RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD M. HALE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Richard M. Hale on February 14, 2003, in Edison, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Nicholas Ferroni: Nicholas Ferroni.

SI: Mr. Hale, thank you very much for sitting down with us today.

Richard Hale: My pleasure, gentlemen.

SI: We would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your family.

RH: Fine.

SI: Where was your father from? What was his background?

RH: Okay. My father, W. Robert Hale, was a graduate of the University of Missouri. He grew up in Missouri. … A lot of his relatives were in the mining area, out in that area of the state. Dad went through the University of Missouri and majored in agriculture, and that is significant, because his roommate, … Billy Regan was his name, he became dean of the College of Agriculture out in Davis, California, and he heard about … the large dairy farm, here, in New Jersey, that needed a manager, and Billy Regan, who worked with the College of Agriculture and, I guess, was head of the Dairy Department, at that time, he asked his roommate, my father, if he'd be interested. Well, Dad came out and ran Woodbrook Farms for many years and that's where I was born and raised. That was the largest dairy farm in New Jersey, at that time. Dad became very friendly, because of … this farm being close to Rutgers, … with the College of Agriculture personnel, the dean, Bill Martin, and the Martin Building, the administration building, is named for him, Jack Bartlett, who was head of the Dairy Department, Jack Bartlett's building was named for him, and I was in school during the time that these … buildings were named. It happened to be during my era and Bill Skelly, who was head of Animal Husbandry, was also a very good friend of Dad's. Dad knew all of these people and stayed in close touch. It was their farming affiliation that was very helpful, and, as Dad became a leader in county government here, in Middlesex County, after that initial period, they stayed very friendly and cooperative, because Dad, … being in the farming area, … [knew] the interests in farming and helping Rutgers College of Agriculture … was very important. The relationship [between my father and Rutgers], I was always very proud of, because, I think, to me, loyalty is terribly important, and Dad, though he was from the University of Missouri, became very loyal to his friends at Rutgers and did lots of things for them, and they had an excellent, mutually beneficial relationship that accrued in a good way. … As I was just a kid, … I had two brothers, I was the middle son, … but, I would tag along with Dad, and so, I got to enjoy a lot of his adult friends, maybe a little unlike the normal teenager kid, I guess. I admired his friends, and so, tagging along with Dad was a beneficial experience. I guess that it taught me information a lot of adult attributes that, hopefully, later on, may have helped in some way. … I was born here in Edison Township, which was, initially, Raritan Township. Thomas A. Edison, of course, we all know the electric light, Thomas Edison did his initial experimenting in electricity and other areas right here in Menlo Park, which is just, really, about two miles from here. … As a matter-of-fact, if this is not diverting too much, when they had the Thomas Edison Memorial here, I was just a

little kid, five or six years old, but, I remember it very well. My grandfather [Philip John Harrah] … was a friend of Thomas Edison's and I probably should relate that to you. … My grandfather was an inventor in Bloomfield, Indiana. This is my mother's family and area. I met Thomas Edison, and I remember my grandfather wanting me to meet him, because they were friends, … both being inventors, and he came all the way from Bloomfield, Indiana, … to help celebrate his friend's memorial. It was sort of a replica of some of … the things and inventions Edison had. He had a laboratory here, and then, we erected a large stone edifice that … is, of course, still there. Anyway, it was a thrill to meet Thomas Edison, but, at that time, I was more interested in rolling down the green grass and things like that, but, I knew it was so important for my grandfather to know that he introduced me to his friend, Thomas Edison. I told you about my father's side of the family. My mother was born and raised in Indiana, so, she was a Hoosier, and my grandfather that I just mentioned, who was a friend of Thomas Edison's, was an inventor, and he invented lots of little items that were practical. He had a farm jack [the Handyman, sheepherder jack or the Hi-Lift Jack], and he had a Kant-Slam door gadget [Kant-Slam Gate and Door Closer] that they used in all the subways in New York. He invented a special tool that had eight uses and things of that nature. Most of the people in this little town of Bloomfield, Indiana, which is about twenty-five miles south of Bloomington, where IU [Indiana University] is, … worked for my grandfather in his factory, and I was always amazed that, when I came out in the summer time, … everybody knew my name. [laughter] They knew that the "Old Man's" grandson, I guess, was coming out, and that's what happened.

My mother met my father, I think, in Illinois. My mother was a soloist in this traveling group that was called the Chautauqua Group, and she was the female soloist in an all-men's band, the Chataqua Band, and they met on this farm Dad was managing. That was the beginning of their romance, and Dad and my mother, … his name was Walter Robert Hale, my mother's name was Nota Harrah Hale. It was PJ Harrah, my grandfather, who was the friend of Thomas Edison. … I was born here, in Edison Township, as I mentioned before, shortly after … they arrived here. I'm the middle of three sons that they had and … my older brother is Jack Hale, who is long since deceased. He died in, I think, the '60s, and my younger brother, Phil Hale, died about three years ago, … that would have been in '99. I was the one, I guess, who was pretty close to being more family oriented. I don't want to be unfair, or unrealistic, or … inaccurate, but, I guess, I often took the brunt of family things, only because I happened to be there and agreeable, and I was always interested, and so, maybe, I was the buffer or something, and went through the school system here, in Raritan Township, the public schools, and I met … my wife, (now, my wife of fifty-eight years), in Metuchen High School. I happened to have been elected … as president of the high school. It was something that, I guess, they don't do now. Instead of the council, the student council, we had a government set up like the federal government, and I had a Senate and a House of Representatives. … My wife's name is Ruth, Ruth Westcott. She was the daughter of Dr. (Wilbert?) Westcott, and … her grandfather was pretty well recognized in this area, a Methodist minister, and so, she knew who I was, and I noticed that she was the cheerleader here, in Metuchen High School, and, you know, that's "the way it goes." I can tell you what is always a very interesting story to my friends; the first date that we had, … she was a junior in high school, and I was a senior, and it was in 1939. I had asked her to go to the Senior Prom, but, she had accepted a date from someone else, so, I missed out on that, but, then, she invited me to the Hi-Y/Tri-Y Night, which was a social night that they had, for high school and Y peoples to get together, and it was a swimming party. … An item that happened at that party,

that I didn't know [about] for years to come, because Ruth was too embarrassed to talk about it, … I thought my bathing suit was the same as the other fellows, but, apparently, my bathing suit was very brief, and that was … very embarrassing to Ruth, and, I guess, maybe, … [because she was] the granddaughter of a Methodist minister, and, in those days, that was the "old school" type living standards. … We had this party, and everything was fine, but, she didn't tell me how embarrassed she was for years, until we had been going together for three or four years, and she said that was terribly embarrassing to her. The idea was, apparently, and I didn't realize this, either, on these bathing suits, in those days, it was a brief one, but, they had laces on each side of the bathing suit, so that you could see the skin all the way up. [laughter] I didn't think that was anything different from anybody else's, but, she withheld her embarrassment until we'd really known each other quite well. An interesting episode, but, then, when we tell the story to other friends, the way I finally responded was, "Well, it worked." [laughter]

NF: It is safe to say that you were high school sweethearts.

RH: We were high school sweethearts, and Ruth went to Mary Washington College, which, later, became a part of the University of Virginia, and I went to Rutgers, and I would always bring Ruth [to the social events]. We had three big weekends at Rutgers, the Soph Hop, the Junior Prom and the Military Ball, and … most people didn't have very much money, so, coming from Mary Washington up to Rutgers, to one of these big ball weekends, was kind of expensive, and so, that was about the only times that we could have a date, beginning my freshman year. We continued to date until, well, of course, the war came about. … I think I was a junior in the Advanced ROTC program and that was … an infantry program. I think they have Air Corps now and a few others. … We had, in those days, in the Advanced ROTC, we had Signal Corps and infantry, but, most of us were in the infantry. …

NF: Your father forged a number of relationships with members of the College of Agriculture faculty, which obviously played a role in your decision to enter Rutgers, especially the College of Agriculture.

RH: Yes, it did. I appreciate your asking any of these things, because I easily forget some of the significant things that have happened; so many items are involved in our growing up area. … I knew some of the professors when I was in Metuchen High School, and I admired them, because they were friends of my parents, and I wanted to major in agriculture, because I was hoping to manage this large dairy farm that my father managed, and then, I thought, "This would be a way to plan for that." There were three schools that I thought would be appropriate, and I can't recall all of the things that went through my mind, but, I think I developed a real loyalty, because of my parents' friends at Rutgers, but, I wanted to go either to Rutgers, or to Cornell, or to the University of Missouri, all of which had strong agricultural schools, and that was my thinking, and Dad took me out to Missouri and showed me all of the wonderful, you know, traditional areas that Midwesterners are involved in, and it was very impressive to me. … I think, maybe, the interest waned as Rutgers became more important, maybe, … my senior year, and so, I think it ended up that the only school I really applied to was Rutgers, even though I probably would have been happy [at the other schools], because I heard they had strong agricultural programs. … Going back to my high school, Metuchen High School, I had high marks in most things, but, I'm afraid that that happened because the teachers all sort of knew me and took a personal

interest, and I don't think I really deserved the marks that I got, and it began to show as I entered Rutgers, because some of the science areas there that were … obligatory for the agricultural program. Most of the other kids in my class were far ahead of me in chemistry, and physics, and those areas. So, I really think I didn't get the best background and really had to struggle. In my freshman year in Rutgers, it was … difficult. It was still a struggle in the sophomore year, but, I think I learned how to study better, and so, by the end of my sophomore year, I was pretty comfortable with things, and did relatively well, and was quite active in the Rutgers areas of undergraduate activity. Yes, I can remember President Bloustein, when Hale Center was dedicated, saying that Dick Hale was the only one he knew who was a member of every honor society in Rutgers and I guess I was. I don't think very much about it, but, I enjoyed being involved in things that had to do with Rutgers. A lot of my friends, as undergraduates, would be involved with me, and that's the way, you gentlemen know, that these things come about.

NF: You were also involved in several sports at Rutgers, including lacrosse and soccer.

RH: Yes, but, I wasn't that good in any one of those sports. I was involved in so many things that I didn't focus on anything. I wasn't nearly the football player that you are, Nick. You look like one, and I'm sure you are one, and, if I had to compete with these kids today who are on the team, [laughter] I wouldn't get to first base, I'm sure. …

NF: You were also involved in a number of organizations, including Cap and Skull. Can you elaborate on your involvement with Cap and Skull? It seems like one of the more prestigious groups at Rutgers.

RH: Yes; oh, it was. … It was one of the great thrills at Rutgers, and Cap and Skull was something that we, as undergraduates, as sophomores and juniors, we knew some of the seniors who were in Cap and Skull and, of course, admired them greatly. I never thought that I would make Cap and Skull, or that I deserved it or anything. The way it worked in those days, in what we call "the Barn" now, … when I was in high school, that was called the beautiful "Million Dollar" Gymnasium around this state [university] community, [laughter] "Million Dollar" Gymnasium, and that's where we had all of our Rutgers convocations and … university assemblies, because it was the largest building that we had. I can remember, at the end of my junior year, … we had this assembly, and then, the ceremony of tapping of the Cap and Skull [candidates]. This was very important, and the way it worked in those days was, you're surprisingly tapped from behind. The recipient didn't know that he … would have been elected, because, in those days, they chose twelve out of some five or six hundred. So, anyway, when I was tapped and [became] a member of Cap and Skull, I couldn't believe that I was well enough qualified. I didn't think I … was anything other than just a plain college kid. It was a thrill to have been chosen a member of Cap and Skull. It always meant so much to me, and it was part of my loyalty, dedication and living for Rutgers, and I think a similar feeling was held by most members of Cap and Skull. I, today, am, I guess, the senior advisor to Cap and Skull. I'm the present senior advisor, and I think Cap and Skull can mean so much to Rutgers, if we use Cap and Skull properly, and I have felt a little bit badly that we have not. That is, Rutgers has not, during the last presidential administration, taken advantage of the wonderful opportunities, because, when we choose, it isn't only that we choose them now, as advisors, their peers choose them and we merely review the qualifications, the outstanding members of Cap and Skull, those

who are chosen to Cap and Skull, can be so important to Rutgers, later on, because they're … achievers, they're involved, they're dedicated, they're community servants, and they have those wonderful qualities that, in my opinion, should be carefully developed, so that their Rutgers classes can be something strong, and that Rutgers can have a higher priority in giving. … Cap and Skull was very important to me. I remember, I was also an adviser when Ozzie Nelson came back on the seventy-fifth anniversary of Cap and Skull, and I guess I was leader of the guest team that oversaw that celebration. We just had our hundredth anniversary of Cap and Skull last year, and I had always felt that Cap and Skull can mean so much to Rutgers and Rutgers' future, and the individuals who are in it have a strong dedication and involvement with Rutgers or they wouldn't have been tapped into Cap and Skull, and so, it's something that I'm almost obsessed with, … because I think it can really be the key, determining factor in bringing strong alumni to support Rutgers.

NF: Were you and your classmates aware of the events surrounding Hitler's rise to power and the situation in Europe in general?

RH: When most of us were seniors [in high school], and I can remember, right after our graduation, having a party here. The Maginot Line in France, which was, … without question, the most complex, defensible fort in the world, … when Hitler's forces went right through and around that Maginot Line, it was a sad feeling, because, though, we didn't know all aspects of things, but, the media kept us up-to-date as to … Hitler's children's programs and things like that. … Maybe we didn't quite understand how serious it was at that time. Maybe we were hoping that it wasn't … as criminal as it became, but, we did know of the war. As freshmen [at Rutgers], we had our studies to contend with, and, you know, we had to concentrate on our studies in high school. So, we knew about it, but, it proliferated, of course, in our sophomore year, and it was in our Rutgers junior year, I think, … certain of us were just chosen for Advanced ROTC, (Reserve Officer Training Corps), and we remember the day, of course, that Pearl Harbor was bombed, getting away from the Hitler episodes, but, we, in ROTC, then, were very excited about going and supporting the country. I guess, very honestly, we thought, "Well, this is one way to get a respite from school. We're ready to fight," and I think that was somewhat common among us. We were probably nineteen and twenty, … maybe twenty-one, at that time, and we'd been training in our infantry tactics in ROTC classes, and so, we felt that … we wanted to be a part of things, and that was kind of the general attitude.

SI: Before Pearl Harbor was attacked, what was the prevailing opinion toward the war on campus? Did most of the students believe that we should become involved in the war, or stay out of the war, or that the United States would eventually become involved in the war?

RH: I think many of us, even in the administration at Rutgers, … just were kind of green in the whole area of war. … We kids were excited, wanted the thrill of fighting for our country and everything, [which] was pretty high on our list of interests, but, I can remember that we had an assembly … where Dr. Clothier, our president, (this was after Pearl Harbor), and Hitler was making his quick advances, and he was moving into [Western Europe]. The Germans had conquered France by then, and Poland, and these other forces … in Europe were falling to his advances, and then, after Pearl Harbor, we had this … convocation, or assembly, in the morning, but, President Clothier … said something that really … was indelible. He said, "Gentlemen, we

can lose this war," and I thought, … "How can we ever lose this war?" but, it was at a time when the Japanese forces were [advancing], certainly after Pearl Harbor, and then, we were defeated there, and the Allies were being defeated in Europe, and he, … with that utterance, was probably accurate, and it, as I say, was indelible to me, because, "How could our country ever lose this war?" Of course, the enemy wasn't on our shores, yet, but, then, shortly after Pearl Harbor, there was a feeling in our country that we could be invaded from the West Coast, and that was a pretty strong feeling by a lot of people.

NF: Where were you when you first heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

RH: Oh, we were in school and I can remember that Pearl Harbor thing very well. When they bombed Pearl Harbor, on December 7th, it was Sunday afternoon, and some of us were studying. Then, several of us put on … our officer's uniforms. The Advanced ROTC students had … officer's uniforms, and I can remember, in our fraternity house, two or three of us marched up and down the hall, "We're ready!" That was after the bombing, and it was … an exciting thing, and then, the next morning, we went to classes. I went over to what is now Cook College, the College of Agriculture, and … that afternoon, President Roosevelt, and everybody put the radio on, … declared war, and … he had made the famous statement that I don't particularly remember now. "This is a day in infamy, that we have been dastardly attacked by … Japan, and … we now declare war." … Then, that was official, and we were kids, and then, we didn't know what was going to happen to us, but, we knew that, somehow, we were going to be sent away, … because we were in Advanced ROTC at that time. Our class, the Class of '44, was the only class that didn't get a commission there. … The other people that you've met, Fritz [General Frederick J.] Kroesen and the others, … fifty of us, … which later became the Black Fifty, and you probably heard the story of that, but, we were sent down to basic training. So, we had to go through the total basic training and, of course, *we had to succeed there*!

SI: Please, do not be afraid to tell us the entire story again.

RH: … Well, I understand you know the story of the Black Fifty, and you've probably heard Fritz, and Crandon Clark, and some of our other classmates. The Class of '44 didn't get its commission, like all of the prior classes did. So, we weren't second lieutenants at all; … I think we were privates, first class. … Well, we were mobilized while we were on campus, but, I can remember … when we would have formations right out on Bishop Campus, where you gentlemen have your classes, and I remember, one day, May the 24th, because it was my brother's birthday, we were standing in formation, … that would have been '43, I think, and, I remember, there was an unusual snowstorm that just came right across our faces, and we couldn't move or see, being in formation, and how the snow was hitting us, [laughter] just a little episode that we recall in cases like that, and then, we were all apprehensive, because we didn't know what was ahead for us. I guess an awful lot of people in our country, and even other countries in the Allied group, had similar feelings. We didn't know what this war would amount to, but, it was a period, frankly, of excitement for us. A lot of us were a little tired of studying, and we didn't know what was ahead there for us, either, but, the war offered some excitement, and new adventure. …

NF: Your classmate and former roommate, General Kroesen, wrote that the Advanced ROTC training was one of the main reasons he was well prepared for combat. Do you also feel that way?

RH: That's interesting that Fritz said that; … I think it probably was a pretty sound program, I guess, as I reflect on it, as he has. It probably was a good, strong prep experience for the war and, … immediately after we were sent, down in the South, [to] different camps to train, I thought those were very good, too, and then, … following that, and I know Fritz would say this, too, Fort Benning was a very strong, effective preparation for us. We were there for three or four months. Did General Kroesen say that about Fort Benning? … It was a very concentrated, tough course and we were afraid that if we didn't pass, and it was a pretty rigorous experience, … we wouldn't be commissioned, and we all … wanted to get our commission. We felt we were pretty well trained and, in reflection, Nick, it was a good background.

NF: You actually completed your junior year in uniform. It would be strange, today, to see so many students in Marine and Army uniforms in the classroom.

RH: Yes, … and one of the confusing things, again, in your interviews with others, that you may know more [about], we got involved in what they called the ASTP. We were in uniform then. That was after we returned from basic training. We came back and this was prior to Officer Candidate School. We were in uniform, then, on campus. We were sent back here and had engineering courses and things, which were wonderful for us, because it helped me a great deal in future life. Yes, I guess we were all in uniform, and, somehow, [we] were enlisted before we went down South, right from the … Reserve Officer Training Corps program. It's a little hazy to me just how it all came about, but, all this mobilization that was going on, we, … students and ROTC Advanced course kids, … followed whatever was directed, and we were in uniform for most of that time.

SI: Both before you were ordered to basic training and when you returned to Rutgers as part of the ASTP, how had the war affected the Rutgers campus?

RH: It's interesting. I think the general feeling [was], at that time, the war and its development was a growing and very important part of our lives and I think part of most Americans' lives. Whereas we were concentrating on our studies in academia, in general, during this period that you referred to, the studies, … as we'd experienced them before, lost, probably, some interest … because of the war effort, the general war effort.

NF: Not to jump back and forth …

RH: That's all right. … I'm afraid I'm doing the casual verbosity.

SI: We have never had an interview that progressed in perfect chronological order. [laughter]

RH: Okay.

NF: Along with forty-nine of your classmates, you were sent to Alabama.

RH: Yes.

NF: Can you tell us about the train ride?

RH: [laughter] You want to hear it again?

NF: The train was rumored to have been the same train that carried Lincoln to Gettysburg.

RH: [laughter] That's pretty good. … Well, it was one of the very old [cars], because it was one of those very worn, dusty [cars]. The windows wouldn't go up and down very easily. We didn't know where we were going. … It was all new, maybe somewhat exciting, to us, but, it was far from the kind of living that most of us were used to. With this antique car we were in, we didn't know what we'd find the next day. … Of course, railroading, in those days, was … kind of a dirty, dusty thing, and we were in the oldest cars and with, probably, the poorest facilities, … but, that was part of the war effort, and it was apprehension, [laughter] I think, on the part of all of us. As I'm sure you've heard with some of the other interviews, by the time we got down there, we were dirty and dusty, because there was no such thing as air conditioning. You'd open the windows, and you'd get even more dirt and dust, and that's how the Black Fifty name came about. We were looked upon as a bunch of unkempt characters who were coming in to some kind of new experience, … that, probably, the sergeants and the other non-coms down South thought, "Well, here's … a bunch of recruits that'll never make it," or something like that, but, … we fell in with the whole scheme and system relatively well, because it was true, as General Kroesen may have told you, that we did have a good background at Rutgers. I don't think we realized it, but, we did have pretty good military training and tactics, probably more than we realized. It probably made our whole experience a little bit more acceptable.

NF: What was your initial experience in basic training like?

RH: Well, it was … rigorous. In a way, it was fun, because we all, pretty much all, aspired to go to … Officer Candidate School, so, we wanted to do a good job. There are always some characters … that, you know, are a part of any group. I can remember one episode, in the real hot summer day, it was at, I think, Fort McClellan; we were being trained, in those days, to realize that we had to hate the enemy, and here we are, we're American kids, we really didn't grow up to hate anything, but, we were being trained to try to realize that we were tough soldiers and that we were going to make it, … and they'd have all kinds of signs around there, … and bayonet training. As hot and as hard as it was, we had to keep doing it, and you'd put the bayonet in, to go up. You'd go over that drill, over and over again, and I can remember one episode, after … a real tough morning in the hot day, we'd just come from bayonet training, and the officers, as I say, were trying to let us know that we were tough, and we were the best damn soldiers in the world. We were told that and we'd better believe it! So, I can remember this one day, when we came in for lunch call, sometimes we had a mail call then. The Captain of our training company looked at one of our fellows; his name was (Ableson?). He said, "Ableson, who is the best damn soldier in the world?" and he looked up at the Captain and said, "You are, Sir." [laughter] … There was fun in the whole course of things. … This particular group, our Black Fifty, if you will, we were … very set on succeeding in basic training, probably much

different from some of the kids who didn't have the background that we had. We wanted to be selected to OCS. I think, … in our case, we had to be totally successful in basic training before we could go to OCS, even though we had this Rutgers Advanced ROTC training. Somehow, we had to again qualify for OCS.

NF: Upon completion of your basic training, you actually returned to Rutgers.

RH: Yes, that's right. That was the ASTP program.

NF: How had your mindset changed since leaving for basic training?

RH: Well, I think we felt we were soldiers then. It was rigorous enough that … it was the first time we really realized that we were soldiers and in the force. … We had the benefit of all that basic training, our shiny boots, and everything was … kept in good order, and I think we felt that we were, I hope this reflects the general feeling, … eligible, ready and qualified to go to the next step. The courses that we had, probably, were just a wonderful benefit that … we enjoyed, maybe didn't realize it so much at that time, because we weren't sure of what they were going to do with us. It was the Black Fifty. That's the reason we sort of enjoyed that name, or used it, because … we felt that we were under the impression that the Army didn't know what they wanted to do with our gang, that we were the Black Fifty. Some of the others told you that we were, … "The blackest white men that he ever saw." …

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RH: … We came into the Rutgers academic environment from our various high schools and [it was] a thrilling new phase in our lives. Again, we were very apprehensive about what things were. I was very impressed about the college scene, because … I wanted to succeed in it, because my parents had both been … college graduates. I don't feel I was as well prepared as I thought I was, … and things were tough for me, but, I got involved, and I guess it was because of my prior family experience in the activities at Rutgers, because I was impressed with them, I joined Delta Upsilon fraternity because they actively rushed me. … We had our high school fraternity weekend, and I went over to the DU House, and, … of course, we were very impressed when these upperclassmen … gave us all these exciting opportunities, as we saw it, and so, I joined Delta Upsilon, but, it was only after much discussion. There were real questions from my family, not my parents. They were very supportive, but, my uncle, who was a graduate of Illinois, happened to be the national president of Kappa Sigma, and that was big to him, of course. … Being from the Midwest, this is my mother's brother, … he came all the way out from Indiana, kind of a big trip in those days, to me, to look at the Kappa Sig House and the DU House, and see whether he felt that I was making the right choice in going to Delta Upsilon rather than Kappa Sigma. I felt a little bit badly about it, because I knew how interested he was in me, … and I didn't want to disappoint him, but, I was so thrilled with the Delta Upsilon program and much impressed with it. … He said to me, … "Dick, I understand … why you're pledging Delta Upsilon," and so, he was a real gentleman, a little disappointment to him, … but, he said it that way, and then, I felt more comfortable in joining DU. An interesting part of my family, if this is not too diversionary, … he was Uncle Chet, Chester Harrah, his wife was the national president of Tri Delt, which was an important national sorority, and it's interesting that

both my aunt and uncle were presidents of their national fraternity and sorority. … So, DU was a very important part of my college life and I held every office in DU and became president. … When I was president, my term of president ended when … we were shipped out in the Army.

NF: Did you live there while you were at Rutgers?

RH: Yes. I lived at the DU House, and it was wonderful that I did, even though … my family's home was not too far away, but, I lived there, because I was so involved in a lot of the Rutgers activities, fraternity, all the others, … Crown and Scroll, Scarlet Key, then, later on, Cap and Skull, … and I was really very much involved with campus and college life. It was important to me and probably the reason that the college experience was such a wonderful, key part of my life at that time.

NF: How did you handle your newfound independence when you moved away from home? Were there any adjustments in your life?

RH: Quite some. One of my favorite stories, and something that happened as part of that transition, when we were freshmen, Dean Fraser Metzger was Dean of Men. … We would have our convocation every Monday morning and, in those days, all freshmen, as part of the tradition, would wear our green dinks. They were little green hats, … we wore them, and we were supposed to wear the dinks all the time, and I can remember, at our first convocation, where we came in and sat in this chapel, [Kirkpatrick Chapel], the same as it is now, and right up there on the elevated stage was the rostrum, and Dean Fraser Metzger, (I think he was a minister in the Christ Church, or Congregational Church, I think it was, in New England, which was quite prevalent up in that area). He had a deep voice and [he] said to us, "Boys," in his deep voice, with great resonance, he said, "these are going to be the finest four years of your lives." We said, "Well, if you say so, Sir," [laughter] but, I think of that often, and I hear Ruth coming back into the little family fun that we have, … and I have said, and say to everybody, that my four years at Rutgers were the finest four years of my life, and, of course, the joke is, Ruth thinks that, probably, my married life with her should be the finest part of my life, and then, the continuation of that is, … "Well, you're a very close second," [laughter] but, we have fun with that, and we relate to it. …

SI: One thing that I have noticed from reading and conducting other interviews is that it seems as though, particularly before the war, if you were not in a fraternity, you were almost on the outside of the Rutgers social world. The fraternities controlled many aspects of life at Rutgers.

RH: I guess that was largely true. Being involved on campus, I made friends, and I had a lot of good friends, who weren't in the fraternity. I felt a little bit sorry for them, because we did have a vibrant, friendly, quite active, maybe classy relationship in being fraternity brothers and having fraternity events and things, setting up house parties where we'd invite the NJC girls over, and it was probably a lot fuller than that of some of the students had who were off campus.

SI: The Scarlet Barbs?

RH: No, but, there was the Scarlet Barb group. We called them commuting students, whatever it was, and I think that the fraternity life, at that time, helped us get an awful lot more out of the tradition of Rutgers, involvement in Rutgers, dedication to Rutgers, because the more you put in it, you know, the more you get out of this thing. … I guess it was that fraternity experience, in that pre-war period, that was a big part of my continuing love, and dedication, and support of Rutgers. … That's kind of how it worked. I'm not sure that everybody felt exactly as I did. I'm sure they didn't, but, to me, when I graduated, just jumping ahead a little bit, a thrill to me, when I started in business here, was just to be able to [return to campus]. If I had an appointment or something to see somebody, if I could just go through the Rutgers campus, it was a thrill and I remember that. … If there was some way I could gauge things so that I could go through the campus, it was a … special treat.

SI: In conducting these interviews, the issue of divisions within the campus often emerges, such as the division between the Agricultural School and Rutgers College. They were physical separate, but, some interviewees say that a social divide also existed. By joining your fraternity, you seem to have overcome that division.

RH: … Yes, that's exactly the way it was. … Of course, a couple of us were called "hayseeds," and we'd get back for lunch, and the fellows said, "Did you pass Carrots 42?" "Yeah, yeah," [laughter] but, … we Aggies were … the subject of jokes, but, that's the way [it was]. … We got our turn. … Probably, we Aggies had heavier course studies. We had eighteen credits, most of the time, and I know I had twenty-one a couple of times, and, you know, we'd have labs in the afternoon, and these business eds, they would be taking only fifteen credits, and they wouldn't have all these labs that we had, and we felt, … "What a snap course these other guys have," and we Aggies had courses with the pre-meds and engineers, in many cases, because we weren't that big, at that time, that we could have our separate curricula. … The College of Engineering, it would only have fewer students. The Ag College gave us, probably, a better training and I can remember how some of us wanted to get rid of … the tough, rigorous physics and chemistry classes. … We thought, "We're going to be farmers and … we don't need all of this bologna." There were six of us. … We'd had two semesters of physics with the other pre-meds and engineers. We said, "We want agricultural engineering and … we don't need any more physics." So, six of us got our story together and went over to the Ag Campus and had this, we thought, very well planned. Professor Frank Helyar was the resident instructor at that time. We were really set on making sure that he … understood how important agricultural engineering really would be for us. We really didn't need more physics. We were all just … barely hanging on to physics, barely passing it. So, we got over there, and he said, "Boys, sit down," and so, we sat down at this little conference table, and he said, "I want to tell you something. If you were in Cornell, we'd let you do this, but, here at Rutgers," … and, incidentally, he was a Cornell graduate, Professor Helyar was, and a fine, fine gentleman, he said, "We at Rutgers want you to be prepared for just about anything that you will engage in in future life. We think that physics is one of the areas of science that is very important to you and will be continuously helpful. So, we don't think it's intelligent to change from that," and we went from that conference terribly disappointed that we had "flunked out," … we were sure we had a good story, … but, since that time, I have thought about that meeting so often and how correct Professor Helyar was, … because almost none of us got involved in the things we thought we were preparing ourselves for, and how much I appreciated that, and how sound advice it was! [laughter] Terribly hard to

take at the time, but, how sound he was. We had a lot of fine, dedicated professors in Rutgers, at that time, in every college, Engineering, the Ag School; in almost every area, we were blessed, I think, with having good faculty. …

SI: Most of the students who work on this project are amazed at how rich the social world was before the war, the house parties, the dances and balls, and so forth.

RH: Oh, absolutely. It was wonderfully rich and exciting, and the interesting thing, to me, if this follows that image, when we came back, those of us who were able to come back, and most of us were, to college, what a completely different world it was. We were nowhere near the "rah-rah" boys that started before the war and had this wonderful, rich college experience. We were dedicated, when we returned, to getting a degree, and the fraternity life, in most cases, was losing its interest a great deal, because we had to make it, somehow, and many of us were married then, and we had this added responsibility, and all this happy-go-lucky stuff was a thing of the past. … This is, I think, significant, because Professor Skelly … was a very much loved professor of animal husbandry in the College of Agriculture, highly thought of, and, at that time, he was voted the most popular professor on campus. I can remember standing out behind our car, before I entered Rutgers, saying to my Dad, (he and Dad became good friends), he said, "Bob, these kids are too goddamn young to be starting in school," and after you have this experience with "before the war" and "after the war," you can realize how sound an observation that was. I think of that frequently and we all see it today. How often our high school graduates are really not quite ready! If they went through the same experience that we did, how sound it would be if there were some interim experience that they could have, so that they, then, could be better prepared for school. We grew up a lot during the war and that was a wonderful opportunity for those of us who [came back]. We were fortunate that we won the war and we could come back to school. We really grew in maturity a great deal and that's so often an unfulfilled need these days.

NF: After leaving the ASTP and Rutgers, you were sent to Fort Benning, Georgia.

RH: Right.

NF: Were you aware that this might be your last stop before heading overseas?

RH: The thinking of ours, at that time, was that we were, again, so apprehensive, we didn't know what was ahead of us. We were delighted to be sent to Fort Benning, because we could become officers, if we succeeded, but, … we thought we were ready. If I can now reflect on that accurately, we'd been through basic training, the ASTP, and waiting for our appointment to Fort Benning. It was an achievement to be able to go to Fort Benning at that time. I mean, you go through the basic training, and then, the ASTP program, … really, awaiting appointment to the Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning. I think we said, "Well, we're finally making it," or something like that. I guess that's what the general feeling was.

SI: Can you tell us about what happened at Fort Benning during that phase of your training?

RH: Well, when we got to Benning, … as I remember it, there was quite a strong need for infantry officers, and, when you're building an Army in our country, the infantry is usually the foundation of aggressive action against the enemy. We were delighted to be there, and we knew it was going to be rigorous. We'd heard this, and it was just a lot tougher than we thought, but, the basic training, of course, was very helpful for us. We were pretty well prepared, but, we knew it would be an upgrade in training. All aspects of the training, the strategy, classes in tactics, leadership, and things like that. … I think most of us were really ready for it, and we learned a lot, and I think it was very much like West Point. In all the formations and things, we had to be completely, you know, top grade in whatever we did. I remember, before we … got our commission, during the later part, for example, … everyone had to do a hundred push-ups and … your body had to be completely straight! You couldn't cheat on them in any way. So, at nights, back in our barracks, we'd practice it. If you practiced more and more, you got to be able to do it. In formations, we were jumped on by the instructors down there, on any little thing that we trainees, (candidates), did wrong, and I guess we became pretty proficient in Army life, trying to make it through to get our commission, and we were, again, a very strong class. They needed officers, … but, they didn't relent on our training. We, of course, hoped they would, but, they didn't.

SI: When you were in OCS, did you have any concept of just how perilous it was to be a second lieutenant in the infantry, the casualty rates and so forth?

RH: I think maybe we overlooked the perilous aspect of it. We wanted to be good officers. We knew we were going to go in and fight for our country. I didn't particularly think about how perilous it was. I just didn't know what was ahead. I wanted to be a good officer and I think most of them in our Fort Benning class were in the same boat. We wanted to be good officers. We wanted to succeed. It would have been tough if we didn't have that ninety-day [training period], the more I think about it, and I guess General Kroesen may have said this to you, the training that we had, from ROTC, to Advanced ROTC, through basic training, ASTP, and then, Officer Candidate School, was really an excellent background. It was probably a better background than most officers, commissioned officers, had before us, *probably a lot better*!

SI: When you were in training, were your instructors mostly regular Army, Reservists or draftees?

RH: Most of them, I think, … weren't regular Army, although some were, … and that would be in the later part of '43. Most of them had been there. In the Army, it's interesting, when you are there six months or so, you're a real seasoned person. They operated as though they [were veterans]. They gave the image of being seasoned guys, only some of whom were in the regular Army, but, even these people who'd preceded us, become your instructors, you admired them for having made [it]. I really can't answer how many of them might have been regular Army.

SI: Would you say that they were all of the same quality?

RH: … They were all pretty sound and I know we were impressed, we candidates; we were impressed with them, good quality!

NF: At Fort Benning, you were assigned to the 86th "Blackhawk" Infantry Division.

RH: That's right.

NF: You were the only one of the Black Fifty assigned to that division and company.

RH: No, no, that's not correct. There were some others.

SI: In the division?

RH: Yes. Is that what you asked?

NF: There were others in the division, but, were you the only one assigned to Company D?

RH: I guess I was the only Dog Company officer. I have to think about that. I know some of the others were assigned to other companies in the division, and then, the regiment, 342nd Regiment.

NF: After developing this strong bond with your classmates in the Black Fifty, was it difficult to see everyone go their separate way?

RH: I don't know that it was so tough, because it was a new experience that you look forward to. You have to take what they gave you, and so, you accept it. We tried to stay in contact, as best we could, but, that was difficult, because we were sent to different areas. … Again, a whole new experience … and you wanted to succeed. I was appointed to Dog Company, as an .81 mm mortar platoon officer, and I had some friends who were heavy machine gun. … Dog Company was comprised of two heavy machine gun platoons and an .81 mm platoon and I was leader of the … mortar platoon.

NF: What was your relationship with your new sergeant like? What type of person was he?

RH: You mean … my sergeant?

NF: Yes.

RH: Interesting. You don't know, of course, what they think of you. You have to develop a feeling of respect. The one sergeant that I had, … I guess, maybe, I had two or three, but, it's a little unclear as to the experience I had with some of them, but, this one sergeant, who was, I've forgotten his name, he was a staff sergeant, and … was a fairly reliable person, because, you know, the sergeant covers many things, … administrative stuff, and training stuff, and tactical stuff, that you, as an officer, don't quite have time for. This one guy, … this was the staff sergeant, when we got on the frontlines over there, … and we started to capture some Germans, (awful thing to remember), but, he … says, "Lieutenant Hale, leave those son-of-a-bitches to me." [laughter] He was kind of tough, and I was afraid of what he would do with them, because we were in the middle of battle, and you know the expression that "war is hell," and it is! I was afraid that he was not as, oh, let's say, … an understanding, compassionate non-commissioned

officer as he should have been. I think he shot a couple of them, but, then, you know, you can't be terribly critical, because you're right in the middle of … situations where they're going to shoot you or you're going to shoot them, and, sometimes, we moved so rapidly, but, to answer your question, some of us had very good sergeants who were very helpful to us, and, like life, some were not that efficient, but, sergeants were key people … in the leadership area, because, whenever you could turn things over to a sergeant who could handle them, it was a big help to the commissioned officers.

SI: Was this staff sergeant a veteran of earlier campaigns?

RH: No, he wasn't. There were probably some that I had that I can't remember who they were and I don't quite remember their background. Very often, the top sergeants, the master sergeants, … had been in the Army before. They were, you know, the top of the non-com ranks. … Some of them were older, most of them much older than I was, and that was an interesting situation. You tried to, you know, properly exert your authority when you're a commissioned officer, without their knowing how green you really are. [laughter]

NF: What was your voyage from the United States to Europe like?

RH: Interesting, another very interesting thing. … In the 86th Division, … at this stage, after our being assigned as new second lieutenants, we were being trained, and thought of, that our mission would be that of attacking the mainland of Japan, because we had made some … improvements over in the [Pacific] islands. The objective, in order to beat the Japanese, we were probably going to … face water maneuvers and hit the mainland. So, we were trained on the West Coast and went to … two or three of the camps out there. … We had amphibious training. … This is the way we were going to be most effective, … and we went through this amphibious training, hitting the beach, and we'd climb up the ropes, and this was a very exciting, sound training, and we would … hit some of those islands right off of California, because that was an easy way for us to train ourselves and our troops in what you do after you hit the beach and so forth. Then, the Battle of the Bulge, all of a sudden, came upon our Allied forces in Europe, and the Battle of the Bulge became very serious, because, … [for] the Germans, this was sort of their last big, hard fling, and they were making inroads, big inroads, and so, here we were, the 86th Division, all of a sudden, we were shipped back from the West Coast, all the way here to the East Coast, and going over to Europe. … We relieved the 82nd Airborne Division [Eighth Infantry Division?] on the frontlines of the Bulge and they were tough guys. They'd been on-[the]-line and they were seasoned. We weren't seasoned. We thought we were well trained, but, we weren't seasoned at all, [laughter] … but, I think, as a unit, we were handling things pretty well. When we left, we left from Camp Myles Standish. This was a real secret maneuver, big secret. I know I couldn't tell my friends, they found out, but, I couldn't tell my friends about this, but, as a matter-of-fact, a lot of stuff, we didn't know, but, we, as officers, knew a few things because of logistics; we had to have completely … new uniforms, tents. All of the equipment and everything was changed from the Pacific [to] over here, because that's where the real need was. So, we left on a troop ship that was called the … *Stockholm*? It was a German built troop ship, and we officers had these wonderful quarters, and the poor men were … eight deep in the holds, down there. … They'd get sick and everything. It was rough, and this was in the winter, and it was very cold. … It took us thirteen days and that was when the U-boats were effectively

operating. We had all these depth charges, all the time, you know, going down and, I don't know, ours was kind of a large armada. We were protected by, I guess, Navy ships and subs, but, … it was a rigorous, scary time. We finally landed in Le Havre, France. … One of the interesting things, since you mentioned it, was that … this was a traditional luxury liner and we had an orchestra there in the dining rooms. … It was really a luxurious situation for us, as officers, but, of course, we'd go down to see our men, you know, frequently, and make sure they're happy, and so forth, but, what a crazy situation; [laughter] … this wonderful luxury liner, at least it was luxurious to us, at that time, and it was being used as a troop ship, which carried out the mission. We had to use all of our shipping facilities, in order to transport all these troops, … kind of an odd or unusual situation, with all this luxury, and, here, we're going over to war. [laughter]

NF: Where did your unit join the front, near Salzburg?

RH: No, it was …

SI: Cologne?

RH: No, close; I think that we were on the Cologne River and the Germans were on the other side. Cologne? You said Salzburg.

SI: Weiden.

RH: … It's close to your towns, but, I think that was the name of it, but, anyway, we went on-line there, and … we knew we had to cross the river. The Germans were on the other side and we had some reconnaissance teams. We had in our battalion this boxer who was [the] eighth ranked heavyweight in the world, and he was a pretty good looking fellow, and friendly, and, before we left the States, pretty popular with the women, … but, when we got over there, went on-line, he was asked to take this patrol [out], it was a night patrol, and, … all of a sudden, he chickened out, I mean, just couldn't handle it, and so, we had this other officer who went through basic training with us, from Rutgers, Bob Hess was his name, … I don't know if that means anything to you, because he … died later on, he took the patrol. He was real heavy. … He barely got through OCS, because of his weight. He took that; [this] young, unassuming guy took over from this … successful heavyweight guy and succeeded. That's a little thought of an item that we encountered. When you go up on-line, you're contending with everything under the sun! … We had K rations and C rations, and I'm sure you've heard of those, but, often, the fellows didn't go for some of those, so, we'd move in on these little villages, where we'd be going on-line, … and if there was a farm there, we'd gather some eggs, [laughter] or whatever you could. I mean, this was not too well organized. Once you get in on-the-front, in competition, it's sort of a no-holds-bared thing, and you contend with whatever are in the elements and the locality with what you can, and you make it work. It's not all SOP, [standard operating procedure], the way we learned all of this stuff in basic training or Officer Candidate School. You have to make things, what we called, "field expedient."

NF: When did you first come under fire?

RH: I think it was, … [when] we first came under fire, … in the river and, … you know, the Germans were very good with these .88s. That was a weapon that they had that was very effective. The Germans were very good at protecting natural barriers. They knew how to use them, you know, a hill, or a river, or whatever, and these .88s they would throw [at you], and you couldn't hear them. You didn't have time to hit the ground. It wasn't like a mortar, but, they were, I think, a more effective weapon than ours. … I think, today, we've developed a lot more effective mortar fire and stuff than we had then. We thought it was good then, because we didn't know any differently, but, that .88 hitting us was very effective, and I'm sure they had many casualties from our fire. We didn't have too many. I had to be on the frontlines, up in front of the front rifle companies, because I directed fire from our .81 mm mortars on the other side of the river. We went on-line a little north of the bridge at Remagen. It was a very famous battle. … We were north of that, on the Cologne River. Funny, I should remember some of these things, I suppose, a little bit better, but …

SI: You can always add to the transcript.

RH: … Once it's behind us, frankly, … I didn't really have nearly the interest that someone like General Kroesen would have, because he stayed in it and that was his life. My life was coming back here, … so, I forget some of these things that should be significant.

NF: In *With the Old Breed,* E.B. Sledge, a Marine who served in the Pacific, wrote that he could not get the whistling sound of incoming mortar fire out of his head. In his experience, the apprehension, anticipation and fear he felt over where they would land were the worst feelings in the world.

RH: That was true of the German .88s. … They would, "Whoop," and you didn't have time to hit the ground. … That's, maybe, a little different from your reflection here, but, that was a very effective weapon that the Germans used against us. … Our .81 mm mortars and our .60 mm mortars; the .60s, the rifle companies used. They were smaller, easier to handle. Ours were big, heavy items and we had to have a whole crew for each mortar. They could hear these. Somehow, our mortars went, "Phew," you know; you'd hear the "Phew," but, at least you could hear it and hit the ground a little easier. We couldn't hit the ground as fast as the German .88s would come at us. …

SI: Were you ever fired upon with "Screaming Mimis?"

RH: Probably? I'm trying to remember.

SI: From what I have read, they made a horrible shrieking noise while in the air.

RH: … I don't recall that, but, probably, we went through it, because we were in all kinds of combat against the German forces and the German forces varied. Some of them were their elite, some of them were the regular German Army, and we probably … were in contact with all of their weapons, because some of it was hand-to-hand fighting. To capture a town, much of it was hand-to-hand, because we were going down through Bavaria, and, … (we called them Krauts), we had the Krauts on the run, but, some of them were fanatics. They'd stay there 'til the last

moment. Then, you had to be careful, because … some of them would put up the white flags, and you got so [that] you couldn't trust them, because they'd take it down and start firing at us.

NF: What were your impressions of the German soldiers and the German Army in general? You probably got a closer look at them once you began taking POWs.

RH: … That's interesting. I think I admired most of them. They were pretty rigid, well trained, tough, articulate people, just like, probably, the Germans that I think of today as being similar to that, I mean, they're the same people, and the elite … were hard, highly disciplined, tough people, and they were … pretty rough on us. I mean, they'd kill us. They didn't want prisoners, you know. They were just tough, but, very good soldiers, probably better soldiers than we were. …

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

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Richard Hale on February 14, 2003, in Edison, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

NF: Nicholas Ferroni.

SI: Please, continue, Mr. Hale.

RH: Okay. We were talking about the quality of the German soldiers. I'd have to say, certainly in our area, and it was probably true in all areas, they were quite high quality. It could have been [that], … toward the end of the war, they didn't have as high a quality militia as they did earlier, I would think, because we had captured or killed a lot of, … probably, their top quality soldiers, troops.

SI: Were you encountering "old men and young boys" towards the end?

RH: You mean the German Army?

SI: Yes. It also sounds as though you encountered *Waffen* SS and other elite units.

RH: Yes, we did. We encountered both the SS troops and the regular German Army troops. I had forgotten about it, but, I guess we did … see some young kids, younger than we were, in uniform, probably. … We had some exciting experiences as we were in combat. Maybe I'm getting ahead of what you are thinking about, Nick, but, … as I mentioned before, we encountered the first German enemy there on the river, and they were very proficient in protecting their rivers and natural barriers. I had a very critical, crucial experience in crossing the Danube. We got to the point of … getting them on the run, pretty much, going down through Bavaria. We would capture town after town, and, at one point, toward the end, I remember, my troops, even though we were a heavy [.81] mm mortar group, we fought, where we had to, like the riflemen. We officers, then, instead of our .45 caliber pistols, … we were issued carbines. A carbine is a smaller rifle and it was more effective for us, because we could … really use it more accurately, for longer range. Officers were the only ones who were issued carbines. The

riflemen … had the Garand rifle, the M1. We were capturing towns and these were pretty hard fights. Sometimes, they could see us coming, and, [if] they didn't have many defensive troops, they put up the white flag. You ran into all kinds of situations. I remember, particularly, a time that we'd captured towns, I think it was close to Attendorn, Germany, we'd gone through this battle and we'd captured towns two or three days in a row. We made good progress going down through Bavaria, and, finally, the men didn't have … much sleep and rest, and I finally said, "Well, as soon as we take this town," (I've forgotten the name of it), … "you're going to be able to rest." … I didn't have the right to say that, but, they were getting careless, and, you know, you go day after day, and you don't have enough rest, no place to sleep, and, you know, it's kind of dangerous. I said, "We capture this town and we're going to rest." … I didn't have the right, because some of the higher commanding officers were the ones who would determine that, but, I know, once people have weapons … and they're tired, they get careless with them, and it's just not efficient warfare. So, I mentioned this to them. We captured this town. It was a tough, tough fight. My friend, … Lieutenant [William E.] Seiders, was killed. … He was the commander of the machine gun platoon right next to me, and then, the other machine gun platoon, Lieutenant Gustafson, he wasn't able to "take it." We got … right up to the Danube River. We had captured towns and had the Krauts on the run, so-to-speak. … It was difficult. Sometimes, they would stand, and they would use a natural fortress, or whatever it was, and we would have a job capturing it, and we'd probably taken more casualties than we wanted, things like that, but, we got to … the Danube River, and this is where I'd said, "Men, once we capture this town," they could rest, we could recoup. We'd just lost our two platoon leaders, two heavy machine gun platoon leaders. … It seems to me it was the afternoon, and I'd told the men that, and about fifty yards up the river, I couldn't believe it, I could see, Colonel Austin, I think, our battalion commander, I'm not sure, and here is this person walking up with the two white pistols, … and it was General George Patton, and I could see George Patton doing this, [Mr. Hale makes a waving on gesture], which meant we're going to cross the river, and I thought, "Oh, no, we can't do it," but, you don't say that. See, to him, strategically, he knew what he was doing, but, tactically, … it was a risky thing, because I knew our troops really were tired and weren't prepared for it. So, I led the crossing. We had rubber boats in darkness, and I lost quite a few people, but, we captured the ground, and, when you do this at night, you don't know what … the situation is. You study it, and you try to plan things as best you can, but, when you're in new territory, and particularly at night, it's a very hard thing to feel comfortable and reorganize. I remember, some of the men were hit, "Lieutenant Hale, I'm hit," and I'd hear it here and there. … You always do the best you can. We did consolidate, but, it was costly for us. From the very high level of General Patton, you know, we conquered the territory and kept driving. That's important to him. It was important to me, … tactically, not strategically, but, tactically, to try to have reasonable control of our troops, but, that's war, you know.

SI: While you were advancing so rapidly, were you ever in danger of outrunning your supply lines? Was supply ever a critical issue in the advance?

RH: Yes, I guess it was continually a problem, depending on what kind of supplies they were. That was always a concern of ours, particularly when you're moving, and I don't focus now on specific areas, but, you always have to consider them. Once you make a gain, you have to consolidate it, then, move on. We probably were too darn thin, … supply wise, but, we had to get by with it, as best we can, and I can't remember specific supplies. We usually would have

our K rations and C rations. … That's what we were supposed to use in battle, not very appetizing to most of the soldiers, but, that's the way it is, but, I can't remember specific areas of short supply at times. Maybe it was always so short of what we needed [laughter] [that] we got used to it. You make it up with whatever you can.

NF: Did you see yourself as becoming more desensitized as you spent more time in combat?

RH: Yes, you do, you get hardened to that. It's because you're involved in it, and your mission, you know, … is to fight, and you do get hardened [to] some of the things. I can remember, going into battle, the first time that I saw, here's a GI, dead. … We were entering a town, attacking this town. Here were GIs with the same clothes on and everything as I, dead, and I thought, "Holy smokes," you know. "Why isn't this me?" It was kind of a revelation, … but, then, you accept this stuff, and then, you think of this sergeant being rough and stuff; I would probably … carefully caution the men, but, I suspect some of this hardened stuff that the non-coms did was in … retaliation to what some of the Germans would do with us. I'm sure it was, I mean, because, very often, their SS troops would not take prisoners. … They were a tough enemy, you know.

NF: Would you say that the green soldiers had the same feelings as you when they first experienced combat? Was it a process?

RH: I think so. We were all kind of in the same boat. War was new to us officers, you know, as it was … to the privates and non-coms. We're all in the boat and we just had similar feelings. I think, … my reflection on most of the time, these soldiers, and they're just regular guys, and you'll find that in Brokaw's book, you'll get a good feel for it. We were civilians, and we had to play a new role in … our lives and establish our philosophy of life, in combat, and we adjusted to it as best we could. Some of us were better than others. …

SI: As your unit advanced into Germany, you must have encountered many German civilians.

RH: Yes.

SI: Did you have any direct contact with any German civilians?

RH: Oh, yes, we had direct contact and, interestingly, you know, the common story, when you would encounter the German people, … you know, the civilians, women and children, is, "*Nix Nazi, nix Nazi*." Everyone would tell you … they had nothing to do with the Nazis. "The Nazis were the ones," and, you know, I think that's true. Many of the civilians … weren't Nazis out to kill us. They were part of the German populace, … but, we always got a kick [out] of it. Everybody would say they're, "*Nix Nazi*," you know, they couldn't speak English, in most cases, but, that was the first thing, … "Don't shoot me, *nix Nazi*." "I'm not a Nazi." … We even made jokes about that, because everybody said they were "*nix Nazi*." That's how they could stay alive and they'd probably heard stories about our … atrocities and things like that. You know, that's what goes on in war.

SI: The military imposed a non-fraternization rule on the troops. Did you have any trouble enforcing that rule?

RH: [laughter] It's almost impossible to enforce it if some of the soldiers have opportunities there, you know. [laughter] … It's part of the bad aspects of war. … Probably, our soldiers were as promiscuous as anybody in the world, and you'd try to control it, because you had to keep your troops together, and they had to be concentrating on the mission, as best they could. … You couldn't allow any of that, even though it probably happened. … I don't remember big problems with it. In our case, initially, and this changed … when we declared V-E Day, it was a little different situation then, you were settled, and you lived there, until you were transported out of there, but, we moved so fast, there wasn't a chance for too much fraternization, I think, as I remember it, … and you had to have all your men … there and accounted for in all the missions.

NF: What did you see of the war's impact on Germany, the devastation and so forth? Was the nation totally ruined?

RH: It varied, I think. It's interesting, Ruth and I have traveled through Germany in the last twenty years and it was beautiful, traveling up and down some of the rivers, and we would see a lot of the large cities, including Berlin and some of the cities south of there. You'd see … a lot more destruction, or the destruction that happened during the war, than we would see as troops, because, in our area, going down through Bavaria, principally, in our division, it was not the large cities so much, where there's a lot of bombing that the Allies did, in some of … the areas, Dresden and some of these areas, that we saw later on, that were bombed out completely. After the war progressed, naturally, we had a larger [air force], we had both the American and British air forces, we did an awful lot of bombing in Germany. We had to, in order to get them to surrender, and, also, to neutralize some of their armament factories. We had to do a lot of bombing, and a lot of those factories were in and around cities, and we would see this, after the war, in traveling through it. The only thing I can reflect on is, I didn't see it during the war, because I wasn't in those cities, or my unit wasn't in those cities, but, we certainly did destroy an awful lot. I felt sorry for these people who had to reconstruct. Another amazing thing, what a great job of … reconstructing the Germans did since World War II. Some of the cities are beautiful, and the guides would show us what things were like, how terribly bombed out some of these areas were, and, boy, they have restored an awful lot of their life and their culture. …

SI: How much air support could you draw upon? Did you ever, say, call in an air strike? Was there any interaction between the ground and air forces?

RH: Yes. Well, I haven't gotten to Korea yet. I was one of those lucky inactive Reserve officers who was sent to Korea, and then, we would call in our napalm bombs, and this was tactical, because, … over there, we'd be fighting in close quarters what we called "the gooks," North Koreans, … and their tactics, I'm jumping way ahead of where you are, … then, were to destroy our command post, our company command post, lower level, and that's how they would be effective in combat against us. They were very good, because we're on the hills, you know, and they would envelop the command post and try to kill us junior officers, … but, what we often did to combat that was, … we had the opportunity to call in the fighters and the bombing. One real problem with that is, we had to be very careful that we were not hitting our own troops, because it was close combat, and I don't know, … nobody will know, how many of our own troops we killed, but, we did effectively … battle the gooks, the Chinese and North Koreans, by bringing

those napalm bombs [in], and I guess that's war. … We had some casualties among our own troops, but, we did effectively fight them. The napalm was a fire bomb, and then, it would spread and, hopefully, kill the enemy.

NF: After the war in Europe ended, what were your thoughts when you were told that you would be sent to the Pacific?

RH: [laughter] Well, my thoughts, initially, our thoughts, here, we won, V-E Day was a great, great time, and, if you don't mind, before I got there, when we drove down to Bavaria, we were right close to Berchtesgaden. Berchtesgaden was Hitler's famous hideout, and so, I took my jeep driver down there. … V-E Day hadn't been established; it was another week or so away. So, I took him down, went into Berchtesgaden. This hideout had … these gorgeous [things], everything. It had all kinds of wonderful pewter and everything, and that's a good opportunity for our looting, but, then, he had this big wine cellar, all these very well known wines, the finest in the world, … and so, my jeep driver and I got a burlap bag and put in all these bottles, because we knew that V-E Day would be right close by, and so, this was to be a celebration. I remember filling up these burlap bags with bottles of fine wines, and we took them back to wherever our billets were. We had a camp set up there, some way, and we took those back. I was one of the fortunate ones, because I was one of the first officers in Berchtesgaden. … You wanted to take anything here and you just couldn't do it, [laughter] you know, and I can remember sending some labels home to my father. He said, "Son, I've got all these labels, but, where is the good stuff?" … It was a thrill to go in this famous hideout that we all heard about and the media was always talking about this. …

NF: What happened after the war in Europe ended?

RH: Yes. Well, we didn't know, of course, … but, we found out, shortly [there]after, since we, the Blackhawk Division, didn't have as much time in Europe, even though we were in the middle of the battle, … it was determined that we were going to [be] sent back to the States, be re-outfitted, and go over to the Pacific, because Japan hadn't surrendered then. That was the next battle. … We accomplished the mission over in Europe. Hitler was destroyed and Mussolini, and that was great, but, we didn't really know [what would happen]. We got sent back to the States before other outfits, and the reason was, they wanted to send us over to attack Japan, and it was re-outfitting, and it took us about, as I remember, thirty or forty-five days to be re-prepared, because we had had amphibious training, so, we were somewhat accustomed, or ready, to attack in the infantry. … I think that was part of the rationale. So, we get out … in the Pacific, in all these troop ships, and, all of a sudden, they dropped the atomic bomb. … Then, our impression was, the Army didn't know what to do with us, and so, … we were shipped over to Manila for clean-up duty. Japs would be up in the hills, and they didn't know the war was over, … but, that got so monotonous, and everybody wanted to come home. I'll tell you, it was boring! When you're not in battle and you think you're doing nothing, it's frustrating, because you want to come home. You did the job, you want to come home!

NF: You were on a ship when you heard about the dropping of the atomic bomb.

RH: Yes.

NF: Did everyone realize, "Thank God, the war is over?"

RH: I guess, yes. That was the general feeling, yes, and I guess we thought, … "They've surrendered. We're going to be sent home," but, it was like an immeasurable time, a long time. We were over in Manila, in the Philippines, and we had this clean-up duty, and it was so boring to us. After all that we'd prepared for, and we thought, "We weren't accomplishing anything, so, why can't we go home?" I mean, enlisted men and officers both. We were all in … sort of the same boat.

NF: Did you encounter any Japanese soldiers in the Philippines?

RH: … Yes. We captured some and, you know, it wasn't a big deal, and it wasn't interesting. It wasn't strong forces. … You would encounter small groups and stuff and, usually, there wasn't any problem in getting them to surrender.

NF: I have always read that the Japanese were ferocious fighters who refused to surrender.

RH: Oh, true, but, toward the end of the war …

NF: There were individuals …

RH: Yes. I imagine they weren't the hardened Japanese soldiers that we would originally encounter in some of those famous battles, I think, as far as we could tell.

NF: How did you feel about the point system?

RH: I just would give anything in the world for a few more points. [laughter] …

NF: They later lowered the number.

RH: Yes, and … did I get some dysentery? No, I didn't, but, I did in Korea. … I was very fortunate, because I was in the frontlines in most of that and I was never hit once. I remember being covered up with dirt from the bombs and things and the people firing at me, because I was usually out in front, to control fire, … and I had a radioman there, and … I would direct .81 mm fire to the enemy, and that's the reason I had to be out in front of the rifle troops, so that I could … have better vision. One thing, this crossing the Danube was a very difficult time. As I mentioned to you, … this Lieutenant Gustafson, who was the machine gun [platoon leader], he was the one who, somehow, just had, I guess, a nervous breakdown, I guess it was, and I was too stupid for that, I guess. I don't know why, but, it … may have bothered me, but, I wasn't the nervous type. … He and I corresponded, all these years, and we went out to his fiftieth anniversary, and he was so excited, he didn't [know], it was a surprise, he broke down and cried. He was an all-American on the Washington State football team, a fine guy, very good friend, became a veterinarian, but, when Ruth and I walked in out there, … he just broke down. He couldn't believe it. Sometimes, some nice friendships like that develop. The other fellow who was a good friend of mine, even a better friend earlier, Lieutenant Seiders, a good officer, he was

killed, right on the banks of the Danube. As I say, the Germans were very good at … using these natural barriers … to defend themselves. They're sound soldiers.

SI: As you moved through Germany, did you face resistance mainly in the form of infantry assaults, harassment attacks or a mixture of both?

RH: I'd say a mixture of both, yes, different situations. … Some towns were well fortified and they fought pretty hard. Others, we were a little surprised that they put up … the white flags, and, you know, it was a great relief when they would surrender, and we'd take them prisoner. Sometimes, you couldn't … determine whether they were going to fight hard or surrender. Probably, we had superior fighting forces, you know, as it worked out. The Danube, … this was a big, let's say, mission achievement, I guess, and … because I took the troops over, I was recommended for the Silver Star. … I'd had two or three Bronze Stars, which most of us got if we were in battle, you know, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, and that sort of thing. … That was an indelible experience, because of my friends that I'd lost, and, … again, in General Patton's view; usually, you never see an outstanding general. We combat soldiers, [laughter] but, I couldn't believe that that's who it was. We all knew who General Patton was by then. We were under his command. We were under both General Bradley and General Patton, with the Fifth Army, or the First Army, was it?

SI: Third Army?

RH: Third Army, part of the time with the Third Army. We were changed. The commanding generals were changed a couple of times. I've forgotten the background for that.

SI: For you, personally, and your unit in general, how did you deal with losing men?

RH: Well, usually, when that happens, you're in battle, and you have your missions, and … all of your thinking is kind of concentrated on the mission ahead, the fighting, and you didn't have time to deal with that, like you would today, for example, because … you're fighting for territory, for your sake, in order to win battles, and I guess it was a … diminishing concern of ours, I think, would be the accurate answer.

SI: From a practical point-of-view, were you able to get the replacements you needed?

RH: Yes, sometimes. Actually, the key, the core of all of our fighting forces … were trained in the States, so that even when we got a few replacements, we could deal with them, because we had enough experience as troops there. That's fortunate, because, … until some of these tough battles, we had most of our own troops that we had trained in the States. You see, we trained in the 86th Division; we trained a lot of … our troops, our privates and non-coms. We had them for a while after we were assigned to the division. So, in the training camps, we knew who they were and we were responsible for training them, so that when we got overseas with them, we're pretty knowledgeable about their ability and that sort of stuff. I was kind of fortunate that we did know that. When I was sent over to Korea, they didn't have such a thing. I mean, I was just a replacement officer, and that was tough going, because I went right on the frontlines, and I figured, since I was such an experienced, knowledgeable guy, I wouldn't be sent to the frontlines,

but, I had to take over Captain (White's?) Company A. He was killed, a West Point officer. I thought, "Hale," and … I don't think I was cynical, I thought, "I have been so fortunate to be on the frontlines in World War II and never hit, but, the Lord has taken care of me long enough." I thought, "This is it." I mean, again, the history, … the Gooks would envelop these command posts of these lieutenants and captains and that's the way they could be successful. … I really wasn't cynical. I thought, "Well, you know, I've been so fortunate so far, this is probably it."

NF: You felt your luck might run out.

RH: Yes. I just figured that … my luck couldn't last much longer. I had so many close calls and was never hit once, never got the Purple Heart. [laughter]

SI: Several combat veterans have noted that their thinking shifts from, "Everything is going to hit me," to, "Nothing is going to hit me."

RH: You know, again, when you're in battle, … either close combat or where they're firing, it seems to me, maybe I was too dumb, … I was thinking about what we were doing more than worrying about whether I was going to be hit or not. A lot of people probably … thought differently than I. They were concerned about being hit, and maybe they should be concerned about being hit, [laughter] but, I would go out there and lead, and I thought, "Boy, I'm stupid." … I could have done it a little bit differently, being more self-protecting, and I thought, … "I'm not smart enough to be [scared]."

NF: Do you think that your mindset contributed to your survival? Some accounts indicate that the anticipation of getting hit is worse than actually getting hit.

RH: I suspect so; I think so. … I've never really reflected on some of these things. … I've never even talked to anybody about this, like we're being frank, exposing these situations. I did think, … after the battles or something, "What's the matter? I must be just dumb. Some of these other people wouldn't do this thing," you know. … It wasn't a complimentary self-expression. It was just that, "I'm taking chances [that] I really, probably, shouldn't." In going across Remagen, [the Danube?] the river, … I happened to be in charge of it, because the other officers were killed or whatever, and I didn't mind the assignment. You learned to take your assignments. You know, if you're assigned by a higher officer to do something, you do it, but, … even though I thought the men weren't ready and needed rest, … you do the best you can. … That was probably the toughest battle that I can remember, and we had more casualties than we wanted. …

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/10/03
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/17/03
Reviewed by Richard M. Hale 7/28/03