCMI, Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institute. It owned both daily papers, it owned the local radio stations, it owned the department store, it ran the economy in Salt Lake City, in particular, in Utah in general. Ogden was a railroad town, … for the Union Pacific. It was their junction point, where, of course, the golden spike was driven in '69. Where the Union Pacific track ended, and what was originally Central Pacific and became part of the Southern Pacific system, tracks began. And the Union Pacific had big transferring yards, maintenance and repair yards there. Funny thing is while the West has grown in general, Ogden has not. Being a railroad town it hasn't really thrived all that much, and it's not that much bigger than it was in the 1940s. Where as the rest of the Utah, has roughly quintupled. Utah as a whole at that time, had about the same population as Union County, about three hundred thousand people.

KP: You would get sick …

CE: I didn't realize it at the time, but, fortunately the only major offshoot from my rheumatic fever. It did not injure my heart, did not wreck any valves, but, it did leave me with hypertension. And what would happen is I would have blackout spells. They first showed up at Rutgers, when I was about eighteen and continued when I went in the army. For no good reason at all, often I would temporarily blackout. Hypertension was the cause of it, I found out afterwards because my blood pressure was shooting up to 220 over 120. And at the time not too much was known about blood pressure. There was no effective treatment really, until into the

seventies, when the galaxy of medicines came along that they use now, and which have helped me since. But in the forties they recognized that there was such a thing as blood pressure and they were curious that high blood pressure was not normal. I remember when a very kindly, knowledgeable, old army doctor at the base hospital in Hill Field, before I went to the general hospital Brigham, was a … told me … I asked him frankly what does this lead to, what are my prospects. He said, "We don't really know that much about it." But he said, "In all fairness, I have to honestly tell you I'd be surprised if you ever see sixty." And of course, I'm fortunate, I'm seventy-three now and in better condition than I was in at sixty. But that is because of living long enough for the new discoveries. He was telling the truth based on medical knowledge as it existed in '43.

KP: Which must have been …

CE: In 1990, I had six coronary bypasses, all at one time, eight hours of surgery, they took thirty-six …

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

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 11/7/99
Reviewed by Clifford Elling 2/1/00