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NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALBERT MESERLIN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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DOMINGO DUARTE

Cecilia Navas: This begins an interview with Mr. Albert Meserlin in Sea Girt, New Jersey. Today's date is March 23, 2001. My name is Cecilia Navas and I am here with …

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Mr. Meserlin, to begin, could you tell us a little bit about your early life, such as where and when you were born?

AM: Sure. I was born in East Orange, New Jersey, [to] a family of five children. We lived near Columbia Grammar School. [I] went to East Orange High School. In fact, in my family, we have two sets of twins, I'm a twin, and … I had a brother and sister, twins; one passed away. What else can I tell you? [laughter] I went to East Orange High School, and, after high school, I started as a runner in Fidelity Union Trust Company in Newark and went to night school at Rutgers and Seton Hall in Newark, New Jersey.

SH: Where did your father work? What type of work did he do?

AM: My father worked for an inventor, Miller Reese Hutchinson, and, eventually, he was a secretary up in Edison's office, in Edison's lab, in West Orange. Dad … came from Germany, Alsace-Lorraine, and my mother, … her family came from England. I know the little church they were married at in West Orange. More interesting is, … my present wife, [laughter] … we've been married fifty-seven, going on fifty-eight, years. … We went to high school together, and we're still together.

SH: Did your mother ever work outside of the home? She probably had her hands full with two sets of twins.

AM: No. Mother worked at home. … Years ago, you could get a maid [at a] very reasonable [price] and we had a live-in maid called (Jana?). … Remember, when you were a kid, you used to play with a baseball bat, one potato, two potato, three [potato]? I can still remember what she taught us, "(Obla, dobla…?)," and I can still remember, I was sitting on the steps as a kid, with my four brothers and sisters, and her teaching us that game. … Do you want to know how I got in the Army?

SH: Sure.

AM: My father was on the draft board. My brother and I went. My brother … didn't get in, 'cause he had a heart murmur. I wasn't accepted because I was underweight, and, at the draft board, there was a sergeant, and I think you had to weigh, like, say, 125, and I might have weighed like 123. He says, "Go out and drink a lot of water, and eat a bunch of bananas, and come back," and that I did, and I got in, and that's how I ended up as a private in the Army. ... Like all of us, then, we went down to Fort Dix, and, from Fort Dix, I … was assigned to a work battalion as a company clerk, because I worked in the bank. … They were big, tough workmen and little me, and, from there, we went to Camp Edwards, Cape Cod. ... I didn't know where we were heading for, but, one day, I saw a sergeant running around with a Speed Graphic camera, taking pictures of some of the buildings. So, I said, "What do you do?" He said, "I work for the camp newspaper," and I said, "Geez, I'd love to get a job like that … and I think I'd be more

beneficial to the Army. My hobby is photography," and he said, "Well, why don't you send home for some pictures and write a letter to the camp commander," and this I did, and about three weeks later, I had a Speed Graphic in my hand and was working for the camp newspaper at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts. I didn't know anything about a Speed Graphic. I don't know if any of you know what a Speed Graphic is. It's just a big, bulky camera, takes a four-by-five negative, but, with their help and so forth, I ended up taking pictures for the camp newspaper and out on the rifle range and the artillery range.

SH: How did you become interested in photography? Did you develop your hobby in grammar school or high school?

AM: I belonged to the camera club in high school, and, in fact, in the yearbook, it says something to the effect that [I worked] as a photographer. ... I wrote home to Irene, I said, "Would you please send me a bunch of my photos and work?" and that's how I ended up being a photographer, and [I] did that for several months, and, all of a sudden, I was transferred, all alone, on a train to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to be trained as a combat photographer with the 165th Photo Unit.

SH: How was your training at Fort Sam Houston different from the training you received at Camp Edwards?

[Interviewee's Editorial Note: At Camp Edward, Massachusetts, I just took pictures for the camp newspapers and for the press. At Fort Sam Houston, Texas, we were trained to be combat photographers.]

AM: Well, … there were five of us sent to [the] Louisiana Maneuvers, and we lived in a tent, stole a million watermelons, [laughter] and [the] five of us clicked. We lived in a tent, bugs, snakes, and everything else, but, it was a job, and it was good training. I think, if I remember, when I was there, Gen. Eisenhower was only a colonel on maneuvers, but, I never got any pictures of him, then. ... We would go out on assignments every day, either assigned to an engineer group or a tank group, … taking pictures, and I have some here [of] a bridge building for training. …

SH: Was combat photography a part of the Signal Corps?

AM: It's part of the Signal Corps, yes. It's a branch of the Signal Corps.

CN: Did the Army train you specifically to be a photographer?

AM: Only as a combat photographer. … They never told you what to do with the camera. … [They] just said, "Go out today and you're assigned to this battalion," or this general, "Go out and follow him around for the day," or this unit or this tank group, and that was it.

SH: Did they tell you what kind of photographs they wanted?

AM: No, they never did. You just had your unit. You were pretty free to do what you wanted as an Army photographer. In fact, when I went overseas, I have a pass here, and I still have it, no one was to interfere with us. We could go and do what we wanted.

SH: Oh, really? You had a lot of freedom to take pictures.

AM: We had a lot of freedom, yes. …

SH: Can you tell us about the five guys that you were with in Louisiana? Were they from all over the country?

AM: They were all [from different places], yes. One of them, a very terrific guy, Jerry Horton, who taught me a lot, he was a newspaper photographer and maybe five or ten years older than I was.

[Interviewee's Editorial Note: Jerry Horton was my closest buddy, also best man at our wedding. Before entering the Army, he was a press photographer for a newspaper in Cleveland. We got separated in London and Jerry was assigned to the Fifth Division and, as a combat photographer, he received the Silver Star medal, three Bronze Star medals, and the Purple Heart. One great guy.]

… Most all of the fellows in the unit were from California, from studios and so forth. We worked together, a movie man and a still man, we worked as a team, two of us, always, together on assignment, and that's how we were trained on maneuvers, … and we had a little photo lab at Camp Polk, Louisiana, and that's where our film was sent in to be developed.

SH: Were you ever tempted to learn how to do the movie angle of the job?

AM: No, I just love still photography. That was what I did.

SH: Did you do your own developing?

AM: … No, I never touched a developer or anything while I was in the service. At the end of a day, we would wrap our film packs up, … with whatever we wrote about each one, … and send them to the lab, and I'll tell you more about that later, how that was done when we were in Europe.

SH: Well, let us continue from there then. I just wanted to know how you developed as a photographer.

AM: It was a hobby. My father sort of pushed it. He bought me my first little Kodak, and what else can I tell you, how I ended up in Europe?

SH: Were you married to Irene at this point?

AM: Oh, yes.

CN: Tell us the story.

AM: Tell you the story? Did you hear that, Irene?

CN: You were high school sweethearts …

AM: … And then, I went into the service and I was stationed at San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston, … with Jerry Horton, who I've mentioned, he and his wife. He was already married, and Irene and I took the train from East Orange to, where'd we go? to Cleveland, and I met Jerry and his wife, … and you can imagine how Irene's mother felt, but, she must have liked me. [laughter] … The four of us drove all the way to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, from Cleveland.

SH: Was that your honeymoon?

AM: That was our honeymoon, and we got married on the way, at (Marion?), Arkansas. … This probably is the same story you hear from a million GIs, that happened during the war. ... We had a little apartment, not an apartment, one room, in a sense, about a mile or two [away] from the camp, near the zoo in San Antonio, and Jerry and his wife had an apartment just a short way away, and we were there, like, what? one or two weeks, or three weeks, before I was sent overseas, and Irene got on a train, all alone, a little girl, back to East Orange, New Jersey. …

SH: I have one question. Since parents were so strict in that era …

AM: And they were strict back there, then.

SH: Why did they let a young woman suddenly get on a train all alone?

Irene Meserlin: 'Cause it was a crazy time of the year, a time, you know. People did crazy things. I'd never let my daughter do anything like that, you know.

AM: I guess they knew we were madly in love. We were engaged for quite awhile.

IM: And then, he went overseas. … Three years, I was alone.

SH: In case the tape did not pick that up, Mrs. Meserlin was explaining how she spent three years alone while Mr. Meserlin was overseas.

SH: Where did you go from San Antonio?

AM: Overseas.

IM: You came back for a few days, and then, you went off.

AM: Yeah. I got home, what? for maybe three or four days or something, … not even that, I guess not, and then, overseas on a little ship, all alone. We didn't go in a convoy. … The ship was called the *Louis Pasteur*, and it was a French ship that was taken over by the British, and I don't know if you've ever eaten … British food on a convoy. It's like eating wet newspaper [laughter] and we hit awful rough weather. I remember looking up out of the ship and seeing waves that looked like mountains, and I think half of the GIs on the ship got sick, and we slept in very close quarters, on the floor, on the tables that we ate on, and [in] the hammocks above us. That's the way we slept, going overseas, just packed in like sardines.

SH: Which unit was being shipped over on the *Louis Pasteur*?

AM: This was my photo unit, and I guess there must have been 150, plus other troops, of us, between the movie men, and the drivers, and the lab people, and I don't know how long we took, but, I know I was very sick, and a lot of us were. In fact, a lot of the furniture got broken on the ship, and people got broken legs because the sea got so rough. ... We landed in northern England, and I'll never forget, here we are, half dead and seasick, and [we had] our big duffel bags, and the ramp looked like a hundred miles long, going up from the boat, and we get to the top, and there was the British Red Cross girl, "Would you like a cookie?" "Dear, I'd like to die right now," [laughter] and we were put on trains, and they were all blacked out, naturally, at that time, in '42, end of '42, early '43. … We were put on a train and taken … down to a little town called (Chipping Sudbury?), down near Bath, England, and … we were stationed there for awhile, and we were billeted anywhere they could put us, in a barn, in a tent, anyplace. … It was a little town, and it had a fish and chips shop and a cattle auction every couple of days, or weeks, and then, one day, … I don't know whether our CO was trying to get rid of us, but, he picked five of us and sent us to London, to the APS, Army Pictorial Service, which was like a gift from heaven, but, that's what I thought. So, one night, I woke up … when the Germans flew over, and I ended up down in the cellar, scared to death, but, eventually, … I was assigned to take pictures of the air raids and the damage after. I got a letter of commendation for that, and, from England, you know, it's funny, while I was in England, I was assigned to cover the build up of what the Yanks had sent over, and it's just unbelievable that the British Isle didn't sink. I have one picture here, thousands of two-and-a-half ton trucks lined up, tanks, it's just unbelievable what we shipped to England, and all I have to say is, the British people have guts. At our lab in London, … for awhile, it was just like working for a newspaper. All of a sudden, the CO in command, he'd say, "Al, get a jeep," and, "We found a little, fourteen-year-old boy up in northern England who joined the Army. We don't know how he got in. We want some pictures of him." You jump in a jeep and that's where you went, or some other assignment. "Go to Land's End, Bristol," or, "There's something we want a picture of," and this went on for awhile. ... I'll never forget, one day, in London, I don't know if you've ever heard of "buzz bombs," [V-1 rockets]; it's … a controlled bomb, in a sense, a little airplane, maybe a couple of yards long, and, when it was up in the air, it made a terrible noise, it sounded like an old Model T motor falling apart. … [It] made a terrible hum, and then, it would cut out and fall to earth, and you never knew where it was going to land. I'll never forget, one day, I was at a Red Cross club, and one landed a block or two away, and I landed on my fanny, and I didn't have my camera, and I ran over to the ruins, and who showed up but Churchill. … He was very fatherly. He hugged us, talked to us, and, all of a sudden, I turned around, and there was a civilian engineer, working for the Air Corps, with a

camera, and I said, “Can I use your camera?” I showed him my patch, "Army Photographer," and he said, “Sure,” and Churchill posed with us, with each one of us, and I gave him the camera. The pictures he took of me didn’t come out, but, the ones of him did. I gave him the camera back, but, I took the film and stuck it in my coat, and he traced me down to the lab, but, I have copies of the pictures, but, the censors cut them up pretty good. You can’t see, but, they’re all cut up, because they didn’t want the Germans to know that these, it was either a V-1 or a V-2, … were landing in London, and that’s one of the group of pictures I have. One day, I ended up on an LST … to Utah Beach, Normandy.

SH: Can you tell us about the build up that you photographed? You said that it was a wonder that England did not sink.

AM: Well, England didn’t sink, but, no matter where you looked, hidden in the countryside would be tanks, trucks, ambulances, every piece of equipment you could think of. … To this day, I wonder why the Germans didn’t see more of this with their air raids, but, eventually, they gave up bombing London, because they found out the British did a better job than they did in the air.

SH: Did you go out to the different air bases that were being established?

AM: We were sent out, sometimes, when the B-17s came in, and that’s another sickening story. [The] B-17s would come in, and it was sickening to see the inside of it shot up, and some of the airmen and the condition that they were in. …

SH: Were you required to go inside and photograph the damage?

AM: Yes. You could look in and photograph them and that’s what we practically did. We would, every other day or every day, get sent somewhere in England to shoot pictures of the war activities.

SH: Were you photographing the activities of the Navy and Air Force as well?

AM: I went over on an LST, and I have pictures here that I’ll show you, … and we got off, and we were there just a very short while and picked up a lot of the 101st Airborne paratroopers that had landed in the first wave, casualties, and took them back to England.

SH: You landed on Utah Beach on the third day, correct?

AM: Yes, then, back to England, and it seems there's a lost period, I can’t remember, all of a sudden, one day, when we hit Paris, I was flown into Paris and assigned to Ike the day Paris was liberated.

SH: Could we examine the period before you landed on Utah Beach? You knew how massive the invasion would be because you were documenting the build up. How did you receive your

orders to cross the Channel? What were you assigned to do? Were you aware of what was happening?

AM: Well, we knew something was happening, definitely. I mean, gosh, in fact, we were assigned to take pictures. Two of the fellows leaving to go to Normandy and Utah, we knew they were going, but, … nobody knew where they were going, … very few, because the Germans would have been waiting, [laughter] but, we knew they were leaving. You could tell by the equipment and all that they had. …

SH: Did you photograph the loading and preparation phase of the invasion?

AM: Loading, everything we did. In fact, I even was out on the Isle of Wight for a short while to get some pictures to show what was going on, and then, back to Southampton and back into London. In fact, I got to know the southern part of England like the back of my hand. We did so much traveling. The fellow I traveled a lot with, at that time, was a movie man, Dick Ham, who I still communicate with. … He lives in California. …

SH: Were you aware of the Slapton Sands training exercise that preceded D-Day?

AM: Oh, yes, yes, because I had taken a lot of pictures. We were sent all over there. In fact, in some parts of England, they had fake airplanes blown up, rubber, and tanks, and all this in a field, and the thing was, I think they had somebody that looked like Patton in the area. [laughter] That's another story. I'll tell you about Patton. I can tell you a few stories, and some things I can't repeat in front of you that he says, but, he was one person that ... was a thorn in our side, but, we needed him, very much so, yeah. … I'll never forget, [I was] with Ike on a tour of the front with Patton. We get to the … Meuse River, and Patton walks into it up to his knees, and he says, "Take my picture." Patton peeing in the Meuse River. Well, of course, we would fake it, leave the slide in and pretend we were taking the pictures. … His men loved him. I saw him, one day, walk in a doorway, [and there was] a little GI standing in the doorway. He'd pick him up under his arms, and lift him up, and kid with him, and say, "Say I'm as young as I used to be," and that's the way he was. …

SH: What were your orders at this time?

AM: I was free to wander. Dick and I were free to wander where[ever] we wanted, as long as we were taking pictures, [laughter] and … you just knew what pictures you want[ed] to get. I mean, it's just like working for a newspaper. In fact, I always thought, when I went with Ike, I was just like a paparazzi, because I always had my camera in his face. Really, it's a wonder he didn't get mad, but, he never did. He never said a word, you know, all the time. … Eventually, I met with a man called Jack Howell, when I was with Ike. He was a movie soldier assigned to him, Jack Howell, and I'll never forget, one day, we were some place shooting pictures, and a movie man got in front of me. … Well, I just knocked him right on his you-know-what [laughter] and that was it, because no one was to interfere with us, in a sense. … I'll tell you some more stories about that later on, in the surrender room.

SH: How soon did you realize that the D-Day invasion was in progress?

AM: Well, you just got the feeling. I mean, it was the excitement all around. You just knew something big was going to happen, and being with Ike in headquarters, well, I wasn't with him then, no, I'm sorry, but, you just knew it. In the photo lab, you know, where people were assigned to where they were going, "You get this and you fly there." You could just pick it up that … something big's going to happen, even though our lab was only a few blocks from Grosvenor Square, which was Ike's headquarters, and sometimes we were sent over there on an assignment to shoot pictures. One day, I remember, I … had to shoot some pictures at the BBC and it was very difficult to get into that building. It was wired and caged up. The only way that you could get in was a special pass. Well, you knew something big was coming. …

CN: Did you decide to go over to Normandy or were you ordered to go?

AM: Oh, no, no, no, no, I was sent.

SH: How did that come about?

AM: You know, I hate to say this, but, I can't remember how I got [that assignment]. I think what happened [was], Dick and I were down at Southampton, where we went over to the Isle of Wight and came back, and … this is how free we were, we got to talking to a commander or a captain of an LST, and he said, "We're leaving," and I said, "Can we go and take some pictures?" and he said, "Sure." I mean, here, … Dick and I weren't prepared at all. We could still go on across the Channel. I can remember the battleships behind us, and the noise, and the cannons going off, and you could almost walk on the ships, and we landed at Utah Beach.

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship?

AM: No. I have pictures of the number of it, and I'd like to find [out] more about it, and I have pictures of the sailors and all. I have pictures of an airman. I went up, on a B-17, on a mission, and I have pictures, and … I don't know who they are. It's a shame, you know. …

SH: Do you know the name of the plane?

AM: Well, one plane is called the *Duke of Paducah* that I was on. It was the name of the plane, … and then, back to England.

SH: Can you describe what you were photographing at Utah Beach?

AM: Mostly, it was prisoners, some prisoners, and a lot of casualties, US casualties, on the ship, and we had a group of Polish prisoners we brought on the ship that I'll never forget, and we had to separate some from the others, because they were still enemies, in a sense, and I'll never forget, the Germans had a little tank, it must have been the size of a sofa, and they filled it with dynamite, and they could run it with electric wire, and we had one of those that we picked up on

the ship to take back to England. … From there, I can't remember what happened between the time I got back to England and when I was flown into Paris, Ike's headquarters.

SH: You were flown from England to Paris.

AM: Paris, and it was just liberated. I have pictures.

[TAPE PAUSED]

Paris was liberated, and that is little me there and that's Jack Howell. He was a movie man with us and I often wondered how I got assigned to Ike. Well, in Paris, here, I got a letter, recently, from one of the photographers, and he said, … "Capt. So-and-So came in the room, and he was looking for somebody to assign to Ike, and we were all drunk," but, I was the only sober one, "so, he picked me." [laughter] … That's just his story.

SH: Just for the record, let me say that what has been liberated in this photograph is a case of champagne. [laughter]

AM: Yeah, well, we drank it like water, I think, and then, I was assigned to Ike's headquarters, and brought into the headquarters, and given a special pass, and was assigned to Ike, to shoot pictures of him, in a sense, mostly for the Army archives, and, also, for newspapers. A lot of the pictures that I shot would be radioed to the States for the newspapers.

SH: Was Dick still with you then?

AM: No. Dick left and Jack Howell, … Sgt. Howell, was the movie man with me, and I'm just trying to figure [out] where we lived in Paris. We were put up at their headquarters and lived in some of the buildings in the headquarters.

SH: When you were traveling around England, were you free to stay or eat anywhere?

AM: At any place, yeah, … sleep there. I'll never forget, one night, I was assigned to photograph and do a story on a black battalion, and I was the only white man in the billets, with a camera and all, and I never laughed so much in my life, the stories, and we got [to] laughing so hard that night in the billets.

SH: Was this in England?

AM: This was in England, yeah, when I went overseas, yeah. So, we really didn't know where we were. …

SH: Did you photograph these things as well?

AM: No. … I shot millions of photographs before I was in combat, everything else across Europe, everything else, but, see, they didn't know where you were, but, when I was with Ike, they just sent copies to headquarters, and I was able to get a few of them.

CN: So, you have never even seen some of the photographs that you took.

AM: Oh, no. … No, because, originally, we had a lab in London. I can't figure where they ever found the building, because everything around it was as flat as a pancake and bombed, and then, when we got to Europe and had taken Paris over, then, the lab moved there, to Paris, and, at the end of the day, our film, we'd wrap it up with the bi-lines and all, and it would go into Paris. Before that, it would be flown to London to be developed.

SH: You talked about how tough the British were. Were they congenial to you?

AM: Oh, yes, yes, yes, very. It was sad; you [would] see these women come out there, shaking their fists at the planes going over, and, yet, their building would be just rubble. …

CN: When you went over to Utah Beach, you just went over, and then, came right back, correct?

AM: Came back, yeah, just got off the ship for maybe a day or two, and that was it, and went right back.

CN: That trip happened just by chance, because you wanted to get some photographs.

AM: Yeah, yeah, get some good pictures. … I don't know if you want this, but, one day, walking down the Champs Ellyse, … he might have been a year or two younger than me, this young boy came up to me and he said, "Oh, I see your patch. You're an Army photographer." He says, "My hobby's photography. I'd just love to sit and talk with you. Would you have a glass of wine with me?" at one of these outdoor cafes. So, I sat down; he introduced himself, Pierre Boulat, and invited me over to their house one night for dinner with his family. Every time I got into Paris, or near their place, I'd call Pierre and I'd be at their house. They treated me like a son. … After the war, I was home one day, looking at a *Life* Magazine, and I saw a series of pictures on West Point, and the photographer's bi-line was Pierre Boulat. ... I called *Life* Magazine and, within ten minutes, I had Pierre on the phone. … Then, he was here. He came to visit us. We were living in Sea Girt then, and he stayed a few days with us, with his wife, and that was maybe five years after the end of the war, and then, I hadn't seen or heard from him 'til five years ago, at the fiftieth anniversary of the surrender, when we were flown over for all the ceremonies, and I asked NBC if they would look up Pierre Boulat, and they did. … We had dinner together. I don't know if I have it here. This is the issue.

IM: That was some trip they gave us.

AM: … That's Pierre's daughter, working for *National Geographic*, today.

SH: Oh, my word, look at this. This is the *National Geographic* for March 2001.

AM: That's just last March and I just sent a letter to Pierre's wife. Pierre passed away a year ago.

CN: So, you inspired Pierre.

AM: Yeah, oh, he was crazy for photography and he turned out to be a great photographer for *Life* Magazine.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Just for the record, we are looking at a book of photographs, in French. Cecilia will translate the inscription dedicated to Mr. Meserlin.

CN: I believe it says, "Al, the best of the best, with love, Paris, 1995," I believe.

AM: Ann and Pierre, is that the way it [reads]?

CN: Pierre …

AM: And that's his wife …

CN: Does that say Jan or Jean?

AM: Annie.

CN: Oh, Annie and Pierre, and this over here says, "1944," I believe.

AM: This is all in French, this book. I wish I could read it, but, here's Pierre. He turned out to be a great, great photographer.

CN: Are these his photographs?

AM: … All his works are in *Life* Magazine.

SH: He covered a variety of subjects.

AM: … Yes, all candids, and he used a Leica when I was there; now, he's using Canon equipment, which I have. I still do a lot of my own black and white work and enlarging, you know.

CN: Do you have your own enlarger?

AM: Yeah, [in] a little dark room downstairs, in the cellar.

CN: Black and white photography is wonderful.

AM: Yes. … Is that our family right there?

IM: Three great-grandchildren.

AM: Everything but our two daughters. [laughter]

IM: (Five?) grandchildren, and then, three great-grandchildren. They had that done for Christmas.

SH: That is a wonderful photograph.

IM: They said they had a hard time getting (it?).

AM: … When they gave us that, we cried at Christmas.

SH: I am sure you did.

AM: I don't know how they got them all together [laughter] and it looked so good. That little baby in the center, the first time he came over, he broke one of my ducks. He broke the head off [one of] my carvings.

CN: Then, he smiled at you and you forgave him. [laughter]

SH: Did you carve the ducks?

AM: I did some and a lot of them I bought in the rough, and worked on them, and painted, you know.

SH: We left off in Paris.

AM: We already got to Paris. Yes, we're in Paris.

SH: You met Pierre in a café.

AM: … If I went to Pierre's house for dinner one night, his father, before you got in the door, he had a drink in his hand, a little after-dinner drink. I never drank in my life, not even a little beer, and you'd sit at the dinner table, and the father would sit next to you, and at his feet would be about four bottles of liquor, champagne, wine, and, every time you took a sip, he'd pick one up and pour more in your glass. I'm sure, from what I hear, he died of liver trouble, [laughter] but, they were awful nice to me, Pierre's mother, and he had a brother, Jean Jacques, who studied and ended up being a dentist, and he has some problems, health problems, now, I know.

SH: What did the father do in Paris?

AM: I never knew. I could hardly understand them, because they were French, you know, and, as a soldier, you get to know a few words, some good, some bad. …

CN: Did Pierre speak English?

AM: He spoke very broken English. His wife spoke [English]. When we went back, at the fiftieth anniversary of the surrender, my wife and I were treated, for eleven days, to all the ceremonies in France and in England, and we were treated to the new train, the underground through the Channel, … but, no matter where we went, either NBC or one of the cameramen had their camera in my face. … At times, I got to feel like Ike, I guess. … It got to be a little annoying, but, I think the troops that were with us, I think they were sort of a little jealous of us being in the limelight, 'cause, I'll never forget, they had a big ceremony at, I can't think of the name of the champagne at Reims, (Tatilare?). … We walked into the big hall, like an auditorium, in a sense, but, it was all tables set up, and, when Irene and I walked in there and they announced our name, I thought I was the King of England or something. Here I am, a little buck sergeant, and we sat at a table, and, to this day, I'm so sick of what I lost. We sat at a table with a lot of retired generals, and the Mayor of Reims, and other dignitaries, and, the menu, we passed around the table, and we each wrote something in our own [language], and they wrote theirs in French and I in English. ... We had a little girl that followed with us [who] was the interpreter, and I brought that home, and, to this day, I don't know where it is, and I would love to have it. I gave it to somebody to interpret it and I never got it back.

CN: You brought it back to the United States.

AM: Yeah, I brought it home with us, yeah. Somewhere, somebody has it, but, I was so mad. … While we were there, it was interesting, they had a girl sing at the affair, and, when she was done, I went up to the table, and I told her how much we enjoyed the music and her singing, and we got talking and something came up that I was at Utah Beach for a short while. "Oh, my mother and father are from there. We must communicate," and we gave each other our addresses, and, lo and behold, I did, I sent them some pictures, and I got a nice letter back from them, later. …

SH: Did you take your camera with you when you went back?

AM: Oh, yes, yes. [laughter] … It was interesting, one day, we were shooting a series of pictures and interviews. There was a retired general there who I sent some pictures to, and he wrote me a nice letter, but, we had to get to Reims within a short time, so, they put Irene and I, oh, no, we went on a bus, and, while we were at Reims, we had to get back to Paris, real quick, and they put us in a big, fancy French limousine, with a chauffeur and an interpreter, and I thought I was in an airplane going back. This guy never got under 110 miles an hour on the Autobahn and I said to him, "Don't you ever get a ticket?" "Oh," he says, "I've got a whole drawer full of them," and he says, "What you do, you don't pay 'em, 'cause, then, they take your picture. Then, you're stuck forever," and he says, "Now, we have a new," what's it? "mayor of this country, and they're all discarded, and we start all over again." [laughter] … Yeah, that was

all on television. My children saw me at home on television at the ceremonies and the ceremonies in London at Hyde Park were great. It was just jammed, and they had this one special building where all the GIs could go, and we were treated just elegantly. They treated us so well and every little English child would come up to me, "Can we have your autograph?" … [They set up a place] where we could go and where we were served, we could eat, and [they] wined and dined us, and, I remember, they got me and (they had me walk, movie man?), no, who was the fellow from Florida? Oh, he did the map room at Ike's headquarters.

IM: (Bunky?) or something.

AM: I'll get his name. He wore his uniform the whole time. He must have smelled. He never washed it, but, we had to go from one end of Hyde Park to the other. They wanted to take some pictures of us in front of the old Army cars and equipment. … As you said, it was a mess, walking through that crowd to get us through.

IM: They treated us wonderfully. …

SH: When you were in London, during the war or during the reunion, did you ever go down into the War Room?

AM: Oh, yes. Did you ever go down in the Underground? … you probably visited it. During air raids, I can remember … going down into the subway and people all sleeping there. I took pictures of that, yeah.

SH: The Imperial War Museum has set up a mock up of the wartime Underground.

AM: Yeah, there is, yeah. We went there. We went through that when we were there.

SH: Were you allowed in the War Room during the war, as an Army photographer?

AM: Oh, yes, yes. … Monty, that's another story.

SH: Please, tell us.

AM: Monty was known at headquarters as Mr. (Nibs?). [laughter] … He was known as Mr. (Nibs?), and I guess you heard a lot of stories, how he hoped [that] he could have Bradley's job, and then, he wanted Ike's job, and it seemed funny. … It seemed like Monty hardly or never came to Ike's headquarters, Ike always had to go to his, and I'll never forget one incident up in Belgium. We went up, Ike and Jack and I, and there were two tents, one tent where Ike and Monty were having a meeting, and, after the meeting, they came into this other tent, and there was a desk, and Jack and I were right behind the desk, and Monty walked in, naturally, dressed like a tramp, with his buggy jacket and his … corduroy pants, and Ike was just dressed immaculately, with his Ike jacket on, and Jack and I were right on the other side of them, on the desk, facing them, and Jack and I didn't realize it, but, behind us, there must have been twenty or

so photographers and British newspaper men, and cocky Monty says to Ike, "Are they all yours?" and Ike says, "No, only those two," and I said, "Oh, good, he gave him the needle."

SH: Did you observe Monty and Ike's interaction at all?

AM: … No. I have a lot of pictures, as you'll see, of them at meetings and this and that, but, you know, I can never tell; you're so busy shooting pictures. At the surrender, I was soaking wet, I worked so fast. …

IM: It was like in the movies. He was up on a chair.

AM: Yeah. … Jack and I had free reign in the surrender room. All the others were cordoned off and that's why you see me standing on a chair.

SH: How did you get these shots?

AM: Yeah, well, I was free. I had the camera in front of the Germans' faces and all. …

IM: Now, all your shots are on the wall in the surrender room when you walk in, all of Al's pictures.

CN: Since you viewed the war through a camera lens, how did that affect your perspective?

AM: You know, you were so young, you didn't realize [it]. I knew my job was to get a lot of good pictures and that's all I did. As I said, I was like a paparazzi. In fact, at the surrender, the Germans, I'll never forget when Jack and I were flown out to the airfield and Jodl landed, and he was so arrogant. Every time the flashbulb went off, he'd give me a dirty look, you know, and he [was in] a long, gray, leather coat. … Even at the surrender, at the table, he sat, as you all probably know, how it was set up, the Allies on one side and the three Germans on the other side, Friedberg, Jodl, and their handyman, I call him. He took care of their coats and shoes. … I'll never forget, he stood up, too, after the surrender was signed and asked, in a sense, "Would the Allies across the table treat us with kindness?" and this, well, it went on deaf ears, I'm sure, after what we saw of the atrocities at some of the camps, but, Ike was not in the surrender room. He was not part of the surrender. When it was all over, they took the three Germans into his office, and he laid the law down to them, and that was it, dismissed them, and then, the fun all started. [laughter] … He gave his famous speech.

SH: Was there an interpreter in the surrender room?

AM: Yeah, there was a Gen. Strong, a British general, who was the interpreter. Gen. Strong was the interpreter.

SH: Who were the other figures sitting on the Allied side of the table?

AM: Oh, gosh, all of them. There were British, there were French, there was Spaatz, Air Marshall Tedder, British, and Bedell Smith, who signed for us, who I thought was the brains of everything, and it seemed like any problem Ike had, Bedell was pulled into the room. Yes, he was a brain.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: We are now looking at some pictures taken by Mr. Meserlin during the surrender.

AM: Yeah, here is Jodl getting off the C-47 at the airfield at Reims, France.

SH: You can see him in his leather coat.

AM: In a gray, leather coat, no smile. I can imagine … what weighed on his shoulders, and here they are, walking into the War Room. That's Gen. Strong. He was the interpreter, and that's Jodl, and this is Friedel.

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

AM: Something wasn't copesetic between Ike and Monty.

SH: This is side two of tape one. We were looking at the surrender photos.

[TAPE PAUSED]

CN: Did they [the German delegates] mind that you were that close?

AM: They had nothing to say about it. [laughter] I just did it. I just went up and shoved the camera in their face. There's Jodl, signing, and there's Jack Howell, in the background, with his movie camera.

SH: It is interesting that they are wearing gloves. Jodl is taking his gloves off to sign, but, his assistant still has his gloves on.

AM: We won't go through all of these, you'll be here [forever], but, here's the famous picture you saw in the *Yank* magazine of Ike's famous smile after the surrender, and here's Ike holding up the pens, and this is Butcher, who was the Naval aide assigned to Ike, and Bedell Smith, and Air Marshall Tedder, and I don't know if you can see this, a little female head sticking up, and that's Kay Summersby. … I think you've all read about her and read her book, but, I never saw anything that seemed wrong or different, but, you never knew what went on at night in the dark; what can I say? …

SH: I would like to back up to the point where you met Pierre.

AM: Pierre Boulat.

SH: You were in Paris and you had just been assigned to Ike. Can you tell us about what happened between that point and the surrender?

AM: All right, let's see, we were at Reims. Jack and I, … we had a driver, Smitty, who was our chauffeur, and I'll never forget, while we were in Paris, Smitty, and, I don't know, you've never been there during the war, but, … all the Frenchman did is blow his horn, and, today, it's illegal, in Paris, to blow a horn, and, one night, I'll never forget, we had a big command car and … the bumper, you'd think it was a cannon in front of us. [laughter] Two Frenchmen come tearing across the street, blowing their horn, and Smitty was a big Southerner who was as tough as can be. He says, "(Here, I get two of them?)," and he drove the car right into the side of them. … No one got hurt. It was just enough to bump them good. Four Frenchmen jumped out of the car and disappeared. They must have been gangsters who stole the car. We never saw them again, and an MP come up, and he says, "Get in your car, guys, and get out of here," [laughter] and that was it, but, that was Smitty. He was a great guy. … I'll never forget, while we were in Paris, we were told, "Never leave any of your equipment or anything in your command car." You know, it was just an open canvas side. One night, something was stolen and Smitty says, "Al, you lay in the back seat and here's a wrench. When you see anybody's arm come in the car, you know what to do with it." [laughter] That's what Smitty was like, but, no, at Reims, Jack and I had like an attic [that] we lived in, right near headquarters, with this French couple who lived downstairs on the second floor. It was a three family house or something like that and this couple was very nice to us. In fact, once in a while, we were able to get away from things with our car, … shoot a partridge, or a pheasant, or something, and we'd bring it to them, and then, they'd cook it. They were very good to us. … You'll see pictures of Reims Cathedral and you'll never believe that there are sandbags piled ten times higher than a two-and-a-half ton truck in front of it, but, Paris and Reims, any of the French cities, had very little damage. I've often wondered how the French got away with that and not any of the other countries in Europe, but, it bothers you at times.

CN: At that point, you were specifically assigned to Ike.

AM: Yes. Jack and I, if Ike was going somewhere, or some dignitaries were coming, we were called over to headquarters to take the pictures, or if he was going on a trip to visit the front, we would tag along. We were told to get in our jeep. If he flew, we'd fly, and I'll never forget one trip going up to the front, and it scared the daylights out of me, and I'm sure it was … the first jet airplane [that] flew over us and buzzed us. ... I don't think they ever realized who was in that car in the front of the group of us, but, I'll never forget, I says, "Oh, brother, they're gonna win the war now."

SH: When you were traveling with Ike and his entourage, how many cars were involved?

AM: Oh, very few, maybe just his and us, or maybe an MP in a jeep up front or a motorcycle. That's all.

SH: I thought that there might be extra security for him.

AM: No, nothing. … In fact, it seems funny, if we were going through a village, you could always tell that somebody knew he was coming, because there'd be somebody, not an FBI man, but, an MP, up in the window, watching or hiding around to protect him, and, in fact, once, the Germans got behind our lines, and dressed as American soldiers, and knew all the slang, and so, it was very strict to get in and out of headquarters. You were stopped and always asked, "Who were the Yankees?" "Who was Babe Ruth?" "Who was this?"

SH: Like a password.

AM: Password, and they caught them and they were all hung or shot, no questions asked.

SH: Did you carry a firearm or a sidearm?

AM: A .45, we carried a .45 pistol.

CN: Did you ever have to go out on reconnaissance?

AM: No. … I can't remember a lot of what happened between London and when I went to France, 'cause I was in Europe, across France and all, and, when we took Paris, I'll never forget, … well, the day or two after we took Paris, I was in a doorway, and somebody was shooting across the street, and I turned around, and somebody said, "Are you all right, soldier?" and it was Air Marshal Tedder, [laughter] calm as could be. ... Then, one time, I got in Paris, in-between when they were cleaning things up. I got in a street, and there was shooting at each end of it, and I ducked down under a car, and one of the Germans or something ran through and dropped his little pistol, and I brought that home with me, and I had it for years, and I gave it away to a gun collector. ... Most of my outfit, the 165th, there were many, many of our men, several, killed. They worked as a team, right up front, in the front lines. In fact, my buddy, Jerry Horton, received a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and all for his bravery as a cameraman, rescuing injured soldiers, casualties, and I shouldn't say it, but, I was home six months and I got a Bronze Star for my photo work. I couldn't believe it, 'cause there were fellows who did much more than I ever did, but, I was just one of the fortunate ones in the unit who was assigned to Ike for the last six months of the war.

SH: Did you stay in Paris or did you move on?

AM: No. We kept going forward. At one time, Ike lived in a castle [that] had a moat around it, I remember, and we lived in tents outside of it, and then, we moved to Reims, ... his headquarters, that's what the little, red schoolhouse [was], and I'll show you, it's not a little, red schoolhouse, it's a school for boys, and we had a first floor flat, which was empty. They put Army cots in there and we were, like, half a block away, or on call all the time.

SH: When you were on call, would you frequently be sent for in the middle of the night by headquarters? Did you have fairly regular hours for working and sleeping?

AM: Well, sometimes, it would be an emergency and ... they'd send a message down to us. Most of the time, we knew a day ahead what was gonna happened. They'd say, "Tomorrow, Ike's gonna tour the front. Be up here," at a certain time, and da-da-da, and that would be it.

CN: When you toured the front with Eisenhower, how close did you actually get to the front lines?

AM: ... We got fairly close. Ike went up to Bastogne ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

I took some pictures of Patton, on a tank, coming to help rescue those surrounded.

[TAPE PAUSED]

... Now, you all know who that is? Jimmy Doolittle, and that's his son.

SH: Really?

AM: Yeah.

SH: Can you tell us the story behind this picture?

AM: I can't tell you much. [laughter] I was called up to take a picture, ... and there was Doolittle, with Ike, and here's what it says on the caption, "Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, chats with Lt. Gen. James H. Doolittle, CO, Eighth Air Force, and his son, Capt. James Doolittle, Jr., at Supreme Headquarters in France. Gen. Doolittle had been awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to his Distinguished Service Medal," and ... the date was January 25, 1945. ... This is one of my favorite shots, it's Ike shaking hands with Patton, and in the background, between them, is Gen. Bradley. ... Bradley and Patton were like night and day. Bradley was just like a fatherly type, almost like a minister, he was such a calm, easy-goer, where Patton was, you know, gung-ho all the time. ... This picture was taken on 2/5/45, "During his recent tour of the Western Front, Gen. Eisenhower shakes hands with Lt. Gen. George S. Patton of the Third Army as they depart from Bastogne. Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, CO of the Twelfth Army GP, looks on. Gen. Eisenhower highly praised the defenders of this historic city, Bastogne, Belgium," and this was radioed to the States for the newspapers.

[TAPE PAUSED]

That's one of my favorites and this is another one of him looking over the ruins of Bastogne.

CN: Did you often take photographs for press releases?

AM: Most ... all of them were. ... You've probably seen a lot of these pictures in history books and newspapers. Even though Ike always had that beautiful smile, genial, I have a picture here,

something went wrong up front, this was November 16, [19]44, and I've never seen Ike so mad, but, you can tell from this picture, he's just gritted his face and closed his mouth real tight, as if something [was locked in his mouth], and that's another one of my favorite shots.

SH: Ike was definitely upset. This looks like the proverbial "grin-and-bear-it" photograph.

[TAPE PAUSED]

AM: ... This is the visit that Zhukov made to Ike. It was Zhukov who was the defender of Stalingrad or Leningrad. He was the defender of one of them, [Stalingrad]. ... Zhukov flew into Frankfurt, Germany, at Ike's headquarters, which was in the IG Farben building, and I have several pictures of Zhukov with Ike. ...

CN: For all of these photographs, you sent your film off to be developed ...

AM: ... At our lab, either in Paris or London.

CN: Did the lab send them back to you at headquarters?

AM: Some of them I got, if I was lucky. There's more. I think that's Molotov with Zhukov.

SH: I think that is Molotov. Evidently, they are looking at a fly-over.

AM: Yes, there was a fly-over. ... Apparently, Zhukov presented Ike with a medal and it had all diamonds and other famous jewels in it from the Soviet Union.

SH: Something must not be going right with this fly-over.

AM: Yeah, from the looks on their faces. [laughter] Look at the look on Ike. Ike always had a strong feeling for the enlisted men up at the front lines. When we toured, whether it was in the mud or anything, he would always get out and chat with them, and here's one time [that] he got out, and one of the GIs says, "Can I take your picture with Ike?" While he was doing that, I got a picture in front of him and ... the picture was taken on February 5, 1945. "Ike Eisenhower," I'm gonna just say, 'Ike,' "posed with a bunch of GIs during his recent tour of the front. The men are members of the 334th AAA Battalion. It all started when one of the GIs asked to take Ike's photo."

CN: Did Eisenhower often comply with these requests?

AM: Oh, yeah, and he would sign autographs for anybody, ... nurses. Go on, ask questions. [laughter] ... That's Prince Charles of Belgium, when we gave back the Belgians their country. [Editor's note: Mr. Meserlin was looking through his files.]

CN: Where did you get your supplies from during the war?

AM: What I needed? The lab ... would send it out to us if we needed anything. I'll never forget when I took this, that's a famous picture of Ike, that's the day he got his five stars. ... This was taken February 1, 1945, and it's the day Ike got ... promoted to Supreme Allied Commander, five star cluster, and the Seal of the United States, and the newly created rank of General of the Army, and I was scared to death; I had to take a portrait. ... I didn't know how to take a portrait for my life, so, I did, and he was so nice about it. I mean, you could see, on the table in front of him, on his desk, is a pack of matches. He was almost a chain smoker. When we toured the front, he would always stop in at some general's office, ... he would sit down with the general, see how they were, and always have a cup of coffee. … What I did [was], I needed a long lens, another lens, and I got in contact with our lab back in Paris, and they sent it, and that's how I got that famous picture of Ike, when he got his [fifth star]. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

There's "his nibs," [Monty]. That's the day I just told you about. ...

SH: It is so ironic that he would be dressed this way.

AM: ... You know, as I told you, a lot of the soldiers, the other photographers in our outfit, were really up to their neck in combat and this is a famous picture. That's our CO.

SH: This is Capt. Herman Wall.

AM: Yeah, he lost his leg.

SH: Are you still in contact with him?

AM: No, he's dead.

SH: Did he die from his injuries?

AM: No, just recently, in the last year or two. This is part of what the build up looked like in England. ... These are all ambulances and two-and-a-half ton trucks, a little of everything. This is the trip, when I went over on the LST. ...

SH: Is Ike going on a ship in this shot?

AM: No, that's a van. ... Let's look on the back, ... see what the guys in the lab wrote. Oh, I can hardly read it, ... "(Churchill something?), Gen. Dwight [Eisenhower], Supreme Allied Commander, as he shows Ike his trailer." Yeah, that's about it.

CN: When was that?

SH: This was taken on November 14, 1944. ...

CN: How often did you come in contact with Churchill?

AM: Only with Ike. In fact, Churchill's dog bit me and there was an article in a British newspaper. [laughter] I'll have to find the clipping. There's more. This is a picture of Ike with Air Marshall Tedder. I don't know where it was taken. ... This picture, and if you can get it done on laser as a copy, that's what they can do, that's Ike, ... Marshall, Jimmy Burns, did you ever hear of him? and Ike.

SH: What are they doing in this picture?

AM: What are they doing? Well, you know who Marshall was. He was the Supreme Supreme Commander, and I came over, and I don't get in on the meetings. They came over to talk something over with Ike. Let me see what date that was. I'm sure that was after.

CN: Since you had so much freedom, were you allowed into the meetings?

AM: I couldn't hear what was going on. ... There were meetings of the brass, and Monty, and all of a lot of the top generals. You know, I'd just be running around shooting pictures. I didn't have any idea of what was going on between them.

CN: You were just concentrating on the photographs.

SH: The caption reads, "Justice James Burns, Director of War Mobilization, talks with Omar Bradley after the arrival of the high ranking officers in France for the inspection of military installations. In the party aboard the ATC transport flight from America were Gen. George Marshall," something, "Gen. Tom Handy, Maj. Gen. Pinky Craig, and Col. Frank McCarthy, at (Wurley?) Airfield in the President's plane called the *Sacred Cow*."

AM: ... I just wanted to show you the size of the camera we had and I'll show you some of the negatives. They're four-by-five inches and that's what we lugged around.

SH: How much did it weigh?

AM: Our equipment was about forty pounds. We had a suitcase ... where everything went into it.

CN: That was in addition to your standard issue duffel bag.

AM: Oh, yeah. ... This is when I went on a little trip. ... I have pictures of the name, *The Duke of Paducah,* and, I swear, they were from New Brunswick ... or Elizabeth, New Jersey, and I don't know why. They were the pilots of the plane. I have a whole bunch of negatives.

CN: Is this a picture of you?

AM: That's me when I had hair, [laughter] believe it or not. ... After I left Gen. Eisenhower, I just want to get a date here, ... the war ended May 8th, and, on June 18th, I was assigned to cover and go on a tour with about twelve movie executives, Darryl Zanuck, Jack Warner, (Guy Valavand?), all the tops, and I was the still photographer, and Bob (Quirk?) went along as the movie photographer. We traveled all over Europe, down through Italy, across Africa, and I got home with them. While I was home, the Jap war ended. ... I was home on a two week leave. ... In fact, I was all set to go back. They were gonna send me back, and I got to the Navy Yard in Brooklyn, and I blew my stack when I saw all these guys sitting around there at a typewriter, and I've been out of the country for years, and they sent me home. They let me out.

SH: After V-E Day, did you think that you might be sent on a tour in the Pacific as a photographer?

AM: A lot of our fellows did, because they didn't know [if] they'd still use them, but, then, thank God, that ended soon.

SH: What was the tour with the movie moguls for?

AM: ... They were touring Europe, I guess to work on some kind of propaganda movies or something, after the war, and they treated them like kings. Oh, I couldn't believe it. We stayed at Monte Carlo. ... They stayed on the Riviera and we lived in this most beautiful mansion, right on the water, two swimming pools. They treated them like kings ... and I went along with them. In fact, here I was, a buck sergeant, and they were shooting crap with hundred dollar bills. [laughter]

SH: What were you doing during this tour?

AM: Taking pictures. ... As you can see, there's Darryl Zanuck. ... That's Bob. He was the movie man with me.

SH: What happened to your friend, Jack?

AM: I never heard from him again. Jack drank all the time.

SH: Wow, these are some photographs.

AM: Yeah, Darryl Zanuck and Jack Warner.

CN: You have one of Jack Benny, also.

AM: ... Up at Camp Edwards, Jack Benny and Livingston and Rochester. ... They entertained the troops.

SH: It looks like Jack Benny has KP duty. Did you see him perform?

AM: No. That's the picture, "We're All Helping the *Fuhrer*." [laughter]

SH: The photographers are photographing themselves. Where was this taken?

AM: Oh, gosh, don't ask me. There's no bi-line. That, I took with my own camera, (Rollaflex?), that I wish I [had] kept.

SH: Where did you go after Bastogne?

AM: We were at the IG Farben [building] in ... [Frankfurt]. That was his headquarters. That's the last I was with him. ... Jack and I, we had a house on an estate. You know, that's where they put us, wine barrels in the cellar, and you wouldn't believe [it], ... and I couldn't believe it, because the IG Farben building wasn't touched, but, Frankfurt was flattened out. In fact, the zoo was across the street and there was nothing left. It was just shattered, complete rubble, but, that IG Farben building was protected. The interesting part of the IG Farben building, we had elevators and escalators. In that building, there were boxes, like seven feet tall and maybe three feet wide, and they were chained together, and they were continuously going real slow, up and down, and they were all chained together, and, if you wanted to go to another floor, you just stepped into one, and, when you got to that floor, you stepped out, and it just kept moving.

SH: A different kind of elevator.

AM: Yeah.

SH: What did Ike do after you were ordered to leave his headquarters?

AM: He stayed there for awhile, yes. My assignment was finished with him.

SH: At that point, you were touring the sights of destruction across Europe.

AM: They went all over Europe, everything, destruction, the bad camps.

SH: Was that the first time that you saw the camps?

AM: No. I had been in them when Ike visited. I don't know which one it was. You don't want to see these pictures. I had more; I threw them away, tarred and feathered.

IM: You wonder why the Germans didn't know about it, you know.

SH: Right now, we are looking at some pictures of the results of the atrocities.

[TAPE PAUSED]

AM: ... This is how your laundry came back. [laughter]

SH: There is no way to tell where or when these were taken.

AM: No, I don't know, and I don't remember which one we were in.

SH: Do you remember when you were told that you would be seeing and photographing these atrocities?

AM: No. They just said, … "Get your jeep and Smitty and let's go."

CN: What was your first reaction to the scenes at the camp?

AM: You were aghast. You just couldn't believe it. You'd just say, "How could anyone treat another human being that way?" period. …

SH: Mr. Meserlin's lap is full of photographs.

AM: Yeah, well, these are all maneuvers and other miscellaneous [pictures]. … You know what, too, I have a set of pictures that I took with my own camera. … These are the negatives. They're the surrender parade at Reims, France, and all these little kids with American flags on the curb and all, and I've often wondered how I could get those to the newspaper at Reims and let them print them. People would love to see those pictures.

SH: I think so.

AM: I have about twenty or thirty of them.

CN: Could you describe what the parade looked like?

AM: … It was just all done by the people in town, nothing fancy, but, … nurses marched and the kids, and then, they had a hanging on a wagon that they pulled, and it was Hitler being hung, and they paraded that through the streets.

CN: A hanging in effigy.

AM: See, Ike loved to stop and have coffee.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: How did Ike address you?

AM: Sergeant. "Sergeant, come here." I have a picture with Ike. Jack and I, in back of headquarters, one day, when it snowed, just bear with me a minute and I'll find it, … and he posed with Jack and I, and we fooled around in the snow. I'll never forget, when I first went with Ike, though, he had a group of us that worked in headquarters [over] to have a drink, just a little get-together, [get to] know each other, and he came out with a little glass [of] straight Scotch.

Well, I took one little touch of it with my tongue and I nearly died. I'm sure he has a dead plant in his office today. [laughter]

CN: What was your rapport with Ike like?

AM: I think he put up with me. [laughter] That's about it, you know, really, because it's all I did, was shoot pictures.

SH: Did he ever tell you to do something?

AM: Never.

SH: Did he ever say, "Go over there," or something like that?

AM: No, never. Nobody really ever told me [anything], once I was in the room and doing these pictures, never.

SH: Other than Patton telling you to take a picture of him in the river.

AM: I saw Patton give a speech once in front of a bunch of WACs, and hold his pistol up, and say something awful, terrible. I mean, I was shocked. He didn't care and you could always tell when he came to headquarters. It seemed like the noise and everything else [increased].

SH: Tell us about some of the shots that you took of Patton on his visits.

AM: Well, I have some where he visited a hospital and he went around and talked and chatted with the GIs; in fact, one, he initialed his cast, autographed it. … I'll never forget, I have some pictures here of him and Ike going to a hospital, and going through a British hospital and signing autographs for all the nurses, but, he was very easy going that way. He had a feeling for the enlisted men, a real strong feeling for them.

SH: You said that about Eisenhower, too.

AM: Yeah. It was terrible, I thought, the way Patton got killed, in an automobile accident.

SH: You were stationed at headquarters, but, you could be sent anywhere at a moment's notice. Did you have any sense of how the war was going? Did you realize, for example, what was happening during the Battle of the Bulge?

AM: Yeah, see, you heard it in headquarters, sure. … There was one sergeant that just took care of the War Room, the maps, and, on this trip, … [where] we went back for the anniversary, he was with us.

SH: What did the photographers do when you were not taking photographs?

AM: Well, what we did, we would take our film over to (Mumm's?) factory and tell the head of the factory, … "Would you like some film?" He'd say, "Yeah, would you like some champagne?" [laughter] and that's how we got our champagne, or we would … go out to the country and swap something … with a farmer to get eggs, and we'd bring eggs back to our place, and, somehow, we managed to cook them. [laughter]

SH: Did you have someone who was in charge of cooking?

AM: No, Smitty or anyone of us, but, you know, looting was the biggest problem among all soldiers, I don't care whether we were in Germany, (Chaps?), or anything else, and we were the same way. We even had a vacuum cleaner in our jeep, … Lord knows what we were ever gonna do with a vacuum cleaner, I'll never know, but, I had some nice cameras and all to bring home, and some other stuff, and I got with the movie men so quick, I had to leave it and flew home. So, I left a lot of souvenirs that I had over there. … My Rollaflex camera and everything else, somebody got.

SH: What did you hear about the homefront? I know that you and Irene must have been corresponding during this time.

AM: We didn't hear a thing and they didn't hear much, either.

IM: … We didn't know there was a war, really. I never worried about it or anything.

CN: Oh, really?

IM: Really, yes. …

SH: What were you doing, Irene?

IM: I worked in the bank. I went to [the] Berkeley [Business] School, and then, I worked in the bank. …

CN: Did you write back and forth to each other?

AM: Yeah, I had some [letters]; V-mail, we had. … This is what I wrote the night of the surrender, full of champagne, so, don't bother about the English or how I felt, and I have a record someplace I did for NBC.

SH: Was the record recorded that night?

AM: Yeah.

SH: Can we insert this into your transcript? It is a little long to read here.

AM: I'll give you a copy. I hope you can read Chinese. [laughter]

SH: I will ask for your interpretation. [laughter]

AM: … I don't know if that was done in our news room.

SH: The heading reads, "East Orange soldier photographs the surrender of the Germans." It was part of the censored release.

AM: … I just wrote down here what we carried as equipment. We had a four-by-five Speed Graphic camera, a 4.5 (Hectar?) lens, a Supermatic shutter, it was focal plane and speeds up to a thousandth, a (Hugomeyer?) range finder, a (Mendelson?) or Graflex flash gun, a Western GE exposure meter, which we never used, you never had time to do that, and filters, and a tripod, and that was the equipment that we carried. By the way, I didn't mention, Ike had two aides, Cdr. Harry Butcher was a naval aide from the … US and Capt. Ernest "Tex" Lee, he was an Army aide, Butcher was a naval aide, and he also had a British military assistant, Col. James Gault, who was with Ike most of the time. …

SH: Did you ever photograph or see any USO shows?

AM: No, no. I'll never forget, when I wrote down here, "The Battle of the Bulge breakthrough near Bastogne caused Gen. [Eisenhower] to be very upset. … All the generals were upset. The first words Ike said to them [were], "I only want to hear cheerful faces. I know the Germans will eventually be surrounded. They do not have the fuel or supplies."

SH: Were these notes that you took at the time?

AM: No, I just wrote these down when I gave talks, and Winston Churchill, a great leader at the right time, he certainly was.

SH: When you took the photographs at Bastogne, were you able to see what the 101st Airborne had suffered through during the siege and what the Fourth Armored Division had gone through to relieve them?

AM: Oh, sure, yeah. I remember seeing the tanks coming up, Patton leading them, when they broke through. Here, I wrote before D-Day, June 6th, "There are about 1,500,000 American troops in England, from one end of England to the other. The countryside is filled with tanks, trucks, cannons, half tanks, jeeps, ambulances, etc."

SH: You have the photographs to prove it.

AM: I met Ernie Pile once at a press camp up in Belgium. I'll never forget, I have Ernie Pile's book, and, in it, he mentions, I wrote this down, … a drink called (Odorvee?). … Have you ever heard of it?

SH: No.

AM: You're lucky. [laughter] Once in a great while, Jack and I would drive our film from Reims into Paris, and all the GIs and the Red Ball Express, which was the trucks and all that delivered all of it, they would all stop at this little house and get a drink. So, Jack and I stopped one day, and we had it, and I agree with what Ernie Pile says about it. … You'd think you were a fire-eater and drinking gasoline, lit. Ernie Pile described it as, "A drink called (Odorvee?), a savage liquid made by boiling barbed wire, soap suds, watch springs, and old tent pegs, with a touch of nitroglycerin to give it flavor. All who drank it deserve the Purple Heart." [laughter]

CN: You tried it?

AM: Yes, [laughter] … but, it's funny. In the Army, you know, you think, oh, you're gonna be lost and all. You're a young kid, but, you make awful good friends.

SH: I think that most of the men that we have interviewed have said that. Some have kept in contact over the years and some have just begun to renew their friendships.

AM: Well, especially the five of us that were on the Louisiana Maneuvers. There was one fellow, Tommy Madray, and he was a herpetologist, a snake expert, from Hollywood, and … he was a movie man with us, and he pulled more things that I can imagine. We went to the zoo there, and he came out with snakes all around him, a two headed snake, scared us to death, [laughter] but, these are the kind of fellows that were in our outfit. Then, when we were in Louisiana, we had a day or so off, we went to Shreveport, and they were gambling there. ... It's a wonder they didn't all end up in jail, because they knew someone at the racetrack, and they had a telephone system, and they bet, and they lost, and then, they won a lot and took off, [laughter] but, that was GI life. You live with these five guys in a tent. We had one fellow, Cowboy, we used to call him, his name was Hoffman, Larry Hoffman, and he did our driving on maneuvers, and he was one toughie. He was half Sioux Indian and he was tough. You never got him drunk, 'cause he was the nastiest drunk. He would have shot every general and lieutenant in the Army. …

CN: Where was he from?

AM: He was from the Midwest, but, if he liked you, you were his buddy for life, and we had a great time with him, but, he was something. In fact, they had a rodeo, and all the Army trucks were put in a circle, and I have pictures of him riding broncos and all in the rodeo, yeah, Cowboy, in the Louisiana Maneuvers. Even though, you know, you're living in a swamp, scorpions and every kind of bug around, you made it fun [with] fellowship. In fact, we used to go out, the cows would come around, he'd show us how he wrestled and threw a cow, you know, crazy things like this. The next day, we'd be up, five o'clock in the morning, in the dark, ready to go for the day, shooting pictures.

SH: Was it a shock for a young man raised in East Orange to go to the South? Did you see anything in the South that was a shock to you?

AM: Well, the shock [was] how some of these people lived so poor in these cotton fields, you know, sort of shocking, but, later on, when I got out of the service, my dad and I and another fellow, we toured all through the South, camping in the mountains. …

CN: Had the South changed much since your first time there during the war?

AM: It hadn't changed much then, in that short time, but, … I couldn't believe, when Irene and I went back to Europe, the construction and what they'd done rebuilding some of these places. ... I felt so sorry, when we'd go through a little village, … like Maastricht, Holland, it was flattened out, and where did these poor civilians go and live? and I remember seeing … an old woman dragging a wagon with lumber in it, logs, with a rope around her shoulders and all, dragging this thing down the street.

SH: Were you impressed with how they were able to adapt to the destruction?

AM: Yes, yes. I couldn't believe how they could have taken it, but, look at, in London, the people, … and all the children were shipped out of London to the countryside.

SH: Did you take any pictures of life in the British countryside?

AM: I have some, you know. … You'd be here all day. I have another pile of pictures. … That's in Louisiana, Jerry, Tommy Madray, and myself. That's where we lived on maneuvers, in a tent.

CN: Were these taken in Louisiana?

AM: Louisy-ana. [laughter]

SH: Did any of your brothers join the service?

AM: My one brother, who's dead now, … he was in the 100th Infantry. He was a private in the front lines, up to Cassino, but, we never talked much about it.

SH: Did you ever get a chance to meet up with him?

AM: No, no. He was … in Italy, came up through the southern way, and I'm going through my computer, trying to find out more about his unit, and what they did, and anything about him, and I finally found somebody that's trying to do something about it.

SH: Your Army career was quite different from most of the men that I have interviewed.

AM: Yes.

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

SH: This continues an interview with Mr. Albert Meserlin.

AM: Here are a few of the pictures … of the parade at Reims after the surrender and there's a little French girl sitting on the curb with an American flag. …

SH: That is a precious photograph. This was taken in the center of Reims.

AM: … Reims, yeah, right after the surrender.

SH: They are all dressed up, standing with their mothers, five to eight year-olds. American GIs are walking down the cobble stone streets. There is a gentleman with a full, white beard playing a drum. People have babies in their arms. Some are dressed in native costumes.

AM: I'm just going through a bunch of pictures here. Here's one, here, members of the 101st Airborne who had jumped on D-Day, we're taking them back to England. That was on that LST, when … we picked them up. …

SH: There are no names, but, it is a great shot. They look relieved. We have other photographs of the rodeo and the maneuvers in Louisiana here. Someone is trying to milk a cow. [laughter]

AM: That's Cowboy, our driver, on maneuvers. There's me taking a picture in the snow, in back of headquarters, of Col. Gout, Ike's British adviser.

SH: Where was this?

AM: In Reims, in back of headquarters.

SH: It looks as if there are four inches of snow on the ground.

AM: Yeah.

SH: Gault was one of Eisenhower's advisers, correct?

AM: Yes. I think I mentioned him before. These are where you were, at Hyde Park.

SH: This was taken at the reunion in 1995.

AM: Yeah. …

CN: What was the mood like at the parade in Reims?

AM: Oh, God, they were going crazy there. The war had just ended and, I don't know, you know, it's funny, you're a young boy, I guess it took me many years after the war to realize what you went through. … My feeling is, "How did I ever get to photograph the surrender?"

CN: That is incredible.

IM: It was incredible. I used to know where he was, though, 'cause I'd follow Eisenhower. I'd know where he is.

SH: That must have been a comfort in itself. When you returned to the United States and you were discharged, what was your attitude? Did you just want to get back to work?

AM: This is interesting. When I came back with the Hollywood movie men, I got off the plane in New York, yeah, … I guess it was La Guardia, with my big duffel bag and all. I didn't have two cents, [laughter] … and I finally got the subway to Newark, to the railroad station at Newark, and Irene worked across the street, in the Ironbound branch of Fidelity Union Trust, and I went in there, and they knew who I was right away, and one of them drove me … to your house. I didn't have any money and [they] drove me up. … Irene never knew when I was coming home until I walked in. … Then, I had to report … in Washington, when I was in, … and then, I was on a two week leave of absence, and, fortunately, Irene had girlfriend that had a big, beautiful home and farm in … Rochester, Maryland. Bob and I went over there and stayed, what? a few days. … I can remember riding her horse up and down the front lawn, [laughter] breakfast in bed. They treated us like kings, two GIs home.

CN: Was this the same Bob who had been your movie man in Europe?

AM: … Yes, yes, … and then, he took off. He lived in California.

CN: Was he on the tour with you?

AM: Yeah, that's how we got home together. He was on the tour with me. …

SH: When you landed at La Guardia, where did he spend the two weeks? You were with Irene, obviously.

AM: Well, he just stayed the few days that we did at Irene's friend's house, and then, … he flew off to California. I never saw him again. I've heard about him through letters from my friend, Dick Ham, in California. He said, "Yeah, he's sober now." [laughter]

SH: How much time elapsed between your arrival in New York and your discharge from the Army?

AM: Oh, gosh, it was maybe three or four weeks.

IM: You had that room in the hospital. … You had to go to the hospital.

AM: … Because I blew my stack and got mad when I was gonna get on the ship … in Brooklyn, they sent me down to Fort Monmouth, to the hospital, and I was there, what? maybe a week.

SH: What was wrong?

AM: … Fatigue. I just blew my stack, because I didn't want to go back. Boy, did I blow it. I was mad. I was screaming in front of a colonel. "You're going to send me back over there?" and I got out, and, … fortunately, the Jap war ended a short while after.

SH: What did you do in Washington? Were you being debriefed?

AM: I had to report in. I don't know, according to the government, when you're a GI, they want to know where you are at all times, [laughter] and that's the worst thing you can do. You always try to hide, but, that time, I couldn't. He had to sign papers, so that I got the two weeks leave of absence, and then, I had to go back.

SH: Your two week leave did not start until you reported in to Washington.

AM: 'Til I reported to Washington, yeah. I probably could have hid home, [laughter] for a month, and then, I'd probably end up in jail. … Yeah, I was a runner when I left the bank. …

SH: You had taken courses at Rutgers and at Seton Hall before the war.

AM: Yes.

SH: You graduated in 1939.

AM: No.

SH: Just to jump back, what do you remember about the Great Depression?

AM: I can remember walking the railroad tracks from Ampere to Newark, looking for coal. [laughter] Yes, we were very fortunate, though, in a sense; my father, he owned several pieces of real estate and he was able, by the skin of his teeth, he might have lost one, to hang on to them, at least get some rent coming in, but, you know, when you look back, they were great days when you're a kid, growing up. I grew up in East Orange, and, you know, … the ice man would come around, you get a piece of ice off the back of the truck, and, you know, you didn't have heat like this. I mean, all the GIs can tell you this. In fact, you had to shake the furnace and get the ashes and put them out.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You were talking about what it was like to be a kid in East Orange.

AM: It was great, you know. … We lived on Maple Avenue, near Springdale Avenue, and right after school, … across the street, in back of the houses, was this big, empty lot, a big area, like a little forest, and that's where we played baseball, football, everything, dig ditches, build a fort, you know, and you don't see that done today with kids.

SH: What were some of the games that you played as a kid?

AM: Well, I'll tell you what we used to [do]. They have these boards they ride, these roller skates things. Well, we used to get an old, wooden egg crate, which was wood, then, and we'd get a two-by-four and nail that on to it, take an old pair of roller skates and take them apart, and put one part in front of the two-by-four, and then, out the side, we used to put two boards out like a handlebar and nail them on, and we'd get a tin can and put it in the front, that was the headlight, … and we had fun doing that, and we played hockey in the street and kickball, you know. We just made our fun. … One fellow had a coop for his homing pigeons, and we used to get on our bikes, and then, he'd take the pigeons from the coop, and we'd ride miles, almost to Princeton, and he'd leave them loose, and, you know, we made our own [fun], but, you don't see this today, kids doing all these things.

SH: Were you ever a Boy Scout?

AM: Oh, yeah. We had a Troop 1 in the Arlington Avenue Presbyterian Church. Troop 1, it was just great, and I can still tie some knots that I did learn there.

SH: How long did you stay involved with the Boy Scouts?

AM: Gee, I don't know.

CN: Were your brothers involved with the Boy Scouts also?

AM: Yeah, my one brother was, not as much as I was. Bob was more into sports than I was. I was a model airplane maker and those things, you know, little gas engines.

SH: Did your father have any stories about Edison?

AM: No. Gosh, he dictated … a whole thing to the girl next door on tape about Edison when he worked up there and all, in the office, and somewheres in the museum is a group of pictures and my dad's in one of them. Years ago, you know, you threw things away. I used to have a bunch of those old Edison records that were a half-an-inch thick and they're gone, you know, things like this, you know, things you only see today in the antique stores for sale. Like all of us, the things we throw away are Lionel trains and everything else, but, it was great then. In fact, it's funny, you grow up and you can still remember the names of the store owners in the little stores that were near where you lived.

SH: Did you have a job when you were a kid?

AM: Yeah. Well, I wouldn't have a shirt on my back if I hadn't delivered newspapers and slept on the floor when it was so hot, and get up, and not wake the rest of the family up, and pull the wagon with newspapers around, and the little candy store was owned by Rubenstein, a little Jewish man and his brother owned this candy store, and I worked in there, when we could, and

my brother worked in Carlson's, a grocery store, and then, there was Berlin's and a butcher market, and an old, little A&P store, with the old butter tubs, which you don't see anymore. [laughter]

SH: Did you go into New York at all?

AM: No. … In high school, my favorite thing was going to the 1939 World's Fair and I have a whole set of pictures from the 1939 World's Fair. I had two buddies, Will Johnson and Phil Nordt, and the three of us were all photo nuts, and we used to get on the train and subway and all and go to the '39 Trylon and Perisphere. … I still have all the negatives and all of them, and one of them, … Will Johnson passed away, but, Phil, he ended up being a cop in the Essex County Park Commission, and he lives up in New York State, and he's pretty well crippled up, and he's six-foot-eleven, and we used to go together. His Army jacket … looked like an overcoat on me, when we got together after the war, ... but, we still talk on the phone and get together, and he gets down, when he can. ... One of his two brothers had a little airplane down at Newark Airport, when Newark Airport was hardly anything. They had a little airplane, called a (Luscome?), and we used to go down there on our bikes or go down with him and get in a plane ride, once in awhile, with him, but, that's going way back, 1938, '39.

SH: Since you were interested in aviation, had you thought of joining the Air Corps?

AM: No. I flew a lot on the Louisiana Maneuvers, most every other day in an L-5, shooting pictures in a little L-5.

CN: How different was it to shoot pictures from an airplane?

AM: I don't know. ... I have one (other?) scary experience, when the movie executives were over, visiting, and we had to fly from somewheres in North Germany, ... we were flying to Africa, but, we never got there, and there was just the pilot, and the co-pilot, and Bob (Quirk?) and I on the plane, with all our equipment and all, and we ran into a heck of a storm, and the last thing I remembered was ... going over the Alps, with treetops about ten feet below us, [laughter] and you were screaming and praying, and I played a harmonica and I was playing that. We were scared to death, but, ... finally, we had to land in a field. We never got where we were going and [we] got out. ...

SH: Did your musical talents put you in demand? [laughter]

AM: No, no, it didn't. I can tell you about some drunken times, getting on a stage, with Jack with a violin and me with a harmonica, half drunk, in some little town.

SH: Was this in Louisiana or Europe?

AM: In Europe, making an ass of ourselves. [laughter] ...

CN: What else did you do during the war to blow off steam?

AM: We didn't get much time. Well, if we ... were told, "Ike's going to be gone for a couple of days," we just played our card games and went hunting or something in the woods, you know.

SH: Did you ever take any R&R leaves?

AM: Well, we were on (half?) R&R most of the time. [laughter]

SH: Did you go to any official R&R rest homes?

AM: No, never, no. I have some pictures of the fellows coming into Paris, R&R, ... in their trucks with all their [things]. ... I had a fellow here the other day, he wasn't in the Army, but, his father sent him something, sent his mother, a box of pictures. The whole box of pictures, there must have been a hundred of them, [were] all of Hitler, every phase of his life. I couldn't believe it, and then, out in the car, he had two flags, Swastikas, the German Swastikas. ... His father sent them, he was in the war, during when I was there, and sent out this box home with these pictures. I don't know how the heck he got them home. Oh, they wouldn't have been any ... secrets there.

CN: Did he take those photographs himself?

AM: No, no, somebody else had taken them. They were all in this box, this German, wooden box. Boy, they were unbelievable.

SH: Going back to your high school days, you mentioned that you were involved in the camera club.

AM: Oh, yes. It was a hobby. I belonged to the camera club.

SH: Did you belong to any other clubs or participate in any other activities?

AM: No, nothing. I really enjoyed my [photography].

SH: Did you ever consider going to college right out of high school?

IM: He couldn't afford it.

AM: It's the Depression. You're lucky [that] you were getting clothes on your back and eating at that time. ...

SH: Just for the record, that was the symbol for money. [Mr. Meserlin rubbed his fingers and thumb together.] [laughter]

IM: My mother sent my two nephews to Colgate and Lafayette, Yale, ... but, my brother, Teddy, he had a scholarship to Yale and Cornell.

AM: Oh, he's a brain. You know, if we had a cocktail party, he'd come with a suitcase and go in the other room and study. ...

SH: How did you land your job at the bank?

AM: When I got out of ... the [high school] graduating class, Fidelity Union Trust Company, because one of the senior vice-presidents lived in East Orange, ... he would pick two graduates out to come and start in the bank as a runner, 'cause you couldn't find a job. You were lucky if you [could], and that's how I started as a runner in the bank.

SH: Why do you think that he picked you?

AM: 'Cause I was stupid. [laughter] No, I guess I had good handwriting. [laughter] I could write numbers well. ... Yes, I think, 'cause two of us were chosen and the other one didn't get it because he didn't have a good handwriting, ... something like that I heard.

CN: They selected you right out of high school.

AM: Yeah, and I started as a runner and, eventually, ended up, after that …

SH: When you were a high school student, did you envision yourself working in the field of banking?

AM: I would have gotten into photography some way, but, you know, photography was nothing, then. Today, it's a big thing. It's unbelievable how it's come forward. ... I had a chance to go to *Look* and *Life*, but, I got so sick of traveling and living out of a suitcase. You know, people thought, "Oh, it's easy, you're a photographer," but, it's hectic. You know, you shoot a picture, you've got to write a caption, and you've got your film, and, while you're doing that, there's another good shot you're missing, so, you're leaving that behind. In the surrender room, I ran around so much, I was soaking wet with sweat. I must have shot fifty pictures in fifteen minutes. ...

IM: We saw him up on a chair in the movies.

SH: Were you involved with the Nuremberg trials at all?

AM: No, I wasn't. The fellow that did it was in our outfit, you know, the 165th, and *Yankee* Magazine, that's printed in the New England states, there was a group of pictures in there of his, and he wrote this article, and he said something in there, "I thought maybe I would end up being Ike's photographer, but, somebody else got it." I think somebody else was there, and he wasn't doing the job he was supposed to, really, but, I shouldn't say that, but, that was my feeling, "Why would they pick little me?"

SH: As a young man coming of age in East Orange in the late 1930s, what were you hearing about Hitler and the worsening situation in Europe?

AM: You know, you really didn't hear much at all, because you were young, it wasn't your interest, but, it was our interest as soon as we heard about Pearl Harbor. Irene and I were in the car, driving, and we heard that.

IM: And then, you enlisted, right away.

SH: Can you elaborate on what you were doing when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

AM: We were taking a ride in the country, you know, just going up to Eagle Rock, to neck, [laughter] no. We've had a great life together. We've traveled. ... I'm talking here, I'll be eighty-one in two months, but, we've been to a lot of the islands. We've been to Scotland, Edinburgh, we lived there for two weeks. ... A friend of ours had an apartment and made us come over.

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about your career and family after the war?

AM: ... The biggest part, then, with getting back was finding an apartment or a place to live. You know, I'll tell you, you know how much I started at in the bank as a runner? nine dollars a week. ... I still have the W-2, 450 dollars a year, and I used to say, "Boy, if I could make thirty-five dollars a week, I could live like a millionaire." [laughter] Today, you would starve to death. I mean, that's how the world has changed. I'll never forget, I ended up running the tax department in the trust department. We used to do, oh, 500, 600 ... fiduciary returns, plus, all the estate returns, and, ... I'll never forget, I used to do a lot of work on federal estate tax returns, evaluation of (closed?) corporations and the federal estate tax return, and then, argue with the IRS of the value and all, but, I became very close friends with two men in the Newark office, Jake Fisher and Frank Herzlinger, who ran the estate tax division, and we used to squabble and fight like heck, you know, "This stock isn't worth that," and this and that, "and it should be lower," and we understood each other. We became very good friends, even though, you know, we understood each other, we knew the business, and, when my daughter was ... hurt in an automobile accident so bad, they were the first ones [who] came.

IM: They wanted to know if we wanted money, anything. ...

AM: Then, as people retired, you were advanced, and I ended up running the tax department, and was promoted to a vice-president.

SH: You have two daughters. One was born in 1946 and the other in 1949.

AM: ... And it all grew from that, [laughter] grandchildren, great-grandchildren. ...

SH: When you look back on your life, how did World War II influence the man that we are interviewing today?

AM: Oh, tough question. The biggest impact, and the way I feel, ... war is hell, believe me, and I can't believe, in this day and age, from what we went through and what the world knew, that they're still killing each other in wars throughout the world. I just can't believe this. What is wrong with the human mind? It's like these high school shootings. What the heck is wrong? but, I think the war made you closer to humanity. You understood how you can make good friends and appreciate them.

SH: Thank you very much for taking the time out of your day to talk with us. Of course, we reserve the right to come back and see you again. [laughter]

AM: Well, anytime you can come back. I enjoyed being with you and you were more interesting than I was on your life. We should have taped that, but, thank you so much for coming. I really appreciate it and I hope I gave you what you want.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/26/01
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/27/01
Reviewed by Albert Meserlin 7/01