

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES T. KENNY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. James T. Kenny on February 11, 1995 at Shoreham, New York with Kurt Piehler and

Natalie Kosonocky: Natalie Kosonocky

Alaina Chip: Alaina Chip.

KP: And I guess I would like to begin by talking about your parents. And you mentioned in your pre-interview survey, that your father had to quit school early and go to work, and your grandfather died of an industrial accident.

James Kenny: Yeah, it was a locomotive plant in Paterson, New Jersey. I don't know what happened in fact, ... I didn't know anything about this. My folks never talked about the past, and my brother Bill did some research and he found [out] about it.

KP: When did you find out this story of what actually happened?

JK: Oh, I'd say about the time my brother Bill retired from his position with the Department of Agriculture in Jersey.

KP: So it was quite recent, relatively recent you found this out.

JK: About ten years ago.

KP: And how did he find out, where did he do the research?

JK: I don't know, I never did ask him that. Well, he came up with photocopies of the birth certificates of both of our grandparents. They also indicated the employment of the grandparents. I will give Bill a call to find out how he found out about the accident that killed our grandparent.

KP: Your father grew up in Paterson, and you mention he initially started out as a plumber's assistant.

JK: Plumber's assistant when he was eleven-and-a-half.

KP: And how long did he stay doing that?

JK: I don't know, all I know is that he was in the New Jersey Bell for 48 years, so he started pretty young with New Jersey Bell.

KP: And it sounds like he was a telephone man through and through.

JK: Oh yeah, yeah. He was a what they called a trouble chief. I often met the workmen who reported to my father when I was walking to grammar school. They would let me put a hand in

the wax they used to seal the wire joints. They told me that my dad was so good that he could tell the kind of bird sitting on the wire they were working on. [laughter]

KP: So your father sounds like he really developed on the job a great deal of knowledge about electricity and electronics and telecommunication.

JK: Father had taken some courses that I assume had to do with the telephone business. The only thing that had to do with his past life was a picture of him in a church band. I guess he played a violin because he wanted me to learn to play the instrument. I didn't like the idea. I gave it up after a short time. I never saw a picture of my mother until long after her death. My sister Helen apparently found it in going through the items after both of them had passed away. I believe it was a picture of mother in her wedding dress. Mother was a real attractive lady.

KP: Interesting, so your father would never tell you stories, "Oh when I was your age I was ..."

JK: No, never. He came to most of the games that any of his sons were involved. I played basketball in high school and 150 lb football and lacrosse in college. He received a broken nose when he was playing baseball in his youth. He said he did not tell his mother and didn't go to a doctor. He paid the price since he had to put a medication in his nose throughout his life.

NK: I guess he was afraid to tell them. Did he get into a fight or was it something else?

JK: I don't know what happened if he got hit by a ball or a bat I have no idea. He never told us that. [laughter]

KP: How did your father and mother meet?

JK: That I don't know.

KP: They also didn't tell anyone.

JK: They both came from Paterson, that's all I know.

KP: That's all you know.

JK: Yes.

KP: Were they always active in the church?

JK: Yes.

KP: They moved from Paterson to Midland Park.

JK: Their first home in Midland Park was on Erie Avenue. They built a new home on Vreeland Avenue, one block from their first residence, I'm guessing that this was about 1910. They lived

there until a few years after World War II. They built another home in Mays Landing, New Jersey. Brother Frank and his wife owned several acres adjoining their property. They built the new house on a parcel next to Frank and Mildred.

Mother did not live too long after moving to the new house. The house was just the thing for our parents. They didn't have to climb stairs as they did in the house in Midland Park. Mary and I and our children visited them about a month before Mother died. The day before we left to go home, Mother and I spent a good part of that day weeding the front lawn. I enjoyed the conversation. I had no idea that Mother had a problem. She died from a stroke about a month later. While the house was next door to Frank all of us including Father agreed that Helen's home was the best for Father. Helen had the room and she was within walking distance from church. Father did live with Bill and us for short periods of time. Father lived about three years after Mother. He died also of a stroke while in the Bergin Pines hospital not too far from Helen.

KP: It sounds like your father and your mother lived very full lives.

JK: Well I tell you, mother and father did everything for us. My mother and father never slept any place other than in Midland Park. They never stayed overnight, never went on vacation, if they went some place it was just a day trip and back.

KP: Really, they never took a two week vacation.

JK: No, never. Of course, they had six of us, and six of us in school ... at one time they had three in college at the same time, so this caused a strain.

KP: So you had how many brothers, five brothers?

JK: Four brothers and a sister.

KP: And three ended up going to college.

JK: All of us did.

KP: Oh all of you, including your sister?

JK: Yeah, well Charlie was the first one at Rutgers. He graduated in '31, Joe was '35, Frank was '38, I was '42, and Bill I think was '47. Bill was initially '45, but then he left during the war and I think he wound up in 1947.

NK: Did your parents engage in a lot of Irish cultural groups?

JK: No, only when I was a kid, my grandmother who died at 96, she would come up sometimes and visit Midland Park with some of her cronies, who came over from Ireland. Of course, her brogue was as thick as can be, and tell some of the Irish jokes, which still sound pretty good, I guess if you can remember them. [laughter]

KP: One figure who sticks out in the 1930s is Franklin D. Roosevelt?

JK: Well, ... they were all for Roosevelt, they were Democrats. The rest of us were all Republicans. [laughter]

KP: The kids were all Republicans.

JK: I think so, as far as I know.

KP: Your father was alive when Kennedy became president. What did he think?

JK: Well they were living down in May's Landing then, so I don't think we ever got into a discussion of politics, no.

KP: Growing up in Midland Park, what do you remember best about growing up as a teenager and even younger?

JK: Well it was a small town, and you knew practically everybody in the town, and it's a good place for kids to grow up. We had sports there, we had swimming, tennis, lots of basketball. No, it was a good town to grow up in.

KP: How many people would commute into New York to work?

JK: From Midland Park, I would say it wasn't too many. After the war I commuted for about six months, from Ridgewood. We'd walk from Midland Park to Ridgewood. I met another fellow, who was just out of the war, same as I was. He was working in New York and we'd meet and walk down to the railroad station in Ridgewood. But no, I only did that for about six months, and I said the heck with this I'm not going to commute back and forth from New York, because at that time the trains were coal-fired without any air conditioning. It's funny you'd go to Ridgewood and every day you went to the same spot on the platform, you sat in the same seat on the train, nobody ever took it from you. But coming home ... you were on your own. Then the windows would go up, and it caused all the smoke or the ashes in the coal would come in, and jeez, the soot around you. [laughter] ... So I said the heck with this. Of course, they were out in the summer months they parked them out in the Jersey City lot, and the sun was beating on them all day, so when we got into a train, at that time, you know, it was pushing 100 I guess, so I didn't stick to that very long. That's when I went out to Long Island.

KP: If I remember correctly, John Crane lived in Midland Park.

JK: ... He ... became a lawyer. Is that the one you're talking about?

KP: Yes.

JK: No, he lived to the east of [us]. ... The town name I've forgotten, like Edison in that direction probably towards the city.

KP: Where did the parents of most your friends work?

JK: Gee, I wouldn't know, I guess I knew that my father was in the telephone company that was it. My mother of course with six kids, she didn't have time to go to work. [laughter]

KP: So your mother did not work when you were growing up?

JK: No, no.

KP: It sounds like that your parents had a strong interest in your going to college.

JK: Oh, yes.

KP: It seems obvious why in some ways you went to Rutgers, but why not St. Peter's or a Catholic school?

JK: Well Charlie, the oldest one, he had a scholarship to one of these colleges in New York, and he was there about a year, and he didn't like it, it was an engineering school, and then he went to Rutgers, because Rutgers was probably the best place he could go to college at that time, and so he went there, and then Joe followed, and Frank, and myself, and Bill. Then Helen went to Newark Normal School, which is now ...

KP: Kean College.

JK: Kean College, yeah.

KP: Growing up did you ever see the Ku Klux Klan activity in your community?

JK: Oh, a couple reports of burning a cross on somebody's front lawn, that was about it. But there was a big separation in the Dutch Reformed. We fought with them all the time. And we had to walk from our house down to Ridgewood to Mt. Carmel's School. And then the kids on the other side of Ridgewood, they would be coming this way to the Dutch Reformed school in Midland Park and every once in a while we'd meet and we'd wind up in a fight. [laughter]

KP: So there was a real separation between Dutch Reform and Catholics.

JK: Yes, oh yes ... miles apart. My father ran for councilman and, of course, being Catholic, he got votes I guess from the Fitzpatricks and the Kennedys, and the Gillens, and a few others, but he didn't go over very strong. [laughter]

KP: Did he win that election?

JK: Oh no, not even close.

KP: Had you thought of going to any other colleges?

JK: No.

KP: It was Rutgers?

JK: Oh yes, that was it.

KP: And how did you like Rutgers? Did you ever visit your brothers before going to Rutgers?

JK: Oh sure, oh yeah.

KP: So you had a good sense of the campus?

JK: Oh yeah, ... all of us belonged to the same fraternity.

AC: Which fraternity was that?

JK: It was the Raritan Club at that time. It's Sigma Phi Ep, now I think it is. I haven't been back there since the day I left.

NK: Really?

JK: I've gone back for several football games and two class reunions. I didn't go back to the fraternity, it was all changed from what I knew.

NK: Was Rutgers prestigious at that time? Did everyone in New Jersey think that Rutgers was the place to be?

JK: We thought it was. [laughter] Unfortunately, what's taking place now in the newspapers, I think is going to hurt the blacks and it's going to hurt the school.

KP: When you entered college, what did you think you wanted to do in 1938-39?

JK: Well my brother Charlie, he was an engineer, and when he got out, of course, that was 1931. There weren't any jobs around. He worked a short time with the Highway Department in New Jersey and surveying and what not. Then he went with the CCC. They sent him out to the State of Washington. They did something out there which required some engineering. He went back to Rutgers and took his master's in business. Then he got into the savings and loans business. He kind of talked me into it. So I went in there with the idea that I was going in the savings and loan, which I did do.

KP: So really, when you entered Rutgers you thought you would be going into the line of work you actually did.

JK: The bank, yeah. ...

KP: When did you join the fraternity, your first year?

JK: Oh yeah, freshmen year, first day I was in the fraternity house. [laughter] It was cheaper there, than going into the dormitory I think, because well we had jobs we could do, like I took care of the furnace in the wintertime, and then I was the steward, and I got my meals free. In those days we figured a dollar a day for everybody for three meals and we came out all right.

AC: Did you receive any scholarships or anything to go to Rutgers?

JK: Yeah, well I took the test and what not, and I didn't get a scholarship, so my mother wrote a letter to Dean Metzger, if we were entitled to a scholarship, so we got 150 dollar scholarship. That went quite a ways in those days. I forget the total. ... What we did when we started working then started paying back my mother and father, and that money was going towards the next one in line, I guess we had little slip ups there. But I paid it off, what I owed, and my brother Bill paid off what he owed, and so did the others. That's the way they worked it out.

KP: So they got the first one started and then?

JK: Yeah, of course, he had a problem, not being able to get a decent job. It was a little difficult for him.

KP: Did you work at all, while you were going to school? You mentioned you worked as a steward, and other jobs in the fraternity, but did you do any other work outside?

JK: We used to usher down the theater, got free tickets. [laughter] ... Then on Sundays after the football game I'd go over to sweep up the stadium. In fact, I was ushering the dedication of the

stadium, not the one we've got today, and that was against Princeton and we beat them. That was the first time we beat them since ...

KP: 1869.

JK: 1869, whatever it was yeah. So I picked up a couple bucks there, but didn't get much. We always worked in the summer though.

KP: Where did you work in the summer?

JK: Well I worked on a cut flower farm. The flowers were sent to the New York market. But we worked always as kids. ... I cut a lot of lawns, and all that money went into the bank. And then that money came out when I went to college.

NK: So your parents had this pretty well planned?

JK: ... Oh yes.

NK: That you were definitely going to school.

JK: We put the money away. My mother saw to that. [laughter]

NK: Was your mother mostly in charge of the finances or did your father have any pull?

JK: Yes, she was. Yeah, she kind of handled that by then. My mother was a secretary, when she was working, and she went through high school, too.

NK: Oh, which your father hadn't.

JK: ... She always helped me with my homework if I needed help.

NK: Was she easy to talk to?

JK: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

NK: So you had a good relationship?

JK: Good relationship with all of us.

AC: While you were at Rutgers did you have a girlfriend?

JK: Not really.

AC: What did you do when you were not at class?

JK: I was active in hundred fifty pound football and lacrosse, I played both. Then I got into CPT. I had to drop lacrosse then, because we had to go to class two nights a week. I think it was three and a half hours each class. Then I went into the advanced course was three nights a week. So I had to do some. So I dropped out of lacrosse, but I continued with the football through the senior year.

KP: You joined the CPT, but did you continue on in the ROTC? Had you thought of taking Advanced ROTC?

JK: No, ... I took the first two years ahead of it initially.

KP: But you did not want to take advanced?

JK: Oh, I applied for it, and they wanted to know why I wanted it. Because, I said, "I need the money." I don't think it went over so well. [laughter]

NK: That wasn't quite the answer they were looking for.

JK: No, so then I enlisted in CPT. I liked flying I always made model airplanes and like that so. In fact in Midland Park we had quite a model airplane club when I was [a kid]. As kids we met at this one storefront we had and a couple of older men that kind of ran it. We bought our supplies from them and they helped us out. So I always had a great interest in flying.

KP: Did you ever go to Newark Airport as a kid to watch the planes?

JK: No, we used to go to one in Franklin Lakes, Nelson's they called it. They used to have events up there on a Sunday. When they'd fly you for a couple bucks. Then they'd have someone parachute out of the airplane.

NK: Would your whole family go or you and some friends?

JK: Me and friends.

KP: You mentioned in growing up in Midland Park there was no love lost between the Dutch Reformed and the Catholics.

JK: No, it wasn't.

KP: What did you think of Dean Metzger? Because I have been told by many I have interviewed in your class that he was a stern Calvinist in the Dutch Reform tradition. They have many distinct memories of him, particularly in chapel.

JK: Oh yeah, yeah. Well I lived next door to him for a while in the Raritan Club. We were next to him, then we moved over to George Street after that. No, I stayed away from him as much as I could. [laughter] So I didn't have any opinion.

AC: So what did you think of chapel? Did you go?

JK: Oh yeah, we had to go once a month, something like that. ... But Sundays I went to St. Peter's across from the Queens Campus.

KP: So you did not go to the Sunday chapel?

JK: No, no, just during the week. More or less it was a class meeting.

KP: When you were going to Rutgers, do any professors stick out as you remember being very good or not so good?

JK: I can remember, but I can't remember his name, the English prof. And the first day of class, he was going down the roster there and gets to my name. He says "Jeez, another Kenny?" He says, "Your old man isn't paying for you is he?" [laughter] He says, "You should be getting in for free." ... I forget his name. I'll have to look in the yearbook, I could probably find him. That was in English, he was quite a character.

AC: You said before about Rutgers, you felt it was prestigious at that time. How was NJC viewed at the same time?

JK: Oh, ... about the same, we felt the same about NJC, oh yeah.

AC: Did you interact with them a lot?

JK: Well, when we had a dance or something ... I'd go over there, and get a date with a girl and come back, it was good for that.

KP: Did you have a chance to read the newspapers when you were going to Rutgers? I mean it sounds like a basic question, but all the people said, they never did, except for the Targum.

JK: ... I used to follow in sports and what not. On Sundays I would look to see how we made out.

KP: But in terms of following what was going on politically, nationally, and overseas. Did you have much sense, say in 1939, 1940, and 1941?

JK: I think so, I think I was interested in it. I have it today. I sit down every morning and read Newsday. Then I go out and get the Times and read that. That takes up a good part of my day.

KP: In 1939, 1940, 1941 what did you think of the approach of war?

JK: Well several times, we thought we weren't going to be in school very long. ... It finally came up to December the 7th. I'll never forget that. I was up in the third floor of the fraternity house, on Sunday afternoon. I was doing my term paper, which I didn't particularly like, it was on religion in Shakespeare. It didn't send me very far. [Laughter] I remember someone yelled downstairs, and I came down and found out that they bombed Hawaii. We decided we would go to the movies. [laughter] ... The draft board was after me, during the summer months between my junior and senior year.

KP: Because for the peacetime draft.

JK: Yeah, and I had to register, and one of the men on the panel, that had a say in it, his son was ... in Rutgers too, and he was in the CPT program the same as I was. ... They gave me a waiver, as I recall-- I forget. So I went to school, and it wasn't too many days after Pearl Harbor that I got a notice to report back for reevaluation. And I went back, they sent me over to Newark and got my physical, and everything else, and then I went back to school. As soon as I finished my exams I packed everything and brought it home, and went over to New York and went to the navy first. ... They examined me, and at the end they said, "We're sorry we can't take you." And I said, "Why, what's the problem?" Malocclusion. I said, "What the hell is malocclusion?" "Your teeth don't meet." I said, "What does that got to do with flying an airplane." You can't hold the oxygen tube in your mouth." [laughter] A lot of baloney. The trouble was they had too many waiting and they didn't have the facilities to bring them in to start training, but the army air force took me right away and then they put me on furlough, and I got paid \$21 a month, and I stayed home. Of course, that wasn't too pleasant because at my age still at home, not in uniform, you took a lot of lashings of people, you know, snide remarks about why aren't you in uniform.

KP: Carl Bosenberg has told this story to us, about having a similar experience of waiting to get orders, to get a draft notice. He said a lot of parents were talking, why is Carl not in uniform.

JK: Yeah, that was common knowledge, ... any kid that was hanging around, you know, that was old enough to be in, why wasn't he in?

NK: So you had graduated at this point and were going?

JK: What they did at Rutgers, if you went into service, you were automatically, if your credits were up to date at the time you left, you automatically got credit for the rest of it. So I got credit for the ... second half of senior year. I didn't go back. I could have gone back if I wanted to, but I didn't see the point in it. I said, maybe they'd start making me finish my thesis on ... [laughter]

NK: Your term paper.

KP: You took part of the CPT program. If it had not been for the draft board, do you think you would have gotten into that program or known of the program?

JK: No, I don't think I would have.

KP: It was going to the draft board?

JK: No, I was in the CPT program before the draft.

KP: Oh, okay.

JK: Yeah, I started in my junior year.

KP: Why did you enroll in the program?

JK: Why?

KP: How did that come about?

JK: Well, because I knew there was a chance of a war, and I didn't want any part of the infantry, ... and I liked flying and I preferred that. That's why I got into the CPT program.

KP: Had you thought about making a career in aviation?

JK: No, not really.

KP: It was really because of the approach of the war?

JK: Yeah, yeah.

KP: So you were pretty sure by your junior year of 1941 that we were going to war with Germany?

JK: Well, all along there, there was a possibility of it. And, of course, at that time, we were lucky that we had time re-train and to get into the production of airplanes and war equipment. And, therefore we weren't too bad off when they pulled that sneak attack on us, because if we had to start from scratch, we'd had a lot of difficulty, I guess. But we were feeding the British and the French with war materials. And we were geared for that, so as soon as the war came, ... we were ready to go.

KP: Do you think your fellow classmates felt the same way about the approach of war?

JK: I don't think we talked about it very much. We all knew that that was hanging in the background.

AC: Were there any anti-war protests or petitions or anything?

JK: No, we wouldn't dare do any of those things. [laughter] We'd been in trouble. No.

KP: At one point Wendell Willkie visited the campus in 1940, during the 1940 campaign. Do you remember that visit?

JK: No, no.

KP: The CPT program, Tom Kindre has talked about it as well as Richard Marlow. I have interviewed both

JK: Oh, yes, Marlow. ...

KP: Did you know Marlow growing up at all?

JK: ... Well, ... his father [had] made pumps or something, I think it was. And that was in Midland Park, but I think Dick lived in Ridgewood. And I knew him, yeah.

KP: But not well growing up.

JK: No.

KP: Both Richard Marlow and Tom Kindre have told a lot of stories about learning how to fly in the late 1930's. Do you have any stories about your experiences learning how to fly?

JK: Well, we started out with an Air Ronca Chief, I think they called it. A two-seater with about a 35 horsepower motor, and we had, I think it was about 70 hours of flying. In the secondary course, we went to ... the bi-plane. That was aerobatics and what not. Then what happens today, and what we did then, I remember the airliners would go from New York to Washington or Philadelphia.

And we were doing stunts, doing our loop to loops, and snap rolls, and slow rolls, and what not. In the same area where the passenger planes were. [laughter] We had to make sure, before you started doing a 360 make sure everything was clear, nobody coming up on you. ... No, I enjoyed it, it was a lot of fun. My first lesson in the secondary course was on Saturday when Rutgers was playing in the stadium. My instructor put on a show-- we flew upside down over the stadium. I used to put on a little bit of a show. ... No, I enjoyed it.

Then I had a bicycle, ... I bought a bicycle for 25 bucks from ... a six day bicycle rider in the Madison Square Garden. And this fellow I went to high school with got into road racing and what not, so when I [was] going into this I got a hold of him and said, ... "Where can I get a good bike good bike? So he took me over to New York and we went to this fellow's shop, and I bought a bike from him for 25 bucks. You could pick this thing up with your pinky almost. It was a good racing bike, so that's how I got from the fraternity house out to Hadley Field on the bicycle.

NK: Where is Hadley Field in relation, was it right next to the stadium?

JK: I'd say a couple of miles beyond, it going towards Plainfield, I guess it is, in fact. ...

KP: I remember Tom Kindre would describe how he would take these classes. He would fly almost 100 to 200 miles just before one of his morning classes. He would get in and then just fly back. Did you have similar experiences?

JK: Yeah, I would go over there, it all depends. Your schedule would vary, either in the morning or in the afternoon or during the day, and yeah I would go over there often times before class. And go up and fly. ... After the war started we were grounded for a week or so, and then I had to do cross-country, so I had to fly from Hadley to Paoli, Pennsylvania down to Atlantic City and back to Hadley, and I got near Philadelphia and this P-40 came up, and he was flying on my wing. [laughter] Of course, I'm looking straight ahead to give him a chance push me down or force me to go down. But that was the big excitement of that trip, with that P-47 on my wing. I don't know how he could slow down to what I was flying, but he did.

KP: It sounds like you went into the air force with a good amount of flying time and flying experience. How valuable did that prove to be, your CPT program?

JK: I think it helped a lot. My instructor in the CPT joined the air corps the same time I did. He was offered a first lieutenant's commission but he to go as an instructor. He said, "NO, I want to fly combat." He was told that he would have to go through the cadet program. Both of us went to Maxwell in the same class. We went through tests to determine whether we were best suited to be a pilot, navigator or bombardier. We both went to primary. He was given a check ride and was promoted to the next stage of the training. I went on to Lawrenceville after finishing the first two stages of training. When I finished the program at Lawrenceville I was sent to the same base that Ray Meyer, my CPT instructor was assigned. We were there to go through a decompression

chamber test. I didn't know that Ray was there. I happened to bump into him. We went to dinner that night. He was very upset. He was told that he had to go through [the] cadet program in order to become a fighter pilot. He did what he was told to do, but did not get the assignment he wanted.

He was there I believe the whole war. Anytime I met a pilot that had gone through his base I would ask them if he knew Ray Meyer. The answer was always a loud YES. I just hope he has been flying a 747 for one of our top airlines.

KP: But he really wanted to fly combat?

JK: Oh yes.

KP: How old was he when he was your instructor?

JK: He was about a year or two younger than I. [laughter] But, ... I guess he hung around Hadley, and did a lot of flying. He was a natural pilot and he was good. He was too good. [laughter] I could see him in a P-51 or something like that. ...

KP: What do you remember about the first time you flew both with the co-pilot, but then as a solo?

JK: Well my experience in that was not very good. I was in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, and we were flying night, first time, so I go up and make a couple of landings with my instructor, and he said, "Okay, you go ahead, you're all right." So I'm coming out and I was cleared to go to take it to the runway, and I got about a 45 degree angle, turning it around, so I could get lined up in the center, and whoosh, right over top of me about ten feet was this airplane. It had no lights, he had lost his electrical system. He couldn't contact the tower, and they didn't know he was coming, and I didn't know he was [coming], because they had cleared me to take off, and here is this guy is going over the top. Geeze, it shook me up. I know that.

NK: Was that your first time?

JK: At night, flying solo at night. And they had to, what they did-- ... they had four quadrants, and you went to this quadrant to that quadrant, and what altitude you're supposed to go to. I got so shook up I got in the ... wrong section, and they called for the fellow to come in from that section. And they said, "Somebody is in here, ... that's not supposed to be here." [laughter] Of course, I kept my mouth shut, and when they told me to come in, I came in. But I don't know what quadrant I was in at the time. But that shook me up, I tell you that.

We had some other nights. I was at Lawrenceville, Illinois and we were night flying there, that was the advanced course, and it was a bad night and we were flying night. And they had a storm went by, and snow and what not. And we were down the line, and we were there for a quite a while, and then it stopped snowing. So they decided to start flying, so our instructor, what they did when you're going through, you always had three students and one instructor. So what happened, well this was ... when we were in the twin engine. And he told the other fellow and ... me too, he said,

"Well you need some course time, why don't you fly from here to Effingham and take that over to Terre Haute and then back to Lawrenceville."

So we figured out, they gave us the winds and the direction and what not. We figured out what course we should follow, and what the timing would be. So we take off and we're relaxed, because we couldn't miss Effingham, because at that time, they had tower lights, and each light was coded, and they used that when they fly from Chicago to let's say L.A. They could follow this light line all the way in and you knew where you were, all you had to do was read the code and check on your map, and you knew your location. So we were kind of relaxed, and we were flying and we flew and we cheated. Where the heck is Effingham and where is this light line? We couldn't fly through that, well we didn't know where we were. And, of course at night, the daytime it is easy to find contact, because you have roads and you look at intersections and like that. In fact one time I got lost, I found a railroad and followed the railroad down to the station. [laughter] I read the name of the town off the station. [laughter] But this night we were flying, and jeez what the heck is going on here, we should be seeing something. So we kept hedging towards the right, because we figured that's where we probably couldn't miss. We couldn't find anything. We saw this light in the distance, and we headed for that. ... We were looking for a beacon. It was a pretty good size town, but we figured we were way up here, but we weren't way up there, we were way down here, and what happened the wind must have shifted completely, and it was probably very strong, because that front had gone by. And then we were pulling up and the light came on, the panel light indicating that we had 23 minutes of gas left. And, I said, jeez we'd better start climbing up, maybe we got to bail out, and off in the distance we saw this green light, an amber, that meant it was an airport. So we headed for that, and then the question came, should we go in directly or should we go over it first with our lights on to check to see if everything is okay? Because we weren't so sure that 23 minutes, we got 23, maybe 15 or maybe ... 30, we didn't know, but 23 is what they told us. So we decided we'd better case this thing first, so we turned our landing lights on, and we found another plane from our base off to the side in the mud. So we made it around and we came back down, and we landed, because we were aware of that, so we didn't have any problem. And, one of the pilots in the other, his old man was a general down in Washington. So we figured we were okay. You know they never said anything about that, but what happened the wind must have been terrific change, because I got caught in another one of those things.

KP: If you could hold that thought.

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

JK: We were flying prisoners of war, French prisoners of war back from Austria to ... Beaumont, I think it was in France. And I was dodging these storms all the way along from Austria back to France, and got to the airport there and called in and they told me number two for landing. And so I got in position and got around, number one got to the base leg, and they called and told us to hold our position, the wind is changing and we'll call you, you know, when the winds are settled down. So we're flying around, flying around, and finally they told number one you're cleared now. And we

were coming in at 180 degrees from what we were flying what we were supposed to land initially. So I'm following him, number two he landed. And then I came in, and I was flaring out and I was going like a son of a gun, and I yelled to the co-pilot, "Hey did you give me full flaps?" He said yeah. Jeez we're going, you know, we're going too fast. So I committed myself, and I landed and I hit the brakes and all of sudden I had no brakes, and I yelled to him, I said, "Get ready to unlock the tail wheel, maybe I'm going to head off on the side up here." Well I wanted to get over top the hill to see what was on the other side of the hill there. There was a lot of airplanes, so I had to go right straight ahead. And I went off the end of the runway, and there were two bomb craters we went through. And when I got out of the airplane, boy I was mad. I went back to the tower, I said, "What the hell is the matter with you?" I said, "You brought me in downwind." He said, "I shot flare off, didn't you see it?" I said, "When I'm landing an airplane, I'm looking about 50 feet in front of me the left side of the runway. I'm not looking at you a mile away over here. You've got a radio, why didn't you call me?" Well I never heard any more about that, except when I got back to England, the CO he said, what happened, he said the brakes ... from the heat they fused. He said, ... you lost your brakes, which I knew. So the wind projections we got, were often bad. And another time I was over in England. They told us, we're having ... it was after the war was over there, and they decided we're going to have a mock raid on Paris.

KP: I heard about these, someone else had done these.

JK: So we took off and it was very cloudy, and the ceiling wasn't too high, and we were flying pretty low getting in formation, and around the airport there and the lead plane was dropping flares every so often, so they could see where they were, and we started climbing we were suppose to come on top around 10,000 feet. And we got up to ten and we were still in it, and we got to around twenty, a little over twenty, and it started to snow. And it was snowing so hard that I couldn't see the end of my wing tip, and here I am flying on another plane, and I wanted to keep him in view. So I had to come inside of his wing on top of him looking down, and then they came through with the order, and they gave us the heading to take, and to come down at 155 miles an hour at 500 feet a minute. Everybody stayed in that, so we came out all right, but I mean that's what the weather reports we got were not so good, and if you relied on them, sometimes you had problems.

And I had another problem, I flew up from ... Fort Myers up to Maxwell Field to deliver something that had to be up there that day.... The CO ... was always good to me. Whenever he had a trip, he used to call me. I'd fly, I'd enjoy it. So I'm heading back and it was late in the evening, and this vicious lightning storm is ahead of me. Well I won't fly through lightning storms at night. The daytime I go around them I won't go through them. ... You know, you stay away from that stuff, because you don't know. The wind could be going up a hundred miles an hour and coming down at a hundred miles an hour. You get caught in there, and there is no telling what would happen. So my brother was in training in Sarasota, Florida which was along the way and it was on the side of the storm, so I let it down there. And I thought it was a little rough here, I'd better come in a little faster than I usually do. I added about ten-fifteen miles an hour to my approach, and I get over the runway and all of a sudden I went boom, just like that. I was on the ground. I dropped about ten

feet straight down. Well, that was a wind sheer. I didn't know that and I never heard of it until one of the airliners crashed going into LaGuardia, and a basketball player, a star of the Knicks, I think it was, was killed in that. Well ... that's the first time, I think, I ever heard of wind sheer. But having experienced that, ... it was just boom, you went right down, there was no reason for it.

NK: The wind just changed on you?

JK: No, the wind was coming down.

NK: Oh, okay.

JK: And it forced me onto the ground. ... I was all over the runway. If I had been further back ... I guess wind sheers travel along with storms. Fortunately, it hit when I was in a good position. So the speed I added on to it, I figured that's what saved me from maybe going down short of the runway. ...

KP: It sounds like you, even before you saw combat you had a number of close calls.

NK: They trained you to do night flying, while you were still preparing to do combat. Did you fly at night while you were overseas?

JK: Oh, yeah, oh sure.

NK: Did you do bombing raids and things at night?

JK: Well, when we got to RTU, which was hard ball, which was the last stage before you go overseas. That's when you do your bombing and what not. No, I did a lot of instructing, I was teaching instrument flying, when I was down in Florida. So they sent me to a separate instructor's school out in Texas, and I went through that. And I passed that and qualified as instructor ... and so that's what I did for a good part of the time.

KP: In fact, you saw a lot of the United States.

JK: Oh yeah.

KP: And coming from a family that did not like to take trips that they were required to stay overnight. You did not make it quite out to the west, but you made it out to South Dakota, and saw a good part of the South. What did you think of the country, of the different places you went to?

JK: I enjoyed it, I always tried to see new things. Of course, my brother would tell you I don't like going on vacation back to the ... [same] place that I've been before. ...

Mary Kenny: He doesn't like to go back to the same place. That's why he went all over.

KP: So what did you think, going to Montgomery, Alabama, and Tuscaloosa, and probably Walnut Ridge, Arkansas?

JK: Walnut Ridge, I was baptized there. We took, I think it was a train, ... I don't where they let us off. But anyway, we got in these army trucks and we go to the airfield, and I'm sitting at the end of the truck, so I'm the first one to jump out. Well I jumped out, there's dust on the ground, there's mud all over, and I went in the mud. [laughter] So that was my initiation, I never liked Arkansas. [laughter]

KP: As an Irish Yankee how did it go with Southerners?

JK: The Texans, they were a bunch of braggarts, ... from what I saw of Texas, I don't know what they have to brag about. [laughter] I guess they had to do something. No, I never thought much of Texas. Well the people were nice. In fact, there were some very nice people in Arkansas. It was Christmas a fellow and I, three of us, we went to church. We went to two or three Masses that day. We hung out in front of the church, and this couple came along and wanted to know if we wanted to join them for Christmas dinner. So we said, sure. That's what we were waiting for. [laughter] They took us out to dinner, which was very nice.

MK: It was a lot different in those days. You could hitch-hike and everything.

JK: Oh yeah.

MK: And never worry about anything.

JK: Yeah, we used to hitch-hike, and ... there was an infantry base between where we were going and down to, oh Dallas, I guess it was and this squad car comes by and jams his brakes on, and got us, they threw it in reverse and the doors wide open. And they were backing up to us, and there was a colonel from the infantry, and he was yelling at us before he got to us. Then he saw the wings [and said], "Oh air corps, get in the back." [laughter] That was it.

NK: What types of planes were you flying during your training?

JK: Well we had the usual ... PT-13, no we started out with like the UPF-7, the bi-plane, and then went to the BASIC, which was the PT-13. We called it the vibrator, because it vibrated so much. And then we had the twin engine was the Curtis, PT-9, which was a nice airplane. ... Then I was in the AT-18, we used that ... in Florida at Buckingham, and that was an airliner ... before the war. It was a Lockheed, and they cut five feet off the fuselage in a lane, and they put a bomb bay in it, and they put a turret on the top. ... Then you see, we went back, that's when the accidents with the thing. So they decided we were taught the wrong way. So that's when we went back to Lockheed

transition school, and the problem was, ... when they shortened the airplane, of course that meant it wasn't as stable ... going. What we didn't like about it was that the wings, the wing was the ... gasoline tank. They didn't have the tank inside, so if you ground looped and pulled any of those rivets in the wings, they could get in the gasoline, and you could have a problem there. ... But they taught us to wheel them in, and you had twin rudders, as a result it was very sensitive to cross wind, and you had to be very careful not to ground loop and tear some of the rivets loose. But then the big problem was when you're coming in ... you trim, we call it trimming, and it takes the weight off ... the wheel pulling back on it. And we used to take this thing and crank it back. The problem was it was a very short thing, and if you had an emergency, which a couple of them did have, then you ran the throttles forward. They couldn't hold the wheel down. And the thing would go up and two of them crashed right on the runway.

So that's why they sent us up there ... to retraining, so then ... we didn't cut back more than ten degrees on the trim, ... so it made it harder to land, and it was less sensitive, but it was much safer. But what happened there, four of us went from there to Mount Point I guess it was, and oh we went there and we wound up in the carnival someplace. Raising Cain there. We went back and Monday three of us, there were four of us, three of them had the same instructor, and they went up with the instructor and they crashed all four of them were killed. So I was the only one out of the group. But what happened, never found out why they crashed. That was a funny airplane. I had it one time with an instructor and it came in on the tarmac and I swung the thing around, and I looked up and I saw a fire across the wing. And I yelled, "We've got a fire over here!" And I hit the brakes and I pushed the throttles all the way forward, and blew the thing out. And I looked up and he's running like a son of gun. [laughter]. I'm in the airplane, he never told me he was leaving, he just ran. So I finished that, and then flew the B-17's.

MK: The best plane there ever was.

NK: B-17?

MK: Oh, yes ... every pilot will tell you it's the best plane.

JK: I was flying, I was ferrying an airplane from Florida out to Texas, and had to go to Mississippi, over Mississippi. My brother Bill was there at the time. He was flying the P-40's at the time. He flew the P-51's, and I decided that something was wrong with the airplane, and I landed and I'm walking up to the BOQ, and I see this fellow coming down, who was a friend of Bill's I met, and I said, "Where's Bill?" He says, "In the hospital." I says, "Why is he there?" "He had an accident, crashed." I said, "Where's hospital?" He showed me and I ran, and I go up there, ... Bill was sitting on the end of the bed, leg going back and forth. What the heck happened? He said, "We were in formation, ... the engine quit." So he says, "I dove down and I started the engine up again, and the thing quit on me again." He says, "I was too low, so I was heading for this highway, and I cut down and I saw the power lines all along the highway." So he said, "I didn't land there." So, he said, "I landed in this scrub oak." He said, "I sat there and the wing started getting shorter and shorter."

Finally he wound up with just the cockpit. [laughter] I saw the airplane, ... all that was left was the cockpit. So we never told my mother about any of these experiences. [laughter] ...

KP: So your parents never heard these stories?

JK: Oh no, no, no! No, I used to write my mother, you know, quite often, and I didn't know what to write about anyway we were flying at altitude 20,000, 25,000 feet, and I put that in the letter. And my mother writes back, "Don't fly so high." [laughter]

NK: Was it a big transition from the planes you flew earlier on to the B-17?

JK: Well it kind of scares you when ... you're flying ... small airplanes, and something comes in that size. But no, ... I felt as comfortable in that airplane, as I felt in my car, in fact more so. I don't trust the other drivers on the road. [laughter] And then when you're flying, the guy flying next to you, ... he's had experience, so he knows what he is doing. No, that's good airplane.

We flew it back ... to the United States, and we left and had to go in ATC, which [is] Air Transport Command. And they told us what to expect on the rest of the trip back to the States. So we had lunch there too, and so they ... told us, okay, take off. ... They all ran out and lined up and sat there, it was just like Kennedy Airport when you got about sixteen airplanes in front of you. And I said, "The heck with that I'm not starting my engines until I can go from here to there without stopping." And I waited and finally we took off. We're flying on top and there were clouds all the way. And we're about a hour off from Iceland, and I told the radio operator to get a hold of Iceland and find out what the weather conditions are there. And so they told him to tell us to turn around and go back to Prestwick, Scotland. So okay and turn around and head back to Prestwick. And I asked Bill the navigator, I said, "What's the highest mountain around this place?" So we're up high enough to clear any of them, and he told me, and it was about 3,000 feet. So I went on the radio, and when I got back to Prestwick and ... I called for landing instructions, and they told me what runway to take and it was right in front of me. And I was kind of tired, so I said, "Is there any objection if I come straight in?" They said, no, because this was early in the morning. They said, it's okay. So I dropped the wheels, dropped the flaps, and did a 180 or 360, and I couldn't find the airport. Well it was camouflaged. And before I was lined up with the runway and I couldn't find the doggone runway now. So I called, I said Jay, "Do me a favor--shoot a flare off?" [laughter] They shot a flare, and I came in landed after that. So we spent a few days there waiting for the weather to clear.

Then we went on to Iceland. We spent a couple of days there, the weather was bad, and we went on to Greenland. And Greenland was quite an experience, because they told us there would be a radio station at the end of the fjord. When you let down over that, there was a left turn, and when you get to that point you have to make your mind up either you're going in or you're getting out of there, because if you go in any further you can't climb up fast enough to get over the mountains. So we looked down, and, of course, the weather was good that day, and we landed. ... The runway was up

hill, ... it was like coming out of ... a ski run. [laughter] Zoom and off we go. And I flew that one mission, but I'm glad I did, because ... I had the experience, I know what it is all about.

But we didn't see anything. What they told us was the Germans were saving their fuel, and every once in a while they would send up the fighters, and, of course, we didn't know whether ... we're going to get any fire on this mission or not, on that day. ... And I can remember them giving me an itinerary, and it said at such and such time we'd pick up the fighter escort for us, the 51's, and I looked up above me and there they were up on top of us. And somebody was having trouble, and called in for an escort, and apparently they picked him up, and ... they said, "You okay now? We got you in sight." And they were satisfied. ... We dropped, it was a marshalling yard we were after. Whether we hit or not, I don't know, because if you are at the end of the formation as we were, the contrails are so thick you can't see the ground. So the lead plane opens up the bomb bays, you open yours up. When they drop their load, you drop yours. But you can't see whether you hit anything or not. ... I assume we did get it.

NK: Did you ever have to fly, before the 51's escorted you, were you flying with other fighter planes that did not have the range to go all the way out to the target?

JK: Not, I didn't. The P47's were used, and the 51's, but just the 51's were used. I only flew that one mission. We were supposed to go on a couple of more, but they didn't really know where the ground forces were, and they were moving so fast. They were afraid that we might bomb our own troops, therefore they had to call them off.

NK: So this was near the end already?

JK: Pardon?

NK: This was near the end of the war already.

JK: Yeah.

MK: Did you tell them about picking up the French prisoners?

JK: Yeah, yeah.

MK: Oh, okay.

JK: I told you about ... the prisoners? ...

KP: Yes.

NK: What was your relationship like with the enlisted men, the ones that took care of your plane?

JK: Well, we had our own crew. There were four officers and five enlisted men. No, there was no ... we moved around as a group.

NK: You pretty much felt like a team?

JK: Oh, yeah, yeah. No, there wasn't any problem there. The ground crew, you know, they were very cooperative, we cooperated with them.

MK: When we went to one of these reunions, the enlisted men said, "They couldn't go any where without us. They needed us." So that's how they felt, they felt very important to them. And I think they felt they treated each other ...

JK: Oh yeah, they'd be upset, I had to bring back a plane once ... I was supposed to fly in formation, so you never flew with a full load in the States. You didn't have the bombs, you had gasoline, but when you're flying the bombs and the gasoline, the airplane handles a lot different. And I was supposed to fly formation, and on the take off, then when I got off the ground I was checking the instruments. I saw we were losing our oil pressure in one of the engines, so I had to turn it off. So I called the tower, and told them we were having problems, and what should I do. And they gave me a heading, and said go out over the Channel, and the drop the bombs and then come back, because I didn't want to have any bombs in there to foul up and blow the place to bits. And I flew around awhile and used up some of the gasoline. ... And what you call the Tokyo Tanks are way out on the end. Well if we made a bad landing, that weight out there, you could do some damage to the plane. So I flew around, I got the thing down, and we came in for a landing with no problem. When we were in training, we had to be able to fly the plane with the engines out on both sides, ... both engines out on one side and had to fly. ... You just dug your shoulder blades into the seat, hold your rudders, because you couldn't change them, because see they wanted them to be trim ready to land. As you came in, and you were sure you were going to land. Then you would take over and go (?)

NK: Were there other pilots, in your bomber group, who had been in more combat than you? Did they talk about it at all?

JK: Oh yeah, down in Florida ... when they came back, and ... men were sent there. No, we were instructed not to discuss that with them, and then when I was in RTU [Replacement Training Unit], which was the last stage before going overseas, one of the fellows who went through training with me was an instructor there. He was shot down over the English Channel and was fished out of there, and he became an instructor. No, we didn't discuss those things, because they were afraid that the people that helped them, it might get back to the Germans and they'd be in trouble. ... A fellow I grew up with, he was a prisoner of war, he got shot down over Italy, and he said when he was interrogated you tell them name, rank, and serial number. He said, they kept that up for a little

while, then they started telling me where I was from, and everything else. They had all the information on me. [laughter] I didn't have to give them anything.

KP: When you said you were instructed not to talk to people, who had been rotated back to the states?

JK: If ... they'd been in the underground.

KP: Oh.

JK: ... Once they were in the underground we couldn't, well they helped them get back. ... We were instructed not to talk to them, that is not to discuss that particular thing.

KP: Oh okay, but not their experiences of flying into combat. Did you ever talk to people coming, before while you were an instructor?

JK: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

KP: What would they tell you about it?

JK: They were scared. They were glad to get it over with.

KP: In terms of your training, would experienced veterans tell you about combat and show you how to apply their experiences in terms of training methods and training instruction? Were there any changes made in how you would teach people how to fly?

JK: No, not that I know of. ... I felt I had pretty good ... instruction, except one instructor which I didn't like, and I think he was afraid of the airplane, and jeez he tried to, he wanted me to fly instruments and happen to be ... that the magnetic compass wasn't working, and the gyro wasn't working. And, of course, it was very bumpy and the magnetic compass was going all over the lot. Well, he said, "if it goes ten degrees one way, you go ten degrees the other way." ... Well I never felt comfortable with him flying as my instructor, because he was afraid of the airplane, I thought. He was the only one I thought, the rest of them were very good. I had no problem with any of them.

KP: You mentioned this one bad instructor, who seem to be afraid of the particular airplane. What made a instructor a good one? Was it their knowledge of the plane, was their sense of how to fly a plane, when to go low, when to go high?

JK: ... Before you could fly an airplane you had to know pretty much about the mechanics of it. ... No, the instructor, I just got the feeling that he, because he wouldn't let you do very much. Well, I

just didn't get along with him. He was the only one. The others I had no problems with, and ... when I was in

B-17 transition, he had put me down for an instructor, and I said, "Gee I'd been in the training command now forever since I got my wings, it was about time I got out of it." So he apologized, and said I shouldn't have put that in the report, so they didn't keep me there then.

KP: How long were you in training command?

JK: Well I started in ... '42 and I got out in, oh well I was in the training command as a cadet and ended training command after that, and then overseas for about three months in England. And then I was out in Sioux Falls waiting to go to B-29 Transition, but the war ended before I got that far.

NK: How did they train you to do the bombing? Did you know for example during the training that when you were in combat that you would not be able to see the target, that you were only looking for the front plane to open its ...

JK: Well [on] the particular day, ... I guess the moisture ... might have been pretty heavy, but talking to other fellows, that flew more of them, apparently that was quite common, you would get this vapor trails, and you couldn't see, you had to pinpoint it.

NK: Did they tell you that in training?

JK: I guess so.

NK: Because I have been reading a lot about the precision bombing stuff, and that they really wanted to make sure you were on target and stuff.

JK: Well, we use[d] to have a lot a fun with the bombardier, because they had a set up in the hangars, ... you were up about ten, fifteen feet and they had this target over there and we had the bombsite, and we would bet as to who was going to come the closest to the thing. And then we had the, like I had the link trainer, which was a very basic trainer we had. We got over in England, they had there where you could fly a mission, and they had a map of France, and Germany and what not, and you worked with your navigator on that. But what we had that thing was, the problem I had was when I was going through school was you had to be going to the link trainer early in the morning. The trouble was, the lighting in there almost put you to sleep, and I had problems staying awake in the darn thing. But no that was only good for putting the map down. And then this wheel would go along and mark where you had been, so that was about the best you could get out of that. But overseas the one we had there was complicated much better than the things we had in the States here.

KP: Everything I have been told from people who have gone through the air force, it was very hard to stay in the air force initially. A lot of people after pre-flight training got washed out.

JK: Yeah.

KP: Do you recall, people who were with you initially, who did not make it and the reasons why?

JK: Yeah, there was one fellow I couldn't understand, he was a football player, and I forget what college he played for, and he was washed out. I was amazed that he was. But I don't know I guess that's when your eyes and your judgement I suppose are the difference. Maybe, he couldn't judge how high he was over the ground coming in for a landing, that's the main thing. ... How they could sit up in these 747's and judge how high they were off the ground gets me, unless I imagine they must have an instrument up there, that tells them how high they are, so they don't drop ten feet. You drop ten feet in the 747 I think the wheels would go right through the fuselage. [laughter]

KP: You said it was a question of judgement, what would make a good pilot and a bad pilot? And as an instructor how would you determine that? What were some of the signs?

JK: Of all the fellows that I flew, only one I didn't approve, and he wound up flying co-pilot for a roommate of mine who was flying the hump, the B-24. And he wrote to me and he was telling me about the weather conditions they were getting there. He said, "They're lousy, and he told me so and so was his co-pilot." And gee, I got that letter, before the day was out I had a letter back to him saying, "Whatever you do don't go to sleep, when you have so and so as your co-pilot. He can't fly instruments."

And what happened, I started with a AT-6, and they sat in the back seat and they put a cover over them. So all they could see was the instruments. So I would line the airplane up and tell them okay you got it, ... well I'd tell them first to set your gyro compass on zero, because your magnetic compasses (proceeds?) and follows, it is not very good for trying to stay in the middle of a runway. So I'd tell them I wanted them to climb up certain speed, to certain altitude, turn and so on up, and just before I'd turn over to him I would take over and I would skid the thing on purpose and that would spill all the gyros. And then I would put the thing almost in a stall, and I would say, "Okay, you got it." And everybody else would get it out, and have no problems straightening the thing out, and doing what they were suppose to do.

So a few days before that I had flown with a major in our squadron, and I was giving him a check ride, and after he finished he said, "Have you ever seen a slow roll on instruments?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Would you like to see one." So I said, "Yeah." So he did a slow roll on instruments, which is quite a feat. So this fellow started into a roll, and I said, "Geez he's going to do a slow roll on instruments for me." Well all of a sudden the canopy went back, he was ready to throw-up. ... What I would do then, after we went through that ... procedure, then we would go on

the seventeen, and we put the plastic on the window, the green plastic, and he would put on red goggles. And so he couldn't see out. All he could see were the instruments. So I would line the plane up in the center of the runway, and tell him, center your gyro and you got it. And we'd go down the runway, and I'd be ready with my feet and hands ready to grab it, and I never had to take over from anybody. Of course, the fellows I flew with had quite a bit of hours of flying time anyway. Except this one fellow, he couldn't divorce himself from his feelings and the instruments. That's why he couldn't fly instruments.

KP: Because he would feel one thing and ...

JK: The instrument would tell him, but he wouldn't believe the instrument that's what we call, the seat of the pants would tell you something different. And he would go by the seat of the pants, instead of the instruments, and therefore he couldn't fly instruments.

KP: The one person you did not recommend, who later flew the hump, do you know whatever happened to him and your friend from aviation school? Because you had mentioned that you had written to him.

JK: I wrote to the fellow who was my roommate.

KP: I talked to Bill Bauer about the air force, it struck me that the air force, I would not say it had less discipline or was easier in a sense, but it seemed to have a looser, you could get away with that stunt of flying to South Dakota would have been much harder say in the army, or in the marines or in the navy to do something like that.

JK: Well the problem we had, when the staff car from the infantry saw us hitchhiking, and an officer doesn't hitchhike, you know, as far as an infantry officer doesn't hitchhike, but we did whatever we wanted. [laughter] We were Ardmore, I guess it was, and we decided to go to some town nearby to spend an off night. And we went there, and it wasn't very good, so we decided to go back to the base, and we didn't have any money to speak of between us, so I tried to cash a check in a restaurant there, and the guy wouldn't cash the thing for us, and we go out and this couple came up to us, and they said, "How much money do you got?" And we told them. And they said, "We'll take you back to Ardmore." So we get in the car ... and they drove down these dirt roads, and we were wondering where the heck is this guy taking us. Well they took us to this trailer, of course, Oklahoma was a dry state, and they got some booze, so we go on down, and we get back to the base around breakfast time. And Bill invites the two of them into the officer's club to have breakfast. And these were the two of the scroungiest people you would ever meet. [laughter] Boy, did we take a ribbing after that. We had them in there and they got their breakfast free. ... So I guess in the infantry you wouldn't dare do that.

KP: Well I have also been told you treated your enlisted men better. Bill Bauer made the point that you took better care of the enlisted men, compared to the infantry or the other branches of the army.

JK: Oh yeah. You took care of your crew, yeah! ... Well, anyway in flying there is a lot of potential damage, or you know, somebody messing up their job, so you want him to do a decent job, and go out of his way if there is something has to be done. ... Crew chiefs too, knew which guys are rough on the engines and which ones were treating them a half-way decent flight.

KP: I guess we would like to ask you something about your own crew.

JK: Yeah.

KP: Could we start with your co-pilot, George ...

JK: Muellerschoen.

KP: Where was he from? What was his background?

JK: He was from Philadelphia. His father was a doctor. ... What happened in my class, when we graduated a lot of them went directly from there to RTU, ... they hadn't flown the B-17. In fact, they hadn't been in a B-17. And George was one of those, and so we had to train him in the time as best we could in the time we had. And, no George, we went out to a ... 34th Bomb Group Reunion a couple years ago, and I hadn't seen George since the war, and he's out in California, so we were in ...

MK: Las Vegas.

JK: Las Vegas, and I said gee we're close by to California, why don't you come out too? So he came out with his wife. And Bill Gombos, we've gone through several, he's the navigator, we have gone to several reunions with him and his wife. In fact, he was in Holland with us the last time. But very soon we lost track of him. We tried to contact him. We understood he went with a telephone company in California.

KP: Conley Ferguson, what was his background before the war?

JK: I don't know, because Conley I picked up late in ... the training, the guy I had initially ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. James T. Kenny on February 11, 1995 in Shoreham, New York with Kurt Piehler

NK: Natalie Kosonocky

AC: Alaina Chip.

KP: And you mentioned that you lost your first bombardier.

JK: Yeah, he was a goof-off, he was always sick. And they apparently went looking for him to dump him. And the CO called me in one day, and told me. He said, "Give me a bad report on him, because we have to get rid of him." He had been with other crews, too, apparently and they had the same problem. So he had been just avoiding going ahead, so Fergie came in late and when we went out and ... headed down to Dallas or one of the other places, it was George, Bill, and I. And Fergie always went his own way.

KP: And the navigator, Bill what was his background before the war?

JK: Bill was a machinist.

KP: And he went back to becoming a machinist after the war?

MK: No.

JK: No, no Bill got into the trucking business and several things. Yeah, he was in several things.

KP: And what about your radio operator?

JK: Oh boy!

KP: Ernest Waite.

JK: Ernie Waite, he's something. He writes these Christmas cards to me about this long-- about Aunt so and so, uncle so and so, and my sister so and so. Oh geez, it drives me nuts! He was with us from ...

MK: He was very young.

JK: Yeah. The first time I saw him after the war, I was on business out in California, and I called him, I had his telephone number, and I called him. So he came to the hotel I was staying at, well when I saw him last he was about 112, I saw him this time he was about 180. [laughter]. Gee, I

had trouble recognizing him when walking up towards the door, I was looking for his. [laughter]
... We went to the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

MK: Oh yeah, right. ...

JK: And he got across the table from me, and he talked and he talked and talked, he was trying to sell me some land in Colorado. And Bill was talking to these cadets from the Air Force Academy, and he wanted me to come down and join them, but he couldn't get through ... Ernie, because he was talking so much. [laughter] From then on, ... he didn't come to any more reunions, that's all I know. He was mad at Bill, because Bill told him off.

MK: Did he talk a lot when ... he was younger?

JK: No, he didn't, no. He was very quiet, he was very quiet. He was a very good radio operator. He was always on the ball. He was a smart kid.

NK: In addition to flying together, did you all spend your leisure time together as well?

JK: Sometimes we did, locally like when we went down to Dallas or what not. You know, we'd be, the three of us would go.

MK: Didn't you spend time together in England too?

JK: Yeah, not too much.

MK: Oh.

NK: The crew did not necessarily stay together?

JK: Well, around the base we would, yeah.

NK: Was it stressful to be there constantly?

JK: Well, we'd go to town to go to a movie, that was about all you could do, because you couldn't buy any food. They kept that for the British, and ... we'd get all the food we wanted. And spend about 50 cents, I guess, getting a movie at that, and then their beer cost, I don't remember how much, but it was lousy beer, you had to strain it through your teeth, fortunately I have a strain here, so the hops would get caught in my teeth. [laughter] ... We were in this pub out there in England, and this woman came up, and we got talking. Of course, ... we were in farm land there, and I was telling her about this Walker Gordon Plant, and it is outside of Princeton, where they have the merry-go-round and the cows, walk up there. Do they still have that?

KP: They do not have the merry-go-round, but I still see the signs for the Walker Gordon, from the train, for the dairy.

JK: Well I was explaining to her about this one. They told us, ... this happened when we were first over there, they told us, you know, not to be a show off or anything, you know watch your P's and Q's, with the British, ... you know, they are our Allies and what not. So I thought she had everyone in the place keep quiet. I was the only one talking, and jeez this woman putting me on or what, because ... she was very much interested in the way we milk our cows with the machines. [laughter] Have you ever seen the merry-go-round? So that was my experience in that pub.

NK: Did you feel well received by the British?

JK: Oh, yeah, yeah. Little kids use to come in and pick up our laundry and take it home. Their mothers would wash them and then we would pay them, whatever the fee was for them washing the things. And when we were over there in England, they came up with the dog tags of one of the fellows they found it and they ...

MK: Oh yeah, when we visited, they found the dog tags of one of the men that was in our group.

JK: Yeah, we had gone back to Mendlesham and took a tour of England after we had been there for a few days. And we went to the pub. It's funny, the men over there are always dressed in their suits or Sunday bests with the vests and everything else. And they would get to these pubs and have all the seats taken. [laughter] And we're supposed to mingle with them, but there were no seats left, ... so we had to go outside. [laughter] We took our beer outside, but they were very friendly.

KP: This was when you were in the service?

JK: Yeah.

KP: Did that strike you as ... ?

JK: Even after the service.

MK: Even after, when we went back.

KP: That tradition continued?

JK: Yeah, they were dressed up.

KP: How much of had changed over time? You had been there during the war, and you have since been back. What changed them? What did you notice was different? Did anything strike you as this is very much how you remembered?

MK: ... The small town didn't advance much.

JK: No, the town hadn't changed. Mary hadn't been. Mary went over after the war with me. We took a trip over there for the reunion. No, most of the hangars were down, and there wasn't much left of it.

MK: There was not much left of the field, but the town is old.

JK: Yeah, it's very old.

MK: You know, you just feel like it still lives. ... In fact, ... men were looking for different landmarks like there was a well or something, a water well in the middle of the Square, and it wasn't there. So this man was very upset, and somebody said hold on, and went home and got his bicycle, and went home and got a picture, and there was a well there, they had taken it down. ... Yeah, it is pretty much the same. The pubs are all the same, old.

JK: No new construction like around here.

MK: No new construction at all. ...

NK: Were you surprised when suddenly you were not supposed to be bombing people, and then they changed your mission to become the flying grocers?

JK: Well, I was glad to do it, because it seemed like a lot of fun, and you know it's something worthwhile for the people. And we were scheduled to go a couple of days sooner than we did go, but it was called off, I mean the weather was bad, so we couldn't go. ... The one fellow that was in my, well he went through RTU with me, in Ardmore, Oklahoma, he flew every mission that the U.S. flew. But ... fortunately I did get picked for one of them. And I was very happy to do it, it was quite an experience to see the way those people reacted. Boy! And when we went back there, they came up to us with tears coming down their faces, and waving to us, every place we went. ... We had police escort and the busses. And we were going down streets the wrong way, and they were getting out of the way for us, and I imagine this one we're going back to, this will be the 50th. We'll back in the town where the Germans sign the surrender, and we're going to be back there. There's only one condition-- that you have to be able walk three-and-a-half miles. If you can't walk three-and-a-half miles you are not to come, which seems kind of strange, because there is a couple of them, there is one man, who is ... in a wheel chair. And then this woman, ... her husband was not one of the flying crew, but they took him on, he substituted with someone else and the [other]

plane was shot down. And he was rescued, the three of them got of it. And she was supposed to go to the reunion before, and then her husband had died. So she came on this one, and she was walking across the floor, and one of the BOQs and she slipped and fell, and she wound up in a wheelchair. But ... there was a ... Polish woman, her husband was coming to the Reunion, and he died. And ... they talked her into coming, and all she had in the way of clothing was the clothes she had on her back. And they took her downtown, and they outfitted her in clothes. That's really ... those people were really something.

KP: This Polish woman who came, was her husband was a Polish fighter?

JK: Yeah, what had happened, ... they were in the Polish Air Force, and when they were defeated, they got to France and then became part of the French Air Force. And when they tumbled, they were back to England, and they were flying with the British Air Force, the RAF.

KP: The missions you did, these food drops, I have actually read some of the Eisenhower correspondence in his papers about the mission, the higher level. But the same time, these agreements reached between governments at war could be a very tenuous thing, having this mistrust on both sides. Did you have the sense doing these missions?

JK: The British were the first to fly, and they were very upset about it, and they said how come we trust them? Because you know we came in, we were flying just over tree tops. And ... there were a few planes that had been hit. But they were told to lay off, and that the Allied Forces would crack down on the officers there if they didn't stop that business, ... firing the small caliber guns that they were doing. A few of them did it, a few planes were hit. But that one, I think they asked for it. Apparently, ... they were flying at low altitudes looking at things. Well Germans didn't want us doing that, and they had control. And it was just the West Coast they had control. The rest of it, ... the Dutch were emancipated, the Allied Forces had driven the Germans out of that area, but they bypassed that because they feared they would lose too many Allied soldiers, and lose too many Dutch residents.

KP: Were you ever concerned on your missions? Did you ever experience hostile fire?

JK: No, we didn't even have any flak. It was flak off to the right, but it wasn't near where we were. I wasn't concerned with it. We thought we might get it, you don't know. Apparently why we didn't get it, I guess, they did that over there, so we wouldn't select them as the next target.

NK: Did they send the fighters out with you, or were the bombers alone for these missions?

JK: No, the fighters were with us. The time we were supposed to pick them up, that's when I checked upstairs and they were flying up there.

NK: Taking care of you.

JK: Yeah.

KP: These missions, would you signal ahead that you were doing it, how were these missions predetermined, were you given instruction to radio ahead advanced warning to the Germans?

JK: Oh no, ... you had to change your course every so many minutes, when you are coming in on the target, but once you come in on the target, of course, you got to go straight ahead. There is no fooling around, but you don't want them to know what the target is, because then they would saturate that with the flak. So you tried to, when you're flying you keep changing your course as you go along, because they figured that it took so many minutes to get the signal from up there to down to their computers, or whatever they had and to adjust the guns for that particular spot. So no, you kept changing.

KP: Even though, there was an acquiescence on both sides to why these missions took place, you were still concerned with flak during your drops, your food drops?

JK: No, no they had agreed that there wouldn't be any of that.

KP: So you didn't ...

JK: We just made sure we stayed in the corridors that we were supposed to be in. If you flew out of the corridor then they would shoot off one flare, and if you didn't get back again, ... then they had the rights to shoot you down.

KP: Did planes ever stray off the corridor by accident that you know of?

JK: Not that I know of, no.

KP: How many planes in your group were lost because of the food missions?

JK: There was only one plane that was shot down. There was several that had small caliber shots taken out of them, but nothing did any damage.

NK: Did that crew survive or were they then prisoners of war or what happened to them?

JK: There was only three survivors on that plane. And there were several more. We flew with minimum crew with just the navigator and the radio operator and the engineer, and the co-pilot and myself.

KP: So you didn't have tail gunners?

JK: No.

KP: For the bread and the food.

JK: Oh, no.

KP: And did you have, you had no fighter escorts.

JK: No.

KP: So you were fairly vulnerable if this thing ...

JK: If they wanted to shoot us down, yes. Then, of course, they were told they would be held accountable for anything that was done outside of this agreement. ... I'm sure they got the instructions out of the ground forces. But the British were very leery of the thing, because they were the first ones. And I understand that our group sent one plane in initially to see if they, you know, would be safe, because we were right over the tree tops.

NK: Did the British continue their tradition of flying at night, or did they do this during the day?

JK: That was the big joke. It's not dark enough yet. [Laughter] There were a lot of jokes about that flying at night.

KP: The jokes about the British flying at night, was that all through the war?

JK: I don't know. ...

MK: When we went back it was a big joke.

JK: We had this Australian across from us on the bus, and he was a real character. He had everybody in stitches most of the time with his jokes.

NK: So ... when did the British do their drops?

JK: They did the first one on April 29th.

NK: During the day or at night?

JK: No, ... the food drops, it was during the day.

NK: Oh so they had broke with ...

JK: ... They were very leery about the first group that went in, but we had 200 and some airplanes that were in there. They fooled with dropping it by parachute, and they gave up on it. That would have been dangerous, because the guy could get above you and drop the darn thing, and it could come down and get into your propeller, and you would have problems.

KP: So the problem was not so much the parachutes, it was the hitting of another plane with the parachute?

JK: Yeah, that would be the problem there, and you wouldn't ... [know] how accurate they would be with the parachutes. No, there was some damage done sure, but ... some losses there.

NK: So you all would come in low enough that you could actually see people on the ground?

JK: Oh yeah, ... we were maybe 150-200 feet at the most. One of the fellows, one of the pilots said to me as we were coming home, he says, "Gees, it's quite an experience." That's the first time he ever flew a B-17 hedge hop, all the way across. [laughter] ...

KP: How many of these food, of these missions did you fly dropping food?

JK: Just one.

KP: Just one.

JK: Yeah, I think they kind of spread that out. This one fellow, why he had twelve of them, I don't know why, but not in our group, from what I gathered. I'm the only one who is ever showing up. I don't know if there were others flying, because the day I went in there. ... The day I went in there was 35 17's from the 34th Bomb Group, altogether there were 403 planes, B-17's from the Third Air Division, and they went into [counting] one, two, three, four, five, there were six drop zones that day, where the American forces went in. We wouldn't been able to, if we had landed and stopped, and they took the food out and took off again, they wouldn't have gotten very much food, because there's too much time lost. In fact, the Germans wouldn't let us land, that was one of the restrictions. We couldn't land, but if they could land, it wouldn't have helped. You'd have to land and taxi, and then you would have to wait to take off. You'd never get that number of airplanes in there.

KP: I wanted to sort of round out your crew a bit more and your group leadership in England, but also at some of your training bases. And I guess the people we have not talked about were your three gunners.

JK: Yeah.

KP: What were they like? What were their backgrounds before the war?

JK: I didn't know much about their backgrounds. The worst job of that is the ... turret on the bottom of the airplane. How ... it is you get out of that thing in a hurry, I don't know, ... that was a tough one. And, no, I don't ... know much about them, because they were all ... young, and probably let's say around twenty, nineteen. Twenty I suppose. Remember I was an old man, I was 22. I got to 25 before I got out.

KP: So did you feel like an old man?

JK: No!

KP: But the air force was a very young branch; it strikes me at interviewing a number of people, they've made similar comments about how they were the old man at 23 or 24.

JK: ... No, the most of them were, ... there were some of the retreads, now and then that you ran across. ... They all ... were pretty much our age.

KP: What did happen to your gunners, James Bugler, Raymond Snow, and Roy Smith?

JK: I've lost contact with them. The only one I heard from, he rejoined the thing and he did that because his father ran off with his wife. He was very upset.

KP: When did this happen, his father ran off with his wife?

JK: After the war was over, and he was home. He wasn't married when he was in the service. So he got married, and he was all upset, so upset he went back into the service.

KP: So in other words he came home to find out his ...

JK: I think he got married after he was home.

KP: But then his wife ran off with his ...

JK: Yes, his father. It upset him very much.

KP: Of your crew, your co-pilot had a college degree.

JK: Yeah.

KP: But who else in your crew had a college degree going into the war?

JK: Bill Gombos didn't.

MK: Ernie.

JK: ... Ernie ... didn't finish school while he was in the service, Fergie? might have been in college.

KP: Conley Ferguson?

JK: Yeah.

KP: And it seems like your gunners were right out of high school?

JK: I would say so, yeah.

KP: Your crew commander in England, what was he like, and your superior officers?

JK: Well, they were typical of, no there was no fooling around with them. To me they were typical air force officers, they were strict on certain things, they had to be. But, no I wouldn't criticize them, no.

KP: So overall you were pleased with the leadership you encountered in the air force.

JK: Yeah, I'd say so, yeah. Except that one pilot I had ...

KP: That's the only one, you have any ill feelings toward in terms of the people instructing you, or base commanders. What about the base commanders, because you saw a number of them?

JK: Well, some of them were a pain in the neck, there was one if you didn't salute the staff car when he went by, he would make you get in the dump truck, and I don't know what he did with them. ... [laughter] That was a ground pounder there, what we called the ground pounder. When I was going through Sebring, with the B-17, the fellows in that group that I was with had finished their missions, and they were checking out now in the B-17. They flew as the co-pilot for the 30 or 35 missions they had to fly, and this one ground pounder we called him, was at the bar in officer's club, and criticized them because he had a small bar on his lapel, and he was supposed to have a big one, you know the ... regular size. And he said to me, "Captain, when I got my wings,

... I bought the biggest wings I could find, and the smallest bar I could find." [laughter] That ended the conversation.

KP: Ground pounders, were they people who never got their wings?

JK: Yeah, ... they were men in finance, and some of them were from World War I, I guess, some of them were old enough for that.

KP: You were still a part of the army, even though you were a separate service. That's when you felt the weight of the traditional army, the ground pounders.

JK: ... Yeah. ... They ran, oh like the officer's clubs, and I don't know what else they did. They did finance.

KP: But it seems like you have a lot of respect for the ground pounders who maintained your plane, and differ from those who ...

JK: ... Well no, we didn't call them ground pounders.

KP: Did you have any affectionate term for them?

JK: ... Maintenance men, oh no. ... You didn't fool around with them. They could, you know, make things a little rough for you.
[laughter]

NK: What was your relationship like with, did you have any contact with like fighter pilots or was there any animosity between the two? I've read things that indicate this.

JK: No, the only time I ... [ran into a] fighter pilot was when I was in instrument training. There was three of us. He was ... the fighter pilot flew 47's in Africa and he was with the same group as my brother Frank was the armament officer for that group, so he knew my brother. And then the other fellow, ... he flew the first Lend Lease officials into Moscow, and he was telling me about his trip in. He had to pick up a navigator and radio operator, I don't know, in India or someplace, I forget where, and he said he wasn't allowed to fly over 1500 feet going into Moscow. And, he said, the whole time he was in Moscow, he said he always had somebody in back of him following me. Here was a guy flying people over from the United States to Russia to make arrangements for them to get war materials they badly needed, and they didn't trust us. So how in the world could you trust the Russians?

NK: Did you and your brother Bill ever share experiences? He was the one who was flying the P-51's right?

JK: Yeah, well other than that mishap he had with the P-40. ... Bill stayed in the Reserves. I dropped out, the reason I dropped out, you had to get four hours a month ... dual, then you were allowed to fly solo. Well I was in Mitchell Field, and, of course, in New York area here, there are a lot of pilots, and a lot wanted to get into the Reserves, such as I wanted to. I used to sit on the phone for a hour on a Saturday morning trying to make arrangements to fly ... the next Saturday or two Saturdays away. And I was flying an AT-6, and I had a lot of time in the AT-6, and I got up in four-and-a-half hours, and the month was almost up, so I as soon as I landed I went up to operations, and I said, "Gee how about signing me up for another flight in half an hour and then I can fly solo." And, "No, we can't sign you up for at least a month." So I said, okay, that was it, and ... I never went back after that. But no, I wished I could of-- then I could have flown, and I'd go over there any time during the summer months and fly in the ... evenings, Saturdays. Well Saturdays, I'd stay away from it, because they had so many people trying to fly. So I dropped out of it, of course, we weren't paid at that time either, ... there would have been any incentive. ...

KP: It seems like you enjoyed flying a great deal.

JK: Yeah, some of us who stayed in, they wound up in Korea, so ... I was married then, and the heck with that stuff.

KP: Did you ever fly a plane after the war? Except you mention when you were flying in the reserves. Have you flown one since the 1940's?

JK: Oh, I flew a couple of times with a neighbor next door, he was in on one of these clubs and I went up with him. And Doctor ... (Slevin?), he had a twin engine plane and I flew with him a couple of times, but I haven't flown since then. ... The fellow next door wanted me to join the club, but I figured ... in their planes you can't fool around. You can't worry about money, if something has to be done you do it. You don't put it off like in a car, where it can be done next week. You have to take care of it now, forget about it. And then somebody louses up, they may not write it up, because they don't want you to know that they did something wrong. So, no, I didn't go for that.

KP: After the war, had you ever thought of making a career in aviation?

JK: There were so many pilots at the end of World War II, all wanting to get into airlines, and I figured with my height I'm not so sure they'd want me. You know, I figured I'm not big enough to fly. I used several cushions when I flew the 17, and then I sat, I was supposed to go to the 29, well I sat in a 29 once for MacArthur over here, the Texas Air Force, you heard about that? They had some World War II planes which they keep in service. I sat in that thing I said, "Gee, I can't see over the instrument panel, I'll need a lot of cushions if I was going to fly this thing." So I never got that far. Oh, I've run across some of the names every once in a while in the paper, I read, at

least some of the fellows that I might flown with or knew. But a lot of them went into ... [commercial aviation]. ... And a lot of them had been laid off too, because it was on and off, on and off. I had one guy ... wanted me to fly a cargo plane, and I said, the heck with that.

KP: When you were overseas and in the military, would you go to Mass often? How often would you go?

JK: ... Every Sunday,

KP: You mentioned the one time you stood outside the church, you went to several Masses. How often would you go into the community, and how often would you go to Mass on base?

JK: On Sunday, they always had ... a Mass in one of the [buildings]. ... I think a lot of things happened to me, I think because my mother went to Mass ... every day in the week when the weather was good. Because some of things, that problem ... in Lawrenceville that night where we ... wound up flying into Sarosata where they increased the speed, got that ...

MK: Wind sheer.

JK: ... Any tight squeeze, I always came all right so I figured somebody was praying [and] taking care of me.

KP: What did you think of your chaplains you had assigned at the various air force bases and then overseas?

JK: They were typical, the chaplains like any place now, ... they would sit down at the table in the officer's club, and then meet with you. And before you flew a mission he always had communion and what not.

KP: So you would take communion before a mission? How many in the squadron would do that?

JK: Gee, I don't know that, I have no idea.

KP: Were you ever concerned when you went on missions, you did not go on many bombing missions, but when you were in training when you were thinking of the possibility, did it ever worry you where the bombs might be going, that they could miss their target and you could hit civilians?

JK: Well, I think having flown just the one I just hoped it did land on the target. I don't know if it did or if it did not, of course, now talking about the atomic bomb in Japan, I thought, well they were kind of sneaky. There were people in Washington talking to our people, talking peace and at

the same time they were on the way to bomb Hawaii, I have no respect for them. And when we were over in Hawaii, two Oriental girls, I assume they were Japanese, standing in front of the statue they had for the Sullivan Brothers, you remember they lost ... five of them, and they stood with the V for Victory ... signal on the steps of that monument, that kind of teed me off.

KP: You were destined to go to the Pacific Theater, you were in fact in South Dakota in route. When did you anticipate getting there? Did they give you specific orders when you might be sent there?

JK: No, no.

KP: Because you noted on your pre-interview survey that you were waiting transportation to training in B-29 for duty.

JK: Yeah, that's what we were told, that we were going to go through B-29 and then onto ... Japan.

KP: So were you in South Dakota, when you learned the war was over?

JK: When the war ended?

KP: Yeah.

JK: Let me see now, yes, I was in South Dakota. Is Al Steiner class of '42 on there, have you talked to him?

KP: Not yet, I haven't. ...

JK: Al was in the 34th Bomb Group. He was the communications officer I think was his job there. And when the war ended in England, he came down in my barracks, ... well we were supposed to be confined to the base that night, they didn't want us out. So he says, "I know where there is a hole in the fence." He says, "Get your bike, we're going out." [laughter] So we got our bicycles, and we rode to some little town. ... There's a Salvation Army, he they were, the war was over and these people were just as somber as could be, ... I said, "This isn't like Times Square in New York, where they went crazy."

KP: This was in Sioux ...

JK: This was in Mendlesham, England.

NK: They were somber there.

JK: Oh yeah, they had this little town.

KP: This was for V-E Day.

MK: Goodness.

JK: Yeah, we were amazed that, ... we thought there would be a lot more action than we saw there.

NK: What was the reaction the on base, were the men there excited at least, was somebody excited at least?

JK: Oh yeah, that's why they wouldn't let us out. [laughter] There were some who were down in London, and you know, celebrated down there. I went to London once I think it was, and I was out walking around the town, this was in the morning I came back I was staying at the USO place in London. And I noticed all the people lined up across the street thick out to the curb. And I went into the USO club and here was the Queen was there and the two daughters, and there was about six or so sitting there talking to them, so all these people were across the street were there, because the Queen was visiting with us.

KP: So you were there when Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth.

JK: Yes, ... they were both there and the mother.

KP: And so did you talk to them?

JK: No I came in right at the tail end of the thing and I don't know what they are talking about. ...

KP: You said your mother and father, particularly your father was typical Irish. What did you think of being in England, with this Irish Catholic heritage, and even almost running into the Queen?

JK: ... We never discussed that. I know my father didn't like the British at all.

KP: What did your father think about the war coming, and in fact you going over to defend England in part?

JK: Well, we got something here about my father. ...

KP: Oh this is an article saying, "Nominating the all out war family. The family of Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Kenny, 57 (Vreeland?) Avenue, Midland Park is all out in the war effort. Four of their sons are in military service. Frances F. is in the army in North Africa, where he has just been promoted to be a first lieutenant. Second Lieutenant James T. in the army air force at Lawrenceville, Illinois. Aviation Cadet William E. at Atlantic City. And Aviation Mechanic Joseph R. at Stewart Field, West Point. Another son Charles F. works for the (Gruman?) Aircraft Company, and the daughter Helen M. is employed by Niagara Power and Light Company in New York City. Mr. Kenny is a trouble shooter for the Paterson Offices of New Jersey Bell Telephone Company."

JK: ... My parents cut that out and sent that to me. Is there ... any other things you would like?

KP: Had you thought about making the army air force a career?

JK: No. ... No, I didn't like living out of val pack all the time. I'd like to settle down some place and stay put.

KP: Had you thought about going back to school at all for a law degree or a MBA or another degree?

JK: No. ... [With the] Savings and Loan, I went out to the University of Washington, I was out there taking courses, two summers in a row, I guess it was. And I went to, there was a graduate school for the Savings and Loan in Indiana, and I went there three years. That was about a month in the summer, or ... maybe two weeks. ... And I went to school in New York, for real estate, ... it was a night thing, but it wasn't much of a course. I just figured I learn something there, that's why I went down.

KP: So you to decided to join your brother in the Savings and Loan?

JK: ... He was with the Long Island Savings, Hempstead Savings, well they became Island Federal. ... He was president of that at one time. But ... I was with the Long Island Savings Bank.

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

KP: You were talking about your career with the Saving and Loan.

JK: ... What happened there was unfortunate, too. I was a mortgage officer. Our problem was we had loans with the interest rates, New York State ... wouldn't lift the usury ceiling here. They had a six percent usury ceiling. We had meetings with the legislature and people from around here--representatives to raise that thing, and they wouldn't do it. And as a result in the business if you had a spread of one and a half points between the cost of money and what you were earning, you

were okay, you could survive without any trouble. But what happened because of the low interest loans, ... we had the highest number of loans recorded in Suffolk County year after year. And, of course, these things are written for 20-25-30 years and it turned out that at the time there that the spread was one-and-a-half. ... [If] the difference between what our cost in money was and what we're earning was one and a half points, we're losing. And I get the reports every month as to how much our reserves went down. All you had to do was take the drop and divide it and what was left and you knew when you were going to be out of business soon. That's what happened.

Now we made so many changes, I attended the last meeting ... in Washington concerning changes in the regulations where they permitted going into partnerships with builders, and ... we were restricted up until then, ten percent of our ... assets or lending, could not exceed that in commercial loans. And when they raised that thing, they went hog wild. And I remember one fellow explaining they had this dual arrangement with this builder, and he said we started out, he said, the builder had the experience and we had the money. At the end it wound up that he had the money and we had the experience. [laughter] Things just went to pot, and they brought these birds in, that made fortunes. ... They issued the stock, sort of like Greenpoint wanted to do recently, and they brought in the wrong people with them. They came in to make to a killing, that's what they did. Because they brought down the barriers. But New York State, they were terrible, they tried to box us in every way they could so we couldn't make any money. And as a result we wound up, we were taken over by the Long Island Savings Bank, and I stayed there until I was 65, and I got out.

KP: When did you realize you were going to be in big trouble because of the problems with the spread? How early was this, was it the 1950's, the 1960's?

JK: ... I retired in 1984 and I'd say maybe four years or so prior to that is when things started to turn around and go down hill.

KP: The late 1970s then. And when were the problems with New York State developing, was it in the 1970s or 1980s?

JK: We'd been after them for years.

KP: Oh way back.

JK: Oh yeah, and towards the end, we had more and more meetings with them and more and more pressure. They looked at it, ... we have so many votes, and there a lot more votes from people out there, that they're looking for it, not us.

KP: Because you even had for example a Republican, Nelson Rockefeller, was this a bipartisan opposition to repeal?

JK: In his time I don't think we were too worried then. The spread was there, the one and half points, as long as we had that spread things were all right.

KP: It was really later in the 1970s that you had that problem.

JK: Yeah, when we started to, when inflation came in with the Carter Administration, I guess is when we started it. That's when your rates got up to 20 percent. The first I.R.A. I had I was getting 14 percent on it, through Chemical Bank. ... Unfortunately, we were not allowed to go into it until near the end, that's about three years I think I had an opportunity to otherwise I would have put in a lot a more than I had in it.

KP: Since your wife is here, maybe I will ask her a few questions. How did you two meet?

MK: Well, I was living in Freeport and he was living with his brother in Freeport, because he was trying to get ... a job on Long Island or something. And we both happened to go to this club that this Catholic Church was starting, a young people's club, which was called the Alpha Omega, and that's how we met. We just clicked right away, ... and we met in February I think was our first date, Valentine's Day was our first date and we married in October.

JK: ... Today they wouldn't have let us get married so soon. [laughter] We have been married now ... 47 years now isn't it, Mary?

MK: Yes.

NK: So you met after the war then?

MK and JK: Oh yeah.

KP: If you don't mind me asking, what did you do during the war years?

MK: I worked with this Sperry Gyroscope Company and also worked for the navy, ... as a secretary. I went from the navy to the Sperry Gyroscope Company.

KP: On Long Island?

MK: Well in the navy, I worked in Brooklyn.

KP: The Brooklyn Navy Yard?

MK: Not too far from the Brooklyn Navy Yard. And then I went to Lake Success, which was a man I was working for when he was a lieutenant in the navy, and then when the war was over, almost over, he went with (Sperry?). I think he was still in the service when he went with (Sperry?), but they were starting up. Then I didn't work after I got married, that was the style then, you didn't work.

KP: Did you miss not working at all?

MK: Yes I did, I did.

JK: You just had kids after the war.

MK: Yeah, that's ... [when] you were supposed to have kids. Oh we did that with children till the next year. So we didn't do too badly, I guess.

KP: Did you have problems getting housing when you first got married?

MK and JK: Yes, oh yes.

JK: We had a deposit on it, I don't know how many families were in it, we had one room...

MK: We shared the bath.

JK: ... Yeah, we shared the bathroom, ... but we put a deposit on that, but then we found out about this house which was a summer home, it had no heat in it. So we got a kerosene stove, and we put a chimney on the thing and cut a hole in the side of the house, and ran the chimney up through that, and that was in 1947. And 1947, was one of the worst years for snow, and it had a flat roof. So I was afraid that the roof would come crashing down on us, so I got out a snow shovel, and I shoveled the snow off the roof. ... And my car was down the street, and I couldn't get home, because I got bogged down in the snow, we had so much of it.

NK: So it is questionable whether that was better than sharing a bathroom? [laughter]

MK: It was, it was.

JK: Well then fortunately the attorney for the bank owned the apartment house, and he had a vacancy after we were there a while. And he said, "I've got an apartment, would you like it?" I said, "Sure!" Then when we started living the way, ... we had heat, we had hot water.

MK: It had a washing machine in it and everything.

JK: We bought a gas stove.

MK: In that little bungalow, you had to heat the water to take a bath. That was really fun.

NK: You must have been glad to get out of there!

KP: You had four children. Had any of them considered joining the military.

MK and JK: No.

KP: Would you have wanted them to go to Vietnam, you had one son, but he was not quite the age?

MK: He wasn't old enough.

KP: Yes.

JK: I hope none of them have to. We got three ... grandchildren, two grandsons. I wouldn't want them to see them go through it. I don't think the service is for women either, I'm very much opposed of that, I can't see it. I mean it is a rough thing. And women aren't supposed to be taking part of those rough things.

NK: When you look back at it, when you came back after the war did you feel that was it the most important thing that you had gone through, and then just gone on through the rest of your life, or this was one of those growing up experiences?

JK: I'm glad I had the experience and gone through it, but I was one of the lucky ones. Some of those that, you know, got pretty well shot up and what not. It wasn't good for them.

KP: When you said you felt lucky, if you had been in training then you would have been put in a bomb group earlier, do you think that the timing was there, not by your own design, but because of your capabilities as an instructor?

JK: I couldn't figure out how they made the decisions as to where you went. I'm glad I didn't get that group that went as copilots immediately, because at that time we didn't have the best fighter escorts and soon, as we had later on, the P-51's came in, the P-40's were not very good. No, I was very, very fortunate. Like Mary's sister's husband, ... he was in the paratroopers and they had it pretty rough.

KP: Just going back to the air force for a bit. You flew back and forth between England and the United States?

JK: ... Well no, I went over by troop ship.

KP: Okay, you and your crew?

JK: Yeah, we went out of Camp Kilmer. We went into New York, and you got on a ferry, and they had covers over both ends of the ferry, so nobody could see you. We went over and got in the boat we went over, ... it [was] picked up down in South America. It was Italian [ship], the Biancomano was the name of the thing, it was the heritage. And they stripped that down; no wood. You know, these state rooms and what not, were down to the metal. And I don't know where we went, one day it would be hot, and one day it would be cold. We were escorted. We had liberty ships all around us, and we had naval ships and what not to patrol, and then some nights they started throwing the ash cans over, and the first one I'll never forget the copilot was running around the room, I think it was about six of us in the room, and ... he was much taller than I am, bigger feet than I. He was going around the room trying to put his feet into my shoes, and waking us up to put our jackets on, our life jackets on. [laughter] We always kidded him about that. ... We had a lot of infantry on board, and we went into Le Havre which is France. There wasn't a building standing from the water back at least a mile, I'd say. And they had the docks were concrete standing on end. ... It was just a complete mess, and we anchored back a ways, and then they had these amphibious boats going back taking the infantry people off, and then they took German prisoners and picked them up on the base on the shore and brought them out to the boat. And they went down to below the infantry were on the way over there.

KP: And then the boat went on to England?

JK: Going to Southampton, yeah. And the night that we went, let's see last night they had the shooting the ...

KP: V-2?

JK: The V-2's, that was the last night they fired the V-2's.

KP: When you were coming into port?

JK: We were in the middle of it.

KP: How scary was it to go through that?

JK: Well, we didn't see them. See we weren't allowed out at that time, because they were dropping depth charges all away across there. We were told that was the last night that they had flown the V-2's.

KP: But you were not actually in the port when the rockets were coming in?

JK: No, we were going across the Channel.

KP: Did you get sea sick at all on the voyage over?

JK: No, jeez, I'd better not, they wouldn't keep you in the air force if you got sick.

KP: I have actually interviewed several pilots, who did get sea sick going over. They said, you would not believe it. You and your men, you went over with your crew, where did your enlisted men sleep?

JK: Oh, they were terrible quarters, and they're so tight. And I felt so badly for them, because they had to eat standing up. But then when I got a job, and I was working in New York, I found out I was standing up and eating my lunch. [laughter] ... We used to go down to Eat'em and Beat'em, I think it was. And you told them what you ate, and they take your word for it. But I understand, that they had people that was theirs, looking and seeing what you ate, and then every so often they would pick something and go and tell them what it should be. That's how they kept you honest. But standing up got me, after seeing them. It wasn't a bad trip, but one day it was hot, and one day, the next day it's cold, and you never knew where you were. Then they use to have boxing matches and different things up on the deck during the day. At night everything had to be closed up tight, no lights.

KP: The infantry on board, were they all white soldiers or where there any black soldiers going over?

JK: Gee, I don't remember, I just know on the way over, we had to read over the letters, and take out what they're not supposed to put in it. Boy some of things that ...

KP: You did some mail censoring.

JK: Yeah, it's amazing some of them didn't have much schooling. That was rather obvious.

KP: When you were in England or the American bases did you ever encounter any black soldiers or airmen?

JK: No, my mail used to wind up, when I was in Tuscaloosa there was black base, ... Tuskegee, my mail often went to Tuskegee instead of Tuscaloosa. ... When I was down in Fort Myers, the orderlies were all black, and I asked this one fellow, ... I said "Jeez, how did you get this job?" He

says, "I'll tell you sir, when they put me out on that rifle range, I made sure I didn't hit that target." [laughter] So I didn't question any more.

KP: Have you ever been to Germany, since the war?

JK: Yeah, we took a trip when we went over to England, we took a trip up the Rhine, but we only got out to a few places along the [way]. They let us out for a couple of hours or something like that as we made our way up the Rhine.

KP: Are you ever surprised how well Germany has done since the war?

JK: Yes, because I flew over Nuremberg, well in that city I don't think there was a building in that city that had a roof on it. ... And just a couple of roads open. We took what you call Cooks Tours, we took the ground personnel and flew them across. ...

KP: This was after the war was over.

JK: This was after the war was over, yes. And they could see the damage and what not. Look up and down the rivers, bridges, no bridges existed. And in Holland, when we were over there, ... a lot of the houses there were just the roof was above water, where the Germans had flooded. ... We took the ground crew over there to see what was going on and what happened. That was quite a sight.

KP: So it sounds like you're very surprised to see how well Europe has done?

JK: Oh yes, yes. Yeah, that was completely gone!

KP: You have been to several reunions, but did you ever join any veterans' organizations?

JK: No, I didn't. No, I just didn't feel like it.

KP: You have said you have occasionally come to some Rutgers football games?

JK: Oh yeah, well we used to have a family reunion every year at Rutgers. And after the game we'd go to a restaurant nearby and have a dinner and what not. So we'd go with my brothers and my sister and the husbands or wives. ... Of course, ... we haven't attended one in the past three years ... I guess, because Joe isn't been too well. And he can't get out to go to a football game anymore, so we haven't been going back for that.

KP: Had you intended to send any of your sons or daughters to Rutgers?

JK: No, I left it up to them, whatever they wanted to do. They had different ideas, I wouldn't object if they wanted to go there.

KP: Because it sounds like you had quite a family tradition, at least with your brothers.

MK: Yeah. One of the grandchildren went. Well I shouldn't say that, no I guess Charlie's daughter went.

JK: Yeah. In fact, didn't she teach at there for a while?

MK: I don't know.

KP: Well if I talked to your daughter earlier, because we have a very strong women's studies program, we could have ...

MK: She went to the University of Chicago, first, [then] to California.

JK: She was over in Holland last year attending a conference, ... and this summer she's going to China she said, something around there. She said there'd be 30,000 people and that's because there are so many people going at same time. They have to send their passports and visas beforehand.

MK: So they can clear them.

JK: ... Because right now I'm not so sure I want her to go China, with what's happening there with the trade.

KP: Well thank you very much. Is there anything that we forgot to ask?

JK: ... I don't know.

KP: About the war or any of your experiences before or after?

JK: I don't know, I think you covered it pretty much.

KP: Well, thank you again.

JK: Thank you!

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

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