RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM S. GILLAM

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This continues an interview with Mr. William S. Gillam on April 24, 1995 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick with Kurt Piehler and Robert Colandro. Before we discuss your wartime experiences, we talked briefly before the interview about your predilection to save things. You trace this, in part, to your Quaker ancestry. Could you recount how you saved quite a bit of your correspondence and other documents?

William Gillam: Well, yes, I ... have saved copies of practically all my correspondence with relatives and ... friends, friends such as members of the Zeta Psi fraternity with whom I have kept in touch. ...

KP: However, not all your family shares this predilection. You mentioned that your brother has joined the 20th Century and prefers the phone.

WG: Right, my other brother, I suspect, recently, ... has saved things because he has a computer, a word processor and you automatically get to save things, but, my brother is not much for writing letters, and so, he doesn't have anything to save. He relies more on the telephone.

KP: Have you ever kept a diary?

WG: No, I've never kept a diary, as such. This whole account ... came out of my memories, supplemented by reference to documents that I had, and, as you know, after I got done [with] it all, I found some other documents that I hadn't thought about that added, actually, just factual things that really don't affect the narrative.

KP: You mentioned that you were prompted partly by Studs Terkel's work in thinking about your own experiences. What did you think of his book?

WG: Well, I enjoyed it very much. What more can I say?

KP: Did any of the stories in there surprise you?

WG: I'm sure they did. I do not remember any specific examples. I mean, you know, as I said before, I think during the time that I was in the service, I was more or less cut off from news on the homefront and I really didn't know what was going on, on the homefront.

KP: Were you able to save the letters that people wrote to you during the war?

WG: Some.

KP: Some?

WG: Well, ... yeah, well, I think I mentioned [that] I have copies of letters my father wrote to me and to my brothers because ... his secretary typed them up and made carbon copies. [laughter] But,

my mother, for example, who actually did more writing to me and my brothers than my father did, hers were longhand letters that have disappeared.

KP: You mentioned that part of your desire to write your story was for your grandchildren. Have you been a little disappointed that they seem less interested in your wartime experiences or do you think they will eventually come around?

WG: I don't know. I mean, they've been living in Florida since they were small boys. I only get to see them three or four times a year and ... there really hasn't been much occasion for them to raise any questions. It's interesting, just recently, they were in New Jersey, and the older boy expressed an interest in seeing the Rutgers campus, and so, we spent a couple of hours riding around College Avenue Campus, and Busch Campus, and even Livingston, and I don't know whether that evidenced any interest ... in coming to Rutgers or not.

KP: It may have just been curiosity.

WG: I would sort of be surprised, mainly because my experience with people that moved to Florida is [that] they're not interested in coming back up to the snowy, cold North. I might ... interject there, besides which, Rutgers University, as [it] is now constituted, is nothing like the Rutgers College that I went to and my son himself didn't come to Rutgers. He went to Wesleyan, which, at the time he went to Wesleyan, it was more like Rutgers used to be. I don't know what Wesleyan's like now.

KP: When did you sense that Rutgers had really changed dramatically from what you knew it as?

WG: Pretty early on, I guess, after my service in the Army and ... I started becoming involved particularly through the Class of '40, in Rutgers affairs. ... Then, I realized how different [it was] and, you know, I've lived in Metuchen since 1949 and read the local newspaper about everything that's going on at Rutgers, things that went on at Rutgers in the 60s, which went on at a lot of other colleges and universities, too. Now, the recent troubles at Rutgers involving minorities, that's something else.

KP: The Class of 1940 is legendary for their involvement at Rutgers. Why do you think the Class of '40 has stayed so close together and has been so active? Have you ever thought about that?

WG: Yeah, ... we incorporated in 1962, ... after our 20th anniversary in '60, and, since that time, we've had money in the bank, and I noticed, right recently, the Class of '38 asking people to send in twenty dollars, because the class funds are nil, and so, just the very fact of incorporation, which is a very simple process, ... has kept us together, and we've had a board of trustees made up of people who live within easy distance of New Brunswick, driving distance, and we've had several meetings a year, and, on the big five year reunions, we've had more meetings than that.

KP: Whose idea was it to incorporate?

WG: I really don't remember. I remember a group of us sitting around a table and discussing it, but, I'm not sure who first presented the idea.

KP: How long have you been secretary of the class?

WG: Well, it's a long story. ... I mean, at our 15th reunion, I was elected vice-president, and then, at our 25th reunion, I had to give that up because of pressure [from] personal affairs, and, later on, I became assistant secretary because our secretary moved to Texas, and I took over without having any title other than assistant secretary, and, ultimately, was elected secretary. So, you know, I've been acting as recording secretary for ... quite a few years, and then, I've been the class correspondent since 1979. ...

KP: How many of your class do you think will come to the 55th?

WG: We had hoped for fifty, but, it looks like it isn't going to be that many. We haven't gotten reservations ... from anything like that. ... I found the Class of '39 only had twenty-seven at their 55th a year ago and I thought, surely, we'd do ... better than that, but, I'm afraid that age has ... caught up with us, and, for many that would like to come, it physically becomes a problem for them. So, at the moment, you know, I'm hoping we might get thirty.

KP: Maybe we should go back to World War II.

WG: Yes.

KP: When we left off, we were talking quite a bit about Fort Benning. I believe we left off in Texas. Bob, would you like to begin?

Robert Colandro: Yeah, I think we left off with your arrival in, I believe it was, Camp Maxey, in Paris, Texas. What was the camp like? Was it built up or had that camp basically been thrown together?

WG: I think, basically, it had been thrown together. I suspect it was like a lot of other camps at that time, training camps. I mean, I had been, briefly before that, at Camp Wheeler ... in Macon, Georgia, and that was the same. ... All of the buildings were ... new, but, ... well, they were like Camp Kilmer was twenty or thirty years ago. ... At Camp Maxey, there just wasn't an opportunity to get into Paris, Texas, much. I mean, you know, we were on duty twenty-four hours a day for seven days a week. I mean, not all that time doing anything. So, it was exceptional when you could get ... into Paris, like when my automobile block froze and I had to get it taken care of. At Fort Benning, they could've taken care of it right on the post, but, not at Camp Maxey.

RC: What were your main duties while you were there?

WG: We were carrying out a training program for the men and I was in Company M, which was a heavy weapons company, which involved machine guns, ... and mortars, and things like map reading, and so forth, and ... physical training, twenty mile marches, frequently, and things at night, training exercises at night. I remember, ... one time, two of the trucks got bogged down in a night exercise ... and it took us 'til morning to get them out.

KP: What were your sergeants and other non-coms like, your cadre? How good were they and do you know anything about their backgrounds?

WG: No.

KP: Were they regular Army?

WG: Oh, no, by that time, ... they were all draftees. ...

KP: Were there a lot of southerners?

WG: ... I really don't know. ... I joined the 99th Division in Camp Van Horn, Mississippi, and, ... very shortly, we were going on the Louisiana Maneuvers, and ... ended up in Maxey, and I really didn't get to know the non-commissioned officers like I had gotten to know the ones ... at the reception center in Fort Benning.

KP: When you left the 99th Infantry Division to go to the 38th Infantry Regiment, what were your thoughts about that? Would you have preferred to have stayed with the 99th?

WG: No, no, ... but, then, I didn't have any idea where I was going, and I didn't know I was going to be in the Second Division until I landed in Normandy, so, ... I just had no idea, but, ... the 99th Division, in my opinion, was not anywheres near ready to operate as a unit in combat, and, obviously, the War Department agreed with that, because I, along with a lot of other officers, ... [was] taken out of the 99th and sent overseas as a replacement officer. Now, I later learned that the 99th Division had participated ... in the Battle of the Bulge and I don't know how they got there.

KP: When you were training people in Texas, did you have a sense that the 99th had a number of problems or that it was just simply a matter of time, that this unit would take a while to train?

WG: ... Yes, you know, at that time, I had no idea that ... I would be singled out, along with others, and I thought, "Now, I'm with a division, and ... when the division is sufficiently trained, they will send us someplace."

KP: So, when you left the unit, they were still in training?

WG: Right. ... You know, I had no idea. I mean, I wasn't the only one that was withdrawn. ... The junior officers that were withdrawn, there were lots of them. ... I gave you a copy of orders, I think,

that has a lot of names on it. So, I have no idea what happened after that to the 99th Division, how they ended up in ... France, in December, for the Battle of the Bulge.

KP: You ended up in the replacement depot at Fort Meade in Maryland and there was quite a Rutgers contingent there. Before we started the interview, you showed us a picture of the Rutgers contingent.

WG: ... They're at Aberdeen.

KP: Oh, Aberdeen, excuse me.

WG: Which was an ordinance [proving ground], ... and they were all ROTC here at Rutgers, which was basically infantry, and ... I think most of them were engineers at Rutgers.

KP: As a replacement officer, you had no idea where you were going. Did you have any apprehension about that, that you were going to eventually be placed in a unit where you did not know anyone and had not trained with them?

WG: I'm sure I did, but, ... like so many others, there was nothing you could do about it, so, you didn't really worry about it. ... I guess the only thing I can recall is being pleased when I learned that I was going to Europe and not to the South Pacific.

KP: So, when you were sent to Fort Meade, you still had no idea where you were going?

WG: Right.

KP: Also, given your training, you could have easily gone to either theater.

WG: Right.

KP: Why did you have apprehensions about going to the Pacific? What did you think at the time?

WG: Well, primarily, the climate, I think, and, as it ended up, you know, the two months that I spent in France were delightful, as far as the weather was concerned. ... It was summer, but, not too hot and not too much rain. ...

KP: How much did the maneuvers in Louisiana have to do with your desire to avoid the South Pacific?

WG: ... Well, I think it probably did, because Louisiana, it was in the summertime, and it was ... hot, and there was a short supply of water for drinking or ... bathing purposes. I mean, actually, I didn't feel, in Normandy, ... the shortage of water. I'm sure that there wasn't an awful lot, but, it didn't seem like a shortage.

KP: You departed in April of 1944 for Scotland. What do you remember about the voyage overseas?

WG: It was ... pretty boring. I mean, most of the time you just spent cooped up ... in a state room.

KP: Did your ship go in a convoy or did it go over independently?

WG: I think independently.

KP: So, you were doing a lot of zigging to avoid U-boats.

WG: Yeah.

KP: Did you have any concerns about U-boats or any problems with seasickness?

WG: Don't recall any. ... I think I did mention [this] in my account, ... one time, I was stationed on the stern of a boat and it went up and down ... pretty much, but, other than that, I don't recall anybody else being afflicted.

KP: What were your duties on board the boat?

WG: Very little, I mean.

KP: Were the soldiers on the boat mainly replacements?

WG: Oh, I think they were all replacements. I don't know that, but, I think so. ... I mean, ... everybody that I came into contact with.

KP: Did you have any responsibilities for supervising enlisted men?

WG: Basically, no.

KP: So, you really just spent a lot of time sitting in the ward room. Did you play cards? What did you do to pass the time?

WG: [laughter] I guess there was some cards. I don't recall participating. Looking back on it, I don't know what the heck I did do for six or eight days, or whatever it took.

RC: Was there a lot of talk about what might lie ahead for you and everyone else on the ship?

WG: No, no.

RC: Any talk of going into France or somewhere else in Europe?

WG: No. I recall none. ... I think that any talking we did had more to do ... with the past.

KP: Did you have any thoughts about the invasion of Europe or any sense of how it would go?

WG: Well, not at that time. I mean, after we got to ... England and got to a semi-permanent station, why, it bends my recall, [but, it] became obvious that we were going to be part ... of an invasion of the Continent, but, of course, we didn't know any more than the Germans did, where those landings were going to take place.

KP: Had you ever been abroad before?

WG: No.

KP: What did you think of Scotland and England?

WG: Well, Scotland, I mean, we were just there for a few hours to get on a train. ...

KP: Which went in the wrong direction.

WG: Well, it really wasn't direction, it was just the wrong place we got off. I mean, we didn't choose to get off there, but, so, then, we ended up ... in the area of Taunton, Crewkerne, and Cricket St. Thomas, which was a delightful area. Again, it was April, May, pleasant weather and everything.

KP: What did you think of the English people and how well did they treat you?

WG: [We] didn't have much contact with the English people, I suppose. As I indicated in my account, [I] got to go London twice. Even there, [I had] very little contact with the English people. I went to the Red Cross club in London and, as I said, ran into an acquaintance of mine from ... Merchantville there.

KP: Lt. Walter White.

WG: Right, and other American officers.

KP: So, you never went to an English pub?

WG: Yes, yes, we did. I think I mentioned in there that the only thing they had ... that I would be interested in drinking was ... gin and peppermint, I don't know, some stupid things.

KP: You mentioned that you were able to continue some training in England, in particular, you got a chance to fire the .81 mm mortars. At this point, were you still in the replacement depot or had you joined the Second Division?

WG: No, I was still in the replacement depot, didn't join the Second Division until after I landed ... in France, and I didn't know I was going to the Second Division until I was there.

KP: So, in other words, you were training and working with replacements. How were the replacements organized? Did you supervise a particular group of men for a particular period of time or was it less organized?

WG: I would say it was less organized. I think, ... this is just a thought, that there were a lot more officers than men ... where I was.

KP: So, in a sense, there were a lot of officers waiting for places to open up.

WG: Right.

KP: Did you ever have any sense of what the casualties might be like, especially because it seemed that they had this surplus of officers in the replacement depot?

WG: No, I don't recall any thoughts about that or expectations. I'll tell you, you just sort of shut your mind to everything except the immediate. You didn't know where you were going, what you were going to do, and you didn't think about it. ...

KP: Where were you when the D-Day assault took place?

WG: Yeah, I was at this Cricket St. Thomas, which was an estate where we did some training on the golf course that was there, and I recall being on that golf course when a lot planes went over, heading south, and it was obvious that something was going on. We weren't told what was going on. I think ... we all just understood.

KP: That the invasion was on?

WG: That something big was happening.

KP: When did you get word that you would be moving out, that you had been assigned to a unit? How many days after D-Day, since you left on the 17th of June?

WG: Well, I don't recall, exactly. I think it was a very few days ... after D-Day that we were told that we were moving, and ... we went from where we were to some kind of camp near Southampton, and we were told very little.

KP: Were you ever struck by how much the military kept you in the dark or did you just accept that there was a good reason for it?

WG: Just accepted it.

RC: When you finally went over and landed on Omaha Beach, I think it was twelve days after the initial invasion.

WG: Right.

RC: What did Omaha Beach look like?

WG: Well, it was a lot of signs of the activity that had taken place, but, actually, you know, from our perspective, we couldn't see much of it. You'd only see the immediate area where ... we landed, and we climbed up a path, up the cliffs, and spent the night there, and, as I think I said in my narrative, it was a lot of activity in the air. Looking back on it, [from] what I've read, I doubt that very much of it ... was enemy.

RC: Did you see a lot of burned out vehicles or anything like that, or had it pretty much been cleaned up?

WG: Oh, no, there was a lot. I mean, again, ... we didn't get a tour of the beach. We only saw a small section where ... we landed, ... and, yes, we did see evidence of what had gone on there.

KP: Were there any bodies still on the beach?

WG: No.

RC: So, basically, you landed on Omaha and were shuttled inland.

WG: Shuttled up by our own foot power. [laughter]

RC: Okay, you marched up or ran up. Was there any incoming fire from artillery at that time?

WG: No, ... not 'til we actually got up to the Second Division, which ... took a couple of days to do that.

KP: You marched up with the replacements?

WG: Right.

KP: Did you know, when you left England, that you were going to the Second Division?

WG: No.

KP: When did they finally let you know your fate?

WG: ... Like a couple of days after I landed in Normandy. I mean, the replacement group just stayed together for a day or so until we got assigned and it wasn't until then that I knew where I was going, to the Second Division.

KP: So, initially, you stayed near the beach?

WG: Yes.

KP: Did you ever observe any German POWs?

WG: Not then, but, later on, when I was with the 38th Infantry, I saw some, not a lot. There were not many Germans taken prisoner at that time. I mean, they were, in effect, fighting a rear guard action, and the nature of ... the terrain, which I went into in my report, the *bocage*, the hedgerows, you sort of kept a distance from the enemy. They were there, but, you didn't see them and they didn't see us, really.

KP: What did you think of the Germans as adversaries? Did you have any opinions on the subject?

WG: Well, I'm sure ... I did. I don't remember anything specific. ... Although, as I have said, all the time I was at Fort Benning, I really didn't have access to the kind of news that ... I would today, but, I was aware of what had happened ... in North Africa, ... involving the Germans there.

KP: You finally learned that you were assigned to the Second Division. Did any other replacement officers join you in the Second Division?

WG: Yes, yes, there were a number, and I think the only one I can remember, ... I think his name was Jameson, who was killed a few days later, but, you know, I got assigned to Company M and I was the only one of that particular group of replacement officers. I'm sure there were some that were assigned to other companies of the 38th Infantry, but, I had no contact with them after that.

KP: Studies have shown that replacements often had a very short life span, that, particularly in battle, they were often very vulnerable. Did you have any sense of how vulnerable you were as a replacement?

WG: No, and I didn't have any feeling that I was more affected than others who had been there, some of them from before D-Day. I mean, some of them had been with the Second Division, 38th Infantry, for a long time.

KP: What was your initial meeting with the officers and the enlisted men in your company like?

WG: I don't really remember.

KP: Was it still daylight when you reported?

WG: Oh, yes, I mean, after dark, not much went on.

KP: Once you got to the battle line, what was your first reaction to combat and to being on the battle line. For example, what was more frightening, small arms fire, or artillery, or the possibility of an air attack?

WG: Well, I think ... the artillery and the possibility of an air attack, but, there wasn't much at that time, and, I mean, we were not affected by any attack by the ... [German] forces. I mean, either we were just in place or we were moving forward. You know, I think the units who were opposite us, as I say, were fighting a rear guard action, although, I'm sure that a lot of men in the front lines weren't aware of that.

KP: You fought in the hedgerow country. What struck you about fighting there? You mentioned that it seemed like the Germans were fighting a rear guard action, but, a lot of generals at the time really hated fighting in the hedgerow country and historians have supported the fact that it was very difficult terrain to wage an offensive in.

WG: Yeah, it was. ... The fighting was one hedgerow at a time. I mean, you were behind one hedgerow, and they were behind another, ... and you couldn't see them. You couldn't see what you were shooting at. Of course, as a platoon leader of a machine gun platoon, or a mortar platoon, I was not up there firing my own weapon, and, at first, I was with the machine guns, and the machine guns ... would fire at the next hedgerow.

KP: So, in other words, before advancing, you would soften the hedgerow up with machine guns and mortars.

WG: ... When we really made the push for Hill 192, there was a tremendous artillery barrage ahead of that and we had some tanks with ... the blades that could push through the hedgerows.

RC: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that, because that pretty much was thrown together on the spot. I believe it was a sergeant who had the idea of doing it.

WG: I didn't know anything about that, at the time. I mean, ... these tanks appeared with ... the blades on them. ... I was not aware of a great number of tanks.

KP: Living on the line, we talked earlier about Army rations and you seem to have liked them. You thought they were fairly good. Any other reflections on the rations, the K and the C?

WG: I guess, and this applies ... not just to the rations, I was, all the time, very much impressed by the availability of whatever we needed, be it food or ammunition, ... and then, after I was wounded, what was available to take care of me, getting back to ... somewheres near the beachhead, and then, being flown to England and ending up in this hospital in Hereford. I mean, I was just amazed, and still am amazed, that there never appeared to be any shortage ... of what you needed. I mean, someplace along the line, the Army had done a tremendous job ... of preparing.

KP: You had mentioned that your uniform had been treated and you did not seem to be irritated by it.

WG: You mean physically irritated?

KP: Yeah, because a lot of people complained that the treatment that had been provided had caused irritation.

WG: No, I don't recall. ... I think I wore the same outer garments from the day I landed ... in Normandy 'til I was taken out. I expect I wore the same undergarments, too. [laughter]

KP: Did you get any hot showers in the two months you were on the line?

WG: ... When I first wrote the account, I thought not, but, [upon] further recollection, I think twice in the two months I had the opportunity to go back ... to where there was showers available.

KP: Did you ever encounter any chaplains during your two months in France?

WG: In the medical evacuation area, there was a chaplain, I recall.

KP: Was he a priest giving last rites?

WG: Well, I think he ... was a Protestant clergyman. I couldn't swear by that. I mean, ... he talked to me and I was lying on a cot. I only remember ... it must've been after I was treated, which involved ... digging the piece of metal out of my hip, which, somehow or other, was given to me, and I still have it at home, and I think I mentioned this in my account. I mean, it was not 'til then that I realized that my hip was, in fact, broken.

KP: So, some time had elapsed before you realized that your hip was broken?

WG: Yeah, I mean, ... it would be like less than twenty-four hours.

KP: Yeah, but, still, quite a bit of time had passed.

WG: Yeah, I mean, you know, I was hit late in the afternoon and, now, I'm talking about early the next morning that I was lying on the cot with my ... hip bandaged up.

KP: You mentioned that you had some contact with French civilians and that you were able to use some of your college French.

WG: Well, ... this was primarily in the period after we had landed in France, before I was assigned to the 38th Infantry. I mean, after I was assigned to the 38th Infantry, I have no recollection of having any contact with any civilians. I mean, we had, by that time, bypassed the civilians. ... In the couple of days there, waiting to be assigned, there seemed to be quite a few.

KP: Did they hang around the camps?

WG: Yeah, but, as I said, ... I couldn't communicate with any of the adults, but, youngsters, ... I was able to make myself understood and [was] able to understand them, to a degree.

KP: Were they glad to see the Americans? Did they treat you as liberators?

WG: I guess they were glad ... to see us. I mean, they certainly didn't evidence any objection to our ... being there. [laughter]

KP: Did you get a sense that the euphoric time had passed for them, the French civilians, that they had gotten used to the fact that the Americans and the British were there?

WG: Yes. The only thing I can add to that is, ... they not only didn't know we were Americans, they didn't know what Americans were. ... I mean, I'm talking about ... these youngsters that I talked to now. I mean, all the time they had been in school, they had never learned anything about America, but, they knew about England and they thought we were English.

KP: You had mentioned that the commanding officer for your battalion was Lt. Col. Olinto Emparsenatti.

WG: ... Barsanti.

KP: Excuse me, Barsanti, and you characterized him, in your account, as a rough, tough, and aggressive leader, as well as a West Point grad.

WG: That was pure speculation. I didn't know that.

KP: What was your sense of him at the time?

WG: It's just what I have said. ... I, personally, had very little contact with him. I don't remember specifically, but, I'm sure, when I first joined the unit, I met him.

KP: However, that was about it?

WG: That was about it.

KP: Who did you have the most contact with when you were on the line?

WG: Lt. Sperla, who was the commander ... of Company M, who, later on, I found, after I came back, was killed the same day I was wounded.

KP: What do you remember about him? How effective a leader or an officer was he? Do you know anything about his background?

WG: Nothing. I mean, as far as I was concerned, he did everything that could be done.

KP: What was the first time you saw somebody get wounded or killed while you were on the line? What was your reaction?

WG: ... It was the day that we attacked Hill 192. I saw a number [of casualties]. I did not see a number get wounded ... or killed, but, saw them afterwards, and, again, not just for myself, I mean, I was amazed at ... the way the medical personnel, aid men, ... came to do whatever could be done for the wounded. I mean, in my own case, you know, it was a couple of hours, I guess. I didn't keep track of it, but, I don't remember ever having any concern that sooner or later ...

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KP: In other words, the speed that corpsmen would reach someone who was wounded gave you, and it seems like a lot of your men, confidence that, if you did get wounded, the Army would take care of you.

WG: I think so, yes. I mean, I didn't have any doubt that sooner or later ...

KP: That they were going to get to you and do whatever they could for you.

WG: ... Right, and it ended up, you know, I got a shot of morphine. I think the wound was bandaged up, and I think they put sulfa powder on it at that point, and I don't recall whether I had to wait longer. ... There were a couple of men available to load me on a stretcher and to carry me back. How far? Half a mile, maybe, and it was not easy going to get me back ... so they could load me on an ambulance ... that went back to the field hospital, I guess ... is the right name for it, where they actually had an operating room. It was just a tent. M.A.S.H. gives some idea, I guess, of what it was like. You know, ... and all throughout, the availability of penicillin and the sulfa drugs seemed to be a great benefit in treating wounded men.

KP: Did you know about penicillin and sulfa drugs when you were injured?

WG: No.

KP: It was only after the war that you learned how important they were?

WG: Right, and, you know, I guess I had heard of penicillin, and my recollection ... is, after I had received the penicillin, they put a "P" on my forehead, ... some kind of marking to indicate that I had a shot of penicillin, and I later found that ... the wound, which was both in the front and back of my hip, that they had packed it with some kind ... of a gel. ... So, I never had the slightest bit of trouble with the wound.

KP: No infection?

WG: Nothing, absolutely, and no real pain. It was just the bone. ...

KP: So, your wound was one that they could treat relatively easy.

WG: Yeah, and I ... had every confidence ... that they could. I mean, even when I was confined to a bed ... in a hospital in Hereford, where they tried several casts. Well, first, they tried traction without a cast, and then, they tried casts, and they had to change it a couple of times, ... and then, I ended up with my legs spread apart, and I had to stay there, 'cause they couldn't get me through the ... doors of anything, and so, finally, when it came time to be evacuated to the ... interior, they put a new cast on with my legs closer together, so that they could get me ... through doors. ... Well, I just never had any reason ... to doubt that I was going to come out of it able ... to walk on my own. ... I didn't think about whether I would limp, or have to use a cane, or even crutches, ... or a wheelchair. I never ... really thought about it.

RC: Going back a little bit, before you were wounded in the hip, you had an incident with a German sniper. Would you tell us about that?

WG: Well, yeah, we were advancing across a field, from one hedgerow to the next, and, when we got to the next hedgerow, we turned left to move along a hedgerow. Now, why, I couldn't tell you, but, then, a sniper opened fire from what was now behind us, which was really to the right of us, and hit the back of my helmet, went right through the helmet, and [it] obviously was within less than an inch of the top of head. I thought about bringing it. I have the helmet. I thought about bringing it over, but, you know, to tell you the truth, you've got to hear the whole story to understand why the ... entry hole is in the back ... of the helmet and not the front of the helmet.

KP: What is the story?

WG: Well, that I was moving to the left and ... the sniper was over to the right. Exactly where he was, I don't know. ... Troops moving up on our right had not flushed him out. Whether he was actually behind their lines, ... I know not.

KP: What happened to the sniper?

WG: I don't know.

RC: Did he shoot anyone in your group? Did he manage to hit anyone?

WG: I don't think he managed to hit anyone, but, I don't know. I mean, no one ... in our platoon did he hit.

RC: I believe that was on July 26th and you were wounded on August the 14th, so, for the next couple of weeks, I gather you were proceeding to move through the hedgerow country. In your account, you mentioned that the 38th Infantry Regiment took quite a number of casualties. Was this whole process just very slow going, at the time?

WG: Well, I guess you would characterize it ... as slow going, I mean, and it was due to the ... nature of the terrain, the hedgerow. I mean, even then, you moved ahead one hedgerow at a time. ...

RC: How far would you guess you would advance in a day? Would it be measured in terms of yards, maybe a couple hundred yards?

WG: I would think more than that. I mean, I think, at that time, ... the German forces were retreating. You know, in the meantime, after the fact, and reading about it all, I mean, George Patton and ... his army and tanks were moving, really moving, and they circled around.

KP: When you were on the line, since you have done a lot of research on it, when you were going through the hedgerow country, how did you think the war was going? Did you have any sense of how well the invasion was going or were you just focusing on the next hedgerow?

WG: Yes, really just focusing on the next hedgerow, but, I guess I had every confidence that the American forces were going to be able ... to move as far as Paris, anyway. I mean, within a reasonable time period.

KP: So, you had no fear that you would be spending the whole year going through these hedgerows?

WG: No.

KP: It sounds like your experiences in the Second Division and, also, in your other divisions and at the reception center, left you with a very favorable view of the Army. You thought that the Army worked very well.

WG: ... Yes, as I indicated, I think ... the training program ... at Fort Benning, Georgia, to train officer candidates and officers in the class, it was streamline education, certainly, but, it was effective.

KP: Were there any problems in your regiment or in your particular unit, any problems with the men or with leadership?

WG: I don't recall any, no.

RC: You mentioned in your account, this was obviously before you were wounded, about a July 25th bombing that is fairly well documented where the Americans accidentally bombed their own troops.

WG: ... Yeah, I mean, I wasn't aware of that, I guess, until I ended up in a hospital back in Hereford where there were several who had been wounded in that bombing. I mean, I was aware of the mass of planes that came over from England, and they came over us, and turned west to where St. Lo was, ... and that was where it took place, but, I mean, the fact that American troops had been hit, I didn't know anything about that for a long time.

KP: So, this was several months later that you learned about it. The wounded men who were bombed at St. Lo by American planes, what was their attitude towards what had happened? Were they embittered toward the Air Force?

WG: Yes.

KP: Who did they blame? Was it the Air Force in general or a particular commander?

WG: Oh, I think just the Air Force in general. I mean, I think ... the feeling of all infantry soldiers was that the Air Force had a cushy job and some of them did. [laughter]

KP: That is interesting, that the Air Force was viewed as a cushy job. What about the Navy, was that also seen as a cushy job?

WG: Well, ... didn't give much thought to the Navy. ... Even, you know, coming across the Channel, we were not aware of the Navy. I mean, the ship I came across [on], I don't know what the name of it was, it wasn't a big ship, and ... it was just a freighter kind of thing, and we would all just make do in, not state rooms. You know, and, when we landed on the Normandy beach, I don't recall having seen any naval vessels. I think, you know, by that time, they had gone back to wherever they came from. ... I'm sure there were some of them [that] were still out there in the Channel on patrol, but, not close in to shore.

RC: Can you give a description of what was going on the day you were wounded and how it exactly happened?

WG: No, ... other than the fact that being, at that time, in charge of a mortar platoon, and ... my experience with the mortar platoon, ... I can't say that I was surprised when, all of a sudden, a mortar shell exploded. How did I know it was a mortar shell? I mean, just from the fact that, if it was artillery, you hear it coming. A mortar shell, you don't hear it coming. ... It's just there and it goes off.

RC: So, you never heard it and, the next thing you knew, you were lying on the ground.

WG: ... I think I said ... it was like being hit by a baseball bat in the hip, ... and I collapsed onto the ground, and I was able ... to crawl a short distance to some kind of a shelter. I mean, as I recall, I was actually on some kind of ... path going up the hill, which turns out, later, [to be] Hill 366. ... I assume you understand these hill numbers were ... simply the height of the hill, and not all hills had numbers on them, but, some of them did.

KP: Before you were hit, what was your sense of what was going on, concerning the assault?

WG: I mean, ... from July 25th, we started moving forward, and, as we moved forward, it got faster and faster. We weren't, you know, running or anything like that, [laughter] but, we were moving ahead faster, and ... it was pretty clear, by that time, that the German forces opposing us were moving back as fast as they could, and I'm sure that they didn't know that they were going to be trapped by Patton's Third Army.

RC: Initially, when you were first wounded, did you know how serious the wound was?

WG: No, until, as I said, the next morning. I didn't understand that ... the bones had been broken. I just thought I had a flesh wound in the hip. I mean, until then, I didn't realize that it had come out the back. I mean, I thought ... it was just in the front.

RC: So, while you were laying on the ground, waiting to get moved out, you did not believe that you were injured too seriously?

WG: No. I mean, you know, and ... it was numb, ... my hip.

KP: You noted that, when you were wounded, you received a visit by the warrant officer.

WG: ... Oh, yes, that was in the (Regentville?).

KP: He interviewed you about your experiences?

WG: Yes.

KP: However, you have never been able to locate the interview.

WG: ... Maybe you want to know more, that's how I got this. I forget the details, I mean, I'm happy to find out and let you know. I mean, ... as I recall, I had to write several letters to different places. ... Somebody, I think, wrote and told me [there's] no way to find a record of this warrant officer's report. ... I suppose if I had known more specifics, what his name was, exactly what organization he was a part of, ... so, this is all they were able to provide.

KP: World War II is interesting because it was one of the first wars where there was an effort to document its history with more than just talking to the generals. S. L. A. Marshall interviewed people when they got off the line and so forth. It would be interesting if we could get the interview and compare what you said then and now.

WG: Yes. ...

KP: How long did you stay in France before coming home aboard the *Queen Mary*?

WG: Oh, I was in England then.

KP: So, you were first sent from France to England?

WG: Yeah, I mean, that was like, you know, forty-eight hours ... after I was wounded that I was loaded onto a DC-3, and flown back ... to England, and ended up, for twenty-four hours, in some kind of hospital, and then, loaded on a train, and taken to Hereford, and then, I was there. I mean, by that time, it was, you know, like August the 20th, or something like that. ... Close to two months I was there.

KP: You got a visit from your brother.

WG: Yes.

KP: That must have been really great to see him.

WG: Oh, it was ... unbelievable that ... he was able to find out where I was, and he came, and he spent the night there.

KP: Had he been in combat at this point?

WG: No.

KP: Did you talk to him about what it was like to be in combat?

WG: Yes.

KP: Did you give him any tips?

WG: What I said, I ... don't really remember, and I don't think he would. He might remember.

KP: When you were in England, who treated you? Were they all American doctors and American nurses?

WG: Oh, yes.

KP: Were there women nurses, also?

WG: Yes.

KP: Was there any sort of entertainment or visits that you remember, besides your brother, for you and the other patients?

WG: The only other visitors I recall were some local females, and who exactly they were and how they came ... to visit us, I don't recall. I mean, I'm not implying that there were a lot of them.

KP: Otherwise, what did you do while you were in the hospital? Were you able to read?

WG: Yes, and I have no recollection of what I read, but, I'm sure that anything I could get my hands on. I mean, otherwise, we talked.

KP: You talked to other wounded soldiers. What were their experiences like, compared to yours? You mentioned one about a Canadian pilot.

WG: ... Yeah, who landed on his head, and, when he arrived at the hospital, it showed. He had the worst black eyes I've ever seen, but, on the other hand, I don't think he was seriously hurt.

KP: What were some of the other wounds on the ward?

WG: There were some who were [in] very serious condition and they didn't talk [or] have any way of talking, really. My recollection ... is that none of the men ... in the ward were ambulatory. They were all bedridden to a degree. Now, I remember the one right next to me, he had ... an arm wound, and so on. I guess he was able to get up, but, I don't recall. I mean, the only people that were up and around were ... nurses and a few of these local girls, and ... I think I mentioned a male medical aid who was a big, strong, football player-type who was able to lift me up, complete ... with the cast, and turn me over.

KP: You must have hated being in a cast.

WG: I don't think hated ... is the right word, annoyed, yes. I mean, it was a great relief when I finally arrived in Atlantic City ... and they took the cast off.

KP: You came home on the *Queen Mary*. What were your thoughts of the voyage home?

WG: Only, as I expressed, the business about the zig-zag course which caused ... the ship to roll. ... I suppose I did sleep, but, I don't recall any extended periods of sleep. ... I think it probably was short naps throughout the twenty-four hour period.

KP: Did you get seasick on the return voyage?

WG: No. Could have, I suppose. I don't recall any others being seasick.

RC: On your return voyage, how much news did you receive about how the war was going in Europe?

WG: Very little.

RC: I gather, for the most part, you pretty much knew that the war was over for you.

WG: Oh, yes, I think all of us [knew]. ...

KP: You initially went to Halloran General Hospital, which later became Willowbrook State Hospital, in Staten Island.

WG: Which was, I believe, a mental hospital, but, at the time, ... I guess it was a hospital that the Army had taken over. I mean, I don't think it was one that was established and ... built by the Army. I think it was a civilian hospital.

KP: You mentioned that you called your parents and that the Red Cross allowed you to call anywhere in the country. How worried were your parents about your condition?

WG: ... Well, I'm sure that they had ... been very worried, ... and were very pleased to hear from me, and to know that I was back in the States. I mean, the communication, when I was in the hospital in England, I mean, the V- Mail, I mean, I could write letters and they'd get them fairly promptly, and they'd write letters and I'd get them, too. ...

KP: How often did your parents write to you and how often did you write to your parents while you were overseas? When you were on the line, how often could you write to them in an average week?

WG: You know, maybe once.

KP: Once a week, but, in the hospital, how often did you write?

WG: No more frequently.

KP: You mentioned your father would dictate his letters to his secretary, but, how often did your mother write?

WG: She wrote frequently, I mean when I was in the States. When I say frequently, [I] maybe don't mean oftener than once a week, but, that was frequently. ... I guess, in the account that I told, they were able to visit Fort Benning, Columbus, once, and then, later, my father came and ... stayed with Captain Hull, Major Hull. I guess it was just the twice.

KP: When you were in Halloran General Hospital, Staten Island, you mentioned that one of the officers, a Lt. Fred Kassler, knew his parents were not home and could not reach them by telephone, so, he decided to place a call to a number in California, to people he did not know. Did you listen to this call?

WG: I mean, he was reasonably close to me, so, I was aware he was doing it, and I don't recall his end of the conversation very much, but, apparently, the people he called, they were perfectly willing to accept the call, and listen to him, ... and respond to anything he said.

KP: What did they talk about, did you have any sense?

WG: Not really.

KP: It seems like a fun thing to do, especially if you have this free call and do not want it to go to waste.

WG: ... Right, right.

KP: I also think that, today, if we did that, people would probably hang up on you.

WG: You think so? Yeah, maybe I guess you're right. ... The circumstances then were that receiving a call out of the blue from some lieutenant who was in a hospital in Staten Island would not ... really phase you.

KP: Your last hospital was in Atlantic City, and, from your account, it seems you have fond memories of your recuperation.

WG: Oh, definitely. I mean, you know, in civilian life, I would have been home within a short time after arriving in Atlantic City, and, you know, there [was] recreation in the form ... of shows put on by the USO, and they had the cast of ... the Philadelphia version of *Oklahoma* come down

and perform ... for us, and there were all kinds of ... gray ladies and young ladies. ... [They] weren't candy-stripers, but, akin to candy-stripers. I mean, ... there were lots of people.

KP: The USO shows you saw, were there any noteworthy performers?

WG: Nobody I had ever heard of, no.

KP: You got the smaller acts on the USO circuit.

WG: Yeah. Incidentally, just the other day, I got a letter from the USO soliciting contributions, saying ... that their source of money had been depleted and their demand for them to do things to help servicemen [had risen], and I made a contribution, which is the first I had ever made to the USO.

KP: Have you seen any USO shows?

RC: Not at all. [laughter]

KP: Sorry, Bob was also in the service.

RC: In much different times.

WG: Well, I agree. I don't think, today, there is anywheres near as much, and I didn't ... have that much experience with [the USO]. I talked about the one time that Blackstone the Magician and ... the Clark Sisters appeared at Fort Benning. That's the only USO show that I remember in five years, and the ... club in London was run by the American Red Cross, but, the USO, they had something called the Stage Door Canteen ... in New York City, and I guess there were other places, I suppose, on the West Coast and wherever.

RC: Had you ever been solicited before by the USO?

WG: No.

RC: How do you suppose you wound up on their mailing list? [laughter]

WG: Well, ... I worry very little, but, [I do] worry about that almost every day when I get something in the mail. How did they get my ... name and address? There's a few things that I do know, ... because Public Service Electric and Gas has had my middle initial as "J" rather than "S" for as long as I can remember, and I've never bothered ... to correct it, and so, every once in awhile, I get mail addressed to William J. Gillam, [laughter] and so, I know where they get the name, but, you know, my feeling is that the USO did a good job, and I think the American Red Cross did, too. ... There have been some criticisms in recent years of the American Red Cross. For example, [that they] solicited funds for victims of an earthquake, or something like that, and then, used the funds

for something else, because, by the time they got the money, it seemed like the something else was more important than what they could do for the earthquake victims, but, some people didn't like that.

KP: Your account gives me the impression that you really got to know the doctors, and the nurses, and the volunteers at Atlantic City a lot better than most.

WG: ... Better than what?

KP: Well, you got to know something about them and their backgrounds, because you have their names and quite a few details. It sounds like Atlantic City was an ideal place for you to recuperate.

WG: ... Oh, very definitely. [laughter] You know, the weather, I don't whether I mentioned this or not, I mean, lots of times, we'd read the Philadelphia paper, and there'd be six inches of snow in Philadelphia, and we'd look out, and there's none in Atlantic City, and, of course, the boardwalk was wonderful for orthopedic cases.

KP: Did you have any concerns, when you were in Atlantic City, that you would not be able to walk very well, that the physical therapy would not work?

WG: ... I guess, yes. I mean, because, by that time, it had been, you know, a number of months now. ... I don't know, I mean, you know, it was a relatively short period of time when I was able ... to get up and start walking ... with crutches, and then, they took X-rays and found that it was not strong enough to support my weight, and then, they operated and put a pin ... in there. ... After that, things went along very well, but, as a matter-of-fact, I ended up walking with a limp for forty years.

KP: Before you had been wounded, had you thought that you might stay in the Army after the war?

WG: I hadn't given it much thought, but, I guess I did when I was at Fort Benning. I did feel that this was a good life.

KP: You felt that this might be more than a temporary situation, because it sounds like you and the Army got along well together.

WG: [laughter] Yes.

KP: After you were wounded, did you realize that was it, that you were going to be out of the Army?

WG: I think that was it, yeah. ... Actually, even after I arrived at Atlantic City, and for several months, I had no idea that I was going to be retired. I thought I was just going to be discharged after a certain period of time, when I could function on my own. As I said, I mean, in a civilian hospital, I would've be sent home early. ...

KP: Why do you think the Army took so long to discharge you? Was it a sense that they owed you something or that they wanted to ease you into civilian life again?

WG: Yeah, I think so, but, I mean, obviously, this was not ... an individual decision by certain officers at the hospital or anything. It was ... the Army's policy. I mean, I will say that I feel that reserve officers like myself, National Guard officers, and officers that became officers through the OCS, were treated, by and large, the same as regular Army officers, as far as, you know, anything like this is concerned, benefits and so forth.

KP: You really feel like you got a fair shake from the Army, that they did not distinguish between the various groups of officers.

WG: Yes.

KP: Did you feel that way all the way through the Army, that the Army viewed you as an OCS officer?

WG: Yeah, I mean, of course, you know, by the time I was in Camp Maxey, ... and from that point on, the National Guard, OCS, and reserve components, in effect, had taken over the Army. I mean, the regular Army officers were few and far between, and, you know, I never felt any resentment that some of ... them had advanced very rapidly.

KP: You got terminal leave and you had a very quiet summer in Merchantville. Did you have a sense that you had missed a good part of the rest of the war in Europe and, also, in the Pacific? Do you ever feel frustrated that you could not do anything to help the war effort after being wounded?

WG: No. I mean, by that time, by the time I got out, in June of 1945, I mean, the war in Europe was over, and there was still the war in the West ... going on.

RC: Did you ever think that your wound, in some ways, may have been a blessing, not to use the term “million-dollar wound?”

WG: ... Yes, I agree. I mean, had I remained, if I thought about it, it was certainly that I would've ended up ... in the Pacific someplace. I didn't look forward to that in the first instance and, certainly, not in the second instance. [laughter]

KP: Did you think that after you were done in Europe that you would be going to the Pacific?

WG: Well, you know, there was never any period where that seemed to be a possibility.

KP: You took advantage of the GI Bill. When did you get that idea, that you would use the GI Bill to go to Wharton for a time?

WG: I don't really remember. I mean, it certainly was well in my mind before I got out of the hospital in Atlantic City. I mean, I think, by then, I had decided that what I would do is ... go to Penn for a year.

KP: Had you ever thought about going to business school before or was this something that stemmed from getting the GI Bill?

WG: No, not really, no. ... After I graduated from Rutgers, I was going to get a job and earn my living. [laughter]

KP: Then, the Army took you away.

WG: Yeah, the going to Penn for a year ... was just to sort of make up for five years ... of Army life, ... although it did help me. I mean, ... the "chair-borne" infantry taught me things about the business world.

KP: What lessons do you think you learned?

WG: I couldn't really tell you. I mean, just the fact that I had sat behind a desk, and had shuffled papers, ... and so forth.

KP: Did you learn anything about interacting with different types of people?

WG: Oh, ... I'm sure I did. You know, ... the officers that I dealt with at the reception center, ... for two-and-a-half years, almost all of them, as far as I'm concerned, all of them, other than myself, were southerners, and I didn't have a very high regard for many of them. I mean, some of them had kept their reserve commissions and they were physically out of shape. I mean, I could understand why they were assigned to ... the "chair-borne" infantry. ... You know, I think [the fact] that I got assigned there was a mistake, from the Army's point of view. I mean, I don't know [if] it was a mistake from my point of view. [laughter] I think ... you sense, from some of your other questions, ... that, when I graduated from Rutgers at age twenty-one, I was a very young age twenty-one.

KP: So, in a sense, the Army had made you much more worldly?

WG: Right.

KP: This is a hypothetical question, but, if World War II had not come along, how do you think your life would have been different in the 1940s? It sounds like you would not have gone to Wharton?

WG: No, I mean, I won't say absolutely no, but, I mean, I had no plans, at that time, ... to do any graduate work. I mean, you know, if you want to get into that, I mean, it took a long time before I

ended up in the actuarial profession, and, looking back, ... I can't understand why nobody here at Rutgers had even suggested the possibility that that was a field that I might be interested in, because it's a combination ... of mathematics and business. ... As I think I told you in the answer to another question, the only other job opportunity that I had [was] an interview with the Prudential and I don't know why they didn't offer me a job, but, if they had, I think it ... might have made some difference, but, I still would've ended up in the Army very shortly, being a unmarried male with a reserve commission as a second lieutenant. Working for the Prudential wouldn't have stopped them one minute, and then, ... I know not really ... whether I would have gotten into the actuarial end of the business.

RC: Did the Army give you a briefing on what type of benefits were available to you and what you would be able to do with them?

WG: I don't recall, really, anything like that. Where I learned that I could get benefits to go to Penn, I really don't remember where I got that. I mean, I know that I had decided that that was what I was going to do sometime shortly after I ended up in Atlantic City. I had figured that out.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. William S. Gillam on April 24th 1995, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and ...

RC: Robert Colandro.

KP: When you returned to the Gallop Poll, had the war changed any of its methods of operating?

WG: Not much. I don't really know what they did and didn't do during the war, but, any case, [in the] Spring ... of '46, I made a decision that I wasn't going to stay on ... at Penn as a graduate student and instructor, and I contacted the Gallop Poll again, ... and I don't recall any problem ... in getting a job with them there. ... Without going into any detail, and, some time, if somebody wanted to, I would, but, I finally became convinced that if you ask your foolish question, and you get a foolish answer, you're foolish to believe it, and that's my characterization of the Gallop Poll.

KP: I was quite struck when you mentioned how Gallop, in one of his television programs, was using New Brunswick as the representative of the nation. He was convinced that New Brunswick represented the nation. Polling, really until the 1980s, was widely believed, although there have been some fiascoes, like, say, the Literary Digest Poll.

WG: ... And, I was involved in the 1948 election where the Gallop Poll showed Dewey was going to win, and then, it turned out that Harry Truman did. ... I was with the Gallop Poll for six months after that or more, ... and, as I say, what I just said a few minutes ago, I still believe it's not ... the way respondents are selected, although a lot has taken place in that aspect of it, but, even if you get

a sample which is a very sound sample, you still have to ask your question and get an answer. ... You know, ... the Gallop Poll organization had several branches in Princeton, where old Dr. Gallop had a finger in all of them, and some of them were involved in commercial research, even at that time, and I was impressed when they ... would get permission from people ... to go in their homes and examine what products they had in their medicine cabinet and on their kitchen shelf, as opposed to asking them what kind of toothpaste you use, and what kind of cereals you use, and so forth, and so, that's what I mean. I mean, you ask a person how they're gonna vote, and they tell you something, and you put that down and believe it, you're crazy. People have all kinds of reasons for misleading you.

KP: How shocking was the '48 debacle which predicted that Dewey would win, in your own thoughts, for the Gallop organization?

WG: ... I think that the feeling there was pretty much what had happened with the Literary Digest, that the problem was with the sample. ... So, while I was still there, ... we started working on efforts to ... select a sample based upon geographic location rather than haphazardly, as it was done before, ... but, I don't think now, in retrospect, that that was the answer.

KP: It may not have been the Gallop Poll, it may have been the Roper Poll, but, I think one of the pollsters from that ill-fated election, for pollsters, said that one of their problems was, and this particular organization even liked Truman, but, they knew that Dewey was gonna win, so, they basically stopped polling about six weeks before the election.

WG: Well, I don't say that that was not part of the problem, but, again, it ties in with the fact that what people told them six weeks before, and then, what they did six weeks later, are not necessarily the same thing. ... Whether people actually changed their minds during that period of time, I know not.

KP: Were there any other polling efforts that led you to become more skeptical, any other instances where you thought there was a problem in the polling business?

WG: Not really, I mean, I didn't see any way around that, as long as you were trying to find out peoples' opinions or how the hell they felt. As I say, the commercial aspects of it could be dealt with in a different way, and it seemed to be perfectly sound, and a lot of that has been done, but, they're still doing it in the political arena, and I didn't see any future in it.

KP: What led you to leave graduate school after a year? Had you thought of staying on or did you really view graduate school as a one year thing?

WG: No, when I went, I viewed it ... as one year to just sort of catch up ... with five years [of being] out of the country, so to speak, and, you know, at the end, or near the end of the first semester, I had the opportunity to ... teach two classes in elementary statistics, and I won't say I didn't enjoy it, but, I had become convinced that a teacher who only knew what he read in books

was not a very good teacher. ... So, you know, I just gave it up and went back to work for the Gallop Poll. Whether, at that time, there had not been the possibility of going back to work for the Gallop Poll, I don't know what I would've done.

KP: It sounds like they were glad to get you back.

WG: ... My father suggested several things to me, like working for the Internal Revenue Service and things like that. ... I didn't pursue it. I mean, I was not an accountant, and there's a great difference between an accountant and a statistician, and accounting just didn't appeal to me at all, worrying about the last cent, you know. [laughter].

KP: After you left the Gallop organization, where did you go next?

WG: I got a job with the ... National Bureau of Casualty Underwriters, which is a rate making organization for the ... property and casualty insurance business and I found out about the Casualty Actuarial Society. They gave a series of eight examinations that was worthwhile taking and I embarked upon that. ... You know, in retrospect, I would've been much better served if I could've started that in 1940 rather than 1949.

KP: You stayed with them for the rest of your career.

WG: Yes. Actually, the organization's name changed. There were a couple of mergers that took place, but, I was with them all the time, from then 'til 19 ...

KP: On the survey, you wrote until 1979.

WG: Yes, 1979, okay.

KP: It sounds like you liked that work a great deal.

WG: Yes.

KP: As well as the organization.

WG: ... I don't think, in looking back, that there are any other kinds of jobs that I could have found, any other fields, that ... I would've felt more comfortable [in] than I was as a casualty actuary, and I don't know how much you know about the distinction between casualty actuaries and life actuaries, but, there's all the difference in the world.

KP: What is the difference?

WG: I mean, life actuaries deal with life insurance and casualty actuaries [deal] with automobile insurance, liability insurance, workers compensation, and so forth.

KP: So, in a sense, you had a lot of different questions to work on, which made it more interesting.

WG: To me, certainly more interesting, and I'm sure that many members of the Society of Actuaries, which is a life actuaries society, think that that's the only kind of actuary work that's worth doing. ... What has happened, I think it was [in] '65, a new organization was formed, [the] American Academy of Actuaries, which encompasses the life actuaries, and the casualty actuaries, and pension actuaries, and so forth, ... but, [it had] become the mouthpiece of the actuarial profession and handles all the dealings ... with the legislators in Washington, and the state, and so forth, and I'm a member of the American Academy of Actuaries, have been since '65 when it was founded, and ... that area has expanded much more than I ever thought it would. In other words, the American Academy is now doing many more things than ... the Casualty Actuarial Society or the Society of Actuaries has ever done or would ever do. I mean, but, the Casualty Actuarial Society and the Society of Actuaries think of themselves as being educational, primarily, and testing, but, you know, not interfacing ... with the public.

KP: The actuarial industry, you began in it when it was still in the slide rule stage and followed it into the computer age. How did the computer change actuarial and statistical work?

WG: Well, you know, ... [at first], the actuarial work was done with accounting machines, ... punchcards. I mean, that was the way of life when I was [in it]. ... We had just really started getting into computers, but, ... still, at that stage, everything was entered on the punchcards, and the punchcards went into the computer, ... and so forth. ... I mean, now, ... everybody has a computer on their desk and ... I'm sure I would be lost if I tried to go back to work. In this connection, my son is a casualty actuary. He came to Rutgers here, and got a Master's in mathematics, and he met his present wife here, where she was getting her Master's in mathematics, and, several years after that, she heard about the National Bureau, and came in, and applied for a job. This was before they were married, so, her name was not Gillam, so, she didn't have any problem getting a job, and, ultimately, she persuaded my son to come in and get a job. Of course, right away, they knew who he was, ... but, it didn't interfere with them offering him a job. At that time, there was no concern about nepotism or anything like that and ... they both are working for National Council and Compensation Insurance in Boca Raton, Florida, and they're both making good money at that, and I'm sure that he is satisfied that he didn't get led astray by ...

KP: By his father. You are now a member of a number of veterans organizations. Did you join any of them in 1945? When did you start becoming active in veterans organizations?

WG: Yes, ... there was an organization that has now disappeared, Disabled Officers Association, and when that finally ... [closed up] shop, I joined the Retired Officers Association. You know, and, of course, the Retired Officers Association, you don't have to be retired because of disability. Lots and lots of them were retired because of twenty or thirty years service, ... and many more of them are regular Army than were in the Disabled Officers Association, and then, later on, I learned about ... the Second Division Association and about the Military Order of the Purple Heart, and

joined both of those, primarily to have access to the information that they distributed in ... their bulletins.

KP: Have you ever gone to a reunion of any of your units?

WG: No.

RC: Have you ever been back to France?

WG: ... No. ... I would have liked to do that, but, things never just seemed like it would be possible.

RC: There are numerous tours now and groups of veterans that go back to visit a lot of these areas.

WG: Yes, ... in addition to the organizations I'm in, I joined the Battle of Normandy Foundation, and I got lots of information about the tours they sponsor, and so forth. ... I would've liked to have ... been in a position to do that.

KP: Your two sons did not serve in the military. Do you have any regrets that they did not?

WG: No, I felt then and feel now that everybody should serve in the military for some period of time, universal military service. At the time, I certainly did not support the Vietnam War and was very pleased that my two sons were able to avoid it. My older son got a low number, or a high number, I'm not sure which one meant that he didn't have any chance, really, of being [called to] serve, and the younger boy went to college, and, by the time he finished college, why, it was over. ...

KP: So, you did not support the war in 1965.

WG: ... No, but, I didn't not support it in any active way. I mean, it's my own personal opinions and I expressed my opinions with friends and relatives. ...

KP: Why were you opposed to it, admittedly, in a quiet way, but, what made you think this war was different from your war?

WG: It's hard to put that ... in a few words. It just seemed like it was a no-win situation ... and, as time went on, it got worse and worse. I mean, we were expending useful efforts for no good reason, no avail. I can't say that I reached a conclusion that under no circumstances should we get involved in ... foreign wars, but, I certainly have not been happy about things like Haiti and that ... stupid island that we sent [troops to]. What was it?

KP: Grenada?

WG: Grenada, yeah. I mean, of course, it didn't amount to much, but, I mean, still.

RC: What did you think of the Korean War?

WG: ... I guess I felt, at the time, that it was more akin to World War II, Korea.

RC: However, by the 1960s, you did not see the Communist takeover in Vietnam as a threat.

WG: A threat to this country, no. For that matter, I have very mixed views as to, ... what was the war in Arabia?

KP: Desert Storm?

WG: ... Basically, my conclusion, that was mainly to pull the Japanese interests out of the fire. I mean, I'm sure that ... if Iran [Iraq] had taken over Arabia [Kuwait], it would've caused economic problems in this country, but, Japan was really the country that would have been hurt by cutting off the supply of oil, and I'll have to say that ... I still don't have very good feelings about the Japanese, or the Germans, for that matter.

KP: So, you have never been back to Germany?

WG: No. I never got to Germany in the first place. I would have no desire to go to Germany.

KP: So, you have never been back to Europe since.

WG: But, ... I would like to go back to Normandy, yes.

KP: However, you have never been back to Europe.

WG: No.

KP: What did you think of the Japanese and Germans as enemies?

WG: Well, I mean, ... with the Germans, I guess ... I really felt that it wasn't the German people, *in toto*, that I was against, it was the Nazis, and I appreciate that many Germans that were involved were Nazis, and involved with the Nazis, and so forth. With the Japanese, it was something completely different. I ... just felt that they were all bad.

KP: Have you ever bought a Japanese car?

WG: No, ... I never would.

KP: Or, a German car?

WG: No, I don't think so. ... Reluctant sayer, I mean, I would tend to buy American first. On the other hand, I do agree, from an economic point of view, that free trade is ... essential to [the] well being of planet Earth.

RC: Where did you learn about the war in the Pacific, from books, movies, other veterans, or all of those sources?

WG: All of those sources.

KP: Did you have any Pacific veterans with you in the Atlantic City hospital?

WG: ... No, I assume that there were some similar hospitals in California. ...

KP: Have you seen any World War II movies that accurately reflect your own experiences in the military?

WG: I can't recall any World War II movies that I have seen. After 1949, when my oldest son was born, for a number of years, I saw no movies at all, and then, later on, after we had obtained TV, ... [I] saw some movies on TV. I have gone to see some movies, but, I do not recall having gone to any ... that were World War II.

RC: Have you seen many documentaries or films from that time period?

WG: No. I mean, I'm just thinking that, on public television, there were some things which deal primarily with ... the music of the era.

KP: Did you like the music of the era? It sounds like you liked the big bands.

WG: Yes, definitely. ... I think there's something to be said for the fact that the big band music has continued to this day, and my older son, who grew up with Elvis Presley ... and rock and roll, has come around to appreciating the big bands sound, ... and he's into CDs with the big band sound.

KP: Well, Bob has a similar story from doing research for the project and listening to his father's narration of the big band era.

RC: Well, he saw quite a few of the big bands. In the New Jersey area and when he was in the war, he was in California, he managed to see a lot of the groups.

WG: You know, ... I didn't really. I mean, what was on radio that I was able to hear was sort of a mixed bag. I think the last time I talked about ... the music down in the South, ... the country-western type of music. So, it really, as far as I was concerned, was ... after I got out of the Army that I became really familiar with the music that had been developed in the ‘40s.

KP: From your description of the South, at times, it seems like a different country from the North.

WG: Yes, yes.

KP: Have you been back to any of the places you were stationed in the South?

WG: No. ... I [would] have liked to have done that, too. ... My wife and I have ... visited New Orleans, and Atlanta, and Williamsburg, and a number of times in Florida, and San Francisco, and Las Vegas, ... but, never any of the places where I was stationed or had any connection with.

RC: Now, when you had first gone south, you were with the 24th Infantry Regiment, which was an African-American regiment. Later on, during the civil rights movement of the '60s, did you have any opinions on that or had that experience reflected upon how you looked upon the civil rights movement?

WG: I guess it did, but, ... I'd be hard pressed to say exactly ... in what way. ... You know, even today, I ... feel that the blacks were mistreated for years, and years, and years, even after the Civil War, or maybe not even, but, particularly after the Civil War, but, I don't know what I would favor ... differently than what has happened as far as the black [movement]. I mean, I don't want to get into President Lawrence and what [he said]. Well, if you're interested, I'll tell you what I think about that. I think what he said is what he truly believes. In spite of ... believing what he said, I think he's done a tremendous job for minorities at Tulane and at Rutgers. Now, this thing, it just keeps stirring. I mean, ... Governor Whitman has made some statement, and I'd like to see the statistics on the number of black families without fathers and the number of white families without fathers, and, I mean, I'm sure that it would maybe not support specifically what ... Governor Whitman said, but, nevertheless, let's face up to facts, people. I mean, Daniel Joseph Moynihan wrote, whether it was a book, or a treatise, or whatever, at one time about the ... breakdown of the colored family. You know, I think, from what I was able to observe in ... Columbus, Georgia, and area, is that the black families were just as cohesive as ... white families at that time. I mean, you know, they were very religious people, and I think ... marriage was important to them, and that they looked down on ... blacks who behaved differently. In Edison Township, ... which surrounds Metuchen, there's an area that was called Potters. Do you know anything about that? It was out in the rural area of Edison Township and a colored, a Negro, establishment had been set [up]. ... Well, they built shacks on land that they didn't own. Actually, it was township owned land that the township had taken over because the owners didn't pay their taxes. ... Squatters is the word, squatters. ...

KP: When was this, in the 1940s?

WG: The '40s, the '50s, too. ... At the same time, there were a group of black families that actually owned their land and their homes in that area and they looked down on the squatters just as much as white people did.

KP: What ever happened to the Potters?

WG: Ultimately, ... the township, my guess, with assistance from the federal government, built housing, and was able to provide housing for most of the squatters, or else, the squatters just picked up and left, went back to Newark, I guess. So, today, it ... still is largely a black population that lives in that area. It's in North Edison Township, bordering on Clark Township in Rahway. ...

RC: How long was it before you heard about the death camps in Europe? Had you talked to anybody that may have been a witness to liberating any of them?

WG: No, and I can't really tell you when I first became aware of it. I'm sure it was ... some time after I got out of the Army. It was into [the]1950[s], anyway.

KP: Thank you. Is there anything we forgot to ask you?

WG: I can't think of anything. Now, what's going to happen now?

KP: Bob will type up a transcript of the interview, and then, we will be sending it to you to for you to correct, or add to, or delete.

WG: Yeah, I really, ... looking back, I can't think of anything that I said that I would have any objection to, but, I'm sure there are.

KP: Well, something may come to mind that you might want to add.

WG: ... Add, or some factual things, just like in my own account. I amended it with a lot of facts which really don't affect it at all.

KP: Well, thank you for all of your information.

WG: Well, going back to the Rutgers bunch at Aberdeen, and I gave you Mike Hill's name and address, but, more generally than that, I mean, are all the members of the Class of '40 going to be invited to participate in this? I mean, directly. I mean, if they read the *Rutgers Magazine,* they would know about it.

KP: Yeah, if someone contacts us, we send them a form and interview them. The only question has been, for us, the money, since we can not afford to mail every alumni from the period a mailing at this point, so, we have been asking classes to do that, but, if you would be willing to send a mailer to your class, we would definitely like to interview them.

WG: Well, I think we're going to have a meeting Thursday, but, I think we've just about exhausted the possibilities of any mailing to our [class]. ... What I'm going to suggest is that we prepare a

letter and send it to ten or twenty people who have not signed up [that] we think would be interested.

KP: Do you know of anyone in your class who is coming from a great distance to the reunion?

WG: Well, I don't know. I have not seen the list of those. I mean, at our 50th reunion, five years ago, we had some coming from Arizona and Florida.

KP: I would very much like to interview those people when they come up, because those are harder to get to.

WG: Yes, well, of course, what has happened to our class in recent years, geographically, is that they'd rather move to the South.

KP: I know. I have seen that with the Class of '42 and even the Class of '49.

WG: So, ... we have some in California and Arizona, but, really, not a great many. I would ... guess in New Jersey, and Virginia, and North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, would take care of ninety percent of our class. Well, I will report at our meeting on Thursday what's happened and I will specifically talk to Mike Hill about the Rutgers bunch and any other members of ... our group who would be interested. I will urge them to get in touch with you.

KP: Yes, I think one or two have. You are one of the last interviews I will be doing until after reunion weekend, because I have an exhibition opening up at the library and some other things, but, I will be at reunion weekend and I will be doing interviews with people from a distance.

WG: This is going to carry on for ...

KP: At least another year.

WG: Yeah, okay.

KP: There will be another class following Bob's class that will need interviews.

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

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