

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRED R. HUETTIG

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Fred R. Huettig on November 26, 2003, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Eric Kessler: Eric Kessler.

SI: Mr. Huettig, thank you very much for taking time to be here; we appreciate it. To begin, could you tell me a little bit about your father, who was also Fred R. Huettig, where he was born, a little bit about his background?

FH: Yes, there's very little to tell, actually. My father died when I was about eight or nine, maybe, and I have very few, if any, memories of him. He had been sick for some time before he died, so, it was a very brief acquaintance.

SI: He grew up in Paterson.

FH: Yes, I think he was born there. His parents lived there and had a home, I don't remember the name of the street, but it was sort [of] on the northwest corner of Paterson, almost in Haledon, and the family owned several of the silk mills, which were then prevalent in Paterson, and they had been lost due to the unionization of the area and the decline in the silk industry in Paterson in general. So, really, there's not much to say on that side of the family.

SI: Were his parents from Germany?

FH: Yes, they were Germans, immigrants. We had very little contact with them and I don't know where they immigrated from or where they were born or anything like that, but they were definitely born in Germany.

SI: What can you tell us about your mother and her family?

FH: Well, my mother was from a family of five children in Paterson, lived in Paterson, and the family was pretty much scattered all around the Northeast. One sister lived in Paterson, another lived in Ridgewood and her two brothers both lived in New York and, again, there was nothing that I can think of that was particularly significant. After my father died, her brothers supported her to the limit of their abilities, but [that] didn't amount to much and we ended up living in Ridgewood in the home of one of her sisters.

SI: Just for the record, can you tell us where you were born and when?

FH: Yes, I was born in Paterson, Paterson General Hospital, on April 19, 1926. The family, at that time, lived in Ridgewood. My father's still alive, obviously, and [we] lived in a pretty nice home in Ridgewood. Again, it's a pretty distant memory now.

SI: All of your childhood was spent in Ridgewood.

FH: I went to Ridgewood High School. For a while, just before my father died, we lived in Radburn and I went to Radburn grammar schools and that was a nice town to grow up in. I think

[it was] a Rockefeller Foundation built development. Nobody had to cross the street to go to school and, at the same time, there were a lot of nice, what I think you now would call a zero lot line housing in the town, a couple of swimming pools, tennis courts. It was a very, very nice atmosphere to grow up in.

SI: Was it a company town?

FH: Well, not really. There was no company associated with it. As I say, it had [been] built sort of experimentally with Rockefeller money and [is] still there. I mean, it's still a fine place to live.

SI: What do you remember about the neighborhood you lived in in Ridgewood?

FH: It was a very nice suburban [town]. It served as a commuter town, really, nice town to grow up in. We had lots of playing fields and played a lot. I was talking to my granddaughter just the other day; she was active in soccer and they don't have anything that is what I would call disorganized sports. Everything is highly organized, where we used to go and, if twenty guys showed up for a hockey game, well, it was ten on each side. If six showed up for a football game, there was three on each side. It was just whoever showed up and everybody played. So, in that respect, it was nice. I played a tremendous amount of tennis, because they had cement courts and you could play almost year round, or at least play on the backboards. So, I grew up, naturally, with tennis as my principal sport.

SI: In the communities that you grew up in, were the people in the community first-generation Americans, second-generation Americans? Were they from a particular background?

FH: Yes, I think it was quite mixed, as far as I remember. Almost everybody, the parents were born American; I don't think there was any immigrant family to speak of. I don't remember any and everybody spoke fluent English, so-to-speak. That would be about the only way I could sort it out. I know they were moderately well to do. Today, Ridgewood is a very, very well to do town, you want to say expensive place to live, but, at that time, this was the end of the Depression, just before the beginning of World War II, and it was comfortable, let's put it that way, not a lot of rich people, but comfortable.

SI: How did the Great Depression affect both your family and the communities that you lived in?

FH: Well, recognize I was pretty young at that time. I didn't have any background to compare it to. It was there and that was it. Of course, cost was one of the major causes, anyhow, and my family's loss of the silk mills. Up to that point, we'd been certainly on the wealthier side of average. So, I guess it was just what you expect in a Depression. It was depressing on everybody.

SI: Was there a situation in your community where people were losing their mortgages?

FH: I don't remember. I don't remember that at all. I'm not conscious of that, let's put it that way, no bread lines.

SI: I think most of the images that we see of the Great Depression are of people selling apples and pencils in the streets.

FH: That was not the case.

SI: Do you remember any hoboes passing through town? Did anyone come to the backdoor asking for food?

FH: No, I don't, really. I don't think that happened. If it did, I don't remember it. It was just a time when not everybody was too happy with their income.

SI: You mentioned the Depression, but unionization also affected the family business. Were unions and class conflict an issue that you remember?

FH: Well, I'm not sure whether I remember that or whether I heard about it from my mother, particularly, but she certainly remembered. In other words, there was definitely conflict. I mean, there were riots and there were incidences of acid throwing and that kind of business in the unionization of the mills in Paterson and, again, I was anywhere from five to ten at the time, so, [I had] very little basis for comparison.

SI: You mentioned that sports took up a great deal of your time as a child.

FH: Yes. In Radburn, they had a fantastic summer program for the kids. Everybody could play something on [the] schedule, with senior, senior, at that time, meaning, maybe, at college level or maybe advanced high school, a higher level high school supervision and it was always available to anybody that wanted to play. There were regular scheduled baseball games in the spring and football games in the fall. I shouldn't say scheduled games. They were scheduled, but, again, it was for anybody that showed up.

SI: What else did you do for entertainment as a child? Did you go to the movies or listen to the radio?

FH: Well, as a child, meaning, let's say, before high school?

SI: Yes.

FH: There were no movies in town, no such thing as TV, of course. My granddaughter doesn't understand that. I'm sure we listened to the radio, listened to the radio a lot, and that's about it. It was a fairly quiet time.

SI: Were you involved in Scouting or anything like that?

FH: I was involved in Scouting when I was in junior high school, but not before. We spent our time going to the next sporting event, really. There were two swimming pools in town and you could swim all you wanted. They were relatively small, but not too crowded and, at that time, it seemed like a heck of a good thing. I do remember a certain, not exactly fear, but consciousness of polio, which was, at that time, supposedly, transmitted in swimming pools and places like that.

SI: Do you remember if there were any scares, where a pool would not be open?

FH: Well, no, nothing serious sank in at that stage.

SI: What do you recall about your education, from elementary school and high school?

FH: Well, I think I had a good education certainly in elementary, and in high school, junior high school and high school, I felt I was getting a very good education. Ridgewood High School was, in its day an excellent school and grammar school. All I know is, I had to work hard, but, even though I changed from Radburn grammar schools to Ridgewood High Schools, I never found that I was behind the pack. I enjoyed school, let's put it that way, always did.

SI: What were your favorite subject areas?

FH: Always math and science. I didn't like English, like a lot of people don't, but I didn't mind grammar, but English literature, I don't think, was too well taught at that time. It was sort of on a take it or leave it basis and you couldn't leave it.

SI: During the 1930s and early 1940s, both in your home and in school, was what was going on in Europe discussed?

FH: Oh, yes, sure. I think all of our parents and my aunts and uncles all had been involved in World War I and were, therefore, quiet conscious and unhappy with what was going on, for they are the beginnings of World War II. At that time, I never paid any attention to whether it was going [to] affect me in the future or not, hardly gave it a thought, and we didn't have any personal losses within the family in the very early stages of the war.

SI: Today, they have current events in schools and kids discuss what is going on in the world. Did they have the same thing when you were in school?

FH: I don't remember that. I don't remember if that existed.

SI: Did you ever have discussions about what was happening?

FH: No. We were sticking pretty close to [the] subject matter at hand. No, I don't have any recollection of current events.

SI: Within your circle of friends or the community, were there any divisions between people who were, perhaps, pro-Fascist and anti-Fascist?

FH: If there were any pros, I never was aware of them. Probably it was some loose conversation about the German influence in Northern New Jersey, an organization called the *Bund*, and, at the same time, I don't know of anybody getting worked up into a high state of excitement over it. It was there, but it went away as soon as the war started.

SI: What did your family and you, as a teenager, think of Franklin Roosevelt?

FH: He was a dirty Democrat. I know nobody liked him. The family is very, very outspokenly, staunchly Republican, but not vigorous about it. Enter their votes and enter in local conversation, their discussions, but, as I say, nothing overt.

SI: Was Ridgewood primarily Republican or Democrat?

FH: Oh, very strongly Republican and almost all of New Jersey was, at that time.

SI: Were there any opinions expressed on the New Deal programs? Did you actually see the New Deal in action anywhere, the CCC or WPA projects?

FH: I don't have any recollection of that. I undoubtedly must have seen WPA projects somewhere, but I have no recollection of that.

SI: You went through Ridgewood High School just two months before Pearl Harbor.

FH: Well, let's see, I graduated in '44. I have to really sit down and figure that out closely, because I entered Ridgewood High School from the ninth grade, in grammar school, in junior high school. The junior high school was in the same building as the high school and I think I started there in eighth grade, pretty sure I did. So, I was eighth and ninth in junior high and entered high school as a sophomore, so-to-speak, and that would have been in 1942, 1941 to 1942, that year, I mean that school year, ending in 1942. ...

SI: In the months leading up to Pearl Harbor, was there any kind of a feeling that the winds of war were blowing?

FH: Not that I was aware of, and I don't remember any. I mean, everybody was unhappy with the state of world affairs, but I don't remember anybody forecasting that the US was going [to] be attacked. If I had heard it, it would have been casual and it probably wouldn't have even sunk in.

SI: Can you tell us about the day Pearl Harbor was attacked? Where were you? What were you doing?

FH: I was at my aunt's house, I remember that. I was at my aunt's house in Paterson. The family was there, probably for Sunday dinner, and the announcement came over the radio. We were probably listening to a football game or something like that at the time and, of course, a tremendous amount of shock and worry, but, again, it didn't affect me or anybody I knew

immediately. So, it wasn't so highly personal. That's sort of a vague memory; I'm sure about all that.

SI: Do you remember any kind of immediate reaction in either your school or the community? Some people have mentioned blackouts or thinking that there was going to be an immediate attack.

FH: No, I don't. I don't really remember that. I think I was pretty insulated from the whole thing. I mean, I don't remember any blackout preparations. When I was in high school I got involved in a civilian defense organization. Because of my interest in chemistry, I was in the water monitoring systems, to make sure there were no poisons or tampering with the water supply.

SI: I did not know that they did that back then.

FH: Yes, they did. We'd take water samples. I don't know how really valuable that was, but we'd take a water sample every week and test it, to make sure there were no newly introduced things that we could test for, which wasn't a heck of a lot, I don't think.

SI: Did you work with somebody from the government or the Civil Defense or was it more on your own?

FH: We had some civilians. Somebody from Civil Defense ran the laboratory. It was sort of a laboratory operation where we test the water and I don't remember how or why I got involved in it; probably, they were looking for somebody to help out with routine chem lab type testing and I was in high school at that time.

SI: After Pearl Harbor, do you remember if members of the senior class, or maybe even the junior class, began to leave to go into the service?

FH: I don't have any consciousness of that. I didn't know anybody, that I can remember, that left high school before finishing.

SI: Were there any other Civil Defense activities that you remember, like plane spotting or air raid drills?

FH: I don't remember any air raid drills, but plane spotting was an effort. I wasn't involved in it, but, then, I'm sure it existed. I can't remember anything else. I'm not sure I would remember that if [you] hadn't suggested it.

SI: Judging from some high school yearbooks I have seen from the era, it seems as though many high schools got very involved in the war effort, in terms of offering classes on how to spot an airplane, a lot more physical activity, basically training teenagers for the service. Do you recall any of that?

FH: Well, a little of the physical training. I don't remember that the high school had any classes. It is reasonable enough to assume that there were some, but I don't remember it. In the gym course, there was more emphasis on calisthenics and that kind of business. Did it supplant any of the sports? I don't think so. We played in a basketball league. It was in an industrial basketball league and I played on the high school tennis team, and that was ongoing. There was some concern, as I think I remember, about being able to get transportation, because of the lack of gasoline.

SI: Do you remember any other forms of rationing that affected you, like food rationing or clothes?

FH: Well, there was meat rationing in particular. I can't say that it really affected me and we never had to substitute bread for meat, so-to-speak.

SI: Was that a constant concern, perhaps, for your aunt or your mother?

FH: Yes, I'm sure that, for the family, it was a shopping restriction. Would we have eaten more meat if we had more stamps? probably. Again, it wasn't so hard that it was a big topic of conversation.

SI: Obviously, right after Pearl Harbor, the war started to affect your life, but when did it become more of a palpable force, leading up to when you enlisted in the Navy? For instance, your cousins started going into the service.

FH: Yes. I had one cousin who was a couple of years older than I was and he went in the Air Force. He lived in Paterson, but he finished high school and I think he went to Upsala College for training in map reading, or interpretation of aerial photography is what it was, and he was overseas, but he never flew in combat or anything like that. He was mostly used for interpretation of photography. I don't think he ever flew and took pictures.

SI: When you were in high school, were you involved in any of the pen pal programs, where you would correspond with the servicemen?

FH: No.

SI: Were you corresponding with anybody?

FH: No, and nothing like that. The consciousness of the war, its potential affect on me personally, probably started [the] beginning of my senior year or just before that. It was a question of, "What are you going to do when you get in the service?" that kind of thing and I thought I'd like to be an officer in the Navy. I made an application for what I think was called a V-12 and was promptly rejected, because I found out, they found out and they told me, that I was colorblind. I didn't know I was colorblind up to that point, but I definitely was. Those color blot tests didn't have any numbers in them, as far as I was concerned. So, I was out of that quite quickly and, shortly after that, they came around in our high school, the Navy did, looking for people who were interested in and good at math and science for a program which was called the

EDDY Program, where you could get a lot of training in electronics, electronics of the time, and, when you became active in the Navy, you started off at one rank up, and then, you went to school for six or eight months and, when you graduated, you either got a first [class], it was a rating, anyhow, third class or, depending on your standing in your training class, second class. Then, I made second class, thank goodness. They gave you another ten dollars a month or something like that. That was an excellent education, as far as I was concerned. I was mixed in with a lot of college students, college electrical engineering, and, unfortunately, I remember this fairly well, they had more trouble with it than I did, because I didn't know anything going in and I could learn to do it the Navy way from day one. The guys that came out of college had to unlearn the way electronics was being taught in the universities at the time, because the Navy's way was backwards, just in the fundamentals, from the way the universities taught it.

SI: Most people who are seniors in high school are thinking about going on to a career or college. For people of your generation, was it all about the service?

FH: Pretty much all about the service. You knew where you were going. I mean, you knew you were going into service and [at] what level. The officer's training schools were, of course, at the colleges and my family didn't have any money. I was never going to college, but I did get in this EDDY Program, which was strictly math and electrical engineering. I think it was a wonderful gift.

SI: Was there a lot of social pressure to be in the service? Were people who were not in the service looked down on?

FH: People who were in service looked down on? no; people who weren't in service, yes. I don't remember that there was any real, say, discrimination, or anything about that. Everybody who could [go] went, and a lot of people who I think shouldn't have went, just because they wanted to. I mean, it was definitely the thing to do.

SI: Your main motivation for going in the Navy was the EDDY Program.

FH: Yes. The Army didn't have a program like that, for reasons I don't understand.

SI: You mentioned the V-12 program, but had you said to yourself, "I would like to be a pilot," or, "I like Navy because ...?"

FH: No, I didn't have any special aim to be a pilot. I just like the Navy, because of the, what should I say? the presence of the water, I guess. I mean, I just wanted to be at sea.

EK: While you were in high school, you mentioned that the Navy came. Was there any active recruitment in high school that you noticed by any of the other services?

FH: I don't think recruitment was the word, because everybody was going to be in some service.

EK: You knew you were going to be in the service.

SI: Did people come in and give talks?

FH: Yes.

EK: Were there any services trying to pull you one way, to join the Army, Navy or Air Force, or did you just want to be in the service?

FH: Yes, you knew you were going to be in service and I don't remember any major presentations at the high school to coax you to go one way or the other. For the Army, there was always the draft and that was considered the least desirable thing to have happen, because you didn't have any choices then.

EK: In the Navy, you were trying to have a choice by joining their program.

FH: Oh, yes. That gave you a genuine choice and gave you a shot at some more education.

SI: In high school, were your teachers and administrators encouraging you either to stay in high school or to enter the service? Did they have an opinion?

FH: Not that I remember. I don't think they were pro or anti any specific branch of service. I think they would have been out of line, that's my thought now. I didn't think about it at all, at the time. They probably would have been out of line if they were pushing one service or the other.

SI: How did your mother react to your decision to go in the Navy?

FH: I think she was resigned to the fact that I had to go somewhere. So, she was content with that. I didn't appreciate how good an education I was going to get there and I'm sure she didn't either, but she was happy I wasn't going into the infantry, let's put [it] that way.

SI: Did you go directly into the EDDY training or was there a boot camp?

FH: Oh, there was boot camp. We had six weeks of boot camp, something like that.

SI: Where did you go for boot camp?

FH: I went to Great Lakes, went to Chicago.

SI: You were eighteen years old. Had you traveled much beyond Ridgewood and Patterson?

FH: Well, I had been away to summer camp a couple of times, way out in the wilds of Western New Jersey, but boot camp was sort of a whole different experience. Fortunately, I went along with three other classmates from Ridgewood High School. We all were in this program and we all got sent to the same boot camp and we were in the same boot company. So, it wasn't like that I was suddenly thrust with only strangers. I've been enough involved, I think, in sports that it was a comfortable move.

SI: How intense was the boot camp training?

FH: Boot camp was a lark. When we first got there, I remember this as kind of funny, when we first got there, they had an obstacle course you had to run and, coming out of the high school programs, it was quite easy, and by the time we were finished our six weeks, it was hard. We definitely lost condition in boot camp. You learned how to shoot a larger rifle than you'd ever had, if you haven't been exposed to a .22 or a shotgun in high school, that was the most, and these were probably .30 caliber or close rifles and march in formation and stand in line for a lot of different things. That's about all.

SI: You were there in the summer.

FH: I graduated on a Friday and went to boot camp on Saturday and was lucky, not lucky, but happy that I'd been able to finish.

SI: Was that part of the deal going in?

FH: Yes.

SI: Were most of the people in your boot camp, whatever your group was ...

FH: [It was] called a company.

SI: Were they also destined for the EDDY Program?

FH: Yes, the whole bunch.

SI: Were they mostly straight out of high school or was it a mix?

FH: It was a mix. I can't tell you closely any percentage, but there were plenty of college level men, fifty-fifty or whatever.

SI: Were they from all over?

FH: Yes, they were from all over, all over the country.

SI: What was it like to suddenly be exposed to this mixture of people, different educational background and social backgrounds?

FH: It was not a problem, no special concerns at all.

SI: It seems like your boot camp experience was not like in the movies, where you see screaming drill instructors.

FH: No. If there were any hard memories there, they faded. I don't remember anything difficult about it.

SI: Do you remember anyone having trouble like adapting to military life, how different it is from civilian life?

FH: I would say there were some that were homesick and some that were not interested or not too capable of the athletic side of the training, but I think we were all pretty happy to be in this special program.

SI: Were you marked men for being in this program in boot camp? Did the other companies say, "Look at the eggheads?"

FH: There was no conflict caused by that. Funny thing, I remember only that I thought that our group was a little more healthy than several of the other groups who had just the average seamen; can't tell you why that sticks in my mind, but it does and that's all. I mean, we weren't in any way harassed or segregated because of our planned training.

SI: In general, was there any kind of military hazing or initiation that you went through?

FH: No.

SI: Was the EDDY [pronounced *E-dee*] program also at Great Lakes?

FH: No. It's EDDY, [pronounced *Ed-ee*] by the way, the first period of training, a one-month training. This is a pretty intensive training, by the way. Classes would start at seven in the morning and end at seven at night, with homework, and I think it was six days a week and that was very, very fundamental electrical terminology, almost just vocabulary and training, for example, in the use of a slide rule and some of the very most fundamental laws of electricity and that was a month and it was in a high school in Chicago. The high school was then taken over by the Navy, downtown Chicago and certainly not every class in the EDDY program went there. There must have been other high schools or similar facilities. That didn't really require a high school, just someplace with blackboards and I don't remember where those were.

SI: Were the people training you Navy personnel?

FH: Navy, all Navy personnel. They may very well have been science teachers in civilian life. My memory now says that they were good teachers.

SI: You mentioned that you probably had a bit of an advantage on the college guys, who had learned it one way, and then, had to unlearn it.

FH: Right.

SI: What was different about the Navy way of doing this?

FH: Well, the first fundamental that I know that was different was the way that electrical current flowed. The Navy taught that the current flow was electron flow and, therefore, it went from

negative to positive. The prevailing instruction at the time in the colleges was that electrical current was more like an impulse that flowed from positive to negative. Did that make any specific difference? In most fundamentals, it really didn't make any difference, but, when you started to get into motors and generators, and I don't remember now how it goes, there was the left hand rule and the right hand rule and you used one for the Navy and one for the college level and there were enough involvements springing off that that the college fellows had a problem. Did it last too long? I don't think so. Inside of four weeks there, [it] was a recurring thought for them.

SI: Was there pressure to stay in the program, because of its intensity?

FH: Well, the pressure was not to fall out of the program and there definitely were people dropping by the wayside all the time.

SI: What would happen to somebody who dropped out of the program?

FH: I think they would go back to some Navy center for reassignment to some kind of sea duty.

EK: While you were living in Chicago, were you living in barracks?

FH: Well, our bunks were in the gym of the high school. There were probably four or five levels [of] bunks and they had a lot of people packed into that gym, but that's where it was. I think it was probably in September and there sometimes were sports, our outside exercise. They made sure we got our exercise. Well, we had a volleyball team and a basketball team, nothing like baseball and football, that required more time or more space.

EK: How did the people of Chicago around the school react to you being there?

FH: They were very happy to sort of honor the servicemen, patriotic.

EK: They were not unhappy to see you living there.

FH: Oh, no. No problem. Chicago was a nice place to be. There was a lot of activity downtown.

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SI: Please, continue.

FH: Yes, Chicago was a nice place to be. There was a lot of activity downtown, movies and stage operations.

EK: Did they let you out every once in a while?

FH: Yes, you'd get out on Sunday, maybe Saturday afternoon, I don't remember that exactly.

EK: Do you recall any USO shows or movies?

FH: I remember that I was in a movie house, that we went to see a performer by the name of King Cole, Nat King Cole, and that was my first exposure, what I would say direct exposure, to any of the music of the times. It was great. We all loved it, but we were only there a month. It was not a significant part.

SI: Was the training on basic electronics or were they training you for one specific thing, like radar?

FH: Well, that was where it was headed, but you didn't know [it] at the time. It was very, very basic electrical. You can't even really call it electronics. It was pure electricity.

SI: Do you have any idea of how many people were lost?

FH: No, but I don't think it was too many.

SI: After that phase of the training, where were you sent next?

FH: Next, we went to Gulf Port, Mississippi, for three months. That was not a pleasant base, but you were worked so hard there that you didn't have a chance to appreciate how bad it was. It was in the middle of a swamp. I think classes started even before seven in the morning and went to maybe eight o'clock at night, very, very intense, but, again, if you stuck with it, you learned a lot and that was the first move into electronics. That's where electronics got into the act and it was very, very heavy on math, vector analysis, I remember. I couldn't even spell it when I got there, but [I] found out what it was fast enough and, of course there were no computers at that time, certainly no handhelds, much less even the bench top, so [that] everything that you wanted to do, math wise, you had to do [with] pencil, paper, and a slide rule. I have to say it was hard, but it was very worthwhile.

SI: Were you with the same group of people?

FH: Not exactly. By then it was scrambled. People there came from other places where they were doing what they had been doing for us in Chicago. There was some of the Chicago group there, but not too many. My Ridgewood High School friends, a couple of them went there with me and a couple went elsewhere, I don't remember where.

SI: Were you put on a specialized track at this stage, in terms of your final duties?

FH: No. It was general purpose electronics. The concept of radar was introduced, but not emphasized. It was all kinds of electronics.

SI: Was there any sort of secrecy involved?

FH: Not there. There was not anything secret involved there, that I remember. Yes, I don't remember anything special there.

SI: Were you able to get away on leaves?

FH: Yes. There, you could at least get a weekend off, Saturday afternoon until Sunday night, and we went mostly with my Ridgewood friends, but not exclusively, made some new friends. We traveled east and west along the Gulf Coast, which had been sort of a resort area, and we'd spend an overnight at one of the resorts, who were otherwise without business. They were happy to have us.

SI: Were there a lot of servicemen in the area?

FH: Yes. There was a huge amount there. I don't even know how far away it was, something, let's say, ten miles, it wasn't too far, it was a huge Air Force base and I found a friend of mine from high school that was there and got over to see him at his Air Force base. It was much nicer than our Navy base.

SI: Did you have any interaction with the people in the city?

FH: I'd have to say very little. We were chasing girls from a nearby southern college, I remember that. I don't remember the name of the college. I don't remember the name of the girls, either.

SI: Did you notice any distinct differences between the North and the South?

FH: As far as the people were concerned? We didn't see enough of the people there, I don't think, and it was pretty cosmopolitan, because of the resort angle of it. [There] must have been some, but I don't remember anything overt.

SI: Did you see any signs of segregation?

FH: You mean black/white segregation? That was completely apparent and, actually, it was, of course, a definite in the Navy at that time, too. There weren't any African-Americans in our training program at all, as I remember, and I don't think there were.

SI: Did you ever see any African-American sailors?

FH: Yes, you saw them in mess halls and maybe in the pharmacy or something like that, but not many. There was no friction or any harassment either way; they were just there.

SI: Did you ever see an African American officer?

FH: Not that I remember.

SI: Where was the next phase of training?

FH: After that, I went to Corpus Christi, Texas. I think I volunteered to go that way. We could have gone to several places for the next phase of training, but Corpus Christi was where the Navy Air Force had its training center and that's where we got heavily into the operation, repair and maintenance of the various kinds of radio and radar that the Navy was using. I think we were there four months.

SI: Was that a training program or were you actually working?

FH: No, it was training. You were troubleshooting, ended up, anyhow, troubleshooting various kinds of equipment that they had induced [with] some kind of a problem. You had to learn how to track it down and identify whatever the problem was. So, that was on combat electronics. I think that started right out that way.

SI: Were those the kind of sets that they would use on planes or ships or both?

FH: This was the Navy Air Force, so, it was all carrier-based. It could have been on the carrier or it could have been in the plane and, of course, they'd use the same equipment if it was a Navy airfield, all pretty much the same thing, and, of course, the same planes and it was for communications and for target identification and for defense, radar defense equipment, looking for enemy operations of any kind and, by then, it was 1945 for sure that I was there. I don't remember where I was for V-E Day, but I remember that I had since finished in Corpus Christi and moved on to a Navy base in California and I was in San Diego when it was V-J Day, which, of course, was a wild and wonderful day.

SI: What do you remember about the celebrations?

FH: Yes, just wild celebrations, that's all. The place was thronging with people; streets were all jammed.

SI: Prior to V-J Day, what did you expect to happen with the war?

FH: Well, I think everybody expected that we'd have to invade Japan then to end it and I know that's where I was headed. I was assigned to a carrier. The carrier was going west, but, before we even left port, in fact, before I even got on the carrier, I think, the war was over. It did not make me mad. The rating I had was aircraft electronic technician. The unit I worked in, which was assigned to go on the carrier, was called a carrier aircraft service unit, a CASU. They probably don't even have them organized like that these days, but that's what it was at the time. I remember that.

SI: Was this the new *Lexington*?

SH: This was the so-called new *Lexington*, yes. The old one had been sunk and this one was a completely new replacement. It was quite an experience, exciting experience.

SI: Were all of the men in your CASU unit straight out of the EDDY program or was it a mix people who had previously served on the ship?

FH: No, nobody had been on the ship before. There were some people who had joined out of active service. I think I first met that kind of personnel in Gulf Port. For example, there were a few Marines, I remember, who had come back from the Pacific and they were in the same training program that we were. The CASU was all enlisted men, the non-officer types, let's put it that way. A couple of chief petty officers were the highest ranking men in the unit.

SI: Were any of them regular Navy?

FH: Yes, sure, yes. I think they were all regular Navy, the chief, and they didn't do much but sort of be the administrative side of the thing. I think they were all electronically trained, but the actual repair and installation work was done by the non-petty officers, like me.

SI: When you were first assigned to the *Lexington*, did you have to install anything or was it all in place?

FH: It was all in place. The planes were there; they had their equipment on them. It was all equipment that we were trained on. I don't know whether that's accident or design, but it was quite efficient. That was the operation. I think the war was over, I'm sure the war was over, before we sailed out of San Diego.

SI: How long before V-J Day had you been assigned to the *Lexington*?

FH: I don't remember. I would have to say it was on the order of a month or something like that, at the most. Maybe I didn't know until I finished the training in Corpus Christi. No, excuse me; it was even later than that. I was in the CASU before the CASU was assigned to the *Lexington*, a month, maybe something like that.

SI: In studying Navy life, it seems that there is a real difference between serving on an LST or a smaller ship and serving on an enormous ship. It is almost an entirely different culture. For instance, the split between officers and enlisted men is very strictly maintained. Did you find that to be the case?

FH: Yes, totally, with the exception that the pilots, of course, were all officers and our interaction with the pilots as far as keeping their planes working well, was close. I used to ride with one. He'd take me along to checkout his equipment for him when he was going off the carrier and coming back.

SI: What was that like, to fly in those aircraft?

FH: Very exciting, very exciting. The planes, of course, were all propeller planes and a lot of them didn't fly much faster than the carrier could go and getting launched in particular was always a risk. The first thing that your plane did when it went off the end of the carrier, was get down below the level of the deck and you look back and there would be the carrier steaming right at you, but it was a low accident rate at that stage and I didn't have any measurable accidents on landing, either.

SI: What kind of plane was it?

FH: It was a SP2C, was the designation for it, but I don't remember who made it, a dive bomber type plane. It wasn't a torpedo plane, it was a dive bomber. It wasn't a fighter. I went on the other ones when they had an equipment problem, but the one that I traveled on the most was that one.

SI: Your relationship with the pilots seems similar to what I have read about ground crews in the Eighth Air Force, where there is a symbiotic relationship.

FH: It probably was not as close as that might have been, because it was sort of short lived first of all, and the pressure of [the] war was over. It was more a casual friendly relationship and sort of not reinforced by pressure.

SI: How strict was the discipline and protocol on the ship? Were you required to salute every time you saw an officer?

FH: Don't remember clearly. I don't think so. I think it was fairly relaxed. Again, the quarters were all separate. You didn't have a lot of intermingling, unless you were going to work.

SI: What kind of quarters did you have?

FH: Just plain old bunks, not bunks, yes, bunks; they weren't hammocks. There were some sections where there were hammocks, but, fortunately, I wasn't in one, just tiers of bunks, and there were relatively large mess rooms.

SI: Was life on the ship comfortable? Was it cramped?

FH: It was quite adequate, as I remember, anyhow. I don't remember [if] I had any time feeling that it was excessively cramped. The bunks were small and closely spaced, but at least it was always clean and dry and it was certainly better than being in the infantry or the Army at that time.

SI: How large was the ship's company?

FH: Counting the aircraft squadron that was on there, you said ship's company, that would not be, necessarily, a permanent part of the ship's company, but counting everybody, I would have to guess it was twelve hundred or thousand, somewhere in that range. It's a big ship, big at that time, but not as big as the ones they have now. I don't remember that number specifically. It must have been somewhere in that range.

SI: During your time on the ship, were you mostly focused on your duties in repairing the equipment? I have heard that after V-J Day, there was a lot of make-work, like having to paint things over and over again.

FH: We didn't have to do that, that kind of thing. Whether that was in existence there or not, I don't know. We were busy enough taking care of the equipment that was being used. They did not stop training, simulated wartime launches and that kind of business, kept right on doing that.

SI: Where did you travel while you were on the ship?

FH: I never went anywhere except Hawaii, Maui, to be exact, and we were off the ship there for maybe a month and, from there, [I] came home. That's where we got off the ship as we were discharged, in preparation for discharge. I did a little electronics repair there. They had a Navy airbase there and, theoretically, we were assigned to the airbase, but that was strictly a transit stop.

SI: What did you think of Hawaii?

FH: At the time, it was great, it was wonderful, very un-crowded, it was very undeveloped, really, but we traveled all over Maui, me and whoever was my buddy at the time. By this time, I had lost track of all my Ridgewood friends. I don't know where any of them were, but I had made new friends.

SI: Did you correspond with anybody at home during this period? How important was correspondence?

FH: I would say I was corresponding with my family, that's about all, one or two high school friends who had gone elsewhere. One was in North Africa and another one was somewhere in the Mediterranean [that] I corresponded with, but very, very infrequently, just sort of keep track. They were my two close friends, closer friends, from high school and I was there in Hawaii for a short period of time. It was more, certainly more, relaxed, as far as the work was concerned, and, for time off you had enough leave time that you could really explore the island and that was very enjoyable and, from there, I was off on a troopship and back to San Francisco for discharge.

SI: Was there a point system at the time?

FH: Oh, yes, yes, yes, and I didn't have a heck of a lot of points. I hadn't been in very long, a little over two years at that stage and I'd never been into any active service, excuse me, actual combat, and, therefore, I think I got out in August and through the great good luck and the grace of God, in September, I came to Rutgers.

SI: At the time that you were discharged, did you give any thought to staying in the Navy?

FH: None whatsoever, no. I stayed in the Naval Reserve. It was sort of a non-event. There were no meetings or anything like that, just on a list, which I did sort of out of patriotic duty. I didn't do anything to keep up on my electronics. There was almost no way you could. You asked earlier about secrecy and what have you, I think. I didn't run into that until I got to Corpus Christi, but, there, all the circuit diagrams and principles of operation of all of the electronics were considered, certainly, restricted; I don't know whether secret is the right word. You

couldn't take any information out of the training compound at all. You couldn't take it back to your barracks for study or anything like that.

SI: How did you find out about the GI Bill? Was there any kind of instruction on it while you were in the Navy?

FH: I don't remember any. There must have been, certainly, word of mouth. It was a known thing, somewhere in that time frame, probably before the war was even over.

SI: You mentioned earlier that you probably would not have been able to go to college without the GI Bill or it would have been very difficult.

FH: Yes. I would not have. The GI Bill was a tremendous boom to me and, at the time, I have to say, I hardly knew [the] name Rutgers when I got out of service, but I started looking around and very quickly found out that nobody in any college except Rutgers, let's say New Jersey, but basically Rutgers, was accepting any applications from anybody that was out of state. There's no way you could get in anything. I remember I went to Lehigh looking for engineering again. I mean, you couldn't even get an interview if they knew you were from out of state. They just [said], "Don't bother us, we won't bother you, don't bother us," and I don't know where else I went. I don't remember going to Stevens. I presume it was in existence at that time. I didn't go there, I think. Yes, the only one that stands out in my mind was that I did go to Lehigh, but the information was clear, "If you're not from the state involved, don't waste your time," and, somewhere along the line, Rutgers cropped up. Maybe some friends of mine were coming here. I don't remember how I made that connection, but as far as I'm concerned it's clearly in my mind as the best thing that had ever happened to me, because I was able to use my Navy training to a small degree and get into something that [had] always been a hobby to me, [which] was mineralogy and the offshoot of that was the Ceramics Department. I didn't take geology, I took ceramics and it's been a boon to my life ever since. So, I was blessed to come to Rutgers.

SI: It is kind of unique for somebody to find peace time application for what they did in the military or to be able to use their training.

FH: Yes, very much so, except if somebody was a machinist mate or something like that, but, no, of course, in ceramics, you have a lot of different options and one of the options was electronic ceramics, which I spent some time thinking that over, and I'm glad I did opt for that and was able to make a lifetime career out of it.

SI: From what I understand, the Ceramics Department was undergoing quite a change in that period, to more of an emphasis on, say, electronics.

FH: Well, the industry was undergoing a change. What you might call all of the pre-war parts of the industry still existed and were major business components. In fact, they were probably the larger business components within the field of ceramics, but the electronics was a new thing. The newness of it was tied in substantially, to television. Black and white television was just starting at that time, as far as [being] a real consumer item, and there were several applications of

electronic ceramics in television which were all brand-new, really, and, from there, it grew very rapidly. So, it was not an offshoot of the old ceramic business, it was a major addition.

SI: How many people in your program do you think came from a similar background of having done something similar in the military?

FH: Excuse me, "In the program," meaning in ceramics?

SI: Yes, students who were studying ceramics, particularly electronic ceramics.

FH: Very few, I think. In my particular class, I can't think of any that had the electronics training that I had. There may have been one or two in preceding classes, except for the Class of '49, '48, '47, [which] were very, very small classes, because they were stunted by the war.

SI: I have also heard from people who were in engineering programs, I am not sure if it extends to the ceramics program, in the five years after the war that Rutgers accepted many students, and then, realized that they could not handle all of them, so, they started arbitrarily failing people or tried to eliminate people from the program.

FH: I don't think that was the case. I would be very surprised if that was the case. The program was tough enough, particularly for anybody who had been in the service for a long time and [had] kind of forgotten the disciplines of high school education. One of the toughest courses that we had as freshmen was college algebra, where, as far as I was concerned I'd, been using it in the service and it was not too much more advanced, a little, I mean, somewhat, not heavily advanced from what I'd had in high school. So, it wasn't so difficult for me. It wasn't easy, but it was not so difficult for me as it was for other people.

SI: It seems like the ceramic engineering course was very intense in general. It did not leave much time for social activities, or there was less time than, say, a humanities course?

FH: None of the engineering courses left as much time for fun and games as the [non]-engineering courses, but, ceramics, you didn't get into that, of course, until just a smattering in your sophomore year, and then, total concentration in junior, senior years. Freshman year, I don't think there was any ceramics. No, there wasn't, because I didn't even make that elective until the end of my freshman year. So, anyhow, I was happy to have that choice and happy to make it.

SI: What about the social life at Rutgers after the war? You were in a fraternity, Beta Theta Pi. How did you become involved with Beta Theta Pi?

FH: Well, another good stroke of luck I had at Rutgers was, when I first came here as a freshman, I got a dorm room. One out of ten got dorm rooms. I don't know if that's the exact number, but it was a small fraction, anyhow, and I was very, very lucky to get a dorm room. I don't know how it happened, luck of the draw I think, and there were several fellows in the dorm who, to this day, are friends that I met in the dorm and that was the basis for a fun social life as a freshman and one of those fellows became a Beta, because his brother had been a Beta, and I

didn't have any college contacts at all, so, I wasn't even conscious of fraternities when I came here. Then, he invited me to join, so, I didn't join until my sophomore year, but that's how I became a Beta. It was through a friend who was one and by coincidence, I was looking for a way to supplement my income or to reduce my expenses. I applied for a position as a preceptor. I applied at the end of my freshman year, which was against all principles. Normally, they were upperclassmen at most. I just decided it couldn't hurt to ask and darned if I didn't get a job as a preceptor in the Student Union, the old Student Union, which you guys probably never even saw. It was down on the corner of College Avenue [and] Hamilton. It's the cross street that goes by the library and behind Old Queens, whatever that street is there, yes, [the] parking lot there. Somerset is the next block down I think. There was a very large, old Victorian building there, which was the Student Union. It consisted of nothing more than a couple of lounges and a couple of rooms you could use for studying; it was mostly for commuters, really, but I got a slot of being preceptor in there, which took care of my room for the next three years of room expense and it was very easy going. There were two other preceptors; we split the time. We open the building in the morning, and then, took charge of making sure that it was being treated properly and then close it down from about five o'clock in the afternoon until, say, eleven o'clock or midnight and on weekends. There was a woman and a janitor that took care of the place during the regular working hours, say, from eight to five and the other two preceptors were both Betas, so, as it turned out we had three Betas running the Student Union and they were instrumental in introducing me to their house, also.

SI: It was just the three of you.

FH: No, the dean, associate dean of men, lived there, also. His name was Howard Crosby. You may know the name. There's a dorm named for him on the other side of the campus, super man, absolutely super man. My kids were brought up to call him Uncle Howard and we stayed in close contact right until he died.

SI: Yes, many people have told us stories about him.

FH: Yes, outstanding man.

SI: It seems like he was one of the crowd.

FH: Yes, definitely, definitely. I was privileged to give part of his eulogy in the chapel when he died. Someone had referred to him as one of the party animals and I said, "Well," this line sticks in my mind, because I think it was clever, that, "he really wasn't one of the party animals. He was the keeper of the animals." That's about what it was. He kept us in line.

SI: Do you remember any other members of the administration, like Dean Metzger or President Clothier?

FH: Clothier, I remember. Mason Gross, I knew quite well, mostly through being introduced by Howard Crosby, and he was an excellent, excellent man. He went on to become president, as you probably know, and Soup Walter, the Glee Club. Brad Abernethy, who was the chaplain, and George Kalli, who ran the Corner Tavern, you had to know him.

SI: Yes, it is still here.

FH: Yes. It's not what it was, though. You used to have to wedge your way in there.

SI: Yes, it is still a nice place.

FH: I hope so. I had my beer mug hanging down there for fifty years. I finally retrieved it when we had our fiftieth reunion. I went down and got it out.

SI: At one time, chapel was mandatory at Rutgers. Was it still mandatory after the war?

FH: I don't think so. I'm quite sure not. If it was, it was only maybe freshman year, but I don't think it was at all. I spent two years as a chapel usher. I don't remember [it] being mandatory.

SI: Did they still have speakers, guest speakers, then?

FH: You mean preachers, ministers?

SI: From what I understand, it is a mix of preachers and, also, lay-people.

FH: Yes, I think so.

SI: What about things like dances and house parties?

FH: Yes, we had all of those. They were all very, very well run, well attended.

SI: In general, what was it like being a veteran along with the other veterans at Rutgers, interacting with the kids straight out of high school? How did these two groups interact on the campus?

FH: Certainly with no problems. I had none that I remember. I mean, we had a mix, mostly veterans, but a definite presence of high school graduates in engineering and I think, probably, no, I was going to say probably the vets tended to dine together. Certainly that was the case freshman year, before I got involved in the Student Union and the fraternity, but the two preceptors that were there had not been in the service, but we became very close friends. We still visit regularly, travel sometimes together and, in the fraternity, there was a complete mix, without any separation or any problem.

SI: Did you go through the regular initiation or was there a veteran's pledge?

FH: No, it was regular, regular initiation. Sort of another angle on that "high school students versus vets," the football team, at that time, was always an excellent team. I don't think Rutgers lost any more than about eight games in my four years here and an awful lot of those fellows, not all, but an awful lot of them, were high school graduates and they were widely recognized and respected on the campus as being very, very good ballplayers. I don't think there was anything

much. Vets tended to party a little bit more, I think and a little harder. I don't remember what the drinking age was at that time, but, in the Corner Tavern, which was a major hang out, that was mostly ex-GIs.

SI: People say that there was also a marked difference in the classroom. The GIs sort of demanded some parity with the professors. They would not expect to be talked down to.

FH: I would say that's probably true, but I don't remember that high school students were talked down to or anything like that.

SI: There was not the traditional professor-student relationship.

FH: Well, I didn't know what to expect in that respect and so I wasn't conscious of what that was, but I was very happy with the relationships in ceramics and in engineering in general. The liberal arts professors in freshman year ...

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

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Fred R. Huettig on November 26, 2003, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

EK: Eric Kessler.

SI: Please, continue.

FH: What was the question?

SI: The relationship between veterans and professors.

FH: The relationship with the professors in ceramics was very, very close and good. It was a small group, anyhow; I think there were only twenty, some number like that, in my class and probably ten in the class ahead of us. Professors were all accessible all the time, mostly all young and very, very capable of teaching. It was a great group. The liberal arts group, some were good, some were more stuffy, I guess, a simple term. I remember, a couple of times, no offense to anybody, but we had foreigners as teachers and they were very hard to understand. They may have known their subjects, but they didn't speak English and that made it very difficult and that was much more difficult on the liberal arts side of things and that was one of the real problems with the college algebra. We had someone, I think he was from the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton, who just, I mean, was unintelligible. We had a couple of engineering profs like that also, but we could fall back on a common theme of numbers, numbers and equations, so [that] you could work out what the guy was trying to say, but the University was under a tremendous strain, absorbing this huge scale up in [the] number of undergraduates.

SI: I think of the unique stories in reference to the housing situation. Most people had to live in the barracks.

FH: Live in the barracks or they had to find a room in town.

SI: What was the relationship between the Rutgers campus and New Brunswick at that time? Did you go into town much?

FH: Yes. It was also on the route to NJC, Douglass today, so you went through town often. Again there was no specific problem. It was a place to go shopping or to go get meals. We had a lot of meals there. I think the town was easier to get along in than it may be today. I don't know what the situation is today in town.

EK: How about Rutgers and NJC? For social visits, you would go across to their campus.

FH: Yes, yes, the social visits, at that time, I don't know how they are today, but, at that time, they were all one way, from this side of town to that side of town, but there was a lot of socializing.

EK: Were there any visitation rules?

FH: You had to be out of Douglass ...

EK: No staying overnight?

FH: Oh, overnight is unheard of, unheard of; that was as far as over at NJC is concerned. When we had a fraternity party, for example, if it's going [to] be a weekend party and [the] girls, the dates, were going to be housed in the fraternity house, all the brothers had to get out. They were gone and I have to say, with minor exceptions, there wasn't much, except weekends of going over to NJC.

SI: Did you stay here most weekends or go home?

FH: No, I stayed here most [weekends]. Yes, when I got the preceptor spot, it was a necessity.

EK: Was Rutgers considered a "suitcase school?"

FH: "Suitcase," meaning commuter?

EK: It seems like a good amount of the students went home nearly every weekend. Were there enough things to do that most stayed?

FH: I think a lot did, yes. I have to say I never heard the term "suitcase school" before and recognize, of course, that it's readily accessible to lots of transportation. You could get home and an awful lot of students come from New Jersey and, therefore, had a home to go to within reason for a weekend.

SI: One thing that always struck me about your class in particular, it seems like Rutgers was becoming more open than it had been before the war, in terms of accepting more minority

students, Jewish students. Bucky Hatchett being the president of your class kind of typifies that. Obviously, you were not here before the war.

FH: I had never heard of Rutgers before the war, so, I can't give you any comment about that.

SI: Did you feel that things were pretty open?

FH: Yes, completely, and the only restriction, early on, was you had to be from New Jersey and I think [the] state had mandated that Rutgers take every New Jersey applicant that met the qualifications or Rutgers decided that for itself, as a "duty," so-to-speak.

SI: I get the impression that, in 1949 and 1950, there were fears of not being able to find a job, that there might be another depression or recession, that the job market was not as strong. Did you have those fears? How did you get your position?

FH: Okay. That was another influence, as far as my selection of ceramics. At the end of my freshman year, there was a distinct undercurrent of lack of employment opportunities and that was a concern even for engineers, I say even, because it was reverse for engineers, but in looking around and in discovering the Ceramics Department I saw the list of employment vacancies that they had, this was published in the hallway, and job descriptions that were there where they had, like, I don't know what it was at that time, because I wasn't too conscious that I remember how many ceramic graduates there were, but I know that, let's say, at the end of the sophomore year where I was already involved in ceramics a little bit, there were like ten job openings for every graduate and it stayed like that. Nobody had a problem getting a job coming out of ceramics if they wanted one for years and that influenced my thinking. I probably would have done it even if it was a problem, because I liked the subject contents so much, but it was a definite influence. Now when I graduated I owed everybody [I] knew some money. I had to get a job and I was very happy to get one. Everybody had multiple choices when they graduated from ceramics in 1949, 1950, and probably 1951.

SI: How did you get with RCA?

FH: RCA was looking to hire a ceramic engineer or two and they had three or four, I don't know. They had come to Rutgers and one of the jobs that I saw posted and interviewed for was the job that I took with RCA. I have to say I don't think there was any specific guidance coming out of the ceramics administration. They just made sure that you understood that it was a good job, in any case, not only just in my case. I mean in general they would tell you "That's a pretty good job," or, "You might not like it, because it's in some remote section of the country," or something like that. So, that's how it was. It was almost a no-brainer.

SI: You stayed with RCA throughout your career.

FH: No, no, not at all. No, I only lasted there a year. I went on from there to a job with Emerson Radio, still in electronics, doing ceramics, because I wasn't totally happy with my job at RCA, because it was too quiet. It was in the Princeton laboratories and it was like being in a library, practically. It was very, very slow paced and I was looking for something a little bit

hotter. So, I got an offer of a job through a friend of mine from Rutgers who had been in my class who was working there and he had a project that was expanding and he asked me if I'd join him and I practically doubled my pay in that one move and I was happy to do that and I worked there for two years, and that project was ending and I had been introduced to the management of a company over here in Keasby, just underneath the Parkway bridge going over the river. They made me a job offer and I went there and I guess I worked for that company for eighteen years or longer, and then, that company was bought up by a West Coast company who proceeded to tear it to shreds and the handwriting was on the wall and I went off and got another job. This was not in ceramics so much as it was in electronic components, but it wasn't ceramics, in Neptune and my whole career was spent in New Jersey, a lot of the time, more than about an hour's drive from Rutgers, and Rutgers was a major resource as far as I was concerned, for any problems, engineering or research kind of problems that came up in the business. By that time, one of my friends, one of my original dorm friends, was chairman of the department. So, we would get together frequently. Everything fit together, great good luck throughout.

SI: In general, does the Rutgers Engineering Department function as a resource for New Jersey firms?

FH: Yes, definitely, very definitely. They have the Center for Ceramic Research, which is very, very strong academic/experience based personnel, and the members of that are, or can be, companies based in New Jersey and there's other ones that aren't based in New Jersey. They were members, but they have an industrial group, and if your company is a member in that respect, you have access to all of the research that's going on there except that which is restricted by some sponsor, and to all [of] the personnel there for help with any problem that you have. I had a problem once; we're way off World War II now. I had a problem once in the business that I was involved [in] North Jersey and we had several ceramic engineers on the project on the problem and nobody could quite decipher [it]. So, we finally, I finally called the chairman of the department, whose name was Mal McLaren, and I told him I had a problem that was beating us and we had to get some fast action; could he arrange for some support for me? He said, "Well, come down tomorrow." So, I came down the next day and found in the meeting that he arranged five ex-presidents of the American Ceramic Society, very, very broad experience and we spent all day discussing, reviewing what we knew in the business about the problem and what they thought was a possible route for a solution or for understanding and I think we had six suggestions and I was able to implement four of them later that week all at once. I introduced four of them for changes in the process. So, we did them all at once and the problem instantly went away. We never went back to find out which one of the four if it was only one solved the problem; we just changed the process to use those four. That would have taken us a year, probably, but for the insight that this resource center gave us and there were things like that constantly, not every week, but whenever we went in to a serious problem, that was where we went for help. The ceramic industry is still relatively small and it's pretty close knit. A lot of people know a lot of people and you can always go [to them]. They're generous with their help and time.

SI: You have also remained very active as an alumnus.

FH: Yes.

SI: In ceramics and your job.

FH: I have a strong obligation to pay back the University and the industry, which I enjoy doing which is probably why I'm here, because I don't think, and I still don't think, I had much to tell you about World War II.

SI: We need all perspectives. It is very interesting to see how the war affected your life. You can not always draw a straight line.

FH: Yes. I could have been a ditch digger, who knows.

SI: Is there anything you would like to add about your family or how you met your wife?

FH: Oh, I met my wife after I graduated. Our first child, I remember, one son came here. I didn't coax him to do it, but I made sure he knew it existed and we had him here as an older child. He'd been up for some football games and saw my great respect for the place and the folks like Howard Crosby and Mason Gross and what have you that we knew and some of the teachers, the professors from the Ceramics Department that I'd had, were still in there. So, he, I think, was happy to come here. I know he's happy to come here. I was happy that he came here and he had got a degree in mechanical engineering and has profited from that ever since.

SI: Your other children did not come to Rutgers.

FH: They did not, no. My daughter wanted to be a vet, and with no veterinary school in New Jersey, she knew she had to go elsewhere and, after she was in a pre-vet program, pre-med I think it was, for a year or so she changed her mind. She says she had enough of killing rats and wanted to get into something else and she got into hospital administration and has done extremely well and our third child was a son and he's the math and science whiz in the family and he went to MIT. He wanted to go to MIT from grammar school, went to MIT, loved it, loved every minute of it, got a scholarship for his advanced degrees and a teaching assistantship and all that kind of business and he's still living in Boston. He's an electronic engineer. I don't think I specifically pushed him in that direction, [I am] sure I didn't, but he had an aptitude that was clear practically from his crib.

SI: Did you ever consider grad school?

FH: I didn't. Yes, you said it. I had stretched my credit up and down College Avenue as far as I could. If I didn't get a job instantly, I was going to starve to death.

EK: How about finding work while in school? Was it easy to find your job as a preceptor?

FH: Oh, there weren't very many preceptor jobs at all.

EK: What about any part-time work in general?

FH: I think if you looked for it, you could find it. I waited on tables in the fraternity to earn my meals, earned my room by being a preceptor. You could always get a job cleaning up after a dance or we used to clean the stadium after the football games and make a little spending money that way.

SI: Before the war, did you have any part time jobs in high school?

FH: No, nothing, I mean, cut lawns and that kind of business, but nothing formal. I don't think there were any. I think the Depression had made sure that anything like that was manned.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to put on the record?

FH: Can't think of anything right off hand.

SI: Is there anything we failed to discuss?

FH: No, no.

SI: All right. Thank you very much.

FH: Okay, thank you.

SI: This concludes our interview with Mr. Fred R. Huettig on November 26, 2003, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and Eric Kessler. Thank you very much.

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

Reviewed by Jude-Anthony Tiscornia 11/15/04

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/21/04

Reviewed by Molly Graham 11/25/2014