

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HAROLD W. MIERS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Harold W. Miers in Mount Laurel, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Emily Lewis: ... Emily Lewis ...

Priscilla Fasaro: ... and Priscilla Fasaro.

SI: Okay, on October 22, 2008. Dr. Miers, thank you very much for having us here today.

Harold W. Miers: You're welcome.

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

HM: I was born in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, on May 7, 1923.

SI: What was your father's name?

HM: My father's name was Russell.

SI: Where was he from?

HM: He was born in Pennsylvania, in a little village outside of Bangor called Flicksville, and they moved to Phillipsburg after they were married.

SI: What was your mother's name?

HM: My mother's name was Estie, E-S-T-I-E, a little unusual name. Her last name was Fisher.

SI: Where was she from?

HM: She was from a little crossroad village in Pennsylvania called Mount Pleasant. It's on Route 611, between Martins Creek and Portland.

PF: How did they meet? Do you know how they met?

HM: No, I really don't. [laughter] [We] never discussed that.

SI: Do you know how either side of the family came to settle in Pennsylvania?

HM: No, that's something that we haven't been able to find out. On my father's side, they probably came in the 1700s. In the Flicksville Cemetery, where my father and mother are buried, my grandfather, my great-grandfather and my great-great grandfather are all buried there, and the great-great grandfather, as I recall, he died in 1812. So, he must have been here long before then.

SI: What did your father do for a living?

HM: He was a machinist. He worked for the Dixie Cup Company in Easton, Pennsylvania.

SI: Is that another reason why they moved to Phillipsburg, since it is right across the border?

HM: Well, Phillipsburg was close and that's, you know, ... where the jobs were, in the city, [laughter] such as "the city" was.

SI: Do you know what he did as a machinist at Dixie? What type of work was that?

HM: Basically, he was a lathe operator and he worked on the parts that were used to put the bottoms in the cups and the curl at [the] top. It was very precise parts that had to be made, and then, in the later years, he worked in the research department.

SI: Researching new products?

HM: No, making parts for new machinery that they were developing.

SI: Okay.

PF: Did he receive special training for that, or was he just hired, and then, they trained him later on?

HM: Well, his training, originally, was at the Ingersoll Rand Company in Phillipsburg, and he worked in two or three other places for short periods of time during the war, World War I, and then, [he] started working in the Dixie Cup Company, probably in the early '20s.

SI: Was there any reason why he was not in World War I, or why he was on the home front in World War I?

HM: Well, he had three children by then. [laughter]

SI: Okay. Are you the youngest of your siblings?

HM: No, I'm the fourth out of five.

SI: What were the names of your siblings?

HM: My sister was the eldest and her name was Mildred. She was born in 1911. Then, my oldest brother, his name is Allen, and then, Paul, and then, my younger brother is Chester.

SI: Your mother never worked outside of the home.

HM: No, she was a stay-at-home mother. In those days, very few worked outside, especially when you had five kids.

SI: I would imagine. [laughter] What are some of your earliest memories of growing up in Phillipsburg?

HM: Well, I remember, there was a lot more snow in those days and we used to do a lot of sleigh riding, as we called it, and, of course, it's a hilly town to begin with. ... We were always outside, playing sports. I mean, we made our own entertainment by playing baseball, football, basketball, out in the street, you know. We would make a backboard and a basket, nail it on to the telephone pole [laughter] and have a basketball game.

PF: Was it a close, tight-knit community?

HM: A tight-knit community?

PF: Yes. Was it a close community?

HM: Yes, I would say it was. It's a working-class community, you know. The only division that you would find there, at that time, was in between the Catholic and the Protestant residents. You know, at that time, there was more of a distrust, or whatever you want to call it, between the different branches of religion, and we, my family, was not that way. We were friends with a lot of Catholic people, ... but there was definitely a little tension, you know.

SI: Were the Catholics more recent immigrants?

HM: Well, there were a lot of Irish and they'd been there quite awhile, you know, [since] the [1847] Famine, which goes way back into the 1840s or whenever. So, they were mostly Irish and Italian, a lot of Italians. ... Life was so different then that it's hard to explain that people were all poor, and the question was, "How poor were you?" ... We grew up during the [Great] Depression and a lot of people had no jobs and there were a lot of hobos that wandered around. ... I remember them coming to our backdoor and my mother would say, "Well, sit down on the porch and I'll get you something to eat," you know, and she'd never let them in the house, naturally, but she would have them sit down on the porch, and she'd make them a sandwich or some soup or whatever. ... Of course, the story was that these hobos would put a mark on the curb where you had a good chance of getting something to eat, you know. [laughter] ... Phillipsburg is a railroad town, so, a lot of them came in and out through the railroad. They'd ride the freight trains and we used to go down to the river and go swimming, and we were always a little leery of them as kids, and they wanted you to stay away. [laughter] I mean, they didn't want to be friends, you know. They would, if you got a little too close, ... chase you away.

SI: Were these guys just passing through or would they gather around the rail depot?

HM: Some were passing through. Some, they would live, like, under a culvert, any place where it was covered and it would be dry, you know, and they'd have their wood fire. ... Sometimes, they'd be warming up, like, a can of beans, warm it up right in the can, you know, and eat it out of the can. ...

PF: You talked about your mother being able to give them some food. How did your family fare during the Depression?

HM: Well, we fared better than most, because my father never lost a day of work. He had work all through the [Great] Depression, but, with five kids, it was still hard, you know, and we wore a lot of hand-me-down clothes. ... Sometimes, your shoes would wear through and you'd put some cardboard [laughter] inside to cover the hole in your shoe, but we were better than most.

SI: Did you have to raise food in a garden or do any hunting to supplement your diet?

HM: Well, my father was a great hunter, so, we all hunted when we were old enough, and, when he shot a deer, or any of the family would shoot a deer, we always had the meat. My mother would can, because there were no freezers in those days, and so, she would can the meat, and then, you'd have that meat all during the winter. ... We had a garden at the Dixie Cup plant. They had some extra land there and they laid it out in plots for the employees that were ambitious enough to come and take care of the garden. So, we raised a lot of stuff there and we'd go over there after dinner and work, you know, and then, on the way home, we'd beg our father to stop and have ice cream on the way home and that was the treat on the way home.

SI: Did your family have a car?

HM: Oh, yes. Yes, my father always had a car. He never had a new car. He used to buy second-hand cars and do a lot of motor repairs himself. We always had a Buick, a large Buick, and then, later, he switched to Oldsmobile, for some reason, but he always wanted a big car. I used to talk to him, in later years, and try to convince him to get a smaller car, but he wanted a big car.

SI: Were there other chores that you would have to do around the house as a kid, or just to help out with the household?

HM: Lots of them. [laughter] Well, we always had dogs, hunting dogs, so, you always had the job of feeding the dogs, cleaning up and taking care of them, but my mother was born with a weak heart. She had rheumatic fever as a child and her heart was weak. So, there were spells when she was quite sick and wasn't able to do that much. So, we would then help do the wash and scrub the kitchen floor and clean the bathrooms and all that stuff that she wasn't able to do at that particular time. So, there were plenty of chores, and we always had to help paint the house. ... My father, the house that he owned was a duplex, in which he rented out the other side. So, we always not only had to paint one side, we had to paint both sides, and, as you got old enough to do it, that was ... part of your job. [laughter]

SI: During the Great Depression, was it difficult to find people to rent the other side of the house?

HM: No. My father, ... he was lucky. He always had good tenants that took care of the place and didn't destroy it, and he never had any trouble and they stayed a long time. ... Some of them were there for a long period of time.

SI: Was your father's job ever affected? Was he ever cut back in his hours?

HM: No. As a matter-of-fact, a lot of the time, he was working overtime even. That was the lucky part.

SI: Was he involved in a union?

HM: Yes, he was. Back in the '30s, they formed the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]. I don't know if you know about that, and then, the CIO ... wanted to organize the Dixie Cup plant and, of course, they [the company] didn't want it. ... I remember, they went on strike and ... several of the employees locked themselves into the plant. ...

PF: Was your father one of them?

HM: No. He wasn't locked in, but he was a strong union man. He was never an officer, as I recall, but he was very much a union man and they used to come [to help]. ... The ones that were locked in would drop a rope down, with a basket or a bucket or whatever, and then, the strikers on the outside would fill it up with food, and that's how they kept going, by getting the food hauled up [laughter] through the rope and the bucket.

SI: Was there any violence? Did the company bring out strikebreakers?

HM: Not there. My oldest brother was involved in some of that. For awhile, he worked at a fur factory and they had a strike and the company brought in a bunch of goons to beat up the workers. So, then, the workers brought in their goons, [laughter] and so, there [was] quite a rough time there for awhile, but that was common in those days and there was a lot of violence on both sides.

SI: I want to go back to what you said about the Catholics and the Protestants in town.

HM: Right.

SI: Was that anything more than just calling names? Were there places Catholics could not go?

HM: Well, it wasn't even calling names. It was just like an undertow [undercurrent] thing, you know. ... It wasn't on the surface. It was just a feeling ... of distrust that some people had. I mean, it wasn't true of all people, but it was common.

SI: Would it be the case that Catholics and Protestants should not date or marry?

HM: Oh, yes, sure. You weren't supposed to marry, intermarry. As a matter-of-fact, when my wife and I were married, we had a Catholic boy who was one of the ushers and a Catholic girl who was one of the bridesmaids, and they had to get a special dispensation from the priest to participate in the Lutheran wedding service. That's the kind of thing you had. ...

SI: Was the church important to you and your family when you were growing up?

HM: Oh, yes, it was, very important, especially to my mother. My father was not as active, but he made sure that we went. [laughter] Even if he didn't, [laughter] we had to go, and we were brought up as Lutherans and we were very active. Of course, they didn't have a lot of social activities in the church in those days, like they do today.

SI: There were no youth groups or that sort of thing.

HM: They did have youth groups, yes, just one, but that was for the older [children], nothing for little kids. It was like high school age, and then, the women had their groups that met during the day, but it was quite different. Today, you have so much going on in the churches.

SI: You talked about how you would play a lot of pickup games and games you made yourself. Were you involved in other organized activities, like Boy Scouts or athletic leagues?

HM: [laughter] There weren't any leagues at all in those days, not in our town, anyway. I joined the Boy Scouts, but, somehow or other, I didn't like it and I dropped out rather quickly. We had a government; I forget whether they called it the WPA [Works Progress Administration] or [not]. It was a government program where they had a recreation center, very small, but that was run by the government and we used to go there, and they had [organized activities]. That's where I first learned to play basketball, and they had, you know, card games and boxing and dancing, tap dancing lessons for the girls, and so forth. ...

PF: You mentioned the WPA center and how it had recreational activities for people. Did your siblings also do that, or was it only you?

HM: My younger brother probably did. The older ones were a little beyond that.

SI: Was it popular with the kids in town?

HM: Oh, yes, yes, very popular.

SI: Were there other kinds of government or relief programs that were in effect in your area?

HM: Yes. I'm trying to think exactly what they would be, but, of course, you had the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]. You probably heard about that. So, a lot of the young kids that weren't in school ... [and who] didn't have a job would join the CCC and they'd go off to the camps and work in the conservation projects.

SI: Were there any camps near the Phillipsburg area?

HM: No. Most of those were out in the West.

SI: Okay, they were going out there for the summer.

HM: ... Yes, more out in the wooded area of the [country].

PF: You talked about younger people who did not have jobs joining the CCC. Did you or your siblings have jobs when you were of age to work?

HM: Yes. Well, we all were caddies when we were [young]. We all started caddying when we were around twelve, thirteen years old at the local golf course. [laughter] So, that gave you some spending money, you know, but, then, my oldest brother, he unfortunately dropped out of high school, and then, he worked for awhile in that fur factory. ... Then, my father had a friend who was the, I guess your production manager, or whatever his title might be, of a company where they had an apprentice program for machinists. So, he was able to get a job there as an apprentice machinist. It was a four-year program, and this is going to sound strange to you, but, the first year, he got fifteen cents an hour, the second year, twenty, the third year, twenty-five, and the fourth year, thirty cents an hour. ... Then, he was a full-fledged machinist and made fairly good wages, but he had to go through [laughter] that training program and you got practically nothing.

PF: Did your parents encourage you and your siblings to get the caddy jobs or to go out and work, or was it something that you and your siblings went out and did on your own?

HM: Well, we did it on our own, because that was our spending money. We didn't have allowances in those days, like the kids do today. ... Our allowance was what we could go out and earn ourselves, and you didn't make a lot, but money was worth something in those days. Like, we used to make eighty cents to caddy eighteen holes, and then, maybe, you got a ten-cent tip. If you got a quarter, that was good, but, with that, you could take your girlfriend to the movies [laughter] or have a little spending money.

SI: What can you tell us about your education? Where did you go to school? Let us begin with that.

HM: Well, I started out, they didn't [have] kindergarten, ... at first grade, in the school called the Freeman [Elementary] School in Phillipsburg, just one year there. ... Then, they changed the boundary lines and I was shifted to a school called the John Firth School and went there from second grade through the eighth grade, and then, I went to Phillipsburg High School and I played basketball. The first year, I was on the junior varsity. Then, I was on the varsity for three years. We had pretty good teams.

PF: What position did you play?

HM: I played guard. I was very skinny in those days. I don't look it now, but, in those days, I was really thin and football was too rough for me. I just couldn't, [laughter] my body couldn't take the beating, and I was president of the class for the last three years. So, I was pretty active in, you know, things around the school.

SI: How far away were the schools from where you lived? Could you walk to them?

HM: Oh, everybody walked, [laughter] and I would say close to a mile, took about fifteen, twenty minutes to get there.

SI: What did you think of the quality of the schools and your teachers?

HM: Well, I think, like, some are better than others, but I think they were pretty good. The math department was particularly good. A lot of the kids that went to college from Phillipsburg went over across the river to Lafayette [College], because they could live at home and they could even walk there, you know. ... The professors at Lafayette always were happy with the quality of the math that the students had, but I would say, you know, it was average. It wasn't spectacular, ... except for the math. I think the math was very good.

PF: Did you know throughout high school that you were going to go to college?

HM: Yes, I would say so. I was the only one from my family that did, but I always had, you know, good grades all through school and it was just assumed that I was going to go to college. I didn't know how or where, but I figured if I didn't go anywhere else, I would go to Lafayette. The basketball coach at East Stroudsburg wanted me to go there and play basketball, but they didn't have any scholarship money or anything, and he said, "Well, do you have any relatives that live in Pennsylvania?" I said "Yes, my grandmother." He said, "Well, we could use her address," but I didn't go for that idea. [laughter] ... There was no guidance counselor. I mean, you were on your own.

PF: Would you say a lot of people from your high school went to college?

HM: Not like today. I couldn't tell you the percentage, because a lot of them went after the war as GIs, through the GI Bill. Now, I was lucky. The football coach, who knew me from being around, saw me one day and he said to me, "You should apply for a State Scholarship." Well, I didn't even know there was a State Scholarship. So, he gave me the information and it was right down [to] the last day or two [laughter] when I got my application in. So, I went down to New Brunswick and took the exam, and, fortunately, I received a State Scholarship, which took care of the tuition, which, as I recall, was four hundred dollars. [laughter] ... Then, I worked at the Dixie Cup that summer and saved enough money so that I could pay for my own room and board, and I found a rooming house on Somerset Street, right next to the hospital, Robert Wood Johnson now. In those days, it was the, what was it called? Somerset Hospital, I think.

SI: Middlesex General?

HM: Middlesex, Middlesex General, that's right, and my sister-in-law was recently in the hospital there and I noticed the house that I lived in there for about a year-and-a-half is all torn down and the hospital's got a big building on top of it. [laughter]

SI: Yes, Robert Wood Johnson is taking over that whole area.

HM: Yes. So, there were about, I would say, eighteen Rutgers students living in this big house.

SI: Was it like a dormitory? Did everybody have their own room?

HM: Mostly, we shared, two to a room, but there were some rooms that were real tiny and you'd have [single occupancy]. Some of the people had their own individual room, but, mostly, it was two to a room. ... This little Hungarian lady, her name was Mrs. Reis, R-E-I-S, and she cooked three meals a day for all of those eighteen students and ... dinner for about twelve additional adult men from the area that lived in other houses where there were no meals there. So, they would come there and have their dinner there, and it cost ten dollars a week for room and board.

SI: Did everyone eat together?

HM: No, ... she had a real large table and you ate when you were ready, within a certain time span.

SI: Okay, like shifts?

HM: More or less, yes, but they weren't formalized. In other words, like, we'd come home for lunch; well, if you had a class from twelve [noon] to one [o'clock in the afternoon], naturally, you would eat at one, but, if you didn't, you'd probably eat at twelve. So, that's the way it ran and it was very good meals, too.

PF: Did you know of anybody else from your high school that went to Rutgers or were you the only one?

HM: I was the only one that I'm aware of, until after the war.

SI: What did you do at Dixie to save up the money to be able to do this? What was your job there?

HM: Well, I had three different jobs there. The first job, we were putting the tops on, like, cottage cheese containers, you know, put them through the machine to put wax on them. ... We were all college kids, or high school, ready to go to college or in college, and a little crazy, you know. [laughter] ... Every once in awhile, somebody would start throwing these lids, [laughter] you know, and, before you know it, the air was full of these lids flying. Well, then, I got transferred to the section where they put the cups through the machine that waxed them, and my job was to keep these vats filled with wax. The wax was in blocks so big, ... like this, that are about that thick, and you'd just put it in there and that would melt. ... That lasted a couple weeks, and then, they put me in the coffee cup machine, [laughter] where we had to manually feed this machine with these blanks that were arched, shaped into an arc. ... You lift them up and put them on this little platform, which had stops on there, and you'd push it against the stop and there were two, one on each side, and then, the machine would come down with suction cups and pick it up and roll it around a metal cone and glue it, and the machine was timed so that you didn't do the same motion all night. It would change, one went faster than the other one, so that you were [stimulated], the motion was constantly changing. That way, you didn't get as fatigued, and we used to do, like, thirty, thirty-three thousand of those in a ten-hour shift.

PF: Your shifts were ten hours.

HM: Ten and twelve [hours]. We had a lot of days we worked twelve hours. Well, we worked seven days a week and a lot of the time was seven at night until seven in the morning, and, if it wasn't seven in the morning, it was five-thirty. So, it didn't give you a heck of a lot of time for a social life. ...

PF: Was this ten to twelve-hour shift the normal shift time for Dixie Cup workers? Was it just because you guys were only there for the summer, so, you signed up for a longer shift?

HM: I'm not sure. I think it was basically normal for the night shift, the ten-hour shift, at that time. See, like, in the summer, you'd be making cups for Christmas, you know. You're always about four to six months ahead of the actual use of the product.

SI: Let me pause.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Ready?

HM: Yes.

SI: Around this time that you were getting ready to go to college, the war had already started in Europe and it was just before Pearl Harbor. What do you remember about that period? Were people talking about the possibility of war or talking about what was happening overseas?

HM: Oh, yes. I had some friends who enlisted [early], like, ... one in particular I'm thinking of, graduated in 1940 and enlisted in the Marines. Jobs were still scarce, even as late as 1940, and so, people were concerned about what was going on, definitely, and the draft had started, too. Now, ... as students, we were exempt from the draft and, in December of 1942, they announced that they were doing away with the exemptions for college students. ... Of course, we were all in the ROTC and they said, if you came in and signed up in the Reserves, Air Corps Reserves, you'd be able to finish out the school year. So, I think it was around December 15th or so, about thirty-five of us, including Dr. Zanzalari and some other of my friends, we all went into the old College Avenue Gym and signed up for the Reserves, and we never did get to finish out the semester. [laughter] In March, March 25th, they called us up to duty, but Rutgers gave us credit for the whole semester. ...

PF: I am going back a little bit; I know your father was of Swiss-German descent.

HM: Yes.

PF: Did he have any family in Germany when all this was happening?

HM: Not that we know of. It's been so long that they've been here that nobody really knows. My uncle tried to go back and check, and his story was that the state house in Pennsylvania had a fire, back sometime in the 1800s, and a lot of those old records were destroyed. ...

PF: I just wondered if that affected his outlook, if the war was happening where his family was.

HM: I mean, we didn't speak German, we weren't any more German than you are, [laughter] you know, I mean, just that we came from that background. Now, my grandfather was a veteran of the Civil War, but I think he was only in about three months before the war ended. ... As kids, we used to go there every Sunday for dinner and, when he died, he was eighty-seven years old, which is pretty old for those days. 1932, he died, and, at that time, they had an organization called the Sons of the Civil War Veterans, [the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War]. ... He was laid out in the parlor in the home, you know, and they had one of their members all dressed in their Civil War uniform with a musket, twenty-four hours a day over the casket, which was very impressive when you're only nine years old, you know. [laughter] ... Then, when he was buried, they had, I don't know, four or five that shot their rifles over the grave when he was buried, and that was very impressive to me. [laughter]

PF: Did your grandfather fighting in the Civil War play any part in shaping your outlook on going into the war in World War II?

HM: I wouldn't say so, no. He never discussed it too much. The only story I remember him telling was, they were in camp somewhere and the cook had made some pies, and I guess he set them out somewhere to cool, you know. ... One of the guys stole a pie and ate the pie, and, of course, they caught him. ... According to my grandfather, the punishment was, they strung him up by his thumbs and hung him. [laughter] You can imagine how painful that was. [laughter] That was to teach you not to steal.

SI: Before you left Phillipsburg for New Brunswick, you described the scene of the Depression and the hobos coming in and that sort of thing. Was that still the case when you left Phillipsburg, or had it gotten any better?

HM: It was a little better. ... The Depression really wasn't over until the war started and the war industry started. That's what brought us out of the Depression, really. All the work that Roosevelt did [the New Deal programs] helped to make it better, but it still was [the] Depression, a long depression, you know. It wasn't just like a year or two; it was ten or twelve years.

SI: You worked at Dixie Cup in the Summer of 1941, before you went to Rutgers. The next summer, did you just stay at school and continue your classes, or did you go back to work at Dixie or someplace else?

HM: I went to work where my brother was working. For some reason, the Dixie job wasn't there, and I worked as a painter and we were painting machinery parts, from little, tiny things up to big [things]. We'd sit there and ... put it on a stick and ... [Editor's Note: Dr. Miers imitates the careful style of painting.]

SI: Very painstaking work.

HM: Very, yes, and then, when the machine was put together and assembled, we had to go back and touch it up, you know, but, then, my boss there was a German, a real German. ... We never discussed the war, that I can recall. I guess it was a topic he didn't want to start [with], [laughter] but he was a very nice guy. ...

SI: Was the factory involved in doing anything for the war effort?

HM: No, this was a bookbinding company. They made the machinery that assembled and bound books.

PF: While you were at Rutgers, did you work? Were you just going to school during the semester, while you were at Rutgers? Did you work in New Brunswick? Was it only over the summer that you worked?

HM: I only worked once. My sophomore year, I got a job at Camp Kilmer, in the PX [post exchange], and I worked there two or three nights a week, for two or three months.

SI: What were you doing? Were you selling things to the GIs?

HM: Ice cream, [laughter] milkshakes, that we made sure they got a darned good milkshake. [laughter]

SI: In that time period, Camp Kilmer must have been growing quite a bit.

HM: Well, see, that was the embarkation camp. That was the last stop before they went overseas, and this would be interesting to you, at that time, ... there was a song, went something about, "*Heil, heil*, right in the," what was that? "right in Hitler's face." ...

SI: *Der Fuehrer's Face*? It was a joke song called *Der Fuehrer's Face* [a 1942 song by Spike Jones]. Was that it?

HM: Yes, and they had that thing on the jukebox, one play after another, [laughter] and, you know, when you were working there, you get so sick of hearing that song, [laughter] but they were building up their morale, I guess, because they were getting ready to go overseas.

PF: Going back to when you first got to Rutgers, what would you say your first impressions of Rutgers were? Did you like it?

HM: Yes, I liked it. I was very happy there. ... I thought the professors were all good and I would like to have played basketball there, but I was a little leery of not getting my schoolwork done if I played, because, going through high school, I was, you know, a little bit of a goof-off and I didn't work as hard as I should have. ... I figured, "If I'm going to keep this scholarship, I'd better buckle down and not go out for basketball." So, I didn't go out. That was my one regret, that I didn't get to play basketball. Of course, after the war, I came back. ... I was discharged on

September 28, 1945, which was a Friday. Monday morning, I was in New Brunswick, to see if I could get enrolled, because I couldn't see myself sitting around for a semester with nothing to do, you know. So, two weeks had already gone by, but they [Rutgers] were very happy to take me and I went home Monday night and, Tuesday, I was back in the dorm, ready to start classes. [laughter] That's how quick I went back to college.

SI: In that first semester, was there any kind of initiation for freshmen?

HM: Oh, we had to wear those crazy beanie caps. [laughter]

SI: Did they make freshmen do anything?

HM: No, not really.

SI: How long did that last, having to wear the cap?

HM: I don't really remember. It wasn't the whole year, ... as I recall. It was just a kind of an inconvenience. [laughter]

SI: You majored in history and political science.

HM: Yes.

SI: What made you choose that major?

HM: I don't know. I was always interested in history when I was in school, and I wasn't particularly interested in math or science at that time, although, later, I found out that I had an aptitude for that, if I really applied myself. When they tested me in the Army, they said that I had a good score in "mechanical aptitude," they called it, and that would be math and physics and that kind of stuff.

PF: I know that you and your wife went to the same high school in Phillipsburg.

HM: Yes.

PF: Did you still keep in touch and date when you went away to Rutgers?

HM: That's an interesting story. We never dated in high school. We were in the same classes and, for some reason, I had other interests, [laughter] she had other interests and we never really dated, and then, after the first year of college, the girl ... that I was dating, we split up. ... There was a sweetshop that the kids, older teenagers, used to hang out at, and they had a little room in the back with a jukebox and the kids would go back there and dance, you know, and then, they'd have their ice cream, and so forth. So, she was there this one night and I walked her home and that was the beginning, and we've been together ever since. [laughter]

PF: This was not in New Brunswick; this was in Phillipsburg.

HM: Yes.

PF: It was over one summer.

HM: Over the summer between freshman and sophomore year.

PF: Was it hard for her, or for you, to have to go back to Rutgers in New Brunswick while she, I guess, stayed in Phillipsburg, while you were in Rutgers?

HM: No, she went to Beaver College, in Jenkintown, [Pennsylvania, now Arcadia University].

PF: How hard was that, going to different schools?

HM: Well, in those days, you didn't see your girlfriends as often as you do today. Even if you were in the same town, you know, you had, like, Wednesday night and Saturday night were special date nights, you know, but I would see her, sometimes, at home, because her sister was working in Matawan and going home weekends. ... If I wanted a ride, she would give me a ride home, ... and then, Claire would come home from Beaver and, occasionally, for dances and things like that, I would go down to Beaver.

SI: Were you involved in a lot of social activities at Rutgers, like dances and clubs?

HM: Not a lot. I was, at that time, they had, what did they call it? the Off-Campus Club, or I think they called it the Off-Campus Club. ... I was involved in that, and then, a bunch of us formed a basketball team and we played in the New Brunswick league, against people who lived in New Brunswick. They didn't particularly like the Rutgers boys. [laughter] They were pretty rough on us, and then, after the war, or, no, not after the war, in I guess it was around December '42, I joined what was then called the Raritan Club. It was a fraternity, but it was a local fraternity. It was on George Street, right across from those high-rise dorms that are there now. They went national after the war, but I didn't go back after the war, because I was going home weekends, because we got engaged right away. As soon as I got home, we got engaged, ... and then, we married when I still had a year to go, in the Summer of '46.

PF: Was it a social fraternity then, or was it more academic?

HM: No, it was a regular fraternity, but it was just local, only one of a kind, and they called it the Raritan Club.

SI: Why did you decide to join the Raritan Club?

HM: My buddy, [J.] Henry Zanzalari, he's the one that got me in it. He had been in it. He knew people in it from somewhere, and so, he went in right away, the freshman year, but, then, I didn't go in until the second year.

PF: What was the process like? Was there a pledge and initiation process?

HM: Well, yes, you had to pledge, but it was very informal, very informal. I had a room with two other guys and one of them is still living, up in Hamilton Square, and the other one just recently passed away. They were both ag [agriculture] students. So, they had to walk over to the Ag School [now the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences] every day from [College Avenue]. That was quite a hike.

PF: Did the Raritan Club stay at Rutgers? Do you know if there is still a chapter at Rutgers?

HM: Well, they went national.

SI: Yes, they have Greek letters now.

HM: Yes, ... it's a regular Greek national now.

SI: One, I forget which Greek fraternity it became, and, two, I do not know if they are on campus now. It is difficult to keep track of which fraternities are on campus and which are not because of all the fraternities coming and going.

HM: ... [laughter] I should know the name of it, but I can't remember the name of it, offhand, but I think they're still active. As a matter-of-fact, Hank Zanzalari, for several years, was, like, a graduate advisor, or whatever you want to call him.

SI: Yes, I think they are still active. I remember Dr. Zanzalari talking about his involvement with them.

HM: Yes.

SI: I think they are still around. From what I understand, from interviewing other people, fraternities were very important at Rutgers at that time.

HM: Oh, yes, definitely.

SI: Was their role diminished at all by the war, or increased?

HM: Well, I would say it was diminished immediately following the war.

SI: When all the GIs came back?

HM: When all the GIs came back, there were so many of them that there weren't enough fraternities to handle them, you know, and I would say it was diminished, but they're always important.

SI: Jumping ahead, do you think the GIs were less inclined to join a fraternity? Were they just not the type that would join a fraternity?

HM: I would say so, yes. For one thing, having been through the war, they had a little different outlook on college. When I came back, I had a young kid who was my roommate in Winants Hall. [Editor's Note: Winants Hall, located on Rutgers' College Avenue Campus, was used as a dormitory, a cafeteria, a post office and for several other purposes in the 1940s.] ... You know, he wasn't eighteen years old yet, he was only seventeen, and he could care less about studying or anything. He was on the crew and he did two things; well, maybe three. He went to crew practice, saw movies every day; every single day, he would go to the movies. [laughter] He never studied. He ate, [laughter] and, once in awhile, he went to class. Well, naturally, he flunked out, but he didn't want to be there. ... Could we take a break?

SI: Sure.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Do you remember any courses or professors that stand out in your memory as being particularly good, bad or useful?

HM: ... I'm trying to think of the names. The biology professor, I thought, was very good, and the physics [professor], but the names don't come back [to me]. See, in those days, we had to take basic biology and botany, basic chemistry and basic physics. That was the requirement. They were very good. ... They had those large lecture halls, and then, we would breakdown and have lab and discussion groups, in a small group. That was a new experience, you know. [Coming] from high school, you didn't have anything like that.

PF: Did you have any experience at Rutgers that stands out as being your worst experience?

HM: The worst experience?

PF: Yes. Was there something you did not like about Rutgers?

HM: I can't say that I had anything that I didn't like. I was always very happy there.

SI: What about your history or political science courses? Do any of those stand out?

HM: The chairman of the department there, (Hurd?), I think his name was, he was good. [laughter] I remember taking this course with him and he had a reputation of being a very hard grader and, somehow or other, he liked what I did and I got what in those days was a "1." I don't know if they still grade that way or not.

SI: It is reversed. A "4" would be a "1." A "4" is an "A" today, but, back then, a "1" would have been an "A."

HM: Yes, "1" was an "A," and I think there were, like, three of us that got the "As." ... One of the other kids, he didn't know me too well, he ... saw me and he said, "Are you the one that got the 'A' in (Hurd's?) class?" [laughter] but we had a funny experience in that class. There was a guy by the name of (Tom Conti?). He was two or three years ahead of me, but we were in the

same class. ... He used to hypnotize people, [laughter] and he had hypnotized this kid and his instructions were to get up at a certain minute, you know, and run out of the building and go as fast as he could all the way down to the end of College Avenue [the main street], where there was a little restaurant. I forget the name of it, probably not there anymore, and this kid, right in the middle of the class, [laughter] he jumps up and dashes out, and that was in the Bishop House. That's torn down now, I think, isn't it?

SI: No, it is still there. [Editor's Note: Bishop House is now primarily used for administrative offices.]

HM: Is it? Well, we were right there in that front room in the Bishop House. It was funny. [laughter] We had our fun then, but we did a lot of work, too.

SI: Did you stay in the boarding house the whole time before you went into the service?

HM: No, just the first year, and then, the second year, for about, let's see, until around December 1st. That's when I went in the fraternity.

SI: You lived at the fraternity house.

HM: Then, after the war, I went into the Winants Hall for that one year, and then, the next year, I lived at home, because ... we went to summer school. So, I only had practice teaching that fall, one or two other courses, so, I stayed at home in Phillipsburg and commuted when I had to.

SI: You eventually went into education. Before the war, did you have an idea of what you wanted to do?

HM: Oh, yes, that was always my [focus]. I was in the School of Education right from the start.

SI: Okay. You always wanted to be in teaching and education.

HM: Right. ... Once I became a teacher, I realized I couldn't support my family. [laughter] ... So, that's when I decided I either had to go into administration, where I could make a few more dollars, or get out and go somewhere else. So, that's when I went into administration.

PF: Can you tell us about the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] Program when you were going through it at Rutgers?

HM: Well, every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon was ROTC. Nothing else was scheduled for freshmen and sophomores. So, we had, you know, classes where we studied military maneuvers and that sort of stuff, and then, we had drill; always have drill. [laughter] [I do not know] what the Army would do without drill, and then, we had, you know, rifle drill. We never had to fire the rifle, but we had learned how to drill with a rifle. That was about it. We never went on any encampments or anything like that, strictly class work and drilling.

SI: Did the pace or the tone of the training change after Pearl Harbor?

HM: I don't think so.

SI: What do you remember about the day Pearl Harbor was attacked?

HM: Well, at that time, nobody knew where Pearl Harbor was, [laughter] or anything about it. The significance of it was, "The war is on, you know. This is it," and it was, you know, ... a shock to everybody. I remember, it was a Sunday and I was home and my girlfriend, at the time, and I were in the living room of her house, listening to the radio, and they interrupted the program, which was music, as I'm sure, and announced what had happened. Well, it was kind of a shock to us, naturally. ... A lot of men went right off and joined immediately. I was more interested in college and trying to stay there.

PF: Did the Pearl Harbor attack change your view about the war?

HM: No. Well, it became more personal and, you know, as long as it was over there in Europe, you didn't like what was going on, you know, like Dunkirk, and so forth, ... but it wasn't quite the same as when it was your own country. [Editor's Note: Dr. Miers is referring to the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force and other Allied forces from Dunkirk, France, and surrounding battle, from May 24 to June 4, 1940.]

SI: Was there any initial reaction of panic or fear of danger, either in Phillipsburg or at Rutgers?

HM: No. The only thing was along, like, the Jersey Shore and the Long Island coast. People there were concerned about subs and, actually, in Long Island, they did land some people from subs, but, other than that, I wouldn't say so.

SI: Did they start Civil Defense training right away?

HM: Oh, yes, absolutely. My sister-in-law, she was an airplane spotter. [laughter] They had people that were trained to recognize foreign planes and they had their duty schedule and they spanned the skies, looking for Japanese or German planes, which never showed up, [laughter] but they were on the job, and then, they had special blood drives. My brother-in-law, he was all *gung ho* on giving blood. He gave blood constantly; they gave him some kind of an award for donating so much blood, and, of course, you had gas rationing. You had a little book with coupons and each coupon was worth so many gallons of gas. ... They had, you know, boards who would determine what kind of coupon you were to get. If you just were driving for pleasure, you got a certain one that gave you very little gas. ... If you drove your car to work, then, you got enough to get you to work, plus, a little bit for pleasure. Our sugar was rationed. Then, they came out with Oleo and it was white. [Editor's Note: Oleo is an abbreviation for oleomargarine, a butter substitute, now known as margarine.] ... It came in a bag and in the bag was a capsule that had the coloring. So, you had to squish this coloring, and then, push it, mix it up, to make it look like real butter. ... It's just pure white when you bought it.

SI: At Rutgers, do you remember if policies like rationing affected the campus?

HM: No.

SI: Was food harder to get? Did your diet change?

HM: No, no, we had everything we wanted as far as food was concerned.

SI: Were any programs, classes or services cut back at Rutgers because of the war?

HM: Not that I'm aware of.

SI: Did they add any wartime programs, like special classes in airplane spotting, or any thing of that nature?

HM: Not that I'm aware of, at Rutgers. ... The Navy had a program where you went to college as a Navy, like a cadet, almost, you know, and what did they call it, V-6? ... [Editor's Note: The US Navy V Programs were condensed wartime training programs for college-level students in different specialties.]

SI: The V-12 Program?

HM: V-12, I guess. An awful lot of ... young guys went into that and became officers, and the Army had some kind of a program, but I can't remember exactly how that worked.

SI: I think they had that at Rutgers, the ASTP.

HM: ... That's it, ASTP.

SI: Were they on campus before you left?

HM: I don't think so.

SI: The reason you signed up for the Army Air Corps was so that you could stay in longer at college.

HM: Hopefully, yes. [laughter]

SI: What else did they tell you about what you would be signing up for, basically?

HM: Nothing. [laughter] You know, we were in, and then, after you're in, that's when you get classified. We went to Fort Dix first, and we were there, probably, two weeks or so, and then, some went to Miami Beach and the rest of us went to Atlantic City, for basic training. They took over all the hotels and we stayed in the hotels and marched on the boardwalk, did exercises on the beach and went to classes in Convention Hall and paraded out to the airport and learned how to pitch a pup tent. That was so silly, [laughter] and take us all out there to learn how to pitch a pup tent, which anyone with a brain in their head could do on their own, you know. [laughter]

PF: Had you ever gone to Atlantic City before your training, or was it your first time?

HM: Yes, sure.

PF: You had been there before.

HM: Yes.

SI: It was just basic training, learning how to fire the weapons, how to march.

HM: Yes. They had the firing range in Brigantine, [near Atlantic City]. Brigantine, at that time, was just totally barren, nothing out there at all, and so, they set up the firing ranges out there. ... We had to go out there and learn how to fire the rifle, and then, we fired the machine [gun], the Thompson [sub]machine gun and a fifty-[caliber], or a forty-five-caliber, pistol, but very few rounds. I mean, you really didn't fire it enough to know how to do it, [laughter] but the rifle, we did learn enough. We shot that enough so that we, you know, could use it if we had to.

SI: At that point, after you had been through Fort Dix and Atlantic City, did you know what you would be doing or were you still unclassified?

HM: In Atlantic City, they had the classification program and they gave you aptitude tests, and then, on the basis of that, they assigned you to go to ... the next stage of training. Well, in my case, the fellow said to me, "You have a good score in administrative work and you have a good score in mechanical aptitude. Which would you rather do?" ... I said, "Well, I don't care. You do with me what you want, you know. I don't have any preference." So, they sent me to clerical school at South Dakota State College. That was an eight-week program and, there, we learned how to do all the Army clerical jobs. So, then, I got shipped out to Salt Lake City and, there, they decided they would send me back, all the way back to South Dakota State College, where I would get training as a classification specialist. So, we went back there, and that was six weeks, and then, back to Salt Lake City. ... In the process, my records were misplaced. So, I got stuck there for a month, and it was in this hot weather, too, and so, then, I was assigned to a B-24 [Liberator, a heavy bomber] squadron and they were in training at McCook, Nebraska. I guess it was probably ... October or so when I went there, and it's cold as the devil out there, [laughter] but you don't feel it as much.

SI: During your training in South Dakota and Salt Lake City, could you tell us what that entailed and what you were trained to do as a classification specialist?

HM: Well, we were supposedly trained to determine what jobs people would have, like what you were qualified for or what you were good at, or, in other words, "Should you be a cook? Should you be a truck driver? Should you do this or that?" and, also, to maintain the individual personnel records. Well, when you get into a combat squadron, you end up doing nothing but keeping the records. So, my job was to keep all the personnel records on all the officers and the enlisted men when they went on missions. ... They had [to fly] a certain number of missions, you have to record it, ... like, if they got the Air Medal or [another decoration], you have to record all that, so that their records are complete, you know, and so, that's basically what I did. I

kept the records for about fifteen hundred people, and we would help each other. If one person had a heavy load all at once and you had nothing, why, you would pitch in and help them.

[TAPE PAUSED]

HM: Where were we?

SI: How many people were working in the records section, doing your job?

HM: Well, doing my job, I was the only one.

SI: Okay.

HM: ... Well, first, you had the commanding officer, you had the executive officer and you had the adjutant. They were the officers. Then, you had about a half a dozen enlisted men, [and] the first sergeant. ... You had one doing payroll, and I forget the different jobs they did, but the six, there were six of us that lived together in the same hut.

SI: You each had different specialties, but you would be able to help each other out.

HM: Right, yes. See, ... when we got there, the airbase was still under construction. So, there were no planes there; there was just the ground people.

SI: Is this at McCook or overseas? This is at McCook in Nebraska.

HM: Oh, no, I'm getting ahead of you. I'm over in Italy now, but I should go back to McCook. [laughter] McCook, we were there until February, when we were shipped off to Newport News, Virginia, which was the port of embarkation, and we were put on Liberty ships. We were down in the hold. [laughter] The bunks were, I think, maybe, four or five high and real close. I mean, they put you in there like sardines, so [that] you could get so many people in.

SI: You only had a couple of feet of space to yourself.

HM: You had what?

SI: I was just describing what you were saying.

HM: I wouldn't say you had any space. You just had a bunk. [laughter] If you wanted space, you had to go up on deck. There was no space down there that you could do anything with but sleep or eat. They had the eating area. They had these big, long tables, and, of course, they were bolted down and you stood up when you ate. There were no chairs or stools or anything to sit down [on], and then, the tables had a little lip on [the edges], because, when the water got rough, sometimes, [laughter] if you weren't holding on to your tray, your tray'd go sliding down [laughter] and that would keep it from falling off. ... We got on ... this Liberty ship and we had our big duffle bags. ... We just barely got down in there and threw our duffle bags on our bed and this officer comes to the top of the stairs, that they're, you know, really vertical stairs that

they have on those ships. ... He blows this whistle and he gives us this lecture about not smoking, "No smoking in the holds, because this ship is loaded with explosives." Whether it was or not, I don't know, but that's what he told us. [laughter] Well, that kind of made us a little uneasy, [laughter] you find out your ship is loaded with explosives, but we were on that Liberty ship twenty-nine days, and there were a little over a hundred ships in the convoy. ... They asked for volunteers to ... help man the guns on the ship and to look out for submarines, and so forth. Well, so, I volunteered. ... When the storms came up, the ships started getting a little close, you know, ... gets a little hairy. You don't know whether they're going to bump together or not, but they never did. ... We had two really bad storms in the Atlantic and a lot of people got seasick. Why, fortunately, I didn't, but a lot of them did, and then, we came to the Strait of Gibraltar. ... We came through the Strait of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea was just as calm as a piece of glass, almost, you know, and we thought, "Oh, boy, this is great." Well, a couple days later, [laughter] we had the worst storm of the whole bunch in the Mediterranean. ... We landed at Naples and the dock, there was no dock, but we pulled up alongside of this sunken hospital ship that was lying on its side. So, when we got off ... our ship, we had to get on the side of this hospital ship to get ashore. ... It was starting to get dark and they put us on trucks and we went north, out of Naples, to a little town called Bagnoli. ... It was the funniest thing. We pulled up and all these little Italian kids surrounded the trucks and they're singing, "Lay that pistol down, babe, lay that pistol down," [the song *Pistol Packin' Mama*]. You know that? You ever hear that song? [laughter]

SI: No.

HM: Well, that was a popular song at that time and just to hear them singing, that was so amusing, and this replacement center was a college, a small college, named after Mussolini's son-in-law, Count Ciano, I think his name was, and we were there for a couple of weeks, I guess. [Editor's Note: Count Gian Galeazzo Ciano was Mussolini's son-in-law; the Collegio Costanzo Ciano in Bagnoli was named for his father, Count Costanzo Ciano.]

PF: Would you say your reception by the natives was hostile or very inviting?

HM: Oh, the Italian people loved us. They were very happy to see us; they didn't like the Germans at all. The Germans were just as mean to them as they were to the enemy. They didn't think much of the Italians, really, and so, they were all happy to see us. Then, of course, we had no beds or bunks or anything to sleep on, not even a folding cot. So, we had to sleep on, like, a marble or a terrazzo floor there for a couple of weeks.

PF: What were the attitudes of the US soldiers towards the Italians?

HM: You mean the American soldiers? Oh, everything was hunky-dory. There was no animosity there. They liked us and we liked them. ... I'm sure there were a few that you didn't know about, you know, but that was [it]. We ran into some troops there, I don't know if they were Afghan or what, but they were dressed in native garb, you know, like the Afghans do. ... It was funny; they didn't know how to use a toilet. So, they had to put guards on the toilets to keep them off, and they would go off in the weeds somewhere and relieve themselves. Otherwise,

they might just go right on the floor or wherever, you know. [laughter] ... They said they were terrific fighters and they were good shooters, but they just weren't trained in modern society.

SI: Were they part of the British forces?

HM: They were part of the British forces, yes.

SI: Okay.

PF: I take it this was your first time in Italy. Was this the first time you had ever been to Italy, while you were stationed there?

HM: Oh, yes. ...

PF: Did you enjoy Italy? What were your impressions of Italy?

HM: Well, Italy, at that time, ... they were as poor as church mice, as they say. They had almost nothing. We had truckloads of Italian workers that were brought to our base every day to work, and they were paid, like, the laborers were paid, I think it was sixty cents a day, but they were happy to get the jobs because, when they arrived, the first thing they did was go to the mess hall and they'd get the food that was left over from breakfast. Then, after lunch, they'd go and get another meal. ... Then, they'd bring along baskets and big number ten cans and stuff like that and take food home with them. So, they were, a lot of them, ... feeding their family from the food they got there, because food was scarce, you know, and money was scarce. ... The area we were in was, basically, the wheat growing area, the flattest area. So, they'd have to have a flat enough area to land the planes [in], you know. ... They didn't have much in the way of machinery. ... They grew wheat all around the airbase, you know. Every square foot they could grow wheat, they did, and they had this tractor, must have been about a 1903 tractor, you know, that had, I think, one cylinder and that would come through and cut the wheat down. ... Then, they would come with the sickles and scythes and go around the edges and cut every stalk they could get a hold of. Nothing was wasted, and they'd have a long bag that went over their shoulder and they would cut it and stuff it in that bag and drag the bag along until it got full. ... Then, they'd dump it, but nothing was wasted.

SI: You mentioned that, when you first got there, the base was incomplete. How quickly was it built up and when did you start getting bombers into the unit?

HM: I would say within a month or less.

SI: What were the facilities like, aside from what you described about them, growing crops all over? What was the field itself and the living facilities like?

HM: [laughter] Tents. We had those pyramid tents they called them and you can put six people in the tent, but, being the ingenious Americans we are, everybody, almost everybody, ended up with a little hut made out of stone. They have a soft, sort of like a sandstone, they called tufa rock and they used a lot of that for fences. So, the Americans would go out with a truck, make a

"moonlight requisition," we used to call it, and bring in a load of tufa rock. ... We had masons that came in and they would mix lime and mud and build these huts for us and they were, like, the same size as the tents, and then, they'd put a roof on it and put windows, a couple of windows, in it. ... The guys in the welding section would take fifty-gallon drums and cut them in half and put a bottom in it, and then, they'd have a tank outside, filled up with hundred-octane airplane gasoline, and then, an aluminum tube came in and, inside, there would be a section of, probably, five or six-inch steel pipe that was formed [into] a pot, and then, a little petcock. You'd open the petcock and the gasoline would start flowing into this, the little pipe, and you'd, "Zip," throw a match in, and you had to be sure you did it quick, [laughter] because that's pretty powerful stuff, and that's how we had heat.

PF: While you were there in Italy, were you guys able to keep up with all that was going on in the other theaters? Was there a lot of communication?

HM: Oh, well, you had the Army newspaper; what did they call it?

SI: *Stars and Stripes*.

HM: *Stars and Stripes*, and you had radios. [As] a matter-of-fact, you know, it was such a secret about where you were going, and so forth, and so on, and you're supposed to not talk about it. The first night we were there, Axis Sally, [a female radio personality who broadcast Nazi propaganda to Allied troops], was on, greeting us to our airbase. The Germans knew our squadron number, they knew all about us. So, they had their spies.

SI: I am not sure you said on the record what your squadron and bomb group number was.

HM: 780th Squadron. This is our squadron history, [referring to a printed history book]. ... That's what I looked like, and that's me with the basketball team.

SI: Okay, they started a basketball team.

HM: Yes, we had a basketball team; that was in McCook, when we were in Nebraska. We had a basketball team, and then, over there, we had a volleyball team that I played on.

SI: Was this just for fun or would you play other squadrons or bomb groups?

HM: We played among ourselves, and then, they had a tournament for all of the Air Force in Italy and we were pretty good. We went to the final game, got beat by a squadron of fighter pilots who were big, tall guys. [laughter] This is our enlisted men who worked in the office. What did I say, six to each tent? Well, there were some that didn't live in the same tent, but this is me here.

SI: What was the daily routine like, once the base got up and running? What was your daily routine like?

HM: Daily routine? Well, get up, go to the mess hall, have your breakfast, and then, come back and go to work.

SI: What would you do at work on a typical day?

HM: Keep the records. That's all I could say. [laughter] I mean, every day would be pretty much the same. You're just keeping the records, and then, we had showers that we could go to, get a shower. A lot of times, you'd do that in the middle of the day, if you had time.

PF: In keeping these records, did you ever come across records of people that you knew?

HM: Well, these are all people from our squadron, so, I knew most of them.

PF: Okay.

SI: Nobody that you knew before; is that what you were asking?

PF: Right, right.

SI: Nobody from your hometown or Rutgers, anybody like that.

HM: Oh, that, no, but, on the ship, on the way over, ... there was another squadron on this Liberty ship and I was up on deck this day and I saw this officer sitting there. He was a captain and, you know, ... officers and enlisted men, they don't associate. So, I looked at him and I said, "I think I know that guy," I said. I thought he was the trainer at Lafayette College and I knew him, he knew me, really, a little bit, and everybody called him Doc Nagel. ... So, I went over to him and I said, "Aren't you Doc Nagel from Lafayette College?" He said, "Oh, yes," and then, I introduced myself. He said, "Yes, I remember you," and so, we talked a couple times on the ship and he said, "Well, I'm going to be stationed in Foggia." He said, "If you get a chance, come up and visit." So, I did. ... There were Army trucks going in all directions. So, whenever you could hop on a truck, you could get anywhere you wanted to go. So, I got a ride up to Foggia and spent the day with him up there and he's a very nice guy. ... Later, I knew his wife. His wife was a teacher in Phillipsburg High School.

PF: Would you do that a lot, just hop on a truck and kind of go around Italy and see it?

HM: Yes, we did that a lot, but, mainly, to two or three places. ... They had a regular ride to a seashore town called Bari, which was a port, actually, too, and then, a town called Barletta, where they had a beautiful beach. We used to go there in the summer, when we had our day off. We all had a day off. So, we used to do that a lot and they had those ... little dressing tents. You know how they do in Europe, they come to the beach with their clothes on and they go in their little tent and change into their swimming clothes.

PF: While you were in the village, did you write a lot back to your then girlfriend or any family members back at home?

HM: I wrote to my girlfriend every day, even on the ship. [laughter]

PF: How open were you about your experiences? Did you talk a lot about it? Did you find yourself, maybe, censoring yourself a little bit?

HM: No, I told her about everything that was going on. As a matter-of-fact, before we left to go overseas, we worked out a scheme where I could tell her where we were when we got there, and the last letter of the last word would spell out, you know, over a series of letters, ... the name of the town that we were [in]. The name of the town was Canosa, C-A-N-O-S-A. Well, when she got that, she said, "Canosa, where in the world is Canosa?" So, she had to get out a map of Italy and look for Canosa. [laughter] Our airbase was about eight miles from Canosa, but that was the closest town.

PF: How quick was the turnaround? Whenever you sent a letter, how quickly would you receive one back from her? How good was the Army, or the military, at delivering your letters?

HM: Well, of course, the ones that I sent on the ship never got mailed until I got there. At that time, she had transferred to Trenton State and she got this package of, like, thirty letters, all at once. So, she was the talk of the campus. [laughter] Everybody saw her, "Are you the one that got all those letters?" [laughter] ... I used to write her every day, and then, ... my parents, I would write, and my brothers, my sister, especially, but you've seen the V-mail [Victory mail], as they called it. You ever seen that?

PF: No.

SI: Did we show you that in class? It was a like form that you would fill out.

PF: Yes, okay, I remember that.

HM: It was put on microfilm or something, you know, and then, they would ship that, and then, print it out, your letter.

SI: You were stationed at Pantanella Airbase for a long time, from when you got there until after V-E [Victory in Europe] Day. What changes do you remember, either in your job or what the bomb group was doing?

HM: It got harder. The missions, in the beginning, were much easier, and I think they flew, like, fifty missions before they had their first casualty, but, then, after the invasion, you know, in June of 1944, that's when things started to get harder, and they would go farther and farther into Europe and all the way up into Germany, and that's when we lost most of our people.

SI: As ground personnel, would you have much interaction with the flight crews?

HM: I had quite a bit, because these friends of mine that were on the basketball team and the volleyball team were all on one crew, and so, I was very friendly with them and, unfortunately, all six of those guys were killed. ... Three of them went up as replacements with another crew

and were shot down and they all were killed. ... Two weeks later, the other three guys went up with another crew and they were shot down, and so, all six of those guys in that crew were killed and that was a shock. This one guy in particular, his name was Larry Hamilton and we were playing volleyball, like we did every night, and I guess it was maybe eight o'clock, or whatever, and it wasn't dark yet. ... He said, "Well, I'm going back and go to bed." I said, "How come?" He said, "Well, I've got a mission tomorrow," and that was the last I saw him. That was the mission when he was killed.

SI: When your unit would lose men, either killed or taken prisoner, would you have to help notify the families or write up the letters home?

HM: No, I never [did]. That was always an officer's job.

SI: You would just handle the records indicating that they had been taken prisoner or killed.

HM: Yes. I had to enter that in the record, yes, if they were killed-in-action or missing-in-action. We had some crews that were missing-in-action and they ended up in Russian-held territory, and the Russians took control of them and held them for awhile, and then, eventually, they let them back through Egypt and whatnot, and they got back eventually, for more missions.

...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: In terms of your job, did they ever bring in new equipment or technology that helped you do your job, like recordkeeping devices?

HM: [laughter] You kidding? No, we had portable typewriters and that was it.

SI: They did not have any punch card systems or anything like that.

HM: Well, yes, the enlisted men's records all had punches around the edge and, when those were punched out in a certain way, you had rods that you could push through and lift them out. So, you didn't have to do it one by one. If you were looking for a certain group, certain class of people or whatever, you could do that. That's it, pencil and paper, [laughter] and they did have calculators for the accounting and the payroll.

SI: You mentioned a number before, fifteen hundred.

HM: Roughly, there was like, roughly, say, nine hundred enlisted men and around six hundred officers.

SI: You would have to put in a lot of information after every mission, right?

HM: ... No, not every mission, just certain things were put in. Like, if they completed so many missions, you would enter that, like twenty-five or something like that, or, after a certain number of missions, they got the Air Medal, and then, if they completed another number, they got what

they called the Air Medal with an [Oak Leaf] Cluster, and so forth. So, that's the kind of stuff you put in, not every mission. That would be too big.

SI: Did you have to handle disciplinary records?

HM: We didn't have any disciplinary problems. ... Air Corps is a different group than the Army. Let me tell you a little story. One day, I was up at group headquarters, there are four squadrons in a group, and we were outside there, hanging around for some reason, and the General from wing headquarters comes out. ... These guys, they're sitting there and, of course, normally, you'd jump at attention and salute and all that, you know, and they just sat there and ... they waved and said, "Hi, General," [laughter] you know, like this. ... So, the next day, a message went out, "We've got to have more military discipline around here," [laughter] but that's the way it was. I mean, there was never any saluting or anything like that. Our commanding officer was a lieutenant colonel. Well, he came in and out of our headquarters, you know, all the time. Well, nobody ever ... called anybody to attention when he came in and out, you know. I had one funny experience with him. ... He happened to be flying that day and he came back from the mission and his jeep was parked at the squadron headquarters. So, one of the two officers said to me, "Harold, you go down, pick up Colonel Cook and his crew," and there was a trailer with it, you know, a little trailer, a little box trailer. Well, there's ten guys in the crew. So, I drive this jeep down and they all jump in. He's sitting in the right seat, you know, and I'm driving in the left seat and ... they have all their flight gear and everything. It was a big load, you know. So, we're going up this dirt road, up the hill, and he said to me, "Go up this way," over just no road at all, you know, ... and a real steep hill. So, I start up and I don't know how to use the low-low. You know, they have a low-low gear in a jeep, and so, the thing stalls out. He says, "Put it in low-low." I said, "I don't know how, Colonel." I said, "I never drove a jeep before." He said, "Well, put the clutch in," he says, "and I'll put it in gear, and then, you can go." So, I put the clutch in and he shifted the gear into low-low. Boy, that thing went right on, it's amazing, the power they have when they get in that low-low gear, but that was embarrassing, [laughter] with the Colonel.

SI: What did you think in general of your officers?

HM: In general? Like everything, good and bad; our adjutant was a pain in the butt and everybody hated him. The Major who was our executive officer was just a wonderful guy. He would do anything for his men and he was a veteran of World War I and he was; what did they call it? He was an enlisted man, but a top enlisted man in World War I, and, when World War II came along, he was, you know, [in his] mid-fifties and he enlisted and he got an automatic commission as a captain. ... He was our, originally, ... intelligence officer, but we went through, I think, around three executive officers, all of whom were complete failures, and, finally, they gave him the job of being the executive officer and, boy, he ran that place like a machine. In the morning, ... he was on the phone, talking to somebody, and he's shaving at the same time. [laughter] ... He could do two things at the same time and know what he was doing, and he is the one who was responsible for this. He got all this material together and wrote it up, had it printed after the war, and I don't know if his picture's in here or not.

SI: This is your unit history book.

HM: Oh, here he is, here. See, he was in his mid-fifties. You know, most of the officers, they were in their twenties. The commanding officer was, like, twenty-five or six.

SI: The Army Air Force did have much younger officers than the Army, the regular Army.

HM: And they were all, the pilots and all this, ... young, but this gives the whole history, pictures of every crew, pictures of the individuals.

SI: Did you ever go on any of the planes as an extra crewmember?

HM: No. The only one that ever did that was the photographers. I flew. They had planes that were, shall I say, pretty well worn out and they used them to fly people to Rome and to Naples, on leave. ... My first experience was funny. ... We were going to Rome and got in this plane and, ... on each side, there was a big window for the machine gun, you know. ... So, we were looking out the window and the guy, the pilot, starts warming up the engines, you know, one engine at a time, and the wing is flapping up and down like this, you know. [laughter] I looked a little scared, I guess, and one of the guys who was a regular flyer said to me, "Don't worry," he said, "it's supposed to do that," [laughter] but, boy, it was amazing how much that was flapping up and down. Yes, ... I went on a, what was it? three-day leave, I guess, to Rome. ... Every day, the Pope [Pius XII] would have an audience with the service people and all the GIs would have rosaries and beads, and so forth, and he would, you know, reach out and bless them, and so forth. I had, I forget whether it was beads or what, and I gave it to one of my Catholic friends and he thought, boy, that was great. This is a picture of a special plane that we had. It was called ... *V Grand*. ... That was the five thousandth B-24 [Liberator] that was built in the plant out in San Diego and all of the people that worked on the plane signed their names on it. ... It flew, I forget how many missions, not a full number of missions, and then, they sent it back home and they used it for bond raising activities. They'd fly to different places and let people look at it and whatnot. ... We were assigned that ship. ... One of our ships was in *Time*; not *Time*.

SI: *Life*?

HM: *Life* Magazine, and I have a picture of that somewhere, where the wing is coming off, been hit real hard and the left wing is, instead of being out here, is like back here, ready to fall off.

SI: Pushed back.

HM: That was in all the magazines, and we had a lot of sadness, but a lot of joy, too. We had our enlisted men's club and the officers had their club. ... That was open at night, was never open during the day, and, of course, we had all the beer that [was allotted]. You were given rations, of course, and then, we'd go into the nearby Italian city and bring back Italian "bathtub" gin and whiskey and wine, you know, ... different kinds of drinks, and then, we had a bar going all night. ... I shouldn't say all night, until probably ten o'clock or so, and a lot of gambling, [laughter] craps tables, poker, blackjack, everything, a lot of gambling, and some guys were so lucky. We had one Jewish guy, a young kid from Brooklyn, he sent more money home, you

wouldn't believe, [laughter] because, when they wanted to send money home, they had to come into squadron headquarters and go through the procedure of sending money home, and, boy, he was so lucky, or good, I don't know. ... Then, there were guys who were broke the first day they got their paycheck, you know. Well, there weren't any paychecks. We were always paid in cash. ... On payday, the adjutant and the clerk in charge of payroll, they'd sit down at a table and everybody would line up and you'd come in. ... They'd count out your money and you'd sign on the dotted line that you got it [the pay].

SI: Did a lot of people get their money that way or did most people send it home? You could do that, right? You could opt to have it sent home.

HM: You could have some deductions, yes, like, usually, that would be for buying bonds or something, as I recall, but I know, when I got out of the Army, I had saved eighteen hundred dollars, which was quite a bit of money when you figure you're only making seventy-five dollars a month, but you don't have that much expense, you know. You get your free meals, ... everything's free, except when you would go off base. ... Then, even when you would go off base, they had places for you to stay overnight that were run by the military.

SI: Did you ever have any interaction with the USO or the Red Cross?

HM: Oh, yes, both. The Red Cross would send people around, and the USO [as well]. We had Joe Louis, the boxer, came, put on a demonstration, but there weren't too many of them, but they came. I shouldn't say this, but they spent most of the time with the officers. [laughter] The officers had the freedoms, and so, ... most of those people were spending more time with the officers than they were with the enlisted men. Today, you wouldn't find that. ... I don't know, a different society today; people are looking out more for the enlisted man.

SI: You did see a real difference between how an officer lived and how an enlisted person lived.

HM: You mean over there, during the war?

SI: Yes.

HM: Oh, yes, yes. They got better food.

SI: Did the officers' club seem better or more well-stocked?

HM: ... I was never in the officers' club, but I know, from talking with people, that, you know, it was much nicer. Ours was very plain, ... but they had the wherewithal with the money and, ... well, that's society, democratic society. [laughter]

SI: What about the end of the war in Europe? What do you remember about that?

HM: I remember a bunch of drunken people. [laughter] That night, we got word on the 7th of May that they were going to sign the treaty tomorrow, the 8th. So, that night, the 7th, everybody was partying it up, and it just so happens that came on my birthday, May 7th. ...

PF: Were you out there celebrating as well?

HM: Sure. [laughter] I wasn't much of a drinker, but I was pretty well loaded, I guess, that night. [laughter] I know I was sick the next day.

SI: Did the group do anything after combat ended? Did it have to go on relief missions or anything like that?

HM: Well, as soon as the war was over with the Germans, they started flying out the planes and they'd fly them back to the States and get them ready to go to the Pacific. ... Almost immediately, they took the ordnance section and transferred them out, because they were going to be handling the ammunitions and whatnot that had to be taken care of, and then, in June, all the rest of us were sent to Naples, first, and then, put on a ship and sent to Trinidad. ... Then, from Trinidad, they disbanded the organization altogether and the men were shipped to different airbases between Natal, Brazil, and West Palm Beach, Florida, because they needed more help at those airbases to handle the planes and the people that were being flown back to the States. They would take off from West Africa, and then, land in Natal, or the base that I was at, was at Fortaleza, [in the state of Ceara, Brazil], because ... it's only, like, I think, a thousand or eleven hundred miles across that way. ... We got all the four-engine planes, because they had the ability to fly a little farther, and the two-engine ones landed at Natal. So, then, I was shipped down there and that was an experience, because Brazil, at that time, was pretty backward, very few cars; about the only cars you saw were embassy or some government cars, you know, and then, they had these, well, I call them "Toonerville trolleys," [after the Fontaine Fox cartoon strip]. They were real, real old and they didn't have, really, brakes of any [kind]. The conductor or driver had a wheel and, when he wanted to brake, he had to turn this wheel around to get the thing to stop, you know. ... So, you'd stand along the road, waiting for the trolley to come along, and, when he was a half a block away, you'd wave him down, you know. ... Sometimes, he was able to get stopped by the time he got to your corner and, sometimes, he'd go by and you'd have to run down and get on wherever, or, even more so, jump on the running board. They had sort of running boards along the sides, both sides of the trolley. So, ... people would just jump on there and hang on to the post and ride, and then, if the conductor would come around to take your money, they'd jump off, and then, when the next one came along, they'd jump on. That way, they could get a free ride. [laughter] They did that in Italy, too. In Rome, they used to do that. ... They were all open, the cars were all open, and they had these running boards just, like, one step up, and you could just jump on there and jump off. We had, like, a USO building there that was nice and they used to have parties there. ...

SI: In Rome or in Fortaleza?

HM: Fortaleza; well, Rome, too. Rome had lots of stuff. Fortaleza was a town of about 125,000. So, it was a pretty good-sized town, ... but, in Brazil, at that time, all these cities like that were totally isolated from each other. None of the roads connected. They would go maybe fifty miles out into the country, and then, they'd stop. So, a lot of the transportation between towns would be by boat on the river or by airplane. You couldn't drive between cities.

SI: Your duties there were basically the same as they had been in Italy, managing the personnel files.

HM: Yes. I don't remember too much about exactly what I did down there, but I'm sure that's probably what it was.

SI: When you were in Italy, did you ever take on any additional duties or were you given any additional assignments?

HM: Well, right when the war ended, they asked me to teach a class on Chinese history, which I knew nothing about, but they knew I was in education, and so, they asked me to do it. Well, I just read the book one day ahead of the rest of them [laughter] and learned about [Chinese Nationalist leader] Sun Yat-sen, and so forth. ...

PF: You spoke briefly about the end of the war. How did you feel when you heard about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

HM: Oh, we were a hundred percent in favor of it. A lot of lives were saved, American lives. A lot of Japanese lives were lost, but the Japanese had a terrible reputation for brutality after Corregidor and Bataan, and a lot of other islands. They were really brutal and mistreated the American soldiers terribly. So, nobody felt sorry for the Japs. I think the Germans did some of that, too, but not nearly as much.

PF: As the Japanese?

SI: I know that, at the end of the war, they had the point system.

HM: Right.

SI: Since you were the person in charge of the personnel files, did that affect your job at all? Were people trying to find out how many points they had based on their file?

HM: ... I didn't actually do it, but somebody took the records and figured out how many points you had, but I didn't have to do that.

SI: Okay.

HM: But, I got out early because I had a lot of points. I think I had something like 128 points or something. They gave you so many points for being overseas for each month and, like, one for one while you were in the States, and I think it was two for one while you were overseas. ... Then, it seems to me that they gave additional points for any commendations that your unit had, like, we had two or three unit commendations, which go on your record, too.

PF: Were you nervous at all about returning home? Were you nervous about, maybe, things having changed a lot since you had been gone?

HM: Just happy. I had a chance to stay in and be appointed as a warrant officer. ... In January of '45, they gave a test for anybody who was interested in being a warrant officer and I had the highest score in the wing. ... I think it was in April, they announced the scores and they said I could be appointed a warrant officer, but I would have to sign up for one year. I said, "Are you crazy? [laughter] You know, the war's over, almost. Why would I want to sign up for a year? [laughter] I want to go home." So, I didn't take that. That was no good for me.

SI: Early in the war, had you ever thought about OCS [Officer Candidate School]?

HM: Well, I took exams, but I never did find out what my scores were. I'm sure ... my scores were high enough to be appointed, but, once I was in a combat outfit, forget it. Nobody gets pulled out of a combat [outfit]. Once we were training in McCook, we were designated for overseas quick, you know. So, I never heard my scores, but I did take them, OCS [tests]. See, they had too many officers at that point. They'd really had an oversupply of officers, because they weren't sure how many they needed. ... Like, in the Army, they used to say, "When in doubt, make seven copies," because you never knew how many copies you needed.

SI: The whole process of coming home from overseas and getting out of the Army was a pretty rapid succession of events for you.

HM: Yes, it was. We flew home to West Palm Beach and we were there probably two or three days, and then, put on a train to Fort Dix and I was discharged around the 28th of September [1945].

SI: You went right back into Rutgers.

HM: ... Yes, discharged on Friday and down there registering on Monday. [laughter]

SI: Was it difficult to readjust to civilian life, to be in the military and, literally, the next week, you were sitting in a classroom?

HM: I think the biggest adjustment was coming back and being put in a dormitory with all these crazy seventeen-year-olds. [laughter] You know, they seemed so childish and juvenile and, you know, you've been through the war and you're serious about things. That was the biggest adjustment, I would say. As far as the class work was concerned, it didn't bother me.

PF: How different was the campus when you got back? Had it changed much?

HM: It really hadn't changed at that point. From the time that we went [back to college], the first change came right soon thereafter, when they opened up the barracks at Raritan Arsenal. I don't know if you know about that or not.

SI: Yes.

HM: Yes.

SI: The students lived in the barracks and they were bussed over.

HM: Yes. ... All these GIs were coming back and enrolling and they had no space for them to stay. So, they made this deal with the Raritan Arsenal to let the students live there. So, then, they had busses that took you back and forth. ... Then, also in '46, when I worked that summer, or I went to school that summer, they started the trailer park over on the other side of the river and I worked over there for the Bosenberg Family, who ran the groundskeeping for the college, and that was dirty work, but it was money. [laughter]

PF: Did you know that you wanted to definitely get your master's, and then, ultimately, a doctorate?

HM: Well, yes, I wanted to go ahead, without any doubt. As a matter-of-fact, I finished my bachelor's work at the end of the first semester in '47 and I enrolled immediately for the master's and took twelve credits, and then, I did substitute teaching for that semester. So, I had twelve credits towards my master's right away, and then, I got my master's in '49. Then, I did a lot of work towards my doctorate at Rutgers and, I don't know, I just didn't seem to be getting anywhere. I didn't like my advisor, nothing was going right and I got a call from a professor at Columbia and he said, "We have a scholarship here. You think you'd be interested? ... You'd have to go full-time," and I said, "Well, I'll see what my wife says." [laughter] So, I asked her if she would be willing to go back to work, and we had three kids. So, she said, yes, she would. So, she went back to work for two years and taught in Trenton and I spent a year at Columbia, living in the dormitory, and I would come home Friday night, usually, go back Sunday night. ... In my year of residency there, I got thirty-six credits, I think it was.

PF: In one year?

HM: Yes.

PF: Wow.

HM: And I took two exams, a qualifying exam and I forget what they called the other one, was based on curriculum, and did all the basic research on my dissertation in that one year or so, and then, I only had nine more credits to get the next year and finish the dissertation. ...

PF: What was your dissertation on?

HM: Well, see, I was in school building planning. I worked for the state education department and I did school planning for the state colleges, and, also, for public schools. So, I did a school facility study for Pawling, New York, and I could have done one for Hamilton Township, but the commissioner wouldn't let me. He said that, "I might have to rule on that someday in the future," and he didn't want me to do it. That would have been nice, because we lived in Trenton, and [with nearby] Hamilton Township, I could have been doing all my work there. As it was, it was a good three-hour ride to Pawling.

SI: After you left Columbia, where did you start working?

HM: I went back to the state ed department. I got my degree in '62, and then, I stayed there until '67 and, in 1967, everything was changing, and so, I decided to start looking elsewhere and I got a job as assistant superintendent of the Board of Cooperative Educational Services in Long Island and I was there, what? thirteen years, I guess.

PF: Could you tell us about your children, when they were born?

HM: Well, Gail is the oldest. She was born in 1948, so, she's sixty years old. She, undoubtedly the brightest one of the three, was very bright and went to Dickinson College in Carlyle, Pennsylvania, and, when she graduated, there were absolutely no jobs. So, she spent a year working with a couple [people]. She and her roommate worked with a couple boys that they knew in Pennington, doing leather belts and leather pocketbooks and stuff like that. [laughter] That was the age of the hippies, you know, [laughter] and so, she did that for a year, and then, I told her, I said, "I think you should come out to Long Island," because she was living in Jersey. So, I used a little nepotism and got her a job in a pre-kindergarten program. She did that for about eight or nine years, and then, she went to law school. She always sort of wanted to go to law school.

PF: Which law school did she go to?

HM: She went to Hofstra, and, when she graduated from law school, she got a really good job in Wall Street and she worked for two different law firms, one in Wall Street and one up there by Rockefeller Center, made very good money, but she didn't like it. So, by that time, she was married and had a baby and ... that was the end of being a lawyer. [laughter] So, she hasn't done anything except be a stay-at-home mom since then. That's twenty-two years ago. Her son is a senior at USC now. ... My other daughter, Nancy, was a good student, but not quite up to Gail, and she went to Beaver, like her mother. ... She studied primary education and she taught for a year or so, maybe two, in Hamilton Township and she didn't get along with her supervisor, so, she wasn't rehired. So, then, she went into the Mobil Research Lab, outside of Pennington, as a library assistant, and then, she liked that kind of work, so, she went to Rutgers and got her master's in library science at Rutgers.

PF: Were you very happy that she returned to your *alma mater*?

HM: Oh, yes, sure, [laughter] and so, she's the head librarian at Pemberton Township, if you know where that is, and Gary was ... a fairly good student, but he wasn't that interested in college and he started working in a glass company after school. My wife was teaching at the time and she figured that was a good place for him, because he couldn't get into any trouble when he was working, and so, the people there convinced him he shouldn't go to college, he should work in the glass field. So, I told him, I said, "Well, Gary, whatever you want to do, it's up to you." I said, "We have the money, if you want to go to college, we have the money to send you, but it's up to you." Well, he wanted to work in the glass business. So, then, when he started, I told him, "Look," I said, "you're not going to be young all your life. Start your own business and, you know, let somebody else do the work and you be the boss." So, when he was twenty years old, that's what he did. He started it from nothing and he ended up probably being

more wealthy than any of them, made a lot of money in the glass business. Now, he's out in Arizona, in Sedona, and he sold his business in Long Island and, unfortunately, he took a mortgage on it and, in about two-and-a-half years, the guy was bust. So, he lost all of his money. So, now, he's started another one, out there. He's trying to keep it small, but it's hard. Right now, he's working on a big project. Paul Newman, you know, has a foundation for troubled kids and this foundation is building this big complex of housing units for the kids and Gary is doing all the windows and glass and doors. It's going to be a big project, but they're doing each building one at a time, and then, he represents a couple window manufacturers. He likes that, because there's no work involved, paperwork. He did one house, the windows cost eighty thousand dollars alone and his cut was twenty-thousand, just for selling it. So, they're doing well. ... Two of them are more wealthy than their father. The only one that isn't is the daughter who's a librarian; they don't pay that much, as you probably know, but we're lucky we've had good kids, and we have four grandkids and three great-grandkids. ...

PF: The last question I have is, would you say that your experiences in World War II have shaped your outlook on subsequent wars, like on the Vietnam War, the Korean War and even the Iraq War, or do you tend not to think about it in that vein?

HM: I don't know that I would say it shaped my thinking on those wars, but I was opposed to Vietnam and I'm opposed to Iraq. I think we're getting involved in too many places we don't belong. That's my feeling.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add for the record or anything that we skipped over?

HM: Oh, I could tell you a hundred stories, but, like, on the way over, like I said, I volunteered to be on the gun watch. Well, this one day, they called on the phone. They said, "There's a mine coming, floating through the convoy," and the gunners were given strict orders not to shoot, because they'd give away their position to the German subs. Well, sure enough, that thing came floating right by our ship and it was one of those big, round ones, with those prongs sticking out, you know. That was interesting.

SI: Did it hit any of the ships in the convoy?

HM: That's an interesting question. Apparently, they did, according to some stuff I've seen written, but we didn't know it. The convoy was so big, with about 110 ships, that they apparently got three or four of the ships, were sunk, but we didn't even know it.

SI: If there are any other stories, feel free to add them.

HM: I don't want to prolong it too much. [laughter]

SI: No, that was a good story. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

PF: Thank you.

HM: Well, it's a pleasure. I didn't know what to expect, ... but I'm glad to meet you and I'm a strong supporter of Rutgers. I always thought it was a good university.

SI: Thank you very much.

PF: Thank you.

HM: Okay, it's my pleasure.

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Reviewed by Mary Joyce Poblete 2/25/10

Reviewed by Steven Ng 2/25/10

Reviewed by Michael Brusca 4/19/10

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 4/20/10

Reviewed by Harold W. Miers 5/11/10