

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD PIECH

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Edward C. Piech on March 2, 1995 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with

Paul Sambrowski: Paul Sambrowski.

Natalie Kosonocky: Natalie Kosonocky.

KP: And, Kurt Piehler. And, I guess, I would like to begin by asking you a little bit about your parents. And, both of your parents came to the United States from Poland?

EP: Yes. They had very limited education for one. My mother was able to learn English rather quickly, but my father didn't. And, so ... there was this constant upheaval, I guess, in the home because my father was still from the old school where, you know, I'm lord and so on. So there was that conflict between my mother and father and it kind of, I think, affected all of us. But, we got along okay. ... My parents had five children, boys and two girls. All were born in Sayreville, New Jersey. My two older brothers and I became very active in Boy Scouting, which, at that time, was our salvation from the language barrier between my father and his children.

KP: Well I guess one question we had initially is, how did your parents end up in Sayreville?

EP: Ah, like everyone else. They knew someone here, and, I guess, that word got [to them], and, there [were] jobs here in Sayreville. Get a job in Sayre-Fisher first, making bricks. And, ... I guess the job was pretty rough where they worked sixteen hours a day and so on. And, then, he ... got a job in DuPont. And, my mother was a housekeeper all her life. Yes, in the United States.

KP: She took care of the home?

EP: Yes. She had five children, she was a, what's the other word?

PS: Housewife?

KP: Housewife.

EP: Housewife.

KP: Or homemaker.

EP: Yes.

KP: Your father, how did he fare in the Great Depression?

EP: It was pretty rough. We always had food on the table. We would all pitch in. Some of us, you know, would go blueberry picking in the summer and earn extra money there. And, I would take out neighbors' ashes and my sister would baby-sit. ... And, in fact, she would not only baby-

sit, but she would serve as ... a like a governess to some of the families that lived in the neighborhood. ...

KP: In fact your family is, the three of you went to college, which is remarkable.

EP: To Rutgers!

KP: Yes, which is quite an achievement in the 1930s and early 1940s.

EP: I believe my brothers were the first ones to get a college education in Sayreville or pretty close to it, yes. From our particular ethnic group, you might say.

KP: So, there was a fairly large Polish community in Sayreville.

EP: Yes, in Sayreville, yes, there was.

KP: You mentioned your father was something of the old school.

EP: Yes, ... he never got off the bus ... that was, you might say, progress. He stayed on, you know, ... the world, as far as he was concerned, the world ended, when he was about 25-26 years old. And, nothing was done better no where. There wasn't any new achievement. None of his sons could do anything better than he did or could or knew. ... So there was ... very little communication because he just wouldn't listen to us. And, he was, I don't know whether he was jealous or just that was his way of keeping control of the family. And, I believe, that was probably [true] throughout [the] United States of a good many foreigners that came over. You know, all, most all ethnic groups.

KP: Because you mentioned that his language skills were not as good as your mother's.

EP: Yes, it took him quite a long time before he was able to understand any English at all. He just refused to learn, he was very stubborn.

NK: How old was he when he arrived in this country?

EP: Ah, let's see. ... My mother was eighteen when she came over. My father ... was 25 years old.

KP: Your father was born in Poland in 1886.

EP: Right.

KP: He came over, he was young, but he was still, he was not nineteen, he was ...

EP: That's right, yes. I think, he's had something like six months of training in the army and ... for many years, I thought he was ... a remarkable hero. And, I liked listening to him talk, but

finally, after I grew up, my mother said that he wasn't and did not do any of those things. He just had six months of ... basic training. [laughter]

KP: I almost get the sense that your father would have liked to stay in Poland.

EP: No, I don't think so. No, because it was rough there. ... They had it tough there. That's why they came here. Their families were very poor.

KP: So he never expressed longings that he could go back home?

EP: No. No. We had some boarders that lived with us. Oh, they helped out, too, incidentally, during the Depression, the boarders. And, some of them went back.

KP: They were Polish, the boarders?

EP: Polish, yeah. And, they were sorry they went back because they got caught in 1939. ... We don't know what happened to some of them.

KP: So, in fact, some of your boarders did go back to Poland.

EP: Oh, yes. Two of them did go back.

KP: And, they got caught up in the war.

EP: Yes.

KP: The relationship between your mother and your father, how much did your mother run the household and how much did your father? In the sense, who kept the family budget?

EP: Well, my mother did. Oh, yes, she did.

KP: And, pay your father an allowance?

EP: No. I don't know how that worked.

KP: Yes.

EP: ... I don't think there was a need for an allowance. because all he did, he just said, "I want beer," and then he got the beer.

KP: And, your mother would ...

EP: Pick up the beer, and I would have to go get it. We got it by bucketfuls ... [for] 25 cents. It was illegal; I don't know why, but at that time, that's what everybody did in Sayreville.

PS: For sale?

EP: Yes. But, you got an awful long way to go here.

KP: I guess one other question to follow up. You mentioned that you were one of the few individuals from your neighborhood to go to college, both you and your brothers.

EP: Well, my brother, the oldest was six years older than me. And, he and my other brother, who is five years older, they were the first two Eagle Scouts in Sayreville. And, also the first to graduate from college.

KP: It sound like your brothers were good role models for you.

EP: ... Yes and no. No, no, not really. I was kind of off on my own.

KP: When did you know ...

EP: I wasn't as smart as they were.

KP: When did you and your brothers know when you would be going to college or hope to go to college?

EP: I think it's from our ... association with the Boy Scouts, with the leaders that were there. They did a tremendous job ... in instilling the desire to go on. And, then, we, our home was directly across from the Hercules Village. And, they were all primarily management people, supervisors and so on. And, the bulk of the Polish people were about a quarter of a mile away. So we in affect were ... divorced from the ethnic section of Sayreville, so that I didn't develop the accent, the usual Polish accent and so on, because all my friends were all from across the way from Hercules and from the DuPont and Boy Scouts and from school.

KP: So your Boy Scout troop was sponsored not by the local Catholic church, but it was ...

EP: Oh, no.

KP: Who?

EP: It was sponsored by the local YMCA, which was ... supported by DuPont and Hercules.

KP: So there weren't very many Polish friends of yours or Poles in the Boy Scouts?

EP: No. In fact, they gave me a hard time ... because ... the implication was you were a sissy and so on. Which was just the opposite. And, the irony of it was, as they grew up, I got to be associated with some of these fellows when I worked in a DuPont laboratory. As they grew up and they started having children, they joined, they had their kids go into Boy Scouts so ... the circle turned around. ... I don't know, there wasn't any of this business where, "you made fun of me when I was in scouts," ... that didn't matter. I was just so happy that they did turn around.

KP: You must have been a bit bemused by seeing ...

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: By the turn of the world.

EP: Oh, yes! Well, it was kind of nice.

NK: Had they wanted you to engage in more cultural activities? Was it the fact that you were leaving the Polish enclave and moving outside?

EP: Well, my father, he made an awful lot of enemies. [laughter] And, so, as a result, ... we didn't really socialize ... with most of the Polish people. Except, we had some cousins. My mother's ... sister, ... no, my father's sister and a lot of cousins. So we did associate with them at [times]. ... Well, because my mother and father went to church. In the Polish church ... in the beginning, and they had to celebrate Easter, ethnic Easter, celebrate ethnic Christmas, you know, from my younger days I remember that. But, later on all that went by the wayside because they started to drift farther and farther away from the older people.

KP: How active were your parents in the church?

EP: Not very active.

KP: So they would just occasionally attend Mass or they went weekly.

EP: Well, they ... my mother was quite faithful. She would attend almost every Sunday.

KP: And, the Mass they attended was in Polish?

EP: Yes. But, again, my father, he got mad at the Church. ... I don't know whether he was part of a little group that was overseeing some of the things in the church. I'm not sure. But, he got mad at them and he stopped going to church. So that was the end of that.

KP: You mentioned that you weren't sure, you thought your father might be Democratic, but you weren't sure. What did your father think of Franklin Roosevelt?

EP: ... He was for him. Yes, oh, yes, because he was a savior for my father and my mother because of Roosevelt's new ideas to fight the Depression.

KP: 1933.

EP: No, well the Job Corps for one. ...

KP: WPA

EP: WPA. Yes.

KP: Did your father ever have a WPA job?

EP: No. ... He was working with DuPont. They never laid him off. ... He ... ended up working, maybe one or two days a week. He always had a job.

KP: He always had to work, but he would often have reduced hours.

EP: Yes. He was an operator in a nitrocellulose plant. But, they made gun cotton. So he took a beating from the standpoint of long hours smelling acid and other chemicals.

KP: You mentioned that the Boy Scouts were an important influence. What about your public school, the Sayreville schools? How well did they prepare you for college?

EP: They were very good. I would say ... I was very fortunate to have very good teachers all through ... [eight] grades, right in Roosevelt School, Parlin, New Jersey. I don't know, if that's in there or not.

KP: You mentioned that you did not initially join your brothers at Rutgers, but instead attended a junior college for two years. How did that come about?

EP: Well, it was a matter of finances. My brother Rudy, ... he went to Lafayette in the ... first year, and we all pitched in, and were able to raise enough money for him to go to start at Lafayette since ... he got a partial scholarship. ... And, we did that by going blueberry picking all summer. And, he was a darn good salesman, he sold quite a few ... blueberries. So we [were] able to make over a hundred and some dollars in one summer. In those days, that was an awful lot for blueberries. And, it gave him enough to start at Lafayette. And, then, of course, things were pretty rough, so he got a job in Hercules. And, he worked second shift and went to Rutgers, first shift. And, my second brother, ... the one five years older than me, he, of course, didn't have enough money to go. He was still too young to start college for one, and not able to work, because he was under 18 years of age. So he went a fifth year in high school-- South River High School. He killed time there and then he got a job at Hercules. ... he ended up working steady second shift, 3 to 11 p.m., throughout four years of college at Rutgers. ... So my brothers really went through the mill to do that.

KP: And, they lived at home when they went through Rutgers?

EP: Yes. They lived at home.

KP: So your father drank a lot?

EP: Not as much as that, as he couldn't hold his liquor. He would take one drink and he was ready to start fighting. Whoever wanted to, arguing, and so you just didn't want to argue because he just escalated to becoming more mean and mean and mean. ... Of course, by the time I came along to go to college ... I was a little bit ... too young to start working, for one thing. I got to graduate when I was seventeen, and, in those days, we didn't have kindergarten. And, so, I

started going to junior college. And, then I was fortunate to get a job at DuPont in the laboratory as a lab technician. I worked there three years to save enough money to start at Rutgers. Or, at least, get going at Rutgers. And, so the time came in 1941. I enrolled. And, my grades weren't that good in high school so they ... registered me as "unclassified." And, I guess I did all right, plus the fact that ... some of my grades improved from going to junior college in Perth Amboy.

KP: So it was the Perth Amboy Junior College?

EP: Right.

KP: Oh, I interpreted the PA as a

EP: Port Authority?

KP: No. as a Pennsylvania school.

EP: No. I'm sorry, ... Perth Amboy. Most of the time I would thumb a ride back and forth to school.

KP: Perth Amboy Junior College, how large was it, and was it a WPA junior college?

EP: Yes, it was, because, believe it or not, my brother eventually got a job there as a teacher after he graduated ... from college. He taught algebra there for several years before he got a job at DuPont.

KP: Now, when you ask what use these interviews are to historians, this is a perfect example. Very little is known about the WPA and these community colleges.

EP: Oh!

KP: Because they're new to me.

EP: Yes.

KP: There may be something out there, but it's not very well known to most historians, even of the New Deal.

EP: Yes, yes.

KP: I remember talking to someone in another interview, and they said they were very impressed with their instructors at a WPA college set up in Morristown. How would you rate the instruction?

EP: Well, the only one I knew was my brother.

KP: Yes.

EP: ... I would rate them fairly well. I took German ... at ... junior college. And, I took some advanced algebra, and [the] instructors were very good, especially the German professor. She was great.

KP: And, most of the people who went to the junior college, were they first generation Americans or was it a mix of people?

EP: It was a mix. It was a mix. Yes, I can't tell any more than that. ...

KP: You mentioned that your grades were not very good at South River. Was it just a very hard school?

EP: It wasn't ... necessarily a very hard school. It was a good school. We had some very good teachers. And, South River got quite a reputation in addition to having a football team. [laughter] But, teachers were reputable ... which we were glad that they were know[n] throughout, for one thing. And, the principal, too. No, I think, maybe, my mother dropped me on my head somewhere along the line. I don't know. [laughter] But, my two brothers were very smart. They were top of the class.

KP: So it came easier for your brothers than for you.

EP: Oh, yes! I mean, ... I often told my brother, "You know, boy ... I don't know [how] you did it, working second shift and so on." And, I said, "It takes me, I have to ... read the same chapter three or four times before it [begins] to sink in, you know, and you can't do that all the time. There's not enough time in the day, to do it." So, ... that was the difference. But, I guess, perhaps, maybe, ... my brothers envied me because I was a little more outgoing.

KP: And, your brothers were more reserved.

EP: More reserved, yes.

KP: One other thing, before coming to Rutgers you mentioned going blueberry picking. And, in fact, one year you made a hundred dollars. Where would you pick the blueberries that close to Sayreville?

EP: All over Sayreville woods.

KP: The whole area?

EP: You know where the Hercules plant is, right now? Hercules and DuPont plants?

KP: No.

EP: They owned huge acres of woods.

KP: Yes.

EP: Old Bridge. It was all woods.

KP: Where we now have developments.

EP: Oh, terrible!

KP: And, so you would just go on this open land and pick.

EP: Open woods, flat woods, just woods. Mosquitoes, bugs, you know, snakes. Pick mushrooms on the way home.

KP: And, then you would sell at a stand or would you just go door to door?

EP: My brother would go door to door, and, also, he would go into Perth Amboy into a wholesale area of ... the market and sell a lot there. He would, occasionally, he would ... get lucky and contract with someone for everything that he had, right, then and there.

KP: Your decision to come to Rutgers, why Rutgers? Was it a matter ...

EP: Because it was the closest school to what I could afford, and as far as transportation-wise.

KP: Had you tried for the state scholarship?

EP: No, no. My grades weren't that good.

KP: What about your brothers? Did they try to get the state scholarship?

EP: Well, my brother got a partial one for Lafayette; my brother Frank did or not.

KP: You came to Rutgers in 1941, before World War II. We will ask you about coming back to Rutgers after the war. But, what are your memories of Rutgers in 1941? America was on the eve of war. What do you remember best?

EP: Well, what I remember the best is that since I did get credit for some of my courses in ... Perth Amboy Junior College, they started ... me [out] with physics, which is generally a sophomore course. And, let's see, I was ... out of school for three years, ... I'm getting mixed up with after the war. It was very pleasant. I enjoyed it. I commuted with another gentleman, an Irishman from Sayreville, Larry Casey. And, because I had a car and he didn't, we kind of got along real well there.

KP: And, he would give you a help out with expenses?

EP: Yes. We dated some of ... the senior girls in South River High School. I had sort of a crush on one of them there. She was three years younger, three or four years younger than I was. And, ... I joined the rifles, Scarlet Rifles. Yes, and that was great.

PS: Working at DuPont, is that what led you towards studying chemistry?

EP: Yes.

PS: Lab technician, you wanted to further that?

EP: Yes, I found that it came to me very easy. Just ... working with my hands, the balance, the mathematics that was required.

PS: Was that the first subject that came easy, because I know you said you had trouble with school earlier?

EP: That was in high school, yes.

PS: Okay.

EP: ... I didn't have so much trouble, as probably I didn't spend enough time as I should have.

PS: I know all about that.

EP: But, whereas my brothers didn't need to spend as much time. They were able to look at one thing and that's it. They remembered. They didn't have to review it, whereas I had to study like hell for that final exam.

PS: That would be frustrating.

EP: Yes.

KP: You were a commuter. How much of the college life were you able to take part in as a commuter? You mentioned you dated people from your high school in South River. Did you go to any Rutgers functions?

EP: Went to football games. ... We didn't have too many then. ... And, since joining a fraternity was out of the question because there was a financial commitment that was required there, so I didn't do any there. ... Plus, I was also still in Boy Scouts. I was a junior leader, holding a troop together with another gentleman, another [man] from Sayreville.

KP: Was this your same troop that you were a member growing up? Were you as junior assistant scoutmaster?

EP: Yes.

KP: Did you make Eagle Scout?

EP: No, I didn't. ... I probably got most of the ... merit badges that were required for Eagle Scout, but we had a disorganized troop. We didn't have ... any leader that was ... continuous throughout the entire time I was in Boy Scouts, whereas the ones that my brothers had, they left. Either they moved, I forget which, or they, yes, I think ... they had to move.

KP: Did you ever make it to a jamboree?

EP: Only to local jamborees.

KP: Local, but never to the national one in Washington?

EP: No.

KP: But, it sounds like something you would have liked to have gone to.

EP: Yes. Oh, yes.

KP: You mentioned that several of your boarders had gone back to Poland and got caught up in the war. When were you aware of what was going on in Europe in terms of Germany and Hitler? Was it 1939 or was it even earlier than that?

EP: Oh, no. No. Through my mother and father. ... All [I] can remember-- I can't go back to the year, but, I can remember it as long as I can remember being able to talk. There was always some conversation pertaining to the turmoil that was in Europe. And, ... they distrusted the Russians more than they distrusted the Germans, the Nazis, which is something that was very difficult for me to understand and accept because in my mind, from reading the papers, and so on, that the Nazis were the worst. But, we found out that ... wasn't always true, too, because the Russians killed off an awful lot of Polish officers and professional men.

KP: But, growing up you remembered it was the Russian threat that was paramount?

EP: Yes. ...

KP: Was it a shock to your parents that Poland was invaded in September of 1939?

EP: Oh, yes, oh, yes, because ... their parents were there. Their brothers and sisters were still there. Yes.

KP: Did your family maintain any contact with them during the war?

EP: I don't think they were able to, at the time. It wasn't until after the war that we heard from some of the children. ...

KP: How did you and your parents feel about America's possible intervention into the war? Did you say in 1940 and 1941 that you hoped the United States would get into this war or did they view this as very much Europe's war?

EP: I think at the time, ... it was that. It was mostly Europe's war, because, ... my classmate's father served in the German Army in World War I and it was evident to me that he was against Hitler and what he was doing, so, from that standpoint, some of that rubbed off on to me, too. ... As far as what are my feelings? ... I find it difficult to put into words because I really did not know what my feelings were in those days.

KP: It sounds like your parents did worry about their family a lot.

EP: Well, let's see. When did we start the draft? I think it was the year ... before the war started. So, yes, my parents were, because my brother ... was the first one ... to be called-- my oldest brother. But, they ... didn't really dwell on it. I didn't feel ...

KP: Even though your father was very argumentative, he didn't have ...

EP: No.

KP: Heated arguments with people.

EP: No, ... he would only argue with his fellow Polish friends, you know. That ... they would win all the wars, you know, just between two or three of them.

KP: Was there any activity in 1939, 1940 and 1941 to help the Polish nation? Any relief drives or committees to help?

EP: Not that I know of. I do know that my mother sent quite a few packages over. ... Quite frequently she sent clothes and some money.

PS: I know that President Clothier was a member of the Polish and Finnish Relief Fund, and Rutgers was very supportive of the relief fund. You were not familiar with that?

EP: No.

KP: Most of the people I have interviewed who went to Rutgers before the war, they have very fond or unfond memories, depends who they are, but one is chapel and the other one is Dean Metzger. Everyone seems to remember chapel, Metzger, and also Vinny Utz. Did you go to chapel at all?

EP: All those three, yes. They were very ... memorable. In fact, when we came back from the war, my wife was very friendly with Vinny Utz's wife. They used to wheel baby carriages up and down Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick, New Jersey. So we knew the Utzs very well. Now, but we're talking about after the war, now.

KP: Yes, so that's when you really got to know Vinny Utz?

EP: Your jumped me ...

KP: But, Dean Metzger and chapel before the war?

EP: Yes, oh, yes. ... We used to go to the chapel after the war, my wife and I, and we used to attend the Glee Club sessions in the chapel. Course, we lived in one-room apartments up here on campus.

KP: And, Dean Metzger in 1941, did you ever have any run-ins with him or dealings with him?.

EP: No. Other than just I enjoyed listening to him. He was very ... easy to get along with, likeable chap. As far as I know, back in those days the campus was ... very friendly. We all read the *Targum*.

KP: As a commuter did you feel left out at all?

EP: Oh, yes. I think I would have loved to live on campus. No question about it. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

KP: You would have liked to join a fraternity?

EP: Oh, yes, by all means.

KP: You mentioned that Doctor Reiman.

EP: Doctor Reiman.

KP: Reiman was your favorite professor. Did you meet him before the war or was this someone you met after the war?

EP: Well, I met him before the war. ... He was my chemistry teacher. ...

KP: Because you noted that he was your favorite professor. What sticks out about him that you remember?

EP: Well, ... he wrote a few books, analytical chemistry, for one. And, probably Reiman and Van Mater Did I put him down or did I forget his name?

KP: No.

EP: Yes, ... he was my chemistry professor, too, and for recitation. Two fine gentleman. I think they also taught my brothers. ... Then there was the head of the chemistry department. Tall fellow, give me a name ...

KP: This is the list of chemists.

EP: Peter A. Van der Meulen.

KP: Oh, he still sticks?

EP: Oh, yes and Henry L. Van Mater, I'll be darn[ed] very nice, too. Van der Meulen taught me some chemistry, too, but ... he was a department head. And, he was an imposing figure, a kind I think you immediately liked and trusted, quiet-spoken, confident.

KP: And, school was hard for you. And, chemistry is not an easy major. It sounds like your success is partly due to your teachers.

EP: True, yes. I had very good teachers.

KP: I guess the inevitable question that I ask everyone is where were you when the attack on Pearl Harbor took place?

EP: It was Sunday, and we were playing bridge in ... our living room.

KP: At your parents' house?

EP: My parents' house, yes. My brothers, three of us, and there was one other person, but, I forget who it was. I think it ... was a friend of my brother's and he was in uniform. So, ... that was a bombshell for all of us. If you want to ask how I felt and what did I think about it, ... that was it, yes, just tremendous. Something you'll never forget, you know. What you were doing at the time.

KP: And, for your brother in uniform, which service was he in? In the army?

EP: He was in bomb disposal, in ordnance. ... He never got a chance to go overseas, though he wanted to. ... They made him an instructor for a long time. He was stationed mostly in the Maryland area.

KP: In Aberdeen.

EP: Aberdeen Proving Grounds, yes, in Fredrick, Maryland.

KP: With your brother in uniform, he was going right off to war. What about your other brother and yourself? What did you think was going on?

EP: Well, he ... had sight problems, so he was 4-F. And, then, even if he wasn't, I don't think Hercules would let him go. He had a priority. What they call a deferment, ... although he wanted to go in the worst way.

KP: And, yourself, did you? It sounds like you wanted to go, too.

Or were you more ambivalent?

EP: ... I was more ambivalent at the time. More concerned ... with my college education. What's going to happen, and, at the same time, secretly elated, I guess, because a decision now is, in effect, what is going to happen to me, being made for me by the world events.

KP: I guess two questions. One, did you return for the spring semester in 1942?

EP: No.

NK: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

EP: I was about to be drafted. And, I enlisted in the air force.

KP: Why the air force?

EP: Well, growing up and ... of some of the knowledge that I obtained from ... reading some of the World War I books, the last place that I wanted to be was in the trenches, sleeping in the mud. And, since I was in Boy Scouts, I had an awful lot of experience sleeping outdoors. ... Why do I want to do that in uniform? I've already done it!

KP: In another uniform.

EP: And, I suppose at that time the air force was starting to be a little ... glamorous. Billy Mitchell was popular at the time. And, we still talked about Lindbergh going across. So that was the influence.

KP: When you mentioned that you had read up on World War I, had you also seen movies? Do you remember any the movies you saw on World War I? Did that have any impact do you think?

EP: No.

KP: It was mainly reading?

EP: Yes.

KP: Did you read novels on the war or was it just general histories?

EP: Just general histories.

KP: You mentioned, do you remember Lindbergh growing up? His flight across?

EP: Yes. Oh, yes.

KP: A number of people I have interviewed have talked about aviation was really thrilling for them in the 1920s and 1930s.

EP: Yes.

KP: Oh, you were part of that?

EP: Yes. Well, every airplane that went over, I was seven years old, and, you know, "There goes Lindbergh, there goes Lindbergh!"

KP: Did you ever go to any of the airports to watch flights, takeoffs. I know some people who live near Newark used to go to Newark Airport.

EP: No.

KP: No?

EP: No, but I did go to Hadley Airport ... which is in, what is Piscataway now, or South Plainfield? And, my Boy Scout buddy and I, we went there, and, I think, we paid five dollars and took a ride. From then on, I said, ... "That's the place for me." So to answer your question, ... from taking the flight, I knew I wanted to be in the air force.

KP: The air force is a difficult branch to get into. Why do you think you were able to make it and stay in the air force? I know a lot of people were washed out of the various training programs, those who wanted to be on crews.

EP: Well, to start with, I did want ... to be a pilot, but I couldn't make it. I passed the written test, but, evidently, there was some little problem, some insidious problem that they detected when I was trying to put ... square blocks into round holes, you know. And, I tried twice; I tried to become a pilot after ... I finished my combat and I still couldn't qualify. So I became ... they assigned me to become a bombardier.

KP: You enlisted in April of 1942 when you were called up. Where did you report initially?

EP: ... [checking papers] I'll have to go through another diary to give you exact dates. Diary of my army career, aviation cadet Edward C. Piech, 1942, Rutgers, February 16, Air Corps mental and physical exam in Trenton, okay. April 11th, enlisted at Trenton. May and June they said, "Stay home, wait until you ... [are] called." I was a private in army air corps, unassigned. June appointed aviation cadet. ... And, I went to Maxwell Field, Alabama. Is that what you want to know?

KP: Yes. So that's where you initially reported?

EP: Yes.

KP: You did not report like many people to Fort Dix. You reported right to Maxwell Field.

EP: Right.

KP: In civilian clothes?

EP: Yes, yes. June the 24th, Maxwell Field, Alabama and then, that's where we took some basic training. ...

NK: What was the training like to be a bombardier?

KP: Actually before asking that.

EP: ... I can give you plenty answers for that.

NK: Okay.

EP: But, maybe we might want to stay in sequence.

KP: Yes. I guess the question is, when you reported to Maxwell Field, how did you travel? Did you travel by train?

EP: By train.

KP: Did you travel with a group of people or were you traveling alone?

EP: No, traveling by myself. And, I might say, it was one of the most enjoyable trips I've ever taken, enjoyable in a sense that I was by myself and ... I just loved the sound of the train clickity clacks. I was going into an ... unknown, a new life, away from home. I didn't miss going away ... from home. I ... was excited, but not excited. At ease. At peace with myself. Almost to the point of being religious, of ... interpreting the sounds of the train going down. I would frequently go in between cars and ... stick my head out and just have the wind blow in my face, and that's why I enjoyed going down there.

KP: Your family never had much money, so this was the biggest trip you had taken?

EP: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

KP: We should probably ask where you traveled before the military and add it to the record.

EP: ... Well, let's see. Well, we went to Boy Scout camp, ... but that was still in New Jersey. We didn't go out of the state. ...

KP: What did you think of the South, your initial impression from this train trip when you arrived?

EP: ... It was about what I expected, what I [had] read about ... in some of the accounts of the Civil War, the way the Negroes lived. The train would go through a good many of those ... poor sections. ... It was sad to see that, but I couldn't dwell on that because, I was on my way.

KP: You had a mission.

EP: Had a mission, yes.

KP: After your arrival on Maxwell Base, that is where you finally became a part of the military. How did that go [in] your initial days? And, was it a shock?

EP: Oh, no. No, it wasn't a shock at all. It was what I expected, yes. I think I was probably prepared from talking ... [with] other people and anything that I've read pertaining to World War I, what's expected.

KP: What about your brother, had he been helpful at all?

EP: ... Also Scarlet Rifles, for one thing.

KP: You knew close order drill?

EP: Oh, yeah. So ... we got quite a bit. And, then we had, oh, that's right, we had to take a ROTC course. ... Yes. I did, that's right.

KP: You had been in ROTC.

EP: ROTC, yes. So I guess that answers the question why all this was not surprising. ... This is what I expected.

KP: What did you learn in basic training in your initial few weeks?

EP: Guard duty, how to peel potatoes, scrub floors. Most of it ... was guard duty. You know, spit and polish. Constant inspections, parades, make your bed so the officer that came around to inspect could bounce a dime. ... Everything was to be neat. But, it was, ... in my mind, it was something that was necessary, you know, because I understood that you had to have discipline. And, there were always a few that were kind of childish. They were rowdy. ... I would call them stupid, I guess. They just didn't accept that this is what they had to do.

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

KP: You mentioned that in your initial group some of them were rowdy and were not taking this seriously enough. Where did most of the people come from in your initial group? Was there any region that dominated?

EP: Oh, yes, Maine. ... The northeastern part of the United States. ...

KP: What did you think of the weather in the South? Your initial reaction, especially because there is not air conditioning in your barracks.

EP: No. ... We weren't that uncomfortable. I was surprised. Don't forget, ... I was in ... Maxwell Field in July. I went to Nashville, Tennessee after that. ... That's where I qualified to be a bombardier. And, that's where I failed to be a pilot, was in Nashville, Tennessee.

KP: Is that where you took your basic tests?

EP: The basic training was in Maxwell Field. Tests were in Nashville. Correct.

KP: How long did your basic training last?

EP: I think it was about two weeks. Well, let's take a look. I've forgotten now. ... June 24th at Alabama and then Nashville, July 28th. So you're talking about a month.

KP: A month of basic.

EP: A month, yes.

KP: Did anyone in basic training wash out of the air force there and get sent to the infantry or another branch in the group that you were with?

EP: No, not there.

KP: Not there.

EP: Not there.

KP: That was later.

EP: Not even at Nashville, either. No. Well, ... [there was] always a place somewhere in Nashville. Either a bombardier, navigator, or pilot. Yes, ... there were some that were, maybe, failed, ... flight physicals that were sent back from ...

KP: Nashville.

EP: Nashville, Tennessee, yes.

KP: How big of a disappointment was it that you did not get to become a pilot?

EP: I wasn't crushed, but I was disappointed, ... I thought, well, maybe I could try again. And, that's about it.

PS: Was becoming a bombardier your second option, your second choice? Or were you placed there?

EP: We were placed there because they evidently needed some people in certain slots rather quickly. ... This was the beginning of making a big air force.

KP : Would you have preferred another position such as navigator or gunner or you didn't, even at that point, give it much thought?

EP: No, I didn't give it much thought.

KP: What you could become?

EP: Right, yes.

KP: At the time would you have preferred ground crew? Or did you want to get into air?

EP: Oh, no ... I wanted to fly.

KP: In some way?

EP: Yes, yes.

KP: Did you know how dangerous the air war would be at the time?

EP: Yes.

KP: Even just going back?

EP: Yes, oh, yes.

KP: In 1941-1942, you realized?

EP: Yes.

KP: Was this from hearing about the RAF and the Battle of Britain?

EP: Yes.

KP: I guess after Nashville you were sent to bombardier school.

EP: Yes, to pre-flight training at Santa Ana, California. We went by train. And, that was another experience that you won't forget because they give you about a half a dozen shots and the whole train was sick. All those shots. And, the trains were slow, and, you know, they had to stop quite frequently to let the main trains go by. It took us four or five days to get over there.

KP: For a trip that normally should have taken two days.

EP: Well, no, I think maybe a little more. Maybe three. Yes, but there were a lot of stops.

KP: Do you remember the train you were on? Was it mainly air force people going to a new base?

EP: Yes, yes it was, ... it was a troop train.

KP: Troop train. What do you think; this is another big trip that you're taking. This time you're not alone. You're with a big group. What are your memories besides the slowness and everyone on the train being sick?

EP: Well, ... I became very good friends with ... another cadet from [the] Boston, Massachusetts area. And, we were about the same size, and we were both slim, and, you know, light on our feet. And, ... whenever we went through an obstacle course ... in basic training, why [we] were always the first ones, ... or even climbing a rope and so on. So we got to ... [become] real buddies.

KP: So you both were in basic then you went to Nashville and then you were both going to bombardier school together?

EP: Right. Yes. Most of the people that went to bombardier school wanted to become pilots, too. [laughter] Some were a little disgruntled, but to go back at that particular time to be a navigator was not as popular as to be as either a pilot or a bombardier, I guess.

KP: Really? Because of the mathematics involved?

EP: Well, no, because probably as a bombardier you did have sort of a control of the airplane for about 30 seconds for one. So you did get to know, going down the road, I did learn how to fly. I wouldn't be able to take off or land, but I felt confident I would be able to bring my pilot and co-pilot [back if they] were shot ... or were unable to perform. I would of, at least, been able to crash-land the airplane or bring it down in one piece.

KP: Bring it down.

EP: Yes, so from that standpoint.

KP: This is sort of out of sequence, but since you brought it up it is a good time to ask. Was that a concern of the crew, if, let's say, the pilots both get killed?

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: And, what was the official procedure for that and what did the crews actually do? Did the pilots train you how to crash-land?

EP: Well, you more or less trained, train yourself on the ground. A few times a pilot would take me up; we'd go up to check something out, or to give our gunners practice firing their guns, he would let me be a co-pilot just to handle the airplane.

KP: That must have been really thrilling.

EP: Oh, yes it was, yeah. In fact, I ... flew the airplane almost up to Scotland when, ... this is another story, when I went up to look for my uncle. He was in the Polish freedom fighters.

KP: And, this was one of those sort of diversionary flights?

EP: Yes.

KP: Well, we will get back to that.

NK: So you were not officially instructed on how to fly?

EP: Oh, no. No.

KP: This was something crews would do because they realized ...

EP: Yes, just like I would teach the pilot and co-pilot how to use the bomb sight. The navigator would teach me some things and I would teach him.

KP: What about the gun crews?

EP: No. The only ones that would have anything close to landing the airplane would be the ... flight engineer. He was a tech sergeant. Well, they were all tech sergeants. But, he would be the one responsible for knowing how to transfer fuel and ... as far as bringing down landing gear and other ... items that were related to the engines. And, ... I don't know if he could land a airplane or not. Probably he could in an emergency, just as well as I could. But, when [we] were in England, I made it a point to learn. We were only in the United States whenever I could to get in on the ... Link Trainer and put some time on it, to learn how to fly. And, ... what I would be doing ... was sign my pilot's or co-pilot's name. ... They were required to put [in] so many hours per month, and I did it for them because I wanted to know how to fly.

KP: You were happy being a bombardier?

EP: I had that desire to survive. ... That was it; that was number one, to survive. In the event of an emergency, I wanted to be able to bring that airplane down. I didn't want to bail out. ...

KP: And, it seems like your pilot and co-pilot thought that was a good idea.

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: Or at least they wanted to get out of the Link Trainer training sessions. How realistic was the Link Trainer in comparison to actual flying when you were a co-pilot? Of course, it's also the first generation of these trainers, but how realistic was it at the time?

EP: Oh, about 25 percent, yes. You know, the fact that these things aren't a mystery when you get behind a control, real controls. You have some idea about looking at the needles, looking at the horizon. Either banking to the left or banking to the right. So, at least you ... became familiar with just the feeling of flying.

KP: This is sort of a general question, but what was your training like? What did you learn in bombardier school? What was the sequence of training and how long did you spend at it?

EP: Well, you actually went to school. You did a lot of ... calisthenics. You did a lot of parading. ... You took turns doing K.P., you know, peeling potatoes, but not too often, very little. You took physics, you took astronomy, you took radio, Morse code. You became proficient in radio. And, you obviously learned quite a bit about the bombsight, for one. But, mostly ... we had some basic algebra, too. Let's see, we also had some pertaining to military rules and regulations and ... what's expected of an officer. ... Let's see, we ... went to pre-flight in September and I was commissioned in the first week of January, 1943, whereas as a pilot, he would go to school about nine months or so, whereas, we only went, let's see, September, October, November. We only went four months.

KP: You must have enjoyed being commissioned an officer because it saved you from K.P. duty and aimless marching.

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: Is that correct?

EP: Oh, yes. Yes. No. No, I don't think so. ... I think you've reached your goal. You've reached one plateau of your goal. And, your goal was to eventually ... go over and, then, come back alive.

KP: How many made it through bombardier training? Did any people wash out?

EP: Oh, yeah.

KP: Why would they wash out? What were some of the reasons?

EP: They probably weren't dexterous enough in ... lining up the bombsight. Well, this isn't pre-flight. Pre-flight might have been that. Perhaps they couldn't master some of the mathematics. They were poor in physics or astronomy. Not so much astronomy as pertaining to looking through a telescope, but ... I guess maybe what I should say is weather, more than astronomy. Yes, because you had, there are certain variables that you needed to understand to plug into the bombsight ... and to look at the charts, find out what the trail would be, what relation to the speed of the airplane and wind direction and wind speed and all that. Plus, some of them may have

been because they were rather unruly. They were difficult to teach. They were always in trouble.

KP: You mention this again. Do you have any memorable stories of some of this unruliness either in basic or in pre-flight, or even in bombardier training? Any incidents that stick out? Do you remember someone doing something very foolish or particularly unruly?

EP: Probably have it in here, in my diary, but I wouldn't be able to find it. Yes. ... I think ... most of it would be related to drinking too much, staying out, coming back too late, you know. ... There was curfew, like everything else. You had the weekend to yourself, but during the week you had to comply. And, you also had to be back on base a certain time on a ... Sunday afternoon. And, evidently, some of the gentlemen ... just probably piled up too many demerits. And, that of course, led to a dismissal. And, there are a few, I think, that, that probably thought all this pre-flight was just a bunch of chicken crap. [laughter] And, they wanted to be washed out. They were just very uncooperative.

KP: Not realizing how important it was?

EP: I don't know what their goals were because I had very little to do with them, for one thing. ... My buddy and I, we just sort of stuck together. ... We were go, go, let's get going, and so on. You know, the war is not going to go away, it's gonna be here for a while.

KP: What would you and your buddy do during weekend leave, when you had the weekends off? At Nashville, and at basic ...

EP: Nashville, I don't think we were allowed to be off the base for too long of a period.

KP: You did not have very much time there, did you?

EP: No, I think, maybe, I went out only once or twice. But, they'd generally be USO dances. And, there were always, always, fair ladies there.

PS: Is this still the buddy from Boston we are speaking of?

EP: Yes.

PS: Okay, from basic to Nashville to pre-flight in California.

EP: All the way, too, to when we got your second lieutenant bars, at Williams Field, Arizona, on January 2nd, 1943.

KP: Yes, so you were actually commissioned in Williams Field.
It says Williams Field.

EP: Arizona, yes.

KP: What would you do on weekend leaves, especially when you were out in California? Where would you go? You mentioned USO dances. Would you go anywhere else?

EP: We were allowed to go from Saturday afternoon to Sunday afternoon. So I'd always go to ... USO dances or movies. ...

NK: Of course. I wanted to get back to the training for the bombardier. Did you have this whole panel of instruments to sort of collect this information on the wind and everything else? Is that what you were working on?

EP: No, you referred to charts. You already had charts, bombardier's charts, that were made based on the variables that I mentioned. And, we looked in the chart, and we determined what your trail was, ... meaning how far the bomb would drop behind your airplane.

NK: Okay, so most of this work was done before the flight, and then you went on the flight?

EP: No, it was actually done ... as you were going into the target because, ... you may not know what the wind is over enemy territory. ... You relied on your navigator to take a fix to determine what your wind speed is and from what direction. ... And, you had your thermometer right in front of you, so you could plug in your thermometer, you know the temperature.

NK: Why did you need the temperature?

EP: ... Because the weather, the temperature has a effect on the ... resistance the bomb has, going through air.

NK: Okay.

EP: ...

KP: One of the questions that military historians often want to get at is the relationship between training and actual practice. I guess one question is, after your missions, how good was your pre-flight training and your actual bombardier training in preparing you? What was particularly good, but what did you sort of shake your head and say, "It was nothing like the textbook said it was going to be" in terms of actually performing your job.

EP: ... It was almost cursory because there was a rush, you know. They wanted to get bombardiers out into combat, and I would have liked to have done more bombing, more bomb practice. I would [have] liked to bomb at higher altitudes. ... You know, we bombed at mostly around ten, eleven thousand feet, but anything more than that, then you would need a face mask ... to breath oxygen, excuse me. It was in a twin engine airplane. There were times, maybe, when the airplane wasn't ready or ... had to be fixed or something so then you missed out on it. To answer your question again, I would have wished that we had more bombing runs for practice.

KP: Roughly, how many bombing runs did you have for practice? Was it a dozen, or was it two dozen, or was it just a handful?

EP: No, it was about a dozen, a dozen to two dozen, yes.

NK: What type of plane were you flying during the training?

EP: It was an AT-11. It was a twin engine.

NK: And, how did that compare? You were in a B-17?

EP: B-17, yes.

NK: How did that compare?

EP: Night and day. Yes, let's see what can I remember about [that]? Well, you had sort of competition amongst the other groups. Who could get the best. ... I remember the term was CE, which was circular error. And, what you were bombing, you were out in the desert in Arizona pretty close to the Mexican border. And, boy, was it a desert! And, your target would be a twenty by twenty, what they called a shack, but it was actually a pyramid, a wooden pyramid. Twenty feet by twelve feet and a base. And, then there was a huge circle. That was the bull's-eye and you tried to put your bomb ... within the white circle. And, of course, if you hit the target, the shack, well, that was better yet. I've forgotten what the score was for that. I guess they would put down the word "shack" period. But, ... your CE was determined. Well, I think the pilot and your instructor ... he would grade ... depend[ing] upon ... [whether] the bomb fell close to the bull's-eye, whether it be ten, would it be twenty? It would be more like playing darts, and that would be your score for that particular flight. So, I think my buddy and I, and another [guy] of Chinese extraction, the three of us got the highest score in our squadrons for CE in bombardiering.

KP: Did you ever hit the shack?

EP: I think I did. Yes, I'm pretty sure I did. ... You would think that you wouldn't forget, but you know, I'm going to be 75 in three months and I'm beginning to forget too many things. [laughter] Yes, I did, yes. The bombs were all sand inside; it was just the charge in the bomb fins that exploded that enabled you to score your hit on the target.

NK: I just wanted to ask you that!

EP: And, when it hit, when it dropped, you'd see a tiny flash. And, sometimes, if there was turbulence or the pilot decided that as soon as you dropped your bombs, turn, you couldn't always see as well. But, he could see because he was in a more advantageous position or he was able to look through the bomb bay, whereas, I wouldn't be able to see. In combat I very rarely saw my bombs drop because remember that I used the word "trail?" The bomb trails the airplane because of the air resistance, plus gravity. That's where temperature comes in. The colder it is, the more resistance you get to the bomb going in flight.

NK: And, you were flying at higher altitudes then, as well, so.

EP: Flying high altitude. So I could never see my bombs hit. The only time I would see my bombs, ... results of my bomb hit, was after we turned around ... to go back home to our base. Then you could look back and see. ...

KP: How much emphasis was there on accuracy? You mentioned you were graded on that, but how many people failed because they could not hit the target? What kind of expectation was there in terms of targeting?

EP: I think that was something that was probably kept private.

KP: They did not give you a hint?

EP: No. ... You did see some of the scores posted on the bulletin board, and you did see some of them, but it just didn't stick in your mind. You were more or less kind of worried about yourself. And, ... there were a few, yes.

KP: What do you remember about any of your instructors or your sergeant, especially when you were going through KP? Did any of your sergeants or instructors or training pilots stick out?

EP: Well, I was naive enough in those days to believe everything and to want to do everything that they said, even to the point of swallowing the importance of being on guard duty ... without a bullet in the rifle, but boy, you're gonna, you know, hey, you know, there's liable to be a Nazi ... coming in. So I was kind of "gung-ho" then, but ... most of us were. ... Because of the seriousness, you know, our lives ... will depend on ... how much training we get. And, look, ... if you want to come home, your going to learn as much as you can. And, that's ... the attitude that I had.

KP: One of the things, I interviewed a pilot; he didn't get very much overseas experience. In fact, he only went on one mission, but one of the things that stuck out in the interview was how dangerous the training was. That ...

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: Planes were constantly crashing. You know that it was dangerous. Do you have any particular memories of accidents that happened to your plane in training or to other planes?

EP: Not in our group. Not in our training in Santa Ana or not even ... in Williams Field, Arizona. But, we did have, oh, three or four ... pilots that were in training in that same field. At Williams in Mesa, Arizona and every once in a while, one of them would crash or get lost in the mountains. There was the, I believe it was the Thunderbird Mountains that were there. They were treacherous. And, we would fly over them occasionally. There were, I ... specifically remember three or four, that some of the pilots that were in training that lost their lives. We didn't ... lose any bombardiers that crashed from our group.

NK: Did you feel like they had let the team down or was it just?

EP: The pilots that crashed?

NK: Yes.

EP: Oh, no! No, I ...

NK: Was there a feeling of ...

EP: No, because ... we were not part of a team at that phase of our training. ... We were just all bombardiers and all pilots. We weren't together. We didn't even eat together. We didn't see each other at all. They, the pilots, were in ... a different part of the field.

KP: You mentioned some people, bombardiers, frustrated pilots more than others.

EP: Yes.

KP: Was there any source of tension between the pilots and bombardiers in the training? Between some of the bombardiers?

EP: We, we didn't see the pilots.

KP: So you were very separate?

EP: Kept separate.

NK: Who took you up then?

EP: He was another pilot. He was an instructor.

NK: Oh, okay.

EP: Okay. ...

KP: You were commissioned at Williams Field, Arizona. Did you do your bombardier training at Williams Field or was your bombardier training at California?

EP: No, it was just at Williams Field.

KP: Williams Field. So you had pre-flight at?

EP: Santa Anna, California, yes. It was pre-flight or ground school.

KP: Ground school.

EP: Yes.

KP: At California, but

EP: But, ... you still went to school at Williams Field. We still did a lot of classroom learning on the ground.

KP: Textbook.

EP: Yes, gunnery, for one thing, you know, skeet shooting, taking guns apart, this and that.

PS: In bombardier school or in the training in Arizona, was there any emphasis placed on the ethics of being a bombardier, as far as what were your targets? And, I know that American Air Force compared to the R.A.F., we were more concerned with the ethics of bombing the civilians and that kind of thing. Were you trained about that then or was that later?

EP: That was later.

PS: Oh, okay. Anderson was a big practitioner in that period.

EP: ... What you were drilled [on] quite frequently is the importance of guarding the bombsight with your life. ...

KP: It was attached to you.

EP: Oh, well, I carried a .45, that was me though. I was issued a .45, and I had to put it, the bomb sight, under lock and key every night. This was after ... I joined a crew, ten men. Wherever I went I had that .45. As long as I had the bombsight. That was ... another part of the, I suppose, we learned later on that ... probably the Nazis had the bombsight [a] long time ago. But, this was part of instilling the camaraderie, I suppose, and the importance of being a bombardier, and, you know. Well, it worked. [laughter] All the way ... going, flying overseas, ... I had that .45 to guard the bombsight so the enemy wouldn't get a hold of it. That was ... what they instilled [in] us in ... training, as far as guarding ... the equipment. And, ... your machine guns, they were yours, you took care of them. When you went up there and fighting minus 60 degrees centigrade, those guns freeze up real fast. ... If you don't shoot right, if you shoot ... too fast, ... you're liable to damage your gun. And, then, because it's so cold, you don't want to take your gloves off because you'll just start losing your fingers because they'll get stuck to the metal, it's so cold. So these were the things you would learn in training. ... And, occasionally, and, I would say, more than occasionally, they would have someone ... that served overseas and experienced some of the pitfalls, ... to let us know what it's like. It was a big help.

KP: Did you have any R.A.F. pilots that came or bombardiers that came out to instruct you?

EP: They didn't have any bombardiers, but we had some ... R.A.F. pilots, yes.

KP: Who came, who talked about what it was like?

EP: ... Yes. But, [not] ... until ... we came over in England.

KP: Okay. That's when you finally met R.A.F. pilots.

EP: Right.

KP: When you and your buddy were commissioned, you were separated. How did that feel to go your separate ways? Would you have wanted to stay together in a sense of serving in the same group or was it just the inevitable thing of war?

EP: Let's see. I think, I think my buddy got married. Yes, so we separated then. But, we ... went to Salt Lake City together then after that we were separated. But, yes, ... I would have liked to have been with him.

KP: When you went from Williams Field to Salt Lake City, what training did you have in Salt Lake City?

EP: Just waiting to be assigned.

KP: What did you think of Salt Lake City as a place to wait around?

EP: Oh, it was very nice! Yes, very nice. I ... was there just last summer, 1994, with my wife when we had our Air Force reunion there. I didn't recognize anything, except the Mormon Temple. ... The mountains were beautiful. The train ride, in January, 1943, was terrible because it was a about a 1800 train with no heat, ... it had gas lights. It was the last of the line. ... Some got married in Williams Field, Arizona, when they got their commission. They and their wives went up on the train with us to Salt Lake City.

KP: Had you been tempted at all to get married?

EP: No.

KP: No. Were you surprised at how quickly some of the people got married?

EP: Well ... these were girlfriends ... from home. In fact, my buddy's fiancée ... came to visit him one time when we were out in ... California. And, others too, other fiancées came out to visit during training.

KP: After Salt Lake City, where did you go to?

EP: Let's see.

KP: You mentioned Boise, Idaho on your survey.

EP: Oh, yeah. I'm getting confused [about] when I went to Boise, first, or Salt Lake City. January 2nd, graduated bombardier second lieutenant. Yes, January 3rd to January 5th, Salt Lake City, air base four days, then left ... Gallon Field ... then we went to Boise, Idaho, January the 9th.

KP: Which must have been very cold.

EP: Well, especially via gas-lighted train coach. First gunnery 30 caliber, 45. Let's see, ... first flight in a B-17. Dry runs over target, February the 11th, 1943. I met my navigator, ... we were the first of the team that we were going to have in February the 22nd, and, that was at ... Boise, Idaho. And, then, six days later, ... we met our pilot and crew. And, then, March the 5th, the first time with full crew, we flew, one-hour flight. I was plagued with ear problems all through the time I was in service. ... In England, I had ear infections.

KP: You were the initial crew, in a sense.

EP: Yes, you might say, yes.

KP: You met the navigator. And, how did that initial start go?

EP: Well, I first thought ... he was a little odd. [laughter] He had a funny walk. But, I learned later on that he was extremely competent. He was a good navigator. He was quite smart.

KP: Where did he come from?

EP: He came from ... Tucson, Arizona.

KP: And, what was different about him? Well, you said he had a funny walk and a little odd. What else struck you about him?

EP: Well, he didn't appear athletic looking that I would think that, you know, most air force people that I saw or I was with, they were all trim, ... there wasn't any overweight, aviation cadets or officers, ... at the time, ... [from] my experience. ...

PS: No room for them in the plane?

EP: Yes, because you did work out quite a bit. You know that's ... one good thing that I liked. ... You played volleyball or you did a lot of physical training, you know, exercise. We played a lot of volleyball once we became officers. to keep in shape.

KP: Had your navigator, had he been to college before the war?

EP: Yes. Yes, he was a graduate.

KP: Graduate of a school in Arizona?

EP: Yes. So was my pilot. My pilot was from Dover, Delaware. He graduated from Duke in 1939. ...

KP: What were your initial impressions of your pilot and copilot?

EP: He, the pilot, was kind of slow going. [laughter] He wore a little bit of a mustache and he kind of appeared like he was mumbling. But, after you've lived with him ... you understood ... able to understand him. Again ... he was intelligent, very confident. I think as soon as you met him, you got the feeling that you were going to trust him. That you got a feeling that you were ... going to come back with him from combat.

KP: You had that sense.

EP: Right from the very beginning, yes.

KP: He was from Duke University ... and from Delaware. What about the copilot, where was?

EP: The copilot didn't come in, until considerably later because we had one or two along the way, and I've got it in here if you want to take time out.

KP: Did they not click with the crew?

EP: No, they weren't happy. I think one of them wanted to be a first pilot rather than a copilot and another one ... didn't want to be in 17s, he wanted to be in something else. And, some, there are times that, that these things happen, you don't hear the complete story. Probably for confidential reasons. I don't know.

KP: But, so you actually went through several copilots?

EP: Yes.

KP: Before you arrived on the copilot that you eventually served with?

EP: ... Not too long. Let's see, I can, Jack Crow was our first copilot, he didn't go with us to Walla Walla. Okay, Fred Worth joined our crew. He's our copilot. He's from ... Rural Retreat, Virginia. That's about 50 miles north of Bristol. Are you familiar with Bristol? It's right on the edge of Kentucky, Virginia, right on the bottom there. And, he was still fighting the Civil War. And, when we first met him, ... he came out with his head [cocked] back like this, and he looked like he had ... finished a quart of bourbon whiskey. Well, come to find out later that's exactly what he did quite a bit. [laughter] He was a typical southerner that loved his ... whiskey and loved his fighting. Yes, he and I, we didn't get along too well at first-- because he was down on Yankees. ...

KP: Did anyone, did you bait him on or did the pilot?

EP: No.

KP: Or you just ...

EP: It was just automatic, I think.

KP: You just let him re-fight the Civil War. You did not join in.

EP: ... No, no I didn't, I didn't really. ... We played cards quite a bit until ... we went into our first combat mission. And, then after that, gambling was no longer interesting. No longer the thrill. There was a bigger thrill over ... the Channel.

KP: What was your pilot's name? Do you remember?

EP: Oh, yes. Doug Harris. No, I have all the names.

KP: Maybe this would be a good point to go through the crew.

EP: Maybe you want to see their pictures.

KP: Yes, that would be nice.

EP: Our airplane going over. [Shows pictures] ... There's my copilot right here. Even right there he looks like he's a rebel. This is at our reunion. ... Here's my copilot here, but he got to be first pilot. ... That's taken as ... his crew. That's the goal. Here's our pilot ... this was taken ... about 1988. That's our pilot. You can probably ... pick me out there. And, here's [the] pilot, here's me, my navigator, copilot and pilot. And, these are all ...

KP: The crew?

EP: The tech sergeant.

PS: That's you, the pilot, copilot, and navigator?

EP: And, here's--this is our ship, *Gremlin's Delight*; this is in England. This is my pilot. This is my copilot. I'm sorry; hold on. This was taken in Walla Walla, Washington before we went overseas, and we put on ... all jackets and all that stuff which was, me, my navigator, my copilot and my pilot over there.

KP: And, your navigators name?

EP: Bill Holloway.

KP: Bill Holloway? ...

PS: From Tucson.

KP: And, then the crew,

EP: This was taken in Walla Walla, Washington before we went overseas. And, this is taken in England.

KP: Who did not make it overseas?

EP: Oh, one, this fellah didn't make it. He never came back he went AWOL

KP: Oh, just, do you remember his name?

EP: Hall.

KP: He just, one day he just ...

EP: And, he took his place, but his name is Hall, too.

KP: I guess maybe you could say ...

EP: This was the ball turret gunner. He just ... happened [not] to be there at that particular time for the photograph. ...

KP: Do you remember his name?

EP: Yes, Roland Benson. I've got the names of all the people, ... not here with me. ...

KP: Maybe you can tell us something about the rest of the crew and their background. Because it sounds like you had a very interesting crew in terms of backgrounds. You had a southerner who was re-fighting the Civil War, a cool rebel.

EP: You'll be here a whole week.

KP: You had someone from the west, from Arizona and, you were from New Jersey.

EP: We had one from Midwest, from Ohio, ... the flight engineer. He was a colorful, colorful individual. I guess he was the oldest. He's probably up ... in his eighties, right now.

KP: So he was in his thirties at the time.

EP: Yes, we didn't know it at the time, that he was. He kept it a secret. The navigator is probably next. I think he's, pretty close to 80 himself right now. The pilot is ... a few years ... older than I am.

KP: You were a relatively old crew in terms of your ages, although they varied.

EP: Well, I was twenty-three when we were together. And, yes let's see, ... radio operator isn't here. Radio operator went to Princeton, but he was from Montclair, New Jersey. I don't know why he did not go ... into ... Officer's Candidate School, but I guess he wanted to be a radio operator. Let's see, what were we talking about?

KP: We were just going through the crew and where they were from.

EP: Oh, okay, okay. The gunners, ... one of them was from Sweden. He was over here for quite a while. He had quite an accent, very likeable chap. He was a ball turret gunner. He was about the youngest. He wasn't even, I don't think he was naturalized yet, yes. And, the other gunner was from ... Jacksonville, Florida. He still lives there; he's hanging on, breathing oxygen. The radio operator is from Montclair, New Jersey. Another gunner was from St. Paul, Minnesota. And, I got the copilot, pilot from Delaware. I guess, I got everybody. Oh, the tail gunner was from Long Island, New York.

KP: You had a very diverse crew, in terms of different parts of the country, different backgrounds. You mentioned there were some problems with your first copilot, and you had someone who went AWOL when you were still in Washington.

EP: That was the copilot, yes.

KP: No, the gunner who went AWOL?

EP: Oh, yeah.

KP: He just.

EP: We don't know what happened. Even the pilot, did not know. He just never returned from leave.

KP: One day he was gone.

EP: Yes, you see, before we went overseas, we got a six-day leave. And, everybody just scattered as fast as they could to go home, the last time, before they went overseas. And, you [had] to be back because you were scheduled to take your airplane overseas so ... one of them, just didn't come back. I guess what happened he broke, but from what I heard later on that he was broken and he was just ... sent to infantry. But, we have a lot of stories to tell, obviously, when you're living together with ten men this long. The four officers were in special barracks for officers, and the six men, enlisted men, were in enlistment barracks.

And, I guess, our crew was probably more democratic than ... anyone else. Well, most air force crews were quite democratic anyway. But, we were more so, in the fact that we used to have our enlisted men visit us in our quarters. And, we would cook chickens, or rabbits, or somebody went out, ... and shot some rabbits or stole some chickens or bartered for some ... produce ... [with] candy or canned goods with a farmer and came back with some chickens. The guy from

... Minnesota, one of our gunners, ... he was a cook before he joined us, and he did some, a lot of cooking for us at midnight.

KP: When did this practice start? Did it start back in the States?

EP: This was in England.

KP: Oh.

EP: In England, yes. In the States we sort of ... went our separate ways quite a bit. When we started in combat we stayed more together, although we flew together all the time, that is, in the States. We practiced together because it was a team effort. You know, you mentioned something about that, that I missed my buddy. Well, actually, they did all ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Edward Piech on March 2, 1995 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler.

PS: And, Paul Sambrowski

NK: And, Natalie Kosonocky. And, we left off on the last tape, and you were saying, following up on the question of buddies and how you were saying that the ...

EP: Well, the objective in the air force was to have each crew to be a team, of course. In the B-17 there were ten men, so it was very important that you became a team member. And, while even though ... there is that difference between the officers and enlisted men you still, wanted to have the camaraderie of being a team. So ... it would not be a good idea to have a buddy somewhere else, you know. Your teammates should be your buddies, in training and in fighting, and so on. So that ... if he did come along to the same base, we really wouldn't be socializing as much as we did in pre-flight training and ... bombardier training because we would want to be with our crewmates.

KP: Up in Walla Walla, Washington and Boise, what did you think of those areas?

EP: ... We had a lot of rain. And, again, we didn't fly as much as I wish we could in training. But, ... whenever we did, [we] began to appreciate the beauty of the Northwest from the air. The forests ... and parts of British Columbia that we flew over and into Montana. Just, just fantastic. From that standpoint, I enjoyed it.

KP: So in your training you pretty much saw most of the different parts of the country.

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: Was your training on the B-17 or was it on the earlier plane that you flew on?

EP: To qualify as a bombardier, I was on a training airplane called an AT-11.

KP: AT-11.

EP: Twin engine.

KP: But, you mentioned the B-17 was different as night and day. What were your initial reactions to the B-17?

EP: So huge! Compared to the 747, it's a little biddy thing now.

KP: But, the B-17 at the time was this huge aircraft.

EP: Yes.

KP: And, what adjustments did you make in terms of your earlier training and now, with a crew, and getting close to the real thing?

EP: It was practically training all over again. ... The bombing was different, the requirements were different, you're now flying with a combat crew. You were flying, you were gonna be flying with live bombs, for one thing, and many more. Bigger loads. ... You had guns, 50 caliber machine guns that you had to become proficient [in], and navigation--you took navigation courses, you took radio courses. You also trained on ... Link Trainer for bombardiers. In fact, I've got a picture of one here, too, at the same time.

NK: Where does the bombardier sit in the B-17? Are you right near the pilot, because you mentioned ...

EP: [Looking at picture] ... Right there. ... up at front.

NK: Oh, in that Plexi-glass nose.

EP: ... Right here, yes. You got a bird's-eye view, right smack in the front. There's a Plexi-glass there. I've had Plexi-glass broken more than once with spent shells from the previous airplane that would fall down and hit the ... air stream and just smack against your window. ...

KP: In terms of your training with your crew, were there any accidents in the Northwest, particularly because of the weather? Any crashes?

EP: ... I don't remember specifically. There were a few; you see, we went on longer training flights. And, if it happened, it may have happened in a different State. And, all you know is, well, so-and-so had an accident.

KP: Did your crew ever get lost during any of its training flights?

EP: No.

KP: What about night flying? Where did you do your first night flying? That's often very memorable.

EP: Yes, it was. It was in Walla Walla, Washington. And, ... my pilot would fly with a blanket over the window, so all ... he had was just the instruments. And, that's how ... he learned how to fly at night. And, many times we would just be passengers, and it was just a ... training program for the pilot, to land, take off, go around, to land, take off. And, the copilot had the chance to do that, too. So ... I didn't do any bombing, ... but we were required to be together as a crew.

KP: You did do practice bombing runs? How successful were you now with a bigger plane, and were you still successful in hitting the target?

EP: We were just required to. We didn't have anything as sophisticated ... as we had in bombardier training. It was more a matter of you and your pilot ... getting acquainted with each other and your equipment. I was successful, to give an answer, yes. But, ... we bombed at 10,000 feet in England, ... not any higher than that. We'd go out over, ... what they called the Wash. ... We didn't go over the Channel because ... enemy airplanes might be coming over, but it was more on ... Ireland's side.

KP: So you did not practice in Walla Walla, Washington at all?

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: You did practice bomb runs there?

EP: Yes, yes.

KP: And, you actually aimed at targets?

EP: Yes, but not as often as I would like because we had frequent bad weather.

KP: When was the last time you got to see your parents in this period? Did you get back? You mentioned you had a six-day leave. Did you try to get back?

EP: That's the first time I went back, yes, since I had left in June of 1942.

KP: What was your parents' reaction to your finally going overseas? How worried were they?

EP: Oh, my mother was very worried.

KP: Did they write you often during the war?

EP: Yeah, oh, yes, I wrote. My diary is filled with people I wrote to and received ... V-mail, whatever they called it. ... [Some mail came] from the people I used to work with in DuPont. And, others, and so on; neighbors, friends, cousins, brothers and sisters.

KP: When you and your crew went overseas to England, did you go by air or did you take a troop ship?

EP: No, we went over by air. We went ... with a provisional group, provisional meaning, in this case, it wasn't a regular group that was put together in the States. We went over, eventually, to be replacement crews for others in England. I don't remember how many airplanes, but we left from, after we came back from our six-day leave on May 26, 1943. We went to Tulsa, Oklahoma and Salina, Kansas, and we picked up an airplane. ... And, from there we went to Detroit, first stop, and, then, we stopped at Bangor, Maine. And, then, Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland, and Prestwick, Scotland. Now, in approaching Greenland, about 300 miles out, one of our engines went out. It just went out of control. ... It just went real fast. ... I mean, a real loud squealing noise, and this was a test of our pilot and copilot. And, they immediately knew what to do, they did a good job. They, what they identified in the air force lingo, feathered the engine, i.e., they stopped it. And, we limped to Greenland ... on three engines. So we had to stay a little longer in Greenland, while they sent us a replacement engine from the States, and, ... then we joined our group, we met them in Iceland. But, while in Greenland, that was the most fascinating experience of my life, to see all the ice cap and the glaciers and going a few miles from where we stayed and taking a .45 and shooting at fish, straight, nobody around. And, the fjords ... were ominously beautiful. ... I mean, to this day, I still think I'm hearing the Sibelius Second Symphony flying up the fjords. ...

KP: You have never been back to Greenland either?

EP: No, no, but I wish, I could. Maybe one of these days I might. ... The weather was ... fantastic. We also heard about, there's some airplanes that were lost that dropped in the ... ice cap. And, ... we saw the dog teams that they had and the men that would go out and try to rescue them and find them. The most exciting, I suppose, is your first experience with 24 hours of daylight ... all day, all night. And, ... you have black shades and you pull them down so you can go to sleep. Iceland was always windy, no trees, cold, and bleak. ... I don't think, I want to go back there again.

KP: So its interesting. You really wanted to go back to Greenland. But, Iceland did not have the same appeal as Greenland?

EP: Oh, no, no. It was not only that. ... But, ... we were cautioned not to get too social, because some of them were still thought to be Nazi sympathizers.

KP: In Iceland?

EP: Iceland, yes.

KP: What about in Greenland?

EP: Or they were more, I guess, not so much Nazis as they were neutrals. They didn't want to have anything to do with getting involved in the war. ... So we were kept way clear, as far away

from town as possible. We ... slept in ... dirty beds and Quonset hut[s] and so on. Who am I to complain about [that], when infantry had to sleep in the mud!

KP: But, in Greenland, Greenland at the time was part of Denmark. What about the inhabitants that you saw there?

EP: We didn't see any. No, there was ... just a very small settlement. There was only one runway and that was all, it was an isolated emergency air field.

KP: A base.

EP: A base, but ... the runway was ... huge ... pieces of metal put together to make a runway. And, you could only come in one, one of two ways. Either this way, or this way. That's all it was. Yes, it was a stopover for U.S. personnel on their way overseas.

KP: Would you, in a sense, have stayed longer then you normally would have?

EP: We stayed a few more days longer, waiting for the replacement engine to ... arrive from the States.

KP: Which was really an accident. You might have not seen anything of Greenland if it was not for that.

EP: Well, we were scheduled to land in Greenland.

KP: Yes, but you would probably have stayed only a few hours.

EP: Yes, oh, yeah, exactly. ... But, you know, actually, approaching Greenland, we could also look down and see ... the torpedoed ship, Dorchester. That's the one in which the three chaplains went down. They gave up their life jackets ... to other servicemen. And, you could see the ship outline in the water, because the water was so clear. And, we were up high.

KP: You could see the sunk ship?

EP: You could see the sunk ship, yes. And, of course, you would see a lot of icebergs. They weren't huge, but they ... would be a threat to shipping.

KP: The engine going out, was this your first sort of experience at being potentially in harm's way?

EP: Yes.

KP: And, what went through your mind?

EP: Quite exciting. Quite, not exciting in the point of, "Oh, boy! Oh, boy! Oh, boy!" [laughter]
... "Uh oh! This is it."

KP: Did thoughts go through your mind like, "What would we have to do if, for example, we had to crash or if we had to land in the water, or bail out?"

EP: ... We had pretty good training, which we trained repeatedly, even ... in the combat area, that is about ditching, leaving the airplane and getting on a little dingy. ... Our navigator was trained sufficiently and so was the radio operator, to send out SOS signals. So from that standpoint we felt pretty comfortable, and ... we had faith in our airplane, for one thing. It started to have a good reputation for being able to float for a while, to give you a chance ... to get on board a dingy, for instance, and save yourself. ... But, I wasn't looking forward to landing in the water. It was too cold!

KP: And, it sounds like you never really wanted to jump out of an airplane either.

EP: No.

KP: You mentioned. Have you ever jumped out?

EP: No.

KP: No.

EP: Close to.

KP: When you arrived in England, what were your initial impressions, both you and your crew?

EP: Well.

KP: Because now you are in sort of a combat zone, but you are also in a different country.

EP: Yes, yes. You didn't get subjected to the English culture immediately, for one thing. You're on an air base and you're with all other Americans there. ... They are just telling you where to go, what to do. ... Well, even the food was still American. So I would say there was no feeling at that particular time.

KP: What was the feeling like to be in England and to be in the war, finally?

EP: Well, ... you were apprehensive ... as to how soon you were going to get into combat. You soon found out. ... We went through more training, which, looking back, was very good. It was justified, because the type of training we now received ... was the nearest to reality of combat conditions. Not [what you were given] in the States.

NK: How did it differ, do you think?

EP: Oh, different in ... the sense that, you heard, some prisoners that escaped, prisoners of war that escaped and came back. ... They gave ... their view. For instance, don't carry a gun with you if you're going to bail out; you're liable to get shot as a spy. A lot of little things that you would never think of or you wouldn't get in the States from someone that hadn't been overseas, about bailing out and about ditching in a channel, oh, about how important it is to keep your guns in good condition, about not shooting too fast, too long, about dressing properly for combat. You know, don't fool around, take your training very seriously.

NK: And, so a lot of this, did it come from the other crews that were on the base with you?

EP: It came from crews, ... that had already experienced combat and that ... probably were either ... on their way home or were set aside to provide lectures for us. I have to take a little more time [for things] to come to mind. What, what is it we were told? ... We went to more ground school, more radio training, more navigation training, more gunnery, and numerous lectures and movies relative to venereal disease.

KP: And, this was in 1943?

EP: Yes.

KP: In the spring of 1943.

EP: Yes. ... The only time that you began to realize that you were in England is when you went off base and went to London. And, then, oh, it was a different country. And, ... I was very pleased. It was very pleasant. There were very nice people. I enjoyed them, I had no problems with the English people.

KP: It sounds liked you liked London; you enjoyed going to London.

EP: Oh, yes. The only part, ... at night, it was dark. ... You could almost get run over every time you went out, because, [all] the taxis had was just a little blue light, because of the "black out." And, they ... had to go slow. I experienced bomb raids in England, in London. Saw the anti-aircraft fire in Grosvenor Square and so on.

KP: What was it like to experience an air raid, especially given the fact that you would be producing them shortly?

EP: Well, I ... already ... [had] produce[d] some.

KP: Well, what was it like to be on the other side of an air raid?

EP: ... It was just something else to look at. You know, ... it was fantastic to see the antiaircraft guns. You know, they use the ones that are shooting at you when you go over in Germany, and to see an airplane get caught in the search lights and then being brought down, ... right where you ... were standing at Grosvenor Square in London! I went to see, I think it was Snow White in the movie in London, and I didn't hear a thing. When I got out there was a whole lot of commotion,

all around ... the block was devastated by bombs. So I just missed it. I mean, I was lucky that I did miss it.

KP: And, you were in the theater and you had not even realized.

EP: I never even heard it. Nope.

NK: Did it feel it was more dangerous to be on the ground or more dangerous to be in the air?

EP: Yes, more dangerous on the ground.

KP: Really. You had that sense?

EP: When I was in London, yes.

KP: Did you ever experience a buzz bomb attack?

EP: Towards the end of my tour, yes. ... Just before I left England, yes.

KP: And, what was your reaction to that? Because some said that was even more scary

EP: That's the answer, Natalie's question.

KP: Yes.

EP: The buzz bombs because you didn't know where they were coming from. We had one mission; we were coming back pretty close to ... nightfall, which was ... late for us. And, ... one airplane was sitting way off, ... out of our caliber range, 50- caliber range. All of a sudden he started lobbing rockets at us. It was the first time we saw the German rockets. That was the beginning. But, they didn't hit any of us, but it was ... interesting. [laughter]

KP: Was it a surprise?

EP: Oh, yes! Oh, yeah. Very much so. And, there were cases where you had a B-17 all by itself, way over there. Hey, what's he doing way over there? It's German ... pilots flying the B-17.

KP: When you say the German pilots were flying the B-17, how did that happen?

EP: Well, because no one could get him on radio for one thing. There was ... no markings that anyone could distinguish.

NK: How did they get their hands on a B-17?

EP: Oh, there was a ... lot of B-17s shot down or they landed, crashed landed, and they ... also acquired our bombsight.

KP: So, in other words, from crash landings, the Germans would reconstruct a B-17.

EP: Or those that didn't get damaged.

KP: Yes. And, then they would fly into formation, because you would not recognize it immediately as an enemy fighter.

EP: That's right. That's right, yes. But, I think most of the time, in this particular case, he was just kind of spying on us to see ... where we were going, and, what ... we [were] going to do. How were we fighting? What protection did we have and so on?

KP: And, was that B-17 brought down?

EP: It wasn't. He just "peeled" away and just took off. We don't know what happened to him.

KP: Was that the only time you saw one?

EP: That's the only time I saw one, yes.

KP: But, it was not a unique occurrence to you.

EP: No, no. It wasn't an everyday occurrence, for one thing. And, I'm sure it was less and less as more of us came over there. More of our fighter cover came over because then they were able to go and dispatch them immediately.

NK: Once you got to England, how long was it before you went on your first combat mission?

EP: Oh, first one, let's see. My first mission was July 26th, ... I arrived in England, June the 12th, 1943. ...

KP: July 26, 1943.

EP: Right, to bomb Hamburg, Germany. One important thing, we were required to fly 25 combat missions, this is, combat missions that have been confirmed missions by the Eighth Air Force. Before, they had to be confirmed, before you could say, "Okay this is a mission." I went through my diary and ... I counted up that we had, not our particular crew, but me, because there are times when maybe the pilot might have ... had a bad cold or copilot and you flew with someone else. ... Sometimes, you accumulated many more missions than some of your crewmates because of that. Anyway, I ... went through, and I found out that in order to get 25 missions, I had prepared to go on another ... 25, which were aborted. ... Every time you're called for a mission, generally, its around 2:30 in the morning, and you had just gotten to bed. You know, came back from town and your stomach is in a knot, naturally. It always is when you're getting ready to go. So it almost counts like a mission, but not one that qualifies.

KP: But, not according to the air force.

EP: Oh, no, no. Well, no, I mean, that's part of the game.

PS: You never had to go on a mission with another crew?

EP: Oh, yes.

PS: You did?

EP: In fact, the first four missions, my first four missions ... three of us went together with another crew. That's the way our group did it, ... for you to further train ... with a combat-experienced crew. My pilot flew as a copilot several missions before he flew by himself as a pilot. ... We were very glad they did that, you know that cut down on the losses. Many times ... there would be a crew that just came in fresh, to replace someone, and they didn't even have a chance to unpack, and they were shot down that particular day. They didn't have enough training.

KP: Was this later in the war, that they stopped doing this kind of training?

EP: Well, in some groups that had high casualties, ... if they send up perhaps 36 airplanes, and eighteen were shot down, ... that's pretty bad, that drains them. So that means they had to have new ones come in immediately. And, the requirement was, if we were going in a certain direction and the mission called for so many airplanes, they had to put them up, whether ... they're new, or old, or what. That's it, you go.

KP: What was your first mission like? What do you remember about it? You trained for a while, but now this was the real thing.

EP: Well, the thing that's very prominent in my mind is when we were having our coffee. I was with a bunch of other colleagues. I was flying with ... another crew. And, I was having my coffee. And, I was going like this, I was laughing. I couldn't stop shaking, but I was laughing from the ... excitement from going into combat. And, there was just, it, it didn't happen the second mission. It was just the first one. And, I found out others felt, and experienced, the same excitement.

NK: So you were eager for a chance to sort of try all this out, I guess.

EP: I don't know if it was eager. ... You were trained to do this, and this was your job. And, you kind of wanted to, your goal was to survive 25, so you could go home. And, that was your goal. That's it, you didn't care about anything else.

PS: Your first mission with the other pilot, with the experienced pilot; he was experienced? Correct?

EP: Yes.

PS: Was that a good thing for you or did you miss your pilot? Were you uncomfortable with another pilot?

EP: It was comfortable because ... he had combat experience. ... He was baptized. And, not only that, what's comfortable is my radio operator was with me, and my navigator was with me. So the three of us. So my navigator and I were up in the nose together. You know, ... he's up there right next to me. ... If I'm over here, he's right next to me, on the side here. We saw some action that time. But, my fourth mission is the one that almost did us in, I guess.

KP: What happened in your fourth mission?

EP: That was when we flew to Kassel, Germany to bomb an aircraft factory on July 30, 1943. And, that's the one where we crash-landed on the way back to England. We got all shot up and landed on one engine. We lost a crewman. But, I wasn't with our ... crew then. See this is how I wrote, "Oklahoma six days, six days to go home." My diary. Any highlights, I would write.

PS: Are we talking about "Poison City" here?

EP: Yes, you know about that ill-fated airplane mission?

PS: Oh, sure.

EP: Oh, oh, well then, if you know about that.

PS: Oh, no, no, no. But, the tape recorder doesn't know about that. It's just what I've read.

EP: Where there is no point in wasting your time.

KP: Oh, no, we actually.

PS: No, there is.

KP: Yes, no there is.

PS: Please.

KP: What do you remember about the mission, where you almost did not make it?

EP: Well, "Poison City" had many mechanical problems. Equipment problems, ... radio, electrical problems. It had some engine problems. And, you don't turn back for some ... little biddy things like that. I mean, if your engine stop[s], and, you can't go. Then you turn around and go home. But, for any, what appears to be minor, but it really wasn't. The engine problem was that when we went up to altitude there, ... parts of it froze. And, it appeared to them, that they were running out of gas. They actually didn't; something else happened that the fuel wasn't going to the engine and they had to stop it, and so we were on three engines. And, we're up

about 25,000 feet or so. Let's see, July, it was July 30th. And, well I start out with, [Piech reads from his diary] "Dear Diary, your Edward ... was very near destined not to come," forget the English, "not to come back home, England, to fill ... in this page on any or any other pages. Events: up at two o'clock, briefing at 2:30, almost missed breakfast. Flight was at 26,500 feet, high group. High group means that we were up at the highest, which is the safest place to be when fighters are coming in. But, Tail-end Charlie, was the worst. That means that we were in a high group, but then there's sort of a ladder effect. And, the last airplane down here is generally the one that's liable to get shot down the first because it's easier for the fighters to come in. They don't come in up top because ... there's many more guns when they come in at the top. So we're at tail end Charlie. I got here, Kassel, that was our target. Ten-500 demos, six-and-a-half-hour flight over Belgium, and way back over Holland. Account, 40 minutes before target, number four engine out. Pulling 50 inches of mercury and still trailed behind. Coming in over Belgium, the wing was hit by a few dozen FW-190s, that's the German fighters; we ... scared them off. Heavy flak, especially over Kassel. Hit target, huge smoke billows. Then the hard time, hard time keeping up with formation for two hours. Just before crossing Holland coast, swarm of FW-190s hit us from all sides. ... Because we ... only had three engines, we had problems. We couldn't keep up with the group at that altitude so the fighters, that's what they do. They pounce on stragglers. And, that's what they did. They pounced on us. And, from all sides, ... Maginis was the pilot, had to feather another engine. Now were down to two. Lack of gas, and no pump to transfer fuel. Down we dove to almost sea level. Before that the 20 millimeter shell bursts in the oxygen bottles and knocked Bill and me, my navigator, for a loop. Actually we were really knocked out. Another tore in the bomb bay. And, three others made huge holes in the wings. Copilots win the correct pieces by a deflection bullet. Plane was definitely filled, literally filled with holes. More trouble. Intercom system was partially out, and very troublesome.

Injuries: tail gunner hand bloodied from shrapnel, shot in the right hand, bleeding slowly. His name is ... Staff Sergeant Reader. Good boy. Sergeant McMagarty, waist gunner, seriously wounded, shot in neck and back. I administered most first aid. Bill, my navigator, gave him oxygen. Sergeant (Ricardi?) shrapnel, light wounds forehead, back, he's okay. Pilot Maginis shot in right thigh, he's alright." See I'm writing this a couple days later, after I get the information. "Ball turret," let's see, "cut up." Tech Sergeant (Glenn?) cut up hands. Harvey, who was our radio operator from ... Montclair, New Jersey. Bill and I, in nose. Copilot Peterson got pinpoint shrapnel wounds in arm. We threw out, ... we thought maybe we would have to drop in the ocean, (in the Channel.) Threw out all ammunition and waist guns. We picked up guns and threw them out, out through the bomb bay. All ammunition right into the Channel. We're going to have to ditch. Cross Channel on two engines. Slow speed and flying low, barely landed on unfinished runway near East Ipswich, England. Landed finally, on one engine and with only three minutes gas left. McGardy was taken to the hospital with others. The rest staggered here and there until our home base plane came to bring us back. #726, "Poison City" sits there a total wreck. I hope, I never see that jig ship, ever, no more, not at all, again! God, thank you for helping us to come back in one piece. We were lucky. ... The pilot was the hero.

Oh, we also had trouble with the bomb bay doors when we were diving down. Couldn't get them closed. Bill found spent bullet right behind his back. In other words, it didn't go through his armor plate; it was a 30 caliber bullet. But, then, later on, I had in here, reaffirmed that the sergeant died, and ... the pilots and copilot, they're okay. But, that's just one of them, i.e., missions."

KP: That was your fourth mission?

EP: That was my ... forth mission.

KP: Why did you get back on the plane after that?

EP: That's your job. That's no problem. Why did people in Iwo Jima, you know, after they did this and that? You know, or even at D-Day, saw so many people killed. You just kept going. You're trained, you know, to do that. There isn't anything else you can do. Well, yes, but you got your honor, for one thing. I suppose maybe that's the difference. That's a powerful force. You have your integrity and you have your honor. You have to face people back home, you know. Even though they say, yes ... hey, we don't blame you. But, you still wouldn't want to fail.

KP: You had seen a lot. In that fourth mission you had seen a lot of combat.

EP: Well, we had quite a bit more after that. Yes, but this is the one ... where we had to. One time we came back pretty late, and we were running out of gas and we had to land at ... another base. We've frequently, quite a few times, we'd land on three engines. It was something. An unspent shell in one of the engines. We didn't see that until we landed and the crew chief went on a ladder and checked the engine and so on. He reached in and he says, "Did you want this?" I mean, there are a million stories like that for everyone, anyone who was in combat. ...

KP: Your first four missions were in a sense, they were common, but in a sense, they were training because you were with another crew.

EP: Yes.

KP: Did you learn anything? Did you and your crew, once you were now together on your fifth mission, but your first together, what did you learn from those missions as a crew that you did differently from training?

EP: I think, the most important thing is that you develop a sense of calm; you're not afraid. You're afraid, but you're not afraid. Not like the first mission where ... the cup was shaking because you were so excited. ... I think the word is, you become more confident of yourself because, you went through it, your training did pay off and the training that you did get, you might say, is now more cemented in your mind and ... in your actions. You know what to do, so that you become a better soldier because of it.

KP: You just brought up your crew chief. What was your relationship with the ground people? Because ... I wouldn't say cushy life, but they are little less in harm's way than you are, the air crews.

EP: A tremendous amount of respect. We didn't socialize with them, but we did chit-chat with them when we went ... out to get into the airplane. And, while they were loading our bombs and getting ready and so on. He was an excellent man. I met him at one of [the] reunions. ... He

reminded me of my pilot. You immediately, just by looking at him, you had confidence that he was going to do a good job. ... I've seen crew chief[s] break down and cry when their airplanes didn't come back because they thought, maybe, the idea is that maybe some mechanical problem occurred because of their oversight.

KP: So you realized that the ground crews were very important to you. Most people I have interviewed have said this same thing, that there wasn't jealousy of the ground crew being out of harm's way because they played such a vital role.

EP: Clark Gable was in our base, and he was, you might say he was ... in the background as far as the limelight because the combat crews were the one[s] that are in the ... excitement. But, he flew with us one time. ... He was prohibited from flying in missions that were going to be, presumably, dangerous. In fact, ... he took a lot of these pictures.

KP: What was it like to meet Clark Gable?

EP: I never really had a one-on-one conversation other ... [than] "Hi," you know, this and that coming back from the airplane, and he would be standing there, and we, you know, shake hands. Everybody wanted to say "Hi" to Clark Gable. I was surprised that ... he was just about an inch or so taller than I am. I thought he was [taller] in all his movies, you know. But, he's ... nice looking fella. ... He had just lost his wife, for one thing. So he was kind of calm. He would go off by himself down to the next town, maybe to visit [a] barmaid or someone like that, just to keep company, but he was very well liked.

KP: Even though he was prohibited from being in harm's way.

EP: Yes. He ... was primarily a photographer when, well, let me put it another way: his assignment for the initial group was to make ... a photo mission of our group training and missions ... in combat. And, years later, when I was home and I was a Cub Master, I heard about the film that he made called "Combat America." And, I sent away for it. Low and behold, I did get it, and I showed it in front of the Cub Scout meeting. And, low and behold, there we were ... coming back from a mission. Our crew, our crew, yes. So ... he made that, in fact, it was in the credits in the film, you know. Clark Gable was a photographer.

KP: You mentioned that you were surprised that he was not much taller than you. Was this your first experience with a larger than life figure?

EP: Yes.

KP: Who you now meet. Do you look at movies in the same way after that, that experience with Clark Gable first-hand?

EP: Well, yes. Oh, yes. But, I thought he looked better, probably, in real life than he did in the movies.

KP: Really?

EP: Yes. I saw several movie stars. Oh, when ... we were in Santa Ana, California, ... they made a point ... of having ... a dance for the whole squadron. They'd invite some movie stars in, and everyone got a chance to dance with Linda Darnell, you know; so did everyone else. You know, "Hello, how are you?" ... It was nice. Good morale booster. And, then, I don't know, if you know, if you ever heard of Madelaine Carrol. You're too young to know Madelaine Carroll. I met her in, in London. She was in the Red Cross booth. She was a movie star at the time. One of the prettiest ones in the '30s.

KP: And, did you still go to USO dances and to USO shows in England?

EP: Yes.

KP: Anyone, did you see anyone that is memorable? Bob Hope?

EP: We saw Bob Hope. I forgot now, not important. It was either ... after the war in Nebraska, when I was stationed there, or in our base ... in England. Saw Bob Hope, saw several others, I don't recall now, who they were. Yes, but I did, I met, a Bebe Daniels. She was ... an American woman that became famous in England for her stage activity. Mainly, I think, she was Panama Hattie or one of those, and, when I was in, oh, boy, when I was in Africa. After I finished my mission, I was sent to Africa for a while. And, coming back, her husband was there. And, we were flying for a while and he says, "Ed, if you're going back, would you mind taking some letters back for me? Would you give them to ... my wife?" You know, because I was going to be in London anyway. So ... [he] gave ... [me] a whole stack of letters, and she invited me to her show. But, before the show, she invited me and ten others to have front row seats to ... her play in London. And, it was perfect. It was beautiful. And, she had squab, which was pigeon, for dinner. And, someone else made it. And, while we were having dinner, there was an air raid going on. We just kept on eating as if nothing happened. ... So that was a very pleasant evening.

KP: So it sounds like when you were not in harm's way, when you were not actually on a mission, or ready to take a mission that parts of the war could be a lot of fun. Is that a way of characterizing it?

EP: ... If you weren't hurt, if you weren't wounded, it was the best place to be. You had clean sheets everyday. You had good food. You ... were allowed to purchase a bottle of wine a month, I think, or something like that. Whatever's available. You went to London. ... I always drank scotch, but you knew ... it was watered down. When, ... you come back late, you always could get a good meal, even though, if you came back late and the mess hall was closed. You were, I suppose, respected quite a bit. You were appreciated for doing what you were doing. At the time, I didn't, I didn't think that as much. But, realizing now and looking back, ... I guess, ... we did [a] pretty good job.

-----END TAPE TWO SIDE ONE-----

KP: Continuing on this theme, you mentioned once that you took a flight to Scotland that does not sound fully authorized.

EP: Well, we took several of them, but this one was. ... I got a letter from my uncle; ... he was equivalent to [a] warrant officer in the Polish Army, stationed ... in England. He was one of those that escaped the Russians. In fact, he even escaped the Germans, too. And, he was with the paratroopers assigned to an English unit. And, I got a letter, and he said something to the effect that he's sick; can I come up and see him, and so on. So we had some time off, a couple days off, and, I told my pilot. He went and talked to the commander. He said it's okay if we fly up to Scotland. ... I don't know if he said Ed's uncle or not. ... I believe, he said, something about checking the airplane out. So he got a flight plan, and he went up to Scotland. And, our whole crew didn't go. ... Just, well I was acting as a copilot. ... Our engineer went, and radio operator went. And, I was sitting in the nose, and, all of a sudden I looked down, and I saw somebody riding real fast on a motorcycle. Oh, we're probably only about a thousand feet up. And, I'm saying this now because, later on, looking back, that was my uncle. He was going downtown to get some liquor. [laughter] Anyway, what had happened is that we landed, and we couldn't stay very long. We just landed, and, ... took off shortly after that. And, I went to see his army group. And, I knew a little Polish. Not too much, but enough not to go hungry if I were shot down in Poland. And, they told me where he went, and what he did. He told me, .. in the letter, that he was sick, and, you know, could he see me. So my pilot, in the meantime, he wanted to fly a Mosquito in the worst way. This is the famous Royal Air Force airplane. And, so he went up with a pilot, and, sure enough, he got the chance to fly a Mosquito. He was, oh, boy, it made his day. Anyway we had to go back and ...

KP: So you never ...

EP: Never met him, never met him. Next time, I got a five-day leave. The whole crew got five days. They went to rest and recuperation at an English shore, ... Blackpool, or whatever it was. So I thought I better go up and try to hunt my Uncle Peter. I told my mother, and she said, you know, this and that, fine. So I went by train up there, [to] look for him. Low and behold, he was gone; he was on maneuvers. He was gone for a whole week. ... And, I stayed and slept with his soldiers. And, it was kind of tough because I didn't know that much Polish. [laughter] I'd forgotten a lot of it. But, it was all right. At least, I tried to see him. And, I didn't see my uncle until after the war when he came ... to the United States in the late '50s.

KP: It must have given you a source of no end of amusement that you twice missed each other in such ways.

EP: Oh, yes. But, my uncle, ... he was a regular army man. ... He was all spit and polish. He was, I would say, are you familiar with the word Prussian soldiers or Prussian officers? Well, ... he emulated Prussian military men. And, in his case, his rank as a warrant officer was ... probably equivalent to a colonel in our group, you know, as far as responsibility and as far as respect from ... his soldiers. But, that was an experience. I would much rather have gone on the beach with my crew. ...

KP: With your crew. Did you attend Mass often when you were in the military? How often would you see a priest?

EP: Well, that is another story. I didn't go to the Catholic Church. I think when I was, once vivid in my mind, vivid in my mind is when I went on my first overnight hike and camping with Boy Scouts. At my first camp, where I spent ... a week, I said, "I have a different religion. No longer the Catholic religion." I believe in religion, ... I believe in God, this and that, but. So I told my mother, and, she said, "It's all right Eddie as long as you be a good boy." I had my communion, my catechism or whatever it is. But, ... no I did[n't] go to communion. And, in [the] service, ... my dog tags, I think, were stamped "Catholic," but later on, I just went to base services. An even when I was flying, there wasn't any doubt in my mind, in what I believed in. It wasn't the case that I rejected the Catholic Church. It's just that I no longer believed in the details that the Catholic Church expounded at that particular time. More or less, in coming from a Polish ethnic ... background, the church ruled more by fear. You got to do this, you got to do that, you got to do this, until I realized that, wait a minute, God doesn't make you want to do all this. [laughter] He wants you to be a good citizen. So ... when I met my wife in Nebraska ... after I came back, she ... went to a First Christian Church in Nebraska. And, that's where we went to church. And, when we came home after the war, ... after college (Rutgers University), we settled in Metuchen. We joined a Reformed Church. But, while [in] college, we went to the chapel here on campus.

KP: Was religion important for you, for members of your crew, for men on base? Going to services?

EP: No.

KP: And, chaplains, how important were they?

EP: ... It was there. But, it wasn't showy. It wasn't, "I got to go, I got to go, I gotta go, I gotta go, ... oh, I miss[ed] it, I missed it." It wasn't a constant conversation. Oh, I gotta make Mass, I got to do this. Oh, I got to go to confession. It was private. Everything was private. What was very nice is that there'd be many, many evenings where our crew would get together, and we would invariably, topic women, first thing. Then it was the war, and, then, it was politics at home. But, invariably by [the] time two o'clock rolled around or so, and, you knew you weren't going to fly, it ended up with religion. Not in a sense of a religion, but only in a sense of the here to come. You know, what do you feel, how do you feel, or is there a God, this and that, and everything else. And, that, ... brought the crew closer together. You know, all ten of us would be there, which was very nice. And, they, the enlisted men, enjoyed coming to our ... barracks.

NK: Oh, so you were actually in barracks and not in ...

EP: Enlisted men, by law at that time, were segregated from the officers. ... I can understand when you need that discipline, that segregation in the infantry, where you have to give some life and death commands. Whereas, ... you're all in the airplane together, there's no need for any separation. You're all doing your job. The pilot is the boss, ... he's the leader, ... he's the captain of the crew. ...

KP: It sounds like you were all part of a crew, but you all had unique specialties.

EP: Exactly.

KP: Whereas, in the infantry the tasks are often very much the same. Whereas, even though another crewman would learn some of your functions, you really were the bombardier, and no one else could do that.

EP: Yes. ... You were specialists, you were right, yes. Except the gunners. ... I could take a gunner's position just about any time.

KP: How often would you do that?

EP: ... Only once. I took on my navigator's duty when he had a problem with his gun. He was doing something else, I think. But, ... one time, we were on a mission to Schweinfurt, Germany, a very memorable mission! That's when ... our individual bomb crew reunion is generally based, on that Schweinfurt mission. August the 17th, 1943 ... is our reunion date. ... And, that's when we went out to a ball-bearing plant. And, there was so much fighting going on, and we were all shooting our guns so much, that we were almost out of munition. My navigator's oxygen hose broke loose for some reason because he was swinging his gun back and forth. And, all of a sudden, there weren't any more fighters coming in. And, my navigator was still shooting. And, I said, "Hey Bill, Bill, Bill! What's going on?" And, I looked at him, and he was green, practically green, and I ... quickly looked, all of a sudden, by luck, I saw his oxygen hose hanging and ... he had a problem because he had lost so much oxygen. Fortunately, ... he recovered rather quickly, as soon as ... I plugged in his hose. But, later on, after the war, he did get some compensation. I think, he said, he got 100 percent because ... it affected his asthma, and, to this day, ... he has a serious problem breathing at times. And, he was able to get ... disability, because, after the war he wrote to me. He said, "Ed, I know you kept a ... diary." He said, "Could you tell us, write in detail about that particular mission, what happened?" And, he wanted to give it to the VA So I did, I sent him a copy. And, I wrote, right out of my diary, and he wrote back. He said, "I got 100 percent." He said, "They figured no one could make up that story." So they believed him and they granted him his request.

KP: His disability?

EP: Disability, yes. So I was grateful for that. But, you were not supposed to keep a diary. All right, it was a no, no. You were lectured at every pillar and post. No diaries now, you're going to get in trouble. Your liable [to be] put in jail. This and that. So, of course, being as naive as I was, I took it to heart, and I hid my diaries every chance I had, kept it out of sight when we ... went from base to base. I would strap it to my leg. Talk about being naive, but I'm glad I did. You know, I'm glad I kept it. And, every time we have ... reunions, I bring it. "Hey, Ed, what did we do here? Then?" You know, what happened this [day] and we were looking at the diary.

KP: I hope that you will give a copy of the diary to Rutgers, to Special Collections, because this is one of the things we would like to save for future generations.

EP: Would you be able to read it, though?

KP: Oh, no, historians have read far worse. That is actually very clear for historians.

EP: Oh, my buddy, ... got shot down. I got it recorded here on September the 13th. I heard indirectly from another group that he was shot down and killed.

KP: So he did not survive the war?

EP: No.

KP: You learned.

EP: No, no ... he had a son, too. Just see if you can ... just thumb through any of them, see if you can see. Can you read any of it?

KP: [Reading from diary] Oh, for "August 8th, 1943, lecture by Colonel Hatcher. Our group has so far shot down the most number of fighters and third place for low losses. Low losses and crews. Talk by combat men that have found their way back from France. Very interesting and hintful. Dinner, light rain all day. Play for a few hands until Captain (Bayard?) in to tell us we have a 24-hour pass starting at fifteen hundred hours. What a dash we have made to take a shower, shave and dress to go to London. Bill, Doug, and I trained to London from Peterboro. Had to stand up on train. So crowded. Supper at the (Tarcodal?), rooms at the Regent Palace Hotel. Doug and I shared the same bed. Damn swell room. Some of the Picadilly Commandos. What a disgrace to the feminine society of England! Few drinks in the hotel. Retired to room early and tired."

EP: That's the way I wrote.

KP: Yes.

EP: Just once and a while I may, would write some feelings in here. This and that. But, ...

KP: Why were you so interested in keeping a diary? Because you usually followed orders.

EP: I don't know. I don't know. Yes, you're right!

KP: You even mentioned guard duty; you took it very seriously.

EP: Yes. The thing that amazed me, though, is our copilot, he didn't keep any diary, and he remembered everything. He's got a fantastic memory. And, he's just about read every book that's been written about the Civil War. He ...

KP: He still lives on the Civil War.

EP: No, ... well, he isn't now. I mean, you know. We meet at his home. ... He and his wife have an antebellum home, beautiful home up in the southwest corner of Virginia. And, they look

forward to having us. Oh, we get along fine. In fact, we got along right after the first combat mission. He and I were ... buddies. We'd go to London together, here and there.

KP: So that combat mission, in some ways, gelled the crew quite a bit.

EP: Yes, it does. It does. Yup, it does.

NK: What other significant missions were you on? Kassel and Schweinfurt are huge, but were there others that stick out in your mind?

EP: Ah, well there's Kiel, my last mission ... from England. There's Kiel where we had the first batch of P-38s, beautiful airplane, in combat. And, of course, being in the nose, I had a front row seat of the dog fights. You've heard of the P-38s, the twin engine. ... Another one was when we went after some ... submarine pens in Nance, France. And, we came back and that was supposed to be an easy mission, and, we got hit by quite a few fighters. Our crew came out all right. I think we lost five airplanes total. ... But, what saved us was that we came through a big front of clouds. It was like a huge curtain in the sky. That's what I remember. And, we dove into that real quick. ... The whole formation dove into that, and we were able to dodge them. And, by that time, I believe one of the leaders phoned in for some help, and some Spitfires escorted us the rest of the way. ... We had fighter cover from the beginning of my missions, a little bit over the Channel, by Spitfires and by Hurricanes. And, then ... the P-47s came on board, and they were able to take us a little bit farther into ... [Europe] because, they carried more gasoline. ... And, then, after that, the P-51s came, and they were faster. And, they also had wing tanks so they were able to go further inland. But, whenever we went into Germany, we were by ourselves. We never had fighter cover over Germany. So, that's when we'd get a lot of fighter attacks.

NK: Even with the P-51s?

EP: No. That's right because they had to ... have ... enough fuel for coming back. They would be ... engaged in combat protecting us right over France, ... and Belgium going over. ... The sad part is when you saw the cover-up above, ... it looks so nice, but then when you see, all of a sudden, little things drop, and that's their ... wing tanks they just jettison them over enemy territory. So ... they do that especially when the fighters are coming, ... the enemy fighters are coming. They jettisoned so they can be more maneuverable and go faster and so on. And, once they do that, you know darn well they're not going to be with you very long because they need gas to get home. ... So that's when you start to get sad, "Uh-oh, you're gonna be on your own." There were many other terrible missions when we were on rest-leave. You know, all those things, by the grace of God, you know, that we were not in combat, and had gone to London, or somewhere else, for a rest.

There ... [were] some SNAFUS; we've had a lot of them. ... We didn't always hit the target. We ... bombed ... by a style called saturated bombing. That means a lot of airplanes together drop their bombs almost simultaneously, on the lead bombardier. ... He sights, ... his bombs to fall short of the target so that by the time the rest of the people back there pressed the release buttons to release the bombs, there's that extra distance that should ... saturate the target. Not just in one place, but saturate it from left to right, and from north, east and west, ... and south. And, if the ... lead bombardier misses, you know, the whole group misses, just about.

KP: Were you ever lead bombardier?

EP: Yes. Towards the end, yes.

KP: How many missions did you do as lead bombardier, three or four?

EP: About ten. ...

KP: So you have a lot of responsibility as lead bombardier?

EP: Oh, yeah, yes. Did you ever see the movie, Memphis Belle?

KP: No, I haven't, but I've been told that it is very accurate. Is that the most accurate movie out there?

EP: Well, ... except for the conversation, you know. They embellished a little bit too much in places. ... They indicated that there was some disagreements and fights amongst the crew on the airplane and I always felt uneasy because, ... you just aren't a crew, if you do that. You're not going to come back ... if you're fighting each other. But, anyway, ... when I saw it, the missions they went on, exactly, practically the same ones we went on. Similar fighter problems, similar antiaircraft fire. They had one indication where they were coming back at night, and, you know, got lost. We didn't get lost, but they had to land in another ... [air field]. And, they actually had ... in there where they hit a target, went around, and approached a target twice. And, they were saying on board, "This is suicide!" And, that's exactly what I had in my book ... that was suicide to go around [twice]. But, ... the second time we came to hit the target, the fighters were really waiting for us. And, fortunately we came out all right, our airplane did. And, the one time you, there were times when you couldn't see your target, and you had to if you were over France. You couldn't drop your bombs in Allied territory. You had to take them back with you. We landed with our bomb load a few times.

KP: Could you drop them in the Channel?

EP: Yes, we dropped them in the Channel. I think it was only once, though, but it was in the Channel way up closer to Germany, Kiel, Hamburg. Yes, where it was still enemy territory. Oh, one time we couldn't see our target, and we were on our way home, and ... the lead pilot or the commander at that particular time decided to bomb a marshalling yard, an intersection. That's one time we did hit the target, but real good!

KP: How much discretion would the lead bombardier have in terms of selection and target? I mean you were given a target.

EP: Oh, no, you didn't have any selection. You ...

KP: But, were there primary and secondary targets? Suppose you couldn't find them, the primary target, or the target. What would happen?

EP: You would, ... like, I said, drop it at [a] marshalling yard or drop it somewhere else in enemy territory. ... In ... Allied territory you would bring them back. We had incendiaries one time, and they were mean; they were terrible. You know, one little mistake, incendiaries, one doesn't get out, ... it's liable to burn your ship because ... they're magnesium, like magnesium flares. I hated those things. I had two missions with those. ... Not our crew, but several of our crew members went with others that went to go after the German heavy water plant, I guess, where they were trying to experiment making an atomic bomb ... and, also, at some rocket installations that were being built to prepare to rain on London. Fortunately, I didn't have to go on any of those. I was either ... grounded because of an ear infection or I was on pass.

Another interesting one was on my 25th mission. I was supposed to get 25. My 25th mission I was asked, almost told, I guess, that I will be going to ... North Africa. I will be taking part of a crew that's going to take General Eaker, who was our general at that time. He was succeeded by ... Lieutenant General Spaatz. He became the new commander. But, later, ... after we landed, I found out, ... we were just a decoy. He was in another airplane. We found out when we landed that ... instead of baggage, what he had was all his liquor in the bomb bay. But, anyway, being ... conscientious like I was, we were flying all night ... outside of Spain, about 100 miles outside of Spain. And, my job was to keep an eye out for fighters, for German fighters, because they have a habit of shooting down airplanes that were in transit from North Africa to England. So I was glued. My eyes were glued all night. Boy, was I tired! ... The moon was out, so we were a pretty good target, too. Fortunately, ... nothing happened. The navigator did a good job and that was my 25th mission. Flying all the way down there. I think I would rather have been in over Germany, than taking that. It was the longest, the most ... boring mission. But, yes, frightening in a sense that you were out of your element. And, then, in North Africa, I was in Algiers for a while and Tunis. And, stayed and waited for my order to get back. I was there about a month. We flew around a few times, went to Italy to deliver some messages and also to get some flight time. And, where it was in about fifteen miles of the fighting in Caserta, Italy. I think it was Patton; he was down there then.

... Then, I ... finally got my orders to go back, and, they said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "I want to go back to England. I want to get my Distinguished Flying Cross." They weren't going to give that to me down there. They said, "Well, we're not equipped to do that. We don't have the orders or anything." So I said, "Send me back to England." So I went back to England on a ... troop airplane, a C-47. ... It was kind of funny to sit back in there, ... where parachuters would be sitting, you know, on a bench. ... Flying all night again, and then, they set me up in hotel in London, at Grosvenor Square. I had to wait about a month ... for my orders and my Distinguished Flying Cross, the medal and the citation. And, I went home by boat. So I had ... both of the ... best possibilities. Over by airplane and back by boat. ... And, the beautiful part about coming back by boat is there were very few of us on [the] boat.

KP: Because everyone was going the other way.

EP: The other way, yes, because they were getting ready for D-Day, which was still a year away. So, over [a] year. So the boat ... really just had ballast, I guess. ... The boat was New Holland. It hadn't ... completed its maiden voyage, presumably, I guess, when the Nazis invaded. The boat left port so the Nazis wouldn't capture it. We had fantastic food. I enjoyed myself. I didn't get seasick. I got just a little bit when we went through [the] outskirts of a hurricane, but

not seasick to the point where I was losing anything, food. ... But, what I did do is I would get up on the bow of the boat, preferably by myself and just ride the waves. With the ... hurricane, I think was about a hundred miles away. We ... went 100 miles out of our way to skirt the hurricane, but the sea was pretty rough, very rough. And, what's vivid in my memory is to stand at the bow and look down and see the bow go, "Voom," down and get ... smacked on both sides by huge waves. I was ... enjoying myself. And, at night, moonlight ride and so on. The moon was out. We played bridge a lot; we gambled. There weren't that many of us. There were some British on board, some Canadians that were going back to the States. There were very few airmen that had just completed their missions.

KP: In your group, how many made the magic 25?

EP: ... There's a ratio of something like 33 percent would make it. One out of three.

KP: How aware were you of this ratio? How quickly did it dawn that your chances of making it were one in three?

EP: Rather quickly. They let you know immediately.

KP: Oh, really. It was no surprise.

EP: No. ... Nobody would keep a secret of something like that. Yes, but again, you were lucky. You happened to be off five days on leave. You got a day off here and there because you were under ... quite a bit of stress. You got very little sleep when you were on active duty. I think there were three nights or four nights in a row where I only got two-and-a-half hours of sleep, each between missions. But, you were young, and you wanted to get your missions. You wanted to get as many [as you could], you didn't want to turn any down.

KP: So there was not this sense of spacing out the mission. You would rather get all the missions over with as quickly as possible?

EP: Yeah. ... You were ordered to go in his place. So-and-so is sick or so-and-so is out on leave, and we didn't think we'd have a mission, but we do. You know, "Ed, we need another bombardier."

KP: At the time, how effective did you think your missions were? Did you have any sense of that? How was your group contributing to winning the war? Did you feel that the missions were very successful or did you have a sense that ...

EP: From the beginning, ... I didn't feel that we were successful because all we ... we would go into France, ... all except for Kassel and Kiel, but every time we would go after an airfield in France, ... most of them were airfields in France and Belgium. It just seemed like, "Gee, why couldn't we have the twin engine bombers go in and do it, or something like that?" But, it was a mission. And, there were some that probably shouldn't have been called a mission, but the rules were as long as you ... entered enemy territory, and you had to fire your guns, even if you never saw a fighter. You got credit for a mission because there were some that ... never fired a shot,

but they had engine problems, and they had to crash-land or land in enemy territory, and they couldn't come back, so.

KP: What were you told if you crashed in Germany or France?

EP: No resistance. Don't offer any resistance. Name, rank and serial number. Have you ever seen the TV program Hogan's Heroes? That's back in the '50s and '60s? Yes, name, rank, and serial number. No, don't give any information.

KP: In your group, how many did in fact get captured?

EP: Our colonel got captured. He was shot down on ... New Year's ... Day of 1943. ... We ... found out later, that he was rescued. You know, came back alive. He was leading a mission, ... December the 31st, lost our colonel. We lost seven crews. But, ... we weren't flying that time. Up at ten o'clock, did little jobs. Got room clean for New Year's. Raining, foggy, all day. ... 331st Group, two groups left at seven-thirty. That means we weren't involved. They left for Bordeaux, France, eight-and-a-half-hour flight. 509 stood down. Oh, wait we had four squadrons. And, we would alternate. One would always stand down, unless it was a maximum effort. Then everybody, ... whatever airplane they had, whatever crews could walk. Okay, you go. But, most of the time one crew was off. That gave the crew chiefs an opportunity to fix up the airplanes. ... I think that's probably the main reason, yes. Anyway, they had a terrible time.

KP: Do you ever wonder, at times, that if a bomb missed its target, where it might have landed and in terms of civilians?

EP: I wondered more about that later on like about 20-30 years later.

KP: But, at the time you didn't?

EP: No. You wouldn't let yourself. All you thought about is getting rid of those bombs and getting home as fast you can go, meaning to your base, as fast as you can. You did your job. You're ... working for the United States out, but you're working for yourself coming back. That's the way our whole crew felt. And, you had to, you had to.

KP: But, you say you later thought about that?

EP: Oh, yes, oh, yes. I ran across at J&J, we were at a bowling banquet, and we were discussing the events, ... and, the fellow that was at the table, I was telling him about Kassel, I guess. I forget which one. Anyway, maybe it was Kassel. And, he said, ... he remembers. He was down in the air raid shelter at that particular time. ... He came over after the war. He had a German accent, still does. You know, good worker. But, to answer your question emphatically, no. At that time, I was more mad at John L. Lewis for striking. That, to me, was the epitome of disloyalty, that miners were on strike, and here we were getting our fannies shot off. So that wasn't just me, it was a common feeling. ... You might say, well, how did you, what did you think about ... Truman ... dropping the bombs at Hiroshima? Hey, great. I feel bad now, you know. I feel worse now than I did at the time. At the time, ... it was, ... you were caught up in

that nationalism that saves lives. You know, our boys are getting killed. And, all the bad publicity about ... Japan, about Corregidor and Bataan. And, the treatment that our soldiers got. So ... that insulated you from any sad feelings about so many people getting killed.

KP: Well, in fact, one of the things we have learned in doing these interviews is how dangerous it was for crews. I did a previous interview, and he said in his crew there were only two planes left in his original group when they started. And, in fact, the one plane, they rotated for a leave, then they came back and were all killed on a mission. His crew were not sent on leave, were sent on a mission, shot down, and all became prisoners of war.

EP: The other crew?

KP: Yes, his crew was captured, and the other crew was killed.

EP: Wow, you talked about being afraid or ... how come you went back in again and so on. Well, we had ... one instant where we had to tell a gunner to get off the crew. He was ... hiding behind armor plate when fighters would come in. ... We would hear over the intercom. What the heck was his name? And, it happened several times. Finally our crew, we all got together, especially ... the officers, we said, "We've got to do something about him." His name was Cunningham. And, what the problem was that on the ground he shot so many fighters. ... Oh, boy, he was bold, unafraid, but, yet, up in flight, he was useless. He would hide behind the armor plate. And, ... you know, he was a hazard to the rest of us ... because his side wasn't covered. So the pilot went to the commanding officer, and he had him taken off our crew.

KP: Where did he go?

EP: I think, he ... he went to the infantry or somewhere else. ... I think, he just didn't ... want to be an airman, anymore. Oh, here it is, here. Cunningham, September the third, Cunningham asked to be grounded on account of fear of combat. There were some that would hit the bottle too much after a mission, especially on their days off. And, it was pathetic. ... A pilot, a nice fellow, but he would get so drunk. I guess he couldn't take it any longer. Whenever ... we had some injuries, ... they took the injured away as fast as possible from the active crew members. They whisked them away to, oh, I think it was a hospital about fifteen miles away, especially those that ... required considerable hospitalization. Which was good. You know, I think that was a good idea. There's no point ... having them close by and be reminders of the hazards of war. ... I think you're primarily, ... you're afraid, but you're not afraid to do your job. ... You might say you're sort of like, holding your breath until you come back. [laughter] But, you don't think, "Ah, I made another one!" You don't think that at all. ... You go on. Hey, I'm going into town, you know. I made friends with a family in Peterboro and became very friendly with a young lady, and I think if I ask[ed] her to marry me, I think she would have. But, she knew that I wanted to get my college education, first and foremost. I wasn't going to get tangled up in anything serious. I wanted to get that ...

KP: So you very much, throughout the war, knew you wanted to get back to ...

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: To Rutgers?

EP: Oh, yes. I wanted to finish college. And, ... I mean, they gave me a break by becoming unclassified. And, I ... evidently, ... they took a chance, and, I think, I've improved myself because ... I averaged around a two for the first semester, before I left.

KP: You mentioned you had gone to Algiers. You later learned to fly the booze for the general. What was it like to be in Algiers for a month?

EP: ... If going to England ... was seeing the day, going to Africa was like just night. When we landed, we landed in Marrakesh, Morocco. And, kids were running around barefoot, and it was cold. I was cold; it was rainy cold, and there they were running barefoot. You didn't dare turn your back, ... you're liable to get stabbed. Your jeeps would have been cut up for the leather. They were very distrustful of Americans. Algiers was almost the same, but ... not as much. There's a little more security there. The ... interesting point was to wake up by, whoever it was, the priest ... of the Arab, ... call to prayer at 5:30 in the morning. I can always remember that. To this day, I wish I could repeat it. And, it was a nice, nice call. ... He could sort of like moan it real loud and stood up on a tall slim building, ... in a pulpit. And, you could hear him throughout most of the city. Call to prayer. I guess, ... I read a lot. I saw movies because ... there was an ... army base nearby. I was assigned a jeep to keep myself busy. So I toured. I did a lot of touring. I went to Carthage. And, I saw the ruins ... of Carthage. ... Where the Christians and the lion were in the arena. But, it was, oh, it was so spoiled. It was ruined. There was human [waste] all over the place. I was so disappointed. You know, I went clear out of my way to go see the museum, and I thought I could ... see something, but. Well, I did sit on one of the seats in ... the stadium, or inside . What do they call it? Coliseum?

KP: Yes.

EP: Yeah, and just imagined myself 2000 years ago or so. I saw DeGaulle in Tunis. Pompous bastard. My God, oh.

KP: In what form did you see him?

EP: I saw him all dressed up in his ... uniform, you know, epaulets this, and medals down to here, and he ... had about a dozen guards all around him. He was ... going through town or some darn thing. I don't know what was involved. ... But, ... he was very tall. ... Quite tall, he stood out. I mean, if anybody wanted to knock his head off, it would be no problem because he stood above everyone else. But, I got a tremendous disliking for him, just looking at him, then.

KP: Really. Had you seen a scene like this before? It sounds like this was a very unusual scene.

EP: Yes, for me it was, yes. But, also, reading about it, he was always giving the Allies a hard time. You know. About wanting this, or wanting that. Trying to exercise his control.

KP: You also had a brief foray into Italy. You had a remarkable military career. Very early in the war you saw three different theaters, England, North Africa, and Italy.

EP: I was just killing time, waiting to get sent back to England. And, my pilot and navigator and I were still together, but I don't know what happened to all the rest of the crew--the enlisted men that were with us. And, we were just sent ... to deliver something in Italy. I think we just stayed enough for dinner, and that's it, and then came back. But, I was also in ... part of Algiers. I stayed in the castle where Eisenhower stayed. I slept in a crypt. It was all concrete, and they gave us ... fantastic food. ... I don't know whether this is true or not, but someone said this is the table that Hannibal brought over with his elephants. It was a huge table; it's marble, beautiful. I don't know about that one's [true]. Probably. I mean, if they made the pyramids, they certainly could ... bring ... a table over, with marble all over it. And, we had wonderful food, and we were eating. And, ... I met one of the ... British head[s] of the air force there. I think they call him the Lord Admiralty, or whatever it is. Well that's a navy, but for the air force. I met a good many others. See, they ... would have this building for VIPs that were passing through, and they would stay overnight. So we were part of their dinner companions. So I didn't stay there too long because I had to move on. But, you know, in service you moved around quite a bit, whether you wanted to or not. ... Is that enough about the war?

KP: I guess one, well, Natalie.

EP: I wouldn't want to just give this to somebody. I don't know.

KP: But, wouldn't you ...

EP: My son read this, you know, and I thought, "Gee, don't you find it boring?" "No, Dad. Gee, you did, you're so detailed."

He says, "You know, you remembered everything." You know, I was surprised.

KP: Well, I wouldn't want you to necessarily part with the original, but if we could make a copy, or you could make a copy for the library, that would be great.

EP: Yes, I think I probably [would] be flattered. Now, when I met my wife, I stopped writing in the diary.

KP: That was actually one of my questions. When you were sent to McCook, Nebraska to lead training.

EP: Because all through the diary my son would say, "Gee, Dad, you really got to know a lot of ladies, girls didn't you?" [laughter] I said, "All airmen did."

KP: So being an airman in terms of getting a date, you could get a date fairly easily.

EP: Oh, I think it was easy for any soldier that presented himself. It didn't matter if he was a private or ...

-----END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO-----

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Edward Piech on March 2, 1995 with Kurt Piehler.

Paul Sambrowski: And, Paul Sambrowski.

KP: I guess one question that's related to the war is that you were sent to McCook, Nebraska.

EP: McCook, Nebraska.

KP: McCook or

EP: McCook.

KP: And, I guess I noticed that there was a clipping that you married someone ... from that town. How did that meeting take place? How big of a town was it?

EP: It was about five to eight thousand people. It was a nice little Midwestern town. When I came back from service, when I came back from London, ... we had a leave for about three weeks at home and then we were sent to Atlantic City for another three weeks. And, there, I let them know, that I would like to become a pilot, to try again. So I was sent to Alamogordo, New Mexico, and I took the test there, again, and I thought I did very well, but nope, no pilot. I think at that particular time they may have had, I'm trying to ... to get myself sympathy that maybe they had enough pilots. [laughter] And, they didn't want any more.

KP: But, the war was still on.

EP: The war was still on, that's right. But, they did need instructors for bombardiers, though, because there was still Japan. And, so, I was sent to McCook, Nebraska, to the heavy ... bomb group. And, there they had some B-17s. And, they were also going to be a base for B-29s. So I became an instructor of B-17s, and then, when 29s came on with ... full crews arrived and were in training, I was their ... bombardier instructor.

KP: What was that like to be in the different role and now being the instructor? What did you try to emphasize? And, did you do anything differently in the way you did training versus the way you received training? Did you learn anything?

EP: Yes, ... I tried to lecture to them about my combat experience and the difference between the training here and the reality. And, it may be entirely different in the ... Pacific, which [I] found out it was, than Europe. The training in Europe was not necessarily conducive to good training for the Asian [theater] because there it was mostly large bodies of water. There navigation was the most important [thing]. ... I guess I was there for about two months, and I was still a first lieutenant, and ... played volleyball quite a bit with the chaplain. He was ... in our B.O.Q., and I was kind of teasing him, "Hey, do you know any of the young girls I could date?" or something like that. He said, "Yes, yes." What he was doing, he was, he knew my future wife. She was going with ... another person, a ... base person. But, he happened to go on leave

or something, so she was by herself. So he didn't tell me that. Yeah, so and so is, you know, available. So I went, and I called up my wife and asked her for a date, and she said, "Yes." So we dated. I think, ... well, let's see, the first time I met her was in July, I believe, and we married in November, that same year. I became, I forget when, I then became a staff bombardier. And, I got my raise in rank from first lieutenant to captain. And, after that, ... I guess, I was made a captain after I was married. ... She would say, "See I married you before you were captain, not after you were captain."

PS: This is the end of 1944, correct?

KP: You're in Nebraska.

PS: You got married in the Fall.

EP: ... This is 1944, correct, yes. Yes, right you got it.

KP: And, you stayed in Nebraska for the rest of the war or were you sent someplace else?

EP: ... Yes.

KP: Which, in a sense, you stayed a long time in Nebraska.

EP: That's right, yes.

KP: And, in fact, your wife must have enjoyed that.

EP: For that year. Well, we moved from pillar to post there. I think we ... moved ... four or five times because housing was horrendous. ... We stayed in one room, at first. It took a while before we got an apartment.

KP: And, did you think of making the air force a career?

EP: No.

KP: No, even though you wanted to be a pilot, you did not want to stay in the air force?

EP: No. There was a good many of us, that [as] soon as, in fact, when Japan surrendered, when they were handing out ratings numbers. One, this and that, that meant that they didn't want you to go. ... Or they wouldn't let you go. ... But, after a while things changed, and, you know, things were moving real fast within a month or so right after that. And, I think it was right as Japan surrendered. Right. August. And, I was in college a month later. That's how fast I moved.

KP: So in other words you moved from Nebraska being in the war to September you were back at Rutgers.

EP: Yes.

KP: Rutgers in 1945.

EP: Right. We found an apartment on Mine Street, in New Brunswick. First of all we lived with my ... folks for a couple of weeks, until we found a place, a third floor apartment on Mine Street.

KP: Oh, wow, not too far from my old office, I used to have an office on Mine Street, at the old psychology building at 88 College Avenue.

EP: Maybe the family is still there, Felton. Well, anyway, ... we moved, we came here. And, my wife knew, too, before we married, that I was determined to finish Rutgers.

KP: That you were going to be coming back here?

EP: No way. I'm gonna come back and get a college education.

KP: You had been here in 1941, and now you are back as a veteran. How did you view college after having all the experiences you did? How did it change you as a student?

EP: Well, it was a shock in the sense that, ... since I did have credits from 1941, I started taking sophomore physics. And, ... then, I took chemistry. I forget which chemistry it was. I literally ... repeated my freshman year. I got credit, but I ... started as a freshman. And, now, seven years since I left high school, that little stint that I had in Rutgers in 1941 really didn't amount to much, as far as keeping ... your brain ... oiled up. I read the first chapter in physics, and it took me, I almost started to cry myself--I spent almost an hour just reading the first chapter. It couldn't sink in. Finally it did, you know. It was that tough. And, my wife would cry; she was in a new state and I was constantly in the books trying to study. ... And, so, ... it was hard getting started. But, I stuck with it, and ended up getting some good grades, except for organic chemistry and calculus.

KP: I am not surprised. I know people in the sciences, and they still say organic is still hardest course.

PS: Everyone has an organic nightmare that's ever taken it.

EP: Yes, this time I will blame the teacher. He was, I wasn't smart enough for one thing for him. He would, I'm not ... embellishing, he would write, erase, write, erase, literally. Starts with a C. Cohen? Cowen? Well, anyway, he was brutal. I had a calculus teacher that ... did not do a good job of explaining for someone that took a little more explaining, time to understand things. But, I had no problem with chemistry and no problem with physical chemistry, analytical chemistry, industrial engineering chemistry, and music, economics, and English lit.

KP: You had to know Dean Metzger or at least knew of him when he was at chapel. What did you think of Dean Crosby?

EP: ... I think he was, at the time he was a little too young ... for his position. He didn't have the respect of the students. It ... took him, probably, some time before he did.

KP: People have been more than unflattering in their assessment of him, actually.

EP: He probably should have been in a middle school, to be a administrator in a middle school, not in a college.

KP: I have gathered from several people whom I have interviewed, that some of the faculty made the adjustment and treated you as adults remembering that you had experienced combat and things most never experience in a lifetime. But, others failed to take this into account. In other words, Crosby didn't really have the sense that he was dealing with veterans.

EP: Yes, although there weren't that many veterans in the chemistry class. There were only 60 of us. And, I think only ... 30 graduated. I think there was only two or three veterans ... in our class.

PS: Class of 1949?

EP: Yes, Class of '49.

KP: In terms of chemistry?

EP: Chemistry, correct. Class of 1949.

KP: How did you interact with the people who were the "traditional students" who were not on the GI Bill?

EP: Well, I was married. Okay. You've got to remember that the social contact was down, too, was way down. I had plenty to do to keep my head above water, with the books. And, we did make friends. I forget who. There was the Lambda Chi. ... They asked me to join. I was about ready to join.

PS: Over down by College Avenue?

EP: ... I think, they were up here, closer to the old gym. ... But, we didn't because ... we were financially strapped. And, while I did get a GI Bill of Rights, ... and my wife got pregnant. ... We wanted to have a child. And, the next year, my sophomore year, and I would try to get part-time jobs in the ... chemistry lab, filling the ... reagents and so on. I think I got twenty hours a week or something like that, so that helped. And, then, I would work all summer at DuPont, at shift work in the film plant in Sayreville, New Jersey. And, then, ... I worked in my senior year all night at DuPont, and then, went to school during the day the first semester, which was pretty rough. And, ... then, I got ... I don't know how I got with Carter-Wallace. But, they hired me ... to do ... German translations of patents. And, this was ... [their] opportunity to look me over, I guess, so, I think, I worked twenty hours a week for them. So the little extra money helped considerably. And, then, one day, they said, "Ed, there's a job here for you, if you want it." I

said, "Oh, great!" I was only one of two people out of all the chemists that had a job when we graduated. All the rest, I found out later on, a good many of them went back to school, some of them pumped gasoline because '49 was a little bit of a slump, economically.

KP: A number of people have said that, too, which differs from the class of 1942. When they got back from the war they often had their pick of jobs.

EP: Oh, yes, yes. And, I must admit, ... Rutgers was only too happy to get some bodies, especially with the GI Bill, are they didn't particularly care. You know, ... I don't think, if my grades were all F's, they would have taken me. ... So ... they were happy to ...

KP: Have you.

EP: Yes, ... but I had no problem with that, taking ... chemistry. I had no problem with that at all.

KP: A number of people I know did not make it past "Introduction to Chemistry." I knew a friend in college who wanted to be a chemistry major who did not last past his freshman year. I guess one question because I know you want to avoid the traffic.

EP: Well, I'll tell you, I don't mind as long as, ... before I leave, I can call my wife.

KP: Oh, no, that's fine.

EP: I told her it would only be a couple of hours and she might be concerned.

KP: Oh, that's no problem. Your first job out of college in 1949, you said you were one of two people hired. With which company again?

EP: Carter-Wallace.

KP: Carter-Wallace.

EP: It used to be right on the intersection of Route 130 and Route 1, at the circle there.

KP: How long did you stay with Carter-Wallace?

EP: Almost four years. ... I came to J&J in October of 1953. And, so I stayed there almost, I guess it was, for four years. Oh, I applied through ... one of the American Chemical Society journals. It was an opening, it didn't say J&J. ... Previous to that, I asked my boss at Carter-Wallace ... for a raise, several times. I did get some, but they were so piddly. And, ... one time, his answer, "Hey, Ed, you know, I'm in the same boat as you, ... I want more money, too." I said, "I don't want to be in your boat." He was the director of research. ... We were [a] close-knit group at ...

KP: At Carter Wallace.

EP: Oh, yes. We had pharmacology, a biochemist, and a Ph.D. organic chemist. We were very good friends. And, then me. And, ... the director of the laboratory, not the director of the research, but the director of the laboratory, Dr. (Ludwick?). In fact, we would bowl together; we would play poker together, and eat at different homes. So we were almost like a bomber crew, ... except the director of research, Dr. (Burger?). He was a foreigner. And, he wasn't very liked because he was ... of the Dr. Waksman school where whatever you do, he got all the credit.

KP: Was that widely known at the time, at Rutgers?

EP: About Waksman?

KP: Yes, oh, yes. That's why they had so many ... suits when streptomycin came out, because he would not give credit. And, they found out that a lot of ... graduate students did an awful lot of work ... on Waksman's discovery. Well, (Burger?) was at that same school. ... His specialty was mephanecin. ... At Carter-Wallace, they started a research laboratory. And, I was one of the first, along with the director and the ... organic chemist that was hired for the laboratory to start a new research laboratory with the idea of looking for compounds which might have anti-convulsive properties, ... especially for epilepsy. And, so, the compound that I worked on, ... [I found] something by mistake, something good ... came out by mistake.

KP: Like in the case of rayon, I think it was?

EP: No, no, no. It's a word. Serendipity, is that it?

KP: Yes, I think so.

EP: The doctor was testing one of our drugs ... in New Brunswick for anti-convulsive properties, and he said, "Hey these people are relaxed, tranquil." So I guess ... he switched and tested it ... as a tranquilizer. ... About five years or so later, after I left Carter-Wallace, I got a call from the income tax people. "How come you don't declare any royalty from this drug because we looked at the research books, and your name is all over the place, as doing this and doing that and everything else?" I laughed, I laughed like hell. I said, "Oh, boy, no, we didn't get anything. The whole team didn't get anything. Only the director of research received payment."

KP: Burger got royalties.

EP: ... Burger, evidently, had a contract with Carter-Wallace. I went to [a] J&J patent lawyer and, I asked him, "Is there anything I can do?" They said, "Forget it, ... nothing." So that was it.

KP: How did you like working for J&J?

EP: Very much. I liked working for Carter-Wallace, too, because we had a nice team. It wasn't so much you working for the company as you're working with these very pleasant people.

KP: And, you found the same experience at J&J?

EP: At J&J, too. Yes, oh, yes. J&J was more people-oriented. ... They took care of their people. They had better benefits. You got the impression that they would never fire you. In fact, it was a good many years before they actually came to the point where they start[ed] laying people off because of economics. It was ... unheard of that anyone would be fired.

KP: So they were a very paternalistic company.

EP: Oh, yes, very much so. ... The research, everything was right here on Route 1. That was J&J back in 1953.

PS: It seems to me you, you said at Carter Wallace and J&J that you work in a team. Would you get that from being on a crew? Do you think that came from there, liking to work on a team in the work place as result of your wartime experiences?

EP: No.

PS: It's different?

EP: No, no I don't think so, because ... if you synthesized a compound, and you actually did the quality control, the analytical on it, to run the hydrogen analysis, chlorine analysis and all that, you did that yourself. You were actually ... an analyst yourself, so the Rutgers training came in to help. Lot of help. But, then, you relied on the biochemists and the pharmacologist to ... give it ... not a cursory test, but they performed certain test[s] to determine if the compound was viable for whatever they were looking. So you became a team from that standpoint. And, you would get together. Well, it was a small company, and a small research laboratory, and you ... always went for coffee together. And, ... so it made you feel like ... part [of a] team, I guess, more than anything else.

PS: But, it's not comparable to the team sense in the war?

EP: No.

PS: Okay.

EP: No.

KP: But, it also made you feel like you were not isolated in doing your research.

EP: Oh, yes. ... That's what took me so long to leave Carter-Wallace. Because ...

KP: You liked your team a lot.

EP: I liked ... our group there, I was working with. I learned from them. It was a good learning, good teaching ground. Rather, because I learned more physical chemistry there, and I did an awful lot of my own analytical chemistry, and, at times, I did quality control. To earn extra

money, ... they asked if I wanted to go up ... into a part of Newark-Belleville, I guess it is ... and run some quality control checks. ... They were making soap. Shaving cream "Rise." It was the first time they came out with "Rise." And, Carter-Wallace was expanding from their little liver pills to ... deodorant cream. ... Another time, a Ph.D. chemist and I ... worked together. He and I would actually clean animal cages to earn some extra money because he was just out of college, too.

KP: You also stayed active in the Boy Scouting movement.

EP: Yes, when my sons were born, I was in ... Boy Scouts from the time I was twelve until I was about seventeen-eighteen, when I start[ed] going to school and junior college. And, then, I went back when my son got to be eight years old, in Cub Scouts. Second year in Cub Scouts, I was Cub Master. And, I stayed with Scouting all the way through, including with my second son, ... five years later until the ... early '70s, I left Scouting.

KP: Did your sons make Eagle Scout?

EP: No. My wife and I raised our boys to choose their own destiny.

KP: And, I guess one question about your postwar experiences, how thrilling was it to have two articles published?

EP: It would have been better, if ... [I were] the author, instead of co-author.

KP: Yes.

EP: It was, it was quite thrilling. Later on, it was nice to ... meet one of the alumni, ... on occasion, "Oh, we saw your name in a journal." ... From that stand point yes, very thrilling. I suppose it helped to get the job at J&J. ... When I told them about asking the director of research for a raise, you know, they laughed like hell. They, J&J, gave me almost a 2000 dollar increase from Carter-Wallace. Plus, I didn't realize it at the time, evidently they knew a little about me a little ahead of time. Not that I was a scientist, but that ... I was working on Band-Aids. Carter Wallace was tinkering with the possibility of making Band-Aids when I was working there.

KP: Which is J&J's lead products.

EP: Yeah. One of the top chemists said, "Well, we know all about you, Ed." You ... didn't know shit from ... At the time, I agree with you now, but looking back. He said, "Yes, we knew all about you, what you were doing." Meaning they had spies out. But, they didn't need spies. They could just tell by what ingredients they would order. You know, purchasing agents tell each other, ... like e-mail, you know. So and so is buying calcium diphosphate. "Hey, they must be working on toothpaste."

KP: So you would know what others were doing? In J&J you would know what other people were working on and thinking of doing?

EP: ... Just because the purchasing people would ... tell you. ... Sometimes you talked to other people that indirectly would know.

KP: A lot of companies like J&J did really badly in the beginning of the mid 1970s to the 1980s. They were becoming these large companies that just could not keep up with the market. Why do you think J&J was, in a sense, able to keep itself competitive? Why has it been so successful over the years?

EP: Diversification, tremendous diversification. From soup to nuts. We made prescription products, we made baby products, we made hospital products, we made doctor office products, band aids, cotton buds, and etc.

KP: Why do you think it was able to maintain the quality? Because sometimes diversification does not work, some companies have not been able to do it as well.

EP: Well, it had to come from the top. But, there were a good many people down below that really took their quality very seriously. I mean, there would be time[s] when, I guess, you know, they paid their people fairly well, ... [not] like the oil companies or the electrical companies. ... We were way down as far as that goes, but the benefits were good. But, the General, Johnson himself, he preached quality. And, if you wanted to be heard at the risk of getting fired, or stepping out of line, you could get to him. And, instead of you being fired, the other guy, the vice president would probably get fired.

There was a time, ... I can give you one instance, when I was ... a Quality Assurance Manager. There is a difference. Quality control are the people on the line; they look at every bottle. Quality assurance only evaluated statistically every so many units from the production line. There was ... one product director that wanted to save 50,000 dollars by reusing little "biddy" tubes that were sample tubes for first-aid cream. It had an active ingredient on it that had to be erased or deleted or new tubes made. It was an active ingredient that was no longer in favor with the medical people. So what did he do? He sent it out to contract manufacturing to zip out with a magic marker, or something similar to it, the active ingredient that [he] wanted to be deleted. Well, it came back and my people were examining it, and, "Oh, Ed, hey, look at this, a certain percentage, ... looks terrible. ... This isn't Johnson and Johnson." Right then and there, I give you an answer. Probably now, ... nowadays, it probably would go out because now it's not ... worrying about a little blur on a label, but, at that time, it was almost a sin to send something out unless that label was just perfect. Okay, so I refused it. I refused it. ... This guy, "Oh, no, no." ... He went over my head. My boss, I don't think he even got to my boss. Anyway he went to someone else higher up in the echelon, and finally, eventually, he went to the president of the company. Hey, you know, quality assurance is throwing the 50,000 dollars away, and I don't recall now how it got [settled], but, anyway, I finally won out, namely that it ... was not approved. In other words, my rejection stood.

KP: Yours was the right decision in the end.

EP: Yes, was the right decision in the end. And, boy did my reputation ... go sky high with the production people, the manager, ... the plant manager and the vice president.

KP: So you had good relations with the production people?

EP: Yeah, oh, yes ... they were saying, "Hey Ed, I don't want any part of this, that's up to you. You make the decision." I don't like it. I'm not go[ing to approve it], you know, this isn't J&J. So I held my ground and the poor guy, I felt sorry for him. But, later on, years later, you know, he didn't go very far after that, either. I felt sorry for him.

KP: This was his big mistake.

EP: Yes, it was a big mistake. But, a lot of people remembered that story. I didn't even have to mention it to them.

KP: So you got the sense that the emphasis on quality was not simply rhetoric, that people really believed in it from the top to the bottom.

EP: Yes, it was. ... And, I was also trained when I left research to go to manufacturing. I was introduced to a very conscientious quality assurance man. I mean, he was "Mr. Quality," if there ever was one. And, no way did I want to ruin my reputation by going against him. I mean, he was up on ... top of the heap of the whole J&J. You know, if you wanted quality, see Mr. Deuble. And, so, I emulated him from that standpoint. Of course, he wasn't anywhere around when ... I was on my own. He was in another division by that time; he was moved up. But, then, my immediate supervisor, he was giving a speech. He went and started taking credit, ... "Boy, I got some good guys, you know." The incident that I went through he managed. He was very clever in managing to take the story and turn it over as his glory, which was fine, ... that's why he's there.

I went, I forgot to tell you that I left from research, I was there for eight years. Then I left to go into production. I was called in, asked. Did I mention that?

KP: No, you didn't.

EP: I was called in by the ... assistant director of research and, "Ed there's a job down there for you in quality assurance. ... Do you want to take it?" Well, I'd already indicated previously that I wanted to change, that I didn't feel I was going anywhere in research, unless I had a Ph.D. I wasn't smart enough to go for Ph.D. ... Financially, I couldn't make it. ... I went down there, and I trained to become a quality assurance person and a manager and then moved into technical service. ... Well, ... my last ten years, I was ... in technical service, but associated with contract manufacturing. So, like in the air force, I start traveling all around the country visiting contractors that did things for J&J. And, did problem solving, which was very interesting.

KP: Oh, yes.

EP: Walk into a plant, you know. "We've got a problem, Ed, waiting for you to come in." Get off the airplane, you know, and help them solve it or direct them this way or that way. It was very interesting.

KP: Plus you were detached from it because you were flying into a new problem. So you had the ability to step back and offer new insights.

EP: Oh, yes. You were also on cost improvement projects. That was your main reason, too, to generate cost improved products. So ... that was great. ... The background for that was a big help in being in research. I had a lot of friends in research that were able to expedite certain things for me because I left on a good ... note with them. "Hey, if Ed's going to be there, fine." You know, something like that. ... And, also, being adjacent in manufacturing, I had a good knowledge of what's required of management in manufacturing, the assembly line, and so on. So those two, put those two together, helped me a lot in ... talking, conversing one-on-one with the contract manufacturer. And, we were always very welcome. J&J, I was proud to say, had a very good name. I was proud to say, no matter where we went. And, we always tried to maintain that semblance of professionalism. Suit, tie when we work, fine, loosen the tie, put on a hard hat, not afraid to step in cream or dirt of whatever it is. ... Work right with the operators, if we had to.

KP: So it sounds like you were very proud of your association with the J&J.

EP: Oh, yes.

PS: How long did you work at J&J?

EP: Until 1988. I worked for 34 and a half years. They put on the record 35.

PS: What you said about how they handled the problem with the label when you were on the quality assurance. Okay, that's typical of J&J from what I've heard. For example, it sounds similar to the way they handled the Tylenol recall. They cover themselves pretty well. My sister works for Ortho.

EP: Oh, okay, so you know.

PS: Yes. She says she has ... nothing bad to say about them.

KP: Would another company have handled the Tylenol scare differently, do you think?

EP: ... You already have many examples of that. You have Exxon, you have, ... a few other drug companies. I forget which [one]. I think is Sandoz. They said, "Oh, no, no." They had so many ... that were dying. They were having a drug out there, and then, they had to put a warning label on. ... There are several. I can't remember which ones right now, okay.

KP: You got the sense at J&J that if there was a problem with a product that J&J would not hesitate to do whatever was right.

EP: I got, towards the last five years or so or more, eight years, I got involved with sterilization packaging. And, you know that there's no "almost sterile."

PS: No.

EP: ... It's like almost pregnant. So your ... you'd have amassed considerable data of ... where a quality assurance person does a lot of testing on what you said, "Well, okay, this equipment will do." You know, you have to establish reliability with the parameters that you set. In other words, I would go in, into a contract manufacturer, and we're going to produce some sterile packaging. It would be my job to make sure that ... they meet our standards, number one, and also to produce enough ... for over a period of time, so that the statistics show that it is now possible to use these parameters for heat sealing or for cutting or for sterilization or whatever to produce a consistent product that has sterile integrity.

... Back when I was a quality assurance manager, you might find this very interesting. When the Kefauver men came on board, and, started, you know, building up the FDA, they, in one year, I had, I think, five to eight inspections by the Food and Drug Administration. ... I was quality assurance manager, so anything that's going bad, ... the plant manager would be at fault, but, hey, you know, you guys didn't do a good job. You should have caught it or something like that. Well, I had eight inspections by ... FDA people. And, ... they were a nightmare. It wasn't until several years later, maybe five years later, that I talked to one of the FDA people that left and was now at another company. He was working for another company. "Oh, we were sent there to learn ... how you maintained your records on your raw materials, on your sterilization. We were there to learn." Those bastards were tearing me apart, at that time.

KP: So you were the model in the industry.

EP: They were the model, yes. ... Probably, one of them, I'm not saying just J&J. ...

KP: This tends not to be written down in history. People tend not to admit that in print or in their documents. Is there anything else about J&J that we forgot to ask you about?

EP: Oh, ... we made mistakes, too. We bought companies we had to get rid of them. You know, they didn't make out. ... Its true, we had to look at about a hundred products before one really makes it through rigorous testing.

KP: What were some of the big mistakes you remember in terms of your experiences? You have told us of your big successes.

EP: Well, ... I sent in a request, shortly after I got hired at Research, "Why doesn't J&J produce a child's toothpaste?" Since they are very heavy on ... baby powder, baby cream, baby this, baby that. ... Oh, yes, okay. A few weeks later, "Okay, Ed, you got the job; you develop the toothpaste." I said, "What!" ... "Well, go in the library, hide for a couple of weeks, you know. And, get some ideas and formula, you know, and order material." And, so, that's what I did.

KP: And, it did not work?

EP: No, ... the flavors were not very stable. ... They were very good for the first month or so, but after about six months, blah. And, merchandising got a hold of some, and they ran some test studies. ... The funny part is, one time I was working on it, and the General came around. This was when he was still alive. And, he looked at it, and he says, "I don't know these

merchandising people. I don't think ... this is going to fly." And, I was working on ... children's toothpaste. They tried toothpaste several times after that.

KP: And, to this day I do not think Johnson and Johnson has a toothpaste.

EP: Nope.

PS: Do you think that J&J has spread themselves too thin as a parent company?

EP: No, if you read Forbes magazine. Oh, about ... three issues ago, so on, where they gave a nice article about J&J, ... to answer you question. Why ... [do] they survive? Because they are diversified and also their management. They give their local top managers ... freedom. In other words, it isn't all, "Wait until we ... find [out] from headquarters what to do." You know, because that's wasting a awful lot of time.

PS: They're almost independent affiliates that have J&J help them out, bail them out, answer questions and, otherwise, they're pretty much on their own.

EP: Oh, they're very much on their own, good or bad.

KP: I guess I have a question in terms of J&J, but in terms of your life. Why has J&J remained so loyal to this area, particularly New Brunswick? And, you have also lived not too far from where you grew up?

EP: Oh. Remember, I told you I didn't know I was applying to J&J when I wrote to the ad, ... to answer the ad in the chemical society journal.

KP: So you were ready to move someplace else?

EP: If I had to.

KP: Yes.

EP: Yes, oh, yes. I didn't mean to digress, but J&J does stand by its credo a very good bit. I mean, I know a good many people. Oh, these are all nice words, but, you know, nobody [is] really for them. ... The bottom line is the most important. It is. It is. But, along with ... that credo, it is practiced; it is followed.

KP: So you are not surprised that they would stay loyal to New Brunswick, especially in the late 1960s, early 1970s?

EP: Well, they probably wouldn't have stayed loyal to New Brunswick ... if the railroad station [had not been] remodeled and what else. And, also, to have the property that they have here. I don't know the other reasons.

KP: But, they could have very easily just moved out to the Princeton area.

EP: ... I think it has an awful lot to do with the Johnson and Johnson family, those that are still alive. They have an awful lot of stock, they have a lot of voting power. ...

KP: So the Johnson family is still a force?

EP: Yeah, oh, yes. ... The Seward family, yes. Very heavy.

KP: And, it sounds like General Johnson, early in your career, was quite a presence at J&J.

EP: Yes, he was. He was a little bit like a DeGaulle. I didn't particularly like him, but I liked his ... business ethics. ... He knew. And, he had good people. He knew how to pick the people up in the top. And, that's what counts.

KP: Are you still, do you think present management, although you are an outsider, but from what you can tell, do you think it is as still as good of a company?

EP: Oh, yes.

KP: Because I've interviewed some people, and they say, "I would never go into this business again: it's changed."

EP: It has changed, but you have to be grown up. So has everything else changed. There's no longer the five cent hot dog, come on. So why would you expect Johnson and Johnson, if J&J stayed the same, they wouldn't be a company, ... they would be down the tube. So from that standpoint, yes. And, they do a good job explaining in separate document[s] to stockholders and to us retirees why they['re] doing this and why they did that, ... which is great. They're not trying to hid anything. ... There will be a lot of people that will say something bad about J&J, but probably, maybe, because they may have had ... their ego hurt or perhaps they weren't moving up as fast. They thought that maybe they['d] move faster, and they may have stepped on some toes, and not knowing when not to step on toes, and, when to step on toes. Its very important in any company. In [the] service, in J&J, at Rutgers. ... Do you get the Star Ledger?

KP: Every now and then. I go in waves when I get a chance to read the newspaper.

EP: Read yesterday's editorial column by Rowan, the black person. He said, "I wouldn't kick Lawrence out," and he gave a darn good article. I wish the hell the Targum would pick it up and repeat, you know, re-quote it. You know, ... he researched it, ... what he did that in Tulane, Louisiana, and so on. You want to know more about Rutgers, I guess we covered Rutgers.

KP: No, I ...

EP: My wife and I were in a trailer camp.

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

EP: You might say, I am a very grateful person.

KP: You didn't mind living in the trailers, at University Heights that I have heard were somewhat spartan?

EP: Which was much better than living in someone else's home on the third floor on Livingston Avenue. We would take our garbage out through someone's living room and so on. Literally, yes. Do you remember Copelman? He used to be the team doctor for the Rutgers football team.

KP: No, I didn't know him.

EP: Yes, ... he was our landlord, very nice, a very nice man.

KP: But, you still had to take your garbage out through the living room.

EP: Well, we were up on the third floor garret.

PS: So you lived on Livingston Avenue; you lived on Mine Street.

EP: First, we lived on Mine Street, then, we found the apartment at Livingston Avenue, and then, right where Vinny Utz lived right next door in the apartment there, with his wife. And, then, the last ... senior year, he went to the ... trailer camp because it was kind of hard to bring up a child in a little one room and no kitchen facilities. All we had was a little hot plate.

KP: So the trailer, in some ways, was a step up.

EP: Yes. ... [laughter] A common lavatory.

KP: Yes, that's what I have read. In fact, students had read various issues of the Targum and reported on what the news was. Vinny Utz, from the class of 1942, everyone from his class has stories about him. What memories do you have of Vinny Utz returning from the war.

EP: Yeah, one arm.

KP: Apparently he was very proud. He would be very reluctant to let people help him. Was that the case?

EP: But, it affected him more than anyone thought.

KP: Really?

EP: Yes, because he really took up drinking something terrible. I guess he eventually burned to death, didn't he, or he got caught in a fire?

KP: Yes, he was in a tragic fire. You mentioned drinking quite a bit. Do you think that, in a sense, that the war encouraged a lot of drinking? It is a very general question, but I noticed that you mentioned a number of times of individuals who would drink to deal with what was going on around them.

EP: Only a few that ... couldn't control themselves. They were, the war affected them. ... Maybe it was an excuse, I don't know. But, I will probably ... want to strike out a lot a bit about. I don't want to leave any record about my father's problem. ...

KP: No, that's fine, no, whatever.

EP: It wouldn't be right because ... many times I thank God that he came over here and got married, and we lived here and not in Europe, that I had the chance to grow up in a wonderful country, and because of him and because of my mother. But, I think the important thing is that ... as you grow up, as you grow older, you begin to realize that it really wasn't his fault, in a way. It was ... because this happened many times. It was a sign of the times, at that time, where the events were going so fast that these people couldn't keep up. Some could and some couldn't. My father couldn't keep up with them.

KP: Well, that might be a good way to end unless there's something else we forgot to ask you about.

EP: You have. I was in Scarlet Rifles, right?

KP: Yes.

EP: Yeah, I was gung-ho in that. I have pictures of that.

KP: Did you go to football games after the war?

EP: Yes, my wife and I went.

KP: How did she like ...

EP: Not too many. I don't think we went to too many. You mean when I was going to college or after working at ...

KP: Well, actually, when you were in college. How did she like being the wife of a student again? And, how did she like New Jersey initially?

EP: She didn't like New Jersey, initially. I mean, coming from ... McCook, was around the 2,700 hundred foot elevation, so it's much drier, of course. They had rough winters, they had dust storms, and they didn't have the New York City element breathing down on them and the traffic. ... It was not easy for her to adjust. ... But, she did. I don't know what else. I'll leave it up to you. I don't want to leave these pictures here.

KP: No, that is okay.

PS: Could I take a look at your medals unless you have more questions. I would like to take a look at your medals and awards that you received.

EP: I don't have the medals here with me. ... You know, ... after all these years, the ribbons just deteriorated. They've literally gone into powder. [look at documents] ... The reason I brought some of these pictures was to show you the appearance of the crew before and after, especially the officers. That's what this was for. Before, during combat and after. I honestly can't feel that I am any help to you at all because so many other people went through the same thing. And, probably, after a while, it gets kind of boring.

KP: There is surprisingly little done on air force history so I can assure you that there's several nuggets of very new material in your interview.

EP: ... And, this picture, there is a statue at the air base we were at, ... made out of concrete in this style. With the ...

KP: With a pyramid and a triangle I etched on it.

PS: For our squadron.

PS: Is that the lamination that makes it look brand new?

EP: Yes. ... When we go to reunions, ... we would wear this just to, you know. I don't have patch, jacket. ...

KP: Reunions are very important to your squadron. When did you start having reunions?

EP: Some of the fellows got together before, but we started for our 40th, 1983, the Schweinfurt reunion.

PS: Had you kept in contact previously with other people in your group?

EP: ... I kept [in] contact with my radio operator and with my ... navigator because he wanted help, and we would write Christmas cards back and forth, occasionally, a phone call. ... This, maybe a Christmas card, but we don't, no use running things into the ground, so then, when you meet in reunion, you have something to say. But, invariably we say very little about our life after the war; it's all wartime. You know, remember this, remember that. Remember when so and so opened the bomb bay by mistake and you were hanging there, you know?

PS: I could not forget that one!

EP: Well, I tell you the truth, I did forget it.

PS: Oh, really!

EP: Yes, I had to remember. I looked back in my diary, "Oh, man!"

PS: God, my life's boring.

KP: Well, thank you very much.

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

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