

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH J. DOMER ZERBE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DAVID BROWN

J. Domer Zerbe: Yeah, I didn't like John. My father went by John.

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with J. Domer Zerbe at Rutgers University, in New Jersey, on November 16, 1994, with Kurt Piehler and ...

David Brown: David Brown.

KP: I guess I'd like to begin by talking a bit about your parents. You mentioned that your father was of German descent. How far back does your family tree go in the United States?

JDZ: Well, both my father and my mother are of German descent. Actually, mother's maiden name was Slear. The family on the Zerbe side goes back to about 1708. Some of the Zerbes came over from Alsace-Lorraine. Initially, we understand that the family came actually out of the Saxony Province, moved to Alsace-Lorraine, and then, subsequently, came to America. Interestingly, they came over as indentured servants to the British. Apparently, they settled up in the Ossining, New York area. They worked in the pine forests, getting pitch for the British Navy ships. Sometime later, and we're not sure exactly when, the two brothers decided that they wanted to leave that area. I suspect they were really farmers at heart. ... They put what belongings they had and built a raft and went over to the headwaters of the Susquehanna River. That is the north branch of the Susquehanna. ... They floated on down below Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to an area where a creek, then known as Tolpehocken, T-O-L-P-E-H-O-C-K-E-N, ... comes into the Susquehanna, and they moved on up the Tolpehocken Creek, and took up residence in there. Now, it isn't clear as to exactly how they obtained deed to the properties, but, at any rate, that's where they went on the Zerbe side.

KP: So, your family on your father's side goes very far back.

JDZ: Way, way back, yes.

KP: What about on your mother's side?

JDZ: Well, I'm not really clear. We were fortunate on the Zerbe side to have a family history that was actually done by a woman who was a Zerbe, who married a Mr. Elliot, who was a publisher of a newspaper in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. ... She had enough interest in the family as such to do this. I suspect, in reading the history, that it could be a lot more complete. It was done way back, as I remember, ... just after the turn of the century. So, I suspect ... if you really dug in and did some more genealogical work, you could discover a lot more, and, sad to say, I probably am remiss in not having done more of that myself.

KP: Your father was born in Altoona, which is a big railroad town, or, at least, was at one point. Did his father work for the railroad?

JDZ: Oh, I come from a railroad family. [laughter] Why, one of the earliest things I could remember is, you know, as a kid growing up, maybe getting into high school ages, my father

saying, "I don't care what you do in life. I want you to be happy doing it. I want you to do it well, but don't work for the railroad." [laughter]

KP: Wow. Really?

JDZ: My father had forty-nine and a half years, with ... what was then the Pennsylvania Railroad. Yeah, he started as a messenger boy in Altoona, making \$14.90 a month and I just can't forget that figure. It's one of those things that sticks in my mind, regardless of the very poor memory I've developed since, but he started as a messenger boy. He went off to World War I in the 28th division, the Keystone Division, ... which was really the Pennsylvania National Guard. ... He was in the division headquarters company, in what they called the G-2, or intelligence section. He was a sergeant major, which was the highest non-commissioned officer ranking, and he retained that rank right through the war. ... When he came back, he went back immediately to the railroad, again, and he went off to a local school. I don't know if it was a high school or what it was, but, anyway, he learned shorthand and he learned typing, and became a clerk for the railroad. ... That's really what he did in, eventually, ... the personnel department in Philadelphia. He moved from Altoona to Harrisburg, for the railroad, and then, from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to Philadelphia. And, each time, getting a little improvement in his pay and in his ranking, but ... still, forty-nine and a half years later, Dad finished as a clerk. But, what he was able to accomplish, in terms of the support for me and my sister, was kind of amazing. I'd like to add parenthetically that, actually, ... his father came from a little place called Lykens, northeast of Harrisburg, and he was a railroader. He was the one, he gravitated from Lykens, Pennsylvania, as a young man, to Altoona, and, as you say Kurt, that was a railroad city. I have vivid memories of going out and spending five and six weeks each summer as a young boy with my grandparents, when it was a railroad town, and there wasn't anything in the world any better than riding a train behind a steam locomotive. I mean, that was ... the joy of my heart. ... My grandfather became what they called a valve machinist in the locomotive shop in Altoona. Actually, it was in Juniata, which is a little town over the hill, just east of Altoona. The Pennsylvania Railroad installations there ... were, at that time, just absolutely huge. That was their main building and repair place for both the locomotives and the cars. Other members of the family, too, worked for the railroad. I had one uncle who was a freight brakeman, and one uncle who was an electrician in the locomotive shop. So, lots of railroading in the family. One of the great things that my grandfather did for me, after he retired, and, incidentally, when World War II came along, he had already been retired. They called him back, because he had expertise as a valve machinist that the railroad had needed, because they got into ... defense work. But, he would take me because I could get passes on the railroad from my Dad, free transportation. He would say to me on a Monday, while I'm out there as just a kid, "Should we go some place this weekend?" Well, you could go anywhere on the Pennsylvania Railroad system, which meant going as far as Chicago, or St. Louis, or Cleveland, or Cincinnati, or Detroit, and I got to all those places. ... So, amongst my friends, in that era, man, I was a big traveler. [laughter]

KP: That's a fact, because most people in the early '40s were lucky to get west of Philadelphia, south of Washington, and north of New York.

JDZ: Yeah, that's right, yeah. I remember very well going to the Century of Progress, in Chicago, in 1934. Boy, that was a high spot in my life, at that time, with my grandfather.

KP: You had mentioned that your father had served in World War I and went in as a sergeant major. You mentioned that he learned how to type and take shorthand. Was that in the Army, or was that afterwards?

JDZ: No, that was afterwards.

KP: That was afterwards. You don't know why he decided to go back to the railroad?

JDZ: No, he, I'm sure, having started as a messenger boy, and with the kind of loyalty attitude that people had in those days, and even in my generation, I'm sure he felt the railroad was the place where he ought to be after the war. And so, he certainly didn't want to be a messenger boy. So, he saw self-improvement in shorthand and typing as a way to accomplish a little more.

KP: You mentioned that your father was in intelligence during the war. Did he serve overseas, in France?

JDZ: Yes, oh, yes.

KP: Did he ever talk about what he did during the war?

JDZ: Not a great deal. No, no, not a great deal, no. And, as I say, he was in division headquarters company. Well, that doesn't get you up to the front, so, he didn't have, what I would term, combat experience. Oh, he brought things back, as every soldier did, you know, memorabilia kinds of things, helmet, backpack, and pictures, ... French postcards, things like that, 'cause, they didn't come home immediately after the war. He didn't get back ... until, I think, about June of 1919.

DB: He may be fortunate for not going to the front.

JDZ: Yes, very much so.

KP: When did he meet your mother?

JDZ: Gosh, Kurt, ... my mother came from Sunbury, Pennsylvania. ... Dad, through another family, well, let me take a step back. My grandmother ... had a very close friend in Sunbury. They had grown up together in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, and this friend of my grandmother's had a daughter, and my grandmother was ... going to make a match. She was going to match my father with the daughter of this friend. ... Somehow or other, they arranged for him to go over to Sunbury and meet her. He didn't know her prior to this meeting. ... He went over, well, there was no real relationship that developed between them. But, in the process, he met my mother in Sunbury, who was a friend of the young girl that my father was supposed to come over and have the date with in Sunbury. ... I remember my mother was always so pleased to talk about the time that my father came over and they went to a park just outside Selinsgrove. I know it well because it was there when I was a young boy. As a matter-of-fact, it's still there, Rolling Green Park, and, at that time, they had dances, apparently, on weekends. A dance band was there and there was a dance floor, and

they went over, and my father winds up dancing with the woman who became my mother, practically every dance, and left the other gal to sit. They had nothing in common, so, it didn't take long after that that ... my dad apparently decided that he'd found a proper mate. And then, he was running to Sunbury every weekend from Altoona. ... They were married June 14, 1921.

KP: Your father's career sort of explains how you ended up in Mount Holly.

JDZ: Yes.

KP: He kept going farther east, and was eventually based down in Philadelphia.

JDZ: Yeah, they lived in an apartment in Philadelphia, as a married couple, and that's where I was born. And then, in that, I guess what we could call it the ... first suburban exodus, after World War I, he decided to come to New Jersey. One of the people ... he worked with had come over and settled in Woodbury, New Jersey. So, mother and dad came over and they looked at Woodbury and, but anyway, subsequently decided that they liked Mount Holly. ... That's how we came to settle there in a small bungalow, for which they paid 3800 dollars, brand new, with an unfinished second floor, and my father, over a period of three or four years, refinished the whole upstairs, made three bedrooms out of it, in addition to the bedroom downstairs. So, it was very, in those days, commodious.

KP: Mount Holly and Camden County was very rural at that point in time.

JDZ: Oh, I'll say. [laughter] Well, of course, Mount Holly is in Burlington County.

KP: Yeah, I always think that it is in Camden, but, it is really Burlington.

JDZ: It's in Burlington. It's interesting you should say that, because, when I came to Rutgers, if you came from south of Trenton, you were referred to as an "apple-knocker." You were, ... I mean, a real country boy, and, of course, I thought of the area north of New Brunswick, once you got into the Newark area and above, you know, I thought about all those communities simply running into one another. When did you know when you were out of one and into another? It was, I guess, this communal desire ... to meet with other people from your area that led me to build some friendships with fellows from south of Trenton. Not that I declined ... friendships with others, but, I remember ... we had a mixer, up here, as freshmen. We'd come in and this was even before classes. I guess classes were going to start the next day. ... I had played baseball for Mount Holly, just as a sub. I was a sub outfielder. A little guy; I only weighed 132 pounds. ... There was a chap from Pemberton who pitched for them, a fellow by the name of Fred Detrick, and I got into a game, as a sub, against him and got the first hit of my high school career [laughter] as a sub against him. ... The reason I mention him is because I remember, the night of the mixer, ... somehow I knew from the local paper, I guess, that he, and then, another friend of his from Pemberton High School, by the name of Bill Haines, whose family was big in cranberries, and still is, in South Jersey, they are the biggest, and the two of them were going to come up to Rutgers. So, I made it a point to meet the both of them at that mixer. And, I met ... some other fellows from Woodstown, Swedesboro, Ocean City, to mention a few places.

KP: There still is a very strong north-south split, but it seems to have even been more pronounced then.

JDZ: Oh, yeah, you see it, certainly, in the politics, in this most recent campaign. The challenge was hurled out, "What do you really know about South Jersey?" [laughter] ... I guess it's sort of like north and south California. ... I think we are getting a heck of a lot more attention than we did in those days. ...

KP: When you were growing up in Mount Holly, where did most people work? What did most people do for a living? Were most commuters into Philadelphia?

JDZ: Well, there was some ... local industry. There were two textile mills that made upholstery fabric. They would have been the largest employers in town. ... Well, one of the upholstery mills actually had a dye-house, as well, which was a separate company, but, under the same ownership, and then, there was another dye-house, Ankokas Dyeing and Finishing. The big textile mill was Northampton Textile, but, let's call the independent dye-house Ankokas Dyeing and Finishing. As a matter-of-fact, my father-in-law worked there for over ... forty years. And then, there was a hosiery mill there, and, in the early twentieth century, prior to about 1920, there was a carpet mill there. There were a number of commuters to Philadelphia. We had railroad service. At that time, the Pennsylvania Railroad actually ran out of Camden and came over through Mount Holly, to Pemberton, and down across, what we think of as, the Pines, the Pine Barrens, through Whiting, over to Seaside Heights, up to Seaside Park, and there were trains that ran every day, back and forth, from Camden up there. So, there were a bunch of commuters from Mount Holly at that time.

KP: Were most people who lived in Mount Holly first generation Americans, or were they second, third, or fourth generation Americans? Did you have any immigrant communities that worked in the mills?

JDZ: Well, I would say second and third generation for the most part, very definitely. My wife comes from an English background and her father was the last of eleven children, and her grandfather had, actually, ... worked in the textile industry in Manchester, England. ... He was brought over to a Philadelphia upholstery concern, people who made plush-type fabrics. ... He had an expertise called plush-cutting, and he was actually recruited from Manchester, England to come over. ... They paid his passage, they paid for his whole family to come over. And then, he would go back, once a year. He was a race track tout, if you will. He enjoyed the races, [laughter] and ... once a year, he would leave the family, I mean, they lived in a section of Philadelphia called Manayunk, an Indian name, and that's where the mill was located. But, then, once a year, he'd go back during race season to watch the ponies run. My wife's father was the only one of the eleven children born in America. The others were ... born in England. But, I don't know that they are necessarily typical. ... I think of my close friends and I think they were all, oh, I'm sure they were all second, third, fourth generation. I don't think we had anything like the kind of ethnic enclaves that ... clustered in the cities, where you're Italian, Polish, German, or whatever groups would come in, brand new, from Europe.

KP: How good was your elementary and high schools, looking back? How well did they prepare you for Rutgers?

JDZ: I think, generally, ... quite good. ... You know, it always sounds, I guess as though, and you don't intend to brag. I'm not patting myself on the back. Please, don't misunderstand. ... I just think that there was an attitude engendered in young people at that time. It certainly was in me. My mother and father had no college education. My father didn't even graduate from high school. He quit school in the middle of his junior year. My mother did graduate from high school, in Sunbury, in 1918. But, there was never any doubt that I was supposed to go to college.

KP: Both your mother and father had ...

JDZ: Yeah, it was just sort of assumed, "Hey, you're going to go to college," and, I guess I was imbued enough with that I worked hard enough in school. ... In today's lexicon, I'm probably considered a nerd. I hear that term from my grandson ...

KP: Were you ever called a grinder?

JDZ: Oh, yes, yeah, some, [laughter] I think in an unjustified way. I never got real great, great marks, but, ... in elementary school and high school, I worked and I got good grades. When I came to Rutgers, I was probably a ... B student. But, I had some great teachers. I mean, there are three or four teachers that stand out in my mind. A high school algebra teacher, an 8th grade ... English teacher, Alva Hendrickson, just great. ... They seemed so dedicated and I enjoyed school. I thought school was great. I get into high school and, well, I have vivid recollections of lots of things. I guess, ... sports activities were high on my agenda. I love football, basketball, ... the major sports.

KP: Did you play any sports?

JDZ: Well, I was pretty small. I said, earlier, I was a sub on the baseball ... team. That was the extent ...

KP: But, you loved going to the games.

JDZ: Oh, yes, sure. ... I had a lot of close friends who participated, who were bigger than I in stature, not that that was the main reason. But, I enjoyed all of that. I got a break, ... I'll call it a break, in my junior year. ... We had student council, as in most schools, or all schools, high schools, and we had a high school that numbered about six hundred, total. ... When it came time to put up candidates for student council, there were two other fellows who were in my class, juniors, and they were running a campaign, you know, in a small kind of a way. And, one of my friends said, "I'm going to start up a petition and run you." Me, for student council president. ... I wound up winning, which was no great tribute to me. [laughter] It's just the idea that by petition, I could win, and that was a good experience. It was a great experience. ... I selected one of those two who had been the original candidates as sort of a right-hand person on the student council. You look back on it, you say, "Well, what real accomplishment did student council ..." But, in those days, and I think

to a high school student, that's important. You start to build some responsibility and some, if you will, feeling about management, managerial kind of stuff. High school was a great experience.

KP: It sounds like being the high school student council president gave you a lot of leadership experience.

JDZ: Well, it did. Each Friday, in addition to running the meetings, of course, ... we'd have an assembly. ... The student council president was the one who got up on the stage ... every Friday, and made some remarks about activities during the week, and introduced the program to be for that Friday. Yeah, standing in front of people and talking, ... it came about a bit easier.

KP: How big was your high school, approximately?

JDZ: Well, we had about six hundred students at the time. We became a regional high school. ... We were Mount Holly High School, in my first two years, and then, they embraced a larger regional concept and, we became Rancocas Valley Regional High School. I graduated from Rancocas Valley Regional High School. ... I had taken a competitive test for a scholarship, which the railroad offered through their employees, through my dad. His insistence was that I should really try to take this test for a scholarship to Bucknell University. ... I sort of gravitated toward Bucknell more out of, I guess, the fact that I had a number of relatives up in that area and I'd become a little familiar with it, and I'd done enough reading to know that it had a very high ranking as a university. So, I took the test, and I got a very, very small, ... little \$400 a year scholarship. ... I graduated from high school and, somewhere, and I have the letters at home, the supervising principal, I'm sorry, the superintendent of all the township schools, lived around the corner from me. ... He wrote me a note one day, after I graduated. He said, "Domer, have you ever thought about Rutgers?" He said, "You know, you could take an exam for a state scholarship, they give so many per county." ... I talked to my parents about it, and thought, "Well, gee wiz, money being as important as it is, maybe this is the direction I ought to go." So, I wound up, then, I had another letter from Mr. Kindig, who was the high school principal, seconding what the superintendent had said, "By all means, take the exam." So, I took the exam and, fortunately, I got a scholarship which paid tuition, which was great. You know, Rutgers then was what, eighteen hundred students. Great, small school. ... I had never been up to Rutgers, prior. ... I didn't know the first thing about New Brunswick, or Rutgers. Of course, once I took the exam, I got a hold of catalogs and things to see what they offered, because my interest, initially, was in journalism. So, I wound up at Rutgers.

KP: Before leaving Mount Holly and the 1930s, how did the Great Depression effect your family?

JDZ: Well, my dad was never fully unemployed. I remember well, him coming home and saying, "Well, we're only going to work three days a week," and he worked Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. But, never fully ... unemployed. But, the parents of my close friends, I had six close friends through high school, ... and this group adhered together. ... We had lots of fun together. Some of them had parents who were totally unemployed. ... It was tough. ... It's a conditioner, there's no question that it conditions some of my thinking today.

KP: In what way?

JDZ: Life, well, there is so much affluence today. You know, it's give your children, give your grandchildren, it's as though I want things better for them, so, give, just give, and that's not right. It just isn't right. I think we are learning that, but it's a slow, slow process. ... It made me a saver in a way. I hate to throw things away. But, I think being a pack rat is kind of one of the things that, perhaps, emerges from this saving kind of trait. My wife does the same thing. You just don't throw things away when you know how tough they were to get. ... When I came to Rutgers, after I had taken this exam that I told you about, I came to find out that the girl who had lived across the street from me in Mount Holly, who was ... three years older than I, was dating a chap who was at Rutgers. His name was Carleton Dilatush. ... My neighbor was Shirley Cain. ... He somehow got the word, through Shirley, that I was going to be an incoming freshman. He was already ... gonna come back for his senior year, I'm coming in for my freshmen year. So, he made it a point to introduce himself to me, and so forth. Well, as a result of that, I wound up going into the same fraternity, in my sophomore year, but, I also was fortunate in getting the job that he had. He carted food from the cafeteria to the infirmary, in metal containers. ... I became heir apparent, when he graduated, to that job and it paid for my meals. Of course, it allowed me ... access to the cafeteria ... to help put the food into the containers. ... And, I had to have a car, in order to do this. ... I got my first car and, I mean, that was a prerequisite to having the job. Had to have a car. Wound up buying a second-hand, 1936 Chevrolet Coupe. Great automobile, stick shift, went to Moorestown to a dealer, and ... my father went with me, of course. Three hundred twenty-five dollars and that car was a great car.

KP: So, you had a car on campus.

JDZ: Well, I had a car but, ... my friends, you know, would beg, "Let me use the car for this, let me use the car for that. Can I go on a date with your car over to NJC?" Whatever. Oh, no, I was a tight ... no, I watched what happened to that car. That was my car. Now, I'd do favors for guys, but they'd go with me. But, I wouldn't ...

KP: Lend it out?

JDZ: No, I didn't lend that car out, no way.

KP: What did you and your father think of the Roosevelt Administration, Franklin Roosevelt?

JDZ: Well, my dad was a Republican, I think all through his adulthood.

KP: He did not waver in 1932 or 1936, did he?

JDZ: ... No, but, on the other hand, ... I don't have a keen recollection on that. My father and I, we really never had many serious discussions about politics. I knew he was Republican. I think, like many Republicans in those days, they saw what had happened under Herbert Hoover and said, "My God, here's salvation under a new man, Roosevelt." ... I had an uncle, for example, who was on WPA, up in Sunbury, Pennsylvania, Works Projects Administration. ... He was totally unemployed and had three children, and we had first hand contact with them. ... I think it brought home to us

that, boy, Roosevelt is doing something worth while. Here's the WPA, then, of course, along came the NRA. I mean, the government was pouring money in. ... When you knew that you had people selling apples on the corners, veterans from World War I, you know, selling nickel apples, anything to try to make a living. ... It wasn't unusual to have hobos come to your back door and beg for something ... to eat in the '30s. You know, "Could I please, you know, I'll do some work, I'll do anything."

KP: So, you remember hobos coming for a ...

JDZ: For a sandwich.

KP: Would your mother give them anything?

JDZ: Oh, yes. Yeah, there was ... a spirit of neighborliness, wanting to help one another. No question about it. You didn't have the suspicion, you didn't have the fear that somebody's going to come into your house, beat you, rape you, that kind of thing. That never crossed your mind.

KP: In your community, did you ever have any Ku Klux Klan activity. Do you remember ever watching them march or anything?

JDZ: No, no, absolutely not. I have no awareness of anything of that sort.

KP: One of the questions that I always ask is why did you come to Rutgers? Did Rutgers live up to your expectations?

JDZ: Yes, yes, I think so.

KP: You never look back and wish you had gone to Bucknell?

JDZ: No, no, not at all. I think Rutgers ... was small enough, and, I guess, in today's situation, where it is so large as a state university, I don't know whether I would have the same feeling about it as I have today. My grandson goes to Franklin and Marshall. He's in his junior year there, and he and his parents went out of their way to select a smaller school. ... It's a school about the same size as what Rutgers was. I think they have about 2200 out there now, as Rutgers was when I went here. ... I'm not arguing against the state university, or what it offers, certainly the latitude it offers, and the costs. I think that's great. I just don't know that it satisfies all. Very doubtful.

KP: Yeah, you were very happy at the time.

JDZ: I was very happy at the time, and ... I get the feeling that my classmates were ... happy, yeah. ... You'd have discussions about why you had compulsory chapel.

KP: How did you feel about compulsory chapel? It often does come up in interviews.

JDZ: I felt ... chapel offered some unusual opportunities, from time to time. They'd have Norman Thomas come. He had the Socialist bent. He spoke and, incidentally, he was an excellent speaker. I mean dynamic, I thought.

KP: In fact, he was speaking here on Pearl Harbor Day, when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

JDZ: You know ... you are telling me something I didn't remember. I have a vivid memory of what I was doing Pearl Harbor Day, and getting the word. I was in the library, I was down in the stacks ... at that time, we called them the stacks. I don't know if they're still there or not, down in the basement, where the booths were. ... I was studying, and I came out, and bumped into people as soon as I got ... on the first floor of the library, telling me what had happened at Pearl Harbor.

DB: When you joined your fraternity, what was it like being in charge of a fraternity in the late 1930s?

JDZ: Well, I wasn't in charge. I did become president of the fraternity in my senior year, 1943. Our fraternity had some problems right from the outset. Alpha Chi Rho had been formed from what was called Ivy Lodge and the Tritilian Lodge, two local fraternities, and they combined back before I came to Rutgers. I can't tell you exactly what year that was done, but it was done, I think, in the early '30s to mid-'30s. ... Building a kind of financial base with an alumni was slow to happen, obviously. You were in the formative years, and here's a new fraternity, Alpha Chi Rho, and it didn't have a lot of strength, anyway. ... As a result, we never had a chapter house that we owned. It was always a rental, and ... in my years here, we lived in two different houses. Of course, I didn't live in a house my freshman year. I lived up on Bartlett Street, with five other students, one of whom, incidentally, had a great impact on my ... career at Rutgers. If I may ...

KP: Oh, no, please do it.

JDZ: I'm going to reminisce for a moment. A fellow by the name of Fred Lacey, who went on to become a federal district judge. The name may ... be familiar to you. Well, I wound up with the Olsen family, who owned the house and put out rooms on Bartlett Street. I had been late in getting up here, and so, I wound up at ... well, we didn't have a lot of university housing, at that time, so I wound up with this private family. And, there were five other students there. Three freshmen, ... two sophomores, and a junior. I wound up rooming with Fred Lacey my freshman year. Now, Lacey was a big guy. He had gone to the University of Indiana on a scholarship, pitching, baseball pitcher. He was about ... 6'3", a big guy, and a good student. ... He hunkered down and I think that was a good motivation to me. Instead of throwing me in with, well, I don't know, I think ... it just happened that way that I wound up rooming with him, not with another one ... of the other two freshmen. He was just a good influence. That was the whole freshman year, but, he was a good influence.

KP: Did you stay in touch with Judge Lacey?

JDZ: No, I lost contact. Of course, ... he was two years ahead of me, and I lost contact with him. ... As a matter-of-fact, I haven't seen him since. ... I've seen pictures of him, read about him, but I

haven't actually seen him. I've looked for him at times, I've been up here for reunions. But, I've never made a connection.

DB: Do you remember any fraternity activities, whether it be your own or another fraternity's?

JDZ: Oh, yeah, sure. Oh, yeah. Anyway, I had said, we lived on two different properties. We lived in a property on Union, ... a rental property, and ... we might say, in a state of disrepair. We would come in, before school started in September, and have some work days and put it in some reasonable shape. And then, we had to get out of there, when was that? I guess ... at the end of my sophomore year, which would have been '41. We had to get out, and then, we rented a house up on ... Easton Avenue. Sigma Alpha Mu was sort of diagonally across from us, Sammies, that's what we called them, yeah. We had a lot of friends over there. But, we had ... fraternity parties. [laughter] ... I was not a beer drinker. I never learned to drink beer then, not as though you have to learn to drink beer. I acquired a taste for beer in the service, finally, after I had already left Fort Benning and gone on to my first station after that, in 1943. But, we had beer parties, and I could remember living in the house on Easton Avenue. The windows, there were two windows in the living room, you came in through a center hallway, and then, made a right turn into this rather large living room, and there were two windows, and those windows came down almost to the floor in that particular house. We had one guy in the fraternity, strong, burly kid. He'd go through the whole winter wearing only a sweater. I remember him and thinking to myself, "My God, what are you doing to yourself? I'm all bundled up with a sweater and parka, and he's walking around in the middle of the winter with a sweater on." Anyway, invariably, he'd have the sweater on and I swear, [laughter] ... he would drink a little too much and, invariably, run through a window. And, never, never cut himself. I swear, never cut himself. It just was good fortune. Anyway, that's one of the recollections. And then, we had, oh, what was he, the assistant dean of men, at that time, by the name of Cuno Bender. Cuno was an ex-football player, big, burly guy, and he was like a traffic cop, you know, out of uniform, plain clothesman. And, he would snoop in on what was going on, when it would be the end of an exam time, or whenever those times were that you were thinking about a party, on a Friday night, or a Saturday night. Cuno was always around, oh, yeah. He was around, he was a sneaky kind of a guy. [laughter] ...

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

JDZ: To continue on the fraternity thing, ... there were actually four of us who roomed together for the last two years. ... It was a great bunch. We had a fellow from Rahway of Czechoslovakian descent named Sloca, Charlie Sloca, and then, Fred Detrick, and the fourth guy was ... Weston Dangler, came from down around Asbury Park. Sloca from Rahway, Detrick from down my way, Pemberton, and it was just a great crew. I didn't do a lot of studying in the fraternity house. I found that to be a difficult, although some fellas didn't. ... We had, I think, ... three engineers my last year, and we had one chemistry major. I mean guys who ... had tough, tough courses. I found the library was the best place I could study and did there more than anywhere else. But, we had a lot of fun, we really did. Good, clean fun. ... We had double bunks, two double bunks, and Charlie Sloca slept above me. ... He was going, at that time, with a girl at NJC. Charlie was a very fine, fine student. He ... got a Phi Beta Kappa key, as did his wife at NJC. He was dating her. ... I remember senior year, he had a picture. Fred Detrick and I talk about this often. Charlie had a picture of

Maureen on his bureau, we shared a bureau, as I remember, and the picture was there. ... Detrick, he was a bird. I mean, he was always kidding around, doing things that would ... annoy, and if he got back in that room before Charlie got back from classes, he'd turn the picture around, face the wall. ... Charlie would come in and he'd storm, "Who did this to the picture." ... He knew right well, well, I don't think he was necessarily sure who it was, but, it was, invariably, ... Detrick. Detrick ... started out in engineering, and then, changed the end of his freshman year, went into, I think, ... education. Dangler was an agriculture student, so, most of his work was across town at ... Cook College, and, of course, most of my classes were, I had a lot up on ... Bishop Place. Great place. Had History and Political Science classes up there. But, the fraternity life ... was good. We were a pretty serious bunch, actually. We had our fun, but, a pretty serious bunch. It wasn't all frivolity. ... Fred Detrick, in our senior year, ... became, I can't think of the title he had, but, helping the cook. We had a cook, a German lady by the name of Ertl, E-R-T-L, Margaret Ertl, who came from Highland Park. ... Yeah, we got her through another German lady who was our housekeeper, and the two German ladies knew each other. We weren't satisfied with the cook we'd had the previous year, so, Margaret Ertl came down, and Margaret was perfect. She couldn't do enough for you, and she knew how to cook. Fred Detrick was the one who would go do the buying for the house, and he and Margaret would go together, much of the time, and, of course, Margaret took ... an extreme liking for Fred. ... Margaret had to be in her early fifties, mid-fifties, at the time, but a dear. I could remember her potato leek soup. [Makes pleased noise.] ... But, anything she did, and, of course, you tried to cook as inexpensively as you could, you know. ... You didn't have meat every meal. You didn't have roast beef, and the better cuts, filet mignon and all that business.

KP: Your fraternity, what were your initiations like?

JDZ: Well, I recollect several things. I recollect crawling across, you know, on all fours and getting paddled by, oh, I don't know, six or eight people. We didn't have a big house. ... If we had maybe sixteen or eighteen in the house, ... that was the largest. We were not a big house. So, my recollection is there might have been six or eight upperclassmen, so, you got paddled. And then, I remember, they gave everybody, all the pledges, ... a full garlic, all the cloves, and you had to eat, you were forced to eat, the garlic. And then, they passed out cigars, and everybody had to light up a cigar. ... I didn't smoke in high school. I mean, I was not a smoker. Later on, I became a pipe smoker, and would smoke some cigars. But, that's all. I'll tell you, you put the cigars on top of the garlic, and ... we were all sick as dogs. What else do I remember about that? ... It was in total innocuous. It was not something that was real hazardous. They didn't make us swim the river. ...

KP: I have heard that some fraternities were not as innocuous.

JDZ: Yeah, yeah. ... My recollection is not vivid of this at all, but I do think that they sent a couple of fellas off to do a bit of scavenging for something or other, and, what you had told me about the two going up to New York sort of triggered that. But, I'm not clear on that, really, at all.

DB: Do you remember if your fraternity, or any others, would poke fun at, or try to get involved in, things such as the German Bund, or any Communist groups, for pranks, or jokes?

JDZ: No, I don't. No, I don't. I have an awareness. I think we all had an awareness of it. When you say poke fun, yes. I think that we had our share of hilarity over things we would read about the Bund meetings, and that kind of thing. But, ... nothing, really, that I could recollect that ... would, really, suggest, you know, a strong, political kind of response to it.

KP: Did most people in the fraternity read the newspapers? Many people have commented how they never got a chance to read the newspapers.

JDZ: No. Well, the newspaper was expensive. ... I knew there was a newspaper out, but ... that's an interesting question, 'cause I don't think of the daily newspaper as something that was available there at the house, that some individual might have bought and, certainly, the fraternity didn't buy it. That was money. That was not a necessity.

KP: Many people have mentioned Vinnie Utz, and one of the pranks he apparently did for his initiation. He did an impersonation of Hitler in front of his fraternity house as part of his pledge.

JDZ: I had heard that. ...

KP: Yeah, it is apparently quite infamous.

JDZ: He was a Kappa Sig up at ... what was the corner of College Avenue and, what's this, George Street? ... I think the freshmen had to go up, and they had like a bell tower, and they'd go up and, "Coo-coo," on the hour, twenty-four hours a day. Fred Baser, who was on our committee could tell you. He was a Kappa Sig, and I think he was one who had to do that. Make a mental note to ask him.

KP: When did you think the United States was going to go to war? Did you have any sense of that before Pearl Harbor?

JDZ: Yes, I think we were all of a mind that we would be involved at some point. I mean, the German U-boat activity, and the sinking of our ships, was something we were all acutely aware of. I don't remember there being any strong feeling, on the other hand, that Roosevelt should try to spur us into ... the conflict. I know ... today it's suggested that he did things that might have speeded that process along, but I don't have any recollection, at the time, of feeling, as a student, that he was doing that. ... From the time that the Italians went into Ethiopia in 1935, I could remember in high school, you know, starting to wonder, "Where is all of this going to lead us?" Mussolini is down there, and then, ... the Hitler-Mussolini bond, and I could remember so well the Germans moving into the Sudetenland. ... You had to feel that, "Hey, there's got to be a crisis here. Somewhere along the line, the Germans have got to be stopped."

KP: Your family's ancestry is German. Did you or your father have any opinions about the situation based upon that?

JDZ: No, no. ... Again, I don't remember my father having any strong opinions. ... A story I could remember about my father better concerns World War I, when he went away from Altoona. They

had neighbors who lived, I think, about three houses away, and this is my father now, ... and my grandparents. They had neighbors who lived three doors away, and their name was Pippert, P-I-P-P-E-R-T, and they were German. I could remember Mr. and Mrs. Pippert with a strong German accent coming down. Now, ... this was during the '30s, when I'm a kid, you know, just a young teenager. But, I could remember them coming down the street in the mid-'30s, and talking to my ... grandparents, and I ... can recall my grandparents making comment about how, I'll use the word, ridiculously ... old-country these Pipperts were. Now, again, my forebearers were German, but they'd been here for a long time. These Pipperts had come here more recently. ... I can remember my father talking about the attitude that the neighbors ... about the Pipperts being in the neighborhood and being very, very pro-German during World War I. ... Of course, my dad was on the American side.

DB: What was the general reaction of the Rutgers community after the fall of France in June of 1940?

JDZ: Dave, I could only say, out of my very vague memory, that it was just only one more block in the ever building road that said, "Hey, we're going to be involved in a war here, somewhere along the line." I mean, ... at the time, we were all, of course, ROTC. ... You know, it was an infantry ROTC unit, and, as a land-grant school, you all are ROTC, unless you were physically disabled.

KP: You elected to stay in.

JDZ: Well, I elected to stay in, but, what I was going to say is, this happened in 1940, so, we were all taking some ROTC, at that time. And then, it was at the end of the sophomore year that you had to make a decision as to whether you wanted to proceed with ROTC. ... At that point, I decided, and I honestly can't tell you why, ... I guess it was the idea that, "Well, by George, why not take advantage of the fact that I could go in as an officer, rather than taking my chances going in as an enlisted man, somewhere down the line." I think ... that feeling was heightened, I know, because, while I was in my junior year, now, I'm in advanced ROTC in my junior year in 1942, ... my number came up at home. ... I could remember a Mrs. Rossell, who sat on the draft board, being very insistent that I go into the service. I'm a student at Rutgers. ... I went down, my father and I, and argued that I'm in advanced ROTC. I'm qualified. I don't have to go in as a draftee at this point. I'd done exactly what any advanced ROTC student could do, and you could get an exemption. There wasn't anything illegal about it.

KP: But, you had to put up an argument with the draft board.

JDZ: Oh, yeah, yeah. ... Remember, you didn't have ... 60-70% of your high school class going off to college in those days. You had maybe 15-20% going off to college, and Mrs. Rossell ... in personality, was a very dominant kind of person in the township. ... She was a bulldog kind of person.

KP: What was her role in the community?

JDZ: Well, she'd served on the town council and she was a woman ... whose name was always, you know, before the public, as it were, politically. ... She gravitated toward power, and her husband was a barber; husband had a barber shop. But, she was a dominant kind of figure.

KP: Was she a Republican or a Democrat?

JDZ: She was a Republican. Oh, yeah.

KP: And, she was on the draft board. Was she just insistent that everyone be drafted?

JDZ: Well, I assume. She took the same position with everybody, had there been others, but, again, I think it was the fact that there were so few involved in advanced ROTC who came before her. I might have been the first one, and she didn't really realize that I was conforming to the letter of the law.

KP: You eventually became an officer. How good was your ROTC training? How effective was it? I'm sure you probably took it more seriously your senior year, when we were already at war.

JDZ: ... That's a tough one. ... I'd have to say that I think if you were to compare the ROTC training with what happened during three months of OCS at Fort Benning, Georgia, there was a night and day difference. I mean, it's one thing getting some preparation out of a book, doing some tactical movements on a map based on the fact that there's a river here, and there are woods here, and there's a hill here. That's one thing. ... I think the instructors were decent ... instructors. There was one guy, ... as a matter-of-fact, the day we had lunch, someone brought up Elmer, what's the name, Klinsman. ... He was one of these officers that was a little rooster. You think of authoritarian, boy, he was the very quintessence of authoritarianism. ... I think the instruction was probably as effective as any ROTC instruction anywhere. But, it paled into insignificance in terms of what happened at OCS, where you had field problems and very intensive preparations.

KP: Without OCS, with your ROTC training alone, you would not have been able to function well as an officer. OCS, it seems, was the crucial element.

JDZ: That was crucial. Oh, yeah. Yeah, very much. Yeah, ... we had some who washed out. Of course, we had to go through OCS, you know. The War Department put through a ruling in the ... fall or winter of '42, no more commissions; no more direct commissions. You went to OCS to earn your commission. So, much of us in ROTC had been inducted into the service in February, took us to Fort Dix. We became privates, but we continued to study. ... By that time, they had what they called an Army Specialized Training Unit, came here from Fort Monmouth, Signal Corps, and they were here for the instruction. ... It was a contingent of, mostly, enlisted men, but, getting training in Signal Corps work. Then, it was automatic after you graduated. We graduated in May, and then, after just a few days, we went to OCS. I wound up down at Benning, where most of our fellas went, and you were automatically made a corporal beforehand.

KP: You majored in History and Political Science. When you came to Rutgers, what did you think you wanted to do?

JDZ: I wanted to write. ... I went into Journalism my first year.

KP: What convinced you not to go into Journalism? Why did you change your mind?

JDZ: I developed ... a strong interest in foreign affairs, at the time. I thought that I wanted to, eventually, work for the State Department, get into the Diplomatic Service, get proficient in a couple of languages, and wind up as a career State Department kind of person. ... That's what led me away from Journalism.

KP: I found this to be remarkable; some people cannot remember any of their professors, much less name their favorite professors. You named three professors that made a distinct impression.

JDZ: Charanis, George, and Ellis.

KP: What was distinctive about these professors that you remember?

JDZ: Well, ... Charanis was Greek, a wonderful guy, a great sense of humor. ... Of course, quite an accent, which stays with you, you know. I think an accent, anytime, tends to attract more attention. But, he taught ... Ancient Civilizations, I guess it was called, and he was tough. I mean, he was a good taskmaster. He'd let you know if you weren't cutting the mustard, as it were. ... As I recall, he had a nice way of embarrassing you. Subtle, make you feel like you want to fall through a crack in the floor if he cited you as really not keeping abreast of what was going on, or not being able to answer a question, or unable to make some rejoinder to whatever ... subject we were discussing. Ellis was quiet, but I thought of Ellis as studious. Ellis was not someone who was easily approachable. Very intensive kind of a guy, and I respected that. You could talk to him, but he wasn't someone you felt would encourage you to come forth and talk. But, he knew his subject, let me tell you, I felt. And, ... Professor George of Political Science, I mean, he was somebody who everybody at Rutgers knew. Whether you were an engineer, chemistry major, biology, ... you knew who Professor George was. He'd get up there and he'd do a dance. He was an angular kind of a build, probably, I don't know, 5'11" or 6 foot, not real heavy, sort of a thin kind of a guy. Smiling face, you know, and ... he'd make one of these real trenchant kind of comments, politically, you know, to see what kind of a response he would get. ... You could get into some great discussions with him. Fun, you know. ... I'm not sure of this, but I would guess, that he probably drew more people, as an elective course, more students coming out of the more scientific disciplines, than any other professor at Rutgers.

KP: A number of people have mentioned him.

JDZ: ... "Hey, I got to take a course ... I've got to go a semester with Professor George." And, he was in local politics, as I recall. He lived outside of New Brunswick, but he was in local politics, think he ran for councilman, or something, not a big job. But, he had his finger in, as it were. ... He was a good influence, I guess, in terms of convincing you that you ought to be a participant ... in the political process, yeah.

KP: And, he didn't care about which side you came down on it sounds.

JDZ: I don't have any recollection ... that he really did. Now, you may get some other comments from others who feel very strongly that he was one or the other, Republican, Democrat, whatever. He was just ... Professor George. He was a good guy to have class with.

KP: Do you have any recollections of Arthur Burns?

JDZ: No, nope. Do not.

KP: The Class of '43 entered Rutgers when America was at peace, although war was breaking out in Europe. When you arrived here, President Clothier said he hoped that the United States would not become involved. The war really transformed Rutgers, as you mentioned earlier. What were the changes that you saw? You talked about the ASTP arriving from Fort Monmouth. Many people were already inducted. What did war do to the campus?

JDZ: ... The only comment that I could make in that regard, I think, is that we started to see some of our classmates, a few of our classmates, leave school and go off. I think the first one of our Class of '43 who was killed was a guy by the name of Johnny Groves, from Ocean City. And, he being from south of Trenton ... I knew John, and John went off quite early. Again, I can't tell you exactly when Kurt, ... but he was early in the game. He may have left in our junior year in '42, but he, eventually, become a tail-gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress, and he was killed over ... in Europe. ... That's really, pretty much, the only recollection I have. I'm probably a poor interviewer, ... because my memory is hazy on lots of things. ... I was probably too immature to appreciate much that was going on, and I'm very frank about that.

KP: What was the relationship between the regular Rutgers College people and the ASTP? Was there any jealousy or misunderstanding looking back upon it?

JDZ: I don't recall any. ... They probably had some misgivings, being around a bunch of college students, but I don't recall there ever being any outbreak of real feeling, hostility. ... Don't have any recollection at all of any particular act or event.

KP: You were inducted as a private when the war broke out.

JDZ: Well, not when the war broke out.

KP: Well, shortly after.

JDZ: Yeah, that was in February of, actually, '43. Yeah.

KP: Did you draw a private's allotment, at that point?

JDZ: Yeah, oh, yeah. It seemed like a strange kind of existence, really, ... to be taken to Dix and inducted, and yet, being able to continue until May.

KP: Were you expected to wear your uniform?

JDZ: Oh, yeah.

KP: So, you wore your uniform to class every day.

JDZ: Oh, yeah.

KP: To what degree, after February of 1943, were you a student and to what degree were you a private? Would you, for example, have morning roll call?

JDZ: No, you just wore your uniform and went to class.

KP: And, you went to your regular ROTC training then. Had the war changed it in any way?

JDZ: Not that I recall.

KP: There was not a difference between 1940-1941 and 1942-1943, in the terms of the training.

JDZ: I don't remember that there was, no.

DB: What can you say about your training at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma?

JDZ: I was not at Camp Gruber. The 88th Division was activated at Camp Gruber. The 88th Division had been in World War I, so, they were re-activated at Camp Gruber. I went over as a replacement, so, I had nothing to do with Gruber. Now, I came into contact with a lot of men, when I got to Italy, who had been at Gruber. I mean, all kinds of stories. As a matter-of-fact, several of the fellows had married Oklahoma girls around from the Muskogee area. But, I was not at Gruber. I went from Fort Benning, OCS, in September of '43, to Camp Croft, South Carolina. ... The orders came through, and some went to McClellan, some went to Croft, some went to half a dozen different places. Well, I wound up at Camp Croft, an infantry replacement training center. Thirteen-week cycle, and then, [makes a "Zip" sound] overseas. Tough. ... Later, in going through two-cycles there, training, two cycles of new draftees, I only met one of the men whom I had had in a cycle in my training platoon at Camp Croft. I only ever met one in Italy. You never know where these fellows went. ... They went over and God knows how many were killed, or wounded, or whatever.

KP: I want to back up and take you back to Fort Benning. You described that training as being very crucial.

JDZ: Well, it was. ... First of all, you had to be impressed with the discipline in the staff and in the administration, the logistics. ... Coming from a sort of loose administration, as a college, young man, and going down there and seeing, boy, everything done. At 10:00, this was done, at 11:00, this was done, at 12:00, this was done, and, boy, you had to be impressed because it was like that.

There wasn't any kidding about it. If you had a field problem, ... you're out there in formation, and, you know, you didn't question that. Hey, listen, I want to be an officer, and, when I was there, they were graduating about one hundred seventy-five new ... infantry second-lieutenants every other day. I gotta tell you, if I can digress, a little story.

KP: No, please, go ahead.

JDZ: One of the things that sticks in my head that has nothing to do with discipline, only the extent that you had a little bit of time between chow, dinner chow, and compulsory study hall at 7:00, and it was compulsory. You had, maybe, depending on how fast you ate, maybe you had twenty, twenty-five minutes, something like that, and it was perfectly natural to get out and, you know, just wander, small groups, ... down the company street. You had the next row of barracks over here, that was the class that was going to graduate three days ahead of you, or two days ahead, and your class, and then, the next barracks over here, that line of barracks, they were going to graduate two days after you, with another bunch of infantry lieutenants. ... So, it happened that in the barracks next to us, there was a candidate who had a lot of notoriety as a football player. His name was Bob Waterfield. He married Jane Russell. Now, Jane Russell may not mean a thing to you, but Jane Russell was a very beautiful, curvaceous actress. ... She was beautiful. She really was, and she made several movies. Anyways, this movie star winds up marrying Bob Waterfield, and he was a UCLA football ... star, and he's in this next barracks. Well, ... it was a lot of fun, actually, to walk down the end of the company street and Jane Russell would come. She was living down there to be close to him. I mean, he wasn't living with her. There was no way he could live with her. He could be with her weekends, but he wasn't living with her. They were married, but she'd drive over. She had a powder-blue, Packard convertible. You probably don't know what a Packard is. Well, it was ... an elegant, expensive automobile. Distinctive. And, it was powder-blue, that made it more distinctive. And, it was a convertible. She'd ride over ... there and park at the end of his company street. Well, that was ... only sixty, seventy yards away. ... You could get yourself, you know, a good view of Jane Russell every night to boost your spirits. And, Bob would ... come down and, you know, they'd chat, and then, when he had to go to compulsory study hall, like all of us, "Zip," back we'd go, compulsory study hall, and she'd drive off. ... It was one of those simple treats. And, I remember, God, Georgia peaches, I could remember the damn hard peaches. They were like baseballs. ... It seemed to me that every dinner meal, we had a Georgia peach. That was ... a dessert. There was some great guys, and I oft times wonder what happened to all these guys ... in my barracks.

KP: Where did they come from?

JDZ: Well, it was interesting, Kurt, in that our OCS class was composed, about 98%, of other ROTC groups. They came from, and you start spouting out the names, we had 'em from Syracuse, Washington State, Creighton, Oklahoma, it was then Oklahoma A&M, it's now Oklahoma State, but then, it was Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical. As a matter-of-fact, ... we were assigned bunks alphabetically, and my name, being a Z, I was right down at the very end. There were no Z's after me, and the fellow who bunked next to me was a Young. Tracy Young was his name. He was ... mild-mannered, ... he came from Oklahoma A&M. As a matter-of-fact, ... he was the NCAA light heavyweight wrestling champ that year. Very mild-mannered guy, weighed about 175 lbs.,

tough as nails, and quiet. ... It was close knit, ... and that was your platoon. That was your training platoon. When we go on a problem, and you were out in the field on problems all the time; that's what made it so valuable, really, the field problems. ... If you weren't doing marksmanship and becoming proficient in putting a ... M-1 together and disassembling it, or a machine gun, or a mortar, whatever, then, ... you were out doing marksmanship. You were out, you were on the range becoming familiar with all the weapons, from a .45 caliber pistol right up to, as I say, .81mm mortars. The field problems were great. They had these great big vans for transportation. Big, long van, and ... two benches would run the length of the vans, and you'd get in there and you'd sit astride the benches, on your way to these problems. Now, the Harmony Church area, Fort Benning is big. I mean, Fort Benning is not a thousand acres, Fort Benning is thousands and thousands of acres, and you've got all kinds of terrain which, again, made it so valuable in your training. And, you'd go out on a field problem and then you'd maneuver, you know, whatever. Maybe it was a squad maneuver, a platoon maneuver, and then, you'd get a chance, you'd be the squad leader one time, you'd just be one of the members of the squad another time, or you'd be the platoon guide. It was in those days, in the table of organization, you had to have a platoon guide. ... You were called on for the different tasks, and then, to learn what that particular task called for. I can remember compass ... problems, particularly those at night. You had to cross all kinds of terrain. You'd run a course, and, in order to pass that test, you'd have to come out within about thirty or forty yards of a stake that was driven in the road. ... In the interim, you're leaving a point back here along one road, and you're going to cross all kinds of terrain, woods, hills, streams, whatever, ... to see how well you could read and follow a compass at night. ... That was one of the more complex problems, and you had to pass that thing. ... If you didn't pass, you had another shot at it. ... If you didn't pass it, ... it was a demerit. You get enough demerits, then you washed out. Either you're pushed back five weeks to another class, or you're washed out totally. ... All of that was in the hands of what they called a tactical officer. Each platoon had a tactical officer. Now, these were officers ... who had been through OCS themselves. ... They were tough, but they were also sympathetic. They'd been ... candidates, and they give you a lot of good guidance, and, for the most part, were ... good leaders.

KP: You mentioned that people washed out. How many did wash out? How many from your platoon, in particular? Did any wash out from your platoon?

JDZ: I can't. ... Our company was probably, at the outset, ... about two hundred men, and I couldn't tell you how many. I don't remember, I'd have to look at my certificate to see how many graduated. ... We got a certificate ...

KP: But, you knew that people washed out?

JDZ: Well, I knew, from the Rutgers gang, ... I think there were twenty-two of us who wound up down there from Rutgers, I believe, and I'm not absolutely sure of that, and, I think, five either were pushed back or washed out completely. ... I can't verify that for sure. ... I think there were seventeen of us who graduated from Benning. Nine of the seventeen were killed. Three of us wound up in, this is Rutgers now, ... Italy, each in a different division. ... Bill Pillion wound up in the 91st Division. Harry Young wound up in the 85th, and he was killed, and I wound up in the 88th. Now, ... I'm sure in each instance, because of the length of time ... well, I'm not absolutely

sure. I was going to say each one of us probably went across as replacement officers, but I'm not absolutely sure about that. I could be wrong.

KP: A number of people that I have talked to in my interviews tried to avoid the infantry and tried to avoid the Army.

JDZ: I didn't have the good sense to do that. I didn't have the good sense to ... do that. No, I can't make any comment. ... I will tell you this. The pride I feel, being in the infantry, you'll never know. I mean, ... I feel so fortunate to be alive. That's the beginning, and I'm not trying to be dramatic. ... It wasn't nice. But, having been there, and back here, I can say, "Boy, I've seen it, and you can't tell me a thing. I know what it is, and don't ever try to make me swallow something." Don't put me in a room with some BSer who's going to tell me how it was from the rear somewhere, because it can't be done. You were there. ... I think every infantryman feels that way. Hell, they take 70% of the casualties. ... They fight the war. ... That isn't to take anything away from the engineers, or the artillery men, or whatever. ... I ought to shut up. But, I feel a great deal of allegiance to the ...

KP: The infantry.

JDZ: To the infantry. ... Yeah, there's nothing like it, because, you know, you live like a dog. You live like an absolute dog. That's part of it, I mean, just the arduous kind of way of living. Being wet, being cold, hoping that there's something to eat. We went through one stretch, one stretch of about three weeks, on K-rations, nothing but K-rations. ... That gets a little tiring, wearing, and then, eat when you can, hope that you might be able to get something warm, ... heat those K-rations somewhat. I'm not trying to over-dramatize. I'm just trying to tell you what is. And, thank God, I wasn't there the winter of '42-'43, before the Cassino Abbey was taken. ... That was absolute hell. It was bad enough for us trying to get through the Gothic Line.

KP: No, I want to move on to Italy soon.

JDZ: ... Well, I'm sorry. I'm getting ahead of myself.

KP: No need to apologize. I know you were very busy in training, but, did you ever get out into Georgia and see any of Georgia when you were in training?

JDZ: No. Oh, no. ... One of the first messages you got as a candidate was, "Don't venture off the post unless you absolutely have to."

-----END SIDE TWO TAPE ONE-----

KP: ... This continues an interview with J. Domer Zerbe on November 16, 1994 at Rutgers University, with Kurt Piehler ...

DB: ...and David Brown.

KP: Just continue, please.

JDZ: Well, you asked about seeing some of rural Georgia, and I indicated very strongly that there were a couple good reasons why we didn't. The parachute school was at Fort Benning and paratroopers have a tough name, as you well know. They were tough, and they were taught to be tough. ... If you ventured over, for example, across the Chattahoochee River to Phoenix City, Alabama, on a Saturday night, you'd be amongst five thousand paratroopers. ... We were told right off that, "If you were wearing an OCS symbol, some of those paratroopers would like nothing better than to get involved and get you embroiled ... in some kind of a fracas, and "Boom," you're washed out." I mean, there wasn't any (aye, yes, or no?) about that. ... So, we stayed away from Phoenix City and, certainly, stayed away from Columbus, Georgia, the closest town.

...

KP: So, you really stayed on base, pretty much.

JDZ: Oh, yes. And, I can't recall anybody who, to my knowledge, ever ventured into any of those towns in the thirteen weeks we were there. Phoenix City, that was a rip-roaring, you know, lots of brothels, and street walkers, and it was a wide-open kind of a town. A paratrooper kind of town, you know. [laughter]

KP: You have created quite a figure for the paratroopers. Did you ever have any contact with them at the base?

JDZ: No, never did, and never did subsequently, either. Since the war I have. ... I have a close acquaintance who was a paratrooper, but, no, I had absolutely none, absolutely none. We had no paratroopers in Italy. German paratroopers, yes, fought them, but not ours. So, we didn't see anything in Georgia other than the Fort Benning base, Harmony Church area.

KP: You were in infantry school, and I get the sense that you were not quite sure what you were getting into. What theater did you hope to get assigned to?

JDZ: Well, ... if I had any preference at all, it would have been to go to Europe rather than the Pacific. The Pacific seemed so damn far away, and, of course, ... I wasn't destined for the Marine Corps. You knew dag-gone well that they were going to have to be making the initial tough landings, and island-hopping across the Pacific. ... I certainly expected to get overseas, somewhere along the line, and I'd rather it be Europe. ... I certainly had no predilection that I was going to go to Italy. I figured, "Well, ... I'd go over to England, and then, eventually, join an outfit in France." But, it didn't happen that way.

KP: You mentioned that after you graduated at Fort Benning, you were transferred to Camp Croft.

JDZ: Croft ... just outside Spartanburg, South Carolina. ... It was an infantry replacement training center. There were a number of, we called them IRTCs, in those days, and that's where a lot of OCS people would go, initially. Now, some would wind up joining a division in the States and get

more training. ... A division might well be on maneuvers and I'm sure some of our fellows wound up that way.

KP: But, you wound up as a replacement.

JDZ: Yeah, there were, I think, ... three or four of us, from my class, who went to ... Croft. And then, you'd join a training battalion and there was, like, a table of organization that the infantry would follow, but ... they were training platoons.

KP: In other words, you would be broken up after your eleven weeks.

JDZ: Oh, yeah. Thirteen, the cycle was thirteen, and then, they eventually expanded it to seventeen weeks. And then, those men ... they're gone. God knows where they went, to the winds, to go somewhere, again, ... as a replacement, just like I wound up doing later. I went through two cycles down there.

KP: This was your first independent Army leadership position. What was it like to command a unit? What did you learn and what was your relationship with your sergeant?

JDZ: Well, we had, in each training platoon, ... a buck sergeant and we had a corporal, and I remember very well, the both of these fellows were Italian. ... As a matter-of fact, they were both from New Jersey, North Jersey. The corporal ... was a football player from the University of Tennessee. ... I think he'd gone down there for two years, and then, subsequently, he's inducted in the service. ... He was tough. I mean, he was tough, but he was fun. I guess ... I quickly learned ... being an officer, you don't just throw your weight around. ... Anyone has that idea, it's misshapen, that you simply come in and, all of a sudden, you're the big honcho. That's for the birds. Anybody does that has got to be off of their noggin. The relationship that an enlisted man, like a sergeant, has with his platoon is an entirely different relationship than an officer has with a platoon. In a sense, even in the training platoon, your non-coms are closer to the men. ... They can do things, they can say things that an officer doesn't, or won't ... or shouldn't, right. You communicate, basically, through your NCOs, your non-coms. And, as I said, there were two in each platoon. The sergeant ... these guys were both young. I mean, they were both in their ... early twenties.

KP: Was your sergeant in the regular Army?

JDZ: No, no, no ... neither of these guys were regular Army. No, none of these people were regular Army. ... Company commander we had, the captain, he was in ROTC from probably, Class of, like, '41, out of some college. As a matter-of-fact, he was a Virginia Tech ... graduate and he'd already made captaincy. He hadn't been overseas. He hadn't been anywhere. I mean, ... he'd been in the States, doing ... the same thing I was doing. No, none of those people were regular Army. We had a battalion commander ... a little guy by the name of Ruby from the State of Massachusetts, and ... he was, probably, National Guard. He hadn't been overseas, ... but, he was a lieutenant colonel. He liked ... all the young officers' wives. ... Oh, he got along great, 'cause, he was a guy about forty-years old, and if you had an affair, like a dance, you know, a weekend dance, boy, he loved to dance with the young officers' wives, those who were married, you know. [laughter] ...

Anyway, the NCOs, they were good. They were proficient. ... I remember, we had one guy in our platoon in the first cycle. He was from New York City, and he was what we called a screw up. I mean, ... everybody else in the platoon could do it right, and he'd screw you up. Well, you get to a point where you say, "Hey, enough of this nonsense. I mean, my reputation's at stake, too. This is a bunch of crap." So, what do you do with this guy? ... You try to reason with him, and so forth. ... I could remember, after a particular inspection, the corporal I mentioned to you, who was the football player from Tennessee, he came to me, said, "Lieutenant, ... we got to do something with this guy." I'm not going to mention his name. "But, we have to do something with him." ... This fella who was messing us up, the platoon, big, big burly guy, but, he was fighting the Army system, pure and simple. ... I said to this corporal, "Yeah, we do." ... This guy says to me, "I'll take care of it, Lieutenant. Do you want me to take care of it?" "Yep, you take care of it." Well, he took care of it. I mean, he gave the guy a little bit of a thrashing. He didn't take him out and beat him half to death, but he worked him over a little bit and he straightened the guy out. He straightened him out. ... Maybe the guy was fearful of getting more, I don't know. But, he became a better soldier.

KP: In other words, he finished.

JDZ: Oh, yeah, that was fine. That worked all right. It might not work in another case, who knows? But, ... you were dependent on an NCO to do that ... kind of thing. I reprimanded the guy, you know, verbally, but that doesn't necessarily cut the mustard. I remember, on a training session at Camp Croft, I did something, if it was a rainy day, you had an indoor ... I mean, you always had an alternative training program scheduled, in the event of rain. So, this was conducted in the barracks. Now, I had my platoon and ... we were on a map reading exercise. This was another New Yorker, from somewhere in New York City, and I remember we had a break, for ten minutes say, and I happened to be standing by the water fountain. This guy, I saw spit in the water fountain. Well, I can't tell you how I reacted to that. I said, "How in the hell could a human being with any sense go to a water fountain and spit?" Hell, he had a men's room he could go to in the barracks, and I grabbed him, he wasn't a big guy, I grabbed him by the back of the neck, and I pulled him away. ... I remember his name, his name was Goetz. I says, "Goetz, what in the hell are you doing?" And, he looked at me in bewilderment. "What do you mean what am I doing?" I said, "I saw you just spit in that water fountain. ... Do you think that's the thing to do?" And, I don't remember, ... I guess he became apologetic, but I often wondered to myself, "My God, maybe he didn't know any better." ... I should not have grabbed him the way I did. I mean, that was *verboden*, but I did it. ... They were good guys ... for the most part, ... and they were all from mid-Atlantic states and New England. ...

KP: So, you didn't have any southerners in your platoon that you could remember off hand.

JDZ: No, I don't. I remember a guy from Maine who was a real good soldier. ... He was in his mid-thirties. He was no young guy. You know, by the time you were thirty-eight, ... you could avoid military service, and this fellow had to be, ... I suspect he was in his ... mid-thirties. His name was Soule, S-O-U-L-E. He was a woodsman from northern Maine, and he was a guy that wanted to be exact. He wanted to do everything right. He wanted to please, but he was tough. ... He was a pleasure to be with, because you knew he was anxious to learn, he was going to do his best, and, hell, we all respond to that sort of thing. ... I had a fellow from West Virginia, I mean a real

Appalachian chap, probably low education, and when I say that, I'm not denigrating, please, when I say low education. A lot of these guys could do a million things I couldn't do, and I came to appreciate that when I got overseas, even the more. But, he was very courteous and always wanting to, you know, one of the things they tell you in the service is don't volunteer. I mean, if you got any brains at all, don't ever volunteer for anything. You get tapped, but don't volunteer. And, I could remember this chap, again, he was a guy in his mid-thirties, and ... he would volunteer. ... I don't know, maybe he thought he was polishing the apple. I don't know, I really didn't give it a lot of thought. He just seemed to be one nice guy who learned growing up that you pitch in, you do your part. ... Only ever seeing one of those guys ... overseas always bothered me a little bit, because ... when I got my orders to go overseas, I thought, "Well, ... I'll wind up ... seeing a few people that had been in training platoons." Only one.

KP: You went through two cycles. When did you get your orders to go overseas? Was it while you were in the middle of a training cycle?

JDZ: No, it was, as I recall, at the end of a cycle. It was between ... cycles. Got the orders in, oh, some time in, I think it was June 2 or 3, 1944. Now, remember, Normandy landing was June 6, and ... my oldest son was born in Spartanburg. He was born in ... November of '43, and my wife, of course, then, we had an apartment on the north end of Spartanburg, and I was home lots of nights, but then, if we were out bivouacking and training, ... I wasn't home.

KP: How did you meet your wife?

JDZ: Well, she was a high school student.

KP: From Mount Holly?

JDZ: High school, yeah.

KP: And, you married before you went into the service?

JDZ: Married before, right, yeah, I married while I was a senior at Rutgers. ...

KP: Did the war hasten your decision to marry?

JDZ: Yeah, I guess it did.

KP: Because. you could have just postponed until after the war.

JDZ: Yeah, I guess it did. I was truly in love, and still am. No, ... my wife was one of two children and we'd gone through school together, and I never really paid any attention to her until about junior year of high school, and then, I knew she existed, because we'd all gone through pretty much school together from elementary school on up. ... Senior year of high school came along and we both were aspiring thespians and she winds up getting the female lead in the senior play and I wind up getting the male lead, and that sort of drew us closer together. ...

KP: And, she followed you to Fort Benning?

JDZ: Oh, no. ... Oh, God no. ...

KP: But, through Spartanburg she did?

JDZ: Yeah, when I got down to Spartanburg, when I got ... to Camp Croft, then I made it my business, as fast as I could, to try to find a place for us to live. ... Somebody gave me a tip to go to this northern end of Spartanburg. As a matter-of-fact, it was outside the city limit up on Route 29, which is the main road north-south in those days. There was no Interstate 85. And, family there by the name of Flow, F-L-O-W. ... Mrs. Flow was from Buffalo, New York, and she married this man by the name of Lennox, Lennox Flow, and he was a Spartanburg resident. I don't know how they ever got together, but ... she ran the household. ... They altered their house a little bit, and they actually had three small apartments. So, the three small apartments were occupied by two other guys like me, young officers out at the base, but we were the only ones that had a child.

KP: So, in a sense, you experienced several different worlds. You were in the Army, but you understood the civilian world at the same time.

JDZ: Yeah, yeah.

KP: Do you consider yourself lucky to get an apartment because apartments were very scarce?

JDZ: Very, very lucky. Yes, absolutely, we were. And, Mrs. Flow was sort of ... a surrogate mother to ... both of us. My mother came down from Mount Holly at the time our son was born, and stayed for, I think, about three weeks with my wife. ... The people, my wife even speaks to this day about how cordial the nurses were. You know, as you were saying earlier, we didn't have the mobility in those days. Southerners were southerners, northerners were northerners and you didn't have all this flow back and forth. The war came along and, of course, then it started. But, my wife comments that those, the local nurses in the hospital there at Spartanburg were just so obliging, ... so caring. It didn't make any difference where she came from.

KP: What other memories do you have of living in Spartanburg, both you and your wife?

JDZ: Well, getting out on a Saturday night. [laughter] ... Remember now, you're close to an Army base. So, on a weekend night, you got thousands of guys coming off the base, wanting to get a little bit of a social life, you know, go out, have a couple of beers, or look for some women, you know. ... Anything to get away from the base. ... You quickly learned that if you went downtown, what we called downtown, down in the center of Spartanburg, with your wife on a Saturday night, or, well, more so a Friday, or Saturday night, hell, all you were doing was this. You were saluting. ... Your arm would fall off. I mean, these were new inductees into the service and they were told, "Hey, you see an officer, you salute." [laughter] ... So, your life was, I found, rather private. What we did, socially, was done with the officers and their wives who lived in the apartment, the other

apartments where we lived there. We'd get together for, you know, dinner, or play cards, and, usually, they'd come to us, because we had the child. We had the baby.

DB: Was there a lot of card playing on the base?

JDZ: Well, yes, I imagine. Yeah, I guess so. I'm talking now about card playing back in the apartment. I'm not talking about out on the base, Dave. Did you misunderstand that?

DB: No.

JDZ: Okay. I'm sure there was a lot of card playing, sure, in the barracks. Oh, Lord, yes. And, gambling. Oh, yeah.

KP: You had access to the PX, but your wife was a civilian. Did you experience any of the civilian rationing?

JDZ: I rarely used it. I didn't use the PX for much.

KP: So, when your wife was at home, you depended on rations?

JDZ: She and I would shop weekends and, occasionally, we'd go over to Camp Croft to the PX, but not very often. We'd go into Spartanburg and do our ...

KP: Do your shopping?

JDZ: ... Basic food shopping, yeah.

KP: Was rationing a problem? Is there anything you particularly remember about dealing with coupons? I'd be curious to hear what your wife would have to say. [laughter]

JDZ: I'd jump ahead to my story if I told you. Now, I don't want to do that because that comes after the war. Well, you were cognizant that so many things were being rationed. ... Yet, I don't recall that there was anything that I missed from my life that I ... wanted so badly that I couldn't have. Obviously, gasoline was rationed and all I needed, I mean, I had this little, I told you, 1936 Coupe, that I'd had here. Well, I took it to Camp Croft. So, I had a car. That was to go in and out from the apartment out to the base, what, seven or eight miles each way, each day, if I wasn't on a training exercise out there. Then, the car would stay out parked on the base. My wife didn't drive, so she's home. She planted a garden, a vegetable garden. She's a flower woman to begin with. She's got tremendous horticulture knowledge. So, she planted a garden, and, I mean, caring for the baby filled in her time pretty well. [laughter]

KP: I could imagine.

JDZ: Yeah, but ... there was certainly enough gas to get me back and forth, and ... I mean, there were never any trips to go over to the Smokies some weekend. You just didn't do it. ... You were

confined to Spartanburg environments, yeah. The social life, as I say was pretty much right there, ... at the Flow family residence. I remember Mrs. Flow ... she had one son, and he was in the 30th Division, and they were on maneuvers somewhere, and she'd keep us abreast of how ... he was doing. ... I could remember her, you know, saying, "Oh, boy, I hope they don't go overseas, yet," or whatever. Eventually, he got overseas, but, by that time, ... we'd gone. Well, I got orders to go overseas around the 2nd or 3rd of June. We packed up the car and started up Route 29. ... We must have started up Route 29 ... I guess, early in the morning, the 5th of June, and we drove all night. Remember ... what a Coupe ... looks like, ...with a ... space like that in the back of the seats, and had a wicker basket and the baby in the basket, and I remember coming into the outskirts of Washington, DC, and here were newsboys out on the street, selling the newspapers. Normandy invasion. ... Oh, boy, ...finally, it is here. So, we went back to Mount Holly, and ... my wife and the baby stayed with my parents. ... The orders were to go to Fort Meade, Maryland. That was preparatory to going to port of embarkation, which turned out to be Newport News, Virginia. ... When you got to Fort Meade, you had no way of knowing when you were going to go. You just knew you were going to go overseas. It was day by day by day by day. ... As it turned out, I got home each weekend, if I lasted up to a weekend, and the orders didn't come to go overseas. ...

KP: You'd go back to Mount Holly.

JDZ: Go back to Mount Holly from Fort Meade, Maryland. Actually, I did that twice. And then, ... the order came. Again, each time you'd leave Mount Holly, you'd say, "Hey, I don't know whether I'm going to see you again or not. I mean, this is bye-bye." So, then, we left from Newport News, and went across on an ... Army transport. ... We were part of a convoy. There must have been ... forty, fifty ships in that convoy. ... I had gotten a promotion. I got a promotion from second to first lieutenant about three weeks, as I remember, before I got my orders to go overseas. There were four officers assigned to a cabin, and that was a luxury. If you'd seen the way the enlisted men were packed in the holds, six bunks high. ... God, you got to feel sorry for people who are being packed in there like they were ... sardines. And, they were here, these canvas bunks, ... six high. And, once a day, at least once a day, you were required to go down, and you were assigned, when you got on the ship, you were assigned to a certain number of men down there, to go check on those men at least once every day, to make sure that illness was taken care of, ... they were getting food, and there was a lot of sea-sickness. God, and that made it terrible, because the odor down there in the hold, ... you know how perspiration starts to permeate a room. Well, here's this confined hold and I don't know how many men there were down there, but hundreds and hundreds and hundreds, and each officer had to go down and see about X-number of men. ... I don't know, I think I was responsible for twenty or thirty men. ... A lot of them were sick. I didn't feel so great myself, but we were up there in the lap of luxury, up on the level of the main deck, four to a cabin. ... It was uneventful. You know, you spent your days out leaning against the rail, most of the time, hoping that ... there's not some submarine out there ... and we had destroyer escorts. They'd race around the perimeter of the convoy all the time.

KP: So, you had no fear of the submarines?

JDZ: ... Fear? Well, I say, oh, yeah, we had some apprehension about submarines.

KP: But, you never had any real contact?

JDZ: No, no. ... The convoys were composed of small Liberty ships. I mean, the only big ships that were fast enough that could outrun a submarine were the one's who went by themselves, in those days. Everything else was in convoy. A lot of Liberty ships. I came back on a Liberty ship. ... Took us fourteen days to get from Newport News over to ... Naples.

KP: You were sent to Italy. What did you think the fighting would be like before you got over there? What were your thoughts of being sent over to Italy as a replacement? Did you have any thoughts at the time?

JDZ: Well, I knew it was mountains. I knew it was one mountain after another. ... I didn't particularly care for that. I mean, I knew that was going to be tough. Not that it turns out to be any tougher than fighting ... through hedgerows. Maybe it was not tougher. ... I knew it wasn't going to be a picnic.

KP: Would you have preferred to go to France?

JDZ: No, not in retrospect, no. ... I had apprehensions. I had concerns about how it would be to get into a rifle company where there'd already been experience. Obviously, you're moving in as a replacement. How are you going to conduct yourself? ... Who's going to continue to give the orders here? ... Anyway, I wound up going to ... they had, in Italy, a huge replacement depot. It was called the Dairy Farm. It was Count Ciano, who was Mussolini's son-in-law, and, this was south of Naples, and it was a huge complex. This was where ... everybody who went to Italy, as a replacement, funneled through the Dairy Farm. You reported in, I mean, there was transport right at the dock at Naples, you know, to take you to the Dairy Farm. And then, from the Dairy Farm, ... you were assigned to a large tent with a bunch of other guys, and you stayed there until the order came for you to go north and join some outfit. So, yeah, everybody felt a great deal of apprehension. "Where am I going? Who am I going to be with?" ... You knew the conduct of the war. At that stage, Rome had been taken. Rome was taken the same day as the Normandy landing, June 6. They finally got to Rome. And then, the Germans had retreated to ... not a strong line, but another line south of Florence. And, I joined, it was fortunate in retrospect, ... the 88th Division, at a time, when the activity was kind of light. They knew that the Gothic Line existed between Florence and Bologna, which is a distance of, what, forty miles? And that's where the next German strong line of resistance was, the Gothic Line. You know, they'd already penetrated how many lines in Germany, up to that point, three or four? Kesselring ... was a master in setting up. It's probably hard to appreciate how very few men could hold up a whole battalion, when you've got the advantage of height, when you're on top of a mountain, and you're looking down. ... You see, your whole element of surprise, first of all, is taken from you. You got to depend upon night attack, ... usually, if you're going to be successful, all other things being equal. It didn't take much, by way of German resistance, to hold up, you know, for hours or for days, you know, depending on the situation. They had the whole element of ... advantage on their side, in terms of where they were placed, ... a number of strong points across the entire Italian Peninsula. So, anyway, I felt, if I get to an outfit, I'll ... try to be a decent ... officer and take it sort of easy, depending on whatever situation I meet. Well, I got assigned to the 88th Division. I report to division headquarters, and then, I wait

a couple of hours, and they send me to the Second Battalion headquarters. Now, I told you, there's not a lot of activity at that point. They were in a static position. We were ... probably thirty miles or so south of the Arno River, south of Florence, which is on the Arno. ... The activity was quiet. ... From the Second Battalion, then they sent me over to E Company. E Company was led by, at that point, Captain Harwood. He was a Hoosier from Indiana. Kind of a gruff guy, maybe three or four years older than I. He was a guy in his twenties and, hell, I'm only, what, twenty-two? ... He says, "Okay, I'm going to assign you to the first platoon, rifle platoon. ... They haven't had an officer for some time." I don't know what he told me, a matter of weeks, ... probably the better part of, maybe, a month or so. ... He said, "They got a tech sergeant who is a hell of a soldier." ... "As a matter-of-fact," he says, "he's in for the DSC, Distinguished Service Cross," which he subsequently got for some sort of action ... previous to this. And, he was a young guy. He was of Ukrainian descent by birth. ... So, I think what Harwood was trying to tell me was, "Hey, I'm going to put you in there. You're inexperienced. You go over there and, you know, don't try to be the head honcho right off the bat. ... Just learn a little bit from this guy." I could remember going over and joining him. The sergeant had the platoon headquarters and it was a wee, small town. There must of been, oh, I don't know, a typical little Italian village, you know, with a bunch of connected, like, row houses, and ... one of these houses was platoon headquarters. And, I went in, introduced myself, and the sergeant was there with a runner. ... So, we started to talk. ... I'm not sure his acceptance was all that positive of me. And, I don't blame him. But, as I think about it, you know, ... he didn't sit back and say, "What the hell are you doing here?" But, ... he probably had thoughts in his mind, "Well, why is the company commander sending this guy to me? I mean, we've been doing fine. We're getting along all right." ... The platoon wasn't up to strength. There wasn't any platoon up to strength. You know, instead of having forty guys in the rifle platoon, there were probably, maybe, thirty. ... So, we chatted a little bit, and I asked him, "Well, ... where's the platoon? What's the situation? Give me the picture of what the situation is, because we're not pushing. We're in a static position." Well, he takes me out and we go around in back of these houses. ... There's a little sporadic rifle and machine-gun fire off in the distance some place. And, running out from the back of this little village was a sort of a spur ... more like a peninsula of woods. ... He said, "What we do at night, ... right after dark, ... I've been sending a reinforced rifle squad out there." He said, "Reinforced to the tune of another BAR." That's a Browning Automatic Rifle. Each rifle squad has a Browning Automatic Rifle. ... He'd put two BARs in the same reinforced; that's why he called it reinforced squad. I don't know, there must of been maybe twelve, thirteen guys. ... He says, "That's really all. We go out there and we stay all night, just in case of patrol activity, and then, right before day break, ... pull them back." So, that was my introduction, and that was a good introduction, because it was not in the midst of some hectic, loud, active battle going on. We stayed there, I guess, ... a week or so. And then, we moved again and the movement, again, was not anything fierce. ... As I said, the Germans were in retreat and they were going back to the next line, the Gothic Line, which was up there about twelve miles above Florence. So, it was a good introduction. ... They pulled us out of the line, pulled our division out of the line, and sent us over to just outside of Pisa, the Leaning Tower, and we stayed there and we trained. We were off-line now and there was very little going on, in terms of actual combat. The 88th Division was out of the line and every other day you got the chance to go over to the south end of Leghorn, Livorno, and swim in the Mediterranean. This was during the hot summer of 1944. Livorno Harbor had been literally, totally destroyed. You couldn't get any kind of a vessel in there. ... A lot of these seaside villas ... lovely homes that the Italians had ... lived in, I guess, during the summer months, ... like we

would go to a seashore resort here. ... Of course, they were gone. There were no civilians around at that point. So, we go over and ... go into one of these seaside houses, or two, or take as many as you want, and take off all your clothes and go out and swim in the Mediterranean for an hour or so. That was recreation if you weren't training. Otherwise, we were having platoon and company training. And then, you had a little time off. I remember going into Pisa and spending a day.

KP: One of the things I have talked about with people, and other scholars who have studied this, was that it was very hard for replacements to form bonds.

JDZ: Right, right.

KP: Being rotated off the line, did this help you, and other replacements, adjust and mesh with the unit?

JDZ: Yes, yes, no question about it. ... I mean, like you, I have read so many instances of replacements being tossed in. I don't know whether you saw, just this past week, I know our PBS Channel showed the Battle of the Bulge ...

KP: No, but I've heard that from people I've interviewed.

JDZ: ... And, he was talking about replacements just being thrown in and they don't even know ... the name of the guy, and then, assigned to a platoon, and the next thing you know, they're KIA. And then, the platoon sergeant doesn't even know their name, or remember their name. No, ... it was very fortunate in that regard, very, because of the, really, quiet kind of activity. But, we knew, ... of course, that we were getting ready to prepare for the Gothic Line, and that was not going ... to be a simple situation. And then, you wondered, "Jeez, well, the Germans have already pulled back out of Florence and they haven't destroyed the city. I know we had some thoughts, a little bit earlier, "My God, are the Germans were going to blow all the bridges over the Arno, and are they going to destroy the marvelous ... art treasures," and that kind of thing in Florence, which they did not, thank God. So, they pulled into their line, the Gothic Line, and it was quiet, as far as our division was concerned, and as far as most of the divisions. The activity, then, ... it just stayed quiet, until about September. ... The 88th Division was held in reserve. When September rolled around, in the first effort, the 85th, the 91st, and the 34th were all going to make first, with the 88th Division in reserve. And then, the 88th, ... wherever one of those three divisions could make a real penetration, the 88th was going to funnel in and attempt to follow up. So, we got involved about ... September 15, or so, and it ... just got progressively tougher as we moved through the forward division. The division we moved through was the 85th, and they had already taken some ... of the primary hills. You know, all the mountains are named in Italy, and they had already taken a couple of theirs, but they had not ... taken the objective in some others, so, bingo, in we come. And, it just got tougher and tougher. After only a week, or ten days, or so, the company commander ... ordered me to take the weapons platoon. "Leave the rifle platoon and take the weapons platoon." Now, our company strength, at that point, was probably two-thirds of what a company should be. Remember, ... the Italian Campaign was ... supposed to be a holding campaign. And, in September, that same September where we were making our effort now, you see, the Seventh Army had gone into

southern France under General Patch, and they were moving from southern France up ... we'll call it kind of a flanking kind of move. ...

-----END TAPE TWO SIDE ONE-----

KP: ... You were saying that you were transferred out of this platoon.

JDZ: From rifle platoon to weapons platoon. Now, I've got a section of machine guns and three 60mm mortars. ... How do you say it, you know? Instead of guys carrying rifles, you got men carrying either pistols or carbines, but there you got three squads, you get three mortars in that section, and you've got ... two light, air-cooled machine guns. It was a good bunch. I mean they were ... great guys. Again, they were experienced and they had good sergeants. As a matter-of-fact, ... almost the whole mortar section were Indians from Arizona ... and New Mexico. How they ever got that kind of alignment, I have no idea.

KP: They were congregated into this platoon.

JDZ: They were congregated into a weapons platoon, and then, ... the mortar section.

KP: Did they speak any Native American languages?

JDZ: Native?

KP: Yeah, did they speak any Indian languages at all?

JDZ: Yeah, to some extent they did. Now, there was a sprinkling of other Indians ... through the company. Yes, because, we have a sergeant by the name of Benevides who was from ... somewhere in Arizona. He was a tech sergeant. He was a platoon sergeant and he was a good one. But, if we ever got back off-line, he would go out and get drunk like you wouldn't believe, and they'd have to haul him back. I mean he couldn't move. He'd get ossified. And, they'd bring him back and they'd reduce him in rank. Boom, you're a private, right off the bat. And, in short order, once he sobered up, and another few days had gone by, hell, he's back to platoon sergeant again. ... That's fact. He was a hell of a soldier, but he'd get a hold of some local *vino* and he'd just go until it was gone, gone, gone. ... So, I had this weapons platoon and that was an entirely different kind of situation, because you're in a position. ... Where do you place the machine guns? Where do you put the mortars? ... You're getting orders. Obviously, if the company commander calls the platoon leaders together, you know what your objective is and you ... try to reach it in the best way possible. But, I can't impress upon you too much how easy it was for just a few enemy troops, in the right positions, to hold us up. ... We frequently would have a whole company column. Now, a company column, that's one guy following one another. That's the least effective kind of maneuver. That isn't a maneuver. ... You had no choice, because, if you ... tried to make a broad front and moved people this way, ... you tried to ride the ridge line and not have people down in the valleys, down in the ravines, because, boy, the Germans were excellent with their mortars. They were devastating and they'd mortar you to tears. It was bad enough riding the ridge lines, but, at least, you had more elevation here than you would have down in the ... ravine of the valley. So, you tried to ride those

and we ... finally, on a very, very foggy day, foggy, light rain day, we took an ... important terrain feature, by surprise. The Germans ... were there but they didn't expect us in the numbers we got up there. ... I can see our regimental commander that day coming up the hill ... and saying, you know, in effect, "Come on, keep moving, keep moving," because it was a surprise. ... Mount Battaglia was the name of this dominant terrain feature, and Battaglia was within eight miles of the Po Valley. Now, remember our objective was the Po Valley. Our objective was to win the war, get it over with, obviously, but the Po Valley gave you this tremendous respite from mountain, mountain, mountain. The Po Valley was twenty-five, thirty miles wide north-south, before you hit the Dolomites, and then, ... eventually the Alps. ... We got within eight miles, and we got on this Mount Battaglia, and, ... by now, I'm company exec of E Company. ... Again, we only had, at that point, ... four officers in the company. We had company commander, company exec, and two platoon leaders, so we were missing one rifle platoon leader and one weapons platoon leader. So, I was company exec. ... We got up on Mount Battaglia, "G" Company was in the lead. They were right up. Well, you'd have to see a picture. But, it was more ... like a ridge line, but a very prominent ridge line. And, at the very, very top was the remnants of an old castle. That castle had been there from way back, let's say, about the twelfth century, and just remnants of it. And, G Company, they got up there at the very, very top. I'm company exec of E Company. You know, your battalions made up, Second Battalion, your companies are E, F, and G, and then, H, heavy weapons company. Each battalion has a heavy weapons company. ... You get three rifle companies and a heavy weapons company. Well, I'm company exec of E and we were not at the very top, we were down to their right about, oh, four hundred, six hundred yards, spread out, and then, of course, dug in. ... Well, we were there for seven days, and in the seven days, we lost two-thirds of our battalion. ... Mostly mortar fire, artillery, and you just had to hold it, that's all. And, we did, but the poor devils in G Company, they had the toughest time. ... I lost a very, very good friend, as a matter-of-fact. I had gone to Rome. I had one pass while I was over there, and I had gone to Rome on pass, and he and I wound up rooming with each other. He was regular Army. He's a guy that had gone into the service about 1938. He was from a little place, Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania His name was Roeder, Bob Roeder, R-O-E-D-E-R, German. ... He was company commander of G Company, he was killed up there at the castle. ... He got the Congressional Medal of Honor. We only had two Congressional Medals of Honor in the 88th Division, and he was one of the two. But, we spent a week there. ...

KP: Is that your most vivid memory of it?

JDZ: That was a nasty, nasty week. ... One of the most, yeah, because you couldn't move. ... We all dug foxholes, and the foxholes couldn't be deep enough. ... It was ... wet snow and rain, and the foxholes would fill up ... with water. We had a lot of people in Italy that got trenchfoot. A lot of them ... had to be sent back with trenchfoot. ... For seven days, the Germans knew that they had no business losing that dominant terrain feature, and they tried to get it back. ... They had trouble supplying us. We went through a period, ... not that it was terrible, but we didn't get any food up for, like, thirty-six hours. All your supplies, in that situation, you know, came up by mules. ... They selected guys out of a division, and they'd become mule-skinners. And, they would handle ... big burros, that's what they were. ... All of the supplies, your ammunition, your food, all had to come that way. ... It was usually done at night, for obvious reasons, where you couldn't be seen. The Germans ... were so accurate with their mortar fire, and they knew, for example, to get up to this

very top of Mount Battaglia, where G Company was, and we were down just a little bit lower, ... you had to go through an expanse of about two hundred fifty yards that was wide open. In daytime, it was just totally open, and, boy, the Germans, they'd keep that mortared sporadically, twenty-four hours a day. You know, they'd throw in two or three shells, and then, there might not be another shell for twenty-eight minutes. And then, they'd throw in two or three more, and it went on ... all the time. Well, these guys come up with the mules, or any men coming up there, you know, they'd get up across there as fast as they could, and you had a lot of situations like that in the mountains. But, anyway, after seven days of that, before ... we were finally relieved, they had to bring up another battalion from our regiment. We lost so many men on the hill.

KP: What was it like to lose so many men at one time? What was that experience like?

JDZ: Well, G Company lost a disproportional larger amount than we lost in E Company, because they were, as I say, at the very, very crown of this hill. We weren't getting many replacements. They were going into the Seventh Army in Southern France. We didn't get replacements, very, very few. So, the unit strength got lower, and lower, and lower. And, the morale started to dip, and ... it was difficult to move around during the daytime. It was very difficult, and, if you did move, you moved fast. There were no ... out-buildings to afford any protection right in that particular area. You'd move from your foxhole, maybe, to the next foxhole, check on how they were doing there, move to the next one, or yell over, ... "You guys all right? Everything okay? You got ammo?" ... But, at night, you could get up and be little bit freer to move, but, meanwhile, you're getting sporadic fire. And then, ... some of the units ran out of ammunition, and ... the burros didn't get up to where we were. ... Hell, they were throwing big pieces of rock down. The Germans would attack and throw rock at them. ... Anything to keep them from getting up the hill. ... After that another battalion from our regiment was committed, ... we were pulled back. We were pulled off-line for a couple of days. ... At that point, we did get a couple of replacements. I say a couple. I can't tell you how many we ... got. We built up platoons maybe by eight or ten guys, but we were never up to full company strength, never.

KP: Never in your time?

JDZ: No, never. ... About ... third week in October, thereabouts, we went into the attack, and I'm still company exec of E Company. G Company was on our left, F in reserve, and we were attacking ... it was open, ... it was rock-strewn, but ... there weren't trees. It was, like, two hills, two small hills, but no trees for cover, just rock, where there was rock. We got our hill, we were on the right, and E Company, we got up and got our hill. We took some casualties, but we got our objective. G Company, you could watch over there, and ... they were getting mortared to tears, and you knew they were taking ... you know, at a distance, it's hard to tell, ... maybe four to six hundred yards away, what's really going on. You know, that's something in infantry, ... it is so hard to communicate, it is so hard to control. ... You know what's going on right in your immediate area, but to know what's going on four hundred yards away is impossible. But, we could tell that they were getting a lot of mortar fire, which said to us, "They're taking casualties." So, ... about late afternoon, it was light, this is ... October, maybe four o'clock or so, ... a runner comes up and says, "Colonel Williamson wants you to take command of G Company." Well, I can only tell you, ... it wasn't a happy thought, in my mind. I mean, I knew some of the guys in G Company. In the

battalion, you got to know people from other companies. But, I thought, "God knows what I'm going to see when I get over there." So, the runner's name was Byrd. He was from West Virginia, too. I remember him well, he was a good kid. ... He said, "And, the Colonel wants me to lead you over there." So, we got down off the crest, or I thought it was off the crest of the hill, and we get about half way over to, and this is only, you know, a couple hundred of yards, they were only over there four or six hundred yards. And then, the damn machine gun start popping right around our heads. You know, I don't know whether you've had the experience, ... but, when you're in the rifle pits ... learning about fire, ... when they're close, ... they pop right over your head. And, here I am. Foolishly, I've got enough of myself exposed. The runner's ahead of me, and he and I are running, ... a trot, and damn, ... I foolishly was up just a little too high, and some German had spotted me, and he was popping them, and they were popping right over my head, the machine gun fire. I remember I saw it and I thought, "You damn fool. How dumb can I be?" And, I get down off of the slope, you know, so you're not creating a silhouette, got over to the G Company. And, I don't know, I think some days it was the worse day of my life. I hope you don't think that I'm playing.

KP: No, of course not.

JDZ: I knew ... the company commander was Ed Maher. He was first lieutenant. He had the company, and, again, the company was not up to strength. He's dead, he's laying on the hill. The company exec, they had a company exec by the name of Dykers. He was wounded. He was ... shot in the ankle, and he was going to be sent back. What was there of the weapons platoon, the mortar section ... well, first of all, I'm getting ahead of myself. I found whoever was leading the company, and it turned out to be a platoon sergeant by the name of Barone. He was from north Jersey. Now, he'd been with the 88th Division from, initially, ...

KP: From training?

JDZ: At Minturno. Yeah, ... when the first elements went in, in southern Italy, in February. So, he'd been with them February, this is October. So, I found out, you know, who was in command of the company, because the officers were ... one dead, one wounded, that's the only two they had. And, Barone's in a, I don't know if you know what a slit trench is, but a slit trench is enough that you can lay down in it, you know. It's not as deep as a foxhole, ... you could stand up in, but a slit trench, anything ... enough to ... afford you some protection. He's got a slit trench, and there's a lot of rocks, shale, in this area. It's a bitch to dig in. But, anyway, I found him, and said, ... "What the hell's the situation? ... Where are the machine guns from your weapons platoon?" So, he points to where the machine guns are. Hell, the ... gunners were both dead on each machine gun. The mortar squad, mortar section, three mortars, of course, they're in back, you know. You fire mortars from defilades somewhere. Well, they were ... in the back and they weren't firing, and there was still sporadic mortar fire coming in. So, I'm laying in this same slit trench with Barone, ... trying to size up the situation, "Where the automatic weapons were, and how many able men do you think there are," and so forth and so on. ... I was with him, I don't know, half-an-hour, maybe, and all of a sudden, he gets over and he starts to beat on the ground, beats table like that, and ... I knew, right off the bat, he was off his rocker. ... He kept saying, "I can't take it anymore. I can't take it anymore. I can't take it anymore." ... The company headquarters, all that consisted of the company headquarters, we had ... the communications sergeant and a runner, two of them. ... Anyway, I used

that runner and I sent him back with Barone. I said, ... "He's of no use to me, at this point." So, he went back, and I get up, and, eventually, got ... riflemen put onto the machine guns. ... We got through the night all right. I mean, if the Germans had decided to ... counterattack, ... they'd have overrun us so easily, it would have been an easy game. But, they didn't.

KP: What happened to the sergeant?

JDZ: He wound up in a military police outfit. We bumped into him ... when we got to Naples to come back to the States, the word got around that Barone was in a MP outfit, and we got to see him. And, he was straightened out, but I'm sure, like everybody, everybody's got a breaking point, at some point. ... Well, anyway, ... the whole offensive, by November 10th or 15th, we were unable to reach the Po Valley; nobody could get to the Po Valley. On a clear day, we could see the Po Valley, and we had maybe one clear day out of a week, and you could actually look into the Po Valley from where we were. Now, this was not Mount Battaglia. I mean, ... we'd been pulled off-line and, you know, another area, and there were a lot of things that happened in-between. ... Our division fought on the east flank of the Fifth Army, most of the time, which meant that we had British Eighth Army on our immediate right. When we took Mount Battaglia, we were five thousand yards ahead of the British Tenth Army on our right. Not Tenth Army, British Eighth Army. ... You know, we kind of shared ... the American Fifth Army occupied about five-eighths to two-thirds of the peninsula, and then, ... the British Eighth Army from the Adriatic into contact with us. And, there were times when we were relieved ... by the Coldstream Guards, a British outfit. They relieved us on one occasion, we relieved them on occasion. ... One happy situation I will never forget. The word got around that the British were going to relieve us on the front. We were on Mount Grande. ... I was company commander, and we'd made our CP, command post, down off the ... crest of the hill, maybe thirty, forty yards, and we piled up stones, yea high, and we made an enclosure. ... That was our CP there. There were no houses, no farm houses, in that area, none of that, and we stretched tarps over top to give us protection from the elements, and this British company commander came up. ... Every British company commander I ever ran into, they all have what they called a batman. The batman ... was an enlisted man who carried their duffel. This was the way that ... the British got their reputation. Pardon.

DB: Like a caddie?

JDZ: Yes, like a caddie, exactly. Well, he came up anyway ... in the afternoon sometime, and the word was that we were going to move out late that night, and they were going to move in, which meant that I had to show him our positions. Well, I did that and that went off, and things were pretty quiet, and we went back. And then, the order got countermanded and it was to be delayed twenty-four hours. They weren't going to come up ... his company exec, second in command, was going to bring the company up. So, instead, he spent the night with us. And, we never had tea, I like tea, and they got a ration of tea. ... We sat there that night, in the CP, into the wee hours of the morning, the command group. You know, myself, and I didn't have a company exec. I only had one ... other officer at that point. There were ... probably six, eight enlisted men in there, all sitting around in the CP. ... He pulls out his tea. He's going to stay over-night now. He's decided, instead of him going back, he'd stay there. So, he stayed there and we're telling stories back and forth, and joking, and ... having a ball. ... He pulls out his bag of tea. He had one of these cloth bags, big cloth

bag of tea. We ... boiled hot water, you know, and had the tea. All we had was coffee. We never had access to tea. So, ... the tea was a nice break. [laughter] ... I swear, we must have ... cut his bag in half before the night was over. But, that sticks in my memory. ... There are so many ... funny things that can happen. We were on the outskirts of Bologna. This was the last push now. In other words, we spent the whole winter in the mountains. I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me just tell you, in a nutshell, I started to suffer a lot of diarrhea, middle November, thereabouts, and I had a standing order with our supply sergeant to always send up long johns for me. I mean, I had diarrhea and I had it bad. And, I was not alone. There were others. Anyway, come Christmas Eve '44, I had yellow jaundice and hepatitis, and there were a lot of yellow jaundice hepatitis patients in Italy, a lot of them, matter-of-fact. So, I got sent to the rear, ambulance to Florence, and then, the C-47 hospital plane back to Naples, 300th General Hospital. So, that's how I spent Christmas Day of 1944, in a hospital plane. I get back to the 300th General Hospital, and the whole hospital is full of yellow jaundice, hepatitis patients in Naples. Spent six or seven weeks in the hospital, and then, you were sent out to a conditioning company, to get ... your legs back in shape, get you in condition again where you could act like an infantryman, after being in the hospital. We spent two weeks in the conditioning company, hiking, you know, for the most part, that kind of thing to build up ... your strength. And then, I got sent back up to the unit. Well, I wasn't sent in as a company commander. ... I'm still a first lieutenant, but I went back and took over what they call the intelligence and reconnaissance platoon. Every battalion has an I&R platoon. So, I took over that platoon. And then, ... from November 15th, roughly, until the spring push started, we were still in the mountains south of Bologna. ... When the final push started in the spring, ... April 3rd, I think, was the date we left the line of departure. ... Our battalion had to go up a gradual slope. ... Monterumici was the name of the mountain on one side, Mount Adone was the name of the other one, but there was a saddle in-between these two. ... It was probably one thousand yards from the line of departure, where your attack started, up to the saddle, and that was a tough thousand yards. There was one old farmhouse, ... all farmhouses over there were stone, ... in there and, of course, the Germans had all winter now to dig in, prepare. I mean, ... when we finally broke through in three days, they had rooms in there, I tell you, ... not unlike this room, dug into the reverse slope of the mountain. It's almost unbelievable, but that's the way and they were living pretty good. But, we had a hard job, getting up that thousand yards of saddle. One of the things the Germans did, ... in that situation, they have what's called a Schu, S-C-H-U, mine, and they looked like a small cigar box. ... When we left the line of departure, there was a lot of sort of sandy area, and they would plant, during the winter, ... these mines. You had a quarter of a pound of explosive in the mine, and the mine would get buried so that just the tip, like a top of a box, not closed, ... just barely sticking out the surface ... of the softer sand. And, all you had to do to trigger that, you know, you hit that box, the lid goes down, and a quarter of a pound of explosives goes off, and it knocks off your foot, or it knocks off the front of your foot. ... We had eleven guys, I think in the first twenty minutes, ... in the battalion, step on Schu mines and lose ... parts of feet. Fortunately, ... we were able to get some of them into ... this farmhouse that was there on that slope, moved them into the basement on the south-side. ... We got up there, ... we got there, and it was rather quick, and from that point on, ... now the hills are getting smaller, down into Bologna, and the Germans are in total retreat. Now, see, this is the spring of '45. The war's only got to go until May 7th or 8th, and it's over. ...

KP: It must have seemed like a very strange war to you for someone who was used to taking a few hundred yards at a time.

JDZ: That's right. Well, it was. It was so strange. ... First of all, we thought it was going to be a big problem getting across the Po River. Well, it wasn't a problem. Why the Germans didn't blow the bridges over the Po River? Not in our area of advance.

KP: Oh, they didn't?

JDZ: I've never read about speculation on why they didn't, but they didn't, and, as a result, we got across in a hurry. Now, you've got ... five infantry divisions in Fifth Army getting across the Po River, in the valley, and starting to sweep out, fan out, as fast as we could go. ... They brought the two and half ton trucks up, and they'd transport a platoon and a half, let's say, at a time, and they'd move them ahead, up the road, ... eight to ten miles, rushed the truck back, put another forty guys on, rush them up. Now, the Germans are in total, total chaos. I mean, they're trying to get back into ... Germany, or into Switzerland, anyway they could. I had a funny experience. ... So, they leap-frogged us like that and we had a situation where, one night, somewhere there in late April, ... we're in a convoy and it's a miserable night. It's raining, pouring rain, and so forth, and ... our truck convoy stops and German SS troops came in and grabbed a whole truck-load of guys, took them prisoner out of their truck, and nobody else in the convoy knew it. It actually happened. And, these ... men from our outfit, our battalion, were prisoners for a matter of, maybe, seven, eight days. And, by that time, the Germans let them go, because the war was ... almost over. But, they got back, and, oh, they were so grateful, because they were afraid SS troops were going to do them in. But, ... it was an interesting time. We got to a place, I remember a little town, Cavalese. Now, you're getting up into the Dolomites, and we get into this ... pretty, little mountain town, and there was a trout stream, ran down through the town. ... We had a sergeant by the name of LaFortune. He was a college guy and he and I would talk about fishing, once in a while. ... We knew we were going to be in there, ... in this little town, at least twenty-four hours, and it was just a beautiful mountain town with a trout stream. ... He comes and he says to me, "Hey, ... let's go trout fishing." "Damn, that sounds good to me. We'll go trout fishing." ... Scrounge up a couple of rods, well, we did. ... We went down, and we are fishing in this stream. I had my45 caliber pistol with me. He didn't have any arm at that point. ... I mean, the war's almost over. ... Here's the stream and here's a mountain that goes up south of the stream, and I hear this crashing, like people coming down. ... You couldn't help but hear them coming down through the underbrush. My God, they come out, they were surprised as we were. Two German soldiers with ... the helmets slung on the muzzle of their rifles ... God knows where they came from. Their unit was in total disorder, ... and, again, they were trying to get back to Germany, one way or another. Well, ... I saw these guys, and down goes the rod, ... whipped the pistol out, and they saw us, you know, and, boy, the hands went up. [laughter] They were very happy, absolutely. ... We took them up to turn them over to the people who had the POW cage. The POW cage wasn't in that town. I don't know where it was, but we turned them over, 'cause we were taking a lot of prisoners at that point.

KP: Was that your first encounter with taking someone prisoner, or had you taken someone prisoner before?

JDZ: No, we'd taken prisoners before. ... As a matter-of-fact, the 88th Division took more prisoners than any other division over there in Italy, ... from the period that they were in combat,

from February of '44 until May of '45. There was a lot of strong feeling about taking prisoners on the part of some people. I mean, there were Americans who would just as soon have killed them, you know because rumors would come back to us, I don't know. ... The kind of carnage that goes on is hard to reckon with sometimes. And, there were lots of stories, ... you know, you turn four prisoners over to ... someone had to accompany them back to the rear, and some of these guys said, "The hell with them. I'll take them down the hill and I'll shoot them." ... I can't attest that that was done. I never saw that done, and I wouldn't have done that myself. I just didn't have that kind of feeling.

KP: But, you mention that your division had a strong feeling about taking prisoners. Why?

JDZ: I have no idea.

KP: I know people have said some units would kill their prisoners.

JDZ: No, ... I can't read anything into that, no. Just fact. We took a lot of prisoners.

DB: Was there a point in time that you sensed that the German morale was declining, or that their fighting was becoming less intense?

JDZ: We knew that their numbers were becoming fewer and fewer. ... We were, supposedly, opposing, at one point, twenty-two German divisions. Well, hell, there wasn't a German division in Italy up to anything like full strength. They were lucky if they were at 40% full strength. So, you knew. They were trying to fight a war on the Eastern Front, war on the Western Front, and just trying to hold what they could, for as long as they could, in Italy. So, they were opposing tremendous numbers of people.

DB: What about the Italians? What were their general attitudes or reactions to you, as well as the Germans?

JDZ: Well, ... first of all, you saw damn few civilians. When you're fighting, the civilians are gone. They've retreated to a cave somewhere, or they've gone to the rear, and, of course, this is agricultural country, farmers. ... Interesting you should ask that, because I can remember we had a lot of kids in our outfit who could speak Italian. We had a lot of boys of Italian extraction. ... One of the enlisted men came up to me one day, he said, "I got a farmer back here, wants to talk to you." So, he brings him up, and I said, "Well, talk to him, what does he want?" So, he gets done this conversation, he says, "Lieutenant, ... you see that farmhouse over there, out there, oh, a half-mile or so? ... That's his home, he wants to go there." I said, "Tell him there are Germans in that farmhouse. We know damn well there are Germans in that farmhouse. Tell him, make sure he understands that." Well, that guy, he was reluctant to believe it. I mean, you could tell by his actions. ... What you had to watch for ... situations like where your front was not moving very fast. You'd get into a static position for a day, or two, or three. You had to watch the people like that weren't being funneled into your lines by the Germans, simply to learn more about your positions, and so forth. We knew this guy, there was not a Chinaman's chance in hell that he was going to be

allowed to go up there to his farm. I mean, we could care less where his farm was, at that point. That didn't mean diddly-squat to us. But, you had situations like that.

KP: You had a very strange experience, not unique to you, but, you were on the line, with combat that went on forever, and then, you were yanked out and sent to a nice hospital with clean sheets. What was that like?

JDZ: Oh, God, that was like seventh heaven, even though I had yellow jaundice and hepatitis. ... I was in a room with two other guys in the hospital, and one of them, by the name of Peterson, I will never forget, because he was a Swede. The 34th Division, his outfit, had more combat time than any other division in any theater in World War II. They went into North Africa, the Red Bull Division. Now, they were National Guard from ... I think, North and South Dakota and Iowa, and ... he was being rotated. He was one of only two guys out of his original rifle company left, and he was being rotated, and he got back as far as his division CP, and he came down with yellow jaundice. ... He was one of the two guys. ... He had ... four hundred thirty-five days of on-line in combat. I thought, "Oh, my God." ... The rest of us were happy, but he wasn't happy, because he was being rotated. He wanted ... to get home. The rest of us were happy to be in those clean sheets. Oh, yeah. ... I could remember three guys came into the room almost every night to play cards, and we called them the Doughnut Brigade. These guys, while they were back there with yellow jaundice and hepatitis and recuperating, they'd had hemorrhoid problems, and they decided to have, if they could get it done, ... hemorrhoidectomies. And, we called them the Doughnut Brigade. I could see those three guys coming out of the room almost every night. ... Anything to, hey, prolong staying there. But, I was sitting there, it was six or seven weeks, and then, back up, as I said, to the conditioning, re-conditioning company. ... You were meeting guys in the hospital, you know, from every unit, share your experiences. I had one hundred forty-nine days on-line, and, fortunately, did not get hit.

KP: But, you had a lot of close calls, it sounds like.

JDZ: I don't know that I had a lot. ... I know of a couple that I had.

KP: But, you were definitely in harm's way.

JDZ: ... I thank my lucky stars with this guy Sgt. Barone and the slit trench, because we happened to be down at the time, and there was a mortar round came in. And, as true as I sit here, it landed about that far from the slit trench. Oh, God, what a roar, and, you know, throwing rocks on you and everything. But, fortunately, we were down. I think, had my head been up, or any part of my body been up above the surface of the ground, it would have been hit.

KP: How scared were you in combat?

JDZ: Oh, hell, now you sound like the doctor. You sound exactly like the doctor. You get to the hospital ...

KP: And then, you were asked that?

JDZ: And, the next day, yes, he comes around, and he's got his clipboard, and he doesn't say, "How scared?" he says, "Were you scared in combat?" "No, I'm a goddamned fool. I wasn't scared in combat, not a bit." Are you crazy? ... That's fact, believe me. [laughter]

KP: The reason that I find it interesting for officers is that you have to lead these men, and, while a private could be more scared, he is really responsible for himself. You have to create this example for your men. How did you feel about that?

JDZ: It felt very inadequate at times. Very inadequate. ... "Does my fear show through to these guys?" Come on, let's be honest. We all, we're in this situation together. "What do you feel?" "Well, I feel the same thing." ...

KP: You mentioned one case of battle fatigue. Had you encountered other men in your units that could not make it?

JDZ: ... Occasionally, we'd have something like that. None of them as stark as the situation where I was taking over a company, and the one guy in command was beating the ground, and just absolutely ... temporarily, certainly, out of his mind. He just ... reached it. Occasionally, we had it, but not really very many. Now, there were a lot of ... desertions in Italy. There were acknowledged desertions. Had a lot of ... guys of Italian extraction, and I don't mean to point to them and say, "Well, they were anymore ... vulnerable to that kind of thing," but there were some.

KP: Did you have men from your unit go AWOL?

JDZ: We had a couple of guys, yeah, just disappeared.

DB: Where would they go?

JDZ: ... Get off the uniform and fit into the ... populace as fast as you could, sure. You know, a lot of ... these guys, you know, in talking to them, you find out that ... their parents had come to this country, so they were new, in the sense that I'd call them, you know, first generation in America. They were first generation immigrants. ... You'd be surprised. I mean, you'd be in a certain area, you're talking about a certain town, and one of your men would pipe up and say, "Hey, my uncle's from ... there." I was grateful for the number of Italians we had in our unit. I know the 88th Division, when it was formed, came primarily from New England and the middle Atlantic states.

-----END SIDE TWO TAPE TWO-----

KP: This continues an interview with J. Domer Zerbe on November 16, 1994 at Rutgers University with Kurt Piehler ...

DB: and David Brown.

KP: I guess I want you to repeat that story.

JDZ: Well, the story you're talking about, this was during the last push in the spring. ... We broke out of the mountains, we're in the south-side of Bologna, and we're stopped momentarily, for some reason or other, and I'm in this nice suburban house with a runner, and our battalion artillery liaison officer, Captain Cohen, and his radioman. ... A mortar round came in and hit the tile roof, and it makes quite ... a clatter. ... The radioman, very nonchalantly says to Captain Cohen, "Did you hear that, Captain?" ... Cohen turns to him indignantly and says to him "Did I hear it? Do you think I am deaf, you dumb son-of-a-bitch?" [laughter] Another thing I remember, south-side, ... now, this is war, and this may sound totally incongruous to you, but it happened. Our battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Yongue, comes walking down the road, in Bologna, with a bicycle, a brand new bicycle. Turns out that they got into one of these suburban homes and here was this lovely bicycle, and he was bound and determined that he was going to get that bicycle to the supply sergeant. You see, your supply sergeant was never up front with the company. He was going to get that to the supply sergeant, and get it sent home. I don't ever know if he got it sent home or not, but I'll tell you one more, along the same lines. During the last push, when we get up ... well into northern Italy, well above Trento, and before Bolzano, we got to a warehouse. It was a German supply warehouse and it must have been Luftwaffe controlled. Remember, Kesselring, at one point, had commanded the Luftwaffe. Anyway, on this warehouse, there were something like two hundred beautiful, gray, flight jackets, German flight jackets. And, there was a section of it that was nothing but liquor. And, there was another section where they had a bunch of ... drafting boards, stenographic supply, comptometers, okay. ... Our battalion commander, it, hell, happened our battalion, was the first to this place. When they uncovered what it was, our lieutenant colonel, the battalion commander, put a guard, he put a couple guards on it, and told regiment, right off the bat, what we had. ... Again, this was a place where we stopped, maybe, overnight, and don't you know the word got around, and the next thing you know, you had big brass, colonels, majors, and the like from rear echelon, showing up, because word got around that there was liquor in this warehouse. And, these guys, these enlisted men, took great pride, boy, in the fact, standing there at port arms, and saying, "Sorry, sir, you'll have to see Colonel Yongue." So, ... the big brass didn't get in. But, the upshot of it was that there must have been seventy or eighty of these, I'm calling them comptometers, adding machines, and, by then, ... the trucks had brought up duffel bags. ... The guys who got these adding machines put these in their duffel bags. ... We're still doing some leap-frogging ahead, remember I told you, in the trucks? ... Finally, and they hung onto these ... until the war was over. We were in the little town of Merano, M-E-R-A-N-O, the day the war ended. We were there the day before the war ended officially. ... There were German troops in that town, we were in the town. ... We were given the word that there was to be no hostility. The following day, the armistice would go into effect. ... I had, and a lot of us had, money that we had taken off prisoners. We called it wallpaper, ... big bills in size. ... I had a bunch of them, as well as all of our guys. ... There were some craft people in this small town, beautiful little town. If you ever get a chance to go there, go there. And, I went in, we decided, "Hey, if this money's going to be any good to us, we'd better spend it in a hurry." And, we did. ... The shopkeepers accepted it, and I have three or four wood carving pieces at home that I bought, and got safely to our supply sergeant, and got sent home. ... The following day, that currency was declared invalid. Invalid. ... No good. But, the interesting thing was, we got there the day before the armistice. I mean, we're on one side of the street and there are German troops sort of nonchalant on the other side of the street. Both of us knew that it was over the next day, officially. That was May 7th.

KP: Did you take those Germans prisoners the next day?

JDZ: No. You know, I can't answer that question, and I'm sorry that I can't. ... I think there ... had to be an agreement somewhere that they were to show up. I presume that they simply showed up as a group, somewhere, and became prisoners of war. The following weekend, the first weekend after the war was over, four of us got a jeep and we drove about forty miles up through beautiful mountain country to the Swiss border. A little town Nauders, N-A-U-D-E-R-S, and we got up there, and there's ... a Swiss guard, Swiss Army, and they wouldn't let us in. They were regarding their neutrality, as they should. ... He stood there and we were able to speak to him, and we said, "We'd just like to have some pictures taken. Can we step into Switzerland?" And, he let us step into Switzerland and we had pictures taken. Big deal. But, I remember sending pictures home, just black and whites, of the wild flowers that were growing on the ride up there. It was, you know, one of these treacherous kinds of roads, beautiful country. God, I'm glad we didn't have to fight through that.

KP: Did you have any concern that you might be sent to Japan to fight against the Japanese?

JDZ: Oh, yeah, sure. ... Absolutely. I didn't have quite enough points to stay in the 88th Division. They had a funny ruling and ... some of us who had gone over as replacements, in the same situation as I, got transferred to the 91st Division. I wound up with the 363rd Infantry Regiment, in the 91st Division. Now, they were over close to Trieste, in the town of Udine, U-D-I-N-E, and they confronted a situation with the Yugoslavians. Remember, Tito's Partisans had been very active, and the Yugoslavians lost land that was mandated to Italy after World War I, and Udine was located in that area, and the Yugoslavs thought that, rightfully, it was theirs. ... They were going to make it a point, now, while the iron was hot, to regain that territory. At least claim it, and then hope that the negotiators would allow it to hold up. So, what do they do but ... our regiment, the battalion I was in, took a company, and it happened to be the particular company I was in, I ... don't remember what happened to the other companies. But, anyway, there was a river that came running on down southerly, and the Allied Control Commission had decided that that would remain a boundary, at least for the time being. ... The regimental commander of the 363rd, just the previous day or two, and this was all in ... late May, or early June, of '45, he had to drive the Yugoslavs out of the town of Udine. ... He did it, he pulled tank destroyers, ... they were given the order. This town had a beautiful central park, and the Yugoslavs were given the order to vacate. They were in the municipal building of the town. ... They were given the order to leave, and they refused. The regimental commander of the 363rd infantry was ordered to drive them out. He got a hold of four TDs, tank destroyers, and he lined them up across the town square. Now, he says, "You get out, or I'm going to blow you out. I'll blow the building down around you." Well, they got out in the last minute, but, when they left, they crossed the Isonzo River, which runs roughly north-south, and the company I was assigned to gets the task of going up and guarding ... an electric generating sub station like, up the river from Udine, ... I'd have to guess at the miles, but a few miles. We're up there, I've got a platoon, and we're guarding this power plant against the possibility of the Yugoslavs taking some extreme action. ... The power plant's on the ... west side of the river, and it's a narrow river. It's not a big river, but a river that would drive turbines and create a lot of power. ... On the east side, they've got higher elevation than we, and we get up there and we knew that

they were digging in. They were creating emplacements, gun emplacements, against the possibility of what? ... I'll tell you, we were uncomfortable. I mean, because we had a rifle company that was stretched out over ... a space of ... three or four miles. ... They'd bring the truck up with our hot food once a day, but, otherwise, you had radio communication from one platoon to another. ... Here these guys are on this bank overlooking us, and we're wondering to ourselves, "What the hell are they going to do? Wait till nightfall, and then, attack us?" ... It was uncomfortable. ... That lasted for just a few days, it wasn't too long, but it was uncomfortable.

DB: Is there any chance that one of the reasons they told the Yugoslavs to get out was because they were Communists?

JDZ: I have no idea. ... I always took the position that ... simply, at this point, there had to be a lot of delicate negotiations that were going to take place. But, they weren't about to let the Yugoslavs come in and, just by a power play, take over a particular area. ... I countered that with driving them out to where they, ... so-called, belong. [laughter] But, that didn't last too long. Incidentally, the men from the 88th who had the duffel bags with the adding machines, well, before I left the 88th, we came back to Lake Descenzano. ... We bivouacked there for several days, and the order came down from regiment, "Dispose of all the things that had been picked up in this warehouse." Well, you never saw such a sick bunch of guys. They let ... the first two hundred who got the flight jackets, they let them keep the flight jackets, as I recall, but the fellows who got the adding machines, and, you know, you'd pick up anything, they had to dispose of them and put them in a great big pile. Out they came from the duffel bags. ... We didn't have enough transport. ... We were picking the best trucks out of the German transport to add to our own, and their transport, at this point, was not very reliable. I can remember, we had two or three German trucks that would move in our convoy, at that point. The war is over, now we're three, four weeks after the war, we're into late May, early June.

KP: When did you embark for the United States?

JDZ: The day Japan surrendered, August 14th. The 91st Division, who did not have the same amount of combat time in Italy that the 88th had, was destined to come back to the States, being brought up to strength, and go to the Pacific. And, they were going to meet at Camp Rucker, Alabama. So, I came back with them, the 363rd Infantry Regiment. It took four days, in a cattle car, from Udine to Naples. Narrow gauge railroad and a cattle car with a bunch of guys, ... a platoon or so. ... You could almost run as fast as a train went. Now, from Udine to Naples has to be ... four hundred miles, maybe. ... Every hour the train would stop and someone'd yell, "Piss call." You'd jump out and urinate, or whatever, and this was the way we got to Naples. And, somebody was telling me, the other day, I was with a bunch of my friends and we were talking about the venereal disease inspections, examinations that you had frequently. Well, the last thing we did before we got on the boat to go home, the order came down for all the troops to come out, dressed only in raincoats and boots. So, we are. And, that was at the pier in Naples. There was a medical team there, inspecting, to make sure they weren't putting anybody on board, you know, with VD.

KP: What would happen if someone did have VD?

JDZ: I don't know, ... they were yanked out.

KP: So, you saw people that were yanked out?

JDZ: Yeah, oh, yeah. ... There were a couple. There was a lot of VD in Italy, but I suspect it was everywhere. ... You had lectures and films on VD every so often, just to keep it foremost in your mind. [laughter]

KP: What did you and your men think about this risk? Did it matter, seeing these films, and such, to your men? Were they less likely to go to a brothel if they were aware of the risk?

JDZ: I guess that depended entirely upon the particular individual. I wouldn't have any part of it, but I guess ... that's the only way I know how to answer that. I am sure there were some who were very much inclined to, at the drop of a hat, and others wouldn't touch it with a ten foot pole.

DB: All right, I have two questions. One, after the war was over and there were celebrations going on, was there any "partying" with the Italian women?

JDZ: Oh, I'm sure there was. I don't carry ... any real, vivid memory of that. Remember what I told you. Now, for example, in the town of Merano, where we were the day before the war ended, there were damn few civilians around. Damn few. If we went through a village, while the war was going on, and you marched through a village, what few Italians that would be there would be out there offering you a bottle of wine, or an egg. You know, an egg was a delicacy. "Ova, Ova." ... And, every guy wouldn't get an egg. Maybe, every eighteenth guy would get an egg handed to him. Speaking of that, we had a guy in our outfit, ... I forget his name, but he was from Tennessee, and he was a butcher. ... We were K-ration, K-ration, K-ration, and, at some point, in, probably, early November, we ... were in a little static situation and somebody came back, they'd been on a little foray, and said, "Hey, there's a good-sized pig down there at that farm. Well, ... what do you think we ought to do?" I said, "What do you think you ought to do? Are you hungry?" So, they bring the pig, and they skin the pig, and we had a barbecue. I can see that, they put that pig on a spit, and we were in a situation where we could do it. ... We weren't right up on the very, very front, and we had pork, nothing ever tasted so good. Frequently, if we got a hot meal, the doggone meal would be lamb, ... mutton from New Zealand, and the damn mutton was 90% fat. Oh, God, it was miserable. It wasn't like good lamb, like you and I know, a leg of lamb. It was miserable. We were on the line one time for, I can't tell you exact number of days, but this is gospel truth, we were on line for the better part of a month, just with K-rations, given to you in three boxes. You tried to heat it, if you could, each one of the rations. Well, that had something to do with the yellow jaundice and hepatitis, too, the nutritional deficiency that resulted. Anyway, they pulled us off-line and told us we were gonna go back and get a hot meal. And, we started walking like ten o'clock at night and we walked back for two, three, hours, wee hours of the morning, ... as it turned out, right back close to where our 105mm howitzers were, ... one of our artillery battalions. They had a huge mound of straw there, huge mound of straw, and they had hot food. Well, if you want to see a bunch of guys ... dig into a meal and make pigs out of themselves, just gorge themselves, I amongst them. And, I'll bet you three-quarters of the guys in the outfit were sick that night. I can see the great, big hamburgers, greasy, but hamburgers, and catsup, you know, a luxury, catsup, and mashed

potatoes and canned peas. And, after you had all you wanted, go over to the hay pile, and get yourself as much hay as you want, and bed down wherever you want. And, we were back close to a whole battery, a battery is four guns, 105mm howitzers. And, they fire, you know, boom, boom, boom, boom, like that, with maybe a little more spacing, but they all fire the same mission, ... within the same short time interval. And, I'll tell you, I bedded down like everybody else, and as God be my judge, those guns fired missions that night, and I never heard them. ... And, we all said in the morning, we were surprised to hear, they said, "Yeah, they fired missions during the night." You get to the point where you could walk in your sleep. ... Really, I'm not kidding you. You do, and there were situations like that. Well, the war ended in Merano, and then, we went to Descenzano. ... I wound up with the 91st Division over around Udine. And, came back and left Naples, 14th of August, after the VD inspection. ...

DB: What did you think of Mark Clark?

KP: What did you think of him at the time?

JDZ: Well, don't forget now, retrospect is always easier. I just recently read a book. You want to read a good book on the Italian Campaign, read Circles of Hell by Eric Morris, who is a British writer. It's Circles of Hell: The War In Italy, 1943-1945. Well, it drew me because that was just the period. I mean, I went over there in '44. I think the historians will, maybe, give him a ... C for his effort. But, I'm sure Mark Clark felt, in all honesty, and with justification, that he never had enough manpower to do what had to be done. I mean, there's a rule in warfare, or there was a rule at that time in warfare, that if you're gonna go into the attack, you ought to outnumber your opponent three to one. Three to one. And then, you stack up the kind of terrain we were in and you might say, "Well, maybe it ought to have been six to one." So, he never had enough. And, yet, ... some of the things that were done at his command, the 36th Division, the Texas outfit, had a terrible, terrible time at the Volturno River. I mean, read about the Italian Campaign. It's just terrible what they were asked to do, and the carnage that they suffered as the result of it. And, Cassino, my god, read about Cassino, attack, after attack, after attack, and the lives that were expended up there. And then, the effort that the Air Force made, the 15th Air Force, you know, bomb it into submission. They didn't bomb anything into submission, the guys just went deeper, and deeper, and deeper, and when the infantry came to attack up that hill, why, they were met with just as fierce opposition as ever. And, the only thing that ... brought down Cassino was, ... in effect, outflanking them. ... And, anytime you can do that, that's a gain. But, I think Clark, I don't think he was outstanding. I think he was a politician, that's for damned sure. He got in touch with Eisenhower, according to this book, ... as soon as Eisenhower was given command of SHAEF. Clark, who had gone to some schools with Eisenhower when they were both lieutenant colonels, he wrote to him right away. And, in his letter, he didn't ask for, ... almost as an equal, he suggested strongly to Eisenhower that he, Clark, should be given a big command under Eisenhower, but, I guess, not far under Eisenhower. I can't quote verbatim, but, you get the picture. Finally, you know, Rome was a big prize, finally got there the 6th of June, the day of the Normandy landing, and that was such a prize. And, he didn't want ... the British Eighth Army to get there ahead of him, and he said, "By God, if there are any Eighth Army people there ahead of us, shoot them." ... Now, I wasn't with him then, see. I joined him about seventy miles north of Rome. But, there were elements of the division that I joined, who went into a part of Rome. They didn't see any British

troops, but Clark was just absolutely fanatic about it. These are prizes. You know, military leaders, hey, they are subjected to pushes and pulls and the ambitions, and, I'm afraid, many of them, as human beings, are not prone to regard life, as long as it's not their life.

DB: Would you put that on the same level as the American and Russian race to Berlin?

JDZ: Yeah. ... Sure, because after all, the politicians are the ones who, ... look at what Churchill wanted to do. I mean, Churchill fought like crazy to have us go into the Balkans, always in the Balkans, the soft underbelly. And, he was the one who wanted to have Eisenhower ... go all the way to Prague. "Get your tail across there so that the Russians don't bring that within their orbit."

KP: You came home and you must have been delighted. If you had been with the 88th, you'd still be in Italy.

JDZ: That's right. They went into occupation duty, and then, ... replacements went, it's interesting because, if you go to an 88th Division reunion, you could be with people who were with them from the very beginning or to people who were with them as late as 1955. Ten years after the war, they were still in occupation over in Italy and Austria. Now, we came home, and ... immediately, I never had any, I went to Rome on pass, I told you, with this Captain Roeder. He and I roomed together, as a matter-of-fact. But, I never had leave, as an officer, so I had ... accumulated thirty-two days leave. So, when I got home, of course, we were given ... two or three weeks, that didn't count as leave time. I mean, you were back from overseas. And then, ... this 91st Division was reassembling at Camp Rucker, Alabama, that's down the southeastern corner of Alabama, outside a little town called Ozark. So, now, my Chevy has been up on blocks while I'm overseas, in Mount Holly. So, I take it down off the blocks while I'm home from overseas. And, I've got five tires, such as they were, and you couldn't get, tires were rationed, and you had to have a mighty good reason to get a tire. So, anyway, two of the guys that I'd come home with on the boat, one from State College, Pennsylvania, and one from up in Maine, we were gonna reassemble at my home in Mount Holly. And, the three of us were gonna go down in my coupe to Rucker. So, we left. I don't know how many days we left ourselves. We, probably, left ourselves three days to get down there. And, I told these guys when we left, I said, "Hey, you can see the condition of these tires and I've tried to get tires while I'm home here ... to no avail, using the excuse that I had to get back to Camp Rucker, Alabama. And, the authorities in Mount Holly said, 'Well, hell, use the train. Go some other way.'" Because we were coming from everywhere, it wasn't the case of a whole unit coming. We started down Route 40, ... and before we got to Baltimore, I had a blow out, and ... I'll bet you we stopped twenty times. We put the spare on, now I've got four tires. I'll bet you we stopped twenty times, between where we had the flat north of Baltimore and Camp Rucker, Alabama, and we made it. ... And, by God, as true as I sit here, the next morning, I come out to the parking lot, down there, and I've got a flat tire. Now, I've got a real good excuse. Now, I'm on a military base and I've got to get home, and I have my vehicle there. And, I went to headquarters, and I had to see two or three different people and explain the circumstance. I got two certificates, and each one for a tire, and I went into Ozark, Alabama, and found a dealer ... and I got two new tires for the Chevrolet. Oh, dear.

KP: Had you thought of staying in the Army?

JDZ: No, absolutely not. I came home, in my hometown of Mount Holly, there was a National Guard company, 44th Division. And, when I came home, I hadn't been home a month, and a fellow I knew, a little younger than I, not a close friend, but an acquaintance, and he'd been a pilot. He'd been a pilot in the Eighth Air Force and he decided to stay in. So, when he came home, instead of staying in the Air Force, he saw this break that he could get running the National Guard company in Mount Holly. He came to me and he said, "Hey, you were in the infantry. This was an infantry outfit. ... Why don't you come on board? ... I can make you company exec, right off the bat." And, I said, "I don't want any part of it. I hope they've lost my records forever. I don't want any part of it. Absolutely none." And, he stayed in and draws the longevity pay, ... he had a nice business, too. But, that's what he wanted. Not me.

KP: So, you had no thought of staying on and making it a career?

JDZ: No, no way. I saw enough of the war and I saw the politicking that goes on in the service ... apple-polishing. It's bad enough in civilian life, but in the Army, I think it's rampant. And, that's probably unjustified, when you get down to a guy like Omar Bradley. A real, fine, apparently, everything you read about Bradley was fine, fine, fine, and he cared about his men, and was a good strategist, so, I don't mean to hold commanders in disrepute. After all, if you take the responsibility, what was it that Truman said, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

KP: When you left, you were married and had a young son. What was that like?

JDZ: ... Oh, it was just great. I can remember coming home ...

KP: How old was your son?

JDZ: Well, ... what was he? I was over there June, and came back in August, so thirteen-months, fourteen-months. And, ... he was a joy, as was my wife. ... In the interim, she'd started living with my parents, who were only too glad to have her and a grandson with them during the war. ... About three months before I came home, she rented a house from her aunt. A little bungalow in Mount Holly that her aunt ... still owned. ... She's started to furnish it and so forth, so, when I came home, I came home to a nice, small home. Yeah, it was a real homecoming. It was.

KP: I read in the *Rutgers Alumni Magazine* that you were very lucky to have a home, because you had to do quite a bit of commuting, you wrote once, between your first job and ...

JDZ: Oh, for a year ... the first year with DuPont. ... I come out of the service, and, of course, didn't want to do anything for a couple of months. ... I had thirty-two days of leave time to begin with and, "Well, I'll start looking for a job come November, into December, of '45." I went to DuPont, and I went to Armstrong Cork Co., I went to Scott Paper, looking for a marketing job. ... The war changed my attitude completely about this aspiration I thought I'd had earlier about the State Department and fluency in a couple of languages. I'd already been overseas and ... it dissuaded me completely from wanting to pursue that. ... I say the war, I guess it was the war. ... All I know is that I came home, now I've got a wife and a son. I thought, "I could get into

marketing.” ... When I got to DuPont, boy, the thing that intrigued me was nylon. Nylon was new. Nylon was invented, well, brought into the commercial picture in 1938, right before the war. Boy, it intrigued me. And, when they sent me ... I went down and talked to personnel, and then, they sent me over to talk to a sales manager in the Fiber Department. Oh, boy, this is where I wanted to be. But, I was offered a job by Armstrong Cork. Scott Paper, I went for an interview, but I never made the follow up. But, I’m glad I went with DuPont. That nylon was intriguing, and, of course, it was only the forerunner of a hell of a lot more fiber chemistry.

KP: And, you stayed with DuPont for the bulk of your career?

JDZ: Yeah, I was with DuPont until ‘85. And, I left about a year and a half before I would have wanted to. I had thirty-nine years and four months. We had an early retirement opportunity. ... At that point, DuPont was very smart, if you look at when they started to go into down-sizing, compared to when some of these did, they started quite early. When they had this early retirement opportunity, I had enough service and age. It was a combination of age and service, and I looked at what my responsibility was going to continue to be. I sat down with the man who was going to be my new boss and saw what he expected. And, he was being thrust into responsibilities that he had very little knowledge of. ... I got involved in waste fiber management, waste fiber development. That’s another story, but it was a very, very small task force. There were very few people in the company knew, really, what, and paid much attention to what we did, and still, we started to make a lot of money. And then, the company got very excited. But, I decided, at that point, that I was gonna wind up frustrated, that after thirty-nine years and four months, to stay on another year and a half, no way. ... I don’t want to finish my career that way, so I bowed out. The company wanted to drop 6500, at that point. This was in April of 1985, and 11,220 took retirement, and it left DuPont in a real manpower crunch for the better part of two years, really did, from ‘85 into ‘87, because ... they had not forecasted accurately about how many people would take the early retirement opportunity. But, ... since then, they’ve had, ... at least, three additional downsizings. You’re done. ... I’ve got to go, as a matter-of-fact. ...

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask?

JDZ: If there is, I can’t think of what it would be. I’m afraid, I mean, looking at my watch we’ve been too long.

KP: Well, thank you very much. ...

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