

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK
AN INTERVIEW WITH MORTON A. SOBIN
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
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TRANSCRIPT BY
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This begins an interview on Dec. 11, 2001 in Van Dyke Hall with Morton A. Sobin and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

SH: Mr. Sobin, thank you so much for making the long trip down here today. Let's begin by having you tell me where and when you were born.

MS: I was born in, I think, the Bronx Hospital. I didn't live there, my family lived in New Jersey, but there were no hospitals there at that time. Since then, at (Sindenham?) Hospital, I think. It no longer exists. As a matter-of-fact, when I had to get a birth certificate for the Air Corps when I enlisted, we had to go through a whole bunch of things to get it. So, I don't know if I'm born yet or not. That was November 12, 1920. My parents, Anna and Joseph Sobin, we lived in Union City, New Jersey. I don't know what else?

SH: When and where was your father born?

MS: Oh, yes. My father was born in what is now Russia. My mother was born, this will get you, on a train in Germany going from Russia to Hamburg to get on a boat to come here. My maternal grandfather had gone ahead and worked in England, in Liverpool on the docks to make enough money to go.

SH: Did they talk about why they were leaving Russia and what the circumstances were?

MS: There was no doubt, they didn't have to talk about it, necessarily.

SH: What year was your mother born on this train?

MS: My mother was born in 1898, 1899, 1900, or 1902, depending on the paperwork you read.

SH: I have a grandmother with the same story.

MS: I would guess, 1899 or 1900, and my father was thirteen years older than that. So, back to like, I guess, '87, and they were good, honest, hardworking people. That's all I can say.

SH: Did they have family already in this country?

MS: Yes, and when my grandmother got here, she worked in a sweatshop in New York to make a living.

SH: What did your father do for employment here in the States?

MS: When my father came over, he was a youngster and he did everything, selling newspapers, you know. As a matter-of-fact, he comes from a big family. My mother was an only child. My father was one of eight or nine, and all the brothers took jobs and sold things, so, they could send the youngest one through Columbia Medical School, which was I think only two years at that time, and that particular uncle became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army. He went through three wars at his desire. It was his desire; WWI, WWII, and Korea, and then he had to have a special

Act of Congress every year, to keep him working. He worked for the VA up in Lyons. After many years as a surgeon, his right hand kind of froze on him. He became a neuro-psychiatrist. So, he helped some of these fellows there. He didn't get paid. He didn't want money and that was it.

SH: What was your father's occupation?

MS: My father was, you can call it, I think there's a word for it, doesn't sound very nice, but there's a word for it, customer peddler. In other words, he had customers and they would buy stuff on installment plans from him. I know, because I took over for about three months when he was in the hospital, after I got out of Rutgers, and he was at it a long time.

SH: Now, did your mother continue to work outside of the home after she had her family?

MS: Did she continue to work?

SH: You said she worked in a sweatshop.

MS: No, my grandmother, her mother was in the sweatshop. Then they had a store, an all-purpose stationery store. Mom and Grandma worked there, while Grandpa went to work. My mother worked after the war. She worked for a long time for Sears Roebuck. She was their brassier consultant, she was.

SH: That's important.

MS: Getting the right size is important.

SH: Tell me about your mother and father's education.

MS: Very little. My mother graduated from high school, as a matter-of-fact, Emerson High School in Union City, and she had the same teacher as I had, and being a stupid kid, I said to that teacher once, I said, "You know, my mother was a student of yours." Oh, boy, I was a villain from that time on.

SH: What is your mother's maiden name?

MS: Littman, like the jewelers, but not from the jewelers. I talk about Mom and Dad as being nice people, honest, fearful of government, you know, I mean by fearful, not trembling or anything, but obey the laws, both citizens, of course, and, but, my maternal grandparents, her mother and father, I still dream about and think about with love, they were such nice people. Grandpa and I were good friends. Oh, boy.

SH: Did you have brothers and sisters?

MS: I have one sister, seven years younger than I am, a little less than seven years younger than I am. She's down in Silver Springs, Maryland. She's got MS, had it a long time, so she's

missing one leg, and she's in a wheelchair all the time, motorized wheelchair. But my children, my grandchildren, all think she's the greatest person in the world because she has pizzazz, you know, she keeps going. She goes shopping by herself, goes down in the elevator in a wheelchair, crosses the street when the signals turn and goes shopping.

SH: Tell me about being raised in Union City.

MS: Well, certainly not the fanciest town in the world, but, it was nothing much, I went to school and the only outside activity, oh, I was a Boy Scout and my sister was a Girl Scout, you know, and she took dancing lessons. I went to the Jewish Community Center up North Hudson, the Y there, and that was really a second home to me. It was really good. I met a lot of friends there, a lot of people, certainly not all Jewish, you know. We had a routine. Friday night there was dancing at one place, Saturday night at the Y, Sunday, up on the roof of St. Joseph's. We did a lot of dancing. I did a lot of dancing. I enjoyed it, and I met a lot of people that way, women, young women, with whom, a couple of them with whom I'm in touch to this day. As a matter-of-fact, I got an Internet message last night from one of them.

SH: Good for you. What was your greatest interest, as a young man in elementary school, first through sixth grade? What really interested you?

MS: You know, I don't know if I can answer that honestly, because I don't remember any interest, but I remember the way I feel now, ... what I should have done. I really had interest in history and geography, especially geography from the first time we got it to now. I think my great thing in life was go to Africa. Africa, some magic, and I went to Africa compliments of Uncle Sam and that's where I met Gene [Eugene Polinsky]. I was coming in, he was going out. I met him in an airfield in there. It was funny ...

SH: We'll get to that story. It will be a good story, we'll get to that.

MS: Yeah, I think I would have been a historian, but probably a geographer.

SH: You talked about being a dancer, were there sports or academic subjects other than geography that were of interest to you?

MS: History, geography, English literature, I really liked those.

SH: Did you follow the baseball teams or any sports activities?

MS: Oh, I followed them, yeah, but I didn't play. I was the littlest guy in my ... I was the littlest guy in my class all the time, and at the Y, I got involved in sports, where they had two teams, blue and white, red and yellow, something like that, and that's one thing I always get picked number one or number two because I could run fast.

SH: What about going to the movies and things like that?

MS: Oh, loved to go. My grandfather used to grab me by the hands and say, "Let's go," and we go to the City Theater, which was a little dump. Ten cents to get in, a nickel for me, ten cents for him and we go in when it started, on a Saturday afternoon, at one o'clock, and I was living in Bayonne at that time, for a few years, he'd call me the day before and he says, "Morton, Douglas Fairbanks," and I came on two buses. He'd pick me up at the bus, and we'd go to the movie, Friday night, Grandma, Grandpa, and I, but Saturday, he and I would go in at quarter to one because "lights down" at one o'clock, and [there] were always two seats saved for us, the fifth row, the first and second seats, the ushers knew, and we'd sit there, and go through everything until my grandmother came down the aisle and says, "Let's go to dinner." We lived a block and a half away, and they were just wonderful people. They were just great to me.

SH: This was in Union City where your grandparents lived? Now, when did you move to Bayonne?

MS: Someplace in there, I don't remember, Sandra. I guess from the time I was four until the time I was six and a half, or something like that.

SH: So, you moved back to Union City?

MS: Yeah.

SH: So, you actually spent all of your elementary school years in Union City?

MS: I started kindergarten in Bayonne.

SH: Did you keep a kosher home?

MS: Yes, and I still do. I do, I'm alone, but what happened is, quite some years ago my wife decided it's time we better change over, so, boy, what we had to go through. We changed everything over, and from that time it was kosher and no hardship. So, I don't have ham or bacon and eggs in the morning, and after she died I kept it that way.

SH: Did you as a young man go to Hebrew School?

MS: Yeah, I went in the afternoons. That killed me as a sportsman. Every afternoon, after school, ran there ... four days a week and Sunday mornings. I hated it. I really did, because the instructors weren't good, I didn't know what was going on. I just happened to get through it, that's about it.

SH: Did you do your bar mitzvah then?

MS: Yes. Eventually, yeah, and did very well with all the other stuff.

SH: What about high school? Which high school did you go to?

MS: Emerson High School in Union City. There were two high schools, Emerson and Union Hill. Emerson High School and I tell you, even then, but, especially, in retrospect, some of the teachers were awful. I don't think they knew how to teach, or didn't know what they were doing. But, all right, and then when I graduated, a friend of mine, from the Y again, I met him, he was at Rutgers, he was a freshman here, he said, "Why don't you come down to school?" So, at the last minute, I applied here, and I got in.

SH: When you were in school, in Emerson High school, were you thinking of going to college?

MS: Oh, yeah, but the old story about "Mama wanting a doctor or a lawyer," and I didn't want that, so, I was an Economics major here, and that was kind of a mistake, too. As I said, I should have been a geographer.

SH: Well, tell me about the Depression, and what your memories are of that.

MS: It's very difficult to speak about some portions of it. I lived on Bergenline Avenue, and up, no, it's down a couple of blocks, three or four blocks, there was a big mill with an iron fence around it, you know, set in concrete, I think ... (Swatsonbacker?) is the name, ... and I remember men sitting there on the little edge of that concrete, just sitting and moping, not doing a thing. I saw the stories, you know, I heard the stories, and I saw people begging, and I saw people trying to sell an orange. It was very dreary, and it kind of busted my dad, who was very well off, you know, he did very well in his business, until the Depression came along, where none of his people paid him any money, and he brought blankets to them in the winters, and gave it to them for free, you know, just can't get along without blankets for themselves, or for their kids. ... Another disturbing sign is when the bank closed, Hudson Savings Bank on Bergenline Avenue and 32nd Street, and I remember a whole bunch of people going right across the avenue, stopping traffic, just standing there. Just standing there, not saying anything or doing anything, just standing there. They wanted to get their own money out, there was a run on the bank, but the bank closed down, and a few days later FDR closed the banks for three days then opened them, period, and things started changing since then. ... We used to drink beer, first it was illegal, and then it became legal, and, of course, I was fifteen years old, and I swore I was twenty-one, and the fellow knew it, and for, what was it, a quarter? Nickel? Quarter? You got a beer, and then you ate food that was available there. It was fun. I had a bunch of friends from a cross-section of the population. Union City was for the most part Italian descent, German, and Irish.

SH: Did your family get involved in politics in Union City?

MS: No. No, I got involved through my mother. She had a friend, who was starting a young Democratic organization. She says to me, "Go, go," so, I went and all of a sudden, that night, I was vice president of the club.

SH: What year was this?

MS: I must have been thirteen, 1933, '34, and I never went back. I called the lady that was running this, I said, "It's not for me." I thought it smelled of a red herring and it wasn't for me,

and I got out of it, and then years, years, years later, during the war, somebody came to the door of our apartment, and as my mother expressed ... "There were two giants," she was at least 5'4", "Two giants, dark suits, nice looking, but very tough looking." [I said] "What did they want?" "They wanted to know where you were." My mother says, "He's in England flying there." "Yeah, can you prove it?" So, she brought letters from me, "Oh, okay." They were [from the] FBI ... there were two reasons they were there. Somebody snitched that I was a draft dodger because they hadn't seen me around, you know, and the second thing is, when we got these passports [part of Sobin memorabilia] ... and everything, they want to know a little bit about us. That was funny. My mother said, "Two giants."

SH: Were there discussions around your family table about what was going on in Europe with Hitler's rise to power, and all of that in Germany?

MS: We didn't talk much about it. There were some discussions. We all knew what was going on. We hated it, and I used to go collect on Sunday mornings. I realize now what a nerve I had to knock on somebody's door, on Sunday morning, wake them up, and ask for money, in a can, for the people in Europe that needed help. I was too dumb to know what I was doing, but anyhow. Yeah, we knew what was going on. I tell everybody. I told my grandchildren, my children, ... that my maternal grandmother won the war, by herself. Every time she saw a picture of Hitler, or Goering, or ToJo, she ripped out their eyes, and she kept doing that all the time. I don't know what started her, but she won the war, she ripped out their eyes. "How can they win the war, they were blind?" wonderful gal. She had to do something, you know, and when the draft came along, ... the first draft was what, twenty to thirty, twenty-eight, the second one was twenty to thirty-five, the third one was eighteen to thirty-five. Well, when that came along, eighteen to sixty-five, my father, my grandfather, and I went together, even though I was already in service, I had been sworn in, but I didn't know what to do, so I went, and a first cousin of ours, very dear man, he was a dentist in town, he was busy, and he said, he looked at us, he said, he was at the table on the draft line, he said to my grandfather, "(Mya?) what are you doing here?" and he says, "I'm not sixty-five, yet." And, so, we went up, but that was funny when the three of us went in.

SH: So, you would have gone into high school in 1935?

MS: '33, Class of '37.

SH: You talked a little bit about the teachers, but was there one teacher that really was a mentor to you?

MS: I would say, no. I can say, yes, for grammar school, Ms. (Keller?), in English Lit. I loved her, loved her expressions, everything about her and Ms. (Mames?) again, English language, grammar, and so on, I loved that, but in high school, no.

SH: As a junior and senior in high school, as you began to make your plans for college, did you look at other universities?

MS: I didn't make plans. That's the thing. I wasn't thinking of it, you know.

SH: You were taking a college prep course, though?

MS: Yeah, yeah, and that's why I can't type to this day. They wouldn't let you take typing lessons, you know. But, no, I've thought about it a little, but, no, I figured right here in New Jersey, and I have friends here already in Class of '40.

SH: Oh, really? Did you come down to campus and check it out with them?

MS: With one of them, yeah.

SH: Who was it, do you remember his name?

MS: Yeah, Solomon Bachrach, like the photographers, he got killed in Korea. They called him back after five years and three months, they called him back. I said, "Don't go, you don't have to go, they're asking you," and he says, "Oh, well, I'll go. I owe it to people," and he's buried here someplace.

SH: Tell me then about how it came to be that you came to Rutgers. The process that you went through to be accepted, and maybe where you lived.

MS: Very simple. Sol said, "Come down and see the place," and I did. He showed me around, and he took me to the Registrar's office, I signed up. Simple as that.

SH: You didn't have to take any exams?

MS: No, no written exam, no, no written exam, at all.

SH: What about your freshman year, where did you live on campus, or did you commute?

MS: No. Oh, no, I couldn't commute, it's too far. I lived on campus at the Tau Delta Phi house, which doesn't exist now, as I understand it. He dragged me along and I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it. I was a fairly poor student in the freshman and sophomore years, as far as grades are concerned, because I didn't know how to study or anything. I really hadn't learned at Emerson, and in my junior year, started picking up, and my junior and senior year were very good. Junior year wasn't as good as it should have been, but I learned about girls. I met a young woman at Douglass, whom I knew from Weehawken, and we were together for about three years. As a matter-of-fact, I got an Internet e-mail from her last night.

SH: Well, tell me what it was like to be a freshman here on campus? What were the initiation experiences that you had?

MS: Well, one of the nice things, that I have never dropped, is everybody said "hello" to each other, whether you knew him or not. I see it's not being done. That's a great thing. As a matter-of-fact, I [walk] along Main Street, Hackensack, and say, "Hello," to somebody, and she probably thought I was a masher, you know, but I think that was one of the nice things. There

were twenty fraternity houses. I was in one of them. I became the president of it in a couple of years, and another thing I really liked about Rutgers' tradition, I don't know if they still have it, the Scarlet Key Club ... Yeah, they were hosts, I was in the Scarlet Key Club, and I just liked it. It was kind of ... small, at that time, we had a total of 1500 graduates, undergraduates, excuse me, undergraduates. Now it's what, 40,000? And I just liked the atmosphere and everything about it, you know. This school has a pretty great atmosphere.

SH: What about, do you remember whom you hosted as a Scarlet Key? Do you remember any of the speakers or the concert series?

MS: No. I know some people came in and we went over ... and I was very pleased and felt privileged to be a member, to have been selected as a member.

SH: Did you have to wear the dink and any of that?

MS: We had to wear the hat and the white jacket, that we had to buy ourselves, for Scarlet Key. I wore a dink as a freshman, that's about all. I liked everything about the tradition and there were some negatives. I hate to go into negatives, but there were some negatives. There was a Dean of Men, last name was Fraser, Dr. something Fraser, he was a minister as well.

SH: Was it Metzger?

MS: Metzger, Fraser Metzger, I'm sorry, Fraser Metzger, that's why I couldn't remember the first name. Fraser Metzger. He was a bigot. I'm not saying it behind his back because he's dead, but he was a bigot and certainly not a good looking man, oh, God, but he did do one thing that was very good, at least for me. He started up a class, a special class, one night a week for some weeks on the physical part of our bodies, you know, sex, in other words, sex education, and he was good at it. He gave a good class. I remember my roommate getting thrown out of one of the classes because of the way he giggled or something.

SH: What was your roommate's name?

MS: Irv, Irving Cohen, he died in the Navy.

SH: Tell me a little bit about what it was like to have to go to mandatory chapel. What were your thoughts on that?

MS: To go where?

SH: You had mandatory chapel at that time, did you not?

MS: I still didn't hear you.

SH: Mandatory chapel.

MS: Oh, yeah. We all asked for an excuse and he gave us a hard time, so, we just didn't show up and nothing happened. I went when I felt like it. I didn't care what they were saying or something. I liked the music. I liked the organ, (Campbell?) playing the organ. As a matter-of-fact, during the week I used to sit in if I heard he was practicing the organ, I used to sit in. I loved that, so there were no problems, but I remember one time I had a run in with Dr. Fraser Metzger. It was on a Monday, I got called to his office, saying that there were ... parties on campus or something, and our fraternity house was practically black, dark, you know, nothing was going on, and I was President of the house at that time, and he called me in. He says, "You know, there were a lot of things going on Saturday night that weren't very nice, that weren't legal, etc, etc." I said, "Yes." He says, "And all the fraternities that were involved are gonna be talked to, especially you fellows." I blew, I have a long fuse. I'm usually good at holding back, but I blew, "What do you mean, 'especially you fellows?'" I said, "You know what you're saying and I know what you're saying, and I think it's a disgrace, and I think you're a bigot," and I turned around and walked out. Went back to the fraternity house, packed my bags, and went home. I figured that's the end of me. Three days later, I got a phone call, "Come on back, nobody has said anything. Nobody has asked for you." I said, "Okay," and I went back to school. That was the end of it. I guess he didn't dare take it any further and neither did I. You asked about the chapel. I think the chapel here is beautiful. I think it's a great tradition. It's too bad it's that small, but that's the way it goes.

SH: What were some of the other activities that you remember participating in as a student here at Rutgers? ROTC was mandatory then.

MS: Yeah, the first two years were mandatory. I kept it to two years and in my freshman year I went out for the 150 pound football team and I weighed a whole 125. I got smashed to pieces. So, I dragged myself back, took a hot shower, a couple of times, went back, and became one of the managers. I felt that was smarter, and you don't break many legs [as a manager], and I was involved with the Queen's Players. My first year, I was in one of their shows and my second and third year I did PR for them. I remember *Room Service* and I forget the other one. I did some good PR. All over the campus there were little stickems before, nowadays, you see them all the time, little stickems with a drawing of a reindeer with the horns and a sign hanging out, *Room Service*, they went all over. We sold out the place. I'm very proud of it.

SH: Were you involved with the *Targum* at all?

MS: No. I was involved with, as I said, Queen's Players and I was involved with, you know, that's a year long job, really, if you're getting involved and I was involved with the fraternity, I was an officer, went up, you know, and as I said, I found girls.

SH: How long did it take you to go over to NJC at that time?

MS: I don't remember, but we walked. It was NJC, the coop, Douglass campus. It's Douglass, Jameson, what's the third one? Bishop? Well, anyhow, it doesn't matter, and I, it was a good hike, I mean really walking, you know. You're young, forty minutes, something like that. Sometimes I got a ride there, or back, and since lights out was at eleven o'clock there, so

SH: What about dancing? Did you keep up your interest in dancing?

MS: Yeah, for a while, but because after I graduated, which was June 8, 1941, shortly after that, I couldn't get a job because I was almost twenty-one. I was not quite twenty-one, and I couldn't get a job because you were almost gonna be drafted, draft age and so on, but then my Dad got sick and I took over his business for about three months, and then came Pearl Harbor and I was there the next month. One person I haven't mentioned, he's such a huge part of my life that I take it for granted. Unfortunately, he died three years ago. My friend Eugene (Graveren?). He went to Union Hill. I went to Emerson. I don't know how, we got together at the Y. He was a devil. He was a real pixie devil. He'd think of things for me to do, and I always got in trouble, and he called me on Sunday afternoon, he says, "You going?" I said, "Of course, I'm going." I said, "We'll go there together, we'll drive together." You know because driving was very limited at that time, not because of gasoline that was rationed, nobody had their own cars, very few people owned cars. He says, "No, I'll meet you there." I should have smelled a rat. I went there, I was the third on-line in the morning, I came back, I was in. I passed the physicals and my mother said, after I told her what happened, she said, "What about Eugene?" "Ma, he wasn't there and he's gonna call in a little while, I don't want to talk to him, that's the end." Sure enough, within ten or fifteen minutes there was a phone call, my mother says, "Here, how can you not talk to Eugene?" We were such good friends for so many years and still were, we were friends for sixty, seventy years, and I said, "What happened to you?" He said, "I just want to see if you got in," he says, "I'll go in." So, he went the next day and he got in and we were separated. Somehow, he went to the Southwest training center, I went to the Southeast, and it's a good thing, because I'm sure he would have gotten me in trouble. We met in England once. I'm on the flight line, I don't know what I was doing there, and in comes a plane, an A-20, and out the belly crawls somebody who looks very familiar. It was Eugene. He was over in East Anglia. He was chief bombardier/navigator for the 9th Air Force, and he washed out at pilot training, but I said, "Hi, what are you doing here?" He says, "I came to see you." I say, "But the plane is going away, how are you going to get back?" He says, "Oh, you'll take me back." I said, "Sure, I'll take a B-24 and just take a hop." Well, anyhow, he spoke to the CO at the bar in the officers club that night. I'm sure the officers club was maybe as big as this room.

SH: So, it's not very big.

MS: And, so, I got a what they called a C-87, UC-87, it was a twin engine Cessna, had five seats, pilot, co-pilot and three buckets back there and I brought my navigator, I said, "Herman, you better come along if you like to ride." Eugene says, ... "Sit back, don't worry about it," he says, "It's so easy, you follow railroad tracks into London and turn left." That's navigation, and it turns out, quite a few miles outside of London, were the barrage balloons. So, we found the place just as his plane is, his crew was going off on a mission. He just about made it, and I couldn't get gasoline for my C-87 because of the low powered engines and the only fuel around there was, they used to call it, 100 octane. It wasn't, it was more than that because they put some stuff in the fuel that pushed it up and that would have blown the cylinder heads off. So, I went from field to field, and out comes the Marines with guns, I finally said, "Fill it up with the gasoline," and I just took the longest runway and flew it off very slowly and I got away with it. On the way back, you can pinpoint the date, I can't, but you can pinpoint the date by knowing, on the way back, going from east to west, coming from north down to south, were gliders and

planes and DC-3s and everything else. What the hell is going on? So, I got underneath, as close to the deck as possible and got out from there and when I got back my CO says to me, “What the hell have you’ve been doing?” “What do you mean?” He said, “You just flew through the whole aerial invasion of Holland, on Aachen,” that was the bad one. So I said, “Eugene did it again.”

SH: Let’s back up a little bit and these are the great stories that I want to hear, but I wanted to ask you more questions about Rutgers. Who was your favorite professor while you were at Rutgers?

MS: Oh, I can see his face, can’t think of his name right now. It was Contemporary Drama. He wasn’t a Ph.D. Oh, very strange, I saw him at a couple of meetings, recognized each other and another one was Dr. (McGinn?), he was Shakespeare.

SH: Nothing in Economics?

MS: Yeah, Dr. Gideonse, slow voice, put you to sleep, but he knew his stuff. The only fan letter I ever wrote in my life was to Dr. Gideonse from Europe. He had predicted everything, the underground, how the dollar would work, and he taught me a valuable lesson in life, for the different positions I’ve held, “follow the dollar.” Like when Nixon got in trouble, I said, “Follow the dollar,” everything, “follow the dollar,” if you follow the dollar, if you really look into it, you get a lot of things, and, so, I liked him. You know, we had classes that would surprise you, like, I remember in my senior year with Dr. Gideonse, International Economic Relations. There were eight of us in the class, eight, you know, I never had big classes here. The most I ever had was maybe thirty or forty, but that was about it. It was more of a relationship than some of the students have nowadays. I liked Dr. (McGinn?), Gideonse, oh, it begins with an “N”.

SH: Well, we’ll think about that later. Did you feel that your Rutgers education prepared you for what you did later on in your life?

MS: No, but that was my fault. I didn’t prepare myself properly, didn’t take the right courses. I had no leadership, nobody guided me. Nobody at home would guide me and not that they wouldn’t, but they didn’t. It’s true with my social life, my academic life, and my physical life, nobody ever told me anything.

SH: When you got out of school, did you have any plans of going on to graduate work at all?

MS: No. No, I hadn’t thought of it. I really, Sandra, I feel the shame on myself to this day, I didn’t know enough. I was stupid, I wasn’t learning enough. I didn’t have enough of a background for any of these things, and I’m afraid that happens to a lot of kids coming to school. I wish there could be a class in the sophomore year or junior year of high school for one semester, class, extra time, if they want to go or not, they don’t have to if they don’t want to, just to help them in things like this, those big changes, what to do, what’s the future, you know, how you can prepare yourself, and so on.

SH: What about jobs between the semesters or in the summer, what did you do during the breaks?

MS: In the summer? Oh, I worked in different jobs. I made a few bucks, you know, to help.

SH: Did you have any scholarships while you were here?

MS: No. I didn't even apply for one. I didn't know, I tell you. No, and I don't think I was deserving of one on academic things. I wasn't that stupid, I didn't have that bad a degree, but I didn't know, okay, nobody prepared me.

SH: Now, after you had done the two years of ROTC, you said you didn't go on for the advanced, but did you think of the Aviation Cadet Corps or anything like that?

MS: What happened was, you had to be ROTC two years, if you were physically fit. Then in the third and fourth year, you took Military Science class, one class a week or something like that, I forget. Oh, there's a funny story ... things happen to me.

SH: Tell us.

MS: The man in charge of it, and the teacher, was a Major Croomquist, mustache, riding crop. He wanted to think he was an English officer. Anyhow, my roommate and I, Irv and I took ...

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

MS: Anyhow, and he said, "You don't seem to be interested to know anything about the navigation we're trying to teach you, ground navigation," and I said, "No, I'm going to be a pilot. I don't care about the navigation, I'll have a navigator." I didn't know at that time, you know, and sure enough, and, would you believe it, I met him in this room, you know, in this little officers' club. We looked at each other and I said, "See, I made it." It was funny. It was the first and last time I saw him after that.

SH: So, he actually wound up being part of the troops in England then?

MS: Well, he was an Army officer.

SH: But I mean he wound up in the Army in England, that's what he was doing?

MS: Yeah, something like that. I didn't even know why he was there. I just, we looked at each other, and he says, "You," and I said, "Yeah, you see I made it," and that was funny.

SH: That's a great story. Do you have other stories about Rutgers you'd like to share before we start talking about the military?

MS: No, I can't think of any right now.

SH: If you do, let me know. You said when you graduated you weren't able to find a job because of being eligible for the draft. During those few months before you enlisted you worked for your father?

MS: Well, I worked for him for like the middle three months. He was operated on and I took over and when we got sworn in, on December 8th we got sworn into the Army and I found out, I just swore myself in to be a private in the Army, that was it, until they had room for us. They didn't have room for us, so, I didn't leave home for my first assignment until March 12, '42, and they sent us from the Central Railroad Station in Newark. I bet you don't even know it's there. It's along Broad Street, not Broad, Broad, I guess, and that has a façade, you know, an unusual façade, you go in and there's a huge railroad station in there.

SH: Really, it's not the Penn Station that we know today?

MS: No, no, Penn Station was there. But this they got and they were very nice to us. They gave us sleepers, two to a bunk, so, we didn't get much sleep. I didn't like that bit.

SH: Where were you being sent?

MS: Alabama.

SH: How did you get to be part of the Air Corps? Did you request that or how did it come to pass?

MS: Well, when you signed up as an aviation cadet, you were signing up as an Army Air Corps.

SH: You did this when you enlisted then on the 8th of December?

MS: Yeah, yeah. It was a place, it was an army recruiting station and it's a good thing I got there early, the line was, but and I said, in my form, "I want to have pilot training." That's what I got, and they sent us to Montgomery Field, Alabama, excuse me, Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama. That was the first station and there was a field (Gunter?) Field across the city, way over, that's where we finally got stuck for a little while, until they had room for us, because not only were they training American cadets, but they were training British cadets there.

SH: Did you begin your training in boot camp or did you go straight to Air Corps training?

MS: You first, we call it pre-flight school in which you went to class, exercise, oh, boy, exercise and then you got ... the only way you saw a plane was up there [pointing up] and then, oh, I have it in that sheet that I'll leave with you to copy. From there, primary flight school was in Decatur, Alabama, up north, and that was neat because the primary schools, at that time, were civilian schools, civilian owned, civilian run, civilian instructors, and kinda nice. Very little military, then our eyes got opened, we went into basic. I went to basic in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas. You can't imagine a worst spot. You wouldn't think a spot like that is in the United States, but all right, and then from there to George Field, Illinois. It's way at the bottom of

Illinois, where Illinois and Indiana come together, and that's where I got my twin engine training. It's all in that sheet.

SH: What was it like to go to the South, to the Deep South? Did you have any impressions on your train ride or any stories from your time spent there?

MS: Well, while walking the streets of Montgomery, a few of us together, some black people stepped off into the street. That burned my ass. That really did. I wasn't one of these torch wielders, or anything like that, but I knew it wasn't right. The whole thing wasn't right. Blacks and Spanish people became servants only, in the Armed Forces, you know, make beds, clean the toilets, serve food, stuff like that. It bothered me a great deal, always did.

SH: When you were in Alabama, did you get any leave, any time to go into town?

MS: Oh, yeah, we went into Montgomery, that's all. ...

SH: Were there USOs set up?

MS: Yeah, it was USO at that time. No, not that I know of there, and we had a graduation dance. Theoretically, we were in each of these three schools for only thirteen weeks, fifty hours of flying, fifty hours of flying and forty, you know, something like and they kept us pretty busy. When you were in class in the morning, you flew in the afternoon and vice versa, and I felt pretty good down there in class. I think I came out in Montgomery at Maxwell Field, I think I came out second or third in my class in grades. You know, after all that wasted time I put in, I felt pretty good about that, and we had good courses and they were important courses, that's why I got in it, navigation.

SH: You said civilians were teaching you, did this follow clear through the three schools that you were in?

MS: No, the civilians were in primary school, first school, they owned the land, the runway, the hangers. They had instructors. Once you moved into basic, it was all military.

SH: In Arkansas then?

MS: Arkansas and then Illinois, all military.

SH: Now had these been WWI pilots, or where did they get their training?

MS: No, no. They were civilian pilots that eventually went into service to add wings, with an "S" in it that means service pilots. ...

SH: What was the percentage of the washout rate? Was it high in the classes that you were involved with?

MS: I can't recall. It was a no nonsense type thing, but I can't recall. It was a good amount. The higher you went in your aviation training the less the percentage would be because, you know, it cleaned out some of the stuff, and it's amazing, some of the young men that were air sick all the time, and they got washed out. You know, how are you going to fly? And I really feel it was from nervousness.

SH: What do you remember about where you were and hearing about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

MS: About the what?

SH: The attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7th.

MS: Oh, I was at home in the living room, with Solomon (Bachrach) who just came home from leave at Fort Dix. He decided to get his year up, so right after graduation, he went in because he had the same problems we all did. I said, "No, no, no." He said, "Yes, yes, yes," and he's sitting there in my living room, we're listening to a football game on the radio, the Yankees against the Dodgers, believe or not, football game.

SH: The Yankees, football?

MS: It was the New York Yankees at one time. There were other teams. The Giants existed, but this game was the Yankees against the Dodgers, I'm pretty sure, and he's sitting there in his uniform and he's telling me how these little yellow guys will never win and I said, "Okay," and then comes the announcement, and he got on the bus and went back to Fort Dix. They called everybody in, and he served five years and three months in WWII, then later on they called him back for Korea and he got killed.

SH: When you were in Illinois and you got your twin engine pilot rating, did you have any choice where you went, what kind of plane you would fly from that point on?

MS: No, as a matter-of-fact, when we graduated, our CO, our colonel there called me in and called another man in, (Lodovich Cerven?), he was from Hillside, it was just coincidence, and he said, "You two are getting a special assignment, you're going to the ferrying command. We need pilots to get these planes all over," and he says, "The reason I picked the two of you is because your records both say the same from your instructors, 'qualified to fly anything.'" I'm not bragging, I saw it in there, I'm just reporting, and so we went to Romulus, Michigan. No, the people who were graduating didn't have a choice. They may have asked for a choice, but they didn't have one, they were assigned.

SH: Did you ask for anything different or did you just wait for an assignment?

MS: Frankly, I don't think we had an opportunity to ask, [we] just waited for an assignment. Just waited to get the wings on

SH: How important was that, getting your wings?

MS: The second most important thing in my life. The other important thing was marrying the woman I did.

SH: Good answer.[laughing] While you were doing all this training, did you also write back and forth to friends and family?

MS: I'm not much of a correspondent, I don't think any letters exist.

SH: I just wondered if you kept up your social contacts, shall we call them?

MS: Oh, no. No, I have a habit, a bad habit. Anything in life, when I finish, when I finish that stage, I just turn my back and walk away. I was a professional photographer and made a fairly decent living at it for just about forty years, and I don't own a camera now, gave them all away.

SH: Your training was in Romulus, Michigan?

MS: Yeah, in Romulus, Michigan, there was what they called the Wayne County Airport there, and there were tar paper shacks they put up for us with potbellied stoves, you know, and it is now Detroit International because Detroit had this airport right in the city, practically. You come off the water, go between, right past one of these gas, natural gas towers and you land, and if you missed, and one night somebody missed, so, they finally got brains and took it away from that natural gas tower. It was a good airport. We got good assignments, and I was able to get to different parts of the world.

SH: Romulus is home of the Ferrying Command Headquarters?

MS: It was the 3rd Ferrying Command Post, either 3rd or 5th, I forget which one. The other one was in Great Falls, Montana and there was one outside of Baltimore.

SH: Can you explain how this worked and what your duties were?

MS: Well, it was a ferrying command base. The Ferrying Command was a section of the Air Transport Command. The Ferrying Command bases got the orders to move certain planes from here to there and they assigned them, and it depended where the initial plane to be picked up was, who got the assignment, you know, whether it was Baltimore, or Detroit, or Great Falls, there was another one, I can't remember where, but all right. ...

SH: Do you remember what your first assignment was?

MS: Oh, yeah, yeah. I went as a co-pilot to some Captain, a long skinny (?) and I remember him being very old, must have been twenty-eight, twenty-nine, and we were to take a B-25, which is a twin engine, to Fresno, California from, frankly I forget where we picked it up, maybe it was on the base at Romulus, maybe it was not. Anyhow, we flew down to Dallas, across, and then up to Fresno. I remember trying to buy some orange juice in California. They

didn't know what I was talking about. No, they really, [they said], "Orange, you want an orange?" To this day I eat a lot of oranges.

SH: Well, tell me then how long you were at Romulus and where some of your treks took you.

MS: From Romulus, Michigan, let's see, I got there in February, '43, and I think I was there, on and off, you know, in and out, probably about a year. Then I was transferred to Great Falls, Montana, where we brought planes up to our friends, the Russians, up in Fairbanks, Alaska, and while I was there, I was transferred to Florida for, oh, it's in there, what's the name of the field? I can't think of it right now. I can see it, but, it was one of the fields that was wiped out by the hurricanes at that time, and we went down there to get four engine instrument, flying, training. So, we knew pretty much ...

SH: Homestead.

MS: Homestead, and we knew pretty much what we're being prepared for was some sort of thing, probably in Europe, or Africa ... It was terrific training, four engine. You took off that darn plane from Homestead in daylight, with a curtain around you, so you get to take off by instruments and come in [for] landing, until the last few seconds, with the curtain around you. ...

SH: You talked about being in Great Falls and taking planes to Fairbanks, Alaska for the Russians, you also talked about being in Maxwell, where you said British pilots were being trained, did you have any interaction with either the British or the Russians at that stage?

MS: The only interaction was to have a drink together, go to the bar, they would drink anything under the sun, you know. See, what they were doing is taking the planes from (Lad?) Field in Fairbanks and flying them to Siberia, putting them on the Trans-Siberian railroad, which they ran for about 5000 miles. What they did was cut the trees along the way, all along, so they wouldn't have to remove the wings, and they got four or five different kinds of aircraft from us, DC-3s, A-20s, B-25s, I think that was it, three, oh, P-39s.

SH: Did they speak English, the pilots that you met in the club?

MS: Very little, and I didn't speak Russian.

SH: What about the British, did you meet any of the British airmen down in the South?

MS: No, they were just cadets like us and they were busy, we were busy.

SH: They kept separate units?

MS: Yeah, they were, as a matter-of-fact, they were in (Gunter?) Field across the way. No, we didn't get to meet much of the British.

SH: How do you think you were picked out of the group at Great Falls to be sent to the special training in Florida at Homestead?

MS: Well, let me first tell you how I got to Great Falls. I got home one time from a trip and someone, the squadron exec officer, says to me, "You're gonna be an instructor, instrument instructor, advanced instrument instructor, basic and advanced." I said, "I am?" At least that meant being in the same place at nights. So, I was instructing and I had two very, very unusual students [assigned] to me. The first student I got was my primary school flight instructor. It was so nice to see him, I liked him and vice versa. He gave me good grades, so I said, when we went up to fly together, instruments under the hood, you know, I said to him, all the things he used to say to me. You know, "You take the stick and go like this, rap your knees, oh, boy." All right, passed him, and I also had Mrs. Nancy Love as a student. She was, you know, with the WASPs and they were priming her to take a flight across the North Atlantic, delivering a bomber, like we had been doing for sometime and, boy, she was nice looking, and I flunked her. She couldn't do the job, at advance training she couldn't do the job. I said, "Let's give it another day" "Let's give it another day." Then I finally flunked her and somebody comes out and says, "You can't flunk her, you got to make a sting out of it." I said, "Okay, then you pass her, you sign for her," and the next day I was in Great Falls.

SH: What is the story of Nancy Love?

MS: Well, Mrs. Nancy Love was one of the headliners for the female group called the WASPs, I'm pretty sure. Women's Airforce Auxiliary or something like that, and a very nice person. She was, I guess, a widow, because there's Love Field in Texas, Dallas, outside Texas, that's a small field named after her husband, I guess, and nice, and she wasn't ready to pass advanced instrument training. So, I went to Great Falls and I guess one of the reasons they sent me to Homestead for a while was, I never got back to Great Falls from Homestead, they shipped me to the one outside of Baltimore, was because of my good grades, and my experience in teaching instruments. It's as simple as that. So that's about it.

SH: When you were sent to Homestead, did you realize what this training was going to do for you?

MS: We were told, in advance, "It's a B-24 advanced instrument schooling down there, you're gonna get it, and you're gonna be a co-pilot because you don't have enough time yet to be a first pilot." You needed 1200 hours and I didn't have that much time. So, it was as simple as that, and while we were down there, yes, we went to ground school, went to some classes and did a lot of flying and it was nice, it was interesting. I remember, I felt, I don't know why, I can't tell you now, I couldn't tell you then, I can't tell you now, I felt very alone down there. I don't know what happened. I felt very blue, depressed, alone down there, but I got through it all right, but I remember, I still [do], if we think of Homestead, I think right away, "depressed." ... Going back to Romulus, Michigan, when we were first assigned there, my friend Lou (Lad?) and I were assigned there and we got there like three o'clock in the morning into Detroit and he had a wife with him. He had just gotten married at graduation down at the chapel at George Field, and we called the officer of the day, or, you know, the one on duty, woke him up, obviously, and he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "We've been assigned here." [He said], "Oh." ... To not drag it out too much, he did send us a car to see him, so he could write something and he gave us

ten days, not leave, what do they call it? Well, it was a leave, because I told him we hadn't had any leaves since the beginning.

SH: A delay en-route or something like that?

MS: Delay en-route, yes, ten days delay en-route, thank you. How about us changing chairs here? [laughing] And we, now we had to have some money to get on a train to go home. I think we went to the traveler's something,

SH: Aid?

MS: (Traveler's Aid?) and we pooled our pennies and everything else and we got home, and, boy, we went on a train to Newark and it was a rotten ride, dirty trains, everything else. It was terrible. Anyhow, we got home. It was a pleasure just to shake loose, and the only trouble is I had to have everything with me that I owned, so I had a big flight bag plus the B-4 bags, big flight bags that usually carried the parachute. Well, my parachute was in there, but I had, my gun and a few other things. My father said, "Put that thing away," but I dragged it up the stairs. It was so heavy. But we got there, and we had leave and that was funny, nobody was expecting us. ... So, the next day, that's when I took, when we got back, after the ten days, when we got back, that's when I went on that B-25 ride and something went wrong with it in the air, mechanically, so we had to, the nearest field was Des Moines, Iowa, that's where the WAC were training, so we had a couple of days ... and it was nice, and then we went to Dallas. I remember I was very tired, very sleepy, because, you know, we played all night and everything else and I went into my room in the hotel and laid down. We went into Love Field, laid down, the door opens, I'm asleep, you know, but I can hear a thing, "My, God, he really is asleep." She says, "To heck with it, no use." I'll never forget that, but anyhow, we found the prettiest girls in the country, as a rule, a bunch, who were from, what would your guess be?

SH: The South.

MS: Kansas City.

SH: My father said that. He married a woman from Kansas City, my mom.

MS: You know, as a whole, as a group, I'm not putting any place else down, but as a group, yeah, no question about it, and the wildest city in the country during the war with Detroit. Yeah, because they had all those men and women coming up from the South to work in the automobile industry, which is really the aviation industry, and because that's where Willow Run was. Willow Run was so big, the place that they put these planes together was so big, that they actually had weather in there.

SH: Really?

MS: It rained, it fogged, yeah, that's how big it was, and they were getting a B-24 out of there every so many minutes or hours or whatever it is.

SH: So you were taking the planes right from the factory?

MS: No, no. Only once I took one from Willow Run. I wasn't very happy about taking a brand new one, hadn't been tested, so, I gave it a twenty minute flight test before I took it across the North Atlantic, you know.

SH: Where did you ferry planes from? Where were some of the destinations other than Alaska?

MS: All right. We brought quite a few bombers, '17s, and '24s to Scotland, which went to England or something like that, and they could have gone to Ireland, too, some of them, not to (?) consolidated aviations, big garage, I don't know what you call it, garage hanger, so to speak, where they fix things and so on and we took, I took planes to California, to Canada, to South America, flew across to Africa, went into Egypt once. I did quite a bit of traveling. I was lucky, you know, compliments of Uncle Sam, except there were a couple bum spots, boy, terrible, dirty, you know. I remember having to land in, I think it's the Hebrides, the islands of northwest of Scotland. It's still wild, you know, they have sheep grazing, and we landed there once and we were given bunk beds, not bunk beds, you know, regular GI beds, folding beds, cots in a nissan hut, which is out of metal and it was raining on me and my bed was all wet because of the dampness in there. I wasn't very happy there. Incidentally, [I would ask] "Where is the men's room?" [I was told], "You see that field out there? We had a few spots like that.

SH: Where was it most fun to ferry a plane to?

MS: Newark, New Jersey. I did ferry quite a few. I got a punishment tour from the same executive officer from Romulus. He says, "You're gonna go to Buffalo and they have a bunch of C-87s," C-87s, that's a twin engine (Cessna?) as I told you before, "and ferry them to Newark because they're going aboard a ship," and I said, "Yeah, okay," and I fly over the house, land in Newark, go out on a date that night, or see the folks, go back to Buffalo, sleep on a cot, a leather cot in the pilot's room, waiting for the next plane to go. Did that five times and then I was finished, and when I got back to Romulus, I said to the executive officer, "You know where I live?"

SH: Do you want to tell me why you were on a punishment flight?

MS: Oh, I said something. I always spoke up. I always told them how to win the war. I did. I was a good soldier, good officer, except at certain times, it just, it bludgeoned me to see some things, and I had to say something. Now what was that about, I forget, the punishment flight? Oh, I know, I know. It was a fella in my outfit, Mason A. (Shimer?) or (Chimer?), nice man, nice young man, from Jersey City and we were given planes. He and another officer, I forget whose name it was, and I were given the job to fly some P-39s from Buffalo, again, to Newark. The weather was fairly poor and hazy and suddenly, there's the George Washington Bridge, which we had to fly under ... We had to fly under. And somebody caught us, so that was the punishment, and I wonder what happened to Mason? He was a lot of fun. I had some people in the service that I would like to see now. I probably could get hold of them on the Internet, or on the phone, but I'm afraid to, because they were all older than I am. I was the youngest one in the outfit all the time. I graduated from here before I was twenty-one ...

SH: You talked about running into the Major who actually taught Military Science here, did you run into any other Rutgers men in all of the different places you went to?

MS: Gene. [Eugene Polinsky] I ran into him in Africa.

SH: That's right, you did.

MS: Sandra, I don't remember. I don't think so. I don't think so.

SH: I mean that story, I want you to tell me more about that story of where you met Mr. Polinsky in Africa. Was that when you were ferrying planes?

MS: Yeah. I was ferrying planes. We had already done so. I was a co-pilot at that time and we were at the airport, one of the airports in Northwest Africa, it was Casablanca, something like that, and we bumped into each other. We were on our way back. He was on the way up and it's funny, just a few years ago, he was in my kitchen, sat down, because I don't drive anymore, I lost the sight in one eye, so I gave my car away, I didn't want to take chances, and I said, "What outfit were you in?" He said, "I was a carpetbagger." I said, "No, you weren't. You couldn't be. I was a carpetbagger." Well, it turns out, we know now, that there were quite a few, four or five different outfits, and they kept it from each other, you know, it was a secret outfit. I met a man, not a young man, because he's my age, I guess he's young, in King's supermarket one day, and there was one of those little island things, stuff with it, and the sign, "Win a free trip to Scotland everything." I was standing there reading it. He said, "Have you ever been to Scotland?" I said, "Yeah," he said, "Where?" I said, "Boy, how I can't think of it now," I said, "Just above St. Andrews." He says, "I was in the Navy and I was up there." I said, "I was in the Air Force." He said, "You guys had the black planes, right?" Small world, oh, it's a small world, you know.

SH: Where were you stationed?

MS: Well, from Homestead, several of us from that school, we shipped up to the (5th ferrying command, 7th ferrying command?) ... near Baltimore, and we were assigned two crews of five people each to a plane to take over to Scotland, you know, to, gee, I'm tough, I can't remember the name of the field in Scotland that we always ferried stuff into. Well, anyhow, we went there and then we were assigned to a place called, (Mookie?) in Cornwall, and our job from there was in uniform and in planes marked, we flew quite a few times down to Casablanca, around France and Spain, through the Bay of Biscayne, and then some of us, not everybody was called into London to a briefing room and a Major stood up and says, "You have a new job as of now," and he explained. He's gonna give us civilian clothes and passports and what we're gonna [he showed us] on a map, you're gonna go from here to here, you know, around Norway, into Norway, into Sweden. I even went as far as ... Poland and dropped something, and he went through the whole business. "Any questions?"

SH: You raised your hand?

MS: [The major said] “Yeah, Lieutenant?” “What happens if we go down?” Meaning in civilian clothes and everything and, “any back up?” I don’t know how much language I can use on this? “Go down, why the fuck do you want to go down?” and walks out. I’ll never forget that. I told my wife that story, and, you know something, anytime that somebody ran into somebody stupid or something, (mumble?). I was shocked, you know, even the guys in the audience with me were a little shocked. They kind of snickered, they didn’t laugh, certainly not at me, and it was a legitimate question. “What happens if we go down? Do we have any back up? Do we have any radio? Do we have ...” So, then we were standing in, very shortly after that we’re standing in Selfridges Department Store in London, right out in the open, the guy is measuring me, civilian clothes. I said, “Don’t you think we ought to go in another room?” “Oh, nobody here would give you away.” So, one of the very first trips we took going to Sweden.

SH: Now, you were flying from Scotland?

MS: No. First, we were from Scotland. What the heck is the name of it?

SH: Was it Lucas?

MS: Lucas, yeah, in Scotland to, but then we got a base of our own down in East Anglia and the reason we got it is because the bomb dump had blown up. The place was useless to the Air Force, so we got it, and we slept in nissan huts. It wasn’t too terrible, you know and we, so, one of the very first trips, I don’t know if it was the first trip or what.

SH: Now, were you the pilot then at this stage?

MS: No. I was still co-pilot, because I hadn’t hit the right amount of time. We’d turn on the radio as soon as we took off. We usually took off about 5-5:15 in the afternoon, but that was double British war time, like daylight savings time, doubled, and as soon as we got up, we’d turn the radio to a station from Germany, ‘cause Lord (Hoho?) would, come on with Miller’s, Glenn Miller’s Hometown [humming], trying to make us homesick, and they played good music, good American music, so, we listened to him until he went off. He was one guy that got his (desserts?), as soon as the war ended, the English took him, strung him up and that was it. I think he was a traitor, and, so, that was one thing, a big secret, you know. Oh, the basic part of the story is he gave messages with all our names flying out of there.

SH: Really?

MS: Yeah. “We know what you’re doing.”

SH: And listed you by name?

MS: Yeah, yeah. He had the names. They had pictures of us in the gestapo headquarters at Norway. One of our guys, he was with the CID, I guess, I don’t know, and he had been in Oslo during the war and he says, they had pictures of all you guys, snapshots with long lenses. “Why do you want to go down for?” Now, after that, it was a long haul to go to Stockholm. We go out of East Anglia down here, go up through the North Sea to the top of Norway, go across Norway,

and we selected where we wanted to go. That was one thing, because it was a single plane mission. Very seldom did more than one plane get off in the night and then down into Stockholm. So, sometimes it was ten hours plus, sometimes as much as twelve plus and the same thing going back, so, one mission was twenty-four plus.

SH: Did you land in Stockholm?

MS: Oh, yeah.

-----END OF TAPE ONE-----

SH: This is tape two, of an interview with Mr. Morton Sobin on Dec. 11, 2001.

MS: Yeah, the reason we brought the supplies for the Norwegians into Stockholm was as soon as we landed, we went to end of the runway, the Swedes would, in effect, look the other way and a bunch of young Norwegians with a big truck would empty us out and then go on, and that was because if we dropped it over Norway, the Germans might get more than the Norwegians of the supplies. You know, it's so difficult to make a drop.

SH: Tell me what you were bringing in. What were you carrying?

MS: Gee, it's too bad, I had a picture someplace. The inside of what we called our C-87s, converted B-24s, there were racks and racks of bags about so high, let's say four and a half feet high, five feet high, four to five feet high and about two foot square and in it were guns, ammunition, grenades, in other words, all war supplies, for the Norwegian underground. As far as food or anything like that, no, we didn't bring that. It was really, and we called it and they were in white bags, you know, white sacks and everybody called it Norwegian diplomatic mail. The Swedes called it that so they could get away, you know, not getting in too much trouble with the Germans, because they were neutral.

SH: How long did you stay on the ground?

MS: In Sweden?

SH: Yes.

MS: We hoped as long as possible. It was great, you know, we stayed in a hotel.

SH: Really?

MS: Yeah. Food was great. It could be a matter of, let's say, we landed there two, three o'clock in the morning, by the time we cleared customs and got a ride to our hotel, wherever we were staying, and got to bed, maybe it's five o'clock in the morning. So, we go to sleep, you know, for a while and, so, we'd make the return trip in one day, one twenty-four hour day, or maybe five days, depends on what had to go back with those planes.

SH: Now, you took things but, you also left with cargo also from Sweden?

MS: Yeah, we took cargo from there. We were trying to out buy the Germans for the ball bearings, which were very important.

SH: When you would stay in the hotel, what nationality of people would you see? Was it a mixture of all sorts?

MS: Yeah, Swedes, Germans, who knows?

SH: Did you talk with any of these people?

MS: Oh, yeah. We went to a restaurant pretty regularly for lunch, let's say, it was called the (Regan Bogen?), the Rainbow Restaurant. It was big and clean and bright, had good food, and it wasn't anything spectacular, but it was very nice, and in the beginning of December, I think it was in 1944, when our fleet out in the Pacific had really racked up the Japanese fleet for about the last time, there were headlines in the papers. So, we took the headlines, the newspapers, wrapped them around a trench knife and had the waitress bring it over to the Japanese group over there. Crazy kids, I was twenty-three at that time, something like that. The Japanese stood up, and walked out. We got to speak to some of the German pilots. (Lufthansa?) was flying back and forth, and I remember once seeing one of their mechanics talk to one of our guys, looking up, and say, "Oh, that's the great secret turbo supercharger." No secrets. And another time at a party, we were having a drink and one of the German pilots was there, and I said, "I noticed you're not here very often anymore." I said, "What happened, you don't have an airport to go back to?"

SH: You said these things to these people.

MS: Yeah.

SH: How did they answer? How do they respond?

MS: He just shrugged his shoulders. Yeah, I remember that. He took it good-heartedly, you know, we are so-called professionals at what were doing and he knew what was going on. As a matter-of-fact, Norway was not just Norway. It was what Hitler called *Festung* Norway, Fortress Norway. He was beginning to send his fighter pilots, fighter planes up there. He figured they'd make a last stand up there, and make some sort of peace, and they didn't do it, of course. But it was not easy. They had a lot of antiaircraft and, oh, I told you we took our own route across Norway and I can tell you right now, 6230 North. It was a waterway, a fjord and we go up the fjord, because to get over the mountains you had to be about 13000 feet, and we were about, more or less, twenty miles north of a German air command in Norway with the planes and night fighters and everything else, and we felt, again, as I said, we were twenty-three years old, twenty-four. We felt we should do something about their brazenness that they kept their lights on at night, so, we took some empty whiskey bottles and in the floor of our flight deck, about so big, about six inches, eight inches across, was a hole through the, that you could drop flares, or you could drop what they call navigational bombs. They were little wooden bombs, glass front

and fins, and when they hit the water, they'd smoke. It was potassium in there and they smoke and you'd get a drift reading from that. So, we went over (Luiliard?), I think is the name of the place, dropped the bombs [whisky bottles], and went on. All of a sudden the lights went out and we laughed and laughed. That gave us the pleasure, that was it, and they probably whistled from the holes in them, you know.

SH: Did you ever have any aircraft fired on going over Norway? Were there any instances like that?

MS: Well, I got shot up once. You saw the plane. There were five of us in the crew, three were dead, one was dying and me. I told you, I'm a lucky guy.

SH: Now, this happened over Norway.

MS: Over Norway.

SH: And you were able to keep the plane flying all the way back.

MS: It wasn't over Norway, it was over the North Sea, west of Norway. The Germans had Intruder planes, night fighters, and they'd follow you, and we got shot up pretty good. I was lucky, and I, as I said, I had one gear that would come down, one that wouldn't, and one of my engines was out, so, I landed on the one gear and kept it that way all the way, as much as possible, until we had no speed left at all and fell down, and I was fine.

SH: For the record, Mr. Sobin is shaking. How armed was your plane? I know it was painted black.

MS: We had no guns on the plane. No guns on us or the plane because as I said, we're going into neutral countries. As a matter-of-fact, I once had a crew chief, a new one came aboard, a great big guy, and I don't know what happened to him, I think he was court-martialed, because I happened to notice when he bent over, he had a gun in his belt. I said, "What's that for?" He says, "Well, we got to have some protection." I said, "Get off this plane right now." I called the provost marshal, I said, "Arrest him." He could have gotten us all killed. I don't know what happened to him. I didn't care. I feel for people, but not like that.

SH: You said these were single mission planes. How many were in your group?

MS: Oh, we only had five planes and twelve crews. So, the most, the biggest group that ever went as far as I know were four of us, four planes.

SH: At one time.

MS: Yeah, well, we'd take off every twenty minutes, you know, have that separation. As a matter-of-fact, one time we took off, I was the first one to take off, and we got somewhat out of Stockholm and we had no, we had people there and radios, but we didn't use them. All of a sudden, I hear, on the air, "(Sonnie?) project," we were the "(Sonnie?) project," turn around and

go back, go back. It's zero, zero here, meaning, no visibility, no ceiling. So, okay, we turned around, went back. Now, I was the first one off, so, I'm the last one going back and that meant fuel problems. Well, I handled the fuel as well as I could, with what we called slow flying and realized, with my navigator at that time, that we're not going to get back to home base, so we went back to Lucas. We called in at Lucas, they didn't have us on their pad, you know. I said, "Look, we're running out of fuel. We only have a few minutes in the air, if that, so either give us lights and landing instructions, or welcome us into your tower." The lights went on fast, and the British get very disturbed about things like that, and that turned out to be fourteen hours and fifteen minutes logged and I only had fourteen hours of fuel. But the slow flying, that we learned in school, when I was a student, we learned in school, your tendency is to go, instead, you know, you have to pull back, slow flyers, and you have a feeling, "Let's go! Let's go!" but I had enough fuel to put in my zippo lighter at that time.

SH: What was your interaction like with the British, and the other forces where you were stationed, and also what was your interaction like with the Swedes?

MS: Oh, as far as the British forces, when we were stationed at Lucas and they had a great many airmen of the Royal Australian Coastal Command, and some British, we got along, that's about it. We'd have cocoa together, sometimes. We didn't have a relationship, we had business on our own, and that was a great place, we could take one bath a week in your helmet, warm water. So, you can imagine how we felt.

SH: Did you have an officers' club that was separate from the Australians and the English?

MS: No. Everything was together. If I remember correctly, it was together. I see their blue uniforms out of the side, and we, as far as in Sweden itself, we got along very well, everybody. As a matter-of-fact, there were twenty-three marriages between Americans and Swedes, not me.

SH: Your crews that were doing the spying?

MS: Yeah, yeah.

SH: Really?

MS: And you know, that's a big percentage. It didn't all work out, but all right, I had a girlfriend there, really nice person, very unusual in that she had, the family was very ... extremely wealthy. It was the Hagelin Family. They're the ones that made this coded disk, the first coded disk that every embassy had, as long as it was coded different, and she had two brothers, and a ... younger sister, and we had a nice social time, Margarita Hagelin.

SH: Now, did you go to their homes?

MS: I was invited to their apartment. ... I don't remember such things as private homes in Stockholm at that time. I don't remember. If they're there, I didn't see them, but I do know that there were apartments and they had a huge apartment on, I don't know, like the fourth or fifth floor of this apartment house, right on the river there. It was nice, it was very nice.

SH: Did you go to people's homes when you were stationed in England?

MS: No, I did not have any social experiences with the English, in East Anglia, where I was stationed. The one time I left the base to get out, because it was cold and dry and wet and dirty, I went with the Provost Marshal, I don't know how I got with him, in an open jeep, we drove to London, it was ninety-seven miles, and we stayed at the Savoy, I think it was. He had some ins and, boy, did I, I really spoiled myself with a hot shower, the hot water, I just stood there, but, no, I didn't have any English friends, except Phyllis, yeah, she was a friend. There was a young woman, who was one of two women that brought a bunch of school kids on a train out to Cornwall. They did that, they got rid of the kids during the war, during the bombings, and I got to meet her out there, and then I saw her when I was in London. As a matter of fact, she and (Milligan?), the other guy in the picture, and I rented a taxi. We made a deal with the taxi driver. "You're not doing much. How much will it cost us to have you take us to all the sightseeing places?" And we made a deal and we took him to lunch with us. He didn't want to eat with us. He wanted another table. I said, "What's the matter? You proud, you know?" He felt funny, but we got him talking. It was nice, and that's the only person I remember directly in England. I'm sure I had other dates. I know I had other dates.

SH: When you were in London, there were no bombings?

MS: Oh. I was at the Kensington Palace Mansion Hotels, one night when the whole crew was on leave there, and we had rented this apartment in the Kensington Palace Mansion Hotel, which was a rooming apartment, I guess, and I had a little room of my own towards the front, and I was in bed, and one of the buzz bombs came and hit. The whole wall went up. We were covered with gray dust and I took a picture of it the next day, the way it was bombed, and a few years ago, when I was in England on an elder hostel, I took pictures, the same place ... same design, just repaired and why doesn't Rutgers have, get involved in the elder hostel program?

SH: We will have to make that suggestion.

MS: Boy, they're all over the world and they're well done. It's continuing education for older people and it's just great. There are a couple in New Jersey I went to, they weren't so hot, but I can't see why Rutgers doesn't get involved, the name forward, and I'm sure they have courses here that they like to push and they make money on it. These places do it because they make money on it.

SH: When you were in England and you were flying from East Anglia, did you get any specific time off?

MS: No, there wasn't any ... no, we didn't get any particular time off. It wasn't a *quid pro quo* type of thing. We would sometimes, we'd be on the ground for a week, week and a half and other times, we'd go out in a couple of days and we, there wasn't any time off.

SH: Did you go to any R&R places?

MS: No, not in my case. I don't remember. I don't think there was any. They didn't think of it, because after all, we were only air transport command, we weren't combat command.

SH: Now, you talked about Cornwall, were you sent to a base in Cornwall?

MS: At Cornwall, the airbase there, I saw it a couple of years ago. It's a British Air Base now, right on the cliffs, and they didn't have room for us in the nissan huts for all of us, so the officers got to stay at the Knowle Hotel. They had tablecloths and young waitresses, food, everything else. My friend, Eugene, came there. Oh, I forgot to tell you about, when he went back, shortly after I took him back to his base, he went home on an emergency leave, his dad had died, had dropped dead. So, he went and visited my mother. All of a sudden I'm not getting anything from home. No packages, no Indian nuts, my mother used to send me. So I said, "What's the matter, don't you love me anymore?" She said, "Well, Eugene said you're living at the hotel where the King and Queen of England stay."

SH: Eugene again.

MS: No. That's about it. What happened, the last flight out of Stockholm back to England, on the midnight the war ended. We were going over Norway and some of the guys said, "Let's turn the lights on." "No, no, there might be a sorehead down there," and we came back. I imagine it was one of the last missions in Europe, and we hung out and we were shipped to Babington and then at Babington, we had a regular airline route, in DC-3s, London, Paris, Lyon, Dijon, Naples, Rome, things like that. We went all over Europe for a while and then 4th of July, I remember going into operations to see whether I was on the board. I said, "My name is not on the board, my co-pilot is." "Who are you?" "Sobin," "Oh, you're going home." So, then I had to hang around and I became the navigational plane for all these old, beat up, war weary planes going back. So, I had a whole bunch in daylight, it was nice in daylight, and landed in Connecticut and went home. Then while I was home on leave, a long leave, I got a long leave then, because, you know, I said, "What's the sense?" and I knew I was gonna go into B-29 training, a bunch of us knew that and then August 8th came along and the bomb dropped, that was it. So, shortly after that, in September, I was home.

SH: Did you think of staying in the military?

MS: Yes. Not because it was the military, but because it was flying. I love the military flying, it was a challenge. Even now, the planes are the top in the world, but when I found out that Congress is ready to let us stay in, some of us, ... but they're not willing to guarantee how long. So, at the will of Congress, you could be thirty-years-old and out on the street. So I said, "The heck with that," and I knew it would bother my parents, anyhow, but they were getting used to this thing, and I did not like Romulus base there. I don't know, there was something about it. Everything was all screwed up, it was too big, something about it, but they sure poured out a lot of planes out of that plant. You asked before, we picked up planes wherever they were manufactured, right in the Midwest there, one of the big cities, anyhow. We picked them up at Boeing, we picked them up at (Consolidated?), we picked them up in Buffalo at that plant and sometimes, we picked up some plane that had been in use because it had to go someplace else, and the Air Corps generally trusted us, our navigational and weather abilities, [more] than the

regular combat pilots. The reason we are being trained in Hempstead for four engine weather, because we'd go out at night and it was a bad weather. We hoped that when we took off over the North Sea, it'd be nice and clear, but over Norway, it'd be cloudy as hell, and then clear in Stockholm. Well, sometimes we took off and it was a little cloudy over the North Sea, and all of a sudden, big booms sounding, you'd feel like you're standing out like a sore thumb, and well, it's just one of those things. I didn't know enough to be scared sometimes, you know.

SH: You talked about bringing in the diplomatic mail for Norway, that's what it was called. Were you ever asked to ferry any passengers?

MS: Oh, yeah. On the way back, we brought out detainees. We brought out underground people from Poland, Holland, France that had gotten to Stockholm with the idea of going to England and ending up with their own forces. Oh, yeah, and I remember one time, towards the end of the war, still bothers me, a Lieutenant, 2nd Lieutenant came up to my plane, to go back, in handcuffs, in irons legs, and, I said, "What's this all about?" "Well, he's a deserter. He flew his plane into Sweden, dumped it here purposely to get out of things," then [I said], "Okay, but take the chains off." "No, no, we can't do that." I said, "Then he doesn't go on my plane. There's not gonna be an officer in chains on my plane." They took it off, and I said to him, "You blink and you're a dead man," and even though we didn't have guns, he didn't know that.

SH: Do you think this happened very often?

MS: No. Some of our forces went into Switzerland and Sweden. You hear about some of the 8th Air Force boys packing a bag before a mission and ending up in Switzerland. There were all kinds of people and all kinds of service. It's really a matter of training. The German type of mind, the Teutonic type of mind, is trained a certain way. I don't know whether there's anything wrong with that or what, but he's trained a certain way, where the Americans are kind of loose, easy going, and can be pretty tough at times. So, that's about it. So, I got back to Connecticut, went on leave, a whole month it was. I was assigned to Fort Totten, you know, no air base there, so, I called a guy there and I said, "Can I stay home? What do I have to come out there for?" He says, "No, Lieutenant, it's all right, just give me your full name, your serial number, and your phone number," and about a month later, he calls me back, he says, "You better come in." I said, "Do I have to come in?" He said, "No, I'll send you the orders." So, he sent me the orders. It was back to Romulus, Michigan, and one thing I didn't care for very much when I went back to Romulus, Michigan, I saw some of my classmate buddies, you know, from flying school and pretty scarred up, pretty beat up from burns and very bitter, some of them, very bitter. They came from the Italian Campaign, and it was hard to talk to them. So, I didn't, you know, I just avoided anything. It was very sad. You know most of the Air Corps, if they came out of a wreck alive, they were all burned, all burned. As a matter-of-fact, one trip back from Scotland, back after flying some planes there, they didn't have enough plane room and the weather was bad, so they put us on in a convoy, ship convoy, and there was one ship in the middle, and I forget which one it was, but it was one of the elite cruise ships before the war and four ships around and we were over here and we were banana boat, United Fruit banana boat, 5000 ton, very small. Oh, boy, was I nauseous all the way, and we asked the Captain, you know we ate meals with the Captain, we asked the Captain, "Where are we going? Boston, Baltimore, New York?" He said, "I can't tell you that." "What do you mean, we're gonna sink our own ship?"

“No, I can’t tell you that.” So the navigators went out [they whispered] they said, “Oh, we’re going to Boston, huh?” He was very annoyed, but it was a natural thing to do. We wanted to know where we were going and when we did get into Boston, they sent us up to some fort up there for a little while, and then they threw us out and we went back to Boston and went to the airport and, incidentally, being a ferrying command pilot, I had a little card, it was (War BB?) priority. I could bump anybody off anything, except the President and the Senators and stuff like that, and it was good for any mode of transportation. Well, I went there and I had a flight and all of the sudden, over the loudspeaker system, “Will Lieutenant Sobin please come to American Airlines.” I went over there, they had changed my flight arrangements, and a young GI walking with a stick came over to me, he says, “Are you anything to the Colonel?” I said, “I don’t have a Colonel, I’ve a Major.” He says, “No, he’s a Colonel now. He just operated on this leg out in the Pacific.” He was with the 5th Station Hospital out there, an uncle of mine.

SH: The uncle you spoke of before.

MS: Yeah.

SH: Oh, wow.

MS: That’s kinda nice. I think that’s about it, unless you have some questions.

SH: I did want to ask you, when did you become a pilot, not just a co-pilot?

MS: You mean a first pilot instead of a co-pilot. All right. I came back from one trip, someplace, I forget where it was. I think it was Casablanca and back. The pilot over there, I saved his ass a couple of times, I tell you.

SH: Where was he from?

MS: Baltimore. You know, he was a service pilot, and one of the things they tell you in class and I paid attention, you know, your balance is up here and if you’re in fog and rain and we were in a fog and rain one day, taking off. We got up to 13000 feet and he was circling, closer and closer, going down. You know, you get the impression, you’re going that way, so, you turn and I finally said to him after about 7000 feet, I said, “Vic!” He let go and I grabbed it to save it, and then another time, something like that, and I find he was having me do all the work, all the flying, wouldn’t let me put it on automatic pilot, so, I came back once, I said, “Vic, I want to get out of this crew. I don’t care how you do it, I want out of the crew.” “What’s the matter? That’s not being loyal.” I said, “I’m just not happy with it.” Next thing I knew I was first pilot.

SH: Where were your crew members from? Where were they from, all over the country?

MS: Yeah, there’s no rhyme or reason to that. It’s just they needed a name and number and the qualifications, that’s it.

SH: How often did you have to change people?

MS: Not very often.

SH: So, basically the same crew.

MS: Same crew, yeah. I had a crew chief, who was with the same guy, Vic, and he somehow snuck over into my crew. He was a master sergeant before he was twenty-one. A very pleasant young man from, peanut farmer, from North Carolina and, really, we became very friendly.

SH: How many officers were on the crew of five?

MS: Three, pilot, co-pilot, navigator, crew chief, radioman.

SH: Did you keep up with any of these people after the war?

MS: No. Oh, with one of the other navigators, I kept up a little while and then I got married.

SH: That's one question I do want to put on you. I had the pleasure of hearing the story outside, before the interview, and I'd like you to tell me again how you met Mrs. Sobin?

MS: I met Emily on November 11, 1945, Armistice Day, because I had a day off and I was marching in a Veteran's parade, and I didn't like it because the fellow in charge of our section turned around and tried to get too "GI" with me, and I was never one for that, so I turned around and said, "You're crazy, goodbye." I walked out. I called a friend of mine whom I hadn't seen in quite sometime because of my heavy schedule and I said, "Let's get together for the day, lunch, dinner, whatever." He said, "Okay, as long as about twelve thirty, one o'clock, I got to stop in, see a friend of mine for a few minutes. He's getting out of the Navy today." I said, "All right," I didn't bother me. So, we went over there and we waited a little while. Then in came Emily with the friend of hers from the Navy, girlfriend, who she was harboring until the gal could get hold of her husband up in Buffalo, and that's how I met her, and then some months later, let's see, November, December, January, February, March, April, May, about six and a half months later, I called her for a date. I had spoken to her several times on the phone. I called her for a date, and we went out, and that was the end of May, and we married, November 3rd. No fooling around.

SH: Where was she from?

MS: She was born in Pennsylvania, Chester, Pennsylvania, but she lived at that time in East Orange, on Central Avenue, is it? One of the apartment houses there.

SH: What had she done in the Navy?

MS: She was aviation machinist's mate, 3rd class, a grease monkey, you know, a grease monkey. If anything had to be fixed in the house, I said, "You know how to do it, do it." But she's quite something and actually in the Navy, after she moved, she was in Oklahoma, Texas and then Hawaii. In Hawaii, she was in the engineering department of plans, and maps, and blueprints, and stuff like that.

SH: When were you officially discharged from the military?

MS: I was home September 14th. I was officially discharged as of December 27, 1945 and ...

SH: In retrospect, what did you think of the bombs that were dropped?

MS: Oh, I sent an e-mail letter to War Room CNN, I'm gonna watch it tonight, I hope they're gonna read it. They answered me. Oh, I sent a note, "Why are we wasting all that time with all those expensive bombs? Burn them out, use napalm, or flame throwers for each cave." Now, I know, there are a million caves, but they don't have to fill the cave, they just put out the entrance.

SH: You're talking about Tora Bora in Afghanistan?

MS: Yeah, all of them, and I said, "I know we'll hear many squirms from other countries about fire, but, forget it, they're not doing it, we're doing it." Something like that. It was nicer than that but, so I got an answer by e-mail that they couldn't use it last night because it was too late, and they have so many letters, to keep watching, they always put as many letters on as possible. I went to CNN, somebody answered this to me. Boy, that one bomb that they used, that makes a crater the size of a football field, they ought to drop it on Rutgers Stadium.

SH: We won't put that on tape. So, evidently, you were in favor of the ending of the war in that way. Would you have been sent into the invasion of Japan?

MS: Yeah, we were all set to go to training schools for the B-29s. That would have been the next step. I kinda would like that, you know, but I was much happier to get home. I don't know why, it was the thing to do, to get home, get into people.

SH: How was your homecoming when you came back? Did you, you were on leave and the war wasn't over yet, but how did people treat you coming back from England like that?

MS: Well, I told you, I came back to Bradley Field, Connecticut, took a bus down to New York, and then New York to New Jersey, and I walked up the stairs, "Here I am." Oh, surprise, real surprised. I was glad to be home.

SH: Did you wear your uniform when you were out on the street during that leave time before you were finally discharged?

MS: You mean that month's time? Oh, yeah. I was still in, that was July. I got my notice on July 4th and I got to Bradley Field on July 14th, you know, Bastille Day, and, yeah, I was still in uniform. I had to be, and besides which, when I went home and went in my closet, I said, "Ma, where are my clothes?" She said, "Oh, my goodness." She had taken them years ago to be cleaned at the tailors, a little tailor shop nearby, the guy died, he moved away, and she never went and got them. So, I had no clothes, so I had to go to Eugene's store and get a suit and he fixed me up great. It was a blue with red dots going through it, oh, anyhow.

SH: How do you think the war impacted and made the man I'm interviewing today?

MS: I think the war made, in the first place, more of a student out of me. I studied and learned my homework. You know when it comes to a matter of life and death, and I was interested in it, too, and, of course, I went through a period there of maturity, a little bit. I don't say I was completely mature by the time I got out, but I got out when I was twenty-five years old, or just under twenty-five, you know, a month or two under, and I think I learned a lot for and against people, you know, depending on who they are. I think I learned to start reading people. Never mind what you're saying, what do you really mean? I liked that. I've always liked that. Emily used to ask me about that, about people. She says, "You're good with people, tell me what I should do about this one," and I think it was, I was in the right place at the right time, most of the time.

SH: Can you tell me how you became a professional photographer?

MS: Yeah, well, I was in England, East Anglia, you know, between flights, could be a lot of time, and they had in one of the old nissan huts there, they had a dark room. Now, one of the GIs there, knew something about photography and one of the navigators was a well-known photographer. Another navigator was a well-known photographer in Ohio. His first one was a Life magazine photographer. Anyhow, I had a camera and I was always interested. I took some pictures, and I wanted to be able to develop and print them, and I started working with this fellow, Art, and everything. We didn't have the proper equipment, but we made do, and I got interested in it, and then when I quit the job in Brooklyn because of too many hours. I couldn't take it. A friend of mine, a very old dear friend of mine, Class of '38 here, said, he was PR for (Von Claus?), remember (Von Claus?), and he says, "Why don't you take pictures for me? I'll pay you for it." "Okay," and that's how it started. Of course, he paid me \$2.50 a picture. I said, finally after a couple of months, I said, "You got to pay me \$3." He says, "I'm not paying it, it's the company paying it." I said, "You know what I mean."

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

MS: ... Work, and all kinds of creative work and I did, I ended up for a while there with three studios. One was basically a wedding studio, the other one was basically a portrait studio, and the first one, the original one, was a general studio, commercial. We did a lot of commercial photography. I had one man that worked with me for many years, for thirty years, did nothing but the photography of commercial products, in the studio, or on assignment.

SH: Now, where were you living then, or where were your studios?

MS: Oh, the main studio was in Hackensack, Main Street. The second studio was in Lodi, just over the Hackensack border. There was a big catering hall built there, Champagne Towers, and we made a studio inside. We paid for it, and I had a third studio in Ridgewood. So, it was a nice combination and I worked hard. I worked very hard all my life, sometimes as much as eighty hours, eighty-five hours a week, but I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed the people around me that I hired, really had, I only once in forty years had to fire somebody, and I gave him ten minutes. I

said, "You're out of here in ten minutes, or I call the police." He'd been stealing from me, but that's the only time actually I've said, "Out." I enjoyed it and I got involved in the photographic associations, one after another. I ended up as president of the International Association, which I enjoyed. That was 1989 or '90, no, '90. That combination, and it's unfortunate, it would have been delightful, because we were traveling a lot, not out of our own pockets anymore, and went to Hawaii, Puerto Rico, things like that. Emily got sick, I mean, and we knew she wasn't gonna make it and I had to tell her. I came back from the doctor once, she said, "Well, tell me." I said, "You know, I've never lied to you, and I won't start now," I said, "You're not gonna make it." I said, "But, you got time, let's make the most of it." You know and so on. So, at what they call my convention was in New Orleans. It was a great convention, beautiful and the banquet beautiful. Three of my girls came, the fourth one who was supposed to come stayed home with Emily because she couldn't make it. She just couldn't make it. Eastern Kodak called me a few days before the convention and said, "How's things going, right? How's Emily?" I said, "Not too well." He says, "How about if we picked her up in an ambulance or a limo take her to Teterboro Airport and fly her down to New Orleans in our plane?" I said, "Fine, thank you very much for it, but we can't do it." You couldn't take a chance, and we, ... the rest of the story about photography is so long it would be, we'd be here overnight. Your husband wouldn't like it.

SH: Now, you had four daughters, you and Emily?

MS: Six.

SH: Six daughters.

MS: We now have five. One was killed at WTC [World Trade Center terrorist attack 9/11/01]. Six daughters.

SH: Wow, that's wonderful.

MS: Oh, it's great. The girls are just so great and great to me, even now.

SH: Do most of them live close by?

MS: No. My oldest daughter, number one, lives about three miles from me. She's become my chauffeur, to doctors, dentists, and so on. My number two girl, who lived in Brooklyn, is the one that was killed, Patrice. Number three, is in Silver Springs, Maryland, she has three sons. Oh, Dina has two daughters. Martha has three sons, and number four is Amy, who's down in Florida, two daughters, and number five is Nancy, in Marietta, Georgia. She was with Kodak for quite a while, and on her own decided to quit. She didn't like the atmosphere anymore, so, anyhow, and number six is out in Minnesota.

SH: Are any of them photographers?

MS: Well, no. Nancy was with Kodak and she had to know all about photography and everything else. I never pushed. I never pushed for any school. I'd say, "How about

Douglass?” That’s all I’d say. I gave them one ‘must.’ You must go to a school within a 350-mile radius of home, period, so in case you have to get home in a hurry or we have to see you in a hurry, we can get there with a car in less than a day. Patrice was always a smart ass, said, “Well, that’s not fair. Half of your circle is in the Atlantic Ocean.” I said, “I don’t care. Find a school out there, you can go,” but she ended up with some good job. She was Executive Vice President of Aon. They had 1100 people working there on four floors. They found 800 and some of them. They found Patrice right away because she started as soon as the air warning came. She started her people down the stairs. In her office, there were about thirty-five people there, and then she turned around and goes back. They asked her, “Where are you going?” “Well, so and so,” a friend of hers was pregnant, “needs help.” That was the last they saw of both of them, and the reason they found her so quickly is we gave them good dental records and she was on the 92nd floor, so when it went down, she was kind of on the top of everything. I assumed that. I don’t know, but she’s been cremated because she was cremated before she was cremated, but that’s about it. Her company has been very nice.

SH: Well, I thank you. Today is the third month and the anniversary of the World Trade Center disaster and I appreciate you coming, with everything that happened.

MS: Today is the 11th, yeah. I still get periods of depression. I live with everything. Listen, when Emily died, it’s eleven and a half years ago, I never thought I’d make it two days. Here I am.

SH: I thank you very much for taking the time.

MS: Oh, please. My pleasure to be with you. My pleasure to be with you.

SH: Thank you.

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Reviewed by Lauren O’Gara 2/12/02

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 2/15/02

Reviewed by Morton Sobin 11/3/02