RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HARRY J. ROCKAFELLER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

FANTASTIC TRANSCRIPTS

Shaun Illingworth: This begins the third interview session with General Harry J. Rockafeller on August 1, 2016, in Manasquan, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth. Also in attendance is …

Robert Henry: … Rob Henry, his son-in-law.

Pamela Henry: … And Pam Henry, his daughter.

SI: Thank you all for having me here today.

Harry J. Rockafeller: We're glad to have you here.

SI: To begin, General, can you tell me a little more about your activities during the battle to retake Bastogne? Your battalion was part of Patton's forces breaking though. What do you remember about getting into the lines around Bastogne?

HR: Well, one of the things that we introduced, right at the outset of the drive up to Bastogne from Arlon, I had brought a task force into the 51st area and we were preparing to continue on up the road from Arlon to Bastogne. Then, my battalion commander took a task force over here, on the left of the highway, going up, and the same composition as I had, which was a tank company and an armored infantry company with the armored infantry riding on the tank company's tanks going up. The procedure every morning was the same. It began with a five-minute artillery preparation from our friendly artillery, directed two hundred yards in advance of where we had reported our position last night, so that the support artillery being shot in that morning would land two hundred yards in front of our forward position. Believe me, you wanted to be darn careful that you gave the right forward position. Now, this, you can know about--it'll just illustrate the vagaries of constant combat--the commander of the 80th Infantry Division, which was on our right coming up to Bastogne, right, was killed by friendly artillery fire, because he had misreported his position and the artillery thought that he was two hundred to three hundred yards further than he had described. When they put this in, good-bye to the 80th Infantry Division, right alongside of us, good-bye to their battalion commander. So, we continued each day with the same thing. The thing that we introduced and we found to be very helpful was called "reconnaissance by fire," okay. That meant that the attacking elements coming up the road would each scout the area in their attack alley, right, when they would see an area which appeared to be a likely place for the Germans to erect a machine-gun nest or a mortar firing squad, and so forth. When we placed this stuff on them, reconnaissance by fire, what that means is, dig out enemy defenders by directing fire, cannon fire, tank fire, into areas, sheds, bins, things like that, which might be areas for the Germans to congregate and fire in defense. Our reconnaissance by fire worked very well because, after we worked it and fired it for a while, as we're moving along, seeing places that, "You know that bushy bunch over there? It looks like they might hide a machine-gun. Give them a burst," right, and, after a while, here we come, the Germans, getting out of their dugouts, out of their foxholes, up and at us, right. If they didn't have any success with the attack, they quit and surrendered. Each day, every day, in the morning, five minutes to eight, a five-minute preparation, two hundred yards beyond where we said on the map, "This is where we spent the night." Two hundred yards beyond that is where that barrage was supposed to land. The 80th Division, they made a mistake and the battalion commander was gone. That was the way we began every day and fought every day, anyplace

you saw that you thought, "That'd be an ideal place for these guys to emplace themselves, and then, fire at us," as we either come up and go by or close in on them. That's what it was called, reconnaissance-by-fire, and it produced prisoners. The more we got up this way, the more the flow of prisoners that way. We also were witnessing the arrival of new German weapons coming [in]. I'm working up this highway in the outside lane, right up against the woods line going through the fields. Then, you gathered people in those days. You'd get a guy comes from the newspaper and maybe the girls come by from the Red Cross and stuff like that, but, anyway, people gathered around. For the first time, we heard this horrible sound, "Wow." First of all, it was, "Boom," and then, "Wow," and this thing comes with a big shell, about like that, and comes bouncing down across the field towards where we are, from the little hill up ahead where they're firing from. I think it was called a *Nebelwerfer*. Have you ever heard of that?

SI: Yes, "the Screaming Mimis?"

HR: Yes, yes, that's exactly right, the Screaming Mimi. So, we're standing in the row in front of the trees, right, and I watched this thing. They fired a round and the round hit the ground maybe fifty yards in front of the delivery of the shell, and then, went on, skipped along the ground, then, went into the trees across the way. Then, they moved it over this way and Screaming Mimi is what it was, designed to terrify you and, also, to kill you, an interesting new development, a strange development, by the Germans, whom we thought already had good weapons. So, we were all standing there looking at it, saying, "Wow, look at that, wow, wow." Finally, I had enough of that. I said, "You can talk as a professional soldier," which I considered myself, I said, "Speaking as a professional soldier, I can tell you that you can call that weapon anything you want and you can call on it to do certain things." I said, "From watching it, it doesn't appear to be very efficient," because the circle of fire that we perceived after a round of this thing was all distorted and not all (unintelligible?), but it was all distorted all around. Now, when that happened, I said, "Speaking as a professional soldier," and I didn't talk this way--I mean, the men knew that I wasn't talking that way, they knew I was going to come up with something--so, I said, "Talking as a professional soldier, as you can see, the spread for that round of shells is bad, inefficient. It's not good for killing people, right. You can see all of that, but I can tell you something," I said, "it sure scares the sh-- out of me," [laughter] and everybody roared. They just roared. They wanted something to hear other than Screaming Mimi coming in. So, that was the first time we saw that weapon and we were impressed, just from the fear value, because it was immense when that thing would fire. Then, these big things would come tumbling out, down and go in the woods someplace and die away. So, that was the second introduction. We didn't get any "buzz bombs," [V-1 rockets].

SI: In reading your unit's combat history, around this time, the Germans were also deploying a lot of their advanced tanks, like the Tigers. Did you encounter any of those?

HR: Panthers, we met. We met some Panthers and the task force working on my right over here employed their tank force against these advancing Panthers. They shot them up kindly and they were very pleased with how well they had done. Every day was the same thing--open with the artillery barrage, and then, start forward. As you went forward, fire at targets of likely enemy positions and, when you put enough fire in there, generally, the Germans came out. So, that's the way we worked. Now, each day, we're gaining a little bit more and we're always moving, every

day, up that road. We got up into just short of Bastogne, according to the map, where we were and where the map said. My driver and I, we're coming up the middle of the highway, a nice, clear road and everything. We're riding along and this guy--I think I told you this part of the story, but, if I do, just stop me--my driver says to me, "Sir," he said, "I just saw a German soldier come out of a V-trench up there by that row of trees where the houses begin." The start of Bastogne is what that was. So, I said, "Well, you know, John, we've been warned about the Germans having American uniforms, American weapons and American vehicles. So, we'll go up there and see what's going on and we'll know better what's happening here," because he couldn't tell me whether it was a Kraut or an American soldier that had come out. You know what the V-trench was, in the roads? Do you know what that [was]?

SI: No.

HR: You should. You should know this. In any discussion of moving across France, Belgium, Luxembourg, okay, all the way into Germany, you ran into the construction of the Autobahn, big, high banks of small rocks and stuff forming the foundation for the Autobahn. We were impressed when we saw it and, every time we used it thereafter, we were impressed with it. The Autobahn was actually a beautiful thing to look at. It really was, far more exciting than the Jersey Turnpike, far more than that. Absolutely straight roads, I liked that, separated by maybe thirty to forty yards, the lanes going east and this lane going west on the Autobahn. We got on, we used it every day until the war was over, but that was one of their things to be proud of. They had built that Autobahn all the way across the Western Front--not the Western Front, the Eastern Front--where the Germans were; not the Germans …

SI: The Russians?

HR: The Russians were coming and pushing and winning and that's where Germany began to back away. Our feeling was that the Germans were afraid of the Russians and we kind of harped on that whenever we took prisoners, and so forth. We'd tell them, "You, *Russkie, Russkie*," Russians, "You." "*Nein, nein, nein*," the Germans would tell us, when we'd see them, prisoners in boxcars and things like that. They were saying, "Oh, they wouldn't do that, they wouldn't do that," and we would say, "You, with the *Russkies*." So, that kind of quieted them down, but that was them. One of the outstanding things we saw, the Germans were fleeing from in front of the Russians and just pouring out of Bastogne and the vicinity, getting away from it all. This is, like, the 26th, 27th of December and we're glad to see this happen. So, we went up to see this soldier that my driver had seen. I told him, I said, "Put your carbine up on your steering wheel and put your carbine like that, so [that] you can just reach, put your hand in the trigger guard and be ready to fire up the V-trench." These V-trenches, we had encountered all the way across France, every fifty, seventy-five yards. The Germans had slave labor and political labor coming in and digging out--you've got a highway like this. This is the road bank right here and it was running around seven to eight feet high, that road bank. Now, the Germans came along with their men and their machines and put a "V" in that side of the road, and then, back to the road--you follow me?

SI: Yes.

HR: V-trench is what it was and it was very effective. We loved it, because, on the few occasions when we got strafed, you got in that trench, because it was perfect protection. So, those V-trenches, we had seen them all the way from the start, back by the Rhine, all the way across Germany, all the way, cleaned out beautifully and very good protection against enemy aircraft. That's what we were running into as we neared Bastogne. Now, as we neared Bastogne, when my driver saw this guy come out of the V-trench, the V-trench was right across that road right out there, you follow me? That's where the V-trench was. We ride down to see who's in the trench. So, when we get to the trench, these two people walk out, looks like an officer and an enlisted driver of his jeep or whatever he had. We talked. I told him I was Harry Rockafeller from the Fourth Armored Division and he told me he was Lieutenant "Somebody" from the 101st Airborne. I could see, right here, the Screaming Eagle, which I was glad to see, too, [laughter] 101st Airborne patch, all right. So, we talked to them. The guy says--none of this crap that you see in the newspaper about, "What do you mean the Fourth Armored rescued the 101st Airborne? Nobody rescues the 101st Airborne," right. That's all right for the guys in the rear end of things to call out, but soldiers who had been under fire the whole time were coming up that road. This lieutenant told me, he says, "You know, every morning, we heard you guys open with a five-minute artillery preparation," and he says, "Each day that you opened, you were closer to us," all right. He says, "Each day that happened, we were very happy." [laughter] So, we talked for a while and they were glad to see us; none of that talk about, "Nobody rescues the 101st Airborne," right. You know that; you know they didn't talk that way. A soldier in a ditch, he's so damned glad that the shooting has quieted down, right. So, then, I told him that my combat command commander, who was General [Herbert L.] Earnest, who was the Assistant Division Commander of the Fourth Armored Division, he was overseeing the fighting along this Arlon-Bastogne Highway, which we never got off. We just kept coming up that road from Arlon all the way up and making progress every day. So, this guy tells me about, "Every morning, we could tell by the way the artillery was that much closer, you guys were coming," okay. So, then, General Earnest came along and I had told him that we were close. I'd called him on the radio, told him we were right at the edge of Bastogne. He says, "Harry, call me when I can come up there and get on the road and head right down into town. Call me then." So, I said, "Okay." So, I called him and I said, "Come on up. We're at the edge of Bastogne and you can travel. The road is covered by guys from the Airborne," and so, he comes up and I went over to the tank and told him. I said, "This lieutenant here has nine men in that house right there, a squad. They've been defending that house now for three or four days." So, "Okay." I said, "You go by that house and you stay on that road right down into the square in Bastogne and there, on the left, will be General McAuliffe's quarters, okay." "All right, fine," he says, "Harry, you've been doing beautifully and I'm so pleased with you," and all that kind of crap. I said, "I hope you have a good visit with General McAuliffe," and off he goes. Now, I walk back to my two people, the Lieutenant and his driver. I said to the Lieutenant, I said, "He wants to go up there so [that] he can talk to his West Point classmate upon arrival." I said, "I've got a Rutgers classmate that's up there. He's with the Eleventh Armored Division. He's been with them now for a few months. They went to them as part of the cadre of people that we sent to them to help them create another armored division." So, he says, "Oh, good, that's fine," and so forth. So, he's busy looking around, doing some things, and a soldier comes over to see me. He says to me, "Sir, what is the name of your college classmate?" I said to him, "His name was Major George Renoux," okay, and he says to me, "Sir, Major Renoux was killed yesterday," gone. I shut up, walked away, went back to my vehicle, because George had sent me a note saying, "Harry, I expect to be up

there waiting when you guys come up that road and I want to see you." He sent it through Army mail and somebody brought it up and delivered it to me, this note which says, "I expect to see you when we get there." Here, I get, "Sir, Major Renoux is dead." So, that would've made a classic picture, if the two Rutgers classmates had shook hands and said, "Boy, we did a good job getting up here." So, now, we're into Bastogne. Now, we can come back. We are sitting on the right flank of the American/Allied encirclement of Bastogne. We're sitting in this right flank, right here, okay, looking towards the town. That's when the Germans started picking, trying to get back to the highway. They wanted to close it down on us. They didn't want us using it, but we managed to fight them off for quite a time and they didn't really have much fight in their fight anymore. They're beginning to--we'd give them a little, "*Sieg Heil*," and they would say, "*Nicht, nicht Sieg Heil, nicht*." In other words, "We don't care anymore about Hitler," "*Nicht Sieg Heil*," which is this one here. We were back, we got into a fight back down the road where the Germans had sprung a small counterattack right against this Arlon-Bastogne Highway, trying to shut it down, so [that] we couldn't use it or they could use it, either one, but we are at Bastogne and that was the end of it. We went back and, in a few days, we were extracted and put in a rest area, way back. We went back to the rest area we'd been in before when we came to that area. We went back into the old dig-ins that we were living in back there. The people there had been awful good to us. We went right back and got right in bed with the people.

SI: Was that in Luxembourg?

HR: Yes, and there was a gin mill on the corner and, on this corner, there was a Nazi Party headquarters, when the Nazis had occupied it. When we came back, we, our battalion, took over that gin mill across the street and the woman and her husband over here, Momma and Mr. (Arensdorf?), their name was, they were awfully nice to us. The woman was repeatedly cooking meals for us or taking our rations and converting them into a pleasant meal, as opposed to a damn can and a box of crackers, and so forth. So, we lived there for a while. Then, now came a big swivel, a political swiveling around, right, "What can we do? Who are we going to send where? We've got to be careful. If we stick the Fourth Armored out in the open now--they're free, they are free--we can use them up here in First Army," or, "We can use them over here," in something else. So, we were kind of glad to get back a little ways, so that we didn't get involved in this. Then, we stayed in that kind of status, training recruits coming in, getting an awful lot of replacements for the people we had lost coming from the Allied side of the tracks, a lot of people we had lost. We were then faced with, "All right, let's take these new recruits and try to acquaint them with what war is like," and that's what we did for quite a period of time. Then, we got into crossing the Rhine. We started up from way back and we started forward and got up to the Rhine River. At that point, the bridge that we were supposed to clear--this is supposed to be a big Allied advantage, to get this bridge cleared, so that the columns could move across, move across. So, this is the opening part now of my story about what happened from the Rhine River to Berlin. So, we got started on training everybody, and then, we got word that we're going to be committed again. They're going to send us up to the Siegfried Line. [laughter] So, my battalion commander called me to say, "Rock, it looks like we're going to go into position up around this area, you see here? I think this is the 26th Division now, which has moved in there, and we're going to go in position, relieve them. It's all a political move, so that the powers-that-be back in Army Headquarters and Corps Headquarters and those places [will be told], 'You can't send the Fourth Armored anyplace. They're already committed. They're in the line, up at the Siegfried

Line, staring at the Germans in the Siegfried Line.'" So, we knew what might be our destiny, but, anyway, he sent me up to the Siegfried Line to see who these guys were, how they were making out, how their morale was and any lessons they wanted to tell us, "How are they doing fighting these big, monstrous bomb head things?" which was the Siegfried Line, all right. So, I got up there and these people were there for the rest of the war. They were dug in in "dug-in dug-ins." They were down into the cellars of all the houses to avoid this considerable fire which was coming out of the Siegfried Line. So, I got in, talked to a lot of people and [asked], "How were they making out and how were their casualties?" and different things like that. I said, "All right, I'm going back." I said, "I spent a lot of time with your people, talking with them while we learned about things here, and so forth. I think you could be proud of them," all that kind of talk, and they say, "We'll see you when you come back." Well, we didn't go back to the Siegfried Line, but we stayed there this one night, the last night. I told the commander of this unit that we were in the area where we were going to relieve things, I said, "I want to get out there tonight and see what these guys do to puzzle you," and all that stuff. "Okay," he says, "come on up. I'll give you a man to take you out in this area." I said, "Okay." I got up there and got this guy. He takes me. I said, "I don't have anybody else. It's just you and me--take me out to those dugouts. I want to talk to the men in the dugouts, okay?" "Yes, sir, I'll get you out there." So, I go out there and there's two guys in the dugout. [laughter] So, I said, "Where are you from, soldier?" "Well," he says, "two weeks ago, I was in Fort Dix." I don't know if I want to tell that story. I said, "Well, what were you doing there?" I knew what "down in Fort Dix" was, was an infantry replacement training center, right. "Well," he says, "we were training people for replacements there and that's what we got. We got two weeks of basic training, right, and then, we got put on a boat and sent here, to the theater." So, we're standing there; there's three of us and this dugout is about this big. I'm saying, "What have you done since you've been in France?" He says, "Well, I was a cook in Eisenhower's kitchen in Paris and we got called up when Bastogne struck, because we thought all hell was breaking loose. So, we came up and got in the line," and I said to this other guy, "What were you doing?" He says, "Well, I was taking care of this dugout by myself." I figured that this guy's not too happy about anything. So, I talked to him a little bit longer. I said, "Well, I'm going to go now, but I want to tell you something." I said, "In a situation like this, if you want to stay alive, you want to stay awake and you want to help your friend stay awake, okay, and then, you can help yourself stay alive in there," and they accepted it. They weren't nasty or anything, but they'd had enough of combat right there. They had been shoved into the line to stop the Germans and they think they had done it. So, their contribution to Bastogne was over, too. So, we were out of Bastogne now, back to Luxembourg, same place we'd been before on a rest area. We enjoyed that part of it, and then, we got told that, "We're going on a big attack tomorrow," whatever, the next day or whenever it was, going on a big attack. My battalion commander talked to me and told me that I would be a task force commander on this big attack, cutting across--he showed me the bridge on the Rhine that we're going to make our way to and we're going to cross, all right. So, off we go, a lot of rough terrain, because we've had a lot of tanks moving through the area and it's beaten up a lot. It's muddy, messy. We got up there and we got to the bridge and the Germans had blown the bridge.

SI: Was this at Karden?

HR: I don't know where it was. All I knew was, I walked out there and I said, "We can't use this. I've got to get our engineers to (unintelligible?), see where it has to go, but we cannot use

this to get across this river." So, I reported the condition of the bridge, unusable, and so forth. So, then, word came from Third Army Headquarters, "Turn your attack south along the Rhine and keep going until you get down to Worms and Oppenheim on the Rhine River," maybe thirty or forty miles down. We went down to there. At 3:50 in the morning, we got in some pontoon boats--you know what a pontoon boat looks like, yes--and the tracks are laid into the boats and we started our trip across the Rhine. We were kidding about, "No more Tennessee." In Tennessee, way back, when we were in training, we went to go across a big river near Nashville, as I remember, a big river, a very deep river, and we're going to go across that. So, when we got there, to the Rhine, we're told, "You're going to be crossing a little after three in the morning." The engineers were our engineers and I said to a couple of them, "You guys are going to have this bridge ready for us to go across?" They said, "Yes." I said, "Look, we don't want any more Tennessee," and they laughed and they said, "Sir, you won't have any Tennessee problems." What had happened in Tennessee--we're always on a learning curve, first time doing things--in Tennessee, to cross this big river, we're crossing a tank company. This is the bridge here and you put a tank here and a tank here and a tank here. Then, you start out, and then, you keep passing over the bridge, but you do not bring these vehicles together, because, in Tennessee, they brought two tanks together like this …

SI: Collapsed the bridge.

HR: They went like that and down. We got Navy tanks, Navy tanks, to get down in the tanks and extricate the bodies that were still in there. So, that was the lesson we had learned. When we were talking, going across the bridge into Germany, we're talking about, "You know what happened in Tennessee, don't you?" and these guys, "We know all about Tennessee. It's not going to happen to you. Don't worry. You'll be all right." [laughter] So, we got across that river in good shape, very nice, very smooth ride. In the morning, early in the morning, we went into Frankfurt, which was right there. As we arrived in Frankfurt, a German troop train arrived, nothing but soldiers, coming up from Marseilles, being sent up to ward off the advance of the Fourth Armored going across France. We had a nice ride and, the next morning, we were in the railroad station when the troop train came in. We put word down to our people, who were lined all up and down the station, "Get them off the train and get them out of here. Get them out of the back and the MPs will be waiting to pick them up as prisoners of war." So, that worked out good. So, those are little things you see happening that, when it happened, you realized the advantage of training for it, because it sure came in handy with these kind of things. The Germans filed off that train, I thought they'd never stop, in Frankfurt, all coming off. Now, we figured we're going to knock off, get some coffee and Coke or something like that, get some sleep, because we're waiting for orders as to where we're going. Three, four o'clock in the morning, the orders came. It was, "Your mission is to go north to get that end of the Autobahn and get up on the Autobahn and stay on the Autobahn and fight your way across Germany all the way to the area south of Berlin and be prepared to go off and go into Berlin." That's how we started across. We had an unusual situation. As I said, the Autobahn was a beautiful architectural thing, beautiful thing, beautiful. So, we're going along on the Autobahn and we came to where it crossed a huge valley, like that, went over, and then, up on the other side, then, back on the Autobahn again and keep going. That's the way we're going. So, we got out to three-quarters of the way across the bridge and here's a hole in the bridge about the size of the floor of this house, the hole, and ain't nobody going over that bridge, okay, because the Germans

themselves didn't know what happened. They didn't know whether it was a bomb or what happened. We didn't know. Only thing we knew was, it was this great, big hole in the Autobahn. So, we get on, back up on the road and we're going again, shooting, the same bit, "You think you see where Germans are hiding? Shoot there. Keep going, keep going." So, we got down to turn off the Autobahn into a town called Limbach and that was as far to the east as the Allies had agreed to go in that area. In other words, that was the joint between us and the Russians, right there. When we got into Limbach, my battalion commander was up ahead of me, he's talking to a German guy. We'd had some fire in there, we put some fire right back in there. My battalion commander says to me, "Rock, these Germans are telling me that about a week ago," he says, "and I couldn't understand him too well, but, about a week ago, a huge, huge cannon had come into town, bigger than any anybody had ever seen, huge cannon was coming in." We were told that it had a range of twenty-five miles, okay, and that's where the hole came from in the bridge. They were firing in defense and they put a big hole, big shell, and then, "Ka-boom." So, he says, "Rock, go down in the woods there and follow it to a clearing." He's got his instructions from some of these Krauts and he says, "You'll find this cannon they're talking about. Then, come back and get me and we'll go down, take some pictures and call the Ordnance people and tell them to get up here and pick up this huge new weapon, right." So, I said, "Damn, you're not going to believe this when you see it. You can't believe it." "Why, Rock?" I said, "I've never seen--it makes a battleship's cannon look like a pea gun, that's all." So, "Okay," he says. So, I got him; I came back and got him. We went down in the woods and he got out and looked around, "My God, Rock." It was huge. It was at least the width of the house and the width of that entry way, that long, big thing like that, a new weapon that they were bringing in in a desperate effort to curb the advance of the Russians and regain supremacy and they couldn't do it. So, we called the Ordnance people to come forward and be prepared to disassemble this huge three-piece cannon. They came and got a couple huge trucks. The only thing they could take in the one truck was the barrel, just that.

SI: Was this one of the guns that they could only transport by rail or was it more mobile than that?

HR: They had brought it in and brought it down in the woods, yes. They'd brought it in the woods and it was all part of new things that Hitler was saying, "This is going to do this." The Screaming Mimi had been in front of that and it didn't happen that way. So, we stayed in Limbach for a few days. We took over the hotel, which was very nice, and we were laughing, we say, "You know, the nice thing about this is, you go down the hall, you select your room. You get the sheets dirty, you get everything dirty and everything. The next morning, you select another room." [laughter] Yes, then, finally, we left there and went back into the heart of Germany. From there, I got a call from the Division Commander, wanted to see me. I went to see him and he told me that--he's living in a little house like this, nice, big desk and everything's fine--Chief of Staff said, "Go up those steps, open that door, step in." "Okay." So, I went up and, as I walked in, General [Hugh] Gaffey said, "Harry, you and I both know that there is no such a thing as an indispensable man, no such thing." To myself, I'm thinking, "This is going to be part of another exercise, 'Please, don't go, please, stay with us. We'll take better care of you than you ever had in your life. Stay here. The war's all over, Rocky, stay here with us. We'll all be going home together.'" I'd heard that talk since November, every month. I'm supposed to come back to America, right, and, every month, at the last minute, "Harry, we've got to keep you

here. We're expecting another mission," right, and the same way with General Gaffey. He said, "Harry," this business of, "There's no such a thing as an indispensable officer." I didn't say a word, not a word, but I knew he was leading up to something. Sure enough, he says, "But, I think you're pretty close to being that and I want you to stay here with us. What do you think?" I said, "General, I think the war is over." I said, "I have a little daughter back home in America that's over a year old and I haven't seen her yet. I'd like to go back and see her." So, he says, "Well, look, Harry, go back to division, your division headquarters," and he says, "I'll have a message there when you get back there." He said, "By the way, I tell you the war is not over. We have a mission right now on this table." He hits this pile of orders over here. He says, "We are headed to Prague, Czechoslovakia, and we are going to beat the Germans out of Prague and we're going to take over Prague. When we've got all the Germans out of there, then, we're going down into where Hitler's shacking up with that bum," Eva Braun or whatever her name is, right. Bavarian Alps is what he's talking about. He says, "That's where we're going," and he said, "That's why I'll tell you the war's not over yet." So, I said, "All right, General, thank you very much for the talk," and so forth. So, I get in my jeep and come back to division headquarters. I get there a couple hours later, because it's dark as hell. I go in and our chief of staff was waiting up for me, says, "Harry, division sent a message saying you can go home. The mission has been changed. The Germans have all retreated out of Prague and we don't have to go there and clear it out. So, you can go home." In the morning, I'm in the train going back to Le Havre to get a boat and come back to America. We had one untoward incident. These little things, you'll never forget. In these Continental cars, they don't go from [where] you open the end door and walk all the way through and get out the other. They don't go that way. You walk through, here's the first door and there's a cabin right here on the side. You open the bar door on that place and you're out on, like, a ride-along rail out there, okay. The same way, you come back out of that, you walk down a little ways, open another car door, get in there and there's, like, three or four bunks in there, all the way down. That's the way it went all the way across France, with us sleeping in these cabins. Well, anyway, we were riding along very slowly, big, long train full of soldiers, and the train screams to a halt with the brakes on hard. We wonder what the hell happened. So, we go outside and, two or three cars down, there's a guy laying out on the ground. We walk down, "What happened?" This guy was standing on this thing where you stand to make the passage from this door over the passage to the next door, get in, go down--out, down, in, that's how you went up and down in those trains, right. So, what happened was, every once in a while, they have staves coming from the roof of the railroad car down to this walkway that you're on to steady it, the walkway itself, right. So, this guy is out there standing on this walkway, right, and here comes a shell-shattered telephone pole, right. The train is coming by like this and the shattered telephone pole is here, bent over, and he gets hit by another pole on the thing. That's the end of the pole and this guy just got killed. That's how some poor bastard got killed on his way home. So, we got from there over to Le Havre and we're all so happy. We got on the boats and this was the greatest convoy that had ever been assembled by Armed Forces--we were told this, anyway--and we got in it. We went with destroyer escorts, in and out, between the ships, and so forth, and we went home. We got to the Narrows in Staten Island without incident and we're coming up the Narrows and they ordered everybody up on deck. We went up on deck and, lo and behold, there's the Statue of Liberty, right, and everybody salutes. So, that was the end of our trip home, took us eleven days or so. What happened was that, after we'd been home a little while, word comes there will be no further transportation of war veterans from where they're at in the battle zone, or out of the battle zone now, there'll be no more

transportation of them back to their original unit that they had left overseas. That was it. Instead, you will be transferred to a stateside assignment. Nobody got sent back to the division, regiment or whatever they'd been in, never got sent back overseas, at that point, because the Army realized how silly it was to be sending soldiers back to Europe. There's no more fighting there. There's a lot of troops there occupying land and everything. Therefore, nobody's going to get shipped back. So, that's the end of the story from Bastogne.

SI: What was it like to be reunited with your family?

HR: When we came up the Narrows, we unloaded and they had trucks there and took us up to Grand Central Station. We got on a train there and we went to a camp up the Hudson, on the left-hand side. I think it was Camp Skank or something like that.

SI: Shanks?

HR: Shanks, was that what it was?

SI: Yes, I think so.

HR: You've got a good memory. That's where we went, okay, to make sure we stayed in training. That's what it was for. So, now, we're told that, "We got your orders. Here are your orders." I read my orders and it says, "You will report to Camp Blanding, Florida," which was an infantry replacement training center during the war. So, I thought, "That's not someplace I'd really like to go to. I think it's going to be a little squeaky." The war is over. Japan hasn't surrendered yet, but the war is over. The bomb has been dropped and all that. So, anyway, now, I'm going to go home, right. So, I get out at the railroad station and get my porter. I said to him, "I'm going to finish shaving here. Could you make sure that my bags are put down on the taxi rack?" He says, "Sir, I already put your bags down there." He says, "Your men friends are all going to the Pennsylvania Station down there. They're going to Florida." I thought, "Holy Christ;" in that suitcase, marriage license, okay. [laughter] What am I going to do? If I start to tell my wife or her mother or her father, they're all going to say, "Come on, Rocky, don't kid around with this. The wedding is tomorrow. Nothing's happened so far, don't kid around. Don't get us charged up and all that crap." So, I thought, "I've got to find that bag and get it out of that station." So, I went down to the taxi stand and I talked to the guy. Jesus, they had a taxi stand which ran from here to West Belmar, terribly long, right, and fully loaded. So, I told the guy, I said, "Look, I've got a problem." I said, "I'm supposed to get married tomorrow." I said, "I've got a marriage license. It's in my suitcase, but, now, my suitcase is in Pennsylvania Station down there on its way to Florida and I can't get at it fast enough." He said, "Wait a minute, I know the guy who took that group of officers, because they were all talking about going to Pennsylvania Station." He says, "That guy will be back here in about ten minutes," the driver, "and I'll point him out to you and you get in that cab and go." He says, "This guy knows everything." He said, "Now, they probably put their bags in storage, because they weren't going to Florida until," he even knew, "they weren't going to Florida until around two o'clock in the afternoon," okay, said, "Don't worry, it'll be all right. The guy will be right here." So, the cab comes back. He says, "There he is, that's the guy right there." He comes up close, "This is your man," he said. Then, he reaches in and tells him, "Help this guy out. He's got an emergency." So, I get in with this

guy. I said, "You remember some officers you took here who were going to Pennsylvania Station?" "I sure do," he says. "They were really full of it, too. They acted like they'd been drinking all night or something." I said, "Well, look, just get me down to Penn Station as fast as you can." "Don't worry," he said. Down we go to Penn Station, I get out, run in. This guy's running with me to help me. He knows where the storage places are and he steers me to them. I go over to the counter, tell the guy, "Look, my life depends on this," and he laughed. He says, "What's the matter?" I said, "I'm supposed to get married tomorrow and the license for that, to get married with, is in the bag, which was brought in here by mistake. I think it's in the short-term storage you're supposed to get out of here this afternoon at three o'clock and go to Florida." So, the guy says, "Well, I remember them." He says, "Go two aisles down, stay on this side and look for your bag right there." So, I go down, turn in there--there's the bag, just lucky all the way through. So, I opened the bag and there was the folder at the top with the marriage license in it. I was saved, because they never would've believed me, never, because they knew I was a teaser and they knew I would be making something up like that. Anyway, now, I got a cab out of Grand Central going over the East River into (Allenhurst?). So, I go down over the Queensboro Bridge, right along there, and the guy says, "You know, I really shouldn't do this." I said, "What do you mean you shouldn't do it?" He said, "Well, I'm in the union now and the union says, 'Don't take anybody across this East River, all right. Let them get a train out of the station.'" So, I said, "Well, please, get me home, will you?" "All right, okay," he says. So, I give him a little extra money and I get home, get in the apartment. I look around and there, over on the wall, is a big sign and there's placards up there. The placards show that, on the sixth floor, Alfred A. and Frances Locker, who are my mother and father-in-law, they live on the sixth floor and they can be found in 6B. So, I said, "Come on, let's get upstairs." So, we get upstairs, he got the bag and everything for me, go over to the door. There's a big, "Yack, yack, yack;" there's a lot of talk going on inside. I pressed the knob to get the doorbell going and I hear, "Who is that? Wonder who that is? Who do you think that is, Frances? Frances, who do you think that could be? We've got everybody we know and love, we've got them right here and now." So, Frances says, "That's Rocky at the door," and she comes to the door and opens the door and she's quite excited. I said to her, "Where's my baby daughter?" She says, "She's over there at that bedroom and she's behind the door there." I said, "What's she doing over there? Sucking her thumb? You'd better stop that right away." I'd read, [if] you don't stop that, it's going to be the end product, all right. So, I get over to the door, pulled the door open and here's this one, right here, behind the door. I said to her, "Take that out of your mouth." She wasn't used to getting orders from me. She was used to getting orders from my father-in-law. So, it took a little encouragement to get [her thumb] out of the mouth. So, that's how my reception was coming home. We finally broke her of this business with the thumb in the mouth.

RH: I have to say it's significant, though, that you represented where you did not see your daughter when she was born, because you were in the war. That was so unique. How old were you?

PH: Fourteen, fifteen months old.

RH: Fifteen months old before you saw Pam.

PH: I was fifteen months old before you ever saw me. I was over a year old when you came home from the war.

HR: Oh, yes, I agree. Well, that's the story of coming home from the war and my daughter, walking over to that door, nobody said anything, "Who could be at the door? Who's out there?" My daughter's coming over, she's not saying anything, and then, she opens the door and she says; oh, no, before she opens the door, she says, "It's Rocky." How she knew that, I never knew, but she guessed right. So, we met there, beginning of a long friendship. [laughter]

SI: At that point, you were a major, correct?

HR: Then, I got promoted to lieutenant colonel not too later on, was what they called then a "gangplank promotion," meaning that you had not served the proper length of time between major and lieutenant colonel, right, to be promoted, but you got what was called a "gangplank promotion," because you were going out of the service.

SI: At what point did you decide that you wanted to be a career officer?

HR: I didn't.

SI: You did not.

HR: No, principally because I had seen the whole world and I never had a home of my own. This house was the house that I bought and lived in and we're still living here. At that time, I didn't like the idea of, every two to three years, "Get your bags packed and get the train tomorrow for so-and-so and get there. You're going to Knoxville, Tennessee, for inclusion in the Armored Force," and all that kind of stuff, was a little bit different. That was the principal reason why I left. I wanted to put my roots down. I didn't want to travel every three years and I used to hear people get so damn mad, "Jesus, I've only been here, here, here and here and they're moving me again for another three years," really upset about it, moving every two to three years. What were you going to say, friend?

SI: What was your next move then after coming home? Did you look for a job? Did you get involved in the Reserves right away?

HR: I went to Camp Blanding and worked with them. That was interesting to me, because I had been in (victory reserve?), a replacement training center, long enough to know what life was like and generally what life was like in those places, "Hey, look, we don't think you're putting out as much as you can and you can do better. We're telling you right now, for your own good, straighten up and fly right from now on and we're not telling you anymore. We're telling you right now, straighten up," right. So, when people talked to me like that, I listened and I decided that I'd stay right where I am. So, off I went to Camp Blanding, Florida, and, in those replacement training centers, it was a funny kind of a place. Number one, combat veterans were very few, very few. The war had just subsided and there's no combat veterans in there, but the war with Japan is still open. "We're telling you, if you don't straighten up and put it out, you're going to have problems, okay. So, you are going to go to Camp Blanding and you're going to

see how those people react." Generally, what I saw, the officers who had been there for six months, eight months, a year, were living in fear of, "Your name is on the Asia checkbook. Get ready. You're going," and, as a result, nobody wanted to go. The war was not proper, not very attractive, to the people who were still in. So, the people who knew what they were doing in those Reserve replacement training centers, when they snapped their fingers, these people who had been told, "You want to get your back straightened up and soldier, buddy, and we're not telling you again, because the next thing we'll tell you is, 'Get your bags packed. You're on the way to Yokohama,'" okay, nobody wanted to hear that at that time, yes.

SI: How long were you at Camp Blanding?

HR: Just about ten or eleven months, I think. First of all, I had nothing but disgust for these people who had been frightened out of their minds about, "You're going to be on the way to Japan. Don't screw up." They didn't say "screw up," "Don't F-U-C-K up, because you're going to be on the way to Japan." You'd go out to a firing range. While you're there, a staff car arrives and it's got to be a big wheel to be riding around in a fancy staff car. When the officer in charge of the range saw that staff car pull in, that officer would break his butt running out to the cab, salute and everything. So, that's the way they were executed, scared to death if they screwed up, they were on their way to Asia. I despised that, because I felt these men should be judged on their merits, not the way they're being judged now. That kind of repelled me.

SI: What did you do after the completion of your assignment at Camp Blanding?

HR: I came back to New York to join the Army Recruitment Command and they came in from New York, 39 Whitehall Street. Have you ever heard of that place?

SI: Yes.

HR: They came in from 39 Whitehall Street, saying, "We want combat veterans to come and man the recruiting effort in the Army, because they can see your record. If you believe in the merits of the Army, they can be sold to, 'Come on, join up and join the Regular Army.'" So, they came down and offered me the chance to come to New York. I also thought, "I'm not going to be here forever. I'm going to be out of the Army before not too long, but I'll be out of the Army." So, I went to Whitehall Street. I think I was up there, I don't know--do you have any idea how long I was at Whitehall Street?

PH: No.

HR: It was either one year or two that I stayed there.

SI: From interviewing other men who served in recruiting positions after the war, I have heard that it was very difficult and there was even some hostility in some areas. Did you face any of that?

HR: You got briefed before you went on your first trip and we got told. My first trip was down the Turnpike to Camden and into Camden and out along the Delaware River, right. I was told,

"Watch out. When you're going along that street, you're liable to get anything, a can of soup or something hurled at the car window," all that kind of thing. He said, you were told, "You won't find many people that love the Army down there," and they didn't. They were blowing [their horns?], all this kind of crap, but that's the feeling that was present at the time, wasn't satisfaction that the war was over, but that was the feeling that was present. The Army was not very well-liked and the recruiting people were even more intensely disliked. You were told, "You're going to Camden? Watch out, watch out for the people standing on either side of the car as you go down the street." Nothing happened.

SI: How far was your territory when you were at Whitehall?

HR: Well, I was called the post, camp and station liaison officer for recruiting and I went from Maryland all the way up to Maine. First Army then was all that area, covered from up in Maryland, then, on up through here, then, on up into New England. Post, camp and station liaison officer, that was my job. Repeatedly, I was told, "You may get a rough reception down in that place, Rocky, when you get there," but I didn't look for it and I didn't get any. There were tales about people dragging open the doors of staff cars and crap like that, but I didn't see any of it and I didn't cultivate any of it. [laughter] I did feel badly about the fact that the people cared little about the fact that the war was over. They just wanted to express [some dissatisfaction]; some guy who went in as a private and emerged as a private first class, he should've been at least a major general, you know what I mean? Those kind of people felt that the Army had failed to recognize their worthwhile purpose and they never forgot it. Some of them don't forget it to this day.

SI: You were recruiting up until 1947, or was it a little later?

HR: I don't know. Those things get a little jumbled. I didn't stay too long in there. I think I decided to get out of the Army from there, because I thought, "I'm right here in New York. It's a business area. I've got a business degree from college. I can tell them a little bit about business and see if I can get a job." That's the way it worked.

SI: Where did you go to work once you left the Army?

HR: I went to work in a place to work up in Asbury Park. It was called Tradio, T-R-A-D-I-O. Are you from around that area?

SI: Yes, but I am not familiar with Tradio.

HR: Tradio was right at the corner of Springwood Avenue and Main Street, where Springwood starts and goes on out into the woods out there. So, I got a job with this outfit called Tradiovision, it was called, supposedly large-screen television. All of the technique that went into it was as simple as, if you sit three feet from that screen, the screen is that wide, but, if you come back a little bit further, the screen will be wider [an early rear-projection method]. There was no focusing and refocusing and all that crap, and then, they were also selling coin radios. In those days, they were very big. So, they had two product lines, one was the television, large-screen, and the other was the coin-operated radios, which they placed in motels and places like

that. You went in, got your bed, went to bed, took a quarter, dropped it in the radio and it played you twenty-five minutes of music or whatever. That's what I was doing when I was working there, when I decided to leave that. Then, I got a job working with Civil Service at Fort Monmouth. I started at the bottom and I left at the top [laughter]--not Army, I was a civilian--but I had gone from Grade 9 to Grade 15. I was making a pretty good living then and we're living here, enjoying life, things like that. Then, pretty soon, everybody in the world was selling coin-operated radios and competition was fierce.

PH: Daddy, I think Shaun is trying to get the transition of when you left the active Army and when you went into the Army Reserves, right?

SI: Also, I would like to get at least an overview of your time at Fort Monmouth in the Civil Service.

HR: Yes.

SI: You said you started as a GS 9 and ended up as a GS 15. Can you describe your positions?

HR: Well, I started as a contract clerk, familiar with contracts and how to place them on top of a particular situation and sell it and move on from there. That was the contract clerk, I was. When I retired, I was the Associate Director of Acquisition for the Electronics Command. Now, associate director, associate director means you have equal prominence and eminence with your subordinates there and I had that. I don't know, I liked the job, I liked the people I worked with, but I didn't feel like I wanted to make it my life's work. About that time, a guy came to see me, hell of a nice guy, Army major. He says to me, "I'm prepared to give you a command position of company commander in an armored infantry Reserve company," and he explained to me all the values that were obtainable by virtue of working in the Reserve at the same time. You're in the Army and, at the same time, you are making a partial living right out of that. So, this guy says, "There are a lot of benefits to be obtained from serving in the Army Reserve, which includes a healthy pension, things like that, and, if you're ever called up, you'll be called up as a member of your own unit. You will never be separated from your unit. You'll be called up as a unit," which was a good thought. The people that you were training and were training with were going to be with you when you got called back into the Army. So, I told him I would take that. So, I went back in the Army Reserve and I was given command of the 1415th Infantry, which was an infantry battalion, part of an infantry battalion. 1415th was the name of it and that's what I got command of, the 1415th Infantry. Then, the 78th Division came along and said, "We'd like you to come over and join us and be with us and we'll guarantee you a bright future in the Army Reserve. You'll be going up the ladder all the time," and I did. Before it was all over, I was the Division Commander of the 78th Division, Army Reserve, which was New Jersey's Reserve division. I went all the way to the top of that and that's how I got to the rank of major general, as commander of the 78th Division. We were close to being called up a couple times, but we never got called up. When I retired, I was the commanding general of the 78th Division.

SI: Where was the division headquartered?

HR: Our headquarters was at Camp Kilmer. Do you know where Camp Kilmer is?

SI: Sure.

HR: Well, Camp Kilmer was where the 78th Division's Headquarters was and our territory carried them into New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, Camden, whole State of New Jersey. We had a good division. It was a training division. The purpose of it was very clear--in the event of mobilization, we would take over the mobilization station that was in our Reserve area. In our case, if we were mobilized, we were to operate and run Fort Dix, the whole thing, receive the troops, take the troops out, run them through basic training, advanced individual training, advanced training and produce a soldier ready to go to a combat troop. That's what the purpose of the training divisions was. We went to Fort Dix every summer for two weeks of summer training and we would go different places different years. In the event of a mobilization, we would go to what we had been told was our mobilization station. That being the case, in the summertime, we would be called up as a unit into the mobilization station and run that mobilization station for the two weeks that we were there. So, we'd get good, lively training and we could've taken over Fort Dix the day after they called us. We could run it. It was a hell of a good idea, really, and they still have training divisions in the Army with that kind of a mission. That was, "Move to a mobilization area," camp, station, whatever you want to call it, "move there and operate that training station." You had the capability to train [for] basic combat training, and then, advanced individual training. Combat training is just, "How do you march? How do you go? How do you soldier?" that kind of thing. Then, advanced individual training is squads, "How do squads fight the action?" stuff like that, "What weapons do you use in advanced training?" machine-guns and things like that. So, we had the capability to train in every weapon that the soldiers had. We enjoyed it, because we knew it was helpful and it was no put-on. It was a very worthwhile thing that we had done. We were many times accorded with the reward of knowing that we were--we felt and we had been told--that we had the best training division in the United States Army Reserve.

SI: When did you retire from the Reserves?

HR: From the Reserve? I quit.

SI: Do you remember approximately when?

HR: When did I get out of the Reserve?

PH: Forty-four years ago.

HR: No, wait a minute, I'll tell you when it was, 1974. Would that make sense?

SI: 1974.

HR: '74, yes.

PH: That is about forty years.

RH: Because our son was five years old then; he was only three or four?

PH: Yes.

HR: 1974 is when the retirement ceremony was held for me at Fort Dix.

RH: If I could add, I think just to put it into perspective, first of all, he was a G 15, top civilian job, and a major general running the 78th Division at the same time, which was quite a feat. Now, he's not going to tell you that, but it was. It was a lot of hours. He had to go to a lot of extra [service commitments]. When you go in the Army Reserve, you have to attend a certain number of hours, but, because of his position, he had to go to additional meetings called administrative time, which he wasn't necessarily paid for, but he had to do it as part of his time. Then, in 1965, when I graduated from college, at that time was the big build-up for Vietnam. So, I had to go in and I was able to get into this Reserve unit here and did basic training at Fort Dix, and then, when I got out of basic training, joined the 78th Division. So, in essence, I worked for my father-in-law.

SI: Do any memories stand out from that period, the Vietnam Era, any difficulties?

HR: To be where?

SI: When you were serving in the 78th Division, and then, later running it, did you see any issues during the Vietnam War? I know that the Vietnam War itself put a lot of strain on the Reserve system. Do you have any thoughts on the Vietnam Era?

HR: Oh, sure. We took our boys and took them down, "This is a bayonet. It goes in the end of this rifle, right here. This is how you do bayonet drill and know how to use your bayonet in a riot area."

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Is it all right to go back on?

HR: Sure.

SI: We had been talking about the Vietnam Era. You mentioned training recruits in how to use a bayonet.

HR: Yes. Well, the reason why I smiled was, I was a regimental commander and the word came down, "Immediately convert your troops into riot units and teach them riot control activity, how to protect themselves," and so forth, and so on. "Get to work, go right now." Now, we're taking a bunch of guys that had very little combat training and telling them, "And this is the way you use this bayonet," and how to control yourself, how to conduct yourself in a crowd. We went through that whole thing because we were told that, "In an emergency, we're going to call you people in to act as riot squads." So, we very quickly tried to get our people versed in, "How do

you control rioters?" because there was genuine fear that we were going to have a major problem in the country. You remember that.

SI: It was a little before my time, [laughter] but I know that there was a lot of civil unrest.

HR: Oh, yes.

SI: From both the antiwar movement and, also, inner city issues. Was your unit actually called out in response to any?

HR: Never got called in.

SI: Okay.

HR: Well, the thing died down. There was not any more or less street fighting and that kind of stuff.

RH: They did end up calling the National Guard first, before the Army Reserve.

SI: Serving in uniform at that time, did you face any prejudice or hostility as antiwar sentiment built?

HR: No. We never had that much. I never had any problems. Even going through Camden, I never had any problems. [laughter] People had been pretty good to us and we worked hard on community relations. For example, up in Newark, we were making strong efforts to recruit black soldiers and we got them. They came in and joined us, told them what they could get from the Reserve and what you could give to the Reserve, and we got good people. One of my best people was a guy named Roy (Grooms?), a black man who was a regimental commander of mine. He was a policeman and he was a top-flight guy. So, we were trying to--somebody came to see me and told me that they were having a special commendation written. Downstairs now, there's an award of the Legion of Merit. You know what that medal is?

SI: Yes.

HR: The Legion of Merit, okay. So, I got the Legion of Merit because of my efforts to integrate our efforts into the structure at Newark, New Jersey, and how successful it had been in getting new people and keeping new people. So, we did have that.

SI: Did you retire from the Civil Service around the same time that you left the Army in the early to mid-1970s?

HR: I don't know.

PH: No, I think it was after you retired from the 78th Division, before you retired from Fort Monmouth.

HR: Yes, but I always kind of smile about it, that I started there as a second lieutenant and climbed up to major general, which was a long, long climb. [laughter] Then, in the same way, the Civil Service, I started then as a GS 9 and left it as a GS 15, which was the highest rank in Civil Service at that point. Now, they have a thing called the Executive Service and that's over and above the GS 1 through GS 15. The Executive Service affords these people certain inducements to want to be up there. The pay is good. It's the highest civilian pay there is. I always smile about it, think about [it]. I had to laugh when I went in to get a job. I sat down at the desk of a guy named Al (Dalton?) and I'm making out this sheet about what I've done, what I've been into, and so forth. So, I put in there, "In the Army, retired as a lieutenant colonel," okay. The guy who's interviewing me picks up his pen, [crosses it out], okay. He pulls this sheet over, which I had been making out, where I had been, what I had done, what I had achieved and all that kind of crap--I'm applying for a job. So, he reaches over and he crosses something out, right here on my application. I got that away from him, looked at it--what he crossed out was the fact that I had been a lieutenant colonel in the Army, okay. He wanted me to know, "Wait a minute," so, he crosses it out. [laughter] Five or six years later, I had his job.

SI: Why did he cross it out?

HR: Because there was a resentment between the Army and the Civil Service, see what I mean? Guys like him didn't want to hear about, "I won the war for America." They didn't want to hear that, and so, he crossed it right off my application.

SI: I wanted to also ask about some of your later activities. You have been, as you said, in this house for a very long time and you have gotten involved in the local community. From what I understand, you have been involved in the hospital. Can you tell me a little about some of your community involvement?

HR: I've been in the hospital now for over thirty years. I went in as a member of the Board of Trustees and I was in it thirty years. I'm now, and have been for the last few years, an *emeritus* trustee, which I thought was quite an honor for the hospital to give me. I was pleased with it when they did give it to me and made me an *emeritus* trustee. So, I have been pretty busy with the hospital over the years and I've enjoyed it. I've enjoyed the people and it's been a very worthwhile volunteer organization. That's at Monmouth Medical Center in Long Branch.

SI: Are there any other activities that you have been passionate about since you retired?

HR: No, because, over time, board activity--I was Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee for the hospital for fifteen years and I was on the Finance Committee, I was on the Space Allocation Committee--so, you find any spare time you got will be pretty well eaten up. I enjoyed it. It was a good thing. I met some wonderful people, fine relationship with them. Do you know anybody in Barnabas?

SI: No.

HR: No?

SI: Not now.

HR: My best friend in the whole system is a guy named Barry Ostrowsky. He is the President of RWJ (Robert Wood Johnson)-Monmouth Medical Center. That's the system that we now hold with, RWJ, which is a real good pat on the back for Monmouth Medical Center and RWJ, because Monmouth is considered one of the best five teaching hospitals in the State of New Jersey. It's been a pleasure to work with them and for them.

SI: You told us earlier about meeting your daughter for the first time. Did you have other children?

HR: No. We have two grandchildren. One is my grandson, Todd Henry, and the other is my granddaughter, Kiersten Ellsworth. It's another reason for being very pleased with what's happened with your life as you moved along.

PH: And three great-grandchildren.

SI: I want to thank you for all the time you have given me over the three sessions. Is there anything that you want to talk about that we have not covered?

HR: I don't know. I want to tell you, I think you are pretty thorough, okay.

SI: Thank you.

HR: And you're very helpful with the quality and quantity of questions that you automatically develop answers with and it's a pleasure to tell you all these various things.

SI: It is my pleasure to interview you.

HR: Well, it kind of puts in focus, "What the hell have I been doing?" [laughter]

SI: I do have one more question, if I can go back to World War II. In reading your "Combat History of the 51st Armored Infantry Battalion," it mentions that you took a German prisoner, I believe at the Siegfried Line, while he was shaving. I wondered if there was more to the story.

HR: Well, we were not in the Siegfried Line. We were in the attack and moving and we came to this small German town. At that time, I was the executive officer of the battalion and had been with the battalion, same battalion, since the day I walked into the Army. Anyway, as things quieted down a little bit, I'm riding into the town with my driver. I'm riding around the edge of the town now and I see what looks to be a school standing on the side, like a one-room, one-window school, right here on the side. So, we're looking for a place to put our battalion command post for that night. We're going to stay right there in that school. I go in, go upstairs. Two women come at me and both about as attractive as nothing, [laughter] horrible, fat and lumpy and no good and scared to death, "Don't kill me, don't kill me," "*Nicht töte*." That's how I learned some of my German, "*Nicht töte*," "Don't kill me, don't kill me." I had to say to the German [interpreter], "What is she saying?" He says she's saying, "Don't kill me." I said to him,

"Where the hell did she get that idea?" He said, "Well, I have seen some of the papers which Hitler sent down saying that you people, Fourth Armored Division types, are small, heavily-armed American combat units and they've just broken through and that's it. They can be easily driven off and driven out of here." That's the way [we were described]. In the papers there, Hitler gave us our famous name, which was "Roosevelt's Butchers," okay. We resented that, because we had never, never violated any of the Geneva Convention, never. We had never mistreated prisoners, never, and I know because I was right in there amidst it. We never beat up them, we never abused anybody, we gave them their rights as prisoners and all that kind of stuff. So, when she came at me with the, "*Nicht töte, nicht töte*," and she's giving me a big hug and she stinks, bad, here, right here, when she gives me this wraparound, she stinks. So, I'm saying to the interpreter, "Tell her no one is going to kill her. No one is going to touch her. She's going to be perfectly all right with us. We're going to stay in this auditorium tonight and we'll be out of here tomorrow, but nobody is going to touch anybody in this school, all right. Tell her that." So, he tells her. She's beginning to blossom. So, in the meanwhile, I'm noticing there's a door here, right. I've got to go to the bathroom and I think it's a bathroom door. So, I go over and open the door and here this guy is, standing at the sink shaving himself, right. I said to him, "*Kommen sie ha raus mit de hände hoch*," "Come out here with your hands high," surrender, right. He's got a look, "Who you ordering around?" that kind of look. "*Kommen sie*." So, "Have you *de pistole*? What kind of pistol?" "I have no pistol." That's his answer. "Do you have a pistol?" He was an officer. No, he didn't have one. So, I said, "Come on," and we never abused them, never abused them, no need to, just get ahold of his arm, down we go, out in the street, but he's got the shaving cream all over his face, right. [laughter] He's vigorously protesting the fact that he's being put out on the street. He is an officer and he shouldn't be treated like that, all that crap. I'm telling him, "*Gange, gange*," and he gets out in the street. I waved to him, went back upstairs. So, now, I'm talking to the girls and I say to them, "*Pistole, pistole*?" "No kinds of *pistole*, no, no *pistole*, no." "Are you sure?" "Oh, no, no kind of *pistole*." So, there's a big couch, like that, in the room. So, I go over and get behind the couch, I pull it out like this and there's three pistols laying on the floor, right. This is where the, "*Nicht*," they thought, now, they're over again with, "*Nicht töte, nicht töte*," "Don't kill me, don't kill me." So, that was about all I could stand of them and we're not going to do anything. The kids had been sent home for the day and we're sleeping in that school, one-room school, for the night. It's just a little incident that happened on the way. The word down was so now that, if you're a German, you're sitting there and I say, "*Sieg Heil*," you know, "*Sieg Heil*," from Hitler, "*Sieg Heil*," and you're a German sitting there, used to be, "*Sieg Heil*," [emphatically], they give it back to you, but, towards the end there, kind of, "*Sieg Heil*," kind of, "*Sieg Heil*," "No *Sieg Heil*," in there. That was the little incident with the women. They were most concerned that they were going to be killed and the other guy was most concerned that he had been pushed out into the street [laughter] with the shaving cream still on his face. I was in a hurry. I'm not going to stand around waiting for this guy to get shaving cream off his face. That's the way I'm thinking, "*Gange, gange*." So, we get him down and out and the girls quieted down and we slept down on the floor of the gymnasium, combination gymnasium and auditorium and basketball court, this thing was. So, that was the only little thing I remember about how people got upset with us, but we never deliberately pushed or punished anybody, never, never took revenge on them. We had seen some terrible things that the Germans did, were as bad as anything you read about today. That's why, I think I was telling somebody, "Don't get too upset about these shootings, because there were murders and massacres during World War II." There were and it was a known fact that the Germans had committed some massacres.

SI: You came across massacre sites. Were they actual camps or were they just places where they had killed many people?

HR: No, not where they killed a lot of people, no, no. It was just the way they treated people. I'll give you a simple example. One day, my battalion commander called me over. We were working down this row of big trees up on the hillside. He calls me over, he says, "Rocky, I want you to get your company, go to the other side of this hill, go to the foot of the hill, turn to your right and go into that village that's over there. When you get in there, kick the Germans out, all right." So, I said, "Okay." So, I got my boys together and we got over on the other side of this hilltop bunch of trees right there, right. We're standing there looking down and here comes a flat wagon out of town with a couple of women driving it and a couple of horses. In the back of the wagon, there's about eight or ten wooden boxes, right. Everybody's saying, "Wonder what this is all about? What could it be?" Meanwhile, I'm scanning the hillside across the valley from us and, up at the top of the hill, I can see tombstones. Then, I put two and two together and say, "They've got to be coffins. Somebody's been killed," and that's what's happening, right. So, I say to my driver, "Let's go into the town now and see what's happening. When we get in there, go down the road and get the mayor. Find the mayor, wherever he is, and bring him back to me right away." So, he does that. By the time I got down into the town, these people now have had something very bad happen to them. The mayor said to me, "Here's what happened." He said, "About a week ago, we could see that the Germans [Americans?] were advancing over this way and this town is in their path." He said, "Some of our young people got excited and said, 'Let's stop them,'" right, and he says, "They went out to your approaching units and told them, 'We're going to come in with you. When we get in town, we can show you where the Germans are quartered in here, with machine-guns or mortars or what-have-you. We can show you that,'" right. "Oh, you're a good boy, good boys," from the Americans, being told, "When you get into town, watch here, watch there, watch here and watch there." So, they're going in with a big advantage and know just where the Germans are in town. When all hell breaks loose, the Germans come into town and were heavily wounded, by virtue of the fact that their armament places were known to the oncoming troops, namely where they placed the things. Also, there were some *SS* troops around in the forerunner of these German troops, who had come out to try and arouse the populace by saying, "Watch out for these Americans. These Americans are butchers. They'll kill you. As soon as they arrive, they'll do you in. If you just get up, put up some resistance, you'll be all right," all that. So, anyway, now, the Germans are looking around and seeing and had been able to watch where the fire was directed to, the American fire, was directed to in the village. They called, they got the town chief of police in and told him that, "We want you to go through town and we want every male living in this town under six years old or over sixty. We want them brought in." The other people are going to be taken care of; every kid under six is going to be shot and every man over sixty is going to be shot. So, the cream of that city's, little city's, population is going to be murdered. He got the townspeople and got the posts out of the fences that were up in front of the houses, took the posts out and he had the people, the townspeople, dig holes for the posts. Then, they pulled in these people who were under six or over sixty and the balance that were there. All the people who the Germans were exercising their wrath on are tied to the posts--the guy showed me the posts, the blood on the posts and everything--and the Germans then went around the individual posts and shot in the back of the head, in the neck, each one of those people. So, the cream, the cream of the city's

youth and age, were selected and murdered in that town. That's what we saw going in the flat wagon up the hillside to the cemetery. So, that was absolutely, clearly murder, right there, and that was one instance. There were other instances. Those Germans were a peculiar bunch. When we started out in Normandy, way back, start of the war, we were in the line for about a week or so, word came, "We're going to have the greatest aerial armada in history come over here. Be ready for it," whatever, it's Tuesday or Wednesday, right, "Be ready for it. They're coming." So, we get ready and we're to take off the next day. We're starting our drive now, down the Brittany Peninsula, okay, and then, we're going to go over to Lorient and Saint-Nazaire. Then, we're coming back into the country and start pounding our way across, but this one bit, with these people, we thought it's going to be tremendous. So, the following morning, after breakfast, we get out there and we're waiting. At eight o'clock, here it comes, [General Rockafeller imitates the bombers' drone] and, as far back as the eye can see, here comes this tremendous armada of American bombers, all right, from England into France and, now, coming right down and going over and bombing the center of the German resistance. Do you remember that?

SI: That was St.-Lo.

HR: Yes, right. St.-Lo, when we went through it that day, looked, oh--did you ever go through St.-Lo?

SI: No.

HR: Oh, my god, it was trash to look at, just trash. It had been so badly beaten and smashed and bombed and strafed and everything. So, anyway, this big, beautiful armada just kept coming and coming and coming, and then, going on out. Now, we are to come out the next morning, because the Germans are going to be so bombed that they will just be out of their minds. This is what we're told. So, in addition, our artillery has sent shell after shell filled with surrender leaflets. A surrender leaflet says, "Dear German Soldier, don't waste your life on this silly thing. Join us and be with us and we'll all be happy together. You're here on a death mission," and all that kind of stuff is in that leaflet that is in this artillery shell, which explodes on the enemy's positon. It says, "Save yourself, because you're going to get it." So, we call that the surrender leaflet, all right. So, when it's all over, the next morning, I take a couple of men and we start forward through the next hedgerows down here, which is where the enemy was in front of my company, right out here. So, when I get over the first hedgerow and into the yard there, so-to-speak, there's a number of dugouts along there. One of the men called me over, he says, "Hey, look at this." I went over to the dugout. These were two-man dugouts and they had a firing step. You're one dugout, I'm another, this is a firing step right here, where you put the mortar on it and you fire and out it goes and the machine-gun fired from there, too. So, we look in there and I'm looking around when somebody discovered that in every one of those dugouts, here, right down in the middle of the dugout--and these are real dugouts. You dig out a big hole--these Germans, these are tough guys--dig out, cut off boughs of trees, cover the hole, cover it with dirt, you've got pretty good protection then, right. So, I'm looking down in the hole and in the center of the hole, in the dugout, looking down like this--you want to go outside a minute?

PH: You want me to? Sure.

HR: I don't think you want to hear it; sorry, Buddy.

PH: That's all right.

HR: I'll tell you in private sometime.

PH: I don't need to know. [Editor's Note: Mrs. Henry leaves.]

HR: In the center of the hole is this pile of shit, about that high.

SI: Three feet.

HR: Right on the top of the pile of shit is this surrender leaflet, which the German soldiers had all been instructed, "(*Poop smolney*?)," "Wipe your ass with that surrender leaflet, and then, place that on the pile of poop on top of the hole in your dugout." Now, that's not a usual way to conduct a battle, [laughter] you understand?

SI: Yes.

HR: That's the way the Germans were. They were tough people and they were capable of bad actions, like murdering those people under six and over sixty. Anybody in that category, it's the cream and they're gone. So, that's one of the things that we saw the Germans do, which you never hear about. We saw it. We were in amazement that they would do something like that. That would never occur to us to do something like that, not that we're sissies or something, not that we were sissies, but it would never occur to us. Here are these sons-of-bitches pooping all over the cabin floor and in the middle of the dugout was a big pile of poop and a surrender leaflet [with] wiped off poop on top there. So, that's when these two, I was telling them the other day, that I said, "Don't get too carried away with the fact that people are being murdered here in this country." I said, "The Germans, and even the Russians more so, were perfectly capable of and did execute very bad things." What could be worse? "Under six, any kid you got that's under six, take them in, and any man over sixty, take him in," and murder them all and here they come out of the village and we're coming down the road looking at them and here are these boxes. So, these things actually happened. So, we know what the Germans could be like and they were bad, bad people.

SI: After the war, after you left the service, did you have any issues readjusting to peace and civilian life, given what you had seen in combat and seeing these atrocities?

HR: I had more trouble back here than I had when I first came home. I had a few days that were upsetting and the two of them were funny. My wife and I were coming around the circle at Newark Airport, was a circle around the administrative buildings as you approach it. We're coming around this circle and there's a guy alongside of me here, right. The son-of-a-bitch has developed the capability to backfire, right, pulls in right close alongside of me, "Boom," and the next thing you know, I was over there, between my wife's feet. She never forgot it, she never forgot it. "Rocky," she says, "I couldn't believe it. You moved right down, got down there out in

front of my feet and you stayed right there." I said, "Well, Mom, you know you get used to--what we used to say, Mom, was 'the quick and the dead,' that you were either quick or dead, either one. If you heard a shell coming in, you threw yourself on the ground quickly, you raised your chances like that," because the shell is going to go like that when it explodes.

SI: Explodes upward.

HR: "And the chances are good that you're going to be the quick and not the dead," but that's what was happening. So, then, we went to a dinner which a woman was giving to an uncle of mine and his wife, asking that I come as the guest of honor, over at Joseph's. You know where Joseph's is, in Long Branch, the restaurant?

SI: I do not believe so.

HR: The restaurant?

SI: No.

HR: Okay. As you go around the Eatontown Circle, turn to go down towards Long Branch, on your left, right down that road, was the place I'm talking about. So, then, we had another one when this woman invited us for dinner. I thought, "Gee, that's very nice." We parked our daughter with a babysitter and got in Joseph's. Waitress came, took the order, everything nice, "Boy, this is nice," good booze, there's wine there, everything, and a reputation for good food. I hadn't been home very long then, right, and I'm saying, "Boy, this is all right." [laughter] So, I'm sitting at the table and the waitress gets all the orders, scribbles down. When she comes back, and I don't see this, she comes back with a huge tray like this, with eight plates on it and all the accompanying silverware, the glasses, and so forth, right. She brings this by, trips and drops the whole goddamn thing right down here. "Whoosh," I'm under the tablecloth immediately. My uncle saw that and he said, "What was that all about, Harry?" I said, "I don't like quick, sharp noises. I don't like that," and he says, "That's what that tray and all the dishes and everything did?" I said, "Exactly, that was it." My wife is pulling at my shirt underneath the table, saying, "Rocky, come on, get up and out of there, get out of there." [laughter] [Editor's Note: Mrs. Henry reenters the room.] That's the dinner party that you missed, remember that?

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add for the record?

HR: Well, there's two instances.

SI: Sure.

HR: No American soldier or officer would ever think of doing that, what I told you. We wouldn't think of it. It just isn't coming to your mind to do that kind of thing, but there they were, with the dirty surrender leaflet with the stuff all over it. They were bad people. Then, the thing that we noticed as we moved across, the German population, before that, as we were moving through towns held by the enemy and friendly with the enemy, we would give them, "*Sieg Heil*," and the people would say, "Ah, get out of here, *Sieg Heil*." We're razzing them,

"*Sieg Heil*," and, "*Heil Hitler*," and not a sound, not a sound, but, as we got more into the middle of Germany and it's clear it's *kaput*, the whole thing, we didn't have any problems with it. They started saying, "*Nicht Heil Hitler, nicht Heil Hitler*." They didn't want any part of Hitler. So, that changed completely as we moved across Germany.

SI: Thank you very much. I appreciate this session today and all of your time over the last three.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/1/2017
Reviewed by Pamela R. Henry 9/28/2017