RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HUGH MCLEOD MAXWELL

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

DAVID D'ONOFRIO
and
NICHOLAS MOLNAR

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
MAY 13, 2005

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Nicholas Molnar: This begins an interview with Hugh McLeod Maxwell on May 14, 2005, at New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Nicholas Molnar and …

David D'Onofrio: David D'Onofrio.

NM: Thank you for sitting for this interview today. When and where were you born?

Hugh McLeod Maxwell: … I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 21, 1923. My mother and father were from Philadelphia, but my father was out there on business for a year or so and I was born while he was there. I spent the first couple of years in Philadelphia and I spent the rest of my years before coming to Rutgers in Nutley, New Jersey.

DD: Can you tell us a little bit about your father?

HM: My father was born and raised in Philadelphia. He worked his way through the University of Pennsylvania. … He was an accountant, graduated from the Wharton School in finance. My mother was born in Philadelphia. She was the oldest of seven children and she went to what was the equivalent of high school, and then, a normal school. … After a couple of years of high school, in those days, there was a shortage of teachers, … they asked various young ladies if they'd like to accelerate and go into normal school. So, she did that. She was also a graduate of the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music in voice and piano. They were married in 1912, in Philadelphia.

DD: How long did you live in Philadelphia?

HM: Just the first couple of years. I was about three, I think, when we moved to New Jersey. So, really, … my formative education was all in the Nutley public schools.

DD: What kind of town was Nutley?

HM: It was a small town, mostly a commuter town for New York and the surrounding area. It's not much changed today.

DD: Right. I used to work in Nutley.

HM: It's still a fairly nice, suburban, little town and their educational program was far superior to most of the surrounding area [at] that time. … When I graduated from high school, I decided I was going to go to Rutgers. [laughter] I enrolled in the College of Agriculture. The reason for that is that … my grandmother had a farm [and] a lot of the family people … were farmers and I worked summers on a farm, lots of times.

NM: Was the farm in New Jersey?

HM: In Pennsylvania, Langhorne, Pennsylvania.

NM: What was growing up in Nutley like? What did you do for fun?

HM: Do for fun? a little bit of everything. Well, back in those days, you didn't have organized sports, as such. Kids would get together and make their own ball clubs up or football teams or what have you. You do your own thing. I also was active in Boy Scouts. I was an Eagle Scout, … I went all the way through the Scouting program, from [the] beginning to the end.

NM: How did the Great Depression affect the town of Nutley?

HM: I would say most everybody there was struggling, although … you wouldn't know it from hearing people complain that much. … I know my dad took … a big cut in his salary, and he wasn't making that much in the beginning, [laughter] and my mother was substitute teaching to supplement the situation, but we managed and there was always food on the table. We never owned our own home up there, because my family did own a home in Philadelphia, [which] they rented out and [we] rented up in Nutley.

NM: What business was your father in?

HM: He worked for [the] Worthington Pump and Machinery Corporation in Harrison, New Jersey, and he was a sales supervisor. He was in the business side of sales. He was, like, the person who kept track of all the salesmen's expenses and programs. My mother was primarily a homemaker, but, also, a substitute teacher. She did teach off and on.

NM: Did she ever pursue music after graduating from the Conservatory?

HM: She sang in church choirs and she was a soloist in a number of different things, weddings and things like that, and she imbued an interest in vocal music in us. I sang in the … chorus in high school. When I came to Rutgers, I was in the Glee Club. My father was a singer, also, and … I think that's one of the ways they met.

NM: How did your family feel about Roosevelt's programs, the New Deal programs? Did they have any opinions on them?

DD: You mentioned that they were both Republicans.

HM: They were both Republicans, but I think they all recognized the need for doing something, because, if you've ever seen what the situation was like, you'd drive the Jersey Meadows, for example, there were shacks all over the Jersey Meadows and people living in those shacks and trying to have little gardens to supplement their livelihood. I know there were a lot of people [who would] come around the house begging for food. I think my mother was [well-known]. They must have put a little sign out that said she was a pretty good one, [laughter] that if you need a sandwich or something to eat, [she would help you out]. [laughter] They said the hobos and bums had their own little way of marking houses where it was a good, safe place to get something. Whatever it was, I don't know, but we always had somebody [who] came up and they never left hungry.

NM: Was that the mentality of the time, everyone trying to help each other out?

HM: I think, to a great extent, yes, yes, because nobody was [well off]; there … [was] no such thing as this everybody living high on the hog. It was a tough, tough time for everybody. I can remember, … all my socks were darned, for example. … When I'd wear out my knickers, … which we wore in those days, they'd get holes in the knees, my mother put patches on them. [laughter] You didn't go out and buy new jeans every time, so that it's a different ballgame from what it is today.

NM: Did you play any sports in high school?

HM: No, not [officially]. I played intramural type of things or pick-up games. I didn't play, organized sports, as such. I also was busy. … I had a magazine route from the time I was nine and I had a newspaper route from the time I was twelve. So, I was busy, after school, doing things like that and [I] was also active in the Boy Scouts. It kept me pretty busy. So, I didn't have time, really, for [sports].

NM: You were involved in your community in other ways.

HM: Yes.

DD: Did your paper route earnings go towards supporting your family?

HM: No. I bought a lot of my own clothes. I bought a lot of things, that my mother and father couldn't afford, with prizes; like, I was in the League of Curtis Salesmen for the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies Home Journal* they [would] give you coupons. For every so much you sold, they'd give you these little coupons. So, I'd take … the coupons I'd get and I bought myself a wagon, a bicycle, [laughter] all kinds of things with these coupons. I did a lot of my Christmas shopping that way, too.

DD: Since both of your parents were college-educated, did they expect you to go to college?

HM: … Definitely. I was the youngest of three boys. My two older brothers were nine and eight years older than me and both of them had gone to college, with a lot of help.

DD: Which schools did they go to?

HM: My oldest brother went to Purdue University for two years, and then, … he went to Newark-Rutgers. … I forget what they called it, then. It was the Newark branch of Rutgers; before, it was sort of an extension, night program. He was working and going to school. … My next older brother graduated from Upsala College, which was in East Orange in those days. It has since folded.

DD: Your father graduated from an Ivy League school. Was there any pressure to follow him?

HM: No, my father did that on his own. He worked days and went to school nights and weekends and to pay his own way through [the] Wharton School.

DD: Wharton is a very prestigious school.

HM: Yes. My youngest daughter has her Master's from there, from Wharton.

NM: Did you always want to go to Rutgers? Did you apply to other colleges?

HM: Not necessarily, but I had my idea of being a [farmer]. I'll tell you one thing that impressed [it] upon me, … I had two uncles who were both fertilizer salesmen. With my grandmother owning a farm and the other uncles working on the farm, but, all during the Depression, people [have] got to eat and they always … sold fertilizer and they made a fair living. … I said, "Well, maybe that's not a bad deal, to go into that field," [laughter] because I … [thought] of this in my head, because of seeing everybody out of jobs and so forth. I figured that was a good, safe bet. So, I enrolled in the College of Agriculture, but, in order to get in, … back in those days, you had to take your entrance exam and I went to Columbia High School in Maplewood and took a competitive exam to get in. Back in those days, Rutgers was a good bargain, too, because the College of Agriculture was subsidized by the state and federal government. I don't know whether you're aware of that, but it was a separate college within Rutgers University, being that it was the State College of Agriculture, where[as] Rutgers was still a private school back then.

DD: That was before the University became the state university.

HM: Before it was the State University of New Jersey, it was the State College of Agriculture. So, they were subsidized by the federal and state [governments]. I don't know, [are] you familiar with how this Land-Grant College Act is? Are you aware of that?

DD: Yes.

HM: … Okay, because, after the Civil War, there were a lot of problems with [skilled labor]. They wanted to have people that were trained in agriculture and the mechanical sciences. So, they decreed, from [the] federal government, that every state would have a state college of agriculture and engineering. So, Rutgers was selected in New Jersey, surprisingly, but people don't know that. Cornell is the state college of agriculture, a private school, in New York.

DD: I was not aware of that.

HM: I found that out, too, because, after two years at Rutgers, the Navy called me up and the Navy sent me to Cornell and I still was in the College of Agriculture at Cornell, but I'll get to that when that time comes.

NM: You entered Rutgers in 1941.

HM: Yes.

NM: Were you aware of the war situation?

HM: Oh, definitely.

NM: You kept up with the news.

HM: Oh, yes, definitely. You couldn't not keep abreast of it, because it was on the radio all the time. Of course, it was pre-Pearl Harbor, but there were still all kinds of activities going on and we'd had the draft for a long time. … My brother was in the Navy. All my brother's friends were in the Army or the Navy, and then, when Pearl Harbor came, I was here, at Rutgers. As a matter-of-fact, I was singing in the chapel choir on that Sunday and, all of a sudden, we came home from the chapel service when they announced that we're [hit at] Pearl Harbor. Everybody was shocked, didn't know what to make of it. A lot of people enlisted the following day.

NM: Did you live on campus or commute?

HM: I commuted, because my folks moved … from Nutley to Middlesex, … after my senior [year] in high school. They had let me stay in Nutley, because they liked the school system. Then, they bought a house in Middlesex, outside of Bound Brook. … My dad had a sideline business of chickens. We raised chickens and turkeys there and I took care of them when I was commuting back and forth to Rutgers, my freshman year and sophomore year.

DD: Going into the College of Agriculture was a natural fit.

HM: Yes, but it was a little tough, though, trying to go to college and take care of the chickens and stuff like that at home. … I rowed on the crew and I sang in the Glee Club and I met my wife there. [laughter] So, [I had] a few distractions.

DD: Do you feel as though you missed something by not living on campus?

HM: Yes, sure. I think everybody should live on campus, if they can. Unfortunately, it wasn't in cards at the time, financially. I did belong to a fraternity. … I belonged to the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity and I purposely joined it, so that I would have kind of a home away from home.

DD: What was your initiation into the fraternity like?

HM: Typical of a college initiation. [laughter]

DD: I am curious. I never joined a fraternity while I was a student at Rutgers.

HM: No, it was a secret sort of thing, but Christian-oriented … and very oriented towards the high ideals of brotherhood. It was a very good experience, as a matter-of-fact. It provided me a social life, a place like a home away from home. … If I was rowing on the crew in the afternoon, I'd get back late; I could eat dinner over there. I ate … most of my lunches at the fraternity house. … I was an officer in the fraternity. So, it was a good experience.

NM: After Pearl Harbor, you mentioned that many students enlisted right away. Did you want to join up immediately or did you decide to wait to be drafted?

HM: Everything was up in the air and I didn't really know what was going to happen, but I figured, "I'm in school, I'll go do what I can," and so, I stayed in school that year and … worked on my grandmother's farm that next summer. … While I was at my grandmother's farm, I got word that my brother, a Naval Aviator had been shot down overseas and I lost a brother. … I was contemplating joining the Naval Aviation and I figured, after him being shot down, it will be kind of a blow to my mother if I did that. So, I tried to enroll in the Navy. … Because I was taking infantry ROTC here, [for] everybody, then, [the] first two years was infantry ROTC, I wasn't particularly anxious to be an infantry person. [laughter] I preferred the Navy. … They wouldn't let me enlist, originally, in the Navy from here, so, I enlisted in the Army Reserve. I figured I might stay in school for a little bit longer, but, then, they got word that you could go to New York and take an exam, and tryout for what was a college program called the V-12 program, and so, I took the exam for that.

DD: How did you find out about the V-12 program?

HM: I'm not sure just how I heard of it. I mean, the word gets around, basically. [laughter] … I took that program [exam] and they said [that] I'd been accepted in it. … I transferred from the Army Reserve to the Navy Reserve. So, I have a discharge from the Army. I never really served in it. [laughter] … Then, the week after I was transferred from the Army Reserve to the Navy Reserve, they called up the Army Reserve. All the kids who were in the Army Reserve here at Rutgers, or wherever, all went in the Army. Well, the Navy let me stay here and finish my sophomore year. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

HM: So, I was permitted to finish out my sophomore year here, and then, I got word that I was going to be going to Cornell University. Fortunately, like I was telling you earlier, Cornell University is also the College of Agriculture of New York and the Navy let me stay in the College of Agriculture, even though I was in the Navy. I was in uniform and everything else and followed all the [regulations], but [I was] just a college student. … So, I spent that summer and the next fall, two semesters, at Cornell and I took all the courses I had to have for the Navy, as well as [the] agricultural courses I could squeeze in, and then, I went to the Midshipman's School. I had an interesting other sidelight there. When I was here at Rutgers, I rowed on the lightweight crew, and so, when I went to Cornell, the word had gotten ahead of me that, "You rowed on the crew [at Rutgers], you have to row [for us]. Come out for the crew at Cornell," and so, I did and I was doing pretty well, eating on the training table and everything else, keeping in shape. They wanted me not to be on the lightweight crew, but the heavier weight crew. Then, they found out [that] I was going to be going to Midshipman's School in the spring. They said, "Well, we don't need you on the crew, because you won't be here during crew season." [laughter] So, all of a sudden, I've been eating on the training table, and then, I stopped the exercise; boy, did I fill out. [laughter] … Anyhow, that was my experience at crew at Cornell. I had the one fall crew [season] there. The reason I went out for crew at Rutgers, by the way, is because I hadn't done any … interscholastic sports in high school. Back then, practically no kid

in high school had crew. The only kids that had crew were kids that went to … private schools or some of the prep schools. I figured I had as good a chance as anybody of making the crew, because I was starting from scratch along with everybody [else], whereas if I'd gone out for football or baseball, all these kids had being doing that for years.

NM: Even now, half the oarsmen are recruited and the other half are walk-ons.

HM: Yes. That's what it was [like] with me and practically the whole crew, then, were walk-ons and we didn't have a big crew, like they do today. That's one of the reasons [why] the Class of '45 sponsored the shell. Are you aware of that? … I am getting ahead of myself, but the Class of '45 started with, I guess, maybe three or four hundred students. In the whole College of Agriculture, there were only five hundred students. … When they finally graduated, they left the engineers and some of the other people stayed to finish up. They accelerated their program and graduated in '44, whereas the rest of us went … in the service. … A lot of the Class of '45 graduated in '44, then, went in the service, but, by then, the war was over, but where was I?

NM: You were telling us why your class donated the shell.

HM: Oh, yes. Well, three members of our Class of '45, now, were on the lightweight crew with me. … One fellow, Jack Dempsey had had … infantile paralysis as a child and he had no legs, practically. They were useless and he was our coxswain, because he was real light in weight. He could handle the coxswain duties just fine. He … has since died. So, they have the scholarship in his memory. Our class, with the limited number of people there are in the class, the amounts of money they can give to the University is relatively insignificant, compared to some of the bigger classes, because I think, like, today, [at the Rutgers Alumni Association luncheon], it was a dozen people back from '45. There's only about fifty of them, I think, all told. The class has given a shell in perpetuity.

NM: While at Cornell, did you correspond with your family and friends?

HM: Oh, yes, oh, yes. … I would come home once in a while; that was about two or three times during the year [that] I came home. We used to [take] the Lehigh Valley Railroad, I don't think it runs today, from Ithaca to South Plainfield. Where is your home, by the way?

NM: I live in Edison.

HM: Oh, okay.

NM: You were commissioned in June of 1944.

HM: I was commissioned an ensign in the Navy, USNR.

NM: Where did you go next?

HM: … On the day of commissioning, depending upon the needs of the service at the time, I think there were about one hundred and something in our class at Midshipman's School and I'd

say eighty percent of them went into amphibs, because, then, they [the US Armed Forces] were figuring on invasions. They were looking for new officers to man LSTs, LCIs and all that kind of vessel and the other group of us, a small group, were selected for mine warfare. I happened to be one that was selected to be in mine warfare.

DD: Did you have any prior training in minesweeping?

HM: No. I took [the] basic, three months, Midshipman's School, seamanship, navigation, damage control, the rest of it, as a deck officer.

DD: Were you trained for specialized duty after you were assigned to a minesweeper?

HM: … No, then, we learned it on-the-job, primarily. We were real green ensigns, I'll tell you, [laughter] didn't know from nothing. We learned fast; we had to. … In those days, almost every small ship was manned by Reservists. I mean, there were very few Naval Academy types around. It was all Reservists, from destroyers on down.

NM: Where was your …

HM: Where did I go from there?

NM: Yes.

HM: My initial assignment was to New Orleans, Louisiana, and I was supposed to pick up a very small minesweeper. It was down … the Mississippi River, about one hundred miles south of New Orleans. This little minesweeper's job was to go back and forth up the Mississippi River, because they were afraid [that] they [the enemy] might mine it and there was some big [traffic there]. Everything coming from the Midwest that was going overseas was coming down the Mississippi. They were afraid it would be mined. … It was a safety thing, back and forth, back and forth. We never caught any mines, but … we had that job. … It was a couple of months of that, and then, I was reassigned, from there, to Key West, Florida. …

NM: When was that, still in 1944?

HM: Yes, … still the fall of '44, I was assigned to Key West, Florida, and I was assigned to what was called a YMS, Yard Mine Sweeper. They weren't big enough to have a name. [laughter] It was just numbers. It was the *YMS-370*.

NM: You were sweeping mines in the Key West area.

HM: Yes. That was a story, too. During World War II, at the beginning, there were U-boats all off our coasts and they were sinking ships one after another. … The US developed the system of convoys and, even then, they were still losing a lot. … The convoys were coming out of Mississippi and all the whole Gulf area, were assembling off of Key West, and we'd have a certain number of ships together and they'd go on convoy, to Europe or Russia or wherever they were going. Surrounding this whole area was a minefield, our own, to protect the ships that were

there. By the time I went there, … that submarine hazard was pretty much eliminated. So, we cleaned up all the mines that were down [there], that we had put out. … I spent from '44 until spring '45, almost a year, in Key West, doing minesweeping, in and out, … every day and sweeping mines and cleaning them up.

NM: How did you disarm the mines?

HM: … There are three different types of mines. There are acoustic mines. They're based upon the noise of a ship going over them. … They'll be on the bottom; for example, [there is] a ship going over and, after so many passes, they'll be set for so many passes, after so many ships go over, all of a sudden, "Boom," just [from] the noise of the ships' screws and so forth. There are magnetic mines, based on the magnetic field that goes around the ship that could set them off, and then, the others are moored mines, which are contact mines, and they're based on hitting them. They're moored, anchored, just below the surface of the water. Most of what we swept were contact mines. You have special gear onboard. So, you'd go through a minefield and, in echelon formation, have heavy wires streamed off from the ship that would snag the moorings of the mines, and then, the cutter would be on the wire. When it contacted the mine, it would cut the cable, come up to the surface; then, you blow it up. So, it was really a little hazardous, because everybody worried about mines, but … that's your business. As a matter-of-fact, in the British Navy, they considered it hazardous duty, minesweeping. … We didn't get particularly involved [in this], but, in every invasion, minesweepers are always the first ones in, because they'd go in to clean the mines before the other ships could go in to land, and so, a lot of ships of our type had been lost over in the European and Italian invasions.

NM: They were also prime targets, since the landing ships could not come in until the area was swept for mines.

HM: Right, and they were wooden-hulled, because a wooden hull didn't have a big magnetic field for the magnetic mines. … Generally, we could go through what they called degaussing, gear that sets up a certain field of magnetism around the ship to try and reduce the amount of magnetism, [the] magnetic field of it, so [that] it's … more safe than other types of ships. We're getting a little technical for somebody who's not involved [in minesweeping]. …

NM: I think you explained it well for future readers. When did you conclude your minesweeping duties off Key West?

HM: … February or March of '45.

NM: Then, you were reassigned.

HM: … Then, our ship was assigned to the Pacific. … So, we went through the Panama Canal and up the West Coast and across [to] Hawaii, Ulithi and Eniwetok and what have you and on out to the Philippines. We were the smallest [type of] ship to cross the Pacific under its own power. It was wooden-hulled. I'll show you a picture.

NM: Was crossing the Pacific in a ship that small rough?

HM: … This was the ship. [Editor's Note: Mr. Maxwell is referring to a picture of the *YMS-370* in a book on minesweepers.]

NM: What was the name of your ship?

HM: *YMS-370*.

NM: Did it have a nickname?

HM: No. That was a big crew, thirty men and four officers. Wonder what a mine looks like? There's one. … These are mine swept Japanese and American mines. … They kept score. [laughter]

DD: Mr. Maxwell is referring to a tally of the mines swept by the crew painted on the side of the ship, similar to the tallies painted on the nose of a bomber or a fighter aircraft.

HM: Yes, we kept score [of] how many mines … we took care of.

NM: What kind of defensive weapons did the minesweeper have?

HM: Big, big deal. We had a three-inch .50 on the bow. … This is interesting; we had four officers aboard, [the] skipper, an exec, who was also the navigator, an engineering officer and the fourth officer, who was everything else. [laughter] I was … gunnery officer, supply officer, communications officer, minesweeping officer; you name it, that was me. [laughter]

NM: A man of many talents.

HM: … When we went out to Hawaii, … we'd never even shot or fired our three-inch .50-caliber gun and they said, "Well, … we're going to have target practice." We said, "We've never even fired this thing," because … we're minesweeping all the time. So, we had to go out and learn how to shoot a three-inch .50 gun and, of course, … [we had] no special gear to keep track of [targeting]. We used to [do] what they called "split the roll." When the ship is going this [and] that way, you try and see when you're going to be, the roll, at just the right angle to get the right trajectory then fire. … It was considered a surface gun and, we also had two twenty-millimeters for antiaircraft. We had .50-caliber machine guns for anti aircraft and mine disposal, but we did most of our mine disposal with a rifle, we were more accurate that way than anything else. … We carried I don't know how many depth charges. Since, we were used on convoy duties, too, on occasion. So, we had depth charges onboard. …

NM: You could blow a mine just by shooting it with a rifle.

HM: Yes. If you hit them just right, they'd blow. I don't know whether I've got a picture of one of them blowing or not. No, … there's one on the water. There's one blowing. There's one out in the water; there it is blowing up. [Editor's Note: Mr. Maxwell is again referring to his book on minesweepers.]

NM: Would you use an M-1 rifle or an older rifle?

HM: Springfield.

NM: The 1903 Springfield.

HM: 1903 Springfield. [laughter] We didn't have anything modern. [laughter] I had a .45 we carried on the hip, once in a blue moon.

NM: Where did you sweep for mines in the Pacific?

HM: … Here, I've got a synopsis of it. … [From] Miami, Florida, we went by Key West, through the Panama Canal to Corinto, Nicaragua; Manzanillo, Mexico, then, we went to San Diego. [From] San Diego, we went to Honolulu. That was another good deal. … We had three days in Hawaii and I was the supply officer, gunnery officer, communications officer. I spent the whole time getting supplies onboard, getting ammunition onboard, getting all the communications and … encryption devices that we needed for the Pacific, which was different from the Atlantic. So, I didn't see much of Hawaii. [laughter] Then, we went from there to Johnson Island, from there to Eniwetok, to Ulithi, … Tacloban in Leyte, and then, … Lamon Bay in Luzon, in the Philippines. Where we did a lot of sweeping. … These were just stops en route. We were … assigned [as] an escort for two tugs that had barges in tow going across the Pacific. We would go on one engine this day and another engine the next day and go around and around and around. They [the tugs] were towing barges, at about six knots. It is the most boring thing, going all the way across the Pacific like that, calm, no signs of anything. … So, it was a long, slow trip getting to the Philippines. We got in the Philippines, … then, we were assigned to cleaning up a lot of the minefields around in the Philippines, in Leyte and in Lamon Bay, … which is up near Luzon in the Philippines.

NM: At this time, did you have a feeling that the war in the Pacific was winding down or were you anticipating an invasion of Japan?

HM: Yes, yes. … If like anybody who had been over there at that time, you realized … that it was just set [for an invasion]. The Philippines were just like England was before the invasion of Europe. It was full of everything they needed for the invasion of Japan. A lot of these islands that they captured en route to Japan were for airplanes and various other things to use as landing places to go to Japan. … There was no indication that we had that it was going to be anything but, even though by the time we got to the Philippines, most of the shooting was over in the Philippines, but we had to clean up the mess. … We were sitting there in this little place off the Philippines and we got word, by radio, that … the Japs had declared [their] surrender and … that was the first time we … broke out the beer and gave everybody [a drink]. We're never allowed to have liquor onboard the Navy ships. Of course, the British "Limey" Navy, all had their grog and what have you, it was standard practice, which we didn't [have]. … We had beer in storage and we would take beach parties and go over [to an island] and have a party, every once in a while. … An interesting experience I had; … I don't know whether you noticed from looking at the crew book, we had thirty sailors [and] one black man out of the thirty sailors. … He was our

steward's mate. It was his job to look after the four officers, although, he had other duties, too. … He was the hot shell man on the guns and he did other things, too, … in the case of an emergency or ship's quarters. … His job, when we were in a minefield, was up in the bow as lookout. … Our skipper had been on the invasion of Italy earlier, and then, came over to be our skipper on our ship. He said, when he came aboard, "We're never going to be leading anybody first." Guess what? Every time the opportunity came up, we were number one. [laughter] So, we were in minefields and we didn't know what was there, in the Philippines. … It would be just like plowing a field. You go down here, and then, you go back up and each ship has their gear strung out like this. The next ship is in the area that's swept in front of him, and then, that one [sweeps out further]. It would be about four ships in a row. So, the first ship through is never protected, but, from there on, you're following where everybody else has been. So, when you sweep one, the ship behind you would usually destroy the mines that are swept from [your ship] and so forth, going back. … We had Penick, his name was, [the] black steward's mate; his job would be as the bow lookout, to look down and tell if he could see if it was a mine. He got up there this one day and he says, "M-m-m-mine." [laughter] By the time he got it out, the mine was already under the ship and hit the gear in the stern of the ship, lifted the ship up, like this, but it just carried our gear away, fortunately. [laughter] He never could quite get it out … fast enough to keep us from hitting the mine, but it was deep enough, since our ship was shallow draft and went over it, but it caught our gear and we lost the gear that held the wires and so forth, down aft of the ship, but that was … comical. It wouldn't have been comical if …

DD: If it had gone off.

HM: It would be god-awful, but it so happened [that it did not]. [laughter]

NM: You did not learn about the atomic bombs when they were first dropped. You only found out about them after the Japanese surrendered.

HM: No, it was after the surrender. …

NM: Your crew did not know what was happening, then, all of a sudden, Japan surrenders.

HM: We were out in this little place, it was four, three, four minesweepers out there, working in this isolated bay in the Philippines. We didn't know anything except … for this radio message that they'd surrendered.

DD: What was the general atmosphere on the ship like? Were the men tense, knowing that they could hit a mine?

HM: No, I don't think so. I think it was businesslike. We knew our business. We'd done a good job. We knew how to [do it]. We'd swept mines and we knew how to handle it. When we were in a minefield, for example, you were never allowed under an overhead, so [that] if you hit a mine, you wouldn't be blown into the overhead. … Here it was, 110 degrees, we wore life preservers and helmets and all kinds of gear and … sweated like the devil, but it was a very businesslike job. … If there had been an invasion of Japan, again, like I said earlier, we would

have been the lead people, because minesweepers are always the first ones in the invasion and there would have been a lot of dead ducks there.

NM: After the war ended, you went to Korea and China.

HM: Yes, yes.

NM: Did you continue your minesweeping duties?

HM: Our job wasn't done, because there still were mines all over the place, and so, after we got the word, … after we finished the job in the Philippines, we were sent up to Korea, but, en route, we … were in the huge typhoon off Okinawa. … I will show you some pictures of that. … This was in the typhoon off Okinawa. We'd get down in the trough [of a wave] and all you'd see is waves, up above you and below you. It was coming over our [deck]. This was a destroyer escort. Our ship was a third that size. We were bobbing around like corks and it's interesting, too, that … in the typhoon off Okinawa, there were eleven ships of our type sunk in the typhoon. They were anchored, not at sea like we were. …

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

HM: … [This book is] a history of the war, various YMSs and what happened to them, and eleven of them were lost in that hurricane off of Okinawa and that was after World War II; I mean, it was after the war was over. It was a terrific typhoon. … Fortunately, we were at sea and the biggest ship with us was this destroyer escort and there was four or five, YMSs with this one. I know, you can barely see the YMS there.

DD: That was probably a tough time for such a small ship with a shallow draft.

HM: Well, we took rolls up to seventy degrees. Water was coming completely over the ship. Fortunately, there was, … from the forward cabin area you had to … go out on the open deck to go down in the engine room. We had lifelines strung from the cabin quarters, … here, along the deck to the engine room, so that they could hang on to go back and forth from bow to stern. That's another story about my friend Penick. When we were in that typhoon, it was about three days long. … Some of the guys went down and slept in their bunks. He was up on the chart table in the navigation cabin, with his helmet on and his life preserver on. [laughter] I said, "Pinick, why don't you go down below?" He said, "No, sir, I'm going to stay up here on this chart table. I feel better here," [laughter] but nobody slept or ate for three days. That was on our way to Inchon, Korea. … It was called Jinsen, then. Inchon is where MacArthur landed in the Korean War, but it was called Jinsen when we went there. That's an interesting port, too. … The tide is something like forty or fifty feet, so [that] you can only go in on a high tide and MacArthur had to time it, like we did, too, when we were going in, in and out. So, we were there for a while, and then, they sent us from there over to … Tsingtao, China. Tsingtao, China, is not far from Korea, across [the] Yellow Sea there. … Tsingtao was a city that had been a German city. It was a German resort. Literally, you looked at this hillside and all the houses looked like they're a German village, but it was … all Jap occupied. … The Japs were occupying it yet, but the Chinese Communists were in the hillsides all around it. They were trying to take this city;

the Japs were trying to hold off, so [that] they could surrender to the Americans. … Lo and behold, we spent three days … minesweeping in this little area, and then, we decided, "Well, we'll go in, see what's in the harbor." So, we went in the harbor and, lo and behold, … there was a Jap cruiser sitting there. … He was sitting there in this little entryway. … Nobody even knew what was there and he was waiting to surrender to the Americans. … Here they are, manning the guns, and we're on this little peashooter of ours [laughter] and we were not as far as from here to the other end of your house [Bishop House]; probably, it was that close. We didn't know whether they were going to shoot at us or not. They didn't, they held on, but it wasn't proper protocol for them to surrender to this little YMS. So, we had to call back … to Inchon and they sent an American cruiser over to accept the surrender from this Japanese cruiser.

NM: Was this in late August?

HM: This was … September of '45. …

NM: Did the Navy warn you that a situation like this might arise?

HM: We didn't even know it was there. Nobody knew it was there.

NM: Did they warn you that Japanese units might be holding out to surrender to Americans?

HM: I don't know. I wasn't the skipper. Maybe they … advised our skipper of that, but we … weren't aware of it. It was just a surprise to everybody. Here they are and they want to surrender. It wasn't proper protocol, so, we called up and had a cruiser come over and accept the surrender of the Jap cruiser. Then, we went back, from there, to Pusan, Korea, which is on the east coast of Korea, and we spent about two months cleaning minefields there. They were American mines that had been dropped by our B-29s and they were … magnetic and acoustic and contact mines. So, it was pretty tricky business.

DD: Would you say that the Americans mines caused you the most trouble?

HM: Not really, because … we knew that there were mines there, but nobody knew exactly where, because it's just like dropping bombs. They don't know exactly where they landed. So, we had to go back and forth, day in and day out, and sweep mines out there. … While we were there, they expatriated all the Japs that were in Korea [at] that time, through Pusan, and were sent back to Japan. Our ship's cook made out like a bandit. They had our Marines monitoring these guys on the dock while they're shipping the Japs back. They were taking away all the contraband that they were taking home with them, stacking it up on the dock. Well, they, the Marines, didn't have a ship's cook and all the food [was] there, so, our cook was looking out for the Marine guards. He was taking pretty good care of [them]. They took pretty good care of him, too, with all kinds of little knickknacks, [laughter] but it was an interesting experience. … Korea was an entirely different [country], then, than it was later on, too. They still had the little, old men with their tall hats and so forth. It was a very backward country. From there, … we were sent down to Shanghai, China. We were cleaning up mines off of … Shanghai.

NM: Was this still in 1945?

HM: This is still Fall '45 and we swept … the Yangtze River in and the Huangpu River in Shanghai. We had an interesting experience there, too. We were there for several months in Shanghai and, since I had sung in the Glee Club at Rutgers and sung at church choirs [in] a number of places, the Anglican cathedral in Shanghai passed word to the American Navy, requesting, … "Anybody that'd like to join our choir for the Christmas season, they'd be glad to have you join them." So, I went over and I sang with the cathedral choir. … That was a good introduction, because we got to meet all the British people that were over there and they were very hospitable to us. So, it was a good experience. We spent several months in Shanghai. As a matter-of-fact, that's where I came home from, Shanghai. My orders back to the States … arrived when I was in Shanghai. I was anxious to get back, anyhow. … Everybody had a certain time. [If] you had so much time and duty, you earned so many points; when you had so many points, you could go home and I had earned the points and then some. … My wife, Gladys, at the time, was a senior at NJC and she was hoping I'd get back for her Senior Ball. Well, I … got back … from Shanghai, through Japan and back to the West Coast of the United States just as a railroad strike hit the West Coast. … They weren't running trains. … So, I had to sit there for a week, in San Francisco, waiting … to get my train coming back. Of course, there were no planes then, in those days. So, I got back the day before her … Senior Prom. So, I made it. … As a matter-of-fact, I got back, the day before Memorial Day 1946.

NM: You were discharged in New York in July 1947.

HM: No, '46, '46, yes, and then, I went back to college that fall and, since I was hot to trot, I got married in the middle of my senior year. My wife, my fiancée at the time, got the highest paying job as a teacher out of NJC, fifteen hundred dollars a year. She was teaching in Scotch Plains. She was teaching and I was back in school, on the GI Bill, and so, we got married on December 21, 1946.

NM: Did you have to re-enroll at Rutgers?

HM: Yes, yes.

NM: You re-enrolled that summer.

HM: Re-enrolled in Rutgers. I could have gone back to Cornell, if I wanted to, but I chose to go to Rutgers.

DD: The GI Bill paid for Rutgers after that.

HM: Yes. So, really, … I got by with a very cheap education, because, by being an Aggie and I was a commuter, my first couple of years were fairly reasonable. My dad had to pay [then]. Then, I got one year in the Navy, and then, I came back and was on the GI Bill. … I wasn't sure just how many credits I had, and so, I was taking courses that I needed to take, I thought I was a junior, and then, the assistant dean who was in charge of the program at the College of Agriculture called me in one day. He said, "You're not a junior." "You've got all your credits from Cornell, and you've got more than enough credits to graduate this year." … Since I was

already married then, I was going to be a man of the world. I said, "I'm going to go out and get [to work]." I got my degree and I said that was it.

DD: What was it like to return to campus after so long?

HM: I don't know, it was a little difficult at first. For one thing, some of the subjects, you have to have your basic courses to lead up to your advanced courses, and, if you've been away from them for several years, trying to get back into the groove of what you needed and so forth was not easy, but I did very well. I think I had a little incentive. … I think most GIs that came back were better students than a lot of the kids that were there then. They were motivated, they were more mature and they knew what they're going to do.

NM: Did you notice if there were many veterans, like yourself, returning on the GI Bill?

HM: Oh, yes. … That's when Rutgers grew like Topsy and this was all over the country. It wasn't just Rutgers, [it was] every school in the country. This was the best thing for this country, the GI Bill, because all sorts of kids that could never have afforded to go to college got to go to college on the GI Bill and a lot of your top engineers and scientists and you name it, in whatever field, got [the] benefits of an education under the GI Bill. I only got one year out of it. Some of them got five or six. I could have gotten more. I should have, if I had enough sense to do it at the time, but I didn't.

DD: During that year, did you notice anything about the relationship between the veterans and the kids just out of high school?

HM: There wasn't much [of a] relationship. Generally, the veterans were more mature and … a lot of them are married. … I don't know whether you're aware of it, but they had a whole big development on the other side of the river, with trailers that these guys were living in with their wives. … Yes, that was a new thing to Rutgers. Of course, when I went to Rutgers originally, there was only, what? less than two thousand students in the school, versus [the] fifty thousand you've got now. It was a totally different ballgame.

DD: Today, married student housing is fairly common.

HM: Yes, but it wasn't then. … That's when it started, because of the GI Bill. We all came back and many were married. They wanted a place to stay, wanted an education. They'd do whatever they could.

NM: You were in the Reserve after the war.

HM: What happened was, I didn't get called back for Korea, but I felt an obligation, so, I went back in the Reserve. I was out for a couple of years and I went back in the Reserve when the Korean War started and I thought I was going to be called back, because minesweepers were needed over there, fortunately I didn't and I … became a training officer in the surface division up in Huntington, Long Island.

DD: You trained men for duty on minesweepers.

HM: … No, we were training all rates. We were taking kids out of high school and putting them in training. We were sending them over to Korea, all these kids, … just Reservists. … So, I came back as a JG [lieutenant, junior grade], became a lieutenant and a lieutenant commander from the Reserve. As a matter-of-fact, today, I get a pension, because … I finished twenty years in the Reserve, stayed in. It's a good supplement to my other income.

NM: How many years did you stay in the Reserve?

HM: Twenty years.

DD: When Korea broke out, how did you feel about your chances of being called up?

HM: I thought it was a pretty good likelihood, but I had two kids at the time.

NM: Were you worried about having to go back?

HM: I wasn't particularly anxious, [laughter] but I figured I was likely, I mean, whether or not I had gotten back in the Reserve on a pay status. They were calling up Reservists all the time, just like they are today, only not to the same extent. I mean, they weren't sending them overseas … to the same extent that they do today, I don't think.

NM: Was that your full-time job?

HM: No, I was a "weekend warrior." As a matter-of-fact, it was … one drill a week, one night a week, and then, two weeks on active duty.

NM: You lived in New Jersey. Where was this?

HM: This was on Long Island, primarily.

NM: You commuted to Long Island on the weekends.

HM: Well, no, no. When I graduated from Rutgers, my first job out of college was as a 4-H Club agent in Somerset County. So, I was … really on the faculty of Rutgers, as such. I spent a couple of years doing that, but … that wasn't my real cup of tea. So, I became the agronomist for a big truck farm. That was my specialty, agronomy, the study of soils, … and so, I was an agronomist. I was in charge of all the fertilizer, liming programs, insect control, disease control, what have you, for a truck farm with about two thousand acres of vegetables. … Originally, it was in Morrisville, Pennsylvania. Then, they sold that farm to US Steel and that's now the Fairless Works of the US Steel. … The family that owned the farm bought another farm in Maryland, on the Eastern Shore. So, I went down there with them for a while and … my wife in particular couldn't stand that rural living, where all they had was tenant farmers around there and the people that owned the farms lived someplace else. There was no social life, no nothing.

NM: Was your wife still teaching?

HM: No. … By that time, when I went to the farm, she gave up her teaching. She taught in Scotch Plains for a year, and then, she taught in Franklin Township for a year-and-a-half, and then, up in the mountains, Martinsville, for about a year or so, while I was in the 4-H agent. … Then, when I went to the farm, she came with me. … By that time, we were trying to get her pregnant and we finally succeeded when we were down in Maryland. Then, I was down there for about a year-and-a-half, on [the] Eastern Shore of Maryland, Galena, Maryland. Then, I got a job with a fertilizer company up in Long Island, as a sales representative. I was up there for seven years.

NM: Were you still in the Reserve?

HM: No, I wasn't in the Active Reserve when I was down there. It was when we went back up to Long Island that I became active in the Reserve. … [I] joined back up when I was up there, because that's when Korea came along and I figured, "I might be called back." So, I joined the Reserve. … Our oldest son was born just before we left Maryland; number two son was born right after we got up … to Long Island. We lived in Northport, Long Island. I don't know whether you know where that is? Huntington Township, about forty miles out on the north shore of Long Island, and then, our oldest daughter, was born up there. Then, after I was there for about six, seven years, there were more houses than there were farms left on Long Island to try to sell fertilizer and insecticides to. So, I got a job with a company selling insecticides. I was still in the agricultural field, selling insecticides, but it was a New York and New England territory, so, I still lived in Long Island for a while. … Then, I was called by my headquarters down there to manage the division in West Norfolk, Virginia, which is part of Portsmouth, and I've been there ever since.

NM: As I can tell from your Virginia license plates.

HM: … When I transferred to Virginia, I transferred to another Reserve unit down there and stayed active down there. I was in what they called the Military Sea Transportation Service, Reserve. My billet, if I'd been called back, would have been commanding officer of the troops embarked on a troopship. … They had civilian crews manning the ships to carry these [soldiers overseas]. They were Civil Service employees, but … you couldn't have Civil Service employees giving directions to the people in the service, so, they had to have a minimal staff of Navy onboard to be responsible for the military end of it, to relate to the troops embarked. So, I had a couple of cruises with them.

NM: Did you expect all of your children to go to college?

HM: … Yes.

NM: Can you tell us about your family?

HM: Well, my wife was a college graduate, I'm a college graduate, we assumed that, … if they had it with them, that they would be going to college. So, they all took their academic courses in

high school and my two oldest sons both graduated from the University of Virginia, one in the School of Architecture, one in liberal arts. … My two daughters both went to Connecticut College in New London. … It's a private school … right across the street from the Coast Guard Academy. That was a joke, too. My oldest daughter went to what had been an all-women's college that became co-ed two years before she went there. … When she came home … for her Christmas holiday she said, "[They are a] funny sort of guys we've got there in Connecticut College." [laughter] She said, "Of course, how many young guys would go to a women's college?" … Initially, there were some funny ones that went there. I said, "What's the matter with the Coasties?" The Coast Guard Academy was right across the street. She said, "They shave their heads and," … "they're bears when they're turned loose on the weekends," [laughter] but she managed to work it out all right. … Then, she got her Master's from SUNY-Binghamton. She married an Episcopal priest and … he has a church up in Binghamton, New York, and she got her Master's up there and she now teaches in a parochial high school. … My youngest daughter graduated from Connecticut College. She worked for Price-Waterhouse for a couple of years, and then, got her MBA from Wharton School. She worked for American Express for about ten years, and then, she became pregnant. … After the second child was born, she worked out a deal, initially, with American Express, where she and another girl that she'd trained would share a job, three days here and three days there. … They both have children, but, then, the efficiency experts came along and said, … "We've got too many people on the staff," even though they worked it out. So, they said, "Well, either you're going to take retirement or work full-time." By that time, … the second child was getting to be a little bit of a problem and she said, "Well, I think I'd rather stay home and take care of [the] kids." So, they paid her off for a year's pay and she took it. She now lives in … Moorestown, New Jersey. She was up in Millburn at the time. Now, she has two kids, ten and eight. My oldest daughter has three boys, twenty, nineteen and thirteen. The twenty-year-old just graduated from Florida State. He was in the, I don't know whether you're familiar with that International Baccalaureate Program.

DD: Vaguely.

HM: What it is [is], it just so happened, when they were in Binghamton, Binghamton High School offered that program, which is a much … intense and accelerated, so that they're taking real advanced programs. When they went to Florida, … her husband was transferred to a parish in West Palm Beach and the two boys went in the same sort of a program down there. So, when they graduated, they have the [credit] equivalent of a sophomore in college. So, he graduated in three years from Florida State and his brother is in the University of Florida, the same thing. My oldest son … didn't have any children, but he has an adopted daughter, who's now a high school senior, and my number two son has two children, fifteen and thirteen, a girl and a boy. So, we have four children and eight grandchildren.

DD: We are almost out of questions.

HM: Getting pretty close.

DD: What is it like for you to come back to campus after all these years?

HM: It doesn't seem like the same place, [laughter] anything but. It was a small, little school, … friendly, small classes. I think … it was especially true when I went back after [the war] for my senior year. There'd be five or six people in a course and I can remember one course in particular; [it] was a course in poultry pathology, which is a weird sort of a thing to be taking. … I don't know whether you realize it, but there's a book that thick of diseases of chickens. It could drive you crazy. So, we're taking this course in poultry pathology with one of the best men in the country, [who] was over at Rutgers in the College of Agriculture, and here I was, trying [to] figure out, "How can you study all these diseases and go in there and take an exam?" … It was a book that thick, [three inches], and we go in there all set to take the exam and the professor says, … "If I've been teaching you all year and if I don't know what you know, … I should hang up as a professor." He said, "There isn't any exam." [laughter] It was only six of us in the class, but, to me, that was the typical thing back then, when you went back, because there were not many advanced students going back.

DD: The smallest class you would have now is perhaps fifteen in a seminar

HM: Yes, and it's small classes and individual instructors and so forth, … totally different thing. I don't know, frankly, that I'd send my kids to a big, huge university again. I think they need the … interaction they could get in a small school. Even UVA is twenty thousand.

DD: I visited UVA.

HM: Have you visited [there]?

DD: When I was looking at schools, it was one of the schools I looked at.

HM: It's a good school. It's the best in Virginia, that and William and Mary, both state schools.

DD: In spite of its size, UVA manages to maintain that small school feel.

HM: It does. Yes, "Mr. Jefferson's University," they're very proud of that and Mr. Jefferson's home, Monticello, is up on the hill, looking down on it. It's a different feel there.

DD: At Rutgers, we have four campuses spread over both sides of the Raritan River.

HM: Well, that's why my daughters went to Connecticut College. It was fifteen hundred students. They wanted a more close situation than what they would have [elsewhere]. Look at Douglass College today; it's the biggest women's college in the country. It was one thousand students when my wife went there. … Of course, Rutgers wasn't coed [when I went here]. There were a few courses that the kids at NJC would come over here [for], journalism and ceramics and a few other things. I think we had two girls in the College of Agriculture that were going to NJC at the time.

DD: Rutgers College did not go co-ed until 1972.

HM: Yes. There were a few girls that would take courses here, but, basically, no. So, what else do you need to know?

NM: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

HM: No. I enjoyed my days here at Rutgers. That's why I came back after I'd been to Cornell and Cornell was a more glamorous school, but Cornell was bigger than Rutgers at that time. … I think, on the campus here at Rutgers, when they brought all the ASTP Army types and here, it was about less than three thousand and Cornell had about six thousand and … I think five thousand of them were GIs and Army, Navy, Marines up there. The whole football team was Navy up at Cornell and Rutgers, here, was all 4-Fs. I don't think they let the Army kids play ball, but the Navy did, but the same thing was true of a lot of the schools with V-12 programs, Princeton, Penn, Cornell, mostly Ivy League schools, Dartmouth; they all had Navy teams. All the best schools in the country were Navy programs.

DD: Rutgers had the 4-Fs.

HM: Well, they had [the] ASTP, but, then, they pulled them all out. That was a blow, too. Some of those poor guys, were here thinking [that] they were going to be a student. When the Battle of the Bulge came along, "Send them in;" they were just slaughtered. It was a real blow to the campus. I don't know whether you've run across that in any of your interviews or not. … They were not Rutgers students, initially. They were here just like we were sent to Cornell, but … they didn't take the full college curriculum. They were taking a special program for the Army, but they were still just students in uniform and, when the Battle of the Bulge came, "We need bodies." It was terrible.

NM: Thank you for this interview

HM: You're quite welcome.

NM: It was very enjoyable.

DD: I wish we had more time.

HM: All right.

NM: This concludes an interview with Mr. Hugh McLeod Maxwell on May 14, 2005, at New Brunswick, New Jersey.

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

Reviewed by Francis Asprec 9/30/05
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 10/13/05
Reviewed by Hugh McLeod Maxwell 12/05