

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
NEW BRUNSWICK  
AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANKLIN J. KNELLER  
FOR THE  
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and  
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TRANSCRIPT BY  
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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Franklin J. Kneller on October 6, 1994, with Kurt Piehler and ...

Elizabeth McDonald: Elizabeth McDonald.

KP: ... At Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. I would like to begin by talking about your father and mother. Which year, roughly, did they emigrate from Germany?

Franklin Kneller: They were born [here]. ...

KP: They were born in the United States.

FK: They were born in the United States. The grandparents came from Germany.

KP: Which part of New Jersey did your family hail from?

FK: The Oranges, particularly Orange, home of Tony Galento.

KP: Where did your father work?

FK: My father took various jobs selling, banks, roofing, roofing materials, roofing services, and most of his life [was] spent that way; also, as a veteran of the Spanish-American War and ... Pershing's visit to Mexico.

KP: He was a veteran of the Spanish-American War and "Blackjack" Pershing's Mexican Expedition.

FK: Yes.

KP: Did your father ever talk about the Spanish-American War?

FK: Oh, yes. ... "When the men were made of steel and the ships were made of wood. ... Now, the ships are made of steel and the men are not too strong," [laughter] those type of things, and he ... had been out to the Philippines and places like that.

KP: He was in the Philippines in 1900.

FK: ... 1899 or so, yes.

KP: How long did he stay in the Philippines?

FK: Just for a visit in and a visit out, by boat. He was in the Navy. ...

KP: Was he assigned to Admiral Dewey's fleet?

FK: Yes, I believe so, yes. I have his papers, but, they're old and tarnished now.

KP: Did he write any letters?

FK: No.

KP: You also mentioned that he was involved in the Pershing Expedition.

FK: He never got there, but, he was part of it. He came back before they got down there.

KP: Was he still in the Navy?

FK: No, the Army.

KP: How did he switch services? Was he in the Reserves? Did he enlist?

FK: He enlisted.

KP: He enlisted.

FK: Yes, yes.

KP: As first-generation German-Americans, how did your parents feel about World War I?

FK: They were embarrassed, and I'm probably alive today 'cause they were embarrassed, 'cause they wouldn't teach me German. [They] wouldn't allow me to learn German.

KP: Really?

FK: ... Because they wanted to be Americans. They wouldn't even have the German newspaper in the house, and they spoke to me of [the fact that] they would ... have days when the person on the bus, you'd be looked down on if he were reading a German-language paper, or trolley car or whatever, so, they didn't want to do anything German. They wanted to be American.

KP: However, they spoke German.

FK: Yes, they spoke German, once in a while, between them, when they didn't want me to know.

KP: Did they discourage you from taking German in high school or college?

FK: No, it's all right for me to take it after my grandparents passed, in grammar school in Irvington. That was all right. ... To learn it was all right, but, not to speak it at home.

KP: You grew up in an English-speaking household.

FK: Yes, yes.

KP: Your parents were Lutheran.

FK: Yes, background Lutheran, yes. ... In those days, ... you walked, so, you usually walked to the nearest church, and it turned out to be a Baptist [church], in Orange. So, they were Baptists, and then, Presbyterian, but, the Lutheran church was too far, a couple of miles away, and you'd have to take a bus and take an extra hour on Sundays, and, in those days, we went to church, in the early 1930s, twice on Sunday.

KP: Did your parents own an automobile while you were growing up?

FK: No, no.

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

FK: Oh, pretty horrible. I can remember the banks closing and them trying to sell their Public Service stock, because, when they came over, they usually worked for Consolidated Edison, in New York, or Public Service, here, because that was an obtainable job for immigrants, lifting and doing manual work. So, they had some shares of stock. First, they didn't have the money in the bank, and then, they sold some shares so [that] we could eat, to get some of the money quick, because you never took extra money out of the bank; you just took enough to last a couple weeks, until you got back to the bank, and I can remember the depth of the bleakness, particularly when the banks were closed.

KP: Your family lost some money.

FK: I don't know how much. ... It was nothing in today's money. ...

KP: Yes, however, at the time ...

FK: ... It was everything.

KP: Did your mother work outside of the home?

FK: Not after I came, but, ... we lived in [my] maternal grandmother's house.

KP: Was your father's career affected by the Great Depression?

FK: Yes. He had one job after another, or trying to get jobs, and I think he went away to the CCC, [Civilian Conservation Corps], too.

KP: Really?

FK: Yes, ... because you [would then] have fifteen dollars a month or something like that, ... in lieu of being able to get a job.

KP: Did he ever work for a Works Progress Administration project?

FK: No. The WPA seemed to be one big negative in those days, made fun of. I know there was an artistic side, but, I'm speaking about the ... raking leaves side, and I think it was more the CCC, go away and help build a forest or build bridges and things like that. Probably, that paid more money; I'm not sure.

KP: What was the name of your high school?

FK: Clifford J. Scott

KP: Which town was that in?

FK: In East Orange. See, because of this problem, ... I guess we moved ... from Orange to Irvington, two times in Irvington, New York, back to East Orange, back to New York, back to East Orange, back to Irvington, back to New York, and then, East Orange again. So, we ended up in East Orange and [I] went three times to school [in] New York, but only one school, Public School 6, and then, my mother remarried, and I went to Clifford J. ... Scott High School.

KP: You attended several high schools before you graduated from East Orange High School.

FK: No, those were all grammar schools. I had ten or eleven changes to different grammar school in Orange, East Orange, Irvington, and New York. By luck, I went to Columbia, East Orange, for grammar school, to the ninth grade, and then, to Cliff J. Scott from the sophomore [year] on, then, a five-year course, ... I was young, so [that] I could make sure I got all the credits and because, as you know, in those days, you got a little invitation, when you became eighteen, for a blood test, right away, then, they let you stay in school to finish. I finished school and the day after we were going to graduate, they wanted us to go down to ... be sworn in. So, the draft board said, [laughter] "Let them have graduation," so, they took us a month later, in July, instead of June. ... One month after we graduated from high school, we went in the Army, or Navy, or Marines, whatever the case may be.

KP: When you were in high school, did you have the desire to move on to college?

FK: Oh, yes. In fact, the last day that you could make up your mind in grammar school, I took my mother to the principal and said, "I want to switch," the last day before starting [high school]. "Yes, I'm going to go to college, definitely." I thought I'd probably ... either go to NYU for journalism, pay as you went, nights, then, for awhile, there was some talk about going to

Columbia, because I was so interested in religion, and someone thought [I could] probably get a scholarship to Columbia.

KP: Did most of the students from your high school go on to college? Of course, the war would throw off those numbers.

FK: Yes, ... there wasn't really that much talk. I guess ... the percentage wasn't as great as it seems to be today.

KP: Yes.

FK: And, of course, ... I assume, once they knew you'd get credit for college if you went in the ... service, then, more people decided [to go to college], I would assume.

KP: Do you have any other memories about living in East Orange in the late 1930s and early 1940s that you would like to share?

FK: Oh, the gas lights. ... During an air raid drill, my stepfather [would] get up and turn out each gas light on our street. ... There was a good playground system and it was a safe place.

KP: I have been told that the shopping was incredible also.

FK: Muir's? I worked there, yes. ... Muir's has since closed down. I liked East Orange. In fact, after I was married, we came back and lived on Ellington Street for a short time, before returning ... here to live on Upson Lane, near the Rutgers football stadium.

KP: It sounds as if the late 1930s brought better times for your family.

FK: When my mother remarried in the '40s, it was ... better off. The late '30s? no, we kept moving back and forth. I worked different jobs, and I remember them putting [in] Social Security. ... I was paid a dollar for delivering newspapers. I used to deliver newspapers for different businesses and the guy took out one penny for Social Security. [laughter] See, that was overdoing it. That, for me, was the start of Social Security, one penny a week.

KP: Did you work during your high school years?

FK: Oh, sure, ... except during the football season. Then, I'd deliver papers early Sunday morning, so [that] I had a buck to spend during the week. This is later, no penny deduction. This is [in] later days. That was ... in the '30s that the guy took the penny out. ...

Elizabeth McDonald: Would you say that most members of your high school class worked?

FK: Not as much as I would want; not as much as, ... probably, in East Orange, because ... that area over there was a higher income area, no. There were some sororities and fraternities, which

I didn't quite know about. Those guys didn't work and the gals didn't work. In fact, very few girls, come to think of it, [worked], ... compared to today.

KP: You made a lot of friends and connections through football.

FK: Yes, and that's how I got to know which of the fraternities [were there] and things like that.

KP: However, you were never invited to join.

FK: No. I was lucky if I had a sport coat. [laughter]

KP: You were invited to join the military. After you graduated, you received your draft notice.

FK: Yes. ... I would have graduated at seventeen, but, I took the extra year, and, when I was eighteen, in March, I got the card. ... Yes, they timed the card so it really came on your birthday, and so, you took the blood test, and then, you were deferred until you finished school. Well, then, they gave us the extra month. ... The deal was, generally, you stayed out all night, if you were a male, ... [after your] high school graduation. No one would've been able to look the people in the eye, the doctors in the eye. [laughter] So, as I said, the draft board, of course, was [comprised of] neighbors, so, they quickly said, "No, give them another month."

KP: Did you know anyone on your local draft board?

FK: Yes, I recall I knew one. ... You didn't go see them, because you didn't have to. I had no excuse to see them. I guess I would've gone if I were considering requesting a deferment.

KP: Most of the men from your high school went into the service.

FK: Yes. ...

KP: Do you know anyone who did not?

FK: No, I can't think of any. ... I can't even think of one that didn't go. You'd have to be ... badly disfigured or physically disabled not to go in those days. I mean, you'd kid yourself, you had flat feet. They'd say, "Jeez, can't you sit down someplace?" [laughter] No two ways about it.

KP: What year were you drafted in?

FK: In '43.

KP: You were drafted in August of 1943. Which branch of the military did you hope to enter?

FK: In those days, at our age, assuming one passed the test, you either went into V-12 or ASTP. You took the test, and I got approved for V-12, ... [to] go to school in the Navy, but, then, I

thought my eyes were bad. I did not appreciate the sea, and so, I took ASTP. I went to Fort Benning and took student training, which was basic training, and then, transferred up to St. John's University, which was a post. We slept in the school rooms, and we're going to be engineers, and, after the war, reconstruct Germany, etc. Of course, that didn't really [happen]. We didn't really want that, 'cause we wanted to get on to other things. The joke was, if you dropped a book, you missed ... three weeks work. We did quarters. You'd be an engineer in three years. So, then, they found out [that] they needed bodies. They did their calculations for post-invasion and they needed what they said were smart, young men or something. So, they closed down. We went straight to maneuvers. We went from the nice post in Brooklyn on maneuvers to Louisiana, to an infantry division. Thus, they could complete a number of divisions.

KP: From ASTP?

FK: ... From ASTP, ASTPs in Boston, and Louisiana, and California, wherever they had them schooled. They collapsed the largest portion of the program and put the students into infantry divisions that had some cadre and knew something. Unfortunately, the infantry [division], I did not like too well, because it had a number of National Guard people, and some of them were not too good, and I could ...

KP: You recognized that right away.

FK: Immediately. In fact, when ... they started to send us overseas, I got back into a rifle company, from a heavy weapons company, and these gentlemen were telling us things that weren't true, and, one time, ... they said, "We're going to have passes before we get ready to go overseas," and I came across a drunken sergeant who threw the unsigned passes at me, so, I took five guys with me, and I said, you know, "We're not going to have passes. This guy's crazy." So, I went to the commanding officer, who was a colonel. ... I knew he was a West Pointer. So, I've got a problem, I woke him up, and [I said], "I've got four guys out here going AWOL. We're going to go," ... and he said, "Why?" and I told him and he said, "Okay." He gave me a five-day pass, ... a three and a two. He sent the others out also. I gave them their passes, [which] he had signed. When I went back, everybody was gone. All the officers and top sergeant were gone. The Colonel knew that he had a problem. I was the straw that did it and he told me not to worry about a thing. "They do anything to you, come back to see me." So, yes, I was right. Later, I found out, when they got in, they had difficulties in combat, which I anticipated.

KP: You could just tell.

FK: Yes. ... One can tell. ...

KP: What else about them?

FK: When ... things don't run right, and they don't stand up, and they can't answer the questions, and they don't look you in the eye. ...

KP: Why do you think the unit was so bad? Theoretically, they had been training for years before the war.

FK: Generally, if you want to get a good one, you get a lot of West Pointers, who want to live and [have] grandkids grow up, not just retire, and drink beer, and waste weekends. [laughter] I'm sure there's some National Guards [that are] great, but, this is back in the '30s. ... Also, the '30s were pretty horrible. There was very little going for anything, and they didn't have the money to have the equipment and training, and even [when] I was in, I started with a [Springfield] '03 rifle, and I'm left-handed, ... and this is '43. They were ... using the ... good equipment to go overseas first.

KP: You were originally sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, on your way to the ASTP. Had you traveled much before you entered the service?

FK: No, no, that was fantastic. ... We went to ... Fort Dix ... for a couple of days, got the shots, and then, went down [to Fort Benning]. Actually, I can't remember that one too well, but, I remember the one when we closed down the school post, and we got on these trains, and, the next morning, we're in Canada. Then, we're in Chicago and we got old trains, [laughter] with a pot stove in the center. I don't think they're gone yet, and ... maybe it was there, I don't know which [trip it was]. Maybe it was the first one. Anyhow, ... I'll always remember the pot stove on the train and the hot weather, ... not that they had it going, but, they sure didn't need it. ... Going back, we went from ... Fort Benning to Atlanta. It took us three days to go one hundred miles, slow, stinking shuttle, back and forth. ... You may hear some good stories about trains in the 1940s, but, I don't know any. [laughter]

KP: What was it like to be in Georgia in 1943? Were you ever allowed to leave the base?

FK: Oh, yes, we went into town and I didn't have drinks then. I was with a guy who was French-American. His father married a French lady during World War I and came back and sired him. ... He knew whiskey a bit, and he'd put whiskey in Coke, or rye in Coke, ... and then, he couldn't speak anything but French, and, of course, I didn't know any French. ... I can remember putting him over my shoulder, and he's screaming about something, and taking him back to camp, [laughter] because I was okay. The MPs left us alone, but, later, I found out why he was screaming. He'd lost his teeth, (dentures), but, I didn't know the word for teeth. Once in awhile, he'd try whiskey on a hike, putting it in his canteen, and that was it. ... [laughter] A great example of how not to do it.

KP: Which parts of the country did the men you went through basic training with come from?

FK: You had some from Nevada, because ... the young men could shoot well, some were Seventh Day Adventists, because we lost them, once they got their religious identification through, ... some from New Jersey, New York. ... Actually, there wasn't too many from the

South. Of course, in this group, the IQ, we were told, had to be 120 or so. So, you didn't get the backwoods ... types, you got the fellows who were interested in college and could qualify.

KP: What did you think of Fort Benning and its environs? Did you interact with any civilians?

FK: No, I didn't have much ... interaction with them. We helped put out a forest fire, ... I remember that. ... For the first eight weeks or so, you didn't get off the post and it was only seventeen weeks. ...

KP: What do you remember about your training and your drill sergeant at Fort Benning?

FK: They would treat us like we were young. [laughter] ... I think they were chosen with great regard for their ability to put up with us, and, of course, they didn't want to screw up, because it's like ... being in the German Army and being sent to the East. If you screw up, you're out and you're going overseas, and they, of course, had enough training. You couldn't ask for more training. ... [They were] young lieutenants. In fact, I remember one young lieutenant that was ahead of us, ... I heard [about this], and he did [do this], he did me a special favor. I was going to go to Boston College and he said, "No, send Frank to someplace near his home," ... which was St. John's, in Brooklyn. So, yes, they were bright. ... I couldn't criticize them, no. I'm sure I didn't then, either.

KP: You studied engineering at St. John's. Before the war, had you considered becoming an engineer?

FK: Absolutely not, but, by some fluke, my ... percentile was satisfactory. You know, you couldn't get out of it and I told the Father at St. John's, "I'm not engineer material." "You've got to be. Your percentile's high." I said, ... "After the war, can I go to MIT?" and he says, "No worry, you've got it. You can go to MIT." [laughter] I never did believe him and I avoided engineering.

KP: You never realized that you had these talents.

FK: No, but, I did take a lot of courses in high school. ... Because it was a five-year course, I took every scientific course possible, ... so [that] no one would tell me I needed more when I applied to a college. I do not believe I had the ability.

KP: In fact, you were very well-prepared.

FK: Oh, yes, for college, because I took a five-year course in high school.

KP: Where were most of the ASTP students at St. John's from?

FK: I'd say almost all from that area.

KP: New York and New Jersey?

FK: Yes. ... We were there for Christmas (1943); I can't remember people going too far [away], no.

KP: Eventually, the Army broke up your unit.

FK: Yes. As usual, you know, because I liked to type, I started the ... St. John's University newspaper, *Univoicity*, a little newspaper for the fellows. The company commander had no one to take care of the office, and so, I took care of it [on the] weekends. One late Saturday afternoon, I answered the phone and there's the announcement [that] we were being broken up. ... They tagged all the things together, ... so, that was it. That was where I had to laugh, that they needed us for, and I know what they needed us for. [laughter] So, then, we broke down. ... Because so many failed, we used to have dinners, spaghetti dinners, for the guys who got thrown out. So, we had one, big spaghetti dinner, and since the college had extra meat points, they had a big dinner, too, at the college. ...

KP: The program was very rigorous.

FK: Oh, jeez. ... Theoretically, you're made an engineer [in], I think, three years, maybe in two. ... As I say, you just had one thing after another, study, study, study. ... Our classrooms and our ... sleeping facilities were all in the same area, just like a place like this; next door would be a regular classroom. ...

KP: How strict was the military discipline in the ASTP at St. John's?

FK: They didn't have to be too strict, because, if you took off, you're out. Again, you're all off to the Army in the East. ... Once in a while, a guy would get caught. I remember, one guy got stopped by an FBI agent. ... They were wandering around and the guy said, "Go back," you know, the young agent, says, "Get back. I have to report you in if you're out here ... at night." So, that's the only time that I recall anything happening.

KP: Were there many inspections?

FK: No one cared to be too hard on you, because you're doing all this studying, [which] was enough. ... I don't remember anybody going wacky or going screaming out the door, either, [laughter] which I think you'd have more so these days, 'cause the pressure appeared to mount. On the other hand, you know, so many guys got thrown out, ... they weren't identified as "quitter," because we believed it was so tough.

KP: After your ASTP unit was dispersed, you were sent down to Louisiana, where you were assigned to a unit that you did not want to be in.

FK: I went into heavy weapons and that was something, to carry the bipods, ... and this is from being inside, in Brooklyn, then, going out in the rain and the storm, and sometimes it rained so much, I remember sitting up against a tree, so [that] I didn't drown, to get some sleep. After about five or six days, you were given time off. They finished the problem, then, you went on to another problem after twenty-four hours. ... If you got a chance, you bought as many Milky Way bars as possible and a case of twenty-four [fit] in your bandoliers, so [that] you could live on those, as the food wasn't the greatest, and we just kept moving. It was the best thing that ever could happen, the best thing, because you got used to it. ...

KP: However, at the time, you hated it.

FK: Yes, but, I thank goodness I had it, because, in actual battle, everything seemed much simpler, due to maneuvers.

KP: When you landed in France, you were thankful for your training.

FK: Yes, yes, except, it was a lot colder. [laughter].

KP: What did you think of the people of Louisiana?

FK: We just didn't. Every once in a while, we got into town, but, then, we got a haircut. ... In those days, a haircut was fifty cents, it was price-controlled, and they gave you a singe. That's how they made their extra money, ... on the singe. ... He'd ask you first if you wanted a singe, and, if you said, "Yes," you wanted a singe, then, you got a good haircut, 'cause you paid ten or fifteen cents more. [laughter] So, if you didn't want a singe, you concluded it would be a horrible [haircut]. ... In those days, haircuts weren't styled too well.

KP: You really wanted to get out of this National Guard unit.

FK: Yes, I did. ... Then, I had a Jewish friend, ... he got in an argument with middle management and said, "Yes, I'll go overseas. You can send Frank, too," or something like that. I don't know how true that is, but, then, they took ... young men out who they thought should go over there, you know, could be of help or something like that. I don't know how it bounced. ...

KP: You mentioned that there were some Jews in this National Guard unit. What happened to them?

FK: I don't know, we broke up. We exchanged letters after the war. I always remember, ... holidays, I can't remember what it was, you could go down to Louisiana, because you couldn't celebrate the Jewish ceremony in the field. ... [My friend] says, "Frank, you're Jewish." I said, "I'm Christian. I'm listed as a Christian." He wanted me to go to New Orleans for Passover with him. He said, "We'll have a great time." [laughter] ... I liked the guy. ... When we got home for leave one time, I went out to his house, ... and then, when we went home, ... [his mother] sent a nice chicken to eat on the train, things like that, but, I never saw him after the war.

KP: Eventually, you managed to get a transfer out of the National Guard unit.

FK: Yes, then, we went overseas, and then, you volunteered. ...

KP: You volunteered for overseas duty.

FK: Well, no. I was going, I was going. It was sort of on the track, ... then, Camp ... Meade, staging area, and then, up here, right next door on Livingston [College Campus].

KP: You went through Camp Kilmer.

FK: Kilmer, yes. That was when nothing was right. It was cold and miserable. I don't know how it could be cold and miserable in September, but, it seemed to be, and then, we got on one ship of the Dutch lines, 15,000 of us, and, you know, they were paying the Jamaican cooks thirty cents a day. They were worth five. Most of us could not eat and you had this much room (two-and-a-half feet), to turn over, back and forth, in your bunk. The only good thing was, they gave us oranges. We lived on oranges. Of course, the boat rocked back and forth. I never quite believed them, so, ... as soon as it took off, I went upstairs, to the promenade deck, and looked through the orders to see where we were going, 'cause I felt, with my luck, I'd probably go ... to the Far East, ... but, it was Europe. [laughter]

KP: Why did you have reservations about going to the Far East?

FK: ... Didn't particularly like the Japanese.

KP: How did you react to the attack on Pearl Harbor?

FK: ... Oh, scary, because, ... we were in high school. We heard it in a candy store on Sunday afternoon and the next day was the "Day of Infamy" Speech. We sat in the auditorium at Scott High School to listen to the President speak to Congress.

KP: You did not want to go to the Far East.

FK: No.

KP: Where did you learn where you were going?

FK: Oh, to Europe, to Scotland. ... You know, some people leave orders out ...

KP: ... And they should not be.

FK: They shouldn't be, but, I guess it was no secret then. ... So, I just wanted to confirm. I remember going to the deck and hunting around for the orders. Of course, you know, ... come to

think of it, you'd have to go through the Canal and a few other things, and that ship I don't think could get through the Canal, now that I know a little bit about the Canal. ...

KP: In your memory, the ship was just awful.

FK: It was a great ship, if you were a tourist, but, when it came to trying to care for 15,000. Maybe it was more than 15,000, on there, and the bad cooks, which they were paying thirty cents a day or something, Jamaican cooks. ... [They] didn't understand how European food should be cooked, at that time of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

KP: Did the ship have a US Navy crew?

FK: Oh, no. I think it must have been Merchant Marines. I don't even remember ... seeing the crew. I don't remember that at all, except those cooks. [laughter] Well, they served.

KP: What did you do to pass the time during your voyage?

FK: I don't even remember reading, just wasted time. ...

KP: Was there any gambling on board the ship?

FK: No. ... Guys must have been broke, 'cause, you know, they could get out of ... Camp Kilmer. ... It wasn't too bad, getting out and spending money.

KP: They spent their money while on leave.

FK: Oh, sure. ... You didn't have money on there. I can't even remember any gambling [on the ship]. ... On maneuvers, yes; going out on training maneuvers, I lost about three months' pay. [laughter] ... During rest time, you'd build a fire on a tree stump, and the fire'd go half the night, and you didn't ... really have to work the next day, if you're on rest, and we played mostly blackjack. ...

KP: When you were stationed at Camp Kilmer, you mentioned that some men used their passes to go into New Brunswick. Did they have a night on the town?

FK: I think so, but, I went home, to the Oranges.

KP: Was that the first time that you had visited this area?

FK: All you had was [Route] 27, ... [so, you did not come this way], unless you had some relatives or something down there. I can't remember how we used to get to the [seashore]. We used Route 27 for the seashore, to Ocean Grove or whatever.

KP: You had never visited the Rutgers campus before.

FK: No, no.

KP: When you were at Camp Kilmer, did it ever occur to you that you might go back there?

FK: [laughter] In fact, when I got out of ... [the Army], we had, [at] the hospital, a young medical counselor and he wanted me to go to Rollins. He advised, "Play tennis down there and you'll find the girls, and they'll," or rather their fathers will, "have money." He arranged a ... ticket. He made it out for Rollins College in Florida, because he thought I'd do better down there than I did up here. I didn't even think of Rutgers then, but, I did start Rutgers because of the journalism. ... He was a great counselor. ... He got me out of the Army early to go to Rutgers. ... I think he figured out, ... I should be here, because he checked on things and said, "You've got to get out and take the SAT test."

KP: Yes.

FK: I got out the 5th of September; I may have took the SAT tests on the 12th. [laughter]

ED: Wow.

FK: Well, I was playing football by the end of the month [laughter] and I was fifty percent disabled. We had a VA office here. My counselor said, "Frank, I don't think you could be fifty percent disabled and play varsity football." My playing ability confirmed his point.

KP: I could not resist asking you about Camp Kilmer, since it was your first exposure to Rutgers.

FK: ... Oh, Rutgers, there was no connection, absolutely. Rutgers ... seemed a distance away.

KP: I guess I am showing my age, because Camp Kilmer is now a part of the Livingston College Campus.

FK: ... In fact, I finished Rutgers in 1949, before it ever became part of [the University].

KP: That is true. It was not incorporated until the 1960s. Going back to the war, you were on a ship bound for Scotland.

FK: Maybe I didn't know we were going to Scotland, but, I ended up in Scotland.

KP: You landed in Scotland. How did you wind up in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division?

FK: Oh, ... [we] went to Scotland, took the train down to a repple-depple, outside London, and they asked, "Who wants to join the airborne?" ... I had that in mind for a number of months.

KP: Did you want to get out of your unit?

FK: I was out of the unit. Once I left the infantry division to go to Meade, I went over as a replacement.

KP: You went over as a replacement.

FK: Yes, yes.

KP: You did not know where you would be assigned.

FK: Oh, no, no, but, you could volunteer for the airborne. So, I went to [the] repple-depple, and I stayed there a time, and, there, they didn't give you any passes. You knew which fence was open, and everybody went out there, and the guard, of course, ... he'd turn around, look around, look away. So, we got to London a number of times by train and, of course, the English, we had no money to speak of, and they let us ride the trains. So, you got London with the V-2 bombs ... real manly, you know; you'd watch your beer and a bomb goes off. It stops and you ...  
[laughter]

KP: Did you duck for cover?

FK: ... No, you didn't. Well, you couldn't, really. You don't know where the next one was going to land. ... If you ran for cover, you may run into it. ... No, I never was in a bomb shelter in London. We didn't bother.

KP: You just stood there with your beer.

FK: Yes, that was the SOP [Standard Operating Procedure] for that one. You just look at each other and joke.

KP: Did a V-2 rocket ever land near you?

FK: I heard the explosions. I didn't go out looking.

KP: They were not close enough ...

FK: Not close enough to really do any damage.

KP: What were your impressions of wartime London?

FK: I liked it, but, I only saw it in the dark, too, because, ... by the time I got out of camp, it was dark, and to get back, sometimes I'd walk seven miles or so, because I missed the train, through the moors, and then, the steam coming up from the moors. It was like Sherlock Holmes movies.  
...

EM: What did you think of the people of London?

FK: A little cold. I did get out to go to church. Otherwise, since then, I've been to London many times, at least twice a year when I lived in Africa.

KP: Do you have any memories of going to the English pubs?

FK: Oh, man, yes, before and after, yes. ... It was twenty cents, a schilling, for a pint of beer. If you borrowed ten schillings, I lived a good night! Those beers were [good]. I tasted them for years after the war. [laughter] I was happy to get back in the 1960s and 1970s, but, they never tasted as good as [in] wartime. Oh, sure; then, singing, ... really some enjoyable times. They closed the pub at ten o'clock or so, and it was "last beer," and then, we'd go out and try to find your way home in the dark.

KP: The blackout marks your memories of England.

FK: Oh, yes, and then, you also had to be careful it wasn't "Eisenhower Night." That's when ... you weren't supposed to be out, but, if you were on AWOL, you didn't know you weren't supposed to be out. So, then, they picked people up. That's how they got the AWOL guys, I was told, on an "Eisenhower Night."

KP: Where did the term "Eisenhower Night" come from?

FK: I don't know, I remember it as that. ... It should have been "Bedell Smith Night," 'cause Bedell Smith was the guy who always signed the negative orders and Ike did the good things, you know, like an exec officer who's a bastard, and Ike did the, "Here, my friends, take this ice cream cone."

KP: How long did you stay in the replacement depot?

FK: A week, two weeks. It seemed like a long time. I was eager to get going, and then, the 101<sup>st</sup> representatives came, and I volunteered. Of course, I wear glasses. ... I was trying to memorize the eye [chart]. ... The doctor said, "Step back there and take your time, you know, relax," and then, he took me again, I had it memorized. [laughter] It was good. I remember that unspoken deal with the doctor and, also, you see, I'm heavy. I really shouldn't have been ...

KP: You were not supposed to be in the airborne.

FK: No, because, when I jump, I go fast, I go down fast, and they put me at the end of the stick, and I've had to walk off a chute, because I was heavier than the usual [paratrooper].

KP: When you say, "Walk off chutes," you literally ...

FK: Walked off a chute, yes, walked out in[to] the air, as they train you, if you land on a chute, ... just walk fast, and ... the air hits yours, and your chute opens, but, it's a funny feeling, walking in air, trying to get off the chute. It's not that difficult, you just gotta remember to walk fast. ...

KP: You volunteered for the 101st Airborne and passed the physical. When did you join the unit?

FK: No, [first], I went to Chilton for jump training, which is in England, and we did about two weeks there, of running, and packing chutes, and then, did five jumps in the final day for graduation.

KP: In other words, you were given a crash course in paratrooper training in England, which was quite different from the training that other paratroopers endured in the United States.

FK: No, the jumpmasters wished to give the same training as in Fort Benning.

KP: What do you remember about your first jump?

FK: I passed out, like most of them pass out, we were told, and then, after that, it's okay. It's something different, where you're just lucky your chute opens and you come back again.

KP: Did fear cause you to pass out?

FK: ... Probably fear; ... you have no history of jumping into air. From a baby on, you're taught not to jump, or, if you have jumped as a baby, you've learned why not to jump. [laughter] So, you generally pass out. Because of the rushing thing, you pass out, they say that, and it happened as they said. ...

KP: How many replacements were in this crash course for the 101st?

FK: Again, I understand, if they start out with a hundred, they're lucky if they end up with forty.

KP: There was a major wash-out rate.

FK: Yes, yes, and, of course, some are officers, including chaplains, so, you hope for them, but, some don't make it, either, because they just couldn't keep up.

KP: Did anyone refuse to jump?

FK: No, but, we passed a lot that didn't jump on June 6th or in September, we were told by the jumpmaster, and they were in the stockade. You don't hear about those guys. ... I haven't heard about them since, but, I remember passing the stockade. "They didn't jump and, goddamn, I'm gonna jump."

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KP: You went through jump training in October 1944.

FK: 1944, yes.

KP: When you were assigned to the 101st, they had already jumped.

FK: Well, they jumped D-Day. ...

KP: You were in training when they jumped on D-Day.

FK: Oh, yes, I heard about [it]. ... I was in the infantry division in the States on ... D-Day. ... I didn't know too much about them, but, I knew I wanted to join them.

KP: When were you finally assigned to the 101st?

FK: In October, I went to the 101st in October 1944.

KP: Your jump training was in September.

FK: October.

KP: What did you do after your jump training was complete?

FK: We went to little huts in the forest, Quonset huts, and, one time, we did get ready to go to Holland, ... two nice days spent under the wing of a plane, ready to go to Holland, where they were fighting then, Market-Garden, but, they called it off. We would go, as replacements, right into the foxholes, but, then, they called it off. We went back to [the] Quonset huts, until it got colder, and didn't do too much, and then, Thanksgiving, or the early Thanksgiving, I remember, because I ate eighteen eggs, I was gonna go on KP or guard duty, so, I said, "Okay, I'll go on guard duty." [I] switched with a guy who wanted to do KP. So, I was up early, and few got up early, and they had fresh eggs, 'specially for Thanksgiving. [I ate] eighteen eggs, [laughter] 'cause I hadn't had them for a month or more. So, then, after that, ... on the Holland thing, the division was going to go back to Mourmelon, from Holland, Mourmelon, France. We went over on DC-3s to Mourmelon, and then, we went into Quonset-type huts again, which the Germans had gotten out of a few months ago. It was a German camp. In fact, we ended up with their beer, which was a good beer then, and then, we spent a couple weeks there. ... Oh, we had a second Thanksgiving, the regular Thanksgiving, and then, we didn't do too much.

On December 18th, we were shaken out of bed, "Get ready to leave," and, of course, we didn't have complete equipment. We didn't know what was going on, ... just [that] the Germans were coming through, and they ... drove trucks down the street, throwing out equipment. [laughter]

So, you got whatever equipment you could find, and then, that afternoon, it was the fastest, theoretically, well, actually, it was the fastest, organization any division had ever activated, I read, in a couple hours, get ready to move from rest time, and without equipment. ... We had rifles and some ammunition, got on trucks, a hundred men to a truck, I did not count them. ... I've read that we were loaded and loaded, ... I don't remember that, but, the trucks were cold, and then, that was during the night. I always remember passing the trenches from World War I. ... Over the years, the trenches had filled in. You could see the outline.

KP: You could see the outline.

FK: I didn't want to get in trenches. [laughter] The last thing I wanted was trenches.

KP: Had you seen *All Quiet On the Western Front*?

FK: Yes. ... We arrived at Bastogne and were told the 82nd was pulling out and we started in. It was daylight hours, we were up all night, moved, dug in, moved, dug in, you know, one of those deals, and then, they at last found a place to dig in and stay, then, the Germans came in. It was about five, ten hours later.

KP: You had spent most of the war in training.

FK: I felt I was well-trained, but, not on-the-job experienced. ... I took basic training three times or so. Yes, it wasn't that tough. ... I was frightened, you know, when we were hit. The Germans came and, you know, I kidded around, tossed a coin, said, "That one's mine," and things like that. I was acting. [laughter] ... Once the big shells came in, they came up with their tanks, I was frightened. Of course, what do we get to protect but a troop carrier. ... That attracts everything. So, yes, I was extremely frightened. Well, then, the joke was, "Where am I gonna run? We're surrounded." [laughter]

KP: You fought at Bastogne.

FK: Yes. ... We had gone through Bastogne and we settled outside of Foy, which I'd been in and out [of] so many times, I thought I knew every barn and house. On one attack, I had to "mouse hole" through a house wall.

KP: Did you know how bad the situation was on-the-line?

FK: Yes. When you don't have any food and limited ammunition, [laughter] you figure it's kind of bad. Artillery noted, "We've got twelve more rounds, where do you want them?" That was the end. ... It was bad, but, what can you do about it? ... You see, I spent days being so concerned, and then, it turned about, I thought nothing could hurt me; you know, from complete vulnerability ... to thinking, "Nothing's gonna happen to me." Then, ... my companions got a little upset, and, one day, they got me to put my rifle against a tree, and took the rifle, and sent me back to the doctor. They thought I was trying to win the war all by myself.

KP: What had you been doing?

FK: ... We had a little knoll, so, I thought we could have a lookout there, an outpost. Of course, I took the wire, and [I said], ... "I need something to defend myself." They gave me a submachine gun, the only gun or rifle I had not qualified on or even handled. ... I did not know how to use it. "What do I gotta do with this?" They said, "Well, it goes to your right when you shoot it." So, I took the wire out and I thought I was really doing something. Of course, you know, the Germans, and my people, knew more than I did. They just let me alone, and I put up this telephone, and soon after the Germans knew I was almost finished, I later found out they had a man in the tree that was watching, they bombarded me, and, of course, ... I [had] been eating C ration cheese for days, two or three times a day, and, just before the bombardment went, I decided I'd go there, so, I had my pants down ... in the snow, ... but, the Army did note it as an outpost, so, the idea overall was a success. I don't know if anyone but me went out there, but, a week later, when I was more composed, up came General McAuliffe, and Taylor had come back from the States. ... They were told, "There's an outpost out there," and they said, "Fine," and ... I was told, "Don't come out of the foxhole," 'cause I didn't shave, I was young. I didn't want to shave in the cold water. ... I told them, "You're gonna be sorry, fellahs. Don't go there. They're gonna bombard you," you know, 'cause it was four o'clock. So, they ran out, and then, the bombardment started, they came running back, and I screamed, "I told you so, I told you so." [laughter] Later, I recently read, ... they told the local colonel, the colonel there, my colonel, "[You] better watch out for that district. They may come in that way," but, it was all because of my stupidity at taking the telephone out and them thinking there should [be] an outpost there and not knowing there was a German high in the tree, which, ... later, someone shot. ... [laughter] Sometimes, I'd get up in the morning and sing, "Oh, what a beautiful morning. Oh, what a beautiful day. I gotta feeling everything's *coming* my way." [laughter] Another one was, ... during the '30s, it was *Balalika*, with Nelson Eddie? Nelson Eddie was a Cossack, and he sang *Silent Night*, in English, to the Germans, and the Germans sang, back to him, *Silent Night* in German. So, you know, those things stick with you, if I'm ever in battle on Christmas. So, I sang *Silent Night*. It was a little quiet. [laughter] A guy's standing beside me, we're talking, and I finished singing it, and we heard, "Zing," and I said, "That came in my left ear." He said, "That came in my right ear." It came between us. [laughter] So, I got really mad, so, I called up for some fire, 'cause they had the grids on the Germans. Our CQ was empty, so, I picked the phone up and requested shells.

KP: On Christmas Eve?

FK: Yes, Christmas, ... and our artillery was zeroed in. ... It probably was phosphorus, because it got a couple of Germans. Must have been phosphorus; they were running around, screaming, their backs on fire, and, of course, I got the worst sense of guilt. They dropped a lot of stuff the Friday before Christmas. The Air Force had dropped that stuff and artillery shot it over. So, I always remember that. Jeez, I felt extreme guilt, that I had [ordered that].

KP: You were hoping to recreate what happened in World War I, where everyone would sing *Silent Night* and there would be a cease fire.

FK: Yes. ... As you know, we did have a cease fire, when the Germans took their wounded over to us. They already had captured our hospital during the first days of battle and they asked us to give up. That was touching, I thought. ... While that cease fire was on, I'm out scavenging different places, trying to get ammunition. So, that was when McAuliffe said, "Nuts," and, when he sent that around, oh, I must've been on that outpost that night, 'cause I heard that message ... on the telephone line I set up. I was listening to the messages and broadcasts. ... Of course, ... I told my mother, "Don't worry, I'll stay safe," and I'm away a couple months, and here it is, Franklin Roosevelt saying, "Let's pray for those surrounded at Bastogne," at the churches in the United States.

KP: Was there any danger that your particular sector would be overrun?

FK: Oh, yes. When it wasn't, it was nice, and [laughter] then, of course, ... when the Germans shouted, "Death," "Tomorrow, you die," they were going to send the tanks in, you want to dig a foxhole near a tree, because you don't want the tank to get on top of you. Oh, yes. Then, at night, sometimes, we'd move fast [to] ... where they were attacking, and it was so cold at times, ten degrees below zero, and, of course, they didn't have body bags, so, they stacked up the bodies, three across, three one way, three the other way, and it affected me. I didn't like, you know, running into a battle area passing those stiff bodies. That was a negative.

KP: How many of your comrades got killed from your unit?

FK: I did not know what the casualty situation was, but, we had about sixty-five in the platoon. I think I was one of the last two. Before Patton's tanks came up, ... my feet were frozen black, so, they sent me back to the first doctor, who would say, "Jeez, we don't know." ... Oh, there were only two of us. We were running our own war then. [laughter] If an officer from battalion got a hold of us, on an attack, he took over, but, then, there was about seven of us left.

KP: How many men were in your unit when you joined the line?

FK: ... For the platoon, I guess, ... sixty-five or so. ... I was not interested in learning the Army. I just wanted to go to college.

KP: You were down to seven.

FK: Seven, then, two, me and Kelly, Kelly and I. ... I don't know, maybe we were lost. They had the pincer going out, and we were in the center, and then, we said, "We've had enough of it," and we put the rifles against the tree and went, but, I was worse off. Originally, back in Mourmelon, I never got the shoes I should get for me; I'm size thirteen. ... They were cooperative. ... They just kept saying, "We ordered them," and stuff, and then, the Lieutenant came in when we were getting ready to go to Bastogne and said, "You don't have to go. You don't have the proper shoes to go." So, of course, I didn't want to be left there, so, I said, "I must go." So, it took no time for my feet to be frozen, and then, they dropped galoshes, size seventeen

galoshes, and some socks. So, I put on four pairs of socks and the galoshes, so [that] I could move. See, being frozen is unusual; first, your feet hurt, and then, they stop hurting. It's when they stop hurting that you have a problem. Later, in Paris, they wanted to cut my toes off. I had one of the biggest arguments with management I ever had, 'cause he's saying, "You're down. Those toes are gone." He was going to operate the next day and I had him give me another week, because, of course, they don't want ...

KP: ... To take off the leg.

FK: Yes, they don't want you to lose a leg; to lose a toe is better. ...

KP: You had severe frostbite.

FK: Oh, yes, oh, yes, black, several toes on both feet were black.

KP: You mentioned that there were chaplains at jump training. How important were the chaplains?

FK: Well, particularly around Christmas, when we were having the real fight, they came up, and this was Roman Catholic, he gave, I guess, Mass, and Holy Communion, and whatever else he gave, 'cause ... the snow was coming in, we didn't know how long we were going to be living ... or if we'd be taken prisoner, 'cause the Germans really had it, food, equipment, ammunition, and eight to one of us, sometimes ten to one of us, I was told. You know, the snow saved us then. When the snow stopped, they were gonna come in on us.

KP: If not for the snow and the cold, you may have been overrun.

FK: Yes, but, the reverse is true, too. Once it got clear, then, the Army Air Force could send the ... airplanes, yes, to re-supply us and, also, take care of the sky, because, if you got the sky, I was told, you got everything, if the weather is good. You could get those tanks down there, things like that, and we had no tanks in our vicinity. ... Of course, the Germans had some of our tanks, so, you didn't welcome a Sherman in until you knew it was *your* Sherman.

KP: How widely known was it that the Germans were sending in Shermans?

FK: Oh, we were told. We knew they had been after Ike and they were coming in. We gave the baseball questions and things like that, you know, and then, we pushed the guys right back to the rear. No one stayed with us, they went back, because I guess we didn't even trust them, if they could answer the baseball questions, and, of course, I'm not good with baseball lore. ...

KP: The stories about using baseball questions during the Battle of the Bulge are not apocryphal.

FK: Oh, they were true. ... I, in fact, look German, but, of course, I stayed with guys who knew me.

KP: If you had wandered off, you might have been mistaken for a German.

FK: I may have been, yes, and, of course, if they asked me baseball questions, I didn't know baseball, [laughter] and, also, they gave most of the passwords with "V"s and "W"s.

KP: The idea was that they would trick anyone who was not an American.

FK: ... Yes, [it is] difficult, I was told, for a German [not] to say, "*Vunderful*."

KP: What else sticks out in your mind about the Battle of the Bulge?

FK: Well, one thing, ... we had a road that went into Foy, [we] were (our company) on one side of the road, and, gee, we were wishing for Christmas packages, "Packages are coming, packages are coming, and we'll get some. They dropped them in. They're going to send them to us," and, at night, [I] heard the truck come up, and it kept going, and it didn't stop, [laughter] went right through our line and hit a mine, ... towards the Germans, and there's our Christmas packages. I wanted them, but, I sure didn't volunteer to go out and get them. I waited for someone else to, [laughter] but, in fact, I remember listening in the foxhole [there and] hearing that truck come, because there was nothing else moving on the road that night.

KP: Yes.

FK: ... It came zipping up, and then, "Bang," you knew it hit the mine, and there was the Christmas packages. Food was pretty horrible. We had some farmers in our group. ... We killed a pig. ... I guess we didn't know anything about hanging it up. We used to kill the chickens and try to eat them, and then, one day, we had chickens in a pail, cooking, and then, a bombardment, and the chickens filled with shrapnel. ...

An Army Air Force liaison officer parachuted into surrounded Bastogne to relay directions to the fighter pilots, I was told. I was on an outpost in a house, on the ground floor, at the top of the stairs to the cellar, looking out at the German house outpost a hundred or so yards away. It was annoying, as the Germans appeared to be living comfortably, as shown by the smoke coming from the chimney. I called for some rounds (artillery) on the house. I was switched to the liaison officer and he relayed my request to a pilot overhead. Two or three bombs were dropped. I wanted to bring the pilot in closer. The liaison officer patched me in with the pilot. I talked to the pilot to drop between our outpost house and the Germans' house with the smoking chimney. The pilot confidently stated he would put the next bomb down the smoking chimney. The next bomb landed closer to me and the explosion lifted me up and threw me down the cellar steps with the telephone in my hand, snapping the wire. Obviously, it was not possible to inform the pilot that he had not done me in. The pilot sounded as if, in a year or so, he would be celebrating his twenty-first birthday, as I would also.

During one time that it was felt that we would be overrun and some would be captured, word was passed that everyone should take off their dog tags, so that the Germans would not be able to identify men of the Jewish faith. After a bit of depression and worrying, I concluded it best to put a dog tag in each boot, so that "graves" could identify me.

KP: How isolated was your unit? Were you aware of how extensive the battle was? Were you just focused on your duties?

FK: Just focused. ... You heard stories, like, you know, they got sixteen [men]. The Germans had come in and, if the guys fell asleep, [they would] kill them at night. They got sixteen, or eleven of sixteen, one night. ... Then, you didn't want to sleep that night. ... Actually, I never really knew the battle until about 1979. I'd read of it, but, not to learn it. ... I had just joined Noxell, and they wanted me to go to England and see what they were doing, and they scheduled me for Luxembourg for a weekend. ... I rented a car and went up to the new museum there, that opened in '76, and they had the battle in three languages, "Day 1," "Day 2," and then, I learned more about it.

KP: Were you surprised by what you learned?

FK: Well, a lot fitted together. It wasn't a surprise, but, it fitted together a little more clearly.

KP: It must have been very confusing at the time.

FK: ... Oh, yes. You didn't care what was happening a half mile down. You were only worried about yourself and the people beside you, waking them up if something happened or ... [so] they didn't sleep too much. I remember, I would go to sleep and I was so tired; I was, for the first couple of days, awake for almost three days. In fact, the Sergeant, I guess, maybe not a sergeant, a corporal or something, they're yelling for me to go on patrol and he says, "Hey, Frank's done enough. Let him sleep." ... I heard that. That patrol never was found, to this day, as far as I know. ... You know, it was something I was glad I had missed.

KP: Despite what had happened?

FK: Yes, 'cause, then, things, you know, wherever we've been shot at or something, [like], in Haiti, ... my hotel was hit in Ecuador, "disturbances" in Laos, as well as coups and attempted coups in Nigeria, (three), Haiti, Zambia, Kenya, Madagascar, etc., that didn't bother me as much. ...

KP: You were toughened by the war.

FK: I believe so. ... I'm not too worried. I guess I worried the first ten days, gee, I was frightened. ... They say it's the opposite way; people think they're indestructible the first time. I knew I was destructible, and then, I became indestructible. [laughter]

KP: You became more confident over time.

FK: Yes, yes.

KP: What did you think of your leadership on-the-line?

FK: Oh, they were good guys. You could really have confidence in that group. ... You knew they'd [the leaders in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne] come through. ... Remember, they had *esprit de corps* that was fabulous. Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* is an apt description.

KP: You joined the unit as a replacement.

FK: Yes, and they took care of me for the first ten days. The vets tried to teach me. ...

KP: These older guys had fought their way across France.

FK: France and Holland, yes. Well, some got hurt in France and missed Holland, some joined in Holland, but, you know, I would imagine, in most good outfits, it's the same way, but, this, of course, had a special spirit there, and, after Bastogne, you couldn't touch them.

KP: What did they teach you that you did not learn in training?

FK: I guess, "Don't worry. Do this, do that," ... more manly references than [before]; easygoing, ... "Don't worry, we got this one," and they watched out. As I said, ... I guess I was a little younger than most of them. ... You heard, once in a while, [that] a guy is sixteen, owned up that he's sixteen during the battle. [laughter] He knew he had enough, "I'm sixteen," or seventeen, "I don't belong here," and to watch out for food. We had outposts and we'd grab potatoes and bring them back and try to kill the cattle that were half [dead], ... had shrapnel in them, things of that sort. ... It was a "work together" arrangement.

KP: How would you rate the medical care during the Battle of the Bulge?

FK: No good, because the Germans got the hospital, and, when the doctors operated, it was said they gave the wounded ... a bottle of liquor. You got the whole bottle to drink, and then, they'd operate.

KP: If you were wounded, your chances were grim.

FK: Oh, pretty horrible, yes. ... [Have] you heard of Vinnie Utz?

KP: Yes.

FK: You know Vinnie?

KP: I have heard about him. Everyone has a Vinnie Utz story.

FK: ... We were in the same sector, I believe. ... He lost his arm there.

KP: You knew Vinnie Utz.

FK: I knew of him there, and then, met him back here at Rutgers in '45, and met him and his wife, Dotty.

KP: He was well-known within your unit.

FK: Yes. ... He was going to play football for the regiment. We were going to have a regimental football game during the Christmas celebrations.

KP: He was a star football player here.

FK: Oh, yes, ... and then, of course, I heard of him here, ... but, yes, I knew of him over there. ... He lost his arm there.

KP: Do you think he lost his arm in part because of the poor medical care?

FK: Oh, due to the cold. You didn't have to worry; if you were hit, you died, it was said, soon enough because of the cold.

KP: Really? Many men died because they were hit and no one could get to them.

FK: Some. ... I think he was always to the right of me. ... Of course, we didn't talk about it, but, ... I assume, and ... there's another thing you don't worry about; you don't worry about going back if you have no hospital, so, I mean, that problem's over with. You don't have to ... think, "Gee, if I can get back, I can have a rest."

KP: What happened to you if you were wounded?

FK: I don't know; I really don't. ... During the cold weather, I don't know. During the warm [weather], ... I found a lieutenant, I don't remember his name, I think Williams, he was wounded, and he was there, and I went to get somebody, 'cause we were ... running through the forest, but, it was warmer then. It was, you know, the 40s. It was relatively warm.

KP: At the end of the Battle of the Bulge, you were badly frostbitten. Your unit had been decimated and you pulled back.

FK: ... Yes, when Kelly and I went back, ... I don't know where we went, ... a first aid tent for another outfit, the doctor cut ... one pair of socks off and they were just frozen. He [could not] bend them back and forth. [laughter] Then, he cut another pair ... and, by the last pair, he could

bend [them]; it was moist. ... I said, "I've been walking on those feet," and he said, "No, you've been walking on your heart." So, they were going to fly me back, ... with bad weather. They went to put ... [me] on the ... litter, and I lived on a litter in the tent, waiting to get on a plane, and then, [we] got bad weather. So, I stayed there [for] as long as I could, per regulations, maybe seven days, and then, they sent me back to another place, and I guess it was an apartment house. ... Oh, I woke up and I was in a hospital, in a VD ward. They didn't have enough room.  
[laughter]

KP: What was the VD ward like?

FK: Oh, nice, excellent guys, 'cause, you know, I was the only inactive guy there, and they even carried me to the john, and I got very ill, and the guys couldn't do enough for me. ... I was taking eighteen sulfa pills per hour or so, trying to [cure] whatever I had, pneumonia, I guess, 'cause I was smoking, too. Then, [I] went back to another apartment house that they turned into a hospital. They put me in a place where the generals came in, so [that] I could talk to them. One thing I got was nine o'clock rations. I told the General, ... "We need food," 'cause ... I was thin. You could count all the ribs and perhaps see my backbone, everything, yes. I needed food, "I'm hungry." So, he made sure we had C rations every night, warmed up. ... In a week or so, we got on the train and went to Paris, ... the Paris hospital where they wanted to cut my [toes off, it was] the American hospital in Paris, which was then a military hospital, and that's where I had the big argument. Then, I went back to Cherbourg, then, back to England, and then, in mid-May, 1945, back to the States.

KP: You never rejoined the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne.

FK: Oh, no. ... No, they didn't even consider it. I guess I considered it, but, they didn't consider it, and then, the war ended when I was in the hospital. That did it. ... I got back, ... through Southampton, on one of the first convoys to arrive in New York after V-E Day, magnificent, the fire boats, with red, white, and blue water, and we ran up the flags. We were in convoy, in a hospital convoy, but, they ran up the flags [for] about a day or two before arriving in Brooklyn.

EM: What did you think of the French people at the time?

FK: ... Remember, there were very few [I saw]. It was the first time I saw people go to the bathroom outside, men and women. That's changed now, but, in the pubs in England, you know, you went against the slate, with girls. We always remember that. I didn't know very much about the people in France. Oh, I know, [in] Mourmelon, we used to go down with a nickel and buy bread, and the people were nice, but, that was after the Germans left. They found us much more accommodating than the Germans.

EM: Were they excited that you were there to liberate them?

FK: They had been liberated by the time I saw them. Of course, we had heard of the situation ... [of] letting de Gaulle into Paris, ... so [that] they could keep de Gaulle off his [Eisenhower's]

back, so that they thought the Frenchmen were liberating [them]. See, most of us, I never really had them on my flank, but, you never wanted a French organization on your flank, because, as they say, they made so much noise and they weren't trained. You know, we were citizen-soldiers, but, we were trained to ... be quiet, and do this and do that, but, the Frenchman is a bit difficult to guide. So, I mean, the English may take tea at four, but, the Frenchman stays up smoking cigarettes and that invites gunfire and those things, so the stories went.

EM: How long was your stay in the hospital in Paris?

FK: ... Each place you went, it was a certain amount of days. You either went back to your unit or waited for, I guess, maybe, a week or two, and then, Cherbourg, where we waited to get on the hospital ships; it was, maybe, two weeks, and then, the lights are on at night, go out in the port, and then, back to the UK.

KP: During the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans committed an infamous massacre ...

FK: Malmedy.

KP: Malmedy. Did you know about the Malmedy Massacre?

FK: Yes, we heard about it.

KP: How did you hear about it?

FK: Oh ...

KP: Through the grapevine?

FK: Yes. We didn't kill too many Germans, because, you know, it just didn't look like we were going to get away with it, so, no. You sent them back fast. You got a little annoyed if they had American cigarettes on them, I remember that, [you were] annoyed, because you know they got the American cigarettes from us, but one did not know how.

KP: You knew about the massacre.

FK: Oh, yes.

KP: How many prisoners did you take?

FK: Oh, maybe seven, eight. ... In fighting through the town, they'd give up. We felt like shooting them, but, you don't shoot people if ... you may be a prisoner yourself and be shot.

KP: Did the Malmedy Massacre lead you to believe that surrender was not an option? Do you think it stiffened your resistance to capture?

FK: No, you know, we never really thought we were going to surrender. I thought we may be overrun, but not surrender.

KP: You were willing to fight and be overrun, but ...

FK: In fact, that's the worst order you can get.

KP: To surrender?

FK: No, "This is it; [laughter] don't move back."

KP: You were given that order.

FK: Oh, yes, ... you know, when the tanks were going to come in. How do you defend yourself against a tank? as I said, ... dig a foxhole near a tree and that's it. Let them roll over you, if they can.

KP: Did a tank ever actually roll over your foxhole?

FK: No, no. ... They never really got in. The Germans got in, but, the tanks went to a different place, so, there was the threat of them, but, in another place, where we ran to one night, it was pretty horrible. I don't know what happened there, but, we stopped, and [I am] digging a foxhole, and my backside's up, like this, and the tree is cut about two inches above [me], right across my backside. Boy, did I dig faster then. I didn't sleep that night, 'cause ... bullets were coming in and I was hugging the ground. ...

KP: You saw a lot of combat in a relatively short amount of time.

FK: It seemed to be enough, but, I wanted it that way, not that I jumped in, but, I wanted it that way, and that was one reason, because, ... again, [because of] *All Quiet On The Western Front* or whatever, I did not want to stay too long in foxholes or trenches, and that was one reason I wanted to join the paratroops. ... We were supposed to be relatively highly paid and highly used. You don't use us to stay and to just hold off somebody; you fight and get out. Yes, that's true, thank goodness. [laughter] I'd rather have it that way.

KP: You did not talk much about the war when you returned home.

FK: Not much.

KP: How would you rate the medical care you received in Paris?

FK: Oh, it was good there. That's a good hospital. That's where Rock Hudson went ... to see if he could get rid of the AIDS. ... I passed it a number of times when on business visits in the '60s and '70s, not that I looked for it. That was good medical care.

KP: Once you left the Bastogne area, your medical care was good.

FK: ... No complaints about medical care, no.

KP: Did your parents know what had happened to you? Did you ever tell your parents about how bad it was?

FK: Oh, no, but, as I said, that weekend of Christmas, when Roosevelt said, "Let's pray for those boys at Bastogne."

KP: Did your mother know you were at Bastogne?

FK: Yes, yes, because she knew the division, 101st Airborne.

KP: Did you ever consider a career in the military?

FK: No, I wanted to go to college. In fact, my counselor suggested I come back, ... because, you know, they needed people who, first, were headed for college, were in college, so, they thought that would be the type of young officer they wanted, experienced, too. ... No, I passed that up immediately. He made another stab at it, but, he didn't follow it up too closely. ...

KP: He had to give you the talk, but, you were not interested.

FK: No, no.

KP: How crucial was the GI Bill in funding your college education?

FK: It was everything, absolutely everything, and, of course, ... like every college, this [college, Rutgers], adapted to it fast. It had its squeaky, disorganized points, but, you know, it was 500 students when I came here. I knew just about everybody, maybe not the names, but, to wave to them. ... Jeez, you knew people; you walked up and down the [same streets]. I was in Winants Hall. ... In fact, some of the guys, ... there were training tables, guys'd come upstairs in my room and smoke who didn't want to be seen smoking, you know, around the coach. That was Rockefeller, then.

KP: Yes.

FK: Dean Silvers was still here. ...

KP: Was Dean Metzger still here?

FK: Yes. What was he dean of?

KP: Dean of Students.

FK: Yes, but, Silvers was before him, wasn't he?

KP: I am not sure.

EM: Where did you live as a student at Rutgers?

FK: Winants Hall, ... and then, they were going to close down Winants Hall and we came to this one up here. ...

EM: Ford Hall.

FK: No. Is there another one around here? It's on the corner, Ford?

KP: Yes.

FK: Yes, maybe, ... yes, it's on this side.

KP: Yes, on this side.

FK: Yes, probably. Oh, we fought; we didn't want to leave Winants Hall, yes, ... and then, I went out to Colonial Farms, because I was working, and I was going to school [during the] days, mornings, and summer school, and then, I went out to Colonial Farms and took care of that. They had a house there. I lived there for a year, and then, came back at Zeta Psi.

EM: Were there a lot of veterans in your class?

FK: Oh, yes. ... The year, '45, it was starting to swell, but, ... as I recall, there's about 500 with the veterans in the September semester, so, it wasn't too many, and we didn't fit in initially, and then, after a while, it was mostly veterans. Of course, paddling us at the Zeta Psi House didn't quite make any sense. I got my paddle, but, no one paddled me very much. [laughter] ... Charles Stevens was there, I think he headed Romance languages.

EM: Was there a notable difference in your first year?

FK: Notable difference how?

EM: You were older than most students.

FK: Oh, yes, but only two or three years. Well, yes, if you take someone out of high school, they're not ready for it, yes. ... I think I saw it more at the fraternity, ... but, then, by that time, the older men were coming back who had been in the fraternity, too.

EM: Why did you join Zeta Psi?

FK: Oh, two other guys joined. ... All of us wanted to do certain things, [if you] get an opportunity to, like coming here. So, [the] fraternity was one of them and same thing with a lot of other things in my life, just to see [what it was about], ... but, I didn't sleep upstairs in that cold attic. My feet still bothered me. ... I slept in the room. I guess they all sleep upstairs now, in that ... dorm, where it's cold and miserable. I had a bed in a room. ...

EM: Did your fraternity have parties?

FK: Yes, but, half the time, I think things happened that I really didn't know it was happening until after it happened, and ... we gave the house up to the girls to stay there and things like that.

EM: Did women come over from ...

FK: Oh, Douglass, yes. Douglass was the main place, yes, yes, but, there was no ladies, no girls, in class, except journalism class, no female cheerleaders or anything like that.

EM: Wow.

FK: ... All boys.

EM: You would see the girls mainly on the weekends.

FK: Yes. Well, I think the guys wandered over during the week. ... As I say, journalism was the only class with girls. ...

EM: Did you meet your wife at Douglass?

FK: No, she was a nurse and she was in nurses' training in Middlesex [County Hospital], which is Robert Wood Johnson, and I went there as an orderly, and then, being [that] the doctors were tired from long hours of work, I used to do some doctor's work down there, nights, Saturday nights, maybe Wednesday nights, mostly Saturday nights. ... I got two offers; ... they thought I was going to become a doctor. ... Both doctors seemed to have shot themselves, so, I guess ... it's good I didn't become a doctor. ...

EM: Your wife was working there also, training to be a nurse.

FK: Yes, then, she went to train in Columbia-Presbyterian and, what's the nut house? ...

KP: Greystone?

FK: Greystone, yes, ... yes, something or other, ... I think it was Greystone. Yes, it was where the mentally ...

KP: Yes, the mentally ill.

FK: Yes, so, that used to be exciting for the girls.

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

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