

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH LEONARD NEMHAUSER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Christopher Ball: This begins an interview with Mr. Leonard Nemhauser on October 30, 2003, in Van Dyke Hall with Chris Ball ...

Roger Cullen: Roger Cullen ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: ... And Sandra Stewart Holyoak. First of all, Mr. Nemhauser, I thank you and Mrs. Nemhauser for coming today and taking the time to sit with us and talk about your experiences in World War II. To begin the interview, could you tell us where and when you were born?

LN: I was born in Brooklyn, in a hospital in Brooklyn, I don't remember the name of the hospital, but, from that point, I moved to, my family moved to, the Bronx and that was the beginning, really, of my life and I lived there for, I guess, we moved to New Brunswick in 1932, I believe it was.

SH: Where did you fit into your family, were you older, younger?

LN: I had a sister who was eight years older than I was. I was born in 1924.

SH: Could you tell us also about your father? What do you know about his background?

LN: My father came to America in 1891. My mother came over in 1893.

SH: Where did your father come from?

LN: My father came from Austria. My mother came from Poland.

SH: Do you know why they came to the United States?

LN: They just wanted to get away to a better place. [laughter]

SH: Did they emigrate with other members of their family?

LN: No. Later on, people did come from the family, but not at that point. They were the only two.

SH: How old was your father when he came over?

LN: I think, if I'm not mistaken, he was somewhere in his, like, about in the teens, early teens.

SH: Where did he work when he came here? Did he have a trade?

LN: He had no trade when he came here, no trade at all, but he did have an uncle and the uncle gave him a job. He had a furniture store in Harlem and my father had a job with him, and then, after that, he found jobs of his own and he became a clothing cutter and he cut clothing for many years. He had another uncle who ran a clothing operation. After that he moved with the family,

just the two of us at that time, and maybe my sister was already one, I don't remember. ... I guess Highland Park is where we moved. He went into business on his own with a children's store, which he knew nothing about, but he came to the town, New Brunswick, he was walking around looking for something to do, and he had a relative that lived in the town and he was looking for something for himself to get together with. He decided that he'd open a store [of] some kind and the only thing he knew was clothing, so, he decided to open a clothing store. He looked at the store that he was going to buy, perhaps, or rent, rather, and when he went there, ... walked into the store and he [the man] said, "What are you doing here?" He [my father] says, "I'm looking for a business." He says, "Well, what kind?" He said, "I want something in the clothing line." He said, "Well, maybe I can help you." He said, "I want to do [something]," and he said, "What is it?" and he said, "I want to go into the clothing business, to open a store, sell clothing, men's clothing." He said, "Well, I'll take you to a town, Plainfield, where there's a store that is available, a men's clothing store." So, he went there and he got there and he said, "I know nothing about men's clothing." He says, "Even though I worked at it, I don't know anything about it," but he said, "Is there anything else you can do in the clothing line?" He said, "Well, I'll be interested in children's clothing." He says, "Fine. I know where there's a children's store in New Brunswick, but it's not doing well and it's not going to be there very long." So, my father said, "Well, let's take a look at it." So, they went back to New Brunswick and they looked at this store. My father looked at it, "Maybe this would be good for me." So, he went into the clothing business, children's store, knew nothing about it, hired a girl, one girl and she was a salesperson. She knew what she was doing. She was very bright. She was Hungarian and she knew everybody in town, because the whole town was full of Hungarians. It worked very nicely to start with and as it grew and it grew and it grew, and then, it became a factor in the city of New Brunswick, really. It was a small store. Eventually, we moved to a larger store and that one, when he opened that large store, it was a fantastic thing. I mean, it was just wonderful and we had a lot of customers that stayed with us all through the years, and then, from there, he moved across to another store, which was even bigger, and it worked well. He managed to make a good business out of what he had and we had a living for the rest of our lives.

SH: Do you remember the name of the store?

LN: Capitol Kiddie Shop

SH: Did you ever hear the story of how your mother and father met?

LN: ... I should know the story. Oh, it was some relatives who, somehow or other, said, my father's name was Ben, and they said, "Ben, would you like to meet a young lady?" and he said, "Fine." So, he went out and he met this young lady and she was a cute lady, very short, very, very short, and he got interested and they married in ... 1914. My sister was born in 1918, I believe. That's where I got that from.

SH: Your sister was eight years older than you.

LN: Yes.

SH: How did that work out? Was it like having two moms in the house?

LN: No, no, no, no way. [laughter] My mother was her own nature, took care of everything. She was a wonderful cook and a wonderful mother.

SH: Did she work in the store as well?

LN: She ... didn't work when the kids were young. When we were young, she worked partially, but she wasn't a permanent person at that time, but, on Saturdays, on busy days, she was there.

SH: Did your father ever discuss World War I?

LN: No, he was not in the war at all. He never spoke about it to me, as far as I know.

SH: He would have been a married man by then.

LN: Yes.

SH: You were very young when you moved to Highland Park.

LN: Right. When we moved out of Brooklyn, we moved to the Bronx before moving to Highland Park. We moved into Highland Park, because he had a relative there, and ... because of this, he went into that store and decided it was a good place for him to try and it worked out very well and we built a good store there. He built a good store there and we had good group of people in the town that stayed with us for years.

SH: Had you started grade school in the Bronx before you came here?

LN: No. [Mr. Nemhauser changed his answer to yes upon review] I was too young to go to school then, I think. I was not in school in the Bronx at all, never, Highland Park. As a matter-of-fact, I came to Highland Park and I was in the fourth grade. That's where I started, in fourth grade in Highland Park. That, I remember.

SH: Where had you gone for the first four years?

LN: It must have been some place in New York [the Bronx], I don't know.

SH: Okay. What was your favorite subject when you got into high school?

LN: I guess, at that point, I wanted to be a doctor, very much so. So, I was looking forward to medicine.

SH: Was your sister able to go to Highland Park as well?

LN: She went to New Brunswick High at that point, New Brunswick High School. That's where she went when she started.

SH: Did she go on to college?

LN: No, she couldn't go because, she had to work in the store. So, I was the only one who went. [laughter]

SH: What year did you graduate from Highland Park? Where you also at New Brunswick High?

LN: No, for me, it was Highland Park. [Upon review, Mr. Nemhauser graduated from Highland Park in 1944.]

SH: Did you graduate in 1948?

LN: Actually, I was in the Class of '45, but, then, I got three years in the war.

SH: Okay. You would have graduated from high school in 1940.

LN: Right, somewhere there, '42, I think it was, something like that, '42, and then, '45, three years in the war. [Mr. Nemhauser graduated high school in 1941.]

SH: Okay. Did you go to college elsewhere before coming to Rutgers?

LN: I went to NYU before I went to Rutgers.

SH: Did you go to NYU before the war?

LN: I went to NYU before I got into the Army, yes. I went in and it seemed to me that it was time for me to go and, on a Sunday morning, my father and my mother and my sister, we were in New York and I'm standing on a corner, and all of a sudden, out of the mouth of this little babe came the words, "I'm not going to college." "Why not?" "Because I don't want to go into the Army. I want to be a doctor and I'm going to manage somehow to do it that way," and that's the story. That's how it started the whole thing.

SH: Were you drafted? Did you sign up for the draft or did you enlist?

LN: I had seen a sign that said, if you wanted to go into the Army, you could pick your own division to get into, and I wanted to be a doctor, so, I decided that I wanted to go to med school and that's what I was going to do. [Mr. Nemhauser signed up for the war.]

CB: Was there anything in particular that influenced you to become a doctor?

LN: It just intrigued me from the time I was a child. I wanted to be a medical man.

CB: Nothing happened beforehand, maybe a person you met?

LN: No, no, just wanted to be.

SH: Did your teachers in high school encourage you to pursue this?

LN: One of them did. One did, really. She thought I had a knack for this type of thing, but that was all, nobody else. Nobody pushed me. My father liked to push me on that, my mother, of course.

SH: They expected you to go to college.

LN: Oh, yes. My sister was a valedictorian of her high school, but she couldn't go to college, because she had to work.

SH: Did she ever express any regret over that?

LN: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SH: Did she ever think about going back later?

LN: Never.

SH: NJC was so close.

LN: That's true, but she had to work; she had to work.

SH: At NYU, were you in the pre-med program?

LN: I went in as a pre-med student and the war came. So for three years, I was out in the war, came out and, "What am I going to do now?" Well, I went to NYU to reapply and I stood in line at NYU for about two-and-a-half hours, around the block. They were all coming in, all coming in from all over. I said, "This is ridiculous. I'll go back and go to Rutgers." [laughter] So, I came home, went right to the Registrar and signed up for Rutgers. That was it.

SH: To back up a little bit, where did you first talk to the recruiter? Was it in New York?

LN: No recruiter. I just saw the sign that said, "You can pick your division if you enlist now," and that's how we did it and I just went down. ... As a matter-of-fact, I went with a friend. We were both going to go together, but the morning I got to the railroad station with him, he comes over to me and he says, "I'm not going." I said, "Why?" He says, "My parents won't let me go." So, I went alone.

RC: What were your parent's views on the war?

LN: Views? They didn't want me to go, that's for sure, but that was my way to go. That's the only way I could figure it.

SH: Were there any discussions in your home about what was going on in Europe?

LN: Oh, my father was a very, very bright man and he read the newspapers continually and he knew all that was going on [in] the war and he knew everything else. It wasn't discussed too much with us as children.

SH: Since they had so many family members still there, were they concerned?

LN: No. ... We were [just] a close-knit family, four people and that was it.

CB: Although your family did not discuss the war a lot, what did you know about the war?

LN: It was a terrible thing for all of us. When it came to the point that I saw a sign that said, "Enlist now and pick your way of going," I knew that, eventually, I was going to have to go. I was eighteen years old, seventeen or eighteen years old at that point, and I knew I was going to have to go. So, I figured I would just as soon pick [the] medical field and, perhaps, then, that would get me in to med school, eventually, and become a doctor.

RC: December 7, 1941, do you remember where you were?

LN: December 7, 1941, I was watching a football game, [the] New York Giants playing. They were my team and that's why I remember about that day. [laughter]

SH: Did you realize what had happened or what would be the outcome of that announcement?

LN: Yes, the announcement. Let me tell you what I got; you wouldn't want to know. [laughter] They couldn't believe that I wasn't going to go to medical school. They just couldn't believe it.

SH: You came home from the game and announced that you were going to go ...

LN: To the Army and, when I went, I went in, I became a medic and I found a wonderful professor who taught me as much as he possible could. [Doctor Langford] He was very lazy. He was a captain in the Army and was a doctor and he taught me everything that he could possibly teach me, because he didn't like to get up. He got up at ten o'clock in the morning. So, I ran sick call for three years in the Army.

SH: Where did you first report to after you enlisted? How soon did they call you to report in?

LN: No, I enlisted and I went right in.

SH: At the same time.

LN: Oh, yes.

SH: Okay. You did not have a week in-between

LN: Maybe a week. I don't remember what I lost.

SH: Where did they send you?

LN: Camp Grant, Illinois.

SH: Can you tell us about it?

LN: I was there for about eight months, or eight weeks, maybe, eight weeks. ... [I went] to Camp Grant, Illinois, first, and then, eight weeks from then, I went to Cold Bay, Alaska, for three months, then, I went to Umnak, Alaska, for six months, then, to Adak, Alaska, for three months ... in 1943, then, I went to Umnak, Alaska, in 1943, also, and, when I got to Alaska, in Umnak, I was there for just about two-and-a-half years. I went up and down the chain, back and forth in the Aleutians, and I went in all the islands. I was in Anchorage, Cold Bay, Adak, Umnak, Kiska, met them all.

SH: Where were you issued the gear that you would need to survive in the cold once you got there?

LN: No, the minute we got up to Alaska, it was cold. I came there in the wintertime, actually, and it was cold and we were furnished with good heavy equipment. We got a lot heavier stuff when we got out to the islands, actually.

SH: Okay. When you were at Camp Grant, did you have any opportunity to apply officer's school?

LN: I really went into the Army because I was able to choose what I could do. That's why I enlisted and I came in. I saw a thing that said, "Enlist now and you can pick your thing." So, I decided that I wanted to be a doctor and I was going to go into the Army now and, maybe, I'd get in the med school, fine. ...

SH: At Camp Grant, were you asked to go to medical school?

LN: No, no. As a matter-of-fact I did want to go. I tried to get in[to] the medical school at that point when I got in the Army. General [Simon] Buckner, [Jr.], was the man in charge of the Alaskan area and I tried desperately to get in and the man would not release me to go into any other field and they just put me in the medics and that was all there was to it, but I couldn't get into school that way. So, I ended up with Camp Grant in 1943, six months, Cold Bay, Alaska, 1943, two months, Adak, Alaska, three months, 1943, and Umnak, Alaska, in 1943, and that was my last place before I came back to Anchorage. I had gone to Anchorage, originally. That was the first place. Then, I came back to Anchorage. Then, I went to Cold Bay, then, I went to Adak, then, I went to Umnak, and then to, Kiska and there was a period of time, from two months, three months, two months, two months, but, ... by the time I got through, I'd spent three years in the Army. That was the whole total of it.

SH: Most of your time was spent in Alaska. Do you know why they moved you so often, every two, three months?

LN: They were very nice to me, really, seriously. [laughter] They kept moving me around. They needed somebody to run sick call and I was good for it, because I had a feel for medicine. I really did. Unfortunately, I didn't get the opportunity to do what I wanted to do, but I did have the opportunity; no, I had the opportunity, but I didn't get it. I didn't do it. I don't know what happened. All I know is, I was in the Army period and I had to do what they wanted me to do then.

SH: What was a normal day like? Do any incidents stand out?

LN: When I went into the medics and they sent me out to Umnak, that was the first place they really sent me, no, Cold Bay was first, but, then, they sent me to Umnak and that was in the middle of the chain, and when I got there, there was a doctor who was very, very lazy, Dr. (Langford?). He was very lazy, but he taught me everything he knew and he didn't get up until ten o'clock in the morning. So, I was there and I ran sick call every day for that period of time.

SH: How many men were stationed at Umnak?

LN: I can't tell you; I don't know. I can't really remember, but, in our own area, we probably had about 250 men in the unit.

SH: Were you with the Air Corps?

LN: I wasn't in the Air Corps then, but I ended up in the Air Corps.

SH: What were you in at this point?

LN: I was just a medic in the Army, but, then, I ended up in the Air Corps, because I started flying up and down the chain. So, they put me in the Air Corps.

SH: How did that come about?

LN: Don't ask me. [laughter] No, I had the opportunity to go from place-to-place and they started to send me up and down and I was good. They kept me there and they kept moving me around.

SH: When you left Camp Grant for Alaska, did you travel by train or by plane? How did you get there?

LN: From Camp Grant, I went to Anchorage, Alaska, that was the shipping out point.

SH: Did you travel by train or plane?

LN: No, no, I went up by train to Seattle and, from Seattle, I traveled ... the inland passageway, going up to Alaska and that's how I got up there. We got up to Alaska and they shoved me up the islands. [He went by boat]

SH: I assume you went by boat.

LN: The first time I went by boat, but, several times, they pulled me back and forth and, when they did, then, I flew, continually.

SH: What kind of aircraft did you fly in?

LN: C-47, was it?

SH: That was one of the transport planes.

LN: I think it was a C-47 we used. Someplace, I got it. I saw it this morning. ...

SH: Did you have any thought that you would like to fly a plane?

LN: No, really. I mean, I wanted to fly, but ... I wasn't going to become a pilot for sure.

SH: Alaska goes through a perpetual night for many, many months. How did that affect you?

LN: No, it didn't affect me at all. It was wonderful. Three o'clock in the morning, it was absolutely sunshine, bright, everything was bright at three o'clock in the morning, but that was only for a certain length of time, and then, the other way around, it was dark all the time. So, we got our shake that way.

SH: Where did they house you? Can you describe your barracks? What were the buildings the like? Were they tents?

LN: No, no. We had a small building. We had one man who sat at the desk and took all the notes and everything that had to be taken down and I had this one doctor who was very lazy, a good doctor, taught me a lot, and, after that, we had an ambulance driver. We had two people who helped and that was about it and we had a small group.

SH: Did you have a hospital? Did you operate? How extensive was your medical care?

LN: This was my group. That was the whole group that we had at that point.

SH: Mr. Nemhauser is showing us some photographs that he brought with him.

LN: This was my little area and I had a telephone, because I had to be called continually, all times through the day and night.

SH: How were the buildings heated?

LN: Little pot-bellied stove, that's what we had. Before the pot-bellied stoves, we didn't really have any heat, didn't have any heat, but, then, they gave us a pot-belly stove in the unit. That was our heating.

CB: During your basic training at Camp Grant, was there any specific training for the cold weather that you would be working in?

LN: No, no. The reason I was sent to Camp Grant [was] because I had asked ... [to be in] the medics and that was the medical [camp], was one of the camps that just was pushing out medics.

RC: You mentioned Dr. Langford. What was his teaching style?

LN: He was a professor of medicine in the University of Iowa. I think it was Iowa; I'm not sure. I don't remember anymore. My memory is so bad, it's a crime. I think it was Iowa, though, because I think that's where he was from.

RC: Was it like classroom learning? Was it in the field?

LN: Oh, no, he just taught me. He just taught me. He didn't want to work so he taught me all he knew so help me. [laughter] I ended up, at one particular point, at, I think it was in Cold Bay, and I get there and I've been back to Anchorage. Then, I came back to Cold Bay and, at Cold Bay, when I pulled in, there was a doctor who had been in the Army for years. He was an elderly gentleman and they had a woman come in, an Aleut, and she was pregnant and she was about due and he didn't know what to do. He had never delivered a baby in all the years that he was up there. So, when he saw me he said, "Do you know anything about medicine?" and I said, "Some of the things." Well, he said, "Well, then, you're going to help," and he's going to help. We start and I start working. I knew something, because I had medical books and I kept reading. I'll never forget it, because the man comes up and says, "What do I do now?" This is a doctor, but ... he only had men; he never had any women. [laughter]

SH: Was it common to work with and dispense medicine to the Aleuts?

LN: Yes.

SH: You would try to fit in yourself?

LN: Oh, yes.

SH: Did they continue with their everyday life or were they helping with the Army's efforts in some way?

LN: No, I don't really remember that much. I didn't have that much contact with the Aleuts, continually, but they were there. They were used primarily as just helpers. That's what they were, nothing else.

SH: What was a normal day like? We know you did sick call in the morning. What else would you do in the course of your day?

LN: I was there all day long, taking care of people. We always had people who had an accident in some fashion or other. I did an appendectomy, two appendectomies I did in the Army, on my own, because he didn't want to know from nothing. He taught me the first time, and then, he said, "Now you go and do it." That was all there was to it. So, I did this and don't ask me how I did it. [laughter]

SH: How did your patients fare?

LN: They all came through alive. [laughter] The first actual surgery that I did was on an ankle. Somebody had split something down there and I didn't know what to do, but I figured I had to do something and he wasn't there to be had, so, I did it and it came out [okay] and he said, "Oh, you did great." He said, "I'm going to teach you more." That's when he started teaching.

SH: Were you the only medic?

LN: No, there were two medics, but they really knew nothing about it at all. They were, actually, I ... hate to say the word "Hillbilly," but that's what they were. They knew nothing, absolutely nothing, and they just ... put them in the medics. They had nothing else to do with them. So, we had two of them and one of them was also at the desk and did all the writing. He was a fairly bright guy from Chicago, but that's all he knew, was to write, took care of the things that happened during the day; that was it.

SH: What did you do for recreation, to keep yourself occupied in between medical emergencies?

LN: Nothing much, nothing much. You know, [on] the islands, there were very few people on the islands and what we did, we did. That was it.

SH: Did you watch movies or read books?

LN: There was a movie house. Let's see, ... about once a week, we got a movie, not much more than that, and they were always old movies. I went sometimes. Sometimes I did, sometimes I didn't, but I was more intrigued with being at the medical office and being ready to take care of somebody if something happened and we had plenty of accidents there.

SH: Did the supplies that you received come in by air or by ship?

LN: Mostly ship. We had ... two revetments on either side of us for planes. The planes were there all the time, but they didn't do much in that respect, bringing things in. Most of the stuff came in by boat.

SH: Were these ships supplying each one of the islands or were they stopping on their way to the Pacific?

LN: No, they were strictly in the North Pacific. That's all there was in that area and they came up and down.

SH: What kind of defenses did you have?

LN: Well, we had an Army battalion that was stationed on the same island that we were at. All I know is, we had two revetments on either side of us, so, there were planes there all the time.

SH: Mostly cargo planes?

LN: No, no. These were battle planes. We had ... A-40s, I think they were, and I can't remember anything like an A-40 today, but that's what I remember. ... I learned an awful lot. That's all I can tell you and I wanted to be a doctor desperately.

SH: Did you see any USO shows or anything like that?

LN: USO shows, we had very, very often. Not at the beginning, but after the first year, we had a lot of them. They came in from all over and we saw all the big stars that used to come in. Oh, it was great. That was great.

SH: Do you remember any of the people that you saw?

LN: I got some pictures of those people, I think, if I can find them. Maybe I didn't even bring them. [Mr. Nemhauser saw Olivia de Havilland, Errol Flynn and Martha Driscoll]

SH: Tell us about the picture that you are holding, Stan Musial

LN: I got Stan Musial, Hank Borowy. I guess they are the only two in this picture.

SH: Were they stationed in the Aleutians?

LN: No, no, these were athletes. ... Musial was with the Cardinals, I believe, and Borowy, I think, I cannot remember who he was with, but they were two good ballplayers and they were the only two that I ever saw there.

SH: Were they in the military at the time?

LN: No, no, this was USO.

SH: You treated Stan Musial, did you not?

LN: Yes.

SH: What was wrong with him?

LN: He had a very, very bad, I don't remember what, but he had a bad something. He was sick, real sick. I don't know if he had pneumonia or something like that, but I took care of him, because this Langford, he didn't like to deal with anything. ... By that time, we had a little separate unit that had been built for us as a hospital. They called it a hospital. It was nothing more than a room, what was probably about two times this size, and that's all it was, but that's how we got it. That's all I know.

SH: During these surgeries, did you have an anesthesiologist?

LN: I gave them anesthetics. I put them to sleep, but not all the time because that was much later. At the beginning, all I could do was minor surgery, and then, when he saw what I was doing and he was very happy about me doing this, not that he bothered with it, he taught me more and the more he taught, the more I learned, and then, I got medical books from him and started to read and that's how it all evolved.

SH: Were there pharmacists on the base?

LN: We had no pharmacist on the base.

SH: Did you prescribe the medicine as well?

LN: Yes, but I was able to get the medicine. It came in from outside. We ordered whatever we needed and got them.

SH: What if there was an emergency beyond your talents or Langford's? Was there a bigger base that you could send a patient to?

LN: The nearest hospital base was in ... Adak, was the nearest place that had a hospital at that point.

SH: You could send them by plane, if you needed to.

LN: Yes.

SH: You have some photographs here where you look like you are in the plane or getting out of the plane. Can you tell us a little bit about those instances?

LN: I don't think I have any of those pictures.

SH: You talked about jumping.

LN: Yes. I jumped out of an airplane.

SH: Can you tell us about that?

LN: Okay, that was very interesting. This was later on. I'd been in the Army for about two, two-and-a-half years by then, and I ... pretty well knew what I was doing, but, one day, a plane crashed, and I just read it in the paper this morning, too, about where it was, ... [Cleveland Island]. Yes, it was a little island and a plane crashed in the snow, turned over several times. There were, I think, eight men on the plane and, when I wrote it up today, I thought that they all died, except one, but, this morning, I read that most of them survived. All I know is, the ones that died, we took out and I put them up against the ship [plane] that was in the crash and that's all we could do with them. They just sat there. It snowed that night and the snow came down and when I looked at them in the morning and I saw the snow on these guys' heads and they're all dead, sitting on the side of the ship [plane], I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. It's unbelievable.

SH: Who jumped with you? Did you jump alone?

LN: No, three of us jumped, Major Johnson, myself and another man named ... Weston, [who] was the guy who came first. This is Weston right here. ... He was coming up from Attu at that point, and he heard about the crash, and then, he came up. He came in; he was the first one there, and then, the other two came later. I guess I was the next group. There were three of us that came in, Major Johnson, Bob (Goodling?) and myself, the three of us. We all jumped. That's another intriguing thing. We jumped out of an airplane. I didn't move. When I got to the door, I said to the Colonel, I said, "If I don't go, push." Bingo, he pushed me out and out I went and, here I am, coming down. It was about twenty-five hundred or three thousand feet that we jumped out and at that point, you know, I was scared stiff, but, when I came out, it was so quiet, it was still. You don't hear a sound. It was wonderful. I was just floating and I finally hit the snow. I was in the snow, hit the snow and I rolled over and now I had two knives on me so that I could cut the shroud lines and I couldn't get them out. Finally, I got them out and I was right at the edge of the valley, I think it was called Cathedral Valley, if I'm not mistaken, and it was a big dip, all the way down. If I'd ... gone any further, run along that thing, I was down there, but I missed it, maybe, by about ten yards, twenty yards, something like that. It was unbelievable. So, that was another interesting part.

SH: How far were you from the plane when you landed?

LN: When I landed, I came down, straight down, and I was right near where the plane was practically. Then, I just rolled in that snow. This wind was blowing and I just blew along. Thank goodness it stopped before I got down into that valley. That valley was deep.

SH: What happened next? You had to get back to the plane. Were you able to get in to it all right?

LN: Oh, yes. By then, the three of us, we were all apart a little bit, like a half-a-mile apart, each of us. We got together and we all went and tried our best to provide something for ourselves. They started to drop [supplies].

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

CB: This is side two, tape one.

LN: Okay. They started dropping all kinds of things that they thought we could use, heavier clothes and things of that nature, food, and it worked pretty good. ...

SH: How long had the plane been down?

LN: ... Here's the story on it, the whole story, and I can't remember. This is the first man who got to the plane. This is Captain Weston. He got there first. He was coming up from Attu on a furlough, and then, he wrote this article. Then, I jumped. ...

SH: This was in the 1943 *Saturday Evening Post*.

LN: Right. There's pictures, too.

SH: One of the photographs shows many people inside the plane in sleeping bags.

LN: Right there.

SH: Did you stay there as well?

LN: Oh, yes. We all slept in the plane. ... By the time we got finished there, I think we had seventeen men in that plane. How we all got in there, I don't know.

SH: How did they get you off of this?

LN: How did they get us off? They came down and got us, but it took about, I don't remember how many weeks we were there.

SH: How did they get you off?

LN: They've sent in planes.

SH: The planes landed, smaller planes?

LN: Yes. ... This is the plane that took us off and this is how we slept in the plane right there. There were a lot of us in that plane, I'll tell you.

SH: Nice down sleeping bags, it looks like.

LN: Yes, yes.

SH: Who ran the dog sled that we see in this picture?

LN: They were Aleuts that they sent up. They came in; they didn't fly in. They went by boat. They went by canoe. They canoed up the river and got there and they came in to help. They had dogs with them.

SH: It was a ski plane. The article said that they literally had to push it to get it ...

LN: That's to get it started, yes.

SH: This plane is just a hunk of scrap metal. It's amazing.

LN: Which one?

SH: The plane that crashed.

LN: Oh, yes, that was a mess. That was a total mess.

SH: Were there other instances where you had to jump?

LN: No, that's the only jump I made. I remember, I did, really, jump once, other than that, but it was a minor thing. It was on the Alcan Highway. Going up the Alcan Highway, something happened, I don't remember what it was, but they needed somebody and they sent me up there and I went up and I went to just do anything that I could, but nothing really happened. It wasn't of any import, but it was an odd thing.

SH: A medic does not normally just ...

LN: Jump. It was cute. It was a lot of fun.

CB: You mentioned briefly, a moment ago, about falling into the Bering Sea? Would you share that with us again?

LN: All I did [was], I got on the other side of the ocean somehow. I got out there at the Arctic and I don't even remember why I was out there, but I was on a boat and the boat sort of was flopping around and I sort of fell out, but I'm not a swimmer, either, and I fell out and I didn't know what to do. I grabbed on to something on the edge of that boat and I held on [to] it and they pulled me back on. It was an amazing thing I'll tell you. I'll never forget that one.

RC: You also mentioned an air drop during Passover.

LN: Oh, yes, they shipped us all kinds of stuff for the Passover. We had not that many Jewish [guys] with us. They weren't that many, but they took care of it. Boy, they brought us all kinds of things and everybody was happy with it, the wine, all kinds of stuff. We had food, it was great.

SH: Did you have a chaplain to perform the ceremony?

LN: No, that we didn't have, not on the island.

SH: Were you ever able to go to services?

LN: Yes, absolutely, in Anchorage, all the time.

SH: Did they send you back there for the services?

LN: No. The only time we went back was when we were sent back to Anchorage. I moved along various places, Adak, Anchorage was the main place at that point, and still is today.

SH: Were other people brought to your medical facility from other rescues, pilots downed in the ocean or sailors from nearby ships?

LN: Not with the Navy. I remember one incident where we were on Kiska. I was in a plane with a Captain Cook and ... we were flying to Kiska, I think we were still at war with Kiska at that point, [that Kiska was still occupied by the Japanese]. This is very, very not too sharp with me, but I remember that we flew through there and something happened to the plane and we were having trouble. I can't remember the whole story, but we did have trouble, but, somehow, he got the plane going again and we got out and we turned around and went right back. That's all I can tell you about that, but it was an unusual situation.

SH: Did you ever run into any Russians?

LN: No.

SH: Any Japanese?

LN: We saw a Japanese on the island.

SH: As prisoners of war?

LN: Well, we saw prisoners of war, but we saw them before that on Kiska. I didn't get into too much of that, but I was on the island when it was invaded.

SH: You were part of the invasion force that went into Kiska.

LN: Yes, I was a medic in the raid.

SH: Did you set up a hospital there or a medical facility?

LN: We were there for a very short time. The biggest problem there was the feet, frostbite. Oh, boy, we had everybody frostbitten down there and those feet were so bad, so bad, unbelievable.

SH: How did you treat it?

LN: As best we knew how. There were a couple of doctors on the island, of course. They were there, but there wasn't much you could do with that frostbite.

SH: Were you treating any of the Japanese?

LN: I don't remember treating any Japanese.

SH: Did you treat any Navy men or men from other services?

LN: We didn't get to the Navy too much. We really had nothing to do with the Navy.

SH: Coast Guard?

LN: I saw a couple of Coast Guard ships, occasionally. We had nothing to do with them.

SH: Were you able to get mail on a regular basis? How did you get it?

LN: Mail came pretty regularly. They were flown in.

SH: What were your letters from home like? What were they saying about the home front?

LN: [laughter] I told them everything was grand where we were. They were happy I was there. [Mr. Nemhauser's family and friends made records and sent them to him]

SH: Did they talk about how rationing was affecting them back here?

LN: Yes well my father and my sister kept me well apprised of what was going on.

SH: Did you hear from any other friends?

LN: I didn't really hear from any friends. ... I also saved the pilot, Captain Cook, who crashed on landing on Cleveland Island in the North Pacific. I saved his life; I remember that. I was looking for his picture this morning. I had a picture of him halfway in the water and halfway out and I couldn't find the picture.

SH: Did you ever run into any other New Jersey men?

LN: My memory is bad, really bad in most cases. I don't remember seeing anyone.

SH: What were the names of the people that you knew from Jersey?

LN: (Lou Satts?) was his name and the other one was Sal Cohen, right, you're right. Boy, you're good.

Rose Nemhauser: He became very friendly with a young man, probably his age, who was supposedly a pianist.

LN: Oh, yes. Who was that?

RN: That was Paul.

LN: Paul, Paul, Paul, what was his last name?

RN: I don't remember.

LN: He was the closest thing; he was close to me the entire war.

RN: I think he was from Indiana or Chicago.

LN: He was from Chicago, Illinois, or Chicago someplace, but he was the closest thing I had in the Army. I forgot about him, my God. Paul was great and ... I've never seen him, although I saw him once. He had a relative in Highland Park, New Jersey, and he came up and that's the only time I saw him, from that point. He was a drinker. This kid could drink like crazy. He was a year older than I was and he drank. There was no stopping him. He never got drunk.

RN: He met his daughter. His daughter had a friend in New Brunswick and came to meet us years later.

LN: He met his daughter, right.

SH: He was a pianist, professionally?

LN: He was a pianist; no, no, he played the piano magnificently. Oh, gee, I forgot all about Paul.

SH: Did you stay involved with the unit or go to any of the reunions?

LN: Never got involved with anything.

SH: Did you ever join the VFW or the AMVETS?

LN: No, nothing. I didn't believe in it. I really didn't and, now, maybe, I'm sorry about it, maybe I'm sorry about it. That's the guy.

SH: He was from Texas.

LN: Yes, but I can't remember his last name. [Upon review, the name he was looking for was Eli Rangel]

RN: He can't remember the first name, either. That one was lovely. In fact, they've even called each other. ...there was some sort of a news letter at times.

SH: That is great. Is there a newsletter that keeps you connected with all of those who served in the Aleutians?

LN: Not all, no. I made no effort to meet anybody, somehow. I didn't feel it was necessary. Now, I'm sorry.

RN: Once, there was a man who lived nearby.

SH: We found a photograph of (Paredes?) Is his first name Eli or was Eli another person?

LN: (Paredes?) was, no, he was a guy that could only drive the truck. That's all he could do. He's not in this. I haven't got him here anywhere, no picture of him, no. He drove the truck. That's all he could do.

SH: There is Eli, and then, there is a dentist and Ben (Curr?).

LN: Ben, that was this guy right over here, between the doctors, the white man in a white coat and myself, and look at that hairdo I had. [laughter]

SH: You said [that] you painted the sign over the Quonset hut. It has the Caduceus.

LN: "The Fighting Medics."

SH: We noticed in the photograph of your room that you have a phone and your pin-up girls as well.

LN: That's why I had a phone, though, because, if they needed me, I was the only one who had a phone and that was directly to the dispensary; the girls, yes, all these girls you know.

SH: Before we started the tape, we spoke about the winter gear that you had and this coat.

LN: That was my dress clothes. Look how you drop right into the snow. You went right into the snow.

SH: How spit-and-polish was the base that you were at?

LN: It always was in the Army, always was in the Army, even there, but we did get away with a lot of things.

SH: In this photograph here, there is a big chunk of rope.

LN: That was on one of the times that we were out looking for some people that were missing.

SH: On the back of the photograph, it says that you were never able to find them.

LN: No.

SH: How often did you go out on a search-and-rescue mission?

LN: Oh, I would say that, during the times that I was out there, probably not too many, maybe ten.

SH: You basically waited for others to bring patients back to you.

LN: Yes, back to us.

SH: Was there a search-and-rescue team that was set up?

LN: No, not then. They didn't have such an animal.

SH: There is a gentleman by the name of Red, in this photograph.

LN: This is Red, right there.

SH: Where was Red from?

LN: Don't ask me. ... "Red Snyder, my friend, at home in Umnak in the Aleutians, 1944." That's all I remember. He was a nice guy. That's all I know.

SH: When did you come back to the States?

LN: I had one furlough, came back. Gee, I don't remember what year it was. I can't remember that, really can't. Can you help me?

RN: About '44, I would say. I was already in college.

LN: You were in college in '44 and I came back for a furlough.

RN: You came back with a winter uniform.

LN: That's right. That's a fact, too. I came out of Chicago. It was hot, summertime, and it was so cold when I got back home that I didn't know what to do, but I had no choice. My father took me out to buy me clothes and he couldn't find anything.

SH: It was tough to buy clothes at that point, I suppose.

LN: Yes, yes. That's the only furlough I ever had in the Army.

SH: One of your notes here said that you also flew in evacuation of the wounded. Was that during the invasion?

LN: Up and down, up and down the chain, wherever there were people like that, I got to them.

SH: Were you in Alaska or in the Aleutians when the surrender happened?

LN: No, I was back in Anchorage then, back in Anchorage. I remember exactly the day that it had happened, too, and let me tell you, boy, they blew out that town that day. That was Anchorage.

SH: What did they do?

LN: They just blew out the town. It was unbelievable.

SH: What did you do?

LN: We ran around like crazy. It was crazy. It was just crazy. [laughter]

CB: In the months before August of 1945, were there any preparations around the bases for the massive invasion? What was going on at that time, in July, June?

LN: August '45, that's almost the end.

CB: Yes, before then.

SH: There was much talk about the invasion of Japan and there was a tremendous buildup of troops in preparation for it.

LN: Nothing ever happened.

SH: You did not notice more supplies and more men coming in.

LN: Nope.

SH: Did anyone ever talk to you about what you would be assigned to do if this in fact did happen?

LN: Well, then, they told us that there was an opportunity for some kind of an invasion and whether they were going to do anything about it, they didn't tell us.

SH: When did you hear about the cessation of hostilities in Europe?

LN: I was already back in Anchorage, I think. Yes, I was back in Anchorage. That was, oh, boy, they tore that town apart.

SH: For V-E Day as well?

LN: They sure did.

SH: When the war ended in Europe, did anything change for you in Pacific Theater?

LN: It didn't change that, but I'll tell you what did happen; the town of Anchorage was a very, very short town. It was three blocks. Today, it's a metropolis, a real metropolis. I've seen pictures of it and I couldn't believe what I saw. I've never been back there, but, gee, whiz, what a difference. A little town, three blocks, that's all it was.

SH: Were there any changes in the number of men that were stationed there after the war in Europe ended?

LN: I don't know. I can't say for sure. I wasn't there at the end, because, at the end, I was up back in Anchorage already and just waiting to get out and I did.

SH: What did you do after the surrender? What was your job? Did you have to stay in or did you have enough points to get out?

LN: I was out. I was in the first group out. I had enough points.

SH: Were you?

LN: Yes. I was loaded with points.

SH: Where did they send you?

LN: To get out? I remember, I was still in Alaska, in Anchorage, and I saw a newspaper. We were all standing in line and I saw a newspaper and it said something about the war almost is over and there would be a lot of people out. Boy, I got in line and I was out in maybe two, three weeks.

SH: Can you tell us why you were awarded the Air Medal?

LN: Primarily for the jumps.

SH: For the jumps, plural?

LN: Yes, that was the first thing I got, was an Air Medal for that jump.

SH: Were there any citations that you received?

LN: Nope, no citations.

SH: You were in the first group out. Were you sent back to Fort Dix?

LN: At that point, ... I don't remember where I was, but I was back in New Jersey right away.

SH: Did you fly back?

LN: No, I didn't fly back. We must have gone by train and I was out in no time. Boy that was quick. It was quick and it was so good. [laughter]

SH: What were your plans then? What did you decide to do?

LN: I still wanted to go to medical school, but it went awry. I wanted to marry this girl and she wasn't going to wait. [laughter]

SH: Where was Mrs. Nemhauser going to school?

LN: Where did you go, at that point?

RN: I was going to Ohio State.

LN: That's right.

SH: When had you first met Mrs. Nemhauser?

LN: A couple of weeks before I went in the Army.

RN: No, not really. I actually met [him] when I was fourteen.

SH: You met when Mrs. Nemhauser was fourteen.

RN: Then, I had a sweet sixteen birthday party and he and two other young men crashed. [laughter] We had a living room and a dining room connected with the arch in-between. Someone had made, like, a mistletoe out of sugar and velvet ... and he made off with it.

SH: Since Mrs. Nemhauser is quite a distance from the microphone, could you repeat that story for us, please, Mr. Nemhauser?

LN: What did I do? That's right. I stole it.

SH: Mrs. Nemhauser had actually met him when she was fourteen. When she had a sweet sixteen party, Mr. Nemhauser and two other friends crashed the party. Not only did they crash the party, they took the mistletoe that was made out of sugar in velvet ribbon and took off with it.

LN: Right.

SH: What did you with it at that point?

LN: God knows. Hey, wait a minute, we kept that for a while.

RN: You kept it forever, and then, one Sunday ...

LN: It's a blue ribbon.

RN: One Sunday, a friend of mine, I was sleeping over ...

SH: What did you do when you came back?

LN: I came back. I wanted to go to NYU, but, as I told you it was such a crowd there that I couldn't stand it and I came back to Rutgers. I said, "All right, I'll go to Rutgers," and Rutgers didn't mean anything to me, lived there, but it didn't mean anything, but I got a good education.

SH: Did you live at home when you came to Rutgers?

LN: Yes, I lived at home. My father had a children's store in New Brunswick and it was very convenient.

SH: Were you considered a commuter student?

LN: Yes.

SH: Did you work in your father's store?

LN: Yes, yes.

SH: What course of study did you pursue?

LN: Medicine, but I didn't become a doctor, because I got married. She wouldn't wait for me. [laughter] It was in August, was it in August? I remember it well. No, what month is it, April, excuse me, April the 4th, there you go. [laughter]

SH: April the 4th, you married. When you got married were you still in pre-med at that point?

LN: No, this was when I came out of the Army. That was the point I came out of the Army, right then.

SH: You married her right after you came out of the Army.

LN: How much longer after I got out?

RN: Three years.

LN: Three years. We sort of stuck together. [laughter]

SH: Did you continue with your education at Rutgers after you were married?

LN: Wait a minute, I did. I went back for a short time before we were married, yes, before we were married.

RN: Yes, you did go back.

LN: Yes, but I think I got the ultimatum, “either-or.”

SH: What course of study was Mrs. Nemhauser pursuing at Ohio State?

RN: I was studying languages, surprisingly enough, but don't ask any more. [laughter] Then, I transferred to Upsala.

LN: That's because it was closer.

RN: It was defunct for many years.

SH: Did you go to work for your father?

LN: Yes, that's what I did. That's exactly what I did, and then, eventually, I took over the store.

SH: You told us before the tape was on that you have two children.

LN: Two children.

SH: Do they live locally?

LN: One lives in Edison, [the other] in Piscataway.

SH: Do either of you have any another question to ask?

CB: When you heard about the Holocaust, did you still have any family in Austria, that you knew about?

LN: Oh, yes, absolutely. We had a lot of family in Europe at that time.

CB: Did you hear from them?

LN: Very little.

SH: Thank you so much for taking the time to do this. I hope that it is been a good experience for you. We thank you both.

RN: Thank you for asking us.

SH: I look forward to being in touch with you at a later time. Thank you so much.

LN: Very good, thank you.

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

Reviewed by Karlee Meibauer 10/10/04  
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 10/14/04  
Reviewed by Leonard Nemhauser 1/15/05