

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN G. SCHERHOLZ

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

G. KURT PIEHLER

and

ANDREW ZAPPO

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 30, 1995

TRANSCRIPT BY

ANDREW ZAPPO

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. John G. Scherholz on November 30, 1995, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

Andrew Zappo: Andrew Zappo.

KP: I would like to begin by discussing your father, who was born in Newark. Were his parents from Germany?

John Scherholz: ... His mother came from a little island in the Baltic Sea that sometimes belonged to Germany, sometimes to Denmark, as I understand it, called Femen, F-E-M-E-N, and my sister's been there, but my grandfather was born here, in Orange, and worked on a German language newspaper in Newark for fifty, sixty years, something like that. I think that was the only job he ever had; [he] was one of the original linotypers.

KP: What did your father do for a living?

JS: My father was an office man. He was credit manager, office manager. He was ... the longest with Sheaffer Pen Company, about twenty-six years, I guess, or twenty-seven, and, after that, he was comptroller for Morgan-Jones, the people that make the bedspreads and towels and all that sort of stuff, but I never liked ... the city. It's a good place to go have fun, but I would never live there, never work there.

KP: When did your parents move out of Newark and into West Orange?

JS: Well, my father ... went to high school in East Orange, about two or three blocks from the Newark line, off of Central Avenue, and then, they lived there. They lived next door to my grandfather, in the house he owned for a few years, and then, they bought a house in West Orange and they lived in West Orange the rest of their married life. I sold my mother's house two years ago. They had three different houses in West Orange. I was born in West Orange and went, also, to West Orange schools.

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

JS: Well, my father never was out of work. He did have his pay cut, ... but we never really wanted for anything, but there wasn't much extra. To the point, much to my disgust and chagrin, for all this time, in 1938, when my sister wanted to go to NJC over here, he said he didn't have enough money to send her to college and keep a car. So, he sold the car. So, all the while I was in high school, we didn't have a car. If I wanted to go anywhere, I had to go by bicycle or bus or get a ride with somebody else and I still hold it against her. [laughter] Of course, anybody that's got an older sister probably understands that situation.

KP: Your parents thought that a college education was important for both of you.

JS: My father was always very willing to accept decisions from people with authority. He had some accounting courses and stuff that he took, nights, but, essentially, he just had a high school education and my mother only went ... through eighth grade. She's probably the smartest one in

the clan. ...

KP: Your mother did not work outside of the home, but was she active in any organizations?

JS: Well, they both were very active in the Presbyterian Church. I think they both probably held every lay office in the Presbyterian [Church in] Morris and Orange [while] they were there and she was still one of their guiding lights in the church when she went to the nursing home. ... She taught Sunday school for years and years. It was quite a congregation at that time, with the Campbells and the Colgates and [the] Bradleys and people like that, you know. There was quite a lot of money there. The only one that I can think of that more or less distinguished himself was Dickinson Debevoise. He's a federal judge. You've probably seen him in these antitrust things and stuff like that. He's a good kid.

KP: You spent a lot of time in the Presbyterian Church as a child.

JS: Yes, sang in the little choir and stuff like that. ... Even when I was in high school, we had a Sunday school class, taught by some language major from Princeton, [laughter] but he impressed us, though, because he could go back to the Greek Bible and translate it. ... How many people can read Greek? [laughter] I can't.

KP: How did your parents feel about Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal in the 1930s?

JS: I don't think they ever voted for a Democrat in their life and I know I haven't. [laughter]

KP: They stayed Republican throughout the 1930s. They voted for Alfred Landon and Wendell Willkie.

JS: Right, absolutely. First one I voted for was Governor Dewey. A couple of years later, he offered me a job up in Pawling, but I didn't take it.

KP: What job did he offer you?

JS: Running his farm. I was kidding him about being governor up there for twelve years or something like that and he had to come to Jersey to get a farm manager, [laughter] nice man, though, ... but I was doing pretty good at the time, but, then, everything caved in after that and I quit farming and went and drove a truck for thirty-five years.

KP: How did you meet Dewey?

JS: Professor Bender over here was a professor in the Dairy Department and they had a farmer's club in New York that used to meet, I don't know, every two weeks or something, like, for lunch or supper or something, all people that had, more or less, gentleman farms or sideline farms or farms that were in the family when they went to the city to work, something like that. ... I guess Dewey was a member of that or whatever, but, anyway, ... Prof. Bender told Governor Dewey that I could do it. He didn't know whether I would come or not, but we went up there. My wife and I went up there to Pawling one Sunday and Mrs. Dewey ran my wife around to ... Edward

R. Murrow and all them other muckity-mucks up there, you know, in the country club and everything and she tried to sell my wife on the place, you know, but ... I was doing pretty well where I was, down in Monmouth County. I thought I was doing fine. I was until I went and got so I couldn't eat, couldn't sleep and couldn't talk without swearing. I thought, "It's time to get out."

KP: You lived in West Orange, which was a very nice suburban community when you were growing up. However, you mentioned that you did not particularly care for cities.

JS: No. ... Of course, my mother came from Mercer County, Massachusetts, and all her people were farmers or, more or less, outdoor people, construction stuff, and I took more after them. I was always more comfortable with them than I was with the city side of the family and I still am.

KP: You spent a lot of time in Massachusetts as a child.

JS: Summers, yes, and then, I went up and worked for my uncle, two years, ... when I was grown up. I went up there in April and May, after I got out of the Army, and I worked until I come back to school in September. I wasn't sure I was coming back. I really didn't want to come back ... and that was probably the best time of my life, because the war was over, didn't have a worry in the world. I was with people I liked, you know. I've got seventeen first cousins in that town, you know. My mother was one of eight kids and she was the only one that moved away.

KP: You still have relatives there.

JS: Oh, yes, sure. They all stop on their way to Florida, coming back and forth. I'm one of the younger ones in my generation and, ... as far as I know, they're all still alive, but they were all blue-collar people. My sister was always surprised that, out of the nineteen or something first cousins we had, that only she and I and ... two other cousins ever finished college, you know. I said, "Well, only the dumb ones got to go to college; the smart ones can make out without it." I still feel that way. You need more education, you get it. I don't mean to ruffle your feathers, but you don't have much more on the top than I got, so, you can't ruffle too many of them. [laughter]

KP: Your great-grandfather was in the Civil War.

JS: How do you know all this stuff?

KP: You filled out a survey. Otherwise, I would not have known. [laughter] Was that on your mother's side or your father's side?

JS: Mother's side. ... She was born between Albany and Schenectady ... and they went way back up there and somebody was complaining. They had a doctor [who] told them they had to walk three times a week. She says, she was about eighty-five then, "What do you mean walk? I've got to walk three times a week, a half an hour a time." My mother says, "That's not walking. ... My grandfather walked from Albany to Virginia and fought the Civil War, and then, walked back." She said, "That's walking," [laughter] and he was still, I've got pictures of him, ...

shooting deer during World War I, in 1914. He was way up in his eighties and he was still hunting. Of course, he was gone about ten years before I was born, so, I never knew him. ... A lot of people don't realize that Berkshire County was settled late in Massachusetts's history. The ground wasn't too good, there wasn't much else there and it was only when they wanted to use the water from the Housatonic River and some of those for mills. That's why Pittsfield's got a big, wide street, you know, not like Albany and Trenton and these other older towns. ... A lot of the people there came from west to east, from the Hudson River Valley and Troy and Albany and that and went to Pittsfield and North Adams and Adams and Great Barrington and those towns. ... So, he had left Albany, my great-grandfather left Albany, and went and lived in Pittsfield for a while, and then, I presume that he went back to between Albany and Schenectady when his folks died, and then, three of his boys went back to Pittsfield again, after that, but it's only thirty, forty miles across there. ... He could do a lot of stuff. He was a soap maker, he made butter and raised vegetables. I don't know what all he couldn't do. My youngest boy got, from that National Archives or whatever it is, where you can get records from military people, ... everything from them about what battles he was in and all that. One of the stories my mother told was that he had a brother that was in business or, I don't know, maybe a sailor, I don't know, never married, was down South when the war broke out and he joined up with the Confederates and I guess, at one time, they were within eight or ten miles of each other, the two brothers, one on one side, one on the other, and my mother said, when she was a kid and they got together for Christmas and that, her mother always got annoyed at them, because they were still arguing about who had the best guns and who had the best horses and she used to tell them, "Why don't you two guys shut up? The war's been over for fifty years." [laughter] So, that would be ... her father-in-law and his brother.

KP: Your father did not serve in World War I.

JS: No, ... they didn't take him. He had a bunch of some kind of carbuncles or something. I remember, he had all kinds of scars in his neck and back where they used to lance them. Of course, now, with all the antibiotics that they have, they'd probably cure it in a month, you know, but they never would take him and, actually, he was working for Public Service in Newark and the doctor told him he should get a job outdoors, the sun might help him, and somebody he worked with had a relative in Pittsfield or Stephentown or somewhere up there along the [Housatonic] and he went up there to get a job outside and ended up working for my grandfather. That's how he met my mother.

KP: When were your parents married?

JS: I don't know, 1920, I think.

KP: Why did they come back to New Jersey?

JS: Well, he came back as soon as he was well, because he wanted to do office work and stuff like that. ... He worked for Krementz for a while, the jewelry people up in Newark and whatnot. I don't really know how many [jobs he had]. I know he worked for (Krueger Auditorium?) for a while. ... The only place I ever remember him working at was Sheaffer's, when I was a kid. He was with them when I was big enough [to remember]. He might have gone with them in 1928 or

1929 and he was with them until '52 or something like that. Essentially, that's where he worked, on 34th Street, all the while I was growing up, you know.

KP: When you were going through high school, did you think that you would go on to college?

JS: Yes, probably.

KP: Were you taking a college prep course?

JS: Yes.

KP: Did you have an interest in agriculture then? Was that your goal?

JS: Yes, either that or construction, something outside, logging.

KP: How would you rate your elementary and high school education in West Orange?

JS: ... Close to the tops in New Jersey. They had very good, you know, recommendations with the colleges and stuff. ... The kids that I went to school with were readily accepted at Lehigh and Syracuse and Rutgers, you know. ... That part of it was no problem.

KP: Approximately how many did go to college from your high school?

JS: Of the boys, a big bunch of them, certainly more than half. Yes, I went to my fiftieth reunion a couple of years ago and ... I think there was only one other fellow that had a business of his own. He and I were the only two that were still working full-time. Of course, I worked up until about a year ago, but a lot of the other ones had been retired for ten years. ...

KP: Why did you choose Rutgers?

JS: I guess, by that time, I was figuring on going into agriculture and I had a shot at it and I took the exam for the State Scholarship and I got that, so, I could come here. The first year, all I had to pay was my room, board and books. It was a hundred and five boys and a hundred and five girls, at that time, [that] competed for it every year, ... but, then, after I came back after the war, I told them, you know, "I don't need it anymore. I've got the GI Bill." I guess they gave it to somebody else.

KP: Were you ever a Boy Scout?

JS: Yes. I didn't do too well in it, though, because I went to a troop over in South Orange and their vacations never corresponded with ours and, when they had their stuff, I never could get to go and I never did much with it. My one boy was Eagle Scout and the other one was Life, I guess. I put a lot of time in for the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts in Hightstown, along with six million other youth activities. All these guys yelling at me all the time, I don't know who the hell they are even, [but] do they know me.

KP: You came to Rutgers in ...

JS: Fall of '42.

KP: We had been at war for a while by then. Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

JS: ... I was playing touch football that Sunday afternoon and got pretty well petered out and I went home and I had a little Stewart-Warner radio that my father bought me one time when I was in the hospital and I used to play that a lot, baseball games, hockey games and stuff. I was doing my homework and I put it on and that's when I heard of it, because it wasn't in ... until the next morning's paper.

KP: Did you have any inkling that we would be going to war so soon?

JS: Yes, yes.

KP: Did you expect a war with Japan?

JS: I figured I'd go, because I had, well, he wasn't a blood cousin, but he had been one of the originals ones drafted before Pearl Harbor and ... I'd seen him when he came home in uniform. ... Of course, a lot of the other ones, like Dick (Betzel?), he went right in service, when he got out of high school, where[as] I went to college. I saw him at my fiftieth reunion. We used to play in the orchestra together. He'd played trumpet and I played the violin, but he got awful fat. ... I asked him where he lived. He says, "Well, we have three homes. We have one in Palm Springs, ... we have one in Boulder and one somewhere in Florida." I say, "What the hell were you, a crook?" and he says, "No, I was in law enforcement." [laughter] So, I got his address. I've been going to write, but I never did yet. I got a Christmas card from him last year.

KP: Did you think of enlisting after Pearl Harbor or after you graduated from high school?

JS: Yes. ... I was interested in the Navy, flying in the Navy, and I went over to 120 Broadway, which was the Navy recruiting center at the time, and I think I've still got the papers, but that would have been ... when I was here, because I was seventeen when I came here. ... I went over there, I think I only went once, but I'm not sure. I think my father went down and got some papers or something for me one time, but they said, "Well, we'll call you," you know, like that, and then, when I ... turned eighteen, on the 6th of January, I got the papers from the draft board and there was questions on there, something like this one [survey] you got here. ... It said, "What classification do you think you ought to be?" and I put 1-A, because I figured, "If the other guys can go, I can go. There's nothing wrong with me." So, it just proceeded on from that, and so, then, when I went in May, they gave me credit for the rest of the semester, but I think I could have done [better]. Of course, the grades were backasswards from what you've got now and I got a three, which was a C, in dairy cattle judging. ... He gave me that because we didn't nearly finish. It's a passing grade and all that, but that was the only three I got in any subject all the while I was here.

KP: Before and after the war?

JS: Both before the war and after; that still raggles me.

AZ: Were you interested in flying? You said that you wanted to enlist in the Navy Air Corps.

JS: No, no, I'd never been up in an airplane yet and I don't think there's enough whiskey or men to put me on one right now, either, but I thought it was a pretty good thing to do. (E. B. Snyder?) went, you know, and he flew. He was still flying [afterwards]. His father's vice-president of Public Service, so, they had things to do with [him], you know, and then, I think he was with the Florida Power and Light Company for years, but ... he had a plane. ... I think it was a P-51 Mustang that he kept and he used to race them, you know, where they go around these pylons and stuff. Well, fifteen years ago, he was racing down in Cape May and he caught a wing in the ground and that was the end of Ebee Snyder. He's the first kid in the group that could throw a football fifty yards, went to Lehigh, but he was a smart kid. He finished ahead of me in school, too, not a whole lot, but some. I don't know whether he got a Phi Beta Kappa key or not. Maybe they don't have a chapter in Lehigh, but I guess they do. Good guy, ... Ebee was a great guy. His mother and my mother were good friends, too.

KP: What do you remember about Rutgers during the first full year of war?

JS: Well, of course, the ROTC was compulsory and I thought I did pretty good in that. I'm still a pretty good map reader and the marching and the calisthenics and stuff never bothered me and I was perfectly comfortable with that infantry training and I was perfectly comfortable in basic training. I thought it was a little tough for a guy who weighed 145 pounds to have to carry the same rifle and pack that the guys that weigh 250 [do], but, you know, I got through all right. ... As I say, more or less, see, I was one of the younger ones in my class, too, in high school, so, a lot of them were already gone and a lot of them ... got their high school diploma given to them because they went in service. Maybe they wouldn't have passed, but they gave them the diploma. ... So, there was a lot of them that were already in, when I got out of high school, from my group, and so, with me, it was just a matter of time when I went. ... Of course, my mother's brother wanted to keep me out, because he could get an agriculture deferment for me, but I told him, "No way. I'm going when the time comes."

KP: You had the chance to take a deferment, if you wanted one.

JS: Oh, yes. Well, as far as I know, he said he could. He had the cows and he didn't have any help. ... They had some kind of a scheme; how ever many animals you had, you were entitled to one person, you know, or something like that. If you had a hundred cows, you could ... defer two people. ... I never even considered it and I wouldn't. Like I say, after the war, I did go up there for more than two summers and it was probably the best time of my life, so, it wasn't that I didn't want to, couldn't do it, but, no, I figured you got to go.

KP: You were enrolled in the Ag School. Where did you live during your first year at Rutgers?

JS: In Hegeman. In fact, I even forgot what they called the, I know they weren't dorm mothers, because they were seniors.

KP: Preceptors.

JS: Preceptors, Jesus, this guy's all right. He uses big words. I don't know, do you know what they all mean? Anyway, I saw, not three or four weeks ago, the name, in the obituaries, of Bob Dalrymple, who was the one here in Hegeman when I was a freshmen, that he'd died and it says he was a member of the Disabled Veterans, but I never saw or heard anything of him since '42. If I had known he lived right near me, I probably would have gone and said hello. ...

KP: What did you enjoy about Rutgers?

JS: That's tough. It's just something to get done with, but, you know, I tried pretty good at anything I'd do and I see my grandson in that. He's in his sixth year down in Myrtle Beach and he's got a real tough [course], [laughter] ... but I used to write term papers on my Christmas vacation. ... Every semester, the first couple of weeks, when everybody's chasing girls and going to the movies and stuff like that, I read through all my textbooks the first couple of weeks of every semester, so [that] I had an idea of what was in there and I worked at it, you know. ... If a Phi Beta Kappa key doesn't mean anything else, it means that you did your work. There's no way you're going to get those grades if you don't show up and turn stuff in on time. Whether you take snap courses or whatever, ... you still have to do your work ... and I worked at it.

KP: You mentioned that Professor Bender was your favorite professor. Did you meet him in your first year here?

JS: ... No, I didn't have him the first year, because I didn't have any dairy courses until I came back. I probably knew who he was, but ... we had one soils course my freshman year and we had Prof. Joffe and I don't think I knew Bender until after I came back.

KP: Did you consider joining a fraternity in your first year?

JS: We had some neighbors that my mother was friendly with and her son was already here, a couple of years ahead of me, and he was a DU and I did come down here one weekend or whatever it was, over one night or something like that, when I was [in] the last year of high school and stayed over there. It was on College Avenue at that time, I don't know whether it still is or not, but I never heard from him. ... After I started getting good grades and stuff like that, some of the fraternities said, "Well, how come you didn't join up with us?" I said, "(Go scratch?)," ... and I still don't approve of it.

KP: Of fraternities?

JS: I don't approve of the fact that they've got files of term papers and that they paddle. If you paddle me, I'll bust somebody's nose, you know. I mean, to me, that's kid shit. I mean, I didn't come here to turn in somebody else's work and, boy, I can look you right in the eye and tell you that, too.

KP: Did you find that your classmates would turn in work that they had not done?

[TAPE PAUSED]

JS: Oh, well, yes, guys would crib on quizzes and stuff like that, but ... my original roommate here, Ted (Thayer?), his brother was in a fraternity and he was, too, but, of course, freshmen didn't live in the fraternity houses. Yes, I heard of it, but I didn't come here for that. It's strictly business.

KP: It sounds like you worked very hard while you were here. Did you join any clubs?

JS: I belonged to the Dairy Club and the Ag Club and the stuff over there. I never held any offices in any of them or whatnot ... and any dates that I got around here were from around town. I never had a date with a girl from the college. ... Maybe I'm too practical, maybe I've been that way all of my life, I don't know.

KP: Everyone seems to have a story about Dean Metzger. Did you ever have an encounter with Dean Metzger during your first year?

JS: I'm trying to remember who he was.

KP: He was the Dean of Men.

JS: I remember [that] Helyar was the dean over at the Agricultural College. I remember the name a little bit, yes, but I never [had an encounter].

KP: Did you go to chapel?

JS: Yes, yes, and I thought it was a damn good idea and I thought phys ed was a damn good idea to be compulsory. I remember, they had some pretty good people talking, like, I'm no Socialist, as you can believe, but I still remember that Norman Thomas came here and spoke at the chapel one time and different respected religious people. ... I think that's probably when I got turned off from any interest in a lot of these colleges, when the students started telling the administration what to do. I feel the same way about a job. If you don't like a job and you can't make reasonable adjustments, fair to everybody, get out, go do something else and, now, the students want to tell the colleges how to run them and what they ought to do and how they ought to behave. My brother-in-law went to Columbia, you know, and they took over that president's office and they took over this office here, blocking this and stopping basketball games and all that. They ought to lock them up. I mean, my idea, when I came, was that, if you were qualified, for X amount of money, you would get a certain amount of education and a certificate or some sort of recognition for what you had done, based on the school's reputation, and you did what you were told and you did it their way and I thought that was fine and I still do. I wouldn't give them a dime anymore. I mean, don't get me wrong, I know that the students in Europe, and Germany especially, are always up in arms, rallying around this and rallying around that. It wasn't my idea, because I got what I wanted. I did what I was supposed to do. I feel the same about everything else, in the Army or anywhere else.

KP: After your draft number came up, where did you report to for your initial induction?

JS: To the Armory in Newark, and then, ... I don't remember how we got to Penn Station in Newark, but we went to Fort Dix, and then, ... I was there just a few days and went to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for basic.

KP: Which branch were you placed in, initially?

JS: Engineers. Yes, I was a bulldozer operator and I was, more or less, the same thing when we came out of there and I went to Camp Edwards and was ... in the amphibious engineers. You see, they had, I think, four brigades, as I remember, that were already overseas. One was in Europe or North Africa somewhere and the other ones were in the Pacific and they were training two more battalions, before they cleared out of Camp Edwards, for replacements for those brigades, whatever they needed, and then, whatever MOS numbers they didn't need went into the pool. ... Because we were around boats and landing craft and stuff like that, ... when they started these harbor craft outfits in the Transportation Corps, that's where I ended up.

KP: Did you want to be in the Engineers?

JS: I liked it. ... I was good at it, too. I could run anything on wheels or tracks. ...

KP: What did you learn in basic? How did your basic differ from other branches' basic training?

JS: Well, I only had, like, six weeks, I guess, of ... practically the same as infantry basic, and then, they were split up. Some of the guys went into combat engineers and some of them went into heavy equipment training and I went into the heavy equipment training. ...

KP: Had you driven any heavy equipment before the war?

JS: Only farm stuff.

KP: That was where you learned to operate a bulldozer.

JS: I don't know if that's where I learned, but I was at it about two weeks and they wanted to make me an instructor. It didn't work out that way, but it was the same in basic training, because I had this ROTC stuff here, map reading and stuff like that. When they went on hikes, a lot of times, they would leave me back at the barracks to go over this stuff with these other guys. I've been here, what? two months and I'm telling these guys, twenty-eight, twenty-nine years old, to shut up and look at the azimuth, you know. [laughter]

AZ: You took basic at Fort Leonard Wood. Where were you sent afterwards for training?

JS: To Camp Edwards, and I was up there through the fall, not quite until Christmastime, and then, they cleared out and we loaded up all the stuff we had there on railroad cars and stuff. We worked down to Woods Hole and loaded stuff, ... alligator tanks and stuff, on railroad cars. Some of it, we put on barges and they towed them down to someplace else. ... Then, I went to

Florida when they started up those harbor craft companies, down on the Gulf Coast, ... near Apalachicola. ... Lousy country, I never liked it. I was there about four months, and then, we went over. I was ... about a year in service before I was in Europe, no regrets. ...

AZ: Did you leave from Florida?

JS: Yes, well, we came up ... to Camp Kilmer and went from there and came back through Kilmer, went back to Fort Dix and said good-bye, but what burns me up is that down below Hightstown there, there used to be a railroad that came from the railroad that runs from the Delaware River over to Fort Dix and I can't remember which trip it was. I think it was when I first went to Fort Dix. I rode on that railroad and, now, there's trees in the middle of it, that (pick?) where the railroad was, and if you don't think that makes you feel old; [laughter] it doesn't seem like that long.

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AZ: Do you remember anything special about crossing the Atlantic? Did you get seasick?

JS: No, I didn't get sick going over. We went over on the *Louis Pasteur*, which was, ... the way I heard it, a French boat that was in the water, but not fitted out and, when the Germans started coming, the French ran it to Dakar, West Africa. ... Then, after France capitulated, the Germans wanted it. ... [I do not know] what they were going to use it for, but they wanted it and they told [them], "Get it up here, to the harbor at Brest," or one of those Atlantic ports and the British got word of it and tried to intercept it, but it outran the cruiser. ... You know, stories grow, but they said they finally turned it around and got it under their guns a few miles off the French shore and took it in to England and they made it into a troopship. That lousy thing could go and, you know, they talk about the *Queen Mary* and them going back and forth with no escorts. We didn't have any escorts, either, but it was made for the South Atlantic run and, boy, that sucker would roll and that North Atlantic is no fun. ... We went over in May, I think, end of April or first week in May, something like that, and I've never seen swells like that in my life and I spend a lot of time on the ocean. I was out in the ocean Monday, fishing. ... We'd go up on deck at night and the stars out on the ocean, you don't see them anywhere else like you do there. ... We went into Liverpool and I remember how small and crowded [it was], you know. I've been hearing about Liverpool all my life as being, you know, a big port and all, but, [when] I saw it, it was narrow. ... We went right on troop trains, right off the [boat], and we ended up down there in Plymouth and we worked for a little while ... by the Royal Dockyard down there and we went to Southampton and went across, but it's funny, I don't remember how I got ... ashore off of that little, beat up troopship. I don't remember [if] we went in a dock or what the heck we went into. I remember going down the rope ladder, but I don't remember [anything else]; I know I didn't swim.

AZ: You docked at Liverpool. Your first impression of England was small and narrow or was that just the port itself?

JS: Yes, well, of course, by that time, those people had been at war for a long time and a lot of

stuff was pretty well run down, but, you know, the railroad rideaways and all were all clean and everything was clean and, all over Europe, [it] was that way, much tidier than this country used to be. We're getting a little better. Yes, ... I could make out most anywhere. What are they going to do, kill me? I feel the same way now.

KP: How long was your unit stationed in England?

JS: Six weeks, maybe, something like that. ...

KP: Did you have any missions or duties in England?

JS: Well, the Chrysler Corporation had made these things they called Sea Mules. They were, essentially, four square tins, iron boxes. Two of them were the bow section, two of them were the rear section and they had straight Chrysler eights in them and you bolted them together and you made a tugboat and they were narrow enough, ... the sections, to be put on a railcar ... and we were putting them together. They weren't worth a damn, but we put them together and, I remember, they ran some of them to Southampton and they blew the engines and stuff, you know. They didn't hold up. Of course, when you hear about those E-boats and stuff like that, you've got a tendency to go real fast, because they even scared our PT boats over there. That was something. I saw one that they scuttled in the mudflats in Le Havre and ... I couldn't believe the workmanship in those things. They were shorter than a PT boat and they had three V-20 Mercedes diesels in them, two sitting this way and one up and three shafts going back and the propellers, I never saw anything shaped like they were. ... Everything was fins on them and they had four injection pumps on them, two on this end, two on that end, each one serving five cylinders. ... I've been around diesels quite a lot and the fuel lines and stuff all got to be the same way, ... made out of plywood or something. I guess they were about five knots faster than the PT boat and they could turn about a half-mile shorter ... and that was a nasty weapon, laying those fogbanks there in the Channel and listen, you know, and come out in back of you. Knock on wood, our outfit was the only one that never lost a boat.

KP: Your outfit never lost a boat.

JS: Down here in Belmar, there's a party boat down there, the *Nighthawk*, and the old man is British, real British, and he was on a little British minesweeper, cleaning up around the beaches and stuff like that and got sunk and one of our boats picked him up and he says he never said anything bad about an American after that. [laughter] I ... showed him some of these pictures, "That's what that tug looked like, the ladder going right up to the wheelhouse." [laughter] ... He's a couple of years older than me, maybe. They had good people, ... got the job done, you know. Canadians, I never had anything to do with any of the New Zealanders or Australians, but the Canadians, I rubbed noses with them, pretty tough, good bunch.

KP: When did your unit leave England?

JS: Well, we got to France, I think, on D-Day +30, so, it would be the first couple days in July, something like that.

KP: Where were you deployed? What was your mission?

JS: Well, we went right on the beach, and then, they took us guys from the maintenance [outfit] out on the Gooseberry [Editor's Note: an artificial breakwater created by ships deliberately sunk off the beach] and we stayed out there for about two months and, if they got a rope in the screw or if something broke, you know, we had to patch it up. They'd run them ... aground and, when the water went out, they put something underneath to fix it, but ... the guys that weren't on the boat were in tents, behind the beach in Normandy, in an apple orchard.

KP: How often were you on a boat and for how long?

JS: Well, when I was in the maintenance, you know, if we could fix something while they were running, we might be on there the whole day doing something. Otherwise, we tied up, you know. ... I lived on that barge, that maintenance barge that we had, for the best part of six months, I guess.

KP: You actually slept there.

JS: Oh, yes. We had a cook, eleven or something; I think eleven or twelve [men].

KP: Was the barge run entirely by the Army?

JS: Yes. Actually, the Army had more boats than the Navy did, when you count them all up.

KP: You normally do not think of the Army as having boats.

JS: That's right and I wasn't crazy about going on boats, which is why I went in the Army, [laughter] but they didn't tell me about the English Channel. ... You go on; at that age, what the hell?

AZ: On the barge, what would you do, typically, besides maintenance? Was that about it?

JS: That was about it, take care of yourself, you know, wash your clothes, sharpen tools. Those clowns kept breaking all kinds of handles in the tools, which weren't very good, what they sent over anyways, especially sledgehammers that you used in beating stuff back down, so [that] you could weld it up and stuff. I made all kind of tool handles out of lifeboat oars from those ships that were sunk along there. There's pretty good ash in them and I spliced a lot of lines. They were always breaking them and I could splice rope and I'd splice them and the guys on the lousy boats would steal them and I'd have to splice up some more. ... If anything, you didn't have enough to do. I mean, that's the way it is in the Army, hurry up and wait for everything, you know, not very efficient.

KP: Did you ever come under enemy fire when you were at the Normandy beaches?

JS: ... Just those reconnaissance planes, once in a while, used to dump a few bombs out there when they'd come over to take pictures. I think they were trying to find out what kind of stuff

was coming in, you know, but I don't think that ... they could have got through by the time we got there with too much that was loaded. [The] only thing they could send through was something fast and it would come through from a different direction every time and they scraped a little landing strip out in back of the beach there and those clowns would come up out of there, ... that dirt runway, P-47s, you know, and I don't think the Germans wanted anything to do with [them]. Damn, those kids could fly.

KP: Who were your immediate commanders, NCOs and officers, while you were at Normandy?

JS: Well, we had ... a warrant officer in charge of the maintenance and he was responsible to our company commander, but, normally, you were attached to some port battalion or something, but I don't really know who we were [under]. I know there was a colonel there and we used to run the barges up on the beach and weld holes in them and we had two welding machines we put in the searchlight trailer [that] we used to take down along side of them and weld it. It wasn't a real lot of fun to strike arcs in the night. [laughter] It makes a pretty good target for those guys up there ... and, sometimes, the guys wouldn't come back with the truck quite soon enough to pull us out of there when the tide was coming in and we pulled that trailer out of there when the water was up over the wheels more than once. ... Laying in that cold sand, welding under the corners of those barges in the night isn't the most fun thing to do, ... because, see, when we got done, they had to get the barges out of there. Most of them they tried to take to Le Havre, but they were all beat up from banging up against the ships, ... mostly the corners, and they wouldn't stay floating long enough to get there and a couple of them sunk on the way. So, we had to finesse. We got them fixed up; we thought ... we'd leave a man on there while the tide came in and he'd go down and see how bad they were leaking, when we thought they were good enough to go. The tug would take them to Le Havre and, I'm not sure, I think they left two there, ... but that was what we were doing for about a month, September.

KP: What did you do to pass the time when you were not working on something?

JS: I don't know. I made a heart for my mother out of half crown and made a ring for my sister out of a shilling piece and stuff, played cards a little bit.

KP: Did you ever go into any of the nearby French towns?

JS: Just during the day, ... when I bought these postcards and stuff. I was only in Carentan once or twice. I wasn't ashore for a couple of months there ... and you're always on the go, you know. ... We got to Ghent, you know, there was taverns and cafes and stuff, near the waterfront there, where you could go and have a beer and play the jukebox and stuff, but, [on] the beach, there was nothing.

KP: How was the food when you were on the barge?

JS: Well, we had ... a cook, ... a lot of stuff, dried stuff and powdered stuff and powdered eggs, but I never really had a problem with C rations and stuff like that. I needed to live. I mean, eating isn't one of my hobbies and, as long as I get something to eat, I'd eat peanut butter and cheese sandwiches and I won't have any problem. A lot of guys were complaining and moaning.

...

KP: You did not mind C rations.

JS: No.

KP: How often would you get a hot shower when you were at Normandy?

JS: I don't think I knew what it was and it was hard, too, because we were working, you know, a lot of times, around saltwater and diesel fuel and all. I had times when I don't think that I had enough skin on my legs that you could cover with my hand, where the skin wasn't coming off. It's tough. ...

AZ: What was your impression of the French civilians that you came in contact with? Did you like them?

JS: I like everybody. There's good people all over and there's crummy people all over. You don't have to go five minutes from here to find either kind and the same is true anywhere in the world. I never had any problem finding good people. ... Le Havre was a little bit tough.

KP: How long were you in Le Havre?

JS: Well, I was there twice, but not [for] very long, a couple of weeks, maybe a week [or] something each time. ... There was a lot of Nazi sympathizers there, because they had the U-boat pens and they took care of those people pretty good, because they didn't want espionage and stuff and they didn't like the Yanks too good.

KP: You sensed that.

JS: Yes, and some of the guys got cut up kind of bad, you know, at night, going out, looking ... to get a drink or something, made them realize they weren't welcome. Dave (Gardner?), one of my customers, he's dead, here, a tractor fell on him a couple of years ago, he says he went into Le Havre later, with an infantry outfit, I guess, and he says, "I remember walking up the hill and giving candy to kids on one side and the people were spitting on him on the other." ... It was a little tough around there. I went a lot of places that, maybe, I shouldn't have gone. You talk about kids, though. Well, we had one kid drowned, fell off the boat going home, at night, after we gave him some bread and we found the bread alongside the barge. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: After your missions at Normandy and Le Havre, you then went to Ghent.

JS: Yes, we went across to Ghent with a bigger tug, ... I don't know, the Transport Service came or something with a bigger tug, [which] was 110 foot, maybe, and we went across to the Tilbury Docks in London, which is in the Thames Estuary there, and then, went back across and up the Scheldt to Ghent and the rest of the outfit went by truck or train or something else and we were

just as glad to go around that way, because ... this fellow from New Milford that I went to see, he was one of the first ones up there and the Germans, I guess, I'm not too familiar with it, but, apparently, the Germans decided to stop shooting them buzz bombs over [at] England and started zeroing them in on some of the ports and stuff. Fred (Racky?) says one of them landed in back of where they were, there in Antwerp, but ... I never heard one.

KP: You never saw one when you were in Ghent.

JS: Yes. The only damage in Ghent was the bridges across the canals. They destroyed some of them when the Germans overran the Low Countries and they only had something that they pulled back and forth on cables, because the bridges were blown out. ... There was no damage there from ordinary warfare, *blitzkrieg* or bombing or anything, at least not that I ever saw.

KP: Did you ever come under fire in Ghent?

JS: No, and then, ... I was in Antwerp for a little while after they gave Ghent back to the Belgians and ... the Germans were done then. ...

KP: What were your responsibilities in Ghent?

JS: Well, we took the ships up and down the canal, because they couldn't make the turns by themselves.

KP: In a sense, you were almost in the Navy.

JS: Did a lot of the same things the Navy did.

KP: What were some of your specific assignments?

JS: Well, like I say, anything that broke, besides making up lines and making fenders for the boats and changing shafts and screws, it was just normal maintenance that you'd have on machinery. Whatever came up, you had to get it fixed.

KP: You were now in a major city. Did that improve your off duty life? Did you go into town more often?

JS: Well, I got to know some of the people, you know, pretty well in the one little cafe there. After we moved out, and that was when I was in the hospital, they moved while I was in the hospital and, for a while, when I was in Antwerp, I used to go back to Ghent. They gave me a lousy job in Antwerp. I was permanent CQ, twenty-four hours on and twenty-four off. I had to go with the trucks ... [and] this was sending guys back home again and it was like a tent city and ... they'd come in by train, truck and everything else and you'd have to assign them to tents and take them for this and take them for that and call them off and get them back on the trains or whatever. ... I got sick of that. ... They had set up these schools in England, up near Blackpool, it was at Warton Air Base there, for the guys that didn't have enough points to come home and I had applied for the first eight-week course, but I was in the hospital, I couldn't go. So, then, I

went for the November one and I went over there and took the heavy equipment and maintenance [course]. It was good. They had guys from Caterpillar ... and everything there for instructors and stuff, you know. We tore a big bulldozer down to the last nut and put it back together again. You've got to learn something.

KP: Was this in November of 1944 or 1945?

JS: '45 and ... that got finished up in January, right after New Year's, and anybody who had over, I don't know what it was, fifty-three points or something like that didn't have to go back to their unit. ... So, I went to Southampton and I came home on the cruiser *Augusta* on the next trip it made after it took Truman to Potsdam and I got sick coming home on that.

KP: You did not get sick going over, though.

JS: I was never sick on the tugboat, either, but I sure got sick coming home. I've got the meal ticket [with] only about three punches in it [for] seven days. [laughter] Of course, I was living pretty good in Southampton, too, as far as that goes.

KP: What do you mean by that?

JS: We were out every night, me and some crazy paratrooper by the name of (McCann?) from Philadelphia. ... We had turned all our money in, all the pounds that we had, but I saved some out because I had a date and I was getting ready, five o'clock, maybe, to get dressed and they come in, they say, "All corporals and T-5s, fall out [in] the company street." I says, "For what?" "We don't know." I says, "I am not going." So, the kid went on. These were all kids that [had] just come over from the States, you know, put them in charge of this kind of crap. "Get the hell away from me. Go find somebody else." So, he came back and he just stood there and McCann, he was a staff sergeant, they didn't want him, he says, "Are you going, Junior?" ... I went by that name the whole time in the war. "I don't know." He says, "You'd better go ... or you won't go home." So, I went. Only time in my life I had that white MP helmet on and them white leggings and you know what it was? gangplank guard on the *Queen Mary*, because they were bringing the war brides home. ... The first trip they made, they had twelve hundred extra English girls on there, ... so, we couldn't let anybody on or anybody off, right. [laughter] ... Then, after that, we were confined and I came home, so, I've still got the handful of pound notes that I was going to spend that night. Here I am, watching somebody else's women. [laughter]

KP: You still have the actual notes.

JS: Yes, I think I do, I'm not sure. The kids might have took them. I've still got the one invasion one here that I showed you, but the funny part about it was, some good-looking girl came down the gangplank and I tell her, "You can't get off," and you could tell she was what you people at Rutgers would call "well-bred," you know, fur coat and whatnot. She says, "I want to go across to the cable office." I says, "I can't let you off." ... She says, "My brother just came back from India," or whatever it was. "He's a lieutenant," or something. She asked me whether I would send it, ... a telegram or cable or whatever it was. She wrote it all out and gave me the money. So, when I was relieved, I went across there and sent the cable for her. ...

KP: Saying that she was aboard the ship?

JS: Yes, or saying hello or good-bye to her brother or whatever the hell it was, you know, but little things happened, you know.

KP: You were an MP once. What did you think of MPs? It sounds as though you may have had a run-in or two with the MPs.

JS: Well, I could never see [why] anybody would want to do it by choice. ... It's bad enough fighting a war without fighting them, too, [laughter] but, you know, they're necessary and, for a while there, when we were in Southampton, before we came back, I pulled guard duty in the stockade and I think I was more scared for my life there than I was [at] any other time, even in bad storms and everything. I'm telling you, that was a bad bunch of guys, you know. They were all the ones that had shot officers or raped civilians. ... Most of them were in there for life and you had to take them to the latrine and all this sort of stuff, you know, by yourself, live ammunition.

KP: How long were you on stockade duty?

JS: Just one four hours.

KP: However, that was your most frightening duty.

JS: Well, it could have been close. I mean, I couldn't believe animals like that. Prisoners of war weren't that bad. ... God, that was a bad bunch.

KP: Did you ever encounter any prisoners of war?

JS: Well, they used to bring us some, once in a while, for, like, work details and stuff, cleaning up stuff and whatnot. I remember, when we were patching barges on the beach, they brought some down there to handle material and stuff like that. Jeez, most of them were only fifteen, sixteen years old. They were younger than I was, you know, but they all said, "Well, the *Wehrmacht* ... will be back. We'll only be here a while." They were still convinced that Germany was going to win.

KP: Even though they were prisoners.

JS: Right. ... Before we left Florida, they had a group of Italian prisoners of war down there, too. I don't know whether they were captured in North Africa or what, but they were down there and some of them had been there quite a while, a year or two, but they used to use them for clean-up detail and stuff like that, picking up stuff along the road. I never saw them, no prisoner of war, ... be of any problem to anybody.

KP: As compared to this group of American prisoners.

JS: Oh, I tell you ...

KP: How did you know how bad their crimes had been? Did they tell you?

JS: Oh, I was told.

KP: You were told what they had done.

JS: [If] you let them go, you served their sentence. [laughter] I'd have shot one as soon as he looked at me cross-eyed. They'd just drive you nuts, you know. You'd tell them to do something and they wouldn't. They knew what you were up against, too, believe me, but they were as bad of humans as I was ever around, ... terrible. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

AZ: Was that the extent of your actual contact with the enemy?

JS: Eye-to-eye, yes. You knew they were in some of the planes and stuff like that, but not eye-to-eye or hand-to-hand. I never shot at one.

KP: Were you in Ghent during the Battle of the Bulge?

JS: No, no, I was in Rouen. We were in Rouen; we didn't go. See, the Germans had some of those islands in the Scheldt and they couldn't get them out of there and they were pretty well up into Germany, I guess, across the Rhine and all, before they got them out of there, ... so that they could use Antwerp and Ghent. You see, it runs up and Antwerp is kind of on the end and ... they made that canal out of the river that comes down from Ghent, with locks, and deepened it, and then, the Port of Ghent is three fingers, like this, great dock, north dock, middle dock and south dock, and then, there was a place down farther where they had to call it the sand dock, where they could put sand in for ballast. ... They could take ships three hundred and more feet [long] up that canal. They couldn't make the corners by themselves and it was a little bit tricky, because they had some other guys there and they turned a tug over, ... lost some guys, but we never had any problem. ...

KP: Did you give any thought to staying in the Army?

JS: No, no, not really, but I had thought of going back afterwards, ... like in Korea and stuff, after I got married and started getting told what to do. [laughter]

KP: However, you never went back into the military.

JS: No, and I never was in the Reserves or the National Guard or anything like that. ... I figured I paid my dues.

KP: Have you ever been back to where you served in Europe?

JS: No, I thought about it, but I've known some guys [that did]. ... Bert Walker went back and he married a British girl and they went back when his boy got out of high school and the wife went and stayed with her folks in England and they went over, but ... everybody tells me, you know, "It's not the same without the guys." ... Like I say, I'd just as soon forget it.

KP: It sounds as though you stayed in touch with a lot of the men in your unit.

JS: No, just two. ... There's the one up in Maine and, unfortunately, he came from a family where none of the males ever lived to be fifty. He got that Hodgkin's or whatever it is, ... the cancer that goes up. Fathers, grandfathers, uncles, his brothers, everybody, he was forty-eight when he died, hell of a guy. He weighed about 250. I weighed about 150. "150 pounds of bone and gristle," he said. [laughter] He'd be fooling around with sparkplugs and stuff like that and I'd be swinging a sledgehammer. [laughter] He was a good guy. My wife used to write back and forth to his wife and they swapped recipes and crochet patterns and stuff like that, but I got a Christmas card from her and I put a note in there that my wife was gone and I haven't heard from her since.

KP: When did you start again at Rutgers?

JS: In the ... fall of '45, right?

KP: When did you leave the military?

JS: February of '45, wasn't it? yes.

KP: Was it 1946? V-E Day was in May of 1945.

JS: Well, it was the next February, '46, and I came home and ... I hung around my sister when she got married, and then, I went up to work for my uncle and I came back in September and went back to Rutgers.

KP: You mentioned that you worked up in Massachusetts in 1946 and 1947. You mentioned earlier that you were very tempted to stay up there.

JS: Well, it was free as a bird, you know. I didn't have anything to worry about. I was with people that I liked and [I was] doing what I could do. ... My cousin, Raymond, was in the tanks, but there are only a few of us that were actually, you know, overseas in the war, out of the cousins and stuff. So, I've got to say that we're pretty respected. He's retired from GE up there. Now, he's got some beef cattle and stuff. He had some trouble with the (cholera?). The state told him to kill a couple of his calves or something and ... [they] said, "Well, we'll send somebody over to investigate." "Don't bother," he says, "I shot them." [laughter] ... Like I say, I was very comfortable with the people up there, the people I liked, and I would be yet. My wife loved all of them, they all loved her, you know. We could go up there, visit around and have a hell of a time. They stopped at the house, you know, a lot better than on my side of the family, a big difference.

KP: How had Rutgers changed when you returned in 1947?

JS: Well, it was so crowded and they were awful short of lab space, especially, so that they scheduled us for a lot of humanities or whatever you want to call it. ... I remember coming back and they gave me "Early American Literature" or something like that. I think I spent more time on that course than I did the other four or five put together, reading *Moby Dick*, because I'm a very, very thorough person when it comes to reading. I usually pretty well remember everything I read. ... So, that disrupted the normal scheduling of courses and stuff, or limited your choices, and some of the stuff, the petty stuff that kids did; one of them lived down there near me. ... He was here when I came back; just, you know, their whole attitudes were different from the fellows that had been in the service and lived in barracks and stuff like that.

KP: What was different?

JS: Well, they just had different things that were important [to them], you know, like varsity football games and stuff, you know. I didn't even know who they were playing. ... So much was changed. I mean, I think the ROTC was made, you know, optional after that and they didn't have chapel. ... A lot of rules were changed. ... I think they got not so strict and maybe the instructors weren't as good, either, because they had to put on some more and a lot of them had been away and got away from stuff. As I say, I came here to study and, if I didn't think I was going to do well and get something out of it and be proud of what I was doing and all that, I wouldn't have stayed. ... I was businesslike about it and that's the way I approached it and I didn't want to waste some professors time or mine or anybody else's at this school or take a space for somebody that really wanted to study. When I get done, I'll have my fling or whatever, ... but, when I was here, I did my work. I'm no genius. I play around with some of those Mensa tests, once in a while, but I don't think I could get a 150.

KP: You mentioned that you met Professor Bender after the war. He was your favorite professor.

JS: ... One of them, yes.

KP: What stood out about Professor Bender?

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----
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JS: ... At that time, [he] was doing research in grass silage and rotation grazing and stuff like that. That was something that, you know, I had never seen or never done and was interested in new stuff and new nutrition studies. ... He was just a nice guy.

KP: How did you meet your wife?

JS: One of my original classmates when I came here earlier, [his] name was Dale Moody, he was a twin, they weren't identical, Dale and Gale, and, when they came back from the war, another brother came and he built a house over there on Riverview Avenue, by Rutgers Stadium.

They lived there, ... because they figured it'd be cheaper, and then, he'd sell the house when they got out of college. Their father was a carpenter and he came up and worked [on it]. ... He met the girl next door and they got married and they had the reception at the Pines up here in Metuchen. ... My roommate knew this girl, that I met and eventually married, and she was going to be there. So, she was a friend of the girl and I was a friend of the groom. So, that's how I met her over there. I was pretty drunk. I thought she was redheaded, but she wasn't. My wife went to Highland Park High School and they had their forty-fifth reunion back there. That was an experience, too, the lies those women tell at those reunions. They did at mine, too. All their daughters married millionaires and live in Newport and the Bahamas and all their sons are all brain surgeons. [laughter] ... I want to be a woman when I come back next time; I want to get away with a lot of stuff. [laughter]

KP: You became a farmer after graduation.

JS: Yes.

KP: Where did you first work after graduating?

JS: Well, one of these guys from that farmer's club in New York had a farm up in Flanders and he needed somebody to do the young stock and maternity work and, in fact, two of us went up there from that class, Jim Kincaid and I, and I stayed there [for] about two years, but he had a couple of sons that came back, you know. They were like my age. So, then, I went to work ... for the father-in-law of a guy I knew from church, this Dick Debevoise, and I worked for his father-in-law, [who] had a farm there in Peapack, and I went there with the understanding that I was to take it over from the old-timer that had been the superintendent for years. That didn't work out. So, then, ... I was six years down in Colt's Neck with a man by the name of Ripley and I had three or four farms. We farmed a lot of ground. I did good down there; didn't have brains enough not to back myself into a corner. You can [only] work seven days a week for just so long before something happens. So, I went to driving trucks. I drove a truck for one outfit for twenty-five years, and then, eleven years with another one.

KP: When you say that you backed yourself into a corner in farming, do you mean in terms of working too hard?

JS: Yes, too many hours, too much strain, too much problems, you know. ... The one guy had five kids and got cancer and died. What are you going to do, throw the widow out of the house? So, until she can make some arrangements, you've got to do his work, stuff like that. Of course, I fancy myself as some kind of infallible [person] probably anyway. You go down there, at that time, Monmouth County was, like, the second highest gross revenue per acre in the country and all that and the county agent's sending guys that had been farmers for twenty and thirty years ... to me to ask me what to do. You know, they're always looking for something. They say, "Are you running this place?"

KP: Had you hoped to own your own farm one day?

JS: It never ... came to the point where [it was possible]. No, I wasn't ... looking forward to it,

no.

KP: It sounds as though farming did not turn out the way you thought it would when you were growing up and in school.

JS: Well, ... the 1950s was probably the lousiest time in the history of American agriculture to be trying to do anything, you know. Prices kept going down and down and down and more regulations all the time and more of this and more of that and the yields went up, you know, like, a hundred percent in ten years or something like that, through the use of the new insecticides, frankly, which are now mostly all banned, and hybrid corn and all this sort of stuff, overproduction, ... and I didn't like the government regulation part of it. I never did.

KP: Which aspects were particularly bothersome?

JS: Well, your management decisions as to what to plant where and how much and stuff like that. ... They started telling you what you could do and what you couldn't do. So, when you had migrant help, you got a lot of interference. There was no way you could comply, you know, with all their regulations and stuff.

KP: What type of regulations would they require for migrant workers?

JS: Oh, screen doors on the shanties and all that sort of stuff. ... They'd break all [the] stuff up, and then, you'd get blamed for it, stuff like that. A lot of this stuff is good, you know, but, [if] you're going to change things, you can't change them overnight, anything to do with human beings, whether it's the History Department or whatever it is. Slow change, a human being can handle a lot of it, an awful lot of it, but you try to do it too fast and it affects too many different things in too many different ways. Oh, it's a funny thing, you know, Prof. Bender always kidded about it, he says, "All of my best students from the college, they're all working for the phone company," ... I mean, unless you wanted to go into research and I didn't want to do that, because I didn't want to be inside. Maybe if I had been a little younger, I would have gone into veterinary medicine, but, as it was, jeez, I was twenty-four years old, you know, by the time I had to go make a living, [laughter] and my nephew, he was thirty, I guess, before he started to go to work and I think my grandson's going to be about eighty. [laughter]

KP: How did you fall into truck driving?

JS: Well, I wanted to work outside and I wanted something to do and I could do that, you know, and I went with ... GLF, which was an agricultural cooperative, which required that you have some agricultural background to get that job at that time and you had to be a farm boy or something, you know, and some of the people that I dealt with from their stores and stuff like that put in a good word for me and I didn't have any problems getting the job.

KP: How long did you drive for them?

JS: Twenty-five years.

KP: What were your routes?

JS: Well, around Central Jersey, mostly Middlesex, Monmouth, Mercer, some Burlington.

KP: Why did you leave that company?

JS: They sold the trucks and contracted the work out and I didn't want to go into business for myself when I was fifty-nine years old. So, one of my customers that I had known and had his kid on the ball team and all this sort of stuff said, "John, when they let you go, come down and work for me." I was going to go down there and work for two years, until I could draw Social Security, and I ended up staying eleven.

KP: You retired only recently.

JS: A year ago Labor Day. This is only my second winter when I haven't been working.

KP: How does it feel to be retired?

JS: It's hard to say, because, a year ago, I got terrible bronchitis and I thought I was going to die and it took me all of December and into January to get to feeling any better, and then, in the spring, they told me I had prostate cancer, so, I got that cut out. So, that pretty well screwed up the early part of this summer. So, I really can't make a decent comparison, because the last winter that I worked, I never missed a day. [laughter] ... So, maybe I just quit just in time, I don't know. If I had the operation to do over again, I don't know whether I would do it or not, awful lot of pain connected with it, probably only last a year.

AZ: Did your children take an interest in your military background?

JS: No. ... My oldest boy's always telling everybody, "My father probably had the safest job [of] anybody in the whole World War II," which is one reason why he and I never got along so good. [laughter] We do pretty good now, but we were really on the outs, to the point [that] I tossed him out of the house when he was in college. The other boy is interested in it from a historical standpoint, like, his great-great-grandfather being in the Civil War and ... my father-in-law was in World War I in France and, you know, he keeps checking that stuff, but ... I don't think he ever had any interest in going in service himself, any more than I would have, except that, at the time, it was something that we had to do, so, we had to do it.

KP: Neither of your sons served in the military.

JS: No. Chris was close to going in Vietnam, but he was never called.

KP: How would you have felt if he had gone to Vietnam?

JS: It was bad with him. That was another one of the things that got me against ... so-called higher education. He came home one night and told me, "My professor told me, don't listen to you people. You screwed the whole world up, your generation." "Probably did," I says, "but

until you prove you can do any better, I'm paying the bills, you'll do what I say or get out." So, he got out. A lot of the things that rub off from, again, [the] academic community; I mean, I was a student. ... I never considered myself to be a scholar. I respect them ... and, in fact, one of Glen's best buddies is working on his Masters in history and I'm very fond of him and I respect people that do that and I respect good musicians ... and theologians, but, an awful lot today, people got a lot of big ideas, but they can't ... implement them or they can't make them work for the [right] length of time or they can't shut them off when they're finished. It makes it very, very difficult for an ordinary person in this country to be willing to participate in it. ... Like the Boy Scouts and all that, they relaxed so much of their stuff that I don't think their awards mean anything. A lot of them don't.

KP: You were a Boy Scout leader for a while.

JS: Well, not too much. ... I did some merit badge work and stuff like that, like Lifesaving Merit Badge. You give it to a kid twelve years old. Well, he's supposed to be able to get an adult out of the water, you know, save their life; ... no way they could do it. A 160-pound kid couldn't handle you if you're dead in the water. I mean, how can you give them that ... and I'd have the Scoutmaster send kids to me for the Gardening Merit Badge and stuff like that, you know. Something was supposed to be done over a whole season. They go, "Oh, I'm already finished," you know. "I did this, I did this." ... He wants me to get it because we're going to have a jamboree or something. ... "Can I get it this week?" "Hey, get lost." So, I quit doing it. It just wouldn't come up to where I wanted to put my name on it, that's all. It's that simple. I'm pretty well impressed by you two guys. [laughter]

KP: Andrew is a good, solid student.

JS: I probably could live next door to you without having the cops there too much. [laughter]

KP: You never joined any veteran's organizations.

JS: Yes, too many heroes. ... I used to deliver oil to the VFW and I'd have to go into the bar there and get the ticket signed, you know, and a lot of these guys I knew from around town, I knew their kids, and they're all heroes, you know. They've all been wounded at least eight or nine times and there's nothing less than a general in there or a commander, you know, and, jeez, what the hell's a corporal doing with this bunch? ... In actuality, I was just as happy to put it behind me. My father-in-law was real active in the American Legion over there in Highland Park. He was commander a couple of times and stuff like that and my mother-in-law was active in the Auxiliary and stuff and my wife ... was in the juniors, or whatever they called it, when she was kid. ... I'm not really a group person. I like being around two or three other guys, maybe, two couples.

AZ: When you first came back from the war, what changes did you see in the country, the massive industrial buildup, women in the workforce, things of that nature?

JS: ... In what I did, where I was, who I had contact with, ... I didn't see much difference immediately. I was concerned that so many of the fellows that came back couldn't get work right

away and stuff like that, ... but I didn't really see much change in the people that I knew and the neighborhoods that I was in. I mean, after ten or fifteen years, the neighborhoods where I grew up and the high school I went to and stuff like that began [to change], but what difference I saw here in Rutgers was physical, I mean, temporary classrooms or chasing around and moving around or not being able to take a course for lack of a building or lack of a professor to do it, numbers, but not philosophy. ... Then, they changed, you know, no more phys ed, no more this, no more that. ... The thing with me is that no matter what you are or who you are, a doctor, a neighbor, a cop or what, you've got to be a good person first. If you're a good person, then, I go on from there. If you're not a good person, no matter how accomplished you are as a surgeon or how much money you got or how beautiful your wife is, it doesn't amount to a damn with me and you learn that in the service, because you learned to ... deal with the people that you can depend on and ... won't lie to you and stuff like that. ...

KP: How did you get around undependable people, especially if it was an officer?

JS: You mean in civilian life?

KP: No, in the military.

JS: I don't know whether I want to tell any of them stories. ... After putting [up with] all we put up with, one of the officers down there, ... I never saw him, I didn't know who he was, he came down there and he made the warrant officer, which was over me, walk half the length of Utah Beach to go shave and he told me to shave, because I hadn't shaved since I left England. We got so nervous on the boat, one guy had a pair of clippers and we cut all the hair off everybody. So, I had just as much hair up here as I had down here. Now, he told me to shave, you know; the next time he saw me, I'd better shave. I was working one day, cutting some plates, make some stoves for the guys in the tents up on the beach, because it began to get a little chilly, and I saw him coming, walking down, nosing around, poking around and I had a big tip on that cutting torch and I kept heating it and heating it and heating it and I had a ball of white hot iron there, big as a golf ball. Well, he got as about as far from you to me, [of] course, he couldn't see where I was looking with the goggles on. I threw the air into that, I burned him full of holes from one end to the other. He never bothered me again. I don't know whether that answers your question. That doesn't make it right or wrong. ... You'd be surprised how many of those fellows changed when we got overseas, [laughter] but, ... that guy didn't know me, I didn't know him. In general, I didn't have any problem with the people that I worked with and got along with.

KP: You got along with your fellow enlisted men and the officers.

JS: Absolutely. ...

KP: Is there anything that we have forgot to ask about? You mentioned earlier that you did not like to talk about the war after you came back.

JS: I didn't say I didn't want to talk about it, but ... it was over and done with. I mean, I didn't talk about college, either, after I got out of college. I would visit with college mates. I knew a couple of them. I'd call my roommate up ... when they had all that stuff about the Battle of the

Bulge, George Jenkins. He started with me, and then, came back, same as I did, and we roomed together over here the last two years. I called him up; his wife said he's been dead for six years. He was the president of the bank up there in Peapack, good guy. He got wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. ... I'd run into one, once in a while, [that] I knew from school. ... I never went to any of the reunions or never went to any football games or anything, never have. ... I just go on, ... which is really very ordinary, I think, for my generation and I'm reasonably proud of what we did, you know, when I look back now. ... When I grew up, there was no Turnpike, there was no Parkway, there was no Verrazano Narrows Bridge, there was no Rutgers campus over on the other side of the river, ... St. Peter's Hospital in Middlesex was a small hospital and I see all these community colleges and everything and I wonder what these guys [today's students] are going to be able to say after fifty years, you know? Are you going to make that many changes and pay for them? If you do, God bless you. I mean, that's fair, right? I mean, I don't consider my generation ... a failure, a lot of ordinary people doing ordinary things.

KP: How do you judge the generation that followed you?

JS: My kids? Well, [in] a lot of ways, they're better than I am, you know. ... There are different ones in the family, you know. My nephew, he was Deputy Mayor of Boston and all that and retired when he was forty-eight. That isn't bad, ... even for a guy that went to Dartmouth and Harvard. ... He's gone back to work now. ... He got bored, so, he went back to work and he's Director of Debt Management for the State of Massachusetts. His wife had a business, sold it for a couple of million, tough life. So, how can you judge? ... I was real annoyed at him, though, and he knows it, because he went through that ROTC program at Dartmouth and I guess that kept him out of Vietnam, but, then, they were supposed to serve time after that and, somehow, they had some situation where you could waive it, you know. So, he was supposed to go on active duty and he never did. That didn't set; I believe you're supposed to do what you agree to do. So, I thought that was a little chicken. I mean, the war was over; there really wasn't no reason why he couldn't go. ... I got along pretty good with the [next] generation, my kids, growing up, the boys especially, because we never had any girls. We never had too many girls around the house, ... but the boys, there was a lot of ballplayers, a lot of hockey players and stuff that know me and yell and holler at me and stop by the house and thought an awful lot of my wife. I think half of the jocks in Mercer County called my wife, "Grandma," you know, but I've got a little grandson that's a pretty good hockey player. He was the most valuable player in the Garden State Games this year and stuff like that. So, physically and athletically, they're probably better than I was, but I never had a chance to find out how good I might have been, you know. I get on them pretty good. The big grandson and I got [to] wresting around over at his uncle's around Christmastime. We broke a few dishes and stuff like that. [laughter] I wasn't about to let him push me around. ... Are you married?

KP: Yes.

JS: Got kids?

KP: No.

JS: Okay. You married?

AZ: No.

JS: Got kids?

AZ: No.

JS: Not that you know of. [laughter] So, are you going to make this business your lifetime work, you think, teaching? ...

AZ: Probably, taking after my father.

JS: ... Your father was a professor?

AZ: No, he teaches high school.

JS: Where?

AZ: Parsippany.

JS: My daughter-in-law teaches in Hightstown. I remember when they flooded Lake Parsippany, when they made it. Well, I don't think of anything else. ... Three-quarters of the guys in service probably never saw combat, you know, I mean, hand-to-hand combat, but it had to be done and it wasn't done, a lot of times, very well and [there was] a lot of waste, wasted time and wasted material and stuff, but it got done, you know. I didn't go in service with the idea of being a hero and I didn't come out a hero and I respect the guys that did, you know, guys like Jimmy (Sheeren?), who was in my class in high school, who was a paratrooper and all that. I mean, I give him credit; that takes guts to volunteer for that kind of stuff, but, then again, these other guys, like Brendan Byrne and some of them, they make out like they did so much, you know, and I don't see how they possibly could have been all the places they said they were. ... I used to help Brendan with his homework. He wrote across his picture in my yearbook, "Thanks for helping me pass chemistry," and what did I get out of him? income taxes, the son of a bitch. [laughter]

KP: You knew Brendan Byrne when he was young.

JS: In high school.

KP: In high school.

JS: He went to a different junior high school than me.

AZ: Do you know D. Robert Mojo?

JS: Don't ...

AZ: I know he went to West Orange High.

JS: Hey, don't bring that up.

AZ: Okay.

JS: Because he and I were the only two that came down here together out of that class, that I know of. You a relation of his?

AZ: No. I transcribed his interview.

JS: Oh, he did one?

KP: Yes.

JS: Well, he lived about two, three blocks from me and he finished a little bit ahead of me in school, high school, one or two places. ... In fact, he wrote in the same yearbook, "See you at Rutgers." ... I saw him at the reunion and I remember going down here the first semester, you know, and ... I don't know where he lived, but he was involved. He was going to be in a fraternity, he's going to be this, he's going to be that. So, at the end of the first semester, ... of course, they had the numbers turned around, I had five 2s and a 1 or something like that, you know. ... Of course, he went into engineering and I think he flunked everything; I'm not sure. ... I don't think we ever had another conversation for fifty years after that, but I did see him at the reunion, but I didn't even ask him what he was doing, because he was too busy talking to somebody about [how] he got out of engineering and got into banking, where the real money was. ... He was a good high school student and I could never figure out why he didn't do better. ... Are you only interviewing graduates?

AZ: Of Rutgers, yes.

JS: Well, he did come back, then, and graduate?

AZ: Yes, in the Class of 1949.

JS: Because I never remember seeing him back here again.

AZ: If I remember correctly, he was in economics.

KP: He settled in Oklahoma City.

JS: I'm not taking anything away from him, but it was just one of those things that baffled me. Basically, I thought [that for] anybody that came here, at that time, with a good high school education, that your freshmen year was more or less something to even out everybody that came from the small schools out in South Jersey and all. ... I didn't really have any problems with anything going. I did what I was supposed to do and I was surprised that he did, ... but he did come to the reunion over here at the Friar Tuck, up there in Cedar Grove. He was there.

Brendan was there, too, but he didn't speak to me, like I care. His wife grew up about two blocks from me, but they're not together anymore. I don't know what happened; I don't know whether she died or what. Her ex-husband lives in Princeton, a paratrooper, but his wife, (Sheeren's?) wife, her name was Sally Gallagher and she was everybody's pal, you know, great looking blonde, bushel basket full of curls, blonde curls, could run faster than most of the boys, you know. Everybody loved Sally Gallagher. I never heard anybody say anything [bad about her]. She was a good student. ... I talked to her at the reunion and she said she lived down the Shore now and I looked her over. I know she wasn't any bigger than a size ten and I says to her, "Did you run this morning, Sally?" She said, "No, but I swam three miles," [laughter] and my wife was fat as hell and a lot of those women had kept themselves in [good shape]. Sally had to be sixty-five, sixty-six, you know, and still looking great, you know, but she and Jimmy are split up, too. Yes, there was some good people. Then, again, there was a lot of them that grew up that way that didn't make it, like Johnny Montgomery, [who] was a year ahead of me, lived over here in Winants Hall and he got hit in the head in Italy, and then, he got killed in Southern France, you know. A kid down the street, (Sully Howe?), went down with the *Hornet* and Drew Williams, he got killed in the Navy, somewhere in the South Pacific. We lost a lot of them in our neighborhood. The one (Rand?) boy went down; he was a pilot, Doug Rand, and Franklin Williams got killed. We lost a lot of them. I used to come home on furlough; I couldn't find anybody to do anything with. ... There was nobody around. Well, I don't know, is this the general kind of thing you're doing?

KP: Yes.

[TAPE PAUSED]

JS: ... He flew fifty missions or something with the Eighth Air Force. He won't even look up at an airplane anymore, had a guy shot up in the other of the plane from him and stuff like that. He never was active in any veteran's organizations. ... My best other shooting buddy was a pilot. ... He went back to the University of Pittsburgh, where he had some of his pre-flight training, flunked out, and he was afraid to tell his mother and father. Here's a guy [who has] been through a war, he's afraid to tell his mother and father [that] he flunked out, because she was a schoolteacher, Pennsylvania Dutch people. She was a schoolteacher and his father was principal of South Side High School in Newark, which was a lot different from what it is now, afraid to tell his father and mother. He went to work for Westinghouse out there. I guess they didn't have enough money or something. He's still hanging around with some of the guys from the college and I guess they altered some subsistence checks or something like that and he ended up in Leavenworth. [laughter] ... We lost an awful lot of guys. ... As far as that goes, I don't see that many people from up in West Orange anymore, because I never went back there to stay after I came home, you know. I hear something from them, once in a while. My folks would see them, you know, but I'm trying to go on from here, you know, but, the last few years, I haven't had too much luck. I buried my father, I buried my mother and, come home one day from going fishing, I found my wife dead on the couch. It's like quick work. I don't seem to be able to catch a break; ... no regrets. ...

KP: Thank you very much.

JS: I don't know what else to [say]. You did at least hear of the Gooseberry, so, you must know something, because most people don't [know]. They heard of that ... Mulberry that the British towed over there. I was only there once. That place was a wreck. It was all broke up and you could only use half of it or something. I looked up at those cliffs where those guys went up there, no thank you. [laughter] That was ... not too good, but, then, again, when they used to toss me overboard, when they got a rope in a screw, with a knife and tell me to go get it out, you know, ... I'd come up and I'd grab a hold of the boat to get my breath and they'd step on my fingers. "Hey, we're sitting ducks here, you know. There's a war going on, Junior." You'd be surprised how good you learned to swim.

KP: Did you know how to swim before the war?

JS: A little bit, but [not much]. [laughter] That's what happened when you're the youngest one in the outfit. That's the kind of stuff [you do].

KP: You get all the jobs that no one else wants.

JS: I got no regrets; somebody had to do it, you know. ... I'll tell you one nasty story. On those boats that they sank in that kind of half moon ... and they cabled them together, some of them, you could jump from one to the other one. Some of them were not quite lined up, because we stole everything we could off of any of them that we could use, wire or whatever, pulleys, (jack lines?), stuff like that, and there's so much tide there, running in and out, it washed the sand out from under them, and then, they broke and ours was the last one that cracked and we got a hell of a storm and it was the SS *Sahale*, which was a old Hog Islander, was made down in Philadelphia in World War I. Well, it cracked, right across the boat and down the sides. Of course, the keel was still together, you know, on the bottom, and every wave came, you know, it started doing this business. So, we'd better have somebody up all night, an hour apiece. ... Well, we had a drum of gasoline with a spigot on it for the generator and the generator we had up on the top deck. ... So, wouldn't you know it, the generator ran out of gas when it was my turn, you know, about two o'clock in the morning. So, one of the tugs tied up alongside, in case something bad happened. So, I hollered over to him and he had a searchlight and he turned it over, so [that] I could see what I was doing. So, I got five gallons of gas out of this drum, but the drum was on that side and I was on this side of the crack. So, I was going back and forth this way to get the can full. I finally got the can full, went up, got the generator started. When I came back down, the drum was gone. ... That fifty-five-gallon drum of gasoline was just plain gone and I had been there five minutes before. That ocean ... doesn't give for anybody.

KP: It sounds like you were both afraid and respectful of the ocean, even though you were very close to land.

JS: I still am. I was out fishing Monday and I got seasick, this past Monday, but I love the ocean, but ... those things like that, it's hard to explain to somebody ... what it was like. ...

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Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/27/04
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/27/04