

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER GORDEUK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Alexander Gordeuk on April 1, 1996 in Westfield, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and ...

Richard Fox: Richard Fox.

KP: I guess I'd like to back up and begin by asking you some questions about your parents, particularly, your father. Both your father and your mother emigrated from Russia?

Alexander Gordeuk: White [Russia], Belarus.

KP: Belarus. When did they emigrate and what led them to emigrate?

AG: Well, Pop came over about 1908, and Mom in 1913, if I remember correctly, or 1911 - 1911 or 1913. Pop came over for, I don't know, I never really asked him, but it was a matter of ... The war with Japan was just over [Russo-Japanese War], he had served in the Russian Army as a medic and he was simply fed up with the whole Russian system. This may surprise you but he had quite a beef with the Russian Church. The village priest, from what he said, served as the local FBI and Gestapo for the Czar and were more politically involved than they should have been. Politics and the church were so intertwined that if you were a thinking person you really resented it. Give unto Caesar what's Caesar's and, God, what is God's. I think that ate on Pop, so he, well, there were family reasons. I was back to Belarus two and a half years ago and Pop was, for a peasant village guy, he was ahead of his time. For instance, he had the first store-bought suit and shoes in the village. After he got out of the military, he bought a suit and shoes and I understand that the village bullies beat him up because they thought he was stuck up or too good for 'em. They [his relatives] also told me he did something else; the floors of these peasant homes were simply rough planks. Pop got the idea of getting some paint and painting the floors of their house, which he did, and that was resented by the other villagers because they thought that the family was getting uppity. So, a number of things apparently balled up, personal and family and the national politics and the church, which caused them to decide, "The hell with it," and go someplace else. He came to the US and was a worker. He had only four years of elementary school. Incidentally, this is fascinating, probably the most fascinating thing about my dad was that he only went four years to school, and one of the biggest surprises I got was when I was studying geometry in high school and was doing my homework and he happened to look over my shoulder and says, "What are you doing?" I knew Pop had only four years of school so I said, "Ahhh, this is geometry," and my feeling was "Pop, you wouldn't know anything about this, you know? I'm a junior in high school and you only had four years, and you wouldn't know anything about this." Pop says, "Well, what's the question?" I outlined the question for him and Pop proceeded to solve it. He hadn't been to school for decades, and I said, "Holy mackerel, what do we got here?" He knew what geometry was and he solved the problem about as fast as I could. Then I asked Pop, "What kind of math were you taught?" They weren't taught arithmetic, geometry, trigonometry and all that; they were simply taught math, they weren't told that is was geometry or algebra. You understand what they did? They were taught *math*, and in the four years of school they had taken him on up into geometry. He was into high school coursework. I was doing some English reading one day and Pop says, "What are you reading?" I said, "Well,

Charles Dickens, he's an English author." And Pop says, "Yeah, I know." He had read more Dickens than I have to this day.

KP: So your father read a lot, it sounds like.

AG: Well, I'm putting the emphasis on the schooling that he got. He was far more educated in four years of elementary school than many of our kids today through high school. I'm not kidding! He learned English, to read, write, and speak it, on his own. Mom never did learn it, to read, write, or speak English.

KP: So she always spoke Russian.

AG: She spoke Russian, so I had to speak Russian at home, you probably pick up a tinge of an accent. I spoke Russian before I went to ... When I went to elementary school in Baptistown, New Jersey, we had no kindergarten so I entered first grade, and I didn't know how to speak English.

KP: Were there other Russian families near you?

AG: Yes, this is interesting, and you historians, one of you ought to take a look at Hunterdon County, and specifically Kingwood Township from about 1922 'til about the start of World War II. It was heavily populated by people of Eastern Europe, mostly Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean-Italian. I grew up and went to school with Italians, Dutch, Germans, these are all immigrants, Croatians, Polish, Ukrainian, well, you get the idea. I heard all these languages, oh, and Hungarian, at thrashing time. We still had the old thrashing machine come by and you threw the bundles off the stack and into the thrashing machine, so you need a lot of people. At the dinner, the ladies got together and put on a dinner, as you probably heard. They may have been peasants but they put on tremendous dinners. They will match anything in the finest restaurant in New York today, I assure you. They did their best old peasant recipes, which now the high class restaurants have adopted. They prepared this food which was terrific. Around the dinner table most of these men would speak their original language. Now, the Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, Croatians, it's all Slavic and I understand from language experts that there are about 800 common roots, in the Slavic languages, that are common to all these languages. So, if you're speaking more or less a household language, a Polish person will be understandable to the Ukrainian. Not all of it maybe, but they know what's being said. So I heard all of these languages and that's both good and bad, because now I've tried to learn better Russian in my time, over the years, and I get the Slavic languages mixed up. I don't use them regularly, so when the situation comes up where I've got to say something in Russian, I may throw in a Polish or Ukrainian word and not know the difference because I just recall the language from 19-, well I went to college in 1937 and I have never heard it regularly since. So, that's a long time. When I went over to visit my relatives for the first time in 1993, it was quite a battle to be able to talk back to them. I understood what they were saying but I had quite a chore replying in some sensible way because I was trying to recall ... There were words I hadn't heard for fifty years and I'd say, "What's the word for...?" And they got a kick out of it, they were very nice about it. But I was able to hear them speak and convey information to me in the Russian they spoke. And they spoke Russian because since then

the local Belarussian dialect was long gone and the kids had gone to Russian schools. They were speaking a good Russian. They'd get the biggest kick out of some of the words and phrases I'd use, that I recalled Mom using, and they found it amusing because I'd ask them, "What's funny?" and they said, "The way you said it is not Russian, it's not Polish, we don't know what it is!" So I said, "Well, isn't there a Belarussian language?" See, Belarus had broken off from the USSR by this time and they were all speaking Russian or Polish on the Polish-Belarussian border. They explained to me that there was no Belarussian language, so as such, and they had a committee appointed of some kind on a national basis, to try to come up with an official Belarussian language. There still isn't one today, they all speak Russian because that's what they learn in school. They said they'd identified something like sixty dialects by then and they didn't know what to do to put together a language that would be the official language of Belarus. I saw the other day in the paper that Belarus has all but rejoined Russia, so I imagine they'll dispense with that question and simply use Russian. That's a tangle that's very interesting. Those are the things, again, you won't see in the papers or read about in the press.

KP: How did your parents make their way to Hunterdon County?

AG: Oh, boy. When my dad came over, even then people had to be sponsored. I don't how, but the first Russian immigrants in Kingwood Township area, where our family was born, were two Jewish Russian farmers. One was named Grossman, and the farm is still there and his grandson runs the farm, and small equipment dealership. The other one was a farmer by the name of Arss, A-R-S-S. Pop's sponsor somehow, I don't know how he got to sponsor him, was Mr. Grossman, and he needed a farmhand. So he sponsored Dad, and it also gave him an opportunity to speak Russian because Mr. Grossman was here as a Russian-speaking immigrant and he had nobody to speak Russian to because nobody spoke Russian. He was one of the first Central European farmers. How my Dad was shared as a farmhand with Mr. Arss and another neighbor, I don't know, but again he only spoke Russian and they got along. What happened next, I don't know, he went back to New York City and then he ended up in Dayton, Ohio and he worked for a steel company out in Dayton. When World War I broke out, he was working for the Schenck, I think it was spelled S-C-H-E-N-C-K, steel works, steel fabricators I think they were. He was in charge of operating a machine. The Schenck Works had a contract with the Navy to make complicated valves for ships, and these were big valves of some sort and they were not meeting the Navy specifications. They were about ready to lose the contract, and my dad, as a Russian immigrant, a rural peasant working a machine, figured out what was wrong with the way they were making them and told Mr. Schenck how to do it right. They did, and the valves passed inspection and Dad gained a friend in the owner of the works and he always recalled that with a lot of pleasure. Why they came back East, I don't know. They ended up in Newcastle, Delaware, he worked for the (Baldwin?) Locomotive Works in South Philadelphia. And then he ended up working on a farm again, near Mr. Grossman's original farm, working for other people as a farmhand for a man by the name Kugler. That's when I was born, on Ridge Road in rural Frenchtown, New Jersey. Then my dad decided he had to get serious about how to make a living, so the (Vanderbilt?) farm near Baptistown came available, and he bought a 140 acre farm – run-down, soil depleted, house falling down, for four thousand dollars. That's where I started my life. It was thin living, I'll guarantee you.

KP: When did you buy the house?

AG: When?

KP: Yes, when?

AG: 1922. The people we bought it from were very nice. So my dad was the first, after Arss and Grossman, in that area, he was the first Central European farmer. Then there was a flood of them, these other nationalities. There were Central Europeans who were in the New York area, who came from the land in Europe and wanted to get back to the land. The farming was going down the drain in Hunterdon County. During World War I, they did fairly well raising grain; grain prices were so high that they could make a living raising grain, wheat and oats and corn and what not, and they'd have a few head of livestock, mostly dairy cows, and between the modest milk check and whatever extra grain they sold they were able to hang on. But when the grain prices broke, just about 1923, then these farmers couldn't make a living. The bottom dropped out of grain, there was no demand for it, and the soil was depleted. They didn't understand the use of fertilizer, the old native farmers, which is a surprise because I thought they would have known how to use better seeds and take advantage of genetics and fertilizers and pest control, but they didn't. So these old-line, we used to call them American farmers because they all spoke English, they simply quit. They sold their farms for whatever they could get and moved into homes in Frenchtown and Baptistown and (Everettstown?) and retired. A lot of them lost everything they made on their farms in the 1929 Wall Street fiasco. Just before it occurred a lot of them invested all their money in stocks, they were going to get rich like the rich people, and they lost everything that they sold their farms for and they were as poor then as the rest of the poor farmers. It was pathetic. It is a history that has never been written down, but somebody ought to go to Hunterdon County and dig into it a little bit.

KP: What did the new farmers do right that the old American farmers didn't do right?

AG: Good question, and the answer is very simple. They had big families. They didn't need farmhands, they had their own big families. I started milking cows when I was eight years old. These kids today are still playing with dolls, or toys, and I was doing a man's chore, I was milking cows. At that time we didn't have any milking machines, you held a twelve quart pail between your knees, like this way, and you sat down and milked the cow. When you're eight years old a twelve quart pail is this big in diameter. I had to put it down on the floor because I couldn't hold the damn pail. Mom milked cows until 1928 or '29, and she did barn chores. She was a farmhand, plus keeping the family together, plus cooking and sewing and whatever. I had a baby brother born just about then, I said, "Mom, you don't have to go milk cows anymore, I'll do it." She looked at me and said, "You?" and I said, "Yeah," and I did. I milked cows starting early. Then in ... the spring of 1939 the College of Agriculture, they still have their Agricultural Field Day, right?

KP: Yes.

AG: Go over there sometime, if you don't, it's an interesting day. They had a milking contest, and I was an engineering student, and I went over there with some of my engineering pals. There was an open class that you could enter, and they pushed me into it, they knew I was a farm boy. They said, "Yeah, you know how to milk cows, why don't you volunteer?" They literally pushed me into volunteering, and I did, and ... I knew how to milk. I beat the previous year's champ and I beat everybody by a margin. You milked for three minutes. I had about fifty per cent more milk in my bucket than anybody else. It was no holds barred. I milked against dairymen, guys that milked for the college in exchange for their room and board, the students, the previous year's champ, I beat 'em all cold turkey, there was no contest. I beat 'em so bad that whoever was second was a far, distant second. Those engineering friends of mine, by next Monday everybody in the Engineering College knew about it. They told everybody they had the milking champ. That's an interesting little sidelight.

KP: Besides dairy cows, what else did you have on your farm?

AG: Poultry, we raised our own pigs, chickens, guineas, geese, ducks, dogs, cats ...

KP: Did you have any commercial crops that you marketed?

AG: Yes, corn mostly, and oats. But we used most of the grains for our own dairy herd to make our own feed, we didn't buy manufactured feed. So I don't know what kind of nutrition the dairy cows were getting, probably inadequate in minerals and vitamins because Pop simply mixed whatever grain we had, corn and oats, and wheat wasn't used for the dairy farm. We sold the wheat, and whatever there was. We made our own hay, of course. The corn we used it to fill the silo, and then there was some ear corn that was used for dairy feed. It was a marginal operation, the only reason we survived, basically, was because of the cheap labor. Eventually, there were eleven boys living on the farm. We never had a hired hand, never, except for the special chores like thrashing time or silo-filling time. The neighbors would swap help. There was never any pay exchanged between farmers who helped each other, and even if you put in an extra day for one of the other farmers you never gave it a second thought. Not a second thought to say, "Gee, he got more help than we did," it never occurred to even think about it. We didn't think in terms of dollars, we thought in terms of getting the job done and of helping each other. That's probably foreign to you, you probably find that a little hard to understand.

RF: Not at all.

AG: No, you don't?

KP: Milk prices got very low, in particular between '32 and '33 ...

AG: Oh, so low that the Rutgers farm management people and economists, there was a news story about it, said that it cost five cents a quart to produce milk, even then, taking all costs into account, and we're getting as low as three cents a quart. So you ask, "Why did you do it?" Because you're subsidizing the city people really. That's not generally known, but the farm community subsidized, during the Great Depression, subsidized the city people who needed to be

fed, and the farmers were losing their tails. But they needed some cash income to pay their taxes, because if you didn't pay your taxes, you lost the farm. You see the incentive: to produce at a losing rate of return because you needed enough cash income to pay the taxes? Today, we talk about the great benefits of capitalism, tell that to us who lived through those years, about the great benefits of capitalism – there were none! You got the slave status, you were a slave to making enough dollars to pay the taxes.

KP: I imagine it must have been a close call, not just for your family but for other families ...

AG: It was. I didn't know how close 'til one of my brothers said that Pop wasn't able to pay taxes for three years in a row, and the farm, the municipal people threatened to sell it for the taxes. I don't remember this, but one of my brothers knows for sure that Dad went to see the Governor of New Jersey, I don't know who he was, it would have been about 1934, in desperation. It took a lot of guts for a man who spoke heavily broken English to go see the governor, and he told the governor, "Look, I've got eleven kids, and if I stay on the farm I'll be able to hack it some way or another, at least to feed 'em. If the farm is sold, then you have some welfare people on your hands." Somehow or other the governor intervened and we were able to scrape enough cash together somehow, I don't know what he did, sell a cow or, I don't know the end of the story. Anyway, he was able to pay off his tax liens and we continued living on the farm. It never got much better until World War II came along and prices went up and demand was high enough, and then he was able to make a buck and increase the dairy herd. From then on things were a lot better.

KP: How long did the family hold on to the farm?

AG: It's still in the family.

KP: It's still in the family?

AG: Yeah, yeah.

KP: One of your brothers?

AG: One of my nephews now is on the farm.

KP: The same farm that ...

AG: The same farm ... The question now is, my brother sold off the development rights and in the settlement of the estate most of the cash he got for the development rights went to settle the estate taxes. Now you have a pitiful situation where for years we slaved like slaves to keep the farm together and now the government gets most of it. That's wrong and the Federal law ought to be changed post-haste. Farmers, by God, have a right to keep and pass on what they earn. No one works harder in a more honorable profession than to produce food for the country. If the farmer makes it, does well, the farm is now worth a million or two, and, hardly any farmer gets more than a six percent return on his investment. And then he dies and the family has to cough

up hundreds of thousands in taxes and they lose the farm. That is a sin, and that is terrible. Mr. Dole [Sen. Robert Dole, R- Kansas], who is the leader of the Senate knows that, he's from the farm country, and one of the reasons I have questions about Dole is that he hasn't had sense enough to bring that up in Congress and ram something through and say, "Look, when a farmer earns it let him keep it! He has earned it! He has done something as a favor to the country!" We eat cheaper than any other people in the world, you know that? Seventeen percent of our income goes to food for our table, no country comes close to it, and the variety we afford the American public. Why that's not more generally known, I don't know, there's a chance for Rutgers to do something. There's another subject, I think Rutgers has been asleep in its public relations with the New Jersey citizens.

KP: Your parents were Russian Orthodox ...

AG: Yeah.

KP: Was there a Russian Orthodox church nearby?

AG: No, my brothers and I were all christened in a Roman Catholic church 'cause that's the closest to Russian, or Eastern Orthodox. Then I was never in a Catholic church after that until I was a sophomore in college and I had a Catholic roommate. He never went, except it was a special occasion, I forget what it was, he conned me into going with him. That was the second time I was ever in a Catholic church, so I never became Catholic-oriented. In college I joined the Presbyterian youth group because I knew some kids who belonged, and it was a great group and a great ... Pastor Culp. He was a great pastor, he really took interest in young people. He was an older man but he probably did as much for my religious life as any man alive. Dr. Culp, C-U-L-P, of the Presbyterian Church on George Street, I think the church is gone now, I think it's torn down. I've never intended to go back to the Catholic church in any way. I just didn't, I've always been Protestant-oriented, I've always been. My parents went to church, itinerant Greek Orthodox or Russian Orthodox ministers would stop by once in a while, they knew about them and they would stop by and visit, occasionally, maybe four or five times during the years I lived at home. One of our neighbors had an automobile, we didn't have until 1938, so once in awhile one of the neighbors would stop by ... And there was a Russian Orthodox church in Mannville, Mannville was heavily Russian, and they would go all the way to Manville for some Russian church services, but they never joined it, they were never close to it. Pop and Mom both had a very bad memory of the Russian church because they knew the village priest was the spy for the police, they all knew that, and you couldn't do anything without the village priest tattling on you. They resented it, and they associated that with the church, they never separated church and state. If they had they probably would have had a different view. But they had a strong resentment that the village priest was the Gestapo of the village. My Dad read the Bible, my mother listened to it. They encouraged us to go to Sunday school. This is interesting, the nearest Sunday school, the nearest church was the Baptist church in Baptistown. You want to talk about ecumenical ... I've been ecumenical all my life, that being the only church in the vicinity. Kids of all faiths used to end up in Baptistown Baptist Church. We had a Reverend Green, who was a great minister. He was probably one of the great influences on my life. We never knew there were differences in dogma in the various churches, we never knew that there were churches that were antagonistic

as kids. We were truly ecumenical. There were Catholic kids who went to church, it was the only church around, the only game in town in walking distance. So the parents said, "Go to church." What's the only church around? Baptistown Baptist Church. Reverend Green, bless his soul, never brought up the issue, "Now, you got to be Baptist," never, and yet he preached the Christian message in the most fundamental way and I think made good Christians out of all of us. One of my brothers said that even some Jewish kids came to the church. That I can't verify, but my brother still swears there were Jewish kids in the Baptist church, and were accepted and nobody knew the difference. I never knew the differences and antagonisms in religions until I was in college. I was in the living group, a senior in the Towers living group, and we had two or three Catholic boys amongst the eleven in the cooperative living group. The first time I was aware of these antagonisms was when one of the boys told a joke which had a Catholic flavor to it. I forget whether it was a Pat and Mike joke or ... It was completely innocuous as far as I was concerned. I didn't know anything about what was said. This one man, a Catholic, he blew his stack. I thought he was going to throw a chair at the boy that told the joke. That was the first time in my life that I became aware that there were these antagonisms between different sects, and to me it was very disconcerting and very disappointing. I never looked at this fellow who pulled the stunt, he meant it, he was livid, I never looked at him as a Christian. From then on I always thought of him as a Catholic, which was a terrible way to look at it. I couldn't help it, this reaction was like a cat snarling at a dog. That's Christian? That gave me troubles.

KP: You never encountered the [Ku Klux] Klan then, in Hunterdon County growing up?

AG: No, no, never. The only organization, that I was aware of, that was pushy in any way, were the Communist guys. There was one farm family, and a Communist organizer, apparently a professional, and they tried to organize and infiltrate the farm organizations. I went to some of the meetings, I didn't know them from nothing, I was eleven or twelve years old. I didn't know about these things. They did it very cleverly, they only supplied literature and never proselytized. To the best of my knowledge they never actually tried to get anyone to join but they tried to influence, clearly looking back on it, and the influence wasn't all bad. The Communist leaders, none of them were Russian, incidentally. It got so bad during the height of the Depression that none of the mixed feed industries, like General Mills and Ralston Purina, and some others, would not sell feed to these farmers because their credit was marginal. They simply would not sell unless you had cash, and you didn't have cash. You had to wait until the milk check came at the end of the month and then you'd pay the feed bill. So, they wouldn't sell any feed. One of these Communists got the farmers together and they started a co-op feed mill. And now the farmers brought in their own grain, and they went to Rutgers, I guess, and got some basic feed formulas which were balanced in nutrition for pigs, for cows, for chickens. And they made up feed that was probably as good as the mixed feed from the big companies, and it probably cost half or less than that because they put the mineral, vitamin, protein package, and the farmers supplied the grain. And they had a grinding service where you brought in your corn or oats or whatever, and they ground that and they mixed it with the right ingredients and then you took back a balanced feed. The Communists did that, and that was always interesting to me. Then out of it came the Flemington Co-op and Feed Mill, which is now a fancy store at the Peddler's Village complex. It's the first one off of Route 12, off to the right. They call it the Mill whatever, the name's still

there. They built a big mill, the biggest in Hunterdon County, and now they were serving all of Hunterdon County with excellent feeds and excellent service.

KP: So it started out as a cooperative?

AG: As a co-op, and the original co-op was put together by these Communist leaders who got the farmers together, but the Communist influence was diluted greatly because most of the membership was just simply farmers. World War II came and the impetus was diluted and disappeared. But the start of it was by the Communists trying to do some good for the rural people of Hunterdon County. You won't find this in the books but I'm telling you that's the way it was. Again, this is where history ought to be honest. Damn it, if credit is due, give the devil his credit. Don't paint over it, and it was painted over.

KP: You mentioned farm organizations, what farm organizations was your father active in?

AG: He was conned into joining the Farm Bureau because I don't think he ever attended a meeting. Somebody had come around to collect dues, and I don't know what the Farm Bureau did for the farmers, I have no idea. He was a member of the Federal Land Bank, you have to be a member to borrow money from the Federal Land Bank. The regional bank was in Springfield, Massachusetts. But you had to join, you had to buy some stock I believe, to be able to take a loan out. It's a little fuzzy, I was a little kid, but I think that's correct. He was also a member of, I think it was, a co-op out of New York, the Dairy-(League?). They bought the milk from the farmers, and I think it was a co-op organized out of New York State. He was a member of that, he had to be to sell milk to the Dairy-(League?) people. But he was never an active member of any farm [organization]. First, he didn't speak English well enough, and second, no one asked him, I guess. I was at a meeting once and somebody was asking support for the Spanish Loyalists [in the Spanish Civil War], collecting money or whatever, and my dad was against anything Communist. The reason was, Mom and Dad had worked like slaves from the time they came here, saved all their money. Mom, with four kids already, ran a boarding house for twelve workers in Dayton to make money to save to go back to their village. They were going to go back with three thousand dollars and that would have made them rich in their village. Then the Communist Revolution came along. They'd sent the money on to a Russian bank and they were going to follow. They'd even had their ship passage tickets bought, so all that they saved now was sitting in that Russian bank in Brest, Belarus. Their ship line tickets were in their pockets and just as soon as World War I was over, they were going to go back, all set. That's how close I came to being a Russian. The war ended, and of course the Communist Revolution took place, and they confiscated everything that was in the banks, so their money went down the drain. Now they had nothing, nothing, not even a place to live. They associate that with the nasty Communists, so Mom and Dad had absolutely no use for that gang. It wasn't until about 1947 or 8, after World War II, that the Russians brought electricity to their villages in Belarus. The relatives wrote and said, "Now we have electricity." Pop changed his mind and thought maybe there is some good in the system that brought them electricity. But that's about all he would concede to 'em. So I grew up in an atmosphere of, "Them bums."

KP: How much contact did your parents maintain with your family in Russia?

AG: Very little. They wrote regularly, maybe twice a year, maybe some years once a year. But maybe more than I realized because when I was over there two and a half years ago, my aunt who is still living, I didn't know she was still alive, I didn't know I had an aunt until my relatives on my dad's side, I was in Brest, and they said, "Do you know you have an aunt in Brest?" I said, "No." This is my aunt, she's eighty-three years old here [showing pictures]. That's my mom, that was her fiftieth wedding anniversary. Look at the resemblance.

KP: Yeah, it is.

AG: And they're eighteen years apart. When I saw her I recognized her in an instant, immediately, from thirty yards away. That was interesting. She was sitting on a park bench and just like that I knew who she was. She showed me, she kept everything, all the pictures my mother and dad ever sent and she had more than I realized, which surprised me because she wasn't as ignorant of the family as I thought she was. So, apparently there was a bit more correspondence than I realized, but I'd say twice a year they kept in touch. So I never had any direct relatives when I was growing up. I never knew an uncle, aunt, cousin, never, never. I never spoke to one, they never wrote me, and I didn't know what they looked like, so I grew up ...

KP: With a lot of brothers.

AG: A lot of brothers. When they used to sing, "Land where my fathers died" [*My Country 'tis of Thee*], I had no fathers!

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KP: Did your father belong the Soil Conservation District when it was established by the New Deal, and did he ever receive any support payments from any New Deal agencies?

AG: I think he did, I think that he participated in a lime program. I'm quite sure that the lime that he used was at least partially paid for. I'm quite sure but I don't know all the details so we'd better let it drop there because I don't think I know more than that. As far as getting the farm engineers for terracing, he did not, but I'm quite sure he participated in the lime program.

KP: What did your father think of Roosevelt?

AG: He was our only hope, to put it very bluntly. I don't think the present historians are fair to Roosevelt. He affected the psychology, forget the economics, the politics, all that, forget it. But psychologically, he gave us enough of a lift that was the margin between despair and hope and let no one tell you any different. The most dyed-in-the-wool conservatives that cuss Roosevelt's memory, they're wrong. He clearly, clearly made a difference, a major difference to the people, even as kids. It seemed to us that he was the only one who cared or tried, the only one. Think

about it, things are going to hell in a handbasket everywhere, no welfare, people come around and beg for anything, and go away grateful, or would volunteer to do ... I'll tell you a story. Our house was falling down, so we tore down the old house, we saved the timber, I was twelve years old. My older brother, John, was fourteen, and Dad says, "Tear the house down." We moved into a barn, by this time we had quite a few kids, and Pop says, "Tear the house down and save all the lumber." We were twelve and fourteen, he didn't tell us how, and we took the house apart and I learned how the old post and beam was put together with wooden pins, how that architecture works, because we took the house apart, piece by piece, we saved all the lumber. The present house on that farm, about maybe forty per cent of it is built of the old timbers that we recycled. We took it apart, took all the nails out, piled the lumber up, and what was the point I was going to make?

KP: In terms of people willing to work?

AG: Oh, yeah. So somehow the word got around that we were building a house. Now, you can't see our house from the county road, it's down a swale. Somehow they found out we were building a house, and these two men, they were of Czech origin and they were plasterers. They came and talked to my dad and they said, "We will plaster ..." this was a twelve room house, a lot of kids, a big house, "We will plaster your house for thirty bucks cash. We will sleep in your barn in the hay, and we'll need to be fed whatever you have." That was the deal. So for fifty cents a day, per man, they did a grand job of plastering, it's as good as ... I'll take you down there right now. It's as good a job of plastering as you'll ever see. Thirty bucks for a twelve room house, that's how scarce cash was. That's how bad things were. It doesn't sink in, now does it? I tell you it can't, you've never been in that position and you hope you never will.

KP: Did your farm have electricity?

AG: No, not until 1938. I was away in college and I came home one day and they were putting up poles for electricity. Yes, I was in college.

KP: So you very distinctly remember the farm getting electricity?

AG: Oh, yeah, good Lord. My mother was walking on air. We didn't have running water until, I must have been a junior in college before we had running water in the house. Things were primitive.

KP: So you used outhouses, too?

AG: Yeah, sure. To this day I wonder how the hell we did it on a cold winter night with snow coming down, and sleet and ice and a bitter chill, and the outhouse is about one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet from the house. People don't understand me, my children don't understand me, they can't. I came from a situation and a culture ... Here's something a lot of people don't understand, we were American-born but of foreign parentage, do you realize to what extent we were really not American? I was probably, until age eight, more a Russian peasant village kid than I was [American]. My values were not American, really. I didn't know it, and it hit my

older brother even more because he lived under it longer. He postponed his college career by four years, he had to work at home to help my dad. So finally they scraped enough to put a down payment on a tuition, and Rutgers had a system of helping out marginal kids. My brother milked cows and worked on the campus and my dad and mom helped him a little bit, and when I got there I had no help. I won a State Scholarship and that's how I happened to go to college. If I hadn't, I would have never gone to college and been a fieldhand someplace to this day. My brother spent four years more as a kid at home, and my mother was a Russian peasant woman, let's face it. So my brother, Steve, inherited enough of the Russian peasant culture that ... It was a number of years after I was out of college, and a lot of people who knew me and my brother, I was only one year behind him although I'm much younger, because he delayed four years, so a lot of people knew him and I both. I remember a couple instances where these Rutgers friends of mine said, "Your brother was a peasant boy, wasn't he?" It never struck me that they were right. I didn't resent it, I said, "Why do you say that?" Well, he lived in the co-op living group all four years, the same co-op that I lived in one year, my senior year. How he used to relate with the other guys, he didn't relate like a typical American boy.

KP: What was different? What did he do so differently?

AG: I don't really know, his attitudes probably, strong work ethics and responsibility. If you told one of us kids to do something, you were never checked on to see if you were doing it, you, by God did it, and no lip, and no back-talk, and no complaining. There's a Russian peasant characteristic to this day. I can't stand our teenagers who start finding excuses when there's something to be done, or, "How much you gonna pay me?" Kids in the summer time go around when the lawns need mowing, we do our own, but they say, "You want your lawn mowed?" and I say, "Yeah, how much?" "Twenty dollars." We did chores for neighbors for free because they needed help. Down the line peasants survived. Why? Because they helped each other. That's the way they grew up, if you don't help each other you don't survive! There were no hospitals, no doctors, midwives delivered babies. Folk medicine took care of problems. My mother was absolutely convinced that cancer was due to two things: diet and inheritance. What's the latest on cancer? Diet and inheritance. She was absolutely convinced of it. How? She knew the families in the village, she knew which families got cancer, it seemed to be certain families. It had to be inherited, no question about it in her mind. And then diet, I don't know how she figured out diet, don't ask me, I never asked her, and I have no idea. But she was right on target, the latest wisdom is diet and inheritance, after a billion dollars worth of research, more than that, maybe five billion dollars worth of research.

KP: Did any of your brothers, or did you, work off the farm for pay?

AG: Yeah, occasionally. Neighbors needed help. We didn't seek it. We had a lot of boys and the neighboring farms knew it. If they had a job like picking tomatoes which some of them did, some of them raised vegetables hoping to sell them to New York markets for cash, desperately needing cash. They needed the tomatoes to be picked, and they'd pick us up after we got done milking cows, and we'd pick tomatoes all day. No coffee breaks, no tea breaks, no lunch, no nothin'. You started at nine o'clock in the morning and you picked straight through. They didn't even bring out a bucket of water, and you didn't complain, it never occurred to you to complain.

You just worked on through and picked as many baskets as you could, and you maybe got two dollars, but that's two dollars that you didn't have, and a pocketwatch cost a dollar. You could buy a pocketwatch, two of 'em. I saved some money and, I never went to a dentist until I was eighteen and ready to go to college, and four of my front teeth had begun to rot away and were visibly decayed. I went to Flemington and my parents didn't have any money, but I figured I ought to get my teeth fixed somehow before I went to college. There was quite a bit of damage done. And I went to an old dentist, about seventy-three years old and still used the pedal drill. I had walked to Flemington, it was about ten miles. I had no appointment, I walked in on this old dentist and I told him I had five dollars, eight dollars, whatever it was, "Could you fix these teeth?" Nobody happened to be in the office at the moment, and he said, "Yes, sit down." He put in porcelain fillings and two are still there. I'm seventy-five, he put them in when I was seventeen. You think only now that dentists know what they're doing? This old-timer put in porcelain fillings and two are still there. So I got my money's worth out of that old gentleman. We worked off the farm, some, helping each other at silo-filling, thrashing, but then, again, no money exchanged, you simply helped your neighbors.

KP: You mentioned that there was this one rare farmer who bought a modern, mechanized combine. How much or how little mechanized equipment was there on farms in your area?

AG: It had just began to come in in a serious way. The bigger tractors, the tractors that were tricycles, so you could move 'em down the row without knocking the crops down, made by (Farmall?), John Deere, they began to come at the time. I don't think any of them had hydraulic lifts until later when Ford Motor introduced the hydraulic lift. Go to the Ag Museum someday, have you been?

KP: Not yet, no.

AG: You've got to go. You got to go, it'll take four hours, I'm serious, it'll take a half-day. Take your wife and kids along. If you have kids, take 'em, and study, their dates are well marked, you've got to see it. Anyway, the combines, the hay-loaders, and then the hay-balers, milking machines, tractors, those were the real technological advances and the ones that came in first. A few farmers are always what they call innovators in the farm field, and then early adopters, adopters, and then the late adopters, and then some people never get the message. There were a handful of early adopters, that was true of the Midwest. Now this is interesting: the farmers in the marginal farming area of Hunterdon County adopted some of these machines, fertilizers, better seeds, sooner than the Midwest farmers. This may be a real surprise to you. I joined Purdue University in 1948 as a poultry extension specialist, and poultry was scattered throughout the Midwest at the time, mostly small farm flocks. So I had to travel, that wasn't the poultry area like Vineland, or Hunterdon County, or Ocean County, in New Jersey you went to a poultry area. There the poultry is everywhere in small farm flocks. So I travelled over the Midwest pretty well, and the other two extension poultrymen were Indiana natives and they introduced me to Midwest agriculture. One of my biggest surprises was that in 1946, '47, '48 only something like seventeen per cent of the farmers had running water. I did a doubletake, most farmers were not, *not*, using fertilizer. I'd have been a rich, rich, wealthy, wealthy man if I'd enough sense to grab a fertilizer dealership when I went out to Purdue, instead of joining Purdue. If I'd gone out there

and got a fertilizer distribution dealership, I'd be a wealthy man, wealthy. The Midwest farmers were about eight to ten years behind the farmers in Hunterdon County in the use of fertilizers and lime. Absolutely astonishing, I couldn't believe it. Why? Because the Midwest's soils are so fertile they gave up a decent crop just plowing and throwing the seeds in the soil. They still made a better crop by far than Hunterdon County farmers. They were surviving, but no running water just fascinated the hell out of me. They did better during World War II because they had better crops, larger yields, and whatnot, and that they didn't have running water. The talk of the farm wives was, "Gee, we're now getting running water." That's astonishing, it doesn't seem possible to you, but that's what I mean about living history. You go back to your books on economics and you're not going to find that. People skip over that, "That's not economics." The hell it's not. That is economics. How do you separate economics from the social and historical? You can't, you've got to put them together. When I look back on the way I was taught in college, I get infuriated, I really do, no one was pulling things together for you.

KP: Among your brothers, how was it determined who went to college and who didn't go to college?

AG: Pure accident. My mother, who never once spent a day in school, she used to talk about college before we went into elementary school. She had two dreams: that someday they'd have an automobile, and that some of us, or all of us, would go to college. Illiterate Russian peasant immigrant, living on a farm, not even rubbing shoulders in a city environment, alone, that's the answer: Mom put the bug in our ears.

KP: She would have liked all of her kids to go to college if that was possible?

AG: Yes, because that's a route out of poverty and the low levels of economic status. She knew that if you got a college degree you stood to get a job that paid \$2,400 a year. Man, that's riches, \$2,400 for being in an office and pushing papers and pencils. We were earning about \$125 a month milking cows and making hay and building fences and whatnot, really working, and here you could make \$2,400 being a white collar man, well, college is the route to go!

KP: What was a typical day like on the farm? Particularly, say, in the summer, once you got older, you mentioned milking cows at a very young age?

AG: Well, you woke up at five-thirty in the morning, didn't even have an alarm clock. I don't know, the biological alarm clock is something wondrous because we didn't have alarm clocks. We didn't have clocks, we had one clock in the house in the kitchen, that's all. It never occurred to us that you might have an alarm clock in your bedroom, forget it. My immediately older brother had a biological alarm clock that was fantastic, five-thirty and he was up, then he'd knock on the door and get us up. You'd get dressed and go out and in the summer time the cows would be in the pasture. The cows were still asleep, so you'd go to where the cows were sleeping and drive them into the barn and give 'em a little feed and then you start milking them. That was all done before you went to school. We had no showers or anything else, so you wore barn clothes, shoes, everything, so, after milking cows you ran into the house and stripped off your workin' clothes and jumped into your school clothes, of which you had one set: one shirt, one pair of

pants, and one tie. But I'll tell you, we dressed better with one set of clothes, Mom would wash 'em on the weekend, then these modern kids slopping around today coming from \$100,000 a year income families. I'm telling you, we were a lot neater. We had better haircuts, Pop cut our hair, and neater, cleaner clothes than these kids you'll see slop down the walk with their shoes untied, hats on backwards, shirttails hanging out, like a bunch of ragamuffins. We had more pride, plus our classmates did, everybody did, we all came to school fairly well dressed. Except for one girl, she was so poor she had one dress all year. She apparently had to sleep in the kitchen, and at that time kitchens weren't that very well ventilated and you used wood or coal burning stoves, and the kitchen odors were ... everything was deep fried in fat and whatnot, and the kitchen odors must have been horrendous. Apparently she slept in the kitchen, and when she'd get on the bus you could smell her when she got on the bus and nobody would sit next to her. I used to feel so damn sorry for her. I don't think I ever felt more sorry for an individual, that isn't in a catastrophic situation, than that poor girl. Her parents were immigrants, I don't know what they were, Hungarian, I believe, and she was overweight to boot, and she'd get on the bus and nobody would sit next to her, nobody, no girl, no boy. I used to sit next to her, just to let her know that somebody gave a damn about her as a person. I felt so sorry for her, to this day I wonder what happened to her. Anyway, so then you'd go to school, and we had to walk to the bus about a half mile up a dirt road. You had to be there on time, and if you weren't ... You know, I never missed the bus, that's amazing! For five years I rode, and then in eighth grade they shuffled us off to Frenchtown Elementary School because we had no room in the Baptistown school and Frenchtown did, so they swapped space. So I rode the bus five years and never missed it once. It never occurred to me how you did that, how you timed everything to always catch the bus. The school day was longer than it is now. I took the college prep course and we had our four years of science, four years of English, four years of math, two years of history, I forget, and one year of economics. We took the core curriculum of college kids, two years language minimum. Someone proposed that core curriculum in New Jersey about five years ago, and the uproar was, you could hear it everywhere. The high school kept saying, "You mean we gotta ...?" and I kept saying, "We did it fifty years ago, you idiots!" You bet. And now with all the computers and better teaching aids and whatnot you can't do it, it's too much? Horsefeathers. You did it, and we had some pretty damn good students. We had a series of straight A students.

KP: At your high school, how many were farm families and how many were non-farm families, roughly?

AG: We were all rural because Frenchtown was the biggest town, it had about a thousand people, we were probably mostly rural, and thirty to forty per cent were outright farm kids. That's why we never did extracurricular activities because we had to go home and cut corn or dig fence posts, or we had to always be there to milk. Basketball? Forget it. We had one kid, he really loved basketball and he was good at it in gym. He would have made the team, like that, but he couldn't, he had to go home. If he stayed, the bus left, and there was no second bus like there is now. These kids that go out now for football, the second bus stops and hauls them home, in town. This guy lived eight miles away from school, so we rural kids really had no chance to participate in sports. All the rural kids, from all the outlying villages, they couldn't participate either, unless they had a car, and a handful of boys had cars. If you were working regularly in the Depression you were rich.

KP: Did you know any people who regularly who were rich in your area?

AG: Yeah, one of my classmates. His dad was a manager of the Jersey Power and Light plant, in Holland, on the Delaware River. It's still there. He drove a Ford coupe convertible, with a rumble seat, and he drove to school, he didn't even take the bus. The funny thing was that none of us were ever jealous. I think about it once in a while and think, "Why weren't we jealous of this guy?" We weren't. He wore a nice suit, or sports coat, to school. There was only one other kid in the entire school that I ever saw wear a nice sports coat, one, that's all. The rest of 'em, ha! Jackets of some sort, neat, clean, but ... That's an interesting point, why weren't we envious of that guy? We were glad for him, I guess we said that we hope we'll do it someday. It was a goal to shoot at, not to be jealous about. Good question, I'm glad you asked that.

KP: I imagine, with the pressures of the farm that you saw classmates who just didn't finish high school. In fact, you had brothers who didn't finish high school?

AG: Yes.

KP: Was there pressure on your classmates to drop out to work on the farm more?

AG: Very little, very little. The three brothers that didn't graduate, one simply liked farming and, remember that triangle I showed you? He wasn't interested in school, yet he was an excellent farm manager. He quit after the eighth grade and went to farming. He was an excellent manager, an excellent cattleman, an excellent dairyman. Yet he dropped out after the eighth grade, he just wanted to farm. One dropped out in his junior or senior year. Again, he simply lost interest in school, and at that time we didn't have guidance counselors. There was no teacher assigned to help a student. I never got any counseling or help, never, and I don't know any kid that did, except one in elementary school who was out of control and was stealing and beating up on kids and the truant officer beat the hell out of him with a hose. He was about fourteen, and the truant officer was bigger than he was, that was the only reason he was able to do it, and it cured the kid. It got his attention and he realized there were consequences to going down the road he did. He wasn't brought before the judge who said, "You're a nice boy, society didn't treat you well, sure, we understand, don't do it anymore," and he goes out and shoots somebody. No, this guy came to the truant officer's attention and the school board decided that there was one way to handle it, stop it, and it worked, it worked. You'd be surprised but I'm for caning, I am. I don't feel sorry at all for that kid in Singapore, I think he'll never go back spray painting automobiles again. I know he won't, and it didn't cost us a nickel. The Singapore people took care of it with a cane. Some people, you've got to get their attention. Look at the kid that Rutgers just recruited in California, what was he caught for?

RF: Possession of marijuana.

AG: C'mon, he's going to be a football hero and star? And he's probably gonna be on the team, the coach ought to punch him in the nose.

KP: You mentioned that you only spoke Russian in the household growing up ...

AG: Only, never English.

KP: How tough was it to learn English when you got to school?

AG: Not easy. Forget me, I heard English when people came to do business. Besides, my two older brothers were in school and were beginning to speak English. We had an immigrant family from Sicily come in the middle of a school year. There were two girls, older, and then three boys. One boy was about eighteen and he never bothered to go to school. The oldest girl was sixteen and they put her in the sixth grade, she couldn't speak a word of English. The next oldest girl was fourteen and they put her in fourth grade, and then the two boys were kids entering school, about six or eight. Inside of three months the two boys were chattering in English out on the baseball diamond, "Peg it to me," and "Hit it," and whatnot, in three months. The oldest girl, who was in sixth grade, learned to speak English eventually and she's still alive and she speaks English with a very heavy Italian accent. You'd think she only came over five years ago. She knows English, but the accent is very heavy. The next oldest girl, I don't know what happened to her, but she learned English in school. Sally, the oldest one, dropped out, she stayed in for just a year or so. You couldn't keep a kid in school after they were sixteen, I believe, at that time, I don't know what the law is now. It was a state law that they had to stay in school until they were sixteen, and she turned sixteen, or seventeen, and was free to stay home. Carmella, the fourteen year old, stayed in school and learned English, and the two boys were speaking English in a couple of months and became part of the American scene. They became Americans that quick. Let me comment, I have absolutely no use for the bilingual programs that we spend billions on in this country, absolutely no use for bilingual instruction. They weren't the only ones who had to learn English in school. I had to, a number of kids had to. About half the kids in Baptistown Elementary school didn't know English when they came to school, and no one ever bothered to teach them in their own language. If they had to learn it, they learned, no problem. They went on to become lawyers and architects and I keep thinking, if I was catered to in Russian, I might still be speaking Russian and not knowing any English to speak of. I'd have never gone to college, I'm dumb, right? They didn't teach Russian in college, I can't go, right? That's horsefeathers. Do away with it. I have plenty of personal experience that proves, in my mind, that it's useless. It can be done.

KP: You lived a very isolated life in the sense that you didn't have electricity. Did you ever get to the movies? What kind of magazines did you subscribe to or read?

AG: Good question. The only movies that I went to was when the local moviehouse, in Frenchtown, had a movie that had cultural value, like *A Tale of Two Cities*. The school would arrange for a daytime showing at the theater. We were more sophisticated a society than you might think in those days. See, what they did, it didn't take any money, the movie theater showed that film and it was part of our course of instruction, in English. So we knew what movies were about and then we'd save our pennies when a real funny movie came along. We liked comedy. Maybe once a year, we'd save our pennies and walk down to Frenchtown for the evening show. Frenchtown was about three miles from our farm, and we'd see a movie occasionally, so we knew

what movies were about. They were not a strange phenomenon to us. Magazines, here's something I never heard my dad explain, but magazine salesman would come around from farm to farm. That was one way to make a living, selling magazines, for adults. Dad could never resist subscribing to a magazine. They were about three dollars a year at the time, but Dad would dip down into his meager cash reserve. We had *Collier's* and *Saturday Evening Post* and we had about four farm magazines, *The New York Agriculturist*, *Pennsylvania Farmer*, *Farm Journal*, and there was a New Jersey agricultural magazine, I forget its name. So we had magazines, (*Hoard's Dairyman*?), Pop never read them. Reading English was never easy for him, so, he apparently knew we were going to read them, and we read them from stem to stern. However, the reading material we read most thoroughly was the dictionary. We saved our money and Sears had a special, for a buck and a half they'd send you a dictionary and something else. So we got our pennies together and sent off for a dictionary, and it arrived and it was a big one. I read the dictionary stem to stern, cover to cover. I enjoyed it. It was before I learned to speak English hardly, I learned to read English. I used to read Zane Grey and Westerns in light, that's probably what ruined my eyes, marginal light behind the old kitchen stove. It didn't have any heat, so in wintertime if you had a few hours, I'd sit behind the kitchen stove. You have to have a space between a kitchen stove and the wall because they'd get so hot you'd burn the papering off. So there was a space of about this much, and I'd sit back there reading Zane Grey and Max Brand, and others when I could barely speak English. But I learned to read early, just on my own. Don't ask me how it's done because now, under teacher's instruction, people don't learn how to read. I learned with no instruction, on my own, the same as Abe Lincoln.

RF: You mentioned earlier about the college prep course you took while you were in high school. How many students, on average, out of the total student body were involved in that?

AG: A small minority.

RF: And of those people did they all go on to college or did they not make it?

AG: Surprisingly many in our class. We had fifty-eight graduate in our high school class, eighteen went on to college. When I learned that, I was flabbergasted, absolutely flabbergasted, because of those, two or three came from family situations where they could probably afford to go to college, that's all. The rest of us went by the simple grit of our souls. We just buckled down and went. And why? I can't tell you, really, I'm not even going to comment on the motivation, except that we saw the Depression coming to an end, so we figured if you were going to take advantage of opportunities, you'd better get a college degree. I guess that's the thinking that went through our heads. I really can't tell you, that's a surprisingly high number in that time, probably a record number at that time. You simply didn't go to college. Girls all took the commercial course and aspired to be clerks, secretaries, stenos [stenographers], and some nurses. You had three choices: there was college prep, commercial, and I guess there was a general curriculum. There wasn't a lot of choice in that. Now you do TV programming in high school and all sorts of things. We had very little choice, it was simple. The brightest kids tended to take college prep because you had to take two years of a language. It was either Latin or French, and that scared off a lot of kids, and, I don't know why, but economics was considered a tough course, maybe it was, I don't remember why, and four years of math ... Physics, is the other one

that scared kids off, chemistry and physics. Our physics class was about twelve, I guess, so more went to college than went to the physics class. Some went to lesser colleges that wouldn't require what Rutgers would require. It was a whole different era and I don't know if it's better now. I'm not so sure whether our present system is better. It's certainly more expensive, administration at the time was very simple. We had a principal and he had a secretary, and we had one assistant principal who carried a full load with teaching and coached track and baseball. Our history teacher coached one of the sports, basketball, I guess. The girls had a basketball team and the lady gym teacher coached that. The administrative load in school at that time was about five per cent or eight per cent of the budget, now it's fifty-something percent is administrative and management. There's some lessons to be pulled out of here, guys, that you can apply in your teaching and what not: Throw it at 'em. Don't be nice to 'em. These modern kids need to wake up. Hit 'em over the head with it.

RF: You also mentioned that you got a New Jersey State Scholarship. How did you go about applying for that, or did you just get a letter saying you qualified for it?

AG: No, there was an announcement in the *Hunterdon County Democrat*, the county paper, that there would be tests for state scholarships at a certain place. I forget where we took them, Flemington, I guess, and if you thought you had the stuff you went there and you took the test. If you passed at a certain level, you got the scholarship, and there were only two scholarships per county. No, I guess, there were more than that, depending on the population of the county. Hunterdon County qualified for two. The two guys that qualified for Hunterdon County was myself and a farmboy friend of mine from Baptistown, the two of us. So I got the scholarship but I had no money, so how do you go? You needed some cash, so Mom had a pig that she was fattening for our pork supply for the winter. She sold the pig and she saved some other money, and she scraped together seventy bucks. So I went to college with seventy bucks in my jeans, which was probably a tremendous sacrifice to the family and their pork supply. In the first week, I enrolled as an engineer. In the first week, when I bought my drawing instruments, T-square, and the necessary books, the seventy dollars was about gone. I was in a panic. I was desperate. I had to room with a lady on Somerset Street, 202 Somerset, a Hungarian immigrant lady. She ran a home restaurant and she had a couple of rooms that she'd let out to college kids. I explained to her that I'd be late once in a while paying my room rent. She let me take my evening meal, which was sumptuous, it really was, she was a great cook. If I was late with my room rent, she was a motherly, old, wonderful lady and she treated me like a son and I appreciated it. She's long gone but I owe her a debt, I really do, she was great. Then I went to work, NYA saved my neck, you to talk about a government program. You know what that is? National Youth Administration. I got a job through the student help office. I was an engineer and there was plenty of work around the labs for twenty-five cents an hour, that's what we got flat, twenty-five cents an hour. I'll never forget this as long as I live: they were moving some heavy machine shop equipment down into the basement of the old engineering building and they needed to bury this heavy duty cable, 1 1/4 inch heavy electrical cable. The machines were moved about fifteen feet on a concrete floor, heavy duty, and Karl was in charge of the machine shop, he says, "I want you to dig a trench six inches deep, four inches wide," and he drew the chalk line across the concrete floor. "Here's a diamond chisel and a five pound hammer," with a short handle, a mason's hammer ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Alexander Gordeuk, on April 1, 1996 in Westfield, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

RF: Richard Fox.

KP: The last tape ended abruptly, and you were telling the story about being given a hammer and, continue ...

AG: ... continue to dig the trench in the solid concrete floor. Karl says, "I got to have this done, give me a deadline. Come in anytime, Saturday, any day, any evening, any noon, any whatever. If you've got some time, just log in your time, whether I'm here or not, here's a sheet, I trust you." I'd come in whenever I had some time and dig that trench, six inches deep and four inches wide, and follow the chalk line. That was the hardest work I ever did in my life. It was slow progress. No diamond saws, nothin', chippin' away chip by chip in that trench. I was amazed at how it finally began to show progress and Karl was very pleased with it, and I finished on target. I tell you, I felt a real sense of accomplishment and then Karl moved in and they filled the trench with the concrete and it was always my trench. Ever since then I've wondered if you could see the evidence of the trench still there. But, that was NYA, twenty-five cents an hour. That gave me, believe it or not, probably the margin as to whether I stayed in school or not. The other windfall was parking cars at the stadium. They paid us five dollars an afternoon for helping to park cars. Five dollars would keep you eating for one week, so we got that week's food allowance, so to speak, if we could get to park cars that one afternoon. And that was a windfall, boy, that was a job that was literally fought for by the guys who needed a buck. The other windfall was that after the big proms, which you don't have anymore, the clean-up crew would come in about three o'clock in the morning, the students, and they paid five dollars for cleaning up the gym, for cleaning up the gym and the restrooms, and that was a flat five dollars. That was a windfall, and those jobs were really sought, and you worked your butt off, none of this clowning around or trying to waste someone's time. You went at it like your life depended on it, which it did, you know, your life did depend on the five dollars. So that's the way you made it, you picked up a buck here or there. Quite a few boys worked in restaurants as dishwashers, and whatnot, that were in a tough condition. But that's the way I did it. In the summertime, you worked whatever you could to pick up a few bucks to help you over into next year. Then I worked in the poultry farm, also, junior and senior year I worked on the Poultry Research Farm on the Cook campus. That was pretty pay, they paid me a regular farmhand's pay, and that was not NYA. They simply needed extra help. I'd get out there whenever I had some time and put in an hour, or two, or three, or a Saturday, whatever, real hard work, farm work, which I was used to and I was happy doing. That was cash and that was a great help. That's the way you made it. We still aren't to the military.

KP: Well, we're moving there. Well, you have some great stories about growing up in Hunterdon so I want to get those on the record. You played soccer, you were able to find the time to play soccer?

AG: You raise an interesting point and I'm surprised you picked up on it. I look back on it, on my career in college, and I don't know how I did it. I also went out for crew and was serious about it, in my junior year. I didn't have any soccer shoes, so I practiced in my farm-work shoes, and I was good enough to make the team but the coach says, "You're going to need a pair of shoes, I won't let you play in a game unless you do." I said, "Coach, I don't have any shoes and I can't afford them," and the coaches' budgets at the time were practically nothing. We started the soccer team at Rutgers when I was there. The team was made up of ex-high school and prep stars. We had more soccer talent than the national champs, I guess, but we never played together so we had a bunch of prima donna stars. Every one of them thought they were going to win the game by themselves. Every one thought that he was Michael Jordan and he didn't need the rest, and the coach couldn't break the mindset of the team. He had no assistants, Coach Dochat, D-O-C-H-A-T, great man, he made men. He put a greater emphasis on making men than he did on winning. He was a true college coach who should have been memorialized somehow by the Rutgers athletic department. So I told my brother, he was better off financially than I was, I told him I needed a pair of soccer shoes to play soccer and he bought 'em for me, or he gave me the money and I went and bought them myself, and that's how I played soccer. I never played in high school, so I had to learn the position entirely. I was a fullback with one of the football players. We had quite a time and we lost every game, except the last game of the second season. It's in the record. I can't deny it. The last game was against Franklin-Marshall, and lest you be unimpressed with that, Franklin-Marshall was, in those years, the national powerhouse in soccer. Year after year, they were Pitino and Kentucky in basketball [Rick Pitino was a very successful coach at the University of Kentucky]. If they played anybody you expected Franklin-Marshall to win. They came to Rutgers, we played on the field where the Commons [Brower] is now. They came in and it was a rainy day and there were puddles of water on the field; the fields weren't as well taken care of as they are now, there was no money to maintain them. If there were puddles of water, there were puddles of water, you played through 'em. Coach had been hammering on us all year and the previous year, he said, "If you play together you can lick any team in the country. The talent's out there, just play together." We didn't take it seriously. We didn't take it seriously, the prima donnas were gonna to win the game all by themselves, and we lost, and we lost, and we lost. The last game against Franklin-Marshall, I guess the chips were down, and everybody knew they were the best in the country and they'd better play together, like the coach said. We trimmed their ears, something like four to one, we creamed them. There was no question as to who the better team was on the field, none, they knew, we knew, the coaches knew. That day, when we played together, we [could have] probably licked, like Coach said, any team in the country. That taught us a lesson which I think stood us in good stead for the rest of our lives, so it's not what you learn in college in the class entirely that affects you later in life. I'll never forget Coach Dochat, "Play together." The other thing he taught me was to keep your eye on the ball. I never appreciated that comment. I never played soccer in high school and he noticed, he didn't have much time to, he had to work with the forwards and how to develop the plays. One man, had us for half an hour, three times a week, or something, and he kept emphasizing, "Keep you eye on the ball." So, by my senior year he had a part-time assistant, one of the graduates, someone who

came out to help him a little. They noticed that when I kicked the ball, I'm too big for a soccer player really, soccer players are lighter than I am, and faster. I was football size at that time, not now, but then. They noticed that when the ball came to me I'd kick it and leave the turf with both of my feet. The coach immediately calls me over, and he says, "Alex, when I say keep your eye on the ball there's something else you must do: never, never, never kick the ball with both feet off the ground." I still didn't pay much attention to him, it didn't sink in. Next scrimmage they recruited a little freshman, he was about five foot four, and he could do tricks with that ball that you wouldn't believe. He was superb and he knew his soccer, and I didn't, and he noticed that when I kicked the ball I left the ground with both feet. So he played the ball towards me, so he knew I had to go after it. I kicked the ball and he kept on running. He timed it just right, and he hit me when both of my feet were off the ground. Do you know what happened to me? I somersaulted in the air, came down, and the coach came over and he says, "Are you all right? Have you broken your neck?" He was worried. He said, "You could have broken your neck, broken your arm, dislocated your shoulder, broken your ankle." He says, "Do you understand now why you keep both feet on the ground?" So whenever someone says, "Keep your feet on the ground and eye on the ball," I know exactly what he's talking about. That's a college lesson that was worth two courses.

KP: You talked a good deal about your coach, but you mentioned on your pre-interview survey that your favorite professor was Professor W.C. Thompson.

AG: Yes, head of the poultry department. Thompson was one of the rare individuals who looked way beyond the class. He knew all his students and he knew many, many students in agriculture beyond the poultry department, and that's a great credit to him 'cause there weren't many such profs. There were more of them on the Ag campus for some reason, to this day, I don't know why. The professors on the agricultural campus took more personal interest in their students than all those downtown. There were exceptions, Dr. Houston Peterson was a famous name, do you still hear it?

KP: Yeah, a lot of the people have mentioned him.

AG: He was one of those, and there were some others, few. The agricultural campus probably had more of the professors who cared about their students than the rest of the college put together. Don't ask me why, I don't know, it ought to be looked into, some psychologist or teaching expert ought to look into it. Well, Prof Thompson cared about each student as a person. He cared about our future, he was extremely proud of the alumni whom he had, who went on to be extra successful and he'd tell us in class about 'em. He'd depart from the subject in class over and over and over again. Something would pop in his mind that was pertinent to the poultry industry, but was a human story, or a success story, or an individual that did something unusual and succeeded. So he gave us a much broader outlook about the whole poultry industry. He taught us how the industry was organized, the organizations in New Jersey, farm and poultry, regionally, nationally. He told us the names of these people, he knew them from conventions, he'd tell us about these people, their leadership qualities and why they were succeeding or not. He told us about the major issues in the poultry industry at the time. He didn't have to say any of that, he could have just stuck with the narrow subject of his class. He really cared about us, he

really cared, and he did it in a fatherly way. He was the uncle I never had. Well, my dad never spent much time with me either. He was the favorite uncle I never had, not just mine, you talk to any poultry department grad, if you can find one, they're all over. Most of them didn't go into poultry, I did, but most of them didn't. They'll give you the same story, I'm sure of it. Students who knew him who were not in poultry will say the same thing; they had a great regard for him as an individual, as a human, as a guide, counselor of students. He had the respect of all the professors. The downtown people would put him on committees, not to include someone from the Ag college, they really wanted his input, he was that type of an individual. A book ought to be written about him, he's worthy of it. He really is, someone ought to give him a belated honor of some sort.

KP: Was there ever tension between the Ag people and regular Rutgers College?

AG: Yes, there was, and probably still is, a little bit. Not in recent years, but when I was there there was. The downtown professors tended to look at us as cowherds, farmhands, and there was some reason for it. I was completely unacquainted with the arts, you mentioned Degas, or some great painter, or El Greco, and I'd say, "Who? Who are they? Why are you concerned about 'em?" And that was true about a lot of us ex-farmboys. We'd never been in an art museum, never been to an opera, never heard a symphony, never knew there was such a thing as better music, never knew that Beethoven was important, or Bach, or Haydn, or Tchaikovsky, or whoever. Those names wouldn't even register with a lot of us, so a lot of the downtown profs, I'm sure, looked at us as hicks. They shouldn't have, no faculty should look down on a student, ever, because of his background, that's his background, he didn't have anything to do with it, so don't hold it against him. Try to guide him, that's where Thompson would come in. He'd suggest so nicely, with a wonderful smile, some event going on, "Do you know that the Philadelphia Symphony is coming in? They'll be playing, why don't you drop in on it?" They wouldn't push you, they'd let you pick it up on your own, that's the way Dr. Thompson was. But we were obviously cultural illiterates, a lot of us, and I think that's the main reason, they sensed this and held us in lower esteem. There were a lot of sophisticated kids, from New York City, who had been to operas and knew their way around the cultural events, and we didn't. They spoke better English, and we had two or three brilliant kids. MacNelly was one, creator of the comic *Shoe*, his dad was a classmate of mine, a sour guy, but a very brilliant guy. He wrote English like you wouldn't believe, and had a tremendous speaking ability, and he could make some of us look like nothing. He failed in life, except he succeeded in an odd field; he became a portrait artist of the first order. Interesting, because he didn't study art, or painting at all in college. I don't know where he picked it up, he apparently had a genius for portrait painting, which none of us knew and he didn't know when we were in college. I just remember him as a brilliant sour apple, and would insult you. He insulted me a number of times, gratuitously, no reason. But he picked up that I was a hick and let me have it for no reason at all, so I don't have warm memories of him.

KP: What about students, would they look down upon you as hicks, from Rutgers College?

AG: What?

KP: The Rutgers College students, from downtown?

AG: No, no, not really. Well, we were excluded from some of the exclusive clubs like Scabbard and Blade and Skull and Bones (Cap and Skull?), I don't know of any aggie [Ag student] who ever made those, there may have, but I can't think of any. There was a bit of a snobbishness in that respect. There were certain dorms that were "the" dorm to be in, Ford Hall, I believe, and the Quadrangle. To me, that was amusing, any kid who thought that he was better than I was for some reason. Of course I wore one pair of pants for the whole year and they always saw me in the one pair of pants, until they fell apart. I suppose they said, "That hick," but I didn't have any other pair of pants. They never bothered to inquire. Now that's something that bugs me. I'll tell you, the speech prof, Professor Reagar, he was also a great maker of men. You've probably picked up on his memory. We were in a speech class and about the time of Thanksgiving the professor says, "Gordeuk, are you going home for Thanksgiving?" I said, "No," and he said, "Why not?" I said, "Well, I have no way home, and I've got to work at the poultry farm." He says, "Can you come over for Thanksgiving dinner?" He was the only prof who ever had me over for Thanksgiving dinner, the only prof that had me in his home. Neils Bohr, you know who he is, do you know what his students remember him most for, and where some of the greatest ideas in physics came from? His wife would have a teatime for Neils Bohr and his grad students at four o'clock in the afternoon, and they'd be invited to Neils Bohr's home and they'd sit around and have one hell of a bull session about physics. Some of the great ideas about physics came out of those bull sessions, not out of the classes. That's how important it is, it's important for students to get to know their professors as people, more than the professors realize. To me, the height of that was when I took that training at the University of California. I walked in on a freshman English class in Wheeler Hall, it seated 1200. Freshman English class, 1200. The professor is standing at a mike, not even a good spotlight on him, lecturing to 1200 freshmen on English. If you were in the back, you couldn't even tell what he looked like. Then, when they broke apart for the discussion groups you never saw the prof, never heard him speak, man to man. You may not know it, but the University of California at Berkeley was having trouble at that time with students learning English, 1943. I was shown the test papers from a freshman English class, 1943, I couldn't believe what I saw. The Frenchtown High School, rural school, there the dumbest kid in class had English skills beyond the average the ones that the University of California was getting. It was atrocious, one of the horrible moments of my life was seeing those English class tests. I couldn't believe it. So that's what you get into when you separate the professor from the student, especially when you get up in college. You should get him closer, not further. One of the things I resent is how many grad students teach classes down there at Rutgers, especially those that can't speak English, like an Egyptian, or an Indian. I ran into Egyptian PhDs in the agricultural industry, as an adult, and I could not understand what in the hell they were talking about. PhDs, talking about physiology, or diseases of some cattle, or whatever, I'll be damned if I knew what they were talking about. They were speaking English, *their* English, and those guys are teaching students. That's a crime, you can put that in your report.

KP: You never joined a fraternity?

AG: Not a Greek fraternity, no. They didn't invite me for good reason, they knew I couldn't participate in all of their activities that required a buck or two, I just couldn't. And I don't think I

was interested, and I'll tell you frankly, I was really put off by the hazing that went on. I had friends that were going through hazing, I would not put up with it, I would have knocked somebody's block off. I'm a farmboy, serious, right? I'm here for a purpose. I remember one: they broke doughnuts and put 'em in a bucket of cider, and they looked like turds. They made these initiated, what's the term ...

KP: The guys who were being initiated ...

AG: They'd make 'em look at it and tell 'em, "That's horse piss and human turds," and then they'd force them, with their hands tied behind them, to dip their head into the bucket. I'd have never done that. There's no way in the world that any fraternity could have made me do that, and if they kept insisting I'd have probably knocked their block off. Some of the other things that they described: They'd take you out a mile from New Brunswick and strip you of all your clothes and make you walk back naked. I wouldn't do it. I'd have busted their chops before I'd, I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't degrade myself, there's no way, no way that I would have done that. That was one reason, and the dollar sign was the other reason. But the Towers Co-operative Living Group, in my senior year, that was actually a fraternity. We were a co-op living group, we didn't pick each other, we were assigned by the Dean's Office, people in need of housing. We did our own cooking together, we had our own social affairs together, we had dances and we invited profs over for dinner. We did our own purchasing, everything, we kept the place clean and neat and picked up and, responsible, and yet we were a living group, and we ate supper together always, and we had a very close relationship. So it was as much a fraternity, probably a better one because there was more responsibility involved, than the ones downtown. So I think I had the advantage of living in a fraternity, but not a Greek fraternity.

KP: Why did you chose engineering, as opposed to an agricultural curriculum?

AG: I don't know, I was too young. Farming to me was simply a lot of hard work. I didn't see any glamour in it. I didn't understand the scientific aspects of it, the management and business end of it. I thought I'd get away from it. I can't really tell you why I picked engineering, I thought it was glamorous, I guess. I was not seventeen yet, when I entered Rutgers, I got out of school early. You could skip grades in those years. I spent six years in elementary school, I started at seven years of age, so I was not yet seventeen when I entered college. What's a seventeen year old farm kid know, who's never had any counseling? Engineering sounded glamorous. I didn't know at the time that I was people-oriented and not thing-oriented. I knew within half a year that I was not an engineer. I was working in the engineering labs under NYA, and I was rubbing shoulders with people who were running these labs. Incidentally, at that time people at Mack Truck didn't have their own testing machines, they went down to Rutgers. They wanted the component tested, they'd bring it down to Rutgers. The grad students would set up the test, and then I'd sit there and read the dials while the test went on, by the hour. You had to read a bunch of stress gauges, every five minutes or so, until the piece failed. If it was a steel piece that was being pulled apart, when it finally broke it was like a thunderclap in the lab. Here I sat in the lab by the hour, by myself, with no one to talk to, and this is engineering. This is what I would be doing if I graduated and worked for some engineering firm. I talked to the engineers and the grad students as to what engineering was all about. I had a pretty good idea what it was

about within half a year and I wanted to quit. I went home and told my folks I wanted to switch curriculum and Mom was adamant, "You start as an engineer, you continue as an engineer." Well, by the end of my second year I knew that was untenable, so I switched on my own to agriculture, which was where my true love was. Before I switched, Rutgers had a psychology department of one or two people, and I went to (Dr. Griffiths?) and I told him of my problem. He was a nice old man, and he smiled and he said, "Well, there's an NYU, or Columbia, test that we give for people who don't know quite what they're going to do. Why don't you take it and we'll see what happens?" About three weeks later he calls me in, he's grinning from ear to ear, and invites me to take a chair, his office was in Winants Hall, in the corner, I still remember it. I was wondering what he was so happy about, and he says, "Gordeuk, I'm not gonna give you any advice at all. I don't care what you do. We tested you for engineer, agriculture, doctor, lawyer, and educator, you scored about the same in all of them. I don't care what you do, you make up your mind and whatever you decide I'll endorse." Incidentally, there's a tie-in. As I look back over my life, I spent eight years as the editor of two national trade magazines. Looking back on it, I didn't know it at the time, my elders didn't tell me, I was the best at editing. I had tremendous success as an editor. It didn't pay much, and the reason I left it was because it didn't pay. Journalism doesn't pay. Dan Rather and Barbara Walters with her seven million dollars a year, those are the real exceptions, and I think they are paid ten times too much anyhow. But the average journalist barely makes a living, if he's lucky. Journalism does not pay. I was paid \$8,000 a year for editing two very successful magazines that were making a pile of money for the company. I got a slightly better offer, for \$10,000, the company wouldn't match it, so I said goodbye. It was a bad decision on my part, I should have stayed, they probably would have settled for nine, and I could have lived with that and then pushed them for additional money. I don't know what it cost them to let me go, just to pay the moving costs to my replacement editor probably cost them the \$2,000 that they wouldn't give me. They were the most dumb, remarkably dumb, stupid decisions they made, and then I didn't make much better ones.

KP: So you really regret leaving as editor?

AG: Yes, yes, I do. I had tremendous rapport with the industry, the industry leaders, researchers. I especially enjoyed my contact with the researchers. You may not know this, but Frank Perdue was successful today and you enjoy chicken at sixty-nine cents a pound, or the cheapest meat in the meat counter, for a reason. A tremendous amount of science and technology came together after World War II and began to be applied in the '50s, when I was editor of the first poultry meat magazine in the world. Then, a year later, I edited two, they gave me *Turkey World*, which is the only magazine devoted to the turkey meat industry. There was more science and technology coming together in those two industries than almost any phase of agriculture anywhere in the world. I didn't understand it at the time, but there's so much work being done in research for a reason, chickens make a tremendous research animal. If you're studying cancer in humans, at a certain point you can't cut a person open and see what the cancer's doing in his gut. If you're doing it with chickens, you can infect one hundred of 'em and you can kill eighty, ninety in various stages and check it out, right? A poultry researcher can do more work in three years than the person doing research in dairy cattle, or beef cattle, can in a lifetime. So the researcher in poultry is so much more advanced in his scientific knowledge, in certain areas, than anybody else. You know who knows the most about nutrition? Do you think that it's these beautiful

blondes on the TV shows, that tell you everything about nutrition? They don't know anything compared to a good poultry nutritionist, he knows more about nutrition than anybody living. Why? Because he can repeat experiments, he can see the results on ten million, or one hundred million. You want to know whether a certain nutrition idea is working? Frank Perdue will test it out and give you the results on fifty million. There's nobody alive who'll ever get as many results from humans, ever. That happened in genetics, physiology, nutrition, incubation, all these basic sciences, and I was in touch with all the leaders, not only in the United States but around the world, while these guys were doing tremendous work. That was a tremendous situation for me to be in. I had such a broad overview of the two industries that the most skilled professor of nutrition or whatever at Cornell would talk to me seriously about what I was picking up and what I knew. I knew things from the farm level that they didn't, and I was able to encourage them. The great work done on taste in animals was started by a professor who was a physiologist, he had nothing to do with farming, he came out of Philadelphia, I think. He was Canadian, and his name was Doctor Kare, K-A-R-E. He ended up in Cornell, and he started to look at chicken's taste ability. At that time, most professors and farmers thought that chickens couldn't taste. He proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that chickens had tastebuds that all previous biologists had missed, and it opened up a whole new field of science in studying taste, and he learned things that are extremely useful. I'd better get off this, I'd spend all day on my work with these scientists. But that gave me a tremendous amount of satisfaction, and some of 'em said that we continued our research only because of what you told us, and pointed us in the direction that actually paid off because of your knowledge of what actually happens on the farm in a chicken coop. That's a lot of satisfaction, you'll never get the credit in the literature, but when the scientists tell you, "If not for you we wouldn't have done this," that's a lot of satisfaction. You know it, no one else knows it, that's alright, you know it. That's one reason why I miss editing, I can't explain to my wife why I miss editing, I can't do it. It's a highly personal thing, and I worked with such diverse groups, from educators to basic researchers. Dr. Hans (Fischer?), so you know him at Rutgers?

KP: No.

AG: He's a world-class nutritionist. He switched from poultry to human. You go down to Rutgers and dig around in nutrition you'll come across Hans Fischer. He started in poultry and he's an escapee from Nazi Germany and he's probably got a number on his arm. Hans and I knew each other very well, a true scientist, a great researcher, and you knew people like that ... and, tremendous satisfaction.

KP: How important was Professor Thompson in keeping your interest in the poultry industry?

AG: None, that was all my idea. He picked up on me when I was in one of his classes, no, earlier than that. I was nominated to the Alpha Zeta agricultural honorary society and you couldn't ordinarily be nominated until you were a junior, and I transferred in my junior year. I carried a double load, incidentally, and I was nominated after I'd been on the campus for, like, half a year, which was unheard of. As one of the initiation rites of Alpha Zeta, at that time, they gave you a list of all the leading professors on the Ag campus, and you had to go and get them to initial that you talked to them. Now there's an initiation that makes sense, as opposed to the

Greek fraternities. They gave you a sheet listing the professors of the campus and you had to see each one, you had to catch them sometime and he had to initial your list. So I got to meet all the key professors on campus and some of them had a little time to talk to you and some didn't. Anyway, when I was initiated into Alpha Zeta, as the new kid on the block, all the key professors at the Ag College knew about it because that was unusual. Why they did it, I never did find out. Somebody picked up on the fact that maybe I was worth it and they broke the rules. They never allowed women until after the war, incidentally, now they do, but women were not allowed, it was all male. So Thompson met me then, but, no, he had nothing to do with coming ...

KP: ... to poultry?

AG: But he did have a lot to do with this. I wanted to graduate with my Class of '41, so I had to nearly double up on the coursework at the Ag College. There were strict rules about taking more than so many credits, and your head of department would simply not approve. After you took four, five, or six courses, you went around at registration time and your head of department would have to sign after the course, to let everybody know he's approved it. Well, I came to him after the seventh or eighth course that I'd scheduled, I'd fit them in somehow, and the prof says, "I can't let you do this, this is ridiculous. No one's ever done it, I can't do it." But I said, "Prof, if I'm gonna graduate with my class, I gotta do it! See, it fits!" But some of my labs overlapped, and some of the aggie courses are on the Ag campus and some of 'em are on the downtown campus, and they overlapped. How much time do they give between classes now? Is it ten minutes?

KP: Now it's twenty minutes.

AG: Whatever it was, ten minutes I think. They allowed thirty minutes between classes on the Ag College and downtown, I guess that's another reason why we stuck out. The profs always had to accommodate their classes 'cause we took a half hour to get into town. Well, we walked, so that's what it took, there were no buses running. I rode a bike, so I said, "Prof, I have a bike. Professor (Jeffries?) says I can take his lab, but I have to take more than half of it. If I can't take more than half of it, he can't let me in, and I've got to complete all of the work." Prof had a sense of humor so he said okay. I got up to about my eighth course in one of the terms and he was really shaking his head, he said, "This is crazy, I don't know how you're going to do it." Of course, about several weeks into the term Professor (Helyar?), who was Dean of Resident Instruction at the Ag College, he came across my curriculum roster and he calls me in. People have nothing but great things to say about (Helyar?), and I remember him for a nasty ultimatum. He gave me an ultimatum, he said, "I'm approving this against my better judgement. This is crazy, this is impossible, besides, you're working on top of it. You're working on the farm, playing soccer, this is nuts. I can't let you do it." I talked him into it, I said, "But Prof Thompson says ..." and Prof Thompson had a lot of swing on the campus. He finally looked at me, very grimly, and he says, "You flunk one course and you're out, you're off the campus, you're gone." Prof says, "It's a deal." I gotta tell you, organic chemistry had me scared stiff.

KP: As it does still to this day.

AG: That was the one that I was wondering if I'd pass or not, and I passed it with a C+ and I stayed. I've got that record someplace here, just take my word for it, it's impossible. I look back, I went out for crew, doubling up, soccer. I quit crew because, after all the assignments were made in the various courses, I had nine major papers to write. Students used to bitch like hell about one, I know, I remember, "We gotta write this paper!" I had nine major papers, and I took an English course. I had to have an English credit, more than the freshman English, to graduate, I had to have another term of English. The only English I could squeeze in was with Professor Johnson on Saturday morning, and it was an advanced writing course for English majors who were aspiring to be writers.

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

AG: Professor Johnson says, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Professor Johnson, I need three credits, I got to take your course to graduate." He scratched his head, and said, "This doesn't make any sense at all, you have no business being here, these kids are way ahead of you. They're juniors, it's an advanced writing course. The assignment, the weekly assignment is to write 2500 words. That's it, and we're serious about it. I can't let you off the hook, that's my standard, 2500 words a week. This is the main thing these guys do, and you don't belong here." I said, "Prof, I need these credits," and finally, after thinking about it, he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do." He was an older professor, in his early seventies, but they kept him on for some reason, he may have been *emeritus*, I don't know. He says, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do, I'm gonna read your first one, or two and then I'll read your last one, or two, and I'll give you a grade based on what progress you've made." I said, "Prof, that's a deal!" So every week, without fail, on Friday nights after dinner, I'd disappear into a hidden nook someplace in that big Records blue building on the Ag campus, where nobody'd see me, and before going to bed that night, it may have been one o'clock or two o'clock, or whatever, I would have written my 2500 words for my next day's class, and I never missed. It may be that experience which permitted me to be a, I'll say it blatantly, a good editor.

KP: It's a standard question that I ask everyone, but did you have any dealings with Dean Metzger?

AG: Yes.

KP: What do you remember of Dean Metzger?

AG: Probably his heart was as big as a bucket, but he was never very nice to me. He was very firm. The reason I had to go to him, once was that I was running out of money and I was literally starving. I knew he had a special emergency fund, some other students had said so, and I went to see him. It was one of the toughest things I ever did in my life, literally begging. I didn't beg, but I really was begging, I was at the end of my rope, I had to eat. I went to see the Dean and he didn't commiserate with my situation, he just listened to my story, and he almost had the attitude

of, "You got yourself into it, why should I feel sorry for you?" He never smiled, never commiserated, finally he reached down in his desk drawer and he gave me a meal ticket that would give me access to the cafeteria, which was in the basement of Winants Hall at the time, and that was good for a week's meals. I was home free for a week and things turned around. But, to this day I wondered why he was ... because he had a heart of gold, I know that. He was a great dean, but why he treated me that way, I don't know. The same question could be asked why Dr. (Helyar?) treated me the way he did, giving me a nasty ultimatum when he should've called me back in and said, "How you doing?" and, you know. So, old timers who remember (Helyar?) have nothing but great things to say, and I sit there and listen to eulogies and I keep thinking, "That's not what he did for me, an ultimatum was all I got." So I'm emphasizing, that's not a true measure of either man, I know that they were great humanitarian guys, both of them.

KP: You didn't stay in ROTC after your sophomore year?

AG: I couldn't afford to, I didn't have time. They took it seriously and they made a career out of it, a lot of boys did. They went on to be commissioned, and then because they were commissioned, when World War II was on, some of 'em became Colonels and Majors. I stayed a private for most of the time, and for good reason, that'll come up here again. I never had basic training in the military, well, I'll get to that.

RF: We've talked a lot about campus attitudes towards fraternities and whatnot, what was the total campus attitude towards the way the war was shaping up, or the way things in Europe were happening? Was there a lot of discussion of it or was it sort of ignored?

AG: The main discussion came from, it didn't even happen in ROTC. Looking back on it, that's strange, isn't it? We had a Colonel Davidson, who was older man, who should have brought that up, but he didn't. He's a good military man, but apparently he didn't know diddly about politics and the world events that were transpiring, and didn't care, apparently. There was a group on the campus, led by guys whose names I forget, they tended to be older students and seniors who conducted some rallies on the Neilsen campus, you know where that is, near where the art museum is now, that used to be a library, that campus, heart of Rutgers. When students got together, not for a violent protest, but for a rally, or something they did it on the Neilsen campus. There were some rallies by these seniors, who were political science majors, I guess, to keep us out of the war. They were connected somehow to, there was a movement in England in the colleges, what was it? The Oxford ...

RF: The Oxford Movement [A student movement in England during the mid to late 1930s].

AG: Yeah, well, you know more about it than I do. I'm really reaching back now. I stood on the fringes of these rallies, and they drew maybe one hundred students, or so, and there'd be a stand and a loudspeaker and somebody would be holding forth about how we shouldn't get into the war in Europe. And I'd stick around for awhile and then leave, I had classes to go to. But that was the main source of memory of any discussion of the issues. That was it, very little, completely inadequate in modern terms, but there wasn't ... We could have a convocation of the entire college in the College Avenue Gym, you know that? All the students would be seated in the

college gym and the balconies, all the students, plus a good portion of the faculty, or maybe all of 'em at the time, and we'd have nationally known speakers. I heard Herbert Hoover speak there after he was President, William Lyons Phelps from Yale, the Governor of New Jersey, I forget who he was. We heard nationally known figures speak to the entire college student body and faculty. You could still, no, you can't do it today, though, can you? Unless you met in the stadium ...

KP: I don't even know if the stadium would hold everyone, actually, the entire Rutgers community.

AG: Well, that's one area where, comparing Rutgers now and Rutgers then, we students got exposure to, this is before TV, some national figure and actually see him in front of us at these convocations. So they were more valuable than we realized at the time, no, we realized they were valuable, but it was years before I realized how valuable. Whoever was responsible for them, Clothier, I guess, President Clothier, deserves a lot of credit. There were other nationally known figures, I forget 'em all. The list was quite long, we had 'em four times a year, was it? I think so. Interesting, and one year one of the college faculty spoke and we were really impressed with his breadth of knowledge. So we weren't isolated, we knew a little. I guess, the downtown campus probably heard some of the economists and historians and Professor Houston Peterson discuss some of these things, but we were out of that loop, so we got none of it except we would hear about it because some of the downtown students would be talking about it later. So we knew that they were getting some exposure, but the aggies were not. We, on the Ag campus, heard absolutely nothing.

KP: Your's would be the last class to graduate in peacetime, what were your career plans during your senior year?

AG: Oh, we knew we were gone, the war was far enough along. We instinctively knew we were going to be in it, so everything was out the window. Look, you're twenty-one; you've got a degree; everybody's talking war; and Hitler is beginning to run roughshod; ships are being sunk; you know where you're going, no one has to spell it out. You're gonna be a soldier and you associate soldiering with dying, actually. You know, there was a hot war on. The chances are that you'll never come back, so you put everything aside. I never even thought about what I was going to do after the war, really, I didn't.

KP: But did you think of enlisting before Pearl Harbor?

AG: Not really, I was trying to straighten out my thinking and decide what I wanted to do. My first reaction on Pearl Harbor day was, I was at the Franklin Institute with a girlfriend, and there was a radio playing, and all of a sudden, calamity, and all the roof falls in and the radio's saying that this is not a joke, you know, this is real, the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor. We left immediately and were just crushed. She quit talking, I quit talking. She was a very bright girl, an NJC girl, a very bright girl, and she knew a lot about history and whatnot. We both knew what was coming, so we rode home in silence and I knew I had to make a decision: wait to be drafted, or what? At the time, I was managing the branch hatchery for the (Kerr Chickeries?) in

Woodbury, New Jersey, and my heart was out of managing the branch hatchery. I knew I was gonna go, but I didn't know what to do.

KP: You very well could have qualified for an agricultural exemption from the draft.

AG: Yes, I could have, I thought about it. I just decided my duty was to be in it, and I don't know, you go through a complicated bit of thinking. You're twenty-one, twenty-two, and you know things are gonna be calamitous. I can't really re-construct my thinking. It was all over the place, I guess. So what I did, I quit the manager of the (Kerr Chickeries?) branch hatchery in Woodbury, and I agreed to go work on a dairy-poultry farm in Plainsboro, not Plainsboro, Plains ...

RF: Plainsfield?

AG: No, there's a town south of Woodbury, New Jersey. The farm had this address and he needed help desperately and I'd quit the hatchery, and he said, "Alex, I don't care if you help me ten weeks, it would be a lot, I need help." So I decided it would be a good way to get fit again, really physically fit, and give me time to think about what I was going to do. My mind was made up, and we're phasing into the military now, was that your intent?

KP: Yeah.

AG: Okay. I was wondering what to do, whether to enlist for the officer training, I knew there was a high priority on getting officers, that officers were necessary, more desperately than ever. If you had a college degree you were sent off to OCS [Officer Candidate School]. I didn't know what to do. So there was a long article in the Philadelphia paper that they were desperately seeking men who had any acquaintance with mechanics, farmboys, they mentioned farmboys especially, mechanics' sons, garage mechanics, auto mechanics, machinists, that type of people, urgently. Rommel was up at El Alamein, in Egypt, and the threat was that he'd roll on to Cairo and knock Egypt out of the war and would cross into the oil fields of the Mideast. This was a desperate situation for the Allies, and we were supplying all sorts of war matériel: trucks, tanks, guns, everything, knocked down. It was being shipped, knocked down, you know what knocked down is, in parts, and it had to be assembled. I don't know all the history of it, but they set up an assembly line in the desert. No roof, no nothin', with the heat of the sun and whatnot, they simply set up an assembly line and hired as many Egyptians that could read English. And they were looking for Americans in the military, they could pay them less and with their military discipline, to man these assembly lines so they could get enough trucks and artillery and equipment up front for General Montgomery, wasn't it, or Alexander?

RF: Montgomery.

AG: Montgomery, to launch the counterattack against the Germans. I said, "That's for me." The farmboy attitude, "There's a job to be done, I think I can do it, roll up your sleeves and go do it." Well, that dictated how my military career went, and it's completely atypical, you will not get a typical military career. I counted up once, I was in something like twenty-eight or thirty different

camps and installations, at one time or another. Many guys enlisted together from the same town, joined the same division or unit, fought the war in the same division, got injured together and got sent home to the same military hospital together and never knew anybody except their own buddies in the small unit, and were all engaged in the same engagements. I was all over the map. I was completely atypical. I never got my basic training, for instance.

KP: I have to just ...

[Tape paused]

AG: How come you know so much about this?

KP: Where we left off, we just interrupted for a second, you had a very atypical career you mentioned.

AG: Well, I never had basic training. If it wasn't for what I learned in ROTC, I'd have been a complete ignoramus about the military.

KP: So you'd originally enlisted with the intention that you would go and work in this factory?

AG: Yeah, well, I'll get into it. I was enlisted in the Philadelphia area, and I knew that was a job for me, "Stop the German advance," the paper says, "It's desperate." I'd been reading the papers, I know it's a desperate situation, so, yeah, I'm gone. Only I never went, this is where the atypical becomes evident. I was enlisted by a Captain Pasquale, I still remember him, he was an older man, probably in the reserves or the Guard, I don't know which. He was an older man, a very nice gentleman, and he was absolutely delighted that I was coming on board to go to Egypt. He was doing his duty, and was nice about it, and he looks at my background as a college grad and says, "When you're through in Egypt, with the assembly situation over there, with your background we'll send you to OCS to become an officer because we need officers." I trusted the military at that point, if they made a promise I believed them. Look at him, he's smiling. It didn't take too many weeks, or months to be skeptical of everything the military tells you. What happened next? I was sent to Fort Dix, and then I was sent to the next military location, I forget where, and then I was assigned to an artillery maintenance school in Aberdeen, Maryland [Aberdeen Proving Grounds]. So instead of going over to help assemble cannon, trucks, equipment, and whatnot, they sent me to antiaircraft artillery maintenance school. See, they had already broke the promise. They needed antiaircraft for the reason that the Germans were still dominant in the air, so antiaircraft artillery was really important, and they needed mechanics for antiaircraft artillery and someone decided that's more important than going to Egypt. So they sent me to ... At this time I believed everything the military said, I was a complete virgin as far as military affairs go, I believed 'em! They send me to antiaircraft artillery maintenance, they figure it's important, let's go. I'm a farmboy, if there's a chore to do, you do it. Well, I graduated from the antiaircraft artillery maintenance school in Aberdeen, Maryland, and instead of going to Egypt, I get assigned to the 135th Ordnance Maintenance Battalion. I ended up in California, and

the 135th was running a base camp, and the Seventh [Infantry] Division was about ready to go fight the Japanese in (Attu?), up in the Aleutians, only the Japanese weren't there. Our intelligence must have been something else. Sorry, if you think I'm tough on the military, I mean to be. When they got up there they ended up shooting at each other instead at of the Japanese. The Japanese were gone. We did not go with the Seventh for a reason, I never did figure it out, but we stayed in California running a base camp at Fort Ord, California. Well, by this time, everybody who had gone in the Army with me had gotten basic training. I never had it. I skipped it completely, ten weeks, or twelve weeks of basic training, I never got it. I went to artillery maintenance school. So I had no basic training, no maneuver experience, no field experience, no combat training experience, none, zero. Keep that in mind because, as I told you, I'm an atypical soldier. One of the first memories of the military that I recall, I reported for duty at Fort Dix, and at the induction center they had an immense mess hall. It fed something like 1200 at a time. They fed continuously, every three hours, or so, they'd empty the mess hall and another group would come on because inductees were coming in. They were feeding around the clock, and there were a tremendous number of KPs, and there was a real major feeding effort. One day, there were corporals in charge of groups of KPs, they called them "KP chasers," and their duty was to see that the KPs weren't goofing off, that you were working. This one afternoon we were assigned to peel potatoes, no, excuse me, not peel potatoes ... Butter used to come in one pound chunks, patties came later, much later. So, five of us were assigned, that's all we did that afternoon, slice those chunks of butter into four pieces and make patties of them, and you know, you have time to chat. There was one older guy there, and so I got talking to him. He was a PhD professor from Temple, and he was a constitutional law expert, but he was a bachelor, he was about thirty five years old. So here's this distinguished professor of constitutional law, two Master's degrees, if I remember it correctly, no, one Master's degree and three Bachelor's degrees, this was the crew. They did it deliberately, these KP guys would have access to your records, and they'd do it deliberately. The more education you got, or social stature, the lower down they'd put you on the KP job, and that was their idea of fun, I guess. At the same time this PhD was cutting butter patties they assigned him another job. You didn't do KP all the time, most of the time you were doing something else. So they assign him to be the bugler, he could bugle the bugle. At the same time, they were screening the inductees to send to a school in Michigan, the Judge Advocate School, someplace in Michigan. They were sending GIs with maybe a high school education to become GI lawyers, with no background at all. Here's a PhD from Temple, in law, and he's a bugler. That's what I mean about misuse, tremendous, tremendous misuse of personnel. They finally discharged this guy, he's too old and he couldn't take the ten mile hikes and whatnot. Another mistake, why not screen him for physical ability? We lost a number of them, thirty-five, thirty-six, thirty-eight year old guys who were drafted and then they were discharged because they couldn't take the training, they couldn't. You go on a ten mile hike and they'd just drop by the wayside and say, "Kill me if you want, I can't make it anymore, that's it," and so they'd discharge 'em. But one of the funniest ones in the induction center was an older, bald headed man on KP with me one day, and, I guess, I knew him a little bit by this time and I said, "Joe, what'd you get today?" He said, "Well, I'm on the garbage can detail," and he was a private, drafted, single, from upstate New York. He owned a chain of local restaurants. So this hillbilly KP chaser, I guess, thought it'd be a joke to put him on a garbage detail. They should have immediately made him a cook, or in charge of the entire operation. I mean, "Holy mackerel, we don't even have to train this guy. Great, we'll make you in charge of this whole

mess hall." Instead, the Army's idea of the use of personnel: put him on a garbage detail. He did a good job with the garbage detail; he was mature enough, he took it seriously, he didn't bitch, and did his job. Many of the inductees of that sort figured, "There's job to do, the military says it's important, I'll do it!" That lasted about four weeks. The farmboys were the most susceptible to that baloney of really doing the job and getting it done. Typically, you'd be assigned to do something and you'd have the whole day to do it in, and the farmboys would do it in one hour, or half an hour. That's the way they did it. They got it done and then they sat around doing nothing, waiting for the next assignment, and it wouldn't come because the poor corporal in charge, or sergeant, didn't know what to do with us, so we just sat there wasting time. It took us about four weeks to catch on, and then you'd stretch out any job into a full day. It was amazing how fast the farmboys caught on. It was amazing. Then, back to our, no, let me see the sequence, I went to a second artillery school at Aberdeen, Maryland, again. This time it was field artillery. I'm telling you, this is a sore point with me because I wonder, I wonder what in the world the US Army specialists were doing prior to World War II? There were officers in charge of various design areas, and when World War II hit, we had one good artillery piece, one, that's all. If we had to fight in '41, a third rate army would have licked us, you listening to me?

RF: Yes.

AG: We were completely unprepared. You can't fight an artillery war with just one artillery piece. The 105 [howitzer] was an excellent machine, the rest of the guns were a joke. We had no antitank gun. We borrowed a gun from the Canadians, a 57-mm antitank, and it was completely inadequate. The velocity of it, the impact power of the 57-mm would be no match against the 88 of the Germans, none. It would be like a pea-shooter against a rifle, we'd have been slaughtered, absolutely slaughtered. And the antiaircraft gun that we used, we borrowed it from the Swedes, the Bofors .40-mm, that's it. We were shocked, even as privates, we were shocked at what we saw was our supply of artillery. Let me digress, our footwear that we had in World War II was a joke. We had one boot, which wasn't water-proof and wasn't warm, the GI combat boot. It was a joke. After the war, I met a young lady in the Boston area, and I brought up the fact that the military boots during World War II and what inadequate footwear it was. She says, "That's interesting, our family knew a colonel," there was a Framingham development lab in Massachusetts, outside of Boston, and they're the ones that put together food packages, clothing, "I happen to know, for many years, the colonel in Framingham who was in charge of the design of footwear prior to World War II." I said, "What did he ever do?" She says, "Stay drunk." She didn't even beat around the bush, she says, "He was the talk of our family, we had him over to our house often." He never did anything, a colonel, even if he had no help, he had to know something about the importance of footwear. He could have gone over and stolen from Germans or Russians or French or British or somebody. He could have had at least samples from these other armies. That's the least he could have done, he did nothing. He stayed drunk, and thousands and millions of GIs paid the price for inadequate footwear in World War II. That's why I said maybe you shouldn't talk to me, you're going to get some insights here that people won't like. Another thing that happened, the officer corps ... We were so short of officers that ... The Army took over, essentially, General Motors and they quit making automobiles and started making war materiel. The Army had a special deal with GM, maybe somebody ought to look into it, see if you can ever find copies of the contracts that the Army made with GM. One of

them was that they would take care of the auto salesmen that lost their jobs as a result of no automobiles. Many and many and many, it was voluntary, of the GM salespeople were commissioned as officers: no training, no military skills, no abilities, and they were commissioned just as a payoff to General Motors. We got one those fellows later when we were over in Europe, we had one of 'em. He wasn't fit to be a good private, let alone an officer, and he was the first officer of the company, and he did nothing, was absolutely valueless to the war effort, but he had a commission. And that was the deal that was made between General Motors and the Army to commission these people who were completely inadequate to be officers, and they put them into uniform and scattered them throughout the military. They were executive officers, I guess many of them turned out to be the clerks of the companies and whatnot. I resent that, I really resent that. When we were over in Europe, over in the combat area, this one day our ex-GM officer was assigned to set up a defense perimeter because we were within rifle shot of the front. I had already established myself as being in charge of the Information and Education effort for our battalion and at the division level, and they heard me speak and saw me put out news bulletins and whatnot, so they knew who I was. By this time I had a corporal's rank I think. So he figured I was the most qualified GI to help him set up the defense perimeter, but I had no instruction in a defense perimeter since ROTC, probably one lecture, but I knew more than he did. You understand the situation I was in? So I took it seriously as we drove around the area in a jeep, I brought up questions which I thought he, as an officer, would answer. He didn't know anything, nothing, about setting up a defense perimeter. So I sized up the situation and we had access, being an ordnance outfit, we had extra machine guns and whatnot. So I used .50-caliber machine guns, we had the ammunition then for these .50-calibers. I figured that if the Germans decided to mix it up with an ordnance outfit they'd run into a wall of .50-caliber and they might change their mind. You know how much more powerful a .50-caliber is than an ordinary 30-mm. So I'd set up the defense perimeter, and I used to say, "He's getting paid for it, he's supposed to do it. What am I doing setting up his perimeter?" I knew he was an ex-GM and it just turned me inside out to realize that that's the way the Army worked. I had no respect for the captain, he was one of 'em, too. But he'd do that, you'd think he would have sent one of the older sergeants who had combat training and basic training and instead they picked me to do it. I resented that. Our officers, especially in Europe, they gave me all intelligence reports, to me. It was stupid, they could have given them to the First Sergeant. If the officers don't want to handle it, at least give it to the First Sergeant of the company. They gave it to me. Of course, I enjoyed the hell out of it, I got to read what the battalion was getting. I saw some interesting material early that had never been published, as far as I know. When the Germans surrendered, the German generals said that if France had supported Czechoslovakia during the partition of Czechoslovakia in the Munich Accord [1938], the Germans would have lost. The high ranking Germans said this: the Czechs had superior equipment, excellent training, pretty good defenses, and if the French had simply made a lunge across the waist of Germany towards Czechoslovakia, the Germans would have given up. They would have quit real quick. Germany would have been severed and the Czechs had an army big enough and equipped well enough that they'd have slaughtered the Germans, at the time of Munich. I've never seen it in print in any history, it may be someplace, but I haven't seen it. That was in an intelligence report that circulated past me, you see why I was interested in this material? Another fault of the military, and this has been referred to, Patton has referred to it and I think some other people have referred to it: when the Red Ball Express was set up to get gasoline and food up to the rampaging American Army after they broke out of the

Normandy pocket, you know how they did it? One route was set up going one way and coming back another way and these trucks would really barrel out. Two comments there, maybe you shouldn't include this, I'll let you use your own judgement, this is racist. No, it isn't racist, it's a fact, but the blacks would take it as racist. Most of the truck drivers, a good portion of them, were black troops on these trucks of the Red Ball Express. A black officer clued me in on this, one of their officers, he was so mad he could have shot 'em, for two reasons: they were pilfering and looting and selling clothing and gasoline that was supposed to be going up to the front line, and they knew it, and they didn't know how to stop it. The discipline was so poor among the black troops that they were literally stealing the pipeline blind. I had a kid brother, who was with the 95th Infantry and they were on the Siegfried Line pecking away at the pillboxes in the middle of winter, and they'd order up winter clothing. When you're crawling away on your hands and knees in the military, in the snow and dirt, your pants wear out fast. Every couple days you'd need a new pair of pants. You'd put on several pairs of pants and they'd still wear out, so their urgent request was for food, ammunition, and extra pairs of pants. My brother said that, time and time again, these trucks would arrive at the front with about one third or one quarter of the material. There was an item about three years after the war ended in one of the papers, the General who was supposed to be looking after that got court martialed, for all the pilfering and theft and whatnot, he wasn't controlling it. But going back a step further, having that black officer bitch to me about how he couldn't control these black troops, I thought it was unfair to court martial the General when the black officer couldn't control these troops either, on the lower level. And he gave another example, I said, "Lieutenant, you're much too hard on these people." He was an ex-teacher from a Florida town someplace and he couldn't wait to get out, he didn't want the commission. He was commissioned because he was a teacher, so they commissioned him and assigned him to black troops. He really resented being assigned to black troops. He thought he should have been assigned as an officer in the American Army. So I said, "You're being much too hard on these guys, I see these trucks and by far the worst trucks, the beaten up trucks, the dirty trucks are being driven by your black battalions, and I see the white trucks and they're in much better shape, cleaned and in better condition, that's not fair, you're judging them too hard." He says, "Corporal, do you know how old the trucks that the white soldiers are driving? A lot of 'em are two years old. They were brought to England and used in England all this time and they've been brought over from England and are now being used here, that's the trucks the white troops are using. Do you know that the trucks the blacks are using are three weeks old? Brand new trucks: all they do is pour gasoline in 'em, they don't change the oil, the filter, do any maintenance on them, don't grease, don't do anything. They just drive them until they drop, they don't wash 'em. So don't tell me that we're not fair to the blacks." That was a black man talking and that was pretty close to verbatim of what he said. He was so anxious to get out of there he was almost sick with it. He'd had it, he couldn't control these troops. And you won't find this in the books of the history of the war. I resent what Eisenhower said, remember? He paid special tribute to the black troops. I saw the black troops in action, and I tell you flat out that we probably would have been better off if we had no black troops in Europe, except for the flyboys that did themselves proud [the Tuskegee Airmen]. But the average black GI, we'd have probably been better off if we didn't have him in Europe at all. Now, I don't know what you can do with that from the history standpoint, unless you get to interview some officers who commanded black troops, you won't get the real picture. They might be still around, but if you get the chance to interview one ...

KP: We've interviewed about a dozen.

AG: Did they bring this up?

KP: No.

AG: No? Maybe I ought to ... out of regard for their words. Things are so racist now and politically correct that maybe ...

KP: I want to just back up a bit. How did you get into the program at the University of California at Berkeley?

AG: Oh, I'll get to that. Okay, so, misuse of gasoline ... Patton needed gasoline urgently, and GIs in the back would be using gasoline for cleaning fluid, I'm serious! They'd take a five gallon can of gasoline and clean their GIs because they always would get pretty dirty and greasy and whatnot, and they'd just take a five gallon can of gasoline, Patton's dying for it, and dump it in a big bucket of some sort and they'd wash one set of GI pants and shirts out and then dump the gasoline. If Patton had seen that, he'd have killed them, I'm serious. Because he kept his eye pretty close on gasoline, and then he finally ran out of gas, and if he had seen how gasoline was being used in the back ... That was Eisenhower's responsibility, not Patton's. The guy, that guy that he assigned to keep supplies moving towards Patton should have had his head handed on a tray to somebody, and that was going on, I witnessed it. My brother could tell you things. Incidentally, my brother had his entire squad shot out from under him.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Alexander Gordeuk on April 1, 1996, in Westfield, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

RF: Richard Fox.

KP: You mentioned your brother, he turned down an officer's commission?

AG: Yes, because being a front-line infantryman, especially a BAR, Browning Automatic Rifleman, whose lifespan in battle was something like seven minutes in World War I, that figure is known, and not much more than twenty minutes in World War II, and he figured that if he got a promotion he'd have to expose himself time and again in leading his men and he'd probably, suffer death and he figured that if he stayed as a private and looked out after himself he would have a chance to survive, which he did. He did survive, but he lost his squad three times, one hundred per cent, three times over. He thinks it's a miracle that he's still here and, I guess, he's right. When I was out on the West Coast I was attached and assigned to the Western Defense Command, this was late 1942. I was assigned to a special group under a Major Chenea, C-H-E-

N-E-A, who later became the top man at the General Motors proving grounds. Major Chenea had a group of about six or eight of us, we were, believe it or not, a design group. There wasn't a graduate engineer amongst us, some of us had some training in engineering drawing and engineering, not much. Our assignment was to design emergency pedestals for old Navy guns to be emplaced along the Pacific shore because we thought we might have a Japanese invasion. These pedestals were very simple. We'd mount Navy guns, the Navy always kept their old guns when they decommissioned the ship, for years and years, since the Spanish War, they would put the guns into grease and stack them in the warehouses, so they had the gun barrels but not the mounts. So we amateur soldiers, who were to design gun pedestals to emplace in concrete, so we could mount these guns and face them out to the Pacific, so they could be used in protecting the seacoast. We even had the simplest kind of sights designed for 'em, I tell you one thing, they were so simple they'd probably be very difficult to disable. Their instruments were very basic. The designs never went into production because it became apparent that the Japanese, after the Battle of Midway, it was clear that the Japanese were not going to land on the West Coast. It was an interesting experience, and probably some of the most delightful months or weeks that I spent in the military because Professor Chenea, or Doctor Chenea, major at the time, he believed in a civilian type atmosphere, no military. He said, "Our job is to do the chores that are assigned to us. There will be no military courtesy or rank pulled in this building of ours. Our first and foremost job is to get the job done, you hear me? I'll protect you against KP and guard duty and everything else so we can get the work out of here just as fast as we can." We designed bayonet mounts for the [M-2] carbine, office furniture. I was in charge of designing an indoor firing range for the ordnance people who repaired guns and had to test fire 'em. So here I was, with two years of engineering, designing this sophisticated firing range set up. One of the biggest problems was how you were going to control the noise so the guys doing the test firing the .50-caliber machine guns wouldn't go deaf, and how to stop the bullets at the other end so they wouldn't go out of the warehouse and slaughter a bunch of GIs on the side. It was very interesting, the fact is that we were given that much responsibility under one major I think is astounding, but I guess that engineers were so short that the Army had no choice but to do that. We finally went over to Europe with the 13th Armored Division, and we landed in, I think it was January of '45, winter was on, the Battle of the Bulge was on. We entered Europe in La Havre. La Havre was already secured, but bombed and in terrible shape by a thousand plane raid which you historians probably know about, three weeks after the Germans had left. I'll get back to that, there's an interesting story about that. We had a lot of Southern boys in our outfit, and the first reaction in seeing the countryside of Europe our GIs couldn't get over the fact that despite the war the French homes and villages that were still intact were neat, there was no debris around, stuff was picked up. I used to travel a lot after the war, in Arkansas and the Deep South a lot, and I didn't understand what was going on until I travelled in the South. After the war, Southern poverty was still in full bloom, and I know these boys came from these homes that were in terrible shape: not painted, debris and junk all around, and a bunch of hound dogs sleeping on the couch. This is the background they came from, and when these boys saw France with their neat homes and barns, whitewashed walls, flowers, flower boxes, their reaction was, "What are we doing helping the French? They live better than we do!" And at the time, being from New Jersey, I don't know what they were talking about, but the poorest French person was living in a nicer environment than the average Southern boy that was in the army. I was shocked to hear them say, "What are we doing here? Why are we helping these people? Look, look how well

they live compared to us." What they didn't know was that the Germans carted away all the soap and soap-like materials, all the food, all the excess clothing was in Germany. These people were just getting by, yet the reaction of the average GI, we were so unprepared, that was our reaction. In Germany it was even worse. The Germans had stolen everything and they had soap and people still were clean, and the reaction there was, "We're fighting the wrong people! These people are like us. What are we doing fighting the Germans?" That was the reaction of the average dogface, and it was very interesting. The ASTP training was over in March of 1944, the Army Specialized Training Program where I specialized in learning all about the Balkans and the European area, language studies for nine of the most grueling months of my life. We had three three-month terms, at the end of each three month term we had a week off, and my mind was literally reeling, we all were. They pumped so much information in a three month period that our minds were spinning. They gave us a week off and told us to get lost, to get out of town and do anything: go home, go to Hollywood, do anything to get our minds off our studies. We'd come back a week later and start all over again. Anyway, I completed my training and I'm one of the few people who completed their Army Specialized Training Program. They had a program like that at Rutgers but I think none of 'em completed it, in engineering, meteorology, and other things, medicine. They dismantled it before they completed it, but we completed ours and we were all supposed to be commissioned as officers and sent to help (Tito?) with his war against the Germans in Yugoslavia. We never got there, again typical Army, spend a bundle of money. We were told that we were probably the most expensive students in the history of all mankind, up to that time. They figured we cost the American public 35,000 dollars each, for nine months of study, and the reason was that our faculty consisted of ex-premiers, prime ministers, leaders of European political parties, the world's most foremost professor of constitutional law in Vienna, a Swiss geologist who was world class, and so forth. They somehow all got assembled at the University of California at Berkeley and they were the faculty we had. We were also told that no student ever in history would probably again be exposed to a faculty of such quality, which we were. Then, when our course was over, instead of sending us to help the war over in the Balkans, we were dumped as replacements to the 13th Armored Division at Camp Bowie, in Brownwood, Texas. There were thousands of us ASTP people dumped to flesh out the 13th Armored, which was the last of two armored divisions being groomed to go overseas. The result was very interesting. We suddenly had the highest IQ of any unit in the military, it was really funny. The regular cadre, we filled out the division by about fifty per cent, in other words, the cadre had been pulled down and replacements sent to Europe for other armored divisions, so the 13th Armored was really stripped down to a cadre. We came in to fill in as privates and corporals and ordinary GIs, and the regulars decided to have some fun with us. I guess the second day we were there, in March of '44, somebody decided to really test us, so they set up a ten mile hike with packs, and they figured they'd show us who's boss. In other words, "We'll show you what you guys got into and how much work you have to do to catch up with us." So we start off on this hike, and I guess you guys know that every hour you're supposed to get a ten minute break on a march, so we start off and we were singing songs in foreign languages which perplexed these regular guys. They didn't know what they had on their hands. After fifty minutes they said, "Halt for a rest stop," and all the ex-ASTP people said, "Let's keep going." The non-coms and officers that were along with us had no choice but to go along with us. They had no choice but they were going to show us up, right? They were going to prove to us how unfit we were and how much work we had to do. So another fifty minutes go by and they call a halt for a rest break, and everybody else says,

"Let's keep going." and they meant it, too. I guess we finally felt sorry for the officers and regular non-coms, so, finally, we did call a rest, and then we went on home. We had one break in a ten mile hike. That was the end of poking fun at our ability. The reason was very simple: we had an hour every day in ASTP of hard physical training under professionals. They really worked us out and after you had a hard workout for an hour of speedball. You know what speedball is? It's a combination of soccer and basketball, not soccer, that doesn't give you enough, speedball would really run you around the field and then at the end of the hour, they made us run around the track for a mile, a mile run, at the end, into the gym, shower, and back in classes. We were in tremendous shape. These guys were sorry. Later, they had the regular Army Physical Fitness Tests, and we scored so high that the regular armored division people were astounded that a bunch of kids out of ASTP colleges were that physically fit. We were far more physically fit than they were. That was the end of their picking on us, physically. Finally, when the division was being tested for combat readiness, a sample of each company was sent to take a combat readiness test. We were an ordnance outfit now. Remember, there were tank outfits, infantry outfits, artillery outfits, attached to an armored division. Our three boys, three privates, who were ASTP kids, they were eighteen, nineteen, whose ASTP had been broken off, very bright kids, you had to be bright to be in ASTP in the first place. There was a battalion retreat and it was announced that these three boys were getting special three day passes because they'd scored the highest of anybody in the division's combat readiness tests. An order was posted on the bulletin boards, and before they got their passes, the order was rescinded and another order appeared saying that the three day passes for these guys were canceled. We had some of these ASTP guys in Division Headquarters, and we knew them personally, and they said the reason those three day passes were canceled was that these three kids scored higher than the Division staff. You know what? These three privates were in the doghouse after that. That's the way the military mind in World War II worked. They showed up, they didn't mean to do it, they just took a test, and they got blamed for something. It was not politically correct for 'em to score higher than the average of the division staff, that included the general, the colonels, everybody, the whole kit and caboodle of 'em. These kids scored higher than the average of the Division staff. Anyhow, just an interesting sidelight ... I'd like to comment on looting. We were advised very sternly, I know our battalion was advised because I did it as Information and Education non-com. Our company appeared before the battalion people and told them about the Geneva rules of warfare: you don't shoot civilians, a prisoner, et cetera, whatever they are, we reviewed them, that looting is not to be done, unless it's war material or war related, then you can steal it. But you're not supposed to go into a civilian house and steal his bathtub, or his dishes, or whatever. Well, the fact is that looting, despite all these warnings, the most efficient looting was done by officers, I hate to tell you that. I really hate to tell you that because they are supposed to set the standard for the troops, right? Well, if the captain or the lieutenant come back with ... and they show it around to all these GIs, and, typically, officers are older men so they know what to look for that's valuable. A GI would steal a camera, or something like that, these guys stole real valuable stuff. I'm sure some of 'em are rich because of what they stole.

KP: How often would things be stolen?

AG: Well, when they had the opportunity, quite often. It was a regular, ongoing thing. We crossed into Germany in the Saar area, and the regular battles had moved on, but we moved on

behind 'em. So the city Saarbrücken, is it Saarbrücken, or, these names disappear after fifty-odd years, was pretty well damaged in the war and ...

[Tape paused]

AG: Our tech sergeant was a watch repairman, he was about forty years old, he was a seasoned, professional jeweler and watch repairman. He just laughed at the officers and GIs who were looting big stuff. He looted the gems out of jewelry in private homes and a wrecked jewelry store. He wouldn't take a camera, he'd take the lenses, at that time the Germans made the best lenses. He'd take out the lens assembly from a camera that he knew was high quality. He kept the jewels in a little pouch, right here in his pocket. He wouldn't tell us what he thought it was worth, but he had diamonds and other jewels. I didn't know about jewelry, I know nothing to this day, but he told us that he could have the finest jewelry store in America when he got back home. He says, "It's all right here."

KP: Did he in fact did that, do you know?

AG: What?

KP: Start a jewelry store.

AG: I don't know, I lost respect for him and I lost interest in him completely. I didn't want to know where he lived. There were other people that I didn't want to have any further contact with. After the war is over, I didn't want anything to do with 'em, these people were immoral people. Pappy, Pappy, what was his name, Pappy? Anyway, he taught us how to loot, and I guess some took his advice and learned to loot right. One of the officers, a major, after the war was over, he asked us to box some material for him. He had a weapons carrier full of loot, he even looted cloth. We were short on nylons and apparently the Germans were making a similar cloth in bolts. He knew enough to steal whole bolts. I wouldn't have had the faintest idea what to steal. He stole guns that were collector quality, and the Germans were great gun collectors. We destroyed the finest gun collections you ever saw, they went down the drain, we just ran tanks over 'em. That's a shame, there were probably guns that were worth millions of dollars that we just demolished. They weren't useful, they were from 1878 or whatever, handmade, beautiful guns, hunting guns. He knew their value; he probably came home with tens of thousands of dollars in collector's guns and pistols. So he made us crate all this stuff, and when an officer sent stuff home his was not inspected, so it went on home to his home. If we wanted to send something home we would have to have an officer inspect it before it could go. I remember boxing up all his loot and all of us GIs were really ticked off that the major would do this. He probably came home and bought the finest house in town someplace and probably had money to spend beyond that, oh, the loot he brought home. That made me very unhappy, because this was what we were accusing the Russians and Germans of doing and we were doing it on a wholesale scale. Don't ever let anybody ever tell you that we didn't loot. The American Army were great looters. We didn't have to loot what the Russians did, the Russians looted, I understand,

machinery and vehicles. We looted what you could turn into cash and carry easy. We really did, there was no stopping it. After the war was over, looting occurred all over the place. I can't really compare it, honestly, with the other armies but we did our share, don't let anybody ever tell you any different, and officers were involved and that's a shame. I'll show you what I looted. Hold on here just a second. We got into Germany and there was a large chicken coop, a big one, I don't know why it was so big. It was about twenty-four by about eighty or one hundred feet long, and they were assembling the water cooled engines the Germans were using in the Focke-Wulf and others. They were assembling these engines in this building, you couldn't tell from the outside, the Germans had dispersed their industry so well that only parts were arriving. No aerial reconnaissance would have ever caught the fact that there were these people assembling these engines. We weren't there first, some other troops came through this engine assembly building that looked like a chicken house and the typical American GI, if they didn't find what was immediately usable for swapping for some sex, or whatever, they'd destroy it. All kinds of valuable manuscripts, books, stamp collections were simply dumped and trampled over. They couldn't see an immediate use for it, they'd destroy it. They'd burn buildings down for no reason except that they're "a goddamn Nazi building, let's see it go up in flames," just to see it go up in flames. I'm not proud of the fact of the way we behaved, I'd yell at these guys, "Look, cut it out, don't destroy those machineries, now that the war is over we're going to try to get them back on their feet! We'll be sending them the same damn machine from Detroit that you're destroying. Don't destroy it, they'll have this machine to start with, it'll make screws or whatever it made." They couldn't understand that, they'd look at me and say, "Are you a Nazi or something?" The average GI was so uninformed, it hurts. I had the background, however, of having completed the Army Specialized Training Program in European area language studies, I'm a college graduate, I could put two and two together, and these guys didn't put one and one together. So, in this particular factory, this is what I looted. I noticed that this was still intact. I'm going to give that to you, you can pass it on to somebody at Rutgers. That's the sum and substance of my looting. It's an interesting item (a 6-inch pocket slide rule).

KP: Yeah, no, it is ...

AG: One soldier's loot.

KP: How much artwork was taken? Was any artwork ever, that you know of, taken?

AG: Not that I know of, no. We didn't have no way to carry it. If it was, there were special troops assigned to that type of thing, scientific material and whatnot. Before the war ended, they trained a bunch of guys and officers to go over there and keep it out of the hands of the Russians. Those special training guys, I don't know what they looted, I have no idea. I imagine all sorts of things were looted.

KP: No one in your unit ... What about any church, were any churches ...

AG: Well, the Germans did a good job on their own, plus the bombing. You'd see churches with a hole knocked in the side and they parked tanks in 'em, because if you took an aerial reconnaissance of a damage done you'd go, "Oh, it's a church," but the Germans were using it as

a tank barn. I'll tell you, no matter how religious you are, after seeing a war you have a different view of religion than you did before. You'd say to yourself, "If that's God's place, why did he let people like Nazis punch a hole in that church and park tanks in it?" There's no answer to it. There was no answer for me as a young man, or a GI, there is no answer today. You put your religion in a different framework than people who haven't seen it. Or you see what has happened to people under war conditions: displaced persons, slave labor and whatnot, it doesn't make any sense that people do this. All right, people do it to people, but then if there is a God, what's he doing? Is he a spectator? There's no answer to that. Nobody's ever given a good answer, don't try, don't try, I'm not going to try. You just accept it, it's like the Jews of the Holocaust. I have some good Jewish friends, I've asked them a number of times, they say they tend not to think about it. If you still believe in God, you run up a dead end, don't you? Where do you go? No one's going with it anyplace. Elie Wiesel has written how many books, and I guess he still hasn't written the definitive book, and I don't think he ever will. I don't think it's up to us to know that. Anyhow, where were we?

RF: You'd earlier mentioned how GIs sold artifacts and things that they'd looted for sex. How easy was it to do this? Was it easy to find women who'd be willing to do this or was this a rarity?

AG: Yeah, this was a disappointment to me, especially when we hit Germany. Hitler categorized people in various categories, and blacks were put down about as low as you could go. The astonishing thing to me was that when we hit Germany, the German girls tumbled to the GIs, and left me very unhappy. One reason, don't take this wrong, this is a philosophical observation, all right? I was scandalized by how easy the German girls lay down for the GIs, for a pack of gum, or cigarettes, or a quarter pound of coffee, to the blacks, all colors and shapes and sizes. It just illustrates to you how skin deep propaganda really affects people. I mean, in a matter of days, these German women are fraternizing, and their brothers probably got killed, and they're fraternizing with the people who probably killed their brothers, in a matter of days. Bring that up to women who think about these things and ask, "How come?" But I think that's been proved throughout history. Armies throughout history have been absorbed when they are far away from home by the gals that they conquered. I understand Bulgaria is the classic example. The original Bulgarians were a Slavic peoples, the Bulgars were not Slavic people, they were Turkish people. The Bulgars came in and kicked the hell out of the Slavic peoples in some battles some centuries ago, but they were too far away to go back to where they came from, so the army stayed in Bulgaria and all the pretty Slavic girls took up with the soldiers, and the Bulgarians stayed and even gave their name to the state. So the modern Bulgarian is most Slavic with a tinge of Bulgar/Turkish peoples in Central Asia. I'm not just poking fun at the German girls, it apparently has gone on through history and I'm not seeing any women philosophers, or thinkers get into this, as to what the women do at home when the boys are away. Throw it at your ladyfriends in college, that'd be a good one for a Master's. No, I'm serious. I was amazed, really amazed, at how easy these gals would fall for a chocolate bar, I couldn't believe it, especially when it was the blacks. You know that there are 60,000 half-black people born in Germany that were born to German women? There are lots of 'em. Did we overrate Hitler's propaganda? In some ways we did and in some ways we didn't. It took hold deeper, faster, I guess with men. "Off I go marching, I'm gonna conquer the world," and the women probably tell 'em, "You idiots," and then if the war's over, they prove it by sleeping with the enemy.

Interesting, interesting, I don't know the answer, I can't even begin to get a hold of that one. We have a lot, I'd better get going. We landed in La Havre, France and there I ran into something that has bothered me also, and I've never seen anything in any history of it. You probably recall that La Havre was plastered with a thousand plane raid, mostly by the British, before the invasion. We were there, and I saw it happen. You know what? They hit mostly the residential areas, believe me. The entire dock and warehouse area, which is the main reason for La Havre, it's a seaport, they missed it! A thousand planes, and you missed the military targets and you plastered the hell out of residential. That's the pinpoint bombing that the Air Corps is bragging about? Boy, I hope your dad wasn't in the Air Corps, that's crap. I walked all around La Havre, we looked at it. Well, here's a little offshoot, a little interesting story which I've never seen anyone allude to. One day we had a half day off, I don't know why, but we were busy in La Havre and we had a half day off. Another fellow and myself and a third guy, Rick ... Rick had gone to high school in France and Switzerland, French Switzerland. He spoke French like a Frenchman, I mean just that easy, he was completely fluent. So we go off in La Havre, and after walking many blocks, we see a, have you been to Europe? You have one of these little stores, these little shops at the corner of almost every block. Like this house on the corner, in France in a village or a city, we'd live up here on the second floor, and down below would be a little shop, a wine shop, cheese shop, a little restaurant or whatever, you got the picture? So we walk past this corner and this shop is intact, and so we go in and there's a lady there, she's about forty five years old. I can still see her, dark haired, a chubby lady, and I don't know if we were going to buy anything, we just wanted to talk to a native. She's not very happy to see us, it's obvious. Finally, one of us goads Rick, "Hey, Rick, ask her what she thinks of the American troops," 'cause we've never been away from home, all I know is that Americans are universally liked. The world loves Americans, right? Nobody hates us, right? That's the propaganda. So we walk in and we say, "Rick, ask her what she thinks of Americans." You know what she said? You know French, any at all? A little bit? "(*Saubette?*)," she spit out. Tell him what (*saubette?*) means.

RF: I don't remember.

AG: "Black beast." If you want to insult somebody, Prof, call 'em, in France, a (*saubette?*). That's as bad a epithet as you can throw at a man, or a lady, or anybody. It means you're the lowest of the low. So Rick explains it to us, so we said, "Hey, Rick, ask her why she thinks that." We were taken aback. She's not smiling, she doesn't like us there. Rick starts asking her and she starts talking. She resented the saturation bombing of La Havre. She said, "Didn't the idiots know, the Germans were gone for three weeks?" How could intelligence not know that the Germans had pulled out of a major city like La Havre? Where are their Free French and underground sources of information that we were supposed to have, that you read about how good they were? They were terrible in the La Havre area, they gave us nothing, so we bombed La Havre and destroyed so many homes, killed a lot of people, and she's angry. So we said, "Rick, ask her if she'd prefer the American Army or the German Army being back?" In an instant, she says, "Regular German Army, *Regular* German Army." Then she went on to describe how they behaved versus how our GIs were behaving, and it was like night and day. The Germans had discipline and control and apparently respect for the average Frenchmen, that's the Regular German Army, I keep emphasizing that. Then we said, "Hey, Rick, ask her about the SS," and he asked her about the SS and now she turned real livid: "They're the worst." And then

we said, "Rick, ask her why." She said that they'd take people for no reason that anybody could figure out, arrest 'em, all ages, all sexes, all of every kind, and they'd take 'em out in a field outside La Havre and just shoot 'em dead, no trial, no hearing, not anything. She was just appalled at what the SS did. But what we were appalled about was the fact that she preferred the Regular German Army to occupy La Havre than the American Army. Then we asked her to give us some examples. American GIs would come into her little shop, hold her up at gunpoint, and take whatever they want. You listening to me? These French are supposed to be our allies, the least we could do was buy the stuff from her, and they just took it. There'd be murders about every night that American GIs were involved with, they'd go in looting and somebody would say, "Hey, you can't take that heirloom," and start a fight over it, the GI would pull out his gun and shoot him. That's hard for me to say because it's one of the turning points of my life, learning that Americans aren't universally liked, like a gun to your head.

KP: Before you had gone into the Army, had you ever left New Jersey?

AG: No, that's the point. Yeah, I was very isolated in a way, geographically and culturally.

KP: You saw most parts of the United States ...

AG: Before I went to Europe, yeah. Because I was in the Army, yeah.

KP: And then you saw Europe ...

AG: And then I saw Europe for the first time.

KP: What did you think of the different parts of the country you saw?

AG: I was surprised how beautiful the West was. I had no concept about what the Rocky Mountains looked like, none, no idea, and what the Plains were like. You'd travel for hours and hours and hours, flat as a board. Corn crops you didn't dream about and cattle and the prosperity. Most Americans who haven't traveled by car, not just the highways ... One of the most interesting pieces of geography close to where we sit is the Shenandoah Valley. You can read all the Civil War history you wish, the Shenandoah Valley was fought over for a reason, it was prosperous agriculturally, there's a lot of goodies down there that either side wanted to control. You don't really appreciate it until you go down there. Drive down there and say, "Wow, what beautiful country, what fertile farms." It's beautiful, it's a day's drive and most Americans don't see it. I never saw it until many, many years later. I was amazed at how beautiful and prosperous it is. What was I disappointed? The South, when I saw the rural homes and whatnot, the unkempt, debris-strewn, junk car scattered, no pride and no paint and no flowers, I couldn't quite put it together because these were Americans, too.

KP: You hadn't grown up with a lot of money, but it sounds like the South really was a surprise.

AG: It got to the point where there was no pride left. I guess there's that "no hope" thing, they'd run out of hope. It was just survival. I served in the Army with a lot of Southern boys, illiterates.

One illiterate boy, his wife could write but he couldn't. So he'd come to me and I'd write his letters. He'd tell me what he wanted to say to his wife and I'd write, and he'd send the letter off and his wife would write back. I wish I could have kept those letters, they'd make a TV program. In a very basic way, an almost animal level way, she'd tell him how she loved. She'd tell how she enjoyed her lovin' in bed, I mean all details. You understand? It wasn't dirty, can you understand what I'm saying? It was on a most basic human level. She loved him, and she loved making love to him and she told him so in the letter, and she told him about the baby, and she told him how she would want again to hold onto him in bed and how she missed him, and it was right. The only thing I can say was that it was not dirty.

KP: But he couldn't read these letters?

AG: He couldn't read 'em so I had to read them back to him. That's quite an experience. I had another experience with him, he learned that he was going to have another baby. The baby was due and his wife had written. He was in the situation where he couldn't get away easily. We were, I forget where we were, in what part of the country, and he came to me 'cause I was his letterwriter and he was desperate. He says, "I'm gonna go AWOL," and I say, "Don't do that. Why are you gonna go AWOL?" He said, "They won't give me a pass and my wife's having a baby in the next two to three days and, I'm going to be with her, period." I said, "Please don't do that, you'll get in trouble unnecessarily." I was on KP, I believe, that day, so I took the noon hour off and I said, "Come with me," and I went to the Red Cross office on the base. There happened to be a Red Cross guy there and I told him what the situation was, and he says, "Leave it to me, I'll see that he gets home." But before I left, you know what the discussion was about? He had to pay the money back to the Red Cross. We thought the Red Cross services were free. And his first concern was, "How are you going to pay me back?" Do you realize why so many GIs don't have a kind word for the Red Cross? It's all changed now, you know that. But that's the way it was.

KP: Yeah, I've heard several stories about the Red Cross. Were there any other stories about them?

AG: The Red Cross? Yeah, one more. When we were in Germany and the war wasn't quite over, but things were beginning to get a little normal, we had a Red Cross wagon. You know these coffee wagons at factory gates?

KP: Hold on.

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

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