

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE A. JOHANNESSEN

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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DANVILLE, CALIFORNIA

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with George A. Johannessen on August 23, 2007, in Danville, California, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Matthew Lawrence: ... Matt Lawrence ...

Jessica Thomson Illingworth: ... Jessica Thomson Illingworth.

SI: This interview is made possible in part by a grant from the Rutgers Alumni Association, who gave us some funds to help defray the cost of traveling out here. Dr. Johannessen, thank you very much for having us in your home and for agreeing to this interview.

George A. Johannessen: It's a pleasure.

SI: Okay, to begin, could you tell us where and when you were born?

GJ: I was born in Seattle, Washington, on January 10, 1919.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about your family background, beginning with your father?

GJ: My father and mother were born and raised in Denmark and they came to the United States in 1914.

Patricia M. Johannessen [Spouse]: '14.

GJ: 1914, they came West and first settled in Kamloops, New Jersey. My oldest sister, Anna, was born in Kamloops, British Columbia, and Kirsten, the next one, was probably also born there. They first to Seattle then to New Jersey. ... My father worked for Standard Oil Company in New York, and then the family settled in West Englewood, New Jersey.

GJ: I was [born in] Seattle, and then, there was my brother, John, who was born in Denmark. My brother Neil, my brother, Hugh, and my sister, Joan were born in Teaneck, NJ. That ... made up the family.

SI: Those younger siblings were all born in New Jersey.

GJ: No.

PJ: John was born in Denmark.

GJ: Oh, John was born in Denmark. [laughter] That's right. They went to Denmark and John was born there. ... He had a tough time after the war, trying to prove [he was a US citizen]. They were glad to take him, but, after he got out, he's got all these rules and regulations, "Well, what are you? You were born in Denmark," you know. ... Actually, the four boys, my brothers and me, all served in the service in World War II. I was in the medics, Army medics, and John was a pilot in B-17s with the Eighth Air Force stationed in England. He used up three B-17s on twenty-five missions. Neil was in the Merchant Marine, and then, he got commissioned an

ensign in the Navy, Hugh, the youngest one, was in the Merchant Marine during WWII; and he later served in Korea.

JJ: Are you saying that your family came here, and then, went back to Denmark?

GJ: For a visit.

PJ: Just for a temporary [stay], yes.

JJ: For a visit.

GJ: And the reason they came to the US was, they thought that the children would have a better life in the United States; nothing wrong with Denmark, of course. Our eldest sister Anna married a Dane and lived there during World War II. Much of our Danish family served in the underground during World War II. Anna died during that period of war in Denmark.

PJ: Of course.

SI: Did they ever tell you any stories about what their life was like in Denmark?

GJ: Well, actually, see that picture up there?

SI: Yes.

GJ: That's A. P. Moller of Denmark, and his son is Maersk Mc-Kinney Moller, who, last year, was named "Man of the Century in Denmark." ... My grandfather; Johannes Nissen Bonnesen.

PJ: He took in the young Mr. Moller who served as an apprentice in his farm store.

GJ: Yes, yes. My grandfather had a big farm store that sold lumber, coal, food and other items.

PJ: Like a farm supply.

GJ: Big, big store in Denmark, and this guy was getting his apprenticeship, and so, when he was finished with that, he lived in my grandfather's home and he wanted to build ships. Well, you know, [he was] a young guy. So, my grandfather helped finance their first ship and, today, his son, Maersk Mc-Kinney Moller, is the man that I just said was voted "Man of the Century in Denmark" last [year], 2006. He heads up the Maersk Line, the biggest shipping company in the world.

PJ: It is the biggest.

SI: The cargo and tanker ships, yes.

GJ: Yes, and, fortunately, I hung ... onto a couple of their shares, [laughter] which is nice, but wonderful people, and I kept up my contacts with Maersk all these years. He just turned ninety-four and remains active as the head of the company.

SI: Wow. The Danish people are famous for being a seafaring people.

GJ: Oh, yes, yes. They were ... the original ones, you know, ... those funny ships and everything, [the Vikings]. [laughter]

SI: Did your father get a job with Standard Oil and that was what brought him to New Jersey, or did he just come to New Jersey and find a job?

GJ: I'm not sure how that happened, but, apparently, he made friends with somebody and they hired him at Standard Oil-Jersey, working out of New York, and his final office was in the Rockefeller Center and he retired from there.

SI: What were your parents' names, for the record?

GJ: My father's George J. W. Johannessen. My mother's name was Anna Bonnesen.

PJ: One "S."

GJ: One "S," Bonnesen, E-N.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside the home?

GJ: No, she was busy with seven children. [laughter]

SI: I can imagine. Where in New Jersey did they settle?

GJ: West Englewood, New Jersey. That's in Bergen County, and where we lived was about five miles from where they built the George Washington Bridge. ... When that was built, my father used to take the bus over the George Washington Bridge, get on the subway and go to his office.

PJ: And, prior to that, he took the ferry.

GJ: Yes, before the bridge was built. The bridge went up in about '36 or so.

SI: You were probably there when they were building the bridge.

GJ: Oh, yes, yes.

SI: What are some of your earliest memories of growing up in West Englewood?

GJ: Well, [I had] a lot of friends around there and I shoveled the snow in the wintertime and, as I grew up, I worked in the grocery store for a dollar-and-a-half a week, six days a week. ... I

used to get tips, but I delivered groceries on my bicycle and the tire cost ninety-eight cents and, [as] I said, we got a dollar-and-a-half a week [laughter] and there weren't very many tips in those years. That was probably 1931 or somewhere in there, 1930, '30, '31, and so on, but I did that pretty regularly, while I [was in school], and then, I shoveled snow in the wintertime.

SI: Were you involved in any organizations or activities?

GJ: Yes, Boy Scouts.

SI: Okay.

GJ: Yes, I was big in the Boy Scouts. ... I never got my Eagle Scout. ... I'm a Life Scout, but I finally figured I'd better get the Eagle and I got about five merit badges [towards the Eagle rank], but I did not get civics and, to this day, I can kick myself. ... I might go back and get the civics, [laughter] but that's why I'm not an Eagle Scout. I was a junior assistant, Scoutmaster and did a lot of camping and Scouting.

SI: Would you go camping in the local area or would you go to a camp?

GJ: Well, the Scoutmaster would take us, our troop, up to Branchville, New Jersey, where there was a nice lake, and we had a little camp there and I'd spend two weeks there, my brother, too. So, that was nice, did a lot of hiking. ... Snake hunting was my favorite action, up near Branchville, New Jersey, up in the Allegheny Mountains there, and we used to catch; what's the name of that snake? There's eighteen species of rattlesnakes and this was a *Crotalus horridus* [a timber or banded rattlesnake]. ... Anyways, it grew about five feet long, you know, and they were poisonous, of course. ... On this one trip, we had snake sticks. You know, I had a tall one, [just] in case, you know, with a little fork on the end, and I was bent over by these bushes and, you know, poking in this rock and I hear the rattle. I said, "Hey, I got one," and they all [said], "Good, good." So, I'm crouched back there, you know, and they all came and we prod him out and I looked down there and there's a whole pile of rattlesnakes right by my tail, [laughter] but we prodded them out and we got five. We never got the guy that was under there, but we got the five rattlesnakes, and it's [done] very carefully, you know. You're right behind the head, you know, and then, lift him up, so [that] he doesn't bite you, you know, and drop him into a burlap bag, potato sack, is what we did. ... Then, we wrapped that sack up, so [that] he couldn't come up and bite. ... My snake stick was the longest. We used that to hang the bag on and two of us carried the bag of snakes back to the camps. ... [laughter]

SI: Like a knapsack.

GJ: And we took them back and, when we got back to camp, we're trying to get him into this box with a screen cover and they ... all escaped again. We had to catch them again, [laughter] but, anyway, that was a big moment for me, to discover the rattlesnakes, and then, catch them.

SI: Wow.

GJ: ... As a matter-of-fact, ... I was taking biology. I was in the tenth grade, I guess, and I told the teacher that, you know, we caught these rattlesnakes, and I think he thought I was giving him a story, you know. [laughter] So, I told the Scoutmaster, you know, and he had these snakes, so, he brings them to the school, the high school, and knocks on the door and he comes in and the teacher was just dumbfounded. [laughter] ... So, he took them into this little room, aside, and said, "No, we really can't have snakes in here." [laughter] So, he took them back. He sent them to the Bronx Zoo, [laughter] but that was kind of funny, because I think the teacher thought I was giving him a story.

SI: It seems like you were interested in nature pretty early in your life.

GJ: Yes, oh, yes, yes.

SI: Which schools did you go to in West Englewood?

GJ: Teaneck High School, four years there, and then, ... there, I was ... manager of the baseball team, my brother played second base, got a hit, when there was any questions, we got a brand-new coach, a young fellow from the University of Pennsylvania, had studied journalism. ... He had written a big article about a five-thousand-acre farm that Karl King had become the manager of, ... signed up for twenty years, twenty-five years, for this five-thousand-acre farm, and this young man had written a story about it. ... So, I told him, I said, "One day," I said, "the old man, he said to me, he says, 'Get a job, be a farmer, be a sea captain, be your own boss, the few hairs I have left on my head are turning gray working for a big corporation.'" So, I told the coach this. He says, "I'll get you a job on a farm." I says, "Get me the job." I went home and I told my father. I says, "I'm going to Pennsylvania this summer to work on King Farms." "Whoa, whoa," you know; so, he invited Marty Wright and his wife to dinner. They were charming people, ... you know, the real McCoy, and so, off I went. ... Here, it was twenty cents an hour, and this was in my junior year vacation, and I lived with about eighteen college men from Rutgers, Penn State and Cornell in a boarding house. ... I made twenty cents an hour and paid a dollar a day, room and board, and worked thirteen-and-a-half hours a day and, you know, big deal, half-hour for lunch. ... Then, when I went back to finish my senior year, it was a different world, because I had been just sort of a nobody, but these guys, you know, they were impressed. I'd been down on King Farms and all this and that, and so, it was quite an interesting revelation to me. So, when I graduated high school, I went back there, to King Farms, and lived in the boarding house and I made good friends, you know, from Rutgers, Penn State and Cornell, and that was wonderful. They made twenty-five cents an hour, [laughter] but I finally got on dusting the crops at night and I got thirty cents an hour for that. So, I saved 230 dollars and I had a friend from Rutgers whose father was a professor at Rutgers, his father, Lyman Schermerhorn Sr. was the head of the Vegetable Crops Department and a very wonderful man, and his son and I became good friends. We were in the same room in the boarding house at King Farms knew I didn't have any money. So, there was the ... Phelps House at Rutgers, "Alpha Phalpa House" is what we called it, and Professor [Frank G.] Helyar of the Ag School talked the University into letting him have the house for guys that needed an education and deserved one who didn't have much money. So, I was selected to go to the "Alpha Phalpa House" as a freshman, where we paid a nickel for breakfast, ten cents for lunch and a quarter for supper, and everybody had chores. The freshmen and sophomores did the dishes and things like that, and then, the juniors

and seniors had special jobs. I had the fires in my junior and senior year, the hot water thing, and then, the heating [of] the house. So, when it was no hot water, I'd hear about it. [laughter] So, that was my job and my last two years there, where I received a wonderful education. ...

PJ: Plus, you had your State Scholarship.

GJ: Oh, yes. I had a-hundred-dollar scholarship. In those days, you know, that was a lot of money, a state school, and, in my sophomore year, the dean called me in, [at the] downtown college, Rutgers downtown ...

SI: Was it [Dean] Metzger?

GJ: Metzger, yes.

SI: Okay.

GJ: Yes, Metzger, right, and he told me about a two-hundred-dollar scholarship. I thought, "Boy, that would really be something," you know. "So, well, come back, see me in about a week." So, a week went by and I didn't hear anything. I went back. ... I said, "I was wondering about that scholarship." "Oh, you got that." [laughter] So, he just didn't tell me. So, I had my two-hundred-dollar scholarship and I had jobs in the greenhouse. On Sundays, I worked in the greenhouse and I went out for crew and that was a great experience and I made the freshman crew, and then, I made the varsity crew, sophomore, junior, senior, and was co-captain in the last year, where we went to Poughkeepsie for the first time, the Poughkeepsie Regatta, which Rutgers, in their rowing, [had never reached before]. I was in the first boat all that time and we were rowing Columbia, Harvard, Boston College and Wisconsin and ... Yale, all the big schools, and we were never quite there, until, finally, we beat Pennsylvania and that gave us an invitation, kind of, really, to Poughkeepsie, in my senior year, and I was co-captain that year. ... As a matter-of-fact, I got drafted in my senior year and I'm going to row on June 23rd, or whatever it was, in '41. This is before the war. So, I got drafted and I said to the draft board, I said, "Hey," I says, "I've got to row at Poughkeepsie in June." [laughter] "You've got a three-week deferment." So, I got a deferment to row the Poughkeepsie Regatta, a big four-mile race. That was a "big mamou," you know. That was the biggest there is, you know. We didn't win it at all. We were in the middle of the pack. Washington won, and I think California was second and Cornell, probably, third, but we were there, and then, of course, I went right away to Uncle Sam, [laughter] went in at Fort Dix and, after a week or two fooling around there, you know, started getting oriented. Then, I went to Camp Lee, Virginia, for basic training as an Army medic.

SI: Before we get too far into your military experience, can we ask some questions about Rutgers and before?

GJ: Yes, oh, yes.

SI: What about the Great Depression? How do you remember that affecting your family or your neighborhood?

GJ: Oh, well, as I say, I shoveled snow and the way I got my jobs [was], a lot of guys would go around, two or three guys, you know, and so, "Whoosh," they do a job. ... I was alone. So, I figured the way to get the job is to go [early]. When it started to snow, I'd go to these different houses, [and] say, "Could I shovel your snow when it stops snowing?" "Yes. How much?" "Fifty cents." "Fine, you can." So, I got ... work up to here. [laughter] If it was a heavy snow, I wouldn't finish until midnight, you know. So, that was what I did there, and what was I telling you about now?

SI: About the Great Depression.

GJ: Yes, ... and then, I went to work in the (Eagle?) Grocery Store for a dollar-and-a-half a week. That was ... six days a week, and all day Saturday, from eighty-thirty until ten o'clock at night, with a half-hour off for lunch. So, I was hoping to get some tips. Well, I didn't get much in the Depression and, one time, on a Saturday, I came home; ... I'd driven my bicycle, you know, to deliver these big Los Angeles crates, you know, the wooden crate with the partition in the middle. That was heavy, with canned goods in it, you know. ... If they get tipped off, I'd sometimes run right into the street there, spill them, ... but I delivered them and this lady gave me, after a very long ride that day, I never forgot it, and she gave me three cents, at home for lunch, [laughter] and I told my father. "George," he said, "don't ever ... take that." He says, "Just tell them, 'You know, you need that more than I do,'" ... but I'd take anything I could get, see. [laughter] So, that was the Depression years and they were kind of thin, you know, for everybody.

JJ: Was your father ever in danger of losing his job?

PJ: Everybody took cuts in their salary, again and again and again.

GJ: ... I do believe he suffered some, whether it was time off or what, but he suffered some, yes, but he hung on. ... It was seven children in the house, you know. Well, of course, it wasn't seven at that time, but it ended up with seven, and we ate well and my mother was a great cook, and I am, too. [laughter] So, when my mother would take the two girls, the two oldest girls, older than me, out, ... I would fix the supper, you know, and ... it was always this round steak, you know. [laughter] You know the round steak? yes, and get an onion, cut it up and, in a big iron skillet, fried that in butter and the onion, then, do the salt and pepper, three minutes on each side, that's it, then, mashed potatoes and that was it, very simple.

PJ: It was good.

GJ: Elegant meal, yes, [laughter] simple. So, I learned to cook early on, because my mother had things to do with the older girls, take them to the shop or something.

SI: Did your family keep any Danish traditions alive in your household, perhaps the language or holidays?

GJ: Well, they ... had their Danish friends, of course, and there were many of them, and ... the American friends, too, of course. ... I can remember one [time], all these Danish gals, old ladies

and guys, you know, just visiting and we had a big house, you know, big living room and all that, and so, they had their Danish friends and American friends, too, quite a few.

SI: Did they cook a lot of the food that they cooked in Denmark?

GJ: Oh, my mother was a great cook. ... Somebody told me that my mother's family had the best cook in Denmark, see, so, I told somebody [else] and they just razzed the hell out of me and I said to my mother, I said, "Well, I told them; I said you had the best cook in Denmark." My mother said "Yes, we did." ... She came from that side of the family, you know what I mean?
...

PJ: What was the most Danish recipe that your mother made? Was it the ...

GJ: Rice porridge, *risengrod*.

PJ: No, no, no. I was thinking of the rice porridge with the ...

GJ: Oh, yes. At Christmastime, we always had *risengrod*, rice porridge with one peeled almond. Okay, it's pure white, you know what I mean? ...

PJ: Made with cream and butter.

GJ: Yes, and [there would] be butter in the middle of the bowl ... and there was a peeled almond in that *risengrod*, you know, ... because you couldn't tell, because it was peeled, ... and whoever got the almond got a prize. Well, when you've got a bunch of little kids, you know, "Eat your porridge," you know, that was one way [to get them to do it]. [laughter] We ate the porridge until somebody would find the almond, and [would shout], "Oh, I got the almond," you know. ... That was very Danish there, and then, the other thing that was Danish is that, in the United States, kids would open their packages on Christmas morning. Well, we never got to see our presents until after dinner on Christmas night, which was a big meal, tremendous meal, with all the *risengrod* and all the turkeys, or whatever they had, and so, that's when we got to open up our packages. Well, we put so much pressure on them that you could pick one for ... Christmas morning. So, there were all these packages, you know, and we had been feeling them all, you know, [laughter] and so, we could pick any one we wanted, that had our name on [it]. ... So, we got one present Christmas morning, and then, with the rest of it, we had to wait until not only the big dinner, but until the ladies finished the dishes and everything, you know, and my father and his friend, Mr. Dinhsen, a visitor there, would be in the living room and the tree's [got] all lights on it. ... We'd have to wait until the girls came out and were finished with the dishes, and then, they would open the packages, you know, one after the other, see, but that was very nerve-wracking for a kid, to wait. [laughter] We did have the stockings, of course, that were opened on Christmas morning. Everybody had a stocking at the end of the bed.

PJ: Did you have the Danish flags on your Christmas tree?

GJ: Oh, yes, yes, the little paper flags, you know, like in a string of flags. So, our tree always had that, and we even have them here, too, little flags, you just, you know, wrap around the tree.

SI: That is great.

GJ: Yes.

SI: You mentioned that your parents, at least, went back to Denmark. Did the whole family go? Did you ever go back to Denmark?

GJ: Oh, yes, years later Patty and I went to Denmark.

PJ: I don't know what you're going to say.

GJ: When Mother's sister said, "Oh, you were born in my bed." I said, "No, no, no." [laughter] See, she remembered John, my brother, who was born in her bed, apparently, and she thought I was [him], ... this nice, little Danish gal. She was eighty years old, I guess, high-heeled shoes on, just looked like a teenager, in a way, you know. [laughter] Yes, but, so, we were just there for a visit.

SI: After you were married?

GJ: Oh, yes, we've been there. ...

PJ: Several times.

GJ: Yes. We were there when they celebrated the fiftieth year of the end of World War II.

SI: Okay.

GJ: Oh, yes, and the Queen of Denmark spoke there and the Danes were big in Underground [resistance movements in German-occupied areas]. They were the ones that saved the Jews, you know, and they got them in their little boats and they took them right over to Sweden and they emptied all the Jews out of Denmark before the Germans could, you know, do their damage, but what was I going to say now?

SI: You were talking about being there for the fiftieth anniversary.

PJ: The end of the occupation.

GJ: ... Yes, the big celebration, because Denmark was big in Underground, you know, very big, and my family was in the Underground. ... One of the family, ... he didn't come home, because he didn't want any trouble for his wife and the Germans were there. ... One time, when the Germans had hoisted a German flag, and the Danish King used to ride out on his horse every day, he was a big, tall guy, his feet almost touched the ground, he was that tall, ... he told [them], "Get that flag down," and then, this guy says, "Well, whoever takes it down will be shot." He says, "I'm the soldier [responsible]. Take it down. Get that down." So, he made them take that Nazi flag down. Denmark was very active in the Underground. Anyway, on this anniversary we

all marched together in the walking street [the *Stroget*] in Copenhagen, a very famous, wonderful street, the Danish and Norwegian military, and the Underground, everyone, and with the Danes, and so on, and other friends ...

PJ: The British.

GJ: The British. ... Well, they all marched down the walking street in Denmark. It was a wonderful day and I would run alongside, you know, ... walk with the British for a while, and then, walk with the Danish Underground, and so, I had a great time. ... I was so proud to be there, you know, after World War II, fifty years later. ... Then, the Queen spoke at the big square there and that was a very memorable time. Yes, that was nice.

SI: Your family has always maintained close ties with your relatives in Denmark.

GJ: Oh, yes, oh, yes, yes.

SI: As the 1930s progressed and Hitler's territorial ambitions became clear, do you remember if they were hearing anything from their relatives in Europe about if they were afraid of the Germans, their power and so forth?

GJ: Well, my oldest sister had married a Dane and she was over there and she died over there during that period of time, and I'm not sure; all I know is that the ambulance, that's about as far as she got.

PJ: They stopped the ambulance, because they were stopping all the vehicles ...

GJ: Anyway, she didn't make it.

PJ: ... and she did not make it to the hospital.

GJ: And so, my mother's family was in the Underground, yes.

PJ: And your mother used to send packages all the time.

GJ: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Yes, they'd send all kinds of goodies. They'd also send me things, when I was overseas, you know. [laughter] ... Unfortunately, at Christmastime, in the tropics, you know, right fifty miles south of the Equator, wherever I was this one Christmas, or two Christmases there, here were these packages, you know, Christmas packages for the troops, which the military made every effort to get [to] the troops, Christmas presents, packages. ... I can still see [myself] sitting there on the cot, opening these things, and then, dropping them into the garbage can, because they had either been smashed up or whatever, but it was very sad, because they were nicely packaged and weren't packaged well enough, you know, to stand the trip. I never forgot that, because that was, you know, all that love and everything that had come all that way and it ended up ...

SI: Yes. A lot of people we have interviewed who were in the Pacific or in the tropics say that. Things get rotten and moldy.

GJ: Yes, yes, that was tough, yes.

SI: Do you remember any discussions in your family about if there was a war coming or if America should get involved in what was happening overseas?

GJ: Oh, yes. My father was ... right up to the minute on everything. He was a very intelligent guy and very involved and very [into the] *New York Times*, from page one to the end of it on Sundays, you know what I mean? So, he was very, very well educated and very thoughtful about everything and, of course, he followed that, developments, right to the minute, but [there was] nothing he could do but let his boys go. [laughter]

ML: Do you remember if he was in favor of the conflict? Did he think America should have been isolationist?

GJ: Oh, he was no isolationist. No, he was absolutely behind what we were trying to do and what we did do, and we whipped their ass, I'll tell you that, [laughter] and, of course, the Japanese thing came on top of it. ... We're sort of facing that kind of a world right now, where ... we want to give everybody a chance to live right, you know, and Bush is being criticized for sticking around over there with Iraq. ... Yet, if we walked away, you know, it would go from bad to worse and, you know, what it is now, ... every day in the paper, you read about fifty people were killed yesterday, this one, that [one], ... blowing up, I mean, every town, and it never ends, just doesn't stop. So, no, we were firmly behind [the] World War II goal that we had. We had to defend ourselves. That's how it works, and then, the lousy Japanese jumped in there to take advantage of the [situation], thought they could, you know, cut a fat hog when we were fully involved with Germany, but they got their comeuppance [laughter] when we dropped that atom [bomb]. As a matter-of-fact, the first B-29s; ... after a year-and-a-half in Belem, [Brazil], I was shifted to a little bigger station hospital at Natal, [Brazil]. That's at the point of South America which is the shortest point for our South Atlantic flights of Africa-Sicily-Italy, replacements for the Eighth Air Force, China-Burma-India. So, that was the South Atlantic route, was where I was. I was in the airport, and what was I going to tell you about it?

SI: You were talking about the B-29s.

GJ: Yes. So, the first B-29, when I was shifted to this bigger hospital, and [got] a little promotion there, and the first B-29s came through Natal. I often wondered, "Why would they come through Natal?" Anyway, one night, about ten o'clock at night, the whole sky lit up, the whole sky lit up. A B-29 blew [up] on the take-off, and one guy, there was eleven, I think, killed, ... or twelve killed, and there's one guy, probably the navigator, ... it's a long, long plane, he was blown right out of that plane, way out into the bushes. He broke his little finger. That's all that happened to him, and I think there was something else wrong with him, but he broke his little finger. He was in the hospital there. So, it was something besides the finger, but that was all, really, damaged. Well, of course, the other guys were, you know, really ...

SI: Probably incinerated.

GJ: ... smashed, yes, but I still, to this day, wonder, "Why did they come through Natal?" because they came out of Saipan when they were doing the bombing. So, they never asked me. [laughter]

SI: Talking about your time at Rutgers, you entered in 1937. That was your first year.

GJ: After graduation in June 1936 I went to work on King Farms for a year-and-a-half and entered Rutgers in the fall of 1937. Oh, yes, yes. So, I had 230 dollars saved up for Rutgers. Yes. So, it was a year-and-a-half, in other words, after I got out of high school. There, I was working for twenty cents an hour and, finally, get up to twenty-five cents an hour, and then, if I was dusting at night, I'd get thirty cents an hour. So, I did that, and I didn't start saving until near the end, [laughter] you know, and I saved 231 dollars. That's what I had when I went to Rutgers. ...

JJ: Were you working with the goal of saving for college?

GJ: Well, I started late, you know. I knew I [should]. You know, when you're making thirty, twenty-five, thirty cents an hour and paying a dollar a day room and board out of that, there's not much left. ... I realized that, by this time, that I was accepted to go to Rutgers, so, I started saving my money very [earnestly] and working at night was very helpful, because I sleep in the daytime and work at night. You're not ...

PJ: Couldn't spend it.

GJ: You're pretty well tied down to the ranch there, [laughter] you know, and that's what I went to school with. As I say, everybody put in five bucks at the beginning of the year and you got some back at the end of the year, but it was a nickel for breakfast, ... ten cents for lunch and a quarter for supper. ... Two guys had to go in on a can of soup, like Campbell's Soup, and we'd have field trips to go to Campbell's Soup and they'd give you four cans of soup. ... You'd bring them home, you know. ... The other thing at the Phelps House, "Alpha Phalpa House," everybody got a quart of Rutgers creamline milk for breakfast, at a cost of ten cents for breakfast. The bottle of milk costs nine cents, and we had one guy assigned to get the milk every morning, and so, everybody had a quart of milk sitting on his space and you can imagine, it's fifteen guys, you know, with fifteen quarts of milk sitting there, and so, they had this paper cap, you remember? I don't know if you ever knew milk caps, ... not just a little thing ...

PJ: They wouldn't remember. [laughter]

GJ: There was a cap that went over the top of the milk thing and you'd write your name on it, you know, and put it in the icebox there, and then, you'd come home, the thing is down that far or that far and there's still some [left]. Well, every once in a while, some guy'd come in and his milk is down [here], "Hey, who's been in my milk?" [laughter] "Old Doc Phelps," it was the Phelps House, Dr. Phelps had owned that house previously, and so, whenever anybody's milk was shorted, it was, "Doc Phelps had been there," [laughter] you know, but that happened fairly

often. [laughter] So, [someone would] get the other guy's milk. Maybe they're finished with their own, but it was quite a sight to see a quart of milk at every place on this long table and, as I say, for lunch, two guys had to go in on a can of soup. ...

SI: When you were working during the day, what kind of things would you do?

GJ: Well, originally, I was helping the bean checker. They picked a lot of beans. Say it's a thousand-acre field or a five-hundred-acre field of beans or something, ... you got a whole bunch of people from Trenton, from Bristol, Pennsylvania. So, they'd come every day and they would pick and they would get twelve cents for a hamper of beans picked. They would bring that hamper [in], one or two, and college checkers, from Cornell, Rutgers, and so on, would punch their cart in. Checkers got twenty-five cents an hour, I got twenty, and I would open up the stations for them to dump these into these twenty-one pound full baskets, with bushel baskets set out for the hampers, and put lids on them when full. Well, for me, I would set out the bushels, you know, separate them, so [that] there'd be six dozen, you know, ... all stacked together, ... and spread them out, with lids between every two bushels. They'd fill them and they'd lid them, and then, I would stack them, and then, when the truck guy come along, I'd help, you know, throw them to him and he'd pile them. ... Then, he'd [say], "Go on up and open up another station." Well, then, I'd race up the field, you know, because ... bean pickers were getting down the field, open up another station, ... and I did all of the work, [laughter] and these guys, all they did was check the little things, twelve cents for each hamper of beans they picked, but a couple of times, they were short of checkers and they'd let me check, and I'm sixteen years old. ... I had the little puncher thing and there's supposed to be twenty-one pounds of beans per hamper. ... I could see them coming in the field, the bean [pickers]; the top of the beans are going [up and down]. I knew they were just fluffed up, you know. So, here's a six-foot-two guy, you know, he comes in, you know, and I'd take that and I'd [say], "Drop it on the ground," and it'd go down like that and I'd say, "Hey, take this back and give me, [instead of] nineteen pounds of beans, twenty-one pounds of beans." They'd look at me. ... Finally, then, this one time, all of a sudden, the bean pickers are sitting down or going to the other stations, either side of mine and (Ben Appenzela?), the bean boss, hell of a nice guy, said, "What's wrong?" I said, "It's not twenty-one pounds. It's just [short]." "Well," he says, ... "you know, if it's nineteen pounds," he said, "just tell them, 'The next time, you know, make it a little heavier,' one thing or another, see," but they would go from my section of forty rows of beans, whatever, I'd see them walking this way. [laughter] They'd shag ass this way, and so, (Ben Appenzela?), he was a hell of a nice guy. He had two boys that worked there. ... Here they are, you know, some of them quit, and then, we paid them out of a little Ford Coupe, on both sides of that, paid the big line. ... They'd get their pay, whatever their little check said, and so, they were laying for me. ... The trucks would come and take the group to Trenton or to Bristol, Pennsylvania, wherever the pickers came from, and so, I told them, ... some of my boys, I had big Steve (Repko?), you know, in the *World Book* about tearing a deck of cards into eight pieces. They were, you know, big, muscle-bound. I said, "Steve," I says, "these guys, you know, they're going to maybe get me," you know, [laughter] so, I said, "Just stick around," and I had a couple of them, and so, here's this little Ford and that line, and then, they would go through the line, then, wait there, then, get on the truck and go home. So, old Steve and ... one or two of these other big guys were there to protect me. [laughter] So, I was never beat up, but I was a candidate [laughter] to get shot down, you know, but, as I say, old (Ben Appenzela?), he saw what was going on. ...

PJ: But, you worked with crops, too. You didn't just ...

GJ: Oh, I did everything. Oh, yes, I dibbled cabbage. You ever hear of dibbling cabbage?

SI: No.

GJ: A dibble, it looks like a pistol. It's got a metal thing about that long, and then, a wooden handle like that, and your guy's dropping Brussels sprouts or cabbage, one, two, he's got a big bushel with these plants in them and the dibbler guy come along. ... Then, you know, I mean, you're bent over all day long, you know, and I'll tell you, that's one of the toughest jobs in the world, dibbling cabbage. ... The only time you dibbled cabbage [was] when it was raining and you couldn't run a tractor in there. So, you sank in the mud like that. Can you imagine spending eleven hours or ten-and-a-half hours going through that kind of walking and bent over and dibbling cabbage? twenty cents an hour for that.

SI: Wow.

GJ: So, that was that. That was one thing. What else? Oh, forking carrots; you know, the carrots are there. You've seen a fork spade, you know, about that tall, with the four tines?

SI: Yes.

GJ: So, you go down the row, ... like that, and loosen that up, and that row is half a mile long, you know. So, you're forking carrots, you know, and somebody else comes along, rips them out and piles them up there, and then, the guys behind them would come and tie them up, or, I guess, at the time, they had to be washed at the packing house, I guess, but that was another tough job, this thing, and the other tough job was raking beets. Now, the seeds were planted and there was a little emerging plant in these little pyramids, ready to emerge there. So, once they had started to germinate, ... the raking crew would come in and gently rake that little hill down and expose that new little plant and, now, she's going to continue to grow. Well, I could rake both ways, either right-handed or left-handed, I could switch which is fortunate. Some guys can only rake one way. So, the raking crew like a bunch of birds going down the rows, you know. You know, like the birds in the sky, some are this way and some are that way? So, I was able to switch when I'd get so tired, but some guys couldn't switch and it was tough. So, that was a tough job, for a long shift twenty cents an hour, but that was just some of the things we did.

SI: Were these college men that you were working with doing the same thing, taking some time off to raise money to pay for their tuition?

GJ: The guys that I was [with]?

SI: Yes, the guys from UPenn, Rutgers, Cornell. Were they only there for a short time, then, they went back to school?

GJ: No, no, no. Those guys were there, most of them, [for credit]. Cornell had a twelve-week requirement, two years of that, of working on a ranch, on a farm, and so, ... that's what they were doing. They were getting their credit for doing it, for working on the ranch. Rutgers didn't have that requirement, but guys from Rutgers needed money, too. ... Like Schermerhorn, he was the head of Veg Crops, well, his son, Lyman Schermerhorn, Jr., he got a job there. His father probably told him to do that, [laughter] and he and I became good friends. That's sort of the way [I went to Rutgers]. I ended up at Rutgers for several reasons. One is my friend, Schermerhorn. The other was that I was a resident of New Jersey, and so, [was entitled to] my scholarship, my one-hundred-dollar scholarship. I got a scholarship for that registration fee. I think it was one hundred dollars, and so, that's why I chose [Rutgers]. It was cheaper for me to go to Rutgers.

SI: Do you remember what your first few days and weeks at Rutgers were like? Was there a hazing period?

GJ: I don't think I got any hazing. I was pretty well broken in for that, you know what I mean? I went snipe hunting on King Farms the first time I was there. [laughter] You know, you've been snipe hunting?

SI: No.

GJ: Oh, there's a ten-thousand acre ...

PJ: They don't even know what that is. [laughter]

GJ: There's a ten-thousand-acre, leftover property from World War I. ... They used to have little railroad tracks in there. This was on King Farms, away from King Farms, five, ten miles away. ... So, we go snipe hunting. Well, I'd never heard of a damn snipe, you know what I mean? So, you get ... way out in this old armory, an old military thing that had been sitting there since World War I. It's all overgrown, and so, here's a little trail and you've got a sack, a burlap bag, and you sort of wait there. ... Their guys are going to beat the bushes out there and the snipe is going to come running and you catch him, see? Well, in the middle of the night, you're ... still there at midnight, you know, and nobody came by. [laughter] So, you start to work at six; you get up at six in the morning at King Farms. So, I had to find my way out of there, you know, and ... you can imagine, not knowing the area. Well, I finally ended up at the boarding house at about five-thirty or a quarter to six, and these guys are just waking up, and I [said], "You dirty buggers." [laughter] Well, then, ... the production manager, (Alvin Thompson?), who was a wonderful man, he come by, you know. He ran the whole farm there and he'd come by that day and just laughed like hell, you know. [laughter] He thought that was the funniest thing in the world. Here are these guys, ... half of them still sleeping there, and I got caught, you know, [laughter] like a real amateur there, certainly funny.

SI: The Rutgers hazing was nothing compared to that.

GJ: No, no, Rutgers was ...

SI: Did you have to wear one of the dink hats?

GJ: Yes, we had a dink, yes, freshmen, yes. Yes, we had dinks, yes. I don't remember what [the rules were]. You're supposed to have it on all the time or the sophomores say something. Do they still do that?

SI: No.

GJ: Yes, they're the dinks, little, black hat, so [that] you were labeled a freshman.

SI: You lived at the Phelps House ...

GJ: Four years.

SI: ... from your first day for all four years. Your chores started immediately.

GJ: Oh, yes, yes. ... I was lucky to have that. I had an NYA [National Youth Administration] job, which was [where] you were allowed to earn ten dollars a month. So, I had an NYA job.

SI: What was the NYA job?

GJ: Well, I took care of the greenhouses on Sundays, yes.

SI: Okay. You listed your major as vegetable crops.

GJ: Yes.

SI: Why did you choose to major in that?

GJ: Well, I had had that experience, which is brand-new work experience. I worked hard all my life, but, I mean, that was a work experience in the way of making a living, and I could see that, King Farms there, you know, that one summer, and then, a year-and-a-half, again, on that farm. ... I liked it and I made a lot of friends there and Karl King, when it came time for me to go to Rutgers, Karl King came out of his office. He was a little guy. He was a track man from Kansas, a very nice guy. He had a nice daughter, too. I used to go with her, and he said, "Now," he said, "some day, I'll have a hundred houses up here." This Turkey Hill was mushroom houses, which I had worked on building that winter, twelve mushroom houses, all insulated, you know, with rock wool in-between there and everything, and then, these beds, you know, six high, of broken down manure, and then, they grew their mushrooms there and I had built [those]. Again, I'd get twenty-five cents an hour, I think, for that, and then, when we got the roof on, we worked after supper. We worked for another three hours, you know. So, we had a full day and I was able to save some of that money there, and Karl King told me, he says, "Some day, I'll have a hundred houses up there," and so on, "and (Alvin Thompson?) will need a replacement," and I was interested in that, when he said, "(Alvin Thompson?)," [who] was the production manager of the five-thousand-acre farm. The first thing he mentioned was an ag engineer and I thought, "Oh, ag engineer, I don't know any mathematics. You know, I'm really weak on that." So, that went right through my [mind]. I wasn't interested, but, when he said, "Alvin Thompson," you

know, the production manager, that appealed to me. ... They just made it interesting for me. It's a wonderful experience, to have somebody look after you, I mean, as an opportunity to follow through on.

SI: Did you stay in touch with Karl King and the others during your college years?

GJ: ... I was an assistant professor at Cornell, you know, when I finished all my graduate work. Then, I became an assistant professor at Cornell, vegetable crops, and so, I went back to King Farms and they were glad to see me.

SI: Do any of your classes or professors stand out in your memory?

GJ: Yes. At Cornell, John Hartman, at Rutgers, yes, Victor Tiedjens, who was in Vegetable Crops, and he was a real dear friend, and Schermerhorn. They were the key people in Veg Crops. Lyman Schermerhorn was the head. ...

PJ: Your debating coach.

GJ: Oh, yes, my debating coach at Rutgers was Richard P. McCormick, yes. His son is the president of Rutgers today.

PJ: His son.

GJ: I mean, his son. [laughter]

SI: Oh, Richard P. McCormick was the debating coach.

GJ: Yes, yes.

SI: Wow.

GJ: The guy that's the president ...

PJ: Now. His father was your debating coach.

GJ: Yes, his father was my coach, debating, yes, nice-looking, young guy. ... Yes, the only reason I got into debating was George Luke, my roommate. He was a big talker and, you know, debate. ... You know, he's my pal, I joined the debating team, [laughter] and this young guy, McCormick, was there. I wrote to his son, didn't I, yes?

PJ: Recently.

GJ: There was an [article]; *Rutgers Magazine* showed the old man standing, on the cover, ... in a green, nice jacket, and that was only a year or two ago, and I wrote his son about that and I got a nice letter from him, yes. ...

PJ: Certainly, your crew coach was another one that you remembered with a lot of affection.

GJ: Oh, yes, yes, Rutgers crew coach, Chuck Logg.

SI: Chuck Logg.

GJ: You ever hear of him?

SI: A lot of people have talked about him, yes. What do you remember about Chuck Logg?

GJ: Oh, he was a marvelous person. He's a Washington oarsman, of course, the best there is, after Rutgers, [laughter] yes. But he had a nice family and he had a lovely wife and he had a son that was sitting on the edge of the float there, you know, rowing on one of these little rowing machines and stuff, just as a kid. ... Later on, the coach's son and his buddy won the Olympics in two-oared, you know, Chuck Logg's boy, Chuck Logg was a wonderful person and he and his wife would always have us down to their house. They lived near Princeton, I've forgot now, but we'd have a nice dinner at his house and, yes, he was great. He was a good coach and, I remember, freshman year, we were rowing against Princeton and he had been at Princeton. Chuck Logg had been at Princeton for a while, and so, [it meant a lot to him]. ... You know, Rutgers won the first football game in the world, and then, it was 1938 before they won the next one, and I was there.

SI: Yes.

GJ: That was the second one, 20-18, we won, but, anyway, so, we're rowing against Princeton, ... at Princeton, at their lake there, and they say it's a straight course, but, to this day, I swear it's not. There's a curve in it, but, anyway, at the finish, there were two markers, you know. You're supposed to finish within ... this area. Well, we're rowing and we're a little ahead of Princeton. You know, to beat Princeton is the ideal thing to do and, okay, we're about forty strokes to a finish and we start on that last forty and Lipsky, who was our coxswain, he's heading this way and he sees ... the boundary and he gives it the rudder and, of course, the shell tips badly.

SI: Tilts.

GJ: ... And the four starboard oars are up in the air and the port oars are right in the water and, of course, the shell practically almost stops, ... and then, he steers us in and we lost the race by a quarter of a length, or whatever it was. ... Coach Logg, who was a sweet guy, I never forgot this, because I know what it would have done to me if I was Lipsky; you know the megaphones they have in crew? "Lipsky, you lost the race for them." The coach hollered.

SI: That must have been tough.

GJ: It was tough on us, but ... I think poor Lipsky; I'd have drowned myself. [laughter] We never did beat Princeton. I don't think we ever did beat Princeton. I would not like to admit that too many times. ... Coach and Mrs. Logg would have us down there for a nice evening, you know, every once in a while.

SI: What about Professor McCormick? What do you remember about him and your time on the debating team?

GJ: Well, yes, he was a nice guy and ... a very gentle soul, and I think his father is probably is, too. ...

PJ: His son, you mean.

GJ: I mean his son. [laughter]

SI: He was not that much older than you, was he?

GJ: No, no. ... He probably just graduated. I guess he probably graduated ... a year or two before. He was a new guy there, and so, he was a teacher of; I guess he taught

SI: History.

GJ: He did?

SI: Yes, he was a history professor.

GJ: Yes, but he was the coach. ... Interesting how much has gone under the bridge since then, and so, his son wrote me a nice letter. ... That was, what, a year or two ago.

SI: Yes, that article came out around then.

GJ: Yes, yes. So, I did ... write to your president, letting him know I was a little disappointed in the fact that Rutgers is not supporting crew, which I think is awful. ... He wrote back some kind of nice excuse, but I didn't ask for ... [laughter]

SI: Well ...

GJ: Crew is expensive, doesn't bring in the money. People stand along the shore. You can't charge them a buck apiece. [laughter]

SI: All of the crew people that I have talked to seem very close.

GJ: Oh, yes.

SI: Almost like a fraternity.

GJ: Yes. If you go through; I'll just give you an example. The Poughkeepsie race was four miles. We were used to racing a mile-and-five-sixteenths, sometimes two miles, but four miles, that's a pretty sturdy go, you know, without quitting or anything. ... I remember, at Poughkeepsie, our cox [coxswain] said "Okay, we're at the two-mile mark." "Two-mile? I'm

done," [laughter] and there was two more miles to go. So, there's something about rowing there that is, I don't know, you can't explain it. ...

SI: Did the debating team travel at all?

GJ: I don't recall traveling anywhere really, probably did, but I don't remember traveling any. I wasn't the best debater. My roommate is the one that sort of conned me into it, but that's where I met today's Rutgers president McCormick.

SI: Do you remember any of the debates? Were you debating topics of the day?

GJ: Oh, God, yes. ... You know, [at] my age, I forget a lot of things.

SI: Take your time.

GJ: ... Something about the rule, compulsory acceptance of the rule, whatever it was, versus not acceptance of the rule. ... I've forgotten now what the debate was.

SI: Towards the end of your time at Rutgers, they instituted the draft, in 1940.

GJ: Yes.

SI: How did that affect the campus? Were a lot of people worried about being taken by the draft?

GJ: Well, I think there was an understanding, and it may have come late, that ... if you were a senior, you would be allowed to finish. I don't know whether that really was correct or not, but ...

PJ: I think that's right.

GJ: I think it is, but I got drafted. ... That was what made it easy for the draft board to say, "Oh, you don't have to come until July 7th. I went in July 7, 1941. ... Oh, it would have been terrible to break up a crew, I mean, especially on a national championship event; too bad we didn't win it. [laughter]

SI: Well, you did compete. That was big.

GJ: We made it.

SI: Yes. You said that was the first time Rutgers had gone.

GJ: Yes, and the last time, I think.

SI: Wow.

GJ: And, now, they've cut out crew, which ... breaks my heart, because, if you talk to another oarsman, he feels the same way I do, you know, and you've probably talked to several oarsmen.

SI: Yes, we have. They pretty much share the same sentiment. Were you in the ROTC at Rutgers?

GJ: ... Yes, first two years.

SI: Okay, just the first two years.

GJ: Yes. Why didn't I do it the second two years? I guess it wasn't compulsory at that time.

SI: Does anything stand out about that training? Do you remember anything about your time in the ROTC?

GJ: ... Not particularly, no.

SI: Okay.

ML: Did it appeal to you at all or was it just another course?

GJ: Well, I probably had other things [I found] more interesting, [laughter] maybe rowing or something. [laughter]

SI: I have heard that it was difficult for ag guys, because you had to go all the way across New Brunswick for training.

GJ: Oh, really, yes. Yes, we were on the other side of town, yes. No, I don't remember a lot about that.

SI: Do you remember any of the social activities at Rutgers, like dances?

GJ: Yes. We used to have a lot of them at the "Alpha Phalpa House." We'd bring in a couple of bales of hay, and then, the girls, and then, we'd have a [party] weekend, you know, but, downtown, you know, the fraternities, there were a couple of oarsmen [there], you know, Johnny Vaill. I don't know if you ever heard of him.

SI: I have heard of him.

GJ: Yes. He was a good buddy of mine and he belonged to the ... Delta Phi [fraternity], rich guys. Well, he was one of them, you know, and, of course, I'm invited to anything, you know. So, I went down there, you know, and it really surprised me, because I think it was in crew season, one thing or another, and here these guys are, you know, smoking and dancing around and having a drink or two, and we didn't touch any of that stuff. Hell, I didn't even eat between meals when I was rowing, [laughter] no smoking, no nothing, you know. ... We had our own little affairs, yes, and we had field days then, you know, the Ag Field Day.

SI: Ag Field Day.

GJ: Yes. As a matter-of-fact, veg crops, I was chairman of that, we won that, one of the first ones.

SI: Yes. It started while you were there, right?

GJ: Yes.

SI: 1938, I think.

GJ: Yes, something like that, and we won and I was chairman of that. You know, I had nice greenhouse exhibits and stuff, yes.

SI: Today, it is a very different thing; it is more like a music festival. Back then, was it more like a 4-H type of event?

GJ: Well, it was a competitive thing, you know, and you put out displays of plant growth and one thing or another and how you did it. ... I remember making cedar boxes, about that tall, about that wide ...

SI: Two-and-a-half feet-by-four feet.

GJ: ... glass front, and filled with different little types of layers of soil and soil conditions, and then, had two plants and it had a wooden cover, to cover the glass, and then, I'd grow them there, where it would show good drainage and good aeration and the root growth would be healthy, where's the salt layer or something, where the roots would stop. ... It was very clear, a very good demonstration, actually. We had a whole bunch of them, you know. ... So, the thing I tell people today, to this day, and people marvel, "That Johannessen, just ask him. He'll tell you in ten seconds what the answer is." [laughter] The answer is, "If you have good aeration and good drainage, soil drainage, you're going to get the maximum yield and the best quality of any vegetable you grow." All you need is good drainage and good aeration. In the absence of oxygen, a feeder root dies. That's everything, and I've gone to all of three colleges and everything and that's the whole thing, right there. [laughter] If you can accomplish that, you're going to be the number one farmer in the country, [laughter] and that's it.

SI: Was there anything that you learned in your classes, well, that may be the one thing that has stuck with you throughout your career?

GJ: That's one thing that stuck with me more than anything else, in my business, in agriculture, in the production of food crops, you know.

SI: Okay. Is there anything else that stands out? [laughter] There are probably many things.

PJ: It's all you need.

SI: Is there anything that a professor taught you or any research that you were exposed to?

GJ: Well, I worked a lot with Dr. Victor Tiedjens on this subject, on this matter, and, see, right after the war, was it really after the war? I went to work for him. Didn't I go to work at Virginia Truck Experiment [Station]?

PJ: Yes.

GJ: Yes. ... When I said I was going to get out of the Army, he said, "I want you here," he had left Rutgers to be the director of the Virginia Truck Experiment Station, and so, he wrote, "I want you here for a year. You could do whatever you want," and I'd say I didn't know whether to go on with agriculture or go into medicine. That was what it was. "You come here. Do whatever you want," and, bless his heart, he did and he was a friend, a real friend. So, that's what I did. I went to work for him and I did a lot of work with soil, you know, breaking up sub-soils and stuff like that, and Tiedjens told me this story, which I always, never forgot, it's interesting, because it gave me a boost, right after the war. He said that he was on an airplane somewhere and, somehow or other, my name came up with some guy he was talking to, and the guy said to Tiedjens, he says, "If you ever met George Johannessen," he says, "you'll never forget it." I said, "Yes, that's pretty nice," but Tiedjens was a friend and I learned a lot from him, and Schermerhorn, and from Karl King and (Alvin Thompson?) on that King Farms, and, of course, I got a lot of basic training from the old man at home.

SI: What about Dr. Helyar or Selman Waksman? Did you have any classes with them?

GJ: Helyar, I have to tell you a story about Helyar. He was the father, "the great, white father," okay, Frank [was his first name], and have you ever been at the "Alpha Phalpa" House, the Phelps House, at Rutgers?

SI: I have seen it. I have passed by it.

GJ: Yes. Well, there's a long way from the road into the house, where the house is, and so, everybody took care of his own room. ... So, sometimes, they weren't, you know, as up-to-snuff as they should be. ... Every once in a while, somebody'd say, "Hey, here comes Prof," and his Oldsmobile would be coming in the driveway and, boy, we're just sweeping things out, [laughter] you know, put them in the closet, you're straightening the beds out, you know, [laughter] clean the house, and he knew, you know. We'd have everything looking spit-and-whistle when he got into the house, you know. [laughter] "Here comes Prof," and he would come to dinner once in a while, you know, with us. We did our own cooking, you know. He was a very wonderful man. He gave us a wonderful gift by insisting that the University turn that house over [in]to a co-op house.

SI: In college, you must have had a really long day, between crew practice, your chores and classes.

GJ: Yes, yes. It was a long day, yes, but I tell you one thing, I quit [swimming]. Swimming was my strong point, when I got to Rutgers, and so, I went out for swimming and they had James Reilly, coach, very famous coach, very good. ... A lot of guys ... went out for swimming in freshman year, and so, he pared that thing down to about six of us, to sort of set us aside, to, you know, start training us, more or less, and I was one of them and I was a good swimmer and he was the best coach in the world, Reilly. Well, then, immature mind of mine, my grades were lousy, see. I said, "Well, geez, ... I've got to quit this swimming business." ... That wasn't it. It was just, you know, [that] it wasn't working right. So, I quit swimming, which I really regret, because I was in that final six freshmen that would [train] under Reilly's wing now, you know, not with the rest of the fifty or sixty guys. ... In the winter, then, I went out for crew and ... I wound up on crew, on the machines, in the winter, and then, I stuck with crew, but I do regret not having that history of a good swimmer, you know, but that's why I gave up swimming. I'm not a scholar, really, you know, not a good scholar.

PJ: Oh, George, Dr. Johannessen. [laughter]

SI: Well said.

PJ: He's modest.

SI: Do you have questions about Rutgers?

JJ: No questions about Rutgers.

SI: You had to register for the draft towards the end of your senior year.

GJ: I must have. I guess everybody did, didn't they?

SI: Okay.

GJ: Yes, I must have. ... I don't know whether people registered or whether they just told you. ... I'm not sure.

SI: Okay.

GJ: But, I do remember getting drafted, so, I must have not initiated that. [laughter] I think the government must have started that thing.

SI: After the Poughkeepsie race, you were very shortly thereafter taken into the military.

GJ: Oh, yes. I went in the service July 7, '41. We were finished with Poughkeepsie on June 24th or 5th or something like that.

SI: Okay, just a few weeks later.

GJ: Yes, a couple, a week or two later.

SI: First, you were sent to Fort Dix.

GJ: Fort Dix, and then, that was just an initiation center, where I was inducted, and then, after two weeks or so, the whole bunch of us were sent to Camp Lee, Virginia, on the train. ... We arrived there in the evening and we were lined up in this gym, sort of, and there was the long tables and different offices there, and so, we're interviewed. ... There were these long lines and, anyway, I got to be interviewed and I think the guy said something about infantry, or what's the infantry base, camp?

SI: Benning?

GJ: Fort Benning, I think. ... I said, "I'm more in medicine." ... I don't know how I got ...

SI: More in the sciences?

GJ: No, listen, I had nothing to do with it. I just said who I was, one thing or another. First, he said, "Infantry," or something. I said, "Well, I have training in this." "Oh, medics." So, it was infantry or medics, at that point, and it was a very fine thing. I can't remember the details of it, but I objected to whatever it was and, very quickly, he said, "Oh, medics," and I'm glad it was medics, because half of my infantry guys are gone, you know.

PJ: More than that.

GJ: Blew them up.

SI: Yes, it is very dangerous, but medics are also in danger.

GJ: They got some of the medics, too.

SI: Yes.

GJ: They didn't get me. [laughter]

SI: Was that the only thing you did at Camp ...

GJ: Camp Lee. ... They made me a corporal.

SI: Okay.

GJ: I'm a drill man, yes, ... at Camp Lee. ... When I went to OCS, Fifth Officer Candidate Class, Medical Administrative Corps, at Carlisle [Barracks], the final competition ... of our class, and sort of showing off what this Class #5 is, there were four or five platoons and I was the platoon leader for ... ours and we won, and so, the reward was that we got to eat first for the last two weeks of OCS. That was a big reward. [laughter] Instead of having to wait for the other guys, we were the first in line, you know, and I won that. I was a drill guy, and the way I won it

is, I can still remember, it was a big stadium, audience. ... The guy ahead of me, [who] was a good drill man, he marched his troops too long in one formation and, after a while, if he's going too long, there's a little wavering in the line, or something like that, you know. ... So, when I come up, I gave my guys the column left, harch, you know, hup, ... and I changed the directions pretty quick. They were all perfect, you know. ... Before they got a chance to screw up, I had them changed into the next one, and that's what won it. I know that. It was that close. So, I was a drill man and, when I was at Camp Lee, Virginia, I was big on that and, as a matter-of-fact, when I got my commission, I was a second lieutenant, because I was young, but all these other guys that had finished near me and so on, next classes or whatever, they were all made first lieutenants, because they were over twenty-seven. They were twenty-seven. They were made first; I'm a second. So, I'm in Camp Breckenridge with a lot of these guys. There were nine station hospital corps that were sent to Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky, to form these station hospitals. All that was there was the commanding officer and the administrative officer, and then, we got the non-coms, and then, we got the troops. But, when these guys were going to have a heavy tent-pitching class, they didn't know how to do that, really, these first lieutenants. So, these guys, they call [me], "Can they come to my class?" "Yes, come on," you know. So, I could get them pitched in twelve minutes, up and down, and these big three-polers, you know, as long as the house, and that always griped me, you know, that they'd made them first lieutenants because they were twenty-seven years old and ... they didn't know how to pitch the damn heavy tent, which is what the medics use a lot of, you know, the ... field stations, station aid hospitals. ...

SI: How long were you at Camp Lee for before you went to OCS?

GJ: I was at Camp Lee, I think, for two classes, ... maybe a year or so, a year-and-a-half, maybe, I don't know, about a year, I suppose.

SI: You were there when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

GJ: Yes. As a matter-of-fact, I was a corporal, ... Sixth Medical Battalion, and, that night, there was a call for all non-commissioned officers to get down to the theater, because the troops were attacking Japanese soldiers. In other words, that was the night of Pearl Harbor. Yes, I never forgot that.

SI: What did they tell you in the briefing?

GJ: Just get down there and keep order.

SI: Okay. You would have to ...

GJ: Well, just see that nobody was misbehaving or taking advantage of the Japanese soldiers [US soldiers], you know, just like they were, except they're Japanese-[Americans], but that was Pearl Harbor. ... Then, the next day, the commanding officer was a general, I forget his name now, he had called a meeting of all of the troops, and it was in this area that was kind of a bowl, sort of a shallow bowl. So, it was very interesting, because you could look at the column of troops here and here and here, all the way around, and you could look from where you were over

there and see these guys neatly lined up and one thing or another. ... He gave a rousing speech, you know, and [said], "Our house is on fire," and so on, and I think Roosevelt's speech was at that time, probably given at that time, too, maybe not, but it was a very sobering moment, that we were attacked at Pearl Harbor, and so on, and ... having that view of all these guys, you know, hundreds of them, thinking, "Now, what's going to happen?" yes, and, "Our house is on fire." That was one of the things that big officer meant.

SI: Did your activities or procedures change much after Pearl Harbor? Was there more security?

GJ: No. I just remember being glad to be selected for ... OCS.

SI: Had you applied for OCS right away? When did you do that?

GJ: No, I didn't apply. ... No, they picked me, yes. ... They picked so many from each of these battalions, these medical battalions, training battalions, and I was one of six or eight or ten or whatever it was. ... We went up to another isolated, sort of, area there, with a barracks, and we lived in this one barracks and trained, then, for a month for ... being accepted for OCS. So, it wasn't that quick. We went through this month. This group that was selected went up there for a month or so and did all of this training and, you know, all kinds of training, you know, and they selected, then, people for OCS, at Carlisle Barracks, and so, they didn't take everybody in there. They took [only some], but that's what my memory is.

ML: Do you have any idea why you were selected?

GJ: Well, I was pretty practiced in the military drill and all that and I had sort of enjoyed it. I took it in and I paid attention to what I was supposed to be doing. [laughter]

PJ: And you had a college degree.

GJ: Oh, I don't think that mattered.

PJ: Well, I don't know.

GJ: Any rate ...

SI: It was probably a big factor.

PJ: I would think.

SI: When you say you were very good at drill, do you just mean marching and the manual of arms?

GJ: Well, the heavy ... tent-pitching and all that.

SI: Okay.

GJ: Oh, yes, I was pretty good at the heavy tent-pitching. I could do it better than anybody else, and that's what griped me, because I was a second lieutenant. [laughter] ... All these other guys were first lieutenants and they would ask [me for help]. You know, this was these new station hospitals that we were all assigned to, eight or ten of them, whatever it was. ...

PJ: Do you think that's because of your Boy Scout training or because you were an athlete or what?

GJ: Oh, no, no, it's just because I was good. [laughter] You know that, Mother.

PJ: Yes.

GJ: Have I told you that before? [laughter]

SI: From what I have read, the military put a real emphasis on speed when putting these hospitals up and breaking them down.

GJ: Well, that's part of it, yes, sure. You've got to move, you know. We're going to move the station, because things have moved, you know. You've got to move closer to the front, ... yes, but that's quite an accomplishment, to get a heavy tent pitched, where it stays up and the wind blows and everything and all the stakes are where they belong and they're in line and, you know, the tent looks like it's supposed to. It's not as easy as it might seem, you know. ... A tent as long as from here to the end of the hall is a pretty sturdy thing there.

SI: Did you also have to work in managing equipment, like bringing up X-ray equipment or surgical equipment?

GJ: Well, when I was in the South Atlantic Theater, with the 193rd Station Hospital, it was my responsibility to serve some of the medical outposts up the Amazon. A thousand miles up the Amazon was Manaus, [Brazil], so, I served them medical supplies that they needed, and Fortaleza, [Brazil]. ... Places around there that didn't have the facilities, I would supply them with that, and then, there would be a couple of officers way up in the woods, communication guys, two guys up ... along the Amazon River, five hundred miles up the Amazon, all by themselves. I would supply them with things like that, you know. So, I did a lot of that.

SI: You had a lot of logistical responsibilities.

GJ: Yes, for outlying posts, and then, we would send ... one of our men to Amapaw, which is, maybe, fifty, a hundred miles away or something, to do something. I can't remember what he did. I remember the guy, he fell in the river and he's so scared he was going to get eaten by piranhas. [laughter] This great, big, husky guy from Ohio, a sergeant, and he fell in the Amazon River and all he could envision was a thousand piranhas coming and chewing all his bones up and he turned white when he was telling the story, when he got back. [laughter]

SI: Going back to OCS, what do you remember about your OCS training?

GJ: Well, I met a lot of nice people, good people, and I felt very good about it, because, like I say, in the ... final weeks, we got to earn the first [position] in the mess hall ... for the end of the program and we had good training. ... Carlisle Barracks is the heart of the United States Army Medical deal, and so that everybody knows, if you're a Carlisle graduate, that's an accomplishment that's worth memorizing, you know, thinking about.

SI: When you say it was good and tough training, do you mean physically intense?

GJ: Everything, yes. ... I was with headquarters detachment and, in other words, I was kept there and most of them were shipped all over the world, but they kept me there and assigned me to the 32nd Medical Battalion, which were the demonstration troops for Carlisle, for the United States Army Medical deal, and so, what was I going to tell you?

SI: You were part of the 32nd.

GJ: Yes. I was a part of them, yes, and, one night, ... early on in my assignment there, the commanding officer, who we had had to call on, as a new officer there, you call on the commanding officer of the 32nd Medical Battalion, and, at retreat that night, after, you know, five o'clock, they announce, "We're moving out at seven PM," or something, "for overnight bivouac," so-and-so and so-and-so, and I thought, "What the hell am I supposed to do?" [laughter] Headquarters detachment, I've got the motor pool under me and all this. Way down, a quarter of a mile down the road, that's the ... motor pool. ... "Going to be overnight bivouac?" and I thought, "Oh, Jesus." ... Then, the Colonel, "You can take care of that?" "Yes, sir." What the hell am I going to do now? So, I go out the back of these permanent buildings, this is Carlisle, and I'm walking down the road, wondering, "Geez, which way do I go now? We're leaving here at seven o'clock tonight, you know, the whole bunch of us." So, I see this sergeant coming along, you know, from the motor pool. I said, "Sergeant," I said, "we're moving out," and so-and-so. "Yes, sir." "Okay, good, you understand?" "Yes." So, he turns around and goes back [laughter] and he takes care of everything. I didn't do a damn thing. ... Everybody knew what they were supposed to do, except me. [laughter] I was in charge. Yes, we went out ... overnight, and they used to tease me, because I was in good shape, you know. I was right out from the Poughkeepsie Regatta. Hell, I was in tip-top shape, and then, these guys are dragging, you know what I mean? and we're marching out all over the place and I'm marching up and down the line, you know, talking to them, cheering them up and everything. ... Of course, the poor motor pool guy, you know, they don't walk more than a mile a week, you know, working in those automobiles and the ambulances, and they couldn't get over it, you know, because I was just tip-top shape, physical condition number one. [laughter] ... I was the cheerleader, sort of.

SI: When you would go out on bivouac or maneuvers, was it just to practice setting up the hospital and stations?

GJ: Yes, yes, ... set up the hospital tents. The tents went up and everything, and down, and then, it was kind of a long hike, too, I mean, get in shape, but, yes, that was part of the game, being able to move and pitch a tent, you know.

SI: Yes. How long were you with the 32nd?

GJ: I don't remember, but it was approaching Christmas, probably 1942. Now with the 193rd Station Hospital training at Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky we got orders to proceed to our port of debarkation, New Orleans, Louisiana. After a short training period we completed the job of addressing each piece of hospital equipment and loaded the boxcar destined for our port of embarkation, New Orleans. Upon completion of this job I retired to headquarters. One look at Major Waggner, our commanding officer told me something was wrong. He said in a soft voice "Our port of embarkation has been changed from New Orleans to New York." I got my good first sergeant and asked, "Could you unload our fueled boxcar, readdress each piece of hospital equipment for our new port of embarkation which has turned out to be New York?" "yes sir." Done. So, everything gets unloaded and readdressed to Camp Kilmer our New York port of deportation.

SI: Camp Kilmer?

GJ: Yes, it was Camp Kilmer. I entered the Army at Fort Dix. That's right, Camp Kilmer, okay. So, we get that set up, and then, we got the train that's going loaded for Camp Kilmer and I get in there near Christmastime. From Camp Kilmer to New York, we're leaving ... on a troop ship, the USS *Manargo*, out of New York. So, anyway, that's what we did. We went to Camp Kilmer and got on a ferry in New York around midnight, in the middle of the rain, ... right near the end of the year, and we're on this ferry and we get out to this ship, the USS *Manargo*. ... We go on this troopship, with two of other station hospitals, headed to Brazil. We had a lot of military escorts going zigzag down the Atlantic Coast, on the way first to Trinidad. We stopped at Trinidad, where Navy men embarked. One of the boats that left us, that had been next to our ship was sunk over the horizon on the way to Africa, I guess, we continued on to the Amazon River.

SI: Belem?

GJ: Belem is at the mouth of the Amazon. Our navy escorts were crisscrossing and a lot of Navy ashcans [depth charges] going up, you know, [attacking] submarines, and we were all on the one side of our ship. We had hundreds of troops on there, nurses, too, and all of these ashcans are going on and, if any torpedo'd hit us, we'd all been in the water, you know, because we're all on that side of the ship, watching these big ka-zooms, you know, and they make a hell of a spray, you know. This is an ashcan, you know. It's full of dynamite and stuff, and they blew a lot of them up. We were glad to finally pull in to Belem, and then, we were there, and then we transported to our Army airbase.

SI: What were the conditions like on the ship?

GJ: Crowded, but real crowded, yes, you know, a lot of troops down in the hold, kind of, sort of. It's not a very comfortable area.

SI: How many men did you have in your command, roughly?

GJ: 193rd Station Hospital, a twenty-five bed hospital, ... and fifty bed 194th Station Hospital went into Natal, and the 200th station hospital was erected in Recife, Brazil. ...

SI: Once you got off the ship and started getting established in Belem, what did you do?

GJ: ... At Belem, we got into these little military buildings, you know, quarters. ... They were still building the hospital ... and they were finishing it up, more or less. I can't remember a whole lot about it, but I guess the barracks was probably built. I don't remember a whole lot about it. ...

SI: Okay. Did you have all of your equipment with you or did you have to receive some?

GJ: No. ... I guess we were still receiving some. ... Because I was the only administrative officer, I was everything. I was the medical supply officer. I supplied the ... medical requirements for the Manaus [base], a thousand miles up the Amazon. So, I was the medical supply officer for the 193rd, but, also, for all these outlying areas and stuff. So, we had a pretty complete hospital, but I can't remember the sequence of events of unloading all of the equipment.

SI: That is all right. What was there, where you built your facilities? Was there a town or an airstrip?

GJ: There's an airstrip, of course, yes, but the town was probably fifteen miles away.

SI: You were pretty much out by yourselves.

GJ: Yes, yes.

SI: Was this facility intended to treat flyers coming down?

GJ: Yes, it was Air Force. It was an air route. It was a main route for aircraft coming out of the United States and, in the wintertime, it was the route, also, for replacements of the Eighth Air Force, up in England and stuff, but, at that stage of the game, early in the war, it was supplying Africa, West Africa, Sicily, Italy, China-Burma-India, constantly, and replacements for the Eighth Air Force, and so on, and, later on, ... year-and-a-half later, the B-29s [were] coming through Natal. They didn't land in Belem, but they did land in Natal. So, it was a very active theater and the submarines were active, because they would lay in wait for the airplanes. ... A lot of them weren't armed with anything but, you know, an extra belly tank, probably A-30s [Martin Baltimore bombers], for the trip across the ocean to Ascension Island, and then, from Ascension to the mainland of Africa. ... So, they would lay there and shoot some of our airplanes up. So, every once in a while, we'd have some German prisoners in our ward. I remember this one US officer, who had burned up, pretty much, in a plane crash, saying, "How do you like that?" Here's this German officer over there. ... His submarine probably shot him down or something.

SI: How often would you get patients in, and what would be the reasons for it?

GJ: Well, the big deal was a plane crash. I mean, then, ... if they didn't kill them all, we'd get whoever was alive, and that was our main, real action. Otherwise, we took care of the people on the base, who ran the [base], the Air Force people, you know. ...

JJ: Were they usually planes that were shot down or planes that just crashed?

GJ: Crashed, mostly, yes.

JJ: Crashed.

SI: Were there a lot of mechanical failures?

GJ: Yes, we'd have all kinds of things. We'd have mid-air collisions and crashes and fire. Fire was the worst, with the crash; it was tough. We had some brave men on our base there that would go [out]. ... You know, the ambulances and everything, it would hit the airplane that was burning and we had guys that would run into the fiery plane ... to take somebody out, and I remember this one time, this guy went in there and he comes out and he's mad as hell, because nobody told him everybody was out. Can you imagine that, yes? ...

JJ: Yes.

SI: Yes. Do you feel like you always had the supplies you needed to keep all of your responsibilities going?

GJ: Yes, we were pretty well-supplied, yes.

SI: Were you able to get the newest things? Penicillin was then coming into use. Were you able to get enough penicillin?

GJ: Oh, well, yes, we had interesting things, as a small station hospital, okay. So, I'm supply officer, okay, and I had a counter ... in the medical supply building, behind which was... all our medical supplies, everything, with a number on it and all, you know, a thousand different things. I have a sergeant in charge of that, and they're supposed to have a requisition from [the doctors], you know, and then, he'll supply it and they get what they want. Well, this one was a dental officer, and nobody's supposed to get beyond that counter, you know; these guys, these curious doctors, had never seen these kinds of equipment before in their lives. So, they'd get in there and they'd say, "Oh, God, ... I'll have one of these," see? Well, that's what this guy was doing and I caught him doing that and I kicked his ass out of there, but, you know, there's brand-new stuff and this dentist was [in awe]. He'd never [seen anything like it]. "Oh, boy, yes, ... I'll have one of those," [laughter] you know, and sort of buffaloed my poor sergeant into giving him all these play tools, you know, and this same guy, I'll never forget, one of my enlisted men was in his chair, in his dental office there, and I went in to sort of see how everything was going. God, he's tying the guy's things up and he pulls a knot and he pulls it right through the flesh and everything, you know, and the guy ends up in the hospital, you know, and some of the first ... dental stuff we had was out of a big footlocker, you know what I mean? the real original stuff.

...

SI: World War I era stuff.

GJ: Well, sort of, yes. There were still some World War I things, yes.

SI: Was there a medical unit, a unit of doctors and nurses, that you worked with in the hospital?

GJ: Oh, well, they were part of our hospital, yes, their staff. Yes, we had surgeons and dentists and nurses.

SI: Were they all part of the 193rd hospital?

GJ: No, that was just my hospital there, yes.

SI: You mentioned these German submarines off the coast. Did you have some sort of force stationed there that could take out the submarines?

GJ: Well, the Navy flew that route, the PBYS. They flew that route, South Atlantic, to keep it clear, but the German subs were not bashful and they knew that a lot of our supply planes and planes that were not particularly armed or fixed with bombs, or anything like that, were flying from Natal to Ascension Island, or from Belem to Ascension Island, and then, from Ascension Island to West Africa the submarines would just lay there and, you know, shoot them. But, we had Navy [PBYS] patrolling those areas. ... Every once in a while, they'd nail a sub and we'd get some of the guys in the hospital.

SI: You were in Belem about a year, more than a year from the end of 1942 to early 1944.

GJ: End of '42. ... A year-and-a-half in Belem and a year in Natal, yes.

SI: What were your daily duties when you were in Belem? What would you do every day?

GJ: What the hell did I do? Well, I'd just make the rounds in the wards, see that everything is all right there, and medical supplies, see that everything's going right there, and just see that everything worked. That's about it, and I'd be in on the wards frequently, especially if there were real critical guys. I'd stop there a couple of times a day, you know, just to see that everything's all right. We had some nice visitors, Eleanor Roosevelt being one of them.

SI: Really?

GJ: We had a Canadian kid, ... I think he was Canadian, maybe he was American, who crashed and burned. ... When she was there, ... I took her, with the head nurse, through the ward and she stopped and visited with this kid and was a very wonderful woman. ... He was Canadian, I think she told him that she'd ... write his mother and say that she had stopped to see him and, by golly, she did. ... That was nice, but I'll never forget, on the way out, after ... she'd gone through our hospital, and our head nurse was with her all the time, and me, and ... the commanding officer at Natal, which is a big base, south of us. ... Maybe he was, yes, the commanding

officer, maybe for the theater; he was shuffling her around the place and he was anxious, ... at the end of her tour through our hospital, for her to get in the station wagon and take her to the airport, so [that] she could be on her way back to wherever, and Mrs. Roosevelt said, "Oh, wait a minute," and she went back to shake hands with our head nurse, you know. She knew she didn't shake hands with her, to say good-bye, [laughter] and this guy was beside himself, because, ... you know, he's the head, but she was very nice. ... Our surgeon, who had been to a little cocktail party ... greeting her the evening before, came back, was a Republican up to there, you know, said how charming a woman that she was and he really changed his mind about Mrs. Roosevelt and everything, and she was that kind of a good scout, you know. ... Anyway, she did write back, ... contacted this kid's mother, and she wrote to the boy and I talked to him and that was pretty special.

SI: Yes.

GJ: She was a good woman.

SI: Was the hospital set up for long-term care or would you just treat people and send them back to somewhere else?

GJ: No. Well, we would want to send them back home, but ... the procedure was that if they were there for a while, and so on, better send them down to Recife, [Brazil], which was a 250 bed hospital, south of Natal, ... and then, they would lay there, and then, they would ship them back to the States, which was a sort of a backward way of doing things, and we kind of complained about that. I don't know if they ever solved that problem. That was not a very smart thing to do, we didn't think.

SI: How often would there be plane crashes? Would it be, like, once a week?

GJ: Sometimes, we'd have a few, and then, we wouldn't have any for a while, yes.

SI: Okay. Were there any recreational activities at Belem?

GJ: Played ping-pong, I guess. [laughter] Oh, yes, and ...

PJ: Volleyball.

GJ: Volleyball, yes, volleyball, yes. That's volleyball, yes. ...

SI: Did you get to go off the base or do any exploring of the local area?

GJ: Oh, well, ... in Belem, we'd go to Belem and case the joint, chase the enlisted men out of the red light district at ten o'clock, and the officers out at midnight. [laughter] It was quite an active area there.

SI: It must have been really unique to be in the Amazon area at that time, different from anything you had seen before.

GJ: ... Oh, it was, yes, oh, yes. One of the early nights there, again, the barracks were just built and we're just coming in, [I] look up there and there's this great, big anaconda lying up there, you know, about twelve feet long. [laughter] ... I don't have it here, I sent it home, but I got a wonderful, big snake that I killed. I had help. A guy had found the snake for me, got him, and I had a big pole, you know, and so on, ... in Belem, this is, you know, right on the Amazon, and we put the pole down here, ... in the crotch of a tree. ... He's tied up there, you know, and he's wrapped around this thing, about twelve-foot long or so, whatever, and this is my snake. So, I've got to kill the guy, [snake], you know, in order to skin him, you know. Well, I didn't dare to ... untie him from here, so, I whacked him. I whacked him pretty good on the head a couple of times, and then, he's still up there, you know, and then, I started to skin him and I skinned him down here and there was this big bag that came hanging down, like this; he had a monkey in him.

SI: Wow.

GJ: So, but I got him. Anyway, I skinned him and I cured the thing and I sent it home, and let my mother know what was coming, so that she wouldn't be scared, [laughter] but, anyway, I had it for many years. ... There was a cousin from Denmark that was here and ... his little boy was here and I thought of that snake skin, which I had in a shoebox. ... What was his name, Mother?

PJ: I don't remember; Thomas.

GJ: Thomas. "Oh, Thomas," I says, "here," and so, we got that snake skin out, unrolled it and, oh, his eyes are like that and I rolled it up and I says, "Here, it's yours." [laughter] He looked up at his father as though [to say], "Can I really take this?" "Yes, take it." So, he took it back to Denmark and he wrote us a letter. ... What did he say in that letter that was [interesting]?

PJ: Well, that he had told his teacher about it and ... he didn't think that she believed him, and so, he said he would bring it and she said okay, but, then, when he took it to school, she didn't want any part of it, [laughter] but that he had proved to her that, yes, he did have a snake skin that was that big. [laughter] He was about eight years old at the time.

GJ: Yes, so, he's got that skin in Denmark.

SI: Wow.

GJ: It's a beautiful (bore?).

PJ: Prior to that our children used it for show-and-tell, all of them. [laughter] We have four children and all four of them brought the snake skin to show their school mates.

[TAPE PAUSED]

PJ: ... Washing the glassware in his lab, in Rutgers Professor Selman Waksman's lab.

SI: You got this job in his lab.

SI: We always appreciate it. We were talking a little bit about the strange wildlife in the Amazon and it prompted a question. Was tropical disease a problem for the men on the base?

GJ: Most of our problems were with food poisoning, quite common in tropical areas.

SI: Okay.

GJ: It's not uncommon. As a matter-of-fact, one night, and this is at Belem, our fifty-bed station hospital, somebody came into the dispensary at about, you know, six o'clock or so, and then, somebody else came in. ... Somebody stopped by our officers' barracks, which is connected to the hospital there, and said, "We've got a couple of guys ... coming in with food poisoning." [We] said, "Okay." Well, he comes back and there's a couple more, and then, a couple more. First thing you know, we had them lined up on litters that [ran] down the hallways, and so on. ... We had a pharmacist guy from Brooklyn, a Jewish boy, who was a character, and he was mixing up these things, ... I don't know, barium or whatever, that makes a brick in your stomach, you know what I mean? stopped all of this up. ... It was a nightmare there, and what happened [was], and I remember this, in the kitchen, at lunch, there's a guy, and I saw this, he had a pan this big around, that high, and it was some kind of a salad that he was mixing. Well, it was so big that he mixed that, and then, he'd have to add some more, and then, some more and one thing or another, and then, in the refrigerator it went. Well, I think he served them that night. Maybe it was early in the morning [that] I saw him doing this. Well, this stuff never cooled off and all these "wee beasties" [bacteria] were really having a field day. So, that was one of the worst deals we had there in Belem, was that food poisoning deal, and that was sad, because they were just "heave-ho," you know, nothing you could do about it, ... [just] give them this cementing material to keep the whole thing back. [laughter] I don't know, really, what's all in that.

PJ: Tarantulas, too?

GJ: No, I mean in the medicine.

PJ: No, I know, but I meant ... that was another problem that you had.

GJ: Oh, well, yes, but they didn't ...

PJ: Didn't do any damage.

GJ: ... Have you seen the spider, the tarantula, a big, old guy? Yes, as a matter-of-fact, one night, ... this same sergeant that dropped in the river and thought he was going to get chewed up by the piranhas, the same guy, he was the X-ray guy. So, we have a dark room, you know, and, in the hallway, about up that high, from there down, there are openings about this big, you know, ... just for air movement. In the tropics, there's not too much. ... You could see through there, those things, about, you know, from here to there. There were three or four of them, ... and so, he's all white-faced and one thing or another. "What's the matter?" He says, "There's a spider in there, in the slot." So, I looked through there and here's this big tarantula and he starts moving

toward the little darkened place, ... at least [it] is dark here, that leads into the X-ray [room]. Well, here he goes and he goes in there, and my poor sergeant there, he was just scared. He's from Ohio, you know. He'd probably never seen a big spider like that, and so, I figure, "Well, I'll take care of that." So, I went in there and I got a broom and I shined a light in and, here, he's walking in there. ... Just a regular broom, you know, a straw broom, so, I took it, you know, the flat side, this way, and, "Bam." [laughter] ... I held it down there, and then, I dragged it along this concrete floor, you know, out, big streak of blood all the way out there. He'd eaten a mouse or something, you know, and this guy's face just got white. [laughter] The same guy that got scared to death when he dropped into the river, the Amazon River, and thought the piranhas were going to chew him up, you know, which they do, you know, [when] they attack, dozens of them, all at once, hit you. ... So, that was another thing, that spider, and then, we had the snakes, of course. They didn't bother anybody, really, but disease-wise, malaria, of course, is a concern all the time there.

ML: Did you ever get used to the weather down there?

GJ: Well, you've kind of got to, if you're living there all the time, you know what I mean? No, I hate humidity myself. Being a Dane, that's really bad, you know. You're sweating. Yes, humidity's a miserable thing, but you get used to everything, I mean, especially in the military. You haven't got any choice. "This is your assignment for the next couple of years. Stick around, you know, and enjoy it. [laughter] Make the most of it."

SI: Did you ever have to travel to any of the distant posts that you talked about?

GJ: Not too far, no. No, I shipped things up.

SI: Okay.

GJ: Yes, and so, I didn't do too much traveling there.

SI: Did you have much interaction with the local Brazilians?

GJ: Yes, in Belem. ... We used to go into town there and, of course, I would be called for officer of the day duty, you know. ... So, we had to check on the soldiers in town and how they were behaving and all that business, but there wasn't a whole lot to do, entertainment-wise, [in] Belem, go in there, and it's fifteen, eighteen miles, whatever it was, and walk around town. There wasn't a whole lot there.

SI: Did you have any natives working on the base?

GJ: Not in our hospital, no. Our hospital was staffed completely.

SI: Okay. After a year-and-a-half at Belem, you were promoted and sent to Natal.

GJ: I wasn't promoted yet. ... Oh, I must have got promoted. I was a first lieutenant, but I was a first lieutenant now, and so, ... the reason I got to Natal was that the ... theater surgeon was

mad that things hadn't run the way it should run in the 194th Station Hospital. ... They shipped the commanding officer to Ascension Island, out in the middle of the Atlantic, as punishment, more or less, a very fine doctor, a very, very wonderful person, too, and (Peterson's?) his name. ... He told me, later, he was never so sorry as anything that he'd done in his life as to offer his services to the United States Army. That's how it hurt him, and he was just a doctor. He wasn't a military guy, you see. So, anyway, what was I going to tell you about it?

SI: How you got to Natal.

GJ: Yes. So, when I got to Natal, I was brought in because the theater surgeon said that the commanding officer, who he had picked to replace this guy, could have anybody in the theater that he wanted, and he wanted me. So, that's how I got there. So, when I got there, I found out that things were a mess, because I also acted as the chief medical supply officer. Well, things were really messed [up] and, of course, the hospital itself, the cafeteria was all screwed up and a lot of things were missing, tools and dishes and pans and whatever. ... So, finally, I figured, "Well, this is a nightmare," and it's, of course, my job, as the administrative officer, to ... see that everything is right. So, I make a report of survey, saying all these things that I want to be replaced, you see, "These are missing," and so on, and the total price, which I got, probably, from the book, or maybe it was from what the price had been. I'm not sure where it was [from], but, anyway, I had a price on everything and it was big. So, I sent it down to headquarters. Colonel Leone was the theater surgeon and he had a classmate of mine, from Carlisle, who I knew, who was a major, and he was a major because he's headquarters detachment. So, he got promoted up to captain and major. So, the Colonel sent him up. There was a visit by our ... commanding officer of the base down to ... Recife, the headquarters of the theater, and, at that visit, he's having lunch with the theater surgeon and a couple of other people, officers around there. ... He learns about the tremendous report of survey that the 194th Station Hospital sent in, you know, and they just couldn't believe it. So, he sends this major, who's my friend, up to see what's going on and he just blew his stack, I guess, this Italian guy, nice guy, good man, but a hot-headed guy. ... So, my friend, I forget his name now, he helped me redo it and put a different price tag on, using the price tag from the military book or something, which is thirty-five cents, instead of a dollar-and-a-half, stuff like that. So, we went all through that, and then, he told me I should bring it down to Colonel Leone, instead of him taking it back. I thought it was kind of strange. "Oh, okay." So, it'd give me a couple of days off, anyway. So, I flew down there and I walk into headquarters detachment of the ... medical deal and it's a big building, lots of desks and all, you know, big hospital, 250-bed hospital, one thing or another. ... Here the [theater] surgeon is, comes walking down the aisle to greet me, shakes hands with me and says, you know, "I want to have your report." He says, "Now," he says, "you go down to the beach and stay around for a week or so and ... enjoy yourself," and so, he says, "Oh, you're still a first lieutenant?" "Yes." "Well, we'll see about that." So, I stayed around there for a week and I had a ball, you know, met this nice gal and everything. I had a great time, swimming at the beach, and so, I go back and I get my promotion to captain.

SI: Wow.

GJ: Soon, not too many months, before I went back to the States, but they appreciated what I had done and got stuck with, more or less. So, anyway, that was that.

SI: Natal was a much bigger base.

GJ: No. ... The biggest base, medical-wise, was Recife, which was just the opposite of what it should have been. I mean, here [Recife], it's the furthest away from the United States, a two-hundred-bed station hospital. The guy's so sick up here [Belem or Natal], he's almost dead, "Send him down here [Recife] and we'll fix him up," and he lays [there] and almost dies there. Then, they send him back to the States, to a general hospital, absolutely stupid, wrong, but that's the way it was. ... They had to do something to get the business up, because the airplanes didn't go to Recife. They left from Natal going east. So, here's this big hospital, all painted, all nice, and, you know, really great, instead of being painted camouflage and all that, which was typical of the military to begin with, you know, but, anyway, that was the deal there.

SI: Do you think there was some reason for that? Was it just inefficiency on the military's part, or was it something political, like they had to build it there for some reason?

GJ: I really have never figured [out] an answer for why Recife was made the major headquarters, except it was more comfortable living. I mean, it was not right on the Equator, like Belem, ... and Natal was not too unpleasant, but Recife was "USAFSA-by-the-Sea," is what we called it, United States Armed Forces South Atlantic, and that was the headquarters. ... As I said, all the big guns and the theater operators were stationed there, where it was a little more comfortable and nice living, and they were right on the ocean and palm trees, gorgeous.

SI: In Natal, were your daily activities pretty much the same as they had been in Belem?

GJ: Yes, pretty much, same thing.

SI: As 1944 progressed, did you notice if they were starting to wind down operations in the theater, or did they keep up the same pace of sending planes overseas?

GJ: No, it was pretty active still. As I say, we still had China-Burma-India, you know.

SI: Okay.

GJ: That lasted forever and, as I say, it started off with North Africa. That's the time I was coming down the South Atlantic. Then, North Africa, then, Sicily, and then, Italy, and things are moving north there, and then, over to France. ... The mountains down there [in South Asia], you know; ... what was that little general's [name]? "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell, a wonderful man.

SI: Oh, "the Hump," [the Himalayas].

GJ: China-Burma-India, yes, "the Hump," and "the Hump" [supply missions] were very active for a long, long time. As a matter-of-fact, "Vinegar Joe" came back in his little plane, a C-46, you know, his C-46, ... "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell in there, hell of a nice little guy. ... He was on his way back to the United States to explain some things that he needed over in China-Burma-India, probably, and it took something like that, [for] some guy that knew what the hell was

going on to come back and talk to people in Washington, say, "For God's sakes, this is what I need, one, two, three. Please, take care of it," and he was able to do that.

SI: When a big figure like that would come into the base, would they come out and meet everybody?

GJ: You mean when "Vinegar Joe" landed?

SI: Yes.

GJ: I don't know whether they even knew he was coming. I don't know. He was on his way back to the United States. He didn't stick around too long.

SI: Did you get to meet him or did you just hear about it later?

GJ: Yes. No, no, I met him, and he'd come to the officers' club and he'd talk to you. He was a regular guy, little fellow, "Vinegar Joe." You heard about him?

SI: Yes.

GJ: Yes. He was in charge of that China-Burma-India [Theater], which was a big deal, flying "the Hump." You know, we lost a lot of planes flying that "Hump." ... That was a formidable piece of geography to get over and the C-46, which was a big version of the DC-3, kind of; the DC-3 was named the C-47, and that the C-46 was a great, big [aircraft], you know, of the same type, only a lot bigger plane.

SI: Did you have any problems similar to those that you had with the submarines up at Belem?

GJ: ... Did I tell you about the submarine officer in the hospital? I'd already told you about that.

SI: Yes.

GJ: ... Yes. This was still in Belem, where we had a naval officer. The submarines had shot his plane down and, actually, he died there, I think, that lieutenant, Navy lieutenant. So, we had some problems with submarines, not too many, but we did have some. Yes, I remember taking this kid's boots off. ... He was flying. That's right. He was flying and the submarine had shot his plane, that's what it was. ... When we got him, fully dressed, we had to pull his boots off, as they were filled with blood. He died in the hospital.

SI: Would you have to help out with medical situations?

GJ: Well, you're not supposed to, but we're small, especially Belem, you know. We'd just hop in the ambulance and whoever's closest to the ambulance hopped in and headed for the siren, you know. As a matter-of-fact, one sad deal, for me, was at Belem, yes. One guy, they were afraid of the heavy clouds and limited visibility, you know, in Belem, and so, at one o'clock, it'd clear up and everybody could land, but, until then, you couldn't see anything. So, this guy, in a B-25, I

think it was; ... the runways are like this. So, he spots the runway at the halfway point. Well, he spots it about there, and at the end is forest, solid forest. So, he thinks that he's going to land his B-25. He's not going to sit in this soup forever. He'd never know where he is. So, he comes up, all of a sudden, [to] the end of the runway. He gives it the brake and the left wheel collapses, in the B-25, and the propeller comes in and he holds his arm up and it chops his arm, so [that] his arm's hanging down there. So, what was the story I was going to tell you about him?

SI: Did you go in the ambulance that recovered him?

GJ: ... Yes, that was the one, I guess that was. So, I happened to be right closest to the ambulance, at the end of the little hospital, right by the dispensary, jumped in, one of my enlisted men hopped in, raced for the airfield. ... As I approached this soldier, who happened to be one of my men, was there opening up this big, wooden gate, and I stepped on the gas. ... He wanted to help, tried to jump on the ambulance running board, and the running board's only this long, and it hit him in the side of the face and he fell down right there. I forget his name. So, I turned right around and here he was, laid out, with a big bang on his head and everything, and I just took him to the, back to the hospital, let the other ambulance take care of the other guy, but that's who the other guy was. He got to be better, but, boy, it sure took a lot out of me, being the company commander, you know, and all that. It took a lot out of me. I sat with him a long time, you know. He lived, all right, but he was pretty well banged up in the head and everything, tough on him.

SI: How would you characterize your relationship with your men?

GJ: Good, pretty good, yes. ... One time, we had a big party, in Belem, yes, and I don't know whether it was Christmas, New Year's or whatever. Anyway, it was a big party and it had the officers and the men, and so, I was showing this guy the standing sit through, you know, in wrestling. Did you ever hear of the standing sit through? I get that guy's arm there, pull it in, under my arm under his thing, and then, go round and round and round, and he goes down, down, down, finally, "Boom." "Bam," down he went, head first, right on the concrete floor. ... It's a long walk down to the dispensary, where we could go to take care of him, and [it was] me and couple of sergeants ... walking down there and [asking], "Where's the flight surgeon?" ... So, he got squared away, but that was quite a party, [laughter] but, you know, that's what happens when you have a little booze in you, I guess, but you had to do something, you know, to entertain yourself and the troops.

SI: Was keeping everybody's morale up a problem, or keeping them from getting into trouble?

GJ: We did have some morale problems. One of them, at Belem, was kind of serious. ... Right across from our hospital was an enlisted men's barracks, sort of, and we got a call to go over. Somebody came over, [explained there were] some problems, and we ran over there. ... A guy had gotten a letter from his wife or somebody and she was off doing something else with somebody else and he was going crazy, and so, our flight surgeon there gave him some kind of medicine to quiet him down and stuff, but that was pretty bad. Yes, it was real bad. We had a few of those things, but not too many.

SI: "Dear John" letters, stuff like that.

GJ: Yes, that was tough.

PJ: Do you remember the patient, ... or maybe it was one of your own enlisted men, that was finally diagnosed as a manic depressive?

GJ: Oh, yes. [laughter] He wasn't one of my men. He was a patient.

PJ: Oh, he was a patient, oh, okay.

GJ: He was a manic depressive and, of course, I make the rounds all the time, you know. I'm in a small hospital. ... This was the Belem hospital, I guess. ... You know, a manic depressive, ... they get real wild and, you know, all these things, and then, after a while, they're back to normal as you and me, see? So, I'd check on him, the guy. ... When he was normal, I'd go talk to him and you'd trade little personal stories and everything else, and I was an ag student, you know, out of Rutgers, ... I'm talking about vegetable crops and stuff, this and this. He's very intelligent and so on. [laughter] So, that's over with and I don't whether it was that night or the next morning, whenever, he goes off, and raves, you know. ... He's raving and he [says], "And that Lieutenant Johannessen," he says, "if he wants to see six feet of corn, all he's got to do is look in the mirror." [laughter] So, in other words, he was on the manic side then. When he was down on the other side, he was just as normal as anybody else, intelligent conversation and everything, but, when he went off the deep end there, he just was wild. That's the way a manic depressive gets, you know, gets out of control. So, I was "six feet of corn if I looked in the mirror." [laughter]

SI: What happened to you after you left Natal in early 1945?

GJ: Natal? Oh, yes, I went back to the States, on a plane, with some Britishers ... from Natal, and, if there was a certain number of British on that plane, you had to go over to some island just to the east of Florida before you landed in the States. ... I was on my way to Florida and, unfortunately, we had that. So, we had to go and let these Englishmen off. So, I got to Florida in the middle of the night, ... midnight, like, and I had to report to somebody. Now, it was dark and the night was beautiful and it was quiet and it was a military base, and you know that smoke from the stacks of the little fires in the [barracks]? ... It was so nice to be back there, and I was searching for this place that I had to report [in at], that I was back here from overseas. So, I find this little light and, sure enough, there's somebody sitting in there, a little light. They said, "Well, it's still dark. You come here ... at eight in the morning." So, at eight in the morning, I went there ... and they're supposed to supply you with ... a train ticket to ... your nearest base [nearest your home], which was Fort Dix. So, as I say, I stayed there overnight. ... Eight o'clock in the morning, yes, eight o'clock that same morning, I went down to get a ride to the place and I couldn't get out until the next day or something. So, it's the first time I ran into a WAC [Women's Army Corps personnel], you know, women in the service. So, she drove me back to the barracks, where I stayed overnight, I guess, and, the next morning, I get a ride on a train to Fort Dix. That's my greeting there, and I get to Fort Dix, ... and then, I was going to ... go home and I got a train ride into New York. I got on a Public Service bus to go back across the George Washington Bridge, I guess, yes, and the bus wouldn't stop on Teaneck Road, which was where I

wanted to go. It was so crowded with military [personnel]. So, he drove me another mile, up by the high school, and I had to walk about a mile-and-a-half or so, with this big B-4 bag, to get home. My father couldn't wait to see me, so, he had left the house and walked down to Route 4, where I would have normally got off and walked home, and so, he missed me and I had to walk from way up by the high school, with this bag, home. So, finally, he came home and that's when he greeted me and it was a typical Army screw-up there. [laughter] But, the bus driver ... had a crowded bus and he didn't want to stop; so much for "the returning soldier." [laughter]

JJ: Were your brothers home at that time?

GJ: No. My brother, John, who was with the Eighth Air Force, he had flown over. ... I'd gotten word that he was going to land where I was, the head of the airbase told me that, but the plane over flew that, and so, I didn't see him. ... So, it was a long time before I did get to see him. So, nobody was home, none of them, except me.

PJ: Well, then, you got to Fort Devens.

GJ: Oh, yes.

PJ: And that was a whole new assignment.

GJ: Yes. ...

PJ: Lovell General [Hospital].

GJ: Yes, I know. I got assigned to Lovell. No, when I first came back to the States, I flew ... into [the] amputee center in Georgia, wasn't it?

PJ: Yes. You weren't there very long.

GJ: No. I had asked for the First Service Command, which you were allowed to do if you had points. I had points up the yang-yang, you know what I mean? and I had so many points, overseas and all that. So, I asked for First Service Command. Where do I end up? at Fort Benning, Georgia, in an amputee center. I tell you, "You lousy buggers, what are you doing there, you know? What are you doing to me?" So, then, the word goes around. I'm working there at the medical supply for a few days, and then, the word comes that, "You're going to be shipped to Presque Isle, Maine." I thought to myself, "For God sakes." There were six of us, from different places in the world. So, that really ticks me off. ... Where did I land? ... Then, from Georgia, I flew to Fort Devens, which is First Service Command. I thought, "Oh, that's nice." I get to First Service Command and they say, "You're going to be shipped to Presque Isle, Maine." That's what it was. So, by this time, I'm teeming. ... I was working, again, there, in medical supplies, where I was working for a few days, and I got a call to meet with the executive officer, Colonel [Thomas R.] Goethals, son of "Panama Canal" [George Washington] Goethals, nice, gray-haired guy, who had commanded the Fifth Surgical Hospital in Italy, and his executive officer was S. Albert Hanser, who had commanded the 33rd Field Surgical Hospital in Anzio and got badly wounded. He was now the exec and they were [behind] the big push to

make this Lovell General Hospital a showcase and really take care of everything properly, and those two guys were picked to do that. So, as I say, ... I'm there with Colonel Goethals and he's talking to me and I was so ticked off. When he asked me about it, I said, "Well, we had a small hospital. We did things the way we, you know, figured we should do them," ... and I was mad, mad as hell, because I thought, ... "Here I go, off to some place in Presque Isle, Maine," or something. So, I go back to the medical supply and, that afternoon, the medical supply head comes to me and says, "I think I may lose you." I said, "What do you mean?" "I don't know," he says, "You've got to go see the Colonel, Colonel Hanser, the executive officer." "All right." Boy, I was boiling over by this time. So, I get over to Colonel Hanser. He greets me, and he's an eye surgeon who's been wounded badly and he can't do any surgery right now. So, there was another guy, a captain. ... So, he says to the other guy, (Barker?), whatever his name was, "You're going to be director of dietetics. You're going to feed ten thousand meals a day," and then, he turns to me, and then, he says, "Johannessen," he says, "the Colonel liked your brutal frankness. We've got a place for you here." I says, "Yes, what's that?" "You're the control officer." I said, "What's the control officer?" "You run the hospital." [laughter] I said, "Come on, what are you doing? This is several thousand patients." I forget how many patients we had there, but thousands of them. "You run the hospital." ... So, I got an office, with another office attached to it, a secretary, and I go there and I said, "What do I do?" "You run the hospital." I walk around, you know, and I see a broken window, I say, "Hey, you know there's a broken window?" Boy, somebody comes and they fix it right away. That's pretty good. [laughter] So, I'd walk around, ... surgical rounds; Colonel, the great surgeon who went to Walter Reed to head surgery ...

PJ: Bowers.

GJ: Mike Bowers. ... Mike Bowers, he was a big Irishman, nice guy, a colonel and a good surgeon, and I had, by this time, two enlisted men assigned to me, one about six-foot-three and the other about six-foot-five. ... [If] we walked down a hall, we just took up the whole hall. [laughter] ... On Saturday morning, when the Colonel is making the rounds, ... Colonel Mike Bowers, and ... the ward surgeon's with him, he'd see me coming and he'd come and back up against the wall. "Here comes the control officer," you know, and so on, and he'd salute, you know. He'd make a big joke out of it. Well, in other words, whatever I said was [law]. I run the hospital. If anybody went to Colonel Hanser, he'd say, "See the control officer." So, it was great. So, I made a lot of friends there and I was in all the wards every day, and then, the serious wards, in there three times a day, and I always used to check on this one ward that was a serious ward. There were about seven [beds]. We had about a couple of hundred wards, I guess, in the whole hospital business, and I'd check on this one guy down in the [one ward]. They're using the end room, which was supposed to be [for] recreation, but we were gambling with bed space, so, there were beds, four beds, in there. ... Always, I'd see this one guy there, a lieutenant, always with a sour look on his face and his one leg is up there, hanging on a Balkan frame, you know, and all that. ... He'd look at you like this and [I would ask], "What's wrong with you today?" "Oh, you know, I don't get anything to eat around here." ... I went out, after one of these days, and I'd check with ... those wards three times a day, with the serious [cases], and I went over to nutrition, I said, "Look, ... I want him to have a steak lunch today." "Oh, he had a steak." I said, "Listen, just give him a steak lunch," and so, I come in late in the afternoon and where he's always had that sour look on his face; he had shown me *Life* magazine with a picture of a guy in

a hospital getting a steak. I think that's what prompted me to do that, and I just stopped and looked at him and he looked up and he smiled. [laughter] He says, "I got a steak, yes," he says. So, I did little things like that. ...

PJ: Where were your patients coming from?

GJ: They were coming ... from Europe and from Japan and from China-Burma-India. One of my serious patients, who I got to talk with [when] I was at Cornell on the faculty; what year was I on the faculty at Cornell?

PJ: '50.

GJ: 1950. That's a long time after the war, and I'm in the ...

PJ: Cafeteria.

GJ: Cafeteria, and this guy comes over to me and his eyebrows were gone and ... I could see that he had been burned. ... I forget his name now. Do you remember his name, Mother?

PJ: No. I remember the incident, because I was there.

GJ: Yes. "I'm So-and-So." "Oh, for God sakes." I used to stop and see him three times a day. He had arrived in the hospital, and I made a round about eight o'clock at night, and I see this guy in this serious Ward Fifteen it was, laying on a litter in a cast with straws sticking out of it and just a real goner, looked like. I said, "What's this?" "We're looking. We're trying to get a bed for him." I said, "Where's Major Breen?" "We're trying to find Major Breen now." Major Breen had ... six or seven wards in there. So, anyway, that was a bad case. ... He got his bed and I would stop to see him about three times a day, because he was bad off, and so, this was the same guy, back at Cornell, five years later, or whenever it was, doing work, and he recognized me, for which I'm very grateful. ... Well, when I first saw him, you didn't think he'd live or do anything, you know, but he was doing well. So, I met a lot of people like that, you know, good people.

SI: It sounds like you really got involved with your patients.

GJ: ... Yes, yes, I did. I was interested in them. As a matter-of-fact, I was interested in even studying medicine, but I didn't.

SI: Why did you not pursue medicine? Was it because you were more interested in agriculture?

GJ: I can't remember. Do you remember what steered me that way, Mother?

PJ: Well, ... yes. You were working at the Virginia Experiment Station and you got the sweet potatoes to bloom.

GJ: That's what it was. Oh, that's right.

PJ: ... And John (Hartman?) came ...

GJ: Oh, yes.

PJ: ... and saw it and he was at Purdue and wanted you to come to Purdue to start your Masters.

GJ: That's what it was, yes, ... my dear friend, Dr. Victor Tiedjens from Rutgers, who had great faith in me and I loved the guy. He was so good. He was the one I learned so much from, about soils, and, when I said I was getting out of the service, he said, "I want you here." He had moved from Rutgers to the Virginia Truck Experiment Station, not far from Norfolk. He said, "I want you here. You can live with us, you can do whatever you want." So, I did and that's how I got down there. ... This was Tiedjens. He worked with Schermerhorn at Rutgers. ... The two worked together and they were both professors, good professors, both of them, and so, that's why I went that route and that, of course, then, got me wrapped up in [agriculture]. ... I got a call from Dr. Tiedjens and I move in ... at the foreman's house, with him, his wife and the little girl. He had been in the tankers in World War II. He'd been [through] a tough time, and so, we became very close friends and I had a nice room in their house, which was two-thirds built when he was called into the military and he finished it up and everything, ... right by the lake, and so, that's where I stayed, and so, I got a call, one time, from Dr. Tiedjens and he said, "I'd like you to come down and meet this guy, Dr. John Hartman, from Purdue." He said, "He's looking for, you know, a graduate student. I told him about you." I said, "What? Are you trying to get rid of me?" He says, "No," he said, "but I think you should talk to him." So, I went down there and I see this guy. He looked like a Latin teacher, very wonderful man, and he's a Cornell graduate, he said to me ... "We'd like you to come to Purdue to do graduate work." I said, "Oh, God." I said, "Would you take me into graduate school at Purdue without seeing a copy of my college transcript?" "Oh, yes." I said, "I'll come." [laughter] So, I got a letter soon after. I had had a sweet potato blooming that nobody in the world had been able to get to bloom before. This is in Virginia. So, I get a call, ... "Come to Purdue." I got this ... assistantship and that's how I got there and I got my Masters there, with him, working on tomato fruit cracking resistance. ... From there, he moved to Cornell and he wanted me to come to Cornell too. So, ... I followed him to Cornell, studied under him there and got my PhD, and then, what did I do? I got on faculty.

PJ: You stayed on the faculty.

GJ: Oh, I stayed on the faculty at Cornell.

PJ: Until the West beckoned. [laughter]

Jl: You met your wife while you were at Cornell?

GJ: Yes. She was out there looking for a husband, from Indiana there, and things were kind of scarce out there in Indiana.

PJ: Right.

GJ: [laughter] So, they set up a program there. Her friend invited her to have lunch with her up in the cafeteria, by the dairy barn, and my friend, whose wife was [the] one involved in getting her to go to lunch with her, he was having lunch with me up there, too, separately. So, we're sitting there, having lunch, and here comes his wife and her friend Patty who she introduced to me.

PJ: Talk about skewed; go ahead. [laughter]

GJ: That night, I just went down to where Patty lived, you know, and knocked on the door. She lived in an attic. ...

PJ: It's all I could afford. [laughter]

GJ: Ithaca's built, you know, on a hill. It's steep and, anyway, I come knock on the back door and she comes flying down the stairs there and everything and invites me up. ... So, I went up and didn't know what to do. I said, "[Would] you like to have a beer?" "Yes." I went up to the store and got six quarts of beer. [laughter] I didn't know what else to do.

PJ: Six.

GJ: It was, wasn't it?

PJ: Yes. I've never seen so much beer in my life. [laughter]

GJ: I don't like beer, either. [laughter] So, that started that off.

SI: You mentioned before that you did your thesis work on tomatoes.

GJ: Yes. I did my thesis work at Purdue on tomatoes, on resistance to cracking. You know, usually, tomatoes, when they are ripening, and sometimes ... when they are ripe, and it rains on them, they just split. Why? It was a major problem in the tomato industry at that time. Since those days, there's been resistance bred into some varieties, which was what I was working on, and, today, you find [that] most of the major varieties don't crack when it rains. So, I started on that at Purdue, and then, I continued that. When Dr. John Hartman joined the faculty of Cornell, I followed him. He brought me along with him, in other words, and they took me at Cornell and I studied under him there and continued my work on crack resistance. Then, I got my PhD, and then, I went on the faculty there.

SI: How long were you on the faculty at Cornell?

GJ: About three, a little over three years.

PJ: Before we came to California.

GJ: I got a call from American Can [and they] came to interview [me]. American Can wanted me to be their Pacific Division agronomist, covering [the] Western United States, Western

Canada and Hawaii, and I figured, "Well, that sounded pretty good." [laughter] So, we got out here. We built our first house in Los Altos and I worked for the can company for about seven years.

PJ: Seven.

GJ: In those seven years I traveled all over the place and I enjoyed my work. It was good work, all over [the] Western United States, Western Canada, Hawaii, with the pineapples. ... Then, the Pineapple Research Institute of Hawaii, ... which was being run by Bob (Cushing?), who was a plant breeder out of Cornell's faculty, he wanted me to be the head of the plant breeding department of the Pineapple Research Institute. So we went out there and I headed up the plant breeding department of Pineapple Research Institute of Hawaii, for five years, and then I joined California Cannery and Growers, as director of raw product research. For three years after which I became director of the newly formed grower owned California Tomato Research Institute Inc, headquartered in first Stockton, California then Livermore, California.

PJ: Well, it was a mutual decision.

GJ: Yes.

PJ: Then, you started the tomato research.

GJ: The chairman of the board at Cal Can, a tomato grower was instrumental in starting the California Tomato Research Institute for me, and so, that's what I did. I became the director of the California Tomato Research Institute and that's where I went and that's where I stayed for twenty-three years. Then, I retired and here I am, sitting here, having a nice visit. [laughter]

SI: Do you guys have any other questions?

ML: How many children did you have?

GJ: ... Four. We have a boy and three girls, and all good kids. Neil, the oldest lives in Walnut Creek, retired from Charles Schwab. He's here every Sunday with a bunch of flowers for mother. Of the three girls, Ann has a master's degree in nursing and is with Phillips medical supply and medical equipment. She's doing very well. She's all over the world, all over the place. She's not married and Susie's not married. Susie is on the Berkeley faculty, and she's also on the faculty, graduate faculty, at St. Mary's. She's a lecturer in exercise science, and she's doing [well]. Kirsten is married with two little ones, now, nineteen and sixteen, and the older one of Kirsten's children, Katie got a scholarship to UCLA for four years

GJ: And then, the younger one, Amy, is just graduating, in another year or so, from high school, I guess.

SI: It sounds like you have been very successful with both your career and your family.

GJ: Yes.

SI: Any other questions?

Jl: No.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add for the record before we end?

GJ: Well, it's nice to meet you guys. ...

SI: It was a pleasure to meet you and Mrs. Johannessen as well.

GJ: ... I had no idea this would be as complex as this is. [laughter] My memory's pretty bad. ...

SI: No, it is pretty good.

Jl: You did a good job. You have a good prompter. [laughter]

GJ: Yes.

PJ: Well, it takes both of us. It used to just take one. [laughter]

GJ: Yes.

SI: You remembered a lot of little anecdotes and details. We are very pleased about that.

GJ: Well, it's been a pleasure to visit with you.

SI: The pleasure is all ours.

Jl: Thank you so much.

SI: Thank you very much, both of you. Thank you again for lunch.

PJ: You're very welcome.

SI: Lunch was a very pleasant surprise. This concludes our interview session with Dr. George A. Johannessen on August 23, 2007, in Danville, California. Thank you very much.

GJ: Thank you, all of you.

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

Reviewed by Joshua Pogozielski 10/17/07

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 12/25/07

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 2/5/08

Reviewed by George Johannessen 2/21/08