RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM KENNETH SMITH

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Michael Ojeda: This begins an interview with Mr. Kenneth Smith. Could you state your name, please?

William Kenneth Smith: My name is William Kenneth Smith and, just for the purpose of the interview, I always use the middle name, so, it's Ken Smith, all right.

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: With Sandra Stewart Holyoak …

MO: … and Michael Ojeda at Bishop House on the New Brunswick Campus of Rutgers University on April 25, 2000. Mr. Smith, it is a pleasure to have you here. I would like to start by asking you a few questions about your parents, both of whom emigrated from Scotland.

KS: That's true, yes. Both my parents emigrated from Scotland, my mother from Dundee, Scotland, and my father from little higher up in the Highlands. They met in this country. My mother came in through Canada; my father came directly to the United States. They met in this country, married in this country and I don't know what else I can say. I was born in Newark, New Jersey, shortly after, I guess, in 1918 and I don't know what else I can say. My father worked for a newspaper, the *Newark Evening News*, and, … at one point, strangely enough, both my parents had worked for a newspaper in Scotland called the *Dundee Courier*, but they didn't know one another and that was it, I guess.

SH: Do you know what brought them to this country? Why did they emigrate to Canada and the United States?

KS: Oh, I'm sure the answer was pretty simple. [laughter] I think that the economy was so bad over there, at that time, [that] I think if you were looking for opportunities, you tended to leave. I'm not sure about my mother, because I'm not sure, well, she must have gotten here just before World War I, I would think, and I think the implications of the war probably had something to do with it, you know. …

SH: Do you know what year your father came to this country?

KS: I really don't, no.

SH: Did any other members of either family emigrate?

KS: Yes, my father had a brother, George, who settled someplace in the Midwest. My mother had a brother in Canada. Later, her younger brother came over and, in fact, lived with us for a while, until, after a few years, he got married and, you know, set up his own house and everything and, well, that was about it. … Oh, and I had an aunt who came over, my father's sister, who had been over here, but was married and her husband later died. She later went back to Scotland to take care of my grandfather.

MO: Do you know anything about how they met?

KS: Well, in those days, even today, I think, it was not uncommon for people coming into … the New York area to settle in either Kearny or Arlington and I'm sure it was loaded with people from Scotland and Ireland and I'm sure, through some social event, they probably met there. I don't know.

MO: They settled in Newark.

KS: Yes, yes, they did. First, they rented a house, I think, in Newark, … an apartment, I guess. I was born in Newark Presbyterian Hospital. A few years later, they built a house on Pomona Avenue in Newark; they built their own house there. … It was very rural then, believe it or not, in Newark. In fact, … the streets were not paved. We didn't have a telephone. In fact, when my parents wanted to visit with neighbors who lived on Chancellor Avenue, about, oh, I'd say the equivalent of four to five blocks away, they had a signal system. They would hang towels on the clothesline and they would decide, by how they arranged it, which house they were going to go to, to play cards, and I met my best friend. Well, my folks had bought the property through to the next street and they sold off the piece of property to this family, the (Beattys?), and the young boy, … we became very close friends, … but we really met because the streets weren't paved and we were in the street, digging a hole, because we hoped to catch the vegetable man with his horse and wagon. That was our plan of attack, [laughter] that was how we met.

SH: Did your mother come here and work for the newspaper as a single, young woman?

KS: No, no, I confused you on that. She and my father had both worked for a paper in Scotland called the *Dundee Courier*.

SH: Okay. I assumed that your mother also worked here.

KS: As far as I know, … I believe that she came over and that's how she got here, … she became a governess for some family in Canada, but … I think that family had arranged for her to be here, yes.

SH: Okay, I jumped the gun. Where did you go to school?

KS: Well, I went to Peshine Avenue School in Newark and, later, I went to Maple Avenue School, after they built it, because the neighborhood where my family had built the house, they were just breaking up the Goldsmith Farms and, actually, the people that bought on the street behind us, which was Goldsmith Avenue, most of those houses over there had pear trees in the backyard. So, that was about it. So, as that population grew, in that section of Newark, we abutted Hillside, New Jersey, if you know the area, and it became necessary to build another school, so, they built Maple Avenue School and I started there. Then, … we went to Scotland for my grandparents' fiftieth wedding anniversary and I'd gone there as an infant; I think I was the first boy grandchild. … I don't remember that, [laughter] but, the next time we went, I was about eight and, through a bunch of circumstances, I got whooping cough and my brother got it from me and he fell and broke a leg. It ended up, we stayed in Scotland for just about a year. Of course, my father had to come back. We'd planned to go for three months. … So, I went to school. I went to Dundee High School; … well, they called it a high school, but it was like

elementary school. I was in the first forum and that was an interesting experience. For one thing, I remember going home to my mother, because my father had left, and saying to her, "You know, the kids over here are pretty dumb," and she said, "What's the trouble?" I said, "Almost every day, they ask me what my name is and where I came from." Of course, they were trying to hear me speak, you know, [laughter] and, when I got back to this country, the opposite had happened. I'd picked up the Scottish (*bern*?). I got over here, then, all the kids wanted to hear me talk, you know. [laughter] So, then, we went once again, when I was twelve, we went back for my other … grandparents' fiftieth wedding anniversary, but that time, we just stayed for [a short time].

SH: What was it like to travel to Scotland at that time?

KS: Oh, it was thrilling. I mean, you know, you went by steamer. … Depending on the steamer that you were on, … the fastest was probably seven to eight days, [the] norm seemed to be about ten days and it was a lot of fun and [I] enjoyed it.

SH: What did you do on the ship? What would a mother do with an eight-year-old and a twelve-year-old on a ship?

KS: Well, I tell you what she did one time and we didn't do it again. [laughter] … They used to have different classes; there was first class, second class and steerage. Later, they sort of combined second and they called it tourist class, but she went, one time, first class, and that was it. We went that way; we didn't come back that way. [laughter] … You had to dress up too much. It was too much work … for her. So, that was that, but, other than that, it was fun. When I went over … [when] I was twelve, even when I was eight, I liked to play deck tennis. I don't know if you know what it is, but you take a thing like a … quoit, a piece of rope that's wrapped around in a circle, and you toss it back and forth over this net and I got to be pretty good at it. So, when I was twelve, they had a contest and I entered and I got teamed up with a fellow who was about twenty-eight. He was totally disgusted because I was his partner. Well, I was better than he was. … We won the trophy. [laughter] …

SH: When you traveled to Scotland, did you travel with your parents' siblings or was it only your family that went?

KS: It was just my family that went. One time, I guess, when we went … when I was eight, I guess it was, we went with some other friends that went with us, but not related to my family at all, … but it made it nice, because there were a couple of younger children in their group. I think there were about twelve or fourteen of us that went that time. So, that was … very interesting.

SH: Did you take any pictures?

KS: Yes, but I don't think I have [them] anymore. We took a lot of pictures. When I was twelve, … shortly before we went, I had become a Boy Scout and I took my uniform with me and, in a park, one day, I met another little boy playing soccer and he was a Boy Scout. … I used to go with him to their meetings and went camping with them, which was a little different than the way we camped over here. They had a two-wheel cart, a big thing like this, that could

hold all your tents, all your equipment, and then, they had ropes that went off the hubs and a bunch of guys got in front on either side pulling the ropes and the two Scoutmasters held the, whatever you called the piece, the wood in the front there, and then, the smaller ones, including me, we hung on. We were on the back, supposedly pushing. Half the time, I think we were being pulled along, but it was great fun and we went and they'd arranged to rent some property from a blacksmith, actually, and we went and camped there for a week or two and that was good, except the farmer had forgotten [that] he was supposed to get hay to put in these … burlap bags we were going to use to sleep on. … There was a big (stronghold?) across the way, so, I went across and cut down the ferns to bring over, which turned out to be a pretty bad idea, because they were too damp later on. [laughter] Well, anyway, I got back over the fence [and] the blacksmith says, "You shouldn't have done that." He said it was some earl's property or something. He said, "The gamekeeper doesn't appreciate you doing that. You're likely to get shot." [laughter] …

SH: What other differences did you notice between Scotland and the United States as a young boy at that time?

KS: … Yes, it made a big difference. My grandfather had a pretty good job. I don't know just what he was called, but he was some sort of an engineer … at this factory where they produced jute, which they frequently used on the back of rugs and things like that, you know. … When they got married, they moved in an apartment and they lived there for their entire lives, you know, and it was a stone building. I guess, … over here, you'd call it, like, an apartment house. … The equivalent of six families could live in this three-story building. The apartments were rather large. The walls were made out of some sort of, like, a sandstone or something. … The walls were probably about this thick and the … building ran right up to the sidewalk and, when you got off, there was, they called it a close, it was a tunnel. You walked through the tunnel to get to the backyard, and then, at the backyard, … just a couple of steps in the open, and then, there was, it's made out of the same stone, this big, circular staircase that went up to each floor level. My grandparents happened to live on the third floor. … They had some limited electricity, but … most of the lighting was done with gas light, with mantles. The heating was all fireplace. The man came once a week with a bag of coal and I never knew how he did it. … I'm sure it weighed a hundred pounds and he'd carry that thing up to the third floor and they'd had a big bin, like, there were a couple big ones that were here, he'd fill it in this bin and alongside that was the kitchen sink and, yes, there was running water there. Then, they had a little two-burner gas stove, but a good part of the cooking was done, it was a big fireplace, … on the right-hand side of the fireplace. They had a capability of making bread there, too, if they wanted to. … I thought they ate nothing but stew [laughter] and that was really because of, frankly, the price of meat, you know, and other things were rather expensive. My mother thought we should have fruit, so, she went out and bought, I forget, something ridiculous, like six oranges. Well, that was like the height of being extravagant, you know, [laughter] but they had to import it all, … usually came from Spain, I understand. So, those were things that struck me as being different. I remember, when I went to Dundee High School, you had a choice; … you either had to wear kilts, which was part of, like, a uniform, or you can wear a blue sort of suit with pants. Well, I was already at the point where I was wearing long pants. Well, the pants were shorts, you know, and high stockings and the jacket was blue, it was trimmed all around with this gold braid and they had their insignia on the pocket, you know. Well, that was a little

different. I was used to wearing a uniform to school, but it was interesting and I wanted kilts. So, I had three maiden aunts and my mother and we went shopping in a department store one day and this friend of the family's over there, who had taken me to school, that was taking me for the first day, and his family was … quite affluent, … I had said to him, "Jeez, I'd like to have kilts like you have, you know." He said, "There's nothing to it. When you get in the store, tell them you want the kilts and, if they don't give it to you, lay on the floor and kick your heels and bang your head." He said, "That's what I do." [laughter] So, I thought the appropriate time had come. My mother was off with one of my aunts in another part of the store and I was there with this one aunt who I sort of liked. I was getting along good with her and I said, "This is it," down I went on the floor. Well, my mother came back, "Oh." [laughter] That was the end of the kilts, … but, then, they wanted a picture, which I still might have someplace, I forget, … a picture of myself in kilts.

SH: You did get one.

KS: Yes, but they made me wear my cousin's kilt and she was a girl. [laughter] That was not very popular, you know, … but I think those are some of the things that were different. My other grandfather, … I don't know what they called him, but he was like the superintendent of the waterworks for the town of Dundee, which was a pretty good-sized town, and so, he lived in a very nice home. It was surrounded by this high wall. They had room for a garden and they had chickens in the backyard and it was just a great, big water reserve, like a lake or something, and that was interesting to me, because I was not acquainted with chickens and my grandmother asked me to go out and bring in the eggs one day. So, I went out and brought in the eggs, but, of course, I also brought in the china eggs [laughter] used to encourage the chickens. So, those things were different for me, a different type of experience, you know. My one uncle over there; well, gasoline, which it is today, was quite expensive. Cars were very expensive. You didn't see too many and my one uncle … had a motorcycle with a sidecar and my two cousins, older cousins, each had motorcycles. So, when they traveled, that's what they did. … They all got on their motorcycles and traveled, because it was much cheaper and you got much better gas mileage.

SH: Did you do any traveling outside of the Dundee area?

KS: Yes. … We never got to France. We'd hoped, we'd planned it, but it didn't work out; I don't know why. Yes, we went down to London, did a lot of sightseeing down there, saw the Tower of London and went to Holyrood Castle [in Edinburgh] and Windsor Castle and, I forget, obviously, saw Buckingham [Palace] and it was a nice way to do it. They had a coastal steamer that was called, I forget, DP&O, Dundee, Perth and London I think was what it stood for, and it sailed out of Dundee and they had staterooms onboard and that's what we did. We traveled on the boat and we went down to London. It parked right in the best part of town, as far as getting to see things, and you lived on the boat while you were there. So, it was … very interesting. I did see the then Queen Mother when we were going to the Tower of London. She happened to pull by in her Rolls Royce, so, we were about this far [away]. So, that was a thrill, for me. One of the most interesting places I found, when we went down to England, was Stoke Poges Church [St. Giles in Buckinghamshire]. I don't know if you happened to get there. Well, it's the church where [Thomas] Gray wrote his elegy, "[Elegy] in a Country Churchyard," and the tombstones

were just the most unusual. It was a small church; like, if a child died, … his tombstone would represent his toys. It might be something that looked like a train, or I don't know what they had in those [days], whatever they were, and they were just the most unusual things and a beautiful setting, very peaceful setting, and the doors and some of the other parts of the church were made from parts of the Spanish Armada, which the English had defeated not too much before, and one of the pews, … which, of course, was impressive to me, was the pew of the William Penn family, who, of course, founded Pennsylvania, … but it was just a unique church. It was really interesting. As a historian, you would have loved it.

SH: After living in Scotland for a year, were you able to tell your friends about what you had seen when you came back? Was it something that they could comprehend?

KS: I think, yes, my one friend, I could and a little bit in school. They asked me to say a few words about what I'd seen and all that sort of thing, you know. Yes, they did. They insulted me, though, because, when they had a play in school, they wanted me to play an English lord and I was highly insulted [laughter] and I didn't do it, either.

SH: You talked about getting a kilt. Which clan?

KS: If I belonged, which I think my uncle was the last one to bear the name, it would be (McPherson?), and, on my mother's side, which is also on my mother's side, … they were Gowans. … As often happens, it was really, like, a subdivision of the McPhersons, but the McPhersons were not as big a clan as the Stuarts. [laughter] … The Smiths, I have no recollection of that; the only thing I could ever find out about that was this chap who claimed that, if the name was Smith, you know, you were one of two things, you were either a goldsmith, a silversmith, three things, or, in history, if you went back far enough, the most important person in the clan was the armorer. So, if the guy was a blacksmith and if he was the one that made the armor, the swords, whatever they used as tools, … and because my father's family came more from the Highland area, they felt that, if anything, somebody in the family, someplace, was probably an armorer or a blacksmith. So, I don't know whether that's true or not. You probably know more than I do. [laughter] That's what he told me.

SH: How much younger was your younger brother?

KS: He was about six years younger, yes.

SH: He was not very old on that first trip.

KS: No, that's … how he fell. He … actually fell in the kitchen. I think he was … about three, I guess. Yes, he wasn't very big. … I had an interesting experience with him, coming home. The captain of the ship, I can't think of the name of it, I think it was the *California* … [or] the *Cameronia*. … He was the youngest passenger on the boat and the captain took a great liking to him and, at one point, my brother was missing and they couldn't find him, you know, and the captain, finally, decided maybe he fell overboard and, in truth, turned the ship around to try and find him, which … would have been impossible by the time we got turned around, you know, but we found him missing pretty soon. What had happened was, coming up from the lower parts of

the ship, when they were … going to serve food, I guess the kitchen or something was down there, they had these big steel, iron doors. Well, when they were serving, the doors were open. When they weren't, they were closed. Well, he got inside there, so, he roamed all around. He'd been down in the kitchen, in the engine room, everything else, you know. [laughter]

SH: As only a little boy can do.

KS: That's right. [laughter]

SH: When you returned to this country, did you have to be reexamined or did they just let you continue on in your grade?

KS: They didn't give me credit. … Actually, I lost a year. I lost that year. Then, I skipped a year. So, it ended up, like, when I got out of high school, I graduated in January. Then, when I wanted to come to college, I had to wait until the following September.

SH: When you were in high school, what were your hobbies? You said that you were in the Boy Scouts. Were you involved in other things, the church or anything like that?

KS: In the church, I was active and, you know, Sunday school, Young Men's Society, that sort of thing, very active, for quite a few years, with my best friend. We were very active in the YMCA, … which was great, when you think of how different things are today. … Where we lived in Newark, we could get a bus, because the YMCA was in the center of Newark, … for a nickel a ride, took you almost twenty minutes to a half-hour to get downtown, and you could … go down by yourself and go to the Y, roam around the stores. Our favorite was running through the five-and-tens and looking at things, you know, but, today, I don't think you would conceive, maybe, of doing that with a young child, especially not in Newark, maybe, [laughter] but it's vastly different. …

MO: What was your neighborhood like, ethnically and religiously?

KS: … As it turned out, over the years, I think it became one of the most interesting neighborhoods in Newark. Obviously, it had started out rural, because of the farms, and then, you had middle-class type people, like my family, moving in by building their first home and all that sort of thing. Most of the homes were single-family. We lived about two blocks, two-and-a-half blocks, above a park called Weequahic Park. The closer you got to the park, the more expensive the homes were and there was a department store in Newark called L. Bamberger's and Company, which was quite famous for years, but, later, … [was] taken over by Macy's, and they actually built a model home. It was a gorgeous brick home, but it had the advantage of facing the park and they used it to display the furniture that they were trying to sell and all that sort of thing. … Anyhow, what I started to say is, … the neighborhood, I always say, originally tended to be Protestant in nature. There was a little, tiny Episcopal church, almost diagonally across the street from where we lived. My family was Presbyterian. We went to a Presbyterian Church a few blocks away. There was a large Baptist church a few blocks the other way and that, … I think, was the essence of the neighborhood. Gradually, the essence changed; it became more Catholic and, among others, for one reason, because the Catholics, a few blocks sort of

north of us, had for years had an orphanage there, but, gradually, the churches arrived, you know, and the next thing that happened was, … I don't know how to explain it, … I don't want to insult anybody, … a higher class of Jewish families moved in. They were more the entrepreneurial type, the more business people type, and our neighbors next door … became a Jewish family and they were very cultured people. He was the head chemist for General Aniline [and Film] Corporation and she was an extremely talented pianist, piano player, and, later, … it became a very Jewish neighborhood, it sort of became different and the family moved in across the street who were quite prosperous. He owned a wholesale meat business, but, like pictures you used to see of over in New York, … they hung all their bedclothes out the front windows every day. Well, Mrs. Levy, who lived next door, who was just a wonderful woman, that was it. I mean, she got insulted and she wasn't going to live in a neighborhood like that, so, they moved. [laughter] She didn't like the class of people that were moving in, I thought, you know, but I hated to see her go, because, and I often thought she did it on purpose, they had no children, … it was a two-family house, they rented the first floor of the house, and there was a bathroom window that faced towards, like, our driveway and, well, their driveway, too, … but it was rather high up off the ground. She'd lock herself out, periodically, and I climbed in the window. See, that was always open. … You know, almost every time I went in, I got a couple of dollars or five dollars. It began to look more like a coincidence, I thought, sometimes, [laughter] but that would explain the neighborhood. Now, of course, I've gone by there in some years, it's very black; … I would say the homes are very well maintained. Obviously, they're older homes, but, I mean, like, at our house, … the lawn and shrubs and everything look very nice, … but it seems to be the evolution.

SH: Which high school did you go to?

KS: Well, first, I went to one called Southside High School, which was a pretty good distance. You either had to ride a bus or you could walk. It was a long walk, and then, later, again, they had to build a new high school. They built a school called Weequahic, it was an Indian name, Weequahic, … which was a very nice school. … Newark, in those days, it was a lot of politics and there was a lot of graft running around and the school was supposed to have been one of the first to have a swimming pool, because Maplewood High School had a swimming pool, which was an adjoining town. Well, we never did get the swimming pool and it took them so long to finish the high school, it ran over budget and everything, that they had built a new elementary school next to it. So, my first year of high school, we went to the elementary school and, … I mean, you really didn't get a really good education there, because, as it turned out, at least the parents decided that the teachers there were jockeying for position, trying to be named head of departments in the high school and it got sort of a fast shrift. Then, they got the high school opened. I'd have to give every credit to the principal, whose name was Max Hertzberg. He brought the standards of that school up so fast, it was unbelievable. When I went to Rutgers, I had no trouble being admitted. My marks … my first two years weren't too good.

SH: In high school, was there a particular mentor who guided you towards Rutgers or towards going to college? Was going to college always expected of you?

KS: No. You know, you had a choice. You could take a college preparatory course or you could take, I forget what they called it, a general course, and there was another course, which

was geared more towards, in those days, helping more the girls, I think. … You became a stenographer or you … headed towards a schoolteacher, really, you know. So, I took a college preparatory course. … My father, … of course, school in Scotland was so different than over here. You were out of high school in Scotland by the time you were sixteen, you know, and it was a much more, in many cases, a better education, I think, a lot more accelerated, but, … I guess he had to commute, he tried to take a couple of courses at Columbia, but I think, between the new baby and things, I don't think that worked. …

SH: Was he still working for the newspaper?

KS: Yes, he was. …

SH: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

KS: We were very fortunate. My father … belonged to a union. He was what they called the linotype operator and, let's see, we were in Scotland, I guess, then, because, by the time we came home, the stock market had really crashed, because the neighbor behind us got out of it, … I don't know how he knew, but he got out of it pretty good. He had said to my mother, "Well, you know, if you'd been here, I would have told you so." Well, we lost some money in the stock market, I have no idea [how much], I don't think it was a great fortune, but they lost money in the stock market. The bank we were in, … after the bank closing by the President, never really quite recovered and … I think I had about eight hundred dollars in the bank and I got half of that back, eventually, but it took several years before you got it back. … It was hard. I was always lucky, in summers, going to college, because, … probably through my father, but I managed to get a job working in the *Newark News* as an office boy, a copy boy is what they called you, and I got fifteen dollars a week for that, … but, then, I expected to work; I did. I had a job starting at the *Newark News*, … I majored in journalism, starting the day after I graduated, but I became unhappy for a number of reasons and I quit.

SH: What activities were you involved in during high school? What were your favorite subjects?

KS: Well, you'd like me, my favorite was history. [laughter]

SH: Good. I am not lobbying for that answer, but it is a good one.

KS: Wasn't too good with math, but I liked English, I particularly liked English, and I liked history. … No, I wasn't active in too much. Can I be candid about it? The school was so Jewish in population, it was difficult to get into anything and I don't know how to describe it. If there was going to be an election, you knew what the election was going to be, you know, and … I don't want to downgrade them, because some of my best friends were Jewish fellows and girls, but it was a different atmosphere. So, I was in a traffic club, which I thought turned out to be very good for me, when it came time to drive, and, other than that, not a great deal. …

SH: Was the traffic club like a driver's education program?

KS: … It was like that, but … you had no vehicle to drive. You never actually had an opportunity to drive, but I think the fellow that taught it really inducted you into a sense of responsibility. He told you what you had to do and so forth and he ran a very interesting course, you know. He was a very interesting guy.

SH: Did you apply to any other colleges besides Rutgers? How did Rutgers become your first choice?

KS: Well, it turned out that a friend of my father's, I guess they might have been from Scotland, too, I don't know, his name was Wallace, but, anyhow, their son had gone to Rutgers and worked for the administration. I'm not exactly sure what he did. I believe he did something related to, like, public relations or public information, but he worked there and the way I finally decided to come here is, that's why I never really looked any farther, they used to have a thing they called prep school weekend and he arranged to have me [at his fraternity] and I ended up joining that fraternity. He arranged to have me come down for a prep school weekend and I stayed at the Theta Chi fraternity, which was on Union Street then, and I liked it and I liked the school and, in those days, they had a pre-pledge, so, I pre-pledged to Theta Chi and, as it turned out, it's probably the best thing I ever did, because, after I started school, by that time, two years before that, my family had paid off the mortgage on their home. They were planning to use that money to pay for my college and I guess a month or so after I started college, my mother got sick for the first time. Eventually, she died in '44, but, each year, … there were no medical plans and it got to a point where they kept borrowing money against it. They finally lost the house, because they couldn't pay the mortgage, and so, it made a difference in my college situation, you know, and I got a job working as a waiter in the fraternity, because, in those days, we had the cook and we had a houseman in there and I got paid for the meals that I worked on. So, when I worked, waited on breakfast, I got fifteen cents and, when I worked lunch, I think, I forget now, I think I got forty or thirty-five [cents], whatever it was. … Anyhow, my first two years we were there, your cost of your meals was a dollar and five cents a day, and then, plus, you had your dues and I forget what else and, eventually, I guess almost by the end of my sophomore year, I was working all three meals. So, it wasn't that demanding, but it didn't give you a lot of time for other things, because you, I think, had to set up the table, and then, after you got done, well, they had a guy that washed the dishes … that was paid, but not a fraternity member, but you had to do the silver, you know, and that sort of thing. So, that tied you up a little bit after dinner. … It really helped me finish college. It really did.

MO: Before going into college, other men that we have interviewed who grew up in Newark say that they remember the Newark Bears, the minor league baseball team.

KS: Yes. I never really cared for the major league, but I enjoyed going to the Newark Bears and, well, I don't remember those names that well, but almost all the great players that advanced to the Yankees were players that had played in Newark and they had a nice little stadium there. It was very good and well attended. … I liked that.

MO: There were also many large movie theaters in Newark. Did you ever have a chance to go to any of them?

KS: Oh, yes, sure. I can't think of all the names right now, went to one called the Branford quite a bit and, at one point, I remember going there to see the Marx Brothers in *Animal Crackers*, was the name of it, and the interesting thing, there, at that time, was a woman who was a very famous singer at the time, Kate Smith. … Kate Smith did it, and she later became a rather big woman and she was pretty big then, she did a handspring on the stage, … because it was a comedy, you know. It was unbelievable.

SH: Kate Smith?

KS: Yes. That was interesting. … There was another big one, the Paramount, over near the *Newark Evening News,* actually, and they all had, well, it was a mixture at first, … vaudeville at the time and, plus, whatever motion pictures were coming along and, … like, where we lived, there were neighborhood movies. You could walk to the Park Theater, which was a pretty reasonable walk, … or you could walk to Hillside, to the Mayfair Theater, and, of course, one of the things was the night they gave out dishes, I'm sure they told you that, and it was a riot. I remember going with my mother to the Mayfair Theater; [laughter] they gave you the dishes on the way in. You heard dishes crashing all night long. … You went for next to nothing, you know, thirty-five cents, I think it was, something. So, you went to Saturday matinee, everybody went to the Saturday matinee, you know. They had serials going on, the Indians are coming. You got a little paper headdress and I think that cost you fifteen cents and you could buy a box of candy for a nickel, so, that was your Saturday, weekend entertainment, really. … I don't know how the Depression [hit them] in other years, but another theater was Loew's [State] Theater. After I left the *Newark Evening News*, I got a job for a while as an investigator for a company called Retail Credit and it was really a nice job and I had a very good territory, Millburn, Short Hills and all that, but I only lasted about, I don't think three months, and I just couldn't take it, because, you know, if a family was applying for a life insurance policy, I'd go to investigate. Well, theoretically, except on rare occasions, you couldn't go in and talk to the people themselves. You had to go to neighbors and I'd have to find, "Well, you know, what sort of a family are they? Does the husband drink a lot? How about the wife? You ever see any strange men going in the house?" … I mean, I just couldn't take it. I felt like I was spying on people, you know. So, finally, I quit that. Well, just about the time I did that, they passed the draft and my number was 324, nice and low. So, I couldn't get a job. I mean, every day, I went down to the center of Newark and I parked the car in this one parking lot, Church Parking Lot, and I'd wander. I went every place for jobs. I got turned down by the five-and-ten. I went to the Wiss Company that makes scissors, I tried to get a job. I can't think of all the places I went, Bamberger's and all the department stores. I couldn't get a job. It was always the same, "You're too old or you're too young." I was never the right age, you know, and, of course, there was the draft. Finally, one day, the fellow in the parking lot said to me, "What are you doing down here?" and I said, "Well, I'm trying to find a job," you know, and he said, "Well, what's the [problem]?" I told him what the trouble was and he said, "Well, I'll give you a job; you want to work here? I'll give you twelve dollars a week and I'll let you park free. You can start working at one o'clock in the afternoon. You can park here in the morning and look for a job." I said, "Fine." So, I did. I ended up going to work, parking cars for twelve dollars a week, and, eventually, … Joe, he came from New Hope, Pennsylvania, he actually owned a farm down there and, at one time, before the Depression, he'd been the general manager for … a company that owned about fifty parking lots in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, you know, around the East

here and, when the breakup came, when the company went for bust, he took over the lease on this particular parking lot, but, anyhow, … it gave me a lot of different experiences, working there. For one thing, the church, it was called the Church Parking Lot, the church itself, … the wealthier families in Newark had gone there. As the neighborhood changed, they had moved out to one of the more wealthier suburbs, you know, up on Wyoming Avenue, but … the church was still there. They exhumed all the bodies from the cemetery and had moved them to their new church and where the parking lot was was really the cemetery, or most of the parking lot was this former cemetery, but the church, they … leased or let the Salvation Army use it. So, it was a Salvation Army church. Well, they'd meet there once a week or so, they'd have band practice there, but, when poor people or hobos or whatever came into town and they'd be trying to find a place to sleep, they'd be looking for that, well, they usually hit the church. Well, that wasn't the right place. … You'd have to tell them how to get to the building, which was maybe a half-a-mile away, in a very poor section of town, where they could get a meal and they could sleep, you know, but it was interesting.

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

SH: Can you tell us about your experiences entering Rutgers as a freshman? You had already pre-pledged, so, you had a base here.

KS: Yes, I did.

SH: Can you tell us about the freshman initiation and the Rutgers customs of that era?

KS: Well, you've probably heard it. Well, you had to wear a dingy, a little cap on top of your head, and I'm not sure about everybody, but, as far as the fraternity was concerned, you had to wear your clothes inside out, with the pockets pulled out, and I think you had to wear green socks, pulled up over your pants, I forget that part there, but that was about it and I thought the experience was very good, because they were well organized and, anything you wanted to know, you went to church, chapel, I should say. I think my chapel day was always on a Tuesday and you got there and they made any announcements that you wanted to hear and you got to know people; … the same people sat next to you. There were three Smiths in my class and we sat together and I just found everybody very helpful. I mean, there was no registration, no great problem, you know; they did it in the gym, you know. It was a little confusing, but it went very smoothly … and the fraternity, as I say, for me, it turned out to be a very fortunate thing and they were a nice group of fellows. In fact, the fellow that pledged me, … well, he did a lot for Rutgers, a fellow named Floyd Bragg, did a lot of fundraising and so forth for the college, and I enjoyed my friendship, over the years, with most of the fellows I met there in the fraternity or in the journalism classes.

SH: Can you tell us about the competition between freshmen and sophomores?

KS: … I can't comment on that. I don't recall anything like that.

SH: Did you attend the dances?

KS: Oh, yes, I went to all of them. Yes, if there was a way to go, I went. I went to the Sophomore Hop, whatever.

SH: You graduated from high school in January and came to Rutgers in September. Did you work at the paper in-between?

KS: … No. First, I went back to Weequahic and I took a course in typing and I took a course in biology. I took three courses, can't remember just what the other one was, and that sort of helped me, because it helped a little bit with the journalism, you know. I didn't know how to type up to then and I never became very proficient, but I was pretty good. I could use several fingers. So, that was … what I did, and then, in the summer, I did go to work for the *Newark News*. Yes, that was the first summer I worked for the *Newark News*. Summer before that, I had worked for First Industrial Loan Company in Newark and … I forget whether I was technically old enough to work there or not, I forget that part, but they never bonded me and, two or three times a day, I'd be taking, you know, in those days, it was a lot of money, … two thousand dollars or so to a bank and depositing it. All they had to do was hit me over the head. There was nothing I could do about it. [laughter] I think I was fifteen the first year I worked there. … That was an interesting place to work.

MO: Did your father's influence lead you to journalism and working on the *Targum*?

KS: I think that was the suspicion, that that was part of it. [laughter] I don't know, but I think a lot of it was the fact that I liked English. I think that had a lot to do with it. …

SH: Was there a specific professor that kept you interested in journalism?

KS: Oh, it was strange, I wouldn't say it that way, but there was Professor Ede and Professor Ede was also an editor on the *Newark News.* So, I sort of knew him from there, not that I could say we were close friends or anything, [laughter] but that was sort of an influence there, and then, … I guess the head of the department was [Kenneth] Jennings and his family, or, really, his wife's family, I guess, owned the *Home News* for a hundred years or so, I guess, and then, … their son, Dr. [Paul] Jennings … graduated from Rutgers, also. I think those were the primary interests, and then, in the fraternity, as it turned out, there were three of us, Dick Van Nostrand, Charlie Donerly and myself, who, by chance, after we got there, discovered we were all going to go to … journalism courses.

SH: As a freshman, you knew that you wanted to major in journalism.

KS: I knew, yes, I did. I knew that's what I was aiming for. You never got to it until the junior year, but, yes, that's right.

SH: When did you start working on the *Targum*?

KS: Oh, I think almost immediately, yes.

SH: Was there a certain area that you worked in?

KS: … I usually worked on the copy desk.

SH: Did you do any reporting?

KS: I did very little reporting. No, most of mine would be editing and we usually wrote the headlines, you know, that sort of thing.

SH: Did you also work on the *Scarlet Letter*?

KS: No, I did not, no, no. [Carleton] Dilatush did. Dilatush was the editor, I guess, when we graduated.

MO: Did you go home while you were living here or did you usually spend most of your time on campus?

KS: No, I went home quite frequently, because my father never drove. Well, he attempted it, but it was like suicide. [laughter] That's the truth. It's a funny story, I may as well tell you. We were going up to Canada one time. He had a couple of incidents, but we were going up to Canada, to visit an aunt and two cousins up there, and, you know, there weren't the highways there are today. You went back roads, sort of up through Pennsylvania and you worked your way up to Toronto. Well, we were up way Upstate some place and my mother drove in the cities and she got out on the open road someplace and said to my father, "Well, now, you drive for a while." So, he did. He had a '32 Pontiac and we got out on this road and he didn't waste any time getting up to speed and we're coming down this big curve in the road here and there was a bridge across. Well, he never slowed down. My mother reached down, trying to get the brake and slow it down. We went around that corner on two wheels and on the bridge is this farmer with his horse and wagon and a load of hay. … It was in the summer and all the windows were open. We took hay off the side of that wagon [laughter] and the inside of the car was filled with this stuff. I don't think he ever drove again. … I don't know what it was. He didn't seem to have a real depth perception ability. I don't know what it was.

SH: I thought maybe it was because they drive on the other side of the street in Britain.

KS: Well, yes, but he'd never driven over there.

SH: Okay. That is a great story. To turn back to Rutgers, how long did it take you to get over to NJC?

KS: Well, that's what I started to say. I sort of became lucky, because of my mother's illness and my father not driving, I ended up with … the car that we had, and so, … if I got a phone call that I had to get home, it made it much easier for me to go home, because she'd be home for maybe a month or two at a time, and then, all of a sudden, she'd be back in the hospital for a week or two, whatever it was, you know, but it worked to my advantage, too, because, see, I also got a job driving the debating team and I forget what I got for that, not a lot of money, but I think I got twelve cents a mile or something, but, on the other hand, when I got home to Newark, on

Frelinghuysen Avenue in Newark, I could buy Merit gas for 9.9 cents a gallon. So, I was doing pretty good there. It was a little more expensive … down here. So, that was it, … and then, one year, I got a job working for Dr. Madsen, who was a sociology professor, and it was under some government program and … I believe I got thirty dollars a month and he was going to write a book, which I never found out if he did, I assume he did, and … two years before, for two years, I think, he had had graduate students write case histories on families and I had to go through all these, I forget how many there were, I think there were three hundred, altogether. I'd have to go through them and he had devised a coding system and I would code the various things on the front that would relate to whatever he was talking about as far as his book was concerned, you know. So, that worked pretty good, but it was a nice way to make some extra money. …

MO: While at Rutgers, did any of the students ever discuss Roosevelt or the New Deal?

KS: Well, everybody, I think, thought about that, because, you know, the football stadium was only built because of WPA, Works Project [Progress] Administration, and I think there were a lot of other things that happened around, not only Rutgers, but in the State, that, in one way or another, helped. For example, I mentioned Sherman, Texas, before, and I don't want to jump off your track there, but, when we were transferred from Fort Worth, Texas, to Sherman, Texas, the place they put us in, these barracks, had been a former CCC camp, you know. That was the Civilian Conservation Corps that Roosevelt had created in order to, frankly, get kids, young people, off the streets and they did a lot of very creative work that was very worthwhile. One of the things they did in New Jersey, which, if you've never been there, it's very interesting, they recreated Washington's winter quarters in Morristown, in a place called Jockey Hollow Park, and that was done by the young people from CCC. So, everybody was aware that he'd done a lot of good things. …

SH: Did your father ever run for political office?

KS: No, I don't think so.

SH: Was he interested in politics at all?

KS: No, no. My mother was active in PTA, but that was about it.

MO: You mentioned on your survey that both of your parents were Republicans. Did they both support Roosevelt anyway?

KS: No, I think they voted for Hoover, but, [laughter] later on, I'm sure, you almost had to support him. It was one of those things.

SH: When you were here on campus, how aware were you of what was going on in Europe?

KS: Oh, you were well aware of it. I mean, I think people were very conscious, especially with the impending war in September [1939], I think it was. People knew about it and, in fact, … I understand, I didn't know any in particular, but a friend of mine did that, who did not go to Rutgers, there were people that left early to go into the war and his name was Cooper. … I guess

he'd tried to enlist in the Air Corps and he was rejected for whatever reason, I don't know. He went up to Canada and joined the Air Corps up there. Yes, I think people were well aware and you have to consider, I don't know what it's like today, but everybody had to take two years of ROTC.

SH: I wanted to ask you about your experiences in ROTC.

KS: I loved it. … I couldn't continue it. I liked the first two years and I would have continued, but I had a laboratory on the drill day. I couldn't work the drill days in, in my junior and senior year.

SH: Who was your favorite professor?

KS: Oh, probably Professor George.

SH: Can you tell us some stories about Professor George?

KS: Well, I can't remember all the stories, but the funny one was when he decided to run for public office in the little town that he lived in and he got stomped [laughter] and here's the guy that's supposed to be teaching political science. … We never let him forget that. [laughter] One time, I had an early morning class with him and … I'd had a course with him the year before and I liked it, but, you know, he got on the same subject that he taught us the year before and I didn't show up for class for about three weeks and I had a deal with, you know, one of the fellows in my fraternity [that] was in the class. I said, "The minute he changes the subject, let me know." So, he did, but, unfortunately, the first day I went back, … we had a ten-minute lapse time between [classes], I was ten minutes late. I was a little late getting in there; I didn't make the time. So, he greeted me, you know, "Well, nice to have you with us again," [laughter] whatever the words were, made me go out in front, you know where that fountain is? I had to walk around that fountain twenty times [laughter] before he'd let me in the class.

SH: Maybe he should have been a drill instructor.

KS: Oh, I liked him. … He was clever.

SH: What kind of interaction did you have with the University administrators and deans?

KS: Very little. I had some interaction with a fellow by the name of Curtin, Ed Curtin, I think his name was, his first name. I know his name was Curtin and I had a little with Metzger. That was about it.

SH: What was your impression of Dean Metzger?

KS: Oh, very staid, solid, proper gentleman who was probably still back in the Victorian Age. [laughter] That would be a poor assessment. No, he was a nice man. … I know he was very helpful to a lot of students. So, that was it.

SH: What about President Clothier?

KS: Oh, very proper, typical old Mainline Philadelphia family. That would be my impression of him, because his family had run that clothing store [Clothier & Strawbridge] there for years.

SH: Did you see him on campus? Did he interact with the students at all? Was he close with the student body?

KS: I would say not as close as some of the others. He was pretty formal. Mason Gross was a lot better, I think. … I think, because of his TV experience, he was more apt to be friendly, not that I was, he was [not] here when I was here.

SH: Was the custom of always saying hello still around when you were here?

KS: Yes, I think [so]. I don't know if it was a formal thing. Yes, because it was such a small school, you got to know a lot of [people]. We only had, in total, maybe twelve hundred students, I guess.

SH: Are there any Rutgers traditions that you remember that have since gone by the wayside?

KS: Oh, I used to love the football season, because we'd all build, put up displays in front of the fraternity houses and so forth. Yes, there were people who would go down to Princeton, try to paint the cannon red. Conversely, they'd try to come up and get our cannon and, on the nights before the Princeton game, you know, the fraternities had guys out guarding their displays, because they'd come up and try to … knock them down or something. …

SH: Were you on any of the raids to Princeton?

KS: Never made a raid to Princeton, but I recall, one night, … I don't know whether the dorms did, but, in the fraternity, it was usually the responsibility of freshmen and sophomores to get the Christmas tree at Christmastime. … Well, they had one time when the railroad police were waiting for them down there. They nailed the whole bunch of them trying to get the trees off the train in the yard. [laughter]

SH: Being a copy editor at the *Targum*, what were some of the big issues that were discussed or debated in the newspaper?

KS: I don't know if I can answer you that way, but one thing that I remember, very distinctly, there was a professor, a speech professor, … I think it was Reager, it's something like that. Well, he was such a person in demand all the time that you could hardly put an issue of the *Targum* out without his name being in there eight, ten times. So, we finally passed a law, I think banned his name; that was it. They weren't going to put his name in the paper. You know, they'd work anything around; [laughter] you could say anything that referred to him, but you never saw him in there. That's the only thing that stands out most.

SH: What are your impressions of some of the speakers that visited the campus?

KS: I don't know, I think sort of routine. I don't think they went into it in quite the way that … they have done in later years. You know, you usually only saw them at a graduation or what was the other day, I forget. There was another day where, if you were going to see anybody, that's when it would be. No, it wasn't common, … because, I remember, I had one of our people come to give a speech and I was quite disappointed. After I'd arranged to … bring this guy up from Texas and they put him in the chapel over at Douglass, you know, which was sort of a disappointment to me. [laughter] You know, the man was a pretty noted geologist and it was at the time when we were busy exploring offshore exploration off the Jersey Coast. I was a little disappointed in that … and he was a good speaker.

MO: While you were at school, did you give any thought to what you wanted to do after graduation?

KS: Oh, I knew I wanted to work for a newspaper.

MO: As a reporter or as a copywriter?

KS: … No, I would have wanted to be a reporter, but that was difficult, too, in those days. The only job I was really offered was with the *Springfield Sun*, in Springfield, New Jersey, and the pay was fifteen dollars a week. You're expected to own a car and you're expected to live in town. I couldn't afford to do it. [laughter]

SH: How much interaction did you have with the women at NJC?

KS: … In my own particular case, I had very little. I think the only reason was, well, there were two reasons, I guess; one is, I lived awfully close to home and, two, I knew a number of girls at home. [laughter] I never quite had the need, as they say on that television program.

SH: Many of the women came to the Rutgers Campus to study journalism.

KS: Yes, there were.

SH: I thought maybe you had stories about that.

KS: Oh, we did. We had quite a few in our class and it's one of the things that I've regretted, always; there was never any way to find out what happened … with those women. … I don't know how many there were, maybe there were fifteen, but, for those days, it was a lot of women and, of course, they got married and you never really heard any more about them, but, no, they were all good girls, very talented.

SH: Did they walk over to campus? Was there a special bus that brought them over? Do you remember?

KS: To tell you the truth, … I honestly don't know how they got here. I really don't. … That's a shame, I never thought of that. [laughter]

SH: You said that you were very aware of what was going on in Europe and some of your classmates had actually gone to Canada to join up. What kind of discussions were there about lend-lease and the other programs that Roosevelt had established?

KS: Oh, I think you heard both sides of the story, you know. Some people, as in any case, were dead set against it, because we were still a very nationalistic type country and they just thought it was going to draw us into the war, but other people, I think, realized that, you know, England really wasn't going to survive unless somebody did something. They were an island and there was no way they could get supplies, unless there was some way to augment whatever they could do, and they didn't have a lot of natural resources, where they could sustain their manufacturing of military equipment.

SH: You still had quite a bit of family in Scotland.

KS: Yes.

SH: On a personal level, what were you hearing from your family? Did you hear from them?

KS: You really weren't hearing an awful lot, you know. They weren't about to be permitted to say too much as to what was going on. …

SH: Did they ever ask for things that they were short of or in need of?

KS: No, I don't think so. … I don't know, maybe my mother was doing it and I didn't know it or something, or my father, I guess I would say. I don't know.

MO: After you graduated, did you find a job immediately?

KS: Yes, next day, I went to work for the *Newark Evening News*, but that didn't last too long and I resigned about, I guess, early in August, or maybe a little before, and then, I went up to the corner to get … something to eat. … Large pretzels, you could get three pretzels for ten cents and you could get a … (Needix?) Orange Juice for a nickel, so, that's usually what I had for lunch and I met my fraternity brother there, a fellow named Charlie Donerly. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, I just quit." He said, "Well, they're looking for somebody over at Retail Credit, where I'm working. Why don't you come over there?" So, I went over there and started work the next day. … It was a job where you got paid, things were different then, … so much for each investigation that you did and they had a bunch of girls there and the girls got paid five cents a page for typing every report you [had] typed up. You had to pay that five cents and it was hard to figure out what you were making. In the long run, … if I realized it, I would have probably stayed there a little longer, because you got one paycheck, like, through your office, but, in many cases, your investigations were also being handled by somebody else, maybe in California or some other place. Well, it took weeks for some of those things to come through. So, after I quit working there, after close to three months, I think, for three months afterwards, I kept getting a check that got less and less. Then, I realized, "Well, I should have stayed there," you know, but I didn't and that's when I ended up working in the parking lot and, in-between

that, my buddy and I, we did odd jobs. I remember washing windows up in Irvington in an apartment house and doing some illegal electrical work. They wouldn't stand for the day, but we did anything to make a few bucks. [laughter] He was also a drummer. When we'd run short of money, … the loan shark [pawn shop], with the three balls out, he knew us in person. … When we needed the money, because we had a date or anything, we'd go in and hock the drums, and then, when we get a few bucks, we'd go in and get the drums back again.

SH: I guess he did not play in a band regularly.

KS: No, no. In fact, my brother had the band. …

SH: Were you musical?

KS: Not me. [laughter] My brother played the sax and the clarinet and the piano. He was the musical one.

SH: Did you dance?

KS: Oh, I loved to dance, yes, yes.

SH: Was there anyone in particular that you kept going back to Newark to see? Did you have a special sweetheart before you left for the war?

KS: No. … I'd had one in high school, but, after that, it was different people at different times, I guess. [laughter]

SH: You told us that waiting for the draft notice made it very difficult to get a job. What happened after you finally got your draft notice?

KS: I'd like to tell you that. That, I think, is the best part of the whole story. At first, starting in January of '41, the draft was … September '40, they had a program where you got called in for a year, a year of service. So, on January 7th, I went for my physical at the Essex County Armory in Newark and was reclassified to 1-B, because they were still very regular Army. They wouldn't take you if you wore glasses. So, I was rejected. So, a couple of weeks after that, and I was still working in the parking lot, … I went in to pay the oil bill for my parents, in Esso, in an office in Elizabeth, New Jersey. When I got there, the cashier window was in the lobby, there was a big line of people there and the receptionist was over here and there were empty chairs. So, I went over and sat down and thought, "When it thins out a little, I'll go up and pay the bill," and the girl, a very nice girl, I was talking to her, obviously, and she said, "Well, what are you doing … around," it was about ten o'clock, … "here at this hour?" I said, "I can't get a job, you know. I'm just … here to pay the bill." She said, "Oh, you're looking for a job?" and I said, "Yes, I'm always looking." She said, "You know, I know they're looking for somebody." She said, "Would you like an application?" I said, "Sure." I filled out the application, I think that was, like, on a Wednesday or a Thursday and I turned it in and, Friday, I went in and saw the employee relations manager and, on Monday, started work. I was an office boy. So, that was pretty good, but that was the custom at that time. You had to be an office boy, for one reason, so

[that] you got to know the people and the different managers and, after a few months of that, then, they moved me into the payroll department, you know, but, to get back to the war; [laughter] so, I worked there for just about a little over a year, because I started work there, I think, January 27th or something and, one day, I just got a notice, "Report to the draft board the next day." It was in March, and so, I did. I arrived there and a man [was] sent to inform me I was going in the Army and he handed me the traditional envelope that they gave the person, or persons, I should say, and they gave me a token and I went out and got on the bus. They told me to go down to Newark and get a train and go down to … Fort Dix. I did. What I didn't know is, I should have gone to see somebody in charge of the railroad station and they would have given me a free ticket. … I paid for my ticket to go down there, and then, I got off the train and … found a bus. The bus took and dropped me off at the gate of Fort Dix. I spent about three-quarters of an hour walking around, trying to find out where I got inducted, and I walked up to the induction place, when I finally found it, and there was a sergeant standing out there and there was a big, long line of people waiting to go through and get inducted, you know, and I walked up to the sergeant and I said, "Is this the induction station?" He said, "Yes. … Are you here [to be inducted]?" I said, "Yes, I've got the papers here." He said, "Well, where's the rest of your men?" Well, I didn't realize that, normally, they named one man the head of a group and he took them down and you all got inducted. So, I said, "There's nobody." I said, "I'm it," and, when you consider that I came from either the largest or second largest draft board in Newark, which was … a pretty big city in those days; so, he said, "I'll tell you what you do." He said, "Why don't you just stand here and, when you see people going by, if you see a group you think you want to be in, just step in the line and, if anybody says anything, tell him I said so." So, I said, "Fine." So, I waited and, pretty soon, I heard these guys going by and they were talking about Lake Hopatcong, Sparta. Well, my buddies and I, we'd been going for four or five years to Cranberry Lake, which is near Lake Hopatcong. So, I said, "Well, I know some of that stuff," so, I stepped right in line. It was nice. One guy, his name was Smith, Tommy Smith, he had a band that played in a club up there in Lake Hopatcong. One of the other kids worked for his father and they owned a butcher shop in Sparta and Smith's family also ran the school busses. So, I felt very comfortable and I'd have to say, some of the other groups that were going through were a little on the rough side. [laughter] So, that was it. So, that was on a Wednesday. So, that night, I guess, … no, it was the next night, I finally got to a telephone. I stood in line for about two hours, I got a telephone, called my family and said, "They said you can come down and see us on Saturday morning." So, that was fine, you know. They were going to come down, my mother could still drive and, Friday night, they called us in and said, "You're leaving tomorrow morning." So, then, I went out and stood in line again and, about eleven o'clock at night, I got my family on the phone and said, "Don't come, we won't be here." [laughter] So, that was that and it was unusual for one person to be drafted; how that happened, I don't know. So, that was it. So, then, … we got our food, we got our mess kits, certain things, you know, and got on this train and they didn't tell you where the devil you were going and they had, in the middle of, sort of, the train, they had a freight car. In the freight car, they had the kitchen. They cooked food and you took your mess kit and you walked down and dipped it in hot water, and then, you got your food, and then, you took it back and tried to eat it, if you could, and I opened up my mess kit, which was not until I was on the train, and some guy had had the stupid mess kit in World War I and it was packed in newspapers. … I mean, it was growing. I mean, it was unbelievable and what could I do with the damned thing, you know? So, I scraped it out the best I could … and I got down to the hot water and I soaked it in there as best I could and I thought, "I have to

eat off it," you know. I had nothing else to do. … Eventually, I got it pretty well cleaned up. I used emery cloth and I used sand, you know. I had it all through the war, eventually, but it had a few little pit marks that were black, you know, and every time they had inspection, they'd tell me to forget it, "Get a new one," you know, and I'd say, "Forget it," because it was solid aluminum and the ones they were giving out then in the war were steel with a plating on it. Well, after you used them a couple of times, the plating wore off, they looked ugly, you know. Mine was better looking. [laughter] So, I kept that, but, anyhow, I thought the way that I went in was most unusual. I don't think too many people went in just that way.

SH: Especially when they asked you where your group was.

KS: Yes. That was it.

SH: Where were you when you heard about the bombing in Pearl Harbor?

KS: Yes, I was in a bar with a very nice young lady named Pauline on Route 10 in New Jersey, up near, probably, … might have been in Whippany, but up in that area. The young lady lived in Mine Hill, New Jersey, yes. I'd met her through Cranberry Lake. [laughter]

SH: Where did you go from Fort Dix?

KS: Well, they took us all the way down to Louisiana. … Oh, I should have explained, the first night in Fort Dix, we slept in little tents. They held, I think, four people and it was sort of out in a field, way down at one end of Fort Dix, and you had a little metal thing, like this, in the middle, a pipe up the middle, and … it was cold on March 11th. You'd throw wood in there and try to keep warm, you know. … Oh, I forgot the best part. Then, the next day, the sergeant, an old Army sergeant, had a roll call, like, six o'clock in the morning, I guess it was, went through the whole 220 names and I said, "You didn't call my name." The guy looks again and looks again. He says, "By any chance, is your name William Kenneth Smith?" … Well, he hadn't called out Kenneth; I never used William [in] all my life. So, I said, "Whoops, that's me." So, after we had breakfast, he … called out a bunch of names, six or seven guys, you know. He said, "Stand here and a truck will come pick you up and take you over to the warehouse to do some work." So, I was one of the names. I stood there and he probably had remembered from the morning. So, we got over to this warehouse. It turned out it was a frozen food warehouse. It was enormous. I don't know how long it was and the truck pulled up and they were delivering sides of beef. … For that year-and-a-half or so, I really didn't weigh a lot, I had worked two jobs. … I never quit the parking lot. I used to work there; I'd have to be there at six o'clock at night and I'd work until it closed, sometimes three o'clock in the morning. The next day, I'd get up and go to work at Exxon, or Esso, rather, and I was down to 126 pounds. I wasn't eating well, because, by the time I left Esso … at night, I think it was five o'clock, I forget, no, quarter of five, they quit then. I didn't have time to eat. I got home, I changed into old work type clothes, then, I went down to the parking lot. The most I was ever eating was a sandwich or whatever I could get out of the local cafeteria, you know, café. So, I wasn't eating; I was way down, you know. So, the other guys all walked in, wrapped their arms around it, lifted them up, brought them in, hooked them up on the thing. I went in, I couldn't even get it off the hook. [laughter] … So, the sergeant says to me, "What's the matter?" I said, "I don't know what's wrong. … I can't lift it," and the guy

says, "Aren't you a butcher?" I said, "No, I'm not a butcher." He says, "Well, all right then, … but you're here now. I've got to put you to work. You've got to do something." He said, "You can make the coffee." I said, "Fine, I'll make the coffee." [laughter] So, I go in this little office they had and I make the coffee and I come out. He had some milk there, cream, whatever it was, and I came out and I said, "I can't find the sugar." He said, "Go over to that warehouse there and tell the sergeant you want sugar." So, I walked and it was a good walk, like, maybe a couple of hundred feet, to the next warehouse. I went over to the next warehouse and one of the guys says, "Sergeant So-and-So says he wants sugar." Jesus, they brought out this bag, it was a hundred pounds of sugar. [laughter] I staggered back across the field, you know, and I finally got it in there and got this thing in there and, finally, got the sugar, you know, and, later on, after I was a little more in the Army, I kept thinking about that thing and I said, "I'll bet they're without sugar every day of the week and I'll bet there's a little black market going on someplace." [laughter] This little bag of sugar like that would have lasted him for fifty years, but, anyhow, that was my experience with the Army. … To cut it short, we went down to Louisiana. We went to a place called Camp Beauregard; some of these camps, I can't remember the names anymore. We were there a short time, and then, they moved us into Camp Livingston, which was not far away, and we became members of the 28th Infantry Division. We were quarantined for a couple of weeks, so [as] to avoid any epidemics of anything, you know, and then, … you got your injections for whatever it was, including one for typhoid, which we didn't need, yellow fever, yes, we didn't need that, but, anyhow, everybody, … their eyes turned yellow. …

SH: What was it like to travel to the South?

KS: Well, it was all right going in on the train and … we didn't get too many passes there. I had one pass, I guess out of Livingston, none out of Beauregard, and I went into, the town was Alexandria, Virginia. It was like a madhouse. … I don't know how many troops were in that area, but you had the troops at Livingston, maybe a hundred thousand, you had little Beauregard, you had a large airfield and there was another camp. It was like bedlam. You went in there; it was silly to go. I was, obviously, an enlisted man. Every time you turned around, you were saluting somebody. It was nuts and the one vivid thing I remember is, you know, women were scarce and I'll tell you, this one guy, I saw him come out of a theater chasing this girl. I don't think that girl was more than thirteen or fourteen. I mean, it was like bedlam, you know, and you knew what he was after, but it was terrible, and then, the fights and they'd be drunk and I remember, one night, you know, you have to get on a truck to get back to camp and the MPs, they just beat a couple of guys up at the club. … They were drunk and they were unruly, but … they really hit them over the head to get them in the truck, you know. So, then, that was about it. I think I made it into one town in the months that I was there and … I was only there for a few months. … When I saw the guy next to me getting a 125, I decided to go to OCS and I got accepted for that. … While I was waiting for that, then, they picked some of us out and … we went to an intelligence school. Well, that was a highly dramatized name, but it was interesting. … You have to learn airplane identification. You learned how to blow up tree stumps, but really so you could blow up telephone poles. We had all sorts of training, like, crossing rivers. One time, we had to swim across and hold our rifles up over our head, your boots around your neck, and, the next time, … the same day, we have to go over again, you took your half of your pup tent and you cut down branches, about the width of your thumb, and you created these branches in, like, a square. You wrapped your tent around in it. Then, you put your clothing, your gun

and so forth in there, and then, you had to push that across the river, and then, they had another one where they had ropes. You had to try and swing across. Another one, you had to pull yourself. The final one, they had engineering combat boats, metal boats, that … you all paddled, but that was pretty interesting. … I learned a lot of things I'd never use again. The instructor was a fellow from Maine, about six-foot-six, and he taught us how to walk through the woods. If it was twigs, you put your heel down and you pushed down gently, so [that] you wouldn't snap a twig. If it was leaves, you did it the other way, you put your foot down this way, and you were supposed to creep up on him and attack him like he was a sentry and kill him, you know. … He picked me up and threw me … about from here to the window before I ever had a chance, [laughter] but, I'll tell you, it was good, because you were tough by the time you got done. We had to do twelve miles with your pack and rifle, with a five-minute break. You had to do it in two hours and twenty minutes … and, I'll tell you, that's a pretty good pace, when you're on uneven ground.

SH: Which camp was this?

KS: Livingston, and they did a lot of other things that were related, … but what they were really training you for, I mean, it was nice they called it intelligence, you were being trained to be a forward observer. That's what it was, or, in the case of an advance, you would be the point man, you know. So, I was sort of glad to get out of there, eventually. … I think I told you the story about the first sergeant calling me up and telling me that I was going to be shipped to Fort Worth the next morning and that I was going to go to a machine record school. When I asked what it was, he informed me I was going to learn how to repair trucks and I said I really wasn't interested, but he said, "Well, you're going over on a Pullman train and you're going to … be on quarters-and-rations." He said, "That's a good deal, take my word for it. You go ahead and do it and they'll find you when they need you for OCS." So, I went and we got over there and, instead, they led us to an office building and, in this office building, there were a number of people working, a lot of women, a lot of girls working there, and they had all this IBM equipment. I don't know if you're familiar with that type of thing or not, but the sorter was a long machine, like this, and there were all slots in it, and the card, the (AD?) card that you had, with the person's information on it, was punched with little tiny holes and it sorted through this machine and you could sort it by alphabetically or serial number, or whatever, company, and then, you could collate them, merge them together or you could reproduce them, if you have to ship the cards to Washington or some place, and it ended up, what I did for most of the war, I handled strength reports. … Usually, the other fellows would work during the day, … except for me, we one or two at night, because I'd go to work about four o'clock in the afternoon and I would call, I don't know how many camps, in the Texas-Oklahoma-New Mexico area, I think one in Louisiana, and I would get the information. I would find out how many officers were there, what the strength was, different units and all the units in the area, and then, … when I got the cards back, … they had a machine called the tabulator, it did the printing, I'd run off the report on the tabulator and, when I got it done, well, especially when we were in Texas, I had the use of a car …

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

MO: This continues an interview on April 25, 2000, on the New Brunswick Campus of Rutgers University with Mr. William Kenneth Smith and …

SH: Sandra Stewart Holyoak

MO: … and Michael Ojeda. Please, continue.

KS: Oh, I had to take the report … into the post office and, … normally, … if I was a little late, they'd stay open, and then, it would get shipped to Washington and the reports, … depending on where you were, I guess, they were either classified secret, confidential, I guess secret; anyhow, there were three categories and … all of us in that unit, we were told, you know, in the event you were ever captured, you're not supposed to disclose, because you knew the name and the quantities of every unit that was in the corps or in the command. So, that's essentially what I did for the [war]. I, essentially, called all over the place and did that. …

SH: Was there tight security there?

KS: … It was probably secure, because we were normally located with the corps headquarters and, usually, with the corps headquarters, there was an MP detachment attached to it. For example, when we were in Brownwood, Texas, … right now, though, I can't think of the name of the camp, but, below us, there was a very large military camp. There was a hill, like, sort of across the street there, that was called (Kruger?) Hill. We were on Kruger Hill and the only people there were the corps headquarters, officers and relatively few enlisted men, and the military unit and ourselves. We were, generally, not well thought of by the military, for one, and others. We were exempt; in all the time I was in the Army, I only had any sort of duty, like, I cleaned the toilets once. The other times I pulled duty, I volunteered to do something, like when we were going from Okinawa to Korea, I volunteered to do something on the boat, you know, I forget what it was. … No, I would say we were quite secure. …

SH: OCS never caught up with you.

KS: Oh, yes, … when I was in Fort Worth, first, they sent us to school; oh, that's the part of the story I forgot to tell you. When we got to school in Fort Worth, the first school you went to was a coding school. They had this book of codes of every occupation you could think of, including things that I had never thought of. I mean, I was aware of what a stripper was in a burlesque, I knew what a bumper was in burlesque, but there were two or three other categories that I'd never heard of, but they had everything there for women and for men and you had to learn that. You had to be able to find the code, anyhow, and then, … I think that class was three weeks. Then, they brought in a girl instructor from IBM and … these IBM machines, especially the tabulator, were controlled, because it wasn't digital, they had a great big board, like this, and you could wire all different combinations in there to move the information different places, or gather up different information on the tabulator, and she taught us that. So, I was in there and I think there were, maybe, twenty people in the class, maybe twenty-five, and I thought, "I'm a dope. … I'm really having trouble understanding this whole system here," you know. So, it turned out, most of the people that we had in our unit, or units like those, and we were the third one organized, were from metropolitan areas only, where they had IBM equipment. They were either from

Chicago, they were from New York, they were from Atlanta, like that, you know, and so, finally, after getting in the coding business and that and starting to think about it, when I realized other people had already been in this business in civilian life. [laughter] When I started working in the payroll department at Exxon, I had control of the … truck drivers, the mechanics, the heating oil mechanics and some other payroll. Well, all I ever saw was this tabulated run [that] would come upstairs to me from the first floor and I'd work out whatever I had to do to check out paying overtime or whatever it was involved. … In all the time I worked for that company, I never saw an IBM machine. Well, when they coded me from where I worked and what I did, and they knew Esso had IBM equipment, … that automatically made me an expert, [laughter] but I'd never seen one. So, anyhow, that was … how I ended up going into that sort of work, you know. …

SH: Were you turned down for OCS?

KS: Yes. The message, the telegram, came in one day and I got the telegram in the office there in Fort Worth and I read it and I thought, "This is ridiculous, at this point." Originally, when we got into Fort Worth, six of us found rooms in a rooming house, which originally had been four apartments, but the woman who owned it had turned … all of them into a rooming house. … I think there were thirty-six women living there and we six soldiers and … almost all the women worked at Consolidated Aircraft, building bombers, you know, and the fellow I roomed with, Ed, had graduated from Marquette and we'd been trying to get out of there. So, one day, we were over … [at] the Worthington Hotel in Fort Worth, one of the oldest, but a beautiful hotel and we kept trying to get in, to see if we could get a room there, you know. … This one day, we went in and we went up to the clerk, you know, and said, "Well, you know, what's the possibilities? We'd like to move in here." Well, there was this elderly woman standing there and she had diamonds that were rather large, she was well dressed and she just sort of stood there and listened, you know, and the clerk says, "No, I'm sorry, we don't have a thing. There's just no possibility you'll get in here," and she turned around and said, "I think you can find them a room." So, we said, "Whoops, … well, you know, we're on quarters-and-rations, you know. What's it going to cost?" and she gave him a look and he says, "Thirty-six dollars a month." Well, for two, that's eighteen dollars each. So, we had a beautiful room on the mezzanine. You went upstairs, it was off the mezzanine, you know. It was fantastic and the best part of the deal was, very frequently, on Sundays, not every, but almost every Sunday, we'd get an invitation from the manager to have dinner. Well, we couldn't afford to eat dinner there. [laughter] … Well, it turned out, I forget her name, I can't place her name, but she owned the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, … one of the biggest papers in the Southwest. She had this tremendous ranch on the outside of town. She owned the hotel. She owned a few other things, you know. [laughter]

SH: What a nice benefactor.

KS: Oh, it was unbelievable, I'll tell you. So, it was … very interesting.

SH: How long were you then in Fort Worth?

KS: We were in Fort Worth from June until January of '43, … yes, because I went in the Army March of '42, yes. Then, we moved up to Sherman, Texas, and we moved into the CCC camp up

there and we were there for almost about the same length of time, I guess, and then, from there, … we moved to Paris, Texas, and I cannot think of the name of the camp, but it was nice, and then, we moved to Brownwood, Texas, and Camp Maxie, I think that was there. … What happened was, … why it was difficult for me to tell you, we were supposedly so good at what we were doing, like, when they were bringing in, organizing new troops, whatever they were, infantry or, later on, tank destroyers and stuff like that, at Camp Hood, … we kept thinking we were going to get shipped overseas and we never did. We'd get left and they'd move the outfit away, like, at first, we were with the X Corps. Then, we were with the 23rd Division, I forget, the 24th Division for a while. I can't remember them all. We transferred so much, it was very difficult to say. … Eventually, when we went overseas, … as it turned out, we were with the Tenth Army. Tenth Army, in Hawaii, was organized in Hawaii from the ground up, only for the purpose of invading Okinawa and it was the first time in the war where General Krueger, I think his name was, was the sole commander of the uniform attack force. So, he was in charge of the Marines, Navy, things like that. So, that was it. So, it … wasn't a terrible time.

MO: Did you have any interaction with the officers in your unit?

KS: Oh, very close, yes. … Initially, at that point, we only had two officers, one was a captain and one was a lieutenant and I think they're in the picture here. Yes, there they are. This was the commanding officer, [Peter] Ficarratto, and this was [James] Walburn; he was from Oklahoma. This guy was from Chicago and he was very close, because they had no friends, either. We were sort of isolated, you know, and, … later on, before we went overseas, they increased it to where we had forty-three men and they brought in another officer, a supply officer, Lieutenant Mitchell. …

SH: Was this unit in the photograph part of the Pennsylvania National Guard?

KS: No. … This was very clever, the way they organized these things. … Almost everybody came from a different type of unit, so, we had almost everything there. Paul Staryak had come from, … like, a military hospital, that wasn't what it was, but he was well qualified in first aid and that type of thing. One of the other fellows and myself, we came from the 28th Infantry Division, some came from an ordnance company. We had a mechanic and an assistant mechanic; they came from a trucking company. … They mixed a lot. Then, we had one guy, well, our mailman, he had formerly been a mailman up in Niagara, New York, I think it was, and he was the guy that took care of all of our mailing problems, you know, but it was a composite. It was a very composite group.

SH: Can you describe what it was like to be in a machine records unit? What kind of equipment did you have and so on?

KS: Well, machine records unit, … basically, it was a mobile unit. We were the third organized in the country and each of the three semi-tractor trailers that we had were equipped with IBM equipment. Normally, they'd had two sorters, a collator, a reproducer, a tabulator and, in one case, I think a keypunch, and then, we had another van that was strictly our supplies. It carried all the IBM equipment cards, which you needed quite a bit of, and then, we had two trucks, two four-by-fours, I think they were called. We had a weapon's carrier. Originally, we had a

command car, which, later, they replaced with a jeep. Because of the limited number of people that we had in the unit, a lot of people did dual duty. I was also a semi-truck driver and I guess that was about it. Yes, I was a semi-truck driver when we moved, you know, and that was about it.

SH: How did you get your power? You said that you were a self-contained unit.

KS: Oh, I'm sorry. We had two large electric generators. They told us that one, theoretically, could have probably provided electricity for a small town, maybe eight thousand, ten thousand people, and we ran them alternately. So, one was always running and the other one became the back up or our truck mechanic could also repair them and they ran off gasoline and we had heaters in the trailers that normally ran on gasoline, sort of like warm air type systems, you know. They were pretty self-sufficient. We had a funny experience in Japan; that jumps ahead a bit.

SH: Go ahead.

KS: I only said it because of the heaters. Another fellow and I were working … and I was waiting to get discharged to go home. We were working in the trailer one day and we had Japanese people that worked for us, men. So, they sent a guy up to add gasoline, so [that] we can have heat, and he poured it down the vent pipe, blew us right out. It's a good thing the doors were open. It blew us right out of the thing, onto the ground. [laughter] … He didn't know any better, you know. …

SH: While in Texas, what did you hear about what was going on in, say, Normandy or Italy? How isolated were you? How much did you know?

KS: … I only knew what we read in the newspaper or heard on a radio. Yes, we had no way of knowing.

MO: Did you have any preconceived notions on whether you would rather go to the Pacific or Europe?

KS: Oh, yes, I'd love to have gone to Europe, because I had all my relatives in Scotland and England, and, in fact, there was a point in the war where, if I'd gone to South Africa, Australia or New Zealand or England, I could have met a relative. I had a cousin whose husband was a representative of the Bank of England and they were in Manchuria and, when the threats of war came, they started to get out and she did. She made it down to Singapore, but, for some reason, he got sent back. … He was interned for the war. She got out and ended up living with some other relative in New Zealand for the duration of the war. She made it down there. …

SH: In these camps in Texas, were there troops that had come back from the war? Did you have any interaction with combat veterans?

KS: No, the only thing I ever saw, … I think that was in Louisiana, they had captured German troops in Africa and they brought them back and I'll tell you, … I mean, they were scary. They

were all very well built men, physically well built, good-looking guys, and they still had the spirit of a Nazi. They'd march through camp, when they marched them through, and they'd be singing these songs and, I mean, … they looked like a threat, I'm not kidding, but, no, that was about the only interaction I had, was with those. No, there was no real need, I think, in our part of the country, [where] we were to bring troops there. I think if they brought troops in from Europe, for example, they'd keep them pretty well on the East Coast and along that area there, you know.

SH: When were you sent to Hawaii?

KS: Close to the end of the war. Now, let me think; now, you're getting me confused. [laughter] It must have been '44, I guess. I think it was probably late in '44. It was interesting, because … they sent us to Fort McPherson, no connection to my relatives, [laughter] Fort McPherson, Georgia, which was a relief. It was the first major fort we'd been in. I mean, it was beautiful, compared to some of the camps, [laughter] and we did our basic training there for overseas training, had another unusual experience there.

SH: Please, tell us.

KS: Well, you have to qualify with your weapon before you went overseas. At that time, then, we were shifted from an M-1 to a carbine and, normally, they would have taken us to a camp in, I think it was Athens, Georgia, I think it was. Because we were so small, they didn't. They took us to the Atlanta Penitentiary and we qualified on the rifle range at the Atlanta Penitentiary and, you know, the guy'd come on and search the bus, when we pulled up to the place, you know, and everybody passed the firing exam. [laughter] … You know, when you missed the target, they raised what they called Maggie's drawers, … if you missed, you know. Well, our own men were down there doing the marking; you know, they put little red markers up where you hit. Everybody qualified. Nobody failed, [laughter] but … the chance of us ever seeing combat was nil.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MO: This will conclude the first part of an interview with William Kenneth Smith. The rest of the interview will be scheduled for a later date with …

SH: Sandra Stewart Holyoak …

MO: … and Michael Ojeda.

SH: Thank you very much.

KS: Okay.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/16/04

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/23/04
Reviewed by William Kenneth Smith 6/6/05