

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH E. JOEL

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

G. KURT PIEHLER

and

BRYAN HOLZMACHER

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TRANSCRIPT BY

EVE SNYDER

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Kenneth E. Joel at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey on December 13, 1994 with Kurt Piehler.
Bryan Holzmacher: And Bryan Holzmacher.

KP: I guess I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your parents.

Kenneth Joel: Fine.

KP: Your father was born in Connecticut?

KJ: Yes.

KP: He worked as a route driver and a laundry worker?

KJ: That he did too, yes.

KP: Could you tell me more about him?

KJ: Okay, starting as of when?

KP: As his job that he did and...

KJ: Alright, okay, well let me see. He was born in Connecticut. He was raised in Newark. ... Before he was married, he told me, he worked in Connecticut in a factory. But mostly he had that job because he had been on a high school state championship basketball team. And then they had industrial leagues rather than professional leagues. He had a job there, but his real job was to play basketball for, I think it was, Yale and Town or something like that. And then he came to Monmouth County in Howell ... Township, and worked on a farm, which was my mother's father's farm. And he met her there and they married.

KP: So your father, he worked in a factory, but he played basketball?

KJ: Yeah, he played basketball. You know, the factory had a team. Like remember [the] Phillipsville 66ers or maybe you don't remember?

KP: No, I know about the industrial teams. Did he ever talk to you about his experiences playing basketball? Was that one of his fond recollections?

KJ: Yeah, ... I guess, ... he was short, 5' 7"... you didn't have to be tall to play basketball then. And I can't remember much that he told me about it, except he said, there was one Yale basketball player who played on their team too, sort of, you know, as a ringer. That's what I remember about that.

KP: Your father came down to New Jersey to settle. What led him to come down?

KJ: His family lived here in New Jersey, in Newark. His father worked in the jewelry industry.

KP: Okay. He was born in Connecticut?

KJ: He was born in Connecticut, right. And when ... they moved down here I don't ... really know.

KP: Did he live in Newark at all?

KJ: Oh yeah, he lived most of his life in Newark. He went back to work in Connecticut in this factory where he played basketball. I don't know why. That's my best recollection.

KP: Your father, was he eligible for the draft at all in World War I?

KJ: Too young.

KP: Oh, too young?

KJ: [He was] too young. His brother was ... in World War I.

KP: You mention that your father met your mother on the farm?

KJ: That's exactly right.

KP: Was he working on the farm?

KJ: He was working on the farm.

KP: Do you know anything about the courtship? How that went?

KJ: I don't. I do not.

KP: Your mother, she also worked in a toy factory?

KJ: She did, right.

KP: Is that before she got married?

KJ: Yes, before.

KP: After she married, did she work?

KJ: After she was married, ... she never worked as long, until they were divorced. As long as they were married she never worked, I don't believe.

KP: When did your parents get divorced? How old were you?

KJ: Thirteen or about that.

KP: Did your mother have to work again then, after the divorce?

KJ: Yes, she did, she did. ... She didn't get enough in alimony. I don't think she got any alimony. Frankly, I think she got some property settlement from a lousy, rotten lawyer in Manasquan, who I won't name. [laughter] All I vaguely remember from when I was young and he was old. And, after that she did have to work, yes.

KP: Did that affect where you were living? Where you and your mother were living?

KJ: Oh, sure.

KP: Where were you living before the divorce?

KJ: Before the divorce we lived in different places, in Monmouth County.

BH: You stayed with your mother after the divorce?

KJ: After the divorce, I stayed with her for a while. And then I went to Florida to stay with my paternal grandfather for a while. And then I went to Charlotte, North Carolina and went one year in high school there while I was living with my paternal grandfather. And then I came back from there, and when I came back from there, I came to Keyport, where my father lived. ... I went one year, the last year of high school to Keyport High School. ... I didn't live with him because he lived in a house where his girlfriend lived. And this is not, you know, this is a long time ago, so appearances were important. She lived in an apartment, upstairs and he lived in a room downstairs in Keyport. And I lived in another house in Keyport, with an old man named Captain Decker, ... for my year of high school in Keyport.

KP: How much do you think the Great Depression had to do with the breakup of your parent's marriage? Do you think economic reasons were involved?

KJ: It might have had something to do with it because they had a house, which they had built, which they lost [in] the mortgage foreclosure. And then we lived in rented places after that. I don't know if it did or not; it might have. But ... they were not suited. They were not suited. If I had been him, I don't think I could have lived with my mother. [laughter]

BH: Were you forced to work to help your mother pay the bills when you were living with her?

KJ: I did work. No, I didn't work. No. We lived with my uncle for a while and he wanted me to go to work, but I wouldn't do it. [laughter]

KP: Growing up, you spent a lot of time in Monmouth County. You also did go to Charlotte, North Carolina for a year.

KJ: For a year, ... Central High School.

KP: What was that like to go from New Jersey to North Carolina?

KJ: Well, Central High School, as I remember Central High School ... my grandfather married, this was his fifth wife, and he married this lady because he thought she had money, and she had it, but she didn't give him any of it. [laughter] Her ... husband had been the plumbing inspector for the city of Charlotte. And they lived in a house, which had been a single family house, it was now four families and they rented three parts. And down the hill, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad is right above us. Down the hill is about ten little houses they rented by the week to people, who worked in the hosiery factories. ... But, her, let me see, her son was also a plumbing contractor. And his wife was a lady who had an idea that she was some kind of a Southern aristocrat because she always used to say she was from the so and so's of Bristol, Tennessee, not the so and so's of some place else. But their house was like what you'd see in the movies. Because they had two daughters and a nice house, lots of cars in front of it, you know. It was something like that. And Central High School, naturally, didn't have any black people in it.

KP: Did you find the segregation in the South different? How did it strike you, in comparison?

KJ: I didn't pay much attention to it, in all frankness.

KP: You were a northerner?

KJ: Yes.

KP: How did that go? Especially in high school. Were jokes ever directed at you? Was there any animosity directed at you?

KJ: I don't remember any.

KP: You grew up in shore towns, Bradley Beach, Neptune City, Keyport. It sounds in some ways like it would be a great place to grow up. Especially in the summer. Is that case?

KJ: It's true. The beach is there.

KP: Did you enjoy that? Did you use the beach a lot?

KJ: Sure, yeah.

KP: They also strike me as very transient communities. Would you have friends in the summer, who would go away for the winter?

KJ: No, no. ... There's lots of year-round people in Bradley Beach and Neptune. Neptune City is not a shore place. Bradley Beach is; Asbury Park is to some extent.

KP: So you would not really make friends with the transient people who came for the summer. It would be really the year round people?

KJ: It would be the year round people, sure.

BH: Was there as much of a tourism factor then as there is now?

KJ: Well, ... there was more in Asbury Park. Bradley Beach there was probably the same so far as I know. Neptune City is not a shore community. People don't come to Neptune City for the summer.

KP: Yeah, for some reason I always just lump all those together. I stand corrected. Did you expect to go to college when you were in high school?

KJ: No. I took, I did something that couldn't be done now because of financial constraints. I went an extra year, it was called post graduate. A year after I graduated they let me go back for a year, and I took college preparatory courses because I didn't have enough at the end of the four years.

KP: So you went to an additional year of high school?

KJ: Yes.

KP: So in other words, you changed your mind in high school about college?

KJ: Somewhere during ... really the last year, I think, in Keyport. I changed my mind, and I decided I would go to college.

KP: Do you know what led you to change your mind?

KJ: It seemed like a good idea. We had ... three friends. There were three of us, myself and another person. He said he was always going to work in education because they got the summers off. [laughter] The other guy didn't care.

BH: What prompted you to go down to Missouri for your first year of school?

KJ: [It was] cheap.

BH: Cost factors?

KJ: [It was] cheap. And you also, it was one of those colleges where you work a certain number of hours a week. And, they did things, they had greenhouses, you know. They grew vegetables or things that they sold and the students maintained, you know, did the maintenance work, most of it of the buildings and all that kind of work. They did all the work in the kitchens. It's called Park College, a Presbyterian school. It only cost, I remember-the tuition, I think, was 350 dollars.

BH: For the year?

KJ: Yeah.

KP: How did you hear about the college?

KJ: I read about it in Redbook magazine. It was an article in Redbook magazine. It had about five of those [schools], I remember. Another one was Berea, B-E-R-E-A, in Kentucky. There were some others like that, that I read about.

KP: So you had done some homework on where you could go to college?

KJ: I don't know if I looked for the article. But, ... I found it anyway.

KP: Had you thought of coming to Rutgers at that point?

KJ: No, no.

BH: In terms of direction, when you went to college, initially did you know what would be your major or what career you wanted?

KJ: Not when I went to Park College. I don't remember that I did, no.

BH: At that point, you were just going to college?

KJ: I just went, right.

KP: I talked to someone from the shore communities. There was some Klan activity in some of the shore communities. Did you ever notice any when you were growing up?

KJ: What kind of activity?

KP: Ku Klux Klan activity?

KJ: No.

KP: Any marches?

KJ: No, I never did. Not at all.

KP: I know actually Somerville had some.

KJ: Really?

KP: One of the shore communities, whose name escapes me at this point, but there was some, and I just wondered if you had similar experiences?

KJ: I have no recollection of anything like that.

KP: You were at Park College when World War II broke out?

KJ: Right.

KP: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

KJ: I was in Park College. That's all I can remember about it.

KP: You do not remember very much about the actual day?

KJ: No. I remember after that happened a lot of the senior class men went off to the service. That I do remember. They didn't finish, you know, even the year. They just went.

BH: Did you think that you might or did you have any desire to do so?

KJ: No, ... I was kind of young then. I guess old enough to go. No, I wasn't inclined to do so. [laughter]

KP: Did Park College have ROTC, if you can remember?

KJ: I'm almost positive it did. ... Yes, I'm sure it did because that's where, I think that's where some of the senior men were, the ROTC people.

KP: You were not in ROTC at the time?

KJ: No, no. ... I was not a military person.

KP: You had two uncles, who had served in World War I. Did they ever talk about it?

KJ: One, one. I had two, but I told you about one. ... No, my Uncle Fred, my father's ... [brother], he was never in combat. I'm not sure he left the United States. I just can't remember. And he was very proud of the fact [that] he was, you know, in it, but I don't, I don't think he was in combat.

KP: And your other uncle?

KJ: The other one, I don't remember if he was in combat either. That was my mother's brother, and I don't remember.

KP: In the 1930s and 1940s, did you read the newspaper very often? It sounds like a basic question, but I have found that a lot of people do not remember really reading the newspaper very much.

KJ: In the '40s, I did. I can't remember about the '30s. I suspect I did.

KP: How much of a sense did you have that America was going to war in the late 1930s and early 1940s?

KJ: Certainly not in the '30s. And I would've been old enough to think about it. I can't remember ... whether I thought, you know, America was going to go to war or not. I don't remember that. I don't remember thinking that I did think so.

KP: In other words, Pearl Harbor was something of a surprise?

KJ: Oh, sure. Absolutely.

BH: What was the atmosphere at the school when you heard about it? Was everybody shocked?

KJ: Yeah, they were, and I say, you know, [there was] this sudden ... outpouring of patriotism, you know, that the ROTC, you know, some of the senior males stood and certainly wanted to go. [They] were ready to go there.

KP: You would have preferred to finish out your college?

KJ: I would have, yeah. ... The thought of going didn't enter my mind.

KP: Park College, what kind of college was it? You said it was ...

KJ: It was liberal arts.

KP: It was a liberal arts college.

KJ: It's sponsored by the Presbyterian Church.

KP: Did you have a major picked out when you came here?

KJ: I don't think so.

KP: What did you think of Missouri? You were there for just a short time, but did you get out into the nearby community at Parkville?

KJ: Yeah, Parkville is just a little town. You know, we used to go down there if you had the money to get some food that was different than what you got at the college. And that was about it, there wasn't much to Parkville. We went down to Kansas City once in awhile. I remember one thing happened in Kansas City, if I were to tell you.

KP: Yes, please do.

KJ: Okay. They have a place called the Cow Barn. And among the jobs you could get as a student would be an usher when they had performances in the Cow Barn. So I was an usher one night. I remember Paul Robeson came there to perform. And apparently his agreement was [that]

it wouldn't be segregated, but it was. And I remember, he wouldn't perform. ... It was a big problem for, ... you know, an hour or two. They made some kind of a compromise and he finally did perform.

KP: You were an usher and people were asking you?

KJ: I don't remember what they asked me, but I remember this happening. Yes, I was an usher there that particular night.

KP: Did you hear him sing?

KJ: Yeah, he did sing.

KP: What did you think of his voice?

KJ: He had a great voice. A beautiful voice.

BH: With regards to segregation, was that the whole county, the schools completely segregated?

KJ: In Kansas City?

BH: Or even at ...

KJ: At Park [College]?

BH: Yes.

KP: Did you have any black students in your class?

KJ: I'm trying to remember. I don't remember, ... I wouldn't say there weren't any. ... But I wouldn't say there were either because I don't remember any. There were lots of children of missionaries at Park College because they didn't have to pay tuition, I don't think.

KP: How big was Park College?

KJ: Small. A few hundred [people], I think.

KP: How did you get out to Missouri?

KJ: I went on the bus. [laughter]

KP: So you saw a good chunk of America?

KJ: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KP: During my interviews with Rutgers alumni, many saw very little of the country before they entered the service, but you had seen a large chunk of the country before you were nineteen. Does anything stick out from Florida, the Carolinas or Missouri in differences at the time?

KJ: No, I'm trying to think. I can't think of anything special.

BH: With race relations throughout the country, since you were traveling back and forth throughout the country, was there more acceptance in the North versus Missouri, North Carolina and Florida?

KJ: Oh yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think so. There would have been more integration in the North than there would have been in either Florida or North Carolina.

BH: Did you see any events or occurrences that you recall, negative or positive?

KJ: I don't remember. People then just accepted it. ... They didn't think about it. It was a part of life, ... it's the way the world worked and you didn't think about it. I remember one time, ... when I came back from World War II, you know, we used to ... go up to New York City and hang around in the Astor Bar. Because, it was a big bar and lots of people went there, you go there and drink. And I met this black soldier, you know, and we had a drink. Or I met him, I don't know, in Times Square. And I said to him, "This is the Hotel New York," and I said, "Let's go in and have a drink." And he was reluctant. I said, "Come on, come on." We went in and this bartender wouldn't serve him. So I'm screaming at this bartender, "If this guy was willing to go ... off and fight, why ... won't you serve him a drink?" And he wouldn't do it, I mean, he was embarrassed, you know, this bartender, and he said, "I'll serve you." I said, "No, you won't." [laughter] And, you know, we left. I think I embarrassed this black guy.

KP: You were initially an unwilling soldier. You would have preferred to finish out college. How were you drafted? Which draft board drafted you? Was it back in Keyport?

KJ: I wasn't drafted. One-Two-One, I volunteered.

KP: What prompted you?

KJ: ... I didn't really volunteer. Another thing, ... I had thought about volunteering to go in the air force, but I was working part-time for a man who owned a couple of five and ten cent stores. And he was in his 30s and he was just at the edge of ... draft age. He was always maybe one year too old for the latest draft. He had no children, just a wife. So he was looking around for what he could do to avoid being drafted. He was much more interested in going ahead and building up his business; then he was going into the military service. So he found a program where ... you could enlist and then you spent, I think it was about an eight-month course, that you took at night given by some engineer from Fort Monmouth who was also staying out of the military service by doing this. Well, we studied radio communication and then, when this was over, then we volunteers went off to active duty and then that's what I did, on the advice of this man I was working for.

KP: Did he ever serve in the military?

KJ: No. No.

BH: So he got around it?

KJ: He never did, you know, and he avoided it legally somehow.

KP: This five and dime you were working at was it in New Jersey?

KJ: In Keyport.

KP: In Keyport. You volunteered, why did the air force have such an appeal?

KJ: Well, I knew enough then to know if you were in the air force you were treated better. ... If you were in the army, it's dirty, messy, uncomfortable. [laughter] If you were in the air force, it may be dangerous, but at least if you come back, you've got a nice warm place to stay and it's comfortable. I don't know why I knew this, but I knew it.

KP: Had you seen any war movies before the war? Something like, All Quiet on the Western Front? Or other movies?

KJ: I saw All Quiet on the Western Front, but I don't remember much about it.

KP: You are not the first to say why they chose the air force or the navy.

KJ: ... Oh, I see yeah. Okay, okay. ...

KP: A lot of people actually got it from ROTC.

KJ: Oh, I see. ...

KP: That the treatment of ROTC and that combined with the movies or other sources, they realized you want to avoid the infantry. I'm just wondering why?

KJ: Yeah, ... infantry's a dangerous place, plus uncomfortable.

KP: You initially were in the air force. In fact, you began pilot training.

KJ: ... Initially, ... when I went into active duty, I went to a signal construction battalion in the army in Texas. Okay. That was disbanded because a lot of the people that were with the group that I had been with taking the radio communications course not to be drafted and to stay out of the service as long as possible, ... they were all wise asses, you see. They wrote to their congressmen and things like that. ... Somewhere in the higher echelons, they got sick of them. And they just disbanded us and sent us off to the infantry. [laughter]

KP: So initially you were in the signal corps. You did eight months of training as a civilian?

KJ: In active duty. Right, yes I did. At night, we used to go to Red Bank High School.

KP: What was that training like?

KJ: They taught us ... about radio, I don't remember much about it. They taught you radio frequencies and, you know, how to operate radios, and the theory behind it and that.

KP: How many nights a week would you go?

KJ: I can't remember. I think it was more than ... one.

BH: When they broke up that group of people, did they try to place them in areas where they would be able to use what they had learned in that schooling program or did they just stuck them into any opening?

KJ: Speaking for myself, it wasn't in any area where I could use it. ... I'm not sure about the rest of them because ... they were spread in all directions.

KP: How big was this unit?

KJ: The signal construction battalion?

KP: Yes, how big was it?

KJ: I would just guess and say 500.

KP: How many were taking a course with you at a time?

KJ: I think all of us went to the same place. And, there were about, maybe about twenty of us.

BH: Everybody you were there with, do you think they volunteered to avoid active duty?

KJ: Yes.

BH: So everybody there?

KJ: Including the instructor.

BH: They all got sent to active duty, when it got broken up?

KJ: Yeah, ... after that signal construction battalion was broken up. Yes. Whether they went to active duty, I don't know. I know where I went.

KP: What did you do when you actually finished your training? You had mentioned that you were in Texas?

KJ: Okay, we used to practice putting up telephone lines, you know, ... communications ... for near the front lines or in the front lines. ... [We would] climb telephone poles, I remember that, and also, [we would] do basic training as well.

KP: So you did get your basic training in Texas and not at Red Bank, in terms of basic military training?

KJ: Right, no military training at Red Bank.

KP: Red Bank, it was really strictly going to class?

KJ: That's all, right.

KP: The men in the unit, the construction battalion sent to Texas, were they from New Jersey or were they from different parts of the country?

KJ: No, they were all from New Jersey, as I remember. ... It was local people. I remember some from Freehold. I don't remember the rest of them, but I remember ... three people from Freehold, but I think they were all local.

KP: You mentioned that a lot of them wrote their congressmen, tried things with every contact they had. Did you have any prominent individuals in the unit? Sons of any major business people or political leaders?

KJ: No, no, ... they were just people who, ... I don't know ... why they thought they could do something like this, but they would think they weren't being treated right by the people, you know, in positions above them in the signal construction battalion, and I just do remember, somebody wrote his congressman.

KP: This did not please some of the senior people?

KJ: This did not please, what they call ... the cadre. The people who were supposed to train us. And, you know, a lot of those guys were really just men who came from working in that field. They worked for a telephone company or a power company, you know, before they were in the service.

KP: So a lot of the cadre were not career officers, but they were people who had had that occupational specialty?

KJ: Right, had that occupation.

KP: Did you have any experiences though with career army cadre?

KJ: When I went ... from there to the infantry division in Mississippi, yes lots of it. [laughter]

KP: Is there anything that sticks out about your Texas experience and your experiences with the signal corps construction?

KJ: All I remember was [that] it could pour rain and you would be soaking wet, and in fifteen minutes you could be dry. I remember the beer was 3.2. I can't remember much else about it.

KP: What did you do when you were not on duty and training in Texas?

KJ: In Texas, okay let me see.

KP: Because you had all of these people from New Jersey?

KJ: Yeah right, ... we would go to either, ... if we got enough time off and you could get transportation, you have to sometimes wait six hours in line to get on a bus if you wanted to. Except for the little town ... outside of the camp. You would go to Natchez, Mississippi or Austin, Texas. And, you would go to the USO sometimes. ... There was not that many times that you'd get to go, that I got to go, you know, maybe a half of a dozen or so. I remember being in Natchez, Mississippi a few times. ... But that was a little closer.

KP: What about the food and your living conditions at your initial place in Texas?

KJ: ... We didn't live in a field, you know, we lived in the barracks. I think once in a while we were in the field, but, you know, mostly in the barracks.

KP: Most of your training sounds like it was focused on signal corps construction?

KJ: It was. That was what we were trained to do, you know, ... build communications, ... near or at the front lines.

BH: If they had not broken that unit up, do you think you would have gone over to Europe anytime soon?

KJ: I don't know, but I suspect so.

BH: It wouldn't have been that far off?

KJ: The training would have been finished and, you know, when training was finished you were gone.

KP: Your unit was broken up. Did you have any idea where you were going?

KJ: ... I don't think until the last minute.

KP: Did they tell you in advance, why the unit was being broken up or did you wake up one morning and everyone was issued orders to go somewhere?

KJ: Somehow I know it was broken up for the reasons that I told you.

KP: Yeah, but you do not remember?

KJ: I don't remember how I know that.

BH: What was your reaction when you got orders for infantry?

KJ: I probably was disappointed, though I don't remember now.

KP: You were sent for your basic infantry training to Camp Van Dorn. Which infantry division were you assigned to? Was it the 106th or was it another one?

KJ: No, that was, I'm going to say, ... I think it was the 87th. ... Their, what do you call that thing? Their insignia is the blood and sword. The bloody sword, have you seen it?

KP: I probably have, but I cannot remember.

KJ: Okay, that was the insignia. I forget what it was known as, but that's the one I went to.

KP: Was it a national guard division or a draftee division?

KJ: It was a draftee division.

KP: You had been in the army for a while when you got to Mississippi. You had not been through basic infantry training. How did that go?

KJ: Well, ... you know, ... it's physical. ... You get up early in the morning; you do a lot of physical things; you're wet. Your feet are wet and you are tired, you know, and you would rather not do it, but that's it. You know when you are twenty, who cares? [laughter]

BH: At that point were you mixed in with people from all across the country? Or were there soldiers from a specific area?

KJ: Yeah, right, I think they were from all across the country, though there were a lot of southerners.

BH: Primarily southerners?

KJ: I wouldn't say primarily, I'm not sure, but there were a lot. And the cadre, you know, were primarily southerners because ... I think in the regular army there were a lot more southerners than any other part of the country.

KP: You were experiencing regular army people for the first time. What impression do you have of them, particularly the sergeants?

KJ: We had, ... not a great relationship in the beginning [laughter] because ... I don't think they thought too well of us and, you know, we didn't think too well of them, sometimes. And some of them were very good at what they did. As time went by, you began to appreciate that, and some of them didn't amount to much. ... I remember-- let me tell you about this one guy. Okay, this was even in a different place, this was in Camp Atterbury, Indiana. I think I'm mixed up; I think I went to Camp Atterbury, Indiana for the basic training and ... then I went to Mississippi ... to the 87th Division; I think that's the way that worked. But anyway this was ... in Mississippi, and there was an older guy, about 30 or so, that was an older guy, and I remember his name was Wilbur Fowler, and he ... taught mathematics at Schenectady College and trained trotting horses. ... I don't know how I became friendly with him. Anyway, ... he was in a different squad, and he couldn't very well ... take care of himself. And the squad leader was a guy named ... Sergeant Moody, who was a southerner, who ... had an illness, but then, to me, he was a drunk, and he abused Wilbur. So I would ... fight with him to help Wilbur. This guy, ... the other cadres would try to protect him. ... One morning, I remember, he hadn't gotten up. So I would say stuff like, "Hi Sergeant, you have a headache today?" And one time, we went on a maneuver, and he got lost because he couldn't figure how to read the compass. So I would say, "What happened? ... Did you get lost?" [laughter]

KP: This is the sergeant that got lost?

KJ: ... Yeah, he got his squad lost, and I remember another night with the cadre. ... This was back in the signal construction battalion; you are supposed to count off. And this was entirely unpremeditated. There were, I think, about 21 of us standing out there. You've got to count from one to 21, which is pretty simple. But for some reason, we were pissed off at the cadre, and the cadre were pissed off at us. Entirely spontaneously, somebody would miscount during the 21. We never knew who it was going to be ahead, and we stayed out there until two or three o'clock in the morning, continuously just counting. [laughter] Do you see why they wanted to break it up?

KP: How long were you with your first infantry division? How long did you stay with them? You eventually went to pilot training, in January of 1944? You indicated you were in pilot training?

KJ: Yeah, ... I was in there in that division, I'm sure it was the 87th Division in Mississippi first, after Camp Swift in Texas. I was there, I don't know, maybe five or six months, and then I took the test. I read about it on the bulletin board that I could take a test for pilot training.

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

KP: You mentioned that you had not received permission to take the test for pilot training?

KJ: No, no. ... I hesitated to ask permission in case it was refused. So I just reported to sick call each day and said I was sick, and I went down and took the test.

KP: You passed the test?

KJ: Yeah, ... the orders came in later on, to the ... headquarters.

KP: Was there a bit of surprise that you had gotten these orders? Was there any tension between the cadre and you?

KJ: Well, I remember, ... I think it was a Saturday morning that I got them. ... And so they called me in and said, "You're going to go to Miami Beach now." And I went in, and I was packing my duffle bag to get going, and Sergeant Moody was there, and he said something. I said, "Sergeant, it's just too cold and wet here. ... I'm going to go to Miami Beach." [laughter]

KP: What did the sergeant reply to that?

KJ: I can't remember.

BH: There was no reprimand then for taking the test under false pretenses?

KJ: No, no, no. ... I was already assigned to somebody else. I was gone.

BH: So they could not do anything?

KJ: Couldn't do anything.

KP: You initially wanted to avoid the infantry. Had being in the infantry just confirmed your feelings?

KJ: Yeah.

KP: Miami Beach. How did you enjoy your training in Miami Beach?

KJ: Fine.

KP: How long did you train for pilot training?

KJ: I'm trying to think how long. Again a few months-- six or eight months, perhaps.

KP: How far advanced did you get in your training?

KJ: I just got through the training in Miami Beach, [which] was the introductory training, and then we went to ... what they called an advanced training field in Newport, Arkansas. But I never flew an airplane. Well, I couldn't be a pilot anyway; you had to take a test, you know, a dexterity test, ... psychological test, a battery of psychological tests and the only thing that I could be was a bombardier. I couldn't be a pilot or a navigator. I didn't qualify.

BH: Have you pursued your pilot's license since then?

KJ: No.

BH: So that ended there?

KJ: That ended there.

KP: In your training in Miami Beach, what did you learn? You had been through two basic trainings at this point?

KJ: Yeah, ... I think we were there basically just to take these tests and to be classified truly and then shipped to where we should go for more training. ... I remember marching in the streets of Miami Beach, but I don't think I was in Miami Beach a terribly long time-- maybe two or three weeks.

KP: It seems like Miami Beach, if you're going to be stationed somewhere in the military, Miami Beach sounds like ...

KJ: That's a nice place because we were barracked in a hotel down there. ... It was a nice place to be; it certainly was. [laughter]

KP: On the other hand, Camp Newport in Arkansas seems less than perfect?

KJ: ... Well that was advanced training and, you know, we didn't really do anything there. Truly we didn't, as I remember, ... we would sometimes play poker all night. ... You know, put blankets over the windows so the lights didn't show out and play poker. We really weren't doing anything.

KP: So you were not doing any formal training for your bombardier training?

KJ: No, no. I don't remember ... what we did there if anything. Mostly it was just waiting, and I don't know for what.

KP: How did you learn that you were going to be going back to an infantry division? What happened? Did they break up a whole unit again?

KJ: ... There was something publicized about, at this point, they ... weren't going to train anymore pilots, bombardiers, or navigators because they thought by the time the training was finished, World War II would be over. So, ... that was what ended it.

KP: It was not your particular unit that was adjourned?

KJ: No, no. It was the whole program that ended at that point because it wouldn't ... have finished in time.

KP: Looking back, was that actually the case? Did you know how long your training was going to last?

KJ: ... I think it was the case. I think it was true.

KP: You were sent to the 106th Infantry Division?

KJ: ... That's Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

KP: Okay, that's when you went to Camp Atterbury? Did you have to go through basic again, with your new division?

KJ: I think I did.

BH: So you went through basic four times?

KJ: [laughter] I think I did.

KP: What did you think of the army at this point? They had really shifted you around. Once you sort of had a hand in it, but twice the army had sort of shifted you around with no real purpose in mind. It almost seems like ...

KJ: Yeah, ... I don't know if I thought about it then, but I think about it now. It seems like they just wasted a lot of resources. Not good planning.

KP: And you went through basic again.

KJ: ... I think so. I don't want to swear to that. We were ... doing a lot of maneuvers; we did a lot of field; we were in the field, you know; we were training; we were not just hanging around.

KP: So you were actually in the field doing field exercises with your new regiment and division? What about the makeup of your regiment in your infantry. Do you remember anything about where people hailed from?

KJ: At Camp Atterbury?

KP: Yeah, what parts of the country?

KJ: All I can remember is that the ... platoon sergeant was from a farm in Indiana, and there was one American Indian from Michigan. I can't remember any of the other people. Oh no, ... okay, there was Donald Young, who, ... I don't know where he came from, but he had been in Princeton University and he hadn't finished there. And there was ... a man named (Latelle?). ... He had lived all over the country. His father was an Episcopalian Bishop. All over the world, I mean. He lived in Germany and different places. I remember those people; that's all I remember.

KP: Did you have any close friends or comrades?

KJ: Those two, sort of.

KP: Those two were?

KJ: Yeah, yeah.

KP: What did you think of your cadre for your division? You were in another draftee division?

KJ: ... I thought the ... platoon sergeant was great. I thought he was just great. He was drafted, and he was from a farm in Indiana, and ... he was a real leader. He treated everybody well, and he was funny. And when you report to the officers, you have to turn around and you salute, you know, to the second lieutenant. He would always go, "put, put" [noise effects] when he was finished. I don't know why he had this expression he made. [laughter] ... I remember one expression he had for me one time when I had, you know, not slept for a couple of nights, maybe because I was in Indianapolis. He said, "Joel, your eyes look like two piss holes in the snow."

BH: So he was more down to earth and got along with the men better than the other leaders?

KJ: Yeah, ... he was ... just great. I just remember him.

KP: What about your lieutenants and your other officers?

KJ: Well, let me see. They are sort of separated from me, you know; they were okay. I don't ... recall anybody I disliked.

BH: How long were you in this camp before being shipped out?

KJ: Again, just a few months, and I can't remember how many months.

BH: It was a short time? You were just doing maneuvers and preparing?

KJ: Yeah, ... three or four months, perhaps.

BH: You knew at this point you were going overseas with this division or you were still uncertain?

KJ: I don't know ... if I know it in the beginning or not. I don't know whether I knew it or not. I think I ... knew it wasn't a replacement division, like the 87th was what they call a replacement division, you know. They trained replacements and sent them to Europe. But ... I don't think this was a replacement division. I realized that this was going to be a unit that stayed together with the same personnel.

KP: You had been in the army for a long time. How well trained were you for battle?

KJ: ... Good question, ... I don't know quite how to answer it.

KP: Yes.

KJ: I wasn't in battle to speak of so it is very difficult to say how well trained I was for it. Because ... I didn't have enough experience ... with it to know. Well, I certainly, you know, knew how to use ... all of the equipment, and, you know, I knew how to accept ... physical unpleasantness, ... bad weather conditions, how to be told to do things and do them.

BH: So you felt that you were prepared for whatever you might encounter at that point?

KJ: I don't know if I thought about it.

KP: Your division was one of the last to enter the war in Europe.

KJ: It was, yeah.

KP: Did you think the war would just pass your division by and pass you by or did you have the sense that you would eventually get in?

KJ: I don't remember.

KP: Do you remember anything about your voyage over and the orders to embark and your trip overseas?

KJ: ... We went over on a ship, ... which had ... in civilian life been called the Aquitania. I remember, you know, ... naturally an awful lot of people were seasick. And I remember, you know, there was lots of people throwing up. [laughter]

KP: Were you sick?

KJ: No, I didn't get seasick, fortunately. No, I didn't. And, ... I remember there was one lady aboard who performed ... for the USO, whose name was Ilona Massey. ... Her name was recognizable, anyway, to me.

KP: How comfortable or uncomfortable were your accommodations aboard the ship?

KJ: It was pretty uncomfortable because, you know, ... there's just a few inches ... above you to the next bunk. ... And, ... I remember the mess hall you know. There always seemed to be water on the floor, and they had these wooden boards, you know, on top of it.

KP: The ship must have smelled?

KJ: I don't remember, but I think it must have. It had to.

KP: What about the food aboard your voyage?

KJ: I guess it was [okay]. ... I don't remember having any complaints about that.

KP: How did you pass the time? Did you play a lot of poker aboard ship?

KJ: We must have played cards, but I don't remember.

BH: How long were you at sea?

KJ: Jeez. I can't remember, ... it might have been two weeks or less.

BH: Where did you land?

KJ: Some place in England.

BH: Did you spend much time there?

KJ: ... We were in England about six or eight weeks at least, I would think. Maybe more.

BH: Was that time used for further preparation for battle?

KJ: Yeah, ... we did exercises sure, absolutely.

BH: Did they try to coordinate you at all with any of the British troops?

KJ: No.

BH: It was strictly American forces?

KJ: Yeah, yeah.

KP: The Americans had been in the war a long time by the time your unit was in England. Did you get any training from people that had actually been in battle?

KJ: I don't think so.

KP: You don't remember any officers who had been in battle or sergeants coming to you and saying, "This is what actually happens!"

KJ: No, I do not.

KP: Your sergeant, he stayed with you when you were shipped out?

KJ: Yes, absolutely.

KP: He had never been in battle had he?

KJ: No.

KP: Do you have any memories of England? Did you go to pubs at all?

KJ: Yeah, ... we used to go ... over the fence at night. We used to go to the pubs and we used to go sometimes to a town called Chelton, which was a little distance away. And we were in London a couple of times. And I was in trouble a little bit.

BH: For going over the fence?

KJ: Well, no, more than that. You know, in England, in the pubs, you see the enlisted men go on one side and the officers go on the other side. ... So drinking beer and becoming courageous through the drinking of beer, I thought this was lousy. So I went over to the side where the officers were. I said, "What the hell did they think? Why did they think they were any better than we were?" [laughter] ... And nobody did anything to me about that, believe it or not. Nobody there took offense. They probably looked up [and thought], "He's drunk, get him out of here." ...

Before we went overseas, we got a little pass to go to London, and I stayed over for three extra days, which I wasn't supposed to do. ... I didn't intend to desert. I had every intention of going. I just knew when they were going and they weren't ... going to go ... for a while yet. And I figured, you know, why shouldn't I stay three days. ... You know, the worst they could do to me ... is tell me, "You can't go!"

BH: Did they do anything to you at all?

KJ: Yeah, I got what they call company punishment. I had to clean out latrines, believe it or not. Honest, I did. I think for seven days. And then I was ... awarded ... what they call an expert infantry badge, just because you did some physical things like doing marches and push ups and stuff. And they had to bring me from company punishment ... to give me my award and to send me back to the company punishment. [laughter] That was over, you know, that was a week of company punishment. It was worth it; it was worth it.

KP: When you were traveling, do you remember different bases? Did you ever date any women in either England or other parts of the United States?

KJ: Yeah, yeah. ... Do you want to ask me about that?

KP: Well, if you have some stories to tell about that?

KJ: Okay, let me see. In Newport, I had a girlfriend. I wasn't very old, but this girl was still in high school. I think she was a senior in high school. And her name was (Deniatrice?) Prince. And her parents ran a bar, which was off limits to service people. I don't know why, but it was. ... My friend from Philadelphia, whose name I can't remember; it was an Irish name. He dated a girl who worked there who was a barmaid. ... I remember after a while, it seemed like, you know, this was really too serious a thing for me, so, you know, I didn't go back ... into Newport anymore. ... I remember the parents of (Deniatrice?) came out one time looking for me. But, I hadn't done anything to hurt (Deniatrice?), believe me.

KP: But her parents thought there was ...

KJ: I don't know what they thought, but anyway they're there looking for me.

[laughter]

BH: They didn't find you?

KJ: No, I wouldn't go out. I wouldn't go out of the barracks. They couldn't come in the barracks to get me.

KP: They were natives of Arkansas?

KJ: Yeah, they lived ... in Newport. But, ... they couldn't come into the barracks to get me. Somebody came in and told me, so and so was out wherever civilians could go, and you could go see them on the post, but I didn't go.

KP: Any other similar experiences or other experiences?

KJ: No, I had a nice girl in Indianapolis, I remember-- Mary Margaret (Gobel?). She came in from the farm, I think, to work at the RCA factory, and she was a nice girl. I remembered her very well. I was sorry to leave because of her.

KP: Really?

KJ: Yes, I was.

KP: Did you write to her at all during the war?

KJ: I don't know if I ever wrote to her or not. I can't remember.

KP: Your unit was eventually sent to France?

KJ: Right.

KP: You had one more ocean voyage?

KJ: Right, across the Channel.

KP: In not probably the most pleasant weather? December is ...

KJ: I don't ... even remember except landing in the water, you know, from the landing craft. You had to jump in the water ... to get to the shore.

KP: You remember that?

KJ: I better remember. And ... we were out there with those little pup tents, you know.

KP: You were really now in the field?

KJ: We were now in the field, that's for sure.

BH: How long were you in the field before you saw any action?

KJ: Just a few days. Then we got on the back of the ... two-and-a-half-ton trucks and went over, what was called, I think was called, the Red Ball Highway. And that went through parts of Belgium; I think it was Belgium or Holland. And then to where our placement was in the Siegfried Line.

KP: Your unit was initially sent to what was supposed to be a quiet sector?

KJ: It was. It was supposed to be a very, very quiet sector. The 2nd Division had been there and ... it was being relieved. And we were told ... we were just going to hang around for the winter. [laughter] And that was that.

KP: Had you been issued winter clothing? How well equipped were you for the winter?

KJ: I guess ... we had the usual winter equipment, I think. ... We didn't have ammunition for the mortars, I remember that. That wasn't there yet.

KP: What about enough ammunition for your own weapons?

KJ: ... I don't recall any shortage, but we didn't do much shooting. ... I never found out.

KP: So initially, when you were sent to the line, how long were you on the line before you saw the enemy or made any contact?

KJ: At night ... or maybe even in the daytime, you could see them moving around once in a while about 500 yards away. But it seemed to be sort of like, you don't bother us and we won't bother you, sort of a thing. You know, I mean, we could see them and you could shoot them. I suppose you could've shot at them if we wanted to, but we didn't do it.

BH: So there were no minor confrontations?

KJ: No, ... it seemed like an unspoken truce. [laughter]

KP: So there was no raiding, no search parties?

KJ: I think we did have-- no, we had to go out on patrol. There were patrols, yes there were.

KP: You really were not looking for trouble it sounds like?

KJ: Didn't find any. I remember that.

BH: So you were prepared in terms of clothing and equipment. Were you prepared for what happened?

KJ: Oh, yeah. ... We had boots and ponchos, you know, the raincoats and the overcoats and gloves. I guess that's all you could have for winter. ...

BH: Since they told you to expect a quiet area or a quiet zone, were you prepared for what happened?

KJ: No.

KP: How much of a shock was it, when the offensive started?

KJ: It was a big shock. ... I wasn't with my unit because somehow I got trench mouth. I don't know what you get trench mouth from, but nothing bad. But, I had it and your gums bleed, so I had gone back to get dental care. I had left the unit and gone in a little further to the rear to get dental care. It was on the way back to my unit, when it happened. So I never got back to my unit.

KP: So you do not know actually what happened to your unit when the attack came?

KJ: I think I saw some of them in the prison camp, or did I? I may just have heard about them. I don't recall that I ever saw any of them again in the prison camp. But I heard about some of them. I only heard about one that I can really remember and that was (Latelle?).

KP: What happened to Latelle?

KJ: He spoke German because, you know, ... he had lived in Germany. And all I heard about him was that, ... after we were prisoners of war, somebody said ... he wasn't too thin. Which means he's getting extra food. So they thought he was collaborating with the Germans. And maybe he was just helping out, you know, because he spoke German, ... in managing the whole thing. But, you know, apparently, whoever saw him thought he was getting extra food from someplace. So, therefore, they thought he was doing something he shouldn't be doing collaborating.

KP: Do you know how many of your unit was killed in that first assault?

KJ: You know, I have no idea. I never saw them again.

KP: You were alone then when you were trying to go back to your unit?

KJ: I was with a whole group of people. I don't know what unit it was, and some of them were tank destroyers. That's all I remember, but it was a whole bunch of people.

KP: You were heading to the front?

KJ: I was ... going back, and I guess these people ... were coming backwards, you know, and then I just got into this group.

KP: So in other words, you were walking up and they were retreating?

KJ: Right. ... I don't remember, I suppose that I was going backwards too. Maybe I was, and I just don't remember.

BH: You did not actually fire a shot? You were just engulfed in the attack?

KJ: No, ... I never fired a shot in anger, not a one. [laughter]

KP: You were caught up with this group. How long did you retreat with them? Do you have any recollection?

KJ: I remember ... lying in the bushes and seeing a German tank roll by. And then I remember being in a valley, which is not the best place to be. And [I was] digging ... with the trenching tools to make a foxhole. ... The ring around on higher ground, ... sometime during while this was happening, ... there were German tanks. You could see ... the front of the tank and the gun. ... There was some talk that went back and forth, you know, talking to each other with the white flags. ... You know, the commanders of each, the Germans and the American forces there. And some time passed, and then the Germans fired a few shells down in there and killed quite a few people and wounded people. And then some officer offered me his compass. ... I don't know why me. [He] offered me his compass and said, "I'll give you my compass if you want to take off." I thought, "I don't know if that is such a good idea for me alone to be going off into these woods with Germans all over." So I refused the offer. And the highest commanding officer there, decided to surrender.

KP: How high was he? Do you remember?

KJ: Would he have ... been a lieutenant colonel? I'm not sure. I mean, he wasn't a general.

BH: This was the group that was down in the valley?

KJ: Yeah, yeah.

KP: How many were there, roughly?

KJ: All I can say is a few hundred.

BH: So you were not in a really small group of several people?

KJ: No, no. ... It was a large group.

KP: So this was a large scale surrender?

KJ: Yeah, yeah. It was.

KP: Did this all come as a shock to you?

KJ: It sure did. The biggest shock in the world. You know, you think of everything, but being captured. You think of being killed, you think of being wounded, but being captured never enters your mind, even though you've had training. A little training is what you're supposed to do, ... if you're captured.

KP: You all surrendered? You were surrendering with a large group, too?

KJ: Yeah, it was a large group, yeah.

KP: What was your initial contact with Germans directly, and did they take anything from you?

KJ: They searched us. What did they take? ... They didn't take personal things. They didn't take rings.

KP: Watches?

KJ: I don't remember if they took watches or not, but they weren't so bad. I mean, ... they ... could have been a lot worse. That's all I can say about that.

KP: Did they shoot anybody? Were there any problems with the surrender? Did anyone refuse to give up? Was there any shooting of any unarmed men?

KJ: Not that I know of. Not ... that I'm aware of.

KP: When you were captured, where did the Germans take you, roughly?

KJ: They took us first to-- ... what was the first camp?

KP: Well, maybe the question I should have asked, how did you get from the battle to the camp?

KJ: Okay, well, we marched a lot. Okay, we walked a lot for a few days. I remember, this is around Christmastime, you know, of course. We were going through German towns and seeing some of the German soldiers home on leave. And everybody, you know, lines up on the street to watch us as we get marched through. [laughter] And I remember some of the good [people]. ... I got a couple of Christmas cookies, you know. Somebody, some German lady gave me a Christmas cookie. You know ...

KP: While you were marching by?

KJ: Yeah, a Christmas cookie.

BH: The civilians were pleasant to you?

KJ: They were not unpleasant at that time. ... They were scared, I remember ... one old lady, she was scared to death of the airplanes bombing. She was so scared, you know, she was trembling. I remember her being by me, I don't know how, but, you know, this poor old lady, as if I could help her. [laughter]

KP: How did it feel to parade down these towns?

KJ: You tried to be as dignified as you can, let's put it that way. But then, you see, ... we still felt good, we hadn't suffered the effects of malnutrition yet. ... You were still, [even though we] didn't eat for a couple of days, you were still strong, physically.

BH: Did you have any fears about what was in store for you?

KJ: Well, I don't really remember thinking about that. I thought, I thought it-- I don't know if "interesting" is the right word or not. But it's sort of interesting to be behind the lines and see what they were doing to come forwards. ... It seemed to me like they didn't come in units, they told the soldiers, "Go and meet us, we'll all get together some place up here and get there any way you can." And I remember these motor vehicles with, people were going [in]. The German soldiers were going to the front with civilian[s], using civilian motor vehicles with the gas bags on the top, you know. They didn't have gasoline yet, they were powered by some kind of gas.

KP: Was there anything else that struck you? Did you see a lot of the destruction from the bombing?

KJ: Well, ... not in the town we marched through. ... I only remember one little town we marched through. ... And then we got on railroad cars; we were put in railroad cars. ... But ... the American planes were all over the sky now. You know, you could see them all over.

KP: Did you, were you ever ...

KJ: We used to count the parachutes, ... what was it, ... the B something or other was shot down. We always used to count the parachutes to see if everybody got out because we knew how many the crew was. We use to say, "One, two, three, four, five, six!" [laughter]

BH: Did you have any fears of being hit by American planes, since there were American planes all over?

KJ: No, but it damn near happened.

BH: While you were on the train, or ...

KJ: Yeah, because we were in the train, you know, and you're packed in this train. You know, when the American planes come, the guards head for the woods, naturally. And the train stopped, it stopped moving, this train. ... They strafe because they don't know ... what's in it. They strafe the train. So you can hear, as the plane gets closer, you can hear the "Brrrr." You can

hear the bullets getting closer to you. So as you're sitting in the car, this is instantaneous, you think, "Shall I stand straight? Shall I move here? What shall I do to give myself the best chance?" And people, inside the car, were killed, were hit by the bullets, from the strafing American planes.

KP: In you car?

KJ: Yeah, yeah.

KP: How many roughly in your car were hit?

KJ: I really can't remember. You know, it wouldn't be a whole lot, but a few.

KP: A few were?

KJ: Were hit, hit and/or killed.

KP: How close did the bullets come to you?

KJ: I can't say. I don't remember anybody around me dropping, but ...

KP: Yeah.

KJ: They had to be close because those aren't very big cars.

BH: Those that were wounded, how were they treated? What did the German do?

KJ: You know, I don't remember. I don't remember.

BH: You don't recall if they were well taken care of, or just left to die?

KJ: I don't remember. No recollection of that I just remember that episode.

KP: There would be a very infamous massacre at the Battle of the Bulge.

KJ: I know, I've read about it.

KP: Did you have any inkling of that when you were captured or in the prison camp? Did you ever learn of that at the time?

KJ: No, I don't remember it at all.

BH: So, you knew nothing of it until after you came back to the States?

KJ: Yes, sure. I don't even remember when I first knew about it.

KP: But it was not during the war?

KJ: I don't think so.

BH: When you got to the camp, how were you treated there?

KJ: Let me see. ... We went to the first camp. Well, you don't get much food, I mean, ... that's the main thing, at that point of the war you didn't; maybe earlier on they did, ... but then you didn't get much food. And it's rotten conditions, you know.

KP: What part of Germany was your camp located in?

KJ: I'm trying to think of where the first one was. That was, ... Western Germany. I think it was at Bonn, ... either outside Bonn or outside Cologne. ... All I do remember about it is, sticks in my mind, ... they take your dog tags and look at your dog tags. ... And once in a while there would be a bomb, which didn't explode. And they always picked Jewish guys to go out and dig out the bomb. They would look at the dog tags and see ... who was Jewish and make them go out and pick up the bombs, the Germans.

KP: Yes.

KJ: Dig out ... the duds in case they exploded.

KP: Did you know of Jewish people in the camp-- how many times was this done?

KJ: I don't remember how many times, but I do specifically remember that.

KP: Them looking at the dog tags?

KJ: Absolutely.

KP: Were any of the Jewish prisoners-of-war in other ways mistreated or singled out?

KJ: I don't remember anything else.

KP: How many Jewish POWs were there in your camp? Do you remember, roughly?

KJ: I don't even remember that.

KP: Yeah.

KJ: Not many, I don't think, but ... I don't know. I can't say.

BH: Were you held with all American soldiers or were there any British soldiers?

KJ: No, I think they were all American where we were.

BH: Any black POWs or other minority group members that you recall?

KJ: I don't remember any black, I don't remember any blacks. This was the first place, it was just a short time [that] we were there.

KP: How big was the camp and how long were you at the first camp?

KJ: Maybe a week, I was there, maybe, something like that. ... I don't know how big, it seemed big, that's all I can say. ...

PAUSE

KP: You had mentioned that you had only spent a week at the first prison camp?

KJ: Yes.

KP: How did you get to the next one?

KJ: Boxcars.

KP: Which prison camp was this? Was this Stalag?

KJ: 4B.

KP: 4B.

KJ: Yeah.

KP: Were you there for the rest of the war?

KJ: Yes.

KP: Where was that prison camp?

KJ: That's near Leipzig and Dresden, in that area. That would be what was Eastern Germany.

KP: How big was that camp?

KJ: Big. ... How many thousands, I don't know, but big. ... There were all kinds of nationalities there.

KP: Were you separated from those other nationalities?

KJ: In our barracks we had Americans and British, that's all. But there were all other kinds. ... There were French; I remember Yugoslavs and Russians, maybe others.

KP: Did you receive any Red Cross shipments or packages at any of the camps?

KJ: At this camp we received, I think maybe two half packages, while I was there.

KP: The men in your barracks and your senior commanders, senior captured commanders, do you have any recollections of them?

KJ: No, no. Of the people in the barracks, that I was with in the prison camp?

KP: Yeah, do you have any recollections?

KJ: I'm trying to think of [them]. ... I remember ... one fellow only because, ... I remember two. Now I remember one because he was killed. He was from West Virginia. ... I don't know what that has to do with it. And, ... he went into the kitchen, trying to steal something. And he was caught, and I think he killed a German with a meat cleaver. But then he was killed.

KP: He was killed on the spot or was he ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Kenneth E. Joel on December 13, 1994 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler.

BH: And Bryan Holzmacher.

KP: Just to follow up quickly on this prisoner, who was raiding the kitchen for food, you don't know whether he was executed or not, or killed on the spot?

KJ: No, I don't know. I think it's rather the latter.

KP: You think that he was killed on the spot?

KJ: No.

KP: Executed later?

KJ: Yes.

KP: You mentioned you had memories of another fellow prisoner?

KJ: There was one guy, who was an operator. He used to go from one to the other. And he was saving money because, you know, there's a lot of trading in these places. ... He was collecting money. He had vision. [laughter] I mean, ... he was focused for the future.

KP: What kind of trading was there going on that you remember?

KJ: A regular market place. But cigarettes, ... as you probably know, was the medium of exchange. And it was the regular market place. When we came in, when the American group came in, the British would, some of them had been there, you know, since North Africa, were very angry at us because we raised the price, you know, inflation. They would ... give up more to get ... a loaf of bread. ... The British person wouldn't because ... they knew the value.

KP: So you would trade so many cigarettes more than they would?

KJ: Yeah or ... even when they first got there, they would give up their wrist watches. ... Some people had wrist watches still. And, you know, they would just give up too much. Pay too much for what they got. And I also remember one British guy who had a suitcase full of money [that] he was going to take home with him. I don't know if he ever made it. [laughter]

BH: You mentioned that the British were angry because you were paying too much. Were there any other tensions between the different armies?

KJ: It was just that. I just remember the British being in the same thing. ... I think ... after a while we ... tolerated each other better.

BH: So there were no outbreaks of any kind?

KJ: No.

BH: Whatever between ...

KJ: No. ... The Germans just treated the Russians worse than anybody.

BH: They did? In what ways, do you recall?

KJ: They used to make them do a lot of work. I remember seeing them hitting them with clubs, you know, across the back, to move. ... Maybe the Russians would, you know, something would drop off a wagon and he try to grab it, you know, maybe a cabbage or something. ... They just used them to do all the hard [work]. ... I guess, there's nothing else I should say. I'm not sure of anything else.

BH: Were there any differentiations between the treatment of officers, privates, prisoners?

KJ: There were no officers. There were no officers here that I know of. ... There were just non-commissioned troops. Even the British were just non-commissioned. I think the officers were at a different place.

BH: They separated everybody?

KJ: Yeah.

KP: So, you only had NCO's as leaders of your barracks and your platoons?

KJ: Right, right.

KP: The American and British camp?

KJ: Yes, I'm quite sure that's right.

BH: Did the officers maintain any sort of control or were they given control by the Germans, of their men? Were they responsible for them?

KJ: Yeah, I think they were given some responsibility. ... I don't really want to say what it was because I don't know.

KP: Did you notice anything else about the treatment of any other nationalities? You remembered the Russians?

KJ: ... I remember going to the Yugoslav barracks once, and I thought things were great there because they seemed to have more. Maybe they just knew how to trade better. You know, there's an underground, you know, from outside the camp to inside the camp.

KP: How much contact would you have with the other nationalities?

KJ: I was in the Yugoslavs, but I don't know why I was there. I think you could wander about, with a certain amount of freedom.

KP: Between the different sectors?

KJ: Yeah, yeah. ...

KP: You were in Eastern Germany, near Dresden and Leipzig?

KJ: Right.

KP: Were you there before or after the major raid on Dresden?

KJ: I was there, I remember it. ... The skies would light up, we knew something special happened that night. When they had the big fire bomb, you mean?

KP: Yes.

KJ: Yes, yes. I specifically remember that happened. Didn't know what it was then.

KP: It was very noticeable?

KJ: Yeah, yeah. Now, how far were we from Dresden? I don't know in miles or kilometers, but I do remember.

KP: Did you hear anything at all about the raid when you were in the camp?

KJ: Anything else about what?

KP: About the Dresden raid. The raid you had seen.

KJ: No, ... I don't think I heard about it in the camp. I think it was afterwards that I knew.

KP: What you had seen?

KJ: What I had seen that night, yes. There was news that came into the camp, you know, I'm sure you've heard that before. The air force had ... in their buttons or something, they had little parts of radios, and they put them together. The Sunday mornings, the religious man or the minister or whoever would come around, you know, to give us our religious experience, ... would tell us the news.

KP: Really? How accurate was he?

KJ: All I remember his telling us was how close the Germans were--strike that--the Russians were coming from the other direction. That's what we were interested in. [laughter] At first, they were moving very fast. ... We thought, "Gee, this is great! They're going to be here in a few days!" Then they seemed to stop for a while. I guess ... while supplies caught up.

BH: How long were you in this camp? Do you recall?

KJ: Four months.

BH: Do you remember any people attempting to escape or anything along those lines?

KJ: I think at this time, the escape routes were sort of closed down-- ... this is the last four months. I'm sure earlier on, ... there was a regular escape route. I think, I remember people telling me that you just waited your turn, until you were next. ... You could give it a try if you wanted to. But I think that time I was there, I think it was pretty well broken down. Because I don't remember anybody trying to escape.

BH: Do you think it could have been because of the notion that the Russians were going to be there any day?

KJ: I think maybe just, ... things were ... falling apart so much ... in Germany that, you know. ...

PAUSE

KP: You had expectations that the war was going to be over soon?

KJ: Right. Plus, ... I think the escape route ... as I understand it, took ... the cooperation of a lot of Germans, too. German civilians, people in Germany. I think it was just sort of collapsing in Germany too. ... That may be my assumption now, made 50 years later and not based on fact.

KP: What was it like? You spent a lot of time in prison camp?

KJ: Yes.

KP: What did you think about?

KJ: Food, unfortunately. [laughter] That's still all they talked about.

KP: So that story is true that people in prison camp just talked about food all the time.

KJ: Yes.

KP: How bad was your diet becoming?

KJ: Let's see, what did we have? In the morning, you'd get a cup of ersatz coffee, alright, ... without anything put in it. And then at lunch time, you'd get some kind of stringy soup and then you would get a part of a loaf of bread. And I don't remember that you got anything at night. Every once in a while, we'd get a piece of margarine. Every once in a while, you'd get a little piece of meat, some kind of stringy, fatty meat, ... certainly not everyday. That's it.

BH: Did everybody receive the same portions or were they discriminated against?

KJ: Everybody got the same portions, as far as I know.

BH: They didn't hold out on, say Jewish soldiers or Russians or anything?

KJ: No. What the Russians got, I don't know. I think I heard rumors they didn't get as much, but I'm not sure about that. ... And we had our Red Cross packages. What we got through the Red Cross package. ... We sort of hoarded that. ... I remember one night, we played cards sometimes. There's two stoves in this big, brick building. ... You could cook on top of it. You know, you get coal to keep it warm part of the day. Not all of the day, but you know, part of the day. I think, ... you can stoke up at night or something like that in the evening. ... I got a package or my share of a package, and I had it ... under my straw mat. And I was playing cards, ... playing poker for ... many hours, and I won about a quarter of a package worth of stuff. ... I got back to my ... bunk and found someone had stolen mine. ... So I was even. [laughter]

KP: The stealing, was that common at the camp?

KJ: Boy, that's a hard question to say, was it common? ... I think, you had to watch stuff, ... so, yes, it has to be common.

KP: It was not a complete surprise is what you are saying?

KJ: No, no, you got to watch things. You just can't leave them laying around and rely on the honor system. These people were hungry, yeah.

KP: What about showers? Did you take any showers, while you were at camp?

KJ: ... Once we had a shower, when I was there. One shower. The only other way you could wash was in the middle. These were brick buildings and in the middle is showers, which came out of a wall, come down about here, then there is a concrete trough underneath that you could wash clothes in that. So, you could wash yourself in that-- in the cold water. Once they took us to a regular shower place with hot water. And that was great. I think if I had known then what I know now about showers, I wouldn't have gone, but ... it was great. And, ... I remember sitting on the floor in the shower picking out ... the cooties, we called them bugs, out of my pubic hairs. Trying to get rid of them.

KP: So you were pretty ...

KJ: Lice, lice is what they were.

KP: So at the camp you got fairly dirty?

KJ: Yeah, yeah. ... Those straw mats had lice in them. ... In this Red Cross package would come DDT, but I swear it seemed to me that made it worse. ... No, it made them more lively. You put it on you, ... and then it seems like there was more activity ... from the lice than if you didn't.

BH: Every day in the camp, were you required to have a roll call?

KJ: Yeah. Every morning we did. Yes.

BH: Just in the morning?

KJ: Just in the morning, as I remember it. Yeah.

KP: Do you remember much interaction with your captors-- with the Germans who guarded you? Did you get to know any of the guards?

KJ: No, no, not that I can remember. ... I just remember ... the one who, ... one of the morning [guards] at roll call, had one leg, you know, he lost a leg in battle. ... But, I don't remember ... having any interaction with any of the guards. I remember guards someplace, but I don't think it was at the camp or maybe soldiers, who were guarding us being sort of friendly because they thought the war was going to be over soon, too. But I don't remember any guards being that way, maybe there were, but I don't remember them. They were all old men, the guards ... as I recall them.

KP: Were there any efforts to have you move when you were in this last prison camp, just before liberation? Was there any talk of moving you to another part of Germany? Any rumor, I should say?

KJ: ... I don't remember any rumors. I just know that about, I think ... about two days before the Russians got there, all the German guards left and there were Hungarian guards for the last couple of days. But, ... I don't remember any talk about moving out of the camp.

BH: When the Russians got there, what exactly happened?

KJ: Well, ... they rode in on their horses, and they're like Cossacks and those tall fur hats, and it was great to see them. [laughter] And ... some of the Russian prisoners-- I just said before all the Germans were gone, but I guess every German wasn't gone because, ... the entrance of these things is just like big two by fours, you know, not very fancy, because they hung, I remember a couple of them hanging there, Germans.

BH: The Russians hung them?

KJ: Yeah, they hung them when they caught them. So they couldn't all have been gone. Though I do remember the Hungarians also.

KP: Did you have any contact with the Russian soldiers that were liberating you? How did that go?

KJ: Well, let me see. First of all, they took us to a city called, Risa [Riga?], I think. And we were put in a building which had housed, I understand, German officers or ... German officer training. ... They gave us some food, better food than we were having. ... They had a lot of typists, and I don't know what the devil they were doing. They had a lot of female typists, you know, clerks working ... and they were making some kind of, I guess they were trying to catalog us or I don't know what they were doing. And I remember once, some American people came in in a couple of jeeps and had a talk with them, [and] they left, and we were still in this Russian camp. ... We really weren't free to leave because we were there, you know. Nobody said, "You're not supposed to go," and I don't know how long we were supposed to be there. ... I went over the fence there, too, one night, and took off on my own to go back.

KP: What happened, when you went over the fence?

KJ: I was just out there ... and I had, ... there was one person with me. All I remember was he was from East Orange, [New Jersey]. And after we got out, we started now going towards what we think the American lines are. ... Now I'm dressed and no longer-- I don't have my uniform because in the prison camp, I had now gotten different clothes. I have British pants and a civilian shirt, you know. I think I still had my dog tags. [laughter]

... One thing I would say to you. While we were in the prison camp, we once in a while had to go into detail into the town to do something-- pull a wagon or something. And I remember, you know, ... it's harder now to be dignified; you've been three months dirty and hungry and you

know. ... I remember, ... no German civilian would look you in the eye. They all looked as if you weren't there. ... But anyway, we took off and it took us a few days. We finally, I finally left this guy behind because he's going too slow. ... He wasn't going to get killed if he was left behind, but I ... said, "Come on, we have got to get going." ... Maybe he was sick or something. ... We found ... a comfortable apartment that somebody had deserted. ... He just wanted to stay there for a while, and I didn't want to stay.

KP: Did you make it to the American lines?

KJ: Yeah, yeah. [I] got sick a few times along the way because in every ... it seemed like in every German town they have a central warehouse. So we got into these, and we're breaking into ... I remember drinking evaporated goat's milk or something and getting so sick. And I remember being in another German farmhouse and being there, and I was by myself now, you see, but there were some other military people. I don't even know if they were Americans, and I remember a German man screaming because he had a couple of chickens left with ... little blue ribbons, which I think meant they were breeding chickens, and he was saying, "Don't kill 'em. Don't kill 'em." But they killed them anyway and ate them and drank his wine. Yeah, I got back to the American lines.

KP: When you were going to the American lines, was the war still on or had the war ended?

KJ: I don't know.

BH: Did you encounter any armed German troops on your three-day trek back to the American lines?

KJ: No, no I didn't.

BH: You didn't see any troops?

KJ: No, in fact, ... I think when I was with the other person, we even got a ride in a German truck that was going that way-- east.

BH: Was it civilian?

KJ: I think so.

KP: You got to the American lines. Then what happened to you? Who did you see? Who were the first Americans that you saw?

KJ: Geez, I don't know. They were infantry soldiers, I mean, I know that. They looked huge, sizewise, fat, bloated almost, compared to ... all of us and what we were accustomed to seeing ... for the four months. ... We were transported to some place in a camp in Northern France and we stayed there for a few days. ... Then ... I went to England.

KP: The camp you were in, was it Camp Lucky Strike, in France?

KJ: I think so!

KP: Did they let you eat everything you wanted to or did they initially restrict your diet?

KJ: I don't remember any restrictions, but, I mean, you were just served ... so much. You know, you hold out your mess kit and you get whatever they're serving everybody.

KP: You had had the experience of being a prisoner. What was it like to get your freedom back? Especially when you were in the American lines?

KJ: It was great. It was wonderful, wonderful.

KP: During the war, had you corresponded with your parents at all?

KJ: I wrote letters, but they had never received them. They didn't receive them until after I was back. [laughter] ...

KP: So had your parents known what had happened to you?

KJ: No, I was missing in action there for a while.

KP: So they thought you were likely dead?

KJ: Something had, certainly something had happened, yeah. ... You know, I was MIA.

KP: How much of a surprise was it to them that you were alive? They were obviously pleased, but?

KJ: ... I think they knew first by mail. I mean, I didn't walk in the door and say, "Here I am!" ... [laughter]

BH: How long of a period was it from the last time they had heard from you until they got notified that you were all right and alive?

KJ: Maybe six months.

BH: When you were in England, you would write?

KJ: Oh yeah, I would correspond when I was in England, sure.

KP: How did you go home? How were you sent home? Did you go back with a unit? Did you ever rejoin a unit?

KJ: ... I went to England and I got a partial payment. ... I took some kind of an extended leave because I went to England, and then I went to Scotland, then I went over to Ireland. ... I visited

my stepmother's family, who lived in-- actually they lived in the Irish Free State. I had to go across the border from Northern Ireland into the Irish Free State. And I visited them.

KP: That must have been a lot of fun actually?

KJ: Yeah, yeah. ... The way I remember it, ... a person could get as much leave as they wanted to at that time. If I wanted to stay two months, I guess, I could have stayed two months, you know; there was places to stay ... when you were in England. American places, you know, where you eat and sleep. ... But I went over and visited them and stayed there for, I guess, three or four days. ... They didn't live a great life, let me tell you. [laughter]

KP: How tough was it? How hard was it?

KJ: What, for them?

KP: Yeah.

KJ: Oh, well let me see. ... This is a tiny little house; it's got a second floor. One of the rooms had a hole in the floor downstairs; I don't think there was any cellar. And there were two bachelor brothers who ran the farm, and the old mother. And one of these days they were going to get around to fixing the floor, but they hadn't gotten around to it yet. [laughter] ... Their food was better, though, ... I think, than most people in the Irish Free State.

KP: It was a very hard life?

KJ: It might have always been that way, ... not because of the war. It might have always been that way. They had a farm.

KP: Did they have electricity?

KJ: Good question. They had a fireplace, I remember that. I don't know whether they had electricity or not. I sort of think they did, but I'm not positive. They had an outhouse; they didn't have indoor plumbing.

KP: You were on extended leave in England. What else did you see in England and Scotland?

KJ: I guess that was just it. I went there, ... and I visited and then, you know, ... went back across ... the Channel and back down to, then got on a boat. ... Maybe stayed in London a couple of days, then got on a boat at Southampton and came back.

KP: You went without a unit?

KJ: Yeah, right, absolutely without a unit. ... Just got some money to buy train tickets and stuff. [laughter]

KP: What type of ship did you come back on?

KJ: I'm almost positive it was a liberty ship. It wasn't a big ship.

KP: Had you given any thought to staying in the army?

KJ: No! [laughter]

KP: How long did it take you to get out? Did you feel that the army was keeping you in longer than necessary, because you were not actually discharged until November of 1945.

KJ: Yeah, ... first they sent us, first we went to Atlantic City as a kind of a, I don't know, I guess a recuperative thing. We stayed down there in some hotel called Hotel Dennis for a while. And then I went to Fort Dix and was discharged.

BH: Was that due to your malnutrition from the prison camp or that was where they sent everybody?

KJ: ... No, I think it was because it was for ex-prisoners of war, yeah. ... It was sort of a recuperation thing.

BH: Medical attention or just rest?

KJ: We didn't really need any medical attention. I think just rest.

KP: What did you do in Atlantic City?

KJ: Well, you know, ... go to the beach, and they used to have a band playing on the beach for us. They had a band playing in the hotel dining room for us. [laughter]

KP: How would you wile away the time? Would you play cards?

KJ: ... You know, I don't remember what else I did in Atlantic City.

KP: It does not sound like it was too onerous of a time?

KJ: No, it wasn't, but I can't remember ... what else we did.

KP: You were discharged at Fort Dix. What prompted you to come to Rutgers? What happened to you after your discharge?

KJ: Well, ... I lived nearby, and ... I had the GI Bill, so I'll go to college.

KP: If the GI Bill had not come along, do you think you would have been able to come to college?

KJ: I don't know. I might have, because I started at Park College without any GI Bill. It would have been a struggle, but I think I would have.

BH: When you came to Rutgers, did you have a sense of where you wanted to go at that point?

KJ: Yeah, I did. ... I wanted to be an accountant, and I took that, and I didn't like it. And, the VA--I think it was the VA--gave me an aptitude test and said to me, "You should be an actor or a lawyer." [laughter] So, ... acting is a tough profession, so ...

KP: So the VA advice proved to be correct, you did become an attorney?

KJ: Yeah. ... I think it was a VA aptitude test.

KP: Had you thought of being an attorney before then?

KJ: Nope, [an] accountant.

KP: What was it like to come back to college after seeing the world? To come to Rutgers?

KJ: Well, ... all the people, you know, so many were just like myself of the students, the male students. ... It was different, it was great, though I didn't live here; I was a commuter.

KP: Where would you commute from?

KJ: Keyport.

KP: How would you get here?

KJ: We drove. ... I drove some days and another person ... from Keyport, who was a student here, would drive some of the days. Then there ... was a fellow in Parlin we used to pick up.

KP: Your two friends or companions, were they GI Bill people too?

KJ: One was and one wasn't.

BH: When you came here, you were older than the rest of the students probably, right?

KJ: No, ... there were an awful lot of veterans. So I wasn't older than them. Loads of them.

KP: What was it like for the veterans versus the non-veterans? Was there any difference?

KJ: I don't remember any.

KP: Yes.

KJ: In fact, most of the people that I remember were all veterans. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned that Professor George was the most memorable professor that you had?

KJ: Yes, by far.

KP: What made him so memorable?

KJ: Because, he was an actor, ... he was an interesting lecturer, and he was just an interesting person. He'd scream and yell. ... He says, "All of you want to get on the high side of respectability, blah, blah." ... [laughter]

BH: You said you commuted. Did you get involved in any events or clubs or organizations?

KJ: I didn't. ... No, I didn't.

BH: Was that the reason, because you were a commuter student?

KJ: I think that has a lot to do with it-- maybe because you're older. I don't know if that makes any difference or not.

BH: Were you working while you were in school?

KJ: Yeah, I always did.

BH: You were working?

KJ: Yeah.

KP: Where did you work?

KJ: I worked at A.S. Beck shoe store in Perth Amboy. And then later on, I worked as a bartender in a restaurant in Keyport called Ye Cottage Inn.

KP: Before you had come to college, in that gap between 1945 and 1946, you worked as a laboratory technician?

KJ: Yeah, I worked ... at National Lab in Sayreville as a lab technician for a few months.

KP: Had you any interest in the sciences at all?

KJ: No, ... I couldn't do mathematics, and ... that shows you're not smart, that shows you're not very bright. Oh, I'm sorry, maybe you can't either. [laughter]

KP: Yes. Math was never a strong point for me. Is there anything else that you remember about your Rutgers experiences in terms of academics or the social side of campus? What did you think

most of your classmates wanted to do when they finished? Were they looking to have good careers and find a wife and settle down?

KJ: I think so, yeah.

KP: When did you meet your wife? It sounds like you met your wife around this time?

KJ: No, I didn't meet her until I was much older. Much older; I ... was 35 ... or almost 35 when I met her.

KP: Were most of your classmates married? The GI Bill classmates?

KJ: Some were. I think quite a few were, but I don't remember. ... One of the two that I commuted [with], he was married. Or he married while we were going here.

BH: Was he living at home with his parents?

KJ: Yeah, ... he lived at home with his parents. And his wife was a co-ed at Douglass, yeah. And then they lived in his family's house in a little apartment.

BH: Did you ever attend any of the social events down here?

KJ: I went to some dances here, but ... I never had a steady girlfriend here.

KP: Where did you decide to go to law school? Did you go on the GI Bill?

KJ: I did; it was enough to just finish law school. I'm pretty sure, or it ran out just at the very end, but it almost did it.

KP: Where did you go to law school?

KJ: Rutgers.

KP: Rutgers in Newark?

KJ: Yeah, yeah, because ... you only needed three undergraduate years and three years in law school at that time.

KP: How did you like law school? You had really not given much thought to being a lawyer until the VA?

KJ: Okay, I liked law school.

KP: What most intrigued you about law initially? That might have changed too, but initially?

KJ: ... It was that aptitude test.

KP: Yeah, but I mean when you were actually in law school, did you like constitutional law better than contracts?

KJ: Oh, what did I like better? What kind? Oh, okay. Well, I ... liked ... constitutional law and torts, rather than say taxation or something like that, yeah.

KP: When you started law school, what type of law did you want to practice or think you would practice?

KJ: You know, I probably had in mind just a general practice, really. You know, because that's what there were in Keyport.

KP: So you knew you wanted to come back to Keyport?

KJ: Well, yes, somewhere around there, probably Keyport, yeah.

KP: You did not have visions like you would try to go to a Wall Street firm or you would try to go into a public defender's office?

KJ: No, I don't think there was any.

KP: Yes, there was just some legal aid offices.

KJ: Yeah, right, but not so much of it. ... No, I just thought I would go ... into practice in Keyport, and I never thought about, you know, ... see if I can get into McCarter and English or anything like that. Which I probably couldn't have. [laughter]

BH: Are you happy with your decision to go through with law school?

KJ: Yeah, I think so. I can't think of ... what much else that I could do.

KP: I have a friend who is in solo practice, and he said, "Some of it's very rewarding and some of it's very tough." What's been the most rewarding about being in solo practice?

KJ: That's a good question. I suppose ... not having to waste any time conferring with partners about what you should do or shouldn't do. [laughter] Right. And not having a boss, anybody to tell you what you should do or shouldn't do. I mean a partner wouldn't tell you what you should do, but you would have to accommodate yourself to a partner.

KP: What are some of the disadvantages or things that you would prefer not to have to deal with?

KJ: As a sole practitioner?

KP: Yes.

KJ: Well, it's difficult to get time off; it's nice to have somebody to talk to about it sometimes, you know, something that you're doing. ... You can specialize more if there, you know, ... is more than one person. I mean, ... you can do more things or ... you can do things better than if you are sole practitioner. ... You are spread pretty thin sometimes.

BH: Had you ever thought of getting a partner?

KJ: I asked one guy, ... one person I went to law school with. And he said, "No." God, thank God, he did, in retrospect. [laughter] But, he did get me a couple of jobs. That was very nice of him. I guess he was flattered. He got me a couple of jobs, as school board attorney in one town, where he lived. You know, he couldn't have all of the jobs.

KP: What kind of cases have you taken over the course of your career?

KJ: ... First, I worked ... in a firm in Matawan, for a short time period. ... And the man I worked with was basically a personal injury lawyer, basically a personal injury lawyer. And then I worked in a firm in Perth Amboy, who is now a big firm in Edison; they do personal injury. They may do other things, but it's basically personal injury. That's what I've probably done ever since, more than anything else, is personal injury work.

KP: Do you do any other types of cases? Do you do any criminal cases?

KJ: No, ... I don't try to keep those too much. I might go to a municipal court, but ... that's as far as I'll go. I won't take any other criminal case.

BH: Do you have any involvements with Rutgers Law School today? Running fund raisers?

KJ: No. In fact, no, I don't.

KP: Other lawyers that you stay in touch with, do you know any of them since law school? Are there any networks of lawyers that you know?

KJ: There's none that I network with. ... The guy who came to Perth Amboy, one of the three, who used to commute over here also went to law school. Now, he's retired, within the last couple of years. I don't ... network with any other ones.

KP: Yes. You have not stayed in touch with people you went to law school with?

KJ: No, ... I see some of them sometimes. Some I don't even remember. [laughter] Or some I look at and wonder, "Did I or didn't I?" But, then when I ... go to the library in Newark, then I can see the pictures. ...

BH: How long do you plan to continue practicing?

KJ: That's a good question. Sometimes I get sick of it, but on the other hand, what would I do? [laughter] Or ... if I did anything else, I'd do something free. Right? I'd be a volunteer or, you know, I'd work for whatever.

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

KP: You would work for Common Cause.

KJ: For Common Cause or something like that, you know. I'd be doing things like that. And I figure, well, I'll work, and then I'll give them some money, and they'll probably be better off.

BH: I don't know if you're involved right now or if you have any interest, but what about things like the VFW?

KJ: No, God no.

BH: No, not interested.

KJ: No. [laughter] ... I did that very soon after I got out of the service, you know. ... Not for me.

BH: No.

KJ: No.

KP: Were you active at all in local politics?

KJ: I was when I was ... just in practice for a couple of years. I was ... on the local governing body; I was a councilman. That's it. And once, I ran in the Democratic primary for assemblyman and lost in the primary. [laughter] And, ... we weren't going to win the election anyway in Monmouth County. [laughter]

KP: You have been in one place for a very long time, Keyport?

KJ: Well, I don't live in Keyport anymore. My office is there.

KP: Yes, you have been very involved in that community, living there. Are there any changes? What strikes you as being the same and what has changed over the years?

KJ: Okay, in recent years it's become a little gentrified. You know, ... people are now moving there and commute to other places; [they] are yuppies. [laughter] We didn't used to see ... people like that in Keyport. Now I see ... a young father ... riding his youngster on a bicycle on Saturday morning, you know, and that's something, I think, when I first started you wouldn't see [that]. They're working class people.

KP: Are there any other changes?

KJ: And I see ... a lot of them are fixing up the old houses. There's a lot of nice old houses, and they are doing, you know, nice jobs, renovating them. No, I don't notice anything else.

KP: What about population growth?

KJ: Not much. It couldn't grow much, maybe a thousand or so. There wasn't any room for it to grow. There are just a couple of ... condominium complexes.

BH: I have a couple of questions pertaining to afterthoughts relating to Germany and the war and POWs. For instance, being a POW yourself, how do you feel about the issue of the POWs in Vietnam?

KJ: Oh, okay. Well, I think, ... what do you mean about the issues? ... To look for them some more?

BH: Do you believe that there are still POWs?

KJ: I doubt it. Don't you?

BH: Yes, personally.

KJ: [laughter] I doubt it, after all of these years, truly.

BH: So, do you think it's an issue that should be just pushed away?

KJ: As much as I know about it, I think they've done about as much as they can because if a person was a POW there and alive and wanted to get out, what would stop him at this point in time?

BH: What would be the advantage of holding POWs to this day?

KJ: Right, what would be the advantage of staying there if you could get out? Even if you had a family.

BH: Another question. What are your views on the reunification of Germany? Do you think of that as a negative thing or a positive thing?

KJ: Positive, yeah positive.

KP: Have you ever been back to Germany?

KJ: Oh, I can't remember where I've been. Actually, I have to stop and think, I don't think so. ... I've been in Austria and Hungary and England. No, I've never been back to Germany. As you get older, it's amazing, your memory really goes, it does. You would think if I had been to Germany, I ought to know it, but I don't know. I've been to Russia, been to China, but I haven't been in Germany. I haven't been in France.

BH: Do you think the reunification of Germany is something to worry about in the future?

KJ: No, ... it just seems natural to me. It seems unnatural to be divided the way it was.

BH: So you do not personally feel that they can become an aggressive world power again and initiate a conflict the third time around?

KJ: No.

BH: No.

KJ: No.

KP: What did you think of "Hogan's Heroes"?

KJ: I think I watched part of it once or twice.

KP: You were not upset by it, were you?

KJ: No, I wasn't upset. It just wasn't worth watching. [laughter]

KP: Were you concerned at all that you might be called up in Korea?

KJ: No, the thought never entered my mind. I guess, I must have been beyond the age where I'd even have to think about it.

KP: What did you think about both Korea and Vietnam at the time?

KJ: At the time? Okay, at the time, in Vietnam, I sympathized with the people who were protesting, beyond a shadow of a doubt. You know, why should we be over there killing the Vietnamese and ourselves? For what? Just because somebody thought that communism was a monolithic thing [and] is going to engulf the world. ... I think it was a preposterous thought even then.

KP: This is not retrospective thinking? You thought that at the time?

KJ: Yeah, I thought at the time, absolutely. ... If I had been that age, I would have been doing the same thing. I ... feel it's great for the people who went, and, you know, I admire them for it. I would never did what people did to them when they came back. They said, "You're baby killers." But, ... I would have been against the thing. And I don't think, and also, I don't think I would have run away. I think I would have just stayed here and protested and taken whatever ... consequences were involved, I think.

KP: A lot of World War II veterans were very gung ho about Vietnam.

KJ: Not me, man. [laughter]

BH: So you think that if you had been of draft age during Vietnam, you would have stayed and not gone to Canada?

KJ: Right, that's what I think.

BH: You would have joined the protestors and gone to jail?

KJ: ... I think that's what I would have done.

BH: If you received a draft notice what do you think you would have done?

KJ: That would have been tough, if I received a draft notice. That would have been a hard decision to make because I have to think, "I'm a lawyer." I could lose my license if, you know, I'm doing terribly illegal things.

KP: Did you ever take a case with anyone resisting the draft?

KJ: I don't even know anybody who resisted the draft, except William Clinton and Dan Quayle. [laughter]

BH: Speaking of them, how do you feel about those two?

KJ: How about those two?

BH: How do you feel about them, personally?

KJ: I think you have to remember what it was like then. And I think that William Clinton was reasonably honorable, [with] what he did. ... I mean, he said, he didn't like it, you know, and he eventually said, he'd go. ... The one complaining about him, Quayle, I mean, he said, "Oh, he didn't say anything [about the war], but he sure in the hell didn't go. Did he?" Nor did Gingrich go. [laughter]

KP: Did you ever talk much about the war at any point in your life; did you talk much about it after the war? Some people have said that this is the most they have talked about the war since the war.

KJ: World War II?

KP: Yes.

KJ: Gee, I don't know whether it is or not. I sometimes would talk to people. ... Who wants to listen? For what? [laughter]

KP: Did you ever see any movies on World War II, specifically movies dealing with prison camps or the experience of being a prisoner, that you thought fit your experiences?

KJ: No, I didn't see any motion pictures.

KP: Yeah, because there were several that were done on prison camps.

KJ: Yeah, I remember, ... I didn't [see any]. These are different kinds of camps that we are talking about now. ... Just for personal opinions, you know, ... I saw all those films about the concentration camps. And just a personal opinion that's got nothing to do about this whole thing. I'm against the death penalty, except for some of those Germans that did that. ... Those [Germans]-- only thing you could do to them, is kill them. Anything else is too little.

BH: Did you ever see the movie, Battle of the Bulge? Do you think that was at all accurate?

KJ: ... You mean the documentary?

BH: TV movie, I don't know if it was in the theaters.

KJ: No, I don't remember seeing it. I've seen the documentary.

KP: The one that was recently on television?

KJ: Yeah, right; I've seen that.

KP: Did that capture ...

KJ: Oh yes, oh yeah. I remember the snow. For years and years, the first time it snowed in the year, the first time it snowed the only thing I immediately think about is that.

BH: Do you view your experiences there as having affected you positively?

KJ: Where is that?

BH: In Germany and Belgium. What you went through. Do you think that it made you a better person?

KJ: Yeah, ... I think it's a lot of experience in a short period. I think it's, you know, it's a tremendous experience in a short period of time.

BH: And this helped you in life, you feel?

KJ: I think so. Sure, I do think so.

BH: Do you have any animosities towards Germany or Germans?

KJ: No, I don't have any animosities ... against German people except those who were--and now they're mostly dead--who were the leaders of the final solution. ... And people, who ... tolerate[d], ... in a position that, you know, ... oh what should I say? I shouldn't say tolerated, but in some way actually furthered it.

BH: So you have no problems with the United States and German relations, trading?

KJ: Oh no. Goodness, no.

BH: Buying a German car?

KJ: ... I have a German car for years. I had two German cars at one time. [laughter] ... My wife has had one for a long time, and I had one. We both had a German car. If I was a Jewish guy, I wouldn't have a German car. But, ... I only know one Jewish person who wouldn't buy a German car. ... There is no reason ... that they should not buy a German car. I'm sure there are Mercedes dealerships in Israel. But I used to jog with a guy, and he used to, it seems like he bought a new car every six months. This was his hobby. I said to him, "Have you ever had a Mercedes?" He said, "My wife will not buy one." So I said, "Good for your wife."

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask?

KJ: No, nothing I can think of.

KP: Thank you very much.

KJ: Okay.

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

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