RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS B. HARTMANN

FOR

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SEAN D. HARVEY
and
JOHN NIEMAN

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
NOVEMBER 11, 1999

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Sean Harvey: This begins an interview with Professor Thomas B. Hartmann on November 11, 1999, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Sean D. Harvey and ...

John Nieman: John Nieman.

SH: We would like to begin the interview by asking you about your father. He immigrated from Europe and worked on the railroads.

Thomas Hartmann: No, he didn't, no. His father did. He was born in Newark, New Jersey, and, when he was a young man, he went to work, out of the sixth grade, ... [for the] (Shears?) Company, a fine implement company, in Newark. ... So, he worked as a machinist, and then, he took a job at the Lehigh Valley Railroad, and he decided, ... he and his brother both decided [that] they'd like to run their own business, so, they started a hardware store in Springfield, New Jersey, and, later, doubled it with a store in Milburn, which is a neighboring town, and so, he was really, essentially, a hardware and supply company merchant. That's what he was, yeah.

SH: When did they open their hardware store?

TH: Oh, golly, before World War I, considerably. I would say, probably, around 1910, something like that.

JN: Which brother did he found the store with?

TH: His brother William, yeah. He only had one. There're only ... two sons in that family, yeah, and his father was born in England, not in Germany, because, in 1848, if you know anything about European history, they had a kind of a middle class revolt against the Prussian rulers, and the revolt was crushed, and certain people, ... particularly young men, were forced to exile themselves from Germany. Either they would go to jail or they'd be exiled, so, most of them chose to be exiled. So, my great-grandfather, who was exiled, he decided to go to England, and so, my grandfather was born in England. Then, he migrated to the US. That's how that worked.

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

TH: She's an immigrant. She was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1884. So, she came to this country when she was seven years old, so, that would be 1891. [She] came to Newark, New Jersey. She met my father at the Central Avenue School, which still, I think, the same buildings, ... is in use. See, that part of Newark's problem is the facilities, as well as everything else. About two billion dollars of capital improvements [are] needed in that city for education alone, but, I think the Central Avenue School still stands, you know. [It was] probably a hundred years old when she went to it.

SH: Did your parents meet in elementary school?

TH: Yes, they did. ... Well, it happened in those days, because you lived in a tight community and, particularly in the church, I guess, ... probably, the families went to the same church, things

like that, because Newark was not a big city then, and the section they lived in was a distinct section of Newark and had its own churches and social institutions, but, I guess that's not too unusual. You don't go very far, either, in those days. There were no automobiles, so, you didn't go anywhere, [laughter] unless you took the trolley car. So, there you are.

SH: Did they ever go on trips via the railroad?

TH: Yeah, I think so, I think so. They were travelers. They became travelers, as they could afford to, but, they didn't do a lot of traveling in the early days, no. They had to work very hard. My father was an intense worker, a seven-day-a-week kind of worker, yeah. Well, Sundays, they took off, because they were very hyper-religious, and so, Sunday was the so-called day of rest, and you didn't even read a Sunday newspaper, no. I wasn't brought up that way, but, they had that kind of pressure on them when they were young.

SH: When you were a child, did they observe Sunday religiously?

TH: Yes, oh, yeah, oh, my, yes, enough to drive their children out of it. [laughter] You're too young, maybe, to understand that, but, it works in reverse, you know, for some people.

SH: Your father passed away during the Depression ...

TH: Yeah, he did.

SH: But, your mother had a college degree ...

TH: No, she didn't have a college degree.

SH: She did not?

TH: No, she didn't, probably a tenth or eleventh grade education. No, she didn't have a [college degree]. Well, she went to a business college, so did he, but, it wasn't ... business school as you know, an MBA or anything like the present. They learned, I think, probably, bookkeeping, and a little bit of accounting, and kind of the hands on stuff that they would need to run a business.

SH: Did your mother manage the business after your father passed away?

TH: Yes, she did, she did. It was a large, relatively speaking, ... hardware and supply company. There's an interesting story involved there. I didn't know why my brother, one of my brothers, had gotten interested in architecture. I didn't ... understand. He was six years older than I, so, I never went through that process with him, but, he became a world famous architect, and I didn't know why. I mean, I didn't know why that happened. I had ... nothing to direct me towards architecture at all. Well, that's because my father had died. ... His supply company, see, he would take a contract with a builder of something, and he'd get the blueprints and bring them home and lay them out on the dining room table, and then, figure out how much hardware was needed, and he would be supplying the hardware, the door handles, the locks, hinges, all that

stuff, nails, screws, and so, he'd figured that out from the blueprint, ... and then, he'd bid on the job, so [that] he would know what he had to bid. ... My brother got intrigued and ... I just discovered this two years ago. He would stand there and watch my father, and then, learn about blueprints, and he was intrigued with blueprints. So, he decided, when he was in high school, or earlier, even, that he wanted to be an architect, that he wanted to design the buildings. ...

JN: He went into that field later.

TH: Oh, yeah. As I say, very successfully. ...

SH: He served in the Army as an engineer.

TH: Yes, yes, he did. He went to MIT, and, there, [it] was a land-grant institution, the way Rutgers used to be, and that [meant] you had to go take ROTC. It was a requirement of every undergraduate to take two years of ROTC, part of the land-grant nature of the place. So, he was in the ROTC and he got a commission. He stayed in for all four years and got a commission in the Army Engineers [upon] graduating.

SH: He also served in World War II.

TH: Oh, yeah. He was called in before Pearl Harbor, yeah, and then, he was sent overseas shortly after Pearl Harbor, and didn't come back until 1945. So, he was overseas about as long as anybody who wasn't captured. ...

JN: When you were growing up, what was your family life like? Where did you live?

TH: We grew up nice, Somerville, New Jersey, right over here, you know, ten miles away. Yeah, it was very nice, a very nice family life. I mean, I didn't even know there was a depression. ... Yeah, I did. I knew that fathers were out of work, ... my friends, and people had to struggle with money, but, I wasn't denied anything, within reason, and so, I didn't know that there was ... thousands of people suffering, you know, selling apples in the streets. We didn't live in the city, so, it wasn't so apparent in a town like that, and the town was dependent upon the agricultural belt around it, and people still had to eat food, and hardware stores were wonderful businesses, because people always need hardware. They always do. You know, they have to repair a door, whether they have the plumbing, you know, whatever has to be done. They have to buy stuff. ... Yeah, it was very nice and the town was nice. Now, you got me started on this. There's a man by the name of Raymond Bateman, who's very famous in New Jersey. He's now chairman of the Sports and Exhibition Authority in the Meadowlands, but, he ran for governor in 1977. He was a state senator for a long time and very well known. He and I grew up in the same neighborhood. He's about seven years younger than I am, but, I knew him very well anyway, 'cause it was a small town; you knew all the kids. He had a brother closer to my age, and we, many times, talked, in recent years, about how important it was to be raised in a town which was diverse. Our town, and those old-fashioned small, New Jersey towns, were diverse towns. They had everything and everybody you can imagine living in them. They did, they did. They weren't suburban. They were more urban, sociologically more urban, than they were suburban, and it's

just a wonderful place to grow up, because [there are] kids of every color, every religion, every ethnic group known to New Jersey. We had Russians, we had Polish, and we had Czech kids, and we had lots of Italian-Americans, you know, the whole bit.

SH: Do remember any problems caused by prejudice during your childhood?

TH: Oh, yeah. Oh, gosh, there's always problems with prejudice, yeah, yeah. The blacks were not assimilated into the community and, yet, they had been there longer than most of the whites. They were Dutch. See, the thing is, about where we're sitting, right here, this whole valley was settled by Dutch farmers, patroons, and they brought with them black labor from the Caribbean and from Africa, and they never enslaved the blacks they brought here. The blacks were ... field hands, but, not slaves, never slaves. So, they were essentially free men and those slaves that could achieve something to support themselves were able to strike out on their own, even start businesses, own property, all those things. They weren't chattel slaves, and so, my town had a relatively large black population, mainly from the old Dutch families, not emigrants from the South. ... So, they had a class about them, and even in the black community of that era, those who hadn't been slaves had greater social standing than those who had been slaves, within the black community itself, but, the whites didn't [care]. See, Paul Robeson went to high school there, and he was the local hero, and that had a lot to do with striking the attitudes in the community. He was the brightest guy in the high school, and he was the best athlete, by far, they'd ever seen, and he was a super, super person, and some of the white families had their children make best friends of Paul Robeson. So, ... one of his problems, growing up, I'm sure, and later, was that he had been accepted by leading white families in that community when he was a youngster, and he thought, maybe, the world was that way, and he discovered very quickly, when he came to Rutgers, that the world was not that way, and so, sure, there were lots of prejudices around, prejudice against Jews and against blacks, primarily, and then, against Catholics, you know. ... Some of that was boys, but, when you grow up in a mixed environment like that, it's like growing up in a city. ... You can't be very prejudiced. You can't be, if you don't live in an enclave, all by yourself. [If] you live in a general community, it's hard to be prejudiced, because you're dealing with people of every kind all day long. Anyway, that's my opinion. ...

JN: You started high school in Somerville, and then, you transferred to Phillips Academy. Why did you make that change?

TH: Well, because of how I was. You can't appreciate this, because you gentlemen are very serious, and you were serious in high school, but, I was not serious. [laughter] I was not serious. I was more into sports than I was into studying. Even though I got through and was on the honor roll more than I wasn't, I still didn't do very good work, I mean, for what I should have been doing. ... My one brother, the architect, and my older sister, fourteen years older than I, had been straight A+ students throughout, and they all assumed that I should be, and I was having too good a time.

JN: Which sports did you play in high school?

TH: Football and track, and I played basketball, not on the high school team, but, in one of the local church teams and stuff like that. Every night, there was something, don't worry. [laughter] ...

SH: Were you involved in any other activities outside of school? Did you find anything else to be more interesting than your studies?

TH: Well, sports, mainly, mainly sports, but, yeah, I was on the newspaper, and I fiddled around in various clubs and socialized to the Nth degree and hit the books last, if I hit them at all. I'm sorry about that, gentlemen. [laughter]

SH: As a child growing up in the Depression, what activities were you involved in? Were your friends in the same financial situation as you?

TH: ... In a town like that, most of the people I knew, most the kids I grew up with in my neighborhood and so forth, didn't suffer either. [There were] a few unemployed fathers, but, they got jobs, usually. ... You see, I didn't grow up in a blue-collar neighborhood at all. It was a middle class, or upper middle class, neighborhood, you might say, by those standards, anyway, and ... [you] didn't see suffering around. ... My friends weren't suffering, the ones I saw most of the time. They weren't suffering.

SH: What did you do for fun?

TH: We played a lot of sandlot sports, ... a lot of sandlot sports, and [we would] just go around, you know, like kids in a small town. You just went and did things. You played some game with the kids in the east side of town, you know. We'd go down to the main street and wander around, you know, just that kind of simple things. There weren't many planned activities in those days. You haven't any Little Leagues or junior teams of one sort or another.

SH: How did the movies and radio fit into your life?

TH: Well, radio was very popular. It was there, and there was a lot of it, and movies, yeah, ... you know, a double feature on Saturday afternoon type of thing, ... [particularly] in bad weather. That was a big deal, [to] go to the movies, because, New Brunswick, not in New Brunswick so much, but, Newark, had great first run movie houses, so [that] you could see the big films. [They] would come there before the [rest]. You'd have to go to New York, see. That was the thing about New Jersey, at that era. You didn't have to go to New York to see a first run movie. You'd go to New York for special shopping, but, you could get anything you wanted [in New Jersey]. If you couldn't get it in New Brunswick, which was the nearest shopping community, you went to Newark, and then, if you wanted to go all the way, you went to New York, to Macy's and stores like that, but, the movies were important. They were part of the entertainment, definitely. Radio had a big, big role to play.

SH: Did you listen to several different shows?

TH: Yeah, different shows, and they had, when I was little, ... these things like *Jack Armstrong, All American Boy, Little Orphan Annie,* a bunch of fifteen minute serials in the afternoon, you know, between five and six, and they got the little kids at home, and they had these things, these kind of programs. Some were sort of adventuresome. ... They were kind of juvenile, when you think about it, but, they certainly sold a lot of cereal, C-E-R-E-A-L. [laughter] They were serial stories, but, they sold a lot of C-E-R-E-A-L. They did. ... Ovaltine, *Little Orphan Annie,* shake up mug, everybody had to have a Little Orphan Annie shake up mug ... for mixing the Ovaltine and the milk. [laughter] You see, the world has changed a lot. None of that stuff would go over. Now, you've got to have video games. ...

JN: When did you meet your wife? Did you meet her at the Phillips Academy?

TH: Yes, I did. As a matter-of-fact, I met her when I was a senior at Andover on Thanksgiving weekend, so, that would be, how many years ago? God, I hate to tell you, fifty-eight years ago. ... How about that? [laughter] this weekend, I mean now, right now.

JN: Did you meet her at a dance?

TH: No. ... A good friend of mine lived in the same town she lived in, Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, and so, because we only got Thanksgiving Day off, he suggested that we go to his house, because I couldn't go home, come to his house. He took a couple [of us], another friend from Hawaii, and I, home with him, and he had a little party of kids he'd grown up with in his neighborhood, and she happened to be one of the girls who came, ... and so, we talked, and I wrote to her, and she wrote back, and that started it. So, here we are.

JN: Did you correspond through the rest of high school and college as well?

TH: Oh, yeah. Well, the war came on. ... We were married in 1945, so, that would be four years later, and we saw each other a total of two weeks, fourteen days, in those four or five years, that's all, and we hadn't really seen a lot of each other, but, we'd written tons of letters, so, that was that, and she went through college and was in graduate school when we got married. So, that's how that worked out.

SH: Did either one of you save those letters?

TH: Well, you know, they ask that question. Women always keep their letters. [laughter] They do. I kept a lot of the wartime letters I'd gotten from when I was overseas, from everybody, not just from her, and went through those just a few months ago, because she suggested that I look through them, ... "Because somebody's got to do something with those letters," and she thought, probably, they would be helpful to anybody who had to do something, and we held out the letters between us. She's kept all those, but, the other letters and everything, and we weeded a lot of letters out that needn't be, you know, they were general information, ... friendly, but, not important.

JN: Why did you decide to go to Princeton?

TH: Oh, that was decided for me before I was born, I think. My parents, luckily for us, got the notion that the most successful people they knew, because neither of them had high school diplomas, ... had gone to what they considered to be the premier institutions of the day, and ... Princeton, being only seventeen miles away, there were four or five families in town where the men had gone to Princeton, and they were well-liked, and they were friends of my parents, and they decided that that was probably where one of their sons should go, but, the doctor had a son, surgeon in town, ... my age. So, he used to take both of us down there all the time for various things, one thing or another, mainly sporting events of one sort or another, so, ... I got to see a lot of it, and so, I decided that's what I wanted to do, but, they had already made that decision ahead of time. My mother held to it, too, I mean, after my father died. So, there was no question.

SH: You never considered going to Rutgers.

TH: No. One of Rutgers' most famous graduates lived across the street, ... a Justice of the State Supreme Court, and he sent both of his sons to Princeton, and that said a lot in those days. You see, Rutgers was a tiny college then, had 1100 undergraduates or something. It wasn't a university as you see it now, so, it wasn't really an option. I mean, if you wanted to go to a small college, you could go to, you know, ... Amherst, Williams, Wesleyan, Rutgers, Lehigh, Lafayette, these were the kind of colleges that people who wanted smaller enrollments went to. So, Rutgers, really, was not a competitor for ... somebody's choice. Really, it really wasn't. So, that's how that developed then. ... Rutgers didn't have the options for student then that it has now, not at all.

SH: Do you feel that the Phillips Academy adequately prepared you for Princeton?

TH: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah, boy, are you kidding? They held my feet to the fire, for one thing. I needed that badly. "Can't fool around," they said. "Don't fool around," you know. They were really good, really good, great instruction. I had Ph.D.s teaching me. They had a better faculty than most colleges. I mean, I'm serious about that. They were really top people and they were good. So, you had to buckle down and do the work and there's no fooling around.

SH: In your opinion, Phillips Academy really shaped you up.

TH: Oh, yeah, a lot. I've been very ... active in school affairs for a long time, simply because I feel I owe it to them for having done that for me. It was a national high school, and it had scholarship kids from all over, and it was a great mix of people, and it was not a prep school in the preppie sense. Oh, yeah, there were some preppies there, but, it wasn't that preppie, because there were a lot of guys who came from nothing and had to work in the mess hall, and I never had to do that, work in the dinning halls and do student labor to earn their scholarships, you know, and things like that. So, it was a very good experience that way. There were black students, all ... kinds of people.

SH: Were the black students treated well?

TH: Yeah, yes. ... I think that most of the prejudice I saw, and that was true at home, and, well, ... people weren't prejudiced against the blacks so much as they were; the blacks came from a different class, and ... they lived together, and there wasn't very much mixing. I think the top student in my high school class was a black, young woman. ... She went to Winston-Salem State, or one of those black colleges down in the South. Today, she would be going to Harvard, you know. She would; I mean, she was very bright, but, in those days, that wasn't part of the thing. First of all, the women's colleges of those days weren't taking black students. Even Douglass didn't take black students. ... So, you didn't have that kind of opportunity, ... but, the most active prejudice was against Jews, ... and that was around all the time, and, yet, we had all these Jewish kids. I lived on a street where half the families were Jewish, you know, and ... it always mystified me how people could be prejudiced, and, you know, I played with the kids. [laughter]

SH: Were there actual acts of discrimination or was it more of an anti-Semitic attitude?

TH: No, no, just the general attitude, ... just kind of anti-Semitism. They may go and buy whatever they're buying from the Jewish merchant and, you know, come back and say that Hitler wasn't all bad, or some stupid thing like that.

JN: Are there any interesting stories about your time at the Phillips Academy that you would like to share? On your pre-interview survey, you mentioned that you went to school with George Bush.

TH: Yeah, he was, well, originally, a classmate, ... though he was a year younger, and he decided to stay another year. So, he graduated in 1942. I graduated in 1941. I knew him, not well, but, I knew him. He was a good athlete and [I] knew him from that, and [he was] just friendly, a very friendly man. He was one of the nicest guys in the school, actually, so, he had that reputation, generally, [of] the people who knew him. ... I've seen him twice, I think, since those days, not as President, but, before he became President, and he's still a very nice guy. He is. I don't like his politics at all, but, he's a nice guy.

SH: How did you view his performance in the White House?

TH: Oh, I think, you know, you get me started on this stuff. God, I [have] got opinions a mile long, more. [laughter] No, I think what really hurt him badly was that he was forced to the right an awful lot. I don't think he started out as that. His father, who was a US Senator, was a conservative Republican of the Herbert Hoover variety, and, you know, "The less government the better," and, "Don't tax people too much," and, "Don't spend public money on much." That's a traditional Republican thing, but, not right wing, not ideological, completely ideological. ... The Democrats of the Franklin Roosevelt stripe wanted programs that helped deal with the problems of the society. Republicans didn't want to spend any money, 'cause it was up to the individual. They believed in the individual economy. You develop according to your own abilities. This is a kind of the free enterprise mentality and Americans traditionally believe this. This is that the individual has a lot to do with what happens to him or her. Republicans really believe this hard, and so, as opposed to a more welfare state kind of attitude that the Democrats, traditional Democrats, have had, where the government has a role that has to deal with issues and

problems and so forth, and so, you didn't divide on an ideological basis. You really divided on a matter of degree, how much, how little, and, all of a sudden, we enter an era, which started, I guess it was bound to happen, and I'm not much enough of a US historian to be able analyze it completely, but, we entered an era with Barry Goldwater where the right wing took over the Republican Party in the San Francisco convention of 1964. ... I remember, one of my best service friend's wife was, at that time, a National Republican committee woman from Connecticut, and she was devoted to the Bushs, and she was also devoted to Nelson Rockefeller, who was also a candidate for President, ... was governor of New York at that time, and Rockefeller wanted to run, of course, on the traditional basis. "We will manage the country better. We will not waste money. We will not ... give money away to all these bosses in Chicago and other cities that have Democratic machines," you know. "We'll do all those good things," but, not on an ideological basis, not, ... you know, the kind of things that the right wing Republicans have begun to stand for. ... She told me that was her nastiest experience in life, going to the San Francisco convention, because she never had been spat upon before, and she was, because she was supporting Rockefeller, and she's kind of a wealthy, proper, Connecticut Republican woman, without an ideological bone in her body, by the way. So, she didn't like the Democrats. She didn't like John F. Kennedy, because he was a Boston Irishman. ... He and his father had bought their way into politics, etc., etc., that type of thing, but, not on an ideological basis. ... George Bush got trapped by that. He was forced to the right and that movement took over the Republican Party, more and more. You just look at the last election, '96. Dole, who is not an ideologue, he's a practical politician, majority leader of the US Senate, you have to be a practical politician; you can't be like Trent Lott. Trent Lott is a disaster in Washington, in my own opinion, because he is too ideological. You cannot be ideological. Newt Gingrich was forced way to the right. I don't think he was necessarily that way, but, he had to be that way for his own party, because, if you didn't, you wouldn't survive. Well, George Bush's the same way. The only way he could replace Ronald Reagan, who talked a big game, but, did nothing. You knew that, didn't you? that Ronald Reagan never got any of these initiatives passed, because ... it wasn't his thing. His thing was to speak, to speak on them. He didn't get them passed, ... nothing got passed, ... but, George Bush gets trapped in that. He has to run against Clinton, and then, ... Dole has to run against Clinton. Clinton is a master politician. He knows which way to move. He's the slipperiest guy in politics you'd ever want to meet, but, a master politician. He makes Franklin Roosevelt, in my opinion, look like an amateur. Clinton is the best I have ever seen at the game, the best, the best. He survives all this other nonsense. How did he survive all the other nonsense? He's the best politician there is. Where is he now? He's all over the world, isn't he? [The] last year of his Presidency and he's right in the forefront of everything, the North Ireland peace process, Middle East. So, what's his record gonna be? What are they gonna write about in the history books about him? They're not going to write about Monica Lewinsky and all that nonsense. They're gonna write about, hey, what kind of world did he leave with his negotiations? ... George Bush could have been in the middle of the road. He was very good on foreign affairs, anyway, but, he was forced way over to the right. He was forced on an anti-abortion platform. My God Almighty, that's a loser. Anybody in politics will tell you that's a loser. If you make that part of your platform, if you force your candidates to run on that kind of platform, they're gonna lose the women's vote. There's just no question about it and the women's vote controls the elections, nowadays. ... I'm sorry, I know I'm preaching to the choir, I guess, but, I'm sorry. ... I cannot understand, but, as a good friend of mine, a former student of

mine, lives in California, says, "Don't tell them. Let them continue to do that. Don't tell them." He's a good Democrat. He says, "Don't tell them. Let them do that. They're too dumb, let them do that." They'll win local races, but, they won't win big races, not if you've got a heavy women's vote that has to come out. So, George W. Bush, what's his stand on abortion been? "I'm against it, but, you know ..." you know. Have you heard him? He's gonna be ambivalent on all those things, school prayer, all these so-called [family] values, prayer in the schools. Did you have prayer in the schools when you went through high school? Did you? I had prayer every morning. So, what the hell's all this about? The teacher has to read a chapter from the Bible. I get enough of that on Sunday and I didn't like it then. We come to school and they have to read from the Bible and recite the Lord's Prayer, every day, every day. This is meant to make a better person of you? Of course, the kids, nobody paid any attention to it. It's self-destructive. It defeats the purpose of doing it and that's stupidity. That is stupidity, but, you run it in a platform, you want a constitutional amendment permitting school prayer? Imagine loading our great Constitution up with nonsense like that. They did it with prohibition. They made criminals out of all the good people in society who didn't want to be told they couldn't drink. They bought the stuff from whom? bootleggers, right? They bought illegal booze; I mean, the good folks did. I'm not talking about the thugs buying it, the good folks did. It defeated the country. It was one of the worst things that ever happened to us. Anyway, you heard me, so, you don't have to ask me another question on this.

JN: Did you participate in any sports or activities at Princeton?

TH: Yeah, I played freshman football and freshman track there, yeah, I did, but, other activities, no. I wasn't there long enough, really, to get involved. [I] probably would have gotten on the newspaper, I think. I would have at least been a writer of some sort in the newspaper, if I had had enough time there and had found my way around, but, freshman year, you didn't find your way around very much. You went to class, and you did the other stuff, and you didn't join a lot of things or go out for a lot of things, at least I didn't, but, I would have. ...

JN: Were there any Armed Forces recruiters at Princeton?

TH: Yeah, sure.

JN: Did they influence your decision to enter the service?

TH: Well, no. You see, ... when the president of Princeton said, the day after Pearl Harbor, he had a big meeting of all undergraduates, that he'd spoken to people in Washington and they said, "The best thing we could do, as students, was to remain in college until things sorted out or where we would ... be needed and what kind of programs it would be and everything." The military was not then geared, in December of 1941, for the various campus programs that were later to come, but, I was very anxious to go. My brother was over there in Europe and I also had followed Hitler and Mussolini, ... those two totalitarians. Well, Mussolini wasn't as successful as Hitler, but, I followed Hitler very closely as a student. I was kind of intrigued with what was happening, ... and so, when he told us to stay, ... that was all right, and I kept looking for things that happened. I wasn't gonna run down to the Navy or Marine Corps recruiter, or the Army

recruiter, and do anything, but, I was looking, and then, all of a sudden, I noticed in the paper, the newspaper, that the Navy said that it had lowered the requirement for naval aviation from two years of college to one year of college, and so, I was in my first year of college, ... and they had a Navy recruiter office there, a graduate of the university, George Brown. I got to know him very well after the war, and he was there in his office, and I went in, and I said, "I understand you'll take somebody with only one year of college. I'll have one year of college in June. I would like to enlist," and he said, "Well, we will accept your enlistment, if you want to try." So, they sent me to New York City for a battery of tests, psychological, physical, interview, and I got accepted by all the testers, except my eyesight wasn't absolutely 20/20 perfect, a little astigmatism. So, they said, "Come back. We can't do that unless you come back." So, I went back and I walked in on a Saturday morning at 90 Church Street to have my eyes retested. I had a good night's sleep. In fact, I stayed in a hotel in New York, so, I had a good night's sleep, and I got up and went down there, and the guy, a young corpsman, I'll never forget him, he looked at my papers, and he said to me, "You a college boy?" I said, "Holy smokes, here I go. I'm gonna be slugging in the mud with a rifle, no flying airplanes." I'd never flown in an airplane at that point in my life. I thought, "Oh, my God," but, then, he looked at me, and he said, "You go to Princeton?" and I thought, "Oh, man. [laughter] I'll be down at the bottom of the pile," and he said, "Golly, ... you guys at Princeton are the best guys I ever met in my life," and I thought, "Gee, a Navy corpsman?" He says, "Yes." He said, "I was an usher at the Chicago Opera House in Chicago. That's how I made extra money. I ushered out there," and he said, "Every Christmas, the Triangle Club would come through there doing their show, and lots of college shows came through, glee clubs, college shows," and he said, "the only ... fellows who ever took us ushers back to the parties in the big houses up in the North Shore [was] the Princeton Triangle Club," ... and he never tested my eyes. [laughter]

SH: You became a pilot because he got to go to a party.

TH: Because he had gone to a party, yeah. ... Well, at least it took away the test. He didn't ever test my eyes. I thought I was dead in the water. Anyway, ... you have to know something about Princeton and about its reputation, even in those days, it was worst then than it is now, but, anyway, that's what happened.

SH: Why did you choose aviation?

TH: I don't know. It just sort of sounded glamorous, to tell you the truth. My brother said he didn't want me in the infantry. So, he said, "Do something where you're not in the infantry." He said, "That's not the place. Be in the Navy or something." So, when this came up, I thought, "Well, what the hell?" Flying sounded [good]. We'd had some aviation success, in at least publicity, in World War II already by, this would probably be February or March of '42. So, being a Navy pilot sounded as though it could be pretty good, not really knowing what it was all about. As I say, I'd never been in an airplane.

JN: Where were you when you learned that Pearl Harbor had been bombed? What was your reaction?

TH: I was in my house, at home, for Sunday dinner, with my mother, she was arguing that the US should enter the war, because she was born in Scotland and an Anglophile of the highest order, and she felt, all along, from '39 on, that the US should be in the war. She really did. That, of course, I'm sure, was an influence on me about what I wanted to do. We were arguing and I said, well, I didn't think we had to go into the war, yet, because, even though France had fallen in the summer, it didn't seem that we needed to, and ... the Germans had invaded Russia. ... She drove me back to college, and, when I got out of the car to go to my dormitory, several guys standing in the front said, "Did you hear the news?" and that's how I heard.

SH: You joined the Navy. How did you end up becoming a Marine pilot?

TH: Well, the Marine Corps is part of the Navy, and, during final training, down at Corpus Christi, they called us all together, and a Navy flier came in, ... an aviator came in, and he told us what carrier life was like and flying from a carrier, etc., etc., and he was kind of point blank and just, you know, like this, and a Marine officer then came in who was not a pilot. He was a regular line company Marine. He had a Sam Brown belt, which is cordovan leather. [Do] you know what a Sam Brown belt is? and he came in in uniform, just a picture of military [perfection] ...

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

TH: Well, you know, a bunch of us all jumped up, you know, ran up there, signed up. We had our choice, because the Navy trained all the [pilots]. We were naval aviators and we chose the Marine Corps as our service. … So, you had that choice, if they took you and everything, but, they took anybody in those days, because they really needed pilots.

JN: When did you report for basic training?

TH: Well, they told me that I would be leaving in August, and so, I finished out my first year comfortably, finished the exams in early June, and had a month or two, month-and-a-half, off for fooling around, until I had my orders. I was preparing; in those days, at Princeton, they had a reading period of a week before your finals where you would read … in some field that you were particularly interested in. I had taken a course or two in philosophy, and I grew very interested in it, and so, I opted to do my reading period in philosophy, and I had this wonderful professor, (Walrus Stace?), … just him and me. I had to read, and it was on pragmatism, I'll never forget it, and he gave me readings, and I had to write a paper. I wrote the paper and he was very impressed with the paper. It was probably the first student production I had ever done that was really first class, and, just at that moment, finished the reading period, … I was on top of the world, because I had done so well with him, and he was such a wonderful guy. My mother called me and said I had orders. So, I rushed home. I [was] meant to get them in August and this was June 1st or something like that. So, it said, "You will report on June 10th, New York City," and so, I was bumped up. So, "Gee, I haven't even started my exams yet." So, I went to the dean and … I told him, I said, "Gee, I got my orders and I can finish my exams, I think, by the 10th, when I have to be in New York." He said, "You don't have to finish your exams. You go on home and get

ready to go." So, he sent me home, so, I never did finish those exams, never did them, but, that's what happened.

SH: Where did you go through basic training?

TH: Iowa Pre-Flight School, they had a pre-flight school there, which consisted of military stuff, like boot camp, consisted of a lot of physical exercising, and a lot of marching, and a lot of classroom stuff, navigation, aircraft recognition, and all kinds of stuff that would be associated, in those days, with piloting, not how you fly a plane, because we didn't fly any planes [there]. We didn't even see an airplane, but, we had this. Well, it was meant to be three months, as a matter-of-fact. It would be three month sessions in pre-flight school to get us ready to become officers in another six months, flight officers in another six months. …

JN: Did you enjoy basic training?

TH: Well, you know, God, I haven't talked about this in so long. I've thought about it from time to time. … In the questionnaire, coming in, you know, I'd put down on it [that] I had played freshman football in college, and, one day, my commanding officer of our class, and most of the officers were ex-football players, pro and Big Ten types, because of the Midwest, and … he read out, "The following men will report to football practice this afternoon," for the base team, for the Iowa Pre-Flight School team. Me, I'm on the list, and there was Gene Hayes, was on the list. He was a friend of mine [that] I'd met on the train, played at Bucknell. He'd graduated from college, though, and we were on this with all the guys we didn't know, I didn't know, who were part of the class, about four of us, I guess, cadets, and so, I went out in the afternoon. There's Colonel Bierman of the Marine Corps, former coach of Minnesota, famous Bernie Bierman, as the coach, and there are all these officers who either played for the Green Bay Packers, or the Chicago Bears, [laughter] and/or for the Big Ten, and, [if] you hadn't graduated, you'd go play pro, yet. I mean, they were … the talent beyond compare. Gentlemen, I'm telling you, I never, in my wildest dreams, … thought I'd end up with guys like this, and, by God, there we were, and we practiced every afternoon, from about June 25th to the first games, probably the 1st of September. We practiced every afternoon, and this big time coach, big time players, and everything. It was wonderful, because I was nineteen or twenty years old and I was having a ball. I never thought I'd [do this; I thought I had] died and gone to heaven, playing with guys like this, and they were all very nice, by the way. Midwesterners tend to be very nice. They were very nice guys. I made some very good friends out of that crew. So, there you go. … That's the thing I remember most about my pre-flight days. The other stuff, I don't remember very much about.

SH: Which position did you play on the team?

TH: No, no, well, no, there's an end to this story, unfortunately, in a way, but, it's bound to happen. We were gonna play Kansas, University of Kansas, at Iowa Stadium, … a first Saturday game, probably the first Saturday of September, and we were getting ready, and I was starting, … and [I was] all set, and, about Wednesday afternoon, I go to practice, and Bernie Bierman said, "The following men will hand in their uniforms." So, about three of us, all cadets, didn't know what he was talking about. … Gene was starting, too, by the way. Bernie Bierman said he was

the best blocking back, quarterbacks, in those days, played blocking backs, … single wing, and he said that Gene Hayes was the best quarterback he ever coached. So, he was gonna play, and he said, "Turn in your uniforms," so, we were mystified. We had no idea. So, we went in. I went in to turn in my uniform, and two of the assistant coaches, one later coached the Green Bay Packers, Philip Bengtson, came up, and I said, "What's wrong? What did we do wrong? What happened?" and he said, "Oh," … and Bierman didn't say to us, "Thanks a lot, guys. I really appreciate it." He was just sore as hell that he was losing us at that particular moment. So, … Phil said [that] the Navy had told them that they needed pilots more than they needed football players. We were to report to flight training. That's what happened. So, I never got to play. [laughter] I never got to play a game. Although, a couple of weeks later, when we were up in Minneapolis for our flight training, … Minnesota was to play the Iowa Pre-flight School in football, and Bierman was so anxious to win that game, because that's where he had coached for many years, so, we went to the game, Gene and I went to the game, and we were sitting there. We went down to the bench to say hello to a lot of the players that we had known, guys we'd been playing with all summer long, and they insisted [that] we sit on the bench with them, which was very nice. I never sat on the bench for a big time game like that, 76,000 people, you know, and all kinds of good things. It was a good game. Anyway, that was the end of the story.

SH: What was flight school like for you? You entered flight school in September, correct?

TH: That's right, September. It was Stearman bi-planes, which still fly around. You'll see them, every once in a while. "Yellow Perils," they were called, a two-man plane, … a pilot and a student, and then, you would fly them alone, too. … When you got to solo, you flew them by yourself, obviously. My first instructor, Ensign Goad, from Memphis, Tennessee, had a theory, and that theory was that he'd take a guy like me, never been in an airplane in his life, and he'd put that plane through every conceivable maneuver that it could have, to get me to know what a plane could be like and what I would feel like in each of the maneuvers, upside down, stalled out in the back, stalled out in front, all kind of loops, slow rolls, snap rolls, the whole bit, all the acrobatic maneuvers. … He did that, and the ground was here, and [then], the ground would be up here, and then, the ground would be down there. I mean, it was just wild, but, it was the best thing. First of all, I didn't get sick. Luckily, I don't suffer from sea sickness, motion sickness, and, secondly, I thought I found it fun. I thought I found it fun.

SH: You really fell in love with flying then.

TH: Yeah, I think so. Well, I felt that I could do it, that it wasn't going to be something impossible, that I wouldn't be scared doing it. That's the thing. Sure, when I finally soloed, I was very nervous, because I wanted to land properly, and it's tough to do stuff like that, but, … not scared. So, he was wise to do that. … It took any of that kind of fear out of the thing.

SH: What were you actually trained for? Did you practice aircraft carrier landings?

TH: Yeah, well, the Navy insisted, and they were so good, that you followed definite rules of flying, because flying from a carrier required such technical proficiency that you had to practice that, from day one. So, they … put circles in fields, and you had to come in and land the plane

on the circle, put it down, come in and put it down on the circle, time after time after time, a small circle. You had to hit that circle, because they wanted you to be used to precision landing. They had to do that for carriers, right? and that you follow your checklist, that you read the checklist there and make sure that everything on the checklist is done before you land, or before you take off, you know, that type of thing. Yeah, it was very good training. It was excellent training. It was disciplined training. It really was. We didn't do much formation flying in the Stearman, a little bit, because the Navy was big on formation flying, in which you flew … one plane in [the] lead and two on either side, and you had to take your lead off the lead plane. When he moved, you moved. … We did a little of that, but, it was good, good precision flying, good training, excellent training, and they rushed us through this, by the way, so, we were rushed.

SH: Was there a high washout rate in training?

TH: Yeah, very high. … Well, Gene Hayes, my friend from Bucknell, just couldn't fly a plane. He just couldn't fly. He could do everything, be a great athlete, the nicest man, but, he just couldn't land the plane. He wing-rolled them all the time, and he just had a problem, and lots of guys [were] like that, nothing against them character-wise or anything else, but, some people just didn't have the skill to do that, just something happens, and Lord knows what it is, but, they find it out early on, and they treated those guys very well, because they made them officers. They moved them through officers' training and made them deck officers or what have you, or aviation officers without wings, you know.

SH: You mentioned that your training was very disciplined and that it demanded a lot from you as a pilot. However, was your training more military or civilian in character?

TH: Military, all military. …

JH: Were your instructors experienced?

TH: No, see, oh, this was so early in the war that none of our instructors had had any combat. I didn't have a combat pilot instructor until I … had my commission and was down in Jacksonville, Florida, doing operational training to go overseas. Then, I had a Navy pilot from the Battle of the Coral Sea, one of the veterans. That was the earliest big naval battle of the war, April of '42. … He and I went instrument flying one day. I mean, that's about the extent of it. No, … these were guys who'd flown, probably, as civilians. They were experienced aviators, but, they weren't experienced naval aviators, but, … they'd gone through flight training and had their Navy wings.

SH: When were you finally shipped out?

TH: I shipped out in July of 1943.

SH: Did you ship out with your squadron or as an individual?

TH: Squadron.

SH: You shipped out right away with the 231.

TH: Yes, right away. We … reformed 231. 231 had been in the Battle of Midway, in which time it lost thirty of its pilots, mostly young guys, mostly lost, navigationally, not shot down, tragic, but, that ocean's a big ocean, and the islands are very small, and these fellows were not experienced. [It was] like taking you and me out there in the island, saying, "Find the Japanese fleet, bomb them, and come back home, you know. Good luck." We'd have, at least, navigational assistance. They didn't really have any navigational assistance, because there was no radio beam from Midway out that they could hone in on, because Japanese planes could hone in on us, so, you know, they were on their own. Most of them never found their way back. That's what my skipper told me, anyway, two or three years ago. I didn't realize that until then, no, and they lost a lot of pilots there, and they lost a lot of pilots at Guadalcanal, and they came back to reconstitute themselves as a new squadron, and so, there were three pilots in the squadron, the skipper, the executive officer, and a flying sergeant, Bud Blass, [who] were the three combat experienced pilots, Elmer Glidden, the CO from the Battle of Midway and Guadalcanal, Navy Crosses in both engagements, and Homer Cook and Bud Blass from Guadalcanal. The rest of us were all non-combat experienced, and so, they put the whole bunch of guys together. We were all new to each other, and, somehow, … when they picked out the squadron, "Who's gonna be in the squadron?" somebody got stuck on H-A-R, because we had the Harris cousins, and Norm Harold, who became my closest friend, and me, Hartmann. They had a bunch of us H-A-Rs in there, but, that's military, you know. … So, anyway, that's what happened. … We were formed to go, and we had done our carrier training and all that, so, we could fly either from carriers or from land.

SH: The original 231 had been stationed on the USS *Lexington*, which was sunk. How were you shipped out?

TH: No, no, it wasn't on the *Lexington*. 231 was a land-based squadron.

SH: My research showed that the 231 had flown from the *Lexington* during the Battle of Midway.

TH: No, no, it was … on Midway Island. It was on Sand Island, actually, the bigger island amid the Midway chain.

SH: The original 231?

TH: [Yes].

SH: Okay, I am sorry. How did your squadron travel to the Pacific?

TH: By ship, by ship, by transport, but, on the Matson Liners, one of the old Hawaiian Matson Liners, … passenger ship. We shipped out on that, to Hawaii, to Ewa, E-W-A, which is the Marine Air Station there, and, there, we picked up our aircraft, which were a lot of new SBD2s,

and some of us flew to the island of Midway and others took a ship out. … We flew for the long, over water hop, one of the longest … in that point of the war. We flew wing on a DC-3. We landed at French Frigate Shoals. Now, the Japanese didn't know that French Frigate Shoals existed. It was a coral atoll with a freighter docked next to it, and they built an airstrip there, and that was midway between Hawaii and Midway, so that we could re-gas there, and all they had was a small crew of men, Navy guys, there who would service airplanes that came through. There was nothing else on the island. It wasn't duty that you would like for very long, I can assure you, unless you liked to fish or something, because it was in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with nothing around it, except the ship docked against the coral reef, you know, ... but, we landed at French Frigate Shoal, and then, we flew the remainder of the hop to Midway, being led by a DC-3, which had better navigation than we had.

SH: You flew an SBD2.

TH: Yeah, we took out the new SBD2s, yeah, to Midway, because they had SBD1s there, and they'd been pretty well wracked up in the Battle of Midway and through … the months after, let me see, this is a year after the Battle of Midway, roughly, when we were going there.

SH: Did you use the SBD2 throughout the war?

TH: Absolutely.

SH: The entire time?

TH: Absolutely.

SH: You never piloted the SBD6 or the F4U Corsair.

TH: No. I flew the SBD2 to the SBD6, and then, when I came back to Cherry Point, I flew the SB2C, the Helldiver. Those are the airplanes I flew. I never flew an F4U, because my squadron got them in the Marshalls after I left. So, I never got to fly one, but, they made dive-bombers out of the F4U. That's … really what happened. They could carry as much of a load and, once they dropped their bombs, they were fighter planes, beautiful fighter planes of that era, yeah.

SH: They were very fast.

TH: Oh, yeah. You read that the 231 was on the *Lexington*? Well, it might have been shipped to Midway on the *Lexington*, but, it was a land-based squadron, 'cause Major Henderson was the CO, Loughton Henderson, Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, named for him. He was the CO and that was a Midway squadron. ...

JN: What differences did you find between the SBD2 and the planes that you trained on?

TH: Oh, I'd flown the SBD2 in Florida, in the operational training, and in El Toro, California, so, it wasn't a new plane for me, no. Really, I had all my operational training in the SBDs, so, it

wasn't strange at all. I didn't do carrier landings in the SBD, I did carrier landing in the SNJ, it was called, the AT-6, the Army called them, … which they still use, I think, a wonderful propeller-driven airplane. We did carrier landings in those in Chicago, on Lake Michigan.

SH: Was there any chance that you might have been sent to the European Theater instead of the Pacific Theater?

TH: No, no. The services, in their great non-wisdom, had divided the world, and the Navy was given the Pacific War, and the Army was given the European War. I can tell you right now that the difference between bombing, blanket bombing, and pin-point bombing is a terrific difference. Sure, our planes didn't have the range that the big planes had, so, flying over Germany might have been difficult, but, the one thing that the Marine Corps developed nicely was close air support, … although we had not been trained in close air support, where you have guys with color things that guide you to the target, they're front-line soldiers in the field, you know, the infantry, and these guys are trained to pin-point where they need bombing. If it's a machine gun nest, or a cave, or something, they pinpoint them, and you come in and bomb that target, but, they needed dive-bombers to do that, because you can't do a blanket bombing, because you just throw a lot of bombs over a wide area. [For] this, you needed pin-point bombing and we could pin-point bomb. We were trained to bomb ships, machine gun emplacements and things like that, inland, and so, we were ready to go to Saipan, and we were packed to go to Saipan, packed to go, and we were gonna go in with one-third of the island secure. We're gonna go on the airstrip, the (Slito?) Airstrip, which was right in that first third, and we were gonna give close air support to the Marine and Army divisions that were fighting in Saipan. … We thought this was the greatest thing that ever happened, because this was gonna put us back into the front-line of the war, you know, and we were the most highly trained squadron in the Pacific. There was no question about it, been there longest. We really trained, but, that night, … you know, the next day, we were supposed to leave, the skipper called us together, he said, "Our orders have been changed." You know why? [The] Army had troops there, and the Army generals insisted that P-47s be their air support, and, of course, those guys had never done anything like this before. They were fighter planes that [had] never done it. So, we didn't get to go. So, they did it with P-47s, whatever they accomplished, but, later, in the Battle of the Philippines, they used Marine dive-bomber squadrons as the close air support for the Army and Marine troops.

JN: They learned from their mistakes.

TH: I hope so, I hope so, ... because it was a very important thing. Close air support is very necessary in land warfare now and, with rockets, now, of course, it's much easier. The rockets came out when I went back from overseas, getting ready for the invasion of Japan. The SB2C had rockets. So, you could aim the plane and fire them and they were very effective, very effective.

SH: What other kinds of targets were you sent after?

TH: Yeah, radio facilities, headquarters facilities, gun emplacements, large and small, runways. We'd keep them bombed so [that] they couldn't land on them, stuff like that.

SH: Did you ever patrol for submarines?

TH: Yeah, we did. We did a lot of anti-submarine patrolling.

SH: How did that work, exactly?

TH: Well, it didn't work. You can't do it in a small airplane. Look, don't ever assume that military people are necessarily bright. Please, never assume that, never, never assume that. You can't do it in a small plane. You can only do it in a large aircraft that has advanced radar and all kinds of things. I saw a periscope once, had one depth charge, an SPD, fifty miles east of Midway, or 150 miles east of Midway, between Midway and Wake Island, and it was not an American submarine, because we knew when they were coming in. It was a sub base, but, our orders were never to drop a depth charge without being sure, because some American submarine might be injured, and staggering back, and not be able to identify itself, or could surface, you know, and so forth. My gunner saw the periscope. He pointed it out to me, and I saw it, and I began to figure out, you know, "If I drop my one depth charge, my chance of hitting anything is absolutely nothing. No chance of hitting it with a single depth charge, none, none. It would take a miracle. If it's an American submarine, for some reason or other, that's staggering back, I'll be court martialled." [laughter] … So, I didn't drop it, but, I reported it, and Marion Carl, who was one of the heroes of Guadalcanal, a fighter pilot, shot down twenty-eight Japanese planes and everything, he was a lieutenant colonel by this time, was back as the head of our group or exec. officer of our group, and he grilled me, and he called me stupid and everything else, because I hadn't dropped the thing, because it was a Japanese submarine, obviously, but, I told him why I hadn't done it, but, that didn't convince him at all, but, he wasn't there, you know. He didn't have to worry about being court martialled. I wasn't going to be court martialled, when you're not sure. Anyway, submarine patrol is impossible. You'd have to have a whole lot of depth charges and you'd have to blanket the area where you think you've seen the sub. You have to; it's a very tricky business.

SH: Did you ever come into contact, one-on-one, with a Japanese plane?

TH: No, no.

SH: You were never in a dogfight.

TH: No, no, only ground fire, that's all, never air fire.

SH: Did you ever have any experiences with the kamikazes?

TH: No, no, they came in … after I got back from overseas. They really didn't appear until Okinawa, after Iwo Jima and so forth, and they began to appear because the Japanese were on their last legs, but, up until that time, they weren't using kamikazes. Fortunately, I never did have to see one of those.

SH: You were stationed at Midway after the famous naval-air battle took place. What were your duties at Midway?

TH: … We were the defense squadron. We flew scouting missions, every day, … and we flew anti-submarine patrols, and we escorted US submarines in. When they were meant to be eighty miles off Midway, we'd pick them up … and know, you know, it'd be such-and-such a submarine, and a whole group of us would escort it back in, with depth charges, in case we saw a Japanese submarine around. That's what I did. … We weren't shot at by anybody when we were at Midway. Nobody shot … in anger.

SH: Was that the case when you were in the Gilbert Islands?

TH: Oh, well, … a lot of Japanese shot at you from the shore, but, not naval or aircraft.

SH: What were your duties at that station?

TH: … We were meant to keep the Japanese from re-using the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. That's what we were to do, that we were to harass them enough so [that] they could never use them again, that they could not, in turn, harass US shipping as it came through there, going toward, well, first of all, the Marianas, and then, Truk, then, Palau, and Iwo Jima, Guadalcanal, Bougainville, you know. … The ships came down through there, so, the idea was to keep the Japanese harassed enough so [that] they couldn't harass us, and it did. It's like we bypassed those islands, shut them down completely. It was a waste of manpower, and bombing power, and lives to do that, by the way, but, if you're gonna look for justification, then, that was the justification for it, but, never assume they're bright, never assume they're bright. Those islands were so bypassed that nothing was ever gonna happen on those again, nothing. Maybe a submarine would sneak in and deliver some ammunition, but, so what? you know. They couldn't go anywhere in the islands. … We sunk all their little boats; all the big ships had [been] long sunk. … War has its own momentum and that's what happened in Vietnam, most recent example. War has its momentum, and so, once you begin to commit lots of people and lots of armament, you continue to commit them, because it's a command set up, and guys competing against each other for promotion and everything, and troops begin to move. Look at World War I, read the history of World War I sometime, you can imagine the idiots doing trench warfare, right? Millions of men killed in trench warfare to gain fifty yards in barbed wire. … "Why would they do that?" Well, the momentum was there. You had the troops there, so, you used them.

JN: What was it like to be hit by enemy fire?

TH: Well, you don't know it until you come back. You don't know until you do a check of the plane, upon landing, unless it's apparent. Most of the fire that hit me was .50 caliber, … .30 caliber stuff. A few of the guys in the squadron were hit with .20 mms, not many with .40, because .40 will knock the plane out of the air. .40 mms or bigger would knock a plane out of the air. When you dive-bomb, you got a chance, because you're most vulnerable as you pull out, but, you're going as fast as the plane will go, so, you get out of there quickly, but, at this point,

you're vulnerable, and some guys were hit, you know. Guys were shot down. … Usually, I'd imagine, they were shot down because they themselves were hit. The plane wasn't knocked out of the air, the pilot was killed. That's what I think happened in most of the fatalities.

JN: Did you have any close calls?

TH: Yes, yes. I knew I was hit this time, because the bullet came right up through my legs, here. It was a machine gun bullet, hit the gun sight in front of me. I heard it, too, I mean, you know, it was right there. …

SH: Were you ever injured?

TH: No, but, that was close. [laughter] I had a wonderful skipper, … a fellow who had been a flight instructor in Minneapolis, by the name of "Wild Bob" Holiday. "Wild Bob" Holiday was renowned in the Midwest, because he was heavyweight boxing champion of the Big Ten, University of Chicago, which was then in the Big Ten, and he was crazy, literally crazy, and he used to just tell us things, when we were cadets, just so funny, gosh, he was the funniest man, and, really, a very nice guy, and so, he was out as the new skipper of my squadron. I was waiting to go home, and we went on this mission, and this happened, and he came back, and he said to the intelligence officer, "Tell me what happened." We went out to the plane and measured it, you know, with a plumb line and everything, where the bullet had hit and everything, and he said, "No pilot of mine is ever gonna die on his last mission. You're grounded. Meet you at the officers' club in an hour." [laughter] He said, "You're grounded." He did, he grounded me. …

SH: You must have had a pretty close relationship with your ground crew.

TH: Oh, yeah, the ground crew were great guys. America really achieved a lot in World War II, it did, because all those guys who [were] mechanics on the airplanes were fantastic. They really were good. They could make something work that nobody thought could ever make it work. They were absolutely fantastic. They were. It was American ingenuity, it was the great purpose, single purpose. They were marvelous. The gunners were marvelous. They were great guys; I mean, just the enlisted personnel that we met. The ground troops were wonderful guys. They were just average Americans, but, they had risen to an occasion, and they did nobly. I mean, that's really fantastic. You think of the mechanics, how fantastic they were, how good they were. The training was excellent and … I think it must have been [that] the purpose was there. People will rise to purposes. How do you sustain? That's another question. William James once wrote an essay on "The Moral Equivalent of War." He said, "How do you get a community to rise to the occasion? the war does. How do you create a moral equivalency?" very important stuff. Philosophically, you've got to think about that. How do you do it? Here we are in a country, if I may say so, which has very little purpose at the moment, except making money, and that's not gonna do it. It doesn't … make it. It doesn't do it. It doesn't; not by itself, it doesn't. You want to make money because you want to give most of it away, that's a great purpose, maybe, but, just to have a bigger car, more cars, … this joker building a thirty-eight million dollar yacht, I mean, that kind of crap. You know, this is stupidity of the highest order. That's not gonna make anybody happy. How can a boat like that make anybody happy? I'm not sure Bill Gates's house

makes him happy. Anyway, "Moral Equivalent of War," William James, the philosopher; you might read that sometime, I think, but, we had it then. We had the war, so, … people were very purposeful. We had the normal bitching and everything that goes on, you know. Hey, that goes with the territory.

SH: Despite the fact that we had great pilots and ground crews, technical problems still caused many accidents.

TH: No, not necessarily.

SH: You never had that sense.

TH: No, I never had that sense. I tell you, from flying, from my experience, and I'm not an expert by any means, it's been a long time since I've flown an airplane, too, obviously, mechanical failure was very seldom the reason for the accidents. I'm sure that's true in airline crashes, too. Pilot error was the most [common] cause by far. … So, no, the planes were simple vehicles. They were really simple, cylindrical, you know, heads on them, and much like your internal combustion in your car, the same thing, and, you know, valves and cylinders, and, well, we had to use a magnetic manifold. … It was relatively simple and primitive. It didn't fail. If they did, you couldn't get it started, or it didn't run smoothly when you are taxiing, something like that, yeah.

SH: You knew even before you took off.

TH: Yes, oh, yeah. I don't remember anybody being in an airplane [and], all of a sudden, it gave out. Wonderful example, I was flying in Jacksonville on operational training. We were doing some anti-submarine patrolling off the Florida coast as part of our training, SBDs, and, all of a sudden, the guy with me, just two of us, we're going out at dusk, and we'd gone from Jacksonville to (Mayport?), I think was the name of town, there's a Navy dockage there, they take big ships, and we were flying across there, and, all of a sudden, this guy, George Washburn, all of a sudden, the plane goes, "Whoosh," like this, and I followed him down to the ground, and he, somehow, had landed the plane at an airstrip in Mayport, the small Navy airstrip there. He landed down. I landed down next to him and he called. Some Navy guys came out, by the way. He had run into a big Florida turkey buzzard. It'd come through his windshield. How it got through the propellers without being carved up, you know, I'll never know, but, it hit him full [on], … and the windshield was thick, … I don't know if it was bulletproof, but, at least it'd give you some protection. So, it hit in there and had broken through and he was covered, covered, with bird, pieces of bone stuck all over his face and everything, and why his eyesight wasn't [ruined], I'll never know, but, he's lucky, you see, … but, that's the kind of thing that could happen. Now, the plane didn't fail at all. [laughter] Some of the … crewmen told me, "Gee, we've got to go get that plane." He said, "It stunk," because the turkey buzzards eat fish down there. [laughter] "It stunk," they said. "Never smelled anything so bad in my life." I said, "Well, poor, old Washburn had to go to the infirmary and have all the bones picked out of his face and chest."

JN: Did you have any communication with your brother during the war? He was also serving overseas.

TH: No. I really didn't see him, or hear from him, or anything until he came back. … He was stationed in England most of the time, and then, in the invasion of Normandy, he went over with the Army Engineers, and I think railroads were the main thing, that he had to help get them going again, you know, for supplies and stuff. … When he came back, he told me that he had been invited to a garden party, early on, and had met the princesses, Queen Elizabeth and her sister, when they were little girls, and so forth, at some party they threw for some American officers, so, he had that kind of experience, but, we never even corresponded, no.

SH: You mentioned that most crashes were due to pilot error and I know that drinking was rampant in the service. Did anyone in your squadron have a hazardous problem with alcohol?

TH: Yeah, yeah, that's a good point, yeah. I had one friend who had a terrific fear of night flying. None of us liked to do it, because the plane's instrumentation was so primitive that you really couldn't be helped. If you lost your horizon, just what happened to the young Kennedy [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] this summer, you can't [fly]. If you lose your horizon with primitive instruments, you don't know whether you're upside down or right side up; you don't know. You don't know. You cannot feel that, 'cause if you got in a cloud, for example, … you didn't really know the attitude of the airplane. You didn't, you didn't. You lose all sense of where you are and what attitude you're in, and so, he really feared that, and so, … he popped a few before he night flew. How he ever made it down the number of times he did, I'll never know, but, he did, somehow. The worst drunken case, though, the commanding officer of the squadron I was sent to in the Gilberts, … Rocky Akers, by name, who was drunk from, I would say, well, he'd start drinking right after breakfast, I mean, he's one of these really bad alcoholics, and he would drink all day long. Occasionally, he'd get up in an airplane. Occasionally, he'd go flying, but, very often he did not fly. He sat in his tent. He had a Scottish Terrier. He was actually written up in *Collier's Magazine,* because he used to take the dog on flights with him, and so, some reporter made a story of it, but, the guy was in the tank all the time, and he did things, and he told us to do things, in an airplane, which were absolutely irrational, and I told the executive officer, who was from my squadron, … a bunch of us were sent down there, Henry Graden, I said, "Henry, … this guy is nuts," and Henry said, "Well, he's drunk all the time." I said, "Yeah, I know." I said, "You've got the responsibility. Because he's drunk, you know, you're like the commanding officer." He said, "Oh, I can't do too much, you know. He still runs everything around here." So, we didn't pay attention to what he told us to do.

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

SH: This continues an interview with Professor Thomas B. Hartmann on November 22, 1999, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Sean Harvey and …

JN: John Nieman.

SH: I just wanted to follow up on Rocky Akers. Did he ever have an accident or cause anyone else to have any accident?

TH: I don't think so. I don't think anybody paid attention to him, because they knew what kind of condition he was in. He was very open about it. He wasn't a secret drinker. He was an open drinker. He'd just sit there with a bottle on his little makeshift desk, in front of his tent. No, I don't think so. I didn't, but, (in any case, he should have?) left, you know. We were really dissatisfied, because we were sent to that squadron, because some genius, again, in the Marine Corps, had decided that, instead of sending a whole squadron back at once and losing all of that squadron and its experience, they would break up the three dive-bomber squadrons in the … Marshall Islands and put one-third of each of us in the three squadrons. What it did, of course, was it destroyed the morale of all three squadrons, bound to, … the bond, you know. You get the bond with your guys, all of a sudden, you're with two-thirds guys, one-third from another squadron and one-third from the home squadron you went to, and nobody is happy, everybody's unhappy, and we had this alcoholic skipper. … Elmer Glidden, our skipper, was a teetotaler. So, you know, we came from a very highly disciplined guy, a hero, two Navy Crosses, after all, not many people got those, … and we came to Rocky Akers, right? So, morale is low, everything is low, the food was abominable, abominable. … [The] Navy usually delivers pretty good food, by the way. In World War II, the Navy delivered very good food, because they had the big ships with the meat lockers, and vegetable/fruit compartments, you know, and so forth, but, the food was lousy, and it spoiled quickly, and it was the tropics, and, oh, God, Makin Island, in the Gilberts, was a real dump. So, my buddy, Norm (Harrower?), who liked to cook, … to this day, he's a gourmet cook, he decided that he would like to take over the mess hall, volunteered to be mess officer. So, he went to Henry (Graden?), our buddy, who was the exec. officer of the squadron, and he said, "Henry, I'm gonna be mess officer," and Henry says, "That's wonderful. We'd love to have you be mess officer." So, Norman went in there, and the first thing he discovered was that the chefs had taken all the copper tubing from the reefer box, a reefer box, in those military terms, is the refrigerator, and that copper tubing is for the refrigerant. [They had] taken all the copper tubing and they had made the world's greatest still. They had it in back of the kitchen, and they took number ten cans of fruit, pears, peaches, … took the syrup, and they distilled it into fruit alcohol, one sort or another, and they were selling it to the Army [personnel] stationed on the base. Army had its own airstrip and the soldiers had no booze. The Navy had booze, so, these guys sold them their distilled spirits at fifty dollars a bottle. I tell you, at fifty dollars a bottle, that's pretty good money even now, but, you can imagine what it was in 1944. The Navy had a big business going, but, they were ruining our food. Because some of our guys were good scroungers, in the military, you learn how to scrounge, some people do, and they know how to do it, they were out there at the carriers in the harbor, or the battleships, whatever ship was there, and, for booze, which is the best bargaining thing you had, money was … not any good to you, but, whiskey was, and, because the Marine Corps always provided whiskey for the officers in the Marines, they'd take the bottles of whiskey and bartered for sides of lamb, and beef, and eggs, and oranges, and all kinds of good food, and we'd bring it in, and it'd be ruined in a day or two. It … had to be thrown away. We'd never get to eat the meat. That's when Norman discovered that they had done this with the reefer box. So, they court-martialed the guys, and they got new cooks in there, and they got the reefer box repaired and working, and the food went way up, way up. We also had a man in the squadron who went to Iowa State, and he

majored in dairy technology, and he knew how to make ice cream, and the Navy had sent these great big ice cream machines out in the Pacific, and so, he made ice cream, and the ice cream was so good, people flew in from all the islands around, whenever the day they made ice cream [was], because the ice cream was so good. I'm serious. [laughter] It was wonderful. So, we began to live better, anyway. It was still a dump. Our morale was shot and everything else, you know.

SH: Aside from getting better food, the rest of the accommodations were not that great.

TH: Yeah, terrible place, terrible place, it was an awful place. I eventually got sent back to Majuro, because I was gonna get my orders, and that's where Bob Holiday was now the skipper. About the second night I was back there, this is a story for you, I went down, over to see a friend of mine in a new fighter squadron that had just arrived, F4U fighter squadron, and I'd known him in training, and I went over to see him, because I heard that they were here, and I knew he was in that squadron, Marine squadron. … I went into the Quonset hut where they had their barracks, and I noticed that … there was a man over on the side who was crying, and I [don't] know if my friend was very glum, but, I said, "What the heck is going on? Why is he crying?" He said, "Well, that's our skipper, that's John Glenn, our Major Glenn, our skipper, and he just lost his wingman this afternoon." He'd been shot down. So, it was John Glenn, the John Glenn, who was a Marine major at that time, fighter pilot, and he was devastated, he was, because I talked to him. I didn't know him at that time, but, I met him, then, at that moment. When he ran for President in 1984, I happened to be at a meeting in Washington, and he and his wife were there, so, I went up to him and said, "I think you were in MAG 13 with me in Majuro Island in the Marshalls." He said, "You bet I was," and I told him, I said, "I remember meeting you and how you were … crying because you had just lost your wingman." "Oh, yes," he said. He gave me the name of the man, and he said what had happened. He said, "I was really distraught. I was very distraught." So, he remembered it, … but, that was one of my experiences, yeah. He's a very nice man, John Glenn, by the way.

SH: When you were transferred, did you keep your gunner or were you assigned a new gunner?

TH: No, no, I got a new one. … I lost track of mine, too, and I spoke to some of the gunners in San Francisco at our reunion in September, … and I said, "Anybody ever heard from Ed Quinn, from St. Joseph's, Missouri? He was my gunner," and they said, "Oh, yes." … He went to Purdue or someplace after the war, and became an engineer, and ended up working in the Grand Coolie Dam, one of those big dams up there in the Columbia River. He said [that] he was an engineer in hydraulics and stuff in the dam and that's the last I've heard of him. … I haven't done it, but, I thought, "Gee whiz, I ought to see," from the Department of the Interior or whomever, "whether I can track him down," because I haven't seen him since, but, I lost him when I was transferred down to Majuro, and I don't remember who the gunners were after that.

SH: What did you do on R&R?

TH: We went to Hawaii. Dr. John (Fiusco?), our flight surgeon, a dear, dear man, I lived with him, … four of us in the tent, him, and the intelligence officer, Stanley Kaplan, and with Norm (Harrower?), the four of us, there were six of us in the tent, and Stanley Kaplan turned out to be

one of the lead attorneys in Chicago, a very, very interesting man, who died the year of our first reunion. We didn't reunion for forty-seven years, 1991. Several of the guys got together and decided to have a reunion and his widow said that he couldn't. He just wanted to live for that reunion, but, anyway, he was a wonderful man, but, he died in 1991, just before the reunion. The other man, the Dr. John (Fiusco?), the flight surgeon, an MD, was assigned to us, and John (Fiusco?) [was] from California, and we renewed our friendship, and I actually went out and visited him and his wife in California about three years ago. … When we were in the South Pacific, he was to check the recreation and rehabilitation thing that the Navy had for us. So, in the first place, we were halfway between Australia and Hawaii, so, he went to Australia first, and he came back, and he told the skipper, "No way are you gonna send your pilots to Australia, because there'll be no rest and rehabilitation if you do." So, he went to Hawaii and he found that the Navy had rented one of the big mansions on Waikiki Beach for this, for aviators. So, I got there twice. I was sent there twice. I don't know how much rehabilitation there was, but, there was a lot of booze, and it was lovely swimming right in front of the house, beautiful mansion, great food, everything, but, nothing else to do, not a lot to do in Hawaii, and Hawaii was inundated with servicemen.

SH: Did they have an luaus?

TH: No. … They'd bring in some of the local girls, from the best families, by the way, who were still there, and they'd come in for tea dance type things, and leave by six, right, you know, four to six. That was about it, and I met one of the girls, and she said, "Would I come to her family place on Saturday afternoon?" Her father and mother were having a big cocktail party, "Would I like to come?" and I said, "Sure, gee whiz." So, I went to it. … [I was] doing all the secret stuff, because Stanley Kaplan had asked me to get ahold of the maps of the Marianas, because we were gonna go to the Marianas, we already knew that, so, I went over there, and JIGPOA, Joint Intelligence Group Pacific Ocean Area, JIGPOA, and I said [that] I wanted maps of the Marianas, because we were gonna go there, and the intelligence officer at JIGPOA says, "Yes." He made me copies, and they gave me the maps, told me to take them back to Majuro, when I went back. You go to the cocktail party, a bunch of Navy guys there, commanders, you know are there. One of them said to me, "What squadron are you with?" and I said, "I'm with 231." He said, "Oh, you're going to Saipan." This was a cocktail party, right, top secret. [laughter] Never assume anything in the service. If he knew it, everybody in the Hawaiian Islands knew we were going there, so, any pretense of secrecy was a waste of time. Anyway, … to get back to it, because we were there for maybe ten days, I guess, if I remember right, we had a blast as far as eating well and drinking well and everything, but, it wasn't much of what … we call "rest and rehabilitation." It's a change, different scenery, hot showers every morning. …

SH: Were you able to get showers at your different stations?

TH: Makeshift showers, yeah, use rainwater. It rained every day, a little bit, so, they'd collect the rainwater, and it'd heat in the sun, and you'd pull the chain and the water'd come down. It worked well, I mean, it was pretty good. Sanitation was pretty well handled, by the way, that way, I mean, primitive. The guys could make anything. They made anything, you know, really did.

SH: What can you tell us about Elmer Glidden? You have mentioned him several times.

TH: Oh, yeah, terrific guy. Well, after 1991, I lost track of him. I saw him once or twice after the war, in Washington. He stayed in, of course, got to be a brigadier general, and he flew in Korea, and he flew … a little bit in Vietnam, not much, and then, he left the service to go into retirement, and he was a New Englander. He was from outside of Boston, South Shore, in Massachusetts, (Cohasset?), actually, the town he came from, and he and his brother opened a printing business, which he was working in. They were living in Canton, Mass, and, when we had our reunion in '91, of course, he and his wife came to the reunion, which was wonderful. … He'd gone to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute during the Depression and, even then, engineers couldn't get jobs. I mean, then, engineers couldn't get jobs, even from the best schools, MIT, Rensselaer, you couldn't get jobs, so, he decided to go into Navy flying. He enlisted and was accepted, because he was a graduate engineer. He worked for a little while with Macy's, I think, which was in retailing, which was not something he should have been in anyway. So, he went in, … so, by the time of the war, he had been commissioned and was an experienced pilot, and then, he was sent to Midway Island … with Lofton Henderson, and half the squadron was flying SP2Us Sikorsky dive-bombers, half fabric, … I mean, you know, jeez, … and the other half were flying the new SBDs that had just been delivered. So, he was lucky; he had an SBD. The other Navy Cross winner in our squadron was Leon Williamson, and Leon was flying an SB2U, and Leon flew that two days. Now, Elmer flew the SBDs two days in the battle, and Leon flew the SB2U two days, and his gunnery, Dusty Roads, flew with him two days. He got a Navy Cross, too. How they ever flew that damned airplane two days, I'll never know, because it was half fabric. You know what I mean by half fabric, going into battle with a half fabric airplane? sitting ducks, and they did two bombing attacks, Elmer did, too, in his SBD, and so, Elmer won the Navy Cross there. … He never got back home. He was sent down to Guadalcanal then, with Lofton Henderson. Henderson was killed at Midway and Glidden was sent to Guadalcanal to form the dive-bomber squadron down there. … It wasn't 231, it was 241, I think. Somehow, the numbers got shifted there, but, it was the same "Ace of Spades Squadron," and he flew at Guadalcanal, and, as I say, stayed in the service. When I didn't get my discharge papers, I wanted to go back to college, November 1st of '45. After the atom bomb, there wasn't anything to do. We were preparing for the invasion of Japan and there was no place to go. … Our squadron was de-commissioned, and I sat in this little base down in North Carolina, I'd become executive officer of the squadron, and there was nothing to do. I couldn't keep pilots or enlisted guys busy. My skipper was Ernest Hemingway, by name, but, not the Ernest Hemingway, but, a guy named Ernest Hemingway, who's still alive, lives out in Oregon. So, we sat around. We fished all day long. We did nothing; I mean, nothing to do. We were looking for things to do, looking for things to keep people occupied and everything. Finally, I got fed up with it. I did one court martial board, and I was on one court martial board, and so, I said, "I'm going to talk to somebody," and they said [that] they'd been up to Washington, talking to the man signing the discharge for Marine aviators. "His name was Elmer Glidden." I said, "Holy smokes, get me an airplane, quick." So, I got a plane and flew immediately to Washington to go see my old skipper, Elmer Glidden, [laughter] who was signing discharge papers. He said, "Oh, I've had yours for a couple of months now. … Golly, I didn't do anything about it because I was sure you wanted to stay in," [laughter] and in all seriousness he said that. He said, "Don't you want to stay in?" and

I said, "Well, golly, Elmer, I'd never even given it a thought. I want to go back to college," and he said, "Oh." I was married by this time, of course, and I said, "No. I want to go back to college." He said, "Well, stay in and we'll send you to college. We'll send you there. We'll pay everything. We'll give you your college education," which they did, by the way, for people. If I had stayed in, they would have sent me through there, but, I said, "No." I didn't really think it was what I wanted to do anymore, because they had lined me up for a court martial board, and the court martial board was to look at the black market being run out of the Cherry Point PX, that's the post exchange, and what the post exchange people were doing were taking the valuables, like silk stockings and things, nylons, I guess, by then, but, those kind of precious commodities that weren't available in the general market, and selling them in the black market, and that meant a court martial of at least six months in length, because we'd have to go through every receipt, and invoice, and book entry, and everything … to trace the crime. That would have been just an awful way to waste six months of my time and I never would have gotten back to college, you know. So, I wanted to duck that one. I wanted out. So, he did, he signed it, almost in my presence. … I got out right away, but, after the reunion in '91, because we go up to Massachusetts every summer for family vacation, near there, near where he lived, we saw him every summer, him and his wife. We saw him at the reunions, you know, talked on the phone a lot and everything, and then, he up, unfortunately, two years ago, and died, suddenly, of a heart attack. I used to play golf with him and stuff. He was a very vigorous, trim man, pretty good at taking care of himself all his life. His death was an absolute shock to … all his friends and everybody, but, he'd had a heart problem [that had] never been discovered, … but, that's the guy.

SH: You kept in close contact with him throughout his life.

TH: Yeah. He was a good man, good man, a real hero, you know, excellent flyer. He had more dive-bomber missions than any pilot in the world. [He was] listed as that. I forget how many, 160 or something. He's written up in the literature, ... written up in the history of the SBDs, written up in dive-bomber history and everything else.

SH: You received fourteen medals, including six Distinguished Flying Crosses. What are the stories behind those decorations?

TH: No, no.

SH: No?

TH: No. I've got to go, gentlemen. I guess I must go, so, thank you very much. …

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 10/24/01
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 11/5/01