RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HOWARD J. ELLIS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Howard J. Ellis in Canton, Mississippi, on January 2, 2009, with Shaun Illingworth. This interview was made possible through a gift from the Class of 1949, Mr. Ellis' class. We thank your class for that, and thank you and your wife for having me here today.

Howard J. Ellis: You're welcome.

SI: To begin, could you tell me where and when you were born?

HE: I was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, on April the 18th, 1921. My mother died at the time I was born. My grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John Boylan, raised me. They were Irish immigrants who came over in the 1890s to settle in America, and my grandfather got a job with the Pennsylvania Railroad as a section foreman, eventually. They had ten children of their own and my mother was the second oldest of the ten, and she was only twenty-three when she died, though. So, I was raised by my grandparents all through high school. I graduated from high school in 1938, at Woodbridge, New Jersey, and it was too soon after the Great Depression. There wasn't any money to go to college. There were 193 in my graduating class and only about three of us went on to college right out of high school, at that time. A lot of them went into the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]. Three boys, and I don't know how many girls … went on to college. Anyway, I worked, 1938 to 1940, as an assistant janitor in the local public school. Then, my grandmother got together enough money, for me to go to Rutgers, so, I did. … If I had gone straight out of high school, I'd have been the Class of '42, but I went in 1940, I was in the Class of '44 but, after one year at Rutgers, I was out of money again. My uncle, who was the … oldest male in the family, had a job with the Pennsylvania Railroad at that time. He was a conductor, who worked a regular train between New York and Washington, DC. He got me a job in the Pennsylvania Station, in New York City, as a trainee. They called me a junior clerk at the time. I was learning to be a passenger crew dispatcher. I was working there when Pearl Harbor happened, and I worked until February of 1942. Then, I enlisted in the Navy.

SI: Before we get into the military, you went to school in Woodbridge. Had your family moved from Elizabeth to Woodbridge or were your grandparents always in Woodbridge?

HE: No, let me clarify that. I was born in a hospital in Elizabeth, but the family lived in Iselin, New Jersey.

SI: Okay.

HE: Iselin is a part of Woodbridge Township, and the towns of Woodbridge, Port Reading, Fords, Iselin, Colonia, were all part [of the same school system]. The only high school was in Woodbridge. So, I went through grammar school in Iselin, through the seventh grade. Then, I had to go to Woodbridge for the eighth grade, and then, over to Woodbridge High School for … my high school education.

SI: How did the Great Depression affect your family in Iselin and the town itself?

HE: Well, of course, it had an effect upon just about everybody, but it didn't affect the job that my grandfather had, … working for the railroad. He kept that job all through the Depression. Then, he finally retired when he was seventy-nine years old. In the rest of the family, my uncle had a job with the railroad, … Uncle John, then Uncle William worked there then, he left and went to work store delivering for a cracker company, National Biscuit Company. … My recollection, at the time I was growing up, there was … seven or eight of the children of my grandparents [who] were still living in the house, and they all, as they grew old enough to be working, had jobs. My Aunt Alice worked for a book company in Rahway, New Jersey. My Uncle Hugh, who was the second youngest of the boys, became an electrician, and he was going to night school at Rutgers to get an electrical engineering degree when he was killed … in an automobile accident, … at the age of twenty-three, when I was sixteen. … I was very close to him, because we worked together in his workshop, down in the basement, and he taught me a lot about electricity. The youngest of the family, Florence, went to normal school and became a schoolteacher, and my Uncle Patrick was a [schoolteacher]. He taught me in the sixth grade, in grammar school. He eventually ended up being the school superintendent … in Middlesex County, and he was a Rutgers graduate. He had his master's degree from Rutgers and he worked until retirement and reached, as I said, the superintendent's position in the school system. My Aunt Katherine became a Catholic nun. My Aunt Mary, the oldest in the family, married a man named Frank Cooper, who was in World War I, in the Navy, in the North Sea, on a mine-laying ship, and his father owned a farm there in Iselin. It was a produce farm and his father took the produce to Newark, New Jersey, to market, every week, when the products were ripe for sale. … When my Uncle Frank got out of the Navy, he decided that he wanted to be a dairy farmer, not a garden farmer. So, he got into the dairy business and very successfully. He had a two-barn facility there, with about a hundred cows, eventually, when I was growing up. He bottled his own milk and established six milk routes, delivering in Metuchen, Iselin, Woodbridge, Colonia, and Rahway. … While I was in high school, I worked there in the summertimes, helping one of my uncles, Robert, who was one of his drivers. … I worked with him on the Metuchen route and got up at four o'clock every morning to deliver milk, and got through [at] around eight-thirty. Then, I stayed at the farm and helped bottle the next day's supply of milk. After this, I went over to the Catholic church, where Father Brennan was pastor at the time. … He kept chickens. So, I fed his chickens and pulled weeds. I remember, he used to pay me five dollars a week and, every time he gave me the five dollars, he'd pat me on the head and ask me to put it in the collection. [laughter] … Working for my uncle on the milk route, my daily pay there, for the full time I worked, was fifty cents, so, you know, money was scarce back then, but it bought a lot more than it buys today. … As a teenager, I played a lot of baseball for the town of Iselin. We had a baseball team and I pitched for it and we played teams around the county. We played in twilight leagues, and then, we played a game every Sunday, during the baseball season. I also pitched for the high school team. My grandmother gave me the money to go to Rutgers for my freshman year, but no money was available for my sophomore year. So, I went to work on the railroad and planned to save enough money to go back to school, but I never did, because Pearl Harbor happened and I joined the Navy in February 1942.

SI: Did you choose Rutgers just because of the cost or was it your family connection?

HE: Yes, it was; … I only lived nine miles from New Brunswick and my Uncle Pat, who, I told you earlier, was a graduate of Rutgers. My Uncle Otto Ohem, who worked for Bakelite, and

Union Carbide, was a graduate of Rutgers University. [Editor's Note: Bakelite merged with Union Carbide in the early 1940s.] He eventually got his chemical engineering degree at Columbia, in New York, but my Uncle Pat used to take me to Rutgers games. They were free in those days. You just stood on the sidelines and watched them play, because they didn't have a stadium even. They had a field, though. They played football, but they didn't have much else. So, I went to a lot of the Rutgers games with my Uncle Pat, when I was a child, and he got me into Boy Scouts and he … became a Boy Scoutmaster, too, and I got into the Boy Scouts, eventually. … As I said, when I finished my first year at Rutgers, that's when I went to work for the railroad, and then, when the war broke out, went into the Navy.

SI: What was that first year at Rutgers like?

HE: Well, I enjoyed it. My problem was, when I was in high school, I never really learned how to study. There were 193 in my class, and I finished fortieth in class ranking. … When I went to Rutgers, I started to learn how to study, but, … well, I ran out of money before I really learned how. I joined a fraternity there, Alpha Kappa Pi, it was in those days. Now, it's Alpha Sigma Phi. …

SI: Did they have a house?

HE: Yes, they had a house, and I forget why they changed the name of the fraternity, whether they just merged with a different fraternity or what, but, I remember, it was Alpha Kappa Pi when I joined, and then, it became Alpha Sigma Phi, after that. … I played on the fraternity football team. We had inter-fraternity games and I also took up boxing. I had done a lot of boxing in the Boy Scouts and … Rutgers, at that time, had a boxing team. So, I boxed my freshman year. I never boxed against anybody, other than the other boxers at Rutgers, because … freshmen weren't boxing against other universities at that time, and it's the only other sport I ever participated in at Rutgers. …

SI: It is interesting that you had these experiences, because most commuters I have interviewed did not get a chance to get involved in many activities. Was that an active desire on your part, that you wanted to become a part of college life, or did it just work out that way?

HE: Well, I liked college life. I went to fraternity parties and I wasn't dating my wife at that time, I was dating another girl. I took her to the dances that I went to at school, but I enjoyed the camaraderie of the fraternity life. I never lived in the fraternity, because I commuted to school. … I had lunch there every day, during the week, and I enjoyed … the friendship, the learning, meeting all the fraternity boys. Growing up in Iselin, I was kind of restricted. I wasn't old enough to have a car of my own, the best I could do was a bicycle, so, I never got too far outside of the parameter of Iselin, except when I went to Woodbridge, to high school and eighth grade. … I lived a pleasant life with my grandparents. I enjoyed [it], had a lot of friends in Iselin. As I said, we had a baseball team that [I played for] and we had a club called the Iselin Cubs that we formed, had a clubhouse. So, I really, enjoyed my teenage years in Iselin.

SI: Around the time that you were working for the public schools, and then, when you went into Rutgers, Hitler and Mussolini were actively taking over other countries in Europe and World

War II broke out. Do you remember discussing these events or trying to learn more about them? What did you think of them at the time?

HE: Well, of course, I was very familiar with the Axis, Germany, Italy and Japan, and, in Iselin, when I was growing up, … the years were heavy with immigration. Most people, my grandparents included, all came through Ellis Island to settle in the United States and you had Germans, Italians and Polish and Swedish and Danish, et cetera, and, coming from their own countries and feeling strange coming to America, formed clubs. You had the Polish-American club, the Italian-American club, the German-American club, and so forth. There were a lot of clubs around where the people kind of stuck with their [ethnicity], the people they knew. … They were all in kind of cliques in those days. German-Americans, … people began to dislike them, because of the rise of Hitler, and, when Hitler, in September of '39, invaded Poland and started World War II, there were a lot of people who disliked the American Germans just as they did the American Japanese when the war broke out. After Pearl Harbor, they didn't hate them … so much, but … they separated them and put them in camps of some sort to keep them separated, because they didn't trust the Japanese after Pearl Harbor, and you had some of that against the Germans. My Uncle Otto was a German. In 1940, he married the youngest Boylan, my Aunt Florence, and his father was a German immigrant. They were very nice people whom I enjoyed most of my life. I don't remember any animosity against the Italian-Americans compared to Germany and Japan. Italy did not seem to be a big factor.

SI: That is okay. You can say it, and then, we will go back.

HE: Yes. When I did graduate from college, in 1949, a group of recruiters came down from Philadelphia to interview the seniors. I used to go up to the personnel [office] and check the bulletin board … for those things, [when] the people came for interviews, and I went up there one day and the guy said, "Hey, we've got some people coming in from Philadelphia today, or tomorrow, to interview for jobs," and I said, "Well, who are they?" He said, "Well, they work for the Supplee-Wills-Jones Milk Company in Philadelphia," and I said, "Well, I'm a poultry major," and he said, "Well, I can't find enough dairy people [who] want to be interviewed, so, give me a break and come in and get interviewed." … So, he eventually ended up with four to be interviewed. I was a poultry husbandry major. One fellow was an agricultural economist, the other fellow was a swine husbandry major and one was a dairy science major. Well, after the interview, they offered me a job, they offered the swine husbandry guy a job, they offered the economist a job, they didn't … offer the dairy science fellow a job. [laughter] So, when we graduated, the three of us went with the company in Philadelphia, the Supplee-Wills-Jones Milk Company, and they were part of a holding company. Apparently, this holding company, National Dairy Products Association it was called, had been buying up all the major dairies in the major cities east of the Mississippi. They started up in Hartford, Connecticut, and even up into Massachusetts, and came into New York, where Sheffield Farms was one of the companies they bought, bought up, and then, they went to Washington, bought the biggest company in Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia, and all the way up to Chicago, but they never went west of the Mississippi. … That was in 1949, when I started with them, as a trainee, and I worked at the 47th Street plant, in Philadelphia, as a lab trainee, and I learned how to test milk, test it for water and test it for butter fat, and learned how to inspect equipment for cleanliness. So, after two, three months of doing that, they sent me to Camden, New Jersey, they had a plant

there where I became a lab technician. Then, … shortly after that, the lab supervisor was promoted and I got his job as laboratory supervisor. The quality control system was set up separately from [the] production management people. The quality control director answered directly to the president. Well, he was, at that time, … vice-president, because what National Dairy Products did, in 1954, was incorporate, for tax purposes, and it became the … National Dairy Products Corporation. Kraft Foods was one that they owned also at that time. So, Kraft was a member of the group, and I was a laboratory supervisor in Camden for about seven or eight months, and then, they sent me out to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where I was working in one of their plants, making condensed milk and cottage cheese. … I worked there as a supervisor, lab supervisor, but I also had [other plants]; they had plants in surrounding communities, like Bedford, Pennsylvania, and up north. I can't remember all the cities, but, anyway, there was seven or eight places where they had receiving plants where the farmers brought their milk in, and then, it was tanked and sent to Philadelphia for bottling. … I had to go around to those plants also and test their milk and test their boiler water and do the inspection of the equipment on each trip, and I would score them, and then, I'd have to sit down with them after I had done the work and tell them what was wrong, that they had to correct. I had to send a report in to … the quality control director of the company. I was quality control supervisor in Chambersburg for about a year-and-a-half, and then, I got promoted to … plant production supervisor, and I only had that job about three months, then, … they made me plant manager, and I ran the plant for two years. … Then, I got promoted to Wilmington, Delaware, to run a bottling plant, … Clover Dairy in Wilmington. I ran that plant for about five years, and then, they asked me to go back to Chambersburg, so that I could oversee the Chambersburg plant and another plant up in Erie, Pennsylvania, a plant in Frederick, Maryland, and in Hagerstown, Maryland, where they made powdered milk. … Then, they had a whole range of plants that went into Philadelphia and down the Eastern Shore of Maryland, receiving plants, all of those, and I was responsible for overseeing all of that at the time. … Then, they offered me a job in Washington, DC, at 21st and Pennsylvania Avenue, just about eight blocks from the White House, as plant manager of that plant. That was a big plant. I did that for a couple of years, and then, I was promoted to what they called the operations manager, which gave me responsibility for the fleet of trucks, in addition to the plant itself. … I had to do all the labor relations, mostly [dealing with] the Teamsters as well as the operating engineers and the painters and carpenters unions. I was responsible for negotiating all those contracts. Then, after five years, I was asked to go out to Cleveland, Ohio, to a different division altogether. That was the Great Lakes Division, and the plant in Washington was part of the Philadelphia Division, and all of the people who were presidents in those divisions when the company incorporated vice-presidents of a division. … They had seven or eight divisions, and so, I went out there as a division production manager, which was really a staff job at the headquarters, and it was my job to police the plants … that were in that division, quality control-wise, operations-wise and [in the] production of the products themselves. So, I worked there for one year. Then, … a general manager's job opened up in Pittsburgh, which they offered to me, and, in Pittsburgh, I had an ice cream plant and a milk plant and, as general manager, I was responsible for Erie, Pennsylvania, and … Wheeling, West Virginia, [where] we had an ice cream plant. I was responsible for that, and all of the milk delivered in West Virginia, which came out of Pittsburgh, delivered by people under contract who would [be] delivering milk in West Virginia, and it was in 1967 [that] I went there. In 1973, or '72, actually, Kraft, who had been just a part of National Dairy Products Corporation, and all of the presidents of National Dairy Products Corporation had come out of the milk and ice cream

facilities, … finally, Kraft, the Kraft president, got control of the National Dairy Products Corporation and Kraft, shortly after he got control, they made the decision that they didn't want to be in the milk and ice cream business. They wanted to concentrate on their international cheese products. So, they started up in Hartford, Connecticut, and just closed one plant down after another. … Being in Pittsburgh, that was the end of my job, when they got to Pittsburgh, and they went all the way through to Chicago. Well, I was unemployed when they did that. They offered me the job of shutting down the operation and I turned it down. I didn't want to shut it down; … I wanted to continue working, if I could. I called a fellow I knew in Georgia, in Atlanta, who was in the recruiting business, looking for people, and I signed up with him and, in the meantime, when the plant closed down, I got a call from the president of a company in Canada to come up. … He was looking for an operations manager; they had thirty plants between Toronto and the west coast of Canada. So, I went up there for an interview and met the board of directors, and they offered me a job. Now, the only reason they could hire me was because they couldn't find an individual in Canada that was qualified, they said, and so, they were able to hire somebody from outside of Canada. Every time I went up there, it was in a blizzard. [laughter] My wife and I flew up there and the fellow in charge of human relations took her to Toronto … while I flew on to their headquarters in Fredericton in New Brunswick, Canada. … He was showing her around, looking for a place to live. When we came back from that interview, I had a call from Columbus, Georgia, a fellow by the name of Lester May, who was head of a company called Flav-O-Rich, which was owned by Dairymen Incorporated. It was a co-operative and they had put together a bunch of milk plants that they had been able to take over because the people running the milk got too far behind in paying their milk bills, so, they were taken over by this company. … He offered me the job over the phone. I said, "Well, I don't know you and I've never met you," and he said, "Well, would you like to come down and meet me?" I said, "Yes." [laughter] I said, "I don't like blind offers." So, I met him in Columbus and we talked awhile, and he offered me the job. So, I went with him and he said, "We want you to stay here in headquarters for awhile and learn how we operate." I said, "Okay." As I say, we were living in Pittsburgh and I came down to Columbus the following week, and, Friday afternoon, I called the company in Canada and apologized. I said, "I've taken an offer here in the United States and I'd really prefer to stay in the United States, if possible." … That went all right, but, then, when I got up to leave the office in Columbus that weekend, … Mr. May came in, he said, "Where you going?" I said, "Well, [I am] packing up for the weekend and going home to Pittsburgh to see about selling our home." He said, "Well, how about going to Mississippi?" I said, "My God, what for?" I'd never been to Mississippi in my life. He said, "Well, I've got the general manager in Mississippi in here and I just terminated him and I want you to take him home and take his car," [laughter] and I said, "Oh, well, that's a nice assignment." … So, I called my wife and I told her that I was going to Mississippi, and, somehow or other, she should get a flight down and see what Mississippi looked like, so, she did. … Anyway, I drove this fellow home and he told me where I could stay, in a motel, and, of course, he was all upset about being terminated, that's all he talked about on the whole trip as we drove. We had to get to Mississippi, had to get to Canton, and he told me where the motel would be and Betty, my wife, got a flight out of Pittsburgh about two o'clock in the morning. She had to change planes someplace, got in around eight or nine the next morning, at the Jackson Airport. I picked her up and we drove to Canton. We got over here and this present house was for sale and there was another house under construction. So, I got a hold of the realtor and we bought this house, and I said, "We still haven't sold our home in Pittsburgh." … I said, "How much

down payment do you want?" He says, "Well, can you afford two hundred dollars?" and I said, "Yes." [laughter] So, I gave him the two hundred dollars and he went back to his realtor's office and his boss refused it. [He said], "Two hundred dollars isn't enough of a down payment to hold the house. You've got to get more than that." So, he had to come back and apologize. He said, … "I never sold a house this expensive before," and he said, "I've got to have eight hundred dollars." I said, "All right, I'll give you eight hundred dollars," which I did, and then, I put my wife on a plane again. She went back to Pittsburgh and I stayed here in Canton as division general manager of Flav-O-Rich. The next week was a unique experience, because nobody from the company came over to introduce me to the people here, or anything. I had to go in there Monday morning and tell them I was their new boss. … It was kind of hard to get started on something like that. [laughter]

SI: Yes, I can imagine.

HE: … That was a Monday morning, but Thursday, … three of them came over from Columbus and we had a formal introduction at that time and it worked out all right, but it was a strange feeling, in the beginning, to walk in there. That job lasted about two years. I eventually became a vice-president of the corporation. Then, they split Flav-O-Rich up into three districts, each head up by a VP. I went up to Bristol, Tennessee, to live, because, then, I had the three divisions they had in North Carolina. I had a plant in Virginia, I had a plant in Kentucky and an ice cream plant in Memphis, and that worked all right for a couple of years, but, then, the company started to go downhill. They were getting in big trouble, financially, and I left them at that point. After leaving Flav-O-Rich, people who had been working with Natural Dairy Products Corp at the same time I was found out that I had left Flav-O-Rich and asked me to come to Pearl River, New York headquarters for Dairylea and come to work there. They needed a Western New York manager to oversee Syracuse, Binghamton, Buffalo, and Scranton, Pennsylvania. I took the job and moved from Bristol, Tennessee to Manlius, New York, just a short drive to Syracuse, where my office was. The snow and ice in that part of the country was just as bad as my Canada experiences! After driving around in that weather all winter, I told my wife I wasn't going to take another winter of it. I turned in my resignation in June, 1979. That's when we came back to Canton. We had rented our house out. … The timing was good, because the people that rented the house had just bought a new home. … So, we moved into our house here and I typed a resume for myself and started looking around a little bit. I went … eleven miles, to Madison and there was a company there called MFC, [Mississippi Federated Cooperatives], and they were in the poultry business, as well as other activities. I figured, "I'm a poultry major and finally getting around to seeing some chickens, I guess." [laughter] So, I went down there with my resume in hand and I walked into the receptionist and asked her if the president of the company was in. … She said, "Yes," and I said, "I wonder if I could see him," and told her what I was looking for, and she said, "Well, yes." … "Let's see," she said, "Oh, come up to his office and introduce yourself." I told him that I was looking for employment. He said, "Well, I don't do any hiring. I've got a bunch of directors who are responsible for different sections of the business," he said. "They do the hiring, when they need to hire, and I don't interfere too much with that responsibility," he said, "but I'll be glad to mention to them, in my next meeting with them, that I have a resume here, yours, and that if there's any interest, why, they would get in contact with you." … I thanked him and left and, just two days later, I got a call from one of the directors. … So, I went to see him and he said, "I really don't have a job for you in the company," he said,

"but what I'd like to do is hire you as a consultant, and I've got an egg plant, frozen egg plant, here in Canton and … another one just like it over in Alabama, and we have two big processing plants for chickens and we've got several fresh egg operations going, where we packaged fresh eggs." … He said, "The frozen egg plants, here and in Cullman, Alabama, are not making any money and I'd like you to take a look at them." … So, I studied them for about three weeks, and wrote a report on them and took it back. Then, he sat down with me and several other people who were employed in these egg plants and we went through the whole report. … He liked the report anyway and he wanted to know if I would do the same thing for their fresh egg plants. He said, … "Some of them are making money, but some of them aren't, so, I'd like for you to study the fresh egg plants, too." So, I said, "Okay."

SI: Can we take a break for a second?

HE: Sure.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: All right, go ahead. You were talking about fixing the egg plants.

HE: Yes, and just as I was about to take on that second assignment of looking at the fresh egg plants. The fellow that was in charge of both of the frozen egg plants, Canton and Cullman, Alabama, was doing some work at home when he, somehow or other, cut himself pretty badly and he died, from a heart attack. Well, I was the only one in that whole system that knew anything about frozen eggs. [laughter] So, they wanted to know if I'd take over the management of the Canton and the Cullman plants and stay here in Canton and run the Canton plant and visit; they had a manager running the plant in Cullman, but they wanted me to go over there … on a regular basis, to check out things with him. So, I did that and, sure enough, two or three years later, this outfit, MFC, was in financial problems and they had to fold up, and so, … they asked me first if I … would sell the egg plants, if I could sell them. … So, I was able to sell them, and then, the inventories we had, in equipment, and parts, and then, they asked me to stay on and do some sales work that they had, and I said, "All right." However, Mrs. John Kraft of the Kraft Food Company was the widow of John Kraft, who, … one of the Kraft brothers, had been president of Kraft, called me one day. … She said her husband, while he was president of Kraft, … also liked to be fiddling around, doing other things, too. He was traveling around, trying to find things that he wanted to do, and he bought a dairy farm up in Grenada, Mississippi, about ninety miles north of Canton, and, when he bought the farm, … shortly after the war broke out; can I get you a drink of anything?

SI: Yes, please; let me pause this.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: I will put it back on.

HE: Mrs. Kraft, somehow or other, had gotten a hold of my name and she called me. … She was a widow by this time, but her husband had bought this farm up in Grenada, and, shortly after

World War II started, he was approached by the government to see if he would provide milk for the troops who were stationed in Camp McCain [in Elliot, Mississippi], up here, and a couple of other places around North Mississippi. … He thought that over and he built himself a little processing plant on his farm there, to bottle the milk for the troops, and it worked out pretty well for him. Finally, he built a plant downtown, in Grenada, to serve the population there, and then, he built another plant over in Greenville, Mississippi. So, he had these two milk plants and he hired two local brothers to run them for him. … One brother, he placed in Grenada and made him president of Grenada Farms, and the other brother, he sent over to Greenville, Mississippi and he was there, as vice-president. Anyway, the two brothers and wives didn't get along very well together, and what was happening [was], after Mr. Kraft died, his widow was trying to oversee it. She'd come down here and they'd have a meeting together, the two brothers and she, and agree on what they were going to do, but, the minute she got on a plane, went back to Chicago, she lived in Chicago, they did as they pleased, and the two brothers didn't get along. … The one in Greenville didn't recognize his brother as president so, they were both doing things very differently. They could have been saving money by grouping their needs on inventories, and so forth, and weren't doing any of that. So, the fellow in … Greenville, did what he wanted to do and the fellow in Grenada would raise heck with him all the time, but didn't seem to have any control over him. … She was frustrated, because she found out that they were doing things that she didn't even talk about with them and that she didn't want done. So, I got this call from her, and she had an accountant working for her and she and the accountant asked me to come up to Chicago and to talk with them, and I said, "I'm really not interested." I said, "I've got a pretty good job where I am right now and … I'm not going to move to Grenada, or Greenville, or anywhere else." Mrs. Kraft wanted to hire me, if she could, because I had some experience that [could] … help her. Anyway, she, her accountant, and I bickered back and forth, and, finally, I said to her, "Look, this is what I want." She was offering me a salary that was ten thousand dollars below what I was making, and I said, "I can't afford a ten-thousand-dollar cut in pay." I said, "What I want, if you want my services, [is], I'll not move, I'll travel to Grenada, and I'd like for you to furnish me an apartment, at your expense, not mine, and I'd like a company car, so [that] I can travel back and forth, and I want this much in salary." Well, they bickered about that for awhile. Finally, they agreed to it, and I started working for them as president of Grenada Farms and I did that for a couple of years, and then, I told them that it didn't look good for the dairy company in North Mississippi. … I said, "You'd be better off to liquidate, sell it to whoever you can sell it to." I was getting close to the time I told them I was going to retire, and I said, "I'll work until I'm sixty-six," but I said, "I'm retiring at the end of 1986." So, anyway, they asked me if I could sell the company for them, and I said, "Well, I'd try," and so, I found a company in Alabama that showed some interest, and they came over. They bought it out and I left them and I've been retired ever since. … That's the end of my career. [laughter]

SI: Thank you for the overview of your career. I have some general questions, then, we will go back and talk about World War II. What were the biggest challenges you saw in your career? Obviously, one career was dairy and the other was poultry, but were there some common challenges that you saw in the agriculture business in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s?

HE: Well, yes, you know, agriculture, especially in the dairy business now, the dairy business, when I came down here to take over this plant in Canton, we had eleven dairy farmers in this part of the state. The biggest group was down on the coast, and the dairy business just wasn't paying

off in Mississippi. People would get into the business and they'd find out they couldn't even make payments that, you know, normally, you'd have to make running a business. … It kind of dried up here. It's still a little strong, I guess, down in the coast. I haven't been following it since I retired, but it just about disappeared overnight here, it seemed like, and it was a challenge, you know, to try to keep your head above water in the dairy industry. … A lot of the companies that I knew, and a lot of the people that I knew that were enjoying good careers in the dairy industry, just kind of faded out of the picture. They don't operate like they used to, you get a company like Kroger's Grocery chain, they built their own ice cream and milk plants. A&P did the same thing, and, you know, I guess most of the major supermarket companies found a way of doing things like that. … Kroger, like, when I was working for Sealtest Milk Company, the National Dairy Products Corporation, we had the Sealtest label, the Breyers label, ice cream, and, of course, all the Sealtest labels in other dairy products, like cottage cheese and sour cream, and so forth. So, what Kraft did [was], they got these companies, like Kroger's and A&P, to franchise the label. So, you can get, today, … Sealtest Milk from Kroger's and Kroger's milk from Kroger's, bottled in the same plant, with the same bottles and everything else, you know. [laughter] All they bought was the label, really, and Sealtest always prided themselves on having [high quality products]. Sealtest was, to begin with, Sealtest, initially, was a successful laboratory company, in the dairy business, and, when National Dairy Products Corporation took them over, they decided that Sealtest would be the name that they wanted to market their products under, because of the reputation that Sealtest Laboratory had. … When people like Kraft [took over], who decided they didn't want to be in the milk and ice cream business, they wanted to push their own cheese products more forcefully, they were eventually taken over by Philip Morris anyway, and so, the dairy industry, those were the biggest challenges that I found in my later years in the dairy business. In the dairy business, per se, there was a lot of turnover, and turnover wasn't good, because the people that turned it over turned it over again. … I guess the poultry business could be, and I haven't followed up on that too much, but I think the poultry business is a little more stable than the dairy business. The problem that the poultry business [faced], in this company that I was working for, anyway, the problem with that was that … they were trying to get companies, grocery companies, at any price. … A&P was a rough customer, and I forget the name of the one down in New Orleans, but they … would bleed the heck out of you. … I remember, when I was working in the poultry business, I wasn't in the sales end of it, but the sales people were just under their thumb all the time. … They'd [the chain supermarkets would] want to run a special on eggs or a special on chickens, a special here and a special there, without any penalty if they wanted to call it off at all. … They had the production people producing this stuff, and, all of a sudden, the sale was over and they had overproduced the product. Now, they had to send it to Mexico, or someplace, to sell at a minimum, and … this kept happening over and over and over again. A&P, … they drove more meat companies and dairy companies, and anybody that was furnishing them products, they drove them out of business, eventually, because they wanted what they wanted at the cost they wanted, … and they had enough competition within the businesses they were working with that they usually got their way. … So, a lot of companies went out of business because they were just being driven out of business by the demands of supermarket businesses. Supermarkets, when I first started working, they weren't even a factor to speak of. There was still a lot of home delivery of milk and ice cream, and so, [people were] not going to any mall to buy the product, to buy bread or to buy milk. You didn't have to go to the mall to get milk, you had it delivered to your doorstep, most of the time. … When the supermarket business came on, it signaled the downfall of the milk

business, really, because they were producing their own milk. … Those were the challenges [that] you seemed to be fighting all the time, the onslaught of the supermarket business coming into being and setting up beautiful stores and malls, and so forth, shopping malls like Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart is a prime example of running things the way they want to run it, … getting the products they want at the price they want them for. So, those were the challenges in the food business, I think, over the years, that has greatly changed both the dairy business and poultry business, and, probably, other agricultural businesses, too, that I don't know about. …

SI: When you were at Rutgers, studying poultry husbandry, the class was mostly focused on the science of the issue. It sounds like, in your career, often, what you were dealing with were business problems and organizational problems. Did you have any preparation for that at Rutgers, or was it mostly on-the-job kind of training?

HE: Well, Rutgers; now, [at] a university like Cornell, [if] you took an agricultural course up at Cornell, you did a year's work of fieldwork out in the agricultural community. Rutgers' approach was that what was important was the science of agriculture. … We had a lot of sciences, I had zoology and biology and botany and genetics, … chemistry, and I had general chemistry, organic chemistry, subjects like that, physics, a full year of physics. … Their approach was that, "You could learn your fieldwork when you started out in whatever field you're in. You could begin to learn it there. You don't have to be an expert in the field. We can't, and don't want, to teach you to be an expert in fieldwork to begin with. We want you to be an expert in the science of agriculture, because, in the long run, that'll pay off a lot better than the fieldwork that you might be exposed to, if we had required you to do fieldwork." So, I kind of agreed with them in that respect, because I didn't find any problems in the milk business that I was in that I … couldn't learn very easily with a little experience and, even though I was a poultry major, I had enough chemistry and other sciences to be able to figure out how to test milk and all that other stuff. I just picked it up very easily, because I had the scientific background that enabled me to learn how to test milk in one day, and I felt that, I began to think, early on, that Rutgers had the right approach to it, and I still think that way.

SI: Let us go back to Pearl Harbor. You were working for the railroad and you said that, shortly afterwards, you got into the service. What do you remember about that day and that period of time?

HE: Well, on December 7, 1941, … that was a Sunday and I was working, because we worked a month, seven to three, and a month, three to eleven, and a month, eleven to seven, … and I worked six days a week. … I forget which day I had off, but, anyway, that Sunday, I was at work, in Pennsylvania Station, when it came over the tickertape. That's the only kind of communication you had back then that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese. Well, I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was even, [laughter] you know, I'd never even thought about Pearl Harbor, and it kind of shook everybody up. It shook me up, too, when I learned what they had done. They'd killed a couple of thousand sailors in the attack, and so, I had a friend, Francis Reedy, who I palled around with a lot. He was a member of the baseball team that I played on in Iselin, and he got on me about joining the Navy. … I said, "I don't want to join the Navy. I've got a good job now, one of the best jobs I ever had," … and, of course, up to then, the railroad had started a lot of secret moves. They had troop movements and everything going at that time

that were privy to only the employees that had to conduct them. … I said, "I don't want to join the Navy," and, finally, he got to me. I went on a date one night with a girl, When I was going home, I passed a recruiting station. I said, "Oh, I'm going to get even with Francis. I'm going to join the Navy before he does," and so, I went in and I enlisted in the Navy there, and, of course, I had to go to 90 Church Street in New York, finally, to get accepted, but I told Francis. … He jumped up right away and he went and joined the Navy, but was not accepted, because he was colorblind, and, here, the guy had been pestering me to join the Navy, and, … after I agreed to do it myself, I find out he couldn't do it. … He ended up in the Seabees. …

SI: Since you worked for the railroad, could you have gotten a deferment?

HE: Pardon?

SI: Could you have gotten a deferment, since you worked for the railroad?

HE: [I] probably could've. I probably would've been exempt for the job I was learning to do, in crew dispatching, then, not only crew dispatching, I did that for about two to three months, and then, they sent me up to what they call the forty office, which was a very interesting job. … I had a desk and a microphone that was around my neck, and a big board here, with a lot of switches on it, where I could talk to various people, like yardmasters, and so forth. … The interesting part of it, and you had to type [up] every single move you made, every single thing you did, you had to sit down and type it, so that the guy that came on next could look at it and find out what was still needed to be done. … Anyway, it was, like, say there was … a carload of fruit coming out of California, destined for Massachusetts. Well, that would hit the Pennsylvania Railroad somewhere around Harrisburg or Philadelphia, and, when it did, the guy in the tower, at Harrisburg or Philadelphia, would call, or I'd called him first, and I told him there's a load of fruit coming in … that had to be sent on through to Massachusetts, when it got … into his division, to let me [know] where it was in the train, because I'd need to send it for partial unloading over in Jersey City. So, he'd call me back and say, "The car was third from the head end, on such-and-such a train, and it hit the Hudson Yard, in Newark, about such-and-such a time." … Out in Newark, at the Hudson Yard, which is a big yard, I had a conductor, an engineer and a fireman, [it] was all, still all, steam engines then, conductor, an engineer and a fireman, and a flagman, that were on [a shift], just waiting out there for orders. So, I'd call them and tell them that the car … that I want them to pick up was the third from the head end of the train, coming at such-and-such a time. It would hit Hudson Yard and I said, "I want you to cut it out of the train when it pulls into the yard and take it over to such-and-such a company in Jersey City, at their dock, for partial unloading, and then, after it's unloaded, bring it back to Hudson, so that I can send [it] on its way to Massachusetts." Then, I'd have to call the yardmaster over at Sunnyside Yard on Long Island and tell him about it, because the Pennsylvania Railroad had electrified its division in 1934, … when they electrified the whole Northeast Corridor. … So, you had electric trains on this, mostly, running, back then, and you couldn't send a steam engine through the tunnel under the Hudson to get to Sunnyside, or either way. So, you had to dispatch it, and, like, had to get the guy over there to dispatch an electric engine to come through the tunnel, just for smokeless purposes. Smoke in the tunnels was too dangerous, [you had to] get him over there, to send an electric engine over, pick up that car and take it to Sunnyside Yard, and then, [at] Sunnyside Yard, they had to get it to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad to go on to

Massachusetts. So, it was very interesting. … Eight hours went very fast, because these things were happening all the time, different trains, different cars, and this is what they called the (movement bureau?) over there, and there were only four of us working in that room. The other three were entirely caught up in making up the trains that went out from New York to Washington, New York to Harrisburg, New York to Atlantic City, and they had to make those up every day, … car-by-car, where they would place the dining [car], where they'd place the smoking cars, and so forth, and they were busy all day long. … So, it was an interesting, very interesting, part of the job for me, and I liked it a lot better than I did crew dispatching. One problem I had, [laughter] one thing with crew dispatching was, I was working Christmas Eve and there's a train, Pennsylvania train, sitting, Number Seventy-Nine. … The odd number trains always went east and the even number trains always came from the west, on the Pennsy, but there's a Train Seventy-Nine that left, every day, about eleven-thirty at night to go to Harrisburg, and, [on] Christmas Eve, all the extra men were working double shifts. … Some of them were so tired, they took what they called the VRD, voluntary time off, and there wasn't a soul in the station and the train didn't have a flagman. So, I went down in the station, went along the platform, I saw this fellow working in the yard down there, and I said, "Hey, you wanted to go to Harrisburg?" and he said, "Yes." I said, "Well, go down, get yourself a set of lights and flags and go down to platform number, track number, so-and-so, and get on Train Seventy-Nine as a flagman, in the rear end," because you couldn't send a train out without a flagman. So, he did. … What happened [was], the next day I came [in], the next time I came to work, … my boss said, "The stationmaster wants to see you." He was the head of this whole setup. So, I went in to him and he read me the riot act, and he says, "You know what you did last night?" I said, "Yes. I had to put this fellow on the Train Seventy-Nine, didn't have a flagman. It had to go out." He said, "Well, that guy works in the labor pool. We had to pay sixteen men in that pool … just for one man [who] went," and he said, "We can't afford to … pay sixteen rear end flagmen, you know," and I said, "Well, I didn't know." I said, "I'm just training here." He said, "I know you are," he said, "but I just want you to know to don't ever do that again." I said, "Well, what do I do if the train doesn't have a flagman?" … He said, "I don't know," but he said, "Don't get somebody that works in the labor pool to go, because the whole pool will have to be paid. According to the union rules, the whole pool has to be paid for that particular job that you sent one man on." … He just scared the hell out of me, but I was twenty at the time. …

SI: After you enlisted in the Navy, how quickly were you actually taken in on active duty? What was that process like?

HE: Well, I joined in February '42, and I went, in late February, to boot camp, in the Northeast there, up by …

SI: Newport?

HE: Newport, Rhode Island, yes. … That was a six-week training course there, was a tough one, but, then, while I was there, … they put out a questionnaire on what you wanted to do in the Navy, and I applied for a radioman on an airplane. Anyway, I didn't get that. … They looked at my resume and everything and they decided that I was better off going to aviation machinist's mate's school. They needed more aviation machinist's mates than they did radiomen. So, when I got through there, they sent a whole trainload of us up into Canada to cross into Chicago. There,

they sent us all to Navy Pier in Chicago, which jutted out into Lake Michigan, and there's fourteen hundred sailors there. … That early in the war, they were still; I had to spend three weeks learning how to run a sewing machine, because the wings on the plane were fabric and you had to sew this fabric and to pull it onto the wing, and just things like that, that a lot of that stuff that had already disappeared out in the fleet [was still being taught]. … We got out in the fleet, all the planes are made of metal, [laughter] and a sewing machine, I haven't touched one since. What I needed was a riveting gun to patch up the metal on the plane wing, or whatever part it was. … Anyway, it's a six-month course in [being an] aviation machinist's mate. I think I ended up eleventh out of the fourteen hundred in my group there, in what I had learned. While [I was] there, they put out a call for aerial gunners. So, I went and volunteered for an aerial gunner, and I got down there and I found out I was too big for [being] an aerial gunner. The bubbles on the planes were too small for my size, and … I'm not that big. Anyway, so, I got rejected on that, and then, they lost a couple of aircraft carriers, … early in the war, and … lost a lot of people, too, and you could have been six-foot-six and become an aerial gunner then, you know. [laughter] They were taking everybody that they could get their hands on. [laughter] So, anyway, I spent part of my time there going out at the end of the pier and learning how to lead a target with a shotgun, like shooting skeet, and we went down there a couple times a week and did that, and then, when we got through the aviation machinist's mate course, which ended up in November of that year, '42, they sent me to Florida, Hollywood, Florida, for gunnery school. That gunnery school, … they had taken over a military school. They had nice rooms and you had four people to a room and you went out at eight o'clock in the morning, you shot skeet for four hours, until you could get twenty-five out of twenty-five with a shotgun. Then, they put the shotgun on a tripod, and you had to hold it like a machine-gun and shoot them, and then, learn how to hit them with that. … In class, we had to learn how to identify Japanese ships, Japanese airplanes, and German ships and German airplanes. It was [when we] didn't know where we were going. Those were, most of the time, the studies we had in class, was the recognition of enemy aircraft, enemy ships. Then, the fellow that was teaching us skeet shooting was an actor, Robert somebody, [Robert Stack], I forget, but he was a national skeet champion at that time. … After the thirty days in Hollywood, Florida, shooting the skeet, they sent us up to a field, a brand-new airfield, outside of Orlando, Florida, and so [that] we could get flight practice. While we were there, [we] got there New Year's Eve and they didn't have any airplanes at the place. [laughter] Finally, about half of our time we spent there, they got one airplane that we were going to be trained in, and the top turret in that plane didn't work. So, we'd go up and it was frozen, and you'd get up in the plane and the pilot would have to tilt it over and you got to shoot at the ground, because you couldn't move the turret around anywhere. … In-between that, you had to go, they were training pilots there, they had Beechcraft training planes that they were training pilots in, and we got to sit up in the glass nose of the Beechcraft and, while they were flying blind, as a lookout, to make sure they didn't run into somebody else. That's when I found out that flying made me very airsick and … I would go up there and just throw up every time that I got up in the plane. … One day, I missed a roll call that they had and they sent thirty of us that missed that roll call, they sent us to San Diego, … California. The rest of them went to Banana River in Florida, and we got out to San Diego and they took the thirty of us and split us up into two groups of fifteen. They sent one group to Seattle to go to Alaska, and the other group to go up to the naval air station in Alameda, California. That's across the bay from San Francisco. Well, I was in the group that went to Alameda and we got there. … We were supposedly going to be trained as tail gunners, … better trained [as] tail gunners, and all we did was sweep the

hangar out, sweep across one way in the morning and back the other way in the afternoon, for about ten days, and then, they announced that they were going to form a new squadron to fly up and down the West Coast, because they were having a big summit of some kind in San Francisco and they wanted to make sure that … all the safety rules were in place. So, we all went and rushed to join this squadron, and we got put on as tail gunners, and we started flying. … They had water targets out in the bay, and they dip over and dive down and drop their water bombs on this platform, or try to hit this platform that was out in the bay, and the gun position in the plane that I was flying in then; … the Navy called it a PV-1 [Ventura]. It was built by Lockheed and it had a step in the bottom of the fuselage where two thirty-caliber machine-guns were protruding. You had to lie on your stomach, prone position, then, there was an upper turret on the top of the fuselage, in the middle of the plane, but, anyway, we'd go and make this run on this target, and then, they'd pull out. … They'd pull out and the pilot would say, "Pilot to tail gunner, where did that bomb hit?" About that time, I was filling up my white hat with vomit and I couldn't answer him. [laughter] He kept hollering at me, and I decided I didn't want to fly too much. So, in the Navy, at that time, people … connected with aviation, anyway, like the ground crew people, some of them got the credit for flight time, which was seventy percent of their pay, if they got in four hours of flying a month. … So, there'd always be a group around the plane, looking for a hop, just as passengers, so [that] they could get their flight time and get their extra money. So, I'd always give them [the opportunity]. I started giving up my place as the tail gunner to … one of these guys that'd come around, and I'd stay on the ground. Well, that went on for about a week or so. … My pilot's name was Anderson, Lieutenant Anderson, and he called me up to see him and he says, "Where the hell have you been?" He said, "We've been practicing for a week. … Every time I go up, I've got a different tail gunner." … He says, "You get in that plane and you stay in that plane. I don't ever want you to miss another flight." I said, "Yes, sir." So, it wasn't too long after that, we went on liberty, Saturday night, to San Francisco and, [when] we got back, there was an aircraft carrier docked in the bay there. … Our orders were to get on the aircraft carrier. So, we had gotten on her; before we went on liberty, we took our sea bags over there, and we went down in the ship and picked out places to sleep, in the sleeping quarters. Then, we went on liberty and we came back around midnight and got on the ship. Our bags were scattered all over, because the regular crew had [done that]. We'd put our bags, a lot of us, in the regular crew's quarters and they had just tossed them out. We eventually found them. They put our planes on the flight deck and we had to sleep under them the whole trip over from San Francisco to Hawaii, but it was all right. It was a nice, balmy trip to Oahu, and then, … from Oahu, we flew over the Pali, into the Naval Air Station Kane'ohe Bay. We were there awhile and we were doing sleeve target … practice. They had a plane flying with a sleeve target. … We were up there practicing shooting at it, and, from that day on, I never got sick again. I loved flying after that. … For some reason or other, it just left me and I could take any kind of a move in a plane and it didn't affect me at all. So, I really started to enjoy flying and shooting. … Anyway, we were then sent to Midway to relieve a PBY flying boat squadron that was patrolling in the Midway area, because they were still worried about the Japs coming back to Midway. We were over on Midway for a month. That's an international bird sanctuary, in case you don't know it. … You'd go into chow in the morning, you had to keep waving your arms to keep the birds out of your face.

SI: Shoo them away.

HE: There's millions of them. Anyway, we flew patrols there for about a month and this pilot, Anderson, that I had, … he was really afraid of the. … We'd take off and one of the gauges would wiggle, and he'd land right back down again, aborting the flight. Finally, the Skipper grounded him, he gave him a ground duty job, and a pilot who had been down in the Guadalcanal area, flying a PBY, was on his way [home], had been down there a long time and saw a lot of action. He's coming home. … When he landed in Hawaii, he got drafted into our squadron as our pilot and the poor guy went back again. He was a fellow from Chicago, had been a college student there, an engineering student, and had been flying down in the Guadalcanal area ever since the Japanese had been occupying it, but he could fly that airplane. He was a heck of a good pilot. Anyway, it wasn't too long after we came back from Midway, maybe [within] a week or two, that we … got orders to go to the Ellice Islands in the Central Pacific. We island hopped down there, but in our airplanes, from Johnson Island to … Baker Island and we ended up on Wallis Island, which was in the group of the Ellice Islands, and that island was our squadron headquarters. … Half the squadron would fly from there to a small island called Funafuti for patrol duty for two weeks, and then, come back and the other half would go. … I was in the first group, that went to Funafuti for the two weeks. Funafuti was shaped just like a boomerang and it was thick enough in the center where there was room for an airstrip, but the two ends of the island were only about thirty feet across, and there was a Marine antiaircraft unit on each end of … Funafuti. … The end closest to us had movies every night and we used to walk down there to watch them. … We came back from this flight one day, in July of '43, and what we'd do when we got back, about seven hours later, … we'd go swimming in the Pacific's blue water. It was nice swimming, and our radioman, a fellow named Roy Teppy from Toledo, Ohio, found this big piece of coral. … He's carrying it back, he dropped it on his foot and it hurt him like the devil. He could hardly walk. So, we went down to the movies that night and our tail gunner, who's Billy Farr from Merced, California, carried him half the way and I carried him the other, piggybacking, and that was the 9th of September in '43. … We got seated there in the movie, just coconut logs that we had to sit on to watch the movie, on an outdoor screen. They had a small recreation hall next to it and a chaplain's quarters, and, on top of the recreation hall, there was an Air Force siren. Well, the movie started at seven o'clock; nine o'clock, that darn siren went off. That's the first time we're able to see any action, and, of course, the patrols we were flying were kind of just patrols. We never ran into any enemy flights or ships or anything. … Anyway, this air raid siren went off and everybody got up at once and started running back through the palm trees to get back to where we were all bivouacked alongside of our planes in the middle of the airstrip. … [The] top gun turret man had a hold of my hand and we went running, [as] fast as we could, … back through those (pinewood?) palm trees, and this radioman that we had to carry up there passed us, [laughter] on foot. He forgot all about his sore foot. We had been told before when we got to Funafuti to dig foxholes. We were quartered in Army tents and we were told to dig a foxhole, enough foxholes outside that our tents, there was six of us to a tent, so [that] we could get into them in case of an air raid. Well, we never really got around to doing it seriously. I mean, we made a half stab at it. It was hard shoveling through that coral. … Anyway, we got back to our area and I got my helmet pulled on and we jumped in this foxhole, and there were about thirty Japanese Betties [Mitsubishi G4Ms], they called them. They were very similar looking to the plane, the PV-1s, Lockheeds, that we were flying, except they had single tails, we had double tails, and they came over and they blasted the heck out of us. … They got several of our planes, which were sitting in [revetments] alongside the airstrips, and, when they hit some of the planes, the ammunition,

machine-gun ammunition, in them began sprouting all over the place. … No one got killed, but I think two or three people got wounded. … That was the first Japanese attack that we had. What had happened was that, earlier, the Army Air Force … was based at Hickam Field in Oahu, [Hawaii], would fly to Funafuti and refuel, and then, they'd take off from there and go up into the Marshall and Gilbert Islands and bomb the Japanese-held islands there that they were assigned to bomb. … They'd come back from there and they'd be pretty well banged up … from aerial guns. … The Japanese found out what was going on with them and they began to strike back, and then, started to hit Funafuti. Well, they were hitting us pretty regular then after that, but the Air Force people, they were flying B-24s, big four-engine planes, and two of them took off, [and] one time, coming back, took off from Funafuti and went right into the ocean. … They never came back while we were there, because the Japs were starting to bomb us on a regular basis, and, shortly after that, we got relieved anyway. We went to British Samoa and American Samoa, and, when we went to British Samoa, and we thought we were going home, we got there and they had a whole bunch of engines there. The plane that we had, our planes, flew two radial engines, 2850 horsepower, and used about fifty gallons an hour on take off, at that rate, but they had outboard tanks on each side, of thirty gallons each, and then, the inboard, on the wings, they had 160-gallon tanks on each side of the fuselage, and, in the fuselage itself, there's a navigator's table [and] there was a big neoprene gas tank that held about two hundred gallons, I think it was, I remember. Anyway, we went to British Samoa and we spent the whole time there changing the engines on our planes, and the aviation machinist's mates and ground people and the flight aviation machinist's mates, we all pitched in and changed these engines over. … We got orders to go up to Tarawa, in the Marshall/Gilbert Islands. The Battle of Tarawa was November, late November in '43, and that's where the Marines took a beating. They tried to go ashore, you know, and the water was too deep on them and it killed a lot of them. Anyway, they took the island over in about three days, and we landed on it. [Editor's Note: The land battle for Tarawa was waged between November 20th and November 23rd in 1943.] As soon as the island was secured, the Seabees came in and repaired the … airstrips, so that we could land. … It was the worst mess I ever saw. I mean, the bombardment from our own Navy had blown apart most of the palm trees, and they were all just stumps in most places, and the Japanese had really heavy concrete places there that were still standing. I mean, the sixteen-inch guns from the Navy battleships couldn't even penetrate them. They were about three feet thick. Anyway, that's where we went, when we had an air raid every night from there on, by the Japs. They would come back and, sometimes, it'd be just a single plane, "pest call," you know, but we'd have to get up and go into these concrete structures. They were pretty big, and we used them for … air raid shelter, but the stench in there was terrible, because a lot of the Japanese had been cooked in there by flamethrowers, and it was just a miserable place to be in. … Anyway, that's where we'd have to go for [shelter] every time these sirens went off, and then, we started, ourselves, striking back. Our squadron flew low-level attacks, below treetop, mostly. The first one was the island of Nauru, which supposedly had, a building on there that made ammunition, on the left side as we approached. … On our right, there was a big cliff, four, five hundred feet high, I guess, … out a ways from the airstrip, and, … according to Navy intelligence, there were five hundred guns in that cliff side. Well, we took off around three in the afternoon that day and flew at about just fifteen feet above the water, all the way to Nauru. … That was to keep Japanese radar from picking us up before we cleared the horizon, and it's about a three-hour flight up there. … By this time, I had been made plane [captain]. I had come out of the tail gunner's spot, I had been made plane captain, which is the flight engineer equivalent to the Army [Air Forces], and it was

my job. We had a crew of six people. It was two pilots and four enlisted men. The enlisted men were the tail gunner and the turret gunner, the radioman and the plane captain, and the two pilots, that you had, the first pilot and the second pilot. The first pilot flew all of the missions; the second pilot was navigator. He sat back at the navigator's table and plotted our navigation, and I sat in the … co-pilot's seat and handled all the instruments to change the gas tanks when they needed to be changed and kept my eye on all the instruments, and so forth. … My pilot, as I said, was a heck of a good flier and he had been chosen, when he joined the squadron by our skipper as the test pilot for the squadron. So, every time they had a plane that needed to be test-flown, he and I and the radioman would go up in it and check it out. … While he was checking instruments, and so forth, he always gave me stick time, flying … the plane, and he kept telling me to, "Keep your nose up." So, anyway, we got to Nauru, we lifted off the sea, forty feet, and we came in at that level, just below the palm tree height. … Two Vs, three planes in a V, the lead plane and the two wing planes, and then, another V, and then, another plane on the tail. So, we had … this formation, coming across Nauru. Well, we were carrying, because of our low flight, … four five-hundred-pound, ten-second delayed action bombs, so that we wouldn't blow ourselves up when we dropped them, Lieutenant Cunningham was flying off the left wing of the Skipper. The Skipper was leading us, and Lieutenant Genta, … my pilot, was flying off his right wing. We dropped our bombs and we go along when Lieutenant Cunningham took a hit in his; I don't know where it was. It must have been in one of his engines, because he went up like that, at forty feet. He came down like this, under; he locked wings with the Skipper's plane, crushed part of the Skipper's left wing, about ten, twelve feet of it. He'd come under, just brushed the underside of our plane, and, somehow, pulled up with one engine, and, of course, the rest of us were gone by then and he was trailing behind, flying on one engine. The Japanese fighters … took off and got them in about twenty-five, thirty minutes after he took [the hit], as we had passed through Nauru. They shot them down, and, [when] we got back, the Skipper, I don't know how the Skipper flew that plane that he flew, but he sure did a good job with it. … It was ten, eleven o'clock at night [when] we got back. We couldn't land because the Japs were bombing our island, but, we finally did land. The Skipper landed first, because of his damaged wing, and he got in safely. As a matter-of-fact, the company that; what kind of plane did I say it was? The PV-1 was a …

SI: Lockheed?

HE: Lockheed. *Lockheed Magazine* came out the following month with a picture of that plane and the story of how the Skipper flew it back. … We all saw that. Anyway, we landed there, and then, we did low-level bombing, we did glide bombing with aerial mines. We'd go to a Japanese-held island and over the harbor of that island, we'd come in high, and at about eighteen [hundred] feet, dropped off these parachuted mines, dropped [them] into the sea, and that was mostly all under pretty heavy, antiaircraft fire from the island. … You didn't see much in the way of Japanese fighters in that area. We did that and we did patrols. One day, we flew up to an island called Wotje, which is not in the Marshall/Gilberts, but was a heavily occupied Japanese island, closer to Japan than most of the rest of them. We were supposed to go up there and get some pictures of Japanese shipping in the harbor, to get some idea of what they had there, and, on the way up, we passed the Island of Mili. … One of our aircraft carriers was sending dive-bombers in on that, … off to the right of us, and we were flying over here and Mili was here, and then, the aircraft carrier was out here and the dive-bombers were coming in here and taking off

and coming back around this way. … Just as we got there, two … American dive-bombers flew right head on into us, and our pilot saw them soon enough. He waved his wings and he got it pulled up. They pulled off and waved off on it, but that was a close call there, and, coming back from Wotje, we ran into a Japanese ship. … We bombed that. It was docked at an island. We went around the island and came down, and then, flew up over the island, come down and dropped our bombs, but we didn't sink the ship, as far as I could see, damaged it, but didn't sink it.

SI: When you flew on these missions, how long would they be?

HE: Well, it depended on the distance you were going. … We were based then at Tarawa. When we were on Funafuti, we'd fly five hundred miles out, a hundred miles across and five hundred miles back, it was on patrol duties, and we were supposedly guarding the Battle of Truk, the Island of Truk, at that time. That took about seven, eight hours of flying, and the bombing missions were usually about a two to three-hour flight to get to the point we were going to attack, like Kwajalein, for instance. We dropped aerial mines in Kwajalein's harbor, that was only about an hour-and-a-half away from where we were, … from Tarawa, but Nauru was about three hours away, … all of our activity was in the Marshalls and Gilberts, after we left Funafuti. … We lost three planes all together, … out of the fifteen. We had eighteen crews and we lost three of those planes, and the crews, too. They all [perished]; there were no survivors. … Well, the first one was … Lieutenant (Parker?), and that was on a routine patrol flight and he ran into some Japanese fighters. They shot him down. The second one was this … Lieutenant Cunningham, … who was on the Nauru flight, and then, the third one was the fellow that I [knew]. I told you there were six of us in a tent and one of the fellows in the tent was a tail gunner … in his crew, not my crew. … He and I were sleeping side by side that night and I couldn't get him to shut up for anything. He just wanted to talk and talk and talk, and he had to get up early in the morning and go on patrol. … Finally, I said to him, we called him "Bonehead," finally, I said to him, "Bonehead, go to sleep, will you? because you've got to get up early and I've got to get up early, because I'm on standby for your flight," and so, he went [to] sleep. … He got up in the morning and we both went down to the airstrip at the same time, and I preflight inspected our plane. … What you had to do there was drain the water out of [the gas tanks]. If there was any water in the gasoline, it would settle to the bottom and there were petcocks in the bottom of the tanks that you had to open up and let loose, open, let the water out, if there's any in there, and then, close the petcock, and then, you had to safety wire it shut. … I had to do that with each of the gas tanks, and then, I had to get in and … start the engines up and check out the magnetos, to make sure that the drop off on the magnetos was right, and that was about it, as far as preflight checks. You made the inspection, visual inspections, of the wheels and the tail wheel, and so forth, but, then, Bonehead's flight took off. They got up about two hundred feet in the air and they dove right into the ocean and blew up … bombs on [the plane], just blew the whole darn thing up. Now, we had to take off after that, and then, fly that patrol that day. So, it's kind of scary.

SI: Was it a mechanical failure?

HE: I don't know what happened. Nobody knows what happened. The same thing happened to those two B-24s off Funafuti. They just went up and they just went into the ocean. I don't know whether it was an air problem or what it was, but something made them drop … into the ocean,

and the same thing happened with Bonehead's crew. … Nobody ever knew what [caused it], whether they had a mechanical failure or not, because they never had time to call back to give an SOS or anything. … Then, we all, most of our squadron, got Air Medals and we got that other ship coming back from Hawaii. We island hopped back … to Kane'ohe Bay and we got ten days R&R [rest and relaxation] at the Waikiki Beach Hotel there, which was a pretty upscale place, … but, five days, we only got five days of it, because a ship came in. One of those island cruisers that used to cruise over and back in peacetime, you know, bringing tourists, and so forth, came in and docked and we got on that and went back. We had a heck of a stormy sea, out two days. … They put up cots for us on the dance floor of the ship and the storm was so bad, they lost lifeboats off it and the cots went sliding across the dance floor, broke a couple of arms on people and, finally, they took the cots out and we had to sleep down on the deck, with the storm going on. It was really a rough storm. Anyway, we got back to San Francisco, Treasure Island and we went out on liberty. I went out and I bought an engagement ring for Betty that night and we got ten days' leave and ten days' travel time, and then, I went back to Iselin and we got married February 19, 1944, and so, we're going to be celebrating our sixty-fifth wedding anniversary next month.

SI: Congratulations.

HE: Thank you. I hope I'm still around next month. [laughter]

SI: Was there a certain defined tour that you had to fulfill, such as a certain number of missions that you had to fly, or was it just that your unit was recalled?

HE: Well, I don't know. … Of course, I wasn't an officer and I didn't have any inside information on how the missions were planned and/or how many missions were planned or anything else. … I just knew that while we were there, we did a lot of low-level bombing. We did drop aerial mines and did patrols. I don't know whether they had any [quota], what the rules were, as far as your number of missions were concerned. … I always heard of the guys that were flying the B-17s and the B-24s over Germany, had so many missions, and then, they came home, but … I don't know whether that applied to us or not. … I never thought about it, I guess, at that time, though, and I didn't know … anything much about the war going on over Germany. …

SI: You described the one mission over Nauru in detail. Would you always fly in formation or was that special?

HE: Yes. If you were making a low-level attack, you usually flew in, seven planes, that was about half the squadron, would fly in two Vs and a single. On a low-level attack, usually, they did that, but flying dropping aerial bombs, it was usually a single-plane operation. You go in one, just drop the aerial mines, and hope we didn't get shot down by the antiaircraft fire.

SI: I have heard from other airmen that, when you go through flak, your plane often gets hit and gets peppered with holes. Was that the case with your plane?

HE: Go through what?

SI: Would your plane get hit with flak and actually get holes in it?

HE: Get hit with flak? Yes, well, we never did get hit in the air, but the day before we left Tarawa, the Japanese bombed us and we were the last plane to leave Tarawa, because my pilot was the test pilot and they wanted to make sure that all the planes were all right. Well, we took off in this plane. We were going to Baker Island and Johnson Island, just island hopping back to Hawaii, and we got up and the engine on my side of the plane was just shaking, and I told the pilot, "We'd better take it back." I said, "It's not going to make it." So, we landed back on Tarawa and there was another plane there that had been left behind to be destroyed, I guess. It was full of holes, but it was from the bombs, Japanese bombings, it wasn't from any, I don't think, from anybody's mission flight. We got on that plane and … there must have been fifteen holes in the darn thing, in [the] fuselage and the wings, and he and I and the radioman, after we landed, we took it up for a test flight, and the pilot says to me, "What do you think, Howard?" I said, "It sounds all right to me. Let's go home," and so, we landed, we picked up the other three fellows in the crew and we didn't have a bit of trouble. We landed at Johnson Island and Baker Island, and each island we landed on, one of our planes was stuck because of engine problems, or one thing or another, and being the last ones off, we were almost the first ones back, because of the [problems encountered by] some of the other planes. … We landed in Hickam Field; we didn't go over to Kane'ohe Bay and we were second or third plane that got back there, I guess.

SI: You mentioned that there were not too many fighter attacks. Were you mostly under attack from flak?

HE: No, the one plane got shot down by Japanese fighters, the first one to go down, and the Cunningham plane, … which had [been] damaged, got the engine shot out and was flying on one engine, he got shot down by fighters that took off after him, but we always caught flak on these parachute mines that we were dropping. We dropped them from eighteen hundred feet and took off. We always caught flak then, but our plane, from some reason, we never got hit on any of the ones that we made on that.

SI: As a gunner, did you ever have an opportunity to use your guns or to engage a target?

HE: No, I never did then, and the only time we used our guns was on the first flight over Nauru, when we were shooting back at the guns that were shooting at us on the cliff side, and, of course, I wasn't a gunner then, I was the plane captain. … I had no duty to do except sit there and be scared, because the second pilot took over my place when we were … close to the target, you know, there, so [that] you'd have two pilots in the seat, instead of a pilot and a plane captain, and so, … all I would do is look out the hatch on top. There was a hatch that the navigator used to navigate with, a little bubble, and I'd stand out and look at that, and all I could see is all these tracer bullets and everything flying at us, but I don't think we ever got hit then, by any of them.

SI: As the plane captain, what were some problems that would come up in flight that you would have to deal with?

HE: What problems?

SI: You talked about all the checks that you had to make before taking off. In flight, were there problems that would come up that you would have to deal with?

HE: Yes. We had one, only one, incident. We took off one day to go on a patrol. We got up. I was sitting in … the copilot's seat and, all of a sudden, the engine on my side, went out, quit. So, I reached down quickly, and there's a cross valve that you could turn on that feeds both engines from the same tank. So, I just reached down and turned that on and the engine caught all right, but what had happened, then, the pilot flew around a little bit, to see what caused the engine to go out. … The outer wing tanks had only thirty gallons of gas in each. … As I said earlier, we used fifty gallons an hour on a takeoff, because you've got your engines wide open, and so, they only had thirty gallons of gasoline in it. The inboard tanks had 160 gallons each in it and the neoprene tank, under the navigator's table, had about … two hundred gallons in it. On longer flights than that, we carried drop tanks that were shaped like torpedoes, hang under the outer wing, but, every time you dropped them, they tip up like that and knock a hole in your wing. So, nobody liked to fly with drop tanks, needless to say, because we didn't want to be punching holes in the wings. … What happened on this instance that I was talking about [was], the plane had been in the ground crew workshop the night before and somebody had taken that valve out and put it in backwards, so that we actually took off on the thirty-gallon tank on my side rather than the 160-gallon tank, which you'd normally take-off on. So, the thing was in backwards and it was draining gas from the thirty-gallon tank and not the 160-gallon tank, and that's what happened. The tank went empty all of a sudden, just knocked the engine out. So, we discovered that because we kept flying around and switching until [the engine started]. You've got a switch, … electric switch, on your dashboard, which you can check each gas meter, each gas tank meter, and, when I flicked the thirty-gallon tank, it was empty and I couldn't understand that, because it hadn't been used. Of course, I didn't know the thing was in backwards there. We kept turning around. We found out that that's what happened, because this 160-gallon tank on my side was so full, the thirty-gallon tank was empty, and that knocked our engine out. … That might have hurt us if we hadn't been taking off at that time. Well, that's the only instance that I can remember where we had any problem.

SI: What was the relationship like between the officers and the enlisted men in the unit and among the crews?

HE: It was a good relationship. We didn't know it at the time, but, when we were off, every Saturday, our pilot gave us a fifth of whiskey, scotch, bourbon, or whatever. Every flight, we got two bottles of beer and a jigger of brandy, [to] calm our nerves, but they had taken care of that when we left the States. They had these big crates full of whisky that they were passing out to the enlisted men, once a week, and two bottles of beer every day, and so, you know, there was a good relationship. … They'd come around and sit down and talk, chat with you, and so forth. It was a very pleasant relationship, … especially [with] me being the plane captain. He'd talk to me a lot about the plane, you know, how it checked out in the morning, and so forth, … as far as the condition of the airplane was, on visual inspection, and what the magneto readings were when you turned on the magnetos. …

SI: In general, was your unit well-supplied with spare parts and everything that you needed to keep the planes up and running?

HE: As far as I know. Of course, I never got involved in the spare parts part, because the ground crew, generally speaking, handled all of that. … Any parts that had to be replaced were replaced when the plane was on the ground and they had the part for it. They would put it in that night or whenever they needed to. … Other than working on changing the engines at British Samoa, I didn't have anything to do with parts, the major parts. We just took the old engines off and mounted the new ones on and the ground crew then hooked everything up. … I was helping the ground crew at that point in time, … and there was usually a chief petty officer in charge of overseeing the installation of the new engines.

SI: You came back to the United States in November of 1944.

HE: … No, in January of '44.

SI: January of 1944, okay.

HE: Yes. We were out there from Mother's Day in '43 through January 1944.

SI: Once you came back to the States, were you detached from the unit or did you receive different duties?

HE: Well, when I came back to the States, … as I said, I was given ten days leave and ten days travel time; it took my mother-in-law fourteen days to plan the wedding, so, we didn't have much of a honeymoon. We got three or four days in New York City, but the fellow that was in my squadron from Allentown, Pennsylvania, got married before he went over and he hadn't had a honeymoon. So, he and his new wife came to our wedding and went on a honeymoon with us. Another fellow that I palled around with a lot, a fellow named Francis Drury Dugan, from Boston, he got married same time in Boston that I did in New Jersey. … After our leave was over, the three wives came out to California, while we were based there, and they all got pregnant about the same time. We sent them back home, and then, we lived on the base. We rented apartments in Oakland, California. The fellow from Allentown and I, and our wives, shared one apartment, but he got on the night shift at the base and I was on the day shift, and it didn't work out too well, because she did all her laundry and eating, and so forth, at different times. So, they finally moved out and got another apartment. So, it was just my wife and I then. …

SI: Did you have different duties then?

HE: Well, … there was a first class aviation machinist named Bill Jones. … He and I, I was a first class petty officer by that time, we were put in charge of operations in HEDRON-8 Squadron, they called it, … at the naval air station, and it was our job; we had a whole crew of sailors that worked with us, seamen and lower ranked sailors. Our duties were to move planes, if they were a big plane, like the PBM, … that would have to be towed up on the shore after it landed in the water, and then, you'd move it around to where … it was needed to be worked on. … Our crew would do that with a tractor that they could latch onto the front of the plane, and then, they had to have a man at each end of the wing, guiding you through the planes that were

all parked … and into whatever hangar it was going to go to, and so, we did that. There was a lieutenant in charge of operations and Jones and I answered to him. We knew what we were supposed to do and we'd get work orders and send our help out to pick up the plane, bring it into the hangar that … they were supposed to bring it to and park it in there, and then, come back and wait for another job of towing and moving planes, and that went on all day long. … It was a busy group that we had, moving planes around, but that was really the only duties we had, just spotting planes for a repair.

SI: How long were you out there doing that?

HE: Well, I was there, got there in January '44 and I left there in October '45, to be discharged on the East Coast. … I was discharged on October 19, 1945, and left the West Coast about five days before that. We came back by train, from California to the East.

SI: What do you remember about the end of the war and V-J Day?

HE: Well, I remember the war ended on August 14, as far as Japan was concerned, and in May as far as Germany and the Italians were concerned, I guess, and I remember a lot of celebrations going on and servicemen kissing strangers, and so forth. … It was a good time, but I was ready to get out of the service about then. [laughter] … I'd spent three years and eight [months], just four months short of four years, in the Navy.

SI: When did you meet your wife? How did you meet your wife?

HE: How did I what?

SI: How did you meet your wife?

HE: I grew up with her.

SI: Okay.

HE: We grew up in the same town. I'm six years older than my wife is, so, she was only seventeen and I was twenty-three when we married, … but I've known her and her brother, Ed, who died last year, all of their lives. We all went to the same Catholic church, and I can remember, Betty would be coming in [to church] that high [tall] and I was that high [tall]. [laughter] Small town, Iselin had twenty-five hundred people then. I think it's something like forty thousand now, and it's heavily occupied with, they call it, the natives there call it "Islim," because there's a large population of the Hindus there. We haven't, I haven't, been back to New Jersey [in] a long time. When we did, it was to visit Betty's brother and wife, but they lived in Elizabeth, Bound Brook, and Lakewood, not Iselin. Edward, Betty's brother, had been in the Navy also, and graduated from college a year after I did then became an FBI agent. He was a Fordham graduate, played football there, and all of the three years I was at Rutgers, we played Fordham and beat them every year.

SI: How soon after you were discharged did you go back into college?

HE: Well, I was coming out of Long Island when I got discharged. I caught a Long Island train into Penn Station, had my sea bag on my shoulder. I was walking across the station to catch the train to Iselin, and I heard this, "Hey, Ellis," and I turned. It was the stationmaster. He says, "You out of the Navy?" I said, "Yes." He says, "When you coming back to work?" I said, "I don't know." I said, "I just got discharged a couple hours ago." He says, "How about coming in Monday?" This was a Friday, and I said, "Okay, I'll see what happens when I talk [with and] see my wife," and I caught the train, got back to Iselin and I went back to work on Monday. … That was October 22, I worked until January, and all that time, we were living with Betty's parents and her father kept after me that I've got to go back to school on the GI Bill and finish my education, and I kept stalling about it. Finally, I decided that's what I'd do, and so, I went back to school in January of … '46 and finished up in January '49.

SI: Did you have any trouble readjusting to school after being away for so long?

HE: Well, one thing I learned how to do [was], … Betty's parents were living in a house that had a basement and I built a little desk down next to the coal pile, and Mr. Breen, her father, had a portable typewriter he let me use. I studied hard every night and typed out everything, I guess I kept them awake late, clacking on the … typewriter, but, anyway, that's when I really learned how to study, and I did, and I got, generally speaking, good marks. … It was uneventful. Going back, I didn't have the fun and the congenialities that existed in my freshman year, because I felt like I didn't have time to do it, and I wanted to finish up, with the three years that I didn't get, as quickly as I could to get out and earn a living. So, I didn't [get into college life]. I was more like an over-aged senior, I guess, since I was twenty-seven years old when I graduated, and I had given away a lot of time in-between. So, I didn't have the [same experience]. I remember, as a freshman, I got hazed at the fraternity. We had to stay up twenty-four hours and paint the walls of the fraternity rooms and we had to wear a dead fish and some other junk around our neck all that time, to create an odor, and we had to go out to NJC [New Jersey College for Women] and bow down to all the ladies out there. You know, it was fun, in a way, but I didn't have that feeling when I went back to school. …

SI: Could you see a real difference between the veterans who were in school and the younger students who had just come out of high school?

HE: Yes. Oh, you could tell the veterans, because they were older and they were, like I was, there to get their education and not to fool around. There wasn't too much partying going on or anything like that among the veterans, and a lot of them were living out in barracks over in; where is it? Do you know where?

SI: The Hillside Campus, across the river?

HE: … What's the Army camp out there?

SI: Camp Kilmer.

HE: Yes, Camp Kilmer. There were a lot of them living in Camp Kilmer and … trying to get through. We only got 115 dollars a month if you were married, and, under the [GI Bill], and I had to work. Summers, I worked for a dollar an hour, which was only forty bucks a week, … doing landscape work for a guy that owned a couple of … tractors. So, it was a period of my life that I was looking forward to finishing, in those three years.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Is there anything else that you would like to add for the record or anything that we skipped over?

HE: No. We only had one child, and he got shifted around a lot, because we were moving a lot when he was growing up, and he ended up graduating from high school in Washington, DC, … or, actually, Bethesda. He went on to Mount St. Mary's in Pennsylvania. … He graduated from Mount St. Mary's College, a history major. He spent fourteen months in the Vietnam. … So, those were rough times for us, too, when he was over in Vietnam, but, no, there's nothing else that I can think of. …

SI: Was he in the infantry?

HE: Yes, he was. He was a candidate for OCS, but, in training, he jumped off a moving vehicle and got a splinter fracture in his leg, which kept him out of OCS, and they sent him to banking school. So, he really never saw any action in Vietnam. He was … in banking, taking care of payroll, I guess, but the fourteen months he was over there, … he said he could see the fighting outside of the base he was in, but he never got involved in it.

SI: Did you ever give him any advice on what to do, based on your own experiences?

HE: Did I ever what?

SI: Based on your experiences as a veteran, did you give him any advice?

HE: No. I never told him what to do. He was a product of the '60s. He tended to be more like a hippie, I suppose you might say, the way they were talking around that time, and I didn't see that much of him while he was in college, but I saw him all the time he was in high school. We had an exchange student from Paris, France, come live with us for a year, when we were living in Washington. … When he came over here, he wanted to go to Catholic school. So, we sent him to Catholic school and Mike was going to public school. So, they weren't really close. Mike wanted to have somebody that he could buddy around with, but … they never were the same personality type, … they were friendly, but they were never close. … The boy's name was Philippe, and we were hoping that Mike and Philippe would have a good time together, but they didn't. Philippe's parents, … before they let him come over here, told him to watch out for the American housewife's cooking. They said, "They used too much salt and pepper and spices," and so, he was afraid to eat when he first came over here, but he got used to it and he loved it. He liked to go out and get pizza with Mike. …

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add, anything else you would like to say for the record?

HE: I can't think of anything, Shaun. We're enjoying our two grandchildren, Sean and Laura. Laura just got married before Christmas. … She's over in Ireland now, on her honeymoon with her husband. He's a law student. He's still got a year-and-a-half of law school to go through when he gets back. So, she's teaching in Collierville, Tennessee. … Coincidentally, the headmaster at the Collierville Academy where she's teaching was the headmaster here in Canton when she and Sean were going to Canton Academy. So, … he knows her well and also knows Sean well. Sean played football for four years here, at Canton Academy.

SI: That is great. Thank you very much for all your time. I appreciate it.

HE: Oh, you're welcome. I didn't mean to take up three hours of it. [laughter]

SI: No, that is just about the average length of the interviews. I appreciate all your time.

HE: Yes.

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

Reviewed by Maria Juliano 12/9/09
Reviewed by Melinda Kinhofer 12/9/09
Reviewed by Cody Martin 12/9/09
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 12/10/09
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 12/15/09
Reviewed by Howard J. Ellis 2/19/10