

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HELGE V. JESPERSEN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview with Mr. Helge V. Jespersen on June 24, 2003, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you, Mr. Jespersen, for taking time out of your day to record this oral history. To begin, please tell me where and when you were born; then, we will talk about your dad.

Helge Jespersen: I was born in Shanghai, China, in 1924. My father was in the feather business in China, working for a Danish company. The biggest source of feathers in the world is, or was at that time, the Eider Duck, which is in Manchuria, and so, the company, which was Northern Feather Works, had several factories in China. He was single until 1923, at which time he went back to Denmark, through the good offices of my mother's brother, ... and met my mother. ... They had a whirlwind courtship and they were married, I think he told me, three weeks after he got there, or at least they became engaged three weeks after, the purpose being, of course, that he wanted to take her back to China, where the job was.

SH: Did he know her prior to leaving for China?

HJ: ... No. I know he had never met her before that, but, probably, her brother had told him a lot about my mother.

SH: He knew the brother well.

HJ: It was a business acquaintance in China.

SH: Please, continue.

HJ: So, they were married in 1923, September 7th of 1923, and he brought her back to China. ... I was born on July 8, 1924, in Shanghai, ... they've told me, in a French hospital in China. ... I had a sister, Paula, who was also born in Shanghai in 1925, and then, in 1926, they were transferred to the American subsidiary of Northern Feather Works, which, the subsidiary, was in Newark, New Jersey.

SH: Did they ever tell you what life was like in China after World War I?

HJ: Not too much. ... I know it was a very easy life for the Europeans. They lived in one of the enclaves. They had a French enclave and an English enclave, and there were a bunch of Danes, Scandinavians, over there, also. This was ... [when] China was run almost as a European country.

SH: Did they ever describe what it was like to go from the easy life in Shanghai to living in Newark, New Jersey?

HJ: Well, ... things were somewhat different, although my father was the president of the Newark subsidiary. So, back in those days, a tremendous salary was like eight thousand dollars a year. So, they did have some help, always had some help, while we were growing up. ... My mother, particularly, was affected by the extreme poverty in China, as she saw it at that time.

My father never talked too much about his experiences in China.

SH: Did your parents ever host missionaries?

HJ: Oh, yes, one of their best friends was; ... I think he was a Presbyterian minister. ... I think he and his wife were English, but they eventually came to the United States and they kept in touch with them practically until they died.

SH: What are your first memories of Newark?

HJ: Well, actually, I grew up in a ... neighboring town called Montclair, New Jersey, a very nice town. It was kind of a bedroom community. We had our own railroad line, going from Montclair right into Hoboken, and then, ... with a ferry, to Wall Street. That's what they used to talk about when I was a kid. Montclair was never quite as hard hit as a lot of areas in the United States, by the Depression, in other words. ... Luckily, my father always had a job.

SH: Did he stay with the same company?

HJ: He stayed with the same company until he retired, forty-five years later. ... Montclair was a nice town. The schools were excellent. I went to the public schools, starting with Grove Street School in Lower Montclair and I then went to Mt. Hebron School, ... near Upper Montclair, and then, to Montclair High School, from which I graduated in 1942.

SH: What do you remember about the Depression as a kid?

HJ: Yes. ... I can remember the beggars coming to our door and asking for food. As I say, Montclair was a fairly well-off town and it wasn't until I grew up ... [that] I realized the magnitude [of it]. You know, unless you're affected by it, it's an academic thing for you. So, I wasn't really [affected], but, ... having said that, I always had to work for everything that I earned. ... I carried papers and I had a whole bunch of jobs, after school jobs, just to earn ten or fifteen cents or a quarter. That was a lot of money in those days.

SH: What did you spend your money on?

HJ: Oh, a lot of it went into the bank. ... Back in those days, you could get penny candy and day-old cupcakes and things like that.

SH: Some people talk about saving for a month just to be able to go to the movies.

HJ: Yes, and the movies cost, depending on where you went, either ten cents or fifteen cents. ... I don't remember even getting an allowance, you know. Later generations did, but I don't [recall that]. It's possible that we might have gotten ten cents or fifteen cents, but there wasn't a lot of that.

SH: Did your mother ever work outside of the home?

HJ: No. ... You know, work at home was a considerable job, raising a family. One of the problems ... in our family life was that my father had an ailment called celiac sprue, or tropical sprue, I guess it was, and this is an intolerance for anything that has gluten in it. So, that lets out wheat and rye and barley and pasta, you know. ... Back in those days, they thought it was a fatal ailment. ... In fact, he said he remembered, one time, that nobody could tell him what was ... ailing him. He lost a lot of weight. He went from about one-hundred-and-forty down to seventy pounds before they found out what it was. ... They found it by his remembering that, when he was in China, this was much more prevalent. They called it tropical sprue, and so, he looked it up in the dictionary and the dictionary said that, to his chagrin, ... this was always a fatal event. Fortunately, they found a doctor in New York City who thought he could fix him up. ... He was successful, because my father lived to be eight-nine years old, and, you know, he gained his weight back and I don't know what kind of diets he was on. I know he was severely restricted and my mother used to have to give him shots, just about every day, of liver extract.

SH: Do you remember which customs from Denmark they kept up in the family?

HJ: Oh, yes. My parents were always very Danish and associated with fellow Danes, immigrants or Danes temporarily in the United States, and they used to play bridge with them and they'd have a get-together and serve Danish meals. But, there was always the idea, in their minds, until the advent of World War II, that, someday, they would go back to Denmark to live.

SH: Did any of their family members, siblings or parents, ever immigrate to this country?

HJ: Yes, there was only one, of all the siblings. My mother was one of eight and my father was one of six, growing up in Denmark, and only my father's youngest brother, Otto, migrated, immigrated, to the United States. They lived up in New York State first, and then, in Connecticut, and they finally settled in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

SH: Did you ever get to visit Denmark before World War II?

HJ: Well, ... we made a trip to Denmark in 1929, some kind of a business trip where they took the family. We went over on a very small ship named the *Argosy*, you know, Jason and the Argonauts. [laughter] ... We visited a lot of cousins and my father's parents and my mother's mother, her father had died quite young, and cousins and so forth, and that was just a trip of several weeks' duration. Other than that, [I] never got to visit Denmark until my wife and I went over in 1979.

SH: Did any of the cousins or siblings come to this country?

HJ: Oh, yes, we had visits. We had visits from my father's father. I would say it was the early '30s, but I can't remember the exact year, and he was an old Army man and pretty strict, ... but he was a lovely man. ... I had an opportunity to visit him later, ... at the end of World War II, but I didn't take that opportunity, ... because, you know, at that point in time, I was anxious to get home. I'm sorry I didn't, but that's the way it was.

SH: Was your family considered strict?

HJ: I think most families were more strict in those days than they are today, and I would say [my parents were] relatively strict. They wanted us to amount to something. ... My mother used to always emphasize ... the need to be different, you know, to, "Play by your own wishes, but be responsible," and, at the same time, "Just don't run with the crowd," which, now, I think, was admirable. I didn't always appreciate that, at the time.

SH: That is a part of what we are trying to ascertain. [laughter]

HJ: Yes. My father, unfortunately, being ailing, didn't maybe do as much as he should have. ... During the whole time that he was sick, which was probably eight, nine years, he would go to work in the morning, come home at six o'clock, go in and lie down on the couch until called for supper, then, get up and have supper. As soon as he was finished eating, whether the rest of us were or not, he'd go in and lie down on the couch again, and then, at nine o'clock, he'd go up to bed. ... That was pretty much his routine for a number of years. It was very, very tough. I'm sure it was tough on my mother.

SH: Which extracurricular activities were you and your siblings involved in?

HJ: ... I'd go to the local parks and play football and baseball and things like that, but I wasn't in organized sports. [I] did a lot of hiking. I was ... very active in the Boy Scouts.

SH: Were you?

HJ: Yes. I thought that was a great organization, you know, and, when our boys were old enough, they got involved in the Boys Scouts as well. You know, it taught me a lot of good things.

SH: Where did you go to camp?

HJ: We used to go to a place called Camp Glen Gray, up near Oakland, New Jersey. I didn't get to go to any summer camps, but ... I was a member, at different times, of two different troops. ... We had a young Scoutmaster and ... we were a small troop and we'd go tooling around and go to different campsites, ... up to Camp Glen Gray, and we [went] hiking, a lot of that, and had a grand time.

SH: Did you ever go to a jamboree?

HJ: No, never did, no.

SH: Did you make Eagle Scout?

HJ: Only made Life. [laughter]

SH: Were you involved in the church or music, anything like that?

HJ: We always went to church, sometimes not always voluntarily, but always did, and I'm happy for that, having had that guidance. What was the other question?

SH: Were you involved in any type of music program? What did you do in the church?

HJ: Oh, mainly went. [laughter] ... It was only active weekends, kind of. ... It's not a week-round thing, like they have in many churches today. ... Growing up, we always seemed to go to the church that was nearest to us. We went to a Dutch Reformed church for a while and, actually, when I was a little boy, I sang in the Episcopal church, in downtown Montclair, and then, for a while, we went to the Congregational church, after we moved uptown.

SH: You lived in two different places in Montclair.

HJ: Actually, let's see, one, two, three, four, five, five different places. Because my parents always expected to go back to Denmark, they rented and it was not until they decided to become citizens that they finally bought a house in Upper Montclair, which I had never seen, because I was off in the service at the time they bought it. ... That was a nice community to grow up in. ... What was the other question?

SH: You told me that you sang. I was wondering if you were involved in a music program.

HJ: Yes. No, I'm one of those failed piano lesson kids. ... I also tried the violin. ... I mean, actually, I like music. I love music, you know, mostly classical music, ... but I didn't have the stick-to-it-ness to do a good job.

SH: Did any of your siblings become involved in music?

HJ: Yes. My sister is quite a good musician. Her name is Paula and she actually has composed music. ... She's been into poetry and things like that, ... mostly after she grew a little bit older and her children were grown.

SH: In high school, what were your favorite subjects? Who were your favorite teachers?

HJ: Well, I can't say I was a very good high school student. I was not. I didn't study and I did have after school jobs most of the time I was growing up. I worked in a grocery store and I worked in, ... at that time, one of the first supermarkets in the country, and, you know, I raked leaves and cut grass and sold flowers, all kinds of things.

SH: What is one of your favorite high school memories?

HJ: I don't know. I was not particularly enamored of high school, I have to say.

SH: It does not have to be a good story. It can be about a time when you got in trouble.

HJ: ... To be honest with you, I haven't really reflected much on that. I didn't particularly like the subjects. I didn't study. ... I know I had the ability, but I just didn't apply myself.

SH: Since your family in fact planned to return to Scandinavia, what was said around the dinner table about the war in Europe prior to the United States' involvement?

HJ: Not a lot. ... My parents were not great communicators. I remember when Denmark was invaded in World War II. ... Of course, it came over the radio in those days. They were very, very concerned, because they had so many relatives over there. ... Actually, there was a big split in the Danish community in the United States, because some of the Danes considered the ones that went back, [who] were called back for any reason, to be traitors, to want to go back to Denmark, and I know that there was a falling out amongst some of the Danes in New Jersey.

SH: Really?

HJ: Yes.

SH: How did that manifest itself? Were there discussions?

HJ: ... Oh, yes, lots of discussions, and I won't say arguments, ... because they were a pretty closely-knit community, but probably [one of] their best friends was a gentleman named Helmut Moeller and he was a *chargé d'affaires*, or had some kind of a similar job, in the United States, ... which was a government position, and so, he decided to go back. ... For a lot of the Danes, it caused some very hard feelings among the ones that stayed on, because they felt he was a traitor. You know, the Danes and the Germans had always gotten along relatively well, being adjacent countries and of a similar religious persuasion, ... but it was a different story in World War II, because ... I guess they had heard things about Hitler's Germany, and heard things from the family members. You know, they were still able to communicate to some extent.

SH: What did they think of Hitler? What did they think when he invaded Poland in 1939?

HJ: ... They disliked him intensely. ... They didn't know what they could do about it. You know, we were here and ... he was over there, but there wasn't too much that could be done. I know that a number of my cousins and aunts and uncles were involved in the Danish Underground [resistance movement] during the war. I found that out after the war was over. That's really ... all I know about that situation. I mean, I can name names, but that wouldn't mean anything to most people.

SH: As Germany conquered most of the Continent and focused on the Battle of Britain, an isolationist movement developed in this country. Did you hear about or discuss that in high school?

HJ: Not really, no. The kids that I knew were somewhat isolated from that type of thing. ... My

parents always frequented a delicatessen in downtown Montclair, because they served all the Danish delicacies, cheeses and pastries and things like that. ... They were very shocked when, one day, the FBI came in and closed them up and he [the delicatessen owner] was charged as a “fifth columnist,” ... running a radio in the back of his store.

SH: Really?

HJ: Yes, but, you know, beyond those occasional instances, ... my parents were kind of closed mouthed about these things. You know, we were the children and they were the parents. I mean, a lot of that was the way it was back in those days.

SH: Lindbergh, a prominent figure in the isolationist movement, was a national hero. However, many young men looked forward to being involved in the war. Do you have any memories of that era?

HJ: In fact, no, I can't say that I do. ... I understand, from later on, where this came from, ... isolationism and the desire not to get involved. ... All I know is that my parents didn't particularly like Roosevelt. My father was a businessman and working for a Danish company. So, he may have thought that it was best to keep quiet, at least they never said very much to us, and the kids that I knew didn't talk politics a lot.

SH: Did your parents become citizens after World War II?

HJ: No, actually, it probably would have been after Denmark was invaded, you know, that they made that decision to stay on.

SH: Did they ever become politically involved?

HJ: No, no, that wasn't their style.

SH: Did your mother ever get involved in any women's organizations in the Montclair area?

HJ: Later on. My mother was a rather shy person. Later on, she did. ... My mother and father were good bridge players, ... but they used to play bridge with the Danish people, members of the Danish community. They never really got too much involved until later on, when all the kids had left home, and then, she did join a bridge club and got pretty active in that.

SH: In high school, did you know that you were going to go on to college?

HJ: No, I didn't. You know, I felt that it was the thing to do and I did get an opportunity to go, but, ... after what I said about my parents being okay during the Depression, conversely, they said there was no money [for me] to go to college. ... A lot of people didn't go to college in those days, but, ... after I graduated from Montclair, I did go to a small college for one semester. Have you ever heard of Hope College in Michigan? It was a little Dutch Reformed college, ... a beautiful, little place, but, again, I hadn't really decided yet that I wanted to study that hard. ...

So, I left at the end of one semester and came home. I knew I would be drafted. You know, they could draft non-citizens in those days, and so, I was drafted. Actually, I did try to enlist in the ... Navy Air Force when I was in college, and I hitchhiked out to Detroit to try to do that, but I failed on two accounts. I wasn't a citizen, number one, and, number two, I was ... a little colorblind, red-green. [laughter] ...

SH: What do you remember about the day Pearl Harbor was attacked?

HJ: ... You know, they say that everybody remembers where they were when Pearl Harbor happened, and I was listening to a football game. I was interested, not so much in participating, ... but in watching and listening to baseball and football. ... I remember, it was a Sunday afternoon and [I was] sitting there, and then, the speaker came over the radio and said that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. ... Of course, at that time, I had no idea what the implications of that were. That was in 1941, so, it took a few years for that to sink in. I came back and went to work as soon as I got out of Hope College, waiting to be drafted. I worked for a while in a company that made drugs, the Schering Corporation. It's since been merged with another company.

SH: You finished your senior year of high school in the semester after Pearl Harbor.

HJ: Yes.

SH: What did you do in the summer before you went to Hope College?

HJ: ... Summer of 1942. I remember, in '41, we were at the Jersey Shore, but, in '42, I can't remember that. I probably was working already. ... I had a job just about my whole life. I've worked continuously, and that's not bad. That's good.

SH: In the summer of your junior year, you were at the Jersey Shore. Would you go there for the summers as a family?

HJ: ... No, just for a weekend or two. ... My parents were quite frugal and we were lucky if we could get in a week at the Shore. [laughter] We used to go down to ... Point Pleasant. One year, we went to Belmar.

SH: What was your summer job during high school?

HJ: My last job, part-time job, was working for the supermarket.

SH: It was that job.

HJ: Yes, and then, I went to work for this Schering Corporation and I guess you'd call me an office boy. That's what I did ... after high school. ... Then, I went to college, and then, when I came back [and was] waiting to be drafted, I went back to work for that same company.

SH: Your sister was just a year behind you in school.

HJ: Yes, right. She went on to Pembroke College. She was a good student, and then, I had two brothers after her and they were probably more like me. [laughter] You know, there is something I want to say about growing up; my parents never let us forget that we were Danes, you know, and so, we didn't always do the things that Americans did. ... We felt a little bit apart from the rest of the kids. That's not a bad thing.

SH: Were you drafted while you were at Hope?

HJ: No, no, I went home. As I say, I didn't do that well at Hope, didn't study, and so, I came back after one semester and just got a job, waiting to be drafted. I knew it was coming, and then, ... I went into the service in May of 1943.

SH: Where were you inducted?

HJ: ... I was inducted into the service in Fort Dix and I went down to Camp Pickett, Virginia, for my basic training. ... Once I got through with basic training, ... probably, primarily because of my Danish language ability, they sent me to Fort Ritchie in Maryland, which was the intelligence center for the United States. ... I think, originally, the intention was that they would use that language ability, but, then, I've always surmised that, since they didn't see the need to have people parachuting into Denmark, I was transferred to the photo intelligence section of the Military Intelligence [branch]. So, I ... was in that training course from May ...

SH: Were you still in Ritchie?

HJ: Camp Ritchie, after I left Pickett. After the basic training, I went to Camp Ritchie and I was there until I was shipped overseas, which was in ... November of 1943.

SH: Where was your embarkation point?

HJ: The [port of] embarkation, of course, was [in the] New York City area. We went through Camp Kilmer, were processed through Camp Kilmer, and then, went overseas on one of the Queens. I think it was [the] *Queen Elizabeth*. ... Back in those days, they shipped about eighteen thousand troops, [with] no escort at all, ... because they figured they could outrun the submarines, and the ship was totally blacked out. ... As I recall, it took only about five or six days to get over. ... We landed in Scotland, in one of the *firths*, I can't remember which one, and then, we were shipped from there down to the Litchfield Barracks in southwestern England. ... We were there for processing, and then, [we were] moved down to Green Street in London for a little while. We lived there, ... the dates all run together now, for a period of weeks, might have been months, and then, from there, [we went] up to one of the airfields. They had a whole bunch of airfields that ringed Oxford and I've tried to remember the name of that airfield, but I can't. It might be in my papers somewhere. ... Even before I found out about this oral history [program], I tried to remember what that was and I couldn't come up with it, but we were there until the invasion.

SH: Which unit were you assigned to?

HJ: We were assigned to Military Intelligence operations, attached to the Air Force. ... Actually, we were set up as teams. We had a team of six people. There was a first lieutenant in charge and a second lieutenant, and then, there was a master sergeant and a T-3. Have you ever heard of that term? T-3, it's a technician, third grade, and it's a staff sergeant with a "T" in the middle of it, [the rank insignia], and I was the T-3, and then, there was a staff sergeant and a T-5, which was a corporal with a "T" in it. ... We all had certain duties. They all kind of run together by now, but that was the team set-up that we had going into Europe. We didn't go in until early August. You know, there was a delay of a couple of months after the invasion and things had been pretty much secured in Normandy by then, but the countryside was just devastated after the campaign. ...

SH: What do you remember about Scotland? What were the conditions like? What was the weather like? What were your duties?

HJ: Well, KP, [kitchen patrol]. [laughter] No, I don't remember some of the specific duties. I know there was always some training going on. I do recall that ... my impression of England was that it was always foggy, particularly up in the Midlands. That's where we went first, now that I think of it. We spent some time in the Midlands, up near a place called Macclesfield, which ... was up in the Midlands of England, and that's where the Third Army trained. I know we always had military training as well, although we didn't get involved in the maneuvers, as the others did.

SH: What did the photo intelligence teams do while the other soldiers were on training maneuvers?

HJ: We didn't do anything specifically with the photo intelligence work until we actually got to Europe.

SH: Did you have all of the equipment that you needed? Were you well-supplied?

HJ: ... Yes. Basically, ... there was a truck, ... kind of like a big panel van, with all kinds of cabinets and spaces for the equipment, but don't ask me to remember what the names of the various pieces of equipment [were]. We worked with stereopticon lenses. ... The aerial photography was taken by P-38s, you know, where they'd have a camera on each wing, and then, when they took the pictures, they developed the pictures and we would look at them through the stereopticon lens. You would get depth perception. ... We didn't do a lot of that while we were in England.

SH: You were also in London, on Green Street. What about the bombings?

HJ: Well, ... oh, yes, that was during the time of the bombings, the V-2, they called them. ... In fact, one night, when I was out somewhere, I came back to my billet [and] it was gone. You know, it had been leveled, ... so, that was a [close one]. It wasn't my time yet.

SH: Where were the men on your team from?

HJ: Well, the people in the Military Intelligence [branch] were involved in the interrogation of prisoners of war. So, there were many refugees from Europe—Germany and Austria, many Jews that had fled from there. ... We had, on our team, a Russian. He was the master sergeant. The two officers were American. ... There was a staff sergeant, [who] was a German, spoke good German. See, these [men] all spoke good German, because their intent was originally to interrogate [German POWs], and then, when they ran out of a need for interrogators, some of them wound up in the ... aerial photography groups. ... Another one was ... a Hispanic, but I don't remember where he was from. I think he might have been from Puerto Rico, and then, me.

SH: Did you socialize with the men from your unit while you were off-duty?

HJ: Oh, yes. We got opportunities to go into town. ... When we were stationed in, it was a little town near Macclesfield, I met a very nice young lady, an English lass, and, at one point in time, I thought I was even going to marry her, [laughter] but that didn't happen. Yes, you know, ... we were able to go to town, and the same thing was true when ... we lived in London, and, you know, [we were not doing much] until they could really put you to work [at] doing what we were trained to do, which I don't remember a lot of. We did get a lot of opportunities to go to town, ... even when we were in that airfield. We got to visit Oxford a number of times. ...

SH: You got to be a tourist.

HJ: Yes, we did.

SH: Was there any interaction with members of the other services?

HJ: ... Not too much, no, not too much, not at that point in time.

SH: What about any of the other Allies?

HJ: ... If there were any in this particular airfield, we didn't get to meet them.

SH: Were you aware of any training accidents?

HJ: Training accidents, no, I don't [recall them].

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

SH: This is side two of tape one. Please, continue.

HJ: Where were we? [laughter]

SH: I was asking you about day-to-day life.

HJ: Kind of boring, actually. No, we had the *Stars and Stripes*, which was the military newspaper, and they provided song sheets, and we didn't get to see much of the local papers. I don't remember reading any of them at all and, you know, we played cards and drank, once in a while, yes.

SH: In town, did you notice any food or other material shortages in that part of England?

HJ: In the Midlands, I can't say I did, you know, because that was a lot of farm country there, and they seemed to have [enough]. We were invited, occasionally, to visit English people, lovely people, you know. They were always very generous with what they had.

SH: Did you ever see any of the Royal Family touring around?

HJ: No, [laughter] I can't say I did.

SH: I thought perhaps you did in London, when you were a tourist.

HJ: I was just a lowly enlisted man. [laughter]

SH: What did you do during air raids? Did you just stay at the bar and drink your beer? Your billet was destroyed.

HJ: Yes. You know, honestly, I don't remember going into any of those shelters more than maybe once or twice and, actually, we were not there that long. ... When I went back to England, many years later, I tried to find the place on Green Street. I think I did, but I'm not certain.

SH: Were you involved in any kind of humanitarian aid effort in that part of the world?

HJ: No.

SH: Did you notice the build-up for the invasion? Were you aware that the invasion was imminent?

HJ: Well, we knew that, at some point in time, it would happen, but ... the question was, "When?" but, then, we didn't receive much of any information at all. ... Everybody was pretty closed mouthed. So, we stood guard duty, ... I do remember that we did our share of KP and other things, to occupy us, but I don't remember any particular build-up, except the night of the invasion. I can recall—I was on guard duty that night—the whole night, there were planes overhead. So, we knew there was something going on.

SH: You were in a small camp outside of Oxford then.

HJ: Right, one of the airfields.

SH: However, no one announced it.

HJ: No. The Army wasn't very communicative, not like today. [laughter]

SH: Afterwards, what did you hear about the invasion? Did you know whether it had been successful or not?

HJ: Well, I don't even remember getting a lot of feedback. I knew that, at one point in time, ... we were probably going to go over. ... I mean, that's why we were trained, and then, oh, it must have been a month-and-a-half later, we were shipped down to Southampton, which was where our point of embarkation was, and shipped over to Normandy.

SH: How were you transported to Normandy?

HJ: Regular ships, yes, not the ones they used for the invasion.

SH: You spoke briefly about the devastation that you observed.

HJ: Yes, I remember the churches and the buildings. ... I can't really recall the names of the towns that we went through.

SH: Where did you land in Normandy?

HJ: Well, you know, Normandy is kind of a peninsula. Anyhow, it was probably in the top of that peninsula. I'm sorry, I just do not recall.

SH: What about your supplies? When you went in, two months later, did you have everything that you needed?

HJ: We had plenty of food and, of course, they shipped our trucks over, which were all specially outfitted, and we were ready to go. ... This was after Patton had started his march across the waist of France and we really didn't stop until we got to a place called Nancy, which was ... a little west, I think, of Metz, which is where we supposedly ... ran out of gas and were stuck for quite a number of months. ... I recall, of course, at that point in time, we pitched tents and we dug holes, you know, foxholes, and that's where we slept while we were waiting to move on.

SH: You said, "Supposedly, we ran out of gas." Do you think that perhaps you did not run out of gas?

HJ: Oh, no, I'm sure we did. ... I've read a number of books about World War II and there were supposedly political motivations, differences between the English thinking and the American thinking. ... Again, I was a lowly GI and I didn't really know what was going on.

SH: What did you do with your trucks at this point? Were they right with you? Were you sleeping near them?

HJ: Yes, yes. Well, they were not in the exact same area, but they were close by. ... When they [the P-38s] ran sorties, taking pictures, we did do some work at that time. In fact, our shifts were interesting, because they were twenty-four [hours] on and twelve off, which screwed up your whole sleeping pattern, but that's the way they chose to do it.

SH: When did your work actually commence?

HJ: ... When we were not on the move, mostly. Once the trek across France started, we didn't really stop until we got to Nancy.

SH: Did you ever interact with the pilots of the P-38s who were taking the photographs?

HJ: No, they just passed it on. ... We were attached to the Third Army Headquarters.

SH: Would you have liked to have gone to Officer Candidate School to become an officer?

HJ: Well, I don't know. ... [I] probably had thoughts [of doing that], but I wasn't qualified, you know. I had not been a good student in high school and ... I wasn't even naturalized until I got into [the Army]. I was naturalized when I was stationed at Camp Ritchie. They decided that before anybody could be sent overseas, they had to be a naturalized citizen. So, we went into Hagerstown, Maryland, and they did it all in one day. You know, normally, you'd have to wait five years, ... or thereabouts, to become a citizen, but we did it all in one day. Anyhow, assessing the situation, I really didn't have the qualifications to become an officer.

SH: Did you find the work that you did interesting?

HJ: Not particularly, no. [laughter] It was actually ... while I was in the service [that] I decided I should ... do something about myself and, ... when I got back, you know, I was going to finish college and do well and amount to something. ... You know, a lot of kids, a lot of boys, don't mature as fast as girls do. ... I think that first semester of college was pretty much a waste of my parents', of my money, actually, because I borrowed money from my father to be able to go. ... The Army provided a lot of books, by the way, so that we were able to read. ... For the first time in my life, I did some serious reading and decided I was going to do something when I got back.

SH: Were you still subject to KP duty?

HJ: Oh, yes. The officers never were, ... that I recall, but even high-ranking non-coms took their tour of KP.

SH: What was the weather like when the Third Army was moving across France?

HJ: Well, it was chilly and damp, but I can't say that it was bad weather.

SH: How far away was the front from where you were?

HJ: Well, probably, once we settled down in Nancy, I would say it might have been ten, fifteen miles away, because we were billeted in a school. Somebody was billeted in a school; not us. We were out on the ground.

SH: The headquarters men, right?

HJ: Yes.

SH: What did you do while you waited? How long was this waiting period in Nancy?

HJ: Well, we ... entertained ourselves a lot. We had a quartet, of which I was one of the members. We used to sing songs. We had a ... baritone and a tenor, a couple of tenors, I guess, and a bass and ... the Army provided a lot of music that we could sing. ... To this day, I still have it at home and take it out and look at it every now and again, and paperback books, too. They had a lot of that stuff.

SH: Did you write letters home?

HJ: ... I wrote to my parents.

SH: Did they save any of your letters?

HJ: ... I found one of the V-mails that I had written to my mother. We have a lot of stuff at my home that needs to be gone through. [laughter]

SH: Did you get any care packages?

HJ: Yes, a few, yes.

SH: Were there things that you requested they send to you?

HJ: Well, my mother generally sent Danish cookies and things like that, because she knew how much I liked them. It was different, because, you know, I didn't feel any real closeness to the American high school system. ... My former partner in business, ... his parents were Swedish and he made the same observation. I don't know what it is. Maybe there was the idea that they always felt that they were going to go back [at] some time and didn't want to get too close. ... You know, to the day my parents' best friends died, they used to call each other, ... "*Herr Jespersen*," "*Fru Jespersen*," and, "*Herr Pedersen*," and, "*Fru Pedersen*." They were very formal, the Danes were, in those days. I think a lot of that disappeared after the war. [I am] not sure it was a bad thing, either, you know.

SH: While you were waiting in Nancy, were there any innovations in or changes made to your

equipment?

HJ: I don't remember. There may have been, but I don't remember any particular new [equipment]. Some of the things that we did were, we made plaster of Paris models, terrain models, so that the soldiers would know what they were facing, and we did quite a bit of observation through these stereopticon lenses. You could see tracks going into areas that looked perfectly normal, like there was nothing there, and, you know, you were supposed to be able to detect military things.

SH: What do you think was your biggest contribution, for example, an occasion when you really shone as an individual?

HJ: I can't say that. ... We tried to work as a team, but, as I say, we took shifts. ... If there were any particular situations like that, they were not passed on to us.

SH: Were officers' and enlisted men's clubs set up when you were on the move?

HJ: Yes, separate. We didn't mingle.

SH: How hierarchal was the Army, in your experience?

HJ: ... We never really got to associate with officers. The only thing I ever did for officers was to drive vehicles for them. I mean, that was another one of my jobs, was to drive the jeep wherever they wanted to go, did quite a bit of that.

SH: Do you remember anything interesting?

HJ: Nothing that I can talk about. [laughter]

SH: Can you tell me about the rest of your tour with the Third Army?

HJ: Well, actually, ... after the breakthrough, ... we were in the process of approaching, and then, crossing the Rhine, I was transferred to the Sixth Cavalry Group, which was a motorized cavalry [unit]. ... We had the same team set-up with them and I was with them for a short while, and then, I was transferred to the 14th Cavalry [Group] and was with them when the war ended.

SH: Why were you transferred? Do you know?

HJ: I don't know.

SH: Was it a replacement situation?

HJ: No, I really don't know. You know, they do what they want. [laughter]

SH: Looking back on the Battle of the Bulge, how did that impact your experience?

HJ: Only to the extent that we knew what was going on and, as I say, we had the *Stars and Stripes* and that was where we got all our news. ... That was, of course, as we found out afterwards, ... a very critical thing, but, as far as us getting involved in that, we didn't.

SH: They did not pull anyone out to serve as infantry replacements or anything like that.

HJ: No. We were all specialized and did not get called into combat duty.

SH: Which unit were you transferred to?

HJ: The Sixth Cavalry. It was the motorized cavalry.

SH: What was the make-up of your team there?

HJ: I think it was quite the same thing, although I can't really recall for sure. I was not with them very long and we got as far as about seventy miles from Dresden. ... We were told that we were going to go right into Berlin, but we didn't. That was when they made the deal with Stalin and let the Russians occupy the eastern part of Germany, and then, we wound up heading south. ... We went as far as a little place called Freising, which was a few miles outside of Munich, and that's where I was when the war ended and that's where I was repatriated from, when they ... finally decided we could go back to the States.

SH: Was there any chance that you could have been sent to the Pacific?

HJ: No. I had eighty-five points, exactly eighty-five points, and that was the magic number. Actually, I could have taken a leave up to Denmark, but, by that time, I was tired of being over there. ... I could have seen my grandfather and my cousins and so forth, but I didn't do it, regretfully. I wish I had, but I wanted to get back and get my life going again.

SH: Did you use your language skills at any point in this experience?

HJ: No. [laughter] ...

SH: Not even as part of the Army of Occupation?

HJ: No, because we never got up to Denmark. ... Of course, that was liberated, so, ... there was never a need. I tried to speak a little French and German, but it was very little, but, you know, I do have had a facility for language. ... I did learn French when I went back to Rutgers. ... Maybe because of having the Danish language, it has been fairly easy for me.

SH: Did you see any displaced persons?

HJ: Well, there were a lot of [them], oh, yes, a lot of Germans. ... When we were in the occupation, ... we saw a lot of Germans. Of course, none of them ever had anything to do with

the Nazis or people like that, but, on balance, they were very nice people and, you know, I've often thought that the same thing could happen in the States, if we had the wrong rules [and] rulers.

SH: What was your job during the occupation? Did your duties change?

HJ: No. Of course, there was no more of the photo intelligence work. We were just sitting there, waiting to ... come home. ... We got to see Hitler's Eagle's Lair, I think they called it.

SH: Berchtesgaden?

HJ: Yes, and we got to ... visit Munich, which also was razed, you know, terrible destruction, and [we saw] the same thing wherever we went in Germany. The buildings were terribly leveled.

SH: For which action did you receive the Silver Star?

HJ: Actually, it wasn't a Silver Star; it was ...

SH: Excuse me, Silver Service Star.

HJ: ... That's because, after you receive five Service Stars, then, they give you one Silver Service Star, no big deal. [laughter]

SH: How did you collect your eighty-five points?

HJ: Well, it was a combination of the theaters that you served in and the number of months that you were overseas, and I was overseas for twenty-four months. I don't remember how ... you accumulated the points. All I know is, I had the required eighty-five to go home. So, I don't think I ever [could have been kept overseas], you know, unless the Japanese War Theater had had prolonged resistance. Then, I might have been called over.

SH: When were you sent back to the States?

HJ: It was in October of 1945.

SH: How were you sent home?

HJ: Well, we were put in, I don't know if it was a forty-and-eight, but it was a French or German railcar and we were shipped to Marseilles, and then, we came back in a ship called the *Admiral [W.L.] Capps* and we landed in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, [port], and then, were shipped back up to Fort Dix for mustering out.

SH: Who crewed the ship that you returned on?

HJ: It was the military, but ... it may have been one of the ships used for carting material as well, but I do know it took a long time, because it was very slow, as compared to the *Queen*. ...

SH: Did you have your sea legs? Did you have trouble with the crossing?

HJ: No, I'm lucky. I've never been seasick in my life.

SH: What does one do onboard the ship for entertainment?

HJ: Well, we read a lot of [books]. ... Both going over and coming back, there was a lot of gambling, and the winners of the smaller gambling sites, eventually, wound up in bigger ones, you know, where they had a lot more money to play with. I never really got much involved in that, the gambling. ... You know, I remember seeing, one night, [where] the winner of one of the big gambling events won about twenty-five thousand dollars. Now, back in those days, that was a lot of money that people had gambled away, but I had most of my meager earnings sent home.

SH: Did you ever go on leave in Europe?

HJ: We went to Paris one time, spent just a couple of days in Paris, seeing the sights. ... Of course, back in those days, I didn't even really know [what to look for]. I mean, there was so much to see in Paris. So, I probably wasted [my time]. I know I spent some time in the Red Cross facility. [laughter]

SH: Did you get to see any other sights in Europe?

HJ: I was not very highly motivated to look as a young man. Now, I love to [travel]. I have traveled a good bit in my older years and seen a lot of the world, fortunately, and seen a lot of the ancient and historic sights, but, back in those days, I really wasn't motivated, I'm sorry to say.

SH: When were you first made aware of the GI Bill?

HJ: Well, they filled us in, you know, and then, when I was mustered out in Newark, New Jersey, I immediately applied to Rutgers. I don't remember why I chose Rutgers, except, of course, ... up until 1946, that was a Dutch Reformed school, and I had been to Rutgers once or twice, as a kid.

SH: For what?

HJ: Football games.

SH: Really?

HJ: Yes. Our Scoutmaster took us down to see Rutgers. That's where he was from. Yes,

maybe that had an influence on me, too, but, you know, that was a good school. ... I enjoyed my career at Rutgers.

SH: Do you remember your Scoutmaster's name?

HJ: Tommy Smith.

SH: What was your first semester at Rutgers like?

HJ: ... When I got back to school, I decided to apply myself, and I did, you know, and I did very well. ... I wound up graduating *Magna Cum Laude*. I studied and I decided I was going to ... amount to something; just a matter of growing up, I guess.

SH: What did you major in?

HJ: Well, I started off in ... history and political science, because I wanted to be in the Diplomatic Corps, but, then, I found out that, in order to do that, you had to have been a citizen [for] ten years. I don't know if the same rules still apply, but I had only been naturalized for a couple of years. So, I switched to economics, ... which was interesting. ... Are you from Rutgers? Did you get to know some of the professors? I think I put down that my favorite professor was Max Gideonse. Do you remember that name?

SH: His name has come up.

HJ: Yes, and I enjoyed these economic courses, and [they] probably somewhat shaped my thinking. You know, one of his courses had to do with reading two or three books, that [spoke] to whether the individual is what ... shapes a country's destiny or whether it was forces outside of the individual. I can't remember the name of the books now, but he gave us some interesting assignments. ... He had a very droll sense of humor and I enjoyed him. ... I minored in French and I liked that subject a lot. ... The professor that taught business management, which was my last major, was a Professor Genzmer. I don't know if you ever heard of that [name]. So, I mean, I enjoyed my stay in Rutgers and I used up all of my accumulated [GI Bill] benefits. I didn't have any money, but, then, I earned a little bit when I was a dorm advisor at the Edison Barracks for a while. ... Then, I spent some time at [the fraternity]. I was a Deke at Rutgers, Delta Kappa Epsilon. ... I stayed there for a year, enjoyed all of that.

SH: As a freshman, where were you housed?

HJ: Well, I had a roommate, a very nice man. ... He was a Jewish refugee, from Austria. ... The whole family came over. They lived in Englewood, New Jersey, but his father ... had been a bass in the Vienna Opera Company, came over here and became a jeweler. His son's name was Herb, Herb Tushak, and we lived together for about a year at 91 Easton Avenue. You know where that is? [laughter] Yes, it was right catty-cornered across from Al Strickland's Bar [laughter] and two doors away from the place where we used to go down and have ice cream. ... Herb has been dead for quite a while now. He was a good roommate.

SH: As a returning GI, you were in classes with young men who were just coming out of high school. What was that like?

HJ: ... There were some young men coming out [of high school], ... but there were many, many veterans and all of them [were] determined ... not to do some of the things that freshmen do, you know, and study more, and that was what I wanted to do, too. I wanted to get the whole thing behind me, and not because I'm particularly smart, but I finished up in two-and-a-half years. I went to school every single summer and all the regular semesters as well and I graduated on August ... 14th, I think it was, of 1948, and then, went to work for General Electric the following Monday.

SH: You were there all summer long. Did most of the other veterans do the same thing you did?

HJ: Well, there were a lot of people [who] went to school during the summer, yes. Now, during the summers, I used to commute back up to my home. I had an old Pontiac that took me back and forth.

SH: How soon after you came home did you buy a car?

HJ: After the war?

SH: Yes.

HJ: Well, it was half owned by my brother and half by myself. We each paid three hundred dollars. [laughter]

SH: Were any of your brothers going to school then?

HJ: No, they were both younger. ... My parents had four children in five years, so, we're all fairly close and both of my brothers actually did go to Rutgers. They were both in the service, but ... neither one of them graduated. They spent time there, and then, they went out and went to work.

SH: What social activities were there for veterans?

HJ: Can't say that there were a lot. You know, I participated in inter-fraternity games and things like that, but, again, I was not in organized sports. Then, of course, there were always things going on in the fraternities, people to talk to, and they'd have social events and things like that.

SH: After living on Easton Avenue, where did you live?

HJ: That was when I went out to the Edison Barracks.

SH: You were sort of a preceptor.

HJ: Yes, preceptor is what they used to call us.

SH: What was it like to be the preceptor for a bunch of GIs?

HJ: ... Nothing, no big deal. ... I don't remember ever even getting involved in a disciplinary situation. You know, we'd take the bus into, this is before I had the car, ... the campus in the morning and out at night.

SH: Did you ever make the trek to the New Jersey College for Women at that time?

HJ: Yes, once in a while, yes. Actually, my wife is from NJC, although I didn't really pursue her until after I graduated. [laughter] I met her, seriously, in my last semester at Rutgers. ...

SH: How did you meet her?

HJ: Well, she worked in the library. She had actually graduated from NJC, now Douglass, and our first date, I'd like to show you how unimaginative I am, ... was a bridge date [with] a fraternity brother of mine and my wife's mother and my wife. [laughter]

SH: How did you come to be in the fraternity?

HJ: Well, I was proposed by one of the other fellows and they accepted me. ...

SH: Was that in your senior year?

HJ: No, no.

SH: It is difficult to tell which year you were in, since you went straight through?

HJ: Yes, I know, it was hard, but it was probably fairly early on, because I started in the spring of '46. So, it might have been the spring or early fall of '46. You know the system; you're proposed for membership, and then, they take ballots and [make you] pledge and so forth and all that. ... Veterans were much more serious, you know. They didn't go for [hazing]; I still had to undergo a hazing and initiation and all that, but it was not as seriously, aggressively done as for the younger members of ... college.

SH: Did you live in the Deke House?

HJ: ... In my last year, I lived in the Deke House. That was a lot of fun, too.

SH: Do you know who supported your nomination?

HJ: Yes. Well, one of them was a guy named Bill Sulzberger. He's related to the Sulzbergers

of the *New York Times*. I forget exactly the routine.

SH: Who was your roommate at the Deke House?

HJ: A guy named Walter Washington Anderson, and I see he just recently died. ... He was a couple of years behind me, a very nice man, and I really enjoyed my time with him.

SH: What were your responsibilities as a member of the house?

HJ: Well, you had to study, you had to behave and you often had nice social get-togethers, dances and things like that. Back in those days, we had a housemother. Her name was Ms. Sliter and she wasn't much in view, but you knew that she knew what was going on and would control things. They didn't get into this *in loco parentis* business until the 1960s, I think it was.

SH: Did you have any interaction with the administration? Do any of the deans stand out?

HJ: No, no, I can't say I did. My wife's family knew Dr. Mason Gross very well, and so, we were always kind of close to him, but, beyond that, I would say not.

SH: Many men have Dean Metzger stories.

HJ: I know the name, but didn't really get involved [with him].

SH: Luther Martin?

HJ: Oh, I remember that. ... Yes, he was the Registrar, as I recall, a very gaunt looking man, [laughter] and I remember the former president. We called him "Whistling Willie." What was his name?

SH: Demarest.

HJ: Yes, Dr. Demarest. He was the type of a fellow that, if you were on the tennis court without a shirt on, he would call you down and tell you to put one on, very proper.

SH: When you came to Rutgers as a GI, was there still mandatory chapel?

HJ: No, because ... they had just disaffiliated from the Dutch Reformed Church, and so, that disappeared just about the time that I entered, in that spring semester.

SH: Were there any concerts or football games in particular that you remember?

HJ: Yes, I used to go to football games, but not all of them. Often times, I would go home, but I'd say I went to an average of three to four games during the time I was a student. We had a great year in 1947.

SH: You talked about some of your favorite professors. Were there some that you felt were not high caliber?

HJ: Well, I can't say that there were any that I didn't like. I knew they were all there trying to do a job. Another one that I did enjoy was a Dr. Leopold Kohr, K-O-H-R, and he was interesting, mainly because of the way he had decided the future of the world. You know, he had sliced up all the countries into manageable segments, so that no one nation would be strong enough to subject the others to their rule, and he was interesting. ... Professor George, of course, was a character. ... I've quoted some of the things that he said a number of times in the past fifty-five years.

SH: How have you stayed affiliated with Rutgers?

HJ: Not real closely, because, when we first got married, we moved up to Schenectady, New York. I went to work for General Electric and I was there for fifteen years. ... That was a good haul back in those days, before they got the Interstate and the Thruway system. It was ... over five hours from New Brunswick, so, I didn't really get down too often, but I've managed to go to almost all of the five-year reunions. I've enjoyed seeing some of my fellow students and fraternity brothers, and so forth, over the years.

SH: What did you do with General Electric?

HJ: Well, I was in ... what they called a training program. Are you familiar with the "loop" training program? You know, it's where they train you in different areas, and then, they decide in what area of management, maybe, you should wind up. ... My training was in something called the business training course, financial management, and then, I had several management jobs before I left General Electric in 1962 and took a job with Mack Trucks, which, as you know, ... was located in New Brunswick at one time and, at that time, was headquartered in Plainfield, New Jersey. ... I was with them for fifteen years. ... Then, another fellow and I, another Mack Trucks employee, also from Montclair, who was of Swedish parentage, applied to become a Mack Dealer. Neither one of us had any money, but, between cashing in my retirement plan and borrowing some money from my father, and I don't know how he got his, ... we were fifty-fifty partners and became the ... Mack Dealer here in the Harrisburg area. ... We were together until 1991, when I bought out his interests, and then I was a dealer until the end of '98, when I sold the business to another Mack Dealer. ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----
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SH: This is tape two, side one, of an interview with Mr. Helge V. Jespersen on June 24, 2003. You were telling me about your contract.

HJ: ... We—the new owner and I—worked out a five-year contract where I would be employed by him, which has worked out very well. They're nice people and, you know, we've had a good working relationship. This contract ends at the end of this year, by the way.

SH: What are your plans for the future?

HJ: Well, I don't know. My wife thinks I'm crazy, but I'm going to try to do something, maybe not full-time, but at least try to keep busy. You've got to keep your mind alert or you lose it.

SH: You and your wife were married in 1949.

HJ: Yes, January of 1949. ... We were married in St. Paul's Catholic Church in Highland Park on January 15th of 1949, and we have been married fifty-four years now.

SH: Congratulations.

HJ: Yes, thank you, she's a wonderful woman.

SH: You said that you met her in the library.

HJ: Yes, she worked as a librarian. She actually has two bachelor's degrees, ... one in history and one in library science. So, she was working in the library and that's where I found her.
[laughter]

SH: After you were married, did she continue to work at the library?

HJ: Well, no. She moved up to Schenectady, New York, where I had been working since August of 1948. ... She got a job in the General Electric library. It wasn't exactly *the* library, it was in one of their divisions, but [she was] doing, essentially, library type of work and she worked there until July of 1950, when our first child came along.

SH: Would you like to talk about your children?

HJ: Oh, I'm proud to. We have seven. Katherine, now Katherine Hill, is our oldest. ... For a while, we lived in northern New Jersey and they went to school there, after I joined Mack Trucks. We lived in Elizabeth for awhile, for two years. Then, we went to Allentown and we bought a home there and that's where most of the kids spent their formative years. Our next [child] was our son, Peter. ... He is currently working with Merrill Lynch and he was born in December of 1951. He was educated, ... went for a while to St. Joseph's in Philadelphia, and then he was in the service, overseas, ... and then, went to West Chester College and that's where he got his degree, in government. ... Then, our son, Eric, ... started out in Loyola in Baltimore, and then, he dropped out for a little while. Then, he went to SUNY of New York and finished his undergraduate degree, and then, he got a graduate degree at Syracuse University, also in New York. ... He's currently working for a firm that does global positioning systems out of Lancaster. Rettew is the name of the company. He and another one of his college buddies had a business of their own for a while, but they closed that up and he went to work for Rettew. ... Eric was born on January 30th of 1954, and then, our son, Allan, was born March 21st of 1956. ... He started college, but he didn't finish and he's currently teaching computer science. ...

Then, Edward was next. He was [born] November 5th of 1957 and he ... graduated from St. Joseph's College in Philadelphia, and then, joined the Air Force. ... He served twenty years in the Air Force and he finished up as a lieutenant colonel. He was a navigator in the US Air Force and he got out after his twentieth year and, oh, I should mention, also has a master's degree. ... He went to Golden State University in 1990. That was when he was stationed out west. Then, our daughter, Mimi, Marian is her name, went to the Catholic University of America and graduated in 1982 and she's married to Steve Harvey, an attorney in Philadelphia. Lastly, our son, Neil, chose not ... to go on to college. He graduated from Bishop McDevitt High School, here in Harrisburg, and then worked with Bell of Pennsylvania. ... He was killed in a hunting accident in 1998. So, that's the history of the children. We have eighteen grandchildren.

SH: I will not ask you for all their birth dates.

HJ: Thank you. [laughter]

SH: You did very well.

HJ: I'd be hard pressed to remember all of them.

SH: Does your family live fairly close?

HJ: ... The furthest away is Edward, who is in Centerville, Ohio, which is a suburb of Dayton. ... They're only seven to eight hours driving time away. So, we get together several times a year, the whole family.

SH: Did any of your children serve in Vietnam?

HJ: No, not Vietnam. My son, Peter, was the only other one who was actually in the military, and he served in the Army. He enlisted during the Vietnam era and served for ... thirty-two months in Berlin, not bad duty. [laughter] ...

SH: Did you stay in the Reserves after you were separated from the military?

HJ: Well, I did, actually, for a short period of time, and I was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and I had that when I went up to Schenectady, but, after the first two children came along, and I had a job which GE said was critical; whether it was or not, I don't know. ... I decided to get out of the Reserves.

SH: Were you concerned that you might be called up for Korea?

HJ: Well, I don't know that that ever really came up. You know, they said I was needed there ... and, with having two young children, that seemed like a logical thing to do.

SH: You obviously spoke Danish. Did you grow up speaking both languages?

HJ: Yes, yes. ... Of course, I went to public schools in Montclair and, you know, you learn English quickly on the street. There were a lot of kids in our neighborhood that we associated with. ... I didn't really ever have too much trouble with language.

SH: Did your parents speak the Danish language at home?

HJ: Yes, we always spoke Danish at home. Mainly, they did that, although they never told us why, but they did it with the idea in mind that we would eventually all be going back to Denmark. ... Of course, any time I talk to my siblings on the phone now, we always have to say a few words in Danish to each other.

SH: You have all kept that up.

HJ: Yes, yes.

SH: Did you teach any of your children?

HJ: They know a few words, ... like, when you get up from the dinner table, you say, "*Tak for mad*," and then, ... the response is, "*Vel bekomme*," or, "You're welcome," a few others like that. ... Some of them have learned more than others. ... You know, some people have more of a facility for languages than do others.

SH: You have discussed some of your later travels.

HJ: Yes. Well, ... I've been fortunate. Number one, I did a little traveling in my jobs. ... During my career with Mack Trucks, I got to spend half a year in Australia, ... lovely country. We were in Queensland, Brisbane.

SH: Did you take the family?

HJ: No, I wasn't able to take the family. In fact, they said that I could, but we had one child graduating from high school and another from college. ... My wife said I made a unilateral decision, but we didn't think that it ... would be particularly good for them to be uprooted like that. ... So, I got to travel a little both when I was with General Electric and with Mack Trucks. ... In connection with being a dealer, there's not much travel involved there, except when you go to dealer meetings ... in different areas of the country. You know, they schedule them in different areas, like, Mack Trucks had one ... meeting in Bermuda and a couple in Tampa, Florida, and a couple in Texas. ... Then, my wife and I have done a little traveling on our own. I've been to Italy five times. It's lovely. I love that place. You know, it's the seat of [the] Renaissance and there's so much to see over there. ... I did get to spend three weeks in Denmark, my wife and I, in 1979 and got to see a few of my parents' generation before they died. They're all gone now, of course, and so are some of my cousins. In fact, we're planning on going back for a week this fall, because they're all getting older. ... The three that I know the best, ... well, two of them are in their eighties and I think one of them is in her seventies. So, we're hoping to spend a little time with them.

SH: Where is your family from?

HJ: Well, they all live in the Copenhagen area. My mother grew up in Jutland, which is the peninsula, and her father was a Lutheran minister in Denmark and had a parish up in a little place called Lemvig, in Jutland. We visited that parish and then visited Fyn. That's the island in the middle, where my father spent a good bit of time, although my father was originally from Copenhagen. ... We've been fortunate to see a good bit of the world. ... My wife and I are currently members of the Friendship Force. Have you ever heard of them? It's an organization that was started by President Jimmy Carter, the idea being to have people exchange and go to different parts of the world, so as to promote friendship and brotherhood. ... My wife has done more of that than I have. She's been to Japan and France and we were in Russia, in St. Petersburg, together in the early '90s, right after *glasnost*. We've also been to Chile with them and in Brazil, on business. Well, we've been fortunate enough to do some traveling.

SH: What are your hobbies or passions now?

HJ: ... Well, I walk. I go to the gym and do a lot of reading and I like classical music and a little travel. That's about it.

SH: How do you think the war impacted you?

HJ: You know, I hate to say this, ... because I just wasn't mature enough really to think about it. In retrospect, of course, it was a catastrophic event in our history and the ideologies that led up to the war, you know, have caused millions and millions of deaths, not just from the war itself, but also the imposition of these ideologies. ... I do believe that, and I'm quite concerned now about Islam. I think that we need to look seriously at Islam and what it stands for. You know, I want to be fair to the Muslims, but, at the same time, I know that, ... with lulls in-between, ... from the time Islam started in the seventh century, there's been conflict. Several times, the Western World has been on the verge of being overrun. So, that's something for the future to solve.

SH: Have you stayed involved with your church or the Boy Scouts?

HJ: Yes. I'm a Catholic and I'm very active. I am involved in a number of committees and activities and my faith has been a most wonderful event in my life.

SH: At this point, if you have anything that you would like to put on the tape that I forgot to ask you about, please do.

HJ: Well, no, only to say that this is an interesting ... thing that Rutgers is doing, and I hope some day to see, not so much my situation, but to see some kind of a summation of what comes out of this program. So, thank you very much for having listened; I'm sure I'm not anywhere near as exciting as some of your other interviewees. [laughter]

SH: I am always impressed by your generation's humility. Again, thank you very much.

HJ: Well, thank you.

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Reviewed by Thomas O'Toole 10/26/05
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/13/06
Reviewed by Helge V. Jespersen 7/27/06