

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD GOLDA

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

and

JESSICA ONDUSKO

And

JULIA HATZIDAIS

JANUARY 26, 2008

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Jessica Ondusko: This begins an interview with Dr. Edward Golda on Friday, January 25, 2008, in Princeton, New Jersey, with Jessica Ondusko ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: ... Sandra Stewart Holyoak and ...

Julia Hatzidais: ... Julia Hatzidais.

SH: Dr. Golda, thank you so much for having us here today. I appreciate it. To begin, just for the record, can you tell me where and when you were born?

Edward Golda: I was born in Newark, New Jersey, September the 5th, 1923.

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about your father, his background, his family background?

EG: Okay. Well, both of my parents are from Poland. My father probably came over when he was about sixteen, and I don't understand it, because, in a few years, he had a butcher business [and] he'd built a house with twelve apartments in it. He didn't know the language or anything. I still don't understand it, [laughter] and he ended up having three butcher shops, in different cities. My brother claims he had five. I only know three, and, of course, we lived right above the butcher shop, on the second floor, and all the other apartments were only three rooms. I guess, what was it, two bedrooms and a kitchen? Ours, we had about seven rooms and we were the only ones with a bathtub and with steam heat. Nobody else had any of that in the building.

SH: To talk a little bit about his immigration story, were there other family members here when he came over at sixteen?

EG: No, absolutely no one, no.

SH: Really?

EG: Yes.

SH: Did he talk about how he made the decision to come to the United States?

EG: Well, it was because of the poverty in Poland. ...

SH: Do you know approximately what year he came over?

EG: No, I don't remember.

SH: On the pre-interview survey, you said that you thought he was born about 1872.

EG: Oh, well, then, yes, I looked that up. ...

SH: It would have been around 1888 that he came over.

EG: Probably, yes.

SH: At sixteen. Had he been a butcher in Poland, do you know?

EG: I don't think so, no.

SH: How much family did he leave behind in Poland?

EG: All I remember is a brother and a sister. The brother, I met in Poland, because I've been to Poland over a dozen times. Well, the sister died soon after he left, and the thing is, the first time I went to Poland was, like, in 1951 or '52 and I met him there, because I was already in Europe. So, I met him at the airport. ...

SH: This is your uncle.

EG: No, I met my father. ... No, he came on a different plane, and he hadn't seen his brother in fifty years. So, anyhow, I'm at the airport, waiting for him, and, you know, they announce, you know, "Mr. Golda." I guess, in those days, they didn't. He walks up and, of course, I'm standing all next to my relatives. I don't even know they're my relatives. [laughter] So, that was a big surprise, and then, we stayed [with them]. I didn't stay too long, because I went on my own way. ... I think my father went once or twice after that.

SH: Oh, wonderful that he got to go again, and so soon after World War II. We will ask you about that a little later as well.

EG: Okay.

SH: You said he owned butcher shops in more than one city; what other cities?

EG: Yes. All right, ours was in Newark, then, another one in Irvington and another one in Hillside, and, when we left Newark, we moved to Hillside. I guess it was because of the business that was there, but the thing is, well, of course, ... during the Depression, he lost his building. That's why we had to get out, and my mother was overjoyed, because she hated [it]. ... There were five boys. She hated [it]. She had to go down and help in the butcher shop whenever it was busy and everything, and, this way, she got away from all that. [laughter] So, she was overjoyed, and so, that's why I went to Hillside High School then.

SH: Okay. That explains that.

EG: And we were the first class in this new building. It was a brand-new building. ... Well, I don't know how important it is, but there was one black boy in the whole school, and, now, I think it's all black, when we went by.

SH: The demographics have changed.

EG: Oh, yes.

JO: How did your mother come to the United States from Poland?

EG: Well, she came with her mother and, I think, three siblings. But, the problem is, ... well, anyhow, I can't find anything about my father in Ellis Island or anything. But, I did, when I went to Poland, I went to my mother's village and I got her birth, baptism certificate, her sister's and her brother's. So, at least I got that much, but it was silly of me; I should have checked on the cemetery, which was next-door, because nobody knew this family anymore.

SH: What was her maiden name?

EG: ... The Polish name was Trojniak, but, when she went to school, ... I think she was eight years old when she came here, so, the nun, she couldn't pronounce the name, so, she says, "Little girl, this is your name," and they changed it to Trainor. From then on, the name was Trainor, oh, and the thing is, she lived right near the Polish church, but the priest says, with this greenhorn, this foreigner, "This kid's never going to make it. Send her to the, you know, English school." So, that's how she ended up in St. James in Newark, instead of St. Casimir's there, because, you know, life would have been easy for her, instead of trying to traipse all the way over to the other one.

SH: He did this so that she would learn English. Was that the reason?

EG: I suppose. I don't know. I don't remember. [laughter]

SH: Did she ever talk about any memories that she had of growing up in Poland?

EG: No. See, that's it, and we never questioned them, which was terrible, because, like, she never spoke about her village or nothing. My father never spoke about anything either. All I remember is, when they ate at home in Poland, they ate from a big pot and everybody had their own spoon. ... You ate out of the big pot, oh, and, when he went to school, he had to carry his shoes. Then, when he got into school, he put the shoes on, or, when they went to church, that was the thing that they did.

SH: Was Golda the name in Poland?

EG: See, yes. I mean, all right, the thing is, in Polish, there's a little hook over the "L" and it changes to a "wooh" sound. So, our name is Golda in Polish. You know, maybe we're something else, [laughter] but, ... no, I mean, you know, everybody says, "Ooooh," but, you know, the gravestones and everything, that's all they have, so, that's all I know.

SH: You talked about going back to the villages. Which village? How close were their villages, actually? What were their names? Do you remember?

EG: Oh, yes, yes. Well, my father was from Gwoznica, but it's near where my uncle and some relatives still live, I still have one cousin, which is Sanok. This is in southern Poland, near Krakow, and my mother is from Kamień, which means "Stone," in English, and that's, oh, not

too far away. The big city is Rzeszów, oh, and, as far as me, I've been, [as] I said, over twelve times. I took courses in Poland, in library science and theater and just language and everything. ... The theater course, they would take us to all the ... theatrical presentations, but the best thing, and I'll never see anything like it again, was a mime production of *Hamlet*. It was spectacular. I never saw one like this, and I don't think I ever will.

SH: Unbelievable. I do want to ask you more about your trips to Poland, but, to go back to your parents, do you know how they met in this country?

EG: Oh, yes, yes. They were in the choir together.

SH: At St. James?

EG: No, no, St. Casimir's, the Polish parish.

SH: Okay. She just went to school at St. James.

EG: Yes. She went to school at St. [James], and she only went a few years, and the thing is, but I don't know how it happened, ... she worked in the rectory. As a little girl, she answered the door, and I guess that's how she practiced or learned her English, but her English was perfect, her Polish was perfect, but my father had a real accent. He never lost it.

JO: Did your mother's family leave Poland for similar reasons, the poverty?

EG: Yes, same thing, poverty, sure, yes.

SH: Do you remember what year they were married? Do you have an idea?

EG: I don't know. Did I put it down? Oh, I think 1914, because our house in Newark; it's still there, but it was all boarded up the last time we went. They're renovating the whole place, because, I guess, people can't live in three rooms only. ... In the front of the building, our name is carved in stone, with, "1916," above it, and that's when he built the thing, and, of course, my brother was down there visiting and, you know, nobody knows what that name means. [laughter] He says, "It's my father [who] built this house," yes, and we lived right across from the Polish church and I went to the Polish school, which is right across the street.

SH: You grew up speaking Polish.

EG: Oh, yes, yes. I graduated from the Polish school, and then, I had all this practice in Poland.

SH: You said there were five brothers.

EG: Yes.

SH: Where do you fit in the birth order?

EG: I'm next to the youngest, yes. There are only two of us left now. ...

SH: What were some of the activities that you would have done as a young boy? You were in high school when you moved to Hillside, right?

EG: Yes.

SH: What are some of your earliest memories?

EG: I don't remember anything, because we didn't have too many activities then, and, of course, well, with school, that's about it. Why, I was an altar boy and, of course, if someone didn't show up for Mass in the morning, at seven o'clock, the nun would yell across the street, you know, "Eddie, come, we need you." So, I'd get out of bed and run over to serve Mass, but, otherwise, I don't remember anything special.

SH: Were your brothers involved as well?

EG: Oh, yes, yes. One, the oldest one, never finished high school, the next one did, well, and the rest of us did, of course, but I was the only one that went to college and graduated.

JO: When you were younger, it sounds like there was a strong Polish community there.

EG: Oh, yes, definitely. There was a Polish community and an Italian community, I remember.

SH: What were some of the festivals and holidays that you remember?

EG: Well ...

SH: As a kid, growing up, what did you look forward to?

EG: Well, see, again, it's all church stuff again. ...

SH: That is okay. [laughter]

EG: No, but, I mean, like, the big Corpus Christi procession. I don't know if you're familiar with it, but, there, we would build seven altars in different places, and then, the priest would go from one to another. ... Then, of course, Easter, we would have sunrise Mass, at, I think, five o'clock. So, we had to get up, like, at four to get ready to do that, and, of course, you had the activities in church. I mean, there were things we did in the Polish church [that] they didn't do in the other church. For instance, during Lent, we weren't allowed to dance, but, in St. James, they danced. So, how come they could dance?

SH: That was the Italian one.

EG: No, no, that's the Irish one. How come, there, they could dance and we can't dance?

JO: It sounds like religion was really important to the community.

EG: Oh, yes, definitely, yes.

SH: What about things like the Boy Scouts?

EG: No, see, ... when I was a kid, we didn't have it, but, right after me, like my younger brother, he joined the Boy Scouts, yes.

SH: You talked about some of the festivals that were in the church, and even the differences. Was there any competition between the Irish church and the Catholic Italians and your church?

EG: No, no.

SH: Did you have sports to compete in between each other?

EG: No, no. All that I remember is, once in awhile, the Italian boys would pass through our section. I don't know how I knew they were Italians, but, you know, nothing happened. [laughter]

JO: Were there any animosities between these different ethnic groups?

EG: No, no, none at all, no.

SH: What were your chores in the butcher shop at that time?

EG: Oh, well, I was no butcher, you know. The rest of them were, you know.

SH: Were they?

EG: So, I guess, yes, this is when we moved to Hillside, I would be the delivery boy. So, I'd be ... so happy if a lady gave me a nickel or a dime, you know. [laughter] That was a fortune. ... Of course, I had to do something. So, I would, like, slice cold cuts, if somebody wanted, or get them vegetables, because we had a butcher/grocer. So, I would help that way and my one chore that I loved [was], because I didn't have to be up front, I'd be in the back, I would weigh five-pound bags of potatoes, so that when somebody wanted, you know, potatoes, they were all ready, in the five-pound bags. So, I would sit in the back and weigh the potatoes. ... Then, one day, I'm slicing meat on the slicer and I sliced off the edge of this thing, and I say to my brother, "Oh, something happened." So, I went home. That was the end of me for a long time. I had to put this thing in hot water every day and everything. [laughter]

SH: You are talking about the end of your thumb.

EG: Yes, yes.

SH: Were there other people who worked in the store? Was it just family?

EG: Oh, no, we would get help. Like, in the other stores, yes, my father had to have people, but, see, they would steal the money, because he had a method. ... Of course, you know, he would come in later and they would open the store; you know, this certain amount of money that he left was gone. So, I remember, he got rid of a few, and then, of course, my oldest brother was in charge of the store at Hillside, but he was that generous kind [of person], you know. He gave [to] everybody, you know. When the lawyer came in, "Oh, you know, would you like some steaks or something?" [laughter] and he ruined the place. My father had to come back and, you know, organize the thing again, but he was an excellent butcher, I will say that much.

JO: How old were you when you started working in the shop?

EG: Well, high school, I guess, about fifteen, sixteen.

SH: What did you do before you were fifteen or sixteen? What were the activities on your street or your block?

EG: Now, see, I didn't get involved much in that stuff.

SH: No baseball?

EG: No, no. See, I wasn't the athletic type, no.

SH: How important was education, as far as your parents were concerned, for their children?

EG: Now, see, the thing is, they didn't push anybody. They never pushed me. Like, you know, I'd come home with good grades, "As," "Bs," you know; [laughter] big deal, you know, if you got an "A" or a "B." No, there was no praise or anything. ... Well, I just worked as well as I could and got results, I guess, yes.

SH: When did you first get the idea that you wanted to go to college?

EG: Oh, I think I always had the idea, because, one year, I went to Seton Hall Prep, and I remember, when I got off the bus, I didn't know where the Prep was. So, I walked with this guy and he was a college student, and I go, "Oh, my God," you know, "a college student." ... I don't know. I wanted to do it, but I never thought I would because, I remember my brother, ... he was working already, he offered to pay for me to go to college. ... I'm not going to accept that. So, it all started ... when I was working at Westinghouse and I went to Seton Hall, night school, in Newark, and, of course, that all stopped when I went into the service. ...

SH: You talked about the Depression and how your father lost the store and the building in Newark. What about the other butcher shops? Did he lose them?

EG: No, no, he kept them.

SH: He kept those.

EG: Yes. I don't know. There was some kind of arrangement where he put the stores in my brothers' names or something, because, otherwise, I think he couldn't have kept them, but I don't know the story, no.

SH: What do you remember seeing, as a young boy, of how it was affecting either your family or others?

EG: You mean the Depression?

SH: Yes.

EG: See, I didn't even know it. I didn't know, because, you know, we had food all the time. What I do remember is, you know, everybody was getting food on credit from the store. ... Of course, most of them never paid this thing, but the family had money and, you know, my parents never discussed it.

SH: They did not.

EG: No, no.

SH: In your home, did your parents speak Polish to each other?

EG: I don't even remember. See, my father probably spoke Polish to us, but we answered him in English, I think, yes.

SH: We have heard stories where families did not want their children to learn their native language.

EG: No, no. ...

SH: You talked about your mother coming over with other family members. Did they live in the same area that you lived in?

EG: Yes, yes. ... Well, first of all, oh, boy, my grandmother lived in our house for awhile. Then, they moved to another apartment, about five minutes away, and that's where she died, and my aunt, ... my mother's sister, claimed that it was because she was running over to take care of us, that she caught pneumonia and she died soon after.

SH: There was a lot of that at that time.

EG: Oh, yes, yes, and they didn't know how to handle it, I guess.

SH: When you moved to Hillside and you knew you were going to go to a new school, was there any kind of a transition from where you had gone to school to this one?

EG: ... Actually, wait a minute, I went a year to Seton Hall Prep, a year to East Side High School, down in Newark, and then, we moved and I went [my] third and fourth year to Hillside, or the third was in the old high school and the fourth year was in the new high school.

SH: Do you ever go back? Are there any kind of reunions?

EG: I went to one reunion, I think, and never went back. But, I did go back, well, this is the Army, to the fiftieth Army reunion in France, which was fabulous. That was fabulous.

SH: Okay. We will talk about that as well. When you were going to high school, was there someone who was a mentor to you, who really encouraged you to think about school?

EG: No, no. In those days, they didn't do that, neither at school or at home. [laughter]

SH: Since your family was from Poland, how aware were they of what was going on, politically, in Poland and Germany?

EG: They never talked about it, if they were.

SH: There were no discussions around the Sunday table.

EG: No, no, but, see, my father was involved in all these Polish societies.

SH: Was he?

EG: Yes. ... Well, my brother told me, anyhow, that we bought new bells for the church in Poland, some organization. ... So, when my brother and my father went back one year--yes, so, he must have gone at least twice--they went to visit that church where the bells were.

SH: To replace them after World War II, or was it before?

EG: No, no, no. I think it was to replace them after World War II. They were gone, yes.

SH: What were some of the Polish societies that existed in Newark in that area?

EG: Oh, I don't know, but, ... I mean, in the church, I know he was the president of the St. Casimir's Society and we had a Polish Falcons, which was a Polish organization, [a non-profit fraternity, founded in Lvov, Poland, in 1886, that promotes mental and physical fitness], and he was in charge of that. He helped build the building. My father was a real political man, but he was a mild man, and I don't see how he got all this done. ... They always counted on him. Well, maybe because he was in business, they figured, you know, "This guy ...

SH: What about politics, Democrats or Republican?

EG: I think they were Democrats, I think.

SH: What did they think of Franklin Roosevelt?

EG: They didn't discuss him. No, politics were never discussed at home.

SH: He was not involved in the politics of the community, as part of a Democrat or Republican organization.

EG: No, no.

SH: Only in the church.

EG: Yes.

JO: To go back to high school, did you have any particular interests, a favorite subject, any clubs that you were involved in?

EG: Well, all I remember is the drama club and I had a role in that, a couple of times. ... I'm a French professor; as far as the French, the only French I had was in high school summer school, which was, like, four weeks or something. ... Then, when the next school year started, she said, "You can take second-year French." I figured, "Lady, you're crazy. I don't know anything." [laughter] So, I never took it. ...

SH: No?

EG: Oh, no, no. So, instead, I had four years of Latin in high school, and then, when I got in the Army, I was actually the interpreter, [laughter] with that four weeks of French that I knew.

JO: Wow, that is amazing.

EG: Yes, but, I mean, I didn't know anything, but, you know, they claimed I was the one that knew French. [laughter] I didn't know anything.

SH: What did you do in the summer in high school? Obviously, one year, you took French, but did you go on any trips? Did the family travel at all?

EG: ... No, when we were kids, we always went away for a month, to the country, but, see, once we moved to Hillside, that was finished.

SH: Where did you go to the country?

EG: Near Dover. ... Oak Ridge was the name of the place, and we used to spend the whole month there, but, you know, we didn't want to go as kids. We wanted to stay with the gang in Newark, [laughter] but, I mean, it was something fabulous for us, because this place had a swimming pool and, you know, we lived in our own little house. My father came every weekend.

SH: Did your mother come with you?

EG: Oh, sure, oh, yes. Oh, no, the family went, yes, except [that] my father stayed to work, yes. So, he would show up, yes, I guess Saturday night.

SH: Were there others from the neighborhood that came as well?

EG: No, no, we were the only ones, yes. [laughter]

SH: You talked about being a delivery boy. Were you delivering with a vehicle?

EG: Oh, no, a bicycle, yes.

SH: When did you first learn to drive?

EG: Well, in Hillside, and that was horrible, because, ... you know, somebody just took you out to learn and, I remember, I was turning once and I didn't know how to turn and I always [almost] hit this other vehicle. So, I guess, yes, well, that happened in Hillside, yes.

SH: When you graduated from high school, what were your plans? You graduated in May or June of 1941.

EG: Yes. Well, I went to work at City Service Oil Company, which was in Hillside, and I guess I was an office clerk, [laughter] and I also was in charge of the switchboard. I didn't know how to operate it. So, a little story that goes there; you know, I don't know how long I was on the switchboard, but one of the women in some department was on and the president came on. ... I figured, "They want to share this conversation with somebody in the New York office." So, I left the three of them on together and, evidently, he, the president, was talking about her. So, she came in, she says, "You're a damn liar," and so, of course, she got fired [laughter] and I stayed on, but I only stayed a couple of months or something, because, then, I got a job at Westinghouse, through my brother. ... That's where I stayed, in Westinghouse, until I went in the Army.

SH: All of your brothers did not stay involved in the family business, the butcher shop.

EG: No, no, no, but, you know, they helped out on the week[end]. Well, let me see, two brothers [worked] in the butcher shop, and the other one helped out on weekends and, of course, my brother, the youngest brother, didn't help.

SH: Did your mother and father have favorites?

EG: I think it was the youngest one, yes, because he would have to get special [treatment], like, he wouldn't eat, you know, string beans, or this or that, only canned peas. It had to be out of the can. So, he had his canned peas all the time. [laughter]

SH: What were you doing at Westinghouse? What was your position there?

EG: I was a clerk. I was just reading about this thing, someplace. Well, oh, first of all, okay, ... I started off in, well, I worked in the basement anyhow, ... in the blueprint section. It was hot as hell down there, okay. There was just one little fan that blew out the hot air and there were these enormous machines that they would make these blueprints on, to send them upstairs to the people that were working on these things. ... I don't remember what I did there. Did I deliver these or something? but, after a few months, I got promoted to upstairs, you know, where it was decent. ...

SH: Daylight. [laughter]

EG: Yes, daylight and decent living, and I could breathe, and then, I was there, I don't know, I think a year-and-a-half.

SH: What did your brother do at Westinghouse?

EG: He was in the chemical department. He did some kind of scientific work, but where, actually, I don't know.

SH: Did you live at home while you were working at Westinghouse?

EG: Oh, yes, yes. He did, too, yes, because he didn't get married until, yes, when I was in the service, he got married.

SH: When you started to go to school at ...

EG: Seton Hall.

SH: When was that? Was that before Pearl Harbor or after?

EG: Let's see; I don't know.

SH: What do you remember about December 7, 1941?

EG: Okay. ... I remember, I was in my aunt's house when they announced it. ... My mother's brother's wife, so, in my uncle's house, okay; that's all I remember. We were there and they announced it.

SH: What was the reaction?

EG: Well, horror, of course, but anything else, I don't remember.

SH: You had already registered for the draft at that stage.

EG: I think so.

SH: Did you think that was going to impact you at all?

EG: Don't remember.

SH: Would working at Westinghouse have gotten you a deferment, or your brother, either?

EG: No. ... Oh, I did get deferred, because I was going to night school.

SH: What were you studying at Seton Hall?

EG: Well, the basic stuff. I remember, I had an English course, philosophy, oh, and Spanish, I took. [laughter] Those are the three courses I remember, and, see, it was close to Westinghouse. I guess that's the reason I went to that.

JO: Before Pearl Harbor, maybe towards the end of your high school career, do you remember any talk about the rise of Hitler?

EG: No, no, never. We didn't discuss things like that, but the funny thing is, though, maybe I'm dreaming, I remember my sixth grade nun talking about Hitler and how rotten he was. So, evidently, he was already operating in those years and she said she would have given him poison if [she had had the chance]. Yes, I still remember that. [laughter]

SH: He was on the move at that point.

EG: I'm sure, yes, sure, yes.

SH: You would have started high school in about 1937, so that would have been 1935 or so.

EG: Yes. ... I don't know how she found out, because, in those days, the nuns didn't know anything. You know, they didn't read newspapers or anything. ...

SH: She must have.

EG: Yes. ...

SH: Being so involved in the Polish community, I just wondered if your father and mother had talked about it. Was your mother involved in anything?

EG: No, no, my mother, no, she was not. She said, "They're all;" well, one was a Polish word. [laughter] ... "All they do is spread gossip," these ladies, because they wanted her to join, you know, the sewing circle and something else. So, she always had an excuse not to go, and, I mean, she had five kids. She didn't have time to do any of that. She left it up to my father to go to all the meetings.

SH: Were your mother's siblings as involved as your father in these organizations?

EG: No, no, no. In fact, my aunt didn't want anybody to know she was Polish. You know, her name was Sofia, but it was changed to Sally, but, see, when she was older, then, she used to boast about being Polish, because, you know, she knew a little bit of Polish. ... She was younger than my mother. She was, I think, six when she came over, but ... I don't think she went to school at all, but a very intelligent woman, well-spoken and everything. ... My mother had two [brothers], well, my Uncle John, and then, my Uncle Joe, but none of them [were active in the community].

SH: What name did Joe and John go by as their last name?

EG: Oh, Trainor. It was Trainor. Oh, yes, no, and then, they had to change, you know, permanently. I don't know how you did it in those days, but I think, after the nun gave their mother the name, that was the name.

SH: Was your mother the oldest of the family?

EG: Yes. It was my mother, then, Joseph, then, Sally, and then, John was the youngest, yes.

SH: Did they bring any other family members over, that you know of?

EG: No, and, see, that's it, you know. I sort of remember, well, my Uncle John talking about this relative in Connecticut, Lawrence, "My brother who knows everything," ... because I have a holy card of Lawrence Trainor dying. ... He claims it's not [his brother] and I claim it's an uncle of ours, and the thing is, like, you know, these holy cards, when somebody dies, they print them, and, see, my aunt didn't want anybody to know. So, there's one holy card, it's Trainor, ... the other one is Trojnak, another one is Trojniak. I don't know ... how many of these holy cards they printed and how many versions, but, no, really, she would change anything. [laughter] ...

SH: Let us talk about how things changed in your neighborhood. You were still going to school at night and working at Westinghouse. As the Armed Forces began to build and mobilize, how did that affect you? What did you see?

EG: I didn't even think of it until I got a notice to report, and three of us reported the same day for our physicals.

SH: Your siblings?

EG: Yes.

SH: Wow. Your mother must have been upset with that one.

EG: Well, sure. So, one didn't pass, Walter didn't pass, but Henry and I passed and were accepted, and we left together for the Army.

SH: How long a period was it between passing the physical and leaving? Was it that same day?

EG: Oh, no, no, no. ...

SH: You came back home to get your things together.

EG: Oh, sure. I don't remember when, but, of course, he went to another camp and I went to Mississippi.

SH: Where did you join? Was it in Newark?

EG: No, Hillside, and we went to Fort Dix. ...

SH: He went to Fort Dix as well.

EG: Yes, he and I. ... Interesting, I mean, you know, we slept in ... these big tents; they weren't barracks. There were maybe four beds in it and it was freezing. I think it was April that I went in.

SH: We do not have a date on here. Do you remember when? It should be in your DD214.

EG: ... Yes, I entered [in] April.

SH: April of 1943.

EG: Yes, 1st of April, and it was so cold. It was wicked. I slept with my hat on. You know, we had these woolen caps, so, I slept with the woolen cap all night. ... I think, yes, I was on KP [kitchen police or patrol duty] and, you know, you had to report for morning report every morning, but I figured, "I'm sleeping." ... Luckily, they never checked on me, ... because, you know, I was exhausted. [laughter] I was on KP all night long. ...

SH: After Dix, then, you went straight to Mississippi.

EG: Yes, yes.

SH: Whereabouts in Mississippi did you go?

EG: Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Camp Shelby, yes.

SH: How much of a shock was that for a young man from New Jersey?

EG: No, see, the thing is ...

SH: You went by train.

EG: Yes, but, I mean, we were all suffering. ... So, it's not like, you know, "Oh, somebody's doing better than I." We were all in the same boat and you just accepted it. That's all. ...

SH: What were you assigned to? What was your training to be?

EG: All right, see, that's the thing, and I was stupid; I should have stayed there. No, I was in Headquarters Company, which is a great company, but I didn't know it was that great, and then, I worked in the office, because they knew I could type a little bit. So, I worked and I was also the mailman, which meant I got out of a lot of things that the others had to do, but I got fed up with that. So, I applied for the Air Corps. So, I went into the Air Corps. I don't know if that's down there, and I was there only a couple of months, because they needed infantrymen again.

SH: Did you stay at Shelby as part of the Air Corps?

EG: No, no, to Miami Beach. We lived in a hotel. I mean, it was fabulous. ...

SH: Were you learning to fly already?

EG: No. See, it was stupid, in a way. They took us down there and they gave us tests. They should have given us these tests before, but, you know, it was this big transition. We went there, I remember, we had to march to go to eat and we all, you know, marched in together. ... We had to sing songs and we had to sing, you know, out loud. We weren't doing it loud enough and they would complain, and, I mean, the meals were fabulous, everything, but that only lasted; I don't remember.

SH: What did the tests show?

EG: I don't remember what the tests showed, but they needed people back in the infantry. So, I got shipped out to ...

JO: Camp Shelby?

EG: No, no, Indiantown Gap, in ...

SH: Pennsylvania.

EG: Yes, Harrisburg, near Harrisburg, I don't know, yes.

SH: What were you doing?

EG: Oh, then, I got put in the regular infantry, into Company A. ... I was just a plain, old soldier, but, again, my luck ...

SH: Is it on that form?

EG: No, no, but I don't know how long I was there. I wasn't too long with this outfit and, oh, in Camp Shelby, I was with the 69th Infantry Division. Here, I joined the 95th, and I don't know, somehow, I went to the chapel and I asked, you know, do they need any help? ... Sure enough, they were looking for a chaplain's assistant. So, I got the job and that saved me from everything,

you know, because, here, all my poor buddies, they were just on the frontlines. When I went over to France, you know, I was in the back lines all the time.

SH: Talk about Indiantown Gap and what you were doing there.

EG: Just training as an infantryman, oh, and I do remember we went to mountain maneuvers, in West Virginia, I think, and the only nice thing about it [was], we were given down sleeping bags. They were fabulous. They were so warm. [laughter]

SH: Did you get to keep them?

EG: No, no, because, once you leave there, you leave everything there.

SH: Was this near Elkins, West Virginia?

EG: I don't remember, but the thing is, you know, we had to learn how to climb mountains and how to come down on a rope, whatever you call that.

JO: Rappelling?

EG: Yes, and it took me all day to do it, because I was afraid, but, see, ... I never dared do it. As a jerk, I should have just walked down the side of the mountain. [laughter] They wouldn't have known it, but I finally got enough nerve and I came down and that was it.

SH: Were there others from New Jersey in this 95th Infantry that you met?

EG: No, but, in the 69th, I was good friends with somebody from Elizabeth, New Jersey, but, then, I tried to find him again and I could never find him.

SH: Do you remember his name?

EG: Yes. His last name is De Biagio, first name, I don't know, but he was in love with this girl back home. She was giving him trouble, because he sent flowers to his sister, but the flowers he sent her weren't as nice. ... Oh, you know, she was complaining about that. [laughter]

SH: Where did your brother wind up, who had left at the same time you did?

EG: ... I don't know where, but, see, he had heart trouble. He had no business being in the Army. He lost a lot of weight. They finally let him go. So, I don't know how long he was in, but he came back.

SH: It was just the two of you, of the five brothers, that actually were in the military.

EG: Yes. Well, then, the youngest brother went in, but I think the war was over. Sure, the war was over, yes.

SH: When you were in Indiantown Gap, do you remember how long you were there before you were shipped overseas?

EG: No, I don't remember.

SH: When did you go overseas, after D-Day? Did you go to England?

EG: Oh, sure, oh, yes, yes, we went to England first. ... We left Indiantown Gap on July 21, 1944. We went to Massachusetts, stayed there, and then, we left on August the 7th, by boat, and see what I just noticed here [on a list]; the ship was unaccompanied for a trip across the Atlantic.

SH: What was the name of the ship?

EG: It was called the *West Point*, but it was formerly the *America*.

JO: Okay.

SH: The big cruise ship. [Editor's Note: The USS *West Point* (AP-23) was originally the United States Lines' flagship *America*.]

EG: Then, we arrived at Liverpool. We stayed in England. ... We arrived August the 17th, we left on September the 11th to go to France, but, see, you know, we went in those special kind of boats, but I don't remember at all. All I know, we ended up in an apple orchard and we lived in this apple orchard until we moved out in, yes, October the 12th, yes. So, we were there, what, probably a month? ... I still remember, we lived in these little pup tents and, see, I shared it with the chaplain.

SH: Was this a Catholic priest?

EG: Oh, yes, no, a Catholic priest, and, see, my job was to set up the altar for Catholic Mass. I was his driver, I typed his letters and things like that. At first, we used to type the letters of condolence to the family, the ones that died, but, I don't know why, they cut it out and some other department took this over.

SH: Was it at Indiantown Gap that you began training to be the chaplain's assistant?

EG: Oh, there was no training. ...

SH: Where was the priest from? Do you remember his name?

EG: Yes, Father Schellenberger, and I tried to find out if; well, I know he's not living, but I wrote to his parish and I got nothing. I'll still going to try. ...

SH: Where was he from?

EG: Ohio, I think. Oh, I went to visit him once, ... because a friend and I went across the country to California. ... Besides having his own parish, he was a prison chaplain at the same time. So, I remember, he took us to the prison to visit.

SH: Interesting. When you went overseas, where were you housed on the ship going across?

EG: Oh, I don't remember, but it was wicked. I think we slept, like, seven in the [tiers]. There were seven tiers of beds or something.

SH: Did you get seasick?

EG: No, no. I remember serving Mass, you know, out on the deck. You know, there would be thousands of guys, but, see, I don't remember the food, nothing.

SH: What about England, Liverpool? What was your impression?

EG: I don't remember, but I know we got a weekend pass to go to London, and I think, was it like six or eight of us slept in this one hotel room? but that's all I remember.

SH: Did you see the evidence of the bombings?

EG: Don't remember.

SH: There were no air raids while you were there.

EG: No, no.

SH: What did you go across the Channel on?

EG: One of those LSTs [landing ship, tank] or whatever they were. As I said, I don't remember the trip at all, but, see, I probably had it easier, because I had to go with the jeep. ...

SH: Were you carrying any kind of sidearm?

EG: Oh, yes. I had to carry a rifle at all times. Yes, you never moved without it, yes.

JO: Were you nervous at all, going over for the first time?

EG: No, because you don't know what's going to happen, you just [figure], "Whatever happens, happens," but the thing is, I think I wrote someplace here, ... the first day we went into combat, you know, you hear all these shells going over, and [I thought], "Oh, my God, you know, how are you going to live through this?" but, see, we didn't know whether the shells were going out or they were coming in. ... Then, finally, we would learn, by the noise, which one was going out, which one was coming in.

SH: Was it just you and the chaplain? Were you involved with any of the other activities? You were assigned to Headquarters Company, correct?

EG: ... Wait a minute; no, now, I'm in Service Company, which is the best company, yes. ...

SH: Why is it the best company?

EG: Because everybody's doing their own thing someplace, you know. Nobody's ever together, yes, like, I think some of them were in charge of all the mail for everybody. ... We were three chaplain's assistants, two Protestant and one Catholic one, and we all traveled together and I remember the one, he was a Baptist minister. He never wanted to look at anybody or talk to anybody. I mean, he was rather strange, and the other one was very, you know, personable. He joked with everyone, talked to everyone. ...

SH: You are talking about the chaplains.

EG: The chaplain, yes, yes.

SH: Where were the assistants from?

EG: Well, one was from Wisconsin and the other one was from Ohio, I think, and they're both dead now. All right, I went to visit the one in Wisconsin, and this is a good story. ... I don't know if it's there; I had a Fulbright to South America, yes, and, coming back, when the stint was over there, a few of us wanted to go through Central America. So, we made all kinds of arrangements. I think, for one week, we went to the travel agent, ... because I was in Columbia, in Bogota, all right. So, we went almost daily to make these arrangements, and then, we found out there was, I don't know, a bombing or some kind of something or other in one of the countries and we couldn't go. So, we went to the travel agent. We said, you know, "We have to cancel." They didn't care. ... We thought they were going to be all upset, you know, after all this, right, but they didn't care. ... Somehow, I don't know how I ended up in Panama with these friends, and I guess I must have been there a week or something, and, oh, because, on this Fulbright, there were three Catholic nuns with us, and there was one that was a real busybody. She would drink beer with us and all that business. The others were, you know, more reserved. ...

SH: What year is this that you were doing the Fulbright?

EG: It's not on there?

SH: No, it is not. I wish it were.

EG: I don't know, but this is when I was teaching school already.

SH: This is well after the war.

EG: Oh, yes, yes. ...

SH: You just jumped ahead of me.

EG: All right, but let me finish this story.

SH: Please.

EG: ... She was really something. ... They would stay in the hotel with us, the nuns. They would share one room, but, somehow, she'd go visit the Catholic orphanage or something, and she had to straighten these nuns out, ... the way they were treating these kids. "These kids are not nuns. You can't have them praying all day long the way you pray," and so, she got them to lessen up on the severity of these kids. So, anyhow, I don't know how she happened to be in Panama with me, and I'm going to leave Panama. We go to the airport; they cancelled my flight, because it was overbooked. "What are we going to do?" She knew somebody in Panama, and ... I think they were there. Oh, they were probably seeing her off. So, they were there. "So, you can stay with them." So, I stayed with them ... maybe a day or two, I don't know, ... whenever the next flight was. So, that was nice. So, years later, when I went to visit the chaplain's assistant in Oconto, Wisconsin, the kids are delivering newspapers and he goes home and he says, "Hey, Mom, ... Mr. Hall has a guest visiting. There's a car there from New Jersey," and they said, "I wonder if it's Ed Golda," and, sure enough, it's ... those people from Panama that were from Oconto that were back home now. So, they came over and visited. [laughter]

SH: Small world.

EG: And how, and how. All right, that was too off. ...

SH: No, that was fine. Tell us about where you were when you were first in combat. You talked about not knowing if the shells were incoming or outgoing.

EG: Well, in France; I don't know where. ... Our big thing was in Metz, because we were known as the; ... we're something, "The Fighting Something of Metz," or something, ["The Iron Men of Metz"], because we liberated this city, which is in eastern France, and so, when we had our fiftieth reunion, it was in Metz. ... It was fabulous. I mean, every day, there was a big feast someplace. ... Like, one day, I'm sure there were five hundred people [who] attended this dinner, ... a fabulous French dinner. ...

SH: Does Vezon come up in here?

EG: No, no. You mean Bastogne? no.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: If you can remember, could you tell us the chronological order of your travels in Europe?

EG: You mean during the war?

SH: Yes.

EG: Well, see, there were a lot of; like, all I remember ...

SH: That you remember.

EG: No, no, but Gravelotte, I remember that. ... See, I didn't know, you know. Every so often, we would go someplace and I didn't know. We went there to rest. I thought it was just another spot to stay and this was in Teterchen, in France, and I think it says we stayed there for three days and we became friendly with one of the French families. So, they had us over for dinner and, I forget, I guess we probably brought them candy. ... You know, they had no food or anything, so, I don't know how they ever managed this. But, I remember, ... to eat, you know, the Army food, we had to go down to the barn, down the road. ... Like, Metz, all I remember of Metz is when we came there in the middle of the night and there was this big fortress, which is the entrance of the city, but anything else that happened, [I forgot]. But, after the war, I've been back, because we ended up in Saarlautern. It's called Saarlouis now, and I became very friendly with one of the people that lived there, because I went to visit. I wanted to see what the place was like and he worked at the railroad station, and so, I asked him something and that started this friendship, which lasted until the fiftieth reunion. I guess I'm jumping back and forth now.

SH: That is okay.

EG: No, but, when I knew I was coming over, I wrote him. He says, "Oh, yes, please, come, you know, we want to see you." So, fine; just about a week before, I get a letter from the son: he just died. So, they said, "But, please, come visit us anyhow." So, the son came over, picked me up with his car, and he took me to, well, his mother's place, and, like, the thing is, ... when I lived in France and I was going home, I went to stay with them. I stayed, like, I think a week or more, and this was over Christmas and New Year's, but I remember freezing, you know. All the foreigners, they love it cold as anything. So, I remember freezing all night, and then, I went to some other reunion someplace and I stayed with them again; I froze again. They have no heat. [laughter] ...

SH: What do you remember about the battle for Metz? What were you doing?

EG: Nothing, nothing, I remember nothing, but, all right, this Saarlautern, we call it, we lived in a bank, ... I mean, something that was a bank. Of course, we lived in the basement and the rest of the house was a ruin. Like, we wanted to use the bathrooms upstairs, but they were loaded with feces and everything. So, you know, we had nothing to do with the place and, one day, we had to go someplace, I guess to say Mass or something, and, when we came back, the garage was gone. It was bombarded. So, luckily, we weren't there. [laughter]

SH: As you were going across France, how often would you do Mass? Did you do it every day?

EG: ... No, no. I'm sure not. I think it was just Sundays.

SH: Would the GIs be able to come?

EG: Oh, yes, yes, the ones that, you know, were on duty close by; some of them would come.

SH: Would you always do it in the open or did you use a church if available?

EG: No, no, oh, and the thing is, like, the chaplain, he was clever. Inside the jeep, he constructed this board, which became the altar, and then, I was the one that had to set up everything, but, sometimes, like, if there was a chapel available someplace, we would say it inside, because, I remember, in Germany, I remember him saying to the nun, in German, "Oh, this is small." Oh, I remember, in Belgium, we stayed, well, I don't even know where we stayed, but did we stay at the convent or something? because there were a bunch of nuns. ... Then, I was outside and this nun is tending to the, I don't know, ... pigs or something, but, see, she wore the whole outfit, except no veil. So, she had, you know, this big white thing covering her head and everything, and so, with my whatever I knew, you know, I said, ... "How come you don't have this thing (veil)?" and she explained to me, you know, that, working with the pigs, she'd get all messed up. ... (The veil would be in the way.)

SH: You were expecting the big ornate explanation.

EG: Yes, yes, and the veil and everything, but she had no veil on. Why? You know, the rest of them were wearing the veil. [laughter]

JO: You would perform the Catholic Mass.

EG: Yes.

JO: All the GIs, no matter what their religious beliefs, would come to this particular service.

EG: No, no, just the Catholics would come.

JO: Okay.

EG: See, because the other two Protestants took care of the ...

JO: Protestants.

EG: Yes.

SH: Were you ever called upon to take the priest for Last Rites?

EG: No, no. In fact, I don't think he ever did, but I remember him complaining, because he was an older man already. The one up in, you know, big headquarters was a young guy, you know. I remember him saying, "What did the Bishop have against me that he sent me to do this?" because, sometimes, the younger guy would come visit.

SH: Were you ever aware of prisoners of war?

EG: No, no, and, see, the thing is, you know, ... I left before the war was over.

SH: Before we do that, though ...

EG: [laughter] Yes, before we get to that.

SH: You had said that you were kind of like the interpreter.

EG: Yes, but ...

SH: For what?

EG: No.

SH: Was it with the locals?

EG: No, because I remember, somehow, ... I remember, November the 11th, which is Armistice Day, we went to this little village and, before Mass, we ate in the priest's house and, of course, there was, you know, a tablecloth and all that, oh, and it's St. Martin's Day. The church was St. Martin's and, you know, I never said anything. I just went to these things and sat there and listened. I mean, I was glad I was included in this meal. I don't know what else I was going to tell you about that. [laughter]

SH: Did you find that the religious communities in these little villages had been saved, so-to-speak?

EG: Well, I remember one convent we stayed in, I don't know if we stayed or visited, but, like, in Germany, like, I think eighty nuns were killed during a bombardment, but that's all I remember of that.

JO: When you were in France, did you ever see any evidence of the French Resistance?

EG: No, no.

JO: Were the people in general very welcoming and gracious?

EG: Well, you know what I don't understand is, you know, looking at the television now and, you know, they're [civilians in current war zones are] all inspecting where the bomb fell and everything, we never saw civilians. I think they were hiding all the time. I remember, in Germany, ... before we lived in the bank, we stayed in a basement someplace, which was next to a museum that had coffins, and I was told the soldiers slept in these coffins, because it was, you know, a better place than sleeping on the floor. ... One of the women brought down her two little kids, because ... there was a little opening for air and she wanted the kids to get a little air, and so, she asked the chaplain, "Is it okay?" and he said, "Yes." I figured, "Why are you letting

her [do that]? You know, she's the enemy. Yes, what are you doing this?" but I remember that little incident.

SH: Did you ever have to fire your rifle?

EG: No, no, thank God, no.

SH: What do you remember about the major river crossings?

EG: No, ... because, see, we were in the back, you know. Everything was done by the people up front.

SH: You talked about having to send the letters back for those that were killed. Did you also send their effects back?

EG: ... No, no, just the letter, notifying them, yes.

SH: You just were in charge of writing letters.

EG: Yes.

SH: Was there any kind of recordkeeping that you as a chaplain's assistant kept?

EG: No, no.

SH: How often did you get R&R?

EG: Well, evidently, every couple of months. Oh, it may be something interesting; I only remember once having a shower all the time I was in Europe.

SH: Really?

EG: It must have been twice, but all I remember is once. You know, they would bring this portable shower [or] something and certain groups would go, but, otherwise, ... you washed how you could.

SH: How were the holidays celebrated, or not?

EG: No, not, because ... all I remember is, for Thanksgiving, we had turkey once, but anything else, I don't remember. Oh, all right, yes, when we were in Germany, Christmas came along. So, I used to get all these packages from Mama. The others didn't get them; I got them. So, I had to share them with everybody. So, we made up a big menu, you know, with fancy names, chicken à la king, and this and that, and we even wrote out the menu and sent it home, but it was just little stuff that was sent from home, and that was our Christmas feast.

JO: Did you write home regularly?

EG: Oh, yes, yes, and I'm sure I wrote at least once a week, if not more, yes.

SH: Did they keep any of your letters?

EG: Yes. All of my letters to my mother, I have them all. I gave them to my nephew, but, oh, I wanted him to check on this Christmas menu and that's all I wanted him [to do], "Go to the Christmas one and send me the menu." He never did. So, I got so furious, I told him, "I want all the letters back." So, I got them, because he was going to write a book, and so, I got the letters back. I got them. [laughter]

SH: As the chaplain's assistant, did you interact with the Red Cross?

EG: No, no, we didn't do any of that.

SH: You did not have to write letters for some people who could not.

EG: No, no, but the things I remember [are], see, I had one good friend. Was it one? yes, one. He's from Milwaukee and, I remember, we went up to the frontline one day and I saw him. He looked like he was, you know, shell-shocked. He didn't want to even look at me, but, see, I didn't know how to go up and talk to him or anything. See, we were kids. We didn't know anything. [laughter]

SH: Did you have to visit, say, the aid stations or the field hospitals or anything like that?

EG: No, no, but, well, that's coming up, because, see, I had to leave for an operation. This was in Germany.

SH: The war is not over yet.

EG: No, no, and I felt horrible that I'm leaving. You know, it was great that I was going, but I felt horrible, leaving all the rest here. You know, I'm getting out of this, and so, you know, they took me by ambulance. You stop at these different stations, these medical stations. I remember, at the first one that I stopped, there was one guy [who] couldn't use his arms or anything. So, all night long, I had to light cigarettes for him, so that he could smoke. In fact, even in the ambulance, all these wounded were with me, and then, what happened? Well, anyhow, I got shipped to England; no, to Wales. I went to Wales and I stayed in the hospital there. I don't know.

SH: In Swansea?

EG: No, I forget where. In fact, after the war, I tried to find it; I couldn't find it, because they claim it's probably torn down and it doesn't exist, but, anyhow, I stayed there, and then, see, I was ambulatory. I had ... a pilonidal cyst and that was causing me problems, because, see, I don't know why, but the doctor was also traveling with our little group. So, I used to go see him almost every night and he would change the bandage. He says, "This looks too bad. You've got

to go have an operation," and that's how I ended up going to England, and then, come over to the hospital. ... I was operated [on] here; they couldn't operate there.

SH: Okay, they sent you back. How did you travel from France to England?

EG: ... France to England.

SH: Did they fly you?

EG: No, no, I'm sure we didn't fly, no, not in those days.

SH: Do you remember what boat you came back from England on?

EG: No, but it was a hospital ship.

SH: Was it?

EG: Yes, because it was all hospital people.

SH: Had the war ended in Europe yet?

EG: Yes, because, when I was in the hospital in Wales, the war ended and we were allowed two drinks. Two whiskies, we could have. [laughter] So, each one was ...

SH: Set right there.

EG: Yes, and, you know, they checked you off, that you got your two drinks.

SH: Did you have good hospital care in the military, as you went to England?

EG: Oh, yes, oh, sure, yes, ... especially here. ... It was Halloran Hospital on ... Staten Island, but, you know, ... I think my brother came once. My family never came, because, you know, there was no gas, no nothing. They couldn't do it. Anyhow, the nurses used to stand around and you'd say [something] and they'd come and do whatever you want. I mean, they did everything and the food was fabulous, and the doctor I had was supposed to be the best in the country. No, the way they took care of people was excellent.

SH: Going back to Wales and the end of the war, what were some of the other reactions that you saw? How did the British people react?

EG: Oh, well, I don't know, but the British girls used to come visit us. There was about three of them [who] would come and I guess this was a way for them to warm up, because there was no heat in their places, and then, like, if we went to town, we would see them there, but, you know, nothing was discussed, yes.

SH: When you first went to England, were there any directions given to the GIs on how to interact with the Brits?

EG: No, no, but I'll never [forget, always] remember, yes, my night in London. We were out in the street and this girl swears at this other guy. I never heard a girl say this before, you know, "You F-ing so-and-so." "Wow, you mean, do girls say this?" [laughter]

JO: When were you in London?

EG: ... Before we went over to France, that time.

SH: Were you still on Staten Island, in Halloran, when the war ended in Japan?

EG: I don't remember.

SH: Do you remember any of the reactions?

EG: No, no.

SH: You talked about your mother being able to send you the little care packages. Did they send things like salami or any food?

EG: ... No, no. All I remember is, like, canned food, because I remember there was a can of cherries, so, we gave that a fancy name. We had, I don't know, cherry compote, or something or other. It was just plain old nothing.

SH: But, appreciated.

EG: Oh, and how, yes.

SH: As a Catholic chaplain, did he observe the feast days and all of that?

EG: No, no, no, just what could be done was done.

SH: Were there any humanitarian efforts towards the Europeans?

EG: No, no, nothing, no, but I remember meeting a couple of Polish people. ... Now, I could kick myself. We were in this house, don't ask me why I was there, and I heard this woman speaking Polish. I should have knocked on the door and talked to her and I was afraid. Then, I met a Polish girl, ... she was helping in the chow line. I don't know what she was doing there, but I remember speaking to her a couple of minutes, but that was all.

SH: When you came back and were discharged, did you stay in the Reserves?

EG: No, no.

SH: When did you start making plans past the war?

EG: No, no, I didn't make any. ...

SH: Did you take advantage of the GI Bill?

EG: Oh, sure. That's how I got my degree.

SH: What did you do when you got out?

EG: I don't remember.

SH: Were you discharged as soon as you left the hospital and were healthy?

EG: No, no. I had to go for rehabilitation in Camp Upton. So, I learned shorthand and I did ceramics and everything else. [laughter] I think I was probably there about a month.

SH: Where is Camp Upton?

EG: Someplace on Long Island, I don't know. [Editor's Note: Camp Upton is located in Yaphank, Suffolk County, Long Island.]

JO: How long were you in rehabilitation for?

EG: I would say about a month, yes.

SH: I noticed that you received the Bronze Star. What was that for?

EG: Oh, yes. Well, I'm not going to say anything. No, I have remarks; I'm not going to make them, but, you know, I've got all kind of things. I don't know, is it listed there? I've got all kinds of medals. No, I don't think so, or did I?

JO: You got the Bronze Star, the Good Conduct, the Victory Medal.

EG: Yes. European Theater of Operations Ribbon; that's enough.

SH: You received the Combat Infantrymen's Badge, too, for being in combat.

EG: Yes, yes, but I didn't do anything special for the Bronze Star, I'll tell you that, but I have a remark about it; I'm not going to make it.

SH: That is your prerogative.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: As always, you are much too humble, but thank you.

EG: No, there's no humility in me.

SH: You knew you wanted to use the GI Bill and you knew you wanted to go back to school. What did you want to study and how did the war impact how you made this decision?

EG: Okay. See, ... I started off in summer school, at Seton Hall, and I was an English major. ... Yes, I think it was summer school. I took my first college French course and I loved him so much and I did so well, that's when I switched to French. So, actually, ... I'm a French, English and philosophy major. No, wait a minute, no; French major, but minors in the other ones, because you had to take so many philosophy courses at Seton Hall. In fact, I don't have a BA, I've got a BS. Why? because I didn't have any Greek or Latin. ...

SH: You had four years of Latin in high school.

EG: Oh, yes, but that didn't count, yes.

SH: What did you want to do with this French degree?

EG: Oh, I always wanted to teach, always, yes.

JO: Did your time in France influence your decision to continue with French?

EG: No, no, that French teacher.

SH: It was this professor.

EG: In fact, I was his baby, because he's the one that got me my jobs when I got my degrees.

SH: When did you take the Fulbright, after graduation?

EG: No, no. See, I was teaching, ... but I taught everything from fifth grade up to university. First, I taught fifth grade, for two or three years. Then, I got a job, oh, I don't know [when], but I ended up in Union [High School] and, of course, I couldn't get a job in French. I got it because I had enough credits in Spanish. So, I was a Spanish teacher, and so, while I was teaching in the junior high, that's when I got the Fulbright to South America. It was only a summer one

SH: Okay.

EG: Yes, ... and I don't know what year I got my Fulbright.

SH: I think it says that you taught fifth grade in Basking Ridge from 1953 to 1955.

EG: Basking Ridge, yes.

SH: You graduated from Seton Hall in 1948. Did you consider graduate school?

EG: ... Then, the next year, I went to graduate school and I got my ...

SH: At Seton Hall?

EG: No, no, at Laval University, and that's where I got my master's in '49.

SH: In Canada?

EG: Canada, yes.

SH: In French.

EG: Yes.

SH: Okay.

EG: See, because my teacher got his degree up there. That's how I ended up in Quebec.

JO: It was a French university.

EG: Oh, yes, oh, yes, everything's in French there.

SH: All the courses were taught in French.

EG: All, yes, yes.

SH: How common was it for someone with a master's degree to be teaching in elementary school?

EG: There were no jobs, nothing. Nothing was available.

SH: You had taken night courses at Seton Hall before the war. Was Seton Hall filled with GIs like yourself when you went back?

EG: ... Oh, sure, sure.

SH: Did it change how the professors taught or treated the students?

EG: No, but, you know, the classrooms were loaded with [veterans]. I mean, they couldn't take care of all these people. There were too many in each class.

SH: Were you living at home and going to school?

EG: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: You moved back in.

EG: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: Was that hard, after having lived in a pup tent?

EG: No, no.

SH: Was your brother okay?

EG: Yes, yes. Well, he married, had two children and, yes, we might as well put this in; he also played with an orchestra. He played accordion. So, this was around Christmastime; I think it was right after Christmas. He went out on one of these gigs. He picked up the accordion, fell over, that was the end of it. He had a heart attack and that was it.

SH: That was soon after the war.

EG: Yes, yes.

SH: That must have been devastating for you as a family.

EG: Oh, sure, and, oh, yes, and my mother was in the hospital at the time. She couldn't even go to the funeral, and then, she died just, I think, a month later.

SH: Oh, my.

EG: Yes, rough.

SH: Obviously, your father lived a longer life, because you talked about him being in Poland with you.

EG: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: In 1949, the job market was flooded with veterans. Did you ever consider teaching college?

EG: Let me see; ... see, I used to teach summers in the college, at Seton Hall, and then, I don't know if I got it there, but I think I taught at Seton Hall, I think, one or two years, at the college, and the GIs were disappearing. They didn't need me anymore, so, I'm without a job, and that's how ... I got the grammar school job in Basking Ridge.

SH: In 1953 to 1955. Then, from 1955 to 1961, you were at Union High School, teaching ...

EG: Yes, Spanish.

SH: That was when you took the Fulbright to South America.

EG: Yes.

SH: Then, from 1962 to 1964, you were teaching at Seton Hall as a professor, [then] in Carnegie Tech.

EG: Oh, yes, but not Seton Hall. ... After graduate work, I went to Carnegie Tech, [now Carnegie Mellon University].

SH: You went and got your PhD.

EG: Now, wait a minute, yes, yes, in '68.

SH: Where did you get your PhD?

EG: Same place, at Laval, yes, but the thing is, after I finished my graduate studies, I went to teach at Carnegie Tech, now Carnegie Mellon, in Pittsburgh. I think I was there one or two years. Then, my favorite French teacher got me a job at Wagner College, on Staten Island, from '64 to '66. Then, my favorite French teacher, because he was at St. John's University, he got me over to St. John's University. ... I think I was there ... two years and, yes, they had to get rid of us, because they closed the university in Brooklyn, which was where it was, and they set up a little school and there was only one language teacher. I think, in Brooklyn, we were, like, three French teachers. There was one teaching French and Spanish only in this new place, and then, from there, I went to Union College, from '70 to '90, and that's where I ended up.

SH: How long had Union College been going at that point? It was fairly new, correct?

EG: ... Well, a few years, because, first, it was; well, they called it "UC Juicy."

SH: Union City?

EG: No, no, it had a lot of names, and, see, then, ... it was Union College and, now, it's Union County College, it's now, but I always say, "Union College," because, [when] I was hired, it was Union College, yes. ... See, I never know when I retired, because I retired and I went back to work anyhow. Oh, I stuck in Union High here, '55 to '61, okay.

JO: Did you become involved in any veterans' organizations after the war?

EG: No, I never did. They wrote me a couple of times. I never [replied], no, no.

SH: You did stay involved with the 95th Infantry.

EG: Oh, yes, yes. I used to go to their reunions.

SH: When did you start doing that?

EG: When?

SH: How soon after the war did they start holding them?

EG: Well, they started, ... but, see, most of them were from around Chicago, so, they were always around Chicago, and that's why I never went to any of them, but, when they came here, like, I think one was in West Virginia, one was in Pennsylvania, so, I went to those.

SH: Do you think your time in the military and being involved in World War II has affected you or made you look at things a little different than most?

EG: It probably has, but I'm not conscious of it.

SH: What has been your passion?

EG: French, sure, because, ... you know, I just published a book.

SH: Did you?

EG: Yes, and they're going to buy it here, because, you know, there's an authors' shelf up there and I'm going to get stuck on there, and it's about a nineteenth century author, [Honoré de] Balzac, because that's what I wrote my ...

SH: Dissertation?

EG: Yes, the PhD on, and I had all this information available. I figured, "Hey, I might as well do something with it," ... because my PhD is on "the child" in Balzac's work, but this is on the background of all the people to whom he dedicated all his books. ... There's, like, these hundred novels in this *Human Comedy*, and so, it was the background and how they fit in with his life, you know, why he picked them and who they were and why and all that. In fact, Tuesday, I'm speaking to the senior citizen group in Monroe.

SH: Wonderful.

EG: Oh, yes, yes. I already spoke to ... somebody. Oh, at our place, where I lived, I talked, gave them a talk.

SH: Do either of you have questions?

JO: I do not.

SH: I think Julia has lost her voice. [laughter]

EG: Yes. Well, I'm always losing mine, too. [laughter]

SH: Is there anything that we did not ask you about that we should have, that you would like to share with us?

EG: No, I think I wrote down stuff here, but, no, because this is what my little niece asked me in her [interview]. ...

SH: Thank you so much for taking time to talk with us. I know you just moved in.

EG: I should have known it was going to take this long. I thought it was going to be, like, ten minutes or something.

SH: Again, we all thank you.

EG: Good, you're most welcome. I hope it's of some help.

SH: It is, it will be.

EG: Well, I hope, I hope.

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

Reviewed by William Olin 10/16/08

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 2/1/09

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 2/3/09

Reviewed by Edward Golda 3/24/09