

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ERNEST HILBERG

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Matthew Lawrence: This begins an interview with Ernest Hilberg on August 18, 2007, in Northridge, California, with Matt Lawrence and ...

Jessica Thomson Illingworth: Jessica Thomson Illingworth.

ML: This interview is made possible in part by a grant from the Rutgers Alumni Association.

Ernest Hilberg: Good for them, [laughter] okay.

ML: Mr. Hilberg, let us start with where and when you were born.

Ernest Hilberg: I was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, July 25, 1924, and I lived on what was called by the locals, "Mortgage Hill," and the reason was that everybody but my father seemed to have a mortgage that only required you to pay interest, preceding 1929; hint. [laughter] ... The FHA [Federal Housing Administration], by the way, came through and said, "As long as you keep the place neat and clean and [you are] making a payment, you can stay in your house," because an empty house is worthless. Proceeding with ... my life, I once walked to a nearby grammar school that was brand-new. After that, I went to Alexander Hamilton Junior High. I mention this because it was the first time I came in contact with people of a different color and it was quite interesting, ... and then, I ran into a little situation when we had a meet of all the junior highs, finding out that Elizabeth was full of segregation. One school was almost totally black; every other school was almost nil, and this, you saw the way it was planned, that it was obviously gerrymandered. ... It turned out, there was one test that I took in grammar school that I must have aced, because I wound up in the top science classes of junior high. I mention this because ... a guidance teacher said, "Look, your family hasn't got any money and you only have average grades, so, do not consider college." I said, "Yes, but they happen to be average grades in the highest class in the school." ... I said, "I'm taking the scientific course. I don't care what you say, I am going to college," (a warning about guidance teachers); I went on to Thomas Jefferson [High School]. In an effort to save money, I worked. ... I delivered magazines, worked for the A&P, and I was saving up my money. In those days, three hundred dollars would get you through the first semester and, it turned out, Rutgers refused me, but my mother knew Dean Earl Reed Silvers very well and he was the Dean of Men at that time. It turned out that he would write news articles for the *Elizabeth Daily Journal*, drop them off with my mother at the Rahway Railroad Station. She would take them into Elizabeth to be delivered to the newspaper, and she suspected, in some cases, he invented news when it wasn't there. [laughter] In the tradition of Ben Franklin, ... why argue with that? The first semester of Rutgers was hilarious. It turned out, many of the people in my class didn't know what was going on. They had scholarships, but I was repeating high school. [laughter] So, when the war started, lo and behold, I wound up with a scholarship that was left over from somebody being drafted, or volunteering. Now, I could not get into the ERC [Enlisted Reserve Corps] because I had a physical impairment; I had buck teeth. Now, what's the physical impairment for buck teeth? I couldn't bite off the [gunpowder] wad, [laughter] and I said, "You're really going to give me a rifle like that?" [laughter] but that was the excuse they gave me. ... So, I go through and I decide, in the summer between my freshman and sophomore year, "I'm going to get a job, maybe at Merck," and they said, "We can't accept you." Everywhere I went, "You're unclassified." So, what the heck? I've been refused by the ERC. I tried to enlist; they wouldn't accept me. [I] said, "What

the heck? I'll get classified 4-F." Well, at the end of the exam, for some reason, I'm raising my right hand, swearing to support the Constitution, etc., etc., [thinking], "Something really went wrong with this deal." [laughter]

Jl: To back up, you saved up money during high school to go to college. You knew that you wanted to go to school. Did your parents go to college or not?

EH: No, but, ... see, here's the quirk in the whole situation. My mother's father went to Trinity in Dublin, Ireland, and my father's father went of the University of Gothenburg. So, all this business about your parents, well, believe me, ITT [Corporation, where he later worked] was refusing to advance people if their parents hadn't gone to college, and they had this in their head, you know, it was all [related]. So, I wound up going to Camp Croft and I remember the train trip. It was unique, in that when we got off the train, the Sergeant looked at us and he says, "What the hell? Did they have you shoveling coal?" because, in those days, they were coal-fired trains. The only way to cool off was to open up the windows. So, after spending a day in the train with open windows, we were full of soot. He said, "Why didn't you wash up?" "Like where?" [laughter] ... but it turned out Camp Croft was quite a nice place to be.

Jl: Where is Camp Croft?

EH: Spartanburg, South Carolina, and, having just been there recently, it's a college. I'm trying to remember what the name of it is. I think it's the College of Spartanburg, South Carolina, [Spartanburg Community College of South Carolina]. ... When I finished there, [Camp Croft], I had been trained in heavy weapons, in machine-guns and mortars. So, everybody's getting shipped out and, hey, I'm there. There were about six of us left, just enough people to keep the building running, and no explanation at all. So, I used to spend every weekend going on trips to North Carolina, where it was cooler, and so forth. Then, finally, I get shipped off to Fort Meade and we were told, "You're going to spend a maximum of three days here." Three weeks later, [laughter] which happened to bring me into around December 1st, so, hey, we've got a leave. We could go off for the weekend. I dashed up to my parents and we celebrated Christmas. Well, you saw them that weekend; the next weekend... [laughter] So, then, [I] got transferred up to Orangeburg, New York; now, definitely a maximum of three days, because this is where you get on the boat and go out. Well, along comes New Year's Eve, and we're still there, and so, they said, "Okay, you can take off to celebrate in New York." Well, I knew New York, having lived in Elizabeth, so, I went to the Stage Door Canteen and all the US[Os] and I got free tickets, every other day, for some stage show. So, I got to see *Oklahoma* and the whole routine. Meanwhile, the other guys are spending their money. So, when it came to playing poker, I was the house, because I was the only one that had money, and I discovered that's the way to beat the poker game. [laughter] If you're the house, you can't lose, because that's the only way you're going to win in poker. So, finally, we get onboard the ... [SS] *Ile de France*. Now, the *Ile de France*, we were told, why, we would exercise every day, and I'm looking at the ship and I'm looking at these thousands of soldiers. I don't know how many it held. "No way this is going to work out." Well, it turned out my "company," quote-unquote, was split up in ten different locations, twenty per location. So, when the boat started leaking during a storm, because we were in E Deck, ... eventually, the water got to about three inches deep and nothing was happening. So, finally, I went up to the purser and I said, "Hey, we've got a leak. [laughter] Are you going to do

something about it?" So, lo and behold, the Army came down, handing out shovels and buckets, and they're going to bail and the Captain says [so]. I said, "Sir, you're not my captain. I might be delegated for another duty, so, I've got to keep free for doing something else," which I honestly believed. So, they're shoveling this. That's the idea, shoveling this [water]. By the way, we were issued, the British imported a soft drink from South Africa that was loaded with sugar. I mean, it made Gatorade look like it was nothing at all, [laughter] and it was flavored with, well, oranges, grapefruit, whatever, but the way they squeezed them, they must have put a twenty-ton press on them, because you got as much flavor from the skin as you did from the [juice]. [laughter] So, finally, they come in and welded the leak. There was never any ... place to exercise on. Maybe the officers had it; I don't know. ... Oh, by the way, we did get to see flying fish, which are iridescent in the dark, and, when we started to leak, it was the result of a storm. ... The only escort we had was blimps, out until we were about sixty miles from shore. After losing the escort, we went like hell [laughter] out to Greenock, Scotland. From Greenock, we went down, by train, to Yeovil. Arriving in Yeovil, we were put in barracks and it was very interesting. ... It was a Quonset hut and it was heated by a little, skinny pot-bellied stove, and they handed us coke. Well, newspapers won't get coke burning. As a matter-of-fact, there was no wood. So, we figured, "We've got to come up with a solution. It's pretty cold." So, since we were taking care of officers' quarters in our spare time, we took the soft coal from the officers and gave them the coke, so [that] we could get that started with [newspapers]. We rolled up a newspaper to get the fire started, and then, the Sergeant comes along and says, "Well, ten percent of you can go on leave, but the rest have to stay to guard the camp." We said, "Against what?" "In case there are German invaders." I said, "Sir, I haven't found a good-sized stone to throw at anyone, let alone a weapon." He kept quiet. Next day, he said, "Oh, I misheard their instructions. Ten percent have to stay to guard the camp; the rest can take off." [laughter] So, the other things, little details, like, "Your clothing looks like hell. Why don't you hang it up?" "We don't have any clothes hangers, sir, but," I said, "there's a cable outside there, laying there, doing nothing, and, if we untwist it, we can make coat hangers. Do we have your permission?" "Sure, go ahead." Of course, he checks with somebody. [laughter] Well, let's see, [we] went into Yeovil, United Kingdom, and Yeovil was a town that normally had about, say, ten thousand people, but it had a dance hall and, one day, we're dancing. Lo and behold, there's an air raid, and I'm looking around and I don't see anybody doing anything. [laughter] So, I said, "Why aren't we doing anything?" and they said, "Well, if you want, you can go into some slit trench," or something or other, "but they won't bomb Yeovil. There's nothing here," [laughter] and so, okay, we went along with that. ... Then, they would transfer us, about every month, to a different location, went from Yeovil to, oh, I think it was Taunton, then Dorchester, and, finally, we went out to Tidworth Army base. It was a big Army base, and they were so glad to see us, because the British had raised hell with the place. It was a disgrace, and they said, "The Americans are relatively neat." It was the sort of place that I left my uniform to be cleaned, ... and then, I was called up to the First Division. ... A year later, when I came back, the uniform was there. [laughter] ... Then, when we got to the First Division, I think there were only about four of us brought in, and I asked what my duties were going to be and they said, "Don't worry about it." I said, "Why?" and they said, "You're a supernumerary." I said, "What the heck is a supernumerary?" and he said, "Well, you're the guys that die and we live, you know, if they're going to kill ten percent ... of the regiment." I said, "[What]?" He said, "That's the way it's been in the invasion of Sicily and the invasion of North Africa; the newest guys die." I've kind of got a different viewpoint on that, [laughter] but it did give me a tilt; like so many of the things the

Army did, no thought process. Like, one day, for some reason, I was told to take apart and clean the Sergeant's .45. [I] said, "Sergeant, I don't know how to get the safeties on or off this thing. I've never seen one before," and, in disgust, he gave me some other duty. It would have been real handy if he'd taught me how to use a .45. I was the last person in the company to be paid, because I was a draftee, and, you know, that doesn't build any sort of comradeship at all, to be one of the group. ... We took a few long hikes, but, since I was heavy weapons, for some reason, I wound up doing an awful lot of KP [kitchen police], and I don't remember being that bad at my duties, [laughter] and, finally, we make a practice invasion. ... We get to the ships, go onboard the ships, take off and, about midnight, maybe two o'clock in the morning, we hear this gunfire, this great simulation, we figure. So, we go land in Torquay. That was a waste of time. The bunkers they had, a three-inch shell could wipe out, and all I remember is that we were supposed to walk to be picked up, to be taken back to our base. It rains on and off in Torquay. ... We always had our raincoats ... off when it was raining and on when it wasn't raining, [laughter] and we said, "Something's got to be done about this stuff." So, finally, they said, "Take them [off] or leave them [on], it's up to you," and so, they took us back to Broadwey. That was our base, which is just north of Portland, I think it was, and there were warnings about, "This is when we're going to go. This is when we're going," [and] so forth, and so on, and, all of a sudden, things started getting serious. The black troops came in and strung barbed wire around us, I guess so [that] we wouldn't leave, or something like that, and I happened to be the one that carried the wire cutters, and the Sergeant says, "Give me the wire cutters," and he cut through the wire ... and we played baseball. [laughter] I mean, these guys had been through two invasions as it was and they were sure that they weren't going to be in on this one, until we got all our assignments for the invasion, and that was a big surprise to everybody. ... In my greenness, I said, "What's this business with D-Day and H-Hour?" "Oh, my God." You are now about to be introduced to the CID, [the US Army's Criminal Investigation Division]. "Why do you want to know when H-Hour is?" I said, "I didn't ask when. I just wanted to know what it meant." Turns out it was when you start counting, [laughter] but, you know, they hadn't explained it. My other encounter with the CID turned [out] to be just about as stupid. It turned out a friend of mine; oh, yes, when this practice invasion [took place], I look out there and there's this ship. It's the *Ancon*. My neighbor, from across the street, was the chief executive officer of the *Ancon*. So, I said, "Is there any possible way of getting in touch with the chief executive officer of the *Ancon*?" gave him his name, and, next thing I know, here I am; the automatic dishwasher they had didn't work too well. So, my job was to coax it through washing dishes and, all of a sudden, there's this, "Attention," and I turned around and [to the chief executive officer of the *Ancon* I said], "Hi, Jack." "Oh." He quickly gave us, "At ease," and they'd gotten word across to him and he'd come across. ... He told my parents he went out of his way to come across, because he thought he'd never see me again. ... As a result of this, he wrote me a letter and said [to] meet him in Exeter. Well, Exeter was on the borderline between "no man's land," where anybody could go, and where nobody could go except the troops, and so, I'm called up and they said, "Why do you want to go to Exeter?" I said, "To meet a friend." "How do you know he's going to be in Exeter?" "Because he wrote me a letter." "Let's see the letter." So, I showed him the letter, and he said, "He shouldn't have done that." I said, "Sir, you've just blown the whole cover. I now know that it's got something to do with the invasion. Now, either let me go or don't let me go, but, you know, all the secrecy is gone," and so, they let me go, but his son had the same damn problem, [laughter] and his son was in the Navy. ... So, we got to see him too. These are the little things that really get [me]. Oh, the other thing, while I was in the replacement depot,

one of the ones we went to, the one that was near Taunton, there are guards walking around camp, and, I mean, these guys weren't just surveying, to see [that] nobody stole anyone. They're armed with belts of ammunition, and, one day, when I was working up with the battalion commander's office, I said, "Why all the guards? What do you expect from us?" He said, "Well, based on the way guys are performing..." I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "We keep going AWOL." I said, "Wait a minute. Did you have Company K in before we were?" [He] said, "What's the difference?" and I said, "Look at the history of Company K. It's a bunch of convicts. [laughter] The only reason they're here is [because] they prefer to serve as military than serve in jail." They didn't do that too well, either. It turned out, when I went with the First Division, one of the fellows I went with was one of these former convicts, and they're never sure that he stayed longer than necessary to get down from the truck, because, next thing they knew, they couldn't find him. I got to see him later. We're all ready for the invasion, and I read every book in the camp, waiting. ... I was about to smoke. I never smoked, because my father had to give it up when I was about thirteen years old. I thought, "Why start something I've got to give up?" and so, I go to take my ration of cigarettes and twenty of them are there, telling me the evils of smoking, because they wanted my ration of cigarettes. [laughter] I burst out laughing. I said, "Okay, I'll take your ration of candy then." So, that's what happened. That's why I never [smoked], because these guys wanted my smokes, "to keep me from smoking." So, finally, we get down, board the ships, a lot of false alarms, and so forth, most of them based on rumors, but I think it probably helped the confusion, so [that] the Germans, if they did have any spies, [would be confused]. Oh, there was one incident that was rather intriguing. All of a sudden, one of the guys of Polish descent vanished. The worst, most intriguing, part about it [was that] he took two bandoliers of ammunition with him and a weapon. So, a squad was formed, and their orders were, "Bring him back, dead, if necessary," and that's what happened.

Jl: They did bring him back.

EH: Yes, because they knew all the sequences of the invasion, and God forbid that got out to anybody, and they just weren't going to stand for it. He was made a great example of what would happen if you tried to leave. So, we go out on the ships and the armada invading was awe-inspiring. They had everything from the paddle-wheel steamers, this was for the British, that used to cross the Channel, way back when, to the Liberty ships and, eventually, we got to see the battleships, and so forth. So, the next [day], oh, we get this big speech from Eisenhower and, interestingly enough, by the way, there was no cheering as a result, when he started to speak or when he finished. Now, this was the First Division, that knew invasions do cost lives, a lot different from this business in Iraq, [the current War in Iraq], where I have little sympathy for a lot of those sergeants. They wanted a fight, okay, there's their fight, go ahead. So, we go to land. We get into the ... landing craft, personnel, and here's this guy in chains, and they unlocked the chains and said, "Climb down and get on that landing craft." He said, "No, I'm not," and they said, "I've got a feeling, I'm sorry, but you're going to wind up in that landing craft one way or the other. I suggest the most convenient way is to climb down," because they had intentions to throw him down there, if necessary, and so, he went in the landing craft; fortunately, not mine. So, we go out there and, [on] the beach, the guys that landed there first are still there, and they're supposed to move in, and we can see that, just as we're beginning to [land], there's a group trying to get up the hill. ... So, where we were supposed to land [at] about nine-thirty, no way, we couldn't find a place to land, because the 29th Division had wound up in the

space, same place, the First Division was supposed to land, plus the fact that the Germans were shelling the shore. Eventually, it became obvious that the Germans were shelling one particular area, and, if you got out of that area, you wouldn't be hit. So, word came to withdraw, to your ships. Before the invasion, I mentioned [to one of] the fellows in my group, in my platoon, "Hey, we've never been taught how to retreat," and he said, "The First Division retreated once and we ain't gonna do that again." He said, "Retreat was worse than going ahead." So, when they came along and said, "Withdraw," I look around and said, "Are we going to?" and the Coast Guardsman turns the landing craft around. I said, "No, you don't. We're not withdrawing," and he said, "Who's going to make me?" and I said, "Well, I think there are at least thirteen guys on here that say you're not going to withdraw. You're outgunned by about thirteen-to-one at best," and he was very unhappy about that thought, and so, what we did [was], we hid behind the destroyer *Cooke* [HMS *Cooke* (K-471)]. The destroyer was moving along so close to the shore, I was sure it was going to ground, knocking out the pillboxes, one by one by one. ... So, meanwhile, that gave the troops time to clear the way. So, we go in and we hit an obstacle, and it tears the bottom right out of the landing craft. The water is rising. "So, what are we going to do about this?" I said, "What I'll do is, if [you] give me the rope, I'll walk into shore, since I'm the tallest one. I probably wouldn't be [in] over my head." Well, [at] that, the regulars, by God, they weren't going to let this draftee show them the way. [laughter] So, they pile over, but, [due to] the sound of the guns, the moment they get it in, they let go of the rope. So, it's no help to the rest of them getting in. Oh, by the way, I decided that I was ... [going to] have to take a new outlook on things, because these tanks that were supposed to float into shore, they were set up so that they could take people into the shore, kept sinking. ... The idea of everyone in the tank drowning, I figured, "Why don't you get out at least?" but, no, and I'm beginning to say, "War is hell." ... Finally, back to where I was, I finally climb out when everybody else is out, because, hey, [at] six-foot-four, I go over. Hey, I've got news for you; the water is more than six-feet-four. [laughter] The depth is around seven feet. "Oh, jeez, I don't want to drown." So, I pushed off and, lo and behold, I could bounce up and get a breath of air. So, the trick was to bounce up and forward at the same time, and here's this guy, he says, "Help, help." So, I grabbed his arm and pulled him along with me. Eventually, we got where we could walk. Simultaneously at that point, he gets a bullet right in the head. So, I moved ahead and saw my sergeant, and it was really amusing. They moved into an antitank trap, which is a great, big, wide ditch, but there was this one bridge and they didn't wipe it out. So, the Sergeant is standing on the bridge. I sat down behind him. After about what seemed like fifteen minutes, but probably five minutes, I said, "Sarge, who the hell are you looking for?" He just gave me a dirty look, and I gathered it was me, [laughter] and we went down into the antitank ditch and it was complete cover. Any machine-gun fire, and so forth, couldn't get you. That's when I discovered the rules of war are liberally interpreted, because it turned out ... the Germans defending the beach are not Germans. They're White Russians. So, the only ones that can talk to them are those soldiers with a Jewish background that knew some Yiddish. ... They asked them where the guns were located; [the prisoners] gave name, rank and serial number. So, the guy's finally disgusted and he takes one safety off the .45 and says, "Where are the guns located?" Takes a second one [off]; all of a sudden, he tells him where the guns are located. ... As I walked by, I said, "So much for the Articles of War," and I didn't press the point, because I thought, "[It] might be just as convenient to shoot me." ... So, we go along, and we finally climb out of the tank ditch, and I'm seeing these white pieces of paper, or handkerchief, or white [scraps], and, for some reason, I don't step on them; neatness, maybe? ... Finally, I see this engineer with his foot blown off and he's got a

tourniquet around [the] foot, and I said, "What's with the pieces of white paper?" and he says, "Oh, that's where the traps ...

ML: Mines?

EH: Mines are." "Oh." The next thing, there's a shell that came by and exploded, maybe a hundred feet away, and I say to my sergeant, I said, "Sergeant, aren't we supposed to duck for cover?" and he says, "Do you know where the mines are?" "Okay, I get your point." [laughter] ... So, we eventually started up the hill. The engineers and some of the infantry climbed up the hill, and I found the one shell hole. There were supposed to be shell holes all over the beach for us to take protection in; one shell, and I never realized I could curl up into such a small space. [laughter] ... Eventually, I decided to move on, moved off, and we moved between these hedgerows and, about three o'clock in the afternoon, I got hungry. So, I hauled out my chocolate bar. Have you ever seen the chocolate bar in the service? It was about that long.

Jl: About five inches.

EH: Yes, about five inches, about two or three inches wide and an inch thick. It looked like [baker's chocolate], what you would use in cooking. Well, it was a real dark chocolate and it was real hard, [laughter] but it was sustenance. I remember my sergeant [saying], "You're eating?" ... Oh, by the way, everybody threw up on the landing craft.

Jl: Really?

EH: Yes, the most sensitive first and, after that smell, it was real easy to do it afterwards.

Jl: From motion sickness or from seeing everything?

EH: Motion sickness. It was really quite rough, which was an advantage in that no one would be expected to make an invasion under those types of seas. So, that's why I was hungry; [laughter] breakfast was bye-bye, and so, we went along. ... I remember, we finally got to a location, and it was about right after dark, so, we would eat our K rations, or whatever, and the Major came around. He says, "Anybody got a watch that works?" I said, "Yes, I have one." I'd bought it when I was in basic training, because my old, ten-dollar Waltham had failed. So, I went out and bought a fifty-dollar Helbros, and it was waterproof. That was the watch used to launch the next attack, the next day, because none of the officers had gotten waterproof watches. ... Oh, yes, I had one requirement, though, that anybody that borrowed my watch had to bring it back to me the next day. That saved my life, because, about three days later, why, I go in, going to have guard duty, I think around two or three, two o'clock in the morning, or something. I wake up; I'd never been on guard duty. "What the heck is going on?" So, Sergeant comes running over to me. He says, ... "You fell asleep during guard duty." I said, "Wait a minute, where's my watch? If I fell asleep doing guard duty, I would have my watch on, but I don't have my watch on," and it turned out that I had slept through an artillery barrage and nobody thought that it was necessary to wake me up, [laughter] and so, that saved me from disgrace, and I got my watch back very slyly, because they knew they'd be in trouble. ... We walked on and, believe it or not, about the fifth day in, we were served breakfast by the cooks, not without a lot of bitching

and moaning, because it turned out we had infiltrated the Germans. We didn't know that. We didn't see anybody, and so, they [the mobile kitchen] had to fight their way up to us. ... So, we eventually got to a point where we stop. There was nobody in front of us at all, but we were the only ones out there. It was at least a mile. ... We were a mile ahead of all the rest of the Americans, and so, we stayed out there in the point, and the next exciting moment was when the Germans decided to launch an attack against us. ... So, it turned out our two mortars were the only defense against that point. Well, we're going to throw some ammunition like [there is] no tomorrow. So, I take one look at the pile of ammunition and I say, "Where's the ammunition?" They pointed where the jeep was with the ammunition. ... [I] take off at a run and come back with six rounds of ammunition on each shoulder. I couldn't do it today if my life depended on it, but, I guess, when my life depends on it, I can do it, [laughter] and there was one sergeant, he says, "Hilberg, you're lucky to be alive." "Why?" He said, "We thought you were running, retreating." ... Oh, by the way, as a result of that, every other ammunition carrier in the section went back to get more ammunition, because we were going through it so fast. We went through it so fast, one round never got triggered. It took off from the heat of the barrel, and it went, [Mr. Hilberg imitates the mortar firing]. ... So, that was the one counterattack and the only thing that it cost us was one tank, and [the] GIs did nothing to blow up the radio, so, we couldn't use those frequencies any longer, because the Germans could listen. ... After that, [we] sort of sat around, until about July 20th. July 20th, we get in the trucks and we move over to this other location, and I had one hell of a celebration for my birthday. On July 25th, all hell breaks loose, and I am not kidding. I mean, it turned out there were 155s [155-millimeter artillery] and every piece of artillery in the United States Army, [laughter] you know, going off, and it was interesting to watch, because they had used a Piper Cub to spot targets. The Piper Cub was up at about two hundred, maybe three hundred feet, at first. As the bombers came over and dropped their loads, eventually, the Piper Cub's flying at about five thousand feet up, [laughter] but we did see the one set of rounds that went off at the wrong place, sort of behind our lines, and it was easy to see. The smoke bomb did not come back where the regulars, all the rest, had. It was retreated. So, then, we took off, and it wasn't that easy to get through the Germans that were left, but we did. ... We take off, and this is where the history of the First Division came back to haunt them. The malaria started to come to those that had been in North Africa, and here they are, they're sweating and shivering, simultaneously, but, after about a few days of that, they recovered sufficiently to go on, and we had to take these malaria pills, which I eventually discovered must have been quinine, because the one time somebody gave me vodka, they thinned it with quinine water. "Gee, that tastes familiar," [laughter] but, when we got to one location, I forget where it was, but it was about as far south as we ever went, why, there was this big German hospital. I mean, it was huge, frankly, a bit suspiciously huge, and so, we just surrounded the place. Well, at night, that hospital opened up against us and tried to attack us. [They] regretted it tremendously, but, at that point, ... we were so well-coordinated with the Air Force that [on the] one mountain road we had to go up, there were a lot of German tanks on it, and we said, "Now, when you drop your bombs, drop them so the tanks are blown off the road, because the last time you did it, damn tank, it took us hours to get it out of the way." So, that's what they do; they blow the tanks off the road, and we captured so many German vehicles that we had to put the orange banners on all the German vehicles, to say, "No, we're Americans," because there was extreme danger. We were strafed by the British once, and it's not all that it's cracked up to be, it's not healthy. ... So, all of a sudden, in France, oh, by the way, we discovered the farmers in France, at that time, seemed to all speak with a Polish accent. It was rather interesting.

Somehow or other, ... Poles had been imported to France, ... by the Germans. Oh, yes, we got to a place and the Colonel's wandering around the schoolhouse. ... "Colonel, what's your problem?" [laughter] and he says, "I've run off the map. I don't know where [we are]. I haven't got a map of [where we are]."

Jl: No other map. [laughter]

EH: I said, "Have you tried the schoolhouse?" He says, "That's where we're checking," he says, "but nobody has a map." [laughter] Apparently, they had to drop one to us. So, we take off and, one day, we get a copy of the *Stars and Stripes*, and it tells us that we're now under [General George S.] Patton. Almost instantly, the First Division stopped moving. The First Division would not fight under Patton, because, in Sicily, Patton had taken all their vehicles, because his got blown on the ship. He put all his vehicles on one ship and all the personnel on another ship, and they, here, these First Division [veterans, the] portion I was with, was mostly from [the] New York area, and they had to learn how to drive donkeys, jackasses, any animal that existed. They said, "After awhile, you could get pretty good at it." [laughter] ... One tank attack, they had to fight with phosphorous shells, because they had no heavy weapons beyond eighty-one-inch [millimeter] mortars and, fortunately, throwing a lot of phosphorous around does discourage people, but they just hated his guts. So, what do you know? We were switched back to [General Omar] Bradley and we proceeded, and the one big advantage at that stage of the war was that the Germans believed their own propaganda. In other words, they always thought we were twenty miles behind them, when, actually, we were at the same location they were, and that went to the extreme of, one time, we arrived as the train arrived at the station, full of food. I mean, we ate like hogs for the next month, because we had all the German rations. So, we moved through there, we moved into Belgium, and that was an interesting experience, because they were trying to bomb us with the V-1s and V-2s, which intrigued me to no end. "Since we don't know where ... we are, how do they know where we are?" and, I mean, they didn't come closer than maybe twenty miles. You could hear them going overhead. By the way, a sixteen-inch ... naval shell, when it's coming over your head, sounds like a freight train, [Mr. Hilberg imitates the shell]. It just sounds like a freight train going over. Oh, yes, that goes back to another incident we did have, where I got an idea that maybe I was going to be lucky, because we called for fire when we were about twenty miles away from the beach, that we had a naval observer with us. ... Unfortunately, they forgot that we were dealing with things like trees. So, they sent the shell in low angle, exploded right over my head, got the guy in front of me, got the guy behind me, but it didn't get me. The world turned real orange for a moment, [laughter] and, fortunately, it didn't get the naval observer, because he said, "High angle, high angle, high angle!" ... I'd forgotten that. Moving on, ... going through Belgium, I guess it was, I'm digging my slit trench, I hit coal. I said, "Sarge, can I get the coal rights?" Digging into coal is difficult. Your little pickaxe bounces off the stuff. So, then, we went on to Aachen, and it was interesting there. ... They discovered that the regular 155s did nothing to the pillboxes, nothing. Oh, by the way, the Maginot Line, one must remember it was designed by the Germans for the [French], so, it wasn't very hard to knock out those pillboxes. Furthermore, they were pointed in the wrong direction. Well, ... it could have been right for us, but, so, what they would do, for awhile, is, they'd keep up fire going on the pillbox, machine-guns, and so forth, and then, they'd go around with a bulldozer and bury it, like a dog burying a bone, and that was our way of fighting pillboxes. Then, at Aachen, they got this bright idea. They fired a (Berry Pistol?) into the pillbox. Well,

you can imagine, with these concrete walls, this thing is bouncing off the walls, you know. I'd leave, too. Well, the Germans also got wise to it, too. So, there was one pillbox that was, I think, taken three times. When we got [there], they were there first, but four times by the Germans and four times by the Americans. I think burying it would have been a very good idea, but we had a situation there where we launched an attack and, right after launching the attack, we get this order to fire on a certain position with our mortars. I said, "Sir, that's where you're supposed to be," and he [said], "Yes, the Germans are on the first floor and we're in the cellar, and we want to get rid of the first floor." So, we fired on the position and it worked, but, also, in the same attack, ... we and the Germans attacked simultaneously, on a real foggy day. That is not the way war works, [laughter] and so, next thing we know, here's this American infantryman wandering around our mortar position. [I] said, "What are you doing here?" and he says, "Oh, I don't know myself what I'm doing here." Obviously, these two attacks had crossed in the fog and gotten rather messy, to say the least. So, interesting, the officers did not reprimand the infantryman. They said, "Hey, you, we need guards. You set yourself up to guard our position." So, the Major was standing beside me and he says, "I don't know what the hell to do under these conditions." I said, "Sir, if you've got any reserves, I think they could go up and take the position you're trying to take, because I think the Germans [are] lost and I don't think they have anybody where they launched from. Normally, that's something to do." So, that's what he did, which resulted in us suddenly finding out that we had surrounded the Germans. There was one detail. When you surround somebody, somebody's in a position where there are Germans on both sides of you, and it got messy. ... They couldn't bring any food up to us at all, so, we went through every ration we had, and so, that's when we started violating the Articles of War, liberating food from the homes, and so forth. We thought, "Hey, we're not supposed to starve to death," and we went up and, one morning, I'm awakened and the Sergeant says, "Pick a number from one to ten." [I said], "Four." "Pick another." "Why am I picking this number?" [laughter] He says, "Because we've got to decide which one of you guys are going up to relieve the machine-guns." It turned out there had been an attack and the machine-gun squad was down to two people, and I said, "Oh, hell, I'll go up," because I didn't want the conscience of picking [someone else]. ... So, I went up and it was very evident what had happened. There's this row of ... dead Germans out in front of the machine-gun position and, at that time, there was a sergeant and I think he had one gunner, and that's why I was there. The Sergeant comes over to talk to me in the morning. In the middle of a sentence, he takes a bullet right in his forehead. Now, normally, I would have called for medics, but I'm thinking, "If somebody's in a position where they can hit him in the forehead, I've got to depend on them not shooting at a red cross?" I didn't think it was a good idea. So, I just kept quiet and, apparently, he was a real popular sergeant and a lot of people were rather unhappy. Oh, by the way, I remember one thing I didn't mention, that right at the beach, seeing these dead bodies everywhere, wounded bodies, I said, "This is not real. This is a 3-D movie. It's not real." So, I turned my emotions off. I just; let people argue that the atomic bomb was so terrible, and I said, "Okay, the fire bombs were okay? They killed a hundred thousand people, but an atomic bomb that kills a hundred thousand, and wounds a lot more, that's not good?" I said, you know, "I don't know the degree emotions can go, their saturation level. Mine's pretty low," and so, my emotions were rather indefinite, at this point. So, it turns out that I'm up there on duty and, eventually, we can go back, get our rations. ... One night, when [I was] going on guard duty, I jump in the foxhole and the guy has put a step into it. "Oh." What happens is, if you're there a long time, you try and get it so [that] even if a hand grenade came in, [you would be safe]. I caught the end of the step, and your toe is not supposed to touch your leg.

"Oh, boy, that hurt," and, by the third day of walking around with this, I said, "The hell with it." So, [if] I just, you know, wanted to walk back, I just walked back. "So, shoot me. See if I care," because I was in such pain and, one of the times I did, to show there are exceptions, a German aircraft came over and started shooting at us, and I hit the dirt and got up and went back and got my food. Meanwhile, the medic's sitting, looking at me, and he says, "Ernie, you've been hit." I said, "Where?" and he says, "Your knee is bleeding." "Oh, yes." He says, "Well, you've just earned a Purple Heart." Oh, there's another detail I forgot, jeez. After the invasion, it must have been less than two weeks, we are ordered to write ourselves up for at least a Bronze Star. I said, "Sergeant, that isn't the way it works. You write somebody else up," [laughter] and he says, "Okay, tell each other whatever story you want." So, I wrote up the fact that I tried to rescue this guy. That was the only thing I had thought that I might be considered [for], and, lo and behold, when I got discharged, I discovered I'd earned a Bronze Star, and that's why I asked you people if you could find out why the hell I got a Bronze Star, [laughter] because I don't know, no commendation, just, "Here's your Bronze Star." ... [The] Purple Heart, of course, I knew the story behind that. ... So, to continue where I was, all of a sudden, I'm offered R&R back in Belgium. "Hey, great." So, I get back to Belgium, I'm walking on cobblestone streets, with a bad ankle. That is not good. So, I go to the dispensary. It was a post office, the dispensary was there, and they were these guys with colds, and so forth, and going home. I'm sitting there. "Good grief," you know, "I'm spending the morning here. I was supposed to be out having fun," and the first thing the doctor says [is], "Have you even looked at yourself in the mirror?" "No, mirrors aren't handy." So, I look at it, and, if you've ever seen these [Bill] Mauldin cartoons, with the GI with the sunken eyeballs? I was the epitome, at that point. What had happened is, since we hadn't eaten much, for quite awhile, I was down to, like, 135 pounds. ... I remember that when they took my greatcoat to be cleaned, they had joked, they said, "This thing's got so much mud in it, it's a walking foxhole," and so, after that, they wouldn't let me go. They immediately ... sent me to a field hospital to have a cast put on my foot and sent me back to England, which was interesting, since they flew me back on a DC-3 [perhaps a C-47, the military transport version of the DC-3] and I'm looking out the window, and the nurse said, "What's wrong?" I said, "It's flapping its wings." [laughter] She thought I was getting sick or something. No, I just couldn't believe what I was looking at, but, gee, I wish I could remember the name of it, but [I] wound up in this hospital camp. ... You know, here's the guys with all good, normal wounds, and here I am with a sprained ankle. The doctor was disgusted. He says, "There's nothing wrong with you," and I said, "That's your viewpoint. I've got my own viewpoint on this," and so, he says, "Walk," and I said, "Sir, it hurts very badly when I walk in bare feet. Let me try shoes." So, we get shoes, and it's tolerable, at that point, because it's been in a cast for over a week, and I said, "Now, I can manage," but I did complain that I kept waking up every day with a headache. ... So, he says, "Take two aspirin," or APCs [aspirin, phenacetin and caffeine pills] they were, probably, aspirin, pepsin and codeine, and so, I do. ... So, they get the bright idea that, for rehabilitation, I should play football. I'm a very good center, but, when two guys hit me, one from one side and one from the other side, and drove my foot into the ground, [laughter] I'd say that this was not a very good cure for my problem, and so, "Okay, you're on KP." Well, you know, KP, at that time, in a hospital, ran from five-thirty in the morning until nine o'clock at night, and they were burning soft coal, which I never got along with. The odor of it bothered me. So, one day, or one night, I wake up screaming, and so, I walked down to the dispensary, told them, "I need something. I have a headache that's out of this world." So, they gave me something, and a note. So, I go back to the barracks. I put the note under my pillow.

Next morning, they wake me up, and I said, "Sarge, you're supposed to read this first." What bothers me is, I am not laying on the bed; I'm about three inches above the bed. "This is a weird sensation," and so, he says, "Ernie, take it easy. There'll be somebody around later to see you." So, what did they do? They give me a Rorschach test, and I have just finished reading an article on the Rorschach test, ... what are the right answers and the wrong answers, and I'm going crazy. ... I'm having trouble trying to figure out, "Which answer do I give, the right one," which is liable to mean you're really having a problem, if you can remember all the right answers, "or [the wrong one]?" So, at that time, Flash Gordon was in. So, everything reminded me of something out of Flash Gordon, and that just blew them [away]. They were furious. I said, "Look, you draw the pictures, I read them." [laughter]

Jl: Where had you read the article? Do you remember?

EH: In *Reader's Digest*, I think it was, and so, lo and behold, all of a sudden, I'm getting special treatment. As a matter-of-fact, I'm sent into this ward with these other guys, and the other guy, well, heck, about three or four of them won't talk. Three or four of them were rather strange. This guy that sleeps next to me insists on having an argument every time before we go to sleep. Generally, the argument was about having an argument. [laughter] ... It turns out his problem was, he was from Louisiana and, to get the money to buy his farm, he robbed a bank, and, of course, when he was drafted, this meant his wife had to run the farm by herself. ... He was worried he was going to lose the farm after all he went through to get it. ... It was real interesting, because nurses would come in [and] they insisted on leaving the light on at night. "Why? What good is that doing us?" and so, finally, I said, "Look, either turn it off or I'm going to turn it off," and she left it on. So, I went out and turned it off, but they had a fire in the linen closet and, lo and behold, these guys that couldn't walk, couldn't talk or anything, [were] up there, putting out the fire, using the hoses and everything, perfectly normal, and that just stunned me. ... Well, then comes the Battle of the Bulge, and I figured, by now, "Now, I'm definitely going to wind up having to go to the front." Of course, one thing that biased that was, somewhere along the way, I got called in by the psychiatrist and he says, "Do you want to go to the front?" I said, "Sir, anybody that ... says he wants to go to the front shouldn't be allowed to go," [laughter] and I think that may have affected my future. ... Oh, by the [way], there was another thing I had forgotten. When in First Division, I'd been there about a week with these guys, I'm told they want me up at Division Headquarters. "Why do they want me up at Division Headquarters for?" "They need a clerk/typist." I said, "I didn't join, get in this war, just to be a clerk/typist. To hell with it." Later, I thought, "What kind of crazed ...

Jl: "What were you thinking?"

EH: Yes, [laughter] but it might have saved my life, because, in the Battle of the Bulge, Headquarters was overrun. ... So, anyhow, I finally get sent out when the guys are coming back from the Battle of the Bulge. They are really in trouble, you know, and so, I said, "Doctor, either let me out of this ward or I'm going to be just like them, because I'm a great mimicker and I don't want to mimic this." I was out the next day. I thought, "Gee, that's all I had to do?" The only trouble was, I was sent with a bunch and, instead of there being three people to go to the secretarial school, there were thirty-one, and they didn't have a place for thirty-one. So, for six weeks, I swept the floors of the school and I came out a clerk/typist, [laughter] which was bad,

because I didn't have the faintest idea, what my duties were. So, I was sent back to Château-Thierry, to become clerk/typist in the motor pool, which the only problem I developed with it was that any time somebody wants to see the commander, he's got to tell the clerk what he wants to see him about. So, I'm getting all the bitching and moaning, and it's becoming obvious that some of it is perfectly justified and the others are just guys looking for favors. ... I began to be aware that there was about eight or ten guys that could do anything they wanted. They wanted to go to Paris for three days? They could go to Paris. Other guys couldn't borrow a jeep if they wanted to, no matter what. So, I complained to the Captain. Oh, I skipped something. Before that, I became ... the court-martial clerk, which was rather interesting, and my qualifications were, and I can thank, mainly, my high school, not Rutgers, [because it] was in high school I had learned how to type, because I had sympathy for my teachers, and I had learned how to type. ... They said, "Okay, since you can type thirty words a minute and you went to college, and you took notes, right?" I said, "Oh, come on." My notes were the important points, in that one word would develop a whole sentence, and so, "Okay." So, we go to the first court-martial, and what was bringing it up was, they were training people that had been in the Ordnance, or so forth, way behind the lines, who, of course, went through basic training, but they hadn't practiced it since, to go up to the front. They'd be replacements for those that had been killed, and so forth, and they had been promised, after, I think it was six weeks, maybe it was less, they would be allowed a three-day pass. Well, that was rescinded, the three-day pass was, an inkling of what things might develop in Iraq. [Editor's Note: Mr. Hilberg is alluding to the stop-loss policy of the late 20th and early 21st centuries in which the enlistments of US service personnel are involuntarily extended.] ... So, the guys were [saying], "The hell with it. If I go AWOL, worst thing that's going to happen to me is I [would] go to prison, but I'll be alive." ... So, we're taking all these things down, and it became obvious, for the court-martial, if you had been at the front, no matter what you did, you got off real easily, and then, again, if you hadn't gone to the front, why, they'd give you some sort of punishment, which kind of amused me. So, one of the questions was, "When did you go AWOL?" and I said, "Wait a minute. Defense lawyer, speak up." "What do you mean?" I said, "He doesn't have to tell when he went AWOL. If they don't know when he went AWOL, he's not AWOL." [laughter] ... "Shut up, you're the clerk." "Okay." Those incidents started to grow on me a bit, ... but, as a court-martial clerk, we were also in the same site where all the criminals would go before they went to trial. It was rather interesting. It turns out most criminals brag about their crime. You know, you say, "Why did you do it?" "Well, they had a lot of money. They didn't need it." "They're eighty years old. You killed them. Why?" "Eh." Another guy stole a bicycle. I said, "How stupid can you be?" [If] you steal a bicycle, American military aren't allowed to have bicycles, so, immediately, you were a criminal, the moment you rode down that street. ... We'd run into other things, like, it turns out that one guy had been picked up with a young lady and they were having intercourse, and the young lady was threatened with, if she didn't say it was rape, why, she would be prosecuted as a prostitute. The gentleman could have been prosecuted rather strongly ... for raping her. So, they finally came up with this [compromise], and they said to the young lady, "Would you be willing to marry this guy?" "Yes, yes." [They] said to him, "Do you want to marry her?" "Yes, yes." "Okay." So, we started setting up a marriage ceremony. A little hitch developed. He says, "What do I tell my wife?" [laughter] "We don't have any record of you being married." He says, "Well, we lived together for quite awhile." I said, "You know, that brings up an interesting point; how do you get a divorce in those cases?" [laughter] ... So, finally, the marriage was set up and it went forth, but we came across all sorts of interesting little tidbits about the law, like

this business of, you know, you've got to read them their rights and all this. ... Hey, so many times, you know darn well the guy is guilty. You're just playing with it, ... but back to where I was. So, in France, the Captain called me in and he said, "You're out. I'm throwing you out." So, it's a rather interesting thing. How do you get thrown out of something in the military? Well, it turns out the only [thing] ... they had to do was, they had a setup, right in the middle of the camp, and it consisted of, I guess it was about twenty-nine sergeants, staff sergeants, sergeant majors, master sergeants, etc. ... I guess the idea is, you don't send these people out on KP, and so forth, ... but they had no allegiance or anything. So, I get out there and I said, "Okay, who's in charge?" "What do you mean, 'Who's in charge?'" I said, "Well, who decides ... when and where you work?" He said, "Well, they bring the guards out, we do the work." I said, "You mean you never take any leave?" ... "No." So, I called up Captain (Thorton?). I said, "Captain (Thorton?), we've got a bunch of people out here that don't get any leave, and I can't figure out who's in charge," and he says, "What was your name, Private?" [laughter] "Ernest Hilberg," and he says, "Yes, I remember you. You're in charge." [laughter] I said, "Wait a minute, I'm a PFC and they're all sergeants and up." He says, "You represent me." I said, "Well, this representative would appreciate [it] if you'd send out some leave passes." So, it was funny, I said, "Now, I've got these passes, sergeants. How do I sign them?" because I'm not Captain (Thorton?). They showed me how to do it, and so, I worked it out with the Captain that I'd have half the people on duty half the time, forty-eight hours on, forty-eight hours off. ... I just find it funny, that PFC Hilberg is running this group, and what we would do is, they'd send the records out of everybody that was going to be transported off to a ship and we'd make sure that the records matched the person, persons, that were going on that ship, and they almost always did, but I know, one time, there was a rebellion. I said, "Okay, we're going to get this job done and we're going to get it done before midnight, because I don't like to go to bed late." "Who the hell are you?" So, I picked up the phone, "Captain (Thorton?)?" and, all of a sudden, I get this, "Oh, I've got a change of heart. Thank you; okay, we'll do it," and that was the only rebellion I had that whole time with that group, but, as a result, I went to Paris almost every [week], worked two days and two days in Paris, and it was rather interesting, because the cost of a place to stay was as little as a package of cigarettes. Sometimes, it might be two packages, and, as far as eating, you'd go to the Red Cross and the Red Cross, at that time, I forget what street it was on, but it had musicians, and the musicians appeared to be all from Hungary and places like that, because that's the kind of music they were playing. ... I mean, it was as charming as one could be, and, sometimes, I would go off to, oh, where the pottery is made. I can't think of it right now, but one of the big pottery manufacturers in France, and then, I'd go to Compiègne, and so forth. ... Of course, the other guys were always going to [Quartier] Pigalle, [the red light district in Paris], and so forth. I did go to, one time, ... the *Folies Bergere*, and that was interesting. I wound up right beside the spotlight and the first time they come on, and the girls are nude, it was interesting, they're only nude when they were standing still. ... The lights would go out if they had to move, and the jokes were in English. They knew where the money was, [laughter] and it was quite interesting, the show, and so forth, but I went to all these different locations and took tours, and so forth, and one interesting experience was, I found out there was no lock on my door. So, I stuck my wallet between the mattress and the box spring and, one night, the light goes on and this woman's standing there, trying to bargain with me, and, believe me, she was too expensive no matter what. [laughter] I mean, at one *franc*, she was expensive, and it turns out that, ... the year before, I worked for Quinn and Boden, in Rahway, New Jersey, book manufacturer, and they were publishing a book for the Army doctors ... on all the sexual diseases that [they] might come

in contact with. Believe me, that [scared me]. [laughter] That made any of the films that they showed you [seem like] nothing. I mean, [I] took one look at it, "Whew," but, I mean, it's funny, the things that can go back on you and affect your life. ... About that time, I was given the chance to take leave and go up to Great Britain. So, great; I went up there and they ask you, "Where do you want to be able to take the train to?" I said, "Well, London," and he says, "Pick either Glasgow ... or Edinburgh, because, then, you could go anywhere. ... If you tried to go any further north of that, you were getting back into restricted territory." So, okay, "So, Edinburgh, what the heck?" So, now that I have a voucher to go to Edinburgh, why the heck [not]? I'll go. [It] so happened that my English teacher, as a senior in high school, was from Edinburgh. So, we had learned all about Robert Burns, and so forth. [Mr. Hilberg imitates his teacher's brogue], "He wasn't Bobby Burns, he was Robert Burns," and I got to see all the places associated with him, also ran into a young lady that turned out to be my wife, years later. ... Eventually, we got taken to Le Havre, which was very interesting, because [we] went to Le Havre and the only thing that we had to eat was gruel. All the other [food], bacon and all this other stuff, isn't there, and we mentioned this to the chaplain. I said, you know, "Chaplain, something funny's going on here. All the good stuff's gone." Well, of course, it had gone to the black market. It's like the cigarettes. The moment we passed Paris, there were no longer cigarettes to the frontline. What we did have is a young man that was very adept at stealing things from the Germans, which we always found fascinating. He would bring back Waldorf-Astoria cigarettes, and so forth, but, so, [we] got on the ship and it turned out it was the *Queen Mary*, cabin class, no less. After taking that back to the United States, I said, "Hey, I'm going to travel the *Queen* as a civilian. This is class." It was a lot different than the *Ile de France*. The funny thing about the *Ile de France* is, it's the ship that my wife came over to the United States on; I mean, these little things that popped up. [laughter] ... I later did travel on the *Queen Elizabeth*, not the *Queen Mary*, ... over to Europe. Yes, my parents had always complained that they couldn't afford to travel much. It seemed to be my destiny to say, "Oh, yes, you can." So, that's about all of it, that I can think of at the moment, unless you want to go into the later activities, after I graduated.

Jl: If you want to.

EH: Okay. ...

Jl: Do you remember what month you came back?

EH: Yes, it was December, December '45, because I came back soon enough so [that] I could work for the post office over Christmas. ...

Jl: Were you married at that time or not yet?

EH: No, not until quite a few years, not until 1952.

Jl: Wow.

EH: Yes. Oh, we were a hot correspondence, at least every six months, but I did get to see her when I decided, in, I guess it was 1947 or '48, that I was going to travel and see Sweden. So, I

get all prepared and I said, "I don't want to see Sweden all by myself." So, I asked her, if I paid her way from Scotland to Sweden, would she go with me? "Oh, yes," and so, ... I went by ship over to Britain, and then, up to Edinburgh, and then, we flew from Prestwick to Copenhagen, which turned out to be a very interesting experience. ... American Overseas Airlines decided that they had to get more pilots over to London, because [of] the restrictions on the amount of time a pilot could be [in the air], it was a seventeen-hour trip, to fly to [the United Kingdom]. So, the plane went to London first before it went to Prestwick. So, it was quite late, and so, we get on the plane and go to Prestwick. Everything's full. So, they aim us towards the tennis courts, where they had bedding that consisted of wood-based sheets, and all set up in this tennis court. So, as we're about to undress, we're told to come back, because they had asked me, "Did I know anybody in Copenhagen?" Well, on the ship, I had met this one Dane. I gave the name. The next thing I know, I'm off on my way to his home, and we go there and his mother greets us, puts us in rooms. Well, my wife-to-be woke up with this guy that looks something like something out of the nineteenth century. He had a celluloid collar and, I mean, it was just right out of the nineteenth century. He was startled to find her in his wife's bed, and she was very nice. It turned out the son wasn't home. He knew nothing about me, but I remember being very pleasantly surprised about [how] they had fruit trees growing on the parkways, all those streets, and, when we went for lunch, before the ship left, we stopped at this one place and we went to order and I thought, "I don't know any Danish." [laughter] So, this guy says, "What do you want?" I said, "What part of the United States were you from, since it sounds like Brooklyn?" He said, "Yes, I used to be from Brooklyn." So, we ordered ... and we went on the ship, across to Malmo and traveled through Sweden. It turned out my wife was my way around Sweden, because, looking like a Swede, nobody would pick me up hitch-hiking, and the only way; one time, we got separated and I finally remembered that I was wearing a US Army T-shirt. So, I took off my shirt and got the undershirt and [got] picked up almost immediately, and they would do things like asking us what the tunes that went with the words of various songs that they had [were], and it was really fascinating. We got acquainted with all the kondatouries and, one time, we were picked up by the mother of one of the Swedish senators. Well, when he found out what she had done, fortunately, we had eaten before, [laughter] we were thrown out of the house about ten o'clock at night and we had to pick up a ride at ten o'clock at night, and, lo and behold, this driver of a coal truck picked us up. My wife-to-be wound up in the cab and I wound up sitting on top of the coal, and, going up hills, I swear that we went up the hills at a rate that was no more than about four miles an hour, [then], down the hills, and he actually stopped at a stand and bought us some apples to eat. It was really fantastic traveling. When we were in Stockholm, we stayed in what had been an artillery barracks, and there was a great discussion going on about the evils of the United States. It turned out that a good portion of the world was scared to death of the United States and, possibly, there could have been good reason, but it turned out [that] those from the Western world argued with those from behind the Iron Curtain, which really hadn't fallen at that time. ... I thought they were keeping their [end up], so, I kept quiet that I was an American. ... Well, I overlooked a little thing that's important for people to know, that after V-E Day, I'm in Trafalgar Square and this captain comes up to me, from the Third Division, that was the wrong step in the first place, and says, "Let's go invade Russia." I said, "Why?" So, [he says], "To get rid of Communism." "Sir, I have a problem. Up until this moment, they were our friends, and, by the way, what if we win? What do you do now? You're not going to occupy that country. Will you remember history? They don't like invaders," and I wrote this, by the way, to our California State senators, ... went right by them, and everybody I've met, you know,

the invasion of Iraq [in 2003] was stupid from the [beginning]. "What if you win? You've got no plan at all. You think that everybody's going to pop up and say, 'Yes, we're friends,'" but, anyhow, that was a little side expedition.

JJ: Did you ever make use of the GI Bill after you came back?

EH: ... Oh, yes, believe me. All the [scholarship] money was taken away from us. Now, I had the GI Bill. Would you believe I was able to save money under the GI Bill? Ten dollars a month, I put aside. So, when I bought my house, I almost got writer's cramp, between the ten dollars a month that I got saved while I was in the military, [laughter] along with the college, etc., etc., so, an awful lot of savings bonds to sell.

JJ: To sign over. [laughter]

EH: But, yes, the GI Bill, I think, saved the nation, and I think the way we're aimed right now is a disaster. ... In the last few years, we have done more to destroy ... the whole United States than any invader could do. We've done everything possible to make the poor poorer and the rich richer, and, ... ultimately, there's only one solution for that, and this fighting the War in Iraq, didn't anybody from the military ever read how the Americans won the War of Independence? ... There were face-to-face battles, but there was this constant gnawing, like in New Jersey. Do you realize that New Jersey was pro-British at the start of the Revolution? Very much so; by the time the British had occupied it for over a year, they were anti-British, because the damn Hessians couldn't get it through their head [that] they were antagonizing the people by stealing everything under the sun, and that's exactly what was developing in Iraq. [If] the people don't want you there, get the heck out. I remember, at the end of World War II, they said, "Okay, ... how are we going to punish Germany?" We said, "Put the US Army in charge," and, you know, we did a damn job of it. Until the Marshall Plan, it was becoming an ultimate disaster. When you've got competent people, give them something to do, but, no, we import people from [the United States]; they've got to be good Republicans, but they can come in. I couldn't believe it. By the way, right now, our country is being sold to the guy that will get [the] most people, to replace Civil Service. They are awarding jobs for TSA [Transportation Security Administration], and so forth. They're not even reading the proposals, but, if you bid more people than the other guy, regardless of your price, you win the contract. I'm afraid that's buying votes. They assume that the Civil Service will [not oppose] their replacement, but Civil Service has a campaign to wipe them out.

JJ: What did you do for your career after you came back?

EH: What did I do? Well, I wanted to work for the telephone company, but it just didn't work out. While I was in Rutgers, it must have been about 1948, on Washington's Birthday, we were wandering through town, and there was a big announcement that there's a Civil Service exam at ten o'clock. It must have been before ten. So, we wandered over to take the Civil Service exam, and, just as a lark, take the exam. Well, 1949, January, jobs were plentiful; 1949, June, uh-oh, no hiring at all, and so, I got these letters from Civil Service, "How would you like to work in Colorado?" "Okay, fine." "How would you like to work in Tennessee?" "Fine." "How would you like to [go to] Washington, DC?" I decided, "Enough of this business. Washington, I can

afford." So, I got a train ticket, went down to Washington, and I said, "I'm here to accept your offer of working at the naval gun factory." Well, that was amusing. First of all, they said, "We never really asked you to work; we just asked if you were interested." I said, "Yes?" "But, it turns out, since nobody accepted it, you've got the job." [laughter] So, my first job, that summer, was working on a remote gun control for B-29s, and I'm working with this guy and he says, "How'd you like to go to a cell meeting?" "Huh?" "You know, where we discuss politics, and so forth." I go, "Oh." Now, I'm thinking, "Maybe this is a test, to see [where my loyalties lay]," and I said, "I'm sorry, what day of the week is this?" He says, "Wednesday." "Oh, I see. ... Every Wednesday, I have a..." Well, eventually, I found out. Oh, by the way, the way this guy operated, [who] was supposed to be my leader, was, we'd come in and he'd open up the *New York Times* crossword puzzle and start working on it. Until he finished the puzzle, we didn't do any work. So, we had to help him, so [that] we'd get to do something. So, it became obvious that what he had in mind wasn't going to work. So, I'm fooling around, trying to get it to work, and so forth, and it was rather interesting, because some guys from MIT that were in the Reserve Corps came to check out what we're doing and they heard about it. That was that. Well, fortunately, I then was given a job doing some drafting, and the drafting was to move the guns so [that] they'd shoot a half a degree closer to the smokestack [of a destroyer]. That was an interesting experience, because, stop and think, "What do the blueprints for a destroyer look like?" Well, they're not full-sized, but they're still awfully long. [laughter] ... So, that's where I learned more about line work than I'd ever had in college or anything. You could see, if you didn't make your lines right, they didn't reproduce very well, and so, put it this way, turns out the place was a hotbed for Communism. So, all this business about Communism wasn't a bunch of baloney. It was a real problem, but I was afraid to report it while I was there, for fear I'd wind up being the Communist, you know. I would be outnumbered. So, when I graduated, I guess sometime before, I went down to Fort Monmouth and said, "I'd like to transfer to Fort Monmouth," and they looked at me. You'll remember my name is Hilberg. ... He says, "I have this guy who wants to transfer, and he's not from CCNY [City College of New York]." I immediately knew what he meant. Do you have any idea what he meant?

Jl: No.

EH: "He's not Jewish." Now, the reason I was hired is, sixty percent of the engineering types were Jewish, about twenty percent were Roman Catholics. A Roman Catholic couldn't get a job in engineering in many places. Then, the remainder was spread between blacks and Protestants. Jeez, they've got themselves a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant. [laughter] That's how I won my job at Fort Monmouth, plus an electrical engineering degree, and that was quite an experience, because it turned out the guys I worked for were great ham radio operators. That was their claim to fame. Neither one of them had gone to college. The paying salary, at the time, for an incoming engineer, was two thousand dollars a year, way out of line. I mean, four thousand was more like it. So, I started in June, two thousand, and, [by] July, I was getting two thousand, five hundred, because, every June, when a new budget came up, they'd kick the salaries up five hundred dollars a year. Then, I ran into things like, one of the guys I had to work with, his name is Rosenberg. ... We've been working together and he says, "Oh, shit, I have to go." "What's wrong?" I said. "Well, they've just realized my name is Rosenberg, so, they're laying me off, because I might be the spy." I said, "Wait a minute, the spy is in the jail, right now." [Editor's Note: Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were arrested and tried in 1951, found guilty of committing

espionage related to sharing information on the atomic bomb with the Soviet Union and executed in 1953.] Well, it turns out communication must be poor. He said, "This is the third time they've done this to me." He said, "My credit rating, credit union, is great." He says, "They know that, eventually, they'll find out that I'm not *the* Rosenberg," and I remember the other thing that was unique about it was, an experience then. They were building a system to locate where mortar shots were coming from, and it turned out the group was almost totally from CCNY, and I remember the guy [saying], "Fellow workers." "He's a worker?" ... Some of the guys there pulled a stunt, made me furious. They were mad at their boss, so, they reported him as being a fellow sympathizer with the Communists, because he'd gone to CCNY and his professor was a Communist. Well, they knew he wasn't a Communist, but, if you had a professor at CCNY, it was probably [that] he was a Communist, and [cartoonist] Al Capp always had an explanation for it. He said, "He wanted to be a member of the Communist Party because they threw the best parties, but he couldn't afford the dues." ... As a matter-of-fact, when I was at Rutgers, there was a Disabled American Vets organization. We're going along, come back from vacation one day, and we've got new officers. "I don't remember that election." "Well, if you read the by-laws," etc., etc., "you'll find out that a special committee can elect new by-laws [officers], under certain..." I sit up and I say, "I don't know about the rest of you, but I don't want any part of an organization like this," and I walked out, so did at least two-thirds of the other people, just walked out of the operation. So, all this talk about, sure, [Senator Joseph] McCarthy was off in left field somewhere, but there was a basis for it, and it's just wild, but I wound up with that job at Fort Monmouth and it was building radiosondes. Now, this sounds like a very benign activity. I mean, how can you not like radiosondes? They're used to predict the weather. Well, it turned out, all the destinations of these radiosondes were near where atomic bombs were going to be set off. So, what they were going to do is make sure that the fallout wasn't going to fall on people. What can you do? ... So, from that, I wound up, I went from the service, working for the government, to working for private industry, ... because, with the government, my boss was a fraud. One time, ... somebody came around and wanted to see my time card. I looked at him and I said, "I've got a time card?" He says, "Yes. Don't you sign it every week?" I said, "I've never seen one," and he said, "There are a lot of time cards with your name on it." I said, "Yes, but I can't write that well," and so, he'd been filling out my time card for me, and he was the sort of boss, "You don't laugh at my jokes, during the coffee break." I said, "I read the *Reader's Digest* faster than you do." [laughter] ... You know, it's irritating. So, I worked at Automatic Manufacturing for awhile, which turned out to be a valuable experience, came in with contact with the working poor. ... Also, I was hired to that job because of my name, and I remember my biggest compliment. After I'd been working for them for about six months, I got the keys to the office of the executive washroom, ... but it got tiresome there, because I only worked on one project the whole time. I got so, if anything went wrong, I could tell what it was all about, but it also gave me invaluable experience on how to make things right. So, I wound up with ITT, and I got that job on the basis of; ... well, I actually got the job with the government on a casual experience I had. With the government, it was a case of, I had learned about cavity oscillators. So, when they showed me this cavity oscillator, "Sure, I recognize that," and he says just the fact that I knew what it was scored [me the job]. ITT, I go there and they said, "We're going to be building magnesium chassis. What's the problem?" I said, "Well, the only thing that's really compatible with magnesium is aluminum," and so, the guy who was going to become my boss said, "You're the first person that knew there was a problem." I said, "By the way, there is a stainless steel that's relatively compatible with magnesium that you can use." So, I was hired.

Just those casual, little incidents got to be [important], and I worked for ITT for awhile, worked on this project. It was a missile that was going to hit a target with an accuracy of six feet. One basic fault in this premise; we don't know where any target, at least in those days, was within an accuracy of six feet. The best accuracy of any map at that time was twenty-five feet, and the further you got away from the center, the worse that was. So, we kept missing targets because they gave ... us the wrong destination, and I wound up doing some other things, but, eventually; this is what amused me. Now, I had one great, big weakness, according to Rutgers. I didn't know how to handle English. Who winds up spending most of his life writing proposals? [laughter] I always found this intriguing, is, "Why am I writing these things?" Well, I will admit that I did get some help from my bosses on the glaring mistakes, but, otherwise, I wound up doing most of this writing, and one of the proposals was on a drone aircraft, and we won three proposals for drone aircraft. What we didn't realize was, drone aircraft were doomed, in those days, because pilots wanted to fly planes directly. They didn't want to do it remotely, ... but it got so interesting that we actually flew these, got to guide these things, and we'd have crashes every once in awhile. They always blamed it on the guidance. Well, you can see where it might be, since we tell everything what to do, and so forth. Well, one time, it was, like, we ran into a mesa. Well, we ran into it because the damn thing was taller than the map told us it [was]. So, we hit it [without] going into any trouble trying to dodge it. [laughter] Other times, ... our aircraft technician had Aircraft Mechanic's License Number Thirteen, thirteenth one issued in the United States. His instruction books told him how to build an airplane, what bicycles tires to buy, pedals, and so forth, but he had learned a lot, and, every time there was a crash, he'd say, "Okay, where are all the parts?" and they brought him everything but the propeller. He said, "You know, these things don't fly very well without propellers. Where is it?" "Well, they're broken off." Somebody wanted to make sure how ... deep to insert the propeller, so, they scribed it. It's fiberglass. Fiberglass acts like glass. If you want to cut glass, you scribe a line, that's where it breaks. ... Another time, the propeller blades were flat. Well, they're supposed to have a pitch to them. So, he had a suspicion and he told everybody to get out of the lab. He started taking the propeller apart, and we hear this, "Oh, shit," and there's oil all over the place, and somebody hadn't properly tightened the hub on. ... Another thing is, we were taking pictures. The first thing we were supposed to do is go out and take some stills. "Gee, you do that pretty well. Let's see if you could take 3-D pictures." "Okay." So, we went out. That was iffy. ... Oh, yes, then, the next thing was, "Let's see if you can take pictures at night." Well, we hated that, because, [when it was] time to snap it, you had to send off these flares, and they didn't always go out. So, you were left with these flares sitting in the aircraft, and you don't know when they're going to leave, and, before flight, they would leave the hangar closed; open it up. One false move from somebody and you're going to have flares all over the place, ... but we did get good pictures. So, then, they went infrared. Infrared, in those days was bad. It was terrible, so, went out [with] radar. So, next thing is chemical disposal. I looked at the Colonel and said, "Colonel, as far as you're concerned, this is mortar disposal, right?" He says, "What do you mean?" I said, "You don't admit that you're even thinking about chemical disposal in the United States? We do not dispose chemicals [stateside]." He said, "Well, we've got to do the thing," and we did it pretty well. It was a little hair-raising in there. The reasons [why] the program was turned down was, we hadn't made up our mind on what we were going to do. We're looking at each other, "Wait a minute, you guys from the Army were the ones that came up with all these schemes. You haven't made up your mind," but, lo and behold, thirteen years later, I come back from vacation and ... the boss says to me, "You were just in the United Kingdom, so, you have a

passport, yes? Okay, you're in charge of this proposal to repair the optical equipment in Iran." I said, "It's just a quirk, boss, but I'm probably qualified. Has nothing to do with each other; you just want me because I've got a passport that's valid." [laughter] In two weeks, we had to write up a proposal to repair any of the equipment supplied by the Americans to the Iranians. Well, you could smell there was a problem, because we wrote it up, we rushed out there, on Labor Day weekend, I remember that, and nobody's there to talk to us. They were in Switzerland, doing something or other, and so, we sat around for awhile, but, eventually, they read the proposal, said, "Sounds good." So, we started writing a proposal for the Iranians. So, they gave us all the tasks. I remember reading it, and I said, "There's something mixed up about this, because you don't have; the numbers have to be fouled up." So, I went up ... to Hill Air Force Base [in Utah], with these Iranians, and got it straightened out, but one of the things we established [was], really, the Americans didn't know much what we were doing. "Let's see, the Iranians have somewhere between six hundred and twenty-four hundred guided bombs." I said, "That's quite a large dispersal." He says, "Give us time. We'll work this out." He says, "Six hundred of them, they sent back. We think they sent them six hundred replacements, we think they ordered twelve hundred; we've got to work that out." "Oh, great," you know, this whole business with, "Where are all the weapons?" and so forth. [Editor's Note: Mr. Hilberg is referring to the search for weapons of mass destruction used as a justification for invading Iraq in 2003.] ... So, we get it, this proposal, finally, we get it written, and part of it is to go to the same camera manufacturer that was down in Yuma that would take these, supposedly, three-dimensional pictures, and, immediately, I say, "I want to see this camera working." "Oh, sure, fine, we'll do that." So, this was about nine o'clock in the morning. We go out for lunch, come back. Four o'clock in the afternoon, I say, "Nobody's asked me to see how it performs." So, I go to the technician and I said, "You've got a problem, huh?" He says, "Yes, it's acting up," and I said, "Oh, yes, they used to act up before and, apparently, you haven't done anything to improve it in the last thirteen years." ... Some of the people I dealt with were dishonest to the utmost. I mean, dealing with ... some of these people doing military programs was just sickening, and some were great, but others would just blow you off, you know. ... I went to ITT and I wound up in the West Coast by the fact that I had to go down to Yuma, work there awhile, because the equipment we had shipped for the drone, the people in the field said it was a bunch of junk, they used more vulgar language, and the people in the lab said they were stupid. I said, "The only thing I see as a way of solving this is [to] get out there," and so, I wound up with a contract to go out there for three months and see what I could square away. Well, it turned out the contract was invalid. The guy that signed it for the military left the day after he signed it, but, anyhow, I was there, and so, they had to pay me and, eventually, we got the people in the field and the people in the lab together. So, they built a pretty good piece of equipment and maintained it quite well. As a matter-of-fact, I remember, every time there was a crash that was blamed on guidance equipment, I said, "Okay, let's investigate. We'll do exactly what they want us to do to prove it," and I said, "The reason I say this, fellows, is because I'm confident that we weren't at fault." I said, "If you go defending it, we get nowhere, whereas [if] you go out and try and analyze the problem or find out what's wrong, you can solve it," and the way I got out of working in Yuma was, they finally decided to ... put the contract out for bid, follow-on. Well, you know what's going to happen; the biggest liar wins. So, Aerojet and ITT bid on it separately, as did Lockheed. So, this guy from Lockheed walks in, says, "This IF [intermediate-frequency] amplifier is all screwed up." I said, "Yes? If you think that's an IF amplifier, it's really screwed up, because it's a modulator that you're holding in your hands," and the Captain ordered me to help him out. I said, "No, Captain,

that is not [in] my contract. My contract is to help your people straighten it out, and your people know the answer. This guy doesn't know what the heck he's talking about, and he won the contracts? I think this is fraud," and so, they threw me off the base. ... I said, "I won't do it," because it turned out this [was] equipment that ITT had developed on its own, owned the original patent, and, here, we were giving away all the information to Lockheed? For example, when I was at Yuma, ... the French arrived. Well, the Colonel says, "Tell them how it works," and I said, "Sir, you realize they're not really our allies?" [He] said, "What do you mean?" I said, "What I mean is that these people are working with the Russians, and I don't think it's a good idea for us to give, divulge, this advanced equipment to the French." So, he comes back, "Sons of bitches!" He said, "They sent a classified telegram telling me not to reveal it, but they didn't realize that I'm not authorized to read the classified telegram, [laughter] they classified it so high up," and, of course, this whole classification was; I was classified at "confidential." While I am working on the contract, they upgraded all the frequencies to "secret." Turns out I was in charge of generating all the secret frequencies. So, I was not allowed to read any memo I wrote. [laughter] ... I'm supposed to wipe out my brain. ... So, I had to explain to the Colonel, sometimes, on some of the stuff I did, I said, "Now, the book that contains the information we want is not classified. The only thing that's classified is that we want the book," [laughter] and so, I said, "What you have to do is ... have the book sent to somebody's private address. The moment it's handed over to somebody from this program, then, it's classified, that we're using those frequencies." So, "Okay," they'd never heard [of] anything like that, but, then, from that, I went to, let's see; oh, yes, then, I was laid off from ITT. Well, no, first thing was, [I] worked on satellite positioning systems. Now, at that time, it was the TRANSIT system [also known as the Navy Navigation Satellite or NAVSAT System], and the reason for the TRANSIT system existing was to locate where a Russian submarine has sunk. The military always wanted it, but they had to rush the things. So, I'm going along and I'm building these systems for precise location, and this thing was precise. I mean, you could locate a target and, if you could stay in one place, you could locate it within inches, almost. ... Then, we're building it, and I said to this admiral, "Well, look, they've got a positioning system built by these gyros, and so forth, that they took around the world, located everything in the right place." He says, "Oh, you believe in the Easter bunny, too, huh?" I said, "Oh," and I said, "By the way, how do you guys make it without this?" and he says, "It wasn't easy." He says, "Often, we found ourselves in places we hadn't expected to be, without using this." He says, "You ever cross the Atlantic?" and I said, "Yes," and he says, "Okay, when you hit Land's End, did you speed up, continue at the same pace, or slow down?" I said, "Now that you mention it, we slowed down." He says, "Yes, because you arrive too damn fast, that's what it was." So, we built the system and, lo and behold, we're shipping it, among other places, to the Apollo Program, [NASA's initiative to land men on the Moon's surface], and so, they would put it on the ships, put it on the aircraft carrier, I remember, and the aircraft carrier commander decided it'd be a great idea to put the air[craft] carrier right on the spot where the missile was supposed to land. You know what? That wasn't a very clever idea. They had to go full speed ahead to get it out of the way of the missile, because it would have hit this [aircraft carrier], and so, up to that point, the missiles were landing one mile, half a mile, ten miles, twenty miles off. [It] turned out, we always knew where the missile was; we didn't know where the aircraft carriers were, and so, because my company, ITT, had also built a program, they were supposed to be able to locate [them] exactly. They had all this fancy equipment, but you could see that [they were] subject to tremendous errors. ... I told one of the technicians that wound up on it, I said, "If you ever dock side-by-side, check and find out what

his position is versus your position." He calls me up one day and he says, "You were right." I said, "Okay, we've established that, about what this time?" and he says, "We're not very accurate," [laughter] but, anyhow, these satellites, positioning systems, were great. I mean, things like, off the California coast, you can get a false echo with radar, and so, one day, the tech is riding along with the sample equipment. He says, "Sir, I wish you wouldn't go so close to the shore." [The officer] said, "What do you mean? Based on our own radar, we're a mile or two away." He [the technician] says, "When the fog lifts, you're going to find out you're about to ground." You know what? He was right. The radar was giving false signals, and so, that worked out great. ... I almost screwed up the whole thing, because I got furious. I was shipping one to [the] *Glomar Challenger*, [a deep-sea drilling vessel used for scientific research]. Hughes Aircraft was using this to locate magnesium, and so forth, at sea, mining, and so, [I asked], "What the hell are we [doing], shipping government equipment to Hughes Aircraft?" and they emphasized that Hughes was still in the mining business and they had bought up two hundred mining sites in the United States. ... Let's see, after satellite positioning, oh, yes, I got laid off and I wound up at Hughes Aircraft and, while I was there, my boss, I had heard, had wound up at Hughes Aircraft. So, I asked if I could see him. [He] says, "You're available? When can you start?" I said, "Whenever you'll let me, frankly." So, he took me on, because he was going crazy, dealing with Hughes engineers. They always wanted to be so precise, and so forth, and so on. He says, "Meanwhile, we're not meeting any delivery schedules, anything." He says, "See what you can do to straighten things out." Well, unfortunately, ... one of my first decisions was to get rid of one of the managers, because they said, "He wants to approve, personally, everything that's going on, and there isn't enough time in the day for him to do that," and so, I had to make the engineers engineers, and this was a big shock. It's not unusual in the engineering profession. People always want more money, and I said, "Well, what more are you doing?" and so, I wound up with that for awhile, working on the TOW [tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided] missile launcher test equipment. ... With that, I had to deal with people from Germany, from Israel, and so forth, and then, one of the guys from Hughes had been working in Israel when the Six-Day War broke out [in June of 1967]. He says, "You know what? When a tank's coming at you and you've got a TOW missile at [your disposal], you become a participant." [laughter] He said, "There's no choice in the matter," ... but, after the TOW missile deal, why, I wound up on writing an awful lot of proposals. ... Oh, yes, by the way, the result of the Iranian thing was, I was supposed to go to Iran, but I was negotiating terms that they weren't enthusiastic about. I said, "If I get any disease or illness as a result of being there, I want you guys to be responsible for my medical treatment." Well, it turned out, they knew that the Shah was about to fall. It turns out, Hughes Aircraft had the best intelligence system in the United States, I swear, ... because, when I was in Iran one time, I'm visiting with this admiral and he's going around with his radio and he was in constant contact with the situation. ... By the way, an admiral does not just walk into a room; you're aware that somebody different has just walked into the room. They walk with that attitude of authority, and that was where I ran into the former; let's see, she was the daughter of the Shah, former Shah, of Iran, and she came over to visit. She's got this big rock hanging down there. ... I said, "This is gross, but I have to ask. Is that a diamond?" and she said, "Yes." I said, "My God, you should be walking with a bodyguard." She says, "Look, if you've got it, flaunt it." ... She actually looked like an Iranian princess, and her daughter was fascinated with things of the American West. She came over with her mother and she was dressed in jeans and a Western shirt and everything, and, strangely enough, most children, the first time they see people, are shy, but many children,

including the Chinese, after you get to know them, are terrible. [laughter] ... That was one of my experiences in Iran. I was supposed to fly to every aviation location in Iran. The Iranians wouldn't admit to but ten of them, and I knew there were twenty-one, and the Iranians said, "What makes you think there are twenty-one?" I said, "All you've got to do is keep your eyes open, too many maps on the wall," ... but I flew, on an Iranian aircraft, to the ten of these sites. One of the sites was near the Iraqi border and it was like driving through the pictures of the *National Geographic*. There were these mud huts, and so forth, and we get out there and what we're going to is a cavern. This cavern is huge. It's very unique, too, because what's happened is, the water has washed away the sands under the stalactites and stalagmites, so [that] they come down like this, and then, there's space between the two. So, I'm looking at this, and here is a paddle boat, like you see in ponds, and so forth, and a plastic rowboat, and we are going to take a tour of the cavern, and what's mounted on the bow is a kerosene lamp, but the lights are on, but that's just in case the lights go off. So, I'm going around this place, seeing it, and I'm thinking, "If anything happens, nobody's going to know." Nobody's going by [the cavern]. I am in contact with nobody, because the Iranians, they might [know about] ... the guys that are taking me through, but they may not know that they brought me along. So, I tell you, it was quite an experience, because it was not far from the Iraqi border, which was interesting, because, at one time, when I was working for ITT, we're discussing the Iraqis, and the Iranians wanted us to set up radar sites. So, Ernie suggests, ... "If they really want peace, you set up one radar and a monitor on both sides, and then, hey, you'll know, because, ... if anything goes wrong, you're going to know about it, bingo." [They] said, "Ernie, don't be [naïve]. Nobody in the world will buy it." I said, "Did you ever try selling it?" I had nothing against peace, ... but, after Iraq, after that Iranian deal came out, I wound up working on (purple cloak?). (Purple cloak's?) purpose was to supply infrared systems, and these infrared systems were fantastic. I mean, you see on TV these things where the [image is shades of] green, and so forth; no, with this infrared, you saw them in black and white and you could identify the blades of grass. I mean, it worked that well. The first time they were involved in any sort of combat was, ... way back when, when the Iranians were trying to disrupt the flow of oil, why, they would come out and they would threaten the tankers. So, the helicopters would go up, armed with this infrared system, and fire shots at them, and they'd go away. Well, it was soon discovered, the moment they saw this infrared system, [it] was a big ball, like, they'd run like heck. So, what the Army did [was], they built twice as many big balls, made out of wood, put them on the helicopter and that was it. It solved the problem, but it did produce things like, one time, the Iranians fired rockets at the maintenance site. ... At the maintenance site, we had one guy that was anti-war. He was [at] the closest thing to getting involved in the war, because he was working on [the] maintenance site, and so, this other system, I don't know that I can tell you about it, but it did have other uses, and it was strictly illegal, but Reagan got away with it, and that's about the time I got out. I got out, actually, because they were laying off people and I was sixty-seven years old and I said, "Well, wait a minute, these people have kids in college. I'll leave." That's about it.

JJ: Now, I would like to go back to a couple of things.

EH: Yes, great.

JJ: I am sure Matt does, too. You spoke with such detail, it is very impressive. I wanted to ask you about Rutgers, specifically, the difference between when you went before the war and after the war, because that must have been different.

EH: Okay. Before the war, I took the train down from Elizabeth, New Jersey, because I couldn't afford to stay on campus, and commuters, as far as Rutgers was concerned, existed; that was it. Now, after the war, I think it was the first year, I was able to get a dorm on campus, and then, for some reason, I never quite figured it out, I could no longer stay on campus. So, I boarded practically across the street from the dorm I had stayed in, and I was asked to join Delta Epsilon, and it was perfectly obvious why. Delta Epsilon had a grade point average that bordered on failure, and it was perfectly obvious why they had it, because they were totally involved in drinking. I mean, they had been forced off. We met in a bar, and, no, this is not my idea of fraternity life, I'm sorry. ... Also, I was rooming behind a fraternity, and what was going on just was, totally, revulsion, ... but Earl Reed Silvers would write [that] he thought I should be more involved. ... Later in life, I understand where he was trying to go with the situation, but, after, it was rather interesting; a lot of times, the professors would try and tell us things. We'd say, "That is not the way it is," you know. "You're not talking about the real world," and I remember, one professor was against big business. Well, it turned out, ultimately, he owned a refinery, but it wasn't a big refinery, it was a small refinery. "Big business; business, okay, not big business," and I know, for the English make-up class, that was a waste of my time and the government's money, or, no, I guess it was my own money, because all I learned was about Hinduism, and I was just disgusted that this was allowed to happen. We did have a thing with Tau Epsilon, whereby we would rate the professors, and I remember one professor, we said that if a student doesn't understand the explanation, repeating the same explanation at about ten dB [decibels] higher amplification does not clarify the answer. Another thing was, we thought the professors ought to dress better than the students, and we actually ... got one of the professors into retirement because he never did anything. All of his [classes], he would have instructors do all the instructing. We said, "We've barely been [taught]. You've committed fraud. You said we were going to be taught by this guy; we're taught by his assistant," and I'm not even sure he qualified as his assistant, to tell you the truth, and the atmosphere was quite different, because these are people that had experience under their belt. I mean, they were at least five years, well, I should say at least three years, beyond the normal age of a student. ... It also proved that prettiness and the architecture has absolutely nothing to do with the education you get, like, I got my master's degree from Rutgers from this Newark high school, Central Newark High School. That's where all my training was, but, by the same token, I got none of the experiences that you might get dealing with professors, like, when I was down at Rutgers, I had to write a paper about the transistor. "Gee, this guy has a name an awful lot like one of the inventors of the transistor." So, I walked in, told him I was writing a paper. So, he tells me all about it. It was the greatest compliment I had ever had in my life, that he thought I understood what he was talking about, but I did get something out of it. [laughter] ... I mean, one thing I've discovered, that [if] people really know a subject and, say, you say you want to know something about it, they will sit down and explain it, to the best of their ability. Other people, like one of the people I worked for at ITT, I said, "Hey, ... we're having trouble with FM, (breaks and confusions?)." He says, "If you don't understand it, I can't explain it to you." My conclusion was, he didn't know what the hell I was talking about. ... As a matter-of-fact, one of the things that I did have when I was going to Rutgers, I did wind up as an usher at the football games, and that was quite revealing,

because we discovered that the people from Princeton that came up to Rutgers were drunks. [laughter] I mean, the bottles were right all over the place. It was quite an experience, seeing that, and so forth. ... Oh, yes, the programs that they had at the University; we used to have the Philadelphia Symphony show up, things like that, ... worked quite well in the gymnasium. ... It turns out, one of my instructors at Rutgers, freshman year, had instructed my father, and he had instructed me in grammar school, junior high and high school. [laughter] ... He said, "You're following me." He was telling us, it was funny, he was explaining how *jujitsu* works and how it works on the resistance. So, I decided, "Hey, what if you don't resist?" So, he tried to throw me over his back; I wound up sprawled all over him, because I didn't resist. [laughter] I thought, "What are the odds?" "Ernie, it's not supposed to be that way." I said, "I just wanted to illustrate how to react to this stuff." ... He was obviously an old-timer, if he had [taught my father], at least in his sixties, but the other things were, I wasn't really into the [activities], as I think you've got. I do remember the dorm was located right behind the chimes of the religious school, there, [the New Brunswick Theological Seminary], I think Dutch Reformed, because they go off. [laughter]

JJ: Wake you up.

EH: Fortunately, they didn't go during the night. This is what I remember about that, but they did have a class on marriage, that I think ... should have been a requirement.

JJ: Really?

EH: Yes, how to learn to respect each other, and so forth, and that's about it, as I can remember.

ML: What was your major?

EH: Electrical engineering, and it was kind of frustrating, because all these people complaining about carrying twelve credits, and so forth, [laughter] you're hardly going to college with twelve credits. I'm looking at around nineteen to twenty credits. "Oh, well, yes, but you get credits for doing engineering lab," and I said, "It takes three hours just while you're there. Don't give me your complaints." ...

ML: You said that you thought high school was more challenging than when you came to Rutgers.

EH: Yes, definitely. Thomas Jefferson, well, it was the sort of school where I observed that, if there were any impurities in the sulfuric acid, you'd wind up with all these bubbles, and so forth. So, the question was written across the paper, "Why?" and my answer was, "Sir, if I can catch up on all my homework, I'll tell you why," [laughter] but, I mean, if you performed, did something, they expected something more, and I'll say that while I wasn't great, real great in Latin, it sure helped when I was in France, because I could pick up just enough to guide me through this and, of course, with the hands, and so forth, why, it got a little tiresome, when we'd keep getting the, "Oh, it's back there." "That's where we've been." We kept attacking them from the rear. ... Thomas Jefferson was quite good and, obviously, Rutgers, the freshman year, they had to back off and make sure you had learned the basics that you should have had before you started, but so

many of the schools didn't have it and it was very tiresome, of going through some of this stuff. I mean, ... the moment the question was asked, you could write down the answer, and God forbid it ever gets that way [again], or what grace it would be if ... things were like that now, but we eventually got this phenomena in California, where there's one school that has taken its accreditation away, in spite of the fact that almost all the students wind up in college, because it can't meet the government standards. In other words, [it is not that] you've got to write the answer or not, let's pick the best multiple choice. Yes, it's interesting when they talk about problems with society, and so forth. When I was going to ... high school, somebody actually set the school on fire. First day, they turned all the fire extinguishers [off], the next day, they came, set the school on fire, and the way they found them was so ingenious. He'd written a threatening note. So, we had to write the last stanza of *The Star-Spangled Banner* on our nearest available typewriter. Boy, was that an out for me, "Ma, I've got to get a typewriter." So, I wound up with a typewriter. What happened [was], they were able to match the type and, by the way, I don't know whether you know it, but some doctors from Elizabeth, New Jersey, started the basis for investigation, criminal investigation, that was used by the FBI. For awhile, they were the consultants. ...

ML: While you were in high school, Pearl Harbor was attacked. Do you remember where you were?

EH: Yes. I was sitting, doing my homework, looking out towards the sun, and it came over the radio, and it was, "Oh, my God." One of my grandmothers blamed Roosevelt for World War II. She was a Republican, "This is all his fault. He'd lined all those battleships up to sucker the Japanese to come in and sink them." "Grandma, relax awhile, think about it." [laughter] It was dumb, but I don't know that it was intentional. Yes, I knew exactly where I was and, within a month, I'd tried to enlist. I didn't try to enlist in the Army. [laughter] I'm afraid ... I wasn't that eager. The funny thing is, I was given the choice to sign up in the Navy during the draft, but I have been onboard ships, in-between, and I said, "I'll never live through it, because getting six-foot-four through those bulkhead doors," I said, "okay, I can do it when the seas are not bad, but, in bad seas, I am never going to make it," and that's an awful way to [live]. ...

JJ: I have a question about the war. You mentioned the difference between enlisted men and draftees, and I was surprised to hear that.

EH: Oh, yes.

JJ: How would you know who was enlisted and who was drafted?

EH: Serial number. Started with a one, you were enlisted; started with a three, you were a draftee.

JJ: You were just not treated as well because of that.

EH: No. As long as we're in a regular Army unit, and [what was] interesting about the regular Army was, you wonder where all these beds came from? Maybe you'd never thought about it, but we had a thing called the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps. Turned out, many of the beds

were available as a result of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and one of the soldiers, now that you're bringing that up, pointed out that he said he would have had a life of crime if it wasn't for the Civilian Conservation Corps, because this was during the Depression. There was no jobs. What do you do? So, you need money, you've got to get it from someone that has it. He said he got in the Civilian Conservation Corps and that was it. In that respect, you brought back another memory. It was, when we were at Camp Croft, the upper floor was totally Southerners, except for five. Lower floor was totally Northerners, except for five. The Southerners treated the Northerners awfully. I mean, it was just [awful]. As a matter-of-fact, it went to the point where one of the notorious ones fell downstairs, and there was ... one of the old-time sergeants, "You've got to watch your feet, soldier. We can't afford having you guys keep falling down the stairs." "Ah-ha." Immediately, "He didn't fall; he was pushed," [laughter] and it was funny, because one of the Southern soldiers slept, was in the bunk next to mine. ... After about four weeks, he invited me to his home, and that was when I made a social blunder, that it was a learning lesson. When somebody invites you to their home, it's a compliment, do it. Don't give this, "Oh, it's going to be too much trouble for you. You're going to have to use your rations," etc., etc., and that's what I used. ... I regretted it all my life, because he was so appreciative that we had treated him like one of us, as compared with the other way around, that he tried to show it that way. Oh, gosh, I later felt ashamed of it, but I hadn't thought of it that way, because, in our family, it was always, "Oh, that'll be too much trouble," etc., etc. ... Of course, none of us had really seen segregation until we got in the South, and that's one of the things that I'm very ashamed about with Eisenhower, that he allowed the separation [in the forces under his command], ... because it must have been awful to go through that, you know, "For Whites Only," or, "For Blacks Only," and so forth. One of the things we said [was], "Well, if it's for blacks only, you mean the whites can't go there? If that's the only toilet available, we can't go?" "Oh, no." "Okay." We just couldn't accept that. I know I did have an experience when I went to church in, I was in [South] Carolina, on one of my leaves, and went to church and came back, and they invited me to dinner. That's fine. So, we're talking. I said, "What do you do for a living?" He says, "Oh, I run a dry cleaning place," and, for some reason, I don't know why, he mentioned the fact that he'd only paid his help ten cents an hour. Well, a living wage, in those days, was more like about twenty-five or thirty cents an hour, and he says, "Well, that's all they deserve. They're not worth anything more." What's the difference between deserve and worth, and so forth, you know? ... I took it for about a half an hour. Then, my stomach was churning, so, I just told him [I had] another appointment ... and left. I mean, after walking out of church; oh, [I] just couldn't take it.

ML: Can you describe what basic training was like?

EH: Yes, it was mainly, let's see, physical exercise. We had things like learning to cooperate, and so forth. That was tossing telephone poles, and a little detail they overlooked; when you're tall, you're going to be the first receiver of this telephone pole coming at you. So, you had to learn to give away quick, so that somebody else was taking the load besides yourself. [laughter] ... Then, of course, we learned to fire our weapons, and so forth, clean them. ... Now, I used to walk three miles back and forth to high school and I'd gotten it down so [that] I could knock off the three miles in a half an hour. So, when I got in the service, they decided ... the Captain was going to show up the rest of the companies. He put me in the lead. We did the six miles in one hour, and he was so proud of himself. Everybody else in the company hated me, because you

can imagine the short guys. [laughter] "Well, all I do is walk; you guys keep up, that's [it]," and we did an awful lot of walking to get in good shape and, let's see, ... there were the physical things, like climbing over walls, and I was terribly coordinated. So, to cross a wall, you had to put your foot in the right place at the right time, or else you just pushed yourself back. I only got over about twenty percent of the time. I must say, I was just terrible at that. ... I've later discovered that my sense of balance was horrible and, believe me, if your sense of balance is bad at twenty, at eighty, you've got a real problem. [laughter] I mean, at sixty-five, I told my doctor, I said, "I walk like I'm drunk." He says, "So, don't drink." That's all he could recommend. ... Yes, there was that and, of course, we trained on the machine-guns and the mortars, and so forth, and one of the things we discovered [was], and we didn't ever really come up with a clue, that an unused machine-gun, water-cooled, if it doesn't have water in it, it gets hot, extremely hot, in South Carolina in the summer, and South Carolina, where we were stationed, had been peach orchards and it was great. There were peach trees all over the place, ... but it turned out they had had a bad year for two years. You know, a freeze would come just when the blossoms were coming on, but, apparently, they could make money like crazy during the day, but the training and everything, you know, you had to ... get up. I remember, one of the things was, we had to wash the windows. We're sitting there, we're looking at this soap. So, we started to wash the windows. "No, that isn't the way to wash the windows." "Just what is the way to wash the windows?" "Get a newspaper, get a wet towel, wash off the real dirt, then, hit it with a newspaper." By golly, that works, and if you've just got the fine mist that's always left with soap, it can be removed with a newspaper. ... They'd come around for the inspections and there was always problems with that, but nothing major. We never had some of these fiendish details that some of the other camps [had]. That's why it was called, "The Country Club." Other things we did, I did notice that whenever they brought any visitors, some Senators or Congressmen, they always wound up eating in our mess hall, and it was the furthest one from the gate, main gate. So, the only theory I could think of, at the time, was, well, they wanted to show ... how good the food was to the people way out in the wilderness. I later found out the head cook was the chef of the Twenty-One Club [in Manhattan]. ... I remember, one time, when he served us spare ribs and he said to me, "What did you think of the spare ribs?" and I said, "Sir, I wound up with a plate of ribs that high, and I was hungry." I said, "Those ribs had been stripped of all meat before we got them." He says, "Yes, I don't think I'll ever allow them again." So, it was embarrassing to go through all these ribs to find there was no food. [laughter] ... Yes, I had done a little work at, the summer before, on a farm, and so, when we were given permission to sit down, I usually had served myself before everybody else got seated. In other words, on the farm, or [in] a boarding house, you know if you wanted to eat, why, get to the food while it's there. "Very indignant." I said, "So? I left you some." [laughter] ... Yes, I had no complaints about the food, frankly. Those months that I was waiting to wind up going anywhere, I wound up as fireman for the [camp], keeping the boilers going, and so forth, but it could be boring, and, you know, the training was mainly to get you in physical shape and get you acquainted with the weapons. ... It was really based on the fact that once you got to a regular outfit, why, you would learn to do the things, which didn't happen to me. I was the one guy that was untrained, big deal, when I got to the First Division. That's why I wanted to ask about, "How do we retreat? I don't know anything about it." That's when I learned about the Kasserine Pass. As I say, basic training was mainly exercise and learning to follow orders and, strangely enough, one of the things that won the war was that the Americans didn't follow orders. I mean, if we had followed orders, we would have retreated from Normandy, and I don't know what would have happened,

but First Division's idea was, "Look, we're not going to fool anybody if we go in some other time. They know it's coming, they know where it's coming. We'd have to change the whole thing, but that takes months. So, let's get it over with," and so many of the cases, like the tanks that they used to knock down the hedgerows, were improvised right on the spot. They had these big things in the front [steel teeth], some tank came along, "Whoosh," lift up the hedgerow. Oh, yes, I did have an experience the day after the invasion, [which] was, I was asked to go out and find one of the mortar squads. I said, "Where are they?" "They're out that a way, somewhere." So, I'm walking along and I see these markers, red on one side, white on the other. So, I looked at them. I see the earth is disturbed, so, I didn't walk on the places where the disturbed earth was. So, I ... come across a guy, he's camouflaged to the nth degree, and I said, "Are there any more Americans in that direction?" He says, "No, they're that way." I said, "What's the deal with the red and white markers?" and he says, "That, the red side's where the mines are," and I said, "I guess I'd better go back exactly the same way I came." [laughter] So, then, I'm going down and I see, "Oh, there's another trail I can take." So, I go along. I suddenly spot our unit. "Come on." "Shut up." "Why should I shut up?" "The Germans are on the other side of the hedgerow." So, I said, "Pull the pin and throw it over." He says, "We're afraid they'll throw it back," and I said, "In other words, you don't want to count to four to throw it." He said, "No." So, they followed me back, but here I am, wandering down these hedgerows, mines, things. Nobody had ever told me about the red and white and all this business. By the grace of God, ... or something or other, [I] just came up with it.

ML: You said, when you joined the First Division, they distanced themselves from you because they figured you would die soon.

EH: Well, there was one thing. One of the first guys to come in contact with me said, "Don't make friends with anybody." He says, "If you do, I don't know whether you can stand having your friend die," and that sort of tilted my whole outlook on the whole thing, could see I wasn't in a [good] position. I do remember, one time, Sergeant (Goldberg?) comes to me and he says, "Okay, Hilberg, are you going to Mass today or not?" I said, "Sergeant, today is Good Friday." He says, "So?" I said, "Are you going to Mass?" He says, "Yes, I don't want to walk twenty-one miles." By the way, our company commander's name was Murphy, and so, I said, "Sarge, if you're going to Mass, I'm going to Mass." So, being Episcopalian, I pick out my prayer book, and knowing the little Latin that I know, I can keep my place, and all these guys, the Polish, the Czechs and Germans, and so forth, are amazed. This guy actually is keeping track of the Mass with his English prayer book, and I said, "Yes, apparently, your Mass is just a Latin version of our Episcopal service," [laughter] and that was sort of [amusing]. There was a couple of things going into effect. I think that's where acceptance of different religions started, was in World War II, when they really ... were forced to become acquainted with the people, like, one time, one of the Southerners discovered that one of the guys was Jewish. He says, "Yes, I'm Jewish," he says, "So, what?" and he says, "Well, based on my father's description of Jews, I'm afraid I expected horns," he says, ... "I would have never picked you out as a Jew at all," and that, these little things, came along to get with [it]. It's like with the British. We changed the whole aspect of the British towards college education. They would find these ... guys, that [their] father had been a coal miner or a machinist, or something like that, and they had gone to a university? never occurred to them to think about going to a university, and, afterward, all my wife's friends found themselves ways to get their kids into college. So, there was an impact that was below the

surface, and, after reading the story in today's paper, you find out, great, they actually are checking the GIs' DNA, and, if they have a propensity for any diseases and they show up after being in the service, they will not pay for [medical costs], [despite the] mere fact that they accepted them to go in the service. "Well, it wasn't service-[connected]," and you'll find out that a lot less medals are being awarded now, because [Secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld thought, "Why, that was just what you were expected to do." Oh, he had a lot of; actually, my son was very friendly with Rumsfeld.

Jl: Really?

EH: Yes, because they ran the 'net for the Pentagon and, when 9/11, [the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York City, at the Pentagon and over Pennsylvania], occurred, why, Lockheed went out, got it going up, and, when the union laborers refused to cooperate, my son reported that they were going to go ahead and fix the place up anyhow. Rumsfeld just says, "Any guy that says he won't do it, because it's not part of his duties, just tell him that he has just joined the United States Army."

ML: Did your son serve in the military?

EH: Yes, but that was a quirk [that] he did that. Oh, jeez, I think it was either, might have been during the Vietnam service, but it turns out he got a medical discharge. It was an impediment he had before he went into the service, that he just couldn't keep up because of it. You would never believe it, looking at him. ... Yes, he decided he wanted to serve.

ML: He enlisted; he was not drafted.

EH: Yes. ...

ML: Did you support that?

EH: Well, I really had no choice. He managed to do it just when he was eighteen and it took me aback, shall we say. ... Actually, it was a very interesting time in our military history. We're well on our way to it right now. It turns out, he found out that, in his squad, it was composed mainly of criminals, and they actually had to go out and buy their own toilet paper, and things were completely screwed up. ... As a matter-of-fact, things were ... so screwed up that some classified material came into the officers and none of them had military classification, but, somehow or another, my son did. I haven't got the faintest idea, except that since I had a security clearance, it might have rubbed off on him, and so, he had to read the document that told the officers what they could do and not do. ... I mean, weird things like that were happening constantly, and I will say that, every time I would go through customs and immigration, everything, "Do you have anything?" They wouldn't ask me if I had anything to declare. I was just waved through. I don't know whether to be complimented or insulted. [laughter] So, I do think that they knew.

Jl: Is there anything else that you would like to add for the tape?

EH: I don't think so. I think I've spoken to you for too long. [laughter] I don't know how much time you had allocated for this.

JJ: Some interviews will last an hour, sometimes, four hours. Do not worry about it.

EH: Oh, my God. When's your next scheduled?

JJ: Not until tomorrow.

EH: Oh, okay.

JJ: Thank you so much for this interview. It was great. Your detail, especially about the invasion, was very impressive. Thank you so much.

EH: Yes. It was an experience. [laughter]

ML: This concludes our interview with Ernest Hilberg. Mr. Hilberg, I just wanted to thank you again.

EH: You're welcome.

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Reviewed by Matthew Lawrence 7/25/08

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 9/21/09

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 9/23/09

Reviewed by Mary T. Hilberg 10/21/10