RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HARRY A. GALINSKY

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. Harry A. Galinsky on July 12, 1995 at Paramus, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and Rekha Gandhi. I guess I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your parents and growing up in Hoboken and your father [who] came from Minsk, Russia.

Harry Galinsky: Right.

KP: There must be a story behind those travels

HG: Both my mother and father came here as very young teens. I think my father came here when he was fifteen or sixteen, alone, had some relatives in this country who had come before him, was apprenticed as a tailor. When he got to this country, he worked in what today would be called a sweatshop, an immigrant sweatshop in New York. And [he] eventually ended up in Hoboken working for a large clothing store as a tailor. My mother, who came from the section of what I guess is Russia-Poland, boundaries change all the time, also came at the same age with friends, I guess. She settled in New York and, I guess, the matchmakers at that point in time, introduced my father to my mother and they got married and settled in Hoboken.

KP: How much of your parents' family came over from Europe?

HG: Just my mother and father.

KP: No relatives joined them?

HG: I shouldn't say that. My uncle, my mother's brother, settled in Montreal, in Canada. And my father brought his sister over to this country and another brother. So there were, from our standpoint growing up, an aunt and three uncles on both sides. Of course, they had gotten married and we had now an accumulation of cousins and so on all in the family.

KP: Did your family stay in touch with the family in Europe at all?

HG: No, I know very little about it other than the oral history of growing up from my father and my mother. And interestingly they really didn't like to speak very much about their experiences. Other than in my father's case anybody approaching seventeen had to escape from Russia, otherwise you were conscripted into the army. So they were finding ways of getting out, and you know the poverty living in the ghetto. And I guess [in] many ways, watching Fiddler on the Roof was almost a prototype of what life was in the eyes of my father and my mother and the small villages that they called *shtetls* in Europe.

KP: Did the pogroms have anything to do with it, did your father ever talk about that?

HG: Life for Jews in Russia was very precarious. And, you know, people were constantly frightened , how to get out and where to go. The great American dream of somehow getting to this country could only be achieved if someone got here and then worked to guarantee that whoever would come in wouldn't be a burden on our society. So in those days you had to have a written guarantee for anybody that came to this country that they wouldn't be a burden; that you

would provide them with housing and with food and with job opportunity. But it was clear to us growing up, that whatever anti-Semitism we were experiencing in this country was nothing compared to the kind that was experienced by my parents.

KP: Your parents told you that?

HG: It's bad, but believe me you have no idea, this is the land of freedom despite, you know, what we are all feeling.

KP: This is nothing compared to Russia?

HG: Exactly.

KP: Your parents settled in Hoboken. In a sense, why Hoboken? Your father had, it sounds like, a good job in Hoboken.

HG: Well, I think that was the reason. I don't think it is anything about Hoboken itself except that it was across the river from where they were living in the lower East side. And he had gotten a job there. And at that point in time the idea of commuting [from] the lower East side to a job in Hoboken became impossible, no Lincoln Tunnel, or no cars, or whatever. So, they found a little apartment and raised a very large family of five boys and two girls.

KP: What year roughly did they settle in Hoboken? Was it after World War I?

HG: Oh, no. It was before World War I. My father came to this country in about 1907 or 1908; my mother maybe 1911. So they were here during World War I.

KP: Had your father been drafted or gotten a draft call?

HG: No, no, he wasn't drafted during World War I. He was married and had children, I guess, maybe at that particular point in time.

KP: Your father, how long did he work in an average week? Did he ever own his own store?

HG: Yes, he ended up opening up a little tailor shop and actually he had a seven-day-a-week job. He worked from seven o'clock in the morning till about eleven o'clock at night every day. And on Sundays he used to go to New York to buy material or old suits to sell. He was trying to raise a family of seven children and a wife. So our vision of our father was really bringing him lunch or bringing him dinner at the store. We really had very little time with our father. Probably only in the summertime when a Sunday meant packing up the family and getting on a subway and a train and going to Coney Island.

KP: So you went to Coney Island?

HG: Oh, that was the family treat, that we would all get to go to Coney Island during the blistering hot summer of living in a tenement in Hoboken.

KP: When did your father start going off on his own tailor shop? Was it in the 1920s?

HG: Yes, yes before the Great Depression. Probably right after World War I he opened up a little tailor shop. He was there for fifty or sixty years I guess. He died in the store at the age of seventy-seven. I got a call. I was the vice-principal of a local high school, and I got a call to come down to the store that he was slumped over. A customer had come in. My mother had died previously and he was alone. So but that's the way, I guess, my father would want to go.

KP: It sounds like he had a lot of pride in his work.

HG: Oh, Yes. You know, that was his social life too. People used to drop in. The old-timers would sit in the store with him and talk about the old times as life went on.

KP: Did any of the family work in the store?

HG: No, but we helped. My father was illiterate, couldn't really read and write. [He] didn't even have time because of his work schedule to go to night school. He handled the English language well and had trouble reading. My mother, we urged her, as we got older, to go to night school, so she was able to read and write. We, each one of us as our time came, did the books of the store, paid the bills and so on. But he had a passion for us to get an education, all of us.

KP: So he didn't envision one or two of you working in the store?

HG: No, in fact, just the opposite. I mean, this is the last thing in the world that they wanted for us to go into that kind of business because it wasn't lucrative. It was a marginal kind of business that you could only earn enough money that your hands could produce. You know, it was not a money-maker. And, of course, it gave us all that vision, or that kind of life gave us all inspiration to want to get an education.

KP: How did the Depression affect your family?

HG: I was the youngest of seven. So I guess I was most sheltered by it in this respect. All my brothers and sisters were excellent students. None of them had the opportunity to go on to college, except my oldest brother who was an outstanding athlete, a basketball player, and he won a scholarship to the University of West Virginia to play basketball. But the rest of them, as soon as they graduated high school, went out to earn money and turned over the eight bucks a week that they got. My mother used to give them a dollar for the rest of the week and everybody contributed to the home because it was very clear to everybody that what my father was bringing in during the Depression was not enough. So the degree that people could get jobs and that varied with brothers. Two of my brothers went into the CCC - Civilian Conservation Corp - during the Depression because they couldn't get jobs. But I was born in ‘26 so that in ‘36 in the midst of Depression I was ten years old. You know, so I really didn't conceptualize what it was like. I didn't know I was poor.

KP: In other words, you always had enough food to go eat?

HG: Oh. yes.

KP: And you were never under threat of eviction or anything dire?

HG: Well, we moved a lot. Later found out that if you didn't pay your rent, then you went and moved somewhere else. My father had a business in town [and] there was a lot of pride about paying bills, and never going on welfare. That was something that was just unheard of; you just wouldn't do that sort of thing. I mean, I do remember not ever buying new clothes. Since I was the youngest of five brothers, I always wore my brothers' clothes. And I was fortunate that one of my brothers had a job ... as a clothing salesman in the store that my father had originally worked in Hoboken as a tailor. My brother eventually went to work there. In fact, during high school I worked there part-time.

KP: Before you went off to the service?

HG: That's right.

KP: Did your family belong to a synagogue?

HG: Yes. We belonged to a synagogue in Hoboken. United Synagogue, it was called.

KP: Was it Reformed or Orthodox?

HG: It was, what today we would probably call, Conservative Synagogue. And I was bar mitzvahed there. All my brothers were bar mitzvahed there and my father went regularly. I can remember, you know, with the contributions at High Holy Days when they stand up and ask for special contributions. Those who were able, you know, got a great deal of public acclaim when they stood up. And my father was unable to give. I know it used to trouble him a great deal and [he] was embarrassed by, you know, they called your name as to how much money you could give. That was something that left me with a thought. When I joined this particular Jewish Community Center I argued against that practice. That it really put people in a very difficult situation, asking people to stand up and make a public pledge in front of 500 or 600 people.

KP: How observant were your parents at home?

HG: My mother kept a Kosher home. She lit candles and the Sabbath was a very important part. But I would not consider the family to have been raised as very orthodox Jews.

KP: Well, your father, sounds like, he had to work on Saturdays?

HG: That's right. He worked on Saturday, [but] there was no such thing as non-kosher food being brought into the house. But if we went out to eat in a restaurant as we got older, there was no family dispute about it.

KP: It sounds like both your parents were classic Roosevelt Democrats.

HG: Oh, yes, oh, yes. My mother, particularly, was madly infatuated with Franklin Roosevelt. We listened to the radio in the house, and we would gather around and sure. ... They belonged to an organization a lot of immigrants belonged to, called, The Workmen's Circle, which in many ways was a socialistic kind of organization. And they went, and they had burial privileges through it and so on. It was a forerunner of the kinds of advantages that unions provided in a non-union environment. And it still goes on today, The Workmen's Circle. And it promoted keeping a lot of the heritage. They had Yiddish classes where you could maintain your fluency. In fact, my wife's family belonged to it and, although I didn't, she had gone through what they call the after-school Workmen's Circle schools.

KP: In other words, there was a lot of Yiddish spoken in your home?

HG: Oh, yes, a tremendous amount of Yiddish spoken in my home. We were all fluent, at least I could understand it although I didn't speak Yiddish well. My brothers and sisters were [fluent] and as the years went on, since I was the youngest, it was more comfortable to speak English in the family. But in the early years it was much more, the percentage of Yiddish versus English, you know, started to rise toward the end.

KP: Hoboken is a part of Hudson County which is notorious in the 30s and 40s for Frank Hague.

HG: Yes.

KP: Any stories that you may have about him?

HG: Oh, sure. There was a counterpart to Frank Hague in Hoboken. We had a mayor called Bernard McFeely, who was in power during the same period of time and ran Hoboken almost as a clone of Jersey City. So we in Hoboken really didn't feel the effect of Mayor Hague except maybe [to] benefit by some of the things that he did, like building that magnificent medical center in Jersey City, the Margaret Hague Maternity Ward and so on.

KP: So you really think you took advantage of ...

HG: Yes, yes. As Hudson county residents we did. And when I got married and lived in Jersey City we took advantage. of it. But in many ways if you look back . . . that was for very poor people like a benevolent dictator. He took care of you, tried to make certain that every large family, with a lot of votes, had at least one person working, you know, or got some sort of benefit.

KP: Did that play a part in your two brothers getting into the CCC?

HG: I don't think so. That was a federal situation. I don't remember our family benefiting from the local political situation. When I graduated from Rutgers and taught in Hoboken, the McFeely reign was over and there was a new group. But getting jobs in teaching became a political issue. The fact that I came from a large family was viewed as a very positive [thing]: brothers, sisters,

votes.

KP: Did any of your brothers work on a WPA project at all? Or other Works Programs?

HG: I think my oldest brother, the one that was the basketball player, who had tremendous notoriety in the community, as an all-state basketball player, and leading an undefeated, what was then Hoboken High School, basketball team, he was favored. And he had gone to college, and so he got to work for the WPA, teaching evenings and so on. So he got some help out of it. He had gotten married before the war and then left the house and they were living in Jersey City. But he was the only one I could think of that really got any benefit from the local political arena.

KP: Hoboken in the 1930s was noted for having a large German community.

HG: Right.

KP: Was there any tension between Jews and Germans in the 30s, that you remember?

HG: Yes. To a degree it was a community, it was a port of debarkation. ... The power structure was Irish. There was a large Italian population. There was a large German population. There was a significant Jewish population during that period in time. Things were very peaceful ethnically until the war. And as refugees fled Germany in the late 30s, some of them settled in Hoboken. Stories about what was happening in Germany, I guess, created some tension between some of the family. But I don't think that we saw in Hoboken as you did in other communities overt German organizations, Bund kind of organization.

KP: Like you did not have some neighborhood … ?

HG: Like West Milford. You know, … it was just not the thing to do at that particular point. And many of us were completely ignorant about what was happening in Germany, I mean, other than stories of people coming over. The meaning was not really clear to us.

KP: So, you weren't very aware in the late 30s what was happening?

HG: No, not at all. Except that we pretty much knew that this Hitler guy was not a good person. Not good for the Jews, as we would say.

KP: You went through the Hoboken school system and you, also, eventually would teach there. How good was your education, looking back on it?

HG: You know, as a student then, and I think, many cases, and I say it today, that students with ability are rarely negatively hampered by a mediocre school system. You know, in fact, what typically happens, students with ability are given attention. Teachers almost gravitate to them, they become their stars. So I look back and I guess that the high school education, in some areas, was lacking. I, particularly, had an enormous disadvantage when I went to high school because, although I was a very good student, the message in the family was that there is no money for college. So I took what was then called the "Commercial Course." I wasn't taking any algebra or

any other course necessary to get into college. In my junior year one of my sisters had gotten a very good job as a secretary to a fairly large corporation. She was single and she wanted me to go to college because I was a good student. And she said, "Is it too late for you to take some college courses?" And I went to see the high school principal and he sat down and in the second half of my junior year, the February semester, and my senior year, he scheduled me to take a year of algebra, a year of geometry, a year of trigonometry, physics, and chemistry. He jammed my schedule so that when I graduated… So I look back at that enormous concentration and [it] left me at an disadvantage that I didn't have the flow of four years to integrate all that information. But the interesting thing about Hoboken was, because it was the Depression and because Stevens Institute was there, a number of the graduates of Stevens Institute lived in Hoboken. Because Hoboken High School was left four permanent scholarships in the will of the founder of Stevens. So four free four-year scholarships went each year based upon the test and sometimes five or six kids took the test for four scholarships. They couldn't get jobs as engineers during the Depression and many ended up teaching chemistry or physics. So we had some bright, outstanding faculty members at the high school. And both with Hague and with McFeely, getting a job as a teacher in those communities needed political clout. But it wasn't a no-show job. They wanted you to prove that their selection was a good one. They expected you to do your job and they didn't want to hear complaints about you, ... "You got a job now; don't make me look bad," kind of routine. So, given the quality of what public education was then, after all, many of the teachers were two-year Normal school graduates in those years, till you got to the high school. The women were typically unmarried, you couldn't get married in those days, particularly during the Depression, they were dedicated. And of course, the typical families, just think of the kinds of family that went to school there, you had German, Jewish, Italian, Irish, most of them had that ethic of doing well … with the exception, I guess, of some of the Italian immigrants, who were at the waterfront getting jobs. So that when their kids quit, graduating from the ninth grade was a big ceremony, because there wouldn't be a high school graduation. But there were jobs on the docks at least during the time I graduated, a long-winded answer to your question. I thought I was adequately prepared depending on which teachers you got. It was not a tremendous disadvantage to me. In fact, when I got out of service, in order to get into Rutgers, I had to take what was then, I think, the Ohio State Entrance Exam, that was before SATs. A lot of kids didn't get into Rutgers, but a number of my Hoboken graduates were able to get in after being out of education for two , two-and-a-half, three years.

KP: You mentioned there was a big deal made of graduation at the ninth grade, as a lot of Italian-American kids went to the docks?

HG: That's right.

KP: That was then dominated by Italian-Americans?

HG: Yes. Yes, that was, it was a combination of Irish and Italian. But, I think, what really happened was that the Irish, many of whom, including then the future major John Grogan, who was president of the Longshoremen's Union, I think the leadership of the union was primarily Irish. But the heavy-duty work was being done by Italians and that, by the way, became a lot of political ... I mean, you went to City Hall to get a job on the docks, them calling, and they shaped up. Everyday you went down to the docks. You didn't know if you were working or not. They

had all kinds of gimmicks. If you put a toothpick behind your ear, you would kick back a portion of your salary. These were the stories I heard. And they went down to look, to pick out who was working or not and if you didn't have a toothpick behind your ear, you didn't get to work that particular day. Some people knew that story and some didn't. If I had known that, I would have made a fortune selling toothpicks!

KP: You mentioned you had one brother who went to college on an athletic scholarship and he went to University of West Virginia. It sounds like your family barely left the New York-New Jersey area?

HG: That's right. This was a whole culture shock for him. He spent two years there, then finished up at N.Y.U. as a Phys.Ed. teacher. The "Savage," a division of N.Y.U., was the Savage College of Physical Education. And he ended up getting his degree from N.Y.U. and then went to Rutgers for his Masters degree.

KP: Going to West Virginia in the 30s, what kind of stories did he come up with?

HG: Well, his stories, plus the stories of my brothers who went to the CCCs, were amazing because my one brother went to North Dakota, and another brother went to Montana, and so on. Of course, they came back with incredible stories about portions of the country and the culture, much the kind of cultural shock that I experienced when I went to the service. Flying on a plane with nine other people from all parts of the country, some of whom had never met a Jew, didn't know what a Jew was like, were waiting for me to play out the stereotypical version of what a Jew would be. And, in fact, one of the stories I tell is the war was over and we were coming home and we are on the ship. We chose either to fly our plane home or take a Liberty ship home. We all chose to take the ship home because we didn't know what kind of condition the plane was in. We didn't want to ... we had lost more planes due to mechanical failure than we did to enemy fire. As we spoke with members of my crew, the pilot was from a town in Texas with about 160 people, and there was another fellow from upstate New York, in a town called Philadelphia, New York, which is north of Watertown, between Watertown and a little farming community. And they start to talk about, "You can't really be a Jew because you are just not like what we were told a Jew was like. You fought as hard as we did, and you weren't cheap and you didn't steal," you know, all the other stereotypic stories that you had. And I think, I said, "Well, there are much more people like me than stereotypes that you have." But ... and stories of my brothers when they went to the CCCs before they went into the service, were very similar. That when it became clear to people that they were Jews, the impact of being with other young males who had never met a Jew was … registered. But being raised in Hoboken, you ended up with a lot of street smarts because we were raised with all different kinds of people. So you knew instinctively how to deal with those kinds of situations. It was a good place to be raised in order to deal with some of the vicissitudes of life.

KP: How tough of a place was it?

HG: It was a tough place to [be] raised, but it had a story of, you know, everybody on the block knew who you were, [who] your family was. And you walked down to the vegetable market and there was a cop on the beat, and you were afraid to do anything because word would immediately

get back to your family. You know, so, it was clear that we were out playing stickball or someone broke a window or someone grabbed an apple from the vegetable store, it was quick to know that punishment was going to be swift. There was no code of silence because it was in the large family. And we lived in a tenement building with probably twenty other families and everybody knew each other. The women, you know, somebody got sick, opened the door next door and kids were in and out. Different religions and, you know, I went to probably four different churches. Something would be going on and they would say, "Come along," and I would go.

KP: Sounds like your family was very open to exploring , given how limited ...

HG: Yes, yes. It was not a ghetto situation. In fact, Hoboken did not provide the typical ghetto for Jews in that it was a section of town where Jews lived. But there was an Italian section. There was a significant Italian section in Hoboken, there still is, where the Italian bakeries were and so on and so forth. I guess the proximity of New York City and the Lower East Side for many of the food and other situations led you ... not to ... I mean, there was a grocery store that specialized, I guess, in Jewish-type products, the herrings and the Old World kinds of stuff that my mother went to. …We all had to go with her because she had to carry bags. No one had a car, I mean, there was no such thing. I didn't learn to drive until I was in the service and I learned to drive in India and, of course, not knowing, you drove on the wrong side of the road. When I came back, I borrowed my brother-in-law's car and almost got killed as I drove down Washington Street on the wrong side of the road. When I dated my wife, even after I came back it, was a matter of getting on what was then the trolley from Hoboken to Jersey City … for the day … and then come back. There was no such thing as anybody in the family having a car. In fact, in my graduating class there was one fellow who had a big newspaper route. He was an entrepreneur and he had other kids working for him. He ended up as a senior with a car. I mean, he was ... Frank Slato had a car, ... we all remembered that. How Frank Slato could get a car, but nobody else did ...

KP: You were still in high school when Pearl Harbor?

HG: Right.

KP: Do you remember where you were?

HG: Yes, I was in my house with three other friends, playing poker, playing cards, and we were listening to the radio. We were all ... well, Pearl Harbor was 1941? So, I guess, I was thirteen, fourteen at the time. And we were stunned. And, of course, I think the difference about World War II, being the popular war, everyone just couldn't wait to be old enough to join up. In fact, I even enlisted in the Army Air Force before I graduated from high school and I was going to ... If you were selected as a cadet, they had a CAP, Civilian Air Patrol, where you went for training for future fliers and so on ... But, in fact, … the sense of a large family, you know, a Jewish family of being cowards. … My oldest brother who was the college graduate had, while he was in high school, gotten involved in a fracas in a bakery. Friends of his had a bakery, he was there and it was being robbed and he attempted to break it up and was stabbed. [He] ended up with severe lung damage … with tuberculosis. So he was not drafted. He was also married with a

child. But he couldn't pass the physical.

KP: But he went to try to get in?

HG: Yes. But my [other] brothers, all of us, were in service, so my mother had four stars in the window. You know, so that everybody knew that the Gallinsky boys were off into the service. There was no question about it. We all … my brother enlisted in the Navy, I enlisted in the Army Air Force. Another brother enlisted in the Army, and, I guess, there were two of us in the Army Air Force, one in the regular Army, and another brother in the Navy. And they were all overseas and then combat. One of the stories that I tell about a brother of mine was the one in which a friend of Studs Terkel said that would have been in his book. I ended up on a B-24 as a ball-turret gunner. I had gone through pilot training and then, unknown to us, they had developed the atomic bomb. So they started to wash out a huge number of cadets because they didn't see this production of future pilots, navigators and bombardiers as being profitable for them. So, they narrowed down. So, one day I would pass the physical to go to school to become a bombardier. A week later, yet another physical and I failed it. Everybody failed it and I was in tears and I was told by the medical guy I had a heart murmur. I said, "But didn't I have a heart murmur a week ago?" He said that "Yes, but we have raised our standards." And I ended up going to gunnery school and became a ball-turret gunner in a B-24. And eventually there were a couple of stories, I feel were incredible stories. It went like this. After going through gunnery training, we were then assigned up to Holyoke, Massachussetts where you met your crew. Pilots came in from one division, and gunners and navigators, they form crews. You met your crew and then we were assigned to a B-24 and we had practice flights for about two or three months. We didn't know where we were going because of the secret nature of what was going on in the war. We did know that there were B-24s in Italy. That there were B-29s in China ... the B-17s were in England. They didn't have any B-24s. So, the assumption was that we were going to Italy. The radio operator on the plane was from Hoboken. An incredible event!! I mean, here were two kids from Hoboken. Somehow I didn't know [him], he was older than I was. And I was eighteen and he was about twenty-two. He had gone to Steven's Institute of Technology; he was like a junior at Stevens. A bright guy. He was … Ray Baker. So Ray and I start to talk about going to Italy. And the stories were that you could make a fortune if you could bring over nylons or chocolate and your love-life would increase dramatically. So from there we went to Mitchell Field, in Long Island, which was a staging area to fly overseas. Now Mitchell Field was not that far from Hoboken. And you were supposed to be there for three days. You were to be given a brand-new B-24, test-fly it, and then fly. This is how they were going to get new planes overseas. That wouldn't necessarily be the plane you fly, but you would get it overseas. So, we ended up in Mitchell Field for nine weeks. And whatever was going on, there was a strike during the middle of the war at Willow Run. I can remember that, Willow Run in Michigan, which was the main manufacturing plant for B-24s and there was a strike in the middle of the war. There was a shortage of parts. But our plane wasn't coming in. So every night we were going to get the word that we were leaving. We came home to say good-bye because the next day the plane was going to come in. And it didn't come in. So Ray Baker and I kept coming back and forth to Hoboken and they had a PX where you could buy cigarettes cheap and chocolates. So we would come home and borrow more money and then we would, the next day, go to the PX and loaded up duffle bags filled with perfumes, and chocolates, and cigarettes, and so on. This was going to be our big investment, two sharp kids from Hoboken and we were going to make a fortune in

Italy and sell the stuff. Then we took off. And they gave you a packet of envelopes, and they were coded. You opened up the envelope when you got in the air and it says, "Fly this particular direction," and then the destination was Bangor, Maine. Bangor, Maine, what the hell, we, if we were going to Italy why are we going to Bangor, Maine? That didn't seem the route. So we flew to Bangor, Maine. We landed, this was January, there was this huge snow storm and we were stuck in Bangor, Maine for about a week, a week and a half. And then we were supposed to fly to Newfoundland, but because of the weather conditions they rerouted us to Bermuda. Well, that started to make some sense because if you went to Bermuda ... Well, the navigator on our plane was the oldest person on the plane. He was the assistant manager of the Princess Hotel in Bermuda before the war. So he said, when we got into the air and we opened up the envelope for Bermuda, "My uncle owns the hotel," and he says, "We have to have engine trouble after we land." So when we landed the engineer, I think, reported engine trouble and we needed parts. So we ended up being hosted at the Princess Hotel in Bermuda for about a week, till they finally caught on and they got us on our way. And the next flight was Marakesh. We flew from Bermuda to Marakesh. Well, that made sense because that was a short run from that point over. We took off from Marakesh and, of course, everyone on the plane knew that we were buying this stuff and they were razzing us. They wanted cigarettes from us and so on. We took off from Marakesh and the next thing was Cairo. Cairo, Egypt. Why, in the hell, are we going to Cairo, Egypt? And we landed there and the next one was Iran, Persia. So we knew we weren't heading [to Italy] and then we were really getting razzed. Then we landed in Karachi, India. We knew we were in trouble. We weren't going to Italy. From there, we had to fly over the Hump, into China. As it turns out, the B-24s were replacing Chennault's planes there. The B-29s were pulling out of China, the heavy-duty bombing, and I guess, MacArthur had gotten back to the Phillipines. They were transferring the B-29s squadrons to the Phillipines for a shorter run to bomb Japan. And we were going to be taking over the job of bombing the Japanese targets within China, Shanghai and so on, and the Yellow River Bridge. There is a picture of our squadron here, using [a] new bomb site, bombing the Yellow River Bridge, was the key installation for the Japanese to get materiel. We all got a commendation medal for that event. But now we are flying into China and, of course, we got the razzing. "What are you going to do with your nylons," and so on, ..."With the peasants working in the rice paddies." We decided that we were going to dump it. We were going to open up the bomb bay doors. We were so embarrassed, we had made such a huge investment and nothing was going to happen. We were holding onto the cigarettes, we were holding onto the chocolate, but the other stuff ... Well, we ended up at our location, which was a place called Chengtu, in China, which is, I guess, equivalent to being in North Dakota, north of Chungking. Desolate airfield, and the facilities were fine. And so we ended up in China and as different from any other billet that I know of. The Chinese government hosted us. It wasn't an Army Air Force facility. It was a facility that was provided by the Chinese government, Chiang Kai-Shek's government, who was delighted that the Americans had come in to help fight the Japanese, who had invaded China. And they had built barracks and each barracks they had a houseboy, who went in, clean the barracks, made your bed for you everyday, so we had that V.I.P. [treatment]. And the entire crew slept together, in other words there weren't officers' quarters and enlisted men's quarters. The ten-men crew slept together in one barracks, and that was the purpose of building team work, when you were to fly the orderly would come down, turn on the lights and indicate that this crew was flying. So the ten men would get up and get ready to go out, which is part of this story. So we were there a day when the houseboy, who spoke English, came over and said, "Anybody bring any cigarettes ?" or

so on ... He became the local salesperson and so we quickly unloaded all our merchandise to him at a small profit. Then found out, a week later, that we were ripped off, that we could have gotten three or four times more, that there was an underground economy that was going on, very effectively, so ... But, I guess, the story that I tell all the time that was most remarkable I believe was, the routine was, you never knew when you were flying a mission, for security purposes. So at four o'clock in the morning the lights would go on, an orderly would come in and say, "You are flying." The ten-men crew would get up, we would get dressed, and we would go to a breakfast briefing of those crews that were flying the targets and so on ... We would take off, like six o'clock in the morning, on a bombing mission. So when you went to sleep at night you had no idea what the next day would bring. Sometimes you were awakened four nights in a row ... sometimes a week would go by and you wouldn't be awakened. I had flown about fifteen to twenty missions, and I am awakened and it's dark and the orderly says to me, and here I am in Chengtu, China, six thousand miles away from home, [he] says, "You have a telephone call." Telephone call? "Are we flying?" "No, you are not flying." It's about three o'clock in the morning. And so I got up and got dressed, walked out of the barracks, the hut, to the orderly room. And I am saying to myself, "Well, I've got three other brothers in the service. Obviously, one of them has gotten killed. This is a Red Cross call." And I am all emotional, and I get there, and I pick up the telephone and a voice says, "Aaron." Now when I went to high school, my name was Aaron, when I enlisted in the service the birth certificate said Harry Aaron. I didn't know about Harry. So if you call me, Aaron, that means that's back in Hoboken. I said, "Who is this?" He says, "Herbie." I said, "Herbie who?" He's Herbie Frankel, the kid I graduated high school with. I said, "Where are you?" He said, "I am a switchboard operator in Calcutta, India." Now I am up in Chengtu, China , you know, literally three thousand miles away from him, six thousand miles away from home. I said, "How the hell did you figure out where I am?" He said, "My mother asked your mother what your APO number was. I have the codebook of where the APO is, and I traced your APO." He says, "I just put through a telephone call that a general couldn't put through." "I'm here at three o'clock in the morning." He said, "All through India, over the Himalayas, through the various connections." I am on the phone with this kid I went to high school with for about an hour. He had just gotten to India, so he was filling me in on what was happening in Hoboken. He had seen my mother and father and so on ... He says to me, "Don't you have a brother in the CBI? Your brother, Eddie?" I said, "Yes." "Where is he?" I said, "In Burma." He said, "Where in Burma?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "You have his APO number?" I said, "Yes." "What is it?" So I gave it to him. So he says to me on the phone, he names the Air Force base in Burma where my brother is. He says, "Tomorrow night I am going to set up a telephone call between your brother, you, and me." And in the middle of the war, the next night at about three o'clock in the morning, by now, I was ready for it. Told the orderly that I was going to get another call. I had a triangle telephone call with my brother in Burma, and Herbie in Calcutt,a for about an hour. Found out where my brother was. I ended up, after twenty-five missions they gave you a week of "R&R," they called it. I caught a supply plane, flew to Calcutta, got on a train, went to Burma, spent three days with my brother in the middle of the war, and got back, and went on. I mean, it was the most incredible situation in the middle of the war to be able, I mean, if you think of the logistics then in 1944, with telephone lines stretching through jungles and so on. Japanese constantly, you know, bombing, cutting down the stuff. It was an incredible event! And my brother and I often talk about it. I went to my fiftieth high school reunion, we saw Herb Frankel who was there. Then we could tell … the story to our friends who we went to high school with. You know, about seeing people in service

during the war.

KP: How common was a prank like that? It sounds like there were similar, I wouldn't say prank, but this was clearly not.

HG: Oh, absolutely not. What you learned in the service was that the master sergeants ran the Army, the supplies, the underground economy. Lot of guys got wealthy in the service. You know, with government materials and so on, and selling it and so on. We left, literally, billions of dollars worth of equipment in China, when we were pulled out of China, when the faster, more fuel efficient plane, the B-25s replaced the B-24s. We were stationed now in India, in Rupsi, India at the base of the Himalayas. And they converted the B-24s into, what they called C-80s and they put gasoline tanks in the bomb bays and we flew gasoline back into China for the B-25s to fly their missions. That was a much more dangerous part of the war, because the planes were really not designed to be gasoline carriers. And sparks, you had to start a motor to get the engines ready and a spark could blow up the plane. So we lost more planes, and more crews, flying gasoline into China, over the Himalayans, over the Hump, than we did in combat missions. And one of the stories I wanted to tell you, which is another amazing story, was when we were all stationed back in Rupsi, which is where I learned to drive a car. I met someone from another bomber squadron who was from New Jersey, from New Brunswick. And so he was in another barracks and, of course, Jersey boys were looking to talk to each other and what was happening. And he asked, he needed x amount of hours, you could get rotated home after x number of missions, x number of hours. So he was short. He had been sick with malaria, his crew had accomplished their time; they went home. He was so mad because he hadn't logged enough time. So he was looking to get on another plane to log enough time. So he flew a couple runs with us, he was still short and he left with another crew one morning and they never came back. Now what happened, everybody became scavengers every time a crew didn't come back. Everybody would go through their personal belongings, take whatever valuables they had, and so on, which sickened me, at that point in time. So I attempted to write a letter to whatever family about the fact that when I had seen him he had been well and so on. The war's over; I come back. I enroll in Rutgers, I am there almost a year and my room-mate says to me, "Let's go shoot some pool." We go down to the YMCA in New Brunswick to shoot pool. And I look up and across the table is this guy that we presumed was dead! And we recognized each other, and he tells me the most harrowing story. ... They were attacked, the plane went down and he bailed out. He doesn't know of anybody else in his crew and for about two and a half months he wandered in the jungles in there and finally came across an outpost with a radio operator. They rescued him and he went home. Everybody from my outfit thought that he was dead. And I walk into a YMCA in New Brunswick and I see this kid who we all presumed dead … He wasn't at the university. He was a local ...

KP: New Brunswick?

HG: … Kid, you know, and so on. But you know we sat down and relived the stories and he wanted to know what happened to all his stuff, who took his watch, who took his, ... and thanked me, by the way, for the letter that I had written to his family who presumed him dead …

KP: So this was a real remarkable.

HG: Absolutely.

KP: Do you remember his name?

HG: Italian fella. I don't remember his name. I really don't. And interestingly, after that one event, I told him I was at the university, there was no attempt on his part to contact me. It was always like the locals versus the kids that are going to college. You know, he wasn't a college-bound kid, there was no relationship. I mean, we weren't good friends, we were just, you know, acquaintances from India.

KP: Going back to the base in China, you mentioned the Chinese government built these barracks, which sounds like they were a cut above the regular barracks.

HG: Yes, in fact, the interesting thing was the food. Because everything that came into China had to be flown over the Hump. Only high priority items came in because the Japanese had the coast so you couldn't ship anything in. So all our supplies had to be flown in. So we ate buffalo meat, and the only thing that we ate that people looked forward to was that they had, plenty of chickens, so we had plenty of eggs. So the diet, the fellow, one of the gunners was from Philadelphia, New York, was a dairy farmer and he couldn't eat. I mean, he just couldn't eat that stuff, drove him crazy. His family sent him peanut butter and he smeared like three inches of peanut butter on every piece of meat so he could get through the war, you know, eating that. I remember, when we got on the Liberty ship, going home, the Navy lived very well. They had, first time we saw during the entire war, butter. They had a slab, ... a pound, of butter on every table. He'd pick up the butter like it was a candy bar and ate the entire pound of butter. I mean, I got sick but, we were treated well. What we did notice though, was that the Communists were ready to overthrow Chiang-Kai Shek. They were stealing equipment from us, they were getting ready for the war to end and getting ready to overthrow Chiang-Kai Shek, and so on. So one of the big problems we had, since we were far-removed from the Japanese, was the local guerrilla raids by the Communist factions that were getting themselves armed with American equipment. And then, when we left, the decision was to abandon all the equipment because that would be flown back. So incredible amount of very valuable military equipment was left there which, we believe, local Communist guerrillas ended up with. And there was a lot of buying and selling going on.

KP: Who provided the security to Chinese bases? Did you have any Air Force?

HG: Yes, yes. There were MPs and there was security. But it was fairly lax, and because there was no physical attacks upon human beings, you know, a jeep would be stolen, equipment would be stolen ...

KP: So if you left something where it wasn’t supposed to be, it could disappear?

HG: You always worried about your houseboy. We had stuff. You were very careful about your guns and so on and always being with you ‘cause you didn't want to lose that. Then there was hell to pay if you lost your gun. The other event was they were giving a briefing on bombing a

target. And we bombed the target, and when we came back we found out that we had wiped out an entire Chinese village and killed all or most of the inhabitants. And I remember them collecting money. That Madame Chiang-Kai Shek … and a Chinese official had informed us …

KP: That you had destroyed a Chinese village?

HG: The entire squadron chipped in and we all gave a month's pay, I guess, to the relatives. And then when we got back this American flag with Chinese wording at the bottom of it, which we had sown inside the jacket, which said something about us making this contribution and that we should be safeguarded and so on. But that was, you know, those things that we had difficulty in going to sleep. You'd think you were bombing a Japanese base, and we ended up taking the wrong information or missing the target. That was the sad part and, of course, losing crews.

KP: When you arrived, how many crews did you arrive with? How many crews were there?

HG: We came in as a single plane. And that's the way they were. They were ferrying over planes. My squadron had about 24 planes in it and we were all part of 308th Bomb Group. We probably had about sixty planes, but about thirty-four that were operable at any one time. Many of the mechanics had been there a long, long time and morale was lousy. It wasn't the greatest place in the world to be. I think there were no cultural [activities]. I don't ever remember seeing a movie or anything else there. It was, you know, go to work, get up early in the morning, fly and, you know, play some ball, put up some temporary basketball nets, and so on, but that was really the extent of it.

KP: And no sight-seeing in the local area?

HG: Oh, no. There was a little village, Chengtu village. In fact, I brought back for Polly some filigree and some jade, you didn't know what was good or bad: you were a kid. You didn't know whether you were being ripped off or what. But that was the extent. We were not near a large city, Shanghai or ... Although there was supposedly a university, Chengtu University, in the area. So there was a little community near the air-base that we got to go into.

KP: Sounds like your interaction was very limited.

HG: Of course, there were women in town. Of course, guys were looking to romance Chinese girls. Of course, there were brothels that were set up for the Air Force. In fact, there were brothels that had ratings, health ratings because venereal disease was so high that you couldn't get a crew to fly. So that the Army Air Force, over the protests of the chaplain, set up brothels that passed the health standards and the girls would have a card that you had to ask for that showed their most recent physical, you know, that she didn't contain a disease. That was the extent of the social life. And that was a real event in terms of even getting to go in.

Rekha Gandhi: What was it actually like flying a bombing missing? Were you gone for like? Did you go during the day or night?

HG: They were long, of course, we were so far away from the coast. There were missions that

we were in the air for ten to twelve hours. Now I was the ball-turret gunner, that means I was descended in a fetal position for ten hours or so on.

KP: You were also in the most vulnerable position.

HG: That's right. And the difference between a B-17, is a B-17 ball-turret was fixed. You could land with the ball-turret down; the B-24 you couldn't land with the ball-turret down because it would hit the ground so it had to be retracted. Your greatest fear was that the hydraulic system would be shut out and they couldn't get you up. There was a mechanical system, of course, my friends used to play games with me, turning off the hydraulic so I couldn't get up and scared the hell out of you. And then, of course, attempting to take what they trained you to do when you were fighting off Zeros and planes was frightening, absolutely frightening. I mean, every time we took off we were frightened, every time we landed … The business of being a "brave hero" was malarky. I mean, we were scared, we were kids! I mean, eighteen, nineteen, the pilot was twenty-two years old, and the oldest person on that plane was the navigator, who was about twenty-four. So you are talking about two years before that someone was a farmer, or you know, someone was an auto mechanic or a college student and all of a sudden you were thrown together with very brief training. These weren't officers that had been through West Point or the Air Force Academy with years of experience. You knew, you threw together a crew. And you sent them off into combat. And quite often, we were victims of our own ignorance on things that we did or we didn't do.

KP: What was the first mission that you were fired on? Was it the first one?

HG: No, it wasn't the first one. I don't know whether it was deliberate or not. But they sent us out on what was commonly called "the milk run." It was a target somewhere near Shanghai in which there was a munitions dump that we were to attack. And what we were worried about was aircraft … and it wasn't heavily defended by planes. But the Yellow River Bridge, which was a crucial artery for the Japanese to get their troops and materials into Manchuria, was the most difficult thing about it. And we lost a lot of planes attempting that ... And then we got a new bomb sight. They replaced the Sperry bomb sight with the Norden bomb sight. So the feeling was, we could fly much higher and still be accurate with the new bomb sight and therefore much safer. So when we were attacked by planes, we didn't have much fighter planes to protect us on our runs. We went pretty naked. It was just the guns on the ships, on the planes, were the ones that [protected] versus B-17s flying from England, running, bombing the German targets had a great deal of fighter protection. We didn't have that.

KP: How large were your formations when you did a typical mission?

HG: Anywhere from eight to twelve planes.

KP: Compared to Europe they were relatively small.

HG: Oh, very small. They had nothing of the massive bombing that occurred in Europe. This was a relatively small operation as compared to what was happening in Europe. And when the B-25s came in, they were much faster. We were lumbering. I mean, the B-24s were criticized

because they were very slow, carried a much bigger bomb load than the B-17s. But they were not very maneuverable or fast planes so they could be sitting ducks, so we always worried about that.

RG: You were in China most of the time, in Chengtu, or you said you came to Rupsi, India?

HG: Yes. We, all of my combat flying came out of Chengtu, China. I would say I was over there about a year and a half. About a year in China and about six months, the last six months in Rupsi, flying gasoline back and forth.

RG: When in India, did you have to take health precautions like the malaria pills?

HG: Oh, yes, that's another good story. Malaria is very prevalent and you couldn't fly missions because you got really sick. So every time you went into the mess hall they gave you what was called an Atabrine tablet. [You] couldn't get quinine because the Japanese had taken over, so they made this substitute. The disadvantage of quinine was it affected your skin pigmentation: it turned you yellow. I am dark and so while I was taking Atabrine, in order to fly, I had a tremendously heavy yellow pigmentation to my skin. And when I went into a village they would laugh. I was more yellow than the local inhabitants. When we stopped taking the Atabrine, when the combat was over, then people came down with malaria or were yellow. You didn't know, as long as you were taking it, … suppressed all the symptoms. For years after, when I got tired or I was physically depleted … I worked in a resort hotel, I was the maitre'd when I was in college. Doctors who were guests would walk over to me and say, "You don't look well; let me give you a free examination." They all thought I had malaria, what was … I am talking of the medical term of what happens when you have malaria. I had to explain to them I am okay. And I became a sun-bather. So I would always have a tan, so when I didn't have a sun-tan, you could see the yellowish tinge from the residue of the Atabrine that stayed with me for years.

KP: Really, you had sort of a daily reminder of your …

HG: That's right. That's right because … my wife has a favorite expression. Even right now, I know, she says it's time for a vacation because I don't have sun on my face and I would start to get that tinge.

RG: That yellowish pallor?

Estelle Galinsky: Did you tell them when you saw the picture, <u>The Enola Gay</u>?

HG: Oh, yes. When we saw ... a movie. The movie that they made, that wasn't <u>The Enola Gay</u>. Enola Gay is the plane that bombed Japan with the nuclear [bomb], Memphis Belle, <u>The Memphis Belle.</u> Watching that movie, that was B-17, but watching the young guy get into the ball-turret … Watching movies, I had recollections and felt a lot of the emotions of reliving that fear of getting back into that ball-turret. As different from everybody else who can walk around the plane, I was locked in. I was locked in, I couldn't get out. You had to make sure that you took care of your bodily functions before you got in, you know, drain yourself, not drink any fluids, and so on, because you weren't going to go up there and have a bathroom call in the middle of a

flight.

KP: And twelve hours is a long time

HG: Oh, on the way back, after you left the target, you know, when we felt that it was safe, I would get out and do what I had to do and then go back in. But typically it was very, very uncompfortable, but, I guess, at that particular time … In fact, as I think [of it], I was about five nine and a half, which was a little tall for that. Usually they looked for people around five six, five seven for that particular assignment.

KP: Going back a bit, you had mentioned about your training and that you were very hastily trained. Where did your training take place?

HG: First of all, we were stationed at Kessler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi where all those Air Force cadets were going through their basic training, which is another good story to tell you. Pair of shorts in the summer, Mississippi, and I get very dark. And I have a picture, close-cropped, curly hair. After about eight weeks in Kessler Field, I am dark as any local Afro-American. And we were given a weekend pass before we ship out for the next assignment. Biloxi is a beach resort, so six of us go to the beach. We are on the beach and I am lying on my stomach, talking to my friends and a local cop comes by and wraps me across the butt with a stick and says to me "Hey, black boy! Off the beach." And all the other five guys are laughing like hell. So they say to him, "He's not black!" And he says, “I don't want any of that bullshit! Off the beach!" So I had to take my bathing suit and I pulled it down and he looked at me and said, "Boy, stay out of the sun!" My sense of prejudice was for real! And then when the war was over and we were being discharged, I was being discharged at Greensboro, North Carolina. I met somebody from Newark, who was on another crew;. We had the same [orders], we were going down to get discharged. We took the train from Penn Station in New York. And we got on the train, and you know the seats on the train you can push the one in front of you forward so four people can sit. A black lieutenant, with ribbons from here to here, was walking down the aisle, obviously looking for a place to sit with a B-4 dufflebag and we said, "Hey, join us." So he takes the bag and he sits down and we get on our way. In fact, they just did a story on the black fighter squadron in Italy.

KP: And he was from that squadron?

HG: Yes, he was. He was going down to get discharged, too. And we were telling him the CBI story. We told him the story about bringing merchandise to what we thought was Italy and he said we would have made a fortune. And it was great. So the train leaves Penn Station and we were going through Pennsylvania and then we get to Washington, D.C. And then the train leaves Union Station, Washington, D.C. We are heading down to North Carolina. Well, we hit Virginia and MPs start to walk on the train, walk over to, [him]. He was the only black military personnel in our particular car. And they said to him, "You have to move up to the black car." Well, there was almost a riot. Here were guys who had gone off and fought in the service and we said to him, "Don't get up." And the MP said, "Look, I don't want any trouble." We were now in the South, and this is 1945 and there's still Jim Crow, and there are still laws in the South, and so on. And he says, "I don't want to make a scene." We refused to let him get out. So he sat there

through most of Virginia, I guess. We got to the next state. We stopped and, I guess, they called ahead.

EG: Next state's North Carolina.

HG: Next station, whatever it was, and a whole group of MPs got on. And, you know, for one MP or two MPs, we were not going to take on, you know, fifty or sixty GIs that were in the car. And they got on, and the train wasn't going to move until he moved to the other car. And, boy, that left a taste in my mouth that I'll never forget for the rest of my life! Here's a guy who was going to give his life, was a hero, and we were still fighting in a country that still dealt with that.

KP: You mentioned earlier, Biloxi, had that been the first time you had really been out of the …

HG: Yes, that was my first. I had been to Panama City in Florida for my gunnery training, that came later. You are right, my first experience, as a kid from Hoboken to the Deep South, was Mississippi, Biloxi, Mississippi. And obviously, the services were segregated; there were no black members of any of our, you know, our crews or training or cadets or so on. They were completely separate during that period of time. Although there was prejudice in the North, coming from a place like Hoboken where we lived, you know, one mile square, people lived together, it was nothing as pervasive as we experienced there.

KP: Did you, in fact, have black families in Hoboken?

HG: Oh, sure. We didn't have a large black population but there was a small number and it was never, let's see you had. … there were no ghettoes so that, you know, there was a very poor section of Hoboken, which was laughable because nobody was wealthy. But probably [in] the least desirable section there were a small number of black families and those kids went to school. We played ball together and there was never a problem. Nothing that resembled the kind of segregation that was in the South.

KP: It was a shock to you, sounds like?

HG: Yes, it was a tremendous shock.

KP: And the South in the 1930s and 40s was not known for tolerance toward Jews.

HG: No, there was no question … All of us, you know, who grew up during that period of time. Growing up in Hoboken you had to prove that you were as tough as any of the Italian kids or the Irish kids, you had to fight when they fought, you had to play ball. I was a beneficiary of my brothers being good athletes, my oldest brothers, so there was an aura about the Galinsky family that helped me. The disadvantage was that they expected me to be as good as everybody, but I wasn't. I wasn't the star on the high school basketball team, but I played baseball.

EG: Did you tell them about when you came home how everybody shared their fears with you?

HG: Yes. Yes, I did. Members of the crew shared with me how they felt about Jews and how I

was not the stereotype that they envisioned I would be.

KP: You had enlisted in the Air Force to be a pilot, why pilot, why the Air Force?

HG: Right. Well, number one, it was glamorous. It started with the government was recruiting in high school, as I recall. They were giving what was called a V-12 test and an A-12 test. V-12 was Navy Air Force and the A-12 was Army Air Force. And they were going to send you to college.

KP: For you, that was the ticket.

HG: So, I took the V-12 test and passed and then was interviewed. And for some reason, which some of my friends tell me was anti-Semitism, I was not selected. But I had gotten myself worked up about this thought. And then went out and enlisted in the Army Air Force as a cadet. And then when my time was to be called I went in and went through the cadet training at Kessler Field and then I told you about "washing out," I think, ten thousand cadets were washed out across the country at various bases. Nobody knew why. But it was that they saw the dropping of the atomic bomb as shortening the war and that they concentrated on getting replacements for crews that were shot down, rather than building up more and more planes and crews.

KP: Your cadet training when you were going through, did you still have the expectation to be going to pilot training? What do you remember of it?

HG: In fact, when my wife and I walk, once in a while, we kid I still get into the cadence. Still remember the songs that you sang, “Wait till the Sun Shines, Nelly,” "You had a good life but you left." They built a lot of comradeship, teamwork, there was a lot of bonding and bringing people together. A lot of, sort of, being the cream of the crop, for your own self-concept. The fact that you had gotten to this point you were very special.

KP: So you didn't feel like some group, a lot of people, who had been through infantry training?

HG: No, not at all. You weren't a grunt and they were going to drive you down. It wasn't the stories about the marines, you know, that they are going to put you through hell. No, you were treated like you were elite, that you are going to be an officer, you know, that you were selected, many never made it. And we don't want to lose any one of you and so on. And at Kessler Field they were going to classify you either as a pilot, a navigator or a bombardier, one of the three major positions on a plane for officer training. And my cut, they took you through a whole series of tests: eye co-ordination tests, color tests and a whole series of them. Then they gave you what they called this 6-A physicals, which is the most comprehensive physical I have ever had. And every six weeks they would give it to you again. And it was that period of time that I was classified to go to bombardier school. I didn't qualify as a pilot or a navigator. My wife can tell you that I would never make it as a navigator. But I was scheduled to be a bombardier. And then they washed out my class out.

KP: Given the fact that you got through all these [tests], you had been going through these periodic physicals, this heart murmur? …

HG: Oh, I picked it up right away. In fact, I wrote a letter, my sister showed me, I was heart-broken. I was heart-broken. I felt I was a failure. Everybody expected me to be, you know, an officer and I ended up being an enlisted man, Master Sergeant, stuck in a ball-turret of a B-24. And it was that expectation and excitement, the psychology that the Army Air Force; there was no Air Force at that time. Each branch of service had their own Air Force; there was a Navy Air Force and there was an Army Air Force, a Marine Air Force. The Army Air Force developed some tremendous psychological techniques that made you feel that you were in the right place, doing the right thing. You didn't get the sense that you wanted to run away from it. I didn't see any thing about not wanting to go overseas, they had us worked up emotionally where we wanted to go, we wanted to fly, not that we weren't frightened, you know. But, and it was a clean war, in that, versus the infantry. I mean, you dropped your bombs, and you shot your machine-guns, but you never knew really what the impact was, you didn't see people dying unless you hit a plane and it exploded.

KP: In other words, you yourself were involved?

HG: Yes, that's right. We were hit and my tail-gunner was wounded, but I was never physically hit at all.

KP: You were devastated, then you ended up being a gunner, how much training did you have as a gunner?

HG: Six weeks in Panama City. Took you out every day and they had targets. You flew and there was a plane dragging a target and … they would take you to all kinds of angles, and the other gunners on the ship would be on there, too, on the young plane. Then they took you through a drill where you had to take apart a fifty-caliber machine-gun blind-folded and put it back together. If they told me that I was going to do that, I never would have believed that in a million years. And you got to do it, you just got to do it, I mean. They said that you would and you went to it, then you took pride in being able to, you know, hit the target and know what you are doing. The rest of the members of your … crew wanted to know if they had the best military gunner, best tail-gunner because everybody's life depended upon each other.

KP: When did you know … the imagery of flying in the 20s and 30s was that it was very modern, the latest thing you could do. It was clean war, besides. I have also interviewed pilots and other Air Force people and there was incredible risk and dangers even before you got overseas.

HG: Oh, yes. We lost a lot of people in training. I met a pilot from Hoboken who heard that I was there, came over, a fellow that was older than I am but knew my brothers, James Fusco. And he was training people down there and he got killed while I was at Panama City. We lost a lot of people in training, the high incidence of error, cause you didn't really have … a trained … and even the trainers were. You didn't have a cadre; our country was unprepared for war, we were in the most primitive stages when Germany was gearing up, you know, from the early 30s to get ready for war. We weren't gearing up; we had a tremendous political movement in this country which was isolationist. You know, Congress was not spending any monies on defense,

Roosevelt had to use all kinds of, as you know, techniques to start to build up the defense establishment. So we were relatively primitive in that way, so there were a lot of losses that were incurred as a result of not really being prepared. Collisions in the air, you know, lack of air controllers as you have today. We flew a training mission from Mount Holyoke, from the Air Force base, Westover Field near Springfield, Mass. And one of our training [missions] was to fly a typical ten-hour or twelve-hour flight. So we flew south, maybe down to North Carolina or South Carolina, and then we turned around to come back. And we hit incredible fog over New York City. And we were looking to land; we would never make it back to Westover Field. So we were looking to land at LaGuardia Airport. And we can hear them, you know, screaming out there, we were too low, "You are over New York City. The buildings are high;" …"Get up," and the pilot was trying to get down low to see what was going on, if he can find it.

EG: Did you see King Kong as you went by?

HG: Right. This is on tape, Polly.

----------END TAPE ONE----------

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Harry A. Galinsky on July 12, 1995, at Paramus, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and Rekha Gandhi.

You were saying you almost … could see the buildings in New York?

HG: We learned from that. Then everybody in the crew was upset at the pilot and the copilot, and they were arguing.. We had a similar experience flying overseas. When we were flying from Bermuda to Marakesh that we were coming in, and we could hear the pilot and the copilot arguing, "Get your nose up; get your nose up! We are going to hit." The copilot was older than the pilot, he had been a professor at the University of Michigan. The pilot was a high school graduate from Texas, I guess, he had all the physical skills, you know to be a hot-shot pilot. But they were screaming at each other about the way we were going. And it was like a cliff coming in and the copilot was saying, "Get above it." He said, "It's a short runway. I gotta make sure I was going to land in the early part of the runway." And they were almost tussling with each other, you know, finally we ended up landing much further down the runway, burning out some tires because we didn't have any landing gear. But you know, you had rookies that were in combat, just learned to fly, you know, a crew put together from all over the country. Civilians doing a military job that they weren't trained for, with a complicated piece of equipment that no one knew very much about. You know, with the pilot training, he wasn't training on B-24s, he was training on multiple-engine planes and then had to learn how to fly a B-24.

KP: When did he learn how to fly with the crew that had been assembled?

HG: He had learned to fly before, he came as a certified copilot. Everybody came as a certified regular operator.

KP: Not on that particular plane?

HG: Not on that particular plane and the newest version of that plane.

KP: So you all learned together?

HG: We learned all together the first couple of times we were up. They had supposedly a veteran pilot, you know, checking him out, checking the crew out on how to handle it. We knew that we were not in Allstate's hands, you know, "Sit back and leave the driving to us." We took off, we worried every time we took off. We landed, we worried, it was not a routine kind of situation. And that went on for a long time.

KP: One of the things a lot of crews I have learned did, which was, from what I can gather, clearly against regulations, is that the pilot would often teach other members of the crew how to ditch the plane in an emergency.

HG: Yes, we did that. And though we did have, we used to say, "What if you two guys get hit and one of us has to land the plane?" So we took turns. We got, you know, minimal kinds of training. But much more the engineer and the radio operator and the nose-gunner because they were up very close, rather than you were going to pull the tail-gunner up. We went through the motions; they got much more time of flying. But that was against rules and regulations.

KP: Yes.

HG: Absolutely, but a lot of it was like the fun bit, too, of flying a …. It wasn't that the motive was only in case of emergency. We all wanted to. I wanted to be a pilot, you know, "Give me a chance to fly this thing." And what was extraordinary for me was how difficult it was to turn. You know, the business of today, having a power steering, I mean, you physically turned that big [plane] and the B-24 was a huge plane for those days. I mean, today you look at it, it was small, but for those days. You know, I expected you could with a touch your finger you could … Part of our training was, we went through at Panama City of all places, of bailing out. They took us on top of a huge structure, high enough for your parachute to open, and you jumped and pulled your cord. So a lot of people got hurt, you know, landing, broke legs, ankles, and so on. We also had time in a single engine plane during the Kessler Field [training]. So we got to take off in a two-seater with a pilot as part of that, "Oh, you're going to be a pilot" kind of routine. So I had that little experience.

KP: So you got a taste of some of what it was like to be a pilot?

HG: That's right.

KP: It sounds like you wish you had been able to …

HG: Oh, absolutely. I mean, I had no great visions. I hear kids talking about, "I want to be a pilot." I mean, up to the time of the war, I had never thought about it. Every kid from Hoboken is going to be a pilot … wouldn't even have thought about it. But when you were going to go in, and pretty much the excitement of the V-12 and the promos that they did, you know, psyched us up about what I wanted to be when I went into the service. And the business of avoidance of

going into the service. At least in blue collar towns, maybe in more wealthy towns, I mean, it was the mark of Zorro if you didn't go in. Anybody that was a 4F was really shunned in Hoboken. Oh, Yes, tough time. "How the hell did you get out? Who did you know?" I mean, that kind of business. The thing to do was to go. My graduating class had about 150 kids in it, about 75 boys, 76 boys. I think 73 of the group [went in]. There was one guy that was wounded, he was fifteen or sixteen when he graduated so he didn't go in at least when we went in, and maybe there were one or two others that somehow did not go in.

KP: It was not unique though? It was a popular war.

HG: No. It was popular, everybody went. Much as your mothers and fathers were frightened to death it was …

KP: Sounds like your parents, your mother and your father had a lot of people in the service.

HG: That's right.

EG: Thank God you didn't wind up like the Sullivan Brothers.

HG: That's right.

KP: You mentioned though that at your base in China there was a lot of low morale.

HG: Low morale for those that had been there before we got there.

KP: For the ground crew?

HG: Well, Yes, the ground crew in particular. They were bitter. They had been there for a couple of years already and didn't see an end to the war and they weren't getting rotated home. You flew enough missions, you got rotated home. They weren't getting rotated home and life was primitive. And they were, you know, wishing the hell … It was almost like you, the crew chief and the crew that took care of your plane, we went out of our way, you know, to cater to them, give them cigarettes, and give them stuff, liquor or whatever we had.

KP: It also sounds as if you guys had some sympathy for them, they were stuck in this God forsaken …..

HG: Absolutely. Majority of them were regular Army guys. And they saw us, I am talking about morale, you know, "These hot-shot kids coming in, what the hell do they know about the Army and the services?" and so on. But you know, the regular Army saw the civilian Army; or the regular Air Force saw the civilian Air Force, they looked down their noses at us.

KP: They didn't have as good accommodations as you did, were they being as well-treated on base?

HG: I don't think so, I don't know for sure. I don't really recall that, or ever entered into that.

That may have been a part of it. But we, we were given a liquor ration. Every time you flew away they credited you with ... so that when you came back you could have a drink, not before you went. But you could have like four ounces of alcohol and you, if you didn't use it, you built up, you get a bottle ... You know, so many of us, I wasn't a drinker, although you learned to do a lot of things in order not to be called a Jew. So you ended up drinking and playing cards and doing the things that stereotypically, you know, supposedly wouldn't be doing. But it was not a predominant thought in my mind. I don't want to give the wrong impression that this was a theme in every decision I made was, "Would I look like a stereotype? "

KP: It sounds like, as a group, you sort of did well together?

HG: Absolutely, it was a good relationship. In fact, the only friction on the plane amongst the crew was between the copilot and the pilot.

KP: Which, as the rest of the crew, you must have looked on …

HG: Worried about it all the time.

KP: So the friction continued?

HG: Yes. You know, it continued and at some point in the … during the missions we were flying in China, no, I guess, we got to Rupsi, the copilot asked for a transfer and got it. So it's not working out. So they made a switch So we ended up with a new copilot for that run, I guess, for the six months we were there.

RG: What was that like, flying over the Hump, because you were doing regular flying over the Hump?

HG: It was frightening because of … the reason it was frightening was so many crews got lost and we knew that our plane was not designed for the job that they gave us to do. We worried about being, flying coffins, they used to call it, because we lost a lot of the B-24s which were converted, you know, to C-87s to take gasoline in. And the fact that if you bailed out, you were bailing out in the middle of mountains and jungle territory, you know. At least if you bailed out in China, there might be a village; you didn't know what the hell you would find, you know, bailing out over the Himalayas.

KP: What kind of training did they give you for bailing out?

HG: None. None about survival. I mean, I listen to the hero that got rescued in Bosnia, about survival training.

KP: Well, that all occurred as a result of previous war experiences.

HG: Pilots would be shot down and didn't know how to survive. So they have instituted training program. But they didn't have …

KP: You mean you didn't have any of that?

HG: No, we got instructions about what to say, what not to do. You know, the bomb sight we had to destroy, the bomb sight, that was the most precious thing on the plane. You know, of all things don't let the bomb sight fall into the hands of the enemy. But you know, the gun, they gave us a lecture on what to do, don't be a hero. If you are surrounded by a lot of people, don't pull your gun. If its one-to-one , then use it.

KP: Yes. But otherwise? …

HG: No survival techniques, and so on. They did give us water purification tablets if you had to drink brackish water. You threw the tablet in and supposedly it would ...

KP: What about survival kits? Did you? …

HG: No.

KP: You didn't have a survival kit.?

HG: No. No.

KP: So you had some tablets and your side arm?

HG: They gave us, you know, you had like a gunbelt and bullets and you had … what they called water purification tablets, [and] Atabrine tablets to take so that you didn't come down with malaria if you were in the jungles and so on. But not of what we would today call, survival gear, none whatsoever.

KP: And, well, you mentioned this one guy who you later met in New Brunswick, in a pool hall of all places. How many crews got shot down?

HG: My experience was that during bombing missions, while in China, we lost three crews. When I was in Rupsi during six months, there were about nine crews that never came back. And we got no information on them.

KP: Did any crews get shot down, crash, and then made it out?

HG: In China, we got word that one of the three crews that were shot down were rescued by Chinese and they eventually got back to the base. But the other two we heard nothing about, whether they were taken prisoners or they were killed or what, we had no information. I had a feeling that part of the psychology was that they didn't want too much information going, raise your level of anxieties when you were taking off , they just didn't tell you.

KP: You were based in India afterwards.

HG: Yes.

KP: What was that like? Did your life improve at all being in India?

HG: Yes, first of all it was a much more relaxed situation. And the population, you know, because of the British occupation, many of the local inhabitants, there were a significant number of people who spoke English. You have that Indian middle class of civil servants. They were well-educated; they spoke English. So you can get into town. Rupsi was a fairly large community and we had access to go out. The pressures in India were far less intensified; we didn't feel so isolated. There was a newspaper you could read. In fact, a story that I tell was when I got to Calcutta, I bought an English newspaper. The headline was "Famine of 1944: Great Failure." And I couldn't understand how a famine could be a failure. I read the article. It said it was predicted, because of the shortage of food, that 8 million people would die of famine and only 6 million had died so far. So the food shortage was going to continue. So one of the things I learned in China, much more in China than in India, was the value on human life that we place was not the same. I tell the story, when I got back, they had lengthened the runway in Chengtu. And they did it by thousands of Chinese coolies, on their hands and knees, breaking up stones with little hammers, and another group pulling with ropes a big roller, right and then a few of those on the ground not getting out of the way and being crushed by the roller and laughter. I mean, it was like a big joke. So the value of an individual human life was really something that was a cultural shock to all of us who couldn't understand. The lack of mourning, or whatever it might be, or that sort of it. At least amongst the very peasant class they were expendable; they were fodder.

KP: You sensed that very quickly?

HG: Yes, very quickly, very quickly. Less so in India. Although the caste system was very dramatic.

KP: It sounds like for someone who hadn't, until the war, had not left Hoboken, you really got …

HG: I came back a cosmopolitan, in many ways. I mean, you think about a twenty-year old, returns as a twenty-year old, leaving as an eighteen-year old. And what two years of being in different parts of this country and then being in a section of the world that very few people have … I mean, you come back and talk about Europe you had some sense of Europe from your neighbors and friends and your family. But there was a section of the world that was, you know, very remote.

EG: Remote.

HG: Very few people had any experiences of it.

KP: Even upper class.

HG: Exactly. One of the things that when I start to teach that the kids in my class used to press my button. If we studied, I'd say, "You know, I was in China," when we are studying geography. And instead of spending an hour on it, they'd keep me going for a couple of days. "Talk about

your experiences there," and so on.

KP: Had you read the National Geographic at all growing up?

HG: No, not really.

KP: What did you know about China and India before you went?

HG: I guess whatever came out in school. You know, whatever my memory was. Pearl Buck, The Good Earth and English literature, I mean, a literature class, an English class I had and the descriptions from geography lessons, whatever pictures they had and books. I am sure we must have looked at the National Geographic and other things, but it was relatively primitive.

KP: You really didn't have … but Italy …

HG: Very clear of what Italy would be like.

KP: When did you leave India, because you were discharged in December of '45, when did you …

HG: I guess I left, it took me about thirty days. It was an interesting story because my wife, Polly, was working for the government.

EG: The Quartermaster Corps, down in Jersey City.

HG: And she found out what troop ship I was on coming home, "The General Black," and was there to greet me. We were going together at the time.

KP: So when did you two meet?

HG: Before I went into service. In fact, I met her in December of 1943.

EG: Yes.

HG: Yes. December 1943 and I left to go overseas in April, January? April ... So I was going with her from December. I was called up in January but during that period of time I told you about Mitchell Field and all that whole business of coming back and forth. I never really got to leave until about April. Then I got in about April. And then we were on the ship for almost thirty days and we were still worried about submarines even though the war was over. We took a very peculiar route to make sure that it was safe because no one was sure whether or not there were still, just like Japanese were still fighting six months on the islands after the war was over, some German submarine was still out there and didn't get the word to come on back in. And then when we came back, one of the things in my memory was the incredible hostility to the Red Cross. When we were in service, they had a Red Cross canteen, and they were charging us for doughnuts and coffee. People were giving money … then they had a separate officers' Red Cross canteen, which got much better, so amongst the enlisted men there was a tremendous amount of

anger about the Red Cross which still stays with me. Salvation Army was wonderful; they gave you everything, they catered to you, but the Red Cross had a lot of complaints. And when we got off the ship we were going down the ramp there was these wonderful Red Cross ladies waiting at the dock to give us stuff, the guys were throwing it back at them. And there was such anger about the treatment. Now this was relegated to the Red Cross posts that were overseas, many of the women that were involved there had the wrong sense of what they ought to do. And the business, when we got back and spoke to some people about the Red Cross, there was never such a thing as charging. I mean, the people were collecting Red Cross funds and you weren't supposed to charge for anything, but they were charging us fifty cents for a doughnut and a cup of coffee.

KP: This is when you were in China and India?

HG: And India, right.

KP: Where you did not have a lot choices.

HG: No,no. So that was ... for years, I couldn't get that memory out of my mind.

KP: Really, so you went out ...

EG: I contributed to the Red Cross.

HG: I was very, very angry about that. And many of my friends in college talked about that. Had similar experiences.

KP: Of being charged for coffee?

HG: Oh, and the caste system between how they treated officers and enlisted men. Why should the Red Cross have a caste system?

KP: What would the officer get from the Red Cross versus the enlisted men?

HG: Oh, they had dances, music, and they had a lot of things going. Whatever it was, it was better. Of course, whenever we were all officers they would tell us what they got at the officers' canteen versus what we got at the enlisted persons' canteen.

KP: And being in the Air Force you were even sleeping together?

HG: That's right. Sounds right. I mean, if, what's the program we watch every once in a while?

EG: M.A.S.H.

HG: You know, if you have ever watched any of the M.A.S.H. series on how they had to conspire to get the enlisted men into the officers' canteen to break down that barrier.

KP: One of the things that strikes me is that there is much less of a barrier, although it varied in the Air Force between the officers and the enlisted men. Seems like your unit, you and your crew had that?

HG: Yes, there was a lot of first name. It wasn't, we didn't talk in the parlance, Captain, so on, everybody was … after a period of time, that disappeared and we were first name people. There wasn't that formality, rigidity. And that whole notion of everybody's life depended upon each other and it was almost implicit: it was a team, like an athletic teamwork or putting on a show together. You really needed each other.

KP: As a pilot, you had mentioned you and the entire base felt badly when this Chinese village was bombed, how worried were you that you hit the right target, in the sense that you hit a legitimate target?

HG: Oh, when we came back we took pictures. I remember on a couple of runs they told me not to put the ball-turret down, but to take pictures. They wanted more speed.going over the target. And the ball would hold you and we didn't expect any fire on some of the runs to take pictures. Then we'd come back and we'd have a debriefing. All the crews would come into a room and then they would display the photos. You hear, cheers would go up because your particular plane hit a target, or the mission was a success, or it wasn't a success, or you'd get chewed out. You know, they'd want to know. The bombardiers would ... you had what was known a lead bombardier. If you flew a mission, the most experienced bombardier flew in the first plane and then when his bombs dropped, the next, they toggled on the plane in front of you, the theory being by the time you got to the same point you would be dropping down. So it was crucial that that first bombardier, you know, be very accurate, because everybody else was dropping bombs based upon reaching the same point in the formation that he was ahead of you. And, it was like hitting a home run with the bases loaded in an important game. You came back and they printed up for all of us to take as a memento the fact that we had gotten a commendation for hitting a ten-foot bridge from fourteen thousand feet in the air, which was an incredible accomplishment.

KP: Because in fact, although the Air Force touted its accuracy, that was far from …

HG: Oh, no smart bombs down the chimney. No, absolutely not. And what you really did was drop enough, hoping that some of them would hit the target.

KP: Did you know, when you were in the States, did you know how inaccurate …

HG: No, we didn't. We didn't know until we start to see the photos of our missions. I mean, the idea was that we had this very sophisticated bomb sight and we went out and we were risking our lives, and we dropped the bombs that were going to hit what we aimed at. And it wasn't until you got back, until you were debriefed when you knew whether risking your life was worthwhile or not. And there was a lot of anger about going out on a mission for ten or twelve hours and coming back and you missed the target completely.

KP: Did you ever feel that you were flying missions that weren't necessary?

HG: Yes. There were times when we bombed that about five times and there was nothing left, why are we going back again, you know. The pictures showed that we knocked out that whole Jap installation, why are we going back again? Particularly if it was a long, you know, unusually long kind of thing, we needed some sort of justification and they'd say, "Well, they are rebuilding it," and, you know, "We gotta get back again," "It's a diversion ... Your crew's going here, meanwhile they think you're going back here," the strategies that most of us didn't understand or care about.

KP: How many missions did you expect to have to serve? Did you have a sort of a …

HG: No. Actually, when we went we didn't know what the rotation was, you know. You were going to fly thirty-five or forty missions, you automatically would get back. In fact, because of the length of our missions, I think, we were able to log enough combat hours after twenty-five or thirty missions to get rotated back.

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

HG: We were in India.. Well, of course, there was a lot of elation. We saw it as our ticket home. That was the period of time we were at. To us the war was over when we heard that. And it was just a matter of getting ourselves home safe and then the big preoccupation, "Don't do anything stupid. Get home safely. We've gone through all of this, let's get home safely." Even in terms of getting drunk and driving a jeep, you know. It was kind of … the theme was, "Don't be stupid, you came through the war, you know, don't get killed." And guys got killed, you know, doing stupid things. You know, you have gunshot … today, you know, someone picks up a gun to see if it is loaded, and then there is a bullet in the chamber. There were incidents of people who got killed, you know. Tragedies, and, of course, the officers and the commandants used to make a whole big thing about, "Hey, guys, the war's over, let's not kill each other."

KP: Had you thought of staying in the Army?

HG: Never, never.

KP: So you were just looking forward to …

HG: Oh, no. It was a matter of going and doing what I had to do. It was never a career option. Maybe if I had become a pilot and saw a connection of a career. Some pilots did, in fact, you know choose to stay in.

KP: You had mentioned on your survey that you had some insights into General Chennault and the Flying Tigers. Did you have any contact with them? …

HG: As I said, many of the ground crews that were still there had serviced Chennault's so [we heard] many of the stories about the Flying Tigers

KP: They had, in fact, been in China for a long time.

HG. A long time; some of them four, five years. But they were a cracker-jack mechanics and so on. And you just couldn't get them so they wouldn't release them. There was a lot of bitterness about the Flying Tigers being pulled out when the B-29s came into this particular base. And it was a different culture. They were swashbuckling, no rules, they were defying all of the discipline of the Army and the Air Force. In fact, the new crew comes in, supposedly highly organized and disciplined as compared to them. They were mavericks.

KP: So your group even though it was pretty casual and informal was more? …

HG: Yes, compared [to them] absolutely, far more disciplined and organized than the Chennault group which, you know, was almost like the Dirty Dozen. They pulled in people from all over the world for this volunteer kind of French Foreign Legion kind of concept. So you didn't have that same training and discipline …as minimal as we had. For many of them it was nothing, they took barn-storming pilots and people who could fly and were willing to do something and off they went.

KP: And your group, I mean, it would be interesting to get some of the ground crew because they knew and observed two different types of …

HG: Absolutely. That would be a great group to interview. Right.

KP: Have you ever been back to Asia, to India? …

HG: Well, I had an interesting experience. I was selected as the only superintendent to go on the first mission to Taiwan. We don't have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, as you are aware, and when Chiang-Kai Shek government left China they went to Taiwan. So I went with a group of educators, about nine of us, as the first mission to start to build a more formal relationship with Taiwan's education. There were three college professors, a commissioner of education, and myself and two members of the State Department of Education. So when I got to Taiwan, some of the terminology, some of the phrases [came back] and the guide said , "You speak Chinese." I said, " No, but I remember some words" When they heard that I had spent a little over a year in China, I became an attraction for a number of those people … We visited university after university and high schools and so on, and I got to talk to people who had been in mainland China and then had come with their families here. When I spoke about Chengtu, there were people who had been there, knew about it and filled me in on some things that I didn't understand. And so that was the one two-week experience I had about four years ago, five years ago. So Dr. Galinsky became a celebrity! They sought after me, and here was an American who knew a little bit about China and Chinese culture and background. And I asked them a lot of questions about, memories I had and what it meant.

KP: Because you really were …

HG: You know, it. Watching people waist-deep in rice paddies, you know, gathering rice and I asked them questions about that whole business, about why. I told you that story about peasants being crushed and whether that was unique to that area or whether that was, you know, common

kind of thing. And they, in many ways, reinforced the notions I'd, I left with.

KP: Really, going back, you would have some of the stuff interpreted?

HG: Although I am certain I was talking to the intelligentsia level of Chinese society that were able to ... The peasants didn't get out of China to come to Taiwan.

KP: Yes.

HG: The government officials, the educated elite and so on. You know, so their view was colored, at least, by their experiences.

RG: That's interesting because I came across that, too. Even on the planes, they did that, apparently, if the plane was overloaded, these Chinese men were just pushed out of the plane.

HG: Yes, yes. Those were stories that I heard while I was there. That if they had a situation in which they were afraid they couldn't land safely, they opened up the cargo door and pushed out a couple of Chinese peasants to make room and laughed.

RG: Yes.

HG: That was a very common story.

RG: This was not an unusual occurrence. That was a common thing.

KP: When did you know you were would take advantage of the G.I. Bill? Did you know when you were overseas? …

HG: One of the things that happened that I started to tell, I really wasn't prepared to go to college when I went through high school.

KP: You mentioned your family couldn't afford it.

HG: But I was adopted by the copilot in many ways. He was a cosmopolitan. He went to the University of Michigan. He wasn't parochial from small town in Texas or upstate New York. And I had a good relationship with him. And he says to me, "You're bright; you should go to college." And he was an instructor at the University of Michigan.

KP: What did he teach?

HG: I don't remember, I really don't. But he encouraged me to go to college. He says, "You're bright," and so when I got back, you went through the normal benefits you can get and so on. My brother, who had been a college graduate, got us all together, and he was the oldest in the family, started to talk about, to my other brothers, also, "Take advantage of the G.I. Bill and go to college.." My other two brothers, my one brother took advantage, but he went through a different kind of training, he wanted to be a cabinet-maker. So they sent him to a vocational

school. And the other brother just didn't have any interest. Two of my other brothers had no interest in going back. I was the youngest, so I took the entrance exam to Rutgers and, of course, my brother had gotten his Masters from Rutgers, so he said, "Go to Rutgers."

KP: So that's how you ended up …

HG: Oh, I have got to tell you another cute story. My brother was sharp, he said to me, "It may be tough to get in." He said the easiest school to get into is the Ag School, that's before Cook. He said,. "So apply to the School of Agriculture." So I passed the test and got accepted to the School of Agriculture. And I am there three days, and the Dean sends for me and he looked at my transcript and he's saying to me, "What's a kid from Hoboken doing in a school of agriculture?" So, you know, I was out of service and had no … at this point, I was cocky. I said, "My brother says this is the easiest school to get into." He says, "What do you want to do?" "I want to be a doctor." So I figured if I said, "Pre-med would be very difficult for me to get into…" He said, "Well, you really shouldn't be here." So he called up the dean, I had been accepted already, so I got transferred, before … I went to one or two classes, I got transferred to the School of Arts and Science and got accepted in there and was pre-med for about three years. And I was married by then and had a child. And then was accepted, couldn't raise the funds.

KP: You were accepted into medical school?

HG: No, I was accepted to dental school. I applied to both, I really didn't know if I wanted to go to medical school. Then the quota system for Jews in the medical schools in 1945 was a national scandal. In fact, Cornell University in New York was cited at that point and somebody showed me an article. There was a legislative committee in Albany, doing investigation of the allegations that there was the quota system at Cornell Medical School, and the dean said, "Of course, there is. If we accepted every Jew," he said then, "We would turn out the class that is only ninety-five percent and that's not how we should be serving our population." And so, even the advisers that I had at Rutgers were saying to me, "Well, you might not get into medical school. You know, Dentistry is a lot easier to get into." So I got accepted at N.Y.U. Dental School and couldn't come up with the bucks. So I decided, I got a call that there were teaching openings. I had a good science background from pre-med,. In my senior year, I took some Ed. courses. I figured I 'd teach for a year or two and then I …I asked for a deferment, and they gave it to me. And life just moved on, you know. I was busy trying to feed, you know, a wife and a kid on eighteen hundred dollars a year as a teacher in Hoboken, so never went back. But I've never had any real regrets; I have had a very successful educational career.

KP: If, say, the G.I. Bill had been extended a few more years or there was a student loan program, you might well have become a doctor or a dentist?

HG: Absolutely, absolutely. There is no question about it but I'd used up all my G.I. Bill on my undergraduate.

KP: So it sounds like the G.I. Bill was crucial?

HG: Oh, the greatest investment this country has ever made. In fact, some researcher once told

me that the four years of the G.I.s that came out of World War II produced the highest completion rate, the greatest grade point average, the most motivated group that has ever gone through higher education in this country. We drove the professors at Rutgers crazy. We had no toleration, we were there, many with … I was one of the younger ones at age twenty, twenty-one. Most of them ranged up into their thirties, and had families. If a professor was late, you had guys saying, "Hey, wait a minute. Come on guys, I have got a busy day. You are here to teach, so come on." The discussions in the classroom were dramatically different. The whole business of dealing with eighteen-year-olds and so on in awe, guys who had been around the block many, many times, challenging some of the statements and points of views, to the point where professors… Some of them loved it because it was very intellectually stimulating; some of them did not know how to handle it, really didn't know how to handle it. Here's a group of veterans, physically dominating and won't take any crap. "We're paying our tuition. Come on, produce." And "None of this," business. I tell a story about C. Rexford Davis, if you want a story. He was the head of the English Department, had been at the college for many, many years, and you had to buy his book and so on. And freshman year I ended up in his class. Pre-med, you worried about grades. And I remember to his credit, he was the one professor that I had who never graded your papers, but you had to make an appointment with him. After you wrote an essay and he sat one-on-one and went over your paper with you, so he graded it while you were there. One of the assignments was to write about something you know well or you have experienced. And I wrote about my experiences in China. And he said to me, he said, "Well, this composition is better than the other ones you have written." He said, "But you have gotta do better research." He said, "Where your facts came from, I don't know." So I said, "I have just spent, you know, a year and a half in China." He said, "Then you are not a good observer of the scene." He said, "'Cause I have read extensively." And I was giving my perceptions about the peasants and the … But, you know, I was in awe as a pre-med student to go back at him, but, you know, the arrogance of never … he had never. I said to him, "Were you in China?" He said, "I don't have to be in China. I am extremely well-read."

KP: You mentioned that Mason Gross was your favorite professor. It's been remarkable how many people from '49 …

HG: I remember Houston Peterson, too. They both taught the philosophy course. But Mason Gross was an incredible, charismatic and very human individual. I mean, even though he was in a relatively large institution, you got the sense that he knew who you were and he had that ... I can remember an experience that I had trying to balance being married, with an infant, and struggling, and going to school, and, I guess, I had a period or semester in which my grades were going down. And he called me in, wanted to know what was happening in my life, what was going on. He gave me some really good support and comments. So, you know, there was a phase of him that I experienced personally.

KP: Yes, I have heard that from a lot of people. Because you were pre-med, so philosophy, I mean, was not …

HG: No, no, it was just a course with him. Of course, the word was out "take Gross's course."

KP: So he was in fact …

HG: Oh, absolutely. I mean, that was a course that you just had to take. That was a premier … you don't want to go through Rutgers and graduate without taking Mason Gross's course.

KP: So in some ways … the more I have heard about Mason Gross, he seems like one of the obvious persons for president, given …

HG: Oh, and a very popular choice, at the time. He had been the Dean, I guess, the Chair of the Philosophy Department. I don't remember exactly, but brilliant, articulate, compassionate.

KP: You got married in college?

HG: Yes.

KP: And where did you live the year you were married before you graduated?

HG: Well, I was living in Jersey City and commuting. It was only the first year when I lived in … then I spent the semester in one of the dorms. And then I, when my wife gave birth, I lived at home with her parents in Jersey City and drove with another G.I. who had lost his arm and was given a car by the government. And I commuted with him from Jersey City for the last three years, two and a half years of college. So I really missed the intimate college life that I had for the first year and a half. Then I became a commuter, driving.

KP: You had sort of experienced both sorts?

HG: Right.

KP: It sounds like there was a fondness?

HG: Oh, Yes. I loved going to college. That was the time of the ... fraternities had a very difficult time during that year. You'd pick that up from anybody because the G.I.s weren't looking to be hazed, to go through, by some eighteen or nineteen or twenty-year-old, you know, being inducted. They wanted you to pledge to their fraternity. So there was another group whose name I forget it, but it was a student group that met a lot of the athletic or social needs of a fraternity, but was not a fraternity. Most of the G.I. veterans were completely turned off by any thought of fraternity life.

KP: Well, I have also been struck, though, is how much activity there was even for a G.I. Bill boom. I had my students go through the *Targums* and they were constantly having dances. There was a whole range of social activities.

HG: Yes, and this student organization which really sprang up to fit this need. The fraternities were not fitting the needs of this group, so another group came up and we were much involved in the life. You know, we went to all the football games, the basketball games and, you know, we were made to feel very much a part of the college.

KP: What's very striking , and I want to make sure I ask this, I have asked a number of people , when you got back, the G.I. Bill people, what's striking is that many people said they never talked very much about the war once they were at Rutgers.

HG: That's true. We didn't sit down and tell war [stories]. I think early on, the first six months when we were at Kilmer, when we were getting to know each other, we talked a little bit about where you were in the service, and so on. But as you got into the rest of it, it was another chapter in your life and it was not a dominant theme, about talking about the war. You were moving onto another stage of your life and, almost humorously, it was you wouldn't want to have anything to do with talking about the war stories, who's at the top? You flew thirty missions, I flew eighty missions and you were shot many times, I was shot down thirty-three times. It was that sort of thing where it was just not the thing to do.

KP: That and the fact this culture that said …

HG: Enough of that, right? Yes, Yes, let's get onto something else. Are we going to beat Princeton?

KP: Did you consider joining any veterans' organizations?

HG: I did belong to, I guess, the American Legion and the Jewish War Veterans Post, but I never got real active. At that point in time, I was trying to survive as a married undergraduate, trying to make a living with a wife and a kid. Part of my dream of going to medical school and dental school was my wife had a very good job with the government, then she became pregnant and that ended it. In those days it was very different from today. It was never a thought that someone else would take care of your child and you could go back to work. It was over. So the financial support that my wife was going to give me ended. So, you know, that part of it just changed completely. I've lost my trend of thought, you had asked me?

KP: About veterans' organizations?

HG: Oh, so I really didn't have the time of going to a meeting and so on. I was waiting tables, I was selling shoes, I had all kinds of part-time jobs. You know, the G.I. bill was enough to take care of my tuition, but I couldn't make a living at it. So I worked summers and I had three or four jobs.

KP: Did you work in the Catskills?

HG: Oh, Yes. That was a big portion of my life. I was the maitre d' at this hotel for a number of years.

KP: I have talked to people who worked in the Catskills and it was very memorable.

RG: Any particular area or resort or …

HG: Yes, up around what is Monticello, Liberty, Upstate New York. I worked at a place in

Livingston Manor called White Roe for many years. And then I fell, naturally going into education, I had my summers off as a teacher so, you know, the owner of the hotel thought that it was a wonderful combination. He was only open in the summer and he had somebody that was now a family man with kids that he could count on every year.

KP: And did you bring your whole family?

HG: Oh, it was wonderful! I could never have … imagine taking your whole family away to a hotel. And then as my kids got older, they became waiters and busboys. When they were going to Rutgers, they ended up, all my kids went to Douglass or Rutgers, and they all worked in the Catskills. And took tremendous pride about the fact that they paid for their own education. Made enough money in the summer in the Catskills to pay a whole year of Rutgers, including room and board,. I'd come home with two thousand dollars. Pay off all my debts that you went away with, two thousand dollars in cash was a tremendous … Tuition was four hundred dollars, room and board was eight hundred dollars, so for two thousand dollars, you made your year.

KP: I have one last question, did you take advantage of the G.I. Mortgage?

HG: Yes. Sure, bought my first house with a veterans' mortgage at four and a half percent. As I said before, I think the return the country got on the investment of the G.I. Bill, in other words, those people who took advantage of it, and are making much more money, paying much more taxes, refunded to the government over the years, beyond the contributions they made to society, was the best investment this country has ever made. Without a question.

KP: I'd like to ask you some more about Hoboken. Because, I am sure, there were stories because you were in the Hoboken school system for a while.

HG: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

KP: It sounds like you are pretty glad to be in Paramus?

HG: Of course, I worked for twenty-two years in the Hoboken system, in an urban area. And then was appointed here as Assistant Superintendent, left here to become the Superintendent of the Morristown School District. And then came back here as the Superintendent for the last ten years, here in Paramus as the Superintendent. I've had, you know, a very successful career. I was New Jersey's first superintendent of the year, president of the state organizations, very active with the graduate school. I am teaching, I don't know if I have it on there, I have been teaching some graduate courses with the Graduate School of Education. Have you talked to Wayne Hoy at all?

KP: No, no.

HG: You people don't talk to each other.

KP: Rutgers is just too big. I am going to be on an Ed.D. committee next year. But that's the first contact with the …

HG: That's right, we always had to have … on my Ed..D … when I got my doctorate, I had to get someone from out of … A requirement, you had to have someone from outside of the department to serve on your committee.

KP: Okay. Thank you very much. Did you have any questions?

RG: No, no more questions.

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

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