RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH SAMUEL J. ERRERA

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Dr. Samuel J. Errera on November 3, 1995, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and …

Troy Dayton: Troy Dayton.

KP: I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your parents. Both your parents came from Italy.

Samuel Errera: They both came over from Italy at a very young age. They were both about four years old.

KP: Did they come over with their family?

SE: They came over with their parents, yes.

KP: Did they initially settle in South Jersey?

SE: Yes. They settled in South Jersey, initially, and pretty much remained there for the rest of their lives.

KP: Did they initially come to the Hammonton area or did they go to Camden, or another part?

SE: My mother was in Clementon for awhile, but, my father, I think, started right in a little town called Rosedale, which is two miles from Hammonton.

KP: What did your father's and mother's parents do?

SE: They were farmers. Both of my grandparents were farmers. By the time I knew them, they each had their own farms. I don't know what they did when they first arrived, but, they had their farms by the time I came along.

KP: I get the feeling that both your mother and father grew up working on a farm.

SE: They did when they were children, but, that's, that may have been until they were seventeen, or something like that, and then, they went on to different things.

KP: Both of your parents had only a little bit of schooling.

SE: Yes.

KP: What shortened their education so much?

SE: I think it was the time and their circumstances. Education was not, I guess, high on the priority list at those times, or the affordability list. Mostly, I think, they had to go to work.

KP: Your father worked as a road foreman.

SE: He was a road foreman. He worked in a shoe factory for awhile and, for most of the time, he was a carpenter.

KP: As a road foreman, where did he work, in a local town or for the state?

SE: I'm not sure. I think he worked for a contractor. I think he was a contractor's foreman on highway work. Again, his time working on the highway was before I was old enough to realize what he was doing. The things I remember him doing are working in a shoe factory and working as a carpenter.

KP: When he worked as a carpenter, did he work in his own shop or did he work for someone else?

SE: Mostly, he was the prime contractor. He hired some other people at times, especially early in World War II, when there was a building boom around the defense establishments, but, for a good part of the time, he worked with my brother, my oldest brother, or one of my brothers-in-law.

KP: It sounds like your family had a rough time during the Great Depression.

SE: We always had food. We always had a place to live. We always had adequate clothing. We did not have a great deal of surplus money at the time. In fact, my mother then went to work in a clothing factory, when we kids were old enough. She didn't have to be around all the time, because there were six children, of which I'm the sixth, and so, she went to work when things were really tough, but, like I said, I always had food, clothing, a warm place to sleep, so, I was not deprived in any way.

KP: Did your parents own their house or did they rent?

SE: They were purchasing their house. They finally got it paid for by the time I was in the Army.

KP: In your day, South Jersey was very rural.

SE: Yes. It was a rural area. It was farm country. Hammonton happens to be halfway between Philadelphia and Atlantic City on the White Horse Pike, and, therefore, in the days of wagon travel, it was the midway stopping point for people traveling between those two cities. That's why the early town grew up around what we used to call Elvin's Corner on the White Horse Pike and Bellevue Avenue in Hammonton. Later, the railroad came through, and it came through around a mile away from Elvin's Corner, and the town pretty much gravitated toward the railroad station.

KP: What was the make-up of Hammonton? What do you remember of the make-up? How many Italian families were there in town?

SE: This was a population of 8,000 and I think considerably over half of it were probably Italians, most of them engaged in farming, although, as I mentioned with my mom, it was also a clothing factory area. We had a number of shops that were making men's clothing, for example.

KP: I read that Hammonton held quite a large carnival and festival in July for Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

SE: Yes. That's right. The 16th of July was a big festival celebration each year, and we did have a carnival and a church procession, and it was really a big event in Hammonton, forty or fifty years ago.

KP: It sounds like you remember some of those festivals quite well.

SE: Oh, sure. My house, or our house, was three blocks from the carnival grounds, and, on the 16th of July, a huge crowd of people would come to Hammonton, and one of the things we did was park cars in our yard. We made some money by parking cars in our yard on the 16th of July, but, that was a big holiday in those days. They would have a procession from the church, I don't know, a three-mile trek, I guess, then, back to the church, and thousands of people participated in the procession.

KP: How religiously observant were your parents? Did they attend Mass regularly?

SE: No. When I was growing up, at least, my mom made sure I went to Mass. It was only later in her life, when things slowed down for her, when she had more time, that she went to Mass regularly. My dad was never a regular participant, but, again, he would scowl at me if I wasn't going to Mass.

KP: I have heard that before.

SE: I don't think you will hear anything different than you've already heard several times before.

KP: There was also a very large fruit cooperative in Hammonton.

SE: Yes. As a matter-of-fact, [laughter] in my high school days, in the summers, I worked in the Hammonton Cooperative Fruit Auction Association, Incorporated, and we used to have a big farmers' auction, … we're talking in the early 1940s, and the farmers used to come in with their little truckloads of mostly small fruit, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, peaches, and they would come in with their little farm trucks, with several crates of small fruit, and we would have buyers there, who had large trucks, and then, they would haul the fruit to Philadelphia, New York City, Boston, Washington, and all the cities in the area. I would write the sales slips, as the auctioneer would auction off the fruit to the buyers.

KP: Looking back, that sounds very quaint.

SE: Yes. Now, when I go past that auction, it's not there anymore, virtually, because, now, well, transportation has changed a good deal and the situation has changed a good deal.

KP: Growing up, how did your parents feel about education? What did they envision for you and your siblings?

SE: Well, my oldest brother was not much interested in education. The second brother did go through high school, okay; maybe it was partly because he played football, basketball, and baseball. Therefore, he enjoyed the extracurricular activities involved in going to school, but, he graduated from high school. None of my three sisters, however, did graduate. The oldest one, I guess, was not particularly interested and she was more interested in going to work. The second one got as far as ninth grade, and that was about the time my mom had decided that she had to go to work at the factory, and she thought that maybe my sister had to stay home to take care of me, but, what happened was, I was four years old, and somebody at the school decided that I could start kindergarten early, so that my sister could continue to go to school, but, unfortunately, she didn't complete high school, anyway, and neither did my other sister. So, my second oldest brother and I were the only ones to finish high school.

KP: In other words, you stand out in your family as the only one to have gone to college.

SE: Yes, and for that, I really owe a debt of gratitude to my high school principal. When I was going to high school, like I said, I had been working at the Hammonton Cooperative Fruit Auction Association, and I used to write the sales slips, but, I was also the bookkeeper.

KP: Through the entire auction?

SE: Yes, for the auction.

KP: I read that it was a million dollars a year.

SE: Yes. In fact, later on, the city treasurer used to be the treasurer for the auction, and he taught me to do the auditing for the auction, so, I had a fairly nice job there at the auction, and I was taking a commercial course in high school. Early in my senior year, the high school principal called me into his office. This is now 1942, okay, and he said, "The Army and the Navy are sending people to college on the A-12, V-12 and V-5 programs, if they can pass certain qualifying tests." I had been taking an extra math course. I had taken algebra and trig, so I had enough credits to graduate. He suggested that I drop my typing course and the shorthand course that I was taking and go sit in on the chemistry course and physics course. He said, "You don't need any of those courses to have enough credits to graduate, but," he said, "if you … sit in on this chemistry course and physics course, you might do well enough on the exam so that the Army will send you to school." So, that's what I did. I took the exam then, in, I guess, Spring of '43, just shortly before I graduated, and a couple of months later, I guess it was a Sunday night, I got a telegram saying; no, that's not quite right. I must have gotten the results of the exam saying that I passed and I should go enlist. I was only seventeen at the time. So, I was told to enlist in the Enlisted Reserve Corps in Camden, and then, await further instructions. So, I enlisted and, a short time later, if my recollection is correct,

on a Sunday evening in September 1943, I got a telegram saying, "Report to Grand Central Station, tomorrow morning, at nine o'clock." So, with a little help from friends, [laughter] I got to Trenton, by car, and then, took the train to Grand Central Station, and, from there, we were sent up to Syracuse University for a few days, and then, eventually, to Auburn, the City of Auburn, where the Army had a unit at what had been Auburn Theological Seminary. We had a unit of ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program) Reserve, again, a whole bunch of seventeen-year-olds who were not old enough to go on active duty in the Army. That's how I spent six months there, at Auburn, which was kind of a Syracuse off-campus site, and had two terms of basic engineering courses.

KP: This probably would never have happened if not for your principal.

SE: That's right. It probably never would have happened. I owe him a debt of gratitude. There's one more fellow that I'll mention later.

KP: Okay.

SE: A Rutgers fellow. I became eighteen years old in January of '44 and the program was such that when we turned eighteen, we were ready for active duty. So, we were supposed to go to basic training, and, according to the grand plan, after basic training, we would go back to school, but, things were happening over in Europe that messed up the grand plan. They decided they did not need nearly as many engineers, or doctors, or whatever, as they had anticipated; what they really needed was infantrymen. So, a whole group of us had gone from Auburn/Syracuse to Fort Dix for induction in the regular Army, and then, presumably, to go to basic training, but, while we were there, the program was ended, or terminated. It really was. So, we hung around Fort Dix for four weeks or so, until they decided what they were going to do with us. I think they knew what they were going to do, and so, it was a matter of where, and so, from Fort Dix, we went to, or I went to, Camp Wolters, Texas, for basic training in the infantry.

KP: I just want to back up a little. How did your parents and yourself feel about World War II? Did they have any ties to Italy?

SE: Oh, no. There was never any concern about that; at least none was ever expressed to me. They were saddened at the event, but, I think they were kind of strong on being good Americans and doing what duty called us to do.

KP: A number of Italian-Americans had strong yearnings to go back to Italy and, as a matter-of-fact, large numbers did. Was there any of that feeling in your family?

SE: I don't ever remember that. My parents were from Sicily, okay, and that was probably one of the poorer sections of Italy, so, there may have been less incentive, in that case, than there might have been from somebody who came from Rome, Venice, or somewhere else.

KP: In other words, they were very happy here. You got the sense that they were very happy to be here.

SE: Oh, yes, very definitely.

KP: Were they active in any Italian-American organizations as you were growing up?

SE: Not really. There was a little club, just a couple of blocks from us, called the Sons of Italy, but, my dad, he was never a member. … To some extent, it was a drinking club, you know, they had a bar and stuff like that, and he was never into that very much, so, he was never a member of that group, as far as I know.

KP: Your father was a Republican in the 1930s, when the Democrats were dominating the political landscape.

SE: Yes. Especially among Catholics and Italians, why was he a Republican? I'm not sure I can answer that. … As a carpenter, he worked with bankers and what's the other name of people engaged in housing?

KP: Contractors?

SE: No, the financiers. …

KP: Mortgage lenders?

SE: Yes, those kinds of people. I don't know if that rubbed off on to him or if he got the business attitude that prompted him to be a Republican.

KP: I know that some people were Republican because of their job, like if they were police officers or something, but, it seems as if your father had other reasons.

SE: Again, I think the town of Hammonton probably had a fair number of Republicans in it, strangely enough. I'm not really sure what led him to be a Republican.

KP: Did any of your brothers or sisters work in any New Deal programs in the 1930s? Where did most of your brothers and sisters work in the 1930s and early 1940s? What kind of jobs did they find?

SE: Again, my oldest brother worked in a clothing factory. My second brother worked on a milk truck, a milk wagon when he first started out, because it was a horse and wagon, then, and he was doing that all through high school, by the way, and I guess he spent fifty years working on a milk truck, and he retired. He was with at least two different companies. First, it was a local company, and then, Abbott's absorbed the local company, and so, he worked for Abbott's for a number of years, and he worked on the milk truck until he retired. That's the one who went through high school. By the way, I neglected to mention, in filling out that form, that my oldest brother was in the Navy in World War II. I think I somehow forgot to mention this.

KP: Which theater did he serve in?

SE: I think he was mostly in the Pacific.

KP: Your oldest brother would have probably been called up very early in the war. Was that the case?

SE: Yes, you know, I can't remember which of us went in first. … Actually, I guess he was about seventeen years older than I, so that he was on the upper age limit. I don't think they called that age limit real early, because he would have been thirty-three or something like that. You know, they actually expanded the draft. … They started with twenty-one, or something like that, you know, twenty-one to twenty-six, or something like that, the cream of the crop, and then, they reached out for more.

KP: In the 1920s, there was a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan movement and there were a number of Klan pockets in South Jersey. Do you remember any type of Klan or Nativist activity?

SE: No, I'm not aware of any of that.

KP: Were there ever any ethnic tensions between the different groups in Hammonton or in surrounding towns?

SE: I don't recall any. I think we were a pretty well integrated town. Some of my best friends were Jewish people. I'm a Catholic. There were Protestants. We had a couple of nice black families in town, too. They were a very distinct minority, but, I think the town, at that time, was quite nicely integrated.

KP: How much of a shock was Pearl Harbor to you and your family? Before Pearl Harbor, did you think that the United States would get involved in the war?

SE: I think there was concern about it, because we were all aware of 1914 and World War I and that what happened in Europe can have a distinct influence on what was going to be happening to us, so, we were concerned about it, supportive of the Allied cause and fearful of what might happen.

KP: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

SE: I remember hearing about it in school. It happened on a Sunday. I went to school on Monday morning. I don't know how we missed it Sunday, but, it seems to me that I learned about it when I was at school on Monday morning.

KP: Really? There was a lag.

SE: Yes.

KP: Did your family own a radio?

SE: Oh, yes, yes, we had a radio. I'm not sure what we were doing on that day that we missed the news, but, it seems to me that I heard about it Monday morning.

KP: You were in high school for a good part of the war. In your high school, what did you do to support the war effort? Did you do anything special, bond drives and so forth?

SE: My dad was an air raid warden, selling bonds, you know. What did we do in school? I don't remember. I guess we did have war bond drives in school, too. We anted up some money toward a war bond, you know. Hardly any of us could afford an $18.75 war bond on our own in the school year. In the summertime, when we were working, it would be different. …

KP: Were there any scrap drives or anything else that seemed memorable?

SE: I can't say I remember. I do remember, I worked at a service station and, you know, we had gas rationing.

KP: What was it like to be a service station attendant during the gas rationing period?

SE: Again, most people had accommodated to the fact, and people who need gasoline had a different type of gas stamp that enabled them to get more gas, and I'm sure there was some skullduggery going on with some of the gas with some of the stamps, but, by and large, I think it worked reasonably well.

KP: You did not encounter a lot of belligerent people.

SE: No, no.

KP: One of the problems during the war was farm labor. Men were going off into the service.

SE: You could get a deferment for farming. If you had a farm, or if you were a contributor on a farm, they were giving deferments for that activity, because, obviously, we do need somebody to prepare the food.

KP: Had you thought of taking a deferment? Would your mother have preferred that you work on your grandfather's farm, rather than be in harm's way?

SE: That was never suggested to me, or occurred to me. Some of my cousins did that, and maybe they were closer to the farm to begin with, but, obviously, neither my older brother, well, none of us did. None of us moved to the farm to avoid the draft.

TD: You were in the ASTP.

SE: ASTP Reserve, actually. [laughter]

TD: Reserve, okay. How did you react to the news that you would not be going back to school and would, in fact, be going into the infantry? Were you and the other ASTP candidates angry or did you kind of expect it?

SE: Yes, we were disappointed, but, the way things were going, it was no big surprise that ASTP was not going to be able to be continued. You know, the newspapers were carrying the stories, the discussions, about the problems that existed, the need for infantry, the fact that there might be a demise to the A-12, V-12, V-5 programs.

TD: Going back a little bit, your mother, your sisters, and one of your brothers worked in the garment factories. Did any of them join a union in the 1930s?

SE: Yes, yes.

TD: Did they all join the garment workers union?

SE: Yes, all of them were members of the union. I can remember when, let's see, a forty-hour, thirty-five cents an hour contract was signed. Does that come to $14.40? That must have been thirty-six cents an hour for a forty-hour week, $14.40 a week. This was a happy thing for them.

KP: Were they initially supportive of the union movement or did they have to be convinced of the need for it?

SE: No, I think they were probably supportive of the union activity. … I think most of the shops in town were union shops.

KP: Was there any sort of conflict between your father, a Republican, and your mother and siblings, who had joined this rather liberal union?

SE: I'm not sure the union was quite as liberal, at that time, as it is today.

KP: The Republican Party was very conservative on union issues then. Was there any give-and-take, even on a friendly basis?

SE: I don't recall that there was any concern about that. I think that my dad thought that the union was right for the garment workers, where there are several hundred people and one boss, … while in his own business, where he was an entrepreneur, on his own, he didn't feel the need for unionism.

KP: Had you done much traveling before your trip to Grand Central Station? It sounds like that was a big adventure for you.

SE: I think I had been to Washington once, with my brother-in-law and my sister. I'd been to Philadelphia and Atlantic City. That was probably the extent of my travels, up until Grand Central Station. That was a whole new world. [laughter]

KP: Before your principal came along, you had never conceived of yourself going to college.

SE: That's right. Somehow, we just did not have the awareness, I guess, because we know, now, kids can go to school even if they can't afford tuition, but, in 1940, I really wasn't aware of that sort of thing.

KP: At Auburn, you were in uniform and you had to stand in formation, but, in other ways, it was similar to the college experience.

SE: Oh, yes. We had a full basic engineering course, and, when I came here, I had virtually a full year's credit toward my bachelors of engineering degree, here at Rutgers, so, it was a fairly stiff course. They worked us good. [laughter]

KP: How well were your classmates able to handle the curriculum at Auburn? In other words, were you aware of people flunking out of the program?

SE: I can't remember anyone flunking out, I don't know, but, I can't think of any offhand. Of course, all the people that were in that program were pretty good students, otherwise, they wouldn't have been in the program. There may have been some who may have left because of the Army type existence. Again, I don't remember, but, I do remember talking to one guy who said that he doesn't remember a thing about Auburn. He's totally blanked that part of his life out of his mind. [laughter]

KP: How rigorous was the Army discipline at Auburn?

SE: Fairly rigorous. We had to be up when it was time to get up, it was lights out, when it was lights out, formations at the given times, PT, close order drill, plus, the regular academic regime. … It was a very closely regulated life.

KP: You were also far from home, relatively speaking. Were you able to see your parents at all that year?

SE: I think we went home for Christmas, for one of the holidays, I think it was Thanksgiving or Christmas, but, we did get home for one of the holidays. Of course, we wrote back and forth, so, there was adequate contact.

KP: What would you do for fun on the weekends, when you were given a leave or a pass for the day?

SE: The one thing I remember doing on a weekend, a friend and I hitchhiked from Auburn to Niagara Falls. Neither of us had ever seen Niagara Falls. So, we had a three-day weekend, and, for some reason, we decided we would go to Niagara Falls, and we'd hitchhike there. In those days, hitchhiking was a perfectly respectable thing to do. He and I got out on the road and we had five consecutive rides before a car ever passed us. The first car that came along picked us up and took us as far as he was going and that happened a total of five times before a car passed us by. So, we

got to Niagara Falls in pretty good order. We had a little more trouble getting back, because of a snowstorm. I don't know if you ever heard of Batavia, New York, but, we were stranded in Batavia, New York, in a snowstorm, stranded only because there were no cars moving. There was nobody coming by to pick us up. Finally, somebody came along and gave us a ride, but, that was the spirit of the times. If there was a serviceman along the side of the road, you stopped and picked him up.

KP: I know that some men commuted to Rutgers by hitchhiking. It was more accepted then.

SE: I would go home hitchhiking, from Rutgers, again, my friend and I would, because there was no good public transportation to get from New Brunswick to Hammonton, so, hitchhiking was the fastest way. We did that a number of times. Coming back, there was a fellow from Atlantic City who had a van type of vehicle and we usually arranged a ride back with him, because it would be at night. It's better to hitchhike in daytime than at night.

KP: Did you date at all when you were up in Syracuse?

SE: Syracuse? No, I don't think we did at all.

KP: You were, in many ways, off on your own.

SE: Yes, I remember that trip to Niagara Falls. I remember going home with another guy in the group from Lafayette, for Thanksgiving. We used to go downtown in Auburn. I guess, mainly, our activities were sports, playing ball, and that sort of thing.

KP: How did you like engineering? You ended up majoring in civil engineering. At that point, would you have wanted to study engineering in college?

SE: I guess, the fact that my dad worked on a highway, you know, and that he was a carpenter, both of those things kind of have an engineering tilt to them, so, civil engineering kind of came natural to me. There wasn't any big change. In fact, … I mentioned that my dad had several men working for him when they were doing house construction related to defense activities, and I used to do the bookkeeping for him, then, and write out the checks for the payroll for the folks that were working for him, and that sort of thing; so, it was close to the construction area.

KP: It sounds like World War II really made a difference in your father's business.

SE: Yes.

KP: How many men did he employ at that point?

SE: I think he may have had up to a dozen, at one point. In addition, he built a chicken house. We had a fair-sized yard, and meat was scarce, and they were encouraging people to do what you could to help the war effort, to provide food, so, he built a chicken house and had a couple of hundred chickens, too.

KP: Did he sell eggs and fowl locally?

SE: Locally. The local people would come and, I guess, I can remember him, on Saturdays, delivering stuff. People would come to the house for eggs.

KP: What type of defense related work did your father do during the war?

SE: It was building houses, near the shipyard, for example.

KP: The Camden Shipyard?

SE: Yes, and others, RCA, and all the other defense activities, but, he was building houses for several other projects.

KP: Do you have any other memories of the Reserve ASTP or the other candidates you met there?

SE: I'll be visiting, next Friday, a good friend from my ASTP Reserve days.

KP: You stayed in touch with some of the other men.

SE: Oh, yes, with this one, Jim Bain, in particular. We were roommates and we got along fine. In fact, … we had kind of lost touch during the war, he was injured, and hospitalized, but, after the war, he figured he could call Hammonton, and ask for someone named Errera, and get in touch with me, and it happened that he asked the operator for someone named Errera in Hammonton, and she said, "We have several," and, I guess, one of them that she mentioned was Peter Errera, and Jim said, "That sounds right. Let's try him." He called my brother and found out where I was. Like I said, I'll be visiting him next week.

KP: Is he also in engineering?

SE: No, no. He did not go back to college after the war. He's a very bright young man. He went to work for Bakelite. Anyway, he worked in the chemical processing industry for a number of years, until he retired. He chose not to go back to school, but, he did very well. He was bright enough so that he could do well at whatever he chose to do.

KP: You waited around Fort Dix for a long time. A number of people have told me that waiting at Fort Dix was not a very pleasant experience.

SE: Again, I may have been lucky, but, somehow, once in awhile the Army puts two and two together you know, they said this guy can type so they sent me over to the reception center and I worked at the reception center for a few weeks while they decided what to do with us. So, I wasn't just hanging around.

KP: So, you had a job?

SE: Yes. I had a contributing job.

KP: I know a lot of people said they were in KP those weeks and it was horrible and they were stuck.

SE: I was lucky, I guess. I worked in the reception center with the WACs. There were a couple of us guys there. The WACs would invite us to take them to the movies, the theater on base, so that they weren't going in unescorted. [laughter] They would invite us to escort them to the movies. They were a few years older than us, but, that was okay.

KP: It sounds like those four weeks were a lot of fun, since you had this little job and you were meeting these WACs.

SE: You know, I never really got to know any of the WACs. We enjoyed their company while we were all there together and there was also the suspense about what was going to become of us. So, we were happy when we finally did get our assignments and got on with the business.

KP: Were you actually receiving people as they came into Fort Dix?

SE: I received my best friend from high school when he came in. We didn't do the whole process, we did part of the process. I remember that I signed him up for the National Service Life Insurance. I filled out the form for him to take out insurance, which the Army was offering. Unfortunately, he was killed. I wished he never used that policy, but, he did.

KP: Well, it was fairly crucial that he took out that policy.

SE: Yes, that was some help to his family, I'm sure.

KP: Many veterans can recall their initial contact with the Army's reception system because the experience was so memorable. Did you get the sense that people were stunned by the process and being in the Army?

SE: Oh, there were some of those. There were some of those who said, "What am I doing here?" [laughter] Most of the people, I think, were in-tune to the fact that this was not like Vietnam, or any other places that we had a big division among the citizens of, "Should we be there?" or, "Should we not be there?" I think that in World War II, it was generally accepted that we had to do what had to be done and most of the people were fully in-tune and decided we had to go on with business; either that or we were so young, we didn't know any better. [laughter] I do sympathize with the thirty-six-year-old people that were being taken in at that time. Us eighteen-year-olds, nobody was depending on me. I had no real problems being in the Army, but, the married people who came through and did have a family, they were in a much tougher situation, emotionally, it had to be, and for any married man, it had to be a problem.

KP: You could sense that.

SE: Oh, yes.

KP: You played no role in determining where people would be sent.

SE: No.

KP: You just took them in.

SE: I was just clerking.

KP: The receiving and assignment process was relatively brief, but, it could alter men's lives. Also, the Army worked in mysterious ways; where you stood in line or when you were called could determine what you did in the service. Did you sense this when you were working there?

SE: Some of it was very haphazard, it seemed. You know, when I first went to Camp Wolters, I was in a group that made me ask myself, "What was I doing here in this group?" [laughter] I couldn't understand some of them when they spoke and they probably wondered who that strange guy was over there, too. I mean, it was a totally different group of people, and then, five or six weeks later, several weeks later, an order came through to move from the 58th Training Battalion to the 52nd Training Battalion, and the fellows there were a much more compatible group. I guess this was on a Sunday, too, but, I got the order to be moving down to the 52nd Battalion; so, put everything in a duffle bag, and put it over your shoulder, and start walking down the street, and right behind me was another guy doing the same thing. Gus and I were being transferred from one battalion to another, where we obviously fit better than we did in the previous one. The 52nd Battalion was a communications training battalion, where we could better use our abilities, I guess.

KP: Syracuse was similar to the area where you grew up, but, Texas must have been like a different world, especially in the 1930s and 1940s. What were your initial impressions of Texas? You mentioned that you could not understand some members of your initial group.

SE: Yes, but, when I got in with the 52nd Battalion, it was a good group. I shouldn't say a "good group;" the other guys were good guys, too. They were just a different social group. Camp Wolters, there, again, we're totally busy with the seventeen weeks of basic training. It was summer. We went through infiltration courses, crawling on the ground, under small arms fire overhead. The temperature was 117 degrees one day when we did this. It was survival. Survival was high on the list [laughter] of what you wanted to do.

TD: It gets hotter down there than it does up here. I go there every year.

SE: The little town that was near us, Mineral Wells, was up to here with soldiers. They had their fill of soldiers and legitimately so, I think. Even too much of a good thing can be bad, and not all things were good, but, then, if we had a weekend pass, we could go to Dallas or Fort Worth. It was great. Both of those cities would lay out the red carpet. You'd go to the USO club in Dallas and

they would ask, "We have several families here that would like you to come for dinner. Would you like to do that?" Most of us were too shy to do it; at least I was.

KP: You never took them up on it.

SE: I never took them up on it. I wish I had, now, but, both Fort Worth and Dallas were good to soldiers. The little towns closer to the camp were just over saturated with us.

KP: I would assume that there were problems with drunken soldiers getting out of control. Were there other problems?

SE: Again, I guess I lived a sheltered existence, but, the guys I was with, … I can't recall any problems. I'm sure there were probably difficulties with daughters and soldiers drinking, but, I did not experience any of that.

KP: What were the backgrounds of the men in your first training battalion, the 58th Training Battalion?

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

KP: Were they from the South?

SE: I think; I would guess they would be Southeast, I can't really remember, and, hey, some of my best friends, when I got to the 100th Division, were people from Arkansas, Kentucky, so, I don't want to label the whole group. It was just a different group.

KP: Were they from poorer backgrounds, not that you came from a wealthy background, by any means, but, were they less educated?

SE: I guess the education level was generally lower.

KP: Did you encounter anyone who could not read or write at this point?

SE: I wouldn't be surprised if there were some from that first group.

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: This was in 1944.

SE: This is when the Army was lowering their standards for allowing people into the Army. That may have had something to do with it.

KP: How many men from the ASTP went down to Texas with you?

SE: I can only remember one other fellow from Auburn who was also in the 52nd.

KP: You did not come down as part of a large group.

SE: No.

KP: Okay. Several ASTP students recall being dropped, as a unit, into a division.

SE: Well, that happened later. [Of] those of us who went into the 100th Division, the platoon I was in in the 100th, half of those guys were ASTP, from various groups, though, so, they kind of spread our Auburn group out.

KP: What do you remember most about basic training?

SE: That infiltration course, the obstacle course. We used to help the thirty-five-year-old guys over the obstacle course. Snakes, Texas has snakes. [laughter] We would encounter them as we were marching by. We didn't bother them, and they didn't bother us, but, I mentioned that the 52nd Battalion was an infantry communications training battalion; one of the means of communications was by messenger. So, if you were given a message to deliver to somebody else, by foot; … I remember running through a field, across the path was a big, black thing. I stopped and let him go through, [laughter] and then, I went through. I guess, the infiltration course, the obstacle course, and the snakes were the things I remember most, also, however, developing some good friendships, … one in particular, Ed Dillon, who is a lawyer in Little Rock, Arkansas, who is a retired lawyer now, or semi-retired, and he and I have kept in touch all through the years.

KP: You formed a number of lasting friendships in the Army.

SE: I just recently got in touch with one fellow that I had not been in touch with for forty-five years or whatever. … I'm getting ahead of the story; after the 100th Division, when the war was over, I went to the 65th Signal Battalion. Again, it was another one of those cases where the Army read the records and said, "Oh, this guy knows how to send code," you know, by radio. So, after the war was over, I was sent to a signal battalion. Anyway, years later, somebody from that group got my name and said he was trying to get in touch with the people in that unit, did I remember any names of people or know where they were? and all I could tell them was that, "His name was Norman Straub and I think he was from Wisconsin." The guy that was doing this bit found Norman Straub and Norman got in touch with me and sent me some pictures, as a matter-of-fact, of him, and me, and some of the other guys in our battalion.

TD: Did you notice a real difference between the people in Dallas and Fort Worth and the people from the Hammonton area? Were they more laid back and so forth?

SE: Actually, the only ones we got to meet were at the USO, because we declined the invitations to go to dinner. I never got to meet them in family situations. Those at the USO, of course, were very friendly, properly friendly.

KP: It sounds like the USO was pretty important for you.

SE: Yes. On base, actually, we had what was called the Beer Garden, and so, a group of us would go to the Beer Garden, have a beer and relax, and they had movies on base. They tried to do a decent job of keeping us entertained and out of mischief.

KP: Were there any black troops stationed at your base?

SE: I don't remember any black troops stationed there.

KP: Drill instructors often leave a lasting impression on many soldiers. What do you remember about your drill instructor?

SE: A good guy, a tough guy. I'm not sure if he was regular Army or not, but, he was tough, but, he was fair. I never saw anybody abused or anything of that sort. In fact, because I had been in the six months training in ASTP, and knew a little bit about close order drill, and had a little bit of Army training when I got to the 52nd Battalion, which was just forming up, by the way; they were in the beginning of their training sequence. There was a shortage of cadre, because they were using all the people they could elsewhere, so, they would choose among the recruits to be acting cadre. So, one day, this sergeant asked if anyone could do close order drill. I said, "I could do close order drill." He said, "Okay, come out and drill the troops." So, I did. I got to be the acting platoon sergeant and, therefore, I never had to do KP. [laughter] So, the ASTP training came in handy there, too. I had a six-month head start on most of the other guys.

KP: Where did you go after basic training?

SE: After basic training, we went to the 100th Infantry Division, and so did my good buddy, Ralph (Red) Allen, who had been in Auburn with me and was also in the 52nd Battalion. We went to different regiments in our division, but, we both went to the 100th Division. At the 100th Division, they were just about ready to go overseas. I was the number eleven rifleman in the twelve-man squad. The twelfth man is the assistant squad leader, so, … I filled the last slot in that squad, in that first platoon of Company E, 399th Infantry Regiment of the 100th Division. … I don't know if there was anybody else who came on that same day or not. I may have filled up the table of organization of our platoon that day. I'm sure there were others, well, my friend, Ralph Allen, and others, who were similarly placed in those units that filled those units up to their TO and made the division ready to go overseas. Shortly after that, we did go overseas.

KP: You were not with the 100th Infantry Division for very long.

SE: No, not before going overseas, right.

KP: You did not take part in any training with the division.

SE: Very little. I remember very little of the training, except, I do remember a little bit of training in our rifle care and handling. In fact, our platoon sergeant, one of his instructions to us was,

"Okay, men, disassemble those rifles, back together again," [laughter] but, he was a good soldier, that guy. That's about all I remember about … division training, in the United States.

KP: The infantry, in general, is quite treacherous, but, rifle companies bear the brunt of the danger.

SE: That's right.

KP: When you were assigned to your company, did you have any sense of how dangerous it was?

SE: Oh, yes. It's not the sort of occupation you would choose.

TD: If you had a choice, would you have picked something else, the Air Force, Armored Corps, anything like that?

SE: Oh, sure. I would like to be artillery, or almost anything. Anything was a step up. No, that's not true, paratroopers or things like that in the Army [were more dangerous], and you know what we used to say about the Air Force was that we used to love to see those guys fly over, and we would worry about them when they were flying into Germany. We knew that they were going to be getting shot at, but, we envied them, because, on the way back, they were going back to a bed, and hot food, and stuff like that, but, hardly anybody, I guess, chooses to be a rifleman in the infantry.

KP: What was your voyage overseas like?

SE: Well, I think it took us fourteen days to cross, or to get across, or something like that, and, you know, that's fourteen days. … I learned how to play bridge. [laughter]

KP: Did you get seasick at all?

SE: Yes, yes. It was not a pleasant trip, some of the days.

KP: How was the food?

SE: The food was adequate. [laughter] Sometimes, I wasn't even interested in food, but, one of my friends said he went overseas by rail, ship's rail.

KP: Was there any fear of submarines? What kind of vessel did you travel on?

SE: … You know, we went in a convoy of some sort, and I'm sure we knew there was submarines out there, but, there were a lot of dangerous things around in those days.

TD: Your convoy was not attacked.

SE: No. We had no difficulty.

KP: Your division landed in Marseilles. How did you feel when you finally made it to Europe? Before your induction, you had hardly left New Jersey. You visited a good chunk of the United States while in training. Now, you were in France.

SE: Well, when we got to Marseilles, when the ship arrived, late in the afternoon, we just sat there until dark, offshore a bit, and then, we landed on LCIs, Navy [landing] craft, infantry, in darkness. I think ours was the first convoy to land in Marseilles. The Allied troops had landed there in August. There'd been an invasion in southern France, so that the front was sixty miles away. We landed at night. We hiked for about three hours inland somewhere, we didn't know where, pitched tents in the mud and went to sleep. [laughter] … That's all we were interested in, after that long haul with full equipment and stuff. I said, "Pitched tents;" they may have had tents. It may have been an assembly area, so, we used their tents and went to sleep. A couple of days later, we got on the trucks and moved up to the front.

KP: You really did not do any additional training in France.

SE: No, on-the-job training, which it was. [laughter]

KP: Before your division embarked, did you have any desertions or AWOLs?

SE: Not in our group, not in our group were there any AWOLs. I did get a very short pass, as I recall, right before I went overseas. That was a difficult one, because you weren't sure what lay ahead.

KP: You were put on trucks and driven up to the front. How scared were you at that point? How prepared did you feel? Did you worry about how you would react?

SE: Yes, I think we were all scared, okay, … and there were a couple of other people, I can remember, in our platoon, three, I guess, [who] kind of folded under the pressure.

KP: Right away?

SE: In a short period of time. … I don't know their circumstances, but, there obviously were some people, … one of which didn't surprise me and one of which did.

KP: Really?

SE: Yes.

KP: Why did the one not surprise you and the other surprise you?

SE: Well, the one that didn't surprise me was, obviously, a sensitive guy. I think he was a sergeant. He was in charge of our squad. He has a responsibility for twelve people that he's going to lead into battle, okay. He's got a job on his hands, a nasty job on his hands. Later on, it got to him. The other fellow was an assistant squad leader, who was quite a different temperament. He was, I'm not

sure how to describe him, kind of a good time guy, yes. He was a tall, handsome fellow, you know. He seemed to have everything going for him, but, somehow, he just wasn't able to handle that situation.

KP: Is that one of the reasons you became assistant squad leader?

SE: Well, the promotion to assistant squad leader came later. By the time we were committed to the front lines, by the time we were committed to the battle, I had been promoted from number eleven rifleman to number two scout, [laughter] okay. Again, that's the kind of promotion that you don't particularly seek, but, somebody's got to do it. Again, I was young, single, in good physical condition, that was my job.

KP: What were the backgrounds of the other men in your squad? How well did you get to know them?

SE: There was a variety of people. There were at least two others who had been in ASTP, a fellow from Kentucky, Ulysses Proffet. … He said he came from so far back in the hills that they had to pump daylight in, Vernon Green, from Arkansas, a variety of people, two guys from North Carolina, a blend.

KP: Had any of them gone to college or finished college?

SE: Nobody had finished college. [Of] our whole platoon, I think half was ASTP people. Have you seen the book, *Scholars in Foxholes*? [Louis E. Keefer (1988)]

KP: No. I have heard of the book and I have interviewed a number of people who were in the ASTP. What do you remember about your first day of actual combat?

SE: [laughter] Well, like I said, I was second scout and my friend, Glenn, another ASTP guy, was first scout. We were told that our objective was this massive farmhouse on a hill, which had an open field between us and it, okay, and our assignment was to take that farmhouse. So, Glenn and I, you're trained to cover each other as you advance, you know, he would run, I would attempt to cover him. I would run, and then, hit the ground after each little run. We did this a few times, and then, we looked back and nobody was following us. [laughter] I said, "Hold up, Glenn. Let's reconsider here," [laughter] and, you know, there was firing going on at the time. …

KP: You were advancing under fire.

SE: Oh, yes. This wasn't just a training session.

KP: It was not an undefended farmhouse.

SE: It was not an undefended farmhouse. So, we regrouped … and, actually, what happened then was that the Germans retreated, when they saw we were serious about taking their position. They retreated, so, that made that particular escapade a bit easier. That was our first combat experience.

KP: You did not start out in a defensive position.

SE: Right. I don't know if we sat in defensive positions before. That was the first firefight of any sort that we were involved in.

KP: What was your most memorable combat experience?

SE: There are two that are very memorable. One was on New Year's Eve. You've heard a number of times before, I'm sure, that the Battle of the Bulge began on December the 16th. The Battle of the Bulge was up north of us, and what happened after that was that anything that could be spared from our area was moved up to counterattack at the Battle of the Bulge, and, obviously, the Germans knew that this was going on. So, on New Year's Eve, they started what I've since learned was Operation: *NORDWIND*, you've heard of that? okay, and one of the facets of Operation: *NORDWIND* was to attack in the area where we were. We were now in defensive positions. I guess, on December 30th, we were in the Maginot Line, okay, and these forts do not afford very good visibility, so, we always had foxhole outposts out in front of the pillboxes, and, one night, I think three of our people, two or three, there were usually two or three in a foxhole, which had at least two, sometimes three, three of them were captured by the Germans. So, the next night, my buddy, Mac MacGregor and Glenn Mayer, and I were sent out to the outpost.

KP: When did you learn that they had been captured?

SE: When we were sent out, we knew that three of the folks from our platoon had been captured and nothing else happened that night. The following night was New Year's Eve and we could hear stuff happening from the German side. In fact, we were three people in the foxhole. I was on guard duty at the time. The other guys were sleeping. I could see what appeared to me to be a line of trucks, their lights shining as if they were going up over a hill and making a turn. After awhile, you could hear like they were celebrating New Year's Eve. I think they were … leaving their inhibitions behind by taking in some alcohol. We had a phone in our foxhole, so, we called this back in. Later on, I heard … what sounded to me like a rifle scraping on barbed wire. I don't know if that's what it was, but, that's what it sounded like, and that was close enough, so that I woke the other fellows up and said, "I think we're getting company," and we did get company, and we called that in. We had, at that foxhole, a machine gun that had been sitting out in the cold for some length of time, so [that] when we saw a line of guys coming up, we pulled the trigger on the machine gun and the bolt slid slowly forward and didn't fire. It was frozen. So, that took a year or two off my life, [laughter] but, we did have our rifles, so, we used our rifles, and we also called in artillery fire. The artillery had that place zeroed in. However, on the right flank of the 100th Division, there had been penetration of an adjacent unit, and we were then ordered to withdraw from where we were, move in[to] defensive positions farther back. The day before, a part of that story I had forgot, again, I was on guard duty. Do you have time for this?

KP: Yes.

SE: One of the stories is, we're in this outpost and I heard a mortar go off. A mortar has a high trajectory. The sound reaches you before the mortar reaches you. The first shot we heard landed about thirty yards from our foxhole. This was after the guys had been captured, so, we knew that they knew where we were. A little while later, we heard a mortar fire again and this one was about fifteen yards from our foxhole. I started praying after the first one, I was praying harder after the [laughter] second one, and then, we heard a third mortar go off, and that was about five yards from the foxhole. A foxhole provides pretty good protection. I guess that they thought that did the job and they did not fire at us anymore. That could have been the night that they came in, figuring that that foxhole had been knocked out. On the night, New Year's Eve, when they did come, the day before, a whole bunch of Christmas packages had arrived back at the pillbox. … So, when we went back to the outpost foxhole, we filled one ammo bag with ammunition, and the other we filled with Christmas candy. [laughter] When the machine gun jammed, there wasn't room for three of us to use our rifles, so, two of us were using our rifles, and the guy inside was handing us ammunition. The first time he reached in, he came out with a Clark Bar, [laughter] you know, wrong ammo bag. [laughter]

KP: How close did the Germans get to your position?

SE: That time? fifty yards, I guess.

KP: You were in danger of being overrun, particularly on your right flank.

SE: Well, that same night, our platoon had two pillboxes, our squad was in this one, another squad in the second one, and that squad was surrounded and captured that night. We had about a dozen guys captured that night in the adjacent pillbox. I'm not sure what happened there.

KP: In fact, part of your line was overrun.

SE: Yes, yes.

KP: When you pulled back, was it a chaotic or smooth procedure?

SE: I guess it was smooth chaos, all right, that's it. We weren't marching to a drumbeat or anything like that. [laughter] …

KP: You maintained unit cohesion and your leaders knew what they were doing.

SE: Yes, yes. This may have been the night that our squad leader had a breakdown. I think that's when it finally got to him, but, he got us back. Somebody got us back. Early on, when we were on-the-line, we were moving from one position to another at night and, you know, you don't know where you are. You don't have a map of the area, no street signs, you're in the woods. So, our company commander, Captain William P. Smith, was leading us. … He had gone back earlier to see where we were going to go, so, he knew where we were going, but, all you do is follow-the-leader. In fact, this night was so pitch-black that what we did was hold on to the shovel, or whatever tool it was, of the guy in front of you and follow him along. We were doing this, and, as

we were doing it, we can hear, up ahead, it sounded like somebody falling, cursing, getting up, next guy falling, cursing, getting up. You know, you're wondering, "What the heck's going on up there?" and, finally, just about the time I get there, Captain Smith was also aware of this, too, he came back, and, by the way, there was a hill you had to slide down. He came back and climbed up the hill again. It was a large artillery shell hole that was filled with communications wires and we were marching into this hole, getting all tangled up in the wires, and having to struggle to get out. Now, if you were going four yards to either side, there wouldn't have been any problem, but, in pitch-blackness, you don't know that, so, you kind of just follow the guy in front of you, and that's what they were doing. The Captain came back with a little flashlight to see what was going on.

KP: Having never been in combat, it was pitch dark, at night, in combat.

SE: It can be. There are times when the moon is bright. It could be pitch dark in the woods, at night, yes. Sometimes, it was. You asked if our first positions on-line, … whether we were in the offensive position; I do remember … moving into positions. At night, we moved into positions; we don't know where we are. You never know where you are. You travel through the darkness. We were in existing foxholes that we were put into, because we relieved another group who was going back to have their socks dry out or something, and then, during the night, up ahead, we could hear water, as if people were crossing a stream. So, the first thing you think of is that the Germans are crossing the stream and coming this way. We had never seen the stream, but, we could tell it was a stream. Well, so, all night, we were a little bit tense and we find out, next morning, that one of our guys, in a foxhole, was baling the water out of his foxhole with a steel helmet. [laughter] There was another night, in a different location, where we could hear this creaking noise. Whenever you hear a strange noise, obviously, you're going to be on alert, and so, for a good part of the night, we were wondering what the heck this creaking noise was. The next morning, a very simple explanation, after the artillery shelling that had gone on, one tree was leaning on another, and, when the wind blew, it moved against the other tree and was creaking, but, you don't ignore any noises when you're in a foxhole.

KP: How many days would you be on-the-line?

SE: They would try to rotate us off, and I wasn't kidding when I said, you know, we changed our socks every day. We had two pair. You wore one pair and put the other pair in your shirt to dry out and, the next day, you changed your socks, switched them. It varied. Sometimes, we would be out there for two weeks and, sometimes, it would be three days and we'd get on back.

KP: When you were sent back, how long would you stay back for?

SE: Sometimes a day, sometimes two days, sometimes more than that. It varied, it depended. … From after the Battle of the Bulge until March 15th, we were pretty much in defensive positions. I guess the generals had decided that there was not a heck of a lot we could do for the rest of the winter, yet, we spent a good deal of effort defending against the Bulge. So, we pretty much stayed in fairly defensive positions for January, February, and the first half of March. March 15th began what we referred to as the Spring Offensive and a memorable battle after that was one that we had, or for us a memorable one, … at Heilbronn, which was on the Neckar River. So, our troops crossed

in rubber rafts, under artillery fire, with smokescreens to try to keep us sheltered from direct fire from the enemy, but, those were two memorable battles, New Year's Eve and Heilbronn.

KP: Your division experienced a variety of combat situations in a relatively short time, winter fighting, defensive fighting, a river crossing and urban combat.

SE: Heilbronn was city fighting. There's one other memorable event, too, and that was on Friday, April 13th, one of these farmhouses, across a big, open cabbage patch this time, and, by the time that day was done, our thirty-nine-man squad was down to thirteen people, and I was the ranking PFC, I guess, in the thirteen-man squad that was left.

KP: You went from thirty-nine that day …

SE: Not that day, no; normal TO is thirty-nine. I'm not sure what we were down to before, but, when that day ended, I could count that we were down to thirteen. That was the last tough one.

KP: Who was the first person in your unit that you lost? Were there particularly bad days? April 13, 1945, seems like a pretty bad day.

SE: Yes. Incidentally, I think we had a minor miracle in our platoon. No one in our platoon was killed. We had a lot of people injured, and we had thirteen of them captured, but, all of them survived.

KP: Do you know if they made it out of the POW camps?

SE: Yes. Our 180-pounders were down to ninety pounds, but, I've seen a number of them since then. So, we all survived. Artillery was probably the biggest inflictor of casualties, but, there was small arms fire, too. My friend, Glenn, got nicked in the finger.

KP: Your platoon was very fortunate. Was your case exceptional?

SE: Yes, it is, because we had lots of injuries, but, none [killed]. … Glenn had a finger nicked, but, I don't know whether it was a rifle [shot], probably a rifle shot, and he was delighted. [laughter] They were taking him back to the hospital, and he was raising his finger, and he said, "A million dollar wound." [laughter]

KP: Did you talk about the "million dollar wound" often?

SE: No, I can't say we did. It probably came up, occasionally. Nobody tried to get hurt on purpose.

KP: Was your squad filled up with replacements?

SE: Oh, yes, because, when our guys were injured, replacements came.

KP: How many soldiers would actually be injured to the point that they could not continue?

SE: I guess we started with a twelve-man squad. … I can think of two of us who weren't injured.

KP: The rest were injured.

SE: The rest, I think, all had some sort of injuries.

KP: Were there any serious wounds, like the loss of a limb?

SE: I don't know of anybody who lost an arm, or a leg, or something like that, but, our platoon was particularly fortunate.

KP: How well were replacements integrated into the unit?

SE: Fine. We need them; they need us, because they came in and they're green. Our replacements often came from the artillery, or something like that. That's a nasty thing to do to an artilleryman, send him [off] as a replacement in an infantry squad, but, again, some of those replacements became good friends. Like I said, they needed us to help get them some battlefield training and we needed them, because we needed replacements.

KP: Did any of the replacements get killed?

SE: No, no, nobody in our platoon.

KP: Not even the replacements?

SE: Nobody, as far as I know, in our platoon, while he was in our platoon, got killed.

KP: How often would you attend religious services?

SE: Occasionally. We didn't really have the opportunity to do that very often, but, we did. … By the way, that winter that we were pretty much in defensive positions, there was a little town named Siersthal, it still is a little town named Siersthal, in northern France. There was a priest there, who we became friendly with, we were there, we'd be on-the-line, we'd go back to Siersthal, and go back on-line, and probably go back to Siersthal. We probably were there three or four times, and we got to know this priest there, and we became friends. They had Mass there. We could go to church there.

KP: How important was religion in sustaining you and the other men in your unit?

SE: I think it was important. I can remember one fellow who didn't have religion. I think he had a harder time than the rest of us, because … so much of what you do or so much of what happens is out of your control. You can't control an artillery shell coming in, or whatever. One of the things you can do is pray, [laughter] … pray and dig fast. I remember, on one occasion, my buddy and I,

and this time, it was a replacement buddy, had moved into a position where we had to dig our own foxholes. This was when the ground was hard and digging was difficult, but, there's artillery fire around, so, you dig. I can remember, Joe Schulte didn't think I was digging fast enough. He said, "Here, Sam, let me have that shovel awhile." There's no shirking the digging effort in a situation like that.

TD: What did you think of the Germans before you were in combat and what did you think afterwards? Did your attitude toward the Germans change?

SE: Well, yes, I guess; towards the end, particularly, we felt sorry for them. I mean, you had to be sympathetic. Again, they were scraping. You had a lot of young fellows that really shouldn't have been in combat, yet, and they had some older fellows. … Well, nobody should be in combat, for that matter, particularly the very young and the very old. There was sympathy towards them, but, at first, they're your enemy. This one occasion, New Year's Eve, where our enemy was fairly close to us, I guess that's the first time I fired at a person I could clearly see.

KP: You could see the people you were shooting at.

SE: Yes. You could see the line up of people that you were shooting at very clearly and very definitely. That's not a pleasant situation to be in. I didn't relish the idea of knocking off a few Krauts, or something like that. It was simply a matter of self-survival.

KP: Toward the end of the war, your unit would take a large number of prisoners, but, in the early stages of combat, how many prisoners would you take?

SE: Occasionally, you would take a prisoner. There were not many early on, as you said. As long as they could retreat and had hopes of winning the war, they would be most apt to retreat. Later on, there were a number of prisoners.

KP: You mentioned this major fight on April 13th. Before then, how heavy had the fighting been? Were you still encountering resistance in early April? Was the April 13th encounter the decisive fight?

SE: I think it was the decisive fight in our particular area, but, when we started the Spring Offensive, March 15th, that was a battle, too. We lost people in that battle. New Year's Eve, we were near a place called Bitche, which is a major fortress in France. The Germans were occupying it at the time I was there and there was fighting around that, too.

KP: In terms of creature comforts, when you were on-the-line, how many hot meals could you get in an average week?

SE: Our kitchen crew tried to do a good job of getting us hot food whenever they could, but, I first really got hot food on Thanksgiving, and we all got dysentery. We all got the "GIs," [Gastro-Intestinal] as we used to call them, because we were used to eating K rations for two months, and, now, we were getting this strange food, turkey, you know, and our stomachs were not prepared for

it. The next day, we were moving forward and somebody would move up to the head of the line, and move on, and come back in on the back of the line. Another incident, in November, if you want [it], we came to a stream. You had to cross the stream. It's November, not today's November, but, tomorrow's November, when the temperature drops down. Well, you'd hold your rifle over your head and walk through the stream, not very wide, but, very wet and cold, and it's raining, and that night, I thought, surely, half of this crew was going to have pneumonia. The next day, the sun came out. We dried off and went on about our business, crazy. Again, we were mostly pretty young, eighteen-year-olds, or nineteen-year-olds, or twenty, something like that, and, I guess, we were in good condition.

KP: What about hot showers? It must have been quite memorable when you got a hot shower.

SE: We had one. We had one hot shower that I remember. [laughter] In fact, I'm sure that's all there was until after the 13th, April 13th. We moved into the Stuttgart area, and, there, we got quartered in a hospital in Bad Constadt, and we had a shower. We slept in-between sheets, we heard a radio, we had drinking water coming out of a faucet, all the real important things in life. For years, I said when I could turn on a faucet to get a glass of water that things are okay. I do appreciate that as something that you have to do without … before you really appreciate it.

KP: Another veteran I spoke with said he always counts himself lucky every night when he puts himself between two clean sheets.

SE: And we heard a radio. We heard music on a radio, the Armed Forces Radio, probably.

KP: History books often portray the Battle of the Bulge as the last gasp of the German military, but, it is becoming more clear to me that November 1944 through March 1945 saw some of the hardest fighting in the European War.

SE: Well, the Bulge was December, … and we did not do much until March, but, March and April, we had some tough [battles]. …

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

KP: In the battles leading up to and for Heilbronn, you engaged in a river crossing and street-to-street combat, both of which are particularly hazardous. What tactics did you use? How effective was your training, compared to what you actually ended up doing?

SE: Well, what you're taught is usually pretty good. I mean, the training was effective. By this time, we had been trained; we, also, or at least some of us, were fairly experienced. You always had some new people coming in, but, you learned quickly there.

KP: What was your objective in Heilbronn?

SE: Clear the streets of Germans, find them where they are, clear the streets of them.

KP: Do any particular incidents stand out in your mind while you were rooting the Germans out of Heilbronn?

SE: The answer that I remember is, our platoon sergeant at this time, his name was Günther Johann Frederick Weirstahl. Believe it or not, he was on our side. He could speak German, you know, with a name like that, obviously, and we're going through the town, trying to clear our sector of the town, and, somehow, well, a civilian came out, and, you know, you don't want to shoot a civilian, so, you tell him, "Get back in the house." "But, there are fires," the civilian said, but, he's talking in German. Günther's talking in German to him, too. So, after the conversation, I asked, "What was that conversation?" and Günther says, "He says there's a fire." I said, "Oh, what did you say?" He said, "Let it burn."

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: You encountered this civilian and your sergeant made this comment to him in German.

SE: Well, we simply were not in the mood to become members of the local fire department at that point. We had other business to attend to; we sent him back into his house.

KP: I have read that, in urban combat in Europe, if German soldiers were holding a building, the Americans would frequently blow out the walls of the structure to get to them. Did your unit ever do that?

SE: In this situation, we weren't sure. If you know if there are soldiers there, you do that. In this situation, we didn't know whether there were soldiers or civilians, so, you don't.

KP: You were not encountering much hostile fire.

SE: Right. We did not, at that point, as we were going through the streets, throw hand grenades at buildings or anything like that. There was no need.

KP: In other words, the defense of the city was …

SE: Before we got into the city.

KP: However, you did not know that when you were going through the city.

SE: Right, right.

KP: Did any of the other squads encounter resistance?

SE: Oh, yes, yes. Heilbronn was a fair-sized city and there were other parts of the town where they got hostile fire in the city.

KP: Many GIs recall that there was widespread hope in the later part of 1944 that the war would be over by Christmas. When you were actually sitting in your foxhole, what did you know about the war overall, how things were progressing and so forth?

SE: We would get *Stars and Stripes* occasionally, and we could read there how things were going. I don't ever remember having the hope that it would be over by Christmas. I don't think we ever felt that optimistic. That would be nice, but, I don't think, realistically, very many of us had that notion at all.

KP: Given the hard fighting you experienced in December and early January, were you surprised at how quickly the German resistance collapsed in the spring of 1945?

SE: Well, we knew, or at least we felt, that the counterattack on December 16th and the one in our area on December 31st, … were last gasp efforts by the Germans, desperation efforts, really, and, when both of those were repulsed, we figured that it wouldn't go a whole lot longer.

TD: Did your squad run into any resistance in Heilbronn? Did you have to take any houses?

SE: No. We were just moving through the area, you know, to get from this edge of town to the other edge of town, and, like I said, our resistance had come before we reached the town. Once we reached the town, … our particular squad didn't have any house-to-house [combat].

TD: Did the Germans leave behind any equipment, vehicles, guns, etc.?

SE: Yes, you would see those all along the way.

TD: Did that reinforce the idea that the Germans were finished?

SE: Yes. Of course, some of the equipment had been damaged, too, because we were sending artillery into the towns before we got there, or while we were on our way there.

KP: You mentioned a Captain Smith earlier.

SE: Yes.

KP: You also spoke about your squad leader, who could not take it. What was your leadership like? It sounds as though Captain Smith was fairly competent.

SE: Yes, and I want to say that I think Captain Smith had the nastiest job that anyone could ever have and that's to be a company commander in the infantry, okay, because a colonel or a general deals with units, deals with Company E, or Company F, or whatever. A company commander is on a level where, … when he sends First Platoon on a mission, he knows those people and he knows the risks involved in the mission. He has a tough job. I met Captain Smith after the war. We were in touch several times. I worked at Lehigh University, and we were buying some equipment from a

company that sold testing machines, and he was the salesman for the company. I walk into this room and I see this guy. [laughter]

KP: That must have been a strange experience. [laughter]

SE: Yes, yes. He was a good guy and we talked and got together occasionally after that. In fact, I arranged for him and his two jeep drivers to get together on one occasion. They gave me heck for not being there. Our leadership was competent, I think, to answer your question. Captain Smith was a capable leader. Nearly all our people were. The only negative story I think I could tell is, one of the platoon leaders, not our platoon leader, was heard to say, "Let my men take that hill," and I think he was given the word that his group would prefer that he not volunteer them for missions like that. [laughter] It's okay if you're assigned to do it, you know, if somebody says, "You're assigned, go do it." It's one of the early rules in the Army, you don't volunteer, especially to take a hill or something like that.

TD: For what action were you awarded the Bronze Star?

SE: I'm not even sure. I think it was just on general principles. I probably have that document somewhere. I don't know where. I honestly do not remember.

TD: It did not specify an incident.

SE: It specified something. I'm not sure I believed it, okay.

KP: You were in Germany for a long time as part of the Army of Occupation.

SE: Yes, I was in Germany. See, … we were discharged on the point system. When the war ended in Europe, after V-E Day in Europe, our division, which had only been in combat for seven months or so, was being prepared to go home for a short leave, and then, presumably, some retraining, and then, off to the South Pacific. Happily, … we were scheduled to go to Le Havre, our date had been set, and V-J Day came along, and they canceled our trip to Le Havre, and the people in the division who had enough points, with enough length of service, etc., were gradually discharged. Those of us who had lower points, I think the cutoff was forty-five points, those of us who had less service then were reassigned, and that's when I was reassigned to 65th Signal Battalion. Again, the Army read my record that I had had radio training back in basic. I'd forgotten code by that time, but, anyway, I had had training in radio operations, so, I was sent, then, to the 65th Signal and spent nearly a year there in the Army of Occupation.

KP: Occupation duty is very different from combat.

SE: Oh, yes. It was very different.

KP: It sounds as though things were very different once you got into Stuttgart.

SE: But, we were only there, I think, for one night, and then, we moved out, but, it was a nice night.

KP: Where was your unit located on V-E Day?

SE: A little place called Bad Boll, a little town, … because we went on down past Stuttgart then, very scattered resistance, however, after that time, and we had reached a place called Bad Boll when V-E Day came.

KP: You were stationed in Germany for quite awhile. I have read that the attitudes of GIs who participated in both combat operations and the occupation of Germany towards the Germans often changed quite a bit over time.

SE: They were people, okay; they were people who had been misled. I guess, there's the feeling that they had this trait, or frequently had this trait, of being militaristic, of being hardheaded. [laughter] My wife is of German descent, my second wife. My first wife died after thirty-five years of marriage. My second wife is a German, so, I could tease her about that, too. You know, they're people. They have their aspirations. They allowed themselves to be seriously misled.

KP: What were some of your duties with the 65th Signal Battalion?

SE: We just maintained communications between various units that were in the Army of Occupation, and we were sending routine messages from, I guess, we were Sixth Corps Radio, or Sixth Corps Communication, so, we maintained the communications with the other units in the Army of Occupation.

KP: It sounds as though your days became routine.

SE: Yes, pretty much so. We were all in one of the three shifts around the clock, but, you maintained communications twenty-four hours a day.

KP: Did you do any sightseeing during the occupation?

SE: A little bit, not very much. … Well, the radio outfit did have some vehicles, but, that sort of thing was not very much on the agenda. We, three of us, had a trip to Paris from the 65th Signal Battalion after the war, not too much other sightseeing. We were near the town of Esslingen, in a little town called Mettingen. We did have an enlisted men's club there. I guess that was the primary entertainment for the group, played a lot of table tennis, [laughter] a lot of table tennis, some basketball. I think those were the things I remember.

KP: Was there any fraternization with German women or other German civilians?

SE: The little kids, particularly, yes. Again, the kids weren't responsible for anything that had happened. We would talk with them, be embarrassed because they could speak English better than we could speak German. …

TD: You did try to learn some German while you were there.

SE: At this stage, or most of this time, the change of attitude was gradual. You weren't always sure … what the attitude was of the people, so, it was a gradual change in attitude.

KP: Were you aware of any hostile actions after V-E Day? For example, on the Autobahn, diehards would take down signs that warned when a bridge had been blown out or take shots at Allied soldiers going by in jeeps.

SE: No, no. A group of us from the 100th Division went back to France and Germany four years ago and I was surprised at the rather warm reception we got, even in Germany, in most places, Stuttgart, for example. However, when we went to Heilbronn, this was the one place where I noticed animosity. … The bus had, "100th Division," on the front of it. I didn't think it was a good idea, [laughter] but, it was there anyway, and somebody saw that, and he let us know that he felt no warmth towards the 100th Division, but, that's really the only time that … I experienced that.

KP: You had a sergeant with a very Germanic name who also spoke German.

SE: Yes, he was also injured on April 13th. He was one of the guys who was [injured]. …

KP: Did he ever discuss his attitude towards Germany, as a German?

SE: He was an American.

KP: Did you get the sense that he, in fact, fought harder?

SE: He might have. He was one tough kid. He was a big, tough kid. … I think he got to be in a high position for Union Carbide. No, like I said, he's the one who told the guy in Heilbronn, "Let it burn."

KP: Did you ever consider staying in the Army?

SE: No, absolutely not.

KP: It sounds as though you spent most of your time during the occupation counting the days on the calendar.

SE: Well, again, there were some good friends there, you know, one of whom I see every year or so, yet, and we also correspond. So, they were good friends. We were young. [As] I said, we played a lot of table tennis.

KP: How did you travel home?

SE: By ship, from Le Havre. That was our debarkation from there.

KP: Did you land in New York?

SE: New York, yes.

KP: By the time you returned home, the war had been over for several months. How did it feel to return home so late, as it were?

SE: I was just glad to be home. The system was fair, I mean, the point system. I think it was a pretty good arrangement. They gave us a point for each month we were in service, a point for each month we were overseas, or in combat, or whatever it was, I don't remember what it was, five points for the Bronze Star, and you knew how many points you had, you knew [how many] points the other guy had. If he had more points than you, he was going to go home first. How fair can you get in a situation like that? So, it was fair.

KP: You never grumbled about the point system. Other veterans did not think the point system was so great. [laughter]

SE: No, I thought it was a pretty good system.

TD: What was your initial reaction to the news that Japan had surrendered in August/September of 1945?

SE: We were glad the war was over in Europe. We were aware that there was still a war in Japan. We were aware that there was a good chance that our division would be assigned to that. That would have been very difficult, to finish a war, go home for awhile, and then, go back to war. That would be tough! Some of our people who were injured in battle recovered, and then, had to go back to battle; they experienced a similar thing. I was never injured in battle, so, I didn't have that. I would think that would be very difficult to do.

KP: Your unit suffered a number of non-fatal casualties, but, it seems as though good medical care reduced the impact of injuries on your unit. Was that due to the quality of your medics?

SE: Yes, our medics … did a fine job, … the guys that were right with us and the people behind them, too. Bain was seriously injured. I had a friend who lost an arm and a leg, but, doesn't complain about the care he got. The damage was irreparable.

KP: When did you first learn about the GI Bill?

SE: Oh, we were aware of that during the Army of Occupation days. This was one of the things we were aware of and that we looked forward to. We knew we had, you know, another year to put in or whatever, and then, we could get [out], and then, the government was going to help us get an education, and I've got to tell the story about the Rutgers prof. I came to Rutgers. Rutgers is the state university, which was a logical place, and they were bending over backwards to take [in] as many people as they could at the time, especially New Jersey residents. So, my friend, Red, and I

both came to Rutgers. He's the one I met at Syracuse. As a matter-of-fact, I met him in Camden when we enlisted, his name is Allen, so, his serial number is 12211912 and mine was 915. We were in Camden together, we were in Auburn, we were overseas together, in different units, but, we wrote to each other, and we came to Rutgers together. In my senior year, my structures prof, Professor A. R. Johnson, long gone from here, of course, came up to my desk and said, "What are you going to do when you graduate?" I said, "Go to work;" again, just the lack of awareness of what the possibilities are. He said, "No, I think you should go to graduate school." He had taught a fellow named Nathan Newmark, who was, at this time, an important figure out in the University of Illinois, in the civil engineering department there. So, Prof. Johnson said, "I'd better write to Nate Newmark and see about getting you an assistantship out there." So, he did and, of course, Nate Newmark gets a letter from his ex-prof saying, "I've got a guy here for you." He said, "Send him out," you know. So, A. R. Johnson got me interested in graduate school. Then, I got the Masters in '51 from Illinois and they asked me, at the time, "Would you like to stay on for a PhD?" I said, "No, I don't really feel like a PhD," but, then, I went to work at Lehigh. So, I was there eleven years. I finally decided that if I was going to stay at the university, I'd better work on a PhD. So, then, on my own, I applied at Cornell and went there for the PhD. Well, I stayed there for six years. Altogether, it was eight years, I guess, and that was good. I used what I learned at the PhD level, really, for the rest of my career, a different part of the structures field, but, I've been in it ever since, still in.

KP: You still do consulting work.

SE: Yes. I was in Detroit, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of this week.

KP: Yes. I just got back from Detroit.

SE: Oh, yes. I'm out there forty weeks a year, I guess, for two or three days a week.

KP: What type of projects do you consult on?

SE: Well, when I left Cornell, I went to the Bethlehem Steel Company, and, when I was at Bethlehem Steel, I was their representative to an organization known as the American Iron and Steel Institute, and they had two activities, one based in Washington, dealing with construction, and, [in] about the early '70s, when the gasoline crunch first came on, they started an activity in Detroit to help the automakers get the weight out of vehicles and make the MPGs higher. So, I was Bethlehem's representative to both of these activities. When I got to be sixty-five and retired from Bethlehem, the AISI office in Detroit asked if I'd like to go to work for them and I said, "I don't want to work full-time anymore. I surely don't want to work full-time in Detroit. My family is in Bethlehem, but, I'd be happy to," I think, I said, … "consult for a day or two a month with you," thinking I could still consult for a day or two and not interfere with Social Security, but, it never happened. I've been working out there three or four days a week.

KP: You spend a lot of time on the road, going back and forth to Detroit.

SE: Yes. I'm usually away two nights, you know, like this last time; go out Tuesday morning and come back Thursday night. So, I'm away two nights, three days, two nights.

KP: Are their offices actually located in Detroit?

SE: Southfield.

KP: Okay. Detroit is a very large city. I was out there just a few weeks ago for a conference.

SE: Where was the conference held?

KP: The conference was held at Wayne State. The hotel I stayed at was right across from GM Headquarters.

SE: That's not a good area.

KP: [laughter] Yes, I know. You worked very hard for your education and in your career, but, in a sense, you were in the right spot at the right time. You did not really plan for this career at first.

SE: I got some good assists from a couple of guys who steered me in a direction that I'm happy they steered me in, okay. I often say that, "Hey, I would have probably been a wealthy businessman in New Jersey, in southern Jersey, if I'd stayed with a commercial course," but, I'm perfectly happy with the way things went.

KP: When did you actually start at Rutgers?

SE: I was discharged in April of '46. We applied shortly after that, and I was admitted, but, I was deficient in an entrance requirement. I had to come in the summer school to take French, so that I would meet the entrance requirements, and, while I was here, I took an English course, and then, I was a sophomore in September.

KP: You mentioned that your favorite professors were DelMastro and Johnson.

SE: A.R. Johnson was the structures prof. A.J. DelMastro was also in the civil engineering department.

KP: Several engineering school graduates have told me that it became very difficult to stay in the program in your junior year.

SE: … One of the things about the junior year that I found is that there are several laboratories and you have to write reports for laboratories. If I had to do creative writing, I'd be in trouble, but, I think I could do a fair job of writing a lab report, so, junior year didn't burden me.

KP: You also played football and lived in the dormitories. Did you enjoy those experiences?

SE: I enjoyed college life. I've enjoyed life. Again, my good friend, Red Allen, [Ralph I. Allen], played football with us. Tom Moore was another one of our squad, … a civil engineering mate who played football, also. I had never played football in high school. I weighed 130 pounds or so. I just didn't go out for the football team, but, here, where they had a 150-pound football team, by this time, I guess, I still weighed about 130 pounds, I was only giving away twenty pounds there, [laughter] not 120, so, I really enjoyed the 150-pound football team, and I was really disappointed when Rutgers decided to drop theirs, but, I enjoyed football. Prof. Johnson, the guy who steered me to graduate school, there was another fellow, Tom Moore, and I were two of his students, two civil engineering students, who were playing football, and he could not understand why a civil engineering student would want to be playing football. So, during football season, Tom and I would get a hard time, but, once football season was over, everything was all right.

KP: He could not understand why you were wasting your time with football.

SE: Yes.

KP: In the late 1940s, the Rutgers student body was a mix of veterans and kids straight out of high school. How well did those two groups get along on campus, especially in the dorms?

SE: I guess, mostly, my close interaction while I was in the dormitory was with other guys who had been in the service, older fellows, and my roommates were almost always veterans; again, no problem. My first roommate was a visitor. He was from Iceland, from Reykjavik, and the two of us shared a room. That must have been my first year, my sophomore year. I guess we got along fine. He was a nice young man. I guess he also couldn't understand why I wanted to play football, but, that's all right.

KP: You also joined the Newman Club. How active were you in the Newman Club?

SE: Just moderately active. For one thing, my home was seventy miles away. Mostly, on weekends, we would head home, unless there was a football game that we were having or something like that. … I was a member of the Newman Club, but, I was not especially active.

KP: You never joined a fraternity. Were you against the idea or did you just not think about it?

SE: I think we gave it a little thought, but, decided, "Nah." We were happy where we were and were just saving it. We were not "rah-rah" guys, not that all fraternity guys are "rah-rah" guys or anything like that, but, … again, we were going home on weekends. It didn't seem that we needed it.

KP: As a class assignment, I had Troy and my other students read a semester's worth of *Targum*s from the 1930s and 1940s. Often, my students are almost envious of the rich on-campus social life then, the dances, the big bands, the Corner Tavern, and so forth. What are your recollections of the social life? Was it as good as my students believe?

SE: Those were good days, the '40s, the late '40s, '50s; those were good days, I often say, for our generation, you know, except for World War II, [laughter] which also had its good side. The GI Bill got me through Rutgers. GI Bill also helped get me through the University of Illinois when I was out there as a graduate student. I had an assistantship, and I also had the GI Bill, so, I was in pretty good shape. In fact, my wife worked in the civil engineering department. So, I think I got $105 for the GI Bill, $133 from my assistantship, she made $120 as a secretary, so, we were in big money. Anyway, those times were good. In the '50s, everybody was still in the happy days after the war, remembering things are good now, things hadn't been that good in times past, and it made for a good situation.

KP: Was your first wife a local?

SE: She was from Hammonton and that's one of the reasons I used to go home on weekends.

KP: Had you met her before the war?

SE: She worked at the Hammonton Auction after the war. She was three years younger than I. … After the war, I said I was discharged in April, I started working for the auction in May again. When I started again, in May, at the auction, … that's when I met her.

KP: You had a career in academia that most academics can only dream about, but, you left it all for a career in industry.

SE: I became a college dropout is how I describe it, [laughter] after twenty years.

KP: It is more common, I believe, for people to make the transition from industry to academia.

SE: In 1982, when I was working at Bethlehem Steel, I had a visiting professorship at the University of Florida for one semester. So, I went from academia … to business, or industry, took six months out, then, went back to academia on a lark, and, again, thoroughly enjoyed it, and then, back to industry.

KP: What are some of your observations on the cultural differences between working for a university and working for a corporation?

SE: Yes, at a university, you operate a lot more as an individual than you do in industry. In industry, you're part of a team most of the time.

KP: To a large extent.

SE: I think that's the biggest difference. There's politics in both places, however.

KP: I am more familiar with the humanities and social sciences, but, one of the criticisms business people often have of academics is that they are very good on theory, but, do not contribute much that is practical. Is that also the case in your field?

SE: I think that that's partly correct, but, in the areas I've worked in, the research that we've done has always been sponsored by industry, nearly all of it, and, therefore, it has to be practically oriented or you don't get the next research job. Most of those who are involved in research and teaching, the practicality of the research involvement carries over into their teaching, so that it's not as bad, wasn't as bad in the situations that I'd been in, as it might be to somebody who's doing research that's sponsored by the National Science Foundation or something, where it is less directed to an immediate practical application, but, no less important, by the way. Basic research should be done. We should not neglect that kind of research.

KP: Since much of your research at Lehigh was sponsored by industry, did that make the transition to the private sector easier?

SE: Lehigh and Cornell, too, by the way. Well, when I went to Bethlehem, it was an aftermath, after having done some research for Bethlehem Steel at Cornell University. Bethlehem wanted some research done. We did it at Cornell. Shortly afterwards, they had a position open, and called, and asked if I'd like to go to Bethlehem Steel, and, actually, for reasons of location more than the actual job, we decided to go.

KP: You wanted to return to this area.

SE: Yes.

KP: You mentioned that teamwork is more important in industry. Were there any other differences that you noticed between being in a university versus a corporate setting?

SE: I don't know. Again, at a university, you're dealing with young people a good deal of the time. In the jobs I've had at Bethlehem Steel and even in the consulting, part of that has been in the training of young people, too, so that in my situation, there hasn't been as great a difference in either activity.

KP: The steel industry was at its peak in the 1940s and 1950s, but, then, the industry took quite a battering.

SE: Yes. What happened, … or part of what happened, at least, was that we became a world economy rather than a closed economy, as far as the steel industry was concerned, and the unions had asked for some considerable increases in salary. The steel industry had gone along with it, because all the industry went along with it. Therefore, … they didn't lose any competitive situation by giving into the unions in those places. I think the steel companies also agreed to some cost of living formulas that were pretty ill-advised, and their costs were going up higher than they had ever anticipated, and they couldn't do anything about it, because they were locked into the agreement contract. Then, when the world competition came onto the scene, the steel companies had to make some adjustments.

KP: I have also read that some of the steel companies failed to make the necessary investments. Was that less of a problem in your estimation?

SE: No, that's partly true. There's no question about that. On the other hand, I remember being down on that visiting professorship at the University of Florida, I was giving a talk to the local mechanical and civil engineering groups about … my experience with the auto industry, and this was about the time that US Steel had purchased Marathon … Oil, and, … in the question and answer period, someone in the audience … had brought this up and said, "If the steel industry would invest in their own business," or, "If US Steel would invest in its own business, instead of buying Marathon Oil, US Steel would be better off," and I said, "If you had money to invest right now, would you invest in the steel industry or would you invest in the oil industry?" There was no question. Anybody with any foresight at all would invest in the oil industry, not the steel industry. So, when US Steel did that, they did it on an economic basis, not on any other basis. Now, you could criticize them for not being socially considerate. Bethlehem Steel, for one, I think, has been a company who has been quite socially considerate. It hurts when you're in a declining industry or an industry that is contracting, I should say, rather than declining. That's a tough situation. Bethlehem used to have 120,000 employees and, now, they have about 30,000. That means that for every employee, four were on the retirement rolls, and they didn't foresee the contraction that was coming in the industry. They always thought that, "We can pay those pensions from the money we were getting from today's operation," but, when you contract, though, that's tough.

KP: I recently heard a report on Nucor Steel. How would you rate that company?

SE: I always said Nucor Steel is a good company. I used to criticize them on one basis and we're trying to get them to correct that. For one thing, a new company, they hire all young people, or mostly young people; they hire enough skilled people to do what's needed in the skill part. They hire all young people. They're not union. By the way, I'm not anti-union. They're not union. They are on profit sharing. It's well run.

KP: That was what I heard.

SE: There's a question of whether thirty years or twenty years from now, how effective that would be, because they're young people and they won't be young people anymore. Maybe they can keep the mix going properly, so that they can still do very well. The thing I used to criticize them for was, the other steel companies, the old steel companies, had developed all of the marketing technology and, now, Nucor was not paying their share for the research and development that continually needs to be done. They were reaping. They weren't doing any of the seeding, and I think they've started to change that, so, I've got no complaints against Nucor.

KP: You mentioned that the early 1950s were a happy time, but, were you at all concerned that you might be called back to serve in Korea?

SE: There were some tough times along the road and I shouldn't overlook those. I remember, when I was in the University of Illinois, one of my Canadian friends was saying something about, "Oh, but, it's just a little war," and there's no such thing as a little war to the guy who's in it. It's a

big war, no matter how small it is. Yes, I sympathized with fellows who had been in Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, places like that, where the situation is so much less clear cut than it was in World War II.

KP: How did you feel about the Vietnam War in particular? You were working on a college campus during that era.

SE: I guess, maybe, I believe our leaders more than I should or something, and I never was a student of politics in those areas, but, I was not happy with the unrest on campus that was going on. I guess that's it. I wasn't happy with the campus unrest.

KP: Cornell was very unhappy, to say the least.

SE: "Berkeley East," is that what they were referred to as?

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

SE: Berkeley was a hotbed on the West Coast, Cornell on the East Coast.

KP: I have been told that there a real division in the faculty at Rutgers between the "doves," who tended to be in the humanities and the social sciences, and the "hawks," who tended to be in the sciences. Was there a similar division at Cornell?

SE: I think Cornell was more liberal than Rutgers; well, the Cornell that I knew was more liberal than the Rutgers that I knew, let's put it that way. That's twenty years difference in time, but, Cornell's a pretty liberal place.

KP: Even in the sciences and engineering?

SE: Yes, I think so.

KP: William Bauer, who was on the ceramics department faculty at Rutgers in the 1960s and 1970s, made that observation.

SE: I can readily believe it. … I think it's kind of a difference in the two fields, the kind of fields we're working in. I think that's a reasonable reading of the situation.

KP: When did you join the American Legion?

SE: I belong to the American Legion, but, it's just a paper membership.

KP: You are not active.

SE: I'm not active in the Legion, no.

KP: When did you join your division's association?

SE: Oh, that group, that's a people kind of thing. I do attend, a fair percentage of the time, the annual meetings, when the meetings are held within convenient distance from where I happen to be at the time. I will attend the division meetings. It's good to see some of those old friends, periodically.

KP: When did you start attending reunions?

SE: For the division?

KP: Yes.

SE: First one they had, that I knew about.

KP: How long ago was that?

SE: That was in 1948, in New York City.

KP: That was quite awhile ago then.

SE: Yes, yes.

KP: Some divisions only began to organize reunions thirty or forty years after the war.

SE: One of the guys in our division started a Century Association, while we were still overseas, as a matter-of-fact, and I think one of our first reunions was in New York City. We had a big snowstorm that weekend [laughter] and not too many of us got there, but, I did. The railroad ran to New York City.

KP: Do you have any thoughts on how Rutgers has changed since you graduated in 1949?

SE: From what I read, Rutgers is a more liberal campus now than it was back in 1949, when I graduated. I was walking around campus today, for example. I didn't get any concern for how liberal the place was or anything. [laughter] My wife said, "Hey, the students are all dressed better here than they are at Lehigh."

KP: [laughter] Really?

SE: I'm not sure what they wear at Lehigh. [laughter]

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask?

SE: I don't think so. I think you put up with me a lot longer than I anticipated.

KP: This was a great interview.

SE: Rutgers was good to me and, as I said before, life's been good to me.

KP: You even have a rewarding post-retirement career.

SE: Yes, [laughter] that's good. I played the ramp down. So, far it's not been too much of a ramp.

KP: Thank you again for coming.

TD: Yes, it's been a pleasure.

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

Reviewed by Nicholas Alexander Ferroni 5/2/03
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 5/6/03
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/16/03
Reviewed by Samuel J. Errera 8/6/03