RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

# AN INTERVIEW WITH HAROLD J. HARRIS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK
and
SEAN HARVEY

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
MAY 15 & 16, 1999

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview with Mr. Harold J. Harris on May 15, 1999, in Bishop House at Rutgers University. This interview is being conducted by Sandra Stewart Holyoak and …

Sean D. Harvey: Sean D. Harvey.

SH: Mr. Harris, thank you for sitting down with us during the very busy weekend of your fiftieth reunion at Rutgers. To begin, where and when were you born?

Harold Harris: I was born in Paterson, New Jersey, 1924.

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about your parents?

HH: My mother and father were both immigrants. My mother came to this country as a very young girl, so, she didn't think of herself as an immigrant. My father came, as a young man, from Poland. They married; it was his second wife. He had … worked briefly as a carpenter in England before coming to the United States and, in this country, he worked in the silk industry. When I was growing up in Paterson, Paterson was known as the silk city of the world. My mother had no career, very little education, grammar school, which, at that time, was a fair amount. My father had, I think, even less education. Neither of them thought of themselves as educated people. Neither of them was interested in ideas. Neither of them was particularly interested in education, for me or for anyone, although my four older brothers, particularly my three oldest, who are my half-brothers, two of them got good educations. One of them wound up as a doctor and the other as a dentist.

SH: How old was your father when he came to this country?

HH: I'm not certain. He would have been in his late twenties or early thirties.

SH: How old was he when he left Poland for England?

HH: … He was only in England a year or two. I'm hazy on these details, because he was not a very communicative man. [laughter] I don't remember ever sitting down [and] having an extended conversation with him. Whatever I know about him, I picked up pretty much on the run, pretty much from my older brothers, who were closer to him than I was. He was quite old when I was born. That had something to do with the distance between us. He was, I think, in his early 40's.

SH: When was he born? Do you know where in Poland he was born?

HH: I know where in Poland, it was Lodz, … which, at that time I think still was the second largest city in Poland, which had a very large textile industry. He would have been born in the 1880s. He came to this country in the early 1900s and my mother came at about roughly the same time.

SH: After he settled in this country, did he continue to communicate with his family in Poland?

HH: No, he didn't, because most of his family would have migrated at that time.

SH: Were they living in this country?

HH: Yes, most of them were. In fact, I didn't know any of my grandparents. They were all dead by the time I was just a little boy and I don't remember either he or my mother ever talking about family they left behind in Poland. My mother's family was almost all in Paterson, New Jersey. My father's family, which wasn't very large, was either in Brooklyn or in Paterson or somewhere in that area.

SH: You mentioned that your father had several brothers.

HH: … He had three brothers. One of them was illiterate, illiterate in Yiddish, illiterate in Russian, illiterate in English. He was a very simple man, had an IQ of about ninety. He had … been a soldier in the Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese War. He was very poor. I remember, this was during the depths of the Depression, I remember, my father, who didn't have all that much, helping him out and helping another brother, who was barely literate and also very poor. … Both of them were unemployed for long periods during the early '30s, in the depths of the Depression. One of his brothers was successful. He owned a small silk factory and, as a matter-of-fact, he even became friendly with a then well-known New Jersey politician named Billy Dill, remember that? because Billy Dill was responsible for helping [to] get … one of my brothers in the medical school at the University of Maryland.

SDH: Did your father continue any Polish traditions in America?

HH: No, no, he didn't. He was a very quiet, very retiring sort of man. In fact, I don't remember ever seeing him read anything except the newspaper. I don't remember him ever expressing any opinion, political or otherwise. I mean, I have absolutely no idea what his opinions were. I'm sure he had them and he probably communicated them to my oldest brother, with whom he was quite close, but not to me.

SDH: Did he maintain his religious practices?

HH: Yes, yes, he was quite religious, although, again, in a rather quiet, unobtrusive way. Actually, the power in my family was my oldest brother. He really ran things and, when the silk business went bottoms-up, which it did in the middle '30s, it turned out that my father had not really saved any money. My oldest brother, who didn't marry until he was forty, handled whatever money there was and he bought a store, a liquor store, in Roselle Park, New Jersey, and my father went to work for him, which was a rather unusual turn. My father was very fortunate in that my oldest brother, who was very tight, very reactionary, politically and every other way, nevertheless, loved and felt a strong obligation to his father. Otherwise, my father and my mother and myself would have been up against it. In other words, we owed almost everything, during the depths of the Depression, to my oldest brother.

SH: Had your father's first wife also come from Poland?

HH: I believe so. I never knew anything about her, although I was very close to her children, which is to say my half-brothers, and, in fact, my real mentor when I was growing up was my second oldest brother, who was a very generous, very warm man. … He did so many things with me that, otherwise, would not have been done, because my father didn't know about them, wasn't interested in them, wasn't interested in me, and so, I looked to my second brother, who is now deceased, to go to my first pro-football game. He taught me tennis and all sorts of things.

SH: Was this Lawrence Harris?

HH: Lawrence, yes. He's been dead for several years.

SH: There were four brothers and yourself.

HH: Yes, three half-brothers and one full brother, who's the only brother still alive.

SH: Is the full brother older or younger than you?

HH: He's older. He's four-and-a-half years older than me.

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about your mother? Where was she born?

HH: She was born in a small town in Poland, as I said, came to this country at a very early age, … had a minimum education, clerked in, I think, a department store, married late, was not a very interesting woman, was a very self-centered woman, really not much more to tell about her.

SH: Which members of her family lived in this country?

HH: Well, … [the] members of her family were really quite interesting people, with the exception of a sister who never married and who got very little education, wasn't at all interested in ideas. Well, one of her brothers was a lawyer in Paterson and was the first ACLU lawyer that I knew or knew of and she had a sister who was very good to me, who was a social worker, and then, had a little private school that I went to, without our paying for it, and it was really that aunt, my Aunt Rose, with my brother, Larry, who really made it possible for me to have what otherwise would have been a barren and rather dreary boyhood, a fairly good one.

SH: Did you grow up in Paterson?

HH: I grew up in Paterson, lived there 'til I was twelve, when, as I said, the bottom fell out of the silk business and my family moved to Roselle, New Jersey. I went to high school there and I will be seeing, tomorrow, a man named John Wicklein, a former *New York Times* man, creator of the television program *Frontline*, who was a year behind me in high school, and I received, just a few days ago, a letter from a woman named Elizabeth Kellogg Carow, who was in my class in Roselle High School. …

SH: Your mother did not work in the silk industry at all.

HH: No, she never worked after her marriage. She worked until her marriage.

SH: Was her family involved in the silk industry in Paterson?

HH: Her father worked as a warper or winder in the silk business. He was … just a worker. My father owned a few looms, which meant that he was, quote, "a capitalist." [laughter] I think that was her family's only connection with the silk business.

SH: You said that your older brother, Jerome, was a reactionary.

HH: … Very much so, very much so, reactionary, a bigot, would not let me use the car, when I was old enough to use it, because he was convinced that I would take out Gentile girls in the car, including this Elizabeth Kellogg Carow. I mean, he made no bones about it. He also was proud of the fact that he had never been to a movie or read a book after high school. [laughter] He was … a very tight, narrow, bigoted human being, who was pleased with himself. [laughter]

SDH: Your brother, then, maintained very strong religious beliefs. You said that your father maintained the religious tradition, but your brother adhered to them even more so.

HH: Yes, except that it isn't so much that my brother was religious as he was just a bigot. I mean, he just disliked all non-Jews. He particularly disliked … all Jews who were Socialists or Communists. … He had very strong, although uninformed, political opinions. I remember, his great hero was Senator Richard Russell, the reactionary Democrat from Georgia, who was one of the powers in the Democratic Party.

SH: Was he the victim of any anti-Semitic acts in Paterson?

HH: No, no, no, I don't think so. …

SH: What were your interests in school?

HH: From a very early age, I was interested in history. I was interested in literature. I was also interested in gambling and smoking. I was seven or eight when I smoked my first cigarette, used to throw cards against the wall for pennies, that sort of thing. [laughter]

SH: Did you work while you were in school?

HH: I had, from a very early age, what you would call intellectual interests, but I was also very much a kid of the streets. I had a great many friends and I also loved girls, I remember, at a very early age, liked sports, was not particularly good at them, but liked every sport, as a kid. I was very much influenced by a seventh grade teacher, Miss Willett, who was a Socialist, at a time, this was 1935, '36, when so many Americans were Socialists. I remember her talking about the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence. I remember, she called me by my last name. I was the only kid in the class, in seventh grade, that she called by his last name, you know, and

she would talk to me sometimes after school. I remember … all my grammar school teachers, but I remember her most fondly.

SH: Why is your last name Harris if your family was from Poland?

HH: It was, originally, I think, Hirsh, but it would have been changed by my father in England, when he stopped off there, when he found some relatives of his [who] had already been living there for sometime. So, I grew up knowing myself only by that name.

SH: That was the name your brothers used as well.

HH: Yes.

SH: In high school, did you work during the summers or have part-time jobs?

HH: No, because it was the kind of town in which there … weren't many jobs for kids after high school and, at that time and in that place, most kids weren't expected to work. … Well, I delivered Sunday newspapers very briefly, even before Roselle, when I was about eleven or twelve, but that was about it. There were almost no opportunities for summer employment in Roselle.

SH: What did you do for entertainment as a young man?

HH: I never lacked for entertainment. As I said, I played a lot of ball, stickball and street ball and so forth, and then, in Roselle, I was a Boy Scout, briefly. … I went to a Boy Scout camp. I remember going on hikes. I started bowling. I became very friendly with a group of kids who belonged to the Presbyterian Church and I remember bowling, Saturday nights, in the Presbyterian Church. … We used to go on beeline hikes, played a lot of softball, was on the team that lost 42-2, softball, swam a lot in the summer, went to movies, occasional parties, played a great deal of tennis in the junior and senior years of high school. In fact, I remember, I was caught up in tennis, and then, I discovered Tolstoy and I was enthralled by *War and Peace* and, I remember, there were about four or five friends coming to get me to play tennis or something and I wouldn't go, because I wanted to finish a chapter in *War and Peace*. [laughter]

SH: Did you spend any time at the famous Paterson Falls?

HH: Yes, I remember going to the falls once or twice as a kid, although … I really lived some distance from it. I spent a fair amount of time in the library as a kid, not an inordinate amount of time, but I remember walking to the library quite a bit. What else did I do? That's pretty much it. Then, in high school, I sang. I was in the glee club and I was the gossip columnist for high school newspaper. [laughter] I was quite a gossip in those years and I had a great many friends, a great many friends.

SH: Were any members of your family involved in any union activities in Paterson?

HH: … Certainly not my oldest brother. He was strongly anti-union. My father, no, because he … was a boss. He was not a worker. I don't think so, except that I mentioned an uncle who was a lawyer for the ACLU, but he wouldn't have been directly involved in the labor union. Oh, I remember, as a kid, I remember my cousin was so proud of me; I was interested in writing. In fact, I wrote a play, when I was in fourth grade, a play called *The Young Lieutenant*, and then, I got the idea in my head of going down to the police station and interviewing prisoners for a little newspaper that I was putting out. I must have been about ten at the time. [laughter] I have no idea what I said to these guys, but, I remember, the cops were very amused and they let me in, anyway.

SH: Do you remember what any of your interviewees were in for?

HH: No, I don't. [laughter]

SDH: It sounds like you were quite an ambitious young man.

HH: Ambitious, but not ambitious, because I was really more fun loving than I was ambitious, and that continued to be the case on through college. I never put anything ahead of pleasure. Even in graduate school, that was true. Pleasure always came first. It would have continued that way if not for my wife, who made me toe-the-line [laughter] and made me do what had to be done.

SH: In high school, did you have an interest in college? You said that no one really encouraged you to aim for higher education.

HH: Not really, no. I thought of myself as a kid, and then, in high school, as, potentially, a writer, but I had no idea what that meant. I don't think I would have ever gone to college, and certainly wouldn't have finished college, if not for the GI Bill. … I came out of the Army, got the GI Bill and decided to go to college, knew very little about college.

SH: Did you go to junior college after high school?

HH: I went to junior college, but I spent more time drinking beer on the way home from the junior college or just fooling around, messing around, than I did studying.

SH: What were you studying?

HH: I don't know. … I took whatever courses [were available]. This was not a very well developed college. This was one of the very first community colleges, only it wasn't even called a community college. It was a junior college … and I was going at night. … I was working days; this was after high school, before the Army. I was working very hard. I was loading and unloading freight cars for Railway Express, which is now FedEx, I guess, and I would come home, and then, I would change and have dinner, and so forth, and then, take a bus to the next town, Cranford, New Jersey, and take a course or two, at the time, whatever came along. You know, it was really just killing time. It was something that most of the kids from my high school, who did not go to real college, did.

SH: Did you ever think about going to a "real" college?

HH: Vaguely, vaguely, because my parents did not encourage me at all. I don't think they would have cared if I had gone to college or not. My best and oldest friend, George Carow who then married this woman named Elizabeth Kellogg, whom I mentioned, he was the one who really put the idea of college in my head. He went to the Citadel and, … after the war, he was an officer, he went to Swarthmore and his wife went to Marietta College. No, she … finished at Douglass, which was then New Jersey College for Women, but, earlier, she had gone to a college in Georgia. Her family was originally from Georgia. So, it was my contact with them, more than anything, that gave me some idea of college, but it was a very vague idea and, even after the Army, when I had the GI Bill, I really knew nothing about … how to apply to college or what colleges were, and so forth, and, since Rutgers was … not quite then the state university, it was on its way to being the state university, it certainly had a very good reputation. … As I said, I knew a couple of girls who had gone to or were going to New Jersey College for Women, so that suggested Rutgers to me.

SH: Were you drafted into the Army?

HH: Yes, I was, yes, just past eighteen.

SH: Where did you report for duty?

HH: Newark, and then, I was sent to Fort Dix. … After a short period there, from which I contracted scarlet fever, which meant my life was saved, because most of the guys I was inducted with were all shipped out and one of them, one of my best friends, was killed in Normandy, in the infantry. A couple others were in the airborne infantry, over [in] the Philippines, that were dropped, and so, the chances are, if I hadn't gotten scarlet fever, I would have gone on one of those campaigns.

SDH: Why were you drafted if you were in junior college? Were you still in junior college at that point?

HH: No, I was in junior college at that time, but that would not have gotten me an exemption. Anyway, at that time, it was the thing to do, to go in the Army when you turned eighteen. I mean, this was World War II and everybody that I knew, with the exception of one or two guys who had physical disabilities, which I didn't have, was drafted. You know, I thought nothing of it. …

SH: Had you thought of enlisting before your eighteenth birthday?

HH: No, although my older brother had enlisted. He was going to be a fly boy, and then, he washed out [laughter] and wound up in Texas for the rest of the war and I, who was drafted, was almost immediately sent overseas and spent almost two-and-a-half years [overseas].

SH: Were your other older brothers drafted as well?

HH: My oldest brother, I guess he would have gotten an exemption, because … the family was dependent on him, but … my brother, Larry, … he was a dentist at that time, so, he was a captain in the Dental Corps and my next brother down was a captain in the Medical Corps, and then, there's my brother next to me in age, … who did volunteer and was going to be a flyer. So, four of the five of us were in the Army.

SH: Where were you sent after Fort Dix?

HH: They sent me to what was then known as a repple-depple, Replacement Depot Shenango in [Greenville], Pennsylvania, and I spent a very short time there before … I hooked up with forty other guys and the forty-one of us were shipped out together to join Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten on what was then the island of Ceylon as the first Americans [at what] was then an Allied headquarters. … First, we stopped off in New Delhi, where I spent a little bit of time. … Working as a volunteer there was the wife of, I think it was General [Archibald] Wavell, who was one of the ranking English generals. From my brief time in New Delhi, I was sent down to Kandy in Ceylon, where I joined Mountbatten's headquarters and I spent most of the rest of the war there.

SH: What were you trained to be?

HH: I was trained … as a medic. I have no idea why, but that meant that I was not trained in the use of weapons. I fired a gun maybe twice. … My basic training was … the ten-mile hike and the … obstacle course. I was very good at that sort of thing. I weighed about 140 pounds then. I was in perfect health. I enjoyed that sort of thing.

SH: Was all of your medical training at Fort Dix?

HH: No, my medical training was in Camp Pickett, in the south of Virginia, Blackstone, Virginia. It wasn't really medical training. The training [was in] how to carry wounded and that sort of thing and very cursory first aid [that] they administer. I don't really remember. Actually, I received more training as a clerk, because I was classified as a clerk, and so, I learned how to type and that sort of thing and that's the sort of thing that I was doing in Mountbatten's headquarters.

SH: Where were you sent after Fort Pickett?

HH: From Shenango, I was sent to India, and then, from India to Ceylon.

SH: You went straight from Pickett to Shenango.

HH: Yes.

SH: How did they transport you to Shenango from Virginia?

HH: … All the transportation at that time would have been by train.

SH: Had you traveled much before going into the service?

HH: Very little, very little. As a kid, I would go into New York once a year, something like that, and … I had not been further west than Pennsylvania, saw part of Pennsylvania.

SH: Do you remember what you were thinking as you traveled across the country?

HH: At that time, not really, because I was in the cocoon that everyone was in that was in the Army, you know, and I saw very little of civilian life at that time. I was surrounded by soldiers and everything I did, everywhere I went, was with other soldiers.

SH: As a child and teenager in the 1930s, how aware were you of the situation in Europe? What did you know at the time?

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: … Well, growing up when and where I did, in the depths of the Depression, I mean, everything in my life was colored by the Depression, and then, everything was colored by the coming to power, first, of Mussolini, although I don't remember that, but I certainly remember Hitler coming to power, and of Franco. …

SH: Were these events discussed in your home?

HH: No, they were not, but they would have been held in my aunt's home, my uncle's home and they would have been held with Miss Willet. She would discuss these things with me, and even the kids in the neighborhood were aware, as kids would be, you know. I mean, this was the overpowering impression that everybody, in the East, anyway, in the middle '30s had. … I mean, you couldn't pick up a newspaper or turn on a radio without being aware of the voice of FDR, and then, the image of Hitler. This was pre-television, of course, but even [in] the newsreels, it was everywhere. … So, I couldn't escape my knowledge of what was going on, although it was, of course, a very generalized sort of knowledge. It was generalized and, yet, I was more interested, at a very early age, in the political than almost any of the kids that I knew. … In fact, I can remember, I was twelve years old when I became a convinced anti-Communist and I mention that because I was reading something in *The Nation*, which, at that time, was going through one of its anti-Communist phases. For a while it was, and it still is, it is again now, well over on the left, but I read an article by Norman Thomas, who was the Socialist candidate for President in 1936, and this convinced me that Communism was this scourge, you know, as much, almost, as Nazism, and so, I remember, at the age of twelve, I said, "I'll never be that part of the political spectrum." So, I did have much greater political awareness than most kids my age and much greater than my parents. As I said, I never heard my father say a word, … never heard my mother discuss, with … each other or with me, ideas of any kind.

SH: Were there any discussions at the synagogue?

HH: My mother was not at all religious. She kept a *kosher* house just because my father wanted her to. My mother was not given to discussing anything, except herself. There was a kind of impenetrable barrier between my father and me and, yet, it was a contented childhood. I was very happy in high school, very happy, because I had such wonderful friends and because I had the brother that I did.

SDH: Did your parents ever discuss with you, later, how they felt about having four of their children go off to war?

HH: No. My mother was simply not given to discussing anything but herself, literally.

SDH: What about your Aunt Rose?

HH: Oh, that was different, … yes, yes, and I loved my Aunt Rose very dearly and she would discuss things with me, and then, when she was very old, I would visit her in a home for the aged, she would look back and remember her earliest days in Paterson, that sort of thing.

SDH: What kind of fears did she have for you when you went off to the war?

HH: I really don't remember and, as I said, then, the whole country was mobilized and, then, everybody that I knew [was in the service], with one exception, a guy named Don Faust. He was the only one that I can remember who did not go in the Army. It was not a big deal. I mean, people just, … at least the people that I knew, didn't talk about it. No one ever said anything, "Oh, you're going in the Army. Oh, you might get killed," [laughter] … I mean, nothing, nothing, and it never bothered me. I never gave it a thought, never.

SH: What do you remember about the Depression? Did your family help other people?

HH: Well, I remember, very vividly, that almost daily, somebody, almost always Caucasian, would come around to our house and go through our garbage can and I also remember visiting my uncle, and I remember thinking that they had very little to eat. I remember that … they were very generous, but he had nothing to be generous with, you know. I mean, my earliest memories are Depression memories of 1931, '32, '33, and they're memories of most people not having enough to eat or not knowing where the next meal is coming from. …

SH: Did you see the lines at the soup kitchens?

HH: No, because … I don't think that they existed in Paterson. Paterson wouldn't have been large enough, although there might have been one. I remember, though, that a Communist named Brown ran for mayor of Paterson in 1932 and he got a fairly good vote. I remember him. At that time, there were Socialist mayors of Scranton, Milwaukee and several other cities. It was a different world than it is now. What else in the Depression? When I think back over those years, there's a kind of grayness to it, you know. So, every day was overcast, every day, but, yet, I was not unhappy, I mean, as a kid, doing the things that kids do, and my family had enough to eat, just enough. I mean, we were certainly not well off, but, I remember, I thought that we were really well off because we owned our own house and we had a car, we had a telephone and we

had a refrigerator. I remember that living right behind us was a pretty little, bright, little Italian-American girl and I can remember her coming out in the yard, eating the rind of cantaloupe. In other words, they couldn't afford cantaloupe, but she would suck on and maybe eat the rind. I remember that. This would have been about 1932 or '33, when there were sixteen million unemployed.

SH: I thought that, perhaps, in Paterson, you might have been exposed to a little more than most people.

HH: That was the most, the worst, that I would have been exposed to. So, I'll have you know that when my kids were growing up, I prided myself, "I'm never, never beginning a sentence with, 'When I was your age,' or, 'Be glad you have', never, never." I never talked about my childhood with them in those terms, never.

SH: Did you go to the movies often?

HH: Yes, because it cost a dime, I remember, Ken Maynard was my great favorite, who was a cowboy star, and I remember *Buck Rogers in the 21st Century*, that sort of thing. Saturday afternoons, usually, with all the kids, we'd troop off. … Also, there were a lot of athletes in my neighborhood. There was a boxer, who lived around the corner, who fought Joe Louis, when Joe Louis was on his way up. Paterson was a great center for boxers at that time. Later on, Billy Conn, who held the World Heavyweight Championship very briefly, lived in Paterson and up the street from me lived a thug named … Izzy Goldstein. He had boxed briefly and, now, he was a bodyguard for a guy named Waxy Gordon, who was the local counterpart to Dutch Schultz. This was big time stuff and I remember walking by a candy store, downtown Paterson, and seeing this Izzy Goldstein standing there, in front of the store, and I knew that Waxy Gordon was inside and there was another neighbor, a guy named Les Kravitz, who pitched briefly for the Atlanta Crackers, which was a minor league baseball team and, I remember, there was a guy up the street who had run away and joined the Navy. It was not uncommon, even for Jewish kids, at that time, to do that, because there were no prospects for them. There were no jobs and none of them ever went to college and, also, they said boxing was a big thing. In fact, you asked me before what I did as a kid and I now remember putting on the boxing gloves, because I remember, briefly, thinking of myself as a potential boxer when I grew up. [laughter]

SH: Turning back to your Army career, how did you cross the Pacific?

HH: Well, to get to India, [I] flew down to Brazil, and then, went across to Accra, … in what is now Nigeria, then, from there, to Yemen, and then, flew to what is now Pakistan, and then, went, I think, by train, I'm not sure, from there to Delhi, and then, from Delhi, [I] would have gone by train down to Ceylon, except, of course, Ceylon is an island. There are little gaps in my memory. I don't remember how I got across from India, but I do remember being on various trains in India.

SH: What did you know about your assignment when you left the States?

HH: Nothing, because it wasn't important that I know. At that time, I was a private, and then, I became a PFC, and then, I became … the equivalent of a sergeant and that was the rank I held, but, as a private, you weren't expected to know anything, you know. [laughter] "Here are your orders. Go."

SH: What was it like to fly in those days?

HH: I'm one of those people who's curiously insensitive to modes of transportation. I mean, I thought nothing of getting on a plane. I thought nothing of getting on a train. I thought nothing of getting on a Marine transport to come back from India. I say that because I remember that there was a terrible storm and the Marine transport I was on was listing at a thirty-degree angle for about two days and I remember guys hanging over [the railing], wanting to die, and I didn't miss a meal. [laughter] In fact, … I remember eating somebody else's meal. I mean, I fought my way up the deck to where the food was. As I say, I'm very fortunate in that way. I just never got seasick, airsick, train sick, [laughter] just didn't have good sense, I guess.

SDH: The conditions, then, were fine, as far as your quarters and food.

HH: Yes.

SDH: The situation you were in really did not bother you too much.

HH: No, no, it never bothered me. The only time I was bothered was when I didn't have enough of the kind of food that I liked to eat. Now, in basic training, I didn't have quite as much to eat, for one thing, because, I remember, I'd sit at a table and they'd blow a whistle and you would dig into the food in the middle and whoever got there first, with a fork, got the most. The fastest got the mostest, you know, and I wasn't that aggressive, but, generally, … I ate well. I mean, I was fed well in India. I slept on the ground the first night in India. Other than that, I slept in a *basha*, a hut, in Ceylon. I didn't mind it. I mean, you don't mind things when everybody around you is doing the same thing. I ate reasonably well. I played tennis, I remember, in Ceylon, … lost a month's salary at a crap game. [laughter] I remember getting big, colorful bills, rupees, and I had nothing to spend them on. I mean, all my needs were taken care of and I walked out of the hut where I'd been paid, there was a crap game going on and, in about a minute, I lost a month's salary, [laughter] and then, another month, I remember, I bought a star ruby for one sister-in-law and a star sapphire for another one. They weren't any good. [laughter] I mean, I was told they were, but, I mean, I had nothing else to … spend money on.

SH: What was your assignment with Mountbatten's headquarters?

HH: I was a clerk … in headquarters and, I remember, Noel Coward came and did *Blithe Spirit*. He was the great friend of Mountbatten's wife and I remember peeing at a urinal between General Cartin de Wiart, who was Winston Churchill's aide-de-camp, and General Raymond Wheeler, who was the chief of the Army Engineers. I mean, that's something you would remember, [laughter] peeing by two such guys, you know, and I also remember being picked up. I was hitchhiking from camp into town one day and I was picked up by … Lieutenant General Albert Wedemeyer, who was the ranking American general, and was later mentioned as the

Republican candidate for President. He didn't get there, I mean, obviously, but those are a couple of the recollections.

SDH: What did your work entail? What were your duties?

HH: Typing, filing, that sort of thing, just menial, clerical jobs, but, again, I mean, I didn't mind them. Everybody was doing that. … I know I preferred that to … fighting the Japanese. Actually, the most interesting thing that happened to me, the only time I came close to getting killed was what didn't happen. … On our way to New Delhi, a group of us were sent out ahead of the main group of forty-one and, somehow, … there were four of us, plus, an old Army sergeant named Lafayette J. Vermet, who was a lush, and we got separated from the rest of the group and we found ourselves in …

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

SH: This is side two of tape one.

HH: My one real Army story, war story, that's worth telling concerns this small group. There were four of us, all kids. We were all eighteen, recently drafted, and we found ourselves out alone and we were informed that Merrill, of Merrill's Marauders, needed replacements and we were it. They were going to drop us behind the Japanese lines in Burma. Well, I remember that the other three guys broke down and cried and I didn't. … I've always been a little bit of a stoic. I was not very happy, because it was, in effect, a death warrant. I mean, the reason that Merrill's Marauders, a guerilla group, needed replacements was that the mortality rate among those guys was about ninety percent. So, the odds are [that] I certainly wouldn't be sitting here talking to you had the orders that were cut for us been sent. …

SDH: You had only fired a gun twice at this point, correct?

HH: Yes, right. That's right.

SDH: You did not even know how to use a gun.

HH: Right. [laughter] I mean, I was a reasonably good shot, I remember, and I rather enjoyed it, but I was not proficient with a gun. [laughter] Well, in any event, the next day, the group of us, the most disconsolate young soldiers you've ever seen, were walking along a road in the camp and, suddenly, we saw a jeep go by with a redheaded captain in it and we ran after it (cold?) and this was the guy who was … in charge of our unit, you see, and he had been behind coming from Brazil, and then, across to India. We hailed him, told him what the problem was and he went to whoever did these things and had them uncut the orders that would have sent us to Burma and cut new orders. … We all went on to join Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, [laughter] which is a little different from joining Merrill's Marauders. I don't know if the name Merrill's Marauders means anything [to you]. They even made a movie of it, you know.

SDH: How did your duties change when you became a sergeant? Did they change at all?

HH: No, no, because … the rank was technician, fourth grade, indicative of the fact that I was a clerk, but I had the same perquisites as a sergeant. I was a T-4 and that was the equivalent of a sergeant, so, I was addressed as sergeant and got the pay of a sergeant. …

SH: When you were living in India, how much interaction did you have with the natives?

HH: Very little, very, very little. I remember, I got sick and I was in the Army hospital in Calcutta and I remember a few Indians coming into my ward or … whatever it was. I don't remember why, but we got into a conversation. I can still remember, they were horrified, horrified to learn from me that I had dated girls, you know. I mean, they thought that Americans were so degenerate because they dated before marriage. … I mean, their picture of the United States was taken from, maybe, one issue of the *Reader's Digest* they had seen somewhere and a few movies, you know, [laughter] and they were convinced that all of us were degenerates. … Also, I remember that I got into a fierce argument with a Brit. Most of the … guys in Mountbatten's headquarters were Brits and they were mostly enlisted men, like me, and there was one guy in particular who played the piano and, somehow, we got into a conversation and he started to knock everything American. American culture was so crude, and so forth, and so on. It made me very angry. [laughter] My patriotic blood boiled up and I remember conducting a fierce argument with him. … Almost the first impression that I had of the British, and this was long before I ever visited Great Britain, was the enormous difference in social class between one Brit and another. I remember, one of my officers had been a grocery clerk in the A&P and most of them, I mean, they were just ordinary guys, you know, but the British officers [were of a higher class]. I remember snapping to attention when … a major with a bristling mustache, who was a member of the Duke of Wellington's own, something like that, would come into the office every morning with a swagger stick and we would all come to attention. The distance between him and the British enlisted men was enormous. I remember thinking all the Brits have bad teeth and they all swore profusely. I'd never heard such obscenity in my life, particularly from the Scots. I had thought, "I'm an American man, you know. [laughter] American soldiers are pretty much given to obscenity, but nothing like the Brits, particularly the Scots." I mean, these guys, every other word out of their mouth was "f---," blah, blah, blah, you know. [laughter] It was a different world, you know. As I said, going in the Army, the American Army, going through basic training and so forth, no great culture shock, you know, but the culture shock was not so much the discovery of the Indians, the Senegalese, but the discovery of the British, at that time. I mean, again, the world has changed greatly since then.

SH: How did the British treat the Indians and Senegalese?

HH: Badly, relative to the Americans. Americans are so much more democratic. Americans were much more likely to give a kid a stick of gum or whatever and the British always kept their distance. The Indians, at the same time that they regarded us all as degenerates, still liked the Americans much more than they did the Brits and, of course, at that time, Great Britain still ruled over India. So, they had a different relationship to the Indians than we did. I mean, we weren't the colonialists.

SDH: Did you ever have an opportunity to go on leave and observe the more personal aspects of Indian life?

HH: Not really. … No, I didn't go on leave, but I went to the Taj Mahal with a group of guys, and then, this was quite interesting, … this was after I'd gone from India to Ceylon, I got sick and they didn't know what the trouble was and they sent me up to India. I was alone and I went to Madras and I had a glass of milk, which was the first milk I had had in about a year-and-a-half and I stayed in a lovely English hotel. In other words, an American, particularly if he was a sergeant, could have a lifestyle comparable to that of English officers, you see. American sergeants were much more like English lieutenants, or even captains, than, let's say, a British sergeant would be like one of his officers. … As a matter-of-fact, you mentioned leave, I did go on leave. I went on leave a couple times in Ceylon, once to go to Colombo, where I spent a couple of nights, once to go to Negombo, which had the most beautiful beach I have ever been to, once to go to Galle, where I was bitten by a scorpion and almost died. Another time, I was bitten by a snake in the camp, but this was interesting. I went from Kandy, up in the mountains, to Naraliya and I saw *Yankee Doodle Dandy* in a movie theater there. I was all alone and I remember that because, in order to go to the john, I had to go outside to an outhouse. [laughter] Also, I remember that I was staying in a hotel in Naraliya, and I got dead drunk, the only time in my life, and I had to be put to bed, poured into bed, by three British Army or Navy officers, one of whom had gone to school with Lawrence Olivier, whom he remembered as filthy, and, you know; just beneath notice. [laughter] I remember waking up in the morning with my quilt covered with vomit. That was the first time and the last time. I've been high, tipsy, but never again drunk. [laughter] So, that was one leave. Another leave, I remember it well, Colombo, Negombo, Galle, and I had fun. I really enjoyed myself. I have always had a capacity for enjoyment, for pleasure. Another leave, I don't know if it's a leave, but, for a few days, I went to the Temple of the Sacred Tooth, which was just outside Kandy. I saw quite a bit of the island of Ceylrn. It's a small island, and at that time, was very peaceful, not now, driven by, really, a continuing civil war between the Senegalese and Tamils in the north, but my recollections of the island are really pretty fond. I enjoyed myself much of the time in India. I remember going to a very good restaurant to eat in Calcutta and being drawn through the city in a *tonga*, a man drawn cart. I remember, I had a date with a nurse from Minnesota. [laughter] It was a double date and we went to this great restaurant. I always saw to it that I ate well wherever I was. As a sergeant, I could afford to. I wasn't worrying about saving money. I didn't spend a cent. So, those are my chief recollections of my time overseas.

SH: Aside from the Brits, were there any other Allied forces there?

HH: Yes, but not at my level. At the very highest level, there would have been representation of the French, I remember, and I think maybe even Italian, but just a few. It was … SEAC, South East Asia Command, and it was really an Anglo-American deal, Mountbatten, and then, an American counterpart, like Wedemeyer.

SH: Were there any Naval forces in the area?

HH: There were, but, again, just a token representation.

SDH: Did you ever face any prejudice because you were Jewish?

HH: No, no. The nearest thing to it, it wasn't prejudice, was, I remember taking a train somewhere and getting in the coach with somebody and, when he learned I was an American, [he] started talking about "Rosenfeld," but, then, an awful lot of American anti-Semites, at that time, were convinced that FDR, Roosevelt, was really Rosenfeld or Rosenberg or something else and this was something that this guy in India had picked up. … I don't even remember whether it was anti-Semitic or not; I don't think so. No, there really wasn't much prejudice. I'm not saying it didn't exist. I'm saying that I didn't encounter it; in fact, at no time in the Army did I. The prejudice would have been, only it really didn't exist, against homosexuals. I say that because, at that time, most men of my generation, including a very good friend, a Congregational minister, who I had lunch with a couple of months ago, and he was telling me he was twenty-five before he even knew that there were such things as lesbians and homosexuals. I say that because I can remember, at times, in the Army, running across guys I vaguely thought of as homosexual, but they never identified themselves as such, you know, and I remember, in fact, in basic training, there were two guys from Buffalo, one named Sneed and the other Kowalski, Francis Kowalski. They were both from Buffalo and Kowalski, I think, … was a dancer and Sneed was a singer, you know, and, I remember, he taught me a Czech song of all things, "*Teda, voche, tede*." I can still sing it, you know. They were great friends and I think I had a very vague, very vague understanding that these guys might have been homosexuals, [laughter] although that was the extent of it. … Again, once or twice afterwards, I was vaguely aware of somebody who I thought of as kind of effete, you know, maybe a mama's boy or a sissy, [laughter] but I wouldn't have gone beyond that. … I thought that was kind of interesting, because … if these guys had ever identified themselves as homosexuals, then, I think there would have been hell to pay.

SDH: What was the attitude towards African-Americans at the time? Did you ever witness any incidents, even during boot camp?

HH: … Well, I had no contact with them, because remember that there was no desegregation in the Army until the Korean War … and I had very little contact with blacks growing up, because they always lived in another part of the city, although there were some black kids in my grammar school. I remember, when I was in the fifth grade, Leroy Roche sat behind me. He was a professional boxer, fifth grade, [laughter] you know, and I remember, at that time, thinking that every black was poor and I remember seeing them, envying them, because, while I had to go home for lunch, they would buy hot dogs from a vendor just outside the school, you know. … These are such superficial impressions, except that my second grade teacher, who loved me dearly, Miss Green was black, but I didn't think of her [as black]. I mean, she was just my teacher. That was pretty much it until high school, and then, in high school, there was still pretty strict segregation, even in the North, at that time. In fact, I was remembering, for the benefit of a friend of mine who came down from Verona, he was Class of '50 at Rutgers, … having a friend at Rutgers, a black kid, who, at that time, would have been called "Negro," named Rod Carrol, and he commuted in Newark and he was a Trotskyist. He was the first, maybe the only, Trotskyist that I've ever known. I don't know … if the word Trotskyist means anything to you, but this was the extreme left wing of the Communist Party. I mean, they regarded the Stalinists as reactionary and I remember, at the time, going to … a little place for a bite to eat in Newark, New Jersey, this would have been 1944, with Rod, and I don't remember what they did, but they made it clear, when he asked for a drink of water, that he was not welcome there. This was Newark, New Jersey, in 1944, but … there were just a handful of blacks in my classes at

Rutgers. I didn't know any of them very well, although, as I said, I was friendly with Rod Carrol. There was certainly no segregation at Rutgers by this time. Whatever segregation that had once existed on campus, and I don't know that it had, certainly didn't exist then, by that time, but, then, of course, you see, I'm talking about the years after the war when there was a sea change in the attitude toward blacks. There was a sea change in social attitudes generally, between the time that I went in the Army, … well, let's say the time I graduated from high school, in 1941, and the time that I got out of the Army, and then, entered Rutgers in 1946. The war transformed the way that people thought about themselves and thought about other people and, now, the Depression was over, and so, that, too, meant enormous change. So, for me, the great dividing line is World War II and on the other side of it was the Depression and Hitler, and Stalin, and so forth, and so on.

SH: Before we leave the China-Burma-India Theater, what kind of entertainment was available to you? How often did you get mail?

HH: Mail? I really don't remember. I don't remember the content. I remember getting letters from this young woman, … Elizabeth Kellogg, who then, in a later month, married my best friend, George Carow. I remember hearing from her. I remember getting an occasional letter from John Wicklein, who I'll be seeing tonight at the Hyatt with his wife, who graduated from … Douglass College the year after [me]. Jack graduated from Rutgers in 1948, … but I remember receiving mail from those people, but I have no idea what the letters [said].

SH: Did you often write letters to home?

HH: I don't think so, but I would have written some, yes.

SH: Did the USO visit India at all? Did the British provide entertainment for the servicemen?

HH: Yes. In fact, I remember playing ping-pong in the hospital in Calcutta with Leonard Pennario, who, at that time, was a young civilian, but he was already a fairly distinguished pianist and he was on a USO tour. Unfortunately, I never got to see Bob Hope or anybody like that, but I remember Pennario and I remember, in Miami, before I shipped out, Johnny Green, who was one of the outstanding pop songwriters of the time, entertained the troops. That's about it, but I remember thinking the USO was marvelous. I mean, they gave us so much, wherever I was, and I really thank God for the USO and the Red Cross, but mostly the USO. The country was very, very generous to its soldiers at that time, not like the Vietnam War and after.

SH: Where did you go after Calcutta, India? Did you have enough points to go home?

HH: … It wasn't a matter of having enough points, it was a matter of the war was over, and so, I was going to be demobilized, and so, I went from Calcutta, I don't remember how I got there, but I went from Calcutta, no, I'm sorry, not from Calcutta, from Ceylon to the Army transport that I mentioned before, and then, the Army transport took me to … Fort Lewis, outside Tacoma, Washington. I came across the country by train, and then, I was in Valley Forge General Hospital for a brief time, and then, I was demobilized.

SH: Why were you in Valley Forge General Hospital?

HH: This makes a rather interesting and curious story, but it's too long a story to tell in detail, but, let me say this, while I was still in Ceylon, I suddenly developed a headache, an inexplicable headache, and I was given a spinal tap and all sorts of tests and they could not discover the source of it, and so, … I think that's why they sent me to the General Hospital in Valley Forge, although I'm hazy on that, to see again, whether before they discharged me from the Army, if they could figure it out. They couldn't and I had that headache non-stop for over fifty years, just learned to accommodate myself to it. As I said, I've always been something of a stoic. I never mentioned it to my children, never, never, and, for over fifty years, I was on a diet of eight to twelve aspirin a day, and then, about six months ago, my internist in Kalamazoo, Dr. Robert Lefevre, told me that what I had was, I thought it was so rare, he said it's an algesic headache. I took so many aspirin early on and I became addicted to the aspirin and it was the taking the aspirin that gave me the headache, see, and I thought that even though I knew that I was not really, quote, "neurotic," I was diagnosed as psychoneurotic, and, thanks to the Army, I went to see … a couple of psychoanalysts, … even though I never felt under stress, you know, and I made an extraordinarily good marriage, blissful marriage. I'll be celebrating fifty years, married June 4th, and my wife never thought of me as neurotic, you know. … Doctors, even now, psychologists, would always expect me to talk about stress, say, "Well, you must have had some stress." I didn't, you know, I didn't, and even in my dreams, I was telling my wife, I have never, never, had a dream in which I was hostile toward her or anyone that I've ever known. So, here was the mystery of this headache and I'm supposed to be psychoneurotic, but I don't feel neurotic and I've always thought of myself as a rather happy-go-lucky guy, you know, in fact, carefree. I mean, I'm not unaware of the outside world, you know, but I've never really worried about myself. In fact I rarely think about myself and, according to Lefevre, this was the explanation, an algesic headache that persisted for over fifty years. I'm now in remission from lymphoma and I was in chemotherapy. It was while taking chemotherapy that I could not take aspirin, and so, I took Tylenol, and then, suddenly, and this is what I told Lefevre about, … the headache disappeared and that was the explanation. I was no longer taking aspirin. Isn't that interesting? [laughter]

SH: How long was it before the Army discharged you from Valley Forge?

HH: I was there just a matter of days, you know. I have just a very hazy recollection of it. I have a wonderful faculty of not remembering unpleasant things. I can remember in great detail … these junk images, where I sat and what I ate outside Paris in a restaurant in 1969, but I can't remember being inducted in the Army and I can't remember being in the hospital, you know. [laughter] … As I said, it's a blissful marriage and my wife is beyond wonderful, but she let me know that if I was more than ten minutes late to meet her, there'd be hell to pay. She doesn't like to be kept waiting, and so, I told her I'd meet her at six-fifteen at the Student Union.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: This continues an interview with Harold Harris on May 16, 1999, at the Hyatt Hotel in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Yesterday, we ended by discussing your time in Valley Forge General Hospital. Could you tell me more about how you were discharged from the Army?

HH: … I'm quite hazy in my recollection of what I did, when, at that time. All that I know is that when I got out of the Army, I came home. I did nothing but look up old friends, rejoin civilian life, waiting … for college to begin and, as I said yesterday, I knew very little about the business of selecting a college, and so, those few months went by very quickly, without anything at all memorable happening, and then, I found myself at Rutgers.

SH: How did your friends welcome you back into the community?

HH: There was no welcome back, just as there was no real formal leave-taking, because the whole society was mobilized, because everybody that I knew had left and everybody I knew came back at around the same time and, as I said, my parents were not really that interested or concerned, so, I have absolutely no recollection of what it was like to come back to Roselle, where I was living at the time.

SH: Had your brothers returned from the service?

HH: Yes. I was the last one back. … Only my brother next to me in age and I were still living at home and I don't even remember what it was like to rejoin him at that time.

SH: Were your mother and father involved in any activities on the home front?

HH: … They were not, no. They were not public people. Neither of them had any interest in the larger life outside the house, none, period.

SH: Was your father still working in your brother's liquor store at that point?

HH: Yes, he was … and that's all that he did. All of his life, that's all that he did, was to work, go to work and come home.

SH: You said that you had no idea how to apply to college. How did you choose Rutgers?

HH: I don't really remember distinctly. It was just there, because it was the best-known university of any size and of any reputation and because people knew about it, just as when I was in high school, everyone knew about Union Junior College, which was two towns over and most people who did not go away to school went there. So, if you were going to go to a university at that time, it was almost always Rutgers and, as I said, I knew a girl who had gone or was going to New Jersey State College for Women and I dated a friend of hers who had gone to New Jersey College for Women. She was a chemist working for Merck, and so, through conversations of that sort, I knew about Rutgers and it seemed the easiest to apply at Rutgers. I had no particular ambition; I had no drive at the time. I had no desire to go far away to school and, therefore, Rutgers was there, oh, and not only that, but a very good friend, in fact, the friend who will be joining me in half-an-hour or so, he had enrolled at Rutgers and he and I were going to live together off campus. So, that would have entered into the decision, also.

SH: Did you in fact wind up living off campus?

HH: Yes, I did. He and I lived on the same floor of a small house where the landlady rented out rooms. This was in the Hungarian section of New Brunswick. …

SH: You entered Rutgers in September of …

HH: '47.

SH: What was the campus like in 1947? What do you remember about it?

HH: … I don't have any vivid recollection of those early days, because, again, it was as though I was swallowed up by the larger community of, this time, veterans and, like most of the veterans, I wasn't really interested in college life. I was just interested in going to class, taking my courses, and so forth, and so on, for a while, but, then, I made a connection with *Targum* and that changed everything, because I was their drama critic and I began to go to the plays, and then, I was in one of the plays, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and … almost all my social activities at Rutgers were connected with *Targum*. I played softball with the *Targum* team and … all of my best friends, especially the chap who was to become my very best Rutgers friend, Hamilton Carson, whom I saw yesterday, he and his wife, he was connected with *Targum*. Frank Long, whom I saw last night at the banquet, he was *Targum*. So, most of my social acquaintances at Rutgers were *Targum*, except for the few guys with whom I bussed tables in the cafeteria and a few guys whom I got to know in class and a few guys whom I got to know commuting for a while by train to Roselle. So, that was pretty much it for my social life, except that I … would have an occasional date. … Until I met my wife, my dates were usually with New Jersey College for Women girls, whom I met through my friend, Elizabeth Kellogg, who was later to be Elizabeth Kellogg Carow.

SH: When you began working on the *Targum*, were you still living in the Hungarian section or did you commute?

HH: Yes, yes, but, then, very soon thereafter, … Jack Wicklein, whom I was living with off campus, he graduated and, at that point, I moved into the dorm. …

SH: Which dorm did you move into?

HH: Phyllis, do you remember? I think it was Winants Hall. Actually, I lived in two different dorms, but Winants is the only one whose name I remember very well, some of the guys who lived with me in the dorm, besides Carson, but most of my interest was, as I said, *Targum*-centered, journalism-centered. I was a student in the School of Journalism and much of what I did centered on … journalism. I even wrote a story, I didn't remember it until yesterday, for the *New Brunswick Home News*. I believe I covered a couple of on campus events. I know I went to hear Robert Frost read poetry and I may have written that up for the *Targum*, only I'm not sure of that. As I said, I went to most of the plays. I became very interested in the theater at that time. George Hutchinson was the director and I got to know him personally and I had great respect for him and I got to know other members of the Drama Department, oh, and, I had forgotten, one activity that I spent a great deal of time in was going to the Corner Tavern. I don't know whether

that still exists or not, but I used to go with a guy named Matt O'Rourke, who was an English major, maybe a graduate student, and there was a biology major there who later made a bit of a name for himself in biology, a man named Courtney Wemyss III, and I remember him very distinctly. He was a real oddball, but a very interesting guy and he had a great store of dirty limericks and the three or four of us used to, over a glass of beer, make up and recite dirty limericks at the Corner Tavern and across the street from the Corner Tavern was a little restaurant. Again, I have no idea if it's still there. I'd forgotten completely about its existence until I walked on the campus yesterday and I used to go there quite often with friends. I did most of these things with other people and that was pretty much my social life at Rutgers, *Targum*, the Corner Tavern, an occasional date with an NJC girl.

SH: How quickly did you settle on journalism as your major?

HH: Immediately. I don't remember what led up to the decision, but I know I had thought of myself, since I was a little boy, as a writer and journalism struck me as being the way to go.

SH: Did you do any other acting at the University?

HH: Nothing but a small part in the production of *Twelfth Night*. That was pretty much it for my activities. My only regret, looking back, is that I didn't sing, that I didn't join the Glee Club. At that time, maybe still, Rutgers had a very good Glee Club. It had a music director named Soup Walter and he was very good, very well known. I had sung in high school, in the glee club, and, if I had been enrolling as a regular student, rather than as a veteran, I probably would have joined the Glee Club, but, since I was a veteran and since most of my time outside of class was taken up by either *Targum* or Corner Tavern, I did not think of the Glee Club.

SH: Did you continue to take courses through the summer or did you stop to work?

HH: Yes, I did, I did. I took courses one summer, anyway. One summer, I worked or was it the summer following Rutgers, I think it was the summer right after graduation that I worked. I had a menial job in a factory in Newark, yes. Again, I'm kind of hazy on the details and on the chronology, but I know that I did not [work]. I didn't have to work while I was at Rutgers, because the GI Bill was a very generous supplier of my needs.

SH: Did you meet Mrs. Harris as an undergraduate at Rutgers?

HH: Yes, yes. It would have been the summer between my junior and senior years. No, it was the fall, but just before school resumed. It was in September and I met her at a dance in Newark, and then, we immediately started going together quite steadily and … I would come home weekends to Roselle, and then, I would go by bus to her home in Orange, which was a very long commute. So, that took a great deal of my time and energy and effort in my senior year at Rutgers, and then, we were married a week before commencement in 1949.

SH: Where were you married?

HH: Where? West Orange. I believe it was West Orange.

Phyllis Harris: Livingston.

HH: Livingston. No, it was Livingston Manor. That was the name of the establishment, but I think it was in West Orange. [laughter]

SH: Was the dance that you met the future Mrs. Harris at a sponsored dance?

HH: It was a dance at the YM and YWHA of Newark. I don't know if it was a sponsored dance.

SH: Did you usually go to dances there?

HH: No. I think it was the first and only one that I went to, but I was, at that time, one of a small group of guys who were looking around, you know, on the prowl, sort of, [laughter] and it was one of a number of dances that I would have gone to during that period.

SH: Did the future Mrs. Harris' family think that it was okay for her to date a returning veteran or did they look at you as a college student?

HH: [laughter] I don't know. I don't think that question ever came up. Again, the category of veteran didn't have the kind of meaning then that it would have later on, because most of the guys that she would have known, the guys of my age, would have been veterans. So, I don't think she would have thought of me as a veteran and I doubt whether her mother, she was living with her mother at the time, thought of me as a veteran. It's a little bit hard now to understand that, but that was the case. …

SH: You were married the week before commencement.

HH: Yes.

SH: What were your plans from that point on?

HH: My plan was to take a Masters in English. I had decided on that, because I had time left on the GI Bill and because, at that time, there were no jobs available for a would-be newspaper reporter, at least not in the East, and that being the case and my having at least, well, I had quite a bit of time left on the GI Bill, I decided to stay here at Rutgers and to take a Masters in English and that was what I did right after our marriage.

SH: Did you live in New Brunswick then?

HH: No, I commuted from Orange. We were living with her mother at that time. I don't remember much of the circumstances. I don't think I came down every day, quite sure enough, but I would have come down probably three times a week for that year that I was working on my Masters.

SH: After you completed your Masters at Rutgers, where did you go?

HH: I then went to the Ohio State University in Columbus and I went largely because I had had, in "Freshman Composition," a really unusual, even remarkable, man who took a real interest in me when I began Rutgers. His name was Robert Krapp. … He was the son of a very distinguished linguist, George Krapp, who wrote one of the first studies of the American language and, between the time I was a freshman in his class and the time I was a senior, he had changed his name to Adams. So, Hamilton Carson and I always spoke of him as "Krapp Adams," although he was known only as Robert Martin Adams, and he became one of the more distinguished literary critics of my generation. He died just a few years ago. He was chiefly responsible for my decision to go on for the PhD in English and he was the one who wrote the letter of recommendation that got me in Ohio State and it got me an assistantship there.

SH: When did you go to Ohio State?

HH: … 1950.

SH: You finished your Masters in one year.

HH: Yes, and I was at the Ohio State for four years. I left with my dissertation not quite finished. I was finished, yes. I taught almost full-time during those four years, but I managed, somehow, to get all of the work done for the PhD and to have a great time as well, going to jazz clubs, playing softball, dancing. It was one of the most pleasurable periods of my life, the four years of graduate school.

SH: Where did you go after Ohio State?

HH: Then, when I got the PhD in 1954, the window of opportunity …

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

SH: This continues an interview with Harold Harris on May 16, 1999, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. We were discussing the employment opportunities that had opened up for those in the English field in 1954.

HH: … I had the offer of four or five jobs, which was remarkable, or was, in a very few years, to become remarkable, and my wife and I had an interview at Miami University at Miami, Ohio, and I had a job offer from them. I was interviewed at a conference by the chairman of the University of Cincinnati … English Department. I could have gone there. I could have gone to the University of Vermont … and, also, Wayne State was in the picture. I chose Kalamazoo College because, at that time, it had just gotten a bundle of money from the Upjohn Family, which was the dominant family in Kalamazoo, the Upjohn Pharmaceutical Company, and they were buying up young talent. They were making, really, a drive to become a major small liberal arts college. So, they offered me, I think it was five hundred dollars a year more than the University of Vermont. At that time, it was quite a good salary that they were offering and we drove up to Kalamazoo together for the interview and they treated us royally and I liked the look of the place. I liked the people that I met. So, without hesitation, I decided on Kalamazoo

College and I never regretted it. It was a great choice. … I taught there from 1954 until 1990, when I retired.

SH: Did you hold any other positions within the college? Were you ever chair of your department?

HH: Well, it was … a four-man department when I got there. [laughter] The faculty consisted of about fifty full-time people and it was a rotating chairmanship, so, yes, I was chairman of the department at one time and I was chairman of most of the major faculty committees at one time or another. I was the president of the AAUP chapter [Association of American University Professors]. I was very active, almost [out] of necessity, on campus. Everybody was; most people were. I was also very active [elsewhere]. I was the chairman of the Bach Festival Commission. I sang Bach, two or three years, which was great stuff. I loved it, singing Bach's *B minor Mass* and the *St. Matthew Passion*. Those were my major [pieces]. … I loved it, hardest work I've ever done, but great. Those were my major activities.

SH: Was Mrs. Harris an active faculty wife? Did she work outside of the home?

HH: Well, she was a faculty wife, and as active, I suppose, as most of the faculty wives, but she also took a job with the publication, a little publication, of the Upjohn Company and she worked for Upjohn for a while, and then, she had had just high school when we met and got married. Then, after a while, after our kids were in school, she went back and got a degree at Western Michigan University. So, that kept her busy, and then, after that, she took a couple of different jobs, and then, took a job, which turned out to be permanent, with the H&R Block Company. She's an income tax consultant, which she still does.

SH: Where did your children come into the picture?

HH: Okay. The children all came in in Kalamazoo. There are three of them, all boys, ranging in age from thirty-four, next week or in two weeks, to forty-three, … our oldest. Only one, the youngest, still lives in Kalamazoo. The middle one lives in Seattle; the oldest lives in Houston.

SH: Did you become close to your boys?

HH: Very close, very, very close, and I'm still very close.

SH: You mentioned that, while you were in Ohio, you did fun things like go to jazz clubs and dances. You have not talked about too many other dances, besides the dance where you met Mrs. Harris. Had you danced much before that?

HH: No, I've always loved to dance. In fact, I still love to dance and my best friend in high school, whom I've mentioned several times, was a great dancer. He was the class dancer and, a couple times, he and I and his wife, whom I've mentioned, and other kids from high school cut class Friday to go to his house in order to have … him teach us the tango, remember, and the Lambeth Walk and things like that. … Actually, you know, most kids have [the] ambition of being a ballplayer, Dodgers or something. … My icon, the entertainer I've always most adored,

was Fred Astaire and, if I could have gone that route, I would have. [laughter] I didn't have that kind of talent, obviously.

SH: We talked about how you met Mrs. Harris.

HH: Yes, we met at a dance. [laughter] I saw her across the room. Without even thinking about it, I realized that I was in love with her, have been ever since, without a moment's gap, and I wouldn't have had the nerve to ask her to dance, except that the chaps with whom she had come to the dance had left her to get a drink or something upstairs, and so, I walked over and, deathless pause, said, "Do you know there's a dance going on upstairs?" … Afterwards, the guy returned. I think we did dance and I got her name and phone number and called her. She didn't remember me very well, but she agreed to see me and that was the start of a … fifty-two-year [relationship].

SH: All of those dance lessons from your friend must have paid off. You were able to sweep her off her feet. [laughter]

HH: I hadn't thought of it in those terms, but, yes, I suppose so. I don't mean to suggest that I was dancing all the time, you know. I mean, I didn't go to a great many dances, but, from a very early age, I've liked to dance. Whenever the opportunity would present itself, I would dance. …

SH: It sounds like music was very important in your early life.

HH: Yes, it was, yes. In fact, for years and years, the first thing I would do when I would wake up in the morning was to jump out of bed and start dancing, usually jitterbugging, [laughter] much to the dismay of my wife, because she is the sort of person who doesn't come awake until she's had her first cup of coffee at nine or ten or some such time, while I was always very cheerful. I'd jump out of bed and start dancing.

SH: Before we conclude the interview, is there anything else that you would like to say on the record?

HH: Yes. I thought, at the time that I was going to Rutgers, that I was getting a first rate education and I've always looked back upon my Rutgers years, the academic life and the business of *Targum,* with real fondness. I enjoyed almost every course that I took. I particularly enjoyed a course that I was remembering last night at the banquet taught by a man named Dick McCormick, a course in New Jersey history, which I thought was perfectly marvelous, and he was as good a teacher as anybody that I had at the college or any other level, yes. So, I never regretted having gone to Rutgers and I would have been pleased if any of my sons had wanted to go, but we're far enough away and circumstances were such that it never seemed right to them. So, they all went [on] … to pursue different academic paths.

SH: Living in Kalamazoo, did you travel to New Jersey with your family often?

HH: Occasionally, but mostly to see my wife's mother, who lived, first, in Orange, and then, Long Island and she has a brother who lives on Long Island. So, they were really the points of contact with the East, because, by that time, most members of my family had either died or

moved to other parts of the country, Connecticut, California, where much of my family now is, but I had not been back to Rutgers since 1950.

SH: I hope you had a wonderful Reunion Weekend.

HH: It was fun. I was very glad that I came. I very much enjoyed seeing the handful of people that I had known pretty well at Rutgers and I mentioned Frank [Long], along with a guy named Paul Van Duren and a guy named Herb Stern, who was at my table. There weren't that many, but there were enough to make it worthwhile.

SH: Thank you very much for talking with us this weekend.

HH: You're quite welcome. Now, I believe you said you would be sending me the transcript afterwards. …

SH: Yes. This concludes an interview with Dr. Harold Harris.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 9/27/04
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 9/28/04
Reviewed by Harold J. Harris 10/3/04