RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK A. GIMPEL

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

G. KURT PIEHLER
and
ALAINA CHIP

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
FEBRUARY 9, 1995

TRANSCRIPT BY

ALAINA CHIP
and
JENNIFER LENKIEWICZ

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Frank A. Gimpel on February 9, 1995, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

Alaina Chip: Alaina Chip.

KP: I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your childhood in the Bronx. How did your parents come to settle in the Bronx?

Frank Gimpel: My mother was born in Manhattan and my father was born in Germany. They met about 1917, something like that, and why they settled in the Bronx, I have no idea.

KP: When did your father come to the United States?

FG: My father came over when he was about two years old.

KP: Did his family speak German?

FG: Yes, they spoke German. He didn't speak German. ... He understood it, but, they didn't speak it at home. My mother, she spoke German, because her mother and father were born in what was then Austria-Hungary, one was Hungarian, the other was Czechoslovakian, and the common language was German. She didn't know how to speak English until she was old enough to go down and play in the streets with the other children. That's where she picked up English.

KP: Was your father old enough to fight in World War I?

FG: No, he wasn't in that. I don't know whether he was old enough to fight in it or not. ...

KP: Did he ever talk about World War I?

FG: No, he just thought that it was kind of bad, the whole war and the outcome of the thing, especially the peace, … and it really wasn't peace, when we look back on it now, just an interruption of the fighting.

KP: Your mother had strong ties to Germany. German was her first language.

FG: She didn't have any strong feeling for Germans. In fact, her parents were Jewish, so, there was no strong feeling for Germans. It just happens to be the common language.

KP: What was the neighborhood that you grew up in, in the Bronx, like?

FG: It was just a mixed neighborhood, little, small, one-family homes, very neighborly for everyone, rural by today's standards, you know. Go to a little, rural town in New Jersey and that's the way the Bronx was back then.

KP: You remember it almost like a small town.

FG: Oh, yes, very small. You had to walk a half a mile or so just to get to a local store. Maybe on the corner, they'd have a grocery store that you could shop in for vegetables, but, not like they are today.

KP: Was English the first language of many of your classmates in school or were most of your classmates recent immigrants?

FG: In the Bronx?

KP: Yes.

FG: Or in Manhattan? 'cause I moved down to Manhattan when I was about seven years old.

KP: Okay.

FG: … My first school that I went to up in the Bronx was, I think it was, PS 12, where Dr. Condon was principal, you know, … the infamous Dr. Condon who was supposed to have dropped the Lindbergh ransom money off at St. Raymond's Cemetery up there. [laughter]

KP: Okay.

FG: … English was the language for almost all of the students. There was very, very little else spoken. It was the same way when we moved down to Manhattan.

KP: Why did your parents move from the Bronx to Manhattan?

FG: Well, my father worked down in Manhattan and it was getting difficult to make that long commute, you know, by subway train every day, finish work, and ... take the subway train, and go back up to the Bronx again.

KP: What did you think of the move? Were you happier in Manhattan?

FG: I was too young. ... The only thing you miss is some of your friends, but, making the move was not that bad. You know, you acclimate when you're young.

KP: When you were growing up in the 1930s, Fiorello LaGuardia was a major figure in New York City and the nation. What did your parents think of him? What did you think of him? Do you have any impressions of him?

FG: I have no lasting impressions of him. I thought it was kind of humorous, though, when he decided [that] he was going to read, over the radio, the comics, because the newspapers had been on strike. [laughter] Looking back, in retrospect, I don't know if that's really the function of a mayor, to read comics to the public.

KP: How did your parents feel about Franklin Roosevelt?

FG: My father wasn't a strong Democrat and he didn't think very much of Franklin Roosevelt and some of his policies.

KP: How did your mother feel about him?

FG: They didn't discuss politics too much in the house. They were too busy trying to keep the family together and keep the home together.

KP: Did your family have any problems during the Great Depression? Were they hit hard by the Depression?

FG: They weren't hit hard, but, they were never affluent. I don't think my father ever made more than twenty-five dollars a week in his whole life. Anything extra that he had, he was working overtime or extra to take work home and do that, and my mother, in order to help out, we lived in a place in Manhattan, she would help clean the house. ... It was a two-family walk-up, and she would clean the halls and scrub the hallways, and I, when I was old enough, I would have to sweep the sidewalks, and shovel the snow off them, and check things like that. ... We tried to make the best of it.

KP: Did your father ever have any gaps of unemployment?

FG: No, not that I know of, no gaps of unemployment.

KP: In the 1930s, did you read the newspaper? How much did you know about what was going on in the world?

FG: Not that much. I knew what was going on. ... I'm just trying to think back, you know. The war started in ...

KP: 1939.

FG: '39. We read the papers, but, not in the depth that we would read it today. I think that's part of maturity.

KP: Before Pearl Harbor, did you have any inkling that the United States might get involved in the war?

FG: ... At that time, there was an isolationist group in the United States that was trying very hard to keep us out of it, but, I had the feeling, from talking to [and] listening to [my] parents, and listening to other people, that we were inevitably going to be drawn into it. It was going to be almost impossible to stay out of it, especially when they started the [Lend-Lease] program, turning over destroyers and escorting the British ships. The newspapers, what they were coming out with [was] that, sooner or later, it was going to happen. ... Even when they were negotiating

with the Japanese, you could almost see that they were looking for some sort of an excuse to get into the war. Now, in retrospect, when you read history, I got a sneaking suspicion that we deliberately provoked them into doing certain things.

KP: However, at the time, you did not know that.

FG: Not that much, no.

KP: You went to college after the war. Before the war, did you expect to go to college?

FG:. ... I graduated from high school in 1940. I went to CCNY (class of 1944) for awhile and then our entry into the war came along.. ... Even before the war came along, I left for awhile and worked at a job in a real estate office, but, I continued my education at nighttime. … Of course, the war came along and I applied for different jobs, and ended up working in the Signal Corps, and went to different schools, pre-radar school, and I got so disgusted with the way they were running things I enlisted in the Army, [laughter] mistake number one.

KP: Getting into CCNY was quite difficult.

FG: Yes, it was very competitive.

KP: When did you know that you wanted to go to college? How much did your parents pressure you or encourage you?

FG: They didn't pressure me, they encouraged me, and, of course, as I said, they sacrificed to keep the family together, and my brother had gone first, and he graduated in 1938, and I, naturally, said, "Gee, I want to go to college, too," 'cause I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do, ... what I wanted to get into, which was, bothersome to my father, because, growing up, he knew what he had to do and what ... he wanted to do, European parents usually encourage their children to try to get an education. At that time, that was the way to get out of the economic status you were in and try to go get a good education and get a profession of some sort.

KP: Did you have any sense of what profession you might want to get into or were you still up in the air?

FG: I was still up in the air, right. I still think that, today, young people, college students, start in college before they really know what they want to do. It might be nice if they had a year or two after high school to go into something to find out what they want to do, what profession they might want to get into, and what are their opportunities are, rather than just come right out of high school and go into college.

KP: I know someone who went to CCNY in the late 1930s and early 1940s and he told me that there were a number of bright people there.

FG: Very, very, very competitive, the professors gave you your homework, they would spend the time and teach you, but, if you didn't get it, it was your tough luck, and, if you didn't keep up with it, you were out, you know.

KP: In fact, he mentioned that there were the fifty "wonder people" in his class that were just unbelievable. It was a bright group to begin with, but, then, there were these fifty people who were just the untouchables, and he named several people who went on to very prestigious careers. He was also in the ROTC at CCNY. He noted that, politically, the student body was all over the map, but, there was a strong anti-war movement in the late 1930s. Do you recall that at all?

FG: I was in the ROTC when I was an undergraduate, but, I didn't notice ... anybody that was strongly anti-war. No one was really in favor of going to war period. At the time, in CCNY, … a large proportion of the students there were Jewish, and, of course, there was no love lost for the Germans by those students. Although, at the time, there was not too much information coming out about the anti-Semitism that was rife in Germany, and, of course, we had that in this country, too, you know, on a lesser scale, maybe, but, nevertheless, there was strong anti-Semitism.

KP: However, you do not remember any rallies or student organizations that were pro- or anti-war at CCNY.

FG: No. I was never one to join very many organizations. …

KP: How many semesters did you complete at CCNY?

FG: I went [for] about a two-and-a-half semester in the daytime, and then, went for about a half a year or three-quarters of a year at night.

KP: You had actually completed quite a bit of college-level work by the time you enlisted.

FG: Oh, yeah.

KP: How would you compare your experiences at CCNY with your experiences at Rutgers?

FG: Well, of course, when I was going to CCNY, I was taking a business administration course. When I came to Rutgers, I was taking engineering and there is a vast difference between the two of them. Also, there was a difference in the atmosphere. When we went to Rutgers, almost everyone was an ex-GI coming out of service. Their interest was, "Let me go get my education and let me get out of here." There were some that were living at home and going to Rutgers. Probably, the majority were living somewhere in the area. The difference in going to college when you're living in the college, environment of going to college and living at home, that was almost like a continuation of high school. … You know, you didn't have the same facilities for studying when you're living at home. You, got your books and came home and, if you had a corner of the kitchen table to sit down at to do your studying you were lucky.

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: You mentioned that you worked for a real estate company before the war.

FG: Right.

KP: When did you get that job?

FG: I got it through a person that was going to the same church that I was going too. He had worked over there, as an office boy. He said, "Hey, there's a job opening over there, would you like to go and do that?" My father encouraged me to do it, and so, I took the job. This same person, Jack Hogan, was subsequently killed while with the Seventh Infantry Division in Alaska (Aleutian Islands). Jack Hogan had a twin brother who had contracted infantile paralysis as a baby and was not eligible for the military.

KP: Was this before or after Pearl Harbor?

FG: This was before Pearl Harbor.

KP: At the time, you were going to CCNY part-time.

FG: Yes, at nighttime. I was taking a couple of courses in the evening.

KP: How did you like your first job? Actually, I probably should phrase that differently, since you did shovel a lot of snow in high school.

FG: Yeah, well, the first job was [at] the real estate office and it was an office boy job, meaning, go out and get the secretaries their coffee, and their lunch, and their Coca-Colas, jobs of that type. ... You know, it was sort of a dead end job, unless you got some background and experience in real estate. The people, at that time, who were doing it were those who went out and made sales and rentals and worked on a commission basis.

KP: Were you interested in real estate?

FG: I don't know what I was interested in. That's what I said. Coming right out of school and going to college, you have no idea of what you really want to do.

KP: Where were you when the attack on Pearl Harbor took place?

FG: ... Pearl Harbor, I was in a movie, and came out, and heard about it after the movie.

KP: Do you remember the picture that you saw?

FG: No, I don't remember. [laughter] I remember the theater. It was on 14th Street, near the "Academy of Music".

KP: What was your reaction to the news? Did you have the urge to enlist right away?

FG: No. It was kind of shocking. ...

KP: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was?

FG: Oh, yeah.

KP: At the time?

FG: Oh, we knew it was in Hawaii, oh, sure. We weren't entirely ignorant of geography at that time. [laughter]

KP: Well, someone I interviewed did, in fact, say, "Where is Pearl Harbor?" at first.

FG: Talk to some of the students today, they don't even know where the western United States is. [laughter]

KP: That is also true. You mentioned that you went to radar school, or was it radio school?

FG: Well, radio school first, and then, radar school, when I got into the Army.

KP: What was the first school that you went to, before enlisting?

FG: The first school I went to, before enlisting, was with the Signal Corps. I started working for the Philadelphia Signal Depot. They sent some of the students in to what they called pre-radar school. We ended up in the University of New Hampshire, we were up there to learn some basic electronics and some math courses. The idea was that they were going to bring those people back to Philadelphia, and then, send them out as inspectors in some of the defense factories providing equipment to the Signal Corps.

KP: This was as a civilian?

FG: This was as a civilian, right.

KP: You mentioned that that did not work out.

FG: Oh, it worked out fine, except that, rather than sending all the students out, as inspectors, some were retained to the depot. Most of them who were sent as inspectors went to Chicago to work in the various factories out in the Chicago area. I ended up staying back at the Philadelphia Signal Depot. … They used to split the shifts up. You'd go some days from eight-to-four, next then you'd go in the early evening, and then, you'd go in the night shift. The work was a very boring, menial type of activity. A requisition would come in, and it wouldn't have all of the information they needed to satisfy the requisition. You then had to be sort of a detective and

look up various technical publications to obtain all the technical information required to complete the requisition form. I felt, at the time, the job was just, leading nowhere, and so, out of disgust, I decided to enlist. … At the time, they were saying that, if you were seventeen years old, and with your parents' permission, you could enlist in the Army and choose whatever branch of the service you wanted, so, I said, "Well, that's a way to get out of this." [laughter] So, I enlisted in the Army.

KP: You were quite young when you entered college.

FG: I started in when I was about eighteen, I guess, seventeen-and-a-half, yeah.

KP: However, you enlisted in the Army at seventeen. You said that you needed your parents' permission. Were you over seventeen?

FG: ... Yeah, well, I had just turned seventeen, a little older, so, … I had started fairly early on. Time went very rapidly, though.

KP: How long did you have the job at the depot? How long was the training at the University of New Hampshire?

FG: Well, the job up at New Hampshire was about two month, and then, I was at the depot in Philadelphia [for] about a couple of weeks, three or four or less.

KP: How many people did you work with at the Philadelphia depot?

FG: Oh, the depot was tremendous in size, but, the little section I was in, there was maybe a couple of people, and it was headed up by lieutenants that they had. That was another thing that disgusted me to no end on the whole part, because, when you tried to talk to someone, and I asked for a transfer out of the job I was doing into another one, the man, it was an officer, said, "Well, I'll release you if the fellow you want to go to says he wants you." Now, I have to wait, 'til the next morning, make an appointment, come in to try to see him. He's not available, so, several days go by. Then, I went to see him and he said, "Well, I'll release you if the other man'll ask for you," and, you know, [after] a couple of times going back and forth like that, I said, ... "This is not for me. I'm going to get out of this madhouse." They all play those games, you know. "[If] he wants you, let him ask for you. If he wants to release you, let him say he will," and it's the usual game that they play within the government, at times. The bureaucracy is horrendous.

KP: You really felt that this job was not contributing to the war effort.

FG: Well, it wasn't contributing meaningfully to it. It had to be done.

KP: Yes.

FG: You know, I wasn't the only person in the world who could do that.

KP: You mentioned that your decision to enlist was your first big mistake.

FG: Well, that was one way to get out of that existing job. I had, meanwhile, put in an application to work for the Navy as they were looking for people to work for them. I had put in an application but, hadn't heard from them. My father was one of those people who was always saying, "Don't leave a job until you have something else in hand." "Don't become a bum and just lay around and be taken care of. [laughter] You want to leave? Get another job and go to another job."

KP: In a sense, you enlisted because it was another job.

FG: Well, it was another job, and, it was one way to get out, plus, the fact that it offered the opportunity to go into the branch of service that I wanted. I knew that the Army, at the time, was developing and working on radar, and I figured I would get in and go to school within the Army and improve myself that way. You know, it was never the idea that I was going to go to college, but, it was a way to learn some sort of a trade in a field that was growing, you know, the field of electronics.

KP: When you enlisted, radar was on the cutting edge of technology.

FG: Yeah, that's right.

KP: In fact, you did go to radar school. Did you get into the ASTP program before you went to radar school?

FG: I went to radar school down at Camp Murphy, Florida, finished up there, and then, went up to Fort Stewart, Georgia, and I was assigned to an antiaircraft battery, and, at that time, they then came out with [the] ASTP and said, [to] students who qualified, "If you want to go back and finish your college education, here is an opportunity." So, I applied for that and got sent to the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina and from there, I was sent up to Johns Hopkins University. Then, through great oversight on the part of the military and because their casualties were so high in France ... North Africa, and Italy, they decided they needed men in the infantry units more than they needed college educated students. So, they sort of cleaned out all of the ASTP units and split them up into various divisions. … Some of the divisions had been drawn down to provide replacements for army divisions after the Normandy invasion. That's how I ended up in the infantry like so so many other young men.

KP: During the war, you worked in a variety of positions within the military, everything from your work in the depot, which was the quartermaster's section to ...

FG: No, this was the Signal Corps. … The quartermasters had their own depots. ...

KP: … Serving in an antiaircraft battery.

FG: ... Right. When I first enlisted in, the Army, I ... had basic training down at Fort Eustice, Virginia, which was one basic training center for antiaircraft. I picked the antiaircraft because ... they were using radar for gun laying purposes. I went there and, from Fort Eustice, I was sent to Chicago. ... Before getting into radar school, you had to go through radio repair school. I was sent to Chicago to radio repair, and then, down to radar school at Camp Murphy, Florida. So, it was like a progression of getting educated.

KP: You spent a good part of 1943 in various schools.

FG: Right, right.

KP: What were your experiences like at all of the different places that you trained, beginning with basic training?

FG: Well, they were very interesting, you know. It was different, you know, when you're young like that, doing different things. … [I] always had a desire to travel; here was an opportunity to travel and get educated at the same time.

KP: What did you think of the different places that you traveled to?

FG: One military camp is like another, you know. [laughter] They didn't locate them in the best places in the world. … Look at the comics, "Camp Swampy," I guess, that's what they were mostly like, but, it wasn't that bad, you know.

KP: Were you ever able to get off base at any of the places you were stationed at?

FG: Oh, yeah, you could go out.

KP: What did you think of the South, having grown up in the North?

FG: Being from the North and being down in the South? [laughter]

KP: Things were a lot different in the South. For example, there was no air conditioning.

FG: Oh, yes. … I guess [that] some of the barracks still are not air conditioned. [laughter] You get used to it. [laughter] It's hot, but, privation like that, ... as a young person, you kind of get used to that thing, and you accept it, and everyone else was in the same boat, so, it wasn't that you were being discriminated against. … Although, I still remember when I went into the service and people said, "why don't you go into the Air Force?" and I said, "What's the difference?" "The Air Force is part of the Army. You get the same uniform and you get the same food." They said, "No, sir," [laughter] and it turned out [that] they were right. The Air Force was the privileged group.

KP: You realized that the Air Force did have special privileges.

FG: Yeah, and, after a while, I learned that the Air Force had radio schools and radar schools that were teaching their students in these endeavors. Of course, they did have better places in which they trained. Atlantic City was one of the basic training places for the Air Force. ... I ended up in the infantry, in the Air Force, I probably would've ended up at some air base in a remote area, maybe, or maybe even outside of London ... not everyone in the Air Force was flying combat missions. The vast majority were on the ground, supporting the combat missions, but, when you end up in the infantry, you're in a combat mission. There's no place in the rear, [laughter], as one person said, "For a long time, you have the Army by the shorthair, but, sooner or later, they turn around and grab you by it." [laughter]

KP: What did you think of your instructors during basic training and at radio and radar school?

FG: The instructors at civilian schools and military schools including basic training were very professional. The civilian schools existed before the war. The army just took them over and continued the existing programs. The instructors at radar schools were noncomm who had been outstanding students in the same courses. Each taught a small segment of the overall courses of instructors.

KP: What do you remember about your basic training drill instructor? [laughter] Was basic training a shock for you?

FG: No, not really. It was a shock to a lot of people, but, you know, as I said, being a young person, you get used to it. I can still remember, in basic, at nighttime, some of the older men, married men, moaning in their sleep and really missing being home.

KP: It sounds like you saw this as a great adventure.

FG: Oh, yeah. I didn't look upon it with dread or anything like that. It was interesting. ...

KP: Where did you hope to get assigned when you enlisted? You were initially sent to an antiaircraft battery. Did you want to go to the European Theater or the Pacific Theater?

FG: If I look back on it and try to think about it, I would have preferred to have been in the European Theater, rather than the Pacific Theater, because, at that time, the reports coming back from what was happening over in the Pacific weren't that great.

KP: You actually did join an antiaircraft battery.

FG: Only in training, and I got assigned to one, but, never in a combat situation. …

KP: Where did you go for antiaircraft training? How long were you with the battery?

FG: The first training, initially, was at Fort Eustice, Virginia, which was basic training for all antiaircraft artillery. At that time, I trained on what they considered, low altitude AAA, 40 mm battery, which was the smaller guns. After the radar training, radar was usually associated with

the high altitude artillery, and I was assigned to a .90 mm outfit in Camp Stewart, Georgia, but, I was only there for a couple of weeks when I went to the ASTP.

KP: It sounds like your training was cut short.

FG: Right, right.

KP: What impressions do you have of the people that you met during your various phases of training? You mentioned that there were clear differences between how younger and older inductees reacted to Army life.

FG: Well, see, … during the training, you ran into a lot of people in the same boat that you were in. They had … roughly the same education, same objectives, and you tended to associate with those who were from your home area. If there were people from New York or New Jersey, you made friends with them and associated with them because you had a lot of things in common.

KP: What about the people from the South or West?

FG: Well ...

KP: You did not get to know them as well.

FG: No, well, you get to know them, but, you're never really associated on a close basis.

KP: It seems as though the radar school brought together many young men who, like yourself, were quite bright.

FG: Well, I'd say above average. Quite bright? [I] never considered myself as being "quite bright."

KP: Many of the radar school students had high school degrees.

FG: Oh, yes. Most were high school graduates

KP: Did the level of education change when you went into the infantry?

FG: No, because, when I went into the infantry, as I told you, they had cleaned out the ASTP units and that's how they filled out the selected divisions. You know, I was from Johns Hopkins, and, when they sent us down to Camp Claiborne, they cleaned out Lehigh, Lafayette, Western Maryland, VMI, VVI, etc., and we ended up down at Camp Claiborne. We got off the train, and were lined … up according to height, and then, they went down the line and said, "One, two, three, four, five, you go over here. Six, go over there," and that's how the first five ended up in the infantry, and the sixth ended up on the other side of the railroad tracks, and they put them in what they called "special forces," which meant that … some of them went back to school, some of them went to the Air Force, some of them went to radio school. A lot of us who ended up in

[the] infantry said, "This is the stupidest thing we ever saw," because we had finished basic training, we had gone through all those schools. … Rather than looking up and picking the person by what their army special training had been, they were taking the easy way and sending some back for special training [laughter] which doesn't improve your feeling for how smart the military is.

KP: You actually served in an infantry unit.

FG: I was in a rifle company, which is about as low as you can get in an infantry unit. [laughter]

KP: However, the company was full of bright people.

FG: There were quite a few. In fact, the reason I ended up in Rutgers, one of the fellows in the company, who subsequently got killed, … went to Rutgers before the war, and he talked about how nice it was, and how it's a little, small town, and how the student ratio to professors was small. ...

KP: Do you remember his name?

FG: Yeah, his name, he's right over there in the Commons. I'm trying to think. I ran into his sister, who worked in the bank over here, after the war, while I was going to school, and, as I told you earlier, after a while, your memory starts to go on you. [laughter] It will come to me.

KP: Good. Actually, we are preparing an exhibition catalog that will list all of the men that Rutgers lost in the war.

FG: Yeah. I was up here at the reunion with my wife and I noticed they had his name down there on the wall, … Rutgers men who were killed.

KP: What was your ASTP training at Johns Hopkins like? What subjects did your instructors emphasize?

FG: It was all basic mathematics, chemistry, physics, english, and physical education.

KP: It was a basic college curriculum.

FG: Basic college curriculum, and the PT was getting out, and they had enlisted men who got you out there, and they'd chase you around the track, and run, and play soccer, and anything else to keep you busy, but, it was all very disciplined. It was almost, run like a military school. You got up in the morning, fell out, had roll call, then breakfast. You'd march off to class. You'd take your classes and come back out and everything was on a timing basis. They'd inspect your barracks and your bed had to be made just right. In fact, I remember, you wouldn't get a pass if you didn't pass inspection. … Some chicken second lieutenant would come in and they'd stand up there and inspect the place. They'd look everywhere to see how the room was and if there was any dirt, or dust, or dust balls flying around, I thought I had made out real well, and he opened

the closet door, put his hand up there and ran it across the inside of the closet, came out with dust and said, "Restricted to the barracks for the weekend." [laughter] …

KP: Which you must have really enjoyed.

FG: Oh, yeah, but, you know, … some people play games. In fact, when I went to Rutgers, we had a professor of engineering who played on a similar basis. He gave you assignments at nighttime, and you'd read them, and he sometimes gave you a fifteen minute quiz in the morning. In one of the books we had on thermodynamics, it went through an explanation of some principle, and it said, "This is never used," … it is just being provided for your information, and you read it, and the SOB, the next morning, gave us a test on that. [laughter] So, you know, these people like to play games at times.

KP: I have heard about this thermodynamics class. It has come up before.

FG: It's probably the same professor. [laughter] Kenny Latham, that was the name of the fellow that was killed, Kenneth Latham, Latham.

KP: Was he a Rutgers graduate?

FG: He didn't graduate. He had gone to Rutgers, and went into the service, and was in ASTP, I think, and then, ended up down in the 84th Infantry Division, but, his name was Kenny Latham, L-A-T-H-A-M.

KP: How long were you at John Hopkins?

FG: They had … semesters, I was there through the third semester. The semesters weren't six months long. It was a little over a year, I guess, maybe not quite a year.

KP: You were there in 1943-1944.

FG: Yeah, end of '43, beginning of '44. They had just been fighting in North Africa and I don't know what year that was. If you take all the times I'm talking about now and add them together, it sounds like I was in the Army for fifteen years. [laughter]

KP: Many of your training schools only lasted a few weeks or months.

FG: Yeah, yeah.

KP: I understand. What did you think of Johns Hopkins and your civilian instructors?

FG: I thought they were very good instructors, the civilian instructors, and, of course, Johns Hopkins always had a good reputation as an academic school.

KP: You thought the school's reputation was warranted.

FG: Right, and, you know, the civilian instructors I had when we were up at the University of New Hampshire were very good, too. Of course, I didn't get some of the very difficult courses. They were competent as teachers, instructors.

KP: This was your second time in college, although under admittedly different circumstances. Did you have any idea that your course work would lead you to the field of engineering?

FG: Yes. That's probably why I got channeled into that, as an area to go into. In fact, when we were down at Johns Hopkins, they were asking some of the students if they wanted to go on and apply for medical school, and they gave a special test to a lot of the students. Some of us really weren't interested in going to medical school, didn't care what our grades were on the test, but, I can remember one or two fellows who did pass the graduate record examination, I guess, or medical exam, ended up either medical or dental school. So, some of them, you know, took advantage of that. I don't know whether they were taking advantage of it because they wanted to stay out, [laughter] rather than going back into the military atmosphere, or whether they really had their hearts set on becoming doctors and dentists.

KP: What did the Army tell you about the ASTP program being terminated?

FG: No, they never told us anything. We just got put on the train and didn't even know the camp we were going to end up in and, lo and behold, after a day-and-a-half on the train, we ended up in the swamps of Louisiana. [laughter]

KP: I am sorry. I meant when you were actually at John Hopkins.

FG: Well, we thought that we were going to go there, and probably continue on and, maybe …

KP: You would become an officer.

FG: … Made officers, or get into … one of the technical branches of the service.

KP: However ...

FG: They promised nothing. …

KP: The Army was very vague about what would happen to you.

FG: Right, right.

KP: Were you surprised by how quickly the ASTP was disbanded?

FG: Yes, it came as rather much of a surprise. … In fact, one fellow I already knew, I had gone to church with, he was in CCNY and was in the engineering group up there, and they got deferments in engineering. He didn't end up in the military, and then, he enlisted in the Navy,

and they gave him a direct commission in the Navy, which counted towards his military time, and, when it was finished, they went and sent him to, maybe, different schools, and he spoke foreign languages. He was an Armenian boy, and he was very proficient in foreign languages, and he ended up at the University of Colorado, and he went to language school out there, and then, they sent him to China. So, the Navy was more direct in what they were talking to some of their personnel about and what their futures could be, what they were training them for.

KP: The ASTP, however …

FG: The ASTP was like something after the fact, you know. [laughter]

KP: How disappointed were you? One day, you were in college and, the next, you were in a rifle company.

FG: Well, you're disappointed, but, as I said earlier, you know, for a long while, you have the Army where you want them, [laughter] but, sooner or later, they turn around and grab you. So, you know, you take your chances, and, if you knew what was going to happen, probably, looking back on it, if I had just stayed with the antiaircraft artillery, I might have had a nice, easy job, because, I understand, the unit that I was with ended up in the Caribbean somewhere. … [laughter]

KP: Did you ever think about that when you were on the line?

FG: Oh, yeah, you think of it all the time. [laughter] "Did I make the right choice when I had it? Do I take the right hand fork in the road or the left hand fork?"

KP: You had already been in the Army for quite a while when you were sent to Louisiana for infantry training.

FG: Oh, yeah.

KP: How much basic training did you go through for the ASTP?

FG: ASTP didn't have any basic. ASTP was strictly like going to school, but, they maintained the military discipline. The basic training was for thirteen weeks and it was given when you first entered the army.

KP: Where was this?

FG: At Fort Eustice, in Virginia. After that, you were out of the basic training and you were just in the military atmosphere, where you had to go and say, "Yes, sir," and, "No, sir," and report to duty when told. [laughter]

KP: At Louisiana?

FG: Well, yeah, what they went through there, at the training, was, you know, first, they would train you in the squads. Then, they would train you for a platoon. Then, they would train you [in your] company. Then, you would go out on battalion exercises. Then, you go out in division exercises.

KP: Did you go through the same basic training as somebody who had not been in the Army or ASTP before?

FG: Well, most of the people who ended up down there … had all finished basic training, … not with the training we were doing, [which] was training you as infantry units.

KP: You were moved immediately into infantry training.

FG: Training, yeah, … for infantry duty and unit [training]. …

KP: For example, how much marksmanship training did you go through? How proficient were you?

FG: Well, we had already had the marksmanship training in basic training. When you went back in the infantry, … you trained with a rifle, and, when you went out to the range, you'd fire there. [laughter] They really didn't care if you hit the target in the middle. [laughter] … As long as you didn't hit the guy who was in the pits, waving the flag, you were all right. [laughter] In fact, I vividly remember, just before we went overseas, … we came up here at Camp ...

KP: Camp Kilmer.

FG: … Kilmer, to go overseas, and there was a young fellow named Reilly. They [would] line you up, and, check your eyesight. They'd checked his eye out, and were saying, "20/20 with the glasses," and he says, "Wait a minute." He says, "I'm blind in this eye," and they said, "No," and they freely took him out, and he really was blind in the one eye. So, if it was a warm body, you end up there. [laughter] They'd cull you out as you go along. If he hadn't said anything, I think he probably would've ended up overseas, and then, there were quite a few, … well, not quite a few, but, I know of several cases where they were underage. The fellows that were in the unit weren't eighteen years old yet. … In fact, our company commander had one young fellow who was big and husky, he was sixteen, a fellow from down South who enlisted, and he wasn't old enough, and the company commander says, "I'm not going to send you into combat," and he sent him back to the kitchen and out of the Army, which I thought was great on the part of the company commander.

KP: He had been able to get through basic training.

FG: He had been able to get through all of it and nobody ever questioned him.

KP: When was his age discovered?

FG: He was discovered when he was overseas, in combat, yeah.

KP: How did they find out?

FG: Oh, I don't know how the captain found out, [laughter] but, he found out [that] he wasn't old enough to be in there.

KP: You were in a rifle company.

FG: Right.

KP: What was your unit, your comrades and sergeant, like, especially in training?

FG: There was a big difference between, quote, "us college kids," and the regular Army people that were there. [laughter] Now, most of the sergeants were regular Army, had been in the Fourth Infantry Division, and had been in, you know, for ten, fifteen years, and, if they got to be the rank of a PFC or corporal, they thought they were making tremendous advancements. Of course, when the war came out, a lot of them just went right on up, you know, sergeants and all, and the captain of our company was a former enlisted man in the regular Army, he went to OCS and … got his commission. I remember, one of the lieutenants in the intelligence group said [that] he couldn't find his way on a map even if he had a compass, [laughter] but, he got to be captain, and he didn't last very long. In fact, [after the] end of the first week of combat, I don't know what ever happened to him, whether he got captured, or wounded, or something, but ...

KP: He did not make it.

FG: He didn't make it through any more than the first week of combat. The one that made it was this Captain Albert Garland, who was the one I said discovered that the young fellow was not old enough and sent him out, and Captain Garland, by the way, was from the South, Louisiana. So, there wasn't any animosity between Northerners and Southerners, just a very intelligent, nice fellow.

KP: Was Captain Garland college-educated?

FG: I probably think he was, yeah. I know that before the war he worked on a New Orleans, Louisiana newspaper.

KP: He did not come up through the ranks.

FG: Well, I think he … [had a] college education. I don't know whether he had an ROTC [commission] or went to OCS.

KP: What sticks out in your memory about your training?

FG: Happy when it was all over. [laughter]

KP: Really? I have heard that the swamps of Louisiana are terrible.

FG: Oh, yeah, yeah. They weren't the best place in the world. There were very interesting incidents that happened. Every time we'd go out for, maneuvers we called them, you know, we'd be training for units, soldiers would all rush over to the PX and … buy up as much candy as they could and other things to eat and load their knapsacks and mess kits with all the candy. Things that stuck out in my mind, it was so hot that when you went to get the candy out of the mess kit, this chocolate had melted all over the inside, [laughter] and then, when we were out there, supposed to be digging foxholes and camouflaging them, someone would come driving down in the middle of a road with a truck full of watermelons, and everybody'd be running out and buying watermelons so [that] they could eat 'em, and the battalion commanders and the regimental commanders would get so mad at the company commanders and all for letting these people break all that discipline, go out and get watermelons, you know. "That's never going to happen when you go to combat," you know. [laughter]

KP: I have also been told that, in combat, the officer/enlisted relationship was not as strict.

FG: … After a while, it was a great leveler. After a while, there was not that much difference between enlisted men and officers. You jumped into the same foxhole and lived together and tried to survive together.

KP: When you were in training, what did you think combat would be like?

FG: Horrible. [laughter] Combat was all from the movies, you know, World War I movies that you saw, or World War II movies.

KP: Which movies stick out in your mind? Did you see *All Quiet on the Western Front*?

FG: Yes, [I] saw that, right. I read the book, and so, I had an appreciation for it, and, of course, then, there were other ones, with James Cagney in it, *The Fighting 69th* and all, and … who was the other one, from Tennessee? He was the marksman that took out a whole German ...

KP: *Sergeant York*.

FG: *Sergeant York*, yeah.

KP: You had a sense that the infantry was not the best place to be.

FG: Not unless you … desire to go there and look for it; not a choice assignment. [laughter]

KP: When your unit was formed, did you have any idea where your unit would be sent?

FG: No, we didn't have any. We all had a feeling that we were going to go wherever they sent us, and we could hope that it would be someplace more pleasant than in the Alps in Italy, … the

Apennines, I guess they are, the mountains down there, and, definitely, none of us wanted to go to the Pacific.

KP: You would have preferred France over Italy.

FG: Oh, sure. …

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

KP: You mentioned that there was animosity between the college boys and the regular soldiers, especially the sergeants.

FG: Mostly the sergeants, as I said, but, when I say "animosity," you know, it wasn't that open, but, there was a difference. They referred to us as, "You college kids," and our first sergeant, Lloyd, I remember [him] saying that, "None of you fellows would make PFCs as long as I'm around." … Everybody said, "Who cares? We want to get out of this Army anyway." [laughter]

KP: You said that your rifle company was full of former ASTP students. Were there any non-ASTP men in your unit?

FG: Oh, yes, there were. It was about half-and-half. That's how they rounded out the division, brought to full strength. As I said, they cleaned out these universities and sent them all down there, and, of course, some of them ended up in what I consider real cushy jobs in the infantry. They ended up in an artillery unit or battalion or regimental headquarters. Most of the combat they saw is what they heard, you know. [laughter]

KP: However, you said that, in your rifle company, half of the men ...

FG: Yeah, about half of them were not ASTP. The other half probably were.

KP: Were they draftees?

FG: Most everyone was draftees, yeah.

KP: Where were the non-ASTP men from? Were they from the South?

FG: They were from all over, … a lot from Oklahoma and Texas, some from out on the West Coast, California, New Mexico, and Arizona. They were pretty well universal.

KP: Did everyone in your rifle company know how to read?

FG: As far as I know, but, in basic training, they didn't. I remember, in basic training, [I was] just really shocked that they had fellows going in there, and they were sending them to school, and they'd come back, and they'd be so proud that they could read, "Cat," and, "Dog," and things of that type.

KP: Some men were learning to read in basic training.

FG: Yeah, yeah.

KP: What else surprised you about basic training? You had been in several advanced Army schools and, now, you were in the infantry. Were there any other surprises?

FG: No, just the shock when you really get into combat. Even though you think you know what you're going to expect, it's quite different, I think.

KP: What did you expect, versus the reality?

FG: Well, not that you were expecting any different, it's just a shock that you're now into it, you know, and, of course, the thing was the discomfort of it all. We ended up in Germany in November, and, the first week in combat, it was nothing but mud, and beet fields, and rain, and, … you know, you couldn't take showers, couldn't clean yourself up, couldn't take your clothes off. You huddled in a foxhole and your feet started to get cold. I remember, my raincoat that I had on, just from running and falling in the mud when you're getting fired at and getting up, the mud would cake on the coat, and you'd be carrying around, like, twenty pounds of mud on you. Your clothes all got wet and stuck to you. Creature comfort is what, after a while, [you] look forward to.

KP: You went through some rough training. Did you expect it to be so filthy, crawling through mud and such?

FG: Oh, you know, I don't know whether I expected it to be that or not. I guess you realized that it was going to happen, that there was nothing that you could do about it.

KP: Did time seem to move slower or faster in combat?

FG: Sometimes, it would feel like it was a hundred years, in some cases, [laughter] but only because you're making an attack, or you're getting shelled, or you're fighting that way. A minute seems like an hour.

KP: How would you rate your company and your division's morale when you were sent overseas?

FG: It was pretty good morale, you know. In fact, some of the people were very relieved to go overseas. I remember, the platoon gidon, a sergeant from Philadelphia, who got killed the same day I got wounded the first time, he was from the regular Army, Fourth Infantry Division, and he just hated, you know, the training. It was just … training, training, training, going out in the fields, and he was very happy when they sent him overseas, like a sense of relief. "Oh, we're out of this thing. Now, we're going to be doing what we were trained to do." …

KP: Some of the regular Army men had been looking forward to this chance to fight.

FG: Well, I don't know if they were looking forward to it. It was just a relief from the same drudgery of the training and training and training.

KP: You seem to remember a lot of drudgery in training.

FG: Oh, yes. ...

KP: What about creature comforts? You probably sampled a variety of Army food at your various stations. How did the infantry mess rank, in your opinion? Was it a shock for you to eat K-rations?

FG: K-rations was sometimes better than the food they served you in the mess hall. [laughter] It varied, you know. Your food varied from how well-trained the cooks and the kitchen people were, and the food that they would draw out of the commissary supplies, and, if you happened to have a good cook and he was lucky and got good food, you would get good food. There was always plenty of it. You know, there was never any shortages, I think.

KP: In that sense, you always had enough to eat.

FG: Oh, yes. There was always enough to eat.

KP: However, the quality …

FG: Yeah, the quality could vary, depending upon the company you were in, and, of course, if you got KP and sent … to the officers' mess, you always knew [that] you were going to eat much better than you would in your company mess. [laughter]

KP: Your unit was sent overseas in 1944.

FG: Right.

KP: How did you cross the Atlantic?

FG: … The ship I went over on, the *Thomas S.Barry,* was the sister ship to the *Morrow Castle,* the one that burned off of Asbury Park, and we went on that, and we ended up in Southampton. … The rumor that I had heard, at the time, [was that] we were supposed to have gone directly into France, but that one of the ships either got damaged, or got lost, or something happened, so, they sent us into Southampton, and we ended up there. … At that time, they had made the breakthrough up to the Siegfried Line, and they were moving all of their supplies forward from Normandy, up to Germany, and they formed what they called the Red Ball Express, and they took some of the men out of the company and put them into the Red Ball Express to drive trucks and bring the supplies forward.

KP: What do you remember about your voyage to Europe?

FG: Playing bridge [laughter] and getting fed twice a day. We had a young fellow from New York, an ASTP guy, who was very big. He played football, I guess, when he was in college, before going into the service, and he was a scrounger and a politician, and he ended up working with the Navy gun crew in their kitchen, he would make sandwiches and bring them back, and, at nighttime, he'd say, "Here, for my buddies," and he'd give us sandwiches that he had, 'cause we only got fed, at that time, twice a day. You'd get up, and you'd have breakfast, and then, you had nothing all day until supper, and then, you would have supper, and it was very boring. It took us almost two weeks to go overseas, we sort of all gathered together, and we had learned to play bridge, and we'd sit there and play bridge, to pass the time of day. In fact, when we ended up in combat, we'd dig our foxholes and we'd sometimes try to make them, like a cross and sit there and play bridge in the foxholes, [laughter] play bridge and play hearts and games like that. It was always hurry-up-and-wait in the Army.

KP: Did you ever gamble?

FG: No, I was a poor gambler. We gambled when we got over into Holland. Invasion money, which they gave us, meant nothing to any of us. Whether it was ten cents or ten dollars, you never knew how much it was worth with no place to spend it. I was a lousy gambler, as one of the fellows said to me. He says, "Gimpel, don't ever go and play cards for money. I know whatever cards you hold in your hand by looking at your glasses." [laughter]

KP: How cramped was your ship going overseas?

FG: Very cramped. I was assigned to the … the upper bunk. They would have … [bunks] four bunks high, the lower one, the next one, the middle one and the top, and my nose was about that far from the roof, or the bulkhead, but, I could sleep anywhere. [laughter]

KP: Did you ever get seasick?

FG: Not that I recall, no.

KP: Were there any U-boat panics or scares during your trip?

FG: [No], 'cause you'd look out and see [that] the convoy was vast in size.

KP: Did you find that to be reassuring?

FG: Reassuring, yeah, a lot of escort boats there, and, as I said, on the boat itself, there were gun crews from the Navy. ...

KP: That was ...

FG: That [was] not a big concern.

KP: You eventually landed in England. What did you think of England, although you were not there for very long?

FG: Well, it was different. It was foggy, cold, and damp all the time. We were down near Winchester, in southern England, and we got a pass to go up to London, which was, different as all heck. I remember seeing Glenn Miller and some of his people at the USO up there in London.

KP: You said that it was very different. What was so different about London?

FG: Well, the people were different and [it was] a different kind of culture than we had been used to here. There's a blackout. Of course, we did have a blackout in the States for a while, when the war first started, but, then, that wasn't observed too much later on, but, England was always under, you know, constant fear of bombing.

KP: Did you witness any V-2 rocket attacks while you were there?

FG: I saw the V-I attacks when I was in the hospital in Belgium, in Liege, but, not in London, because, as I said, we were stationed in Winchester, which was a considerable distance from London, and London was just an overnight pass.

KP: Did you meet any English civilians? Did you go into any pubs?

FG: They had pubs down there where we were stationed, and, again, the games they played was a variation of bridge, whist, I guess they had, and I remember how cold the rooms were, and you would get up, and take English coins, and put 'em into slots, so that the heat would go on, [laughter] keep you warm for a while, but, the English people were very gracious. There weren't that many men [around]. There were men, but, they were elderly men. [The] young men weren't there and I don't know if they were resentful of the American soldiers. American soldiers had a very flippant type of attitude towards other people. [laughter]

KP: You said that they were glad, gracious, but, also, there seemed to be some tension there.

FG: Well, there's tension because the American soldiers had almost everything. We ate well, and, even though we were well fed and ate well, we still tried to buy things that the British people would have on the market. I remember, [one of the] things that we liked a lot was the British bread, which we would buy, and they also had a sort of a liver paste that they had, which you could put on the bread. … We never realized that, maybe, there was a big shortage, as far as the civilian populations were concerned and [it] probably wasn't that much of a concern to us. We thought about it. I remember, when we first landed in Southampton, men were standing at the rails, and we had oranges and fruits like that, and [we were] throwing it down to the people, and the British sailors [said], "Oh, save that. That's worth a lot of money over here," you know.

KP: For you, this was ...

FG: This was just a giveaway, you know, and the same way when we ended up over in Holland and Belgium. The American soldier would give away his candy and rations and things of that type and they were very, very … grateful to receive it, I think.

KP: Until you went overseas, you did not realize how much ...

FG: … They were suffering, right.

KP: … And how well off America was.

FG: And how well off we were. In fact, … when my brother and I came home, we both came home on the same hospital ship, and we saw the attitude of some of the people in New York and how they treated it. We were just really mad as all heck. … We were waiting in the subway, and there would be some soldier on a cane or something, waiting to get in, and people would rush right by him and push him aside, and then, we'd hear [that] even some of our relatives would go out, and they were hoarding hundred pound bags of sugar. … The attitude was, "Why, I'm going to get everything I can. I'm not going to worry about, you know, living off the ration cards that we're given." The attitude of the American population was not the same as some of the people that were, you know, living in privation over in Europe at the time.

KP: How long were you stationed in England?

FG: We were only in England [for] a couple of weeks, and then, we went over to France.

KP: Then, you knew that you were going into combat.

FG: Well, we knew we were going in as soon as we got on the boat. [laughter] The big dream was, "Well, we're going to be in the Army of Occupation and the war will be over by the time we [land]." ...

KP: There was a lot of talk in November of 1944 about ending the war by Christmas.

FG: Well, there was a lot of talk, because, as you know, they had just … tried to invade Germany through Holland, going up there to Nijmegen, … as related in the book, *A Bridge Too Far*, with the two US airborne divisions and the British airborne division. The whole thought was they would sweep … behind the Germans and capture them and the war would be over; wasn't so. [laughter]

KP: Your division, in fact, was initially deployed to support the British.

FG: Initially we were assigned to the Ninth Army and we were the extreme left division of the left army of the American forces over there. Two of our regiments were assigned initially to the British to take, a salient that they called the Geilenkirchen Salient. We were there to take that salient. One regiment was loaned to the 30th Infantry Division, which was further south to the right on the line. … That was our initial regimental assignment and our company and battalion

was supported by a British tank regiment called the Sherwood Rangers, that was our first introduction into combat.

KP: For your particular unit?

FG: Our particular unit, right.

KP: What do you remember about your first combat experience?

FG: Miserable.

KP: Earlier, you mentioned the mud.

FG: Yeah.

KP: What else sticks out in your mind? How scared were you?

FG: Oh, I was scared. You know, everyone is. A person says they're not scared, they're lying.

KP: Really? Everyone from your captain on down?

FG: Oh, yeah, yeah, everyone did it, even colonels. I remember, one of the first towns [that] we went into, there were German pillboxes on either side of the road, and, while we were advancing toward this town of Prummern, these pillboxes were on the outside, and this colonel was there, and he was standing around exhorting the troops and all, and suddenly, a bunch of shells started coming in, and he hot footed it for one of the captured pillboxes, and that's the last we ever saw of him. [laughter]

KP: You were supported by British tanks.

FG: Right.

KP: Did you have any contact with the British tankers or were they off in the distance?

FG: They were a distance [away], yeah. We contacted a little bit. The thing I remember about the British soldiers, I used to think that the American soldiers could curse, but, we could take lessons from the British. [laughter] Cards and spades, they'd beat us.

KP: They knew how to curse.

FG: No, we knew how to curse, but, they knew how to do it better.

KP: You were scared, dirty and uncomfortable. How did you react to seeing people get hurt, wounded and killed? When did your unit lose its first man and how did you react?

FG: … That's a hard thing to answer, because you're always revolted by death, but, you know, you knew that it was going to happen. ...

KP: Did you think that it would happen to you?

FG: You hoped it wouldn't. [laughter]

KP: You were not one of the people that thought ...

FT: You would always hope that it wasn't going to be you, because, if you thought you were going to be [hit], you probably never would've been able to survive. You had to live on faith and on hope and, if you're feeling was [that] you're going to get killed, you know, I think your whole morale and your whole being would have collapsed on you.

KP: Were chaplains assigned to your unit?

FG: There were chaplains assigned, right.

KP: How important were the chaplains?

FG: In fact, … one of my first experiences, you were asking for some of the things, on the very first day, when we were on the attack, … we were moving forward, and they started getting shells on us and fired upon, and I dove onto the ground, into the mud, and a piece of paper came flying by. I put my hand out and turned it over and it was the Twenty-Third Psalm. Your morale is really boosted a lot when you read it, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He leadeth me into the Valley of Death," you know, and all of that.

KP: That was actually meaningful for you.

FG: At that time. Yes! You know, of course, if you lived in hope, you figured, "Okay, I'll have to put my fate in the hands of God."

KP: That seems to support the idea that there are no atheists in foxholes.

FG: I guess so, yeah.

KP: … At least in your unit.

FG: Yeah, yeah. There's always somebody. I'm reminded of that [Bill Mauldin] cartoon that they had of Willie and Joe during the war, and they're both sitting over there, and one of them is wondering how he could say a prayer in Hindu, because he wasn't going to pass up any bets. [laughter] Besides praying to God, he was going to get comforted by Hindus, and Shintos, and whatever other religion there was. [laughter]

KP: Who were the best soldiers in your unit? Who did well in combat and who did not do as well? You mentioned the captain who had come up through the ranks who was out of the war within a week.

FG: Yeah. Well, you know, if you survived, you did well in combat after the first week, that was the great leveler.

KP: A large number of men did not make it through that first week.

FG: Well, a lot of them were killed, or wounded, or sent back. Our battalion had about 800 people when we went in, the first week in combat, and, at the end of the first week, if they had a hundred or 150 that were combat ready, there was a lot.

KP: Basically, your unit lost ...

FG: Lost a lot of people, not all of them killed or wounded, trenchfoot was one of the big problems. Your feet got frozen, and they would evacuate you back. One of the things they eventually had was the discipline for keeping the feet dry and warm. After a while, they would send up, with food, fresh pairs of socks, and you were supposed to take your shoes off and rub your feet, and dry them, and then, put on fresh socks, and put your shoes back on, and send the other pair of socks back to get washed and replaced. See, the first week, they didn't do that. A lot of the fellows ended up with trenchfoot. When I got wounded the first time, beside being hit in the arm, my feet were partially frozen. As the doctor said, about the wound in the arm, "If a lion did that to you, we'd call it a scratch, but ..." [laughter]

KP: What mistakes did people make in combat? You mentioned that the first week was a leveler, however, some things, such as trenchfoot, were beyond anyone's control. What else?

FG: Well, the first thing you'd try to learn was the differentiation of the sounds of artillery, whether it was going out or coming in, and, if it was coming in, how close it was going to come to you, and keep your head down and keep your backside down in the foxholes or something. If you would stop for any period of time, you try to dig a foxhole, dig something, to get into to protect yourself.

KP: There were men who would not do this.

FG: Oh, they would, sure. You learn very rapidly when your life is at stake. [laughter] When you're in training in Louisiana, you would delay doing that, because nothing was going to happen to you. When you got up into combat, you knew that a mistake was going to be costly. …

KP: Some men in your unit must have made some mistakes during the war.

FG: Some of the mistakes that were made, and I didn't see them in my unit, but, I talked to fellows in the hospital. … They were stupid mistakes that they made. They would have hand grenades, and hand grenades used to come in little cans. You'd take them out, and the handle was

free, and there was a pin in it, and, if you pulled the pin out, the handle would fly off and it would go off. Well, when you took them out of the tin, there was tape that was around the cardboard. So, when you took your hand grenade out, the first thing you'd learn to do is wrap the tape around … the handle on the thing, so, even if the pin came out, it wasn't going to pop. You waited until you were going to use it, and then, take it off and use the hand grenade, and the second thing you'd learn is, never try to hang 'em on [you]. … You know, you see pictures and they hang their hand grenades on their lapels. You don't want to put it there, because some of the fellows were stupid and never put the tape around it. One fellow was telling me how a couple of men had them … on their lapels. They'd jump out of the back of the truck, and the shock of coming down and stopping short, the hand grenades would pull out, and the pins would come out, and they'd go off, and a couple of people around would get wounded. Another stupid mistake they made is, … we always tried to find a house that had a cellar. That way, you could get your creature comfort, and you'd get in there, and you'd take your pack off, and people would just take their rifle and put it in the corner with their pack, and they weren't too careful with it, and they wouldn't put the rifle on safety, and, when they'd go to pick their rifle up and wanted to move out, they'd put their hand over the top of it, and the webbing that you used to wear would get caught on the trigger, and they'd pull it up, and it would go off, and they would have a lot of wounds with their hands getting blown [off], and fellows were getting shot in their feet.

KP: Do you think that anyone did that deliberately?

FG: I don't know. There was some talk [that] it was deliberate. The guy had to be an idiot to shoot himself in the hand and have the chance of losing your hand and the foot, but, that's stupidity. I mean, if he did it deliberately or not, it's still stupid. [laughter]

KP: Did you learn how to read enemy fire? You said that the first lesson was to stay down low.

FG: You [have] got to keep down, try to … dig a foxhole, try to differentiate between the sounds. …

KP: What else did you learn quickly?

FG: Yeah, the difference between your own rifles and your own machine guns and German *schmizers*, you know. That was their machine pistols that they had and they had a very distinctive sound. … In fact, some of the people in our company would try to capture those and use them, and, after a while, the Captain demanded that they get rid of those, because, when you hear that go off, and you knew it was an enemy sound, and it was to your right or left or behind, … you didn't know who was there, he wasn't going to take any chances. He said, "You will get rid of all the enemy machine pistols that you have."

KP: Why did American soldiers want to use German weapons? Were they better?

FG: Well, we had our rifles, we would have seven or eight shots, and they were single shots, where the German *schmizer* was a machine pistol. … In combat, the important thing is your firepower. You very rarely were able to sit down, take aim, and shoot at somebody, but, if you

had a lot of bullets flying toward the enemy, he would stay down, too, which would give you a better chance to survive while you were advancing.

KP: It seems as though you learned to shoot your rifle as much as possible.

FG: If you had the chance. In fact, I can remember, some of the commanders, … and I guess it was Patton, … would teach the men and insist that they all fire as they moved forward, because he said, "The enemy who is busy trying to duck is not going to be there to shoot you." So, whether you hit him or not, just as long as you put a lot of firepower on him, he stayed down, too.

KP: Was anyone in your unit reluctant to fire his weapon?

FG: No. It was never much on a personal basis. Nobody was really, over there saying, "I'm going to look for somebody so I can kill 'em,".

KP: It sounds like the men of your unit, particularly the ASTP guys, wanted to get this over with as soon as possible.

FG: Yeah. I don't think it was just unique to the ASTP. I think it might have been … general to everyone that was in the Army; get home in one piece.

AC: How were you wounded? Could you tell us about that action?

FG: Well, the first time it happened, we were outside this town of Prummern. We were trying to take some pillboxes that were on the outside of the town, on the right hand side, at a place called Mahogany Hill. We were pinned down there for a day-and-a-half, with the British were supporting us. Three British tanks came up to try to knock the pillboxes out with flame-throwers. They were up there, and they put the flame-throwers on the pillboxes, and the first thing we heard was, "Bang, bang, bang," the German .88s, the first two British tanks were hit directly and burst into fire, and the third one started to try to back off, and three more shells came over and hit it. …

KP: Did anyone get out of the tanks?

FG: Some of them did. In fact, that was one of the most vivid things I remember. One of the fellows was trying to get out of the tank, and he kept trying to pull himself out, and he couldn't. … One of the fellows from our company jumped up on the tank and tried to help him out, and the Germans fired at him, so, he had to … jump down. He couldn't help him. … The last thing we saw was the fellow just letting go, sinking back into the tank, and [he] probably burned alive. … This one fellow that went over with us on the ship, who I said got the sandwiches for us, was a big, burly fellow, and he crawled out of the foxhole and got a hold of one of the British tank drivers. … This was after several hours, and the British tank driver had his whole rear end that was shot off, and he was laying there, and Sy put the fellow on his back and crawled on his hands and knees to get off of the ridge where he would not get the direct fire from the pillboxes, and

then, got out of the line of fire, and went down to the aid station, and took the British officer with him down there.

KP: Do you know if he made it?

FG: He made it, yeah, because I met him several times since then. We are still good friends and see each other often. I think he should have received a medal for this effort, but no one ever put him in for one. His name is Sy Kuppersmith.

KP: What about the British officer?

FG: Oh, the British officer. I don't know whether he made it or not, but, I know Sy made it, although it affected him to the point that he never returned to our unit.

KP: Was he decorated for that action?

FG: No, but he should have been. Our platoon leader, if he saw it could not put him in for a decoration because he was captured as a prisoner of war the next day.

KP: It sounds very heroic.

FG: Oh, yeah. … Our second company commander said that he would give Silver Stars to fellows if they knocked out a tank. That was his criteria for [decorations]. [laughter] ...

KP: Really? Did anyone knock out a tank and receive the Silver Star?

FG: Not that I know of, but, then, that next day, since we weren't able to take out that pillbox with the British tanks, they decided the only way you were going to do it is by sending the infantry up there. So, we had engineers. … They used to put dynamite all over the pillboxes, explosives, they called them satchel charges, and you tried to get up to the outer trench of the pillbox, they had zigzag trenches, and you would drive the Germans into the pillboxes, and then, the engineers would come up and put satchel charges on the doors and blow them in, and the Germans would surrender, but, before we reached the pillboxes, the Germans in the trench were there, and they had these automatic pistols, and they fired on us. … The platoon gidon fellow, Joe Monteleon, we were all in the same foxhole together, he got hit in the stomach, and another fellow was hit in the back of the head, and I was hit in the arm, of course, my wound wasn't that great, so they evacuated this sergeant first. They took us down, off the face of the hill, and then, in jeeps, they took us back to the aid station in the little town we had captured. I remember, the doctor in the aid station said, "Gee, it was too bad about that little sergeant." I said, "What little sergeant?" He said, "Oh, the one that came down here." I said, "Do you know his name?" He said, "No." I said, "Joe Monteleon?" He said, "Yeah, that's the guy." I said, "What happened to him?" He said, "He died on the way back to the field hospital."

KP: That was your sergeant?

FG: He and I and the platoon lieutenant, Wing, were all in the same foxhole together. The Lieutenant said we had to take the pillboxes, he [the Sergeant] said, "Do I really have to go, Lieutenant? … I want to stay." He was the same one who was very happy to go over into combat. He said to the Lieutenant, "You know, if I could just go home." He said, "I'll work on the railroads and dig ditches for the rest of my life. I just want to go home and see my wife and son." He never made it.

KP: Was he regular Army?

FG: Yeah, he had been in the Army for some time. He and the other senior sergeant all were regular army with the Fourth Infantry Division.

KP: However, this was his first taste of combat.

FG: That was his first taste of combat, yeah. So, as I said, [it is] the luck, it's not the amount of training you had or the rank you held. …

KP: It also sounds as if combat was an equalizer of sorts.

FG: Oh, yes.

KP: Even between the regular Army ...

FG: Right, right.

KP: … And the draftees.

FG: In fact, a lot of the fellows in ASTP, they made sergeants, some of them got direct battlefield commissions, which was the last thing in the world I ever would've wanted; no fun having responsibility in a combat unit. You have all you can do to keep yourself alive, rather than have to worry about the rest of the men in your squad or your platoon.

KP: You did not have a lot of time to think about things.

FG: No, you were thinking about yourself and trying to save yourself, no heroes, you know.

KP: How long were you at the aid station? Where were you sent from there?

FG: Well, they keep sending you back. From the battalion aid station, you go back to the regimental/division, field hospital reason. As I said, the thing that they sent me back further was that I had trenchfoot. So, I ended up in Liege, and, just about that time, the Battle of the Ardennes started, and so, rather than being sent almost immediately back up, I went to a replacement depot, and then, from there, I got sent back to the division, in Belgium, during the middle of the Ardennes offensive.

KP: Were you sent back to your unit?

FG: I went right back to the old unit. I was lucky. Some fellows got sent to different units, you know. Then, they had to reestablish their network of friends and all. If you went back to your old unit, you were greeted with open arms, "Oh, glad to see you," you know, and then, they'd bring you up to date on who was alive and who wasn't, who's wounded, and what happened to them and all.

KP: How good was the medical care that you received for your first wound?

FG: Oh, the medical care was always great; nothing but the highest praise for the medical service.

KP: You were greeted with open arms when you returned. How had your unit changed in that brief time?

FG: [There were] a lot of new fellows in it, but, basically, it hadn't changed. Some of the old fellows were still there with much closer camaraderie than when they first went over.

KP: From most accounts that I have read, replacements had a difficult time fitting into existing units.

FG: They did.

KP: Was that the case in your particular unit?

FG: Same, because a replacement was a stranger when he'd come up there. They were all by themselves. They didn't know too many people. The only person they might know is two or three others that would come up to the division with them as replacements. They were parceled out to different companies, and, if you were lucky, you'd have some fellow you had gone from the States with or trained with come into the same company. If not, he came in and he was like an outsider and it would take him time to get assimilated into the unit. … Even after a while, a lot of times, you didn't even know who he was and, two or three days later, he'd get killed or something like that. So, it was tough. … Probably, that was one of the hardest things, being a replacement. Going over as a unit was much, much easier, much better for your morale than coming in as a replacement.

KP: You joined the Battle of the Ardennes at its halfway point. What are some of your memories of that battle?

FG: Cold, [laughter] cold, cold, cold.

KP: Was it as cold as they say it was?

FG: It was. It was very, very cold, but, we had sort of gotten acclimated a little bit. We knew how to take care of ourselves a little better and how to take care of our feet and all. I remember one of the gifts that got sent over from the Red Cross, somebody had knitted a scarf, a heavy, woolen scarf, and it was so big that I [would] wrap it around my neck, under my arms, around my back, and tuck it in the back of my pants. [laughter] It kept the neck, the arms, and the fanny warm.

KP: It sounds like you appreciated the Red Cross for that.

FG: Yeah, any gifts that you got, you were always appreciative for that.

KP: How much mail did you get when you were on-the-line? How effective were these letters and parcels?

FG: Well, I was a very poor writer, so, I didn't get too much mail back, [laughter] but, we got a fair amount of it. If I was a great correspondent, I probably would've gotten a lot more mail. I'd get letters from my mother and father. My brother was in another unit, … with the Signal Corps, and he would write, and, of course, it would go around, back to the States, and then, come back over. In fact, near the end of the Battle of the Bulge, I met him at a Belgian town, Petitham, and he came with a friend of his. This friend, who was in the same Signal company as my brother, had a brother who was in the Seventy-Fifth Infantry Division, I was with the Eighty-Fourth , and the divisions were close together. So, my brother's company commander gave them both permission to come up and try to see if they could meet with us.

KP: Were they successful?

FG: Yeah.

KP: That must have been a surprise.

FG: Yeah. [laughter] In fact, when my brother came up, it was very nice, the company and all let him stay and [would] feed him, and we ate out of mess kits at the time, and, if you were lucky, you would get two halves, but, if you weren't, you got one half, and the food was always from the bottom up, so that your meat would go in, and mashed potatoes on top, and gravy on top of that, and then, fruit salad or something. So, to this day, I will not eat any of that stuff together. My brother had it, and, later on, when I met him in the hospital, later on, he had said, "You know, that was the lousiest food I ever had, but, I didn't want to say anything to you, to make you feel badly about it." [laughter]

KP: Eating in the field, even if you could get warm food, it could be a real ...

FG: Right. In fact, I preferred the K-ration and the C-ration.

KP: Really?

FG: That was the instant packages that they had. [Of] course, you could be selective, you know, and have eggs and bacon or cheese and bacon, you know. ...

KP: Not this mush all together.

FG: And not the mush all together. [laughter] You eat it by different courses, except that we would get, sometimes, in the C-rations, instead of having coffee in it, they would have lemonade. Now, [we were] in the middle of the Ardennes, with the snow, and they give you lemonade. [laughter]

KP: Did you smoke during the war?

FG: No, I didn't smoke, never learned to smoke.

KP: Did you trade away your cigarette rations?

FG: Nothing to trade it for. [laughter] You'd give it to your friends around you, if they had them.

KP: During the Battle of the Ardennes, which particular combat actions were your unit involved in?

FG: Oh, it was almost continuous. Of course, you know, after the Germans got stopped, we just continued pushing them back from one little village to the next.

KP: You remember the Battle of the Bulge as continuous combat.

FG: It was continuous combat, continuously, you know. The next town was your next objective. It was open spaces, snow all over. The tanks and things like that would slide off the road. There was a little bit of bitterness on the part of some of the fellows in combat; because of the snow out there, with the brown uniforms, you'd stand out like a sore thumb. They later on tried to give you white parkas to put over you, and then, they tried to get the boots that they now have, with rubber bottoms on them and all, but, they never had enough to give to the fellows up in combat. Yet, when I was back in the hospitals, everybody back there was wearing combat boots and all, because the fellows in supply would strip all that away and use it themselves and whatever was left, that went forward. If you had a very small foot or a very big one, you might be lucky to get the pair of shoes, but, a normal size, you wouldn't necessarily get something. I always blamed that on the discipline of the unit commanders, rather than pass an order and say, "Anybody that I find in my command who's wearing those things and not assigned to combat is going to go and be disciplined severely," so that they wouldn't try to go and pilfer that.

KP: How much resentment did you have when you were on-the-line?

FG: A lot. [laughter] There was always a lot of resentment to the rear echelons.

KP: Was that resentment uniform, whether they were privates or generals?

FG: [laughter] That's why I say, when they said this thing last year, about the Class of '44 won the war, the resentment still carries forward. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned that combat was the great equalizer for officers and enlisted men. Who did you come to respect out of your sergeants, lieutenants and captains?

FG: Well, there was a big turnover, you know, except for the First Sergeant. He stayed a little bit longer than the others, although he got wounded, but, … the same way, the platoon commander I had, he got captured and … we got a replacement. Most of the replacement fellows were nice. The Captain who was a replacement, the platoon commander was a replacement, they all didn't carry over the same relationship that they had during training; "I'm an officer," you know, "respect me because I am." These fellows all wanted the respect for what they did, not for who they were.

KP: As replacement officers, they must have been more scared, since they had not trained with the unit.

FG: Well, a lot of them were not replacements that came, you know, fresh from OCS or something. They were replacements because they had been in the lower rank or something like that. …

KP: Your replacement officers ...

FG: Right, they came right on up, right. Some of the replacement officers, as I said, were direct commissions themselves, so, they had been [in] as enlisted men.

AC: What about the second time? You were wounded?

FG: Second time I was wounded? That was another lucky thing. After we came out of Belgium, we went back up to Germany, the very same area that we had left when we went down to Belgium, and they crossed the Roer River. Now, what the Germans did is, they blew the dams on the Roer River, so they could flood that whole area, to delay the attack in crossing into the German heartland as such, and we had about a week of training, learning how to go across on amphibious boats and all. … Then, finally, when the river went down far enough, and I remember the night before, we went up, and we were on, like, a little rise overlooking the river, and they brought every tank that they had right up on top of that hill, one right next to another, and then, they fired what they called "time on target," where every piece of artillery, from the corps artillery, Army artillery, division artillery, and the tanks, all opened fire, not simultaneously, but, the bigger guns in the back fired first, and then, the ones forward fired, and the whole horizon lit up when all of those shells landed over there. … I remember reading later on, 2000 tubes of artillery fired right on that one section there. Then, we went down to the boats, and we crossed the river, and we captured several of the German towns, and then, they had what they called the breakthrough. They broke the German resistance and they put us on tanks. It was called Task Force Church, … we'd ride on trucks or we'd walk, march, and then, they would

alternate from trucks to tanks; most of the tanks would not want to move forward unless they had infantry with them, going simultaneously ahead, so that you could clear out the German antitank guns and the shoulder launch weapons. … I was on a tank, and we were coming to this crossroad, and the Germans started dropping mortar shells in there, and the tanks stopped, and … the drivers would buttoned up, and we were sitting as infantry on top of the tank. [laughter] … Then, they tried to make a mad dash across the crossroad, and, of course, the Germans had dropped their shells in very rapidly, and I got hit in the knee. The Captain was riding on the tank, and there was another fellow, his name was Boyd, he got hit, the Captain says, "Get off." … I jumped down, and there were tanks coming [from] behind, our own tanks, you know, they were spread out, coming down that road, and I jumped off, and I tried to stand up, and my leg just would collapse down on me, because the shrapnel had gone into the knee, and I'm trying to crawl away, and this other fellow who jumped off reached down, grabbed me under the arm, and he just pulled me right off the road, we went down into the cellar, and it was nice and warm down there, and … the German civilians who lived there had feather beds that they had, and we were on that. … They had shelves of preserves, peaches, and apples, and cherries that they had preserved, and we're there sampling them all [laughter] and eating away. … About a half-hour later, the medics came up, because they would send the medics back, you know, from an area that there had been combat, to see if they could pick up the wounded and the dead, and he came in, and they found me, and I was off there, again, to the rear, to the hospital. I ended up in a hospital in France and they then sent me back and evacuated me to England. … It was a very interesting story there, because my brother, meanwhile, had been injured in an accident, and, I remember, this Red Cross lady came up, and she said, "I understand you're going to be leaving here," and I said, "Yes." She said, "Do you know where you're going?" and I said, "No," and she said, "Did you hear about your brother?" Now, … I had a letter from my father saying that, "It's too bad about your brother," and the worst thing that I could think of is, he got sent into the infantry, because, at that time, [laughter] they were going back and taking men from the different outfits and filling in the infantry units, and I said, "No." Then, she said, "Well, he's in the hospital," and she said, "You know where you're going?" I said, "No." She went in and talked to somebody in the medical administration and said, "Oh, he's in the same hospital you're going to." So, the ambulance took me up to that hospital and I remember talking to the ambulance driver, saying, "My brother is here. Can you try to find out, you know, where he is? I don't know what ward he's in." He came out and he said, "Oh, you're going to the same place your brother is," and they came out, and they put me in the bed, and one bed away from me was where my brother was located. … He had been injured. … They were on weapons a carrier and another truck had forced it off the road, and he got thrown out and landed on his head, and he had a very, very severe brain injury, he was in a coma for, oh, about two or three weeks, and then, he had, like, amnesia, and he didn't know who he was for a month after that.

KP: When you were in the hospital, did he know who he was?

FG: He recognized me and he had a very wild look, you know. He hadn't shaved and his eyes were wild looking and all. … He had gotten to the thing, and he was very aggressive, and I think the injury caused that, and so, they said they were going to evacuate me back for the operation, and they were going to send me back to the States, but, they decided they wouldn't operate in England, they would send me back to the States for the operation. … My brother, since he was

not injured in combat, they had, you know, established that his injury was service connected, that he wasn't off AWOL, or fooling around, or something like that. … They finally established that. We both left together, on the same hospital ship, and ended up in New York, in Hollerhahn Hospital on Staten Island.

KP: Did your brother suffer permanent brain damage?

FG: He suffered permanent brain injury, but, you know, he recovered a lot. He still had, sort of, partial paralysis of his left side, and, if the weather got very cold, his hand would shake this way, he couldn't control the shaking on it. I saw the X-rays of his head and it looked just as if you'd take a hard boiled egg and dropped it, and all the cracks, you know, that an egg would have, that's the way his skull looked. The thing that saved him, they said, was that he had been dozing in the back, and he had his helmet on, and he was relaxed, so that when he landed and hit, he wasn't stiff or something like that, to break his neck and all, and the helmet, I guess, helped the head.

KP: What happened to your knee? How is it now?

FG: Well, the shrapnel is still there, just little pieces of shrapnel. If you look at it, it's about the size of maybe your little pinkie fingernail, and one got embedded into the bone of the femur, I guess, the upper one, and two little pieces were under the kneecap. … That's what they wanted to remove, and, at that time, the surgery to remove it meant [that] they would have to take the whole kneecap off to remove the shrapnel. … So, the doctors over in England, at the time, said, "No, it's going to be a major operation. We'll send you back to the States, and you can recuperate over there, and your family can go and visit with you." So, I got sent back, and, when I ended up in the hospital in the States, they decided that, since it wasn't bothering [me] that much, and it wasn't moving around, they would leave it there and see, you know, what would happen in time. … So, after fifty years, I imagine [that] I must have absorbed all [of] that into the blood or built up some sort of a sack around it. ...

KP: Do you have any problems with it?

FG: Not too much; only when the weather [gets bad], sometimes it gets ...

KP: … Cold.

FG: Yeah, it stiffens up just a little bit.

KP: Do you remember which month in 1945 that you were wounded the second time?

FG: Well, the first time was November, and then, the second time, after the Bulge, [I] came back, and it was sometime around March. I remember, the winter was just getting over in Germany, and springtime was in the air, [laughter] ... I got wounded around March. ...

KP: As an infantryman, you were looking forward to the spring.

FG: I was looking forward to just living. I didn't care whether it was spring or winter. [laughter]

KP: After the Battle of the Ardennes, how much combat would your unit see on an average day?

FG: Well, you saw [combat] almost continuously. An infantry division very rarely gets pulled out of the line. You get up into the line, and your division is up there, and the Army sort of works on two on the front and one in reserve, so that there'd be two regiments that would be on the line, one regiment in reserve, … two battalions on-the-line, one battalion back in reserve, and then, the same way with companies. Three companies on, one company in reserve, and that's how they rotated it around. … If you got involved in particularly heavy fighting and you needed to get pulled back for a rest or replacements, they would have another company move through and take up your position while they replenished yours and brought you back to take a shower and eat and something like that, and then, you'd move back up again. … They said [that] the only thing you could look forward to was either get killed or get wounded.

KP: Did the end of the war seem like a distant thing?

FG: No, no. We knew the Germans were badly beaten. You could see by the manpower they had, the old men, young kids that were being captured.

KP: You could see …

FG: You could see, in terms of what was happening, that the war was nearing an end.

KP: Did German resistance weaken after the Battle of the Ardennes?

FG: Yeah, it weakened, 'cause, you know, they lost a lot of their manpower and equipment on their part and they pulled a lot of their artillery and tanks out for [the] one big gamble they made in the Ardennes. So, the resistance weakened. …

KP: In January and February, were there days when you would not see hostile fire?

FG: We'd see hostile fire, because we were always trying to move forward. As I said, the next big thing was to cross the Roer River, so that we could go and push deeper into the German Siegfried Line. Most of it we had penetrated when we reached the Roer. That was their belt of defense that they had, their pillboxes and tank traps, and once we broke through to the Roer, you know, it looked like we would have fairly easy going, but, there was still a lot of rivers to cross and that's where they made their main defense lines.

KP: You mentioned that you were wounded while riding on a tank. When did you begin to ride on vehicles? When did your unit get that kind of mobility?

FG: It was towards the end of February.

KP: Through January and February, you were still on foot.

FG: As I said, we (the US Army) had broken the back of most of the German resistance. Now, our division, instead of moving straight forward, the objective was to cross the Roer River, and then, we were supposed to swing over to the left to behind the German units, that were facing the British, so that, you know, they could move forward, and we sort of went behind those and went behind some of the German units, and, when they collapsed in, it was just isolated pockets of resistance that the Germans would have into different towns, and, when … it was a big breakthrough, they decided that we could move much faster if they … made us mobile, and so, they had tanks, and they put us on trucks and tanks and just moved forward that way. Then, instead of being a hundred feet or a hundred yards in one day, you were making ten or fifteen miles in a day.

KP: However, until late February, the war, for you, was still a hundred feet at a time.

FG: That's right, yeah.

KP: You still saw a lot of combat in January and February.

FG: Yes.

KP: It was not until March that your unit really began to move.

FG: Yeah, and even after I got wounded, the unit did see some [fighting], ... 'cause I got wounded outside of a town called Krefeld, and our division went up and went … across the Rhine River, up near Duisburg, where they had the bridges, you know, that they had captured up there, … but, there were isolated pockets of resistance, even after I had gotten [wounded]. ... The hardest part was that initial couple of weeks, you know, when we first hit the German pockets in the Siegfried Line, in Germany, right over the Dutch border.

KP: Was that the hardest combat that you saw?

FG: That was the hardest part, and, of course, looking back on it, we were kind of fortunate, because there were some other areas that were even, probably, more difficult, going into the mountainous region in Germany. We were in rather flat, open country, all beet fields, and, ... of course, they were hard, too, because the Germans had pillboxes and had line of sight, you know, all the way down, so, they could see you coming from miles away.

KP: During the war, the enemy was trying to kill you and you were trying to kill their soldiers. How did you feel about the whole question of trying to kill people?

FG: If you had to, you had to. I don't know that I would have gone deliberately to kill someone. ...

KP: Did you ever know that you had actually killed someone?

FG: No, no. I remembering firing at someone, but, I don't think I ever hit him, because [laughter] they were still moving.

KP: Some people know that they shot their rifle ...

FG: Oh, I knew I shot it, but, you know, after a while, the rifles weren't accurate, at any distance away, they weren't zeroed in. We didn't have any time to go out, and have practice, and adjust the sights. Overtime they got out of adjustments. So, if you fired at someone, you weren't sure … you were going to really hit 'em, even though you fired at him. I can remember, on one occasion, two of us were sitting up in the second story of a building, firing at some Germans we saw trying to infiltrate and come back into the area that we had just captured, firing at them, but, they still kept coming, and I don't know if we ever hit any of them. It was good practice, you know. [laughter] We'd aim at telephone poles and little insulators and see if we could hit those. We weren't hitting those either. [laughter] ...

KP: When did you first encounter German prisoners of war? How many prisoners would your unit capture?

FG: The first time I remember taking any quantity is right after we crossed the Roer River, and we went into the first town, and we captured several, you know, a quantity, maybe twenty, or thirty, or forty, and we were told to take them back from the town we had, back to the rear area, and there were Germans on the high ground to the right. What we did, we lined the Germans up, had 'em put their hands up over their heads and had them between us and their German troops that were up on the hill, and we ran down the road with them, figuring that the Germans were not going to shoot at their own who were surrendering, with their hands in the air. They knew they were German troops. We took them back to the next town and dropped them off there, and then, we'd get a ride on some fast moving vehicle to go back and rejoin our company, because, the faster you moved, the safer you're going to be in … rejoining your unit, but, you know, … for our company, we'd capture ten or fifteen Germans a day, [which] was a lot, and, if the battalion was capturing several hundred a day, it was a lot, but, they were very young and old, most of them.

KP: Initially, you captured only a few Germans.

FG: Yes.

KP: You did not begin to take prisoners in large numbers until March 1945.

FG: Right, right. When we were moving fast, we left pockets of resistance for the follow up units to clean up, mostly to surrender.

KP: During the Battle of the Ardennes, how much did you know about the battle, overall? Looking back, we know exactly what the Germans were trying to do. From an infantryman's point of view, what did you know at the time?

FG: Not too much. All we knew is that we were told, the next town, we had to take. How that fit into the overall picture, we didn't have that much of an idea, not from the perspective of the riflemen in the company.

KP: Did you know about Bastogne at the time?

FG: We knew of Bastogne.

KP: However, you did not have the whole picture.

FG: Not the whole picture.

KP: Now, of course, we know about the face off at Bastogne.

FG: And, of course, you know, a lot of that stuff is still propaganda. The thing we know today is that Bastogne wasn't just defended by the 101st Airborne Division. There were a lot of other troops that were in Bastogne from other units that had been hit by the Germans, fell back, and got assembled into Bastogne and were fighting there. So, you know, the glory all went to the units that tried to make the most of it, like the 101st Airborne, but, there were lots and lots of other men that were there who fought there, not with the airborne division.

KP: Did you know about the Malmedy massacre? Were there rumors?

FG: I don't know. … I can't vividly say, "Oh, yes, I remember that." I don't know when I first became aware of it, … you know, at the end of the war or, you know, while it was going on.

KP: When you were on-the-line, did you hear any rumors?

FG: Didn't know too much about it, no.

KP: What about the German infiltrators, the units of English-speaking commandos?

FG: Never met any of them. We had heard about it and knew about it, the passwords, you know, and we were told to be careful about anyone in American uniforms, and, of course, all the things came about of asking them questions, "Who was in such-and-such a World Series?" and, "Who's Joe Dimaggio?" and questions like that. [laughter]

KP: You actually did that.

FG: We never had that many Germans that were approaching us that way. Most of the Germans that … were probably trying to infiltrate were trying to get back to some crossroads or some key position, to hold it, but, they weren't trying to infiltrate when you were on a line company, to get through your line. Remember our unit was committed after the German breakthrough. Our division's mission was to stabilize the front and turn the Germans back.

KP: Some of the men that I have interviewed have told me about being interrogated by men from different units for several minutes. What did you think of Germany before the war? How did being in combat against the Germans change your attitude?

FG: I don't know if it changed my attitudes or what I thought before.

KP: Have you ever been back to Germany?

FG: Yeah. In fact, our division just had the fiftieth reunion of the Battle of the Bulge this past summer. My wife and I went over there. We traveled through Belgium, and into Germany, and down into Switzerland. Before that, when I went over on government business, I went back to Germany. [I] couldn't recognize a lot of the areas that we had been in before, because, when we left, it was just rubble, and almost every house was destroyed, and the roofs were knocked down. The first time I went over there, we looked out and there were like hills where there were never hills before. We found out that [what] the Germans did was take all the rubble, pile it all up, and put dirt on top of it, and planted trees. So, they created their own mountains. Now, almost every house has been rebuilt and they're all [in] beautiful condition and, economically, I guess, they're doing quite well.

KP: Were you surprised by how well Germany was rebuilt?

FG: I was surprised that they were able to get rebuilt. … You know, when I left Germany, I thought that they never would be able to rebuild it at all. So, I was really surprised at how well they rebuilt it.

KP: Did you ever feel any animosity towards the Germans, even since the war?

FG: You know, [I] get a little mad at their attitude sometimes. [laughter]

KP: Would you buy a German car?

FG: I'd buy a car, but, I would prefer to buy an American car. I don't care whether it is a German car or a Japanese car or an Italian car. I think, probably, we'd be better off to buy American products. Of course, there's a lot of arguments about the quality we have, and the cost of American products, and whether we're competitive or not.

KP: You mentioned that you even played cards while you were on-the-line.

FG: The first couple of weeks. After a while all you're interested in is resting and sleep.

KP: Yes. How much sleep did you get on an average day?

FG: As much as you could get. [laughter]

KP: Some days, you must have gotten a lot of sleep, while you must have gone without on other days.

FG: Yeah.

KP: How much sleep could you get during combat?

FG: Well, if there was inactivity you'd get several hours. Of course, when we were in the Ardennes, it used to be so cold that it was difficult to sleep. You'd fall asleep and the first thing you know, you started to freeze to death, so, you had to move around. …

KP: On-the-line, you could not build fires.

FG: Couldn't build fires, so, what you'd look for is cellars. You lived like rats in the cellar. Of course, that was the height of creature comfort.

KP: Was a cellar?

FG: Was a warm and dry cellar. Preferably one with preserves. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned cellars several times.

FG: Oh, yeah. [That was] the first place you would head for, because you were kind of secure, if you were in the cellar, from artillery fire and from direct fire.

KP: How often did you find civilians hiding in these cellars?

FG: After we … crossed the Roer River, we would find quite a few civilians down in the cellars. … In fact, after we crossed the Roer River, in the first town we were in, I remember going with the company into this one building, and I was down in the cellar, and I crawled into a coal bin, and I was sleeping there, and then, I don't know [for] what reason, got up, and I went upstairs, and three German tanks were coming right down the middle of the street, and they were firing, you know, at both sides of the road. They started firing into the house, that I was in, and a couple of us just dove out the window and the back door, and there was a little apple orchard. We got into the orchard and ran like hell to get out of the way and the tanks passed through.

KP: You did not have the urge to take out the tank and get your Silver Star.

FG: You don't have anything to accomplish that task.. A rifle's not going to take a tank out, [laughter] and, if you didn't have a bazooka, you weren't going to take the tank out, and, contrary to popular movies, you didn't go around with wine bottles filled with gasoline that you threw on them to burn them out.

KP: Were there any particular actions that you saw on-the-line that stand out in your mind as truly heroic?

FG: Well, as I said, I think the fellow, … Sy Kuppersmith, when he went up there, and took that British tanker, and put him on his back, and crawled down the hill with him to the aid station. ...

KP: That was probably one of the most …

FG: Yeah, I thought that was kind of heroic.

KP: Did anyone else's actions stand out as being above and beyond the call of duty?

FG: I didn't see any Audie Murphy's. [laughter]

KP: Did you ever encounter any French or Belgian civilians?

FG: Well, when we were in the Ardennes, we found a lot of the Belgian civilians there. [I] saw some of the French civilians, but, that's only when we were passing up from Normandy, going on up to the German border.

KP: Could you tell how scared these civilians trapped in the combat zone felt?

FG: Some of them in Belgium were, yeah, and they suffered quite a bit, you know, from their homes being wrecked, and it was a battleground [the] first time the Germans passed through in the invasion in France, and then, the Germans retreated through Belgium, and then, they invaded, again, the second time, and then, the Americans came through. So, a lot of those Belgian citizens saw the armies moving back and forth and it was quite an experience for them.

KP: You mentioned that they hid out in cellars. How much damage did the civilian homes incur from having troops on both sides moving through?

FG: Most of the homes that we saw going through were ruined.

KP: Were ruined?

FG: Were ruined, and that was true of a lot of the German houses, 'cause I remember one of the places we went through, in the German towns, and American soldiers destroyed comforters and figurines, I wouldn't say out of spite, but, … they had no concern for what they were doing. Germans had these eider down comforters, and the soldiers would grab those and walk on them, or wrap them around themselves and take 'em, and that they had Delftware little things that they saved that they had on shelves, knock it off and break it. Maybe it made them feel better doing that, I don't know, [laughter] but, the homes … were very, very destroyed, ... if there was a combat area, especially right in that little belt that was right over the Dutch border.

KP: It did not matter whether they were French, Belgian, Dutch or German; they all got beaten up.

FG: They'd all get beaten on from artillery fire from both sides, yeah.

KP: Were you, the Allied troops, more respectful to the civilian homes?

FG: In Belgium, they were more respectful for the homes. They didn't destroy, I mean, I don't think. To the same extent, they felt no compunction that it was a German house and that they were destroying it. You know, quote, "He was the enemy and you don't feel sorry for the enemy." "Brought it on himself," you know, that's the attitude.

KP: Most soldiers on-the-line felt that way.

FG: Yeah.

KP: Were any of the men in your unit unable to cope? Did anyone suffer from battle fatigue?

FG: I remember one thing very, very vividly. The time that we got on the trucks to move forward, they took our company out and put us on them. There was one fellow, and he was, oh, I guess, at that time, an old man. He was in his thirties or something and married and had a child, and I could see him starting to lose it, sitting in the truck, and the first thing you know, his legs were starting to shake and he was going back and forth. Finally, he completely lost it, and the company commander came by and told him to get out and sent him back. I guess, what do they call it? shell shock, at one time, and battle fatigue. That was the most vivid remembrance I had of one fellow losing it. Everybody was scared, frightened, and ... the longer you waited and the more you sat there, the more you had time to think of what was coming next.

KP: The first time you were wounded, you must have had a lot of time to think about what had just happened to you. Would you have preferred to go home after your first wound?

FG: [laughter] I'd have preferred to go home any time. You know, I knew it wasn't a very serious wound, and you dreaded the thought of having to go back up there again, but, you didn't have much choice.

KP: When you were on-the-line, how often could you take a shower?

FG: Not very frequently. I think we must've stunk to High Heaven. [laughter] I can only remember two or three times having it; once, where we were in Holland, where there was a lot of these Dutch coal mines there, and we were brought back to one of those mines, and the Dutch had, and I guess the Germans had the same thing, … chains that went up to the roof and came down, with hooks on them, and the Dutch miners would come in and take off their civilian clothes, put on their mining clothes, and then, put their clothes up there, their civilian clothes that they'd go back and forth to work in, on these chains and hang 'em up, and, when we came in to get our showers, we'd put our uniforms up there, take the shower, come out, and put the same dirty uniform back on. [laughter]

KP: They did not give you clean clothes.

FG: They didn't give us clean [clothes] there, but, … another time, they had what they called shower vans. They were forty foot vans that had showers on either side, and you'd take your clothes off and throw 'em in a pile, and they'd give you a towel and a piece of soap, and turn the water on, and you had two minutes to soap yourself up, and then, two minutes to rinse yourself off, and then, you left and dried yourself, and then, they gave you new uniforms, and they never fitted the same, you know, too small or too large. [laughter] You put 'em on. They were clean at least.

KP: You saw very few clean uniforms and laundry.

FG: Not too many times; no laundry at all.

KP: You wore that shirt ...

FG: You wore the same thing, you know. You'd fill your helmet up with water and you take your bath from the helmet, with no wash rags, just your hands and all, and no underarm deodorant.

KP: That must have made you more frightening to the civilians, because you really were different.

FG: I don't know if we were frightening. We smelled, I guess. [laughter]

KP: How often did you discuss the war after you returned home?

FG: [I] talked about it a lot with some of the fellows that shared it with you and all.

KP: You joined the VFW.

FG: Yeah, and, of course, the VFW talked about it. Yeah, you didn't talk too much about it at home. I think, people weren't that interested in your war experiences. I know my mother and father were just very happy that we came home. It wasn't 'til later on [that] I found out, … you know, how much of a shock it must have been to them, 'cause they lived in this little, small community, down in South Jersey, and, when you were wounded or killed, they used to send people down with a telegram. They got two of them for me and one for my brother. So, you know, that's quite a shock to the parents to see someone walking down this little, rural road and come up to the door of the house. You're always with dread, "What's happening?"

KP: Your parents had moved out of Manhattan.

FG: They moved out of Manhattan, right, yeah.

KP: They retired to the Jersey Shore.

FG: Not the Shore, down in Egg Harbor, which is inland a little bit. …

KP: They had this experience of a man with a telegram coming to the door.

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

FG: Yeah, and, you know, I can understand it and appreciate it a lot more now that I'm a parent and I have children. [laughter] I used to tell them, "Don't worry about it, you know. As long as you don't hear from me, everything's all right." They would always bring me to task that I'm [not] writing them frequently enough.

KP: It sounds as though you would not have much time to write when you were in combat.

FG: No, and, when you did have the time, you didn't want to sit down and write a letter.

KP: When your unit was pulled out of the line, or put in reserve, how far away from the battle were you positioned? Did you ever get to go on leave?

FG: No, never got leave. Only time I was able to get back was when I was wounded and went back, and then, go forward again.

KP: In other words, you were either on-the-line or in reserve for the duration.

FG: Right, continuously, and that's true with most units.

KP: That is interesting, because many of the other veterans that I have interviewed remember going on leave and seeing movies. You must have been very envious of the people stationed further back.

FG: Of the people in the back, yeah, I was.

KP: Yes.

FG: "Rear echelon," quote-unquote.

KP: How accurate do you think people like Bill Mauldin were?

FG: I think he was fairly accurate, yeah.

KP: You could identify with his cartoons.

FG: Right, right. He and Ernie Pyle and all, they really gave you the thing from the perspective of the infantryman, in combat, on-the-line.

KP: How do you think your experiences influenced you? What did you learn from them? I guess one lesson would be, "Do not enlist in the infantry." [laughter]

FG: I think it matures you a lot. Makes you more tolerant of what's going on around you, a lot more tolerant for others, more respect for them.

KP: Did you feel that you had done your part in the war, perhaps more so than others, by being in the infantry?

FG: Yeah, I think so. Of course the feeling, I think, was greater for some of the people who stayed home during the war and, for one reason or other, were not in the military, either they had some sort of a disability or [something else]. ... I think they felt much deeper the fact that they weren't in the war and that some of their friends had been there and had been in combat and came home, although I never felt the resentment for that. I always thought, "Gee, they were lucky." [laughter]

KP: You actually wrote on your pre-interview survey, "Not so lucky." I get the sense that luck plays a real role in the life of an infantryman.

FG: I think so.

KP: Yes, luck and …

FG: A certain amount of control over your destiny and your future, but, there's a lot of luck that's involved there.

KP: Fate?

FG: As I said, if I had been a little bit taller or shorter, I might have been that sixth man, … when they went down the line and took every sixth one out. [laughter]

KP: It strikes me that, on the one hand, you could not figure out why the Army did certain things ...

FG: I still can't, even after working for the Army for years.

KP: … But, on the other hand, they did a lot of things right.

FG: Oh, yeah.

KP: For example, there was always plenty of food. Did you ever have a problem with ammunition?

FG: No, we never ran out of ammunition, had plenty of that, except that, as I said, some of the things that we kind of resented were the little creature comfort. If somebody could be

comfortable with that, back at the rear, they took it. They didn't care if it got up to the unit on-the-line, and the medical service was great, but, don't forget, the medical service were all professionals. Most of the doctors and nurses were professional people that came in, didn't choose that, you know, that that's what their [heart's] desire was. They were just ordered to go there and they just carried on their professionalism in the military.

KP: Did you have any desire to stay in the Army after the war?

FG: No. [laughter]

KP: Did you hear the talk about urging you to re-enlist?

FG: No, never got any talk about the urge to re-enlist or not. We were all happy to come out and [stay] out of the Army, although the things that we resented a little bit, or I did, was, after fighting in the combat and going over to Germany, there were some people that went in, and then, they went over there in the Army of Occupation, and they were all living high off the hog on the whole thing, saying, you know, their life was enhanced by the things that we did, who were in there and who got sent home. … When we came out of the service, there were quite a few that went to Rutgers … some of them that just couldn't adjust to the civilian life. That was particularly true of a lot of the officers and they went back into the service, you know, some of the pilots and all.

KP: They had gotten used to the Army of Occupation.

FG: Well, the Army of Occupation and all, what they had been doing in the Army, and liked that much more than trying to go and adjust and become a student and go to college. So, if they could, they tried to get back into the service again, and, of course, you know, a lot of them were bitterly disappointed, because the Korean War started and, here, they had stayed on in. [laughter] If they got sent over to Japan, they ended up in Korea, maybe worse off.

KP: You did not join the Reserves.

FG: I never joined the Reserves, never joined the ROTC or the National Guard. That was all behind me.

KP: Why did you choose Rutgers? You mentioned that one of your comrades had gone here before the war.

FG: Mainly because of what this one fellow had said and it was close to home. I had been toying with the idea of going back either to the University of New Hampshire or to Johns Hopkins, and, mainly because of what Kenny Latham had said on how it was here, and how it was a nice little town, and the student-to-teacher ratio was very good, I said, "Oh, I'll try it," and I remember hitchhiking up here from South Jersey and walking through the gate down there, going up to the chapel, in uniform, because you could hitchhike better if you were in uniform than if you were out of it, [laughter] and walking into Old Queens and registering. I was told to come

back on such-and-such a date. [I] came back on that date and [was] told that the only place we had to live is out in Camp Kilmer.

KP: That must have been a strange experience.

FG: Yes.

KP: You had left for Europe from Camp Kilmer.

FG: Right, and back to it again

AC: Where did you live at Rutgers?

FG: For the first semester, I was at Camp Kilmer, and then, the summer came, and I went home, and then, we came back.and because they were very short of housing on the campus, they drew lots to see where you would stay. I was able to get a place in Ford, but, the two other fellows I had made close friends with at Kilmer, they didn't make out so well. So, we looked around and we ended on George Street, above a jewelry store. We found an attic and the fellow said he'd rent it to us. It was a cold water flat. We had to buy a kerosene stove to heat the place and had … one john and a sink where we could bathe. We went there, and we went to one of the fraternities, and we picked up bunk beds, from the fraternity, put 'em up there. We papered the walls, and built desks, and got chairs that we'd scrounge and we lived there for three years.

KP: You later had a run-in with the dean.

FG: With the dean. Yeah, after a while, he decided to go around and see how the students were making out, three years after we were here. He was shocked when he saw where we were living. "Do your parents know where you're living," he asked? [laughter]

KP: What was your reaction to this dean?

FG: I wasn't very kindly disposed to him. [laughter]

KP: You and Crosby ...

FG: Dean Crosby. ... He was not my candidate for most popular man on the campus.

KP: At the time?

FG: At the time, yeah.

KP: Why?

FG: Just his demeanor, you know.

KP: And ...

FG: Not that we thought any less of him but, … don't come around and lecture to us about where we're living when they might have done better by us.

KP: It seems strange, since you had just come from this combat environment …

FG: … And then, he comes back and he's concerned that we're living comfortably in an attic instead of a cellar. [laughter] I went up in … life. You know, from a cellar, I ended up on the top floor. [laugher] What more could you ask for?

KP: Was it strange to be back in college? In the 1940s and 1950s, deans were thought of as parents *in abstentia*. They were your parents away from home.

FG: Yes.

KP: How did that make you feel?

FG: I didn't feel strange being back in college, because, as I said, I had gone to college before I went into the service, and then, for part of the time when in service, I was in college. I was used to the college atmosphere, except that, now, the Rutgers administration was still trying to … treat us as if we had just come out of high school, and [as if it was] the first time we're in college and never been away from home and never took care of ourselves. [It was] a late stage there, to try to treat you that way instead of saying, "Hey, I understand you fellows are grown up, and you've matured, and you went through all this experience, and how can we help you out? … What can we do for you?" The only thing they ever tried to do for us, you know, is give us a hard time about [things]. ... You show up to chapel and do this and do that.

KP: Can you tell us about chapel?

FG: Chapel was mandatory for all freshmen. You had to go at least once a week over to Kirkpatrick Chapel and sit there, whether you wanted to or not, and then, when the classes got larger, they held those at the gym, across the street from Brower Commons. Everyone was mandated to be there, and they'd take attendance. Of course, you'd go in, get your attendance taken, and you'd run out of there. [laughter] That was the end of it. Of course, after a while, we kept wondering, "Well, even if we don't go there and they don't find our name, what's he going to do to us, throw us out of school?" They liked the money they were getting paid on the GI Bill too much to throw some of that money out the door because you didn't go to chapel.

KP: What did you think about chapel?

FG: I thought it [was] very juvenile, you know.

KP: Had you given any thought to joining a fraternity?

FG: No, no. Fraternities, we didn't believe in those things. We had all the hazing we wanted when we were in the service. I'm not going to subject myself to that, to join some elite outfit, you know, because it's a fraternity.

KP: What kind of hazing did you endure in the service?

FG: Well, you know, the new men, college kids, and that kind of stuff, and you'd get a little hazing from the sergeants, … not the same kind of hazing that they had in the fraternity. ...

KP: In a sense, they were going to show you who was boss.

FG: Yeah, yeah.

KP: The deans and the professors were used to having kids in their classes, not veterans. Did you know any students who had just gotten out of high school?

FG: Only one or two, but, I didn't get to know them too well. Most of my classmates were old, returning veterans from the Air Force, the Navy, or the Army. I say Air Force; the Air Force was the Army at the time, too, you know.

KP: Yes. You actually had very little contact with the "traditional" students.

FG: Yeah, very, very little; in fact, non-existent. There were a few young fellows in there but, you just knew they had not been in [the] service. …

KP: The rest were just older veterans.

FG: Older veterans in there, had a lot of things in common.

KP: When you entered Rutgers, did you know that you wanted to be an engineer?

FG: Yeah, that's why I entered into the School of Engineering. [laughter]

KP: You went right ...

FG: Went right into it, yeah.

KP: I have heard from other engineers that Rutgers had a very rigorous curriculum in place at the time.

FG: Very! We always thought it was the hardest curriculum in the school, and we always thought that if you couldn't pass engineering, you went down the chain, you know, take a liberal arts class. You end up in education, at the very bottom, become a teacher. Excuse me.

KP: [laughter] That is okay. I have heard that before.

FG: But, you know, there … were some in education here, at Rutgers, but, most of them, I guess, that wanted to go out and do teaching went into the teacher's colleges, like Glassboro, and Montclair, and places like that.

KP: What type of engineering did you want to go into?

FG: I went into electrical.

KP: Which was different from your Army experience.

FG: Army experience, right. Hey, you might as well build on something you had some experience on and, of course, at that time, engineers were in, more or less, demand. The salaries, when you got out, were fairly good and the job opportunities were good, although there was a little dip, for a while there, in job opportunities.

KP: I have been told that the job market in 1949 was tough.

FG: It was.

KP: Yes.

FG: Yes, I said, there was a little dip in it. [laughter]

AC: Where did you work after you graduated from Rutgers?

FG: I … started [to] work at Fort Monmouth and went there immediately. There were a whole bunch of us [that] came out of Rutgers and went there, because there was difficulty in the job market. The government was hiring and starting to rebuild its technical capabilities. [I] went down to Fort Monmouth, got a job down there, and been there ever since.

KP: How much of a "traditional" college experience did you have during your time at Rutgers?

FG: Very little. There wasn't much of a college life at all.

KP: Did you go to any of the dances?

FG: No.

KP: Did you date any of the women at the New Jersey College for Women?

FG: That's on the other side of town. [laughter] We had one woman who was in our engineering class. So, that was the exposure to the women. This was strictly a men's college on this side of town and, besides, most of the fellows figured that the girls over in NJC were young, too young,

because, you know, they had come out of the service and were twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three years old or older. Some were even married men.

KP: The New Jersey College for Women students were much younger.

FG: Yeah, seventeen, eighteen and nineteen.

KP: Did you join any clubs?

FG: Just the IEEE, no other clubs. The only clubs that they really had, besides the fraternities, were the Commuters' Clubs, or whatever they called it at that time. If you commuted, there was a club for them. There wasn't that much club activity. There were a few, like the IEEE, … clubs of that type, the Newman Club, and I wasn't into religion that much either. [laughter]

KP: Despite your experiences with faith in the field?

FG: No.

KP: Where did most of the veterans stand politically?

FG: I was always very conservative, so, I don't know where they stood on it. [laughter] They ran the gamut, you know. At that time, the only two politics there were were Republican and Democrat, or Socialist.

KP: For example, in the 1948 presidential election, were most veterans for Truman or Dewey?

FG: I think, probably, most of them might have been for Truman, but, … that's just a vague perception.

AC: What did you do when you were not in class?

FG: Homework. [laughter]

AC: Okay.

FG: The movies.

KP: Did you go to the State Theater?

FG: Right. Most of the time, it was just doing homework. We got loaded up with the homework and, Saturdays, [there] were always classes for the, I forget what the heck they call 'em. They'd give you an experiment or something like that, and you'd work on the experiment, and you'd have to go home and write it up.

KP: Oh, a lab.

AC: A lab.

FG: Labs, that's what it was, labs. So, Saturday mornings were all labs and Saturday afternoon was preparing the lab papers and getting them ready to be turned in. The only free time you had, then, would be Saturday night and Sunday, and, if I could, I'd go home or go up to New York and visit with friends I had up there. During the rest of the time, it was all just studying, and reading, and preparing your papers; not very much social life.

KP: Did the curriculum become more difficult over your four years?

FG: I thought it did get advanced. It became a little bit more difficult. I was never impressed too much by the quality of the teachers, you know.

KP: You had been given a very rosy picture of Rutgers.

FG: Yeah, yeah.

KP: Did it live up to your expectations?

FG: No, it didn't live up to it, but, you know, looking back on it, I can understand it, because they got this big influx, and they still had the teachers that were left from before the war, they were teaching and had tenure. … Teaching is a very difficult field. I think, … some people, even though they may have their doctorates and are brilliant, are just lousy teachers, and they may be great in the laboratory, and they may be great in … their profession, but, as far as teaching and getting something across to the students, they don't do that too well.

KP: You could sense that.

FG: Yeah.

KP: Do any of your professors stick out in your mind as being particularly good?

FG: Well, Dr. Gross we had for philosophy, and he was very good, but, that was a great, big lecture hall, and you sat there, but, individually, as teachers, ... some of the teachers that we had over in the College of Engineering were just students who had graduated, graduate students, and they were trying to teach some of the courses.

KP: You really remember Mason Gross.

FG: Right, yeah, 'cause he was interesting, and, of course, you know, they were always what a lot of the engineering students called "crap courses," [laughter] if you'll excuse me, the language. You know, it was something they had to take, and it's not what they wanted, and they would look at it and say, "I don't know how this is going to help me be a better engineer." Very, very poor perception, because I think that's where a lot of engineers lack the graces and the polish that

you can get from a good liberal arts course, and rather than look with disdain on some of those courses, they should've looked upon them with enthusiasm…

KP: You saw the wisdom of the concept.

FG: Oh, yes.

KP: However, at the time ...

FG: Oh, no, I didn't care one way or the other.

KP: Yes, although you had had a wide range of courses.

FG: Right, right. You should hear my son take off on this thing. He thinks that everything begins and ends with a liberal arts course. [laughter]

KP: Did you work during the school year?

FG: Not during school, but, in the summertimes, I did work. I worked, one summer, on a gulf oil… tanker in the engine room. I went down to South America a couple times. I worked, another summer, in one of the hotels down at Atlantic City, and worked part of another summer in a place in Egg Harbor that made overhead doors, [laughter] did manual work strapping them together and loading trailers full of them.

KP: Did you feel fortunate to have the GI Bill?

FG: Oh, yes. …

KP: Do you think that you would have gone to college without it?

FG: I don't know. I would have hoped to, but, it was a God send, the GI Bill. I think it was one of the best investments the government ever made.

KP: Your first job was at Fort Monmouth.

FG: Upon graduating, yeah.

KP: What did you do? You were working for the Army again.

FG: Right, [laughter] back in the Signal Corps again.

KP: You must have felt like your life was going in a circle.

FG: Oh, no, because it was a different atmosphere, becauseFort Monmouth, at the time, was all professional people, engineers. … When I worked for the Signal Corps down in Philadelphia, it

was a … meaningless job in supply, and the officers there I don't think knew anything more about what the hell they were doing than we did, whereas, always, at Fort Monmouth, [the people] that we were working with had been working as professionals for a good number of years, and they knew what they were doing, and where they were going, and what programs they were going to be working on.

KP: What did you do, initially?

FG: Initially, I went into what they called power sources branch, which was trying to survey different pieces of equipment that … were being developed within the Army, and determine what their power requirements were, and whether they were going to be battery operated, like this, or whether they were going to need some other source of energy, engine, generator. We were trying to give consulting service to the developers of what was available, what they could look forward to, how the equipment worked. I got out of the engineering phase and got into the administrative part of it. I've been in that part almost ever since. I'm doing less and less engineering and more and more programming and administration of the programs.

KP: When did you make the switch?

FG: I didn't, it just came sort of like natural. A position would open up and you'd transition to that position.

KP: All at Fort Monmouth?

FG: All at Fort Monmouth.

KP: When did you retire?

FG: 1984.

KP: You spent a long time there.

FG: Yeah.

KP: How did the base and the mission change? What advances did you see?

FG: Well, the base has changed, but, the mission has always been the same. It is to develop and provide electronic equipment for the Army.

KP: Electronics really progressed during that period.

FG: Oh, yes, yes. It's changed tremendously, but, … still, you're providing the most modern and up-to-date equipment available to the Army, and, when you say "the Army," it's for every branch. It's for the infantry, artillery, weather, surveillance. The big thing, now, is all in the intelligence field, electronic warfare, surveillance, target acquisition, and intercept and exploitation..

KP: What made you most proud of your work at Fort Monmouth?

FG: Promotions. [laughter] I don't know that I can say that I ever really contributed directly to things. You worked on a lot of the programs that we did. … I worked on those programs where we were trying to establish the army missile program and place a man on the moon...

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

FG: The missiles, … and, of course, you know, early on, the government decided they were going to try to land on the moon, the services, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy were all vying for a principle roll to play on that. The Army was trying to put together a plan how they would put a manned base on the moon, what would be required, and how they would sustain it, and what equipment was necessary. Fort Monmouth fed information to the people down at the Missile Command. There was a Gen. Maderas down there at the time in charge of the overall army program. ...

KP: This was in the early 1960s.

FG: That was in the early '60s, establishing a base on the moon was classified top secret. It was a total army commitment including the Signal Corps., Ordinance Corps., Corps. of Engineers, Transportation and Quartermaster Corps.

KP: How much of what you planned was real?

FG: It was all real. There was no make-believe on the whole thing.

KP: How much of what you planned actually came to fruition?

FG: Well, they never did establish a base on the moon. The government decided not to proceed with this program. A lot of the research and development of equipment came to fruition. You know, they started off with the devices for power, solar energy, and, you know, they became a reality, and, now, they got it on almost every one of the satellites up there, these solar power converters, solar cells, and new batteries, all new batteries, things like that, power sources, and miniaturized equipment. The transistor … came into … popular use, extensive use.

KP: A lot of that initial planning did actually have some ...

FG: Right. It converted into a finite product, and, of course, that's the other thing that a lot of the people don't realize, that a lot of things that were developed for military purposes and for the entrance into space have found conversion into civilian devices. There's a big pay off that way, all across the board, on everything that we do.

KP: You were at Fort Monmouth in the early 1950s, when there was an investigation done ...

FG: Right.

KP: ... by Senator Joe McCarthy's committee. How did that affect life at the base?

FG: There were quite a few people that it affected. During the McCarthy era, I guess, there were some people that were, like, guilty by association. I knew several people that worked in the same unit that I did, had gone to CCNY, and had been in school with the Rosenbergs, and, right away, "Oh, you were at CCNY in such-and-such a year and Rosenberg was in your class? Gee, we're going to have to investigate you a little bit further." There was a lot of that guilt by association.

KP: You also went to CCNY.

FG: Right.

KP: Did you ever have any problems?

FG: No, never had any problems. Only problem I had was [with] a fellow who graduated from Rutgers with me, named Butenko, who was employed at Standardization agency. He obtained a job through my roommate, E. Brussels also of the class of '49, who was employed at the time by ITT Federal at Nutley. It was there that he got picked up for actively spying for the Soviets and put in jail for a rather long period of time.

KP: Did you know him?

FG: Oh, I knew him real well, yeah. Of course, he was very radical. You know, there was nothing that the Russians did that was bad. Everything was good and we were all bad.

KP: Which class was he in?

FG: He was part of the Class of '49 and he was an intelligent fellow. He was Tau Beta Pi, [the] honorary engineering society.

KP: Was he a campus radical?

FG: [laughter] Well, he wasn't a campus radical, [that] he went around and spoke that way. He was just radical in general. …

KP: Was he politically active?

FG: I don't know whether he was active politically or not.

KP: Did you know him from Rutgers?

FG: I knew him from Rutgers. Yeah, we were in the same class.

KP: Yes.

FG: I said that, you know, I just listened to him talk. ...

KP: Was he active in student government?

FG: No.

KP: You knew him from personal ...

FG: Personal experience, and, you know, [from] personal discussions with him, [I knew] that he was very, very radical. … I was surprised that he ended up working for the Army, which he kind of disdained and all. He had been in the Navy for a period of time, … towards the end of the war, yeah.

KP: Towards the end of the war. He later got into ...

FG: Yeah. He was working … at Fort Monmouth in the Standardization agency. There's another one that they could look up, you know, as an alumnus of Rutgers. [laughter]

KP: Yes.

FG: Famous people.

KP: Is he still alive?

FG: I don't know. He might still be in jail, 'cause they put him there for a pretty long period of time. He came from around here. His parents were Russian and lived over near the Plainfield area, I guess.

KP: Where did you meet your wife?

FG: At Fort Monmouth. She worked down at Fort Monmouth, and one of the women that worked in the same office as I did, they were roommates, and [I] met her that way.

KP: None of your sons joined the military.

FG: No. My son went into the Peace Corps. He had an opportunity to get a direct commission in the Navy and he said, "I'm not going to go into the Navy and go down to the training base down there at Pensacola." He said, "I'm not going to have some sergeant spitting in my face and telling me how stupid I am." [laughter] So, he passed up the opportunity, although he was on the verge of doing it. He got accepted through the first phase and the Navy was looking for him to go in there. Meanwhile, the opportunity to go in the Peace Corps came along and he went in the Peace Corps.

KP: Did he like the Peace Corps?

FG: Well, he tolerated it, you know. He spent three years in Ghana, and the conditions he lived under were not ideal, but, I take my hat off to him, 'cause he stuck it out. We met him, at the end of the year-and-a-half, over in London. My wife and I and my daughter went over there and met him, and he said the hardest thing he had to do was get back on that plane and go back to Ghana, because he knew what it was going to be like to go back there, but, he stuck it out for the full three years.

KP: You could identify with some of the conditions that he lived under.

FG: Yes, yes.

KP: Do you regret that none of your children went into the military?

FG: No. … He was the only one, I guess, [that] had an opportunity. The girls never looked forward to going into the military, one way or the other. [laughter] We're not a military family.

KP: Would it be safe to say that, even though you did your duty, you wish that the war had never come along?

FG: Yeah, you know, I think the war disrupted a lot of lives and caused a lot of grief to a lot of people, so, from that perspective, you know, [I am] not happy about seeing that the war was there and what had happened. Of course, other people did benefit by it, but, it did a lot of sadness and a lot of hurt.

KP: Did you ever tell your children war stories?

FG: They, you know, were mildly interested, a little bit, not too much. They don't sit around and say, "Now tell me a war story, Dad," [laughter] 'cause I got kind of funny [results] with the three children. My son and my middle daughter are very, very liberal and my eldest daughter is very conservative. Her husband is very conservative. My son's not married, but, my middle daughter's husband is very liberal. So, you know, we sit down and discuss and there's always an argument about it. [laughter]

KP: Do you have any sense of why they think that way?

FG: A different generation, and a different way they've been brought up, and a different perspective to look at things.

KP: Really?

FG: Just like, I look at what's happening at Rutgers today and I get very, very angry and mad about it, 'cause, [as] I said, you know, [when] I came in, it's like the inmates taking over the institution. It's now not over some of the issues that they say it is; it's a matter of power, you

know. The students want the power, and they want the administration to give it up, and I can't see that happening, and so, they make a big issue out of something, and, also, I'm kind of resentful about the fact that he made those remarks at a faculty meeting and it leaked, because the people on the faculty are fighting with him to get increases in salary and all. So, that doesn't come out. The only thing that the media and everybody else looks at … is that ill-conceived remark he had, but, if you look at his record, he's done a lot to open Rutgers up for the minorities. Now, the minority population in New Jersey is, what? about thirteen, fourteen percent; thirty-one percent [are] now in Rutgers. … He raised it by ten percent since he came in and he's opened up a lot of faculty positions to minorities and to women. So, you know, as well as the commentators was talking over the radio today, they ought to be happy to keep him in there, because they got him in a position; he's going to bend over even further in the future to keep them happy. [laughter]

KP: When you were at Rutgers, how many black students were there?

FG: Not too many, one or two.

KP: In the engineering school?

FG: Yeah, one or two in engineering, not a lot.

KP: Did you encounter any black GIs when you were overseas?

FG: Not in the divisions. You know, it's a segregated Army.

KP: What about in training?

FG: They'd be in the same camp, but, they'd be in different units, you know.

KP: Did you pass through any black units during combat?

FG: There were no black infantry units or artillery units that were directly associated with our division. We did have, you know, quartermaster companies with trucks that brought you to the front and they were black units that way. We did encounter them, you know; we went back on passes to London and places like that.

KP: That was your only contact.

FG: That was the only thing. There was never a lot of socializing, although it's changed tremendously. … Down at work, I know a lot of fellows that were over in Korea and Vietnam, and their units got integrated, and it was very difficult and hard for 'em, but, they lived through it, and, maybe, the Army's better for it, too, maybe the country's better for it, too. I shouldn't say, "Maybe." I know, definitely, it is.

AC: I was going to ask you about future wars.

FG: *Star Wars*, now, when you're talking about the future?

AC: How did you feel about Korea and Vietnam at the time? Do you feel differently today?

FG: Well, [I] didn't feel too happy about being at war, and, of course, there was a lot of opposition on the part of the younger people about being in the war, and I think a lot of us who had been veterans and had been in the combat … could not see some of the things that they're doing to stay out of it, and I know [that] I have a certain amount of resentment for our President today. The fact that he didn't go into the war might have been great, but, the fact that he lied about what he did and how he pulled all sorts of strings to stay out makes me just slightly resentful, I think. Again, the Class of '44 won the war.

KP: In fact, in the 1950s and 1960s, most Congressmen had served in the military. Now, almost no one in Congress is a veteran.

FG: Well, there's one thing about not going in and another thing about actively trying to avoid it, and then, trying to lie to the public about the fact that they didn't try to avoid it.

KP: What did you think about Dan Quayle? Did you think that he was doing the same thing?

FG: Yeah. You know, this was true; ... one of the bad things about the war in Vietnam is that the people with the education and all were able to avoid the draft and they were able to not serve in it, where, if you were poor, and not too well-educated, and not well-connected, you ended up fighting a war for those people that were staying out, and I don't think that's fair either.

KP: You were at Fort Monmouth during both the Korean War and the Vietnam War and you were actually in World War II. Did you notice any difference in the attitude towards the war as opposed to being in the war? I get the impression that everyone knew we were in a war during World War II, as opposed to Korea or Vietnam.

FG: Oh, the people down at Fort Monmouth were very, very aware of being in the war and very aware of the war in Vietnam and the war in Korea, and, of course, they were doing everything they could to go to help the troops, so that that war would end and you could save as many lives as possible, and we did have a lot of the young fellows who graduated from college, went into the service, came over, and came back, and they were hiring them back into Fort Monmouth for a while, until they could discharge them from the Army, all that, and so, we came into a lot of contact with them and heard their experiences.

KP: Did the fact that you had been in the Army help you get your job at Fort Monmouth? Do you think that played a role?

FG: [It] might have had, I don't know.

KP: It was not ...

FG: I don't think it was a deciding factor. I think that the gist [was], we were building up at the time, ramping up, and they needed the engineers to start to build up the organization, whether they had any feeling that we were going to get involved in another war, like Korea, [which] came along very, very soon after '49.

KP: In fact, many people stayed in the Reserves or re-enlisted.

FG: Right.

KP: You came into contact with many veterans through your job.

FG: Right.

KP: Did you notice any difference between the way Korean and Vietnam War veterans perceived their veteran status as opposed to the World War II veterans?

FG: I haven't noticed. [There] probably is a difference. I never, you know, tried to examine it to that [extent]. ...

KP: I once spoke with a Vietnam veteran who did a lot of work with the American Legion and he spoke about the differences between the World War II veterans and the Vietnam veterans. For example, when the World War II veterans dominated the Legion, they sat in the middle of the meeting room. When the World War II veterans were no longer dominant, the Vietnam veterans sat in the middle.

FG: Well, I guess you'll find that in all types of endeavors, not just ...

KP: Yes.

FG: … Necessarily veterans. Of course, I guess, the World War II veterans, when they were in any organization, always said, "I had it much harder than you," you know, and you even have that attitude sometimes to your children. "You don't really know what it's like, you know, 'til you go through it," and people in the Depression era had the same thing, you know. "You never lived under the Depression. You don't know what it is to want," and it's true. You talk to a lot of people and, you know, the generation, now, … I've talked to my friend and his daughter always said, "Daddy, you keep talking about being poor and all. We never knew what it was like. You know, we never knew what it was to be poor and live through a Depression," until you experience it, and that's the same way, I guess, some veterans are, and there are veterans and veterans, you know. I always say that a fellow who served in combat in World War II, or served in combat in Korea, or served in combat in Vietnam were different than those who didn't serve in combat on it.

KP: Just being in the military ...

FG: Just being in the military didn't automatically make it any different, you know; it's the individual experiences that they had and the units they served in.

KP: That really ...

FG: That makes the difference, right. I think if those that served in Korea were in these combat units and had to go suffer through hell, they were just as good as anybody in World War II and the same way in Vietnam. Only difference that the people figure [on], in Vietnam, you went into combat, and you might get ferried in by helicopter, and be there 'til the mission's over, and then, you were back to some sort of a base camp, where you could relax, and get a shower, and eat a good meal. …

KP: I have never heard that from a World War II veteran.

FG: Oh, yeah.

KP: That was not the case during your war.

FG: Yeah.

KP: Is there anything that we forgot to ask about Rutgers or the war?

FG: I think you covered most of the subjects. As I said, you can tickle your memory a little bit and go back and have all sorts of stories to recount.

KP: Thank you very much.

FG: Thank you.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 10/2/01
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 10/7/01
Edited by Frank Gimpel 6/21/02
Corrections by Rupali Parikh 6/24/02