

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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BRICK TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Michael Ojeda: This begins the second part of an interview with Mr. William Kenneth Smith on May 11, 2000, in Brick Township, New Jersey, with Michael Ojeda and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you, Mr. Smith, for letting us come down to Brick to continue your interview. In our first interview, you spoke about Cranberry Lake and Lake Hopatcong. How does a young man from Newark, New Jersey, wind up spending his summers at Cranberry Lake and Lake Hopatcong?

William Kenneth Smith: Well, it was four or five friends that I went through high school with and, in the later part of our high school years, we rented a piece of property on the waterfront at Cranberry Lake and used the canoe for transportation up there and really had some wonderful times up there, for about four or five summers, I guess.

SSH: Did you go there when you were in high school and in college?

KS: Yes, yes. Well, after we were old enough to drive, yes.

SSH: Did your parents ever come up to see what you were up to?

KS: No. We were pretty much alone, you know, but we met a lot of very interesting people here and a lot of lovely young ladies [laughter] and their families. ... One or two of the families, in particular, sort of, at times, took care of us, you know. We'd be invited for dinner or something and I'll tell you a story I probably shouldn't tell you. So, we decided, one summer, that we would invite the young ladies over ... that we had been dating ... for dinner and it was a very cruel thing that we did. It was for a dinner and what we had for dinner was a skunk that we had caught and threw in the fire and burnt. [laughter] It turned them off. That was one of the hazards of camping there. Every night, when you came home, we normally had one or two skunks in our tents. We had two tents, ... but all you had to do was take your flashlight and shine it in their eyes and they would follow the flashlight and you could lead them off into the woods and turn the light off. ... Once you're in the tent, they never bothered you, but, anyhow, ... it was a great place, a lot of fun.

SSH: Did you have any problems with bears?

KS: No, we didn't, not up in that [area]. I'm sure they were up there, but we never had any problems around there. Caught the biggest fish we ever did. Another fellow and I were out, well, I guess we were paddling home, and we weren't really fishing, but a big, big bass trout, he was about this big, hopped up and landed right in the canoe. Well, we almost went over trying to get [him in]. We finally got him, you know, and, apparently, it was quite a catch, because the sports editor in the *Newark News*, ... I was working there in the summers, he put an article in his paper about catching it, and the other fellow's father, ... as it happened, was an advertising manager for the paper called the *Herald-Tribune* and he mentioned it over there. So, we got publicity in both newspapers, [laughter] but it was a good-sized catch.

SSH: That would be the only way I could catch a fish. [laughter] We had asked earlier about where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed and you mentioned that you were with a young woman that you had met at Cranberry Lake, but you were in Whippany.

KS: Well, I hadn't met her at Cranberry Lake, but, anyhow, I'd met her up in that area.

SSH: Okay, and you were in Whippany. What happened next? Did you register for the draft?

KS: Oh, no. Can I start over again?

SSH: Yes.

KS: What had happened, the draft was drawn in September of 1940, I believe, and ... I drew a rather low number, 324, and so, starting shortly after that, I don't remember, I got called up in January of '41 for a physical exam, and I went for the physical exam, and the Army was still a very old-time army. I was rejected, because I wore glasses, and I was reclassified to 1-B. So, theoretically, I would have been in the Army from January of '41, right through the period where Pearl Harbor occurred, and so, instead, ... as I said, I was dating this girl. ... I mean, everybody got excited; a lot of people ran down and enlisted, you know, that sort of thing. I'd had some problems, because my mother first got ill the October after I entered college and she'd be in and out of a hospital pretty much until she died in '43, I guess it was. So, I didn't feel pressured as far as enlisting, because, frankly, we needed the money at home, you know. Eventually, ... we lost our home and everything, because of the medical bills, but, yes, there were people that almost immediately ran down and enlisted. My best friend ended up doing that. He was in the Air Corps, but, no, that's about all I could [remember].

SSH: Were there any reactions at the restaurant?

KS: Oh, yes, everybody was immediately running home and, you know, trying to get home and be with their family and listening to whatever ... President Roosevelt was going to be saying on the radio or whatever the newscasters were going to be saying, yes.

SSH: Where did you listen to Roosevelt's speech the next day?

KS: At home.

SSH: You were at home with your family.

KS: Yes, yes.

SSH: You made the decision not to stay in the newspaper business, began looking for a job and wound up working for the man in the parking lot, and then, eventually, with Esso. Why did you leave the newspaper business?

KS: Well, yes, I guess it was a small thing. You know, when you get out of college, you were all hopped up and everything. ... The procedure in the company, I'd worked there, for the

*Newark News*, every summer for the four years I was in college and the procedure had been, and, you know, I watched it happen, you had to be a copy boy and, ... like, a friend of mine, Bill (Gardy?), he got promoted. Eventually, he became a sportswriter and traveled with the New York Yankees. He was rather well known and ... I thought that would be the procedure. ... Well, it was a matter of relate-ability. Somebody came in; I'd started working there the day after I graduated in June and it was towards the end of about the third week in July, I guess, and this fellow, his brother was one of the editors there, and there was a job open that I was assuming I was going to get in the Montclair office, and I didn't get the job and I looked at it and I thought, "Well, I'm going to be on par with this fellow and I don't have the right connections." [laughter] So, I just decided I'd resign and they told me, after I had resigned, the editor, Mr. (Felmley?), his name was, said, well, they had another job opened, lined up for me, but it wasn't going to happen for two or three months, but, at that point, I had made up my mind that I was just going to get out of there, you know.

SSH: Had your father retired at that point?

KS: Oh, no, no. He was still there, yes.

SSH: How did your father's union help people during the Great Depression?

KS: Yes, I thought what that union did was unique during the Depression, because the membership voted and decided that they would each take a day off a week and that the substitutes, who were not steadily employed, but worked whenever, ... you know, somebody was sick or whatever was going on, eventually, it ended up that they all, generally, earned a salary five days a week, and so, they and their families [made out]. Also, you know, really, we, as a family, literally didn't know there was a Depression. You know, we came through it very cleanly.

SSH: Was your father involved at all in running the union or was he just a member? What was the name of the union?

KS: It's a typographical union. I think the proper name was the International Typographical Union; I'm not positive of the first ... [word]. No, I don't think he was very active.

SSH: Was he an officer?

KS: No, he attended their meetings and things like that.

SSH: To leap forward, you were part of a machine records unit in the Army.

KS: That's correct.

SSH: It sounds like a very unique and perhaps even elite group, if only based upon the fact that you suffered the bias of others. [laughter] Where did that bias come from?

KS: Oh, I think the bias came, it was, really, jealousy in a way, because, ... normally, we would be attached to, like, a corps headquarters for quarters and rations. So, they had to provide the mess for us, they had to provide the guard duty and, normally, within the corps group, there was also a military police attachment, and they sort of resented the fact that we just didn't have any duties to do. Our only duties, really, like, when we were in, say, Sherman, Texas, well, we had to haul our own coal up to heat the place in the wintertime, you know, things like that, and we didn't have to clean the latrines or any of those jobs that, you know, soldiers didn't always like doing, [laughter] but that was it. ... For almost the entire war, we had to do whatever training the other people did that were in the branch and we were normally always categorized as infantry. So, like, every Friday, most Fridays, I'd say, you'd go on a twenty-five-mile hike. Well, you had to ... work in the twenty-five-mile hike with your job thing, you know, ... and we did other training, like, you know, you had to learn how to, I missed that, because I was working, shoot a bazooka, you know, other types of training. So, that was it. So, normally, we did the military part, but we didn't have to do the details.

SSH: You said in the last interview that you were the third such unit organized. How many were there, ultimately?

KS: I don't know. I remember hearing, I think I heard a number as high as twenty-three, but I'm not ... positive of that. We had no reason to know any of the other units. ...

SSH: Why was your unit moved around Texas so often during those years?

KS: I think it mainly depended on which corps unit we were going to get attached to and there was no good reason for it. The funny part of the move was, when we went to the X Corps, up in Sherman, Texas, ... our quarters were actually old CCC buildings, and some of them were, you know, they'd been around a while. [laughter] You could look through the cracks outside, but it was a very lovely little town, a nice place to be stationed, you know, even though, when they heard we were coming to town, they voted the town dry. [laughter] ...

SSH: Nothing personal. [laughter]

KS: Nothing personal, but an interesting story is, one of our fellows, he was a Texan, fellow named Mullane, he'd go into Dallas, which was a good ride away, and he'd take a suitcase and he'd come back with some refreshments, you know, various kinds. The sheriff met the train, they were high-speed trolleys, I shouldn't exactly call them trains, and the sheriff met the thing and arrested him, ... looked at the suitcase and arrested him, and our captain went down and informed the sheriff that he couldn't arrest him because it was military property. [laughter] Of course, the captain was interested in some of the refreshments, also. [laughter]

SSH: You were a well-traveled young man, as we discussed on the first tape.

KS: Yes, yes.

SSH: Were there any incidents that you remember in the South, either in Louisiana or Texas, related to racism?

KS: ... I really can't think of anything that was racism, because, well, the only time I saw it and was frightened was, at one point, my unit, because of the size of the trucks, they had maneuvers in Louisiana and we were supposed to go on the maneuvers. It was our corps and they decided [that] the trucks were so heavy that they were just going to bog down in the marshy land around Louisiana, and so, lucky me, I was nominated to go. So, I spent four months over there and they assigned a Signal Corps squad to me, because you moved around a lot. ... I was a corporal then and ... they would string telephone lines. ... I had a Teletype, they had a Teletype operator for me, and I'd give my reports of the strengths of all the different units in the maneuvers as ... they sent couriers to bring in the messages to me. I remember one fellow on a motorcycle who'd come about a hundred-and-fifty miles to deliver the statistics, you know, and ... that was rather interesting. It was awkward, because I was alone, so, when you had to, ... and it rained a lot down there, put your tent up, ... they gave me another half, I had to put two halves of the tent [together]. Well, sometimes, I was flooded out by the time I got the tent up, you know, but it was ... interesting and the only time I saw anything that I saw as a racial incident was, ... when they told me I could go back to Texas, ... they took me to a railhead and dropped me off and I don't know what was going on, but ... no comments as far as the black people were concerned, but they were ... literally having a war of their own, and there was a quartermaster group, and I don't know what was happening, but they were actually shooting. They were firing live rounds and I don't know where they got them. I mean, I was under a tent and they had quite a problem getting them under control, but they did and what caused the upset, I don't know, you know.

SSH: There was segregation of troops ...

KS: You had to be where you saw that segregation, see, and we didn't, because, as it happened, and that's the Army at that time, the corps headquarters, they were all white, and, in the corps headquarters, there were probably more officers there than there were enlisted men, you know, in the total corps. ... No, I didn't have the opportunity, really, to see it.

SSH: You mentioned an incident about boarding a bus.

KS: Well, that's true; I'm sorry I forgot that, but it's true, at one time, in Louisiana, I was taking a bus back to camp and they just made whatever black troops were there, even if they got on, they made them get off, and you'd see them stand in line as the bus pulled away and you wondered, ... "What's going on?" ... You know, they're in uniform, the same as you are, why are they being treated any differently, but, I mean, I knew it, you know. You knew that it existed down South, but it was startling to me, because I didn't think it would exist in the Army, and, you know, that was the difference.

SSH: You also mentioned an incident in Hawaii.

KS: Oh, I was surprised, when we were in Hawaii and were taking some abandon ship training at a swimming pool and the troops that came after us were Puerto Rican and that startled me, amazed me a little bit, because they were divided into two groups. There were the black Puerto Rican troops and there were the white Puerto Rican troops, and I just presumed, if you're from Puerto Rico, you know, you're Puerto Rican. [laughter]

SSH: Can you tell us how your military career progressed from your assignment to X Corps in Texas?

KS: Well, when I left Louisiana, ... can you shut that off for a minute?

[TAPE PAUSED]

Well, we moved to various places in Texas, Sherman, Texas, Brownwood, Texas, Paris, Texas, and I'm sure there was one other spot that I'm not thinking of right now, ... and I did say Fort Worth, but, then, after we had finished whatever we were doing there, when the word finally came that we were going overseas, they shipped us, by train, from Texas to Atlanta, Georgia, we were stationed at Fort McPherson, [Georgia]. It was an interesting trip, because we filled one Pullman car and they would attach us to different trains ... to move us across to Georgia, and the interesting thing [was], and we were thrilled, we were laid over at a railhead in New Orleans, just outside New Orleans, and the officers were very nice. They told us they were going to take us into New Orleans, so [that] we could see Bourbon Street, and they did. They marched us down to Bourbon Street and showed us the buildings and turned us around and marched us back again, [laughter] but, of course, the object was to make us exercise. When we got to Fort McPherson, it was the first time we'd been in a regular Army fort, which was, ... by comparison, quite beautiful, compared to the camps, you know, and we did our overseas training there. ... As I'd mentioned earlier, we qualified at the Atlanta Penitentiary. ... The weeks we were there, you got a lot of injections, medication, things like that, and did a lot of physical exercise. ... We were not equipped to do any of ... our normal IBM work. We didn't have the equipment then. Then, when they decided to ship us out, we had all presumed that we were going to Europe and I was looking forward to it, because I have a lot of relatives in England and Scotland. [laughter] The same thing again, they put us on a Pullman car, I think it took us, it was either seven, I forget whether it was seven or ten days, to cross the country and the same thing, they attached us to the back of a train and pulled us to wherever the next stop was going to be, where we picked up somebody else, and an odd thing happened in Chicago. We got to Chicago and, at that time, there were two railroad stations in Chicago. So, they pulled us into the one station, they took us off. They hired taxicabs. They put us in taxicabs and moved us across to the next station. [laughter] So, from there, we proceeded west and went through your state, I guess, [Wyoming], Montana, and we ended up at Fort Lewis, Washington, outside of Seattle. We arrived there the day before, ... I think it was the 23rd of December, I'm not sure, and then, the next day was Christmas Eve and we had Christmas dinner there, and the next day after that, we boarded the boat for Hawaii. The interesting thing that happened to me there was, they did give us one pass. We could go into Seattle and get on the bus, and I was the last one on the bus, and the buses were very crowded. Everybody was trying to go in there, and so, I was the last one on, and I was leaning against the railing that shut as they closed the door. The driver, who'd been working long hours, I found out later, thought that somebody ran in front of the bus, and he slammed on the brakes, and all these people were standing up behind me, they pushed me forward and I bounced into the windshield and smashed my glasses. So, the bus driver, of course, was upset and called his bus company and, somehow, ... well, because of the time, the night, the evening, they called an optician and the man came into town, opened up his shop and said he'd have my glasses for me the next day. So, that must have been Christmas Day, I guess, [laughter] and, the

next morning, they had a MP pick me up at the camp and take me into town to get the glasses. I got the glasses and it was the strangest coincidence, they also drove me to the boat, to where we were being picked up, and I pulled up in this cab and got out of the cab and I looked at the line going into the boat and my troops were just going aboard. [laughter] So, I stepped right in the line and went aboard the ship. ...

SSH: Do you remember what the name of the ship was?

KS: I don't. The only thing I remember about it [was], it was very old. There was a metal plaque on one wall, down near the engines, "Built in 1895," and it was a former, there was a shipping line called the President Line, it was a President liner. Which president it was named after, I don't know, but the interesting part, I guess, was that ... we were in the bottom hold and I'd remembered enough about being on the ship that I got ... in the top bunk, because [if] anybody's going to get seasick, it wasn't going to be on me, [laughter] and they did get seasick. About two days out, the second day out, we hit an extremely bad storm and I may have told you, I don't know. Anyhow, hit a very bad storm and they made an announcement; they were looking for volunteers. So, Carl Bacni and I volunteered. We were the only two that did, as a matter-of-fact, and there were a couple thousand troops on board. It turned out that the ship's carpenter had had polio, and so, we were assigned to help [him]. That was our job. We had to help him repair the damage and ... the ship was old. There weren't that kind of latrine facilities available under deck, so, they had built wooden latrines up on the deck and one latrine was the urinal and it was a long, running trench, you know, and they pumped seawater in that float continuously, but, when you were in the storm, you didn't know what you were getting splashed with sometimes, [laughter] ... and the same if you had to sit down, why, it was in a different area, but, anyhow, the waves were so high, I don't know, I estimated the waves were the height of this house. It was the worst storm I'd ever seen. ... One of the tenders in the Merchant Marine was a young lad and, ... as we got told by the crew, he forgot to put water in one of the boilers, there were two engines, and so, ... literally, just about all they could do was keep the nose of the ship heading into the storm, you know. The trip that was supposed to take us five days took us about ten or eleven days, I think it was, and so, ... you'd have to shower up on deck at the same time. So, that was it and the storm had bashed in some doors, you know, leading down into the holds, and we'd worked on that and we repaired, well, whatever they wanted to repair, and I remember, I told my wife, I said, the interesting thing was, the ship's carpenter shop was the thing next to the chain lockers, so, it was in the very forward part of the ship, and you'd get down there and, if you were trying to saw a piece of wood, ... it was like being in an elevator. I mean, the nose would go up like this and you'd come down, you know, but the good thing was, we didn't realize that the ship's carpenter ... was some sort of a petty officer. Well, everybody else, you lined up on deck for food and it was the same thing, you got two meals a day. It was stew and it was pretty hard to eat, especially if you're being seasick. Well, we got taken down to where ... the petty officers ate. We sat down, they handed us a menu [laughter] and ... we always had a choice of two things, you know, and the best part was, they had fruit. You got oranges or apples, you know, things like that, and the Merchant Marine crew, they had a racket going, too. They knew what the food was like for the troops, and so, ... they sold sandwiches. So, ... in those days, [it was] a lot of money; for three-fifty, you could get two pieces of bread and a piece of cheese, ... but, in some cases, it was all somebody could handle, you know, because of the weather conditions. So, anyhow that was it. ... We survived that and it was good.



SSH: Was there any tension between the Merchant Marine and the military?

KS: Well, yes, ... only in the sense that, you know, the unhappiness over the food situation and, you know, they felt they were being taken, and they were, you know. The crew was out to make money. [laughter] So, I don't know where they were getting all the food, so, they had to be working in conjunction with the cooks.

SSH: Were you traveling alone or were you in a convoy?

KS: No, ... from Seattle to Hawaii, you ran alone and, theoretically, you would have been moving faster than we were moving, [laughter] but that was it. So, then, when we got to Hawaii, we were stationed in Schofield Barracks and, as it happened, ... Schofield Barracks consisted of quadrangles of dormitories and a mess hall, storage supply. The building we were in also had an auditorium up on the second or third floor, I forget, and it was ... the only quadrangle at Schofield that got hit by a Japanese bomb, and it hit the supply barracks. It really did no damage to speak of, but you could see the repairs to the roof, you know. So, that was about that, I guess. ...

SSH: Did you see some of the damage from the Pearl Harbor attack when you were there?

KS: Only got there in a truck once or twice and that was interesting. We picked up new equipment in Hawaii and we had to pick up a new supply semi-tractor trailer. Well, we had the semi, we needed the trailer, and so, the fellow, Sully Elacqua, who was our mechanic, I had to go ... with him to pick up the van and we went down there to pick up the van. ... Hawaii is fairly hilly, if you've been there, and we came back. We were coming back and we're going down a hill and, as you came down this hill, there was a narrow bridge at the end, and then, you zoomed up another hill on the other side. ... We couldn't stop, you know. We were going like hell and what happened was, and he should have caught it, but he didn't, we had the wrong type of trailer. Instead of having air brakes, we had vacuum brakes and ... we were just going fast enough that we couldn't shift it, ... we couldn't get it into a lower gear, you know, and we went around ... that bridge. I mean, I thought we were going over. I mean, we went around and the wheels were like this, you know. [laughter] So, a couple of days later, we had to take the damn thing back again, so [that] we [could] get the right trailer, but, anyhow, ... that was fun, and on Hawaii, ... we did jungle training and things like that. Fortunately, for the jungle training, you had to walk through the Dole pineapple fields from Schofield to get to where the jungle training was and the big challenge was to get a couple of pineapples and stick them in your blouse, you know, and it was a dangerous operation, theoretically, they said it was, because they had the fields patrolled by guys on horseback with shotguns, you know, working for Dole, ... but we managed to get a few. [laughter] So, that was it.

SSH: They were a little prickly.

KS: Yes. [laughter] So, it was fun.

MO: During all of these transfers, was your unit able to stay relatively intact?

KS: Oh, always, yes, ... the same people, essentially. Well, we had some changes, yes. ... When we went from Fort Worth to Sherman, I think I'd explained to you, when I was at Fort Dix, I had to suddenly call my family, and we were only there three days, ... so, my family never saw me, and it was about, I think, almost eleven months later, ... the captain we had, he just wouldn't give us leaves. You know, that was all there was to it. So, I don't know how it happened, but an inspector general came, a major, and everybody got interviewed about what were your complaints and what was wrong. Well, of course, everybody complained about the same thing, ... "We can't get leaves. We can't go home." So, he was forced to give us leaves to go home, you know. So, that was the first time my family saw me in uniform, was eleven months after I went in. I finally got home.

SSH: Where had you traveled from?

KS: Newark, New Jersey.

SSH: I meant, where were you when you finally got your leave?

KS: Oh, we were in Sherman, Texas.

SSH: Did you travel by air or by train?

KS: Oh, no, two-and-a-half to three days on a train, sitting up, you know, couldn't afford a Pullman if you could get it, probably couldn't get one anyhow, you know. ... Well, you go into New York and you could just take the PATH train across to Newark. That part was easy. Yes, I don't know anything else I can say about that.

MO: How long were you in Hawaii before you left for overseas?

KS: Let me think about that now; I think we were there almost five months, about five months, something like that.

SSH: You were just continually training while you got your unit ready to go.

KS: Yes, yes, whatever they told us. Well, the odd part was, the Tenth Army, which invaded Okinawa, was the Army specifically organized for that purpose, and the offices for the general was in our quadrangle. He started there at least, you know. So, they were busy assembling all the troops that were going to participate and take part in the invasion. ... Yes, our training continued and we didn't do an awful lot of IBM work at that time. What I did do was, then, ... because I handled the strength reports, I got sent down to Fort Shafter, you know, in Honolulu for ... about two weeks, ten days to two weeks, so [that] I could learn how handle battlefield injury, you know, killed in action or battlefield injury, you know; there were about six different categories that you could categorize them in and that was a good break for me, because I'd been trying to get a good cigarette lighter and the Hawaiian guy that worked there, in Shafter, who I worked with to be trained, you know, his girlfriend worked over in the PX, ... and he knew I was looking for a cigarette lighter and he must have alerted her. She called up one day and said, "Get

over here as fast as you can. We've got cigarette lighters." ... We wanted one of those Zippo windproof cigarette lighters. So, I got a cigarette lighter and I'd been invited to a *luau* by he and his girlfriend and the Captain couldn't see it. He couldn't see giving me a pass to go. [laughter]

SSH: You did not get to go.

KS: I didn't get to go.

SSH: Did you get to have any interaction with the locals?

KS: Oh, I can tell you one [story]. ... I'm sure, when the captains knew that something was about to start, that we were going to leave Hawaii, they arranged to get, ... it may have been a common practice, but maybe because we were such a small unit, ... steaks and they had beer and things that, normally, you wouldn't have and we had a beer party over on the beach, on one of the beaches on the other side of the island. ... I drove the truck to get over there. So, I stayed fairly sober out of that, but what happened was, there were three very attractive looking young ladies over there. I believe they were probably Army nurses, but they were in bathing suits, you know. Well, obviously, everybody was trying to socialize with the young ladies and they weren't fighting too hard, especially after they found out we had steak and beer. [laughter] They were happy to join us, ... but that was our farewell party, ... when they knew we were going to leave and it was very nice of them to arrange that, but ... we were not very military. I mean, there wasn't a lot of saluting, you know. You didn't call the officers by their first name, but, you know, it was Captain This and you didn't have any of the other stuff that went with it, because they all worked with you, too. So, it was good.

SSH: Did you have any interaction with the other services, the Navy, the Air Corps or the Marines?

KS: Very seldom, very few. The Okinawa invasion was the first integrated invasion. General [Ray S.] Geiger, he had complete control over the Marines, the Navy, and coordinated, and that was a first for that part of the war. I don't know about in Europe, you know.

SSH: Where did you go from Hawaii? Do you remember which month that was?

KS: Oh, yes. ... The invasion was on Easter Sunday. It must have been '45, I think it was '45, and ... we would never have gone on the initial invasion, but, in the third convoy, we theoretically we should have gone and we almost did. [laughter] They got down there for us to go and somebody had miscalculated. They couldn't fit our trucks and they were going to be carried on the decks of the ships and they couldn't fit them on. So, we actually didn't go 'til, oh, probably the end of May, maybe June. It was probably around the first week in June, I would guess, and we did go in a convoy. Now, again, that was an experience, too. Our ship, ... the APA, Army Personnel Assault Ship, ... we were supposed to be on, which was a great improvement; you were much better off if you were on one of those. The quarters were better, everything was better, than if you got on a more Merchant Marine type of thing, and we got ... out of Pearl, I think we were out the second day, and our ship, he was the lead commander for the convoy and, all of a sudden, we turned around and went back to Hawaii. [laughter] The rest

of the convoy kept going. It turned out, a couple of mess boys on board had gotten into a fight the night before and one guy got stabbed. I think, eventually, ... he died, but, anyhow, he got stabbed, and so, what had happened is, our captain had violated Navy orders, standing orders, because he, ... theoretically, had to report to the port captain that, you know, everything was clear on his ship. ... Well, he hadn't reported that there had been a stabbing. So, he had to go back, take them back, because, obviously, there had to be a trial, you know. So, we laid there for, I don't know, I think eight or ten hours. Then, we turned around; then, we went out again. ... It was great. I mean, we really went full speed and we dropped off troops, quartermaster troops, in Guam, and then, we went to the rendezvous point, where we really picked up the rest of the convoy, at Ulithi Atoll, and we were, I forget, they called it "cat fever," but, anyhow, our whole [unit], everybody was sick and, theoretically, you should have got off on the atoll and exercised, and ... we never got off the ship, and then, we went up to Okinawa and that was all right, you know. You went down the landing nets into the craft and you went ashore and they had floating docks about so wide, these pontoon type things that floated. So, we pulled up to one of those and we all got off, ... walked down this thing ... to the beach and, [when] we got down there, the Captain decided that we'd forgotten something we'd never use anyhow, we forgot a box of hand grenades. So, Alan Weinstock and I were sent back to get the hand grenades. So, we got back and got the hand grenades and they had, like, ropes on this thing, and so, you juggled this thing down the walk, which was not bad, really, and we got down to the beach. Of course, then, we couldn't find our unit. We didn't know where ... they'd gone. So, we put down the box for a minute, thought we'd rest there for a few minutes, and then, the great opportunity occurred to us, although we maybe didn't think so at the time; this gentlemen came up to us and stood there and tapped, I think Alan, on the shoulder and said, "Fellows, what are you doing here? You shouldn't stay here," and we looked up and this guy was a general. It turned out it was General Merrill of Merrill's Marauders and he advised us, "Get off the beach." ... The Japs, usually every night, sent a bomber over at that point in the war. It was an annoyance. You know, they dropped bombs. Then, we got lucky. [laughter] So, we went looking for our unit and they were on a DUKW ... and starting to go inland. So, we threw the hand grenades on, we scrambled on the back of this thing, but literally hanging on as this thing took us into where we were going to be encamped, you know. The encampment was ... pretty close to adjoining the headquarters of the army, the Tenth Army, which, at that time, ... was General Stilwell, by then, I guess, and then, next to us, we felt we were well protected, the MPs were right next to us, you know, but there was the first time, ... we did have to draw guard duty there, you know, and we slept in, we had five-man tents, and we got lucky. ... The little group I was with, I was a sergeant, then, I guess, we found an enormous wagon wheel ... that I guess belonged to some Okinawan, ... but it was laying out in a field. So, we took the thing back and we got it set up on a post and the spokes were just right; you could lay your helmet in there and that's how we got washed. We put all our helmets in there, and then, we stood there, could get washed, you know. It was quite a thing. Of course, we had to eventually share with the other fellows. [laughter] ... There was no way to take a bath. When you took a bath, you waited for it to rain, and then, you just loosened the ropes on your tent, so [that] it gathered water, and then, you just stripped and gave yourself a bath, you know. I don't know ... if I should have told that story, I mean, after all, that's a nude story, [laughter] but that was about it, I guess. ... Well, I had a disagreement with the Master Sergeant and I was busted to a private and the disagreement came because, I felt justified, but it didn't matter, ... my squad, we had built a place for a shower, because we knew, eventually, they were going to bring in water by truck and you'd get a fifty-five gallon drum and

you could get a head on it, you know, make yourself a shower. So, we built this thing and I don't know where I was, I was off on something, and I came back this one day and the ... Master Sergeant, he'd torn down the shower and moved it someplace else. Well, I got so mad at him that I challenged him. Well, he didn't accept the challenge. He would have beat the daylights out of me, anyhow. [laughter] He was much bigger than I was. So, they gave me a choice; ... I could take a transfer to infantry, I could be court-martialed or I could take company punishment. So, I said, "I'll take company punishment." It turned out to be a great thing. [laughter] They didn't know what to do with me, especially because we didn't have a private in our organization. So, on the table of organization, there was no such thing. So, they gave me, like, odd things to do. I was still doing my own job, when I had to, but ... they gave me odd jobs. Well, one of the jobs I got was to go up to the ... headquarters, because an advance man from the Adjutant General's Department was coming up for MacArthur and he was going to be quartered there. Well, ... at that point, that summer, I guess it was, there were never any enlisted men in the Adjutant General's Department, which ... we were a part of, but that summer, they created it, so, we were now part of the Adjutant [General's Department]. Enlisted men were now [there]. ... I had this jeep they gave me and I had to go out and ...

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

MO: This is side two of tape one. Please, continue.

KS: Oh, I was saying that, yes, our unit became part of the Adjutant General's [Department]. So, I was assigned ... to take the jeep and drive up to the headquarters and pick up this major from MacArthur's headquarters and, actually, what I was doing was taking him on sightseeing tours. You know, he was looking things over and ... he was a very sociable man, had me in for a drink once or twice, [laughter] and it was great. ... It gave me an opportunity to see parts of the island that, normally, I never would have seen and the Navy ... and Air Force had pretty well [leveled it]; the major city was Naha and it was, essentially, flat. ... The only thing left standing was part of a church and about one wall of, I guess it had been a university or some sort of a school, at any rate, and ... it was hard to believe, the total destruction that was there, you know, and that's the only time I had any occasion to see dead bodies and there were dead bodies around. Because they'd been there a while, a lot of maggots [were on them], but, fortunately, you know, during the war, I never had to fire the rifle and never had to get involved in anything like that. ... I wasn't too happy about the thought of killing anybody to begin with, [laughter] but it was true, though, I would say this, that they got you psychologically and I never thought I could kill anybody, but, when I got done with the bayonet training in the infantry, ... if I'd had to go forward, I don't think I'd have any qualms doing what I had to do, but, as I say, I'm very fortunate that never happened.

SSH: Did you see any native Okinawans during this sightseeing tour with the Major?

KS: Yes, they tended to avoid you. ... I believe, we believed, that the Japs had just said that we were terrible people and we were going to kill them. ... You know, I remember, one time, seeing some of the women down at a stream, washing clothing, and the minute we stopped, they just took off into the fields, into the woods, you know. So, at that point, I think, ... at least when I was there, I think they were still scared to death and I don't blame them. I mean, the bombing

and everything, ... you know, it had been tremendous. I was struck by ... their burial sites. ... They build enormous wood, brick or whatever, I don't know what they used, how they made it, but I'll say brick, some type of brick, enclosures and there'd be generations of bodies in there. I understood they left them there until they were just the bones and, somehow, they ended up getting them into urns of some sort or another. So, they said there were generations of them in there and you could go in there. The interesting thing that they told us, whether it was true or somebody was giving us a story, I don't know, the shape certainly resembled what you ... would consider as a woman's body, and the wall came out like this, which could be like the thighs or something like that. They said it resembled the womb of a woman and that's what they used as their burial [sites], and they'd be built into the sides of these hills, you know.

SSH: How big were these crypts?

KS: Oh, you could get several people walking [inside]. You could walk right in. They were big. ...

SSH: Were they still being maintained?

KS: Yes, they looked as though they'd been maintained. There was some damage, because, I believe, some of the Japanese used them as air raid shelters and stuff, you know. They were that type of construction; ... they could have been very protective, I think. Usually, ... there'd be a gully or something, and then, they'd be built along there. So, that was about it.

MO: While you were in Okinawa, were you on the same sixteen-hour a day schedule as you were in the States?

KS: Yes, pretty much. It was ... pretty much the same thing. I guess the thing that I didn't mention, which ... especially came into being after I'd gone to Fort Shafter, and it must have been a shock to the enemy, both in Europe and us [the Pacific], the ideal thing of the IBM equipment was, it had all these records of all these troops on the cards and you either had their military occupational specialty or their civilian specialty and some other information there, you know, ... whether they were riflemen, whatever it was, you know, and their rank. Well, when we were taking casualties, if they were taking casualties in the infantry, especially, and, at the end of a day, ... I was running a report, if I had a handful of these IBM cards, I could hold approximately five hundred, well, it didn't dawn on me until then, these are five hundred people that have either been killed, shot, injured in some way. Well, you would take the IBM cards and you run it through a machine called a collator. It had dual feed and it would match cards and you matched whatever you were trying to do. Well, the surprising thing, I think, to the enemy must have been our replacements, because we would run the cards against the replacements depots. So, you came close to getting, ... not an exact match, but a similar match to the replacement that was going to be sent up to fill in for the wounded person and that was unique to that war. I mean, it was a skill; before, you know, World War I or the other wars, you need a hundred men, you pulled up a hundred men, but this way, you could pull up, you know, machine gunners, riflemen, bazooka men, whatever the need might be, you know. So, that was ... unique, and so, we did that sort of ... thing in our trailers. ...

SSH: Did your duties give you a sense of how the war was going?

KS: Well, there was a time, I never proved it, there was one day that struck me; I thought that I saw, he wasn't in journalism, but I was pretty sure I saw a guy that ... had been at Rutgers when I was there and that struck me the most, I guess, you know. Well, ... you had to know it wasn't going good when you saw the casualties coming in, but, fortunately, too, I have to be honest and say, by the time we got there in June, the Japs were still fighting pretty bad, but the fighting wasn't that severe then. What had happened, we had pretty well pushed them up to one end of the island. In fact, when we got there, like where we camped and that, you sort of had to worry more at night about Japs who'd been cut off down here and who were trying to, and were, sneaking through the lines, trying to get back up with the ... rest of the troops, you know, but ... we didn't see any of that, really.

SSH: Were there any prisoners of war that you were aware of?

KS: ... I never saw any. No, ... what I did see is, and it was pathetic, really, ... we had people that could speak Japanese and ... I saw them one time, they'd go out in the field and appeal to them to surrender. They knew there were clusters there and they almost never succeeded. I mean, they intended to commit suicide before ... you got them, you know, but they did, they managed to save some. They did get them, yes. So, let's see, where are we now? ... Well, next thing, we're going to go to Korea. ...

SSH: Okay. Can you tell us how you finished up your tour in Okinawa?

KS: I guess the highlight of the finish up of the tour was, because, shortly after that, we left to go to Korea, ... MacArthur came up to meet with Stilwell, you know, and ... it wasn't much of a thing, but I just happened to have to pickup the Major that day and was up at the camp when he arrived. So, I got a ... pretty close look at MacArthur, ... because he was a big hero, then. So, that ... was rather good.

SSH: What did the men that you associated with think of MacArthur and Stilwell?

KS: Well, MacArthur, they thought of as ... a very proper, I was going to say pompous, I don't think that's quite the right word, but he was a very proper type individual, and aloof is a good word. There's a good word. Stilwell was definitely the soldier's soldier, you know, and I thought the greatest thing he did was, which took nerve, and I often remembered seeing MacArthur meeting him, the British troops, or Australian, either one, whatever they were, I think they were both, but, anyhow, they were issued summer uniforms. They had shorts. We had the long fatigues; ... rarely did you wear your uniform. So, Stilwell saw that and I don't know why we couldn't get summer outfits, but we couldn't and he got annoyed by it. So, he took a pair of scissors and he cut his pants off and, of course, the strings hung down and he came out of the tent one day and that's the way he was, and all the other officers, they cut their pants, then, all the enlisted [men]. Everybody cut their pants off, you know. ... I think that best describes the type of person [he was]. So, the soldiers loved him. You know, he was quite a guy.

SSH: There was an amalgamation of all the different forces on Okinawa.

KS: Yes.

SSH: Was there any friction between these different troops?

KS: I don't think so. ... Well, we were always so isolated, I can't really say. I don't ... know of any.

SSH: Did you ever see any men who had been liberated from POW or internee camps?

KS: Never did, no, no.

SSH: Did you receive mail consistently?

KS: I had an interesting thing happen, yes, the mail came pretty consistently, and, as I had said, because my father worked for the *Newark News*, ... I got a *Newark News* all the time I was in the Army, you know, and I believe ... the company paid for it, I don't know, but it would be terrible at times. I mean, it would come in clusters. I mean, you might get ten, twenty newspapers at a time, you know; what the hell to do with them? ... They were appreciated, because I was one of the few people that was actually getting a hometown type of newspaper and, at the time, the *Newark News* was probably, I'm sure it was rated as one of the ten best newspapers in the country, and the fellow named (Sinet?), who was the editor-in-chief, was one of the highest paid men in the country. In those days, it was a lot of money, he made fifty thousand a year, all through the Depression. [laughter] ... So, a lot of guys, if they only wanted to read the funny papers, they were glad to see the papers, you know, and, in some cases, we found other uses for the newspaper, [laughter] but, anyhow, ... it was better than leaves, but, yes, ... that worked out pretty well. Mail came through pretty good. Boy, I would say that it did and V-mail was pretty good, you know, so, it worked out.

SSH: Did you have a lot of people writing to you?

KS: Not really. My family was writing, you know, and some of the people I worked with. I had a funny case there. When I worked in, ... as I say, I started in the payroll department at Esso and I went into the 28th Division, as I think I told you, and they had come from around Altoona, Pennsylvania, the particular company I was with, Company G, and I got a letter one day in the mail, I had a couple from her, from someone named Janet Blair. Well, there was a movie actress named Janet Blair and she had come from Altoona. "You know Janet Blair?" I never told them any different. [laughter] Janet Blair worked with me in the payroll department and she was ... close to retirement. ...

SSH: You mentioned that you might have seen a Rutgers graduate in your casualty list. In all of your postings and duties, did you ever run into any Rutgers graduates?

KS: Never really did, never did, no, but I was pleased, I mean, like in Texas, say, where we were mixed more with civilians than [with] the military, that, if the occasion came up, people knew about Rutgers, so, that sort of pleased me. So, that was interesting, not like down in



Memphis a few years ago, when they said, "What's a Rutgers [alum doing] at a football game?" and then, we beat them, [laughter] okay.

SSH: When you were on Okinawa, the war was coming to a close.

KS: Yes, well, we had the artificial peace call. ...

SSH: Tell us about that, please.

KS: Well, they went wild, the MPs next to us, in particular. They were shooting off machine guns and everything else. Most of us, we laid down under the trailers. ... Actually, I understood that, on Okinawa, in that mad house, where there was a false peace thing, ... six guys got killed. I mean, they were just berserk, you know, with joy because it was over. Well, it turned out it was wrong, you know. So, that was that. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SSH: You were telling us about the end of your tour in Okinawa and the false peace. How much longer were you there?

KS: Let's see, I think we left there, I can't think of the date, in September. ... We were then going to go up to Korea as part of occupation and the night before we left, or I should say the morning when we woke up, we went on a landing craft, medium. ... They just, you know, ran it into the land, and then, we had to back our trucks and equipment on, you know, and ... everything fit on there pretty good, but, the night before, some kind soul stole the top off the jeep, so, we didn't have a top for the jeep. ... So, we went up and we landed in Inchon and that's, what do you call that? a land-locked harbor, you know, because they have very high tides there, like up in Maine and that [area], and so, I was still the driver, you know, and so, I had the two officers, and the other officer drove in one of the trucks, and I was leading the convoy up from Inchon to Seoul, and I thought we were doing a pretty good job, but, by one point, we discovered we'd lost a truck. [laughter] So, [we] turned around and it turned out they had mechanical problems, you know. So, we got our mechanic back and he worked with them and we got up to Seoul and we were in a building right across from, I think they called it the Imperial Hotel, which turned out to be the headquarters for the occupation, and we took over an office building. Somebody said it had belonged to Mitsubishi. Anyhow, it was some Japanese company. It was a very sturdy building and we slept on the floor in there and our trucks ... were outside and we operated them out there and they were a source of great curiosity to the Koreans, because, probably, none of them had ever seen an IBM machine before and we had a stock operation that we did, especially anywhere we were for visiting dignitaries, generals and that sort of thing. [The] IBM sorting machine was about the length of this table and you fed the cards in the hopper here and they fell into different slots on the way down, up to nine, and then, three high count, and we'd have a pack of cards all organized and we'd put that in there and, boom, they'd all fall in there. They just looked fantastic, you know. [laughter] We weren't doing a thing, you know, but it impressed the people looking at it, and so, the Koreans were impressed, too. So, that was it. We stayed there for a while. Later on, almost a week later, we got quite a surprise, because we were on the first floor and nobody ever went upstairs, and we discovered there were a hundred-

and-fifty Japanese up there and they were up there because they were scared to death of being lynched by the Koreans, who hated them, and so, ... they went in there for safety, you know. So, that was it.

SSH: What happened to the hundred-and-fifty Japanese?

KS: Well, they finally they took them away. You know, I guess, eventually, they got them sent back to Japan, I guess. I don't know; I don't know whatever happened to them. ... So, then, they moved us out of there and they put us up ... in a school, a rather nice school building. ... A nice place to be; ... including our troops, there was a lot of black marketeering going on over the wall, the place was surrounded by a wall, and boots were in high demand. So, you had to be careful what you did with your boots or they were going to disappear, but it was a very nice school. It was the first place, let's see, we got a Special Services package and it included some records and there was a record player down in the principal's office, apparently, and they got that thing going. ... We finally heard the song, I forget, I think it was Glenn Miller, and the name of the song was *Sentimental Journey*. Well, that was it, you know; you all knew you were going home. ... That was pretty touching. ... There, we met a young Korean boy, Wong, who was a brilliant, smart little boy. He was probably about twelve, or maybe a little older at the most. ... Among other things, ... his family got killed in Shanghai and he had walked, I think it was like a thousand or twelve hundred miles. He had walked up to Seoul, because he knew he had an aunt there that had married a Korean, and so, he lived with this aunt and he was very enterprising, you know. We were having trouble trying to figure out how to get our clothes washed and all that, so, he said, ... you could communicate with him a little bit, you know, and he said, "Well, his aunt would be glad to do the laundry," and we, of course, said we'd be glad to pay her, which we did, and then, when we could, if you could get away with, you know, a C ration, a couple of cans of food or something, you managed to give them some of that, and did a fantastic job. One day, Wong came in for the laundry and he said, "(*Etai*?, *etai*?)." "(*Etai*?)," meant her muscles hurt. She couldn't do it anymore. So, we ... didn't know what we were going to do. Wong said, "Don't worry about it," and ... you had to give Wong cigarettes. They were great bartering things during the war. So, one day, we're out in the truck and there was a river that ran right through there and we're up on the river and here on the river bank is Wong, strolling up and down, smoking his cigarette, and he's got about fifteen kids down there, and they're all working for him. They're doing the laundry down there and he's paying them. [laughter] He was quite a boy. He was quite interesting. So, let's see, what else happened there?

SSH: Did the weather change at all?

KS: Oh, I know what was interesting. Oh, it was terrible, sleeping in that. ... One night, I know, I got so damn cold in that school, ... it was a damp cold, it wasn't really like being on an island, it's a peninsula, that I took my, it was the dumbest thing I ever did, ... tent half and put it on top of my sleeping bag and, well, of course, I built up too much condensation. Oh, it was the worst thing I ever did; I was colder than ever when it was over, you know, but that was it. We had little stoves and little heat tabs and you tried to make something hot, you know, ... because we had, I don't know if you ever had any of that, ... tropical chocolate bars. I mean, they were like impossible to cut. I mean, it was unbelievable how tough they were, but, if you could shave them up a little bit, you could put them in your mess kit cup, and then, heat it, and then, you'd

have hot chocolate, you know. So, we tried to do that sort of thing. So, I think the amazing thing was that the Russian general came down one day to meet with our headquarters people and he came with very few troops, but, you know, obviously, he brought security with him, and it was terrible to see. The Russian troops were amazed that we only had one wristwatch and they'd have wristwatches like this, [up to the elbow]. They just took them off the Koreans. I mean, whatever they wanted, they just took, you know. So, that was sort of different and interesting, you know, and they were an arrogant bunch, really, but, you know, it was the way they were brought up and the way they were trained. I mean, their training was, I think, much rougher than ours. So, that was about it, I think.

MO: You were still on Okinawa when the war ended.

KS: Yes, I was, yes.

MO: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the atomic bombs?

KS: No, I don't. Yes, I must have been on Okinawa, yes, I'd have to have been, I guess, yes. ... I'll go a little farther, if I may? So, our stay in Korea was, you know, pretty calm. I think the amazing thing was, in that first building we were in, we didn't have any heat, either, but there was a pile of coal in the backyard that must have been half the height of this house. ... I guess they were ready for winter and, one day, and, you know, it had been decided by the Army, a bunch of these Koreans showed up with their little, they have very small horses or pony types, very rugged little animals, with baskets on each side. In like no time at all, they moved all that coal out of there. I don't know where it went to, but ... it was like a bunch of ants working. It was unbelievable and they're strong little people. Another day, ... on one of the upper floors, I think it was a three-story building, there was this enormous safe. ... Oh, it was easily six-foot high. I never saw anything so big in my life and about, I think, fifteen or eighteen of these Koreans came in and it just seemed impossible. They moved that safe right out of the building and brought it down a step at a time and they moved the thing out of there, you know. It was unbelievable. Oh, that was the unusual thing; you don't mind me talking about latrines, do you? [laughter]

SSH: Not at all. They are a normal fact of life.

KS: Well, ... we'd never seen anything like it. ... The building was, in a sense, very modern. In the basement, they had a sauna bath, you know, and everything all rigged up for the Japanese officials. You came in this hallway and, off to the right, there was a separate room, tiled, beautifully tiled, everything, a latrine and it was a running water latrine. It was a trench and the water flowed through and, ... if you wanted to sit down, you'd squat over this running trench and it flowed away; if you urinated, the same sort of thing. Well, that was interesting, but, what first shocked us was, we weren't quite use to that, ... women would walk in off the street, or men, but mostly women, and you'd be sitting there and, all of a sudden, some woman'd come in and casually sit down in front of you or behind you. ... Well, as you said, it's a natural thing to do, you know, but we just didn't do it that way, you know. That was my first experience with a running trench, but it was a sanitary way to do it. So, that was about that; I think that about did it.

SSH: That puts a new connotation on public restroom.

KS: [laughter] Yes, it does. So, then, I get to the point of, on November 9th, I think it was, they were breaking up my unit and many of the fellows had enough points to go home. I didn't, and so, I had to finish up the strength report and ... Lieutenant (Walburn?) was left there with me and, theoretically, we were both supposed to ... be at Kimpo Airport the next morning at six o'clock to go to Japan. He never showed up. I showed up. I discovered, later, he had a delay en route. I don't think he was feeling well. I think ... he was being taken care of by an Army nurse up in the field hospital, but, anyhow, he didn't show up. ... I got down and I waited; I got on this plane and other people got on the plane and the plane shook me up a little bit, because one wing was painted a different color than the rest of the plane and I thought, "Oh, this guy's had a little trouble or something." [laughter] Anyhow, I got on the plane and it obviously must have been used by paratroopers, I think, because the seats were like canvas slats, slung lengthwise against the wall. So, I was one of the last ones on. I got to sit down and I looked around and there was gold all over the place. There was nobody on the plane that was less than a major. There were lieutenant colonels, there were colonels, I didn't see any generals, and I thought, "Holy, I mean, what am I doing here? You know, I'm in the wrong place." [laughter] So, the plane takes off and it was a very wonderful experience for me. We flew over to Japan. The pilot flew us over Nagasaki. We saw the bombing at Nagasaki. We landed at Hiroshima, on a little, dirt runway, and they wouldn't really let you off the runway, but the sight was unbelievable. I mean, right close to the runway, obviously, had been a big factory and there was nothing left; the only thing left was, like, the steel girders and they were twisted and turned, I mean, but walls, there was nothing as far as you looked. There was like nothing to see, you know. Well, it turned out that ... all the men on the plane were, I think they were called reparations people. They were all business people in certain fields that knew a lot about the worth, the value, of things and they were there to figure out reparations, as far as the Japanese were concerned, both, apparently, in Korea and in Japan, and that's the reason they were getting ... priority treatment. That's the only reason we ever flew over Nagasaki or we ever landed at Hiroshima, [laughter] you know, and I was fortunate to have been on the plane. So, I was there, as I say, November 9th; it was reasonable close ... after the dropping of the bomb, and so, then, ... we landed in Osaka. All the officers got taken care of, off they went, and I was left there and, theoretically, ... there should have been a vehicle there to pick me up. ... By this time, I was already back to sergeant. I mean, I'm sure the Captain knew something was wrong and ... I got a promotion every month or two months. [laughter] So, let's see, I lost myself here.

SSH: The plane had landed.

KS: Oh, we landed in Osaka. Nobody was there to meet me. So, there were a couple of guys there that had a jeep. One was an officer and an enlisted man. They said, "Well, we'll take you into the center of Osaka." So, I said, "Fine." So, here I am, I've got my two bags, my B bag and, you know, my clothes, my gun, all that stuff. ... We get into the center of Osaka, I don't know what the hell happened, but they decided, "Well, ... that's it. They've got to drop me right there," so, they dropped me in front of a store and the war wasn't over that long and ... there weren't any troops around. [laughter] I mean, you could see the Japanese, but nobody paid any attention to me, really. ... I could see the railroad station. So, I was able to figure out enough that the train

was going to go to Kyoto, which was where I was trying to go to. Well, I thought, "Well, forget that action." I mean, there were Japanese on the roofs of the train, they were hanging out all over the place, you know. There was no way you were going to get on, not with two big bags. ... So, I thought, "I'll stay here some more." So, I got back in the doorway and put my two bags in the doorway and waited and waited. Sure enough, eventually, after, oh, I was there at least three or four hours, I guess, all of a sudden, an MP jeep came by and I waved and hailed him and I got him. So, they took me up to their headquarters and they said, "What's the charge?" "Well," I said, "I'm supposed to be picked [up]. They told me I'd be picked up here, but nobody's ever arrived." ... They called up to Kyoto for me and I don't know what they did, but, eventually, then, I had to wait another, because it was a good drive up there, ... hour or two before they got there. They took me up. I got up there and they'd quartered us in what had been an old industrial museum and one of my buddies was already there and he knew I was coming and he ... had saved a bed next to him, because there were just beds all over the place, you know, and so, that got me located.

[TAPE PAUSED]

... We stayed in there and that, again, was an experience. ... They had made showers. The showers, they'd just run pipes, you know, in the open area, and then, over here, there were boards that were put up. They were about so far apart, you know, and that was the laundry and the dry cleaning unit. Well, I'll tell you, those Japanese women had a good opportunity to look us over. You'd go in there and take a shower and you'd see them looking at you, [laughter] but it worked out. It was very good, you know. Later, then, we got moved. ... We were there for a while, not long, a week or two, and then, we were going to go back into business with a stationery machine records unit, which was stationed in an office building downtown. So, they moved us into what had really been the press building for the Japanese press, because it was on a big, broad street, and it looked right down at the summer palace. ... The summer palace was maybe two blocks down or something like that and this building was very modern. It had round windows, it had two tremendous glass doors that opened when you went in, and so, Bob and I, ... we got one room together, we didn't have to buddy up with anybody, and we had a fellow in the Army, in the unit, like, his name continually escapes me, except it was Irish, and he was hopeless. I mean, he joined us late and no matter what they gave him to do, he managed to foul it up. ... They put him in charge of the building. He was the permanent charge of the building and we got a lot of Japanese to work for us. There were about fifty of them that worked around the building. They worked on preparing the food; they cleaned the place. He organized the thing; it was unbelievable. ... There was one man, or maybe two, I don't know, because there were a lot of people staying there, his sole job was to see that your shoes were lined up straight under your bed. That was his duty and they had other guys that swept the floor and he had ... a rating system, had this big chart that he hung out in the lobby and, depending how ... the Japanese men did their job, he rated them, somehow. Well, one day, we arrived home from work and standing at the front door are these two Japanese. We came up to the front door, they opened the door for you. They bowed as you came in, you know. Well, that was his system, whoever the best guys for the week [were], they got to open the door, you know. He was a complete nut. Then, he discovered there was a nightclub up in the mountains and the Japanese ... were banned from buying beer or alcoholic beverages, I guess, except whatever they made at home, sake and stuff, and he discovered that this nightclub stacked their empty beer bottles out in back of the place.

He got a hold of a couple of these Japanese that worked for us one night and ... the three of them ... got a big truck, they drove up there, they filled the truck with empty bottles and the only way you could get more beer was to turn in empty bottles. Well, by the time I left Japan, I must have had six or eight empty bottles under the bed. You couldn't drink the stuff, you know, fast enough, [laughter] but ... he was a unique personality, he really was. ... So, finally, it got to be Christmastime and ... he went downtown to some of the department stores that were now getting back into stride and, you know, were looking for business. They had Christmas trees in the windows and stuff. Well, he went in and requisitioned them. ... We had Christmas trees in the lobby, we had one up on the roof [laughter] and they were happy to do it. Then, he put together, my wife, I'm sure, is waiting for me to tell this part of the story, ... for going away, he organized, we're going to have a party. They had this enormous auditorium up in the upstairs of this building and a stage and curtains, the whole business. We're going to have a going away party. Well, he got one of the leading actresses in Japan, movies, theater, she came and she performed and sang and got a band, I don't know where he requisitioned that from, and then, he had this Japanese fellow who was a marvelous singer and who'd taught himself to sing and speak English from ... Frank Sinatra records and he sounded like him. He got up there and he did all the Frank Sinatra records, you know, and they had dancers and all that sort of thing, and the highlight of the evening was a strip teaser. [laughter] Well, the story was interesting. ... He went out to whatever his sources were to get the strip teaser and, as far as he could find out, the Japanese had never heard of this. They didn't know what a strip-teaser was. So, somehow, he gets together with a prostitute, he gets her and he takes this other guy with him, and they get her up into this hotel room and they show her how to do the striptease. They tell her what she has to do and she agrees to do it. So, that was the final act of the evening. So, they announce that and out she comes and she does; she goes around the stage. She had on two or three kimonos; she dropped those around the stage and whatever else she wore. It ended up she was nude, you know, but, then, everybody's yelling and screaming. We were all sitting there, you know, and we'd all had a few beers and everything, and they're clapping like crazy, and the girl thought that was all part of the [act], ... because she'd been trained in the hotel room. She then went all around the room and put all the clothes back on again, [laughter] because that is ... the only thing they could do.

SSH: In reverse.

KS: Yes, in reverse. So, that was ... about it, I think, you know, and, yes, the only other odd thing that happened there was, we were still working in trailers and the Japanese fellow, we had one that sort of maintained things, or was supposed to, you know. ... The heaters in our trailers were fed, because it was the common fluid, gasoline. Another fellow and I were working in the trailer and I told him to go fill the tank up with gasoline, which was up in the top. When he poured it down the chimney, it blew us right out ... of the trailer. [laughter] That was about it. I think Mary Jo's about ready for lunch.

[TAPE PAUSED]

KS: Okay. Where do you want me to start now?

SSH: When you were on Okinawa and the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, what were the reactions? How much were you aware of? What had you read in the newspapers that you were getting from home?

KS: Well, I guess we weren't aware of very much, really, but, eventually, as the news came out and, you know, as the paper from home got there, you began to find out that it was a very impressive and very destructive thing, more so than anything you'd heard of, because, you know, up to that point, the big concern was over the possibility of having to invade Japan and realizing that their defense was probably going to be unbelievable, because, if past history was anything, they were probably going to fight to the death, ... including men, women and children. I mean, ... the death toll that would ... take place was almost unbelievable, on both sides, more so for the Japs than us, I guess. So, that was really what we thought, and then, I guess, as I had said earlier, the fact that I had an opportunity to see Nagasaki and ... to land, literally, in the middle of it, it just made the thing all the more unbelievable. You just couldn't believe that one bomb could create so much havoc, so much destruction. ...

SSH: Do you remember where you were when the war ended in Europe and when news of Roosevelt's death broke?

KS: I don't remember the wheres, but I remember the reaction when Roosevelt passed away. You know, he had been such a forceful leader and those of us who were in the Army were, you know, of the age that, when the Depression was going on, you realized that it was the action he took to create things like the Works Progress Administration, the Civil Conservation group, and so forth, and the institution of Social Security and his efforts, I think, towards unemployment. ... I guess you would say it was almost like losing a father figure, because he was that representative to most Americans, including those in the military, especially with his Fireside Chats and talks, you know. He brought the country together and ... I think he did the same with his leadership. I mean, ... he and his staff, cabinet, I guess, showed great ingenuity, especially when Britain was in, you know, almost ... a state of collapse and, if he hadn't turned over the fifty outmoded destroyers to them; it served the purpose. It gave them the vessels they needed to bring the convoys to bring the supplies that they needed, because, you know, being an island, how much (natural?) resources could they have? I mean, their principal resource over there was probably coal, you know, but it let them get the iron and the metal and parts and planes that he arranged to give them through Lend-Lease. So, he ... was a great loss, I think. ...

SSH: You mentioned earlier, off the tape, how well you thought he worked with Churchill.

KS: I did. I think they were the prime force, their ability to get along, and they seemed to have such a great understanding of one another, maybe it's because, [at] one time or another, both, I believe, were involved with the navies of their countries. ... I know that Churchill was and I'm sure that Roosevelt was, also, and I think they had a common bond of understanding and they were two leaders who [were] needed in a time of real distress. So, I think, yes, they were made for the job. They arrived at the right time; they were doing the right thing.

SSH: Was there a general announcement made to the troops when he passed away?

KS: Well, yes, you got it ... soon over the Armed Forces Radio and other communications, you know, eventually, you got it.

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

MO: This continues the second interview with William Kenneth Smith in Brick Township, New Jersey, on May 11, 2000, with Michael Ojeda and ...

SSH: Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

MO: Mr. Smith, you were just saying that you were there when the first group of WAVES arrived.

KS: Well, to the best of our knowledge, we thought it was the first group of WAVES, and they arrived and, of course, it was instant panic, because I forget what somebody estimated, but I think, because of the high volume of number of troops on Oahu, that I think somebody said they thought the ratio of male to female was something like a thousand to one. ... It was an astronomical number and, of course, just twenty-five hundred arriving, which, of course, were probably going to be reserved pretty well for the Navy, [laughter] but, anyhow, ... I think it was good for morale. I think it let everybody know that everybody was behind the job and they were all going to do the right thing and it's true. The WAVES rendered [good service], ... as did the WACS and the others, I forget the Marines one now. ... You know, they just offered another means of support and manpower where it was needed and, in many cases, released men for other duties. You know, I think ... it worked out great. I don't know whoever thought of it, but it was a great idea.

SSH: Was there ever any chance that your unit would have any women in it? You had been trained by women in the States.

KS: Yes, we had. ...

SSH: Were there ever any women involved in these units?

KS: If there were, I never saw them, never saw them. No, that's true; I'm not saying that properly. If that had happened, I would guess it would have been an all WAC unit. You were segregated, really. So, they would never have intermixed, I don't think; today, yes. [laughter]

SSH: At one point, you mentioned that you had to show off your facility and how the collators worked with the cards. What other dignitaries did you show this to?

KS: I can't name anyone by name, but I can say that they were visiting dignitaries. ... In one case, it was a general, ... with his staff. So, it would be rather high-ranking officers being informed of what the service was that we could offer and, I guess, in wartime, our prize or principal thing that we could offer would be that we could offer them men that were probably better qualified to replace the person that was wounded or taken out of action for whatever



reason and I think ... that was the main reason for the tours. It didn't happen too often, but it did, yes.

SSH: What did the average soldier think of Truman taking over after Roosevelt died?

KS: Well, I think, you know, because ... he wasn't really that well known a person, ... in my opinion, to the public; he was well known to the society in Washington, because of his long service in the Congress and things like that, but, yes, I think people that thought that he didn't amount to very much was because they didn't know enough about him, but I think he soon proved them wrong. He turned out to be a very strong personality, as far as the presidency was concerned. He took firm positions, in a different way than Roosevelt did. I think Roosevelt could more cajole the people and I think Truman took more of a positive stand on issues.

SSH: Was there any discussion about the problems between Truman and MacArthur?

KS: That would have been after my time, but, yes, ... I think there were people, probably, in the Korean War, and I wasn't part of that, who would have thought that, you know, maybe MacArthur had the right idea. If he'd gone up and attacked that bridge at the Yalu and maybe that would have stopped the Chinese from coming through and might have saved lives, I don't know, but, yes, other than that, that would be my only thought.

SSH: Okay.

MO: The last place you were stationed overseas was in Japan.

KS: Yes, it was.

MO: How long were you there?

KS: Not long. I was there from November 9th, until, ... I'll say roughly, I don't know exactly, I think it was the day before Christmas. So, it was a relatively short stay. ... Could I add to that? ... We were very fortunate to be in Kyoto, because, as you probably know or may know, Kyoto, ... well, in the first place, it was the original capital of Japan. So, if you juggle the letters [in Tokyo], you'd get Kyoto, and it was the only major city, that I know of, in Japan that was never bombed, because it had so many religious sites and temples and things like that in the city that the government realized, it would have been one of the more serious [sticking points]. It could have aroused the Japanese people even more than they were aroused, you know, and a beautiful city. The imperial palace ... was just about two blocks from where we were quartered, but just a gorgeous place. I mean, the shrubberies, the water, ... just a beautiful place; ... you know, you could tour it. We couldn't go in, but you could tour it and I met a family there, a young lady, a young girl, and I'll straighten that out by saying we were friends. ... I met her in a park, ... with another fellow and another girl, actually and it was sort of a subterfuge. We had a camera, but you couldn't buy any film. So, we took their pictures [laughter] and that was how we met and they were dressed in costume, you know, traditional costumes and they were very nice. I couldn't really speak with the young lady. Her family owned the tea room and I'd go over there ... at night and we couldn't really talk. I had a little book with translations, you know, but they

got a big charge [out] of playing, what do you call that game? The memory game where you turn the cards over and you've got to match pairs of playing cards.

SSH: Concentration?

KS: Concentration. They'd play that. They'd get a big charge when I lost, [laughter] you know, and the heat they had was a charcoal pot, which, you know, of course, later [we] found out really wasn't the healthiest thing to do, but, if you got cold, you sort of held your hands over there, so that it warmed up just part of your wrist and the walls were pretty much paper, you know, that sort of thing, but they were a very nice family, and I had a lot of fun going with them. ... The girl was very nice to me, I mean, ... took me around. I saw all sorts of shrines and things, Shinto shrines, I'm sure I never would have discovered on my own. I remember, she showed me one where lovers that were disappointed or couldn't marry because of their families, they'd come to commit suicide, you know, that sort of thing. I can't remember the name of it and that was it. Then, I took her once to that nightclub up in the hills. She was very thrilled with that and we managed dancing pretty well. ... By that time, I was twenty-eight and she was, I think, I don't know her age; I figured she was somewhere between sixteen and eighteen. So, we had a good relationship. ... I don't know how she found out, but, the night I left, I was going to leave the next morning, I was going to leave Japan, she came up and I don't know how she described who I was, probably, she had enough of my name, but she ... gave me very nice little gifts. They were all cards, Christmas cards in Japanese, and all this sort of stuff and I was never able to thank her. She wrote me a note, which I never was able to get translated, because, when I left the next morning, we had a translator there, he wasn't in sight and I couldn't get him to read me the note, you know. So, that was it. That was fun and I found, I don't know, maybe because it was Kyoto, that the Japanese people there were, I found, just wonderful, I mean, very easy to get along with and no resentment there. ... I met one fellow who had been slated to be a *kamikaze* pilot, but the war ended ... and he came from a very well-to-do Japanese family, actually, and he said, you know, there was ... no resentment; "I mean, I was doing for my country what you were doing for yours and that's all over with," and that was about the attitude you seemed to run into, you know. ... I never saw any indication of any problem. You could walk around the streets at night. You didn't have to worry about being held up or robbed or anything, you know, and we'd go to, well, they called it a dance hall. It was like, in America, years ago, they would have called it a dime dance hall, but you went to this place and there were these Japanese girls there and you bought tickets and you'd get up and dance and you'd give them a ticket, you know, and they'd sit with you at the table and, you know, ... you had a beer, but, usually, you know, there'd be four or five of us and we'd go and we'd meet four or five of these girls. We'd dance a little bit and take off. So, it was good, yes.

MO: While you were overseas, did you have any contact with your brother in the Army Air Forces?

KS: Very little. ... Theoretically, he didn't have to go into the Army because of my mother's illness, but he was taller than I was, he was about six-foot, maybe a little more, and what had happened was, he got a job working for a company in Newark, Flood and Conklin. They manufactured paint and, I guess, the men kept disappearing. By the time, I think, he was about eighteen, he ended up, in effect, being the foreman and there was a bunch of women doing the

work in there and he kept, also, getting a lot of questions, "Why aren't you in the [service]?" It finally got to him. [It] ended up, he had a nervous breakdown. So, I never expected him to go in the Army, but, all of a sudden, he made up his mind that he was going in and it [was] driving my mother out of her mind. So, she didn't need that. So, I wrote back to him ... and told him, you know, "Not to go in the Army, but, before you do, send him someplace. Find an IBM school, tell him to learn how to do IBM work," and then, I knew he'd be safe and it would ease my mother's mind. So, he did that and he went in the service. He went in the Air Corps. He was stationed and trained in Atlantic City and lived in a hotel down there, and then, later, went out to Wright Field, out in Ohio, and he ended up in a very specialized unit. I can't think of all the names now, but ... the officers in charge, one was named Watson, he was the son of somebody who founded IBM, one was the son of somebody from General Motors, and I forget who the third person was. Anyhow, they all came from very influential industrial families. Their job was, ... when the *Queen Mary* or *Elizabeth* went overseas, they usually went hotbeds, you know. One crew was sleeping [in the beds] and, in the nights, somebody else would sleep [in them]. [When] they went over, they didn't; they had first class accommodations all the way over, ... and I think because of the officers in charge, [laughter] I don't know, but, anyhow, their job was to study ... the effectiveness of the strategic air bombing of Europe and categorize it all into computers, into the IBM computers, and that's what they did, and he wasn't over there that long, really, I guess, when the war ended, and came back and they put him up in, I forget, some college in New York, not Columbia, someplace in New York. They put him up in the dorms there and they were then supposed to go Japan and do the same thing and the war ended. So, that was it. So, his stay in the service was not that long and ... it was a relief, I know, for my mother, in particular.

SSH: When you were in Korea, did you see any Chinese people?

KS: I'll tell you an interesting thing about that. Wong is back in this story again. He could walk down the street and look at their feet and I couldn't tell the difference, because most of them wore those thong type things, which I've learned to wear, too, but, if they were Japanese, he'd spit at them, and I'd be [afraid], you know, you were going to get in trouble and he knew who was Korean and who was Chinese, and how he knew, I don't know. Now, maybe he was leading us on, but he certainly seemed to know and he seemed to hit it right when it came to being Japanese, you know, but you didn't see too many of them, but, I say, he was a very enterprising young man. You know, you would have been proud to have him as a son. ...

SSH: How long did it take you to get back to the States? How did you come back to the States from Japan?

KS: It was a reasonably fast trip. I can't remember, I have a newspaper clipping someplace, but ... we were on a good troopship and, you know, they say in the Army, "Don't ever volunteer for anything." Well, I volunteered; actually, I forgot to tell you, I volunteered another time. ... Well, when we were going from Hawaii over to Okinawa, we dropped off the troops in Guam. They were the quartermaster troops, it was a black quartermaster organization, and it was on a Navy ship. They put out a call for volunteers. So, Carl and I thought, "Jesus, we hit it so good, maybe we'll volunteer." [laughter] They made us shore patrol. I'm not very big at all and, then, I only weighed about 140 or fifty pounds. Carl was shorter than I was. ... We were supposed to stop the gambling on the ship. The black troops that were there, ... all over the decks, there were

gambling games going on, you know. Well, we go around, [laughter] they wouldn't listen to us and they tried to beat us up. [laughter] We kept trying, you know; we couldn't do it. So, finally, [we] went back to, ... what was he called? the provost or something like that, anyhow, whoever this guy that was supposed to be [in charge]. We went up to him and said, "This is impossible. I mean, we're not getting anyplace here," you know. [laughter] "We think our lives are in danger, it's getting so bad." He says, "You keep doing it and I'll take care of it," and I did. Well, the next day, here, we go up to meet him, tell him, "Well, here we are, we're ready to go to work." [laughter] Here is this black sergeant, he was like six-foot-six, weighed about three hundred pounds, [laughter] all muscle. He walked around, he was a top sergeant, you know, he walked around with us. They gave us any lip, he was right in [there]. [laughter] ... That solved the whole problem. [laughter] We were heroes again. So, coming home ... to the United States, they called [for volunteers], "All right, I'll volunteer," you know. So, I volunteered. This was especially after the rest of the people are in this compartment that I'm in. They're from the 27th Infantry Division, who'd taken a hell of a beating all the way up from, you know, ... Australia and they're talking about how they shot a couple of lieutenants in the back and all this sort of stuff, [laughter] and I'm thinking, "I don't know whether they're putting it on for my benefit or whether it's the truth." So, I volunteered. They're going to have me work in the kitchen, in the mess. So, they said, "Go downstairs, we need oranges." Well, I went down the ladder like this and was, like, in the bottom of the ship, practically, to get to this refrigerated unit. I get this crate of oranges and I'm coming up the steps. I finally get up the stairs and the ship's (purser collided?), ... we both went flying down the stairs, oranges all over the place. [laughter] I didn't last long at that job.

SSH: They wanted oranges, not orange juice.

KS: Yes. So, we ended up going back into Seattle and ... we turned in our equipment and supplies and everything at Fort Lewis, and then, they put us on the train for home. ... That had to be January, you know. Well, the train took the northern route through Montana, Wyoming, and the train had to stop periodically, I don't know if it had to; they'd stop for water, I don't know what they stopped for and, one time, they stopped in this little town, I think it was in Montana, I'm not sure now, but, anyhow, down ... this long street, you could see a bar. So, they let us off long enough, you ran down the street and you tried to buy some beer, you know, or whatever you could buy, and we did. Another fellow and I went down and we chipped in and we bought a case of beer and we brought the case of beer back. We didn't know what to do with it, so, we put it out on the, what do they call that part of the train? like, the vestibule or whatever they call that out there. Well, we never thought about that. We went in, had a couple of beers with us, you know, and left it out there. The damn stuff froze, popped the tops off. ... It was cold. So, that was about it; that was it. So, the rest of the [ride] home, going home, was pretty uneventful after that, you know, and they ... brought you back into Fort Dix and got discharged there with no problem, ... you know, got a cab and came home. ... Force of habit, I forgot that my family had lost the house and I got off the bus at Pomona Avenue, which we lived at for I don't know how many years, and realized that I was at the wrong place and they had moved, oh, three or four, five blocks away, to a family that ... owned several [places]. They'd been an old family in Newark and they owned three big, old [homes], very similar to the building that you're in, at Bishop, and ... they had one on this corner, one here, one over here on this corner, and this one they had broken down into apartments, there were three floors. ... The woman was also my

mother's doctor, and so, she had arranged for them to move into there, which was good, because, when my mother needed shots, she gave them, saved us quite a bit of money, and the rent was very, you know, ... inexpensive. There were certain drawbacks to it, you know. The heating system was, you'd go down to the cellar to see the heating system, it was a warm air feed, no fans or anything, you know, convection or whatever you call it. The pipes, ... I mean, they were like this size, you know, and the bathrooms, because, obviously, they'd had outdoor bathrooms, was an add-on in the back of the house and they had run heat there, but, I mean, in the winter, there was ... no heat back there. Man, it was cold, and so, ... I'd say the part of the floor that we had, the second floor, I guess it was, originally, it had probably been a library, I think, and then, there were two bedrooms, but the one bedroom was rented out to a ... very elderly lady, Mrs. (Ferris?), who had taken a liking to me, and so, she made me an afghan and it was Rutgers colors. I got home and she gave me the afghan.

SSH: How sweet.

KS: Princeton colors. She never knew the difference. [laughter] ... I never told her and she died shortly after that, but, anyhow, ... that was it and I know my brother got home shortly after that, I guess. So, that was about it.

SSH: You said that you were able to get one leave to visit your family. Was that it?

KS: No, I had a couple. I forget; ... they weren't too generous with those ... and the one time, I ended up in trouble, you know. I forget what happened. We'd been in Sherman and I bought, no, it was when ... my mother died and I think we were in Brownwood then, I forget, and so, ... you know, I arranged to get home, ... through the Red Cross, and then, was returning. When I was returning, and they only gave you ten days at the time; by the time we got through with the funeral, you know, you barely had time [to get back]. As I pulled into St. Louis to change the train to the MKT [Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad] down to Texas, the train I was supposed to catch was ... pulling out and I knew it was, you know. We could see it, you know. ... Oh, the other thing to complicate it [was], while I was away, ... they had moved from, that's it, they'd moved from Sherman to Brownwood and they'd sent me a telegram. Well, when I missed the train, I didn't know what else to do and the only thing I had [was], my mother had a check that she had received, I believe it was the Army, whatever they called that, Dependency Check, which she had endorsed and it was for, like, I forget, thirty dollars or thirty-five, I forget what it was, and so, I took that, I had no money, ... and so, when I got to St. Louis, I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what the procedure [was], what I should have done, that was what was wrong. Somebody should have told me, "Well, anything like that happens, you go to whatever they call the stationmaster and you tell him, and then, he takes care of taking your transportation." I didn't know that. I met this lovely young woman, really, who was some sort of, I don't know, a hostess, not American Red Cross, but she was in some service type of organization and I told her the problem and I said, "All I have is this thirty dollars and ... I understand there's another train I can get about six hours from now and I want to get that train." She didn't really know me from Adam. She walked me up the street to some jewelry store that she knew and the guy cashed the check. So, I took the check and went back and I bought a ticket on the train and it was a terrible thing; it was a milk run train. I mean, we stopped all over the place for no reason at all, you know, in little towns. I don't know what the hell they stopped for.

So, I finally made it back. I was exhausted by then. I mean, I'd been on the train for, well, really, three days, I guess, not sleeping very well, buying sandwiches ... when we stopped and somebody came in and sold me a sandwich and I knew I worked at night, but I didn't go into the charge of quarters and turn in my leave papers. I thought, "Well, I'll go to bed and when I get up to go to [work], I'll give him the leave papers." Well, that was the wrong thing to do. So, I got company punishment for that and the guy was sadistic at times. My job was, I had to cut the grass with a pair of scissors around the trailers and the scissors were about this long, you know. ... They had me doing that for a week I guess, but, then, I still had to work. I mean, when ... four o'clock came, ... then, they knew when I was doomed, but it was all right, it wasn't bad. ... I mean, I was depressed anyhow at the time and I didn't have a nickel to my name. ... It kept me occupied; it was good.

SSH: What did you decide to do once you returned to civilian life and got settled?

KS: I'll tell you, after four years, I was a month short of four years, I just decided, "I'm going to take a little time," ... well, because I hadn't really ever got all the leave that I was entitled to. So, I think I had ... just about thirty days of leave left. Well, they paid you that. You got paid for your unused leave, and then, your discharge pay, I think, ... was three hundred dollars. ... I had enough money that I could make out for a while and I just took it easy and visited people and I did go down and work a couple days at the parking lot and, eventually, I went back to Exxon; ... actually, did I go back to the same job? I think I went back into the payroll job, and then, after that, I got promoted into the tax department. Oh, if there was anything I ever hated; [laughter] oh, that had me strained. I was thinking of leaving the company that time, but it worked out, you know. It was a short stay of, ... I think, about two years. I learned ... something, worked with some nice people, but that was it.

SSH: When did you meet Mrs. Smith?

KS: All right, now we're getting down to the nitty-gritty. [laughter] ... I had been working in New York. I was editor of this magazine over there. ...

SSH: For Esso?

KS: For Esso, yes, it was called the *Esso Marketer*. I was in a group in the advertising department and, in the department, we had four publications. We had the *Esso Heat Waves*, which was for oil heat distributors and installers. We had *Esso Farm News*, which was very famous. It had a circulation of about, roughly, between four hundred and five hundred thousand. It was a free magazine. It touted various products we sold for farmers and insecticides, you know, that sort of thing, and what was the other one? the *Exxon Dealer*. We had another one for Exxon dealers and there was another one called *Exxon Oil Ways*, which promoted industrial oil lubricants for industry, and so, I was in that group and, gosh, now, you've got me off on the track again. ... I really knew nothing about agriculture and I knew little or nothing about gardening. So, one day, the editor of the *Esso Farm News* said to me, he said, "You know, I'd really like to do a story about a nice roadside stand," and I opened my mouth and said, "I know of a lovely little roadside stand," and he said, "Oh, you write the story then." So, I said, "Oh, all right. I'll see if the man's interested. I'll go see." It was right out here. The name of the stand was Kettle

Creek Farm. So, I went out and saw the guy one day, ... his last name was (Dougherty?). Anyhow, he was very amiable, very friendly about the whole situation. What he had was a cranberry farm in the background, off another branch of this Kettle Creek here, and so, I went and talked to him and he had this lovely little stand there and, out there, he had his sorting machines, so, they graded the cranberries, they sorted them, put them in baskets and all that sort of thing. So, I went back and I said, "Well, I found a stand," you know, and I guess I took a picture of it or something. "Oh," Max said, "hey, that looks good. What does he do?" So, I said, "Cranberries." "Oh, I've been looking for a story on cranberries." ... I was elected. So, ... there was a photographer that I used to hire, John Keller, I hired John and we went down there. Well, I'd never been at a cranberry farm before and I'll tell you, it was, oh, cranberry season, so, it was either June, July or early August, right in that season, went back there. My God, ... the soil's a mixture of peat and stuff, there's water all the time, the steam, ... you could see it rising up. These people are back there picking cranberries. In fact, I met the oldest cranberry picker in New Jersey. He was ninety-four ... and he was a fast picker, too, that guy. [laughter] So, anyhow, we went back, we did the story, you know, and, ... you know, they got paid by the flat. They picked a flat like this and there was X number of baskets, little baskets, in there and they got so much money for doing that, you know. Well, I wrote the story and Max knew as much about growing cranberries as I did, which was [nothing], and I knew less about agriculture than he did. So, I didn't know what to do. I wrote the story. So, I took it back to this Dougherty and showed it to him and he read it and ... he was very generous, I think. He had very few corrections. It was pleasant for me, anyhow, but I still was a little unsure about what I was doing. So, I called the Rutgers Agricultural thing and was told [that] what I wanted to talk to was the ... small plant expert or something like that, you know. So, I got this man on the phone, I can't think of his name, but, apparently, he was supposed to be some sort of an expert and said, "I wondered, if I send you a copy of my story, would you mind reviewing it for me, because ... I don't want this thing going [out and anyone] thinking I'm a complete nut," you know, and he said, "Well, what's the story about?" So, I said, "Well, it's about cranberries." "Oh, well, what did you write it about?" "Well, I wrote it about Kettle Creek Farm." "Oh, well, who is that?" I said, "Oh, that's Tom Dougherty," I think his name was. "Oh, Tom Dougherty; did he look at it?" I said, "Yes, he did," and he said, "Did he approve of it?" I said, "Yes, he made a couple corrections." He said, "Well, he's the best cranberry grower in New Jersey. If he says it's all right, go right ahead." So, we published the story, you know, but, anyhow, ... what that aside had to do with this. [laughter] ...

SSH: How does Mrs. Smith fit into the story?

KS: Oh, when I was in the quandary about a job, because everything was moving to Texas and they already had editors doing similar to what [I was doing], ... the whole crew, the only guy that got a job out of it was our boss. He got a job; ... he was a Rutgers graduate, Walter Sieffert, and the rest of us, we were up in the air. So, ... it was snowing one day. I'd written, in fact, I think that caused a little unhappiness, too, ... the story of the consolidation of the industries of the companies of Pate Oil, Exxon, Humble Oil, I forget, there were five, and I got my story out before the group in Texas got theirs out, and Walter Beach, the guy, I don't think he was very happy about that. I think that didn't ... help me, but, anyhow, it was snowing, so, I couldn't make it into [work]. ... I'd spent hours on the road, getting out from here, and, finally, got up near Elizabeth and I said, "I'll go in the Elizabeth office." So, I go into this office, I call my boss over

in New York and said, "I just can't ... make it. I mean, ... it's already eleven o'clock in the morning and here's where I am." So, I said, "I'll find ... a story over here. ... I'll do something over here." He said, "Oh, that's fine, go ahead. It's a messy day." Oh, I go up to the person in the payroll department, where I had worked some years ago, you know, and Charlie Oakerson, the manager, is there. He said, "How are you? How's everything?" "Fine." He said, "What are you doing today?" I said, "Well, I had trouble getting here because of the weather," and he said, "Oh, well, we're having our annual Christmas party, why don't you come to the party?" [laughter] So, I said, "Well, that sounds good to me." So, I went to the party, and then, it got embarrassing. We got to the party and, all of a sudden, I'm standing there, talking to him, and there's a young fellow standing over [there], younger than me, anyhow. He said, "How would you like to come back to New Jersey?" He says, "I'll offer you your old job." I said, "Yes, but what about Todd Hansen?" He said, "I can't stand him. I don't like the job he's doing. ... I'm going to fire him anyhow." So, I said, "Well, I'll take the job." So, that was how I got the job, but, as I say, ... I was happy. So, I took a cut in pay and they redlined me so much, ... not only could I not get a raise, but I couldn't get a cost of living index. ... That was the circumstances, because, you know, we had the baby. So, anyhow, ... I got the job. It turned out, ... my wife had been working up in the plant up in Hackensack, New Jersey, but she did volunteer speaking for what was known as ... the New Jersey Petroleum Association, so, she would go out and give talks, you know. So, they'd heard about her in this office, and then, they brought her down and it turned out, they were trying to start a program, which, eventually, they called the ... Esso Hostess Program, something like that, and so, ... her job was going to be, not only would she have to give some talks once in a while, not as numerous as before, but they were going to give her a car, a white car, and they'd put the sign on the side, "Esso Woman Motorist Councilor." ... Her job was to go around and visit service stations and try to encourage them to keep, especially the rest rooms, clean, but talk to them about different things that they could do and it was all part of a recognition of the fact that, you know, it was long overdue, ... women were, maybe, the more important customers, because they were the ones running the husband to the train station or the bus station. They were the ones running the kids to the [schools]. They were probably buying more gasoline, maybe not buying the other products, which, maybe, the husband made the decision, if you need new tires or ... whatever that would be. So, that was what her job was going to be. So, I came back here and the guy in charge, I don't know what he'd been doing, well, in the first place, I just don't think he knew what he was doing, not Hansen, but another fellow, the program just wasn't getting moving. So, ... Charlie Oakerson asked me if I thought I could do anything and I said, "Yes, ... I'd be glad to do it," and so, ... I hired an advertising agency out of New York that I'd used once in a while and we did all sorts of literature to try and promote it, mail outs and things that would go to all the dealers and all that sort of thing, and then, ... her speaking engagements were taking a different pattern and I wasn't married, and so, the guy who was the boss said, "But we don't like her going out at night. Now, she's starting to go out a lot at night. We want somebody to be along, you know, just for safety reasons and, if some questions come up that she can't handle, theoretically, you should [help]." Most of the audiences were all women, you know, women's clubs and things like that. So, that was it. ... I'd go out at night, you know, with her and stuff, and so, eventually, you know, we'd stop and have a drink or something afterwards or go to a dance or something. So, eventually, that was it. ... Then, I was certainly a lot older and ... she's a bit younger than I am, but she was older, too. So, it worked out very well. It's been a good marriage. She had a funny one happen to her. One time, they had a company-wide public relations meeting down in Historic Williamsburg, you



know, and she was scheduled to give a talk and, you know, for her, ... [she] could have been a little nervous, because we'd had a lot of vice-presidents and big shots in the company there, you know, and the talk she was supposed to give, which we worked on, was, "What every woman should know about a car," and it was in the early days of what I think they then called "flack boards." They're like Velcro. You put [them in] the car and you could stick it on this thing. It wasn't quite as good as Velcro, I don't think, whatever it was. ... [She] got on to give the talk and we had rehearsed this thing and ... she knew what she was doing, you know, and everything was great down there and it's her turn to go on and this room is packed with a couple hundred people. [laughter] We never rehearsed it in a room that was air-conditioned. [laughter] She'd put these things up and the air conditioning reacted [with it], ... the things would fall down. [laughter] ... Well, fortunately, she's got a great sense of humor and she can be as funny as hell. [laughter] She finally had them eating out of her hands. ... That was the way that we met, by chance that I was transferred back and she happened to be working there.

SSH: Do you have a family?

KS: We have one daughter, Laurie, who lives down in Lacey. ... We lived next door for a while, and then, we got transferred and, like you, ... could not afford to buy a house in Westchester County. ... With our income, it was out of the question, you know, and so, we kept looking and we kept moving farther up and we finally got very lucky. We hit this, it was a development in Norwalk, right at the Westport-Wilton border there, right in that angle, and ... whoever the developer was that did it, and, later, we saw a magazine article that had been written about him in ... *House* and *Home & Garden* or something, his wife came in, and it was a very treed area. ... Originally, it had been part of some sort of a farm, I guess, and she decided how the houses would be situated and what trees would be saved. ... I bet we had close to a hundred trees on the property and it was not that big of a lot. I mean, we had like a hundred-and-ninety-five feet on the road, and then, it was a very irregular property, because part of the farm was left down here. So, it would come back like this and would go like this and would come in again. The very back of it was twenty-eight feet wide, which was on the little ... stream going through, you know, and ... each house was different. Like, our house, we faced the street head-on. The guy across the street from us, ... you walked around to the back of his house. That was where his door was. The house on this side was on a different angle. Isabel, next door, which we could hardly see because of the trees, ... again, hers ran this way and you drove down the driveway and you were at ... the steps to her front door. It was a unique little development, it really was. It was only about, maybe, six or eight blocks long. ... It was a real find and the funny part was, the guy we bought the house from, we didn't know it, he was in financial trouble. He had a very good job with McGraw-Hill and they were moving to Princeton and he was transferred and he bought, I forget, I think it was twenty-eight acres, someplace between Princeton and Hightstown, someplace in there, and they ran into a problem. For some reason, it was below the level of the road by quite a few feet and there was some sort of zoning restriction. He had to bring in loads and loads of fill and fill this place in, in order to get permission to build this house. Well, he was in financial binds. So, we literally, like, stole the house, like, unbelievable, and it was a great little house. It was good.

SSH: What keeps you busy now?

KS: Well, I'm program chairman for the retired Exxon group of New Jersey and I've done that for, I don't know, I retired in '82, so, almost since the day I retired, I guess, I don't know, and it keeps me pretty busy. Right now, I'm working on, in fact, I just got a commitment for it, the Seaview Village Kitchen Band, and ... they're a very entertaining group, mostly ladies. ... They use bazookas, and then, you know, the plungers you use to play, they've got all those. They've got all sorts of crazy instruments made out of kitchen appliances and ... they're really pretty good and ... I just got them signed up yesterday. ... Last month, I had Cindy Claus, she's curator of the Point Pleasant Aquarium, which is a very lovely aquarium, if you're ever down that way, it's worth going in. It's right up on the boardwalk. So, I find different things like that, you know, for speakers.

SSH: Mike, do you have any questions?

MO: Yes. As a veteran, how did you feel about America's entry into the Korean and Vietnam Wars?

KS: Well, I think I was probably like a lot of people that had been in the military. I saw nothing wrong with it; I really didn't. It sounded like, oh, Korea, we filled an obligation. We were committed to the Korean government and I thought that it was an obligation that had to be fulfilled. ... I sort of agreed with MacArthur. I felt, you know, if there's a way to do it and try to cut the thing off, it was terrible, you know, ... then, they just got overrun by the Chinese. I mean, it was pathetic. Vietnam, I didn't know that much about, but I thought, at the time that Truman made the decision, it sounded like the right decision, at the time, but, again, when you think back and you saw how the French got beat up over there, you think, then, we should have had better sense, you know. We should have taken a lesson from what they were doing. ...

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

KS: I think the one thing that I neglected to bring out is, I appreciated the education I received at Rutgers and in the Journalism Department, because, ultimately, down the road, although it took a few years, I finally got to do things that were related to journalism. You know, I supplied news releases, I ran various functions, ... such as boat christenings and things like that. I was especially pleased with the ability to conceive of the idea of running educational programs for college students and they were very successful, because I found that ... many of the professors, once they'd been there, were more than willing to come back on another year or so. I thought that was encouraging and I think, in some respects, I brought a different attitude to some of those professors and to the students. I was especially impressed with a gentleman I employed, ... or engaged, I should say, Phil Douglass was a very creative minded photographer and had developed a fantastic presentation on what people should look for in taking a photograph and how to use a photograph and how to develop it, and he told you things that you didn't believe could be true, but which he could convince you ... was a better way of doing it and, when he put on his presentation, you hardly heard a murmur in the room, because, ... actually, they were all learning something in a way that they had never thought of before. ... There were things like that that made it all very worthwhile for me and I found that, with the background I had in journalism, that it helped me and, eventually, I ended up being in ... public relations. Then, eventually, we called it public affairs and you did relate ... more to the public type affairs and so forth that the

company was involved in. Anyhow, I had the freedom of doing a job I enjoyed and was very happy in the work that I did.

MO: Mr. Smith, we would like to thank you for taking the time to do the second part of this interview and also for a lovely lunch. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

KS: ... No, I'd like to thank you both for taking the time to come down here. It was a great convenience for us. I mean, I drive on occasion, but, truthfully, Mary Jo does most of the driving. Well, when you think of the hundreds of miles, thousands of miles, she drove as the Esso Woman Motorist Counselor, [laughter] that's when I knew she was a talented driver.

SSH: Thank you very much.

MO: Thank you.

KS: Thank you, Sandra, and thank you.

MO: This will conclude an interview with William Kenneth Smith in Brick Township, New Jersey, on May 11, 2000, with Michael Ojeda and ...

SSH: Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

KS: Okay.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/23/04

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/25/04

Reviewed by William Kenneth Smith 6/6/05