

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK
AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES G. HANDFORD
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. James G. Handford, on Friday, October 25, 1996, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

Yaelle Cohen: Yaelle Cohen.

KP: I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your father, who also graduated from Rutgers University in the Class of 1915

James G. Handford: Right.

KP: Actually, it was Rutgers College back then.

JH: Correct.

KP: Why did he come to Rutgers?

JH: I think he came to Rutgers because he received a ... fine scholarship here, and ... he really wanted to come here, anyway. ... He got a wonderful scholarship, and he came up here, and another friend of his came up at the same time, Bill Campbell, also Class of 1915, and I believe they roomed together when they first arrived on campus. ... Then, both went to Harvard Law School afterwards.

KP: Your father came from Vineland.

JH: Yes.

KP: Did he grow up on a farm?

JH: He grew up on a farm in Vineland and, after Harvard Law School, he wanted to practice in North Jersey. So, he settled in the, then, quite a fine town [of] Newark, and he practiced law there for over fifty years. ... I grew up in Maplewood, which is a suburb of Newark, and, when I went away to the war, in '44, while I was away, the family ... summered one summer in Ocean Grove. I had never been there myself, prior to that or at that time. My mother and father decided to buy a house down there and sell the one in Maplewood. They purchased a ... home in Loch Arbor, which is just across Deal Lake, north of Asbury Park, and that's how I got there. I came home, after the war, and that was the first time I saw the new family home.

KP: They moved away when you went off to war.

JH: Yes, yes. I went to Columbia High School in South Orange, in Maplewood, and then, I was drafted. ... Well, we all went to Fort Dix in those days, and then, they put us on what I would call a cattle car, a troop train, [laughter] and we went to Camp Blanding, in the wilds of North Florida, which was a wretched place, and, of course, since I was young, ... they gave me a rifle and said, "You're in the infantry." [laughter] "Oh," I said, "that's wonderful." So, it was very

rigorous training and, ... but, we thrived on it, but, we were exhausted on weekends. [laughter] ... Then was the Battle of the Bulge period and they rushed us up. They shortened our ... cycle and sent us. We went up to Camp Miles Standish, which is, I believe, just adjacent to Boston, and we got on a troop ship, and we landed in England. We were only there at a camp city for a few days, and they put us on a small ship, and we went to La Havre, and we had full field packs, and [laughter] it was terrible, and, at La Havre, you have to climb practically straight up, and we got up there, and they sent us forward, into a replacement depot in Verviers and Belgium, and I remember, vividly, when they issued ... the gun, the M-1 rifle, to me there. ... It had a little scar on the side, and one of the old, grizzled veterans said, "Oh, this fellow was shot three days ago," [laughter] and so, then, we got on these ... big trucks, Army trucks, and we were going up towards the front, and we saw this Red Cross train, painted white with the Red Cross on the side, and it was open on the sides. It was sort of a makeshift freight type of thing, and these guys are yelling out, "You'll get yours," [laughter] and we felt wonderful. [laughter] ... I was very fortunate, in respect that they, out of nowhere, put me in an armored division. That ... was heavenly, to get out of the infantry. Some of the fellows that went, were in my infantry unit, were armored infantry in the armored unit I was in, and some of those fellows were killed, running up behind the tanks, you know. I was in the reconnaissance company of the 32nd Armored Regiment and I was in a half-track. I was a machine gunner. I had such bad eyes, they figured, if I throw enough [laughter] ammunition at them, [the Germans] I'd hit somebody, but, we were ... sort of an entity onto ourselves, this half-track, and we had the most unique group of people in it. We had an Indian from Oklahoma who, sometimes, would imbibe in [some] firewater he would find somewhere and want to shoot the company commander. [laughter] Well, that was ... not allowed, but, we had a Polish fellow from Hamtramck, which is the Polish section of Detroit. ... When we liberated the concentration camp at Nordhausen, we lost him for about four days, ... all these Polish girls were mobbing him, and, I don't know, he just disappeared for a while. ... That was the most touching experience of my life, to pull up to ... the gate of this Nordhausen, I have pictures of it here, and to see this [scene]. ...

KP: When you pulled up to the gates, were any of the inmates still alive?

JH: Yes, there were people alive and they were like little children, the ones that were ambulatory. Somehow, they had just got a hold of bicycles. I think, probably, the SS guards had them, and the SS guards all disappeared before we arrived, so, there was no fighting to get into the concentration camp, and they were riding around on bicycles, and they were hilarious. ... It's hard to describe how they were, the screaming, and hollering, and laughing. ...

KP: Were you in one of the first units to arrive at the camp?

JH: Yeah, but, we only stayed there a few hours, because we had another job. ...

KP: Backing up to your childhood, your father must have had all kinds of stories about Rutgers. You must have visited Rutgers long before you entered as a student.

JH: Well, yes, ... he loved Rutgers and he ... liked the type of people that were here. It was a more or less homogeneous group of people, from all over, all walks of life, but, basically, the same ... type of person, you know, and he ... told me about the great football teams they had. He wasn't a great sports fan, but, he told me about, Robeson wasn't here at that time, but, they had other people, and they had this coach called ... Foster Sandford, and he was sort of a legend in his time. He was the ... Frank (Leheigh?) of, not Notre Dame, but of Rutgers, you see? ... There was a golden era of Rutgers football, and they won most of their ball games in those days, and he said that they were considered in the top twenty-five in the country. ...

Myrtle Handford: He carried the money bag, you remember?

JH: Oh, yes, ... Nielson Field. You know Nielson Field?

KP: Yes.

JH: The gates of Nielson Field were on College Avenue, where he entered. ... By the way, I wonder what ever happened to those gates? Some people think that, during the war effort, they tore them down and melted them, smelted them. Find them if you can. They'd look good out at the stadium, but, he had to carry the money from the games up to Old Queen's and deposit it in Old Queen's. I said, "Pop, didn't you have a guard?" ... "Oh, no, I just had a satchel." He said, "I carried it up College Avenue."

MH: He said, "We didn't need anyone in those days." [laughter]

KP: Did your father play any sports at Rutgers?

JH: No, no.

KP: However, it sounds like he was an avid supporter of the team.

JH: Yeah.

KP: Do you remember going to football games here while growing up?

JH: Well, I remember a few games that we went to in ... Nielson Field, [laughter] in the old days, and ... there was a lot of spirit, and the student body all turned out, not like today, where they do other things. You never see them at the football games, but, ... there was really a spirit and a love for Rutgers, and, of course, he knew all the school songs. I wonder how many of these football players even know, "On the Banks of the Old Raritan?" There was allegiance there, you know, and I don't think, today, it's here.

KP: Before the interview began, you commented that your father had expressed some sentiment that things had declined. He sort of said, "Things have changed. It is not the same."

JH: Well, he thought that we were a little rowdier than ... his era was, and that they spent more time in the library than we did, [laughter] and just generally the feeling from one generation to another, you know, nothing like the good old days.

KP: Your father practiced law. What type of law did he practice?

JH: General practice in Newark, he had a partner, fifty years in the Kenny Building on Broad and Market Street.

MH: And, the same secretary.

JH: He had the same secretary for fifty years, too. [laughter]

KP: He did general practice.

JH: General practice.

KP: It sounds like it was a small firm.

JH: It was, yes. ... He worked for insurance companies out of Hartford, a lot of them. He represented them in court. So, a lot of his work was with insurance matters. ... His big case was in the Supreme Court, but, he lost the case. He said, "It was those liberal judges down there." [laughter]

KP: When did he argue that case?

JH: Oh, about '36.

MH: Oh, you were just a little boy.

JH: Felix Frankfurter was the Chief Justice. ...

MH: You must have been about ten.

JH: Ten, maybe. I was ten, maybe, in '36, yeah.

KP: That must have been a big case for him.

JH: Yeah. He introduced me, ... in the cloak room, to some of the judges and I was totally overwhelmed.

KP: Oh, you went with him?

JH: Yes, I went with him, my mother and myself.

KP: You actually saw him argue.

JH: Oh, sure, yeah.

KP: That must have been very thrilling for you.

JH: Once in a lifetime.

MH: But, you never said to him, "Retire." He never retired.

KP: Really? He worked until he passed away.

JH: Yeah. He was totally devoted to his profession, as you are. [laughter]

KP: Do you know how your parents met?

JH: Let's see ...

KP: Your mother was also from Vineland.

JH: Yes. ... My mother's family, her father ... was a builder, in building, construction, and her brother worked with her father, and they lived in town, because they didn't have a farm, and they had lived out in the west side of town in a farm. He said he tired of farm work early in life, but, ... he was very democratic. We used to go down there, when I was young, and we'd see these old, grizzled farmers, and he'd go around, and chat with them, and reminisce about some things that happened ten, fifteen years prior to that. He was a very democratic man.

MH: ... Your father's sister was friendly with ... your mother's family. Isn't that how they got together?

JH: Oh, that's right, yes, but, you know, in a small town, they get to know each other at a very early age.

KP: Vineland was a very small town, then.

JH: Yes, it was, yes.

KP: I imagine that you spent a lot of time down there as a child.

JH: Well, we used to spend summers down there, and ... Dad would stay, and come down on weekends, and, sometimes, for a week or two. He'd come down on the Blue Comet. I think he went from Newark to Philadelphia, and then, from Philadelphia, the train, I guess, went to

Atlantic City, and we'd stop in Hammonton on Friday night, and he'd get off the train, and ... we'd drive from Hammonton over to Vineland.

MH: ... He wasn't married when ... he went to Rutgers.

JH: No, no. ... People didn't do that in those days.

MH: But, his mother saw your mother with somebody else. So, she said, "James, you better get a hold of Isabel. She's out with someone else." [laughter] He used to ride on his bicycle. [laughter]

JH: I still have his bicycle and he used to work summers in Vineland, to help defray [the] cost at Rutgers, as a carpenter's helper. ... I still have his bicycle, an old (Ivor Johnson?), and he told me he dropped this massive timber down on the bicycle, and the straight bar that goes across, it barely dented it. Now, I said, "That was quality." They were too good for their own ... worth, because they went out of business later. Ivor Johnson was a firearms maker, too.

KP: I imagine that the bike is just as solid today ...

JH: Oh, it is solid.

KP: ... As it was in your father's day.

JH: Yes.

KP: You mentioned that he had picked Newark for his practice. Why did your parents choose Maplewood as a place to settle?

JH: Well, that's another story. ... I don't know exactly why he picked that spot, but, as my grandfather, my mother's father, was a builder, as a wedding present, they built a house for him.

KP: That is a very nice wedding present.

JH: They don't do that nowadays. [laughter] So, he just had to purchase the lot, and buy the materials, and they did the work for him for nothing.

KP: Wow, I am very envious of that. What type of town was Maplewood when you were growing up?

JH: Oh, it was always a middle-class community. I thought Columbia High School was sort of cliquish. I mean, ... they had different classes of people there, but, basically, it's an upper middle-class community.

KP: When you say it was cliquish, were there fraternities in the high school?

JH: No, no, there weren't fraternities, but, certain groups seemed to carry on together. I didn't especially like it. I liked Rutgers a lot better.

KP: At Columbia, did you find that, for example, one group dominated, say, the sports teams?

JH: Yeah, I think so. I would say that. We went back to our fiftieth reunion, you see. You still saw the cliquish groups all sitting together.

KP: They broke up into the old cliques. You were not a part of that?

JH: No, ... I didn't participate in any sports, except track, and my mother used to say, "Oh, my, Jim, you're going to have an enlarged heart before you're thirty years old." [laughter] I'm still here.

KP: Were you ever a Boy Scout?

JH: Sure. ... Also, I got my first military experience by joining, I think I was a junior in high school, the New Jersey State Guard, and they met in the Orange Armory twice a month, I think, and it was close order drill, and, after I had a little of that, I didn't think I wanted anymore, but, I stuck it out, and they disbanded after I left, so, there was no more New Jersey State Guard. [laughter]

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

JH: ... My father was a workaholic, and I can't recall [anything], other than the fact that things were rare. All this was later on, in the war, but, during the Depression, ... I was just six or seven years old then. ... We were basically a frugal family to begin with. We never had a lot of luxuries. My father and mother, they didn't go out to eat a lot, meat and potatoes crowd, you know.

KP: They were frugal, but, your father was employed.

JH: Oh, sure. He did well. He did well in support of the family.

KP: It sounds like he had a good roster of clients in the 1930s ...

JH: He did. ...

KP: ... To be arguing a case before the Supreme Court.

JH: He did have, ... and it was quite an honor for him to be the representative in Newark of many of the big insurance companies, to defend their cases.

KP: Especially since Newark is a big insurance town in its own right.

JH: It is, yes, yes.

KP: How active was your family in the Presbyterian Church?

JH: Well, I don't think we were totally active, but, naturally, I went to Sunday School, and I guess we're more active today than we were then.

MH: I think once they moved to the Shore, they were more active in the Presbyterian Church.

JH: Yeah, and, now, I'm an usher in the auditorium, so, that's quite a job. It's not only a Sunday job, it's a Saturday night job, because they have a lot of shows there on Saturday, and very reasonable, and people come from all over. The problem is that parking is at a premium.

KP: Did your mother ever work outside the home?

JH: No, she never worked.

KP: Even during the war?

JH: Never worked.

KP: Did she join any clubs or women's organizations?

JH: Yes. ...

MH: Yes. ... She belonged to the Women's Club and she had a bridge club.

JH: Bridge club, yes, ... and belonged to some circle in the church. That was about it.

KP: Your father was a Republican in the 1930s, an era when the Democrats were triumphing around the country.

JH: Oh, yes. ... [laughter]

KP: What did your father think of Roosevelt and the New Deal?

JH: Didn't think much of him.

KP: When you were in high school, did your parents assume that you would be going to college?

JH: Yes.

KP: Did they assume, also, that you would be going to Rutgers?

JH: I presume so. ... They never discussed it, really.

MH: No, I think that my mother-in-law wanted him to go to Princeton.

JH: Oh, gosh. ...

MH: ... They were going down to Vineland, and Jim said to his father, "I want you to stop in New Brunswick," and he went in and decided that's where he was going.

JH: The town was a bit different in those days, too. Of course, during the war years, it was a boom town, with the Camp Kilmer out here, and the cowboy bars, and all kind of crazy things down on Albany Street. ... One time, I remember, when I was here at school, we had four movie houses. ...

KP: Yes.

JH: There's none now, I don't think.

KP: Well, the State Theater has been saved.

JH: Oh, that's right, ... yes.

KP: They actually show movies there, every now and then, along with other things. People have commented that the cinema thrived in New Brunswick.

JH: That's where you'd take your date, yes.

KP: To the State Theater?

JH: The State and the Opera House, which was not an opera house. The Opera House burned down, finally, and ... there was that shaky little place at the corner of George and Albany. In fact, in later years, the Douglass girls were not allowed to go near that place. [laughter]

KP: Why were they not allowed to go there?

JH: Well, they were showing all these scroungy movies, you know, and ... there was a fourth movie house, the State, I don't know. ... Was that the Rivoli?

KP: I am not sure. I do not know all of the names.

JH: ... I think there were four movie houses. ... Once in a while, if I wanted to splurge while I was in school, I'd go into this Chinese restaurant on Albany Street, upstairs, sixty-five cents, full course luncheon. [laughter]

KP: It sounds like you enjoyed college a lot more than high school.

JH: I did, yes. I went out for the football team, but, unfortunately, ... fortunately, I guess I was, I was drafted before the first game. [laughter]

KP: You were in high school when World War II broke out.

JH: Sure.

KP: What are your earliest memories of the war, before the United States entered the conflict?

JH: Well, I was always interested in history, and I majored in history at this university, and, of course, it's followed me through my life, and I used to be mesmerized by these reports from the Polish Front, and Chamberlain and Churchill, and all these events, and I, of course, was familiar with it right from the beginning. ...

KP: At the time, from 1939 to early 1941, what did you think America's role should be? Did you think we should intervene?

JH: Early on, not many people wanted to intervene. There was an America First group that ... wanted us to stay out of these entangling wars abroad. They felt that, after World War I, ... we had lost a lot of men, that we shouldn't get embroiled on the other side of the ocean, but, as things materialized, I think the general public saw that it would be very difficult for us to stay out, especially after the Battle of Britain.

KP: Did you favor intervention at that time? Did you think lend-lease was a good idea?

JH: Well, I thought lend-lease was a good idea, if it could keep us out. [laughter] I mean, I was right in the sights of the guns, you know. I would, eventually, have to serve and nobody wants to be shot at, if they can help it.

KP: You would have preferred it if we could have stayed out of the war.

JH: Yeah, but, I understood, when I was drafted, that I had to go, and I was doing the right thing, and there was no qualms.

KP: Did you know any families or individuals who were America Firsters?

JH: No, not really.

KP: What about pro-interventionists?

JH: No. It was sort of a muted thing in the community.

KP: Do you remember where you were when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

JH: Well, it was a Sunday, I remember, and ... when we heard the announcement, we were transfixed to our radios, and heard all the terrible events, and ... it was just something hard to believe.

KP: It sounds like you were not expecting the attack.

JH: No.

KP: In your high school, were there any special wartime activities, such as scrap drives or bond drives?

JH: Yes, we did have a scrap drive, and, of course, you know, during the war, we all had rationing. ... Mother had to be very careful with these little [coupons], ... I have some of those still at home, ... and car stickers that [said] A, B, C, according to the amount you were entitled to, of gasoline each month. ... My father was the air raid warden. He said there was some woman feeding her baby, and the light was on, and he hated to tell her to ... turn the lights out, you know. It was a blackout, total blackout, ... but, he enjoyed being an air raid warden. I still have his hat.

KP: The helmet.

JH: Yeah, the helmet ... and the armband. [laughter]

KP: Did you serve as an air raid warden or anything like that?

JH: No, no, no. Well, I did serve in the State Guard.

KP: When did you join the Guard? Were you a senior in high school?

JH: I was a junior in high school. My friend said, "Oh, this is wonderful. We get a uniform," [laughter] and I ... was quite naive, but, it wasn't a lot of work. ... It took me away from my books one night a week.

KP: Where did the Guard meet?

JH: We met in the ... Armory in Orange.

KP: How old were most of the Guard members?

JH: Well, ... they were all ages.

KP: How much training did you do?

JH: Very little, close order drill, mostly. [laughter]

KP: Did you learn how to use any weapons?

JH: We had weapons, but, we didn't go into any [detail]. ... We just sort of, "Right shoulder arms," and off we went.

KP: It sounds like you would have preferred to avoid the infantry if you could and that you learned this from your stint with the State Guard.

JH: It's true, but, I had no choice, you know. ... Can I interject something?

KP: Oh, please do.

JH: ... I told you, we were ... in a half-track and a reconnaissance company. As the name denotes, we were out looking for various locations and where the enemy was, ... but, I was so young and naive, ... I never thought about being killed, and I look back, in retrospect, and I say, "Gosh, in some of these places, we were the only vehicle there and the Germans ... could have, you know, killed us at night." ... Sometimes, we'd ... just sleep underneath our vehicles, and, when we moved, the whole group would, like in covered wagons, when they had the Conestoga white wagons, ... bring them in a circle. We'd bring our tanks and all our vehicles in a circle and we'd sleep underneath them. Well, this is silly, [laughter] but, one night, I had a nightmare, and I screamed, and all the guys opened up with their .30 and .50 caliber machine guns. They thought the enemy was attacking. I never quite lived that one down. [laughter] ... At that time, I remember, there was a SS trooper, and he was a bad type, very bad type, and he wanted to go back to Hitler. You know, it's brutal, war. So, these guys were fed up with him. They said, "Well, you go back to Hitler," and, ... before he got out of sight of the men, they opened up with all their machine guns and blew him to pieces. I mean, human nature such as it is in combat, strange things happen. Then, they would go over to him and see what souvenirs they could get off of him. At one time, ... the Indian and I were dug in at the edge of an airport, in our foxhole with our machine gun. We took it off the vehicle, and the vehicle went somewhere else, and there's a hedge here, and we're dug in here, and the air field's there, and there's a long hedge, and, on the other side of the hedge, you hear the clunking footsteps of a German soldier, because, you know, they wore those hob-nailed boots, and the Indian wanted to shoot 'em. ... He was a member of the (Volkstraum?), which, at the end of the war, were ... flotsam and jetsam, you know, little kids and old men, and this guy must have been seventy years old, and he had a German uniform on, and he turned white. ... I said, "No, no, don't shoot him. We'll take him prisoner." ... Another interesting experience when we took prisoners, I remember, one time, we were ... in this small town, in the square, and there was a few hundred prisoners, and our job was to go through and shake them down, see if they had any weapons, and ... I never took watches,

and chains, and things, but, some GIs would ... take their watches off of them, booty of war, I guess, but, I just didn't feel that it was the proper thing to do.

KP: When did you realize that war was dangerous and that you could easily get killed?

JH: [laughter] Well, some of ... these gory pictures used to come back of the invasion of Poland and of all these dead bodies laying all over the place. Another thing that should have concerned me that didn't concern me, I did not have enough points, at the end of the war, to come home, as some of the old, grizzled veterans had, and we stayed there. ... If it hadn't been for the bomb, we were slated to go invade the island of Honshu, of Japan, the main island. ... Thank God they dropped the bomb, because I very easily could not be here today.

KP: Before you went off to war, you had the chance to go to Rutgers, briefly. How long were you here? Was it for a full semester?

JH: No, I was here for a quarter and it was a different world ... then.

KP: There were not many civilians on campus at that time.

JH: No, there weren't. There was the ASTP and the ASTRP. In fact, the college football team played sports with those fellows, and, I remember, I was in ROTC, and some of the boys said, "Well, these soldiers used to get into the movie houses for, like, a quarter, in uniform." So, we had the bright idea to wear your, you know, [ROTC uniform]. It's a military uniform. ... You had that torch of knowledge on the little badge and the guys would say, "Oh, yeah, we're in the flame-throwers," and ... all these ROTC guys would go to the movies. [laughter]

KP: Oh, that is the first time I have heard that. Rutgers was a very small college before the war, but, the war really cut into the student body.

JH: Well, ... I started at Rutgers in Winants Hall. In Winants Hall, in those days, was the bookstore, the dining room, the post office, and your lodging. Everything was just in that one area. It was lovely. It was just grand. [laughter] ... A lot of the fraternities were closed and some kept open and ... took non-members to dine. ... That's where I [ate my] evening meal only. At lunch, I'd eat up at the cafeteria.

KP: Did you try to join a fraternity in 1944, your first year here?

JH: No, not really.

KP: Did you take part in any sports or activities?

JH: I went out for the football team. [laughter]

KP: What about when you returned?

JH: Well, when I came back, ... you know, I didn't want to get involved with ... sports.

KP: When you enrolled in Rutgers, how long did you think you would be able to stay?

JH: Well, I figured I'd only be three months, and I thought I'd better get my foot in the door and get started here, and I also went to school, ... immediately after the war, at Biarritz American University in Southern France, and I got a semester's credit out of that, and then, I went one year here to summer school, one or two summers, and so, I graduated. I was only really here, [at Rutgers, for] three years. ... I came in in '44. ... '48, I should have graduated. As it was, I should have graduated in '50, because I was in the Army for two years, but, I had taken that summer school and, also, Biarritz.

KP: You also had a quarter.

JH: Yeah, I had a quarter.

KP: Did you participate in any other activities when you were here that quarter?

JH: No, because I wanted to get my studies in order and, ... as everyone said, "You have to start off on the right foot."

KP: How were your studies that first quarter?

JH: Oh, good, good. I had a little trouble with Spanish, though. ... [laughter]

KP: You mentioned that Professor Edward McNall Burns was your favorite professor. Did you meet him that quarter?

JH: I had met him that quarter and it was my first day at Rutgers, in class, ... on the first floor of, ... you know, the old history building. ...

KP: Bishop House.

JH: ... Bishop House, and we came in and we all sat down. ... This was in June. He had a white linen suit on, very distinguished looking, with a mustache, and then, he called, "Mr. Handford," and I thought I had arrived. [laughter]

KP: Was Dean Metzger still here?

JH: Yes, he was here.

KP: Did you have any dealings with Dean Metzger?

JH: No. ...

KP: What did you think about chapel?

JH: Oh, chapel was compulsory for that quarter when I was here, I think on Tuesday. It was sort of nice. It was an ecumenical type of thing, and I thought it was a good thing for these young fellows to get a little feeling for God, and no one was opposed to it, whatever your faith was. It was only an hour.

KP: People have very distinct memories of chapel and Dean Metzger, particularly those who got into trouble.

JH: He was a legend in his time. Needless to say, I kept my nose clean.

KP: You mentioned earlier that Camp Kilmer's presence was really felt in New Brunswick.

JH: Correct.

KP: There were many bars that arose to cater to the troops. Were there ever any fights?

JH: ... Oh, yeah, there were various brawls and things of that nature. Boys will be boys, but, there were a lot of these cowboy bars downtown, you know, and you could hear the music practically up on the campus.

KP: Were there ever any warnings from, say, Dean Metzger that you should really avoid those parts of town?

JH: Yes, yes. Most of us did.

KP: A lot of men talk about going to the Coop for dates. Did you date at all while you were at Rutgers?

JH: Yes, I think a few times that summer. It's not there, is it? ... I get these mixed up. The one on the highway is ...

KP: Douglass.

JH: It changed ... names. ...

KP: Yeah. It was NJC then, but, now, it is named Douglass.

JH: Yes. I liked those little, old ... houses. I thought that was unique. It must have made the girls feel at home.

KP: Corwin.

JH: But, they've changed it all around, haven't they? ...

KP: No, those houses are still there.

JH: They're still there? They're very unique on a campus that I would be familiar with. ...

KP: Those houses are still being used. You were drafted and did not have much of a choice. If you had had a choice, which branch of the service would you have chosen?

JH: The Army.

KP: You still would have picked the Army?

JH: Yes. ... I get seasick very readily. [laughter]

KP: The Air Corps did not appeal to you?

JH: No, flying is not my [cup of tea]. ... [laughter]

KP: That left the Army almost by default.

JH: Correct.

KP: What branch of the Army did you hope for?

JH: Well, I knew ... that they wanted cannon fodder. ... [laughter]

KP: You did not even think about whether it would be good to go into, say, the Quartermaster Corps?

JH: No, no. I had nothing to say about it.

KP: Yes, I know. So, you finished your quarter, and then, you reported to Fort Dix.

JH: I went first to Newark, then, Fort Dix, and then, we'd fall out every day for about a week, and they'd call out your names, "And So-And-So," and you'd go off somewhere on a train. We went off on a train and, "Oh, we're in Louisiana. Oh, no, we're in Texas." We went at night, and going through all these little towns in the South, and we ended up in this wretched Camp Blanding, Florida, which is up in cold, wretched, north Florida.

KP: You mentioned that you had visited Washington with your father, when he argued his case before the Supreme Court.

JH: Correct.

KP: How much traveling had you done before the war?

JH: We did very little traveling.

KP: Washington must have been a big trip.

JH: Yeah, we went for ... three or four little trips. Vineland was our big trip. [laughter]

KP: Which is not that far away.

MH: Cape May. ...

JH: Cape May. We used to go down to Cape May and Wildwood, and the Philadelphia crowd all love it down there, you know. It's just as congested as the North Jersey beaches.

KP: What did you think about the South? It sounds like you were not that pleased with Camp Blanding.

JH: Well, you know, you didn't have hardly any contact with the civilian personnel. ...

MH: Well, the camp was way out of town.

JH: Yeah, out in Stark, and, you know, it was wretched, and I only went [on] one leave, one weekend pass, and I went to St. Augustine. I thought that was more cultural than going to Jacksonville and fight with the Navy. ... I got in one of those little carriages with a horse and I thought I was the King of England. They drove me all around St. Augustine, and I liked history, and it was enjoyable, but, ... in our barracks, we had two tough fellows from Brooklyn, the Grasso brothers, and they were really tough. ... I think they were criminals to begin with. [laughter] ... Every weekend, they went to fight with the Navy, ... and then, they'd come back. ... What we used to do, we had a little pot bellied stove and cords of wood, and, when we went to bed at night, we'd put these cords of wood up and down these two aisles and the bunks on each side. We'd put them about six feet apart, and they'd come in about three in the morning, drunk, and trip over all these cords of wood. [laughter]

KP: So, they would go in every night and ...

JH: Yeah, want to fight with the Navy, sailors.

KP: Why?

JH: Well, they were ... just wacko. [laughter]

KP: Do you know what happened to them after Camp Blanding?

JH: No, but, thank God, they weren't in my outfit after that.

KP: It sounds like you expected them to be thrown into the brig at some point.

JH: Yes. ...

KP: Or, the ...

JH: Guardhouse.

KP: Guardhouse, yes. Who else was in your unit at Camp Blanding? Was there anyone as colorful as the Grasso brothers from Brooklyn?

JH: ... Not really.

KP: Were most of the inductees from the Northeast?

JH: Yeah, most of us were from the Northeast, and the cadre were all ... old, grizzled sergeants who had been in Europe, and they had brought them back, and they were career soldiers, and they were nearly all Southerners. ... This one fellow, I could see why they fought so well in the Civil War. This one fellow, he was tough, and instead of saying, "Right here," he would say, "Right cheer. Right cheer. Line up, right cheer," [laughter] and we sort of liked the old guy after a while, but, they'd work the tails off of us, you know.

KP: They were combat veterans.

JH: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and ... they were career men, so, they had to put them somewhere. So, they made them cadre in ... these infantry basic camps.

KP: In terms of your training, what did they emphasize? Since they were combat veterans, did you ever hear a line like, "You really need to learn this, because, when you go into combat, this is what will happen?"

JH: Well, yeah, they said that all the time, but, they never reminisced about any of their experiences. In fact, there was a line drawn between you and them, you know. ... They were there to train you. They weren't there to converse with you. ... They stayed with themselves and they were all, like, master sergeants or higher up on the enlisted category.

KP: They kept their distance.

JH: Yeah, they kept their distance.

KP: What do you remember most about training? What are your most vivid memories?

JH: Oh, when we went on our long road marches, twenty mile marches, ... double, double, double time. These older fellows would fall out, and you'd have the meat wagon, the ambulance, following the troops along, and they'd pick up these guys. You'd step over them, you know. Some guys, thirty-five, forty years old, they couldn't keep up with a twenty-year-old, and I felt bad for those guys, but, they all lived. [laughter]

KP: You had a number of older men in your unit at Blanding.

JH: Yes, yes.

KP: What are your worst memories of training? What did you really not like?

JH: Well, one time, I wanted a weekend pass, and I didn't get it, and that bugged me. ...

KP: Do you know why you did not get the pass?

JH: ... My rifle wasn't clean. [laughter]

KP: When you were in the State Guard, you had thought that some of it was for the birds. In training, did you think that some of their procedures were also for the birds?

JH: No, I felt that, you know, if it was going to save my life, why not? and then, they used to ... come and have inspections, and check your bed, and they'd flip a quarter, and, if it didn't bounce, ... they'd tear it apart. You'd go at it again. My wife's a nurse. She knows, ... you know, how to make a bed, Millie. I never learned. [laughter]

KP: Did they flip a lot of quarters on your bed?

JH: Not too often, but, there was stealing. I think it was those Grasso brothers.

KP: With the Grasso brothers, I would imagine that there was a lot of gambling going on in the off hours.

JH: Yeah. ... I was never prone to gamble.

KP: Did other people gamble?

JH: Yeah, they gambled. Cards were a big game. Everyone played cards to pass the time.

KP: You were training for the infantry at Blanding, correct?

JH: Correct, ... yes.

KP: Basic infantry training?

JH: Yes.

KP: How long were you at Blanding, sixteen weeks?

JH: Well, that was the full cycle, but, I think we left after twelve weeks.

KP: You only had twelve weeks of training.

JH: Yeah. They accelerated it at the end. [laughter]

KP: When did you arrive at Blanding?

JH: September, October? Right after that quarter. The quarter ended in September, here [at Rutgers].

KP: At that point, there was some wishful thinking that the war in Europe might be over by Christmas.

JH: Yeah. General Eisenhower made a five pound bet with General Montgomery that it would be over by Christmas and, ... due to the Bulge, he lost his five pounds.

KP: Were you hoping that the war in Europe would end before you were needed?

JH: I didn't have any qualms. I mean, I was young and it was exciting, ... see the world. ... [laughter]

KP: You wanted to go overseas.

JH: I always liked to travel.

KP: After Camp Blanding, where did the Army send you?

JH: We were, for a short period, in Maryland, for a week or two. I forget the name ... of the fort there, and then, ... we went on leave for a week, and I was then to report to Camp Miles Standish, I think it's in Cape Cod, and we went out, in the dead of winter, from the port of Boston. ... There were still German U-boats around, but, it never bothered me, but, so many of these guys were so sick, oh, my goodness, and, you know, they stacked you, like, six guys here and six over there, one on top of the other. You had to be a monkey to climb up to the top bunk, and a lot of fellows were really deathly sick, and, ... you know, we made it over there, but, they were vomiting all over the boat. It was awful.

KP: You got sea sick, too, as you noted before.

JH: But, not bad though. ... I was woozy, but, I had my wits about me.

KP: How good or bad was the food going over? A lot of veterans have commented on how memorable the food was.

MH: Jim eats anything. [laughter]

JH: I still [do]. I don't remember too much about the food. I was anticipating the big event when we landed.

KP: Were you going over as a replacement or as part of a unit?

JH: We were going over as a replacement.

KP: Therefore, you did not know where you might end up.

JH: I didn't know where I'd end up, but, I presumed I'd be in an infantry unit. Ninety percent of the people were in infantry and, by a stroke of genius, I was placed in the Third Armored Division.

KP: Did you land directly in France?

JH: No, no. ... I get Liverpool and Southampton mixed up. Which one is on the Atlantic, Liverpool?

KP: Liverpool.

JH: Landed at Liverpool, and we went across the Midlands to Southampton by train, and the British Red Cross girls were giving us donuts, and ... they were very nice, and then, we landed in Southampton. We were only there about a week, and, I remember, ... one night, we went out to a little club and they were playing music. ...

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

KP: They were playing the two national anthems at this club.

JH: Yes, and I was up at the bar, and this fellow that looked like John Bull, ... he just looked like the personification of ... what John Bull would be like, ... he said, "Don't ... trust those frogs. [laughter] Don't trust those frogs. They got us all in this mess and we have to have you come over and get us out of it." So, I still remember that. There was an animosity toward the French among the British.

KP: Even though they were allies in the fight against Germany.

JH: Yes. Oh, and then, at the end, ... they played the two national anthems. We went back to our tent, billet, where we were bivouacked, and this girl, pretty girl, came out, and she said that, "Some man's chasing me," or something, so, we said, "We'll escort you home." You know how Americans are, so chivalrous? We took her to her door, and went back to our camp, and then, a few days later, we went on a small boat, a (Packard?), I guess, over to La Havre, and we had full field packs and everything, and we climbed up that hill, and then, we got on trucks and went up to Belgium and Verviers, and that's when they issued that gun. ...

KP: That had been previously used. [laughter]

JH: Used, and then, all the women were waving white handkerchiefs at us as we went up to the front, and that's when ... that Red Cross train passed us, coming the other way. ... The most touching [moment], of course, was at the concentration camp.

KP: Once you got to Belgium, you learned where you would be going and you were assigned to a half-track.

JH: I got assigned to the 32nd Armored Regiment Recon Company and I never saw other soldiers. There were four of us in this vehicle and we were sort of an entity onto ourselves. Sometimes, we were lost behind enemy lines. They couldn't read maps or something. [laughter] ... One time, they said, "Oh, ... the Germans are counter-attacking," and the rumor was, if they'd catch you with any of these stolen Nazi flags, and guns, and things, they'd shoot you on the spot. So, these guys are throwing this stuff out of the back of the half-track and we're hightailing it back toward our own lines.

KP: Riding around on this half-track, it sounds like you were fighting your own war.

JH: Well, we'd ... see something, and then, we'd run, really.

KP: Was there a sergeant or a lieutenant in charge?

JH: Only a corporal. ... He was about thirty-five years old. Now, that's interesting. ... We went up to the Rutgers-Syracuse game and we ... made a little side trip into Pennsylvania. His name was Tom Benjamin and we visited his wife. ... He had met her in Deburg, where we were stationed after the war, and, ... although she was Dutch, she was working for the French Red Cross, and we went and visited her, and she said, "Tom died in June." So, I just missed [him], you know. We had ... fully intended to go to our Third Armored Division annual event at Valley Forge that previous June, and he had been there, and it ... [was] just lost.

KP: It sounds like you stayed in touch with him over the years.

JH: Yeah. ... I've written to him and he was a teacher. He was a teacher in the school system there, in the little town in Pennsylvania.

KP: Who else have you stayed in touch with?

JH: Well, ... this Indian, American Indian, from Oklahoma. You had to just keep him away from booze, and, you know, this car commander liked wine. ...

KP: That was the corporal?

JH: Yeah, the corporal. So, we're in these ... little, tiny towns, and ... I was the youngest one, so, ... sometimes, we'd stay there in the town at night, and they'd put me on guard duty, and I could have been shot in the back, but, I wasn't worried. It didn't bother me, and then, these guys, ... they'd say they'd liberate the wine cellar, so, they would, you know, and I didn't drink, so, and we also had a cigarette ration, and I never smoked cigarettes. I was such a good boy. [laughter]

MH: But, your mother used to send cigarettes to you.

JH: Oh, ... she sent me cake.

MH: Macaroons. [laughter]

JH: Macaroons. They were ... hard as rocks when they came. [laughter] I felt like throwing them at the enemy, and she sent me a dress enlisted man's hat. Now, what was I going to use that in combat for? [laughter]

MH: She sent you ...

JH: ... A sleeping bag one time. ... I was so embarrassed. [laughter]

MH: She sent you ... a first-aid kit.

KP: Your mother was very concerned for you.

JH: Yeah, well, I could handle myself.

KP: Most people talk about being on the line and moving very slowly. It sounds like you were very mobile.

JH: Yeah, and there was some animosity, though. They had this Italian-American guy, Tony. ... He was the driver of the vehicle. ...

KP: Was he the one that liked wine?

JH: They all did, especially the Indian, but, ... (Mandrino?) was his name, and he was the driver, and he was a New York boy, rough and tough, and this Polish guy from (Hamtramick?), he was rough and tough, and they'd get in fights sometimes, and the Indian was going to shoot everybody up, and the car commander, [it] was all he could do to keep peace among his own four people in the vehicle, but, in the end, everything turned out fine, and I didn't go to Japan and get shot after all.

KP: You joined your unit in February of 1945.

JH: February, yeah.

KP: When was the first time that you were actually shot at?

JH: Oh, soon thereafter. [laughter] Well, first of all, I remember, ... if you get between the lines, ... artillery had duels with each other, and I could not tell when ours was going out or theirs was coming in, so, I ducked down, and the boys laughed, because, of course, they knew exactly, by the sound of it, which was our artillery and which was the German artillery.

KP: How long had your recon unit been in combat?

JH: I was a replacement. Oh, by the way, ... when I got into this half-track, there was a big [patch] in the rear door. It looked like it had been ... shot through and it was all redone, you know. "Oh, yeah, yeah," he said, "That guy got killed that was here last." [laughter]

KP: That must have made you feel great.

JH: Yeah. ...

KP: Were you sitting in the same spot?

JH: Yeah, same spot. There were two .30 caliber machine guns on each side and a .50 caliber and a ring up on top, a lot of fire power.

KP: Had your unit been with the division since they landed in France?

JH: I can't say that.

KP: They did not say?

JH: No. ... We never discussed that. They were there when I arrived.

KP: Yes. They also seemed to know what they were doing, for the most part.

JH: Fortunately. Yeah, fortunately. [laughter]

KP: You learned to duck during an artillery attack rather quickly. What other things did you learn on the job?

JH: Well, when to ... run, when to get out of there. Of course, one time, then, we were in a raspberry patch and I love raspberries. I used to grow them in the summer in Vineland. It was ... funny that I had to dig a foxhole in this raspberry patch, because ... there was a German tank over the hill, and we could hear them firing, and they said, ... “We can’t get out of here. ... We gotta fight.” Well, fortunately, the guy didn’t come over the hill, but, we were dug in there in that raspberry patch. ... I was eating raspberries while I was [digging in]. ... [laughter]

KP: When you say that you had to dig in and fight, do you mean only your half-track?

JH: Yeah, just our half-track. ...

KP: The corporal decided this?

JH: Yeah, yeah, that we couldn’t get away from it, that if we got in the vehicle, that they would zero in on this big half-track and blow us right up.

KP: You had to dig a foxhole.

JH: Yeah, yeah, ... and we had our bazooka with us. If the tank came over, [we were] to shoot the bazooka.

KP: You were glad that you did not need to do that. Did you ever have any close calls?

JH: Not really. I wouldn’t say there was any close calls. You know, you can never tell, because it’s such a fluid situation, and, especially in the later part of the war, you’re on the move all the time.

KP: People have told me that, towards the end of the war, sometimes, there would be stiff German resistance, but, at other times, you just kept moving and the resistance was, at best, nominal.

JH: Yeah, I mean, ... there was no infantry attached to us, so, we were just sitting ducks there, and, if we didn’t move at the proper time, we could have been killed.

KP: Did you have any contact with German civilians?

JH: You know, that’s interesting. I had very little contact [with civilians] during the war. Of course, I remember this one time, the first time I saw a dead soldier in the road. The Americans always picked their dead up, you know, from a morale standpoint, and got them out of there. Well, ... this German was laying along the road, and these half-tracks would go by, it was a dirt

road, and he was just covered with dust, you know. It was a terrible sight, but, you get used to that after a while. Contact with the Germans, during the war, [there was] very little contact with the Germans.

MH: Didn't you try to look up somebody?

JH: Oh, yes. ... In Vineland, I worked for Mr. Stern. He was a German Jew, and he was one of the fortunate ones that got out, got to America, just before the war, and I had worked for him for twenty-five cents an hour. That was big money, and I'd save up and buy a war bond. ... He was telling me if I would look up some of his relatives in Frankfurt. Well, I went to Frankfurt and I had the address. ... The place was just, it's unbelievable. It was just level. People were living in cellars, and I really made an earnest effort to ... look for his relatives, but, I could not find it. The streets signs were all obliterated. Everything was obliterated.

KP: Did you ever find out what happened to his relatives? Were they killed in the camps?

JH: ... I never found that out, because I didn't go back to Vineland after the war.

KP: This man that you worked for in Vineland, did he ever talk about his experiences?

JH: He never really talked about it.

KP: Let me give Yaelle a chance to ask some questions.

JH: Oh, can I say one more thing?

KP: Oh, yes, please.

JH: ... I didn't digress into discussing our trip over there with the Division. The one thing, as I told you, that stood out was at Nordhausen. The Germans had invited back all the ones from that concentration camp who were living and could make it. So, they all came back, and it was about a dozen of us that were there on that day it was liberated, and ... the Germans went all out for us. It was a massive tent and it was a lovely buffet, wasn't it?

MH: [Yes].

JH: ... We met some very interesting people and I want to show you a letter here. ... [Mr. Handford goes into briefcase and pulls out some pictures] Oh, there is something else. ... I'm taking up too much of your time today.

KP: Oh, no, more is better.

JH: ... This is the concentration camp.

YC: As an American soldier, were you aware of the genocide that was going on in the camps?

JH: No, not really.

YC: No?

JH: Not until we stumbled onto things. It was amazing. We didn't know at all. It was amazing. I had no insight at all. ... I don't know who knew, but, the ones that knew didn't say anything.

MH: There is an interesting letter. ...

JH: ... There's an interesting letter.

MH: ... This couple met in a concentration camp, and were married, and they moved to Sweden.

KP: Oh, very nice.

MH: We met them ...

JH: We met them ...

MH: ... At the banquet.

JH: ... At the banquet.

MH: He had a Rotary pin on, and I said, "My husband's a Rotarian," and ... she was explaining that they had met ... in a concentration camp, and were married, and moved to Sweden. They have a son in New York, and they have a daughter in California, and they wanted us to come and visit. So, they sent Jim a Rotary banner. It was a terribly sad trip. ...

JH: ... Then, we met this fellow who was from Belorussia. He was a physicist and you know how they like to exchange little [gifts]. ... He gave me these little mementos.

MH: It was interesting, the number of people that were in concentration camps that we met there.

JH: From all over the world, from Australia, from the United States, and from Sweden.

MH: But, you correspond with that one from Australia, remember?

JH: Yes. He's invited me over there. Now, they weren't all Jewish people, but, there was a good group of Jewish people, ... and he happened to be a Jewish chap, the one that went to Australia, and he's invited me to come visit him in Australia, and, you know, we made some

friends there, and, you know the Army newspaper, the *Stars and Stripes*, is out of business now. This is one of their last issues. You can have it. ...

KP: Oh, thank you.

JH: For Europe. ...

KP: How interesting.

JH: Here's something you might want to look at that the Belgians gave us.

KP: Had you been back to Germany before then?

JH: Yes, because ... my wife was Canadian, and ... her brother-in-law was a captain in the Canadian Air Force, and he was stationed in Lahr, which is across from Strasbourg, and we went over in, what, '68?

MH: [Yes].

JH: And visited them in Lahr, and then, we went on a trip to East Germany, at that time. I wanted to see what it was like, and it was absolutely worse than what ... you might imagine, and then, we went into East Berlin, and we took the railroad down to Prague, and, to get a transit visa, we had ... to go to this office in East Berlin. ... There were still pock marks from the war, thirteen, fifteen years later. It was terrible. We'd see, going down ... through Germany, East Germany, on the train, old women working in the fields. I guess the men were all in the military. ...

MH: This was interesting. ... When we were over in September, the children made all these things for us.

JH: Whatever it is. [laughter] Let's see what else. This is in German, but, ... I have to explain to you what this [is].

MH: They were kindergarten kids, and they kept them out of school, and they gave the women flowers, and the little boys presented them to the men, and the little girls presented them to the ... ladies.

JH: You can have that.

KP: Oh, thank you. Are you sure?

JH: Yeah. I have some extra things here.

KP: Is this a copy of the letter or is this your original?

JH: You can have that.

KP: I assume that you want the artwork back. [laughter]

MH and JH: Yes. [laughter]

JH: Let's see what else we have. Oh, here's ... something interesting. ... In Weimar, we were staying at this hotel, and this German, middle-aged German, came in and you felt compassion for the fellow. ... His father was an American soldier, and his mother was a German girl, and he was the offspring ... of these two, and ... I always wondered ... if [there was] any way I could find out who his father was.

MH: He's from New York State, up around Buffalo.

JH: They thought he was.

MH: We wondered if, maybe, you know, ... *America's Most Wanted* [could help].

JH: I mean, he's an educated fellow and someone might be able to find him. The fellow really researched this.

KP: Oh, there are even pictures of him.

JH: Yes, yes.

MH: He wanted his illegitimate father, I guess he's illegitimate, and ... he has a grandson, and he wanted his father to meet his grandson.

JH: To meet his American father.

KP: Is this a copy of that?

JH: You can have that.

KP: Let me give it some thought.

JH: I wish we could do something.

KP: Yes.

JH: He was a really nice, middle-aged fellow. He had a good job and, ... really, he grabbed all the Americans, didn't he?

MH: [Yes].

JH: To see if we could help.

KP: This is very interesting.

JH: ... Maybe someone could follow that up.

KP: We will try.

JH: Okay, try. I don't know. It's a shot in the dark.

KP: I will let Yaelle continue.

JH: Shoot.

YC: Back to the question I asked before, what were the reactions of the soldiers in your division to the concentration camps?

JH: Oh, we were totally appalled by the whole thing. ... As I say, ... I did not go ... inside the concentration camp, but, we were one of the first ones there, and the infantry went in, ... and they helped the survivors, and the medics went and helped others. Now, ... this concentration camp at Nordhausen, at Dora, which is near Buchenwald, I guess it was an adjunct to it, during the war years, the Germans developed the V-1 and the V-2 rockets. ... At Peenemunde, on the Baltic Sea, they did this work.

MH: ... It was in a mountain, wasn't it, Jim?

JH: ... Yeah, let me get to that. ... They developed these rockets up on the Baltic Sea. Well, the British and Americans found out about it and they bombed it. So, the Germans decided that, ... if they were going to work on these rockets, they'd have to move them. ... What these people did is, ... it's a mountain, and they dug into the mountain, so [that] the bombs would not affect them. They dug into the mountain a whole city, and many of these inmates, they just worked on these rockets for the Germans to manufacture, and many of these inmates never saw the light of day.

MH: It was terrible.

JH: Only electricity did they see. Didn't I have a book on that here, somewhere?

MH: We were talking to some of them, and they said that, when they got out into the sunlight, they were really blinded, and their ... living conditions were horrible.

KP: When you were liberating Nordhausen, did you realize the importance of this site, that it was part of the V-2 program?

JH: No, we didn't even know that. ...

KP: It sounds like you just saw it and ...

JH: Went on. We had no time to query people.

KP: When did you realize the full extent of the concentration camp system?

JH: Oh, I understood it after that. Oh, here, ... but, this is written in French, but, ... these pictures will tell you. I think that's [the mouth of the cave]. ...

MH: It was so large that the buses drove right into it.

JH: Here's another [picture that the] Belgian kids in one of the towns did for us.

MH: Every little town we went to, they gave us wine. ... Everyone had so much wine ...

JH: Champagne.

MH: ... And champagne that, before we left, we had a wine party, but, there was the one bottle that this little, old lady gave you, remember?

JH: ... She was a stout woman, about in her seventies, and she'd motioned for me to come over to her car, and I went to her car, and she brought this bottle of wine. She said, "I've been saving this since the war and I wanted to give it to an American soldier." ... That's her husband and this is a family, on the trip back, that we stayed with in France.

MH: What happened is, when we went over in September, I had the passports and Jim's had expired ...

JH: Oh, please, don't [tell this story]. ...

MH: So, we couldn't leave with the group and it was so funny. ... The lady said, "Mrs. Handford, you can go, but, your husband's passport's expired." I keep them in one place, and I didn't check, but, anyway, we got the passport the next day, and we flew to London. Then, we had to change planes to go to Belgium. So, fortunately, we met this Belgian fellow that worked in London and he commuted from ...

JH: You can have this, too.

MH: ... Brussels to London, where he worked. ... Fortunately, we got some Belgium money in New York before we left, and we thought, "Well, we'd take the train to get to France," and just

before we landed in Brussels, the stewardess said, “Mr. and Mrs. Handford, somebody’s waiting for you.”

JH: ... He was holding up, you know, a sign like they meet people [with] at the Handford Inn. He had come up from France, this fellow. ...

MH: Two hours.

JH: Two hours, and the funny thing, going back, he had no Belgian money, [laughter] and they wouldn’t take French money in the toll gate, but, fortunately, we had some Belgian money, and we got through.

MH: ... He was trying to get us to this luncheon at noon, and this is like about nine-thirty, a quarter to ten in the morning, and he was speeding. So, the gendarme stopped him, and the little bit of French I understood, he had said to him, “I have an American GI here and we’re going to a luncheon.” So, he let us go, [laughter] and they gave Jim a bottle of Cognac, and the lady was an artist ...

JH: Where we stayed, that family. ...

MH: ... And I told [her] the village that we were staying in. She had painted [it].

KP: Oh.

MH: ... The people were just delightful.

KP: Was your trip to Nordhausen part of a Third Armored Division reunion trip?

JH: No, no. ...

MH: There were two trips.

JH: We made two trips in two succeeding years. In ‘94, we made the long trip, the trek, ... in September. In ‘95, we made the trip to Nordhausen, and, oh, by the way, we stayed in Leipzig, and at Leipzig, in East Germany, the cities, they’re building like crazy, now that it’s part of West Germany. There’s cranes all over the place.

MH: We counted twenty-three cranes out of our room window.

JH: Rebuilding it, but, you go into ... the small, little communities in East Germany and it’s exactly as it was fifty years ago, no change.

KP: Yes.

JH: There's my interrogator, over there. [laughter]

KP: Your division was pulled back several times in those last two months. Do you remember why? It sounds like you came through most of your encounters unscathed.

JH: Yes, yes. Well, [we] weren't with them very often. We were an entity unto ourselves. We were in this vehicle and we were just going helter skelter. I'm sure the car commander knew what he was doing, but, we trusted our life with him, and he pulled us through, and I don't think he had ever been wounded, do you?

MH: No.

JH: ... He had been in there for many, many months.

KP: It sounds like you got quite lost, on occasion. [laughter]

JH: Well, at the time, I didn't know we were lost. [laughter] ... I thought there was a method to our madness.

KP: Did you keep in touch with the rest of your unit by radio?

JH: By radio, yes, and, occasionally, we'd rendezvous with them on moves, major moves, and I remember when ... the war ended, and we came back, and we went through the ... what's the forest up there? Is that the Black Forest? and we had our vehicles, ... you know, hundreds of vehicles, lined up and going through these roads, and ... two vehicles ahead of me was a Jeep, and we see this fellow keel over. It was a German sniper up in the woods that shot him and killed him. So, you weren't even safe after the armistice and they couldn't get him. I mean, [they are] massive forests up there, a sniper.

KP: When was this?

JH: After the armistice.

KP: How many days after the signing?

JH: Oh, maybe three or four.

KP: So, it was not the day after?

JH: No, no, no. He must have known the war was over.

KP: You were unable to get him.

JH: No, couldn't. We just kept moving.

KP: How often did your unit take prisoners?

JH: Well, ... I can only recall the one instance. ... Well, I took that one prisoner. That didn't amount to anything. We were, I told you, in that one town. There must have been a couple of hundred ... prisoners, and we had them in the town square, and you'd shake them down for ... any weapons they might have, but, ... I just thought that some of the GIs overdid it. They'd take their watches, and gold chains, and rings, ... you know.

KP: What about going into towns and breaking into private homes? Did you ever see any of that?

JH: No, but, ... we commandeered homes at times. We ended up in Dessau. I didn't personally meet the Russians, but, ... [our forces linked up] on the Elbe River, north of Berlin, north of Magdeburg. ... At that time, it was nearly the end of the war, we confiscated houses. I mean, that was normal. I mean, all armies do that, and the people had to move out, and we went in, and I did steal something there. I took a German ... naval officer's hat. I figured he didn't need it anymore.

MH: ... A swastika.

JH: ... It's in perfect condition. Would this library want any of these things, or should I give them to West Point or somewhere?

KP: The library generally wants papers and documents. Material things, like helmets, they generally do not want, because they do not have the facilities to store them.

JH: Yeah. West Point would take it.

KP: They are particularly interested in diaries, letters, and V-mail.

JH: ... Also, I have a Rutgers room in my house and I have a multitude of Rutgers mementos.

KP: They are more likely to want those items.

JH: ... They do want it. ...

KP: Tom Frusciano would be the one to talk to.

JH: Tom, yes. We went and visited with Tom ... and I think he may come down to my house. He wants to see what I have.

KP: Yes, Rutgers mementos are in a different class.

JH: Yeah, well, we're not discussing that today. ...

[Tape Paused]

JH: ... Truck and went to Berlin. Well, nobody had the intention to go in rooting for a football team. We all went different ways. ... I met the Russians at the Brandenburg Gate. They were a motley looking group of people. They'd have the German pants on, and a Russian shirt, and something else, I mean, and a lot of them looked like kids, about fifteen years old. That was an interesting experience, and then, we went to the Reich's Chancellery, and the Russians had blown the walls in on it, but, Hitler had a beautiful rug there, and ... I wanted to bring the rug home with me, but, unfortunately, there was too much rubble on the rug. I couldn't get it out of there. That would be a great thing to have on my living room [floor].

KP: You actually tried to pull this rug out and take it?

JH: Yeah, yeah. Oh, gee, there was four of us and we thought that'd be a great coup, to have Hitler's rug. Everything else was looted.

KP: When did you get into Berlin to see this football game? Who was playing?

JH: Well, our division was playing ... some airborne division that was stationed there.

KP: Where did they play?

JH: Well, I guess they played in Olympic Stadium. ... Don't ask me what the score was.

KP: What month was this?

JH: Oh, yeah, I guess in the early fall.

KP: In the early fall?

JH: Yeah. ...

KP: Berlin was rubble at that point.

JH: It was rubble. Everything was rubble. The only thing that I recall that wasn't rubble was Heidelberg, and somebody told me that the reason was that America had a lot of "economic interests" there, quote-unquote, and they decided they weren't going to bomb it, and up the road there was Darmstadt, which was totally leveled, and, when we went through Dresden, going to Czechoslovakia, ... that was ...

MH: It was terrible.

JH: There was no reason for that. There were no armored factories or anything there and the ... British bombed it at night and we bombed it in the daytime. It was right at the end of the war. I don't know how many tens of thousands of people were killed.

MH: But, the German women are putting all [of] it back together.

JH: Oh, it's beautiful. It's better than it ever was and you asked me about ... the citizens. I'll tell you about the citizens after the war. You couldn't believe that ... their leaders did what they did. They just were so normal and they were passive, if anything. There was no belligerency among them, and they ... just wanted to exist and subsist on the little things that [we gave them], and it was sorta pathetic. We'd have our chow line, and, at the end of the chow line, some girl, or old lady, or little kid would stand there, and, if you didn't finish your coffee, ... you'd give them your coffee, ... and they used to take cigarette butts, and go pick them all up, and make cigarettes out of their residue. It was unbelievable.

MH: What was that little town we were in where the Germans, ... in September, ... really weren't very happy to see us? Do you remember?

JH: Oh, when we went over there, these places that we visited were all in France and Belgium, but, we did go in Stellburg, which is the first town we went into in Germany, and there was some bitter fighting there, and the Lord Mayor ... invited us to a luncheon, but, you know, that was the first time where any animosity showed. I mean, we felt we shouldn't have been there to begin with.

MH: And you could sense it by the way they spoke. You felt you weren't wanted.

JH: But, they gave us a little luncheon. I don't know why, but, it was planned that way. Other than that, the German people were fine, and, you know, we visited a German panzer unit, a tank group, and they let us take pictures of their tanks. They invited us into their mess. We had a meal with them. A few of them spoke English and these tanks are the most modern things you've ever seen. I wouldn't want to get into a war with them again. I have pictures of all this, by the way. You're not interested in movies, are you? ...

KP: We are interested in photographs.

JH: You are interested in [pictures].

KP: Yes, we definitely would be interested in them.

JH: Okay. ... I have a lot of things, and, you know, some of them I don't want to part with right now. ...

KP: Oh, no, of course not.

JH: I give you things that I have duplicates of.

KP: That would be great.

JH: Someday, if you want this material, the day'll come and you'll be first in line. [laughter]

KP: Hopefully, that day is a long way off. After the war ended, what did you do? What happened to the other men in your recon unit?

JH: Well, we were all transferred out of that, because they didn't need any fighting units anymore.

KP: Where were you transferred to?

JH: ... I was put in the constabulary on the border between East and West, between the Russian Zone and the American Zone. They wanted to put me on horses, but, I said, "I don't want to go on any horses." By the way, when I first got over there, they wanted to put me in a tank. I got this tank and I said, "Gee, this is terrible." Then, they wanted ... me to be a motorcycle courier between the front lines, and I thought that wasn't too safe either, and, finally, they put me in the half-track, and that's where I ended up. Oh, after the war, it was really a boring life. There wasn't much to do, you know. You stood guard duty. ...

KP: How long were you with the constabulary?

JH: Constabulary? A few months. ...

KP: What would you do on an average day?

JH: Drill.

KP: You never actually did anything.

JH: No, but, you see, they wanted to keep us combat ready. We didn't know. I didn't even think about the Pacific. They wanted to keep us ready, to transport us to invade the islands of Japan. I don't think you'd need a reconnaissance half-track for that, though.

KP: On a day to day basis, did you have any contact with the civilian population?

JH: Sure, a lot of contact with them, and I'm an avid philatelist, and I found a little stamp store in this town, and I went in, and they had very few things to sell, I mean, postcards, mostly. That's all they had. I don't know how they subsisted, I guess only through the generosity of the American soldiers, ... the military government.

KP: What about the black market? There was quite a black market running at the time.

JH: Oh, yeah, a big black market, yeah, and, of course, speaking of black, ... I can't remember ever seeing a black soldier. I can't ever [recall] ... seeing one. They were mostly in transportation units, that they would drive supplies up to the front and back, or up near the front, but, there were no mixed [units]. ... Latinos were mixed in. There was a Puerto Rican fellow in one of my units, but, the black soldiers, there were none. I mean, they were [there], but, ... they weren't in combat units. There were some in combat units, but, they were very few and far between.

KP: When did you leave Germany?

JH: Well, ... I left Germany in August, and they brought me back to New York, and then, to Camp Kilmer, and then, to Rutgers. I was home about a week and I enrolled at Rutgers.

KP: When did you enroll at Rutgers?

JH: What's that, ... '46?

KP: 1946. Where were you when you found out that the war in the Pacific was over?

JH: Let's see, when was that, in August?

KP: Yes.

JH: ... I don't remember. I remember where I was when the war in Europe was over.

KP: Yes. You were in Germany for almost an entire year after the war ended.

JH: ... Yeah, yeah.

KP: Did you remain with the constabulary or did you have other assignments?

JH: Well, they moved me to ... the First Armored Division and we didn't do anything there, either. It was sort of a non-entity, what went on after the war. It was hard to keep discipline, because there was nothing [to do], I mean, and there was a lot of this fraternization. If you talked with a German girl, you would get a big fine. Well, that was absurd, because they couldn't enforce it, you know, and the worst ones were the officers. They had women all over the place. ... The worst thing was, later on, just before I came home, they had all these young, wild kids over there, like Rutgers students or something. They sent them all over there. We felt like we were grizzled, old veterans at that time and we couldn't wait to get home.

KP: It sounds like you got to see a large part of Europe.

JH: Sure. ... After the war, I went on leave to ... Switzerland, paradise.

KP: Really? What did you see in Switzerland?

JH: Well, we stayed in some very fine hotels in Montreaux. We stayed in the (Palay?), the Palace Hotel, which was a very exclusive, old hotel, and all the rich English used to stay there. ... All these GIs took it over, and there was this one old, English gal, she couldn't understand it, how they would allow these uncouth Yanks in here. [laughter]

KP: You went back in 1968 and 1995. Were you surprised by how well Germany, and Europe in general, has recovered since World War II?

JH: Marshall Plan, yeah. Yeah, I was surprised, but, ... we always knew that they were enterprising people, but, it looked impossible at that time, at the end of the war, in '45. ... Another thing, they used to say, "Oh, oh, that German girl, she's wild. She goes with Americans. Our girls would never do that." Our girls would do exactly the same thing under the same conditions. You know, some people are holier than thou.

KP: You said that a lot of Germans looked down upon the German girls who went out with GIs in 1945 and 1946.

JH: Well, some did, yeah, but, some did it economically, because they got food, ... or somebody made friends with the mess sergeant. [laughter]

KP: I have been told that chocolate bars and cigarettes really had a lot of currency value.

JH: ... Especially, yeah, cigarettes, and in combat, gee, we were lucky, cigarettes were free, but, I didn't smoke, and then, we had C-rations and K-rations. I get them mixed up. One of them came in a large box, and they were canned meat, and all the old, grizzled guys, you're supposed to make meals out of it, well, they grabbed these cans out of the box, and I always got stuck with fig bars. [laughter] Oh, oh, and then, ... I'm a devil, we were coming home, and we had to fly out of Bremerhaven, and the officer was supposed to check our duffel bags, ... but, I had two duffel bags. I had one inadvertently hidden, and then, when I got off [in] ... Jersey City, off the boat, I had two duffel [bags]. Nobody said anything and I had, you know, guns and things in it. Not guns, I didn't like guns. ... I was a military government police[man] for a while. That was a racket, too. In Germany, you'd go into a town, you'd plaster these signs up, and the Germans had to turn in their, I don't know why, but, binoculars, and cameras, and stuff that had no military value, and then, the first things would be the officers, they'd come in and pick it over, and the guys like me'd come along at the end, but, I got some guns, but, I didn't want the guns. I don't like guns and I feel a little guilty, I have a terrific gold watch. ... This guy, I don't know how he got it, I'm sure he stole it, I didn't want the guns, so, he traded me the watch for the three guns, and I still have it now. I feel guilty about it. I want to return it to the owner, but, I don't know who he is. [laughter]

KP: When you were with the military police, did you walk a beat?

JH: No, no, you just ... [don't] do much, ... just walk around town, ... but, as I say, the people were very passive. Nobody'd shoot at you at night or anything. ... It was safer than being home, especially today.

KP: A lot of people have said that when they talked to the Germans about the war, all of a sudden, there were no Nazis in Germany.

JH: Well, I didn't have that much contact with them, but, ... you know, I can't say. ...

KP: Did you have any conversations with the Germans?

JH: No, there was a language barrier.

KP: You said that it was difficult to maintain discipline after V-J Day, particularly. Do you remember any specific incidents?

JH: Well, some of these ... new fellows that'd arrive over there, all they wanted to do is get drunk, and grab a girl, and disappear somewhere, and it's hard, though. You had to have discipline. It's a military organization and it was tough, but, ... we had drills, ... because the Army knew, at that time, that we might be the shock troops to land in Japan, and we didn't know that, and I never even thought about Japan. I mean, that was something else again, but, as I say, if they hadn't dropped the bomb, I'm sure we would have went over there.

YC: Where were you when you found out that the bomb had been dropped?

JH: Let's see, that was ... August 8th or 7th. I think I was in the mess hall when I heard about it, but, I didn't relate that to what might have happened otherwise. ... I mean, for my sake, I'm glad they did it, you know? I mean, I feel sorry for those poor souls over there, but, if they had surrendered, that wouldn't have happened, either.

KP: Did you attend services while you were in the military?

JH: Well, yeah, just before I went overseas, I got very religious. [laughter]

KP: It is often said that there are no atheists in foxholes.

JH: ... I went to chapel in basic training, 'cause I could have been killed there, too. We were throwing ... sticks of dynamite one day and [we did] all these crazy things in infiltration courses, with live ammunition. It was about that far over my head, the live ammunition, and fellows were killed there. They'd panic and raise their heads.

KP: Did you see people get hit?

JH: No, I didn't see them get killed.

KP: It sounds like they warned you.

JH: Oh, they warned you, yeah.

KP: They told you that if you raised your head, it would get blown off.

JH: ... Yeah. So, you were digging right down into that dirt.

KP: Did you ever consider staying in the military?

JH: No, but, they do give you a talk at the end. They give you a little spiel. They give you bonuses, and all this and that, and they give you another rank. ...

KP: However, this did not sway you.

JH: No. ...

KP: When did you learn about the GI Bill?

JH: I guess I didn't learn about it 'til I got home, but, it was a godsend, and, you know, that turned the colleges upside down right after the war, and, you know, also, it turned the football team here upside down. They got all these veterans back that were twenty-five years old, and we'd wipe out people on Saturday afternoon, and, now, they can't beat their way out of a paper bag, ... and, now, they're what I call "mercenaries." They're paid mercenaries. Half of them shouldn't even be in college, academically. Well, we won't go into that subject.

KP: You came back from Europe in August of 1946. You got out of the military and decided to come back to Rutgers.

JH: Yes.

KP: You had also been in college in France at the American University. What did you take there?

JH: History. ...

KP: History?

JH: Usually history courses.

KP: How did they compare to your courses at Rutgers, both before and after the war?

JH: The professors there ... were selected from various colleges in America, and I felt that they were on a comparable status with the ones we had here at Rutgers, and I did quite well there, because there wasn't much else to do, and I didn't do any sightseeing, and I was rooming with an older guy from Indiana.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. James G. Handford on October 25, 1996, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

YC: Yaelle Cohen.

KP: You came back to Rutgers and you alluded to the fact that the GIs sort of turned the campus upside down.

JH: Well, ... a lot of us wore part of our GI uniforms around campus, and I remember the first summer I went to summer school, and I lived down at the shore, in Ocean Grove, and there was another gal that went to Connecticut College for Women, and she was going to take this course when I found out about her, and ... the mother drove us up, and she said, "My son went to Yale. We wouldn't dress this way at Yale," [laughter] the GIs going around with old field jackets on, and no ... GI boots though, I didn't see. We aren't very formal here at Rutgers, even today. Are we?

KP: No. [laughter] In what ways do you think the GIs changed the school? You had taken classes mostly with civilians before the war. What were post-war, veteran-filled classes like?

JH: Well, I think the general consensus is, and I would agree, that they were more serious minded. Part of their life, a dangerous part of their life, was behind them, and their experience there was behind them, and they wanted to get on with the rest of their life, and they felt the way to do it was through education, and, by and large, ... they put their mind to the books.

KP: You sensed that your classmates were just more serious.

JH: Yes, yes, but, of course, we had some that came in out of high school. ...

KP: What was it like to have grizzled war veterans sitting next to kids who were fresh out of high school?

JH: Well, I mean, ... you didn't cavort around with them. They had their friends and you had your friends.

KP: There were two very distinct groups.

JH: But, it was ... very amicable among ourselves, among the group.

KP: You joined a fraternity when you got back.

JH: Yeah, Kappa Sigma. ... I didn't join when I was here in '44, because, I don't know why. I think the house was closed. Some of the fraternities were closed, and, after the war, I had some friends, and, by the way, my father was in Kappa Sigma, [which], up 'til 1915, was called the Queen's Club. It was just a ...

KP: Local fraternity.

JH: Then, it went national.

KP: I imagine that you probably joined Kappa Sigma because of your father.

JH: More, yeah, but, I probably would have joined it anyway. They were a nice group of fellows, and most of them were serious minded, and we didn't have any problem right after the war. We used to have a beautiful house down here at the corner, which is that ugly parking lot down there. ...

KP: Oh, yes.

JH: Where those trucks park.

KP: Yes, the grease trucks.

JH: Yeah.

KP: What happened to the house?

JH: Well, they couldn't make the payments, I guess during the war, and they lost it. Then, they bought that monstrosity over on Union Street, which has been added on to. In fact, the fraternities in this college are the worst looking mess I've ever seen. Go to any other college, ... are there fraternities at Drew?

KP: No.

JH: No?

KP: There was a decision not to have any.

JH: Well, if you go to Lehigh, or Lafayette, or any of these places, they're all plush places. These look like "down in the mouth places," you know? There's a couple nice looking fraternities and, now, they have sororities here, do they? Are the sororities new buildings or ... have they taken over some of these old, run down houses?

KP: I think only two sororities have houses at this point.

JH: Are they new houses? ...

KP: I do not know.

JH: Well, I just wondered, but, ... most of us were veterans there ... at that house, in the fraternity at that time. ...

KP: Did you have any non-veterans in the fraternity?

JH: Well, ... not the first year. After that, there were more and more.

KP: Did you go through initiation at the fraternity?

JH: Not really. I hear about all this and I never had to wear a dink, a freshman hat. [laughter] I think in 1944 we had it, but, ... the veterans weren't going to walk around with one of those scarlet, little dinks on their heads. [laughter] So, that went by the wayside. ...

KP: Did you go to chapel after you came back?

JH: Sure. Not regularly, but, I went to chapel. It's a beautiful place, this Kirkpatrick Chapel, at this university.

KP: Oh, yes, I know.

JH: ... Usually, I went home on weekends, like a lot of Rutgers people do. It's such a small state, of course.

KP: You also went to your share of football games.

JH: Oh, I enjoyed football, yeah. That was my big outlet at the end of the week, yeah, and a lot of these players were in my class, the former coach, Frank Burns, a real gentleman, and others, and we enjoyed football. I still enjoy football. ...

MH: He's missed five or six games in forty some years.

JH: But, this team ... is abysmal. Their so-called "West Coast offense," I haven't seen it yet, [laughter] but, you know, I shouldn't express myself, 'cause you're an employee of the university, [laughter] but, ... I'm fed up with this university wanting to be big time, and can't make it, and then, they're going to have to compromise their academics to get people. [In] this Big East league, you got ... some really bad actors in it, like University of Miami, West Virginia

isn't much better, and how are you going to compete on a level playing field unless you play with their rules? ... If you play with their rules, ... you got all kinds of problems.

KP: It sounds like you miss the days when we used to play Princeton.

JH: Oh, that was the greatest thing. You'd take a date to the Princeton games. That'd be the ultimate. [laughter] Oh, you missed something that's just ... hard to express. Of course, they always beat us, but, then, as soon as we got good [enough] to beat them, ... they put down their marbles and said, "We're not going to play anymore." [laughter]

KP: Before the war, what type of career did you want?

JH: I don't know. I thought I might teach.

KP: When you came back, did you still want to teach?

JH: No. ...

MH: Taught for six months.

JH: I taught for a year and I quit.

KP: Where did you teach?

JH: Long Branch High School. I had all the dumb kids and ... were they dumb. [laughter] I taught English and ... the writing, it was unfathomable. It was like a foreign language.

MH: I corrected the papers. ...

JH: We were going together then, so, I gave her the papers to correct.

MH: It was one big, long sentence. [laughter]

KP: Where did you meet? Did you meet while you were at Rutgers?

JH: ... No, no, we didn't. After Rutgers.

KP: Shortly thereafter?

MH: No. ...

JH: ... Myrtle is from Northern Canada, from Manitoba. Her father worked on the railroad. They lived 200 miles north of the border. She spoke Cree Indian before she spoke English, but, anyhow, ... she went to nursing school in St. Boniface, Manitoba, next to Winnipeg, the big city,

and she was very diligent, and she wanted to go for some advanced training, and she went to the ...

MH: Margaret Hague.

JH: Margaret Hague in Jersey City, and she met a woman, a nurse in Margaret Hague who lived in Long Branch, and, later on, through that connection, Myrtle got a job ... as a nurse in pediatrics at ...

MH: Long Branch. ...

JH: What's that called?

MH: Long Branch. ...

JH: ... Monmouth Medical Center, and then, she ended up head of pediatrics nursing there, and I saved her from that "fate worse than death." [laughter] I was in social work then. I was making peanuts. So, that's how I met her, was that I started a small nursing home. I thought it would be nice. I'm in social work. So, I find out that they're selling this complete diet kitchen at Monmouth Medical Center for peanuts, and I had peanuts, so, I went up there, and I talked to your friend, Mr. Gottlieb, and he sold me this thing. ... First, I went to the administrator's office. I met the assistant administrator, that's Mr. Gottlieb, and Gottlieb's secretary was her sister, and I said, "I'm looking for some wild chick here. [laughter] You got any nurses running around?" ... So, Myrtle didn't know if she should go out with me or not, so, she came down, and she walked by, and she saw me sitting there, but, my back was to the door, and her sister was over there, and she was either going to go this way or that way. [laughter]

KP: She was either going to shake her head, "yes," or, "no."

MH: And I went this way. [laughter]

JH: So, ... that's how I met Myrtle, and then, she quit there, and we had this business for twenty years, and we did very well. We sold it to ...

MH: Ten years ago.

JH: The Methodist Home of New Jersey. I did quite well. As my father would say, "I've got enough to see me out." [laughter]

KP: After you sold the business, did you continue working?

JH: No, no, I just howled. We traveled. Well, first thing we did, we bought, from Continental Airlines, I was sixty-two, then, ... there's a special ticket you can buy for senior citizens. I bought one, first class, everywhere they travel in the world, and we just traveled. We were like

kings. We went to New Zealand, we went to Australia, we went to Ecuador, we went to Guatemala, we went to Paris, and a few other places in between. [laughter]

MH: Costa Rica. ...

JH: Costa Rica, and ... we really enjoy traveling.

MH: We stayed home sixteen days that year. [laughter]

KP: That sounds like a lot of fun.

MH: It was.

JH: It was. Things all worked out.

KP: Mrs. Handford, did you expect to become an American citizen?

JH: Oh, she is one now.

KP: Oh, yes, but, did you expect that when you came down to New Jersey?

MH: No, not really.

KP: You just expected to do your training at the Margaret Hague Center?

MH: Well, the last year that I lived in Canada, I worked for Victorian Order of Nursing, and we had over ten feet of snow, and I thought, "I'm not going to put up with this snow anymore." [laughter] I'd realized, when you grow up in it, you don't know any better, but, then, when you come and see that you don't have ten feet of snow, it makes a big difference. So, my sister, my girlfriend, and I came down.

KP: ... And lived happily ever.

JH: Her sister married a Rutgers fellow, a Rutgers engineer, and they live out in Denver. They've been there for years, haven't they? ... They have just retired, but, when Myrtle came down here and married me, she thought New Jersey was Florida. [laughter] Since then, we've found Florida. She knows where it is. [laughter]

KP: When did you join the VFW?

JH: Oh, I joined the VFW ...

MH: About twenty some years ago. ...

JH: ... Twenty some years ago.

KP: However, you did not join initially after the war?

JH: No, no, no. I didn't join anything. ...

MH: When we moved to Ocean Grove you ...

JH: Joined, and these guys all died off, and it was about three of us left, and ... our VFW meetings were in our house, we have a big house on the ocean, and, finally, one or two more of them died and we had to disband. [laughter]

MH: And one woman.

JH: We had one woman. ... She was a nurse in World War II. What was her name, Captain? Anyhow, it doesn't matter.

MH: But, she used to lecture to them. ...

KP: What would she lecture about?

JH: These guys are all seventy or eighty years old, mind you.

MH: ... One was in his nineties, you were the youngest, and she'd always tell them about the flu vaccine, every fall. Well, she had read this article, it was before AIDS had come into being, about gonorrhea and syphilis going up, [laughter] and she's discussing it with them, and I had been sitting in the kitchen, laughing my head off, and they're sitting there, listening to her. I said, "Jim, do you know what she's talking about?"

JH: We had to put up with her, because she sold more poppies than anybody in the world, and she was a nurse. She'd go up to the hospital at Fort Monmouth and she'd practically demand all the personnel up there ... buy poppies off her. ... What happened in the end was, we went by on a Memorial Day.

MH: ... All the wives would get annoyed, because she would call the husbands to take her here and take her there. So, she said I was the only one that didn't object to my husband taking her places. Well, she didn't have a car and the bus service isn't so great. So, Jim would always pick her up to take her to the ...

JH: ... Memorial Day Parade, yeah.

MH: And he said, "She's not there." She'd been dead for two or three days in her apartment.

KP: Oh. Was she ever married?

JH: No. ...

MH: She was married. Her husband was an urologist, and he passed away, and she had a son, but, they were ...

JH: Estranged. ...

MH: ... There wasn't a very good feeling between the two.

KP: It sounds like the war was pretty important to her.

MH: Yes, it was.

JH: It was. She was in the whole war ... and she used to ...

MH: Go on the troop ships. ...

JH: ... Carry the wounded back from France to Britain, to the hospital, back and forth, back and forth.

MH: She had some very interesting stories to tell.

KP: It is a shame that we never got a chance to interview her.

MH: Yes, it is, because she really had some interesting stories.

KP: Do you remember any particular themes from her lectures? Obviously, she was very concerned about venereal disease.

MH: Yes, she was. [laughter]

KP: Even to the point where she was still lecturing about it to sixty and seventy-year-old veterans.

MH: It was so funny. I said to Jim, "I wonder what she'd have said now about AIDS?" I can't remember. ...

JH: I can't remember any stories. ...

MH: I remember ... her saying that, when they were bombing and she was in the operating room, how terrible it was, because the whole ship would shake. ...

KP: She was in combat the whole time?

MH: Oh, yes, yes, very definitely, and [she would talk] about legs that they had to remove and, oh, horrible things.

KP: When did you get interested in going back to reunions?

JH: ... I'm class correspondent for '49.

KP: No, I mean military reunions.

JH: Reunions? I haven't gone to any reunions.

KP: What about the reunion in Pennsylvania?

JH: We wanted to go. ... We just got interested in the Third Armored Division Association a year ago and we fully intended to go, a year ago in October. ... They held it at Valley Forge and I would have met my old ... mate there. ...

MH: ... You had the Rotary Club coming to a football game.

JH: A Rutgers game, of course.

MH: And it was a Saturday, so, we missed it.

JH: That took precedent. [laughter]

MH: But, our first encounter with the Third Armored Division was in September, when we went on that trip. There were eighty-six of us, or there were two busloads, and the fellow that organized it was also in the Third Armored Division, and he had been back several times, so, he knew exactly where to go, and ... it was a fantastic trip, very well organized, wasn't it?

JH: Yes, it was.

MH: ... Then, they had been on other trips that he had organized, and then, of course, they organized the one to the concentration camp.

JH: But, some of these fellows couldn't walk hardly, ... and some of these hotels, you had to climb up two or three flights. I was sort of like a porter, carrying for these old guys, and I'm already about sixty-eight years old. [laughter]

MH: The oldest couple were from Michigan. ... She was eighty-six and he was eighty-four, 'cause, remember, we helped them at the airport, too.

JH: ... During that trip, two of the fellows, ... what was the problem?

MH: One was in congestive heart failure and the other one had a collapsed lung, but, ... I think we only paid eight or 900 dollars each, and this was for three weeks and included everything. ... He also had a built in thing, ... if anyone got sick, they paid for everything over there, and they paid for transporting the woman back and forth to the hospital. In fact, ... they took her and they paid for her meals, her lot, everything. The one came home with us, the other one was there, I think, three weeks and came home later.

KP: Oh, wow. I cannot resist asking, since you have been very active with Rutgers for many years, particularly in your loyalty to the football team, which has gotten some press ...

JH: Well, we had an article in the *Asbury Park Press* about ten years ago.

KP: Yes. You also have strong Rutgers roots, in terms of your father going here ...

MH: And his cousin and his brother-in-law.

JH: My cousin's Class of '50. ...

MH: And my brother-in-law.

JH: ... He's correspondent, Thomas Bach, Thomas Handford Bach.

KP: What do you think have been the most significant changes over the years?

JH: Well, I think it's sort of grew like Topsy. ... Of course, you look at a school like Lafayette, who's stayed about 1500, 2000, and I presume it's about the same as it was in those days. When we became a state university, I know we were obligated ... to do things that otherwise we wouldn't do, but, sometimes, I think ... this president's ego's running away with him, that he wants to have a winning football team at all costs. ... Of course, paying girls' basketball [coach], ... no offense, girls' basketball is wonderful, I go to it, but, to pay her 150,000, plus, 150,000 in perks is just absurd. I mean, that should go into people like you, the professors here at the university, and what does the professors' union think about that kind of nonsense? ... Some of these coaches, it's unbelievable what they're paid. I know you can't get involved in that.

KP: Yes, I will not comment on that. [laughter]

JH: I'm just telling you what a lot of the alumni [are saying] and a lot of the alumni have cut off giving to this university ...

MH: Because of that.

JH: ... Because they feel ... that their priorities are all wrong here.

KP: I often ask alumni who are very active this next question, because you and other active alumni have gotten to know, in one way or another, many of the past university presidents. What did you think of the different presidents that you knew as both a student and an alumnus?

JH: Well, first we had ...

KP: President Clothier.

JH: A Princeton man as president. We respected him. I've never heard a bad word ever said about him. Then, he was followed by Louis Webster Jones. Louis Webster Jones was only here a few years and he left, so, I mean, I didn't know anything about the fellow. All I know is that he died in Sarasota, Florida, where we have a little house, but, after him came a fellow that they really respected, Mason Gross. Mason Gross ... was a crew man. He loved to watch the crew perform, but, ... one year, ... when I was in school, we had a great season, and there was talk about us going to a bowl, and he kaboshed that immediately and said, "Rutgers is not going to any bowls." Well, we're still not going to any bowls, but, our attitude has changed. We'd do anything to go to a bowl now, and then, followed him, Bloustein was a controversial fellow, but, he had a lot of good points, and I think he was a good president. This guy, forget it.

KP: Very few people ever say an ill word about Mason Gross, which is remarkable, considering that he was president at a very controversial time. He had everything from Eugene Genovese to students taking over his office to contend with. What was the key to his success?

JH: Well, I think why we had admired him, maybe more than anything else, he was a professor who taught while he was here, and ... people respected him for his academic achievements. ... He would teach, give courses occasionally, so, they felt, "Well, this fellow is academic in the first magnitude," and he never rocked the boat, and he was stern, but, I think everybody thought he was fair, although my father ... thought he caved in on ... some events at the time.

KP: Really?

JH: Well, I thought they caved in the time they had the basketball game here and all the black kids, not all of them, ... sat out in the middle of the floor. I mean, a lot of us thought they should have cleared the floor, but, they felt otherwise. The trouble with this liberal attitude at a college is that, sooner or later, they take over from the people that are in authority, you know.

KP: While the university was expanding rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, under Ed Bloustein, it just exploded.

JH: Ed Bloustein, I think, was a fine guy, a smart fellow. I think he achieved a lot for the university, although he was controversial. I guess anybody in that position is controversial, but, I think, on the whole, as you look in retrospect, he did a lot for this university, and he was a fine fellow, and he died prematurely, and how they selected this guy, I'll never know, but, we won't go into that.

KP: No, I often tell people ...

JH: Don't get on that subject. ...

KP: Well, no, you are free to comment, but, since he is still the president, some people have been reluctant to comment. Of course, some people have not been reluctant to comment.

JH: ... Among the alumni, I think the general consensus is negative towards him, and, you know, he's not approachable. I mean, he just seems aloof from what's going on. I mean, Ed Bloustein, at a football game, he'd talk to you. This guy is just. He's in a different world, you know. Okay, let's get off of that. [laughter]

YC: You worked for the Red Cross in Korea and the Philippines. How did you get involved with the Red Cross?

JH: Well, I like to travel, as you know, and I came back, and I wanted to do something different. I didn't want to be in the military, and I didn't have any money, and I wanted to travel, so, I went down to Washington, and they hired me in the field director's office ... in Korea, and I went to Korea for ten months, and that was an enlightening experience. We were stationed with First Corps Artillery, and it was right after the war, though, and we had these tents up near the DMZ, and ... my mother sent me seeds. She says, "You're going to be there quite awhile, plan accordingly." So, I took this ... nice, abandoned rice paddy and I grew the best radishes, lettuce. The General wanted some of my crops. ...

MH: And he's still growing vegetables.

JH: And I have a big garden at home, now, but, anyhow, that was a nice experience, but, it was nothing like Europe, you know, and then, ... it was total desolation. Now, there's another people, like the Germans, who were totally desolated, who we helped, but, they helped themselves. They came [up] by their bootstraps, and ... they're vying with Japan for the power, economic power, in the Far East, and ... I admire them for that.

KP: Were you surprised by how much Korea has changed?

JH: More so than Germany. I mean, Germany, before, had been a power. Korea never was. Korea was under [Japanese rule]. ...

MH: [Unintelligible]

JH: Oh, yeah. I'll tell you that story. I was over there and I befriended this Korean captain. He was an interpreter for the General of the First ROK, Republic of Korea, Division, and he wanted to go to college in the worst way, and he spoke good English, and we had a small library in our unit, and ... he asked me if I would take some books out in my name for him, and I did so, and,

eventually, he wanted to come to school. So, I contacted Rutgers, and ... he was admitted to Rutgers, and he came here, and he bought a second-hand Volkswagen for fifty dollars, or something, and he lived with my folks down the Shore before I got home, and he commuted to Rutgers every day, and he got his degree here, and then, he got his Masters' at the University of Minnesota, and, now, he's teaching in a university in Seoul.

KP: Really, how interesting.

MH: And we met his wife.

JH: ... Tell that story. His wife, she came and visited. ...

MH: She came ... over to do some work or something. ...

JH: She was a professional.

MH: ... She came to see my mother-in-law, so, she spent the weekend with us, and she has since passed on, unfortunately, and they have a little girl. My mother-in-law used to keep in touch with him for a long time. We can't seem to find him anymore. ...

JH: We had a post office box. ...

MH: ... We haven't heard from him.

JH: It comes back to us, but, we'll get over there, one of these days, and we'll sleuth him out.

KP: What did you do for the Red Cross?

JH: Oh, [it] was just social work with the troops. ... You know, it's a sad story with a lot of our black countrymen. So many of them, when they wanted emergency leave, you're only supposed to give it to the immediate family, the father and mother, or children, or their brothers or sisters, but, so many of them, I noted, were raised by their grandparents, and you had to give it to them, because that was their next of kin. Well, it was perplexing and it was a sad, sad commentary.

KP: In Korea, you dealt with a large number of black troops.

JH: Well, some black troops, yeah, because the Army, of course, by then, had changed some.

KP: Being in the Red Cross, people were often coming to you when there was a real problem.

JH: Yeah, yeah.

KP: What were some of the stories that you heard or the problems that you had to deal with?

JH: We had to have verification. You had to wire home and their local Red Cross chapter had to go out and verify what these people said, because some of them would say anything to get home.

...

KP: You had some stories that were total bunk.

JH: Oh, yeah. Some stories were out of this world. I can't recall of any offhand, though, and then, I went to the Philippines and [did] the same thing, and I enjoyed it. I wanted to get to a warm climate, because it's cold as hell in Korea in the winter, and I was there in these tents in the middle of winter. Most of them were transferred into Japan. I didn't want to go to Japan, so, I went to the Philippines and I enjoyed it very much. I had a wonderful time down there. I met a lot of nice people and ... I'd like to go back, just on a visit, of course.

MH: ... He saved some money ...

JH: ... Oh, I always aspired to someday have some small business of my own, and I had saved all my money, 'cause I was single, and I had all my allotments sent home to my father, and I found out ... that the way to make money is, you bring a car over here. They're always talking about Jaguars and my friend said, "Oh, ... these rich Filipinos, ... they want a Cadillac Fleetwood, a big, black one, you know." So, I saved every penny, and they sent me this Fleetwood over, and I picked it up in Manila and took it up to the base. ... I'd drive around all these little towns and they'd think it was the president of the country there. I got known as Cadillac Jim. "Cadillac Jim, here he comes." So, finally, it came time, and I had to go home, and, you know, what am I going to do with a Cadillac Fleetwood over here? So, I met this fellow that owned the Philippine Rabbit Bus Company. The Rabbit Bus goes from Manila up north, and Luzon, and their buses are open on the side, but, they have canvas. When it rains, they put the canvas down, and it's funny, I went into the bus, and I hear this, "Ch, ch, ch," and the more they go, "Ch, ch, ch," the ... faster this guy goes. I mean, it's a game. Well, anyhow, the president of Philippine Rabbit liked it. He's like a Mafia boss. He just looked at it. He didn't even talk to me. He went away. Then, he sent his flunkies down and he paid me, you'd think it was contraband, a thousand pesos notes, a big box of 'em, like that. I seemed to have a friend, ... this fellow, one of my good friends, Joe Cohen, he worked for the bank there, the National City Bank in New York. I said, "Now, what do you want me to do with this worthless money?" He says, "Well, I'll convert it for you and have it sent to the States." So, I had to have all these henchman bring this money into the bank before I turned the car over to him, and convert it into money, and ... sent back home. ...

KP: Did you actually make money on the car?

JH: Yeah. I made money and that money helped me start this nursing home business I had.

KP: Why did you decide to leave the Red Cross?

JH: Because I had bigger and better ideas.

KP: You did not want to make a career out of it.

JH: No, no, I didn't want a career.

KP: What did you think of the Red Cross?

JH: Well, you know, they sort of have a bad name, but, I don't think they're deserving of the bad name. The experience of people I have, that worked with them professionally, did a good job and were conscientious.

KP: I was just wondering, because some people have praised the Red Cross to the limit and others have been less than kind.

JH: Yeah. My wife thinks the Salvation Army's a much better outfit.

KP: Then, you came back. Did you teach school then?

JH: Yeah, for a while, then, I bought this business. I had this fellow, he was older than I was, and he had a hotel, ... a big, old hotel.

MH: ... He told Mr. Campbell about it.

JH: Pardon?

MH: He told Mr. Campbell about it.

JH: Oh, yeah. My father's partner, Campbell, in Newark, and this fellow was from Newark, Ed Morris. ... Campbell was an entrepreneur. ... He bought properties, too, but, he told Ed Morris that, "You know, that's not my bill. I'm in the Essex County area. I can't get involved in anything down the Shore," and he mentioned it to my father, and my father mentioned it to me, and we explored it, and found out that there was a chance to make a few dollars, and we got involved in it, and it went pretty smoothly for a while, but, I had a partner who thought the only thing you had to do in a business was take the money to the bank, but, there are other things you have to do in a business. So, one day, we had this accountant, he came in and he said, "Boys, you're going to have to close your doors. You're ... going under." Well, we had approval from the state for so many beds, in segments they gave them to us, because we were new, and then, just at that time, God shone on us. They let us have another section, ... open it up, and we made money from then on.

KP: You ran a nursing home, which, I imagine, is a lot of work.

JH: It is a lot of work.

KP: What were some of the trials and tribulations of your job?

JH: Well, you know, the patients are no problem at all, really. ...

MH: They're cute. ...

JH: It's the in-laws that are a problem.

MH: And staffing. ...

JH: And the staffing is a difficult problem, to get competent and capable staff. The relatives, some of them ... just show up when the person is on their death bed, you know, trying [to be] greedy, ... see what they can get from these people. Human nature is sad in that way. We had one fellow who was a big man on the New York Stock Exchange, I forget his name

MH: Mr. Gould.

JH: Gould, Edson Gould, very big man, worth millions, and his mother lived in Interlaken, right nearby there, and he had a black sheep brother, who was drunk all the time, and Edson Gould was paying the bill, but, ... like most millionaires, they use your money as long as they can. He paid, but, always late.

MH: Never bought her any clothes. She used to be a seamstress for Best and Company, no, Brooks Brothers, and ... I used to give her clothes that people had brought in, and she would remake them for herself. She was a very sweet, little lady, and she loved to sew, so, we used to let her do a lot of the sewing. We encouraged things like that, but, the State would come in. There are these people that sit in Washington, that make up all these rules and regulations, who have probably never even been in a nursing home, and that's what made it very difficult.

KP: What were some of the problems caused by these regulations?

MH: Well, first of all, ... they didn't want us serving our big meal at noon. These people go to bed early. ... They wanted everything documented, whether you did it or not, and I said, "We don't do things like that." If I came in to inspect a nursing home, I would look to see if the toenails are cut, what the bed linen is like, are the blankets clean, what about the mattresses? They didn't look at this, they just looked at desk work, and we were always at odds with them because of these things.

KP: You got the sense that they were more interested in the bureaucracy of it.

MH: That's right.

KP: If the paperwork was in order, everything would be marked as fine, even though the place could be falling apart.

MH: Right. I said to her, "I can write down anything on paper. How do you know I do it?" ... We were very fortunate, because we had two very good physicians that backed me up, and they wanted us to serve our big meal at night. They didn't want us to give them hot cereal all year around. ... I used to interview all the families and the patients, and find out what they would eat, and we found that most of them wanted cooked cereal. The ones who wanted cold cereal would have it. We always served our big meal at noon, because they went to bed so early. ... They got annoyed because I kept a toaster in the nurses' station. If the patient got up in the middle of the night, and if they wanted a glass of milk and a piece of toast, there was no reason why they couldn't have it. If they were at home, they would have done this at home, and if they slept through breakfast, it wasn't a big thing. The kitchen was always open. They could always get something to eat. We tried to make it as if they were at home, instead of an institution. It didn't always work. ...

KP: I think that is what is now being encouraged. You were, in a sense, way ahead.

MH: Right, and we had an animal and the patients loved animals.

KP: In fact, there are programs like that now, pet therapy.

MH: Right, and they used to complain bitterly. I would never let the dog off the leash, but, I would take him in to visit the patients. They used to save little bits of bread and things for him and ... it was their way of feeling at home.

KP: You mentioned that there were problems with the woman who sewed, in terms of regulations.

MH: Yeah. They didn't want patients doing things like that.

KP: Really, which is now encouraged.

MH: Right.

KP: Yes, it is interesting. It sounds like, when you were running the nursing home, you wanted to keep the patients as people.

MH: Right, right.

JH: Reverting back to this multi-millionaire, Wall Street mucky-muck, his brother, the black sheep, the only time you'd see him was going in to have his mother sign over her Social Security check to him every month, disgusting.

MH: ... Then, they objected ... that we sorted the mail. ... We would give them their personal mail, but, ... if Social Security checks or something came in, they all went in the waste basket,

because ... some of them didn't know what it was, and we weren't taking it from them or anything. ... That was our way of controlling it, just little things. Well, they weren't little things, they were big things to me.

JH: But, fortunately, we're out of that dilemma for ten years.

MH: But, they were cute. ... Our little physician's mother-in-law, she was cute. Wasn't she cute? She used to write everything down. ... Before she'd eat her meal, you'd have to tell her what was on her plate and she'd write it down. "Broccoli, B-R-O-C-K-L-A-Y." ... So, it was her birthday, August 17th, and she said, "My birthday, August 17th, eighty-seven years old," and I said, "Oh, Maude," I said, "You know, my birthday's August 17th," and she said, "How old would you be?" and I said, "Eighty-seven, just like me." So, Ruth invited us over. ...

JH: That's her daughter.

MH: Her daughter, for her birthday party. ... She was telling Ruth that it was also my birthday. So, we were coming home in the car, and she said, "You know, I wouldn't go around telling everybody how old you were," and I said, "Why?" She said, "You don't have any wrinkles. You have your own teeth. You don't wear any glasses." I said, "Well, how old do you think I am?" Well, she said, "You don't look a day over seventy," and I must have been in my forties. [laughter] ... It was those cute little things that you remember ... and that made it easier, and we had some excellent staff.

KP: It sounds like you also enjoyed working together.

JH: Yeah, we did. ... Myrtle was more reluctant than I was when it came time to sell. Well, we met with the board. You see, what happened, our place is here, this is the block, and we owned the house in the back, on the corner, and there were two old houses in there that, long before, we bought and tore down to make a lovely patio for the patients, and the Methodists owned the building at the other end of the block, and they wanted the whole block, because they wanted, eventually, to tear it all down and build a modern facility there. So, we were very fortunate in that respect, that we had ... what they really wanted. Well, they didn't offer us much at first, and, finally, they came around and gave us the figure. ...

MH: They wanted our license.

JH: They wanted the license to transfer ... sixty-eight beds to a new place they built, and Myrtle was reluctant, but, I said, "Gee, look at this figure here that they're going to give us. I mean, how reluctant can you be?" [laughter]

MH: And the staffing was getting to be [a problem]. ...

JH: "We lived over the store," as they say. All the years, we lived up on top of this nursing home.

MH: But, it was very convenient, because, if someone didn't show up, ... you know, we were there.

KP: Yes. Also, you were a nurse.

MH: Right. ...

KP: You said it was hard to get good nurses.

MH: It was. I had to fire some of them. You know what? In those days, you really got the bottom of the barrel. I found I had better LPNs than I had RNs.

KP: Really?

JH: ... The good thing about it is, they didn't know when you were there and when you weren't there, because you had to walk through the lobby to take the elevator up to your apartment all the time, but, before Myrtle came on the scene, we had one old woman I hired as a nurse. ... I came in one night at one o'clock and she was sleeping, rocking in the chair. ... She went quick.
[laughter]

MH: You always got the lazy ones. The ones that didn't want to do anything are the ones you end up getting in nursing homes. Well, I found it was better if you found an untrained girl, especially if they had children, because ... there's a lot of similarities between senior citizens and children, and I found that ... we had some really good black kids from the South who were excellent. In fact, we're still very friendly with them.

KP: You had a lot of black nurses.

MH: Excellent.

JH: We had quite a few, yeah, and we were close to all of them.

MH: Eight.

JH: Eight, and ... we've been trying, ever since we got out of there, we have a lovely home right on the ocean, we wanted to have all our former employees back for a picnic, for a cookout, and it happened what, this year, the bad storm?

MH: The storm came. ...

JH: That bad storm that weekend. So, we didn't have it, ... but, we're going to have it next year. We'll invite you down when we have it.

KP: Oh, please do.

JH: Will you?

KP: I would love to.

MH: We have a nice group. ... I had one girl that I hired as a nurse's aide, and I didn't have a housekeeper, and I was down on my hands and knees, mopping the floor, and the sales would come in, and they asked, ... "Jesse, where is Mrs. Handford?" She says, "She's down there on the floor, scrubbing the floor." So, she said, "Mrs. Handford, you can't do that." She says, "I'm your new housekeeper. I don't like feeding patients. I don't have the patience." So, she was our housekeeper and we got a really good little gal in the kitchen.

JH: From the high school.

MH: From the high school, from the vocational school, and she's still working for them. She started when she was sixteen and I didn't know she was sixteen. She lied about her age. Her little boy was only four months old and, now, he's married and has children of his own.

JH: He's in the Navy. So, it's a small world.

KP: Ocean Grove has a very interesting history. It was actually run by the Methodist Church.

JH: Yeah, it was.

KP: Until the courts struck that down.

JH: Well, you folks oughta come down sometime. We'll show you around. It's not Methodist now, it's everything, but, still, the heart and soul is the auditorium, which is a gorgeous, old, wooden structure, and it's only open in the summer, 'cause it has no heat, and it has services, two services, on Sunday, and, on Saturday night, they have ... concerts, like, who came this year? ... They're pretty good concerts. Ten, fifteen dollars, where can you go to a concert for that? ... They had some of the older singers, Mel Torme and some of these people, 'cause these people are mostly older.

MH: Tony Bennett.

JH: And they love that ... Tony Bennett.

MH: And Bob Hope was there one year.

JH: Bob Hope was there one year, but, it's really great. It's a great atmosphere. ...

KP: You still like Ocean Grove.

JH: Yeah, the only problem we had, though, the State of New Jersey, we have some old hotels, and they dumped these welfare-medical patients, some of these parolees, into these houses in town, and it was going down hill, but, we made such a stink about it, the State of New Jersey closed up some of these places. I mean, we felt that, “Why should you pick on us, and in Asbury Park, and not pick on all these other towns? I mean, we don’t mind taking our share of these people, but, we don’t think we should be over[full].” ... In the summer, you don’t notice them, because there are so few of them and ‘cause [there are] thousands of tourists, but, in the winter, all of a sudden, they show up and they’re sitting out. They have no recreation or activity. They just walk up and down the main street, you know. It looks awful.

MH: I blame the hotel people. I mean, they should really have some activities for them and have some sort of a structured life for them. I mean, line them up in the morning, and give them their medication, and things like that. I think half of these people ... either over take or they under take.

JH: Their medication.

MH: ... It’s sad.

JH: But, it’s better. It’s getting a lot better, and there’s movement in town, ... and another doctor moved into town, a lawyer moved into town, and, I mean, ... they’re building up places and you see a lot of progress.

KP: Oh, good.

JH: Well, it was a step down, and, now, we’re going up two steps, but, ... personally, we’re inviting you to come see us sometime.

KP: We would like to.

JH: We got a great, big place. We’re right on the ocean, across from the boardwalk, and I’ll have the Rutgers flag flying the day you come down.

MH: He used to fly the Rutgers flag, and then, we had our Stars and Stripes stolen on us, so, Jim’s never flew the Rutgers [flag]. ...

JH: No, well, I don’t want that stolen. [laughter] ... The door knob is tuned to play the, “On the Banks of the Old Raritan,” the door bell. I am a wacko.

KP: I never used to go to the Jersey Shore, because my family lived in Lake Hopatcong.

JH: Oh, yeah.

KP: However, since college, I have gone to the Shore and I am absolutely in love with it.

JH: It's only an hour down [Route] 18. ...

KP: No, I know. We have been to Spring Lake and I was just recently in Long Branch for an interview. I am absolutely intrigued by the Jersey Shore.

JH: The sad town is Asbury Park. It's really degenerated into a third rate community.

MH: When we sold the nursing home, our two physicians retired, also, with us.

JH: Yeah, Dr. Jewel and Dr. Bailey.

MH: Yeah, we had two excellent physicians.

JH: Yeah, and we're going to have a little cookout for the doctors one of these days, too. Maybe you Rutgers people will have a cookout.

KP: Since I have you here, I wanted to ask you some questions, Mrs. Handford, about Canada and your childhood. I noticed, on your husband's survey, that he listed your ethnicity as Ukrainian and French.

MH: Right.

KP: I know that there is a large Ukrainian community in Canada.

MH: Yes, there is. Yes, well, in St. Boniface, it's all French, hardly anyone speaks English. Well, I'm sure they speak English now, and then, up in the northern part was quite a Ukrainian settlement, but, we lived up farther north. It was, like, probably about 500 miles from the American border. In fact, we ... didn't stay home to go to school. We went away to school.

KP: You went to a boarding school?

MH: Well, it wasn't a boarding school. We had a home in a little town where we stayed, and, of course, in those days, it was so safe, you know, a little town, and everyone knows everyone else, but, one year, ... Christmas, our wedding anniversary and birthday were all so close, so, what Jim did for me is, he got tickets, and we flew up to Bismarck, North Dakota, and we went to all the little towns that I grew up in and visited a lot of my friends and family. It was a very interesting trip.

KP: You grew up in a really isolated area

MH: Yes, I did.

KP: Even for Canada.

MH: Yeah. Well, see, actually, it's only heavily populated in the first 200 miles up the border.
...

KP: Even if you look on a map, you can tell that it is about 500 miles.

MH: Right, right, ... yeah. ...

KP: When did you decide to become a nurse?

MH: Oh, when I was quite young, and I made a study of all the hospitals, and I decided I'd get the best training at St. Boniface. ... It was only 500 beds when I started, but, we got everything there, and, now, it's up to about 900 and some beds. ... Of course, the nuns run a very good hospital.

JH: But, Myrtle says there's hardly any nuns there anymore.

MH: No.

JH: You can't get ... girls to go into that. ...

MH: In fact, [it is] the same order that's here at [St. Peter's]. ...

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

KP: Growing up, did you speak French?

MH: No, no, no, English.

KP: Did you speak any French?

JH: A little. ...

MH: A little. ...

JH: ... Didn't they speak to you in English, ... the nuns?

MH: No. Some of them couldn't speak English.

JH: Well, how did they communicate? You knew some basic ... French.

MH: ... I knew enough to ... understand what they wanted.

JH: She said they're extremely strict. She's not Catholic, but, she went to that hospital because she figured that would get the best training.

KP: Canada entered the war in 1939.

MH: Yes.

KP: You were in elementary school at the time.

MH: Yeah.

KP: What do you remember about wartime Canada? It must have been very vivid.

MH: It was. All I could remember is how we could hide our father, so [that] he wouldn't get put into the service. [laughter] My mother used to say, "There's nowhere you can hide him."

KP: Did your father serve?

MH: No, he didn't, because there were three children in the family, but, we used to knit for the Red Cross. We knitted socks, and those things that they put over their heads, and scarves, and mittens. ...

JH: Tell them about where you lived. Her father was a foreman on the Canadian National Railway, and they'd move, occasionally, and they'd live in the ...

MH: Railroad station.

JH: Railroad station.

KP: You moved around quite a bit with your father.

MH: But, we always went to the same school, except the one year they wanted to start a school up in the northern part, and they needed nine children. So, with us three, it made the nine, and ... we had to shingle the roof, so [that] we could get it finished, so [that] we could start school in September.

KP: You actually shingled the roof?

MH: Yeah. ... The first teacher we had there had been in the Navy and he was one of the GIs.

JH: Well ...

MH: ... That taught us.

JH: ... Canadian GIs.

MH: Yeah, Canadian.

JH: Tell about when, ... on Saturday, if you wanted to go [somewhere], you took your dog on the train and they all knew you. Tell 'em about that experience.

MH: Well, ... if we went to the strawberry patch ...

JH: Those three sisters. ...

MH: Or the blueberry patch, the train men all knew us, and they'd take the dog, and he'd sit on the seat with us, and they'd drop us off at the berry patch.

KP: Would they pick you up when you were finished?

MH: Well, my father would pick us up.

KP: Although you have become an American citizen, are there things that you miss about Canada?

MH: Well, you know, ... there's a lot of similarity between the two countries, ... not really. I think living in Ocean Grove, being a little town, was very much [the same]. ... Of course, ... the town that I grew up in was much smaller. ...

KP: You wanted to live in a small town.

MH: Right.

KP: You liked the small town feel.

MH: Right.

JH: ... Were there many fellows that were lost in the war ... from your town?

MH: Yeah. Well, in our little town, there were about four, which was a lot for a little town, right.

KP: What was the total size of your town, roughly?

MH: Oh, maybe a hundred people, maybe not, 'cause everyone knew everyone else.

KP: Yes.

JH: ... We went up there, Myrtle. They had a big homecoming. We had a great time, didn't we?

MH: Yeah, we did.

JH: When was that, about ten years ago?

MH: About fifteen. Anyway, Minitona started out as a tent town, which is like Ocean Grove, because they have all these little tents, and that's how Ocean Grove started. So, I said, "Jim, I started in a tent town and I ended up in a tent town." [laughter]

JH: We've talked you out. [laughter]

KP: Is there anything that we forgot to ask you, anything about Rutgers? I feel like there is more that I should ask you about Rutgers?

JH: Oh, ... I don't know. ... I'm a little concerned about the future of the school.

KP: What concerns you?

JH: Well, I just feel that it's too large. Maybe I'm just a small time boy that grew up in a small school, and, I mean, if I had to do it again, I don't know if I'd go to Rutgers.

KP: It is really the size that concerns you.

JH: Yeah, I mean, it's overpowering. Some of these classes here must be massive.

KP: They are. [laughter]

JH: I mean, you don't get the individual attention. Even when we came back as GIs, nothing was that large. What's the freshmen enrollment here?

KP: Oh, in Rutgers College, I think it is around two or three thousand.

JH: It's three or four times as large as [back then] and we thought we were large. We were large considering what the classes were prior to the war.

KP: The classes I teach are centered around oral history and they are very small. For the last three years, they have been capped at fifteen.

JH: That's great.

KP: The students involved with this project really have a small class experience and they have a lot of contact with me. However, you are not the only alumnus to comment on this issue.

JH: ... Another disturbing thing, a lot of alumni my age, they sent their children somewhere else, and that's discouraging. A Princetonian would never do that.

KP: Some alumni have, in fact, sent their children here.

JH: Well, ... it's a minority, yeah.

KP: We have noticed that on the surveys as well.

JH: Yeah, I still have the allegiance. I'm a Rutgers man, and I'll be one 'til I die, but, I wouldn't want to start over again in this environment.

MH: In fact, our first dog was named "Rutgers."

JH: Yeah, it was red.

MH: ... When we had to have him put to sleep, we came up to the bookstore, and got ... a Rutgers apothecary thing, and had him cremated. ... [laughter]

JH: You gotta see this Rutgers room. It's great.

KP: Maybe I should come down with Tom Frusciano.

JH: Oh, that's the guy I want down here, and he knows about me, because we're good friends of the Pitts, who live in Highland Park, and he wrote The History Of Rutgers Football. ... They're about five or ten years older than us, but, we go to football games with them, because I just love to drive along and he tells me a Rutgers [story], "Now, in 1934 ...

MH: His grandfather went to Rutgers, his uncle went to Rutgers. ... His uncle, and his grandfather, and his father, and Larry.

JH: ... His son went to Rutgers and his grandson may go to Rutgers, only because it's cheap. [laughter]

MH: And the daughter's the swimming coach.

JH: Oh, yeah, the daughter doesn't know where to go. ... This Larry Pitt lives in Highland Park. The daughter was in the Olympic games, famous swimmer, and she has two girls, and these girls are great swimmers in Franklin High School, and one's a senior. Which one is that, Katie?

MH: Katie.

JH: And all these big time swimming schools are after her, but, Rutgers is not aspiring big time in swimming. ... Penn State and Purdue are after her very strongly. She would have liked to

have gone to Princeton, but, ... they don't have the money. The father and mother teach, and, ... you know, it's crazy to go into hoc for that. She'll probably get just as good an education here.

MH: But, he has a lot of Rutgers stories.

JH: You ought to interview him. This guy's fabulous.

MH: And he's exacting. I mean, he doesn't deviate from anything. ... My sister has said, "When we go on these trips, Jim should have a tape and let Larry put all these things on tape."

KP: Please, pass our name on to him.

JH: I will.

KP: Yes, we would be happy to interview him.

JH: Oh, he's one of the last of the Old Guard. ... He worked here for a while, in the Dean of Men's Office, and ... he was in education all his life. He ended up at Kean College.

MH: But, he did color on ...

JH: ... Rutgers football games. ... He doesn't look like an athlete, but, he's the kind of people that he had his mind set on becoming a player, and he's thin, he'll seem frail, and he scored the winning goal in lacrosse against Army one year, broke his leg. I said, "What'd you do, Larry, die for dear old Rutgers?" [laughter] ... You have to meet him. I know you're a very busy man, you've got all these courses to teach. ... Maybe we could work it in so that I could introduce you to him.

KP: That would be great.

MH: Jim got the Rutgers cannon for them, for the football team.

JH: Oh, yeah. Our class, they couldn't get the cannon. The guy wouldn't finish it, or something or other, ... out in Cleveland. So, I told you about that. You heard about that, didn't you? If you go to the football game, you'll see that big cannon up on the hill. That's our Class of '49 cannon. So, ... our classmates threw their hands up, "How are we going to get it?" I said, "I'll get it." I called them collect three or four times, and, finally, he was gonna have it ready. We went out to Cleveland with our car. We rented a trailer, we put the cannon on it, and we dragged it back. It was for the Columbia game and we got here the night before.

MH: We got here at five o'clock in the morning. We got to Ocean Grove and we had to be here by ten o'clock. What had happened, the car we had, they couldn't get a good ...

JH: Proper hitch for it.

MH: ... Hitch for it. So, they had to go all over Cleveland looking for a hitch [laughter] for the car, and we stayed in a motel, and ... he dropped us off, because he said it was in a terrible section of Cleveland, and he said, "Don't open the door. I will call you when I come to pick you up in the morning." So, he dropped us off there, and he made sure we had the door locked, and he called us and he said, "I will be over in ten minutes, and I will knock at the door, and you come out." [laughter]

JH: It's really a beautiful cannon. ... It was built to specifications. We wrote to West Point, and, if anyone knows how to make cannons, they do, so, ... it's terrific. It's better than anything anyone else has. ...

KP: I was going to ask a question, but, it is on the tip of my tongue.

JH: Well, we'll be quiet for a second. [laughter]

MH: We've had Rutgers people as patients in our nursing home.

JH: The former ... Registrar, Lew Martin, died in our place, and a Professor Lamar of the English Department, he was a patient there. Now, let's see, ... you don't want this stuff, do you? I can give it to you any time.

KP: We would be happy to take copies of it.

JH: What's this?

MH: Oh, is that from those people in France? ...

JH: Oh, yeah, ... we have a nice summer cafeteria about a block from us, and they hire high type, young college people, usually foreigners, and the French girl, ... she was going to interpret [these], and she's going to contact this family we stayed with. She went home and she's coming back next summer. I'll have further translations for her to do. Well, that's sort of cute. ... You know, the schools were out, and they were all waving Belgian flags and American flags, and, when we got to Liege, we all got on the boat, I guess the only boat the Belgian Navy has, and they took us right up the river. Is that the Meuse? I forget, and they wine and dined [us]. ... It was just a tearjerker.

MH: What we noticed was that the Belgian people really hate the German people.

KP: Even to this day?

MH: Yeah. This one woman that we talked to, and she said she was only like sixteen or seventeen, and we were going through this museum, she said to me, ... it's all about the concentration camp, ... "My grandparents and my cousin were killed in there."

JH: Yeah, it was sad.

MH: She said, “You know what the German people used to do?” She said, “At nights, when the people would come out, the German soldiers would just kill anybody, young or old,” and she said, “I can’t forget those things,” and I guess you can’t.

JH: Why the Belgians were overwhelmed by us even more than the French is because of the Battle of the Bulge, in which we took territory, lost it, and had to take it back again.

MH: ... They just couldn’t do enough for you.

KP: Were you surprised by how well they treated you?

MH: Oh, I was overwhelmed. I really couldn’t believe it and they ... were very sincere, weren’t they, Jim?

JH: ... Liege is a big city, you know, must be a million people or so. We had a motorcade through town and they’re all waving flags out the windows. It was very touching.

KP: Well, thank you very much. I feel like we should just let the tape roll, because, when I am ready to stop, you have another good story.

JH: Well, that’s all.

MH: ... Incidentally, this woman, who’s only about sixteen or seventeen, from Belgium, married an American and she lives in Oregon.

KP: Oh, wow, interesting.

MH: ... We met some very interesting people. ... Remember that man in France, when he was telling us about that young girl? ... They killed American soldiers, shot their heads off, and the little girl dragged them up to her house and wrapped them in American flags. ... I said to Jim, “What I can’t understand, how one human being can do those horrible things to another one.” ...

JH: Look at Bosnia.

MH: When we were in the concentration camp in Nordhausen, we met this French family and ... they came to the concentration camp. Their grandfather had been in this concentration camp and they said the stories he told were terrible. They would let the water drip on them. ... Well, when we went in there, ... it was so wet.

JH: All types of torture.

MH: It was so wet, I don't know how they stood it. They had no clothes, and it was cold, and she says she doesn't know how ... the grandfather survived.

JH: ... What book did I give you there? This one I think I gotta hold onto. Do you think, ... this type of stuff, the library would want, eventually, or no?

KP: Some of the material we will keep with your transcript, and then, we will send it over.

JH: Okay. See, now, this is where they lived, in this cave, dug out, and they'd never come out for days on end, assembling these V-1 and V-2 rockets. They lived in there. Of course, ... there was electricity, but, a lot of them caught pneumonia, and, I mean, they lived there. ...

MH: I do remember one thing. After I got out of high school, my girlfriend worked in a camera place where they developed pictures, and one of the soldiers had brought a bunch of these pictures in, and there were like big hayracks of human bodies, just stacked one on top of the other. It was horrible. It was just skeletons, picture after picture. ... I couldn't even look at half of them.

KP: She was developing these photographs?

MH: Yeah, she said, ... "This is horrible." She said, "I don't know if I can finish developing all these." It was one of the Canadian soldiers that had taken pictures of it.

KP: When did you first learn about the Holocaust?

MH: We had some very dear Jewish friends, and they were bringing some of their Jewish relatives [over] from Germany, and that's when we found out about it, and I must have been, well, I guess I was just in grade school.

KP: Was this before or after the war?

MH: No, this was ... after the war.

KP: This was in 1946 and 1947.

MH: Yeah.

KP: That was when you really ...

MH: I realized, right.

JH: Did I give you one of these?

KP: Oh, no.

JH: Let me take it, and, ... if it is, I'll send it on to you, because this would be worth[while]. ...

MH: You know, it was so funny, when we were ... there for the concentration camp thing, there were a group of Japanese, and they were trying to see how the Germans were setting up to celebrate the end of the war, and they were copying some of the things. Apparently, the Japanese ... and the German people have a very good working relationship, is what this woman, ... our guide, was telling us. We had a nice, little guide ... from East Germany, remember? ... She was translating things for us. She was the one who was telling me all this.

KP: Were you surprised that the German government took such an interest in commemorating the liberation of Nordhausen?

MH: Yes, yes.

JH: ... I think, in fifty years, it's changed. You've got a new generation growing up, and I think they have been imbued with the fact that terrible things happened by their people in generations gone by, and I think they're really, honestly trying to make amends.

MH: Well, I don't think all the German people were like that. Did you see that on public television, *Christabel*, the English girl that married the German fellow? There were a group of them, ... I read the book, that didn't want this. ...

JH: I think I can spare this, but, I'll take it back and I'll mail it to you.

MH: ... This German family, hid his wife and children in the Black Forest, I believe it was, but, ... I can see why the Belgian people [feel that way]. I think maybe I would feel the same way.

JH: ... Here's a video. You're going to have to do something with it. It's on Nordhausen, made by the Germans, excellent, excellent.

KP: Is this your only copy?

JH: No, no, it's not my only copy. It's in German, and it's on the German format, and I don't know, at the university or somewhere, where they can convert that. ... You won't be able to play it the way it is, and it's in German, so, I mean, you got a German Department here that can translate the thing for you.

KP: Okay.

JH: And keep that, but, that's worth doing something with.

KP: Okay.

JH: Okay. That picture tells more than a thousand words in this case. Young lady, you've been very quiet. Are you getting a one for this course? [laughter]

YC: I am going to that concentration camp in May.

MH: Are you?

YC: Yes. Where exactly is Nordhausen?

JH: ... Nordhausen-Dohr it's called. Nordhausen is north of Weimar, where, you know, the Weimar Republic was, is not far from there, and ... Buchenwald is in Weimar, on the edge of Weimar, and Nordhausen is not too much further north than Weimar. Didn't we go by car one day to Dohr? It's more interesting. This is really not a concentration camp where they just gassed people. They did do away with some people here, but, not many. These were for slave laborers, to work, to manufacture for them. So, it was in their best interest to keep these people alive, and so, ... it was not as ghastly as these extermination camps, but, you'll enjoy that, if you can get it translated, you have a friend in the German Department, ... and get the format changed, 'cause the US and Canada have a different format. I think Japan does, too.

KP: Okay.

JH: ... It's a different format.

KP: So, this is not VHS?

JH: No, that's not VHS, but, it can be done.

MH: You had some done by that Polish man in Florida. ...

JH: In Florida, yeah. I think he only charged me ten or fifteen dollars. You can get it done here for nothing. [laughter]

KP: Well, thank you very much for your time.

JH: It was our pleasure to meet you, too. ...

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

Reviewed by Melanie Cooper 10/97

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 5/24/00

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/5/00

Reviewed by James Handford 8/00