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NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JUSTIN WEISS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Justin Weiss on August 2, 1994 at Newton, Massachusetts with Kurt Piehler. And I would like to begin by talking about your parents, and first your father. Your father came from?

Justin Weiss: Dad was born in a small town called (Boraslav?). It was a border town between Poland and Austria; today would be located ... in Poland. You wouldn't have identified it as Polish, Eastern European Jewish was what he was. ... He was an interesting young man because his father died one night ... when he was sleeping together. His father never woke up in the morning. His mother, brother and sister then emigrated to the United States when he was fourteen. No sorry, ... he was twelve. He stayed behind to finish school, lived with relatives and had a job, he said, managing a lumber yard. [laughter] Anyway, he came over by himself.

KP: After his family had.

JW: Yeah, he was really very quite mature as a young man. He discovered that his mother had remarried as a matter of economic convenience, and he hated the man, and he got her to break it up. [laughter] And he wasn't the oldest either, but he was clearly the one who had the get up and go and the education, and he became a professional man. Never really went to college, but he graduated from law school.

KP: Really, which law school?

JW: ... New Jersey Law School, I think at that time.

KP: And so he was a lawyer.

JW: Yeah.

KP: And what was his practice centered on?

JW: Well, he did a lot of ... civil and some real estate law. And it was never a big practice. He was very hard hit in the Depression. Simultaneously he lost all of his real estate assets and was hospitalized by a debilitating disease which threatened his life for months ... and it took him several years to get back on his feet, so it was kind of a hard time.

KP: Did he mainly service the neighborhood where he lived in?

JW: Yeah. Well, he had a downtown office and clients from various places. In his later years he had a very small practice, but he was on the legal staff of the City of Newark, which turned out to be a very fortunate decision for him because it allowed him to have a decent retirement and benefits and so forth which, without that, I think there would have been some trouble. So while he was at work, it didn't really mean what it does today in terms of earning power and so forth.

KP: Did your father serve in the First World War?

JW: Yes, he did.

KP: In which branch of the service?

JW: He was in the quartermaster corps. He was in France. ... There was a glamorous photo of him, I remember, sitting in a railroad car peeling potatoes. [laughter] ...

KP: And your parents, how did they meet?

JW: Well, I tell you, I don't have a great memory, but one day we were visiting my folks, Dad was then 78, ... long after his fiftieth anniversary, but we suggested to him that he might want to write his memoirs. And Dad had been a saver of all kinds of memorabilia and clippings. He was a little bit vain about when his name was in the papers and so forth. He had sat down and he actually wrote the story of his life and that's how I came to find out some of these things.

KP: Do you still have it?

JW: Yeah, ... My kids have copies of it. Well, they met, I think at a dance. My Mom was pretty young, She was nineteen, and he was eight years older. And he was practicing law by that time. We're talking about 1920. They were married in February 1921.

KP: So your father went to war without being married.

JW: Oh yeah. Well, he was young when he went to war at ... 24. But they met and did some dating. He writes in his book of many earlier attempts by ambitious parents of young women that tried to nab him. [laughter] I guess they just kind of fell in love and that was it. She was, when she married, twenty years old. In fact, I had put out a little thing for my kids called "Four Generations of Early Marriages and Early Births," because it's been that way in my family. ... I have a married granddaughter and she thinks my age is not par for the course. We all married young.

KP: Your mother, did she work outside of the household when they were married?

JW: No, Mom ... worked clerically for her father who had a business and then after I was born she didn't really work at all. In those days you just sort of didn't, you know.

KP: Your father, did he ever talk much about the war or his views of the war and why we got in?

JW: Not a lot. He had one experience. I think he was in New Jersey at Sea Girt. The tent he was in was struck by lightning. The man next to him was killed. ... He was not injured, but he claimed to have lost his sense of smell in that episode, which I find a little bit difficult to explain. Anyway, he was spared. He didn't see any combat overseas, he never really talked much about it.

KP: He never told you about his experiences in France?

JW: There's not much in the book either, no. I call it a book; it's not published.

KP: How long is it?

JW: (laughter] Consists of two parts. The first part is a story of how things were with her and he had a good memory. The second part is filled with banquet programs and newspaper articles and my Dad's attempts to be sure not to hurt anybody's feelings by leaving them out. [laughter] So he was a very loving man. He was very busy. He was active in politics, active in Zionism, both.

KP: So you grew up with your father being very politically active?

JW: Oh yeah, yeah.

KP: Would your father be characterized as a New Deal liberal? Was he in favor of it?

JW: Oh yeah, yeah. ... He was the president at that time of the largest Democratic ward in the city, and he was the president of the Democratic Organization.

KP: You went to Weequahic High School, and how would you characterize this experience?

JW: Do you know how to spell it?

KP: Sort of...[laughs]

JW: (spells it) W-E-E-Q-U-A-H-I-C.

KP: Which has, in retrospect, a very great reputation for academic excellence.

JW: Has it? Good.

KP: Did you sense that at the time?

JW: Oh yes! Well, I began studies there in 1934 and, I think, it only opened in '31 or something like that. It was quite new. Oh yeah.

KP: And so the expectation for most of you is that you would go on to college?

JW: Yes. ... That area was inhabited largely by families whose earlier generation had been in the city. Usually the first generation in America, ... largely Jewish families.

KP: So you just got the sense that you were destined to go to college?

JW Oh sure! No question. Well, my Dad was a professional, you know, in town.

KP: And so there was also that notion in your family.

JW: Oh yeah.

KP: How did you end up at Rutgers? Why Rutgers, New Brunswick? Is there a story there?

JW: Yeah. I have to confess that--not confess--I have to admit that my life has been influenced at certain key points by things that sort of just happened to me, rather than my going out after them. [laughter] ... No, ... I applied for a state scholarship which, in those days, was available by competitive examination and paid full tuition for four years, and it was economical to go to Rutgers.

KP: So the state scholarship was really central?

JW: Oh absolutely. Otherwise I would have gone to a local teachers college, maybe Montclair, and studied to be a math teacher which is what I thought at the time. But I went to Rutgers and got the scholarship. It was the only school I applied to. ... Things were not good at home financially at all at that time in 1938. I started Rutgers at sixteen which was a little young, but I had a roommate who was a year ahead of me who was sixteen. [laughter] ... But anyhow, so I went there and I joined a fraternity because I needed a place to live. I knew somebody who lived there.

KP: So which fraternity did you join?

JW: Tau Delta Phi. ... I lived about half of the time, half of the years, at school and half of the years I commuted by train or by car from Newark because Dad couldn't afford what was then, really what it cost to live in a fraternity. We're talking about peanuts. Maybe 30 dollars a month for food and maybe 100 dollars a year for rent.

KP: So half the time you were at the fraternity and half the time you were a commuter?

JW: Yeah, yeah. It was crazy.

KP: So you attended school as a member of a fraternity, but then also as a commuter.

JW: My identity was not with the commuters. ... [laughter]

KP: So you really felt tied into the fraternity world.

JW: Oh yeah, yeah. ... That's where my friends were.

KP: So most of your friend were fraternity members?

JW: That or ... journalists, yeah. ... But more fraternity members though.

KP: What do you think the advantages of being a fraternity member were at the time? In retrospect?

JW: Well, it was a way of making some kind of identity or affiliation. It didn't feel, at that time, very exclusive. Anybody could get in who wanted to. [laughter] Our fraternity, I shouldn't say that entirely, but basically it was entirely Jewish. There were two other fraternities on campus which were the same.

KP: So the fraternities were relatively segregated by religion?

JW: Oh absolutely. I don't know that there was Catholic or Protestant segregation. I don't think so.

KP: There were two Jewish fraternities and those were divisions...

JW: ... Nobody seemed very troubled about that at the time. We just sort of [knew] how it was. ...

KP: Did you attend chapel when you were at Rutgers?

JW: Only compulsory chapel. [laughter] There was compulsory chapel.

KP: What did you think of that experience?

JW: ... I was very identified ethnically as a Jew, but I was fairly atheist. ... Again, ... I didn't object to it though; it certainly wasn't for me.

KP: Did you ever have experiences with Dean Metzger?

JW: Certainly I can remember him, I can see him before me. I can remember at this time bawdy lyrics from well known melodies that involved people like Dean Metzger. [laughter] But I'm not going to repeat them.

KP: I primarily asked because people have commented that he was a very stern Calvinist.

JW: Oh absolutely, yes.

KP: There is an article about you thanking, at one point, Frederick Merwin in the journalism department. Was he your professor at that time? Was he your favorite professor?

JW: There were two that were very different. He was the head of the program, I respected him; I liked him; he was a very kindly gentleman. ... There was another man named Kenneth Claude Jennings in journalism, ... he was more a newspaper man, I think. He was a strange man, ... he used to use words like "punctuality." He misused the language terribly. My somewhat juvenile goal was to be a sports writer and my friend Nate Polowetsky, Class of '42, and I also started,

briefly, what we hoped would become a nationwide syndicate pieces of feature articles that we wrote, but it never went anywhere. ...

KP: So you grew up with a love of sports?

JW: Yeah, yeah.

KP: And did you go often football games?

JW: Oh yeah, I'd go to all the football games .. when I was at Rutgers. ... I was second-string right end on the freshmen 150- pound football team. [laughter] First year sports were compulsory. [laughter] I wasn't much good.

KP: Did you go to Newark Bear games?

JW: Yeah, yeah. ... And my high school basketball games. I was a sports editor in high school.

KP: So journalism was a longstanding interest of yours and being a sports writer?

JW: Yeah, yeah.

KP: You mention that there was another professor that you were very fond of.

JW: Jennings and Merwin.

KP: And Merwin was your...

JW: Yeah, yeah. ... Oh, they were all others. I had a history professor named Burns.

KP: Arthur Burns.

JW: Yeah. I get him confused with James McNall Burns. Yes, Arthur I think it was. He was a fine professor. It was in his class that we heard the broadcast that the Martians had invaded New Jersey.

KP: Why? ...

JW: No, ... I'm sorry it was the night before class, and we all discussed it the next morning.

KP: What did his discussion center on? What was your analysis at the time? Do you remember any of it?

JW: Well, by the morning, it had certainly become clear what had happened. [laughter] But when the broadcast was ... coming over, it was panic. ...

KP: Even at Rutgers?

JW: Oh yeah.

KP: People really believed in it?

JW: Yeah. ... It depended upon if they were listening. They had to listen closely to the disclaimers. If you tuned into the middle then-- if you heard the disclaimers, then you could listen to it quite differently.

KP: But if you turned it on in the middle you did not realize it was a show.

JW: Yes. I think that was the key thing. And then people would discuss it, and you would know it was just a show. But it was so well done.

KP: What did you think of R.O.T.C. training?

JW: Well I liked it. It was compulsory for two years.

KP: Did you consider staying in?

JW: No, I didn't, no. It was not something that was high on my list. I liked the marching, and I had a good feel for it, and it stood me in good stead when I later went into the service as an aviation cadet, and we did that all the time. But I didn't consider it that I wound [up] being an officer.

KP: Did you think that the United States was going to go to war at the time, 1940-41? Or did you think that decision was something far off?

JW: Well, I'm not sure that it was that clear, but it sure looked like it was a possibility because things were happening at that time, as you know.

KP: But at the time you had a sense that there was danger, but you were not quite sure?

JW: Yeah. ... One hoped that there were other ways to put things to rest in Europe, but it was ...

KP: You mention that your father was an active Zionist. What was his sense of what was going on in Europe, particularly Germany?

JW: Oh, ... he was very, very concerned about Hitler. ... Responsibility, we later learned [of] the extermination of people.

KP: Did your father support intervention in the war?

JW: Good question. I'm not sure how early he supported it. ... I know that he was thrilled when [I] told him that I had decided to go right after Pearl Harbor. Of course, everybody went after Pearl Harbor. ... I think ... he would certainly [have] favored ... [intervention]. ... He was not an isolationist in that period at all.

KP: What about your classmates? What do you think their sense of the war was before we were involved in it? Everyone was very much for it, but there was a collective pause about how much they divided about the war at an earlier point.

JW: Earlier.

KP: Earlier, before Pearl Harbor.

JW: It was a difficult thing because one can understand a lot of ambivalence to be politically and even morally for at the same time not be eager to go fight, but one would have one [of] those kinds of conflicting feelings. But patriotism was pretty universal before Pearl Harbor in the real sense that the country was going to with (Roosevelt?). ... I can't remember any serious opposition to it by anybody, any peace movements it at the time. There may have been, but I don't know.

KP: When you left Rutgers, did you think you would be a journalist? Was that the goal?

JW: Yes, I did. Actually, I was only at Rutgers three and a half years. I got my degree.

KP: What happened?

JW: What happened then was that a ... fraternity brother ... in my class and I and another friend decided all to go and sign up in the army air corp to become pilots.

KP: So you all went as a group?

JW: ... Yes we did, at Rutgers. ... We all wanted to become pilots, very glamorous. We had finished our seventh semester and the college made it known that if we volunteered for the service we could get credit for the full four years, I think that was important for the students, an enticement for us. Anyway, it was early January of 1942, and I was inducted on the 21st of January. When I originally went for my induction they turned me down because I didn't weigh enough for my height. A sergeant there said, "Go out and eat a whole lot of bananas and come back." I did and I made the weight. [laughter] So that was the last I saw of Rutgers, pretty much.

KP: So you did not finish out the year 1942.

JW: No, I didn't even start the last semester. Journalism might have been where I got caught more of ... [a] spot, but hard to know. But I had been going with a girl, off and on, since she was 14 and I was 17. I had another girlfriend in college, but ...

KP: You saw each other a lot?

JW: Yeah, yeah. ... I said, a tearful farewell on my way to the service to two different girls at two different train stations. [laughter] But I married the first one. Not that I was such a ladies' man, but I did have a girlfriend in school and at home. A commuter's girlfriend and a New Brunswick girl. [laughter]

KP: I read in your file that you initially went for training to Montgomery, Alabama. Was that where you initially went when you were inducted?

JW: Well, inducted in ... January 21st, went by train to Montgomery.

KP: So you went straight to Montgomery?

JW: Yeah, which turned out to be an interesting thing because the country was in no way prepared for the vast influx of people coming. So they put us up on cots in an old mill in Montgomery for two weeks, then sent us home on a two-month furlough.

KP: So you traveled all that way, then got sent home?

JW: They put us in uniforms that looked like officers' uniforms and I got saluted all over the place. [laughter] ... Training in camp began in about, oh in April. ...

KP: Did you go back to Montgomery?

JW: Oh, yeah. That was just for some basic training indoctrination. Then the flight training consists of two months at each of three bases in the southeast, Florida, South Carolina, [and] Georgia. Two months [at] each. And I finished my pilot training in Albany, Georgia in February of 1943.

KP: What type of pilot were you?

JW: Well, I was qualified as a two-engine pilot, and I had no idea where I would be assigned. I married as soon as I got to my new base. ... I was sent out to Oklahoma City right after I finished training. I got married there to my childhood sweetheart who by that time was seventeen, and I was six weeks shy of twenty-one. And there we were, these two kids out in the middle of nowhere, and, I like to say, that the only science I took in college--I took two sciences-- military science and political science. [laughter] Very, very deprived education, I guess, for who I was at the time. But I found myself in the service assigned not to a combat unit, but as an assistant engineering officer in an air service squadron whose job it was to repair the aircraft that were used in training pilots. I knew nothing about aircraft or engineering, but I was given that job because I was a pilot, and one had to test hop the planes after they had major repairs, and you had to be a flying officer. Well, that was in February of '43. Between then and October, I became the chief aircraft engineering officer; the other other guy was transferred. And I was sent overseas in October to do basically the same job.

KP: Where were you sent overseas to?

JW: I went first to ... several bases in England. I was up near Nottingham first and spent most of my time in England at Greenham Common which later became famous as an anti-war protest sight. ... There's a training base there outside of Newbury and Oxford, and there I was. In the states, in Kansas where I started, ... I was administrative technical head of a group of about 400 civilian mechanics of all kinds. Sheet metal workers, parachute packers and I knew nothing. ... But the foreman was good, mostly technical. Over in Europe, I had about 250 servicemen for whom I was the engineering officer and once again, most of them knew more than I did and were older than I was.

KP: So you really must have felt like a 90-day wonder.

JW: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I had less ... test flying to do because our pilots were trained pilots, and they preferred to fly their own plane, which made sense. ... So I did that work really basically, for two years. I became, after awhile, somewhat qualified. ... I used to fly around mainly to go get parts. ...

KP: Or test planes?

JW: No, I didn't test planes overseas. We had DC-3s, the workhorses of the air force. I was in a troop carrier organization that carried ... [the] paratroopers on D-Day, towed gliders, and did medical evacuations-- those kind of missions. ... So mainly I was concerned with running the general maintenance and repair operations. As I say, I knew very little.

KP: Had you done much traveling before you entered the military?

JW: No.

KP: Where's the farthest west you had gone and the farthest south?

JW: [laughter] Well, I've described to you the situation of virtual poverty, so, I don't know. I think probably to Washington one Easter vacation with a couple of roommates. Been to Philadelphia, maybe that was about it. ...

KP: So you were sent out to Montgomery, Alabama. What did you think of the south?

JW: I got to the train station I saw two drinking fountains, colored and white, two rest rooms, and it kind of hit me that's where I was, you know?

KP: So you really had never noticed?

JW: Well, I knew, but I didn't feel it.

KP: Yes.

JW: I had read about it, of course. ... There were very few Negroes in my experience up to that time. I think I always felt an open mind about it. The ones I knew I liked, but it hadn't become a forceful issue.

KP: What about your own ethnicity coming into the south?

JW: I was a little uncomfortable. There were very few Jewish guys in my organization. I had a roommate named Weiss who was from South Dakota, who was definitely not Jewish. But there were very, very few of us. In fact, over in England and in France, the last six months we were in France, I had a chief of the engine department, a master sergeant who was Jewish. And he kind of avoided me a lot. And, after the war was over he told me--I had him to my house after we got back in Philadelphia--and he said, "You know, you must have wondered why I steered clear of you. ... I just couldn't handle cozying up to a Jewish officer. I took a lot of flak as a Jewish sergeant."

KP: Was he a career sergeant?

JW: No, the only career person in that outfit was the commanding officer who had been a sergeant in peacetime.

KP: In terms of your training, your initial air cadet training, is there anything that stands out besides going down and then coming home?

JW: Yeah. I was scared to death the ... first time I ... [was] inside of an airplane, and, I was flying it with the instructor. We flew what looked like World War I biplanes, Stearman Primary trainers, two wings, two open cockpits. ... I sit in the front, the instructor in the back. We communicated through, ... he has a speaking tube. It's attached to my ears through my helmet. He can talk to me, I can't talk to him. [laughter] And ...

KP: So you could just listen to him, you couldn't ask him any questions?

JW: And I threw up all over the plane. [laughter]

KP: From the air sickness?

JW: Yeah, yeah. And he said, "Well, we only have one rule; you do it, you clean it up." And I never threw up again. [laughter] It was kind of exciting to fly.

KP: Had you ever flown before?

JW: No, no. I was not a good pilot, I was a passable pilot.

KP: So this training took place at Montgomery. Then you went to several other bases to complete your training?

JW: ... I went to Lakeland, Florida where I flew these primary training planes and ... that was enjoyable. You got to see the city a little bit and have the $1.50 steak dinner in town and so forth. I enjoyed that training-- a good group of guys. ... It began to be exciting.

KP: Where were most of your fellow trainees from?

JW: All over, all over.

KP: Did you have the feeling that you were part of an elite group?

JW: No. ... A man named Gerry Blum, about whom I'll tell you much more later, was my roommate my first year. He was a sophomore and I'd known him in high school. Gerry finished college a year before me, had ... started graduate work in psychology at Stanford and, during the war, he was a psychologist for the air corps. He was involved in working with the tests, the qualifying tests that we got when we came down to Montgomery to determine whether we would go for pilot, or navigator, or bombardier's training. And sometime, well after the fact, he had seen my results, and, he said, that I had a perfect score for all three, which was unusual, ... I don't know why.

... So that early flying was good, a little scary, but we learned a lot about how to fly a plane, how to recognize enemy aircraft ... a lot of that stuff. I got pneumonia in the middle of my second training, and I was in the hospital two weeks and home two weeks. Catch up, ... we learned to fly at night. The third place, Albany, Georgia, where I took my two-engine planes. I kind of went blissfully through the whole thing. I made some good friends, you know. I remember a lot of stress, running three miles a morning, that kind of stuff. I was tuned into it.

KP: What was the success rate? How many people did not make it through training?

JW: I don't know. My general sense is about 25 to 30 percent.

KP: So, there was the stress that you might not make it?

JW: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

KP: And then what would happen?

JW: Well, you would be reassigned somewhere. ...

KP: After you finished training did you expect to see combat?

JW: Yeah, ... I had no reason to think otherwise. I was not happy about it, because as I said, I had planned to be married at that point.

KP: When did you propose and how did that come about?

JW: When I was home with that two-month furlough. [laughter]

KP: So, after you got out of Montgomery, you came back and proposed?

JW: Yeah. We decided that, like millions of other people, I guess, who knew what the future would hold, and we loved each other, and we wanted to be together and so, when I finished my training, we got married.

KP: And your bride and you moved. You were assigned as an engineering officer to Oklahoma.

JW: Well, yeah. We were there, basically, just to kind of get placed. Then we moved to a place with the unlikely-sounding name of Arkansas City, Kansas, which was on the Arkansas River just north of Oklahoma. And it was there that I began my engineering officer duties.

KP: Which you had no background.

JW: None.

KP: Do you have any idea why the army air corps did this?

JW: I'm not sure, I don't know, if there's more to it than that. It may well be ... that I wasn't graded highly enough to be considered a good risk as pilot trainer. That's entirely possible.

KP: No one had ever explained to you why?

JW: No, no. ...

KP: You were just given these orders?

JW: Oh yeah. You went where you were told. [laughter]

KP: Before talking about your duties, your wife joined you. What was that like? Your wife was from Newark and set up home in Kansas.

JW: Irvington. Well, this base had been started by a cadre of all kinds of mechanics and so forth from Lubbock, Texas. And so this homogeneous group of Texans, and they welcomed us very much. Looked out after us. We lived ... in an apartment and one of these families lived upstairs from us. Just very nice.

KP: You had a very good experience with meeting Texans?

JW: Oh absolutely. They were all up, yup. All of them had two first names, but that was all right. [laughter] Billy Joe and Harry Ray, no, but they were fine. Had I gotten more deeply involved and stayed longer, I suppose, I would have had a chance to ... [get] a more differentiated

view of things, but we worked hard. My wife was terrified when she would see me flying overhead. [laughter] I enjoyed it.

KP: Did you live on base?

JW: No, no. In town.

KP: How big was the town?

JW: ... [inaudible]

KP: Did you have a sense of what the war did to the town? For example, did you have a hard time getting an apartment?

JW: No, no. ... It was not far from the Indian country. The hotel in town was the Osage Hotel. Ponca City was not far. We went to Indian jamborees there.

KP: Which must have been very exotic for you.

JW: Yeah.

KP: Did it match your images of what you had seen in movies and what you had read? Indian culture, Texan culture, did anything strike you?

JW: Well, it was all such superficial contact. We just would come in and would look and enjoy. It wasn't quite like in the cowboy movies. You could see these Indian people. They weren't savages in spite of what it says in the Declaration of Independence. You know about that?

KP: Yes, yes.

JW: It was kind of like sightseeing, you know. I just had this image of myself as a very naive person, not traveled, not particularly well-read. ...

KP: Even though you had been a journalism major?

JW: I was a slow reader all my life. I came into elementary school knowing how to read from my uncle's teaching, didn't know how to read the right way. When I moved from the suburbs--when my Dad ... got struck down, we left that beautiful house he had built in Verona and came back to Newark, I was put back a year and a half in school to be closer to my age, and I still finished high school at sixteen. I guess, I had some illusion I was real smart, but I turned out not to be all that smart. But, I'm digressing.

KP: No, that's okay. Did your wife work at the town where you were stationed in Kansas?

JW: No. She didn't know what to do with herself.

KP: What did you do?

JW: My wife was a very, very bright capable woman. Brighter than I, to be sure. She passed up college to come marry me, just out of high school. Had planned to go to New York University, but her plans changed, and she never did go to college.

KP: Things like going out to see the Indians, would that be one of the common things you did for recreation?

JW: No, we just went once. ... I wasn't off duty a lot, really.

KP: You were really on duty quite a bit?

JW: Yeah, it was pretty much [a] seven-day-a-week job. In fact, I would go flying on Saturday and Sunday. Not entirely, we played some softball with people, but there wasn't a lot to see there.

KP: So you felt very isolated?

JW: Yes. Each of us had a younger brother and in the summer of '43 ... they traveled out by train and spent a couple of weeks with us, which was nice. My brother then was nine and her brother was fourteen.

KP: So this was a very exotic trip for them.

JW: Oh wow! ... Yeah, such a different world as you're finding out. ...

KP: You mentioned you were supervising 400 civilians. How did that go without having an engineering background?

JW: Well, I stayed in my office probably more than I should, and I walked around, and became acquainted with things. The foreman, as I say, was very nice and very kind to me, and I suppose really ran the place, and I did the flying, but he always let me in on what was happening.

KP: So your foreman would come in to you and say this is what we should do, and you would just nod your head and say, "Of course."

JW: Oh absolutely. I can't recall ever saying, "Wait a minute; hold on there!" [laughter] But technically, it was my command and the military appointed him.

KP: And he was a civilian?

JW: Oh yes. All of them were. ... I had an assistant engineering officer, ... I was six months a second lieutenant, six months a first lieutenant and became a captain when I was, well let's see, ... before I was 22. ... But that was par for the course. ...

KP: How effective was the shop, looking back?

JW: I think it was pretty good, because these people ... had all been doing this in Texas. They were brought up.

KP: So they were very much a cohesive unit?

JW: Yes. And they knew what they were about. I mean, they were not entirely ... [Texans]. We hired some local people, but basically, the people who ran it and the staffs were from Lubbock, Texas, and they worked together, they knew their business. ... There was a custom which I adhered to. For example, if I was test flying a plane, we were still, they were single-wing, two open cockpit planes. I would pick somebody who worked on the plane and say, "Grab a parachute; let's go up and see if it flies." [laughter]

KP: So, in a sense, you stood by your work.

JW: Yeah, sure. One day I came to the woman who headed the parachute packing shop, and I said, "Grab a parachute." ... She hadn't expected that; it was funny.

KP: How many women did you have working there?

JW: Very few.

KP: Were they centrally in the parachute area?

JW: There weren't many. I'm trying to recall. Some clerical people ...

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

KP: So you were sent to England?

JW: My wife became pregnant in ... early June.

KP: June of 1943.

JW: ... She was still seventeen.

KP: Your wife was young and this was a lot to deal with.

JW: Oh yeah, yeah. Her father came out and he was a great man. He helped get our act together and returned a couple of hundred soda bottles and packed us up.

KP: And your wife. Where did your wife go to?

JW: Back home. Lived with her folks.

KP: And had the baby when you were overseas?

JW: I was not there. I first saw my daughter when she was nineteen months old, and she was talking, and she said, "Welcome home from France, Daddy. What did you bring me?" She had been coached for quite awhile. [laughter]

KP: So you had not seen your daughter?

JW: ... Pictures.

KP: Pictures, but you hadn't seen her take her first steps or ...

JW: None of it.

KP: What was your relationship like with your daughter? Do you think that in some ways affected it?

JW: Well, yeah. See, my wife lived with her ... parents and younger brother, and she was totally dependent upon them. Her parents essentially were ... my daughter's parents. Not that my wife was in any way, not a mother, but they were the grown-ups. They lived ... in their house. And, ... the whole time I was away, and for about six months after I got back, we lived there. Then we moved to our own apartment, which was at one end of the building and they moved to the other end of the building. Very, very close with her parents.

KP: So your wife was back in Irvington and you were sent to England.

JW: She went to work for Prudential Insurance Company.

KP: Downtown Newark.

JW: Yes.

KP: And you went to England. How did you embark?

JW: Well, I took a train from Kansas to Taunton, Massachusetts, Camp Myles Standish, which was a staging area for overseas people. And we got on a boat, which was a small boat. U.S.S. Borinquen, which was a liberty ship. ... It was a rough voyage, and we landed in Cardiff, Wales and went by train to our base.

KP: And your base was in Greenham Common?

JW: No, that was my final base. I was ... up near Nottingham for the first part. ... Interesting experience there. Again, I was the engineering officer--didn't know much, you know. It was a very icy day in January and this little plane, the same plane I had learned to fly, two engines, came into the base and skidded on the ice and cracked up. We looked at it, and my chief sergeant said, "This can't be repaired." So we wrote it off as salvage and after the paperwork was over, he said, "We can fix it for you." [laughter] So they fixed it, and I had a private unlisted plane for a long time.

KP: So you had done all the paperwork and sent it in.

JW: It ... didn't exist. I had very little functional flying at that time. ... You had to fly four hours a month in order to get your flight pay. And I would fly easily four hours a month. I would fly in the double daylight saving time. I would take them up at ten o'clock at night because it would be nice and light. I'd be cruising around in my plane--[laughter] two engine, five passenger plane.

KP: What did you think of England? What was your image of England going through high school and college and then the reality of living in England?

JW: Well, most of what I knew about England really was historical England, you know. ... By the time I got over, the heaviest of the bombing was over, the blitz. But, there were buzz bombs and ... every night blackouts on the base in England. Our headlights were painted over, except for one quarter inch by one inch space for a light. ... Total blackout in London, there were many buzz bombs that hit. ...

... The English people I knew, I kind of liked. I went to dances and things. Actually it was a seven-day-a-week job. ... One day my commanding officer called me, and he said, "Orders to get into my jeep with my driver and go to London for the weekend."

KP: You really did not have a lot of leave to the point where your commander said it was time for you to go on leave?

JW: He said, "I'll make you a promise that the hangar will still be standing when you get back."

KP: So you did take the weekend in London.

JW: Yeah.

KP: What did you think of your weekend in London?

JW: Very exciting, very exciting, yeah. ... I didn't know a lot about where to go or what to see, but years later when I returned I had more of a feel for what it was like. But, it was dark and the place was full of servicemen of all kinds. London was prostitutes and profiteers of all kinds.

KP: So there was a seedy element to it?

JW: Yes, ... but mostly because of the war. Combination of terror that had subsided, a sense that things, ... that the tide had turned. ... Most of the children were still away, out in the country, but people were less scared than they had been. ... I didn't feel scared.

KP: Did you ever experience direct attack, a bombing or a close call?

JW: No. The experience I had--of course, it's stamped indelibly in my mind--is this. At one point at our base in England, we had gliders ... and the troops would come over and they would take training flights. ... And then at a certain point the British moved some men in with a number of British-built gliders called Horsa gliders. They were mainly wooden gliders, glued together. One day, on a training mission, one of our planes towed a Horsa glider off the ground, and he went around and kind of circled the field and the towing hook, no, my mistake, the elevators fell off the glider, the rear elevators, and it couldn't fly. They cut it loose and it plunged to the ground and there were eighteen men killed in their seats. It was horrible. One of my jobs was, as the aircraft engineering officer, and I had to investigate the crash, ... and I had to check it out. I had a number of other crashes I had to check out, but that was ...

KP: That was really terrible.

JW: Oh yeah. ... There was ... never another Horsa glider used by the Americans after that.

KP: This was a bad design?

JW: Yeah, yeah. They were old. The British called airplanes "kites" in those days and those really were like kites. Airplanes were "crates", gliders were "kites", sorry. Airplanes were crates. So that was the most difficult. I had a head engine mechanic working on a plane. One of the aircraft mechanics was killed on the job. I came to see his brains oozing out of his head. Struck on the head.

KP: From something from behind?

JW: Well, yeah. ... In those planes, the landing gears were electric. They were assisted by a bungee cord which has lately come into prominence again. And, he disconnected a bungee cord at one end, didn't know quite what he was doing. It brought a heavy iron rod that was at the other end of it crashing across his skull. So those are my war stories.

KP: How did you feel about this?

JW: Oh, horrible. ...

KP: Because one minute someone was fine and the next minute he is dead.

JW: ... I wasn't there. It was late at night I was called immediately. ... Man was right on the base. I lived there. ... I didn't feel responsible. I guess there was some level of guilt. I had felt that he

should have been trained better. But again, because of my lack of direct involvement in the training of these men, I didn't feel that I had trained them badly.

KP: That you were personally responsible for that training.

JW: Yeah, I guess in the larger scheme of things, one is always responsible, and I felt that, ... but I didn't feel that I had personally been delinquent.

KP: Your base, you mentioned that you had 200 men under you.

JW: About 250.

KP: 250. What was the unit structure? For example, did you have junior officers under you?

JW: There was the captain who had been a sergeant and he was a tough old bird, very egocentric and he would sometimes-- I had a private phone line between ... mine and his office, so he could call me. One day he called me, and said, "Captain!" "Yes sir." "Get your ass up here!" So I went up and he had a mixture of grapefruit juice and raw alcohol that he was trying out and insisted that I accompany him in this test maneuver. He did things like that all the time. I learned to drink some, but I wasn't really much of a drinker. ... I got drunk over in England ... with the boys, you know? But not seriously so, not really impaired anything. I was a kid still.

... But the rest of the structure was, ... we only had I think, six officers in this group that were in the ... squadron, a small squadron with all these GIs. And we were attached to this air troop carrier group which was in the Ninth Air Force. ... Our small group was commanded by a lieutenant colonel and the larger squadron by a ... colonel. But ... among us junior officers in our command, there were only about seven of us, and we lived together and spent a lot of time together.

KP: Were you all 90-day wonders?

JW: Yeah.

KP: Including your captain?

JW: ... No, he was a career ... sergeant.

KP: He had been [a] career sergeant before the war, and the war had really given him that rank.

JW: Oh yeah. That's what they had.

KP: You were impressed with him in many ways?

JW: I wouldn't say impressed.

KP: But you felt that he was doing a good job.

JW: I never thought otherwise. Given who I was and what I knew. I had a sergeant in charge of the sheet metal shop, and he was about 40 years old, very old to me, and I had promised one of the chief officers on the base that I would have the sheet metal shop make him some kind of things that he wanted to have ... in his own shop. I did that, and I sent the work order through. A sergeant came up to me the following week, and he said, "Captain, do you enjoy flying?" And I said, "Yeah, I do. ... Why do you ask?" ... "Well, just stay up in the air more of the time and come into my shop less." [laugher] I said, "I think that's reasonable given what I did to you." [laughter] I was a pretty agreeable type. ... Did you hear the story about the man who lived to be 120 years old and when asked the secret of his longevity, he said, "Well, I never disagreed with anybody."

KP: So in a sense you had your sergeants really run the show.

JW: Well, I think, I did what I could, but I was really an overseer and a facilitator. I was in no way someone who could say technically how to do this or that.

KP: So you mainly saw that they got enough equipment and that their needs were taken care of?

JW: Right. ... And I knew what was going on. ... I didn't have the seasoned shop foreman that I had in the States. They were good men, but they were all doing this for the first time.

KP: So as opposed to Kansas, these people were also learning on the job, too?

JW: Yeah, yeah.

KP: How did that go?

JW: We had no basis of comparison. We did not know how other similar groups were doing. I think, basically, people were pleased with the job we did. Each of the four flight squadrons had their own maintenance crews so what we did was the work that was above their level that they couldn't do. I wasn't responsible for getting the planes on the line every morning, but more into repairs and engine changes and overhauls.

KP: In fact, when it went back to the unit, someone else would look over the aircraft, too.

JW: Sure, right, and fly it.

KP: And fly it?

JW: ... Yeah, sure. We had some battle damage to repair, planes that had been shot at. D-Day was not without incident. One of our planes lost a glider before it got to France.

KP: So your base was also in a staging area.

JW: Well, the troops didn't stay on the base, but they came to board the planes.

KP: You saw them boarding for the invasion?

JW: Well, as a matter of fact, Eisenhower came just before D-Day, and, addressed the troops, and, I was there. And I saw that and thought, "Oh what a nice thing he's doing going to all these bases," and I learned just recently with the D-Day anniversary stuff that this was the only base he came to. His headquarters was nearby and he just picked that one to go to.

KP: So you saw him greet the troops.

JW: And in France where our air bases consisted of ... some quickly-made steel landing strips. One day, General Patton came to visit, and I was standing somewhat far off, knew he was coming, and somebody said, "You better salute him because he's been known to get out of a plane or a car or a tank and come up and ream somebody's tail for not saluting." [laughter]

KP: So you did salute him?

JW: Oh, absolutely.

KP: And he just drove by?

JW: Yeah. I got to see more of London ... as time went on, I think. A little more sophisticated, but pretty dark. ... Exciting.

KP: The men on your base, where did they hail from?

JW: Let's see, Everett was from New York, Sleppy was from Texas, and the captain was from the Midwest. ...

KP: So, a lot of Midwesterners.

JW: Yes.

KP: But there's a scattering.

JW: I don't remember any Californians. ...

KP: Your men, were they also as equally busy? Were they working seven days a week?

JW: Mostly. Well, ... after awhile ... [they] got to take some more weekends off, but in the beginning there was very little time.

KP: Did any of them ever get in trouble off base?

JW: I'm sure they did. They were not administratively under my command.

KP: So you didn't have to deal with anything?

JW: Right. The C.O. would deal with that. They were my men only as they worked in the shops, but they were his men in command. ...

KP: But you didn't have to sort out the problems?

JW: No. I didn't have to do the discipline, no.

KP: How long did you stay in England? When did you go to France?

JW: Eighteen months, from October of '43 until February of '45. No, that can't be right. ... Well, let's see, I was overseas 24 months. So I came over in about February of '45, I went to France. The outfit moved there and we continued to do the same work.

KP: What part of France?

JW: We were stationed outside of ... Rheims. No, earlier we were outside the ... city of Amiens, and I have some memories of that. At one point, well, the officers were stationed in half of a nunnery in town, and the men stayed in tents on the base.

KP: Was there any contact with the nuns?

JW: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Our contact with them was limited to seeing them in the courtyard that was accessible by window and the hall ways were boarded up. But, they were great quarters, you know, and I was given the mission on Bastille Day of taking up a little plane and flying it over the town and dropping leaflets over the town and dropping a wreath at the base of the statue in the town center to celebrate Bastille Day. And on take-off, my brakes locked in ... the little tiny plane, and I thought to myself, "How am I ever going to land this plane? What's going to happen?" [laughter] But, I made my leaflet distribution, and I dived down and I dropped the wreath. ... Pretty close to the base of the statue, and I landed on the grass, instead of on the runway. ... Then we shot fireworks ... off the roof of the nunnery, firecrackers to celebrate ...

KP: Bastille Day.

JW: Right, right.

KP: Did the inhabitants of the city like this?

JW: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah.

KP: What other memories do you have of France?

JW: I remember being befriended by some very lovely families, and I had dinner with them, spent some time with their daughters and so forth. I had a chance to go to Paris after the war, and then I had a week on the French Riviera for rest and reclamation.
JW: So you saw a good part of France as a young man.

JW: Some, some. Not a lot in detail. ... One of my most exciting flight missions, my first assignment in England, by the way, was flying small planes that the artillery used after they were assembled out of crates. I would fly them to make sure they were airworthy, and I did that. And the day the war ended in Europe in ... May ... that was a gloriously drunk episode.

The war ended, and it was a marvelous, marvelous day, of course and we celebrated. I wound up somehow on the balcony of Amiens city hall, and I'm making a speech, none of which I remember. But it was nice, and then we began to pack for the Pacific. We were packed for Guam in August when the bombs hit which, of course, made us all deliriously happy.

KP: Otherwise your unit was destined to be in Guam.

JW: Oh yeah, yeah.

KP: And to continue what you were doing.

JW: We were packed.

KP: Had you thought of making the military a career?

JW: I thought of it briefly before I was mustered out. ... I think it wouldn't have worked out for me. I really would not have been a career soldier. Captains were getting decent pay and I thought, well, it's not such a difficult life. Feels like a safe life now, but I think had I wanted this stay, probably wouldn't have ... been a career for me. I did enlist in the reserve before I got out--inactive reserve.

KP: But you had flirted with the idea, given it some thought?

JW: Yeah. Not a lot.

KP: Is there anything else about your military experiences I have not asked about?

JW: Oh, I was a great pilot. One day while we were waiting to leave Europe in the staging area near France as I said, a friend of mine, a non-flying officer, said, a colleague of mine, "Hey! Let's take up one of these planes and go visit this friend of mine down in Orleans." And so I said, "Sure," because I'd been flying these anyway. So we took off and I was such a sharp pilot that I didn't have an aircraft map. I had a road map. [laughter] But I knew where it was, you know. So we got down there and discovered there wasn't an airfield there. [laughter] So I saw this softball field, and I said, "Well, we can set down here." So we set down and ran out of field before I ran out of speed. [laughter] Crossed the road, wound up in a ditch, and we were standing on our

nose. The propeller broke and some other damage. I got the plane down, and so we had no choice, but to spend the night ... in the place where these ordnance troops lived while the ordnance mechanics, I went to Paris in a jeep and got parts, and they fixed the airplane under my direction. And then, as we were preparing to leave the next morning in this little plane, we had to spin the prop. We didn't have an electric starter, and he was spinning and it wouldn't go, and I said, "You sit in the cockpit and I'll spin." And I gave it a good spin and the next thing I know I see my watch on the ground. The prop had kicked back and just hit me right there.

KP: Which could have possibly taken off your arm.

JW: Yeah, it could have. I was sure I had a broken wrist so it was back to Paris again, by jeep this time, for medical attention. And so I come back, and I take off, no airfield. I take off down the highway, one arm in a sling. [laughter]

KP: So in fact you had hurt your arm.

JW: ... It wasn't broken, but it was badly swollen and hurt. ... What seemed like hundreds of guys cheering me off as I jumped off the ground over some wires and took off. [laughter] That was the closest I came to a combat mission. But no, as you see, I had an easy time in the service. I was fortunate, I was not in danger. Even my job was not demanding. ...

KP: When you left the military you were married and had a child. What career path were you thinking about when you got back home?

JW: Well, I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure. I had a couple of months before I mustered out in January of '46. I got home in October. ... My father-in-law was in the jewelry manufacturing business in New York, and he knew some people, and I said. "Yeah, I could be interested in something like that." "I could look around and see if there's place you might be interested in." So, I did, I went into business with this man, he had ... nine kids, a very small company, ... and I was to be the salesman. So we began to sell rings and things, and I was in that for a couple a years, wasn't good at it, and I got a job in a retail jewelry store. I had no idea that I was going to get further education. I was not looking forward to a very great life.

KP: So at that point it sounds like you thought you would not have a great career.

JW: Yeah.

KP: Did you have some disappointment after having been an officer, a captain?

JW: Oh yeah.

KP: With a lot of responsibility.

JW: Yeah. But you know, just as I got through Rutgers on no tuition, the G.I. Bill and then graduate school and this same roommate, Gerry Blum, ... the 15-year-old, who had been the

psychologist in the service had just gotten a Ph.D. at Stanford in psychology and was a young assistant professor at the University of Michigan, which was a fine university. He was visiting us one time, and he said, "Why are you doing this? You're not happy. You could be a hell of a psychologist." I said, "Really?" I said, "You know, the only psychology I took at Rutgers was when you and I attended elementary psych and it turned us both off. But you went on, and, I didn't." "You know, give it some thought." ... And the more we thought about it, my wife and I, the more we realized there was nothing to lose and a great deal of potential to be gained. By that time I had two children. A daughter and a son that was two years old. She was six. And we decided that I would apply to the University of Michigan, but I had to make all the prerequisites up. So the year before I went out there, '49 to '50, I worked six days and one night a week in a jewelry store and two nights I ... commuted to Columbia and took all the psychology courses I needed ... for graduate school.

KP: In college you had no idea that you would ...

JW: Furthest thing from my mind.

KP: You also used your G.I. Bill benefits fairly late.

JW: Yeah, yeah. ... But there were many others. I really got out there without a dime, basically. I lived in university housing which was fine. I had a job the first summer even before school while I was taking more prerequisites. Then I started graduate school September of 1950. Mostly younger, mostly brighter, mostly people who had known they wanted to be psychologists for quite some time. And I felt--could I learn--was the question. I knew I didn't read especially fast and couldn't read a lot, but I wound up doing okay. I got all A's. If you got a B it wasn't so great, but.

KP: Did you know you wanted to be in clinical psychology?

JW: Yes, from the start, oh yeah.

KP: Your alumni survey said you ended up teaching at Michigan for quite some time. Was your teaching at Michigan classroom teaching?

JW: Here's how it went. It took me four years to do my doctoral dissertation. Then I worked for a year at the university hospital in the psychiatry department and continued to see some patients at the university psychological clinic where I had done part of my training. And then I had an offer of a job at Yale Medical School working in a two-man department under a man who had just written the previous year, a marvelous, marvelous book on the psychoanalytic interpretation of the Rorschach test. I'd been recommended to him. I'd sent him some test reports, and he flew me out there for interviews at Yale and hired me. I learned later on that one of my two letters of recommendation from the department had never even got there, but the other one was great and they were impressed with me in the interviews.

So I went to Yale, and the guy's name was Roy Schafer, and ... he has been a leading psychoanalytic psychologist for two generations. Still is. But after I had been at Yale for two weeks, I got a letter from Michigan asking if I would like to come back. Here again, Gerry Blum's finger was in the pie, Fred Wyatt, a Viennese psychologist who ran the psych clinic wanted me back. Together, they put together a position for me as assistant director of the clinic. Half the time was research with Gerry, which I enjoyed, and teaching a course in psychopathology for undergraduate psych majors, which was about 30 students. And so my time at Yale was largely spent in preparing to go back to Michigan, emotionally. I didn't get the most out of Yale. I went to Michigan and I was on the tenure track there, but didn't really publish anything as a first author. We put together a book and some other stuff. By that time, Gerry was a tenured professor and I was an assistant professor. And I was expected to stay on and then, in my typical fashion, I got an inquiry from Harvard. ... In those days, people asked around, do you know anybody good? So my name came up, and I got a letter from this psychiatrist, "You've been recommended. Would you be interested in a position?" In typical Justin Weiss fashion, I didn't answer it. I was happy there.

KP: In Michigan.

JW: Yeah. We liked Ann Arbor. Second time there. So then I got a cable from him. He said, "I'm going to be in Detroit at such and such a date, at such and such a hotel. Why don't you come and talk to me?" So I did. And he was the professor of psychiatry at Harvard, and he headed this hospital. We talked and it went pretty well. He was a Texan. He said, "How much do you need to make?" And I told him, and he said, "I can arrange that. You're going to be involved in training and teaching clinical psychologists at the university in the doctoral program and at the hospital, training program. You're going to run that program." I had to made sure in this first interview that ... that the training of psychologists included learning psychotherapy which, in psychology in those days, was not a widespread thing in medical institutions. If you were a doctor you could treat people, if you weren't it could be difficult. So anyhow, I came out to Boston for two days of interviews, and I was taken by Boston, by the people and the place. A fine, fine, one of the finest teaching hospitals in the country-- Boston Psychopathic Hospital, it used to be known as. It's the Massachusetts Mental Health Center, part of Harvard Medical School, a first-rate place. And so there I was.

I came to this area, bought a house in Newton overnight and commenced to work in September 1959. And here I have been ever since. I was chief psychologist until I resigned the position in 1982. I continued on the staff there as a part-time consultant, and have continued still. Which I enjoy. I'll be there this afternoon. But I kind of grew weary of administrative duties and also felt it was time for a younger person. I clearly didn't have the energy, and I had a very good person on my staff who was my age when I started. I recommended her, and she became administrator and is still chief psychologist.

KP: But if I had said to you in 1945 you would have ended up on this career path?

JW: I had no idea where I was going. ... As you can see, I've led a charmed life in spite of, well I had to, I didn't, wasn't sure I was going to talk about myself in such degrading terms, but that's

just really who I've been. Things have come my way. I've been able, somehow, ... to impress people and take advantage of it, and not do a bad job.

KP: Your career path, do you think that it would be possible to do something similar today?

JW: No way. No.

KP: Why?

JW: I came into a rapidly expanding profession. There was competition for graduate school positions, certainly. This field was growing, but it was a time when, if you were reasonably bright, you could get in. I'm sure my friend helped me to get into the school. We never discussed it. ...

KP: But also having had the GI Bill to fund it.

JW: Oh yeah, no question about that in my mind. I don't know where I'd have been. ... I might a been a high school teacher, which wouldn't be too bad. ... So I came here, and I was the director of the training program that had already been started and had a federal grant. And I taught graduate seminars at Harvard in the graduate program. I was really the only live clinical psychologist in the graduate program. The rest of them were teachers, writers and experimental people. And so I was an active member there on a part-time basis. And I taught every group of first year clinical psychology, graduate students that came through. That was my connection. My main base was at Harvard Medical School and its hospital. I just put together an album of annual photographs of my department at Mass. Mental. Staff and trainees number anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five people, taken each June and it's nice to kind of look over those 20 photographs and see my own aging, my own beards or lack thereof, ... the aging process is before my eye.

KP: Is there anything in terms of the training or in terms of the field that you have noticed has changed?

JW: Oh, everything has changed tremendously over the years. As I say, it was an expanding profession. Mental health was an expanding profession. And this is why when somebody had a good position to fill, they'd ask others to recommend good people. Now ... maybe there'd be a 100 applicants. We still ask for good people, but the jobs don't come looking for you anymore.

KP: It's very competitive.

JW: Oh absolutely, yeah. Now, the whole health care delivery system is drastically changed, as you know, in keeping with the times. A whole shift has been from hospitals to community centers with varying degrees of success. Our hospital was the only one to be both, the Harvard teaching hospital and a state hospital. It had been that ever since it was founded in 1912. It was a Harvard-state collaborative effort. There'd been two others in 1912 that started at the same time. One at Ann Arbor and Johns Hopkins--three psychopathic hospitals.

KP: Do you think that advantages, the connection with state hospitals?

JW: Oh sure, still does, still does.

KP: In what ways?

JW: Many ways. Training is conducted under the auspices of Harvard. All of us had teaching appointments, the top medical students there. The head of the hospital was the professor, not the only professor. There are now six teaching hospitals in psychiatry at Harvard. The ... department has an excellent teaching faculty. Without the teaching program it would just be an ordinary hospital.

KP: Do you think it improved patient care?

JW: Oh no question, no question. I'm sure, absolutely.

KP: Your patients were getting the latest treatment.

JW: Yeah. There is a lot of ongoing research in mental health there. The patients are ... being treated by bright, ambitious, committed men and women who were getting excellent training in a state hospital. ... Their attendants were young, bright people, ready to move on to careers. Most of, not most, but many. My son was an attendant at that hospital for two summers ... behind my back. [laughter]

KP: Oh you didn't know?

JW: Well, I went to Micronesia with the Peace Corps for the summer of 1967. It was then that he applied for the job. He didn't say who his father was. [laughter]

KP: You were in the Peace Corps?

JW: Just for the summer. ... No, I was overseas for a summer. I did a number of projects earlier on weekends and so forth, as a psychologist interviewing people who were in training. Micronesia was fascinating, but that's not World War II. ...

KP: In terms of war and the American society, did you ever treat individuals who were affected by the war either as a participant or civilian?

JW: I did in the Veteran's Administration, yes. That was what my earliest training was.

KP: What was that?

JW: Well, they were people who went psychotic during the war.

KP: This is World War II?

JW: Yeah, yeah. They were all veterans. I worked for the first year, a couple of days, the equivalent of a day a week, I guess, in a mental hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan. Then I worked in a hospital in Dearborn. That was a general hospital, and I worked in an outpatient clinic in Detroit, so I had different slices of people. ... Most of the people I saw, I think, were not traumatically injured people, except for the brain damaged which sustained brain injuries. I think most of them you couldn't say were crazy ... or seriously hurt by the war, except as it was a part of their developmental experience. We knew about shell-shock from World War I, and we talked something about the trial of a war experience. ... Hypnosis was used sometimes to try to get to ... [the] bottom of things. The first patient I ever had in Dearborn was a man who ... was carried in with hysterical paralysis from the waist down.

KP: And that was from war related?

JW: No. ... He was a young man, had been married for six months and lived in an apartment beneath his mother to whom he was very attached. The marriage was just falling apart and the wife said, "We have to move away from this area." Another part of Michigan, she insisted, and he said, "Okay." He couldn't tell his mother he was moving. The day before the moving van was to come, the night before, he had to go upstairs and say, "Mom, we're moving tomorrow." And he did. He got back to his own apartment, and he fell on the floor and literally could not move, in both senses of the word. And he was admitted with this paralysis. His wife went on and moved. It took about, I guess, four weeks for him to regain his full function, a little at a time. I was trained to recognize all the psychodynamic cures. I knew all the unconscious meanings of this thing, but it had very little to do with his cure. We did sodium pentothal interviews. He was able to understand what came out in them; but it made no difference.

KP: You found even in psychology that in terms of helping a patient, I wouldn't say it's seat of the pants, but you can't ...

JW: Well, no. I knew exactly what to do, and I did it all. But what allowed him with dignity to recover his ... was to alter his supports, from a wheelchair, to crutches ...

KP: You had, in a sense, put him through rehabilitation.

JW: Yeah. ... Not I, we. That it was interesting; psychological tests on him were interesting. It was interesting to talk with him, but very difficult to get him to see the light. That was a hysterical character structure, not to be aware. ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Justin Weiss on August 2, 1994 in Newton, Massachusetts with Kurt Piehler. You joined the Peace Corps. What was your thinking?

JW: I didn't, I didn't really join. [laughter]

KP: But you were involved with the Peace Corps, how did that come about?

JW: Well, I was asked by a friend of mine if I would like to do some psychological work for the Peace Corps, sort of evaluating people who were ... in training. The training was done, sometimes, at a local university. There was a training site up in Putney, Vermont near Bennington, where ... where they take people and train them to go overseas. My job was as a weekend warrior to interview, to present my opinions, and at the end of training, decide who was fit to go overseas. ... So I did that and on the basis of that, I was asked if I would like to go to Micronesia for a summer. I had never heard of it. But, it was just at the right time in my life to take a summer off from work. I was to be the head of a ... four-psychologist team. And one of the very first training programs to be conducted overseas in the place where they were going to serve. So we didn't have to speculate on whether they would be able to.

KP: Adapt to culture and all of those questions.

JW: Exactly, exactly. And, I said, "I'll go if you can find ... a job for my wife." So he said, "Okay, fine, make her the secretary for the psychologists." [laughter] So we went to San Francisco for a couple of weeks for the initial staging and orientation. There were some people who dropped out at that point. And then, off to Micronesia. It was fascinating. We lived on an island that had no ... electricity, no running water, no roads, no cars, but we managed to have a little water because by the time we got there they had had a previous group there, and they had gotten mountain springs down to each of the six little villages where the training was going on. Eventually, after most of the summer, we did get a generator. My wife and I lived in one of three concrete block houses. The rest of the people lived in huts that they built with and coordinated with the Trukese inhabitants. After the Peace Corps moved out, the Trukese had some nice homes for themselves.

But it was completely new and involving experience. It was early enough in the Peace Corps; it [was] greatly exciting ... people were there, mostly there were what we called A.B. generalists, bachelor of arts graduates with a keen sense of wanting to do something like that. Exciting, just beginning. An interesting time in history, 1967. The war in Vietnam, we had gotten into it, and people were wondering how can there be a Peace Corps when they're making war? And also, the cities were beginning to go up in turmoil. And there were a few black Peace Corps volunteers, and they were hearing, "Why aren't you back in your own town? You're needed there. What are you doing out here?" So these two developments, another war coming, a whole social upheaval, civil rights movement, and the Peace Corps.

KP: What was your sense of the black volunteers and how they felt? Was there disappointment?

JW: They were torn. We only had three and I talked to them all. They'd their hearts set on the Peace Corps for a long time.

KP: So they were really inspired by the Peace Corps just like the white volunteers?

JW: Yeah, oh, yeah. And what they thought was, "This is two years. When I get back, I will have lots of time to do what I'd been trying to do." They felt they were doing some good for people, those people were black, too. Truk was an interesting place. Historically, the islands were first taken over from the natives by Spanish and then by Germans until after World War I and then by Japanese till after World War II. They were mostly Polynesians by descent, but had several cultures imposed on them. And they were very nice.

KP: How do you think the American culture affected them?

JW: [laughter] One day a guy named David Shakow, who was the training director for the Peace Corps came out to visit our program, and we're sitting around and the chief of the island, the chief of the tribe, was there and so forth. And I expressed some concern about the fact that we had somehow, ... "Coca-Cola-ized" the island. The kids were listening to American music and everything was becoming American. I said, "What is going to happen to Trukese culture?" So David said, "Well, I think the chief can answer that question." The chief said, "You came, too. Spanish, Germans, and Japanese. And we'll survive the Americans, too."

KP: So the islanders were aware of this?

JW: Of all the Peace Corps volunteers, oh, yes. Peace Corps volunteers lived with Trukese families. This was in Truk. Truk Lagoon was the biggest lagoon in the world. It is now a national park because, of the sunken Japanese ships in the harbor which all have their ... clearly dated growth of marine life of all kinds. National Geographic did a big spread on that, on the Truk Lagoon.

KP: Your one son was too young for Vietnam. How would you have felt if he had to go to Vietnam?

JW: Not good. I think he would have had a very hard time of it. He went to Harvard, and as a senior in '69 to '70, college uprisings were at their height and there was an attempt to take over the university, which they did briefly during that time. He was involved in it, but I think only with one foot.

KP: He had one foot in and one foot out.

JW: Yeah. I mean, emotionally he was involved with it. When the school was shut down he said, "I don't think it's right to shut down Harvard University. On the other hand, I'm so far behind on my work and my papers that it would be a blessing." [laughter] But he was mainly troubled by shutting down the school. He wasn't in it with both feet. And he wound up going to medical school. ... First, he was headed for social psychology. He had his experiences as an attendant on the ward. Then, he said, "Well, if you want to have leverage in this field you might as well be a psychiatrist." He went to medical school sort of as a necessary prerequisite, and he got to like it. He went to Chapel Hill in North Carolina and did his internship and residency in Cleveland. And he was still headed for psychiatry, but somehow he never quite got around to making appointments for the interviews. He stayed in internal medicine, which he liked, and

that's what he does today. He's in a group practice at the Mass. General Hospital. He likes his work a lot.

KP: And your daughter?

JW: Both kids lived away from home. He lived at Harvard, she lived at Brandeis, which was nice.

KP: Even though the schools were very close.

JW: Yes. We didn't see much of them. [laughter] And Debbie got a bachelor's degree in psychology and she married young. She married at nineteen.

KP: Your family tradition again.

JW: She had a year left to go to college. Her husband was a year ahead of her at Harvard, and he went to graduate school at Brown in psychology, so she lived in Providence and finished her senior year at Brandeis on a rearranged schedule. Then she got a master's degree in psychology at the University of Rhode Island and never practiced psychology. She too, raising a family and, a very bright woman, but only now in the last several years has gotten into serious work where she can use ... her brain. It's in the computer field and she loves it and thrives on it. ... But she has long delayed the emergence in terms of using her own talents. ...

KP: You mentioned when we were talking about Rutgers that you were an atheist. Has that belief continued?

JW: Yeah. I still accept that ethnically, I'm Jewish. I'm not active; I don't belong to a temple, ... but I have friends who do, and have nothing against it. ... My son was a born atheist, ... I think my father was, too.

KP: But ethnically you very proud of your identity.

JW: Yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah.

KP: But in terms of the religious beliefs.

JW: I mean, I enjoy some of the religious rituals on those occasions when I go to a wedding or a funeral or so forth. The memories come back and I can remember the songs. I had a Bar Mitzvah and a Jewish education, but not much beyond that.

KP: Is there anything I forgot to ask about World War II or anything else?

JW: There must be more stuff in the records. ... If I think of something, I will call you.

KP: No, please either write it down or call.

JW: I'll probably call you, it's easier.

KP: Okay, that's fine. I will be looking for excuses to come up to Massachusetts.

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

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