

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS C. JACKSON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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and

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SOUTH NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Thomas C. Jackson in South Norwalk, Connecticut, on July 16, 2001, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Greg Kupsky: ... Greg Kupsky ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: ... Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you for taking the time to do this interview. To begin, could you tell us about yourself and your family?

Thomas Jackson: I was born on March 16th in 1921, ... born in the Brooklyn Hospital, as a matter-of-fact, although my family had recently moved out to Plandome, Long Island. ... Plandome is part of Manhasset, which is on Manhasset Bay, on the North Shore, and I grew up there, the youngest of four boys, and went to the local schools, up until my junior year, when I went away to a school in Windsor, Connecticut, called Loomis, [now the Loomis Chaffee School], went there for a couple of years, then, went to Williams College, where I had a very enjoyable, perhaps too enjoyable, two years, because I left and didn't know what to do, thought I'd like to go to work. My father said, "No, no, no, you've got to get a college degree." That was important in those days. So, I had another friend, as a matter-of-fact, ... he was a great football player at Williams, and he had gone, on some kind of a football scholarship, to Rutgers. So, I figured, "What the heck?" and I went down there and spent a very enjoyable time, again, because I was the type of guy that was adaptable and enjoyed myself, spent a very pleasant two years there. ... I belonged to the Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity. Fraternities were important in those days, and so, I was able to pick up at the local chapter and managed, with the help of a little summer school stuff, to graduate on time, sort of graduate on time, because the war started, as we all know, in December of '41. ... I joined; to be honest, I can't remember what the heck it was, but it was some kind of an outfit which enables you to enlist, but stay in college until they called you. I don't remember; it wasn't the ERC [Enlisted Reserve Corps], but it was something. It was an initialed group; initials were very big then.

SI: Was it the ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program]?

TJ: No, not the ASTP, because that was a [program where] you went away to college, to study particular things. No, this was something that enabled you to stay in college and, technically, you were a member of the Army, but, actually, you weren't, if that makes sense. ... Finally, in about, I think it was about March '43, they called me. In fact, they called us all. There were a whole bunch of us and we went down to Camp Dix. ... I've never remembered if it's called Camp Dix or Fort Dix, but, anyway, we went down there, a whole bunch of us, and I guess you want a few anecdotes. I'll tell you one. ... These are silly things that I remember. ... The whole bunch of us had taken ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps], so, we all knew how to march, I mean, all the stuff, you know, "To the left flank," and, "To the rear march," and so forth, but the guys that were down there running the whole operation, the NCOs [non-commissioned officers], who were mostly old Army men, had a whole bunch of us and they took us out to march. Presumably, this was the first time we'd ever marched. We were a bunch of raw recruits, and I remember one guy saying to the other, "Wait 'til you see this. This'll be awful," and then, they started to get us to march and, of course, we were magnificent. [laughter] We were real pros, because we'd learned this in ROTC and we were marching to beat hell and they were amazed and delighted. Another thing I remember, we were all in the barracks; ... we were just enlisted men,

but the guys who ... had been officers in the ROTC, for some reason, all came down in a group as well. I guess they were being enlisted at the same time, or a few days later than us, and, for some reason, they were located right outside our barracks. ... Somebody saw them and we all went out and started yelling, "Hey, hey, Joe, hello," ... and, of course, the NCOs, who were in charge of us, got sore as hell and made us all go in, which, I think, was kind of a wake-up call to us, because, all of a sudden, we realized we were in the Army. ... You want me to go from there?

SH: I would like to back up a little bit.

TJ: Oh, yes, okay.

SH: Would you tell us about your father and mother? How did they meet? What was your family background?

TJ: Well, they, more or less, grew up together in the same church, Plymouth Church, in Brooklyn, which was a very historic church, still is. Henry Ward Beecher auctioned off a slave there, to dramatize the Civil War. He used to claim that Abraham Lincoln secretly came to pray there, but I don't know. I think Henry Ward Beecher; well, you don't want to hear about Henry Ward Beecher. Okay, anyway, they met; they knew each other as kids. My father was, I think, about six years older than my mother. Brooklyn then, of course, was a fairly rural place. ... He was in the insurance business, eventually had his own insurance agency, and just before I was born, they moved out to Plandome, which, I told you, is in the North Shore of Long Island, a great place to grow up, I might add, still very nice. What else now?

SH: What was your father's name?

TJ: Oh, G. Harry Jackson. I don't know why he called himself G. Harry. I guess he didn't like the name George, but he was never known as such. He was always called Harry. Four boys, as I told you, the two oldest were twins, nine years older than me. We're all still alive, which I used to think was wonderful, that it's a long-lived family, but, now, I'm not so sure, as I start to totter around, "Jesus, what's going to happen to me? I'm going to go to well into my nineties, I'm sure. Who's going to take care [of me]?" Well, anyway, nobody wants to hear about that.

SH: What was your mother's name?

TJ: My mother's name was Mae Clark, and my name is Thomas Clark Jackson.

SH: Was your father involved in World War I?

TJ: ... By then, he had had two kids and, no, he wasn't. Well, I guess he was, in a sense. I never quite got many details about this, but I think he was in what we used to refer to, I don't know what the technical name was, as the Secret Service. He did a certain amount of, I guess, anti-espionage work, I suppose, but I don't think on a full-time basis.

SH: Did he ever talk about what that work entailed?

TJ: No. I have vague memories of a few stories, but I don't think it was too dramatic. He had a younger brother, though, who was killed during the war and who was apparently a wonderful guy and had gotten ... some kind of a medal. Now, if I were smarter, I could tell you which medal it is. It's not the Medal of Honor, but it's the second-highest, [the Distinguished Service Cross?]. He was quite a fellow. He was a lieutenant, had been a good football player, apparently, was a wonderful guy. I never knew him, obviously. He died before I was born, which was 1921. Well, anyway, as I say, just before I was born, the family moved out to Plandome and my mother went in to have me at the Brooklyn Hospital. Why, I don't know; I guess, because, maybe, it was better. ... I tell people it was a matter of pride; she wanted all the children, to be born in Brooklyn. Now, as you people may or may not know, I've been told that something like one out of every seven people in this country, native-born, have relatives, immediate relatives, who were born in Brooklyn. Everybody was born in Brooklyn, a hell of a place.

SH: What was your mother's educational background, before she married your father?

TJ: Not much. He went to, I think it was, Commercial High School in Brooklyn and didn't go to college. ... His younger brother, that was killed, went to college for a short while and his sister went to Barnard. ... This is not of great consequence, but she was a diving champ at Barnard, of interest to me, because I was always interested in swimming. Okay, now, let's see, where were we? Oh, we're in Plandome, a wonderful place to grow up, I think I told you that. ... Well, I told you; I don't want to keep repeating myself, which is a sign of my age.

SH: What were your activities growing up? What were your interests?

TJ: Oh, God, ... we were all crazy about sports. Every afternoon, for example, at this time of year, we would play baseball, and you would think, from this, that I was a good athlete, but I was really pretty bad. My brothers were okay. I was, I think, probably the worst, and maybe I didn't work at it as much as I should've, because I knew I was the worst. My brother, Harry, played in high school. He was pretty good. He went away to prep school for one year, I think he played there, then, he went to college. He went to Brown; his twin brother went to Dartmouth. My brother, Dick, was a very good athlete. He played all over the place. He played at Dartmouth and went out to the West Coast, where they played Stanford. In those days, the Ivy League was a big, big deal in athletics. I was no good at all at anything, although, every afternoon, faithfully, we played. We played football, you know, we had neighborhood teams, and even, sometimes; ... I suppose I was adequate as a football player, which, when you're a kid, just means you're not afraid to tackle somebody.

SH: What do you remember about the Depression?

TJ: Oh, God. ... I'm happy to say, my father, who had his own business, must have hustled like mad. You don't know about these things when you're a kid, but we really didn't suffer much and, as a matter-of-fact, this section of Long Island was a pretty classy spot. There were a lot of fairly successful, wealthy people, not that we were, in that, well, we knew them, and I was well aware of the fact of the Depression. In fact, I'm a typical sort of a "Depression baby"-type guy. I still

go around turning out the lights, which is something my kids have never mastered, and I think I was well aware of it, but I didn't suffer. I do remember, for example, Good Humor started at that time, ... you know, the ice cream outfit, and it was sort of a family joke. My mother had the idea, somehow, that the guy that started Good Humor, I don't think this is true, was some sort of a Wall Street impresario and he hired, as his Good Humor salespeople, the guys that drove the trucks around, the brokers that he had to let go, which I don't think was true, but it was a family joke. ... We all used to snicker and say, "Look at that broker;" not an interesting story, but a true one. What else can I tell you?

SI: Were you in Scouting?

TJ: Oh, yes, yes. I was a Scout. We were a very active Scouting family. As a matter-of-fact, I think my father started Troop 71 in Plandome, and all my brothers were members and, as a matter-of-fact, my uncle, who had married ... my father's sister, became the Scoutmaster. Although he lived in Brooklyn, he used to come out every week, which was quite a thing, and I became quite active. ... Well, I don't think it makes any difference; I became a Life Scout. ... I used to wish I'd have become an Eagle, but I didn't pursue it, used to go to Boy Scout camp, the Nassau County camp in Wading River, Long Island, Camp Wauwepex.

GK: Did any of your brothers make it to Eagle Scout?

TJ: No, no. As a matter-of-fact, ... I think they were all First Class and that was it. They didn't pursue it to the degree I did. Well, okay, I should have been an Eagle. I think I had about, I don't know, something like fifteen merit badges.

SH: Were you involved in any church activities growing up?

TJ: Well, we went to church, ... the local Episcopal church, and I was amazed, of course, when I went back, many years later, in that the church that I remembered as a huge, imposing building suddenly became quite small. [laughter] ... It was a fairly wealthy church. There was a beautiful parish house, which was built during my tenure there, if that's the right phrase. Yes, I was an Episcopalian and a Sunday school goer, right up until the time, I guess, I went away to school. I became confirmed, taught Sunday school here, and gave my business to the local church, which is a United church, Congregational. Oh, I guess you want to know; how about personal stuff? Like, when I was at Rutgers, ... there was a wonderful set-up, as you people know, better than I do, although maybe you don't appreciate the fact that what was then known as New Jersey College for Women was a separate, completely separate, campus. There were no women at Rutgers. They were all, literally, a mile away. I don't quite understand the arrangement now. Apparently, there are two aspects of female education. You can either go to Rutgers and live on the campus or you can go to what is now called Douglass, but I think the other deal was just great, because, personally, the older I get, the more I believe in single-sex education. I think it makes an awful lot of sense at that age, and, anyway, it was wonderful. You could go over. If a girl was attractive, very pretty and nice, she could go out every night if she wanted, which, as a matter-of-fact, my wife ... practically did. ... She was very smart, I guess, because she used to play bridge all day and go out on dates all night and get pretty good marks, and I could vouch for the fact that she was quite smart, but, anyway, my last year, we

were in the same class. That is to say, we were both in the Class of '43. She and I became quite pally, and then; jeez, I haven't even gotten to the service, yet.

SH: That is okay. We are looking for stories.

TJ: ... I'll get to the service. As I think I told you, about in March, they called me up. I had had a lot of trouble. I tried to enlist. All my brothers had enlisted. I tried to, earlier, and I had a little trouble with my ear, because I used to swim a lot and I had some kind of an ear infection and that held me up, and so, I couldn't enlist until; I don't know. It's all rather vague, ... how it happened. ... I wanted to get in the service, not because I was a fantastically *gung ho*-type guy, but ... you more or less were obliged to. ... It was impossible not to want to enlist, practically. So, when I went down to Dix, I went through the basic training. How do you feel about spicy stuff? Not spicy, but ...

SH: We are here to hear the stories. [laughter]

TJ: Well, there was one thing that I still think of, and I've never had a chance to tell anybody. It struck me very funny. ... We all took our basic training. No, it wasn't our basic training, ... the period prior to basic training, when they were organizing you, and there were these old NCOs who were running the thing. ... Every morning, they would call you out and ... list the names of the guys ... who were supposed to convene somewhere, in the company street, who would be sent to this camp or that camp. ... I remember, ... there was a tough, old Army guy and, I remember, he was saying, "Listen to the paragraph." The paragraph told you which group you got into, which, in turn, determined where you were going to be sent, and there was a guy named "Katz." He would name everybody, saying, "Jones, Jackson, Katz," and, "K, as in kat shit," he said, which ... struck me very funny. [laughter] I don't know why. It's not that funny, but it struck me funny at the time. It still does. [laughter] Anyway, ... what you did at the early training deal was take a bunch of ... tests and they sent you to where, A, I guess they needed somebody, B, whether they thought you were equipped, mentally or whatever, to handle it, and I ended up in the Air Force, which was then, I believe, part of the Army. In the process of being separated, I went down to Atlantic City, where I stayed in the Shelburne Hotel. At that point, the Air Force had taken over practically the whole damn town, all the hotels, and it was quite a nice thing, except that, ... you know, there'd be about four guys in what used to be a room for one. We ate in the Hotel Dennis, which is across the street, stayed in the Shelburne. Many, many years later, my wife and I went down and stayed in the Shelburne. ... This was before gambling and the place was practically falling down. ... When you went to basic training, you took a lot of tests.

SH: Aptitude?

TJ: Aptitude. When you get old, ... words that you've used all your life suddenly become ... goners. Well, anyway, I took a lot of tests and, ... mechanically, I'm a complete boob. In fact, in a lot of respects I'm a complete boob, but, mechanically, ... if you're fairly good with your hands, *et cetera*, and could indicate that you were, you might be sent to a mechanics' school, or, if you ... understood electricity, *et cetera*, which I didn't, you'd be sent to, let's say, radio school. If you were just a guy who, maybe, could write or read, you would be sent to clerical school. So, I

spent my, whatever it was, about two months down there, at Atlantic City, and it was quite amazing, really, when I think about it, because they really do turn you into a worthwhile soldier, a guy who kind of knows what he's doing. You get in marvelous shape. We used to march all over the place and sing. It must have driven the people, the local people, crazy, because [General Henry H.] "Hap" Arnold had just become the head of the Air Force, which, as I say, had just officially separated from the Army, I think. [Editor's Note: The US Army Air Forces was established in July 1941. The US Air Force was established in September 1947.] ... He, apparently, was nuts about music, which delighted me, because I liked, as I still like, as this indicates, [Mr. Jackson points to thousands of jazz records on his shelves], jazz. ... He got a whole bunch of musicians, well, he got Glenn Miller to organize the musical part of the Air Force. I'm not telling this well, but Glenn Miller attracted a great many musicians, a lot of professional musicians. They had the greatest marching band I ever heard. There must have been about a hundred guys. They were all professional musicians, and I want to tell you, ... I went to one retreat down there and it was the damndest thing I ever heard. You never heard such a band. You know, there'd be, like, about five tubas. It must have been a hundred-piece band, all professionals. Boy, were they good. He also had lots of little jazz bands that would play at the mess things, and he had a whole lot of good musicians, and he had us all singing, all these songs, you know, *I've Got Sixpence*, and all that sort of crap. We'd march up and down and we did all the requisite basic training stuff, went to the firing range, marched, exercised, *et cetera*, until, finally, it came time to get sent somewhere, and I got sent to South Dakota, ... Brookings, South Dakota, which was a; secretarial isn't the right word. What would the word be? Well, anyway, it was ...

SH: Clerical?

TJ: Clerical. Well, you see, that's what I mean, I can't think of these words. So, ... a bunch of us went to South Dakota, which was kind of fun, on the train.

SH: Had you done any traveling before that, family vacations or anything of that sort?

TJ: Well, you know, nothing dramatic. I don't think I'd ever been West. I'd certainly never been as far west as South Dakota, which, to me, ... I mean, I didn't know anybody from there. Who knew anybody from South Dakota? not me. ... We went to ... South Dakota State, not the University of South Dakota, South Dakota State, which is in Brookings, and we took over the whole campus. There were a few girls there. I don't think there were any guys there and we stayed in dormitories and took all kinds of clerical stuff, and it wasn't bad. I was engaged at the time, I guess I should have said that, just before I went out to South Dakota. No, that's not right; I wasn't engaged. I was going steady; God, that's not a good phrase, but what else do you say? So, anyway, I went out to South Dakota and went through the whole damn thing, not too enthusiastic, because who wanted to be a company clerk? I sure didn't; completed that, got pretty good marks, which I should have, because I was a college graduate. Most of these guys weren't. Oh, I should point out that, when I was in Atlantic City, Rutgers, ... I had completed what amounted to a little more than three-quarters of my college career, by this point, and they very nicely said, "You don't have to come back for the last couple of months to get your degree. We'll give you your degree." So, when I was in Atlantic City, I said, "I want to get out. I want to go to my graduation," and they said, "Oh, you can't do it," and then, all of a sudden, word

came down, "Yes, if the guy's going to graduate, let him graduate." By this time, it was too late for me to get in the ceremony, which was all right with me, because who cared? So, I went down there and that was good fun. ... I got a weekend and saw my girl, and so forth, and where was I? I'm back in South Dakota, Brookings, South Dakota. ... This Brookings, South Dakota, was, I thought, a charming place.

SH: What time of the year was this?

TJ: This is in the summer, and it's quite hot there. It was in the spring, actually, but it was still pretty hot. ... It was a real, classic, American small town. There was a local band that played Sunday night, you know, ... and the townspeople would come out to the park. It was very nice. I enjoyed it and they were quite nice to us, and then, I was sent to what was known as a replacement depot, which we used to call a "repple-depple." That was the phrase. You've probably heard that before, [in] Salt Lake City. Why? I don't know, but Salt Lake City, and there you go ... to sit around until they assign you. If they needed a company clerk or if they were starting a new air force group, you would be sent there, and I was loitering around there, not doing much of anything and getting into Salt Lake City, which was pretty good fun, because Salt Lake City struck me as kind of an attractive place. I remember seeing that wonderful movie; Vincente Minnelli directed it. It had Buck and Bubbles, the best vaudeville act I ever saw, Duke Ellington, Lena Horne. It was a black movie. I can't think of the name of it, a black musical. Ethel Waters was in it. I saw that twice, probably the first movie I ever saw twice, which is neither here nor there. *Cabin in the Sky*, I think it was *Cabin in the Sky*. Yes, that's it, good movie. I'd like to see it again. Anyway, I was loitering around, waiting to be assigned as a clerk, not too happy about being a company clerk potential, when, all of a sudden, word came down. ... They went through my records, and they went through a number of our records, and they had us take tests and it turned out that I was equipped to be a cryptographer, a cryptographic technician, which probably sounds quite impressive to you people.

SH: It does sound impressive.

TJ: But, ... all you are is a clerk. I mean, ... when I tell people I was a cryptographer, I frequently don't explain, because it sounds pretty good. They're confusing cryptographers with crypto-analysts. The crypto-analyst is a really smart, frequently kind of a nutty guy, has to be terribly, terribly weird and smart, particularly good in mathematics, which I never was, because a crypto-analyst is the kind of guy that breaks down the codes. A cryptographer is just a clerk, who deals in codes, true, but that's fairly basic. Anyway, I went to cryptographic school there, which, as it happens, was ... also in Salt Lake City, at the Salt Lake City Fairgrounds, we were. ... That was a relatively quick and short, but quite intensive, course in how to become a cryptographer. The only real thing I can remember about that is the circus came to the area and I like circuses. I still do. In fact, I'm a member of the Circus Fans of America and the Circus Historical Society. That's red hot stuff for your tape. [laughter] So, I had a good time. I think Poodles Hanneford, [a clown and trick rider], a great act, was in that particular show. I think it was a Cole Brothers show. Anyway, I became a cryptographer, all of a sudden, which made me feel a little better, because I was, as I hope lots of other people were, impressed by ... calling myself a cryptographer, and then, I was assigned to a bomb group in Wendover Field, Utah, which is not a tremendous distance from Salt Lake City, obviously. Wendover is way out in the

salt flats, as I believe they're called, sort of a godforsaken area, and it was used for heavy bomb groups, because the heavy bomb groups could go out and drop bombs, and so forth. ... In those days, ... there were three stages for bomb groups. ... This is true of heavy bomb groups, I think it probably was true of medium bomb groups, and maybe fighter groups, I don't know. They had three phases of training. First phase was when they were organizing. Second phase was when ... it was a little more advanced and, of course, the third phase was the final, when the group was really being readied to go overseas, and I joined, in Wendover Field, the 451st Bomb Group, 726th Squadron (Heavy), B-24s, in the second phase, and there was no cryptographic work to be done at that stage. The cryptographers in the squadron were attached to the communications section. There was armament, communications, ... all kinds of different divisions within the ground crew, which, of course, is what I was in. Then, we moved to the third phase, which was Fairmont, Nebraska, and, by the time the third phase came about, we were pretty much an integrated unit. Everybody, more or less, knew what they were supposed to be doing, and we completed the third phase. ... Oh, did I say, at one point, I came home and I got engaged? ... I always regretted that, I should have gotten married, but who knew? You know, you didn't know what was going to happen and, if you were a young guy, with a dramatic turn of mind, you pictured yourself fighting hand-to-hand with a bunch of Germans or Japs or some damned thing. ... The idea was that you didn't want to get married, because who knew? You might get killed; it wouldn't be fair. "We'll get married later." So, we got engaged. I always regretted that, because, when you got married, in the service, you got a little extra money, which went to your wife. ... Since I spent about two years overseas, I blew a lot of money. I might as well have been married. I was engaged; what the hell? I've always regretted losing that money. [laughter] Okay, where was I now? ... Oh, yes, complete the third phase; ... the whole ground crew, the whole group, except for the flying personnel, and, as you probably know, a heavy bomber, a B-24, had a pilot, a co-pilot, a navigator, a bombardier and, I don't know, something like, I think, six gunners, and these guys then separated from us and, eventually, flew to South America and across to Africa. ... We, the ground crew, ... the rest of this group, went to, I think it was called either Fort or Camp Patrick Henry [Camp Patrick Henry] in Virginia. ... Oh, we did that on a train. Trains were all over the place, which leads me to believe, if we're ever in a war again, I don't know what we're going to do, because you had to have trains to maneuver people around and, now, ... why the hell they've gotten rid of the trains and we've got these damned trucks; well, I know why. It's because the damn General Motors, *et cetera, et cetera*, have loused this up. Well, anyway, trains were wonderful things and we were traveling. One wonderful thing, now, you've probably run across this before, there was a town called North Platte, Nebraska. You probably know what I'm going to say; the people in North Platte were extremely nice. ... I've met maybe two or three guys in my life, since the war, who recall North Platte, because the train, ... all the troop trains were all crisscrossing across the country, would stop in North Platte and the people ... would all turn out. They had cakes, ... birthday cakes, because ... it was hundreds of soldiers, somebody was always having a birthday, and the people were terribly nice, everybody remembers, I think. Anybody that ever went through can remember what a wonderful welcome it was in North Platte. I've always remembered that. We stayed there for about an hour and they gave us stuff to eat and made a big fuss over us. Anyway, we went down to Camp Patrick Henry. There were a bunch of Italian prisoners when we were stationed, very temporarily, there. On the other side of the fence were a bunch of Italian prisoners, very congenial fellows, as most Italians are, and I remember, they were telling us, "Oh, boy, you guys are going to get in trouble. You ought to see those bombs," you know, this, of course, from my

friends who spoke Italian. So, anyway, ... that was kind of fun. That was my first brush with international warfare. [laughter] So, then, we went ... out to a boat; you don't call it a boat, you call it a ship, a Liberty ship. The *John S. Pillsbury* was the name of it. ... Liberty ships were comparatively small. Henry Kaiser, who was kind of a revered name in those days, a real captain of industry, ... got busy and saw to it that Liberty ships were built like mad, because they needed plenty of ships to get people across. You didn't fly across, as a rule, then. I mean, air travel was quite restricted. Anyway, ... by this time, ... I probably was a corporal; maybe I was a sergeant, I don't know, obviously, I was an enlisted man. ... In the Liberty ships, we were way down in the bowels of the ship, in a, I don't know what you call it, a hatch or something, and the bunks were ... racked five high, with about this much room between you and the guy above you.

SH: That is not even two feet.

TJ: No, and on your bunk, which, of course, was a little canvas thing, you had to put your gas mask. They gave us gas masks. You had to have a gas mask. Your rifle; I had a carbine, which I never shot in anger, and all your equipment, in a duffle bag, and then, you had to somehow sleep on there, with a guy's rear-end practically hanging in your face, and that was bad enough, but, in the center, these were all around the side of the, I guess you'd call it a hatch, and in the center was a big open area. ... There were card games going on all day and, unfortunately, all night, too, although there weren't as many at night, but the guys would be yelling, you know, and there'd be fights and you'd be trying to sleep in this ridiculous thing, plus, the fact that we were down pretty far and there were two thin stairs, about that wide, on each side of the hatch to get up. Now, God help us, if a submarine had hit our ship, everybody would have fought to get up and it would have been murder. I don't know what we did about that, plus, the fact we got served down there. We ate down there and our cooks had just become introduced to all these eggs and stuff, powdered eggs and that sort of stuff, and they really hadn't mastered it. There's a trick to cooking some of that stuff and this tasted awful. These guys, eventually, got to figure out you added this or you added that and made it palatable, but we had to eat all this awful, awful crap. Now, there was one good thing. Mostly, you would get fed and you would go up the narrow ladder and sit outside; we're in a gigantic convoy, with destroyers dashing around. There must have been, I don't know, forty ships or something like that, at least. It was a huge convoy. Fortunately, for me, ... all these Liberty ships had a gun crew, a Navy gun crew. They had Merchant Marine sailors, a captain, but they had one ensign and a couple of sailors who maintained the guns. They all had lousy, little guns, which I'm sure wouldn't have done any good at all.

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

TJ: I was saying, oh, fortunately, this guy, whose brother, I think, I knew, I think his name was Paul, was some kind of a gun functionary in the Navy, and, of course, because ... this was their life, they travel back and forth in these convoys, he had a fairly nice bunk. ... When he discovered that I was from Plandome and he was from Port Washington and we had some mutual acquaintances, and so forth, I was set. I could sneak into his place and sleep and that was nice. ... I remember, of course, going through the Straits of Gibraltar. Somebody woke me up, said, "Hey, we're going through the Straits of Gibraltar." So, I thought, "Oh, boy," you know, I pictured the big rock and thought it would be fantastic. Well, it was at night; I couldn't see a

damned thing, but I peeked around anyway. ... Finally, we landed in a place called Mers-El-Kebir, ... which was off Oran, Algeria. Oran was the big town, big city. I believe Oran is the place ... where Albert Camus wrote *The Plague*, right? Oran, but I didn't know about that, thank God. I didn't know anything about any plague. When was *The Plague* written? I never read that book, but was *The Plague* before the war? I guess it was after. Was it before the war or after the war?

SH: I think it was after. [Editor's Note: *The Plague* was published in 1947.]

TJ: Well, in any case, ... oh, there was one awful thing. ... We were all on the ship and the ship, our little Liberty ship, went up against the dock and there were a bunch of wily Moroccans, or whatever the hell they were, Oranians, and I think, I don't remember if I actually saw this, although, if I saw it, I don't know how I could not be sure I saw it, or if somebody told me, but there was one of the natives who was sleeping on the dock. You know, there were tracks, railroad tracks, and things, to take the supplies off, and the train went over the guy's leg, ... which, of course, didn't help the guy at all, and the guy jumped up and started hopping around and screaming, which you would expect him to do, and his colleagues, the other natives, all laughed like mad. They thought that was the funniest thing they ever saw. As I say, incredibly enough, I can't remember if I saw this or if somebody told me. That's strange. ... I guess I must have been told, because I probably couldn't have forgotten having seen that. Well, anyway, we were eventually sent to a staging area outside of Oran, and it was a little bit scary, because here we were, in North Africa, and there are all these sinister-looking natives milling around, outside the camp, and we had to post guards there, and that was kind of fun. ... We were at this staging area for about a week, maybe two weeks, including Christmas Eve, and I do remember there was another outfit there. Meanwhile, our flying guys were flying over and, I remember, ... the other outfit had been there longer than us, so, they were pretty acclimated and they had a hell of a lot of native wine, and they had two big; I remember this. I think we did the same thing later. They had two big ash cans filled with crummy native wine at the chow line. So, as you're waiting at the chow line, you'd put your little dipper in the wine and drank your wine as you went up. ... I don't know if we did that for Christmas or not, or whether they gave us one of their wine things or not, but I vaguely remember the wine, which was pretty awful, as you might expect, and I think there was a certain amount of diarrhea that resulted from this.

SH: What instructions or warnings were you given before you landed?

TJ: Oh, "Stay away from the natives," and you heard horror stories about how guys on guard duty were found with their throat cut, and so forth, but I think that was all phony. I do remember, I was delighted, because, despite my wretched French, ... of course, they all spoke French, the natives did, ... I was able to buy some blood oranges. ... I don't believe I'd ever had red oranges at the time, and so, I was a hero to my little group, because I was able to buy the oranges. [laughter] It was a simple life. Well, anyway, then, we got on a boat called the *Johan de Witt*, a great big, fat, ugly, nasty cruise ship, I guess it had been, which was run by the British Army, an important point, because ... I've always been told, and I've never quite understood this, but, apparently, it's true, that the British Navy is a very dirty outfit. ... This boat certainly was filthy, although the guys that ran it were Army guys. There were a bunch of natives, of some sort, Lascars or something, that were running this. This was to take us across the Mediterranean,

to Italy, eventually, and the British Army fed us on the boat. ... The trip was maybe two days, but it was very noteworthy, because, shortly after one of our first meals, everybody got diarrhea, just about everybody, all of us. ... As you might guess, the facilities were quite limited, for so many guys, because we're packed all over the place. Fortunately for me, I was pretty lucky on several counts. I suffered before most guys, so, I didn't have to wait, the way so many guys did, but it was pretty miserable, I can tell you, and everybody was very unhappy. I think, going over to Italy, I think I saw a body floating, which was probably the first dead person I'd ever seen, and that was a little sobering. ... Then, I remember, we went past the Isle of Capri and there was a very charming guy, who must have been a musical performer or something, who was sort of our tour guide and was designed, I guess, to keep us cheerful, an English fellow. ... "There's the Isle of Capri. There's Gracie Fields' house," he said. Gracie Fields, which you guys don't know, because you're all too young, was a very big name in England at that time, a great performer. Oh, you did know that.

SI: I have heard the name.

TJ: Atta boy. Okay, then, we ... went into Naples Harbor and we stayed on the boat. As luck would have it, we landed on New Year's Eve Day.

SH: This would be 1944.

TJ: ... Yes, I guess it was. It was the end of '43, going into '44, and that's kind of interesting, because ... we had a convoy going across, I mean, again, our tub and a number of other boats, so, there was a whole lot of ships anchored, most of which were American. ... Of course, on New Year's Eve, nothing would do but everybody had to shoot their guns, their cannons and their guns, off, which was kind of poor form, because the Naples people had only recently been freed from German hegemony. I've never used that word before, "German hegemony." [laughter] I may use it again. Anyway, so, this was a dirty trick. The poor people, the poor Italians, thought, "Oh, my God, another air raid," I'm sure, but all we were doing, all the Navy guys were doing, was having fun, celebrating New Year's Eve. Well, then, we landed, the next day, I guess. They took us off and they took us out to some, I guess it had been an orphanage or a school or something, and we all stayed there. It was terribly, terribly cold and I think I had one or two blankets. We all had one or two blankets, and it was probably as miserable a night as I can remember spending, because I froze. They hadn't really equipped us very well. We stayed there for a few days, and then, they moved the whole bunch, ... in trucks, you know, those great, big trucks, to Gioia del Colle, which was on the west coast, below Bari, if that means anything to you. This ... had been an Italian Air Force base. I think it was a fighter base, but, as it happens, our truck, the truck that my particular group was going to travel in, broke down. ... The rest of them went and about four of us, five of us, had to stay in this, whatever the hell it was, orphanage or whatever it was, for a couple of days, which turned out to be great fun, because I think we had one officer, who paid no attention to us, which, of course, we were grateful for, and there were about four or five of us and we had no duties, no nothing. I remember, there was a USO [United Service Organizations] show. Ella Logan, always a great favorite of mine, was in the show and I remember going to see that and I also remember buying some, to my amazement, asti spumante, which is, as you know, kind of a sort of champagne, a bubbly drink, and there was a kid named Fitzgerald, who had never had champagne. So, I said, "You're going to love this," and he did.

He thought it was the greatest thing in the world. ... To this day, I'm sure he's drinking champagne like mad. Well, anyway, we spent a couple of days wandering around, and then, they finally came and picked us up and took us to Gioia del Colle. By that time, all the hard work had been done. The tents had been put up and we didn't have to do a thing, and I moved in the tent with my guys from the communications section and life went on, but ... I still wasn't doing any cryptography work. For some reason, I don't know why, there was no cryptography work to be done. So, I was sort of functioning as a kind of quasi-communications clerk, I guess, and I was doing odds and ends. ... I'll tell you, ... one of the worst days, ... somehow, I got dragooned into waiting on the officers' mess, as a waiter, I guess. I don't know why, and my officer, a nice, young guy, named Dunstan, from Newport, Rhode Island, saw me there, because he was obviously an officer, said, "What the hell are you doing here? You shouldn't be doing this." So, he said, "I'll tell you what. I'll make it up to you. Tomorrow, there's an assignment going up somewhere and it'll be a pleasant outing for you." So, I said, "Great," and, somehow, I got screwed up and I didn't make the pleasant trip, somehow, but I got assigned to a group that literally cracked rocks, you know, ... the way the prisoners do in the funny papers, with the sledgehammers, ... to go into a machine that took the smaller rocks that had been cracked and made gravel out of them. ... I spent the day cracking rocks, when I should have been taking it easy, after being a damned waiter in the officers' mess, but I survived that. [laughter]

SH: Did you ever get the pleasant trip?

TJ: Well, ... I suppose I can't complain, because I had had four days on my own ... when the truck broke down. Well, anyway, life went on there and, pretty soon, they figured out that ... the heavy bombers, the B-24s, it got kind of muddy there, the field wasn't really equipped to handle heavy bombers, to the degree that it had to be, so, they split the group up into two squadrons here and two squadrons there. ... I don't know where the other guys went, but our two, the 726th and 727th, went down to a place called San Pancrazio, which was down on "the Heel," [the Puglia region of Southern Italy], while the engineers, ... the regular Air Force engineers, not our group, the guys ... were building a field for us, for the whole group, further north. ... That was my first actual [assignment]. ... I did work as a cryptographer in San Pancrazio and we spent a couple of, ... I don't remember, a month to two months [there]. This is quite awhile ago. Then, finally, we all moved up to this splendid, new field, which was on a great, big, I guess what had used to be a farm, in-between Cerignola and Foggia. ... The group headquarters, I don't know why I wasn't one of them, but they had a small cryptographic group and each squadron had about three or four cryptographers. So, there were cryptographers coming out of their eyeballs. They had about sixteen cryptographers. They only needed, probably, about eight. So, once again, I wasn't a cryptographer, I was a communications clerk and man-of-all-work, and that was kind of dramatic. Oh, I should tell you, you wouldn't think there was a war going on, the way I'm talking, but, meanwhile, ... occasionally, some of these ships would come back in bad shape. ... The ships would explode, awful things happened, but you'd do better getting that firsthand, from a guy that ... was in the flying thing. I had a fairly easy time of it. ...

SH: Where were they flying to? What were their missions?

TJ: Oh, they were going to Ploesti and Regensburg. ... In fact, my group ... got something like eight Battle Stars. The Battle Stars, they did give out Battle Stars kind of, flippantly is almost

the word I'm looking for, but that, later, was very important to me, as I'll tell you. ... You got a Battle Star if your group had taken part in action of a fairly important raid. I mean, even guys on the ground crew got a Battle Star, because the guys that flew the missions, I think it was ... twenty-five missions, and then, you left, if you made twenty-five. ... After the missions, they would have a briefing in the tent, the operations and the intelligence people, and ... they would give the guys a shot of whiskey, as I remember. ... A few guys would turn their shot down and ... would get a bottle on their last mission, if you see what I'm trying to say. ... Then, they would drink their whole damn thing at once, coming back from the last mission, and, of course, there was always lots of jollity about the guys. You know, they wore flak jackets, which was sort of armor things, and, frequently, ... when they were going over the target, they would take their flak jackets off and put it over their bottle, anyway, and then, come home loaded, you know, which nobody begrudged them, because it was a pretty miserable experience.

SH: Did you ever fly?

TJ: No. Well, you know, I went up in airplanes, but ... I never made a mission. After awhile, ... obviously, I was excess baggage, as a non-working cryptographer. ... By this point, I was a buck sergeant. They sent me to the wing headquarters. Now, you probably know this, but there's a wing, and then, underneath the wing, there are about four or five groups, and then, in each group, there are ... four squadrons, who are actually the guys that do the fighting. The wing, obviously, is a headquarters. So, I was sent to the wing. Now, the wing is a big deal ... for cryptographers, because the air force, which was the 15th Air Force, which was in Bari, for every mission, the air force would rough out a mission, I guess, and send [it], in code, to the wing headquarters. Guys like me, a cryptographer, would get the coded message. I would decode it. I, meaning all of us, we, would decode it. Then, we would take it in to the operations and intelligence people at the wing headquarters. The wing guys would then break it down for the groups and give it back to us, and then, we would encode it to the groups, who, in turn, would work it out with their particular squadrons. This was kind of scary, in a way, because, when you encoded and decoded, you had to identify yourself. You had to put your initials on there, ... and these instructions were fairly complicated. They were longitude and latitude and, you know, if you put a two down instead of a three, who the hell knows? You could bomb your own troops or yourself, ... and they had you dead to rights, because you had to initial it. So, if there was a mistake, encoding and decoding, and there was a certain amount of error, there were a lot of numbers, because every flight plan had a couple of alternative areas. So, that was mildly stressful. Also, we worked around the clock. We worked eight-hour shifts in the code room, you know, eight hours on, and then, you had a lot of time off, ... and that was pretty good. Another good thing is, the code room was off limits to everybody except the General, the commanding general, and so, if, for example, the First Sergeant was after you, you could run in the code room. ... We had a little Judas window, [a one-way mirror], ... and he couldn't come in, but, of course, ... you had to go out, eventually. [laughter] The funny thing about this was, our general was something of a sport, a lush and a fellow that liked ladies, I think, and he was forever sending his officers out to stop USO troupes and WACs and whatever, to come in and have a big party. ... When that happened, he would frequently, if the ladies were attractive enough; ... being the commanding general, he could do anything he wanted. A commanding general, I want to tell you, overseas, a commanding general is absolute czar. He would show the ladies around the area and he would come to the code room. He would knock on the door and

we would open up our door, "Oh, how do you do, General?" we would say and we would open the door, because ... who the hell was going to keep the General out? Well, what the General would invariably do, he would bring in a bunch of women. "This is my code room. This is secret," he'd say, and he'd wink at us, and nobody ever had the guts, I certainly didn't, to say, "You can come in, General, but those ladies," who may well be spies, "can't," ... and they would be looking around. ... They probably were spies; who the hell knows? [laughter] Well, anyway, ... I thought that was kind of interesting. The General was a jolly fellow, but, as I say, quite a sport. Incidentally, ... I think, as a first lieutenant, he was the head of the air force ... in Manila when both Eisenhower and MacArthur were there. I think Eisenhower was an aide to MacArthur, before the war, in Manila, and this guy, as a first lieutenant, was the head of the air force there, which was probably about three planes. So, I guess ... he was a fairly important guy and I guess ... he knew what the hell he was doing.

SI: Were there any other security precautions, concerning the cryptography?

TJ: Well, ... everything was in code, obviously. We had these machines called scramblers, which were, in effect, typewriters, you typed on, but, you know, if you typed a "J," it might come out a "U" or something. ... You had; I forget what we called them. It's amazing, some things you can remember and some things you can't, but there was a kind of lead-in you had. I forget what we called them. ... You indicated to the recipient what your key was, or something, I don't remember, but it's probably just as well, because I shouldn't tell people, that this is still secret, for all I know. Anyway, I had a good time at the wing. It was pretty pleasant. Obviously, there was no fighting going on. I mean, nobody was in danger. We had one big plane. I'll tell you; well, you're interested in provocative, improper things that happened. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

TJ: Oh, yes. The General, who, as I've already indicated, like all generals, was a complete emperor of all he surveyed, ... was entitled, as, I guess, wing commanders were, to a plane. He had his own B-17, which was quite fashionably laid out. I think he had, you know, like a couch, and so forth, and it was pretty good, ... and he also had a guy who was an interpreter. He spoke Italian. ... I think he might have been a Yugoslav; I don't know why. He probably came from Trieste or someplace right on the border. He was sort of a hanger-on, but he was very handy, because, every once in awhile, when the General wanted to have a real big, swinging party, he would send the interpreter, with a couple of flying guys, up to Rome to pick up some sporty ladies, and they would go up, [flying]. ... You know, every time you warm one of those planes, just warm it up, never mind flying, it costs a lot of money, ... I mean, a lot of gas involved. A B-17 is a big, four-motor plane. So, anyway, every once in awhile, they would go up and come back with a lot of women, and then, that's frequently when he would show up in our code room. ... Every once in awhile, a couple of officers, junior officers, would come to let the troops have a look at these women, you know. These guys were all partying like mad with all these women, all these officers, young guys, and here we were, sitting in the enlisted men's club and, every once in awhile, they would just give us a look. They would bring in the women, "Here, this is our enlisted men's club. These are our enlisted men," I mean, you know, here we were, poor, pathetic underlings. Okay, that's enough; I've gotten back at the officers.

SH: What was the General's name? Do you mind putting it on tape?

TJ: Oh, no, it was Lee. His name was Lee, I think it was William Lee, but he was called Jerry; I don't know why. Nice man, he was a very nice man, kind of a tough-looking guy. ... I think he had gone to Texas A&M. He was a lifer, sort of, an officer. ... The air force general was General Twining. ... I think his executive officer was a guy named (Bourne?), who I had vaguely remembered as a football player from West Point. Well, anyway, that was good sport and I was working and I had a lot of time on my hands. ... There were a lot of terrific guys at the wing, because the wing, being a headquarters, ultimately attracted some fairly interesting guys. I mean, ... this may sound ... more snobbish than I would like to sound, but the fact is, there were guys that were interesting. I remember, there was one guy that was an antique appraiser, who was certainly no dope, and there were a lot of fairly interesting guys, and so, it was good fun, for me, and they also had a very good baseball team. I liked baseball. As I've already told you, I was never any good, but there were a lot of guys that had been minor leaguers, and so forth, and they had a lot of pretty good games. That was kind of fun, because the enlisted men and the officers would be on one team and all bets were off. I mean, if the officer made a goof, the enlisted men, on the ball field, at least, could bawl him out.

SH: How strictly divided were the enlisted men and the officers?

TJ: Well, an officer was an officer. I mean, you saluted him. Well, you didn't really around the place too much, but you were supposed to, and, you know, you were supposed to call him, "Sir."
...

SH: How relaxed was it?

TJ: Well, certainly, the flying personnel were much more relaxed, particularly in so far as the ground crew was concerned, that is to say, the guys who, in effect, their life depended on. I mean, you're not going to get snotty with a guy who fixes your machine gun or ... the motor on your machine, and, also, ... they were flyers. They didn't really consider themselves; well, I don't know how they considered themselves, but we didn't consider them as, in effect, "regular" officers. They were, more or less, guys, and we all felt kindly toward them, because they were putting it on the line every couple of days. How could you be nasty to a guy who is liable to get shot that next day or something? but the ... ground crew officers were more formal. You know, they were in charge of us, so-to-speak.

SH: Did you have any interaction with the native Italians or spend any time off the base?

TJ: Yes, quite a bit. There was a big YMCA arrangement, ... I guess it was called a USO thing, which we used to go to a lot, but there were always some guys who spoke Italian, Italian-American soldiers, and, generally, would strike up a conversation. I'll tell you something that you'd be interested in; I thought this was interesting. ... In North Africa, ... of course, GIs would sell cigarettes like mad, for a lot of money, and some guys would do amazing things. ... They would open a carton, maybe with a sharp knife or something, and take out the cigarettes, fill the cigarettes with, begging your pardon, horseshit or camel shit or something, seal them up again, put them back in the cartons and sell them to the natives, for, I don't know, twenty bucks

or something, and then, laugh like mad. There were even worse things. ... In the wing headquarters, I remember some guys ... went to the mess sergeant, who they knew, and said, "Let me have a big sack of sugar. I'll bring it back to you tomorrow." Of course, the Italian people were kind of flat on their backs and there were a lot of larcenous people in Italy, just as there are everywhere, and these guys would go out ... with this one sack of sugar. They would go maybe where they had made a connection with a larcenous Italian and say to the guy, "Here, I'll sell you this sack of sugar," which is big dough. The guy would maybe give him, I don't know, two hundred bucks, I don't know, something ridiculous, and then, these guys would leave, but they would have some friends who would strap on MP [military police] things and pistols. They would come in and say, "MPs, MPs; hear you've got some stolen sugar there," and the poor Italians would whine and say, "Oh, we'll give you money." They would then bribe the MPs. The MPs, who weren't really MPs, would take the sack of sugar, and then, they would all take it back to the mess sergeant and they would have made, you know, hundreds of dollars. This happened; I don't know how often it happened, but I heard of it, and I was always kind of bemused by that, because I thought it took a certain amount of criminal ingenuity, good American know-how. [laughter]

SH: Did you ever have to eat K rations or C rations?

TJ: Oh, sure, oh, yes. Oh, you used that a lot if you're traveling from here to there. You used a certain amount of them. ... Frequently, if you got a hold of it, you would take the chocolate out of it or something, ... or you could sell it to the people, because guys sold all sorts of things. ... There were frequent visits to families. ... As I started to say, there were a lot of guys who spoke pretty good Italian and the people were very nice. You know, Italians, even in Italy, which was in dreadful straits, as you might imagine, even in Italy, they were very easygoing and cheerful and pleasant.

SH: Did you run into any Rutgers men while you were in Italy?

TJ: Let me think; jeez, I don't think I did. I can't think of any. I might have, but I can't think of any. I was in touch with them. I did a terrible thing. ... Just before the invasion, you know, everybody knew the invasion was coming one of these days, and I had a couple of friends, fraternity brothers, one guy was a classmate, both good friends, and they were lieutenants, had been in the ROTC, in the infantry.

SH: Do you remember their names?

TJ: Yes, John Huntley and [Edgar Clifford] Cliff Pangburn, two nice guys. Cliff was a particular good friend of mine, and I sent them V-mail letters, saying something to the effect of, "Oh, boy, I hope you're still alive. That invasion's going to go." Well, of course, both the letters came back, marked, "Deceased," which didn't make me feel too good. It was kind of a dumb thing to do. ...

SH: Were you in trouble for what you put in the V-mail about the invasion?

TJ: Oh, no, who knew? I mean, it was imminent. We all knew it. There had been talk about it. There was a guy, now that you mentioned it, ... Milton Marmor, had gone to Rutgers. Now, Milton Marmor was a very interesting guy. He was at the wing. He was an old newspaperman and he knew everybody. ... I think he was, maybe, like, the head of the Jersey AP [Associated Press] Division. Why Milton Marmor, why they didn't make ... better use of him, because he was quite a remarkable guy, I thought. I believe he went to Rutgers, and he was a nice guy and he and I got along very well, because he was quite amusing and we were pretty good friends. He was older than I was. I mean, he wasn't in my immediate college era, but he was ... some sort of a PR-type guy of the wing. He wasn't very important, as he should have been, because he was a very intelligent, capable guy, and I did see him a few times after the war.

SH: What was the mail service like? Was the service consistent?

TJ: Yes, yes. You did two things. ... You could send a regular letter, which took a long while, or a V-mail, ... which was, you know, a complicated, folded thing, which would restrict; is that the right word? That isn't the right word, and it would come on a little, tiny [card]. I used to have some upstairs; I don't think I do now. No, the mail came regularly.

SH: What did you hear about the rest of the war?

TJ: ... *Time* and *Newsweek*, and so forth, had special, little editions. ... Anyway, no, the mail was pretty good. Of course, they used to censor everything, which was kind of casual, but they did, because, I remember, I was in Naples one time and I bumped into some guys that were infantrymen, who had been in infantry action, and fiddled around, fooled around with them for a couple of days. ... For some reason, one of the guys insisted we get our picture taken and he insisted I wear, you know that, the infantryman rifle? ...

SH: The Combat Infantryman's Badge.

TJ: If you're in that, if you're a combat veteran, and I said, you know, "I don't want to do that." ... He insisted on it, so, I did it. I had my picture taken, and then, I sent my picture home to my wife, not my wife, my girl, but I wrote in the letter, ... "You may notice that I have a Combat Infantryman's Badge, which the guy insisted I wear and I'm not entitled to it." I did cover myself, but somebody did see it ... and he told Lieutenant Dunstan, my officer. Lieutenant Dunstan said to me, "What the hell are you doing with it?" So, I said, "Well, tell Lieutenant Esicoff," I think his name was, "to read the letter and he'll see." So, that was all I heard about that. I was just about to think of something. Oh, yes, I was going to tell you, I almost got the Silver Star. Now, I can see you're impressed, as well you should be, because the Silver Star is a very serious medal. I think, don't hold me to this, but I'm pretty sure you can only get it either in combat or when you're in direct aid to combat.

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

SI: Please, continue.

TJ: Okay. ... Medals are kind of important to the people back home, I guess, with good reason, and the air force used to send down to the wing X number of medals. Then, the wing would distribute them to the groups, who would finally distribute them to the squadrons, where the guys were actually doing the fighting. ... As you might expect, I'm not reflecting much credit on the US Armed Services, as you might expect, a great many guys would somehow manage to get medals in the headquarters areas, I mean, guys who'd never, like me, heard a shot fired in anger, and, by the time the twenty medals for the month got down to the poor guys in the squadron, there'd be about seven of them left. ... So, we noticed that in the wing, and guys were picking up Silver Stars, a marvelous medal to have, who really had no right to have it, simply because they were able to shortstop the medal on the way down to where it belonged. So, somebody said to our officer, Lieutenant Dunstan, "Jesus, Lieutenant, all these guys in the wing are getting all these damned Silver Stars. Why the hell don't we get any?" and he said, "You're right," and he said, "Jackson," ... at this point, I was the head of the code room, the enlisted men, the enlisted head, and I was, maybe, one of the better typists there, said, "Jackson, ... type up," I can't remember what the word is. It's not request, "Type us up a something."

GK: Citation?

TJ: Yes, I guess that's right, "A citation, for you and for me, for a Silver Star." [laughter] So, I sat down and this took a certain amount of doing, because you had to put it all in all this phony military language, you know, "Sergeant Jackson did, in direct aid of his fellow soldiers," and so forth, and so on. I did it for the Lieutenant and I did it for me, and I wrote up a couple of dandies, and the only trouble was, it had to be typed perfectly and I didn't have much time and, to make a long story short, I couldn't type it impeccably enough for the Lieutenant. So, I said, "I can't get it right." We're in a terrible hurry, he said, "I'll tell you what you do. Get Sergeant Eickoff," Sergeant Eickoff was the head clerk, hell of a typist, ... "write one up for Sergeant Eickoff [laughter] and we'll get him to type it." By this time, he and I were anxious for our Silver Stars. ... I wrote one up for Sergeant Eickoff. Sergeant Eickoff, of course, that was hard as hell, because how am I going to justify a company clerk, a wing clerk; but, anyway, I did, but, by that time, you'll be happy to know, it was too late and we didn't get it. Now, that would have been a wonderful thing, because, to get home, they had a system of points, you've probably heard about the point system, which was based on, ... you got X points for how long you were overseas, how many Battle Stars you had, how many medals you had, and so forth, and I think a Silver Star was probably about six points or something. My God, if I'd have had a Silver Star, I'd have gotten home in no time. ... I was on detached service for about a year. ... I should have been a master sergeant, or at least a tech sergeant, but there's a table of, TO, table of order or something like that.

SI: Organization.

TJ: Yes, where ... a unit is only entitled to X number of master sergeants. By the time I got there, they had their full complement, so, I got screwed. ... When I was on detached service, they made me give back four of my Battle Stars. I only have four Battle Stars now, me, a guy who never heard a rifle, was frightened at the firing range. ...

SH: Did you move at all from headquarters?

TJ: No. I stayed at the wing until the war was over, and then, eventually, they broke the whole outfit down and I was sent to a repple-depple outside of Caserta, where I stayed for months. That was waiting for the ship to go home. The war was well over. ...

SH: Was the war in the Pacific over yet?

TJ: No. The Pacific wasn't, and that's important, or it was important to me at the time. ... There was a great deal of talk about their forming cadres for B-29 groups to fight in Japan and there was a lot of agitation about, "You'd better watch out. They're liable to take you in that cadre and send you over to the Pacific. Maybe they need cryptographers or something," and then, I think, the bomb was dropped, so, all bets were off. ... The timing is a little fuzzy in my mind. But, I know, ... when I was at Caserta, it was great, because you're just sitting around. The war was over. All you were doing was waiting for a ship, and I happened to be in Naples and I ran into a guy named Tommy O'Connell, who was from my hometown, who was an officer, and I guess I said, ... "Hi, Tommy," I guess I said, which I suppose I should have said, "Hello, Lieutenant O'Connell." Anyway, Tommy said, "What are you doing?" ... I said, "I'm waiting for a ship." "I may be able to help you," he said, "I'm involved in getting people on ships." So, he did. He got me on a little earlier than I was entitled to and I came home on the *Sea Scamp*, I think, which was a big ship, and not terribly comfortable, but who cared, at this point? There was no convoy, no nothing, and you were on your way home. ... I got home, I guess it was '45, went to Monmouth, spent a couple of days, only, getting separated and I think I was officially separated on Thanksgiving Day and went to my grandmother's house in Brooklyn, where we always used to go for Thanksgiving, and there was my family and, I guess, my wife, who I would marry shortly, and that was it. ...

SH: Did you ever use the GI Bill for school?

TJ: No, I was through. I had my degree. Well, I mean, I was getting married. I wasn't going to go back to school. I had to make a living. ... We got married in January. As a matter-of-fact, we got married at Woodlawn.

SH: Where was your wife from?

TJ: Oh, she was from Haddonfield, New Jersey. ... As I told you, she went to what was then called NJC and we were married, and then, my aunt, who lived down the street in Brooklyn, with my grandmother, noticed that a bunch of buildings were going up, ... not far from there, and she stood in line and got an apartment. They were making these available for veterans and we stayed there for about four years, then, came out here.

SH: To back up, where did you get the nickname "Bear" Jackson?

TJ: Where did you hear that?

SH: The *Rutgers Alumni Magazine*.

TJ: "Jack the Bear." ... I wrote a sort of, I don't know, humor column, I guess, for the *Targum*, and I don't think I used my own name. I think I used the name "Jack the Bear." Jack the Bear was an old piano player, around the turn of the century, jazz piano player, and, in fact, you may or may not know, Duke Ellington ... made a marvelous record called *Jack the Bear*, which features the nonpareil bass player Jimmy Blanton, and I just thought it had a nice sound to it. ... There was a movie a couple of years ago, which was a lousy movie, I'm told; what's the name of that little guy?

SI: Danny DeVito.

TJ: Yes, Danny DeVito was in it. I heard it was a lousy film, and it was called *Jack the Bear* and it had to do, somehow, there was some kind of a connection, not with the original Jack the Bear, the old piano player, who I don't think Ellington had ever heard [of], but with the record that Ellington made. You know, just for the hell of it, since I'm as egotistical as the next fellow, I ... not only wrote this column under the name of Jack the Bear, for sort of reverse snobbish reasons--I guess, you know, I hoped people [would ask], "Who is Jack the Bear?" "Oh, that's Tom Jackson"--I eventually had a jazz show in town here, for which I used the name Jack the Bear.

SH: You had a show here.

TJ: It was a little radio show.

SH: Did you want to be involved with radio in college?

TJ: No, I only did this. It is a small local station, ... which, incidentally, has since folded. I'd like to get back, because the truth is that, ... you know, Armstrong, Ellington, Bessie Smith, [Joe "King"] Oliver, there's an entire generation, you guys are probably examples, maybe you're not, I hope you're not, ... who never heard this kind of stuff. They're amazed. I was astounded. When I put this stuff on the radio, people would call in; they'd never heard of it. You know, ridiculous; it's going right down the tubes. Pretty soon, there'll be nobody left. So, although it sounds pompous, I feel that I almost have an obligation to try to spread it, but the trouble is, I can't get the show back on the air. I did it for about six years and it was pretty good. A lot of people liked it. I say pretty good, because I deliberately, ... you'd never guess this, but I didn't try to talk too much and I didn't over intellectualize, which too many people that do this sort of thing do.

SH: You are referring to the wall of LP-filled shelves that are a part of your collection.

TJ: Yes, great stuff. I mean, the music was sensational, but this isn't why you came.

SH: Can you tell us about your family?

TJ: My immediate?

SH: Yes.

TJ: Well, my wife died a couple of years ago and I have four kids, and this is pathetic, not one grandchild, three boys and a girl, interesting kids, not a big money winner in the crowd, [laughter] but, then, why should they be. I never was.

SI: I understand that, in 1944, Mt. Vesuvius erupted and it caused many problems for the Air Force. Do you have any memory of that?

TJ: ... Oh, I don't remember a thing about Mt. Vesuvius, except I often felt bad that I never went to Pompeii or anything, which I should've done. I haven't been back to Italy ever since, ... to my wife's regret. She always wanted to go. Well, I guess I did go there for a short while, but not to the area where I had been. No, I don't remember a thing about Mt. Vesuvius. ... One time, I took a trip to Monte Cassino. This was shortly after; you know, we were bogged down in Cassino for the longest time and, a short while after, I went up there with a couple of guys and we wandered around and took pictures ... by destroyed tanks and things. It was quite amazing. All the shrubbery was down. Oh, God, it must have been awful. ...

GK: How did you meet your wife?

TJ: Well, I met her through the normal circumstances, in college. She was a college girl and, as I think I mentioned, NJC was literally a mile away. ... It was like Harvard and Radcliffe were, I guess, and Brown and Pembroke and Rutgers College and NJC, then. This was before girls at Rutgers. So, it was a normal social consequence, that you'd meet girls from there. I don't know; I don't remember.

SH: Where did you do your ROTC, at Williams or at Rutgers?

TJ: Rutgers. There was no ROTC at Williams. I didn't really do ROTC. ... I went there, as I told you, my last two years and what you did at Rutgers, ... you had to take ROTC your first two years, and then, they picked the officers for the last two years, but my father, ... I suppose I'm glad he did, more or less insisted that, even though I was, in effect, a junior, I think they called me unclassified, at that point, ... he wanted me to take one year of ROTC. So, I did, which is how I happened to be able to march with all those guys.

SH: You talked about a football player that had gone from Williams to Rutgers also. Do you remember his name?

TJ: Sure, very well, he was a good friend of mine, Bill Forbes. He was from Brooklyn, hell of a nice guy. I think he became a flyer and I think he stayed in the Air Force, and I think he died many years ago. Oddly enough, his brother-in-law, who died, too, ... lived over here and I used to see him quite a bit. ...

SI: Do you remember where you were on the day of Pearl Harbor?

TJ: Yes, I do. Everybody does. I was hitchhiking. I was wearing what I now realize was a dreadful-looking pinstriped blue suit and I was going to a fashionable cocktail party ... on Park Avenue in New York and I was hitchhiking down Route 1. You could hitchhike very easily in

those days. It was a different world, and [I was] minding my own business, with my thumb up, and a guy picked me up, maybe a truck or something, and he said, "Hey, the Japanese just," you know, and I said, "Pearl Harbor, where the hell is that? You're kidding," and, you know, I didn't believe it. Then, I went to the party. A beautiful girl was giving the party, a girl I knew from Garden City, and there were a bunch of guys. By this time, I think there was a draft, before the war, and there were a lot of guys at the party in uniform and, of course, the radio was going like mad. There was a certain amount of excitement, kind of loused the party up in some ways. ... "All military personnel, back to your units," and I remember the guys were all, "Oh, I'm not going back. I'm going to wait until later. I'll make believe I didn't hear it."

SH: At that point, were your brothers involved in the military?

TJ: I don't think so. We were all four in. Two were in the Navy. One had a hell of a job. He was in the Army, but he ran those little boats that they used for the invasions, the Army did, ... and it was a rather specialized business.

SH: Did your family talk at all about what they did during the war?

TJ: Well, my mother, I have a picture in there of her, ... she was a, I don't know, Red Cross something or other, lady, at the hospitals and stuff. ... So, she was fairly active. ... My brother, Dick, was, I don't know, some; what do you call those big damn cannons on the ships? There was some kind of a mathematical arrangement, so that when the ship goes up and down, the cannon continues its trajectory; oh, hell, well, anyway, he did that. ... I don't think he ever went overseas. He worked in Navy yards and things like that. ... Another one was an officer on one of those Liberty ship-type things. So, we were all involved, but there was nothing odd about that, almost everybody was, and, if you weren't, you kind of wished you were, if only to be, you know, one of the gang.

SH: When the Vietnam War came, your sons would have been very close to that age. What did you think about Vietnam?

TJ: Well, I didn't appreciate the Vietnam [War]. I was not militant, but I wasn't for it. One kid did go in, ... the oldest kid, did go in the Air Force. He got screwed. ... In those days, they said you could call your own job, and I forget what it was, but he ended up loading bombs in Guam and he was very unhappy about that, because he wasn't in favor of the Vietnamese War, either, and he didn't want to pile a bunch of bombs on a B-29 [B-52?] and drop them on a bunch of [Vietnamese], but he did. ... I remember, he wrote and he said, "This is terrible." What the hell could I tell him? I couldn't say, "Don't do it. They'll throw you in jail," or in ... the stockade or something, and I didn't know what to do. So, I just said, "Well, you just have to stick it out," which he did. He did his, I guess it was four years.

SH: Did anybody talk to you about staying in the military?

TJ: ... If they did, they didn't really try very hard. I mean, it was patent that you could do it, but, of course, everybody was anxious to get out and start their life.

SH: Did you ever think of joining the Reserves?

TJ: No. A lot of guys, not a lot, but a number of people, did. No, I didn't. Now, I had a brother-in-law, who's still alive, who did stay in the Reserves. I think he may even have become a colonel or maybe, possibly, a brigadier general, but, you know, by just going to a meeting every couple of months or some damned thing. ... I think he's still getting a pension, but, ... at this point, I was not a particularly, as you perhaps guessed, militaristic fellow. ...

SH: Did you join any veterans' organizations?

TJ: No, I didn't join that, ... no.

SH: How did you get involved in your interest in the circus?

TJ: ... Oh, I don't know, just interested in the circus, interested in jazz, interested in swimming, interested in the eighteenth century in England, a lot of things. You know, you people are interested in things. Everybody's got to have something of interest.

SH: Thank you very much for taking time to sit with us.

TJ: I hope I didn't overdo it. I know I've talked an awful lot.

SH: This concludes the interview. Thank you very much.

TJ: Thank you.

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

Reviewed by William Olin 11/16/08

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 2/9/09

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 2/10/09

Reviewed by Thomas C. Jackson 3/16/09