

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOAN YUNKER HIGGINS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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SPRING LAKE, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Matt Lawrence: This begins an interview with Joan Yunker Higgins on April 26, 2007, in Spring Lake, New Jersey, with Matt Lawrence and Shaun Illingworth.

Shaun Illingworth: Thank you very much for having us.

Joan Higgins: Well, I'm delighted really to talk to you.

ML: Let's start with the basics, where and when were you born?

JH: I was born and this is different also, we were, all three of us, were born in our house, not in a hospital, and in Montclair, New Jersey, 32 The Crescent, and my father was a dentist, so this was a very large house. The picture of it is right here on the wall, and so I was the youngest of three girls and it was delightful, old-fashioned living and I don't know whatever happened to that world but it was a delightful world.

SI: Could you elaborate on that, what you mean by old-fashioned living?

JH: By that I mean, it was, Montclair was a lovely town. We had, ... one car, seldom used, we could walk every place. We were, because of his dentist's office, we were on what they called 32 The Crescent. The Crescent was from Trinity Place to South Fullerton and it was two blocks from Bloomfield Avenue. Nobody had...cars. There were trolley cars and that was the way you got around and, of course, there were some people that drove, but very seldom, and so that's why all the offices were close to the downtown center. They called The Crescent "Pill Alley" for that reason, there were so many doctors and dentists on it. So we had, it was just like a little private enclave...everything was around us. We had everything right there and also right next door to Kimberly School and they were patients of my father's as well. So...they had a wonderful tennis court and we owned the net so...we had our private, our own private tennis club, you might say... We were very popular as a result. But it was my grandmother and her sister, my great aunt, lived with us so...they would have been insulted if they had just lived there with no job to do or anything. So...Auntie Sue was a fantastic cook and baker, and so forth. But Father was the only man, with six women, so people really felt that he was up for sainthood. But it was a very simple probably, but very controlled, very, very nice life. We went to the local grammar school in, it was only about two blocks away. Our church was right there on South Fullerton Avenue and then, ... the Dominican sisters were patients of my father's and, in those days, they were..., they always had to go out two by two ... from Caldwell. Of course, our neighbors, the founders of Kimberly School, thought we should go there to school, whereas the Dominicans, Sister Raymond, thought we should go to Lacordaire, which was in Upper Montclair. So later on, we did go to Lacordaire; I did from the sixth grade on. I was very lucky too, I went all the way through grammar and high school and, to make a long story short, my best friend in school for one year lived across the street from Lacordaire. But her father there, insisted that...they come down to Kimberly and, of course, we lived next door to Kimberly and commuted all the way up to Upper Montclair. So that was kind of amusing but fun. It was a very simple, easy, delightful life.

ML: Let's talk a little bit about your family background. Could you talk about your father, where he came from and where he was born?

JH: Well, my father was, ... Yunker was a German name. He was born in Paterson...to, he had one brother and two sisters. He was the youngest of the family and he went for his college education at the University of Maryland Dental School, which happened to be in Baltimore. So my maternal grandmother, they, of course, lived in Baltimore at the time and Mother and..., she has one brother. So Daddy was very good and he went to Mass every morning of his life. So he ..., would go to Mass in Baltimore and so did Grandma. So Grandma, who was kind of the ruler of the roost, may I say, she would see this nice young man in church every morning and she said, "I'm going to ask that young man home for dinner," and so she did. Of course, ...when he arrived, and, ...very amusingly, he'd say, "Oh, I came to the door and when I met you, well, that was it." [laughter] So, but it turned out very lovely. So then they moved up. Originally, when they were married, they moved to Valley Road [in Montclair] by the Montclair Tennis Club... But Grandma of course was looking around. He had an office downtown so she thought, "Well I came across this...very, one of the original Victorians in Montclair." It had fifteen rooms, fireplace in every room, three chimneys..., and she said, "That would be a lovely place to have your office and we would live there as well." So that is the way it worked out. But, can you imagine, they paid four thousand dollars for this house? So this is what you say, it's a world that's disappeared for sure, but absolutely delightful. We, as far as Depression is concerned, the only thing I can remember about that is that, every once in a while, I'd come home and be surprised, somebody was having something to eat on the back steps, or something of the sort. They would come by and see...to get a meal, and I'm sure they had a regular group of houses that they could stop at. Very nice, nothing to be afraid of, it just was the circumstance of the time, you know. So all my memories are delightful of growing up. Of course I, being the youngest, didn't have a thing to do. I could do exactly as I pleased so that's delightful, too, but none of us did, because it just seemed to work out so well. So other than that, I really don't know what I could add particularly unless you have something you like to question about.

ML: Your father had a German name. Did he ever talk about World War I, or his opinions on it?

JH: No, not really. The only thing that he did say when I was growing up...he said, "You know, Joan," he said, "I have a feeling that I lived in the last peaceful world," and yet they had World War I... But it did not involve the whole country as certainly World War II did...and his father was a charming, lovely guy. He did go back to Germany at one point. This is one of my early remembrances and he had lived in the Bavarian section, which is the very friendly, very lively, singing area, and so forth and so on, and he went to the house where he...grew up in and he asked them could he possibly just stay in his room for one night...and he did. Of course, he came back with wonderful things that they make there, you know, scissors and knives and all sorts of beautiful things. I remember the boats came into Jersey City at that point and I don't, I couldn't tell you point blank where the street was, but I can remember standing there and looking down this, right to the water...where the water came up, and when we went to pick him up and take him home. Of course, there again, our cars at that point were interesting, the first car was a Buick, open sides.... For instance, if you were going any place you would have to stop, with the rain, and snap on the sides, the windows on, and we drove to the Shore with this. That was like a whole day's, you know, we'd leave about six o'clock in the morning, I don't even know why we bothered because it took so long to get there, but it was delightful. At any rate, so the first car

was this Buick and then the next one was a...you may never have heard of a Locomobile, that was all closed. You know that was a step forward, and then we had a Dodge and Daddy, of course, did very little driving. I'm looking at my mother and father right over..., you see the gentleman with the white knickers? [pointing to a picture] He's at a, that's my father, and my mother is in the other one, and, of course, Mother did more driving than he, because he couldn't leave the office with patients, and so forth. He had very, very wonderful disposition and was a very good craftsman as well. So the only trouble is, as the youngest in the family, if you happen to have a day off and all of a sudden you'd hear, "Joan, Joan, why don't you come down, I have a broken appointment, maybe we can take a look at you." [laughter] Can't get away from a dentist...but he was very good. That was just the way you feel. He was really great. So, no, I never heard any discussion of the war. Of course, being the youngest I didn't have any need of it, particularly, and not being a boy also. But it was, I think there was even though it was Depression, even though there was difficulty, it didn't seem to touch us particularly. I know there were many times where patients would...said, well, they would, I don't know whether they ever brought us food particularly, but...they would not be able to pay the bill right away, no problem... So I just have a lovely view of it. Now whether anybody that was more concerned about it at the time...

SI: Do you know of anybody in your neighborhood that was affected, like they lost their house or...

JH: No. No. As I said, they were all, there was an apartment house across the street, which was three floors...nothing like these huge, gigantor things, and everyone was, big, beautiful apartments, and we all sort of grew up together. There were also, as I said, with Kimberly School next door, it took the whole block, to the next street, and facing them there were three apartments a little bit taller. I mean, this was downtown and everybody seemed to pretty much stay put where they were. No, everybody was fine. Of course, I wasn't too aware of any not being able to afford anything or anybody of that sort, they all seemed to be able to take care of themselves very well.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about your schooling? What school was like?

JH: Well, the first school from the first to the fifth grade, it was the Immaculate Grammar School...by our church. That, of course, had larger, much larger classes and boys and girls together, and so forth. Now in the fifth grade just before, I had nothing to say about this by the way, you just went and did whatever your parents decided, or made up their mind about, and so I was in the fifth grade and, of course, they put the girls over here and the boys over here. Well, as you can tell, I'm a bit of a talker so consequently the Sisters, they were the Sisters of Charity from St. Elizabeth, so, at any rate, Sister Agnes Sofia was getting a little annoyed with me talking. This is interesting because there was a lot of boys here and we were the last girls here. So next to me, if you can imagine, I had George Washington, Jack Dempsey and a Jimmy Riley. Jimmy Riley later became my pastor at Our Lady of the Lake. But she [Sister], I guess, was a little bit concerned that I may have been talking a little bit too much, so her way of disciplining me was to send me over to the boy's side. [laughter] That was great; these boys are, everyone of them, still my friends. Yesterday I got a phone call from a girl that I was in the first grade with, very, very loyal and one of them was Gerard Cavanaugh, the one that was right in front of me,

and, you know, I've known them all my life since. He was down in Myrtle Beach and when we were at Myrtle Beach about two years ago with my daughter and her husband, who used to take me every place in the summer since I've been a widow, so I said to them, "We're going to have dinner tonight with somebody I was in the fifth grade with," and, of course, my grandson said, "Fifth grade! Oh!" ... "How could anybody do that?" You know, and he's just very, very nice. So these friendships lasted a long time... He was an Army flyer, fighter pilot, and of course, my husband was a bomber pilot in the Marines. Of course, they all started out in the Navy. I'm digressing from the old days here, but they called them the ninety day wonders because they needed them...and my husband...said, "If I'm going to go in the service, ...I think I would rather be in the air than in a foxhole." So he went to St. Peters and the NJE, New Jersey Engineering... from Newark and a couple of other schools, just a handful, but they were...trained at Caldwell Airport which was the [Civilian Pilot Training Program]. So that was wonderful...it...stood them in good stead and when he, they, of course, had to go into New York to sign up for this Navy thing and the two boys that he signed up with were friends for the rest of their lives, and they were both fighter pilots. So then they transferred them to North Carolina, University of North Carolina, to train and from there they went out to St. Louis, which, was a commercial airport, just like Newark Airport, Lambert Field and I know I have letters here that said, "Well, I to, had to go out to have," he had so many checks...and this particular time...he is flying around and, of course, all the airlines were coming in, too, not as much as today of course...he said, "I tell you I was coming, started to land and decided that wasn't a good idea," ... "I went up there and I just circled, circled, circled, until they all left." But from Lambert Field...they went to Pensacola. There was the two big Navy bases places, Pensacola or Corpus Christi, Texas, and so that was delightful and I'm sure that piece, did you see, the piece that was in the book I showed you? So I think from there that tells about him calling in the middle of an air raid, where my mother was the air raid warden on the block, and you were very much involved, everybody in the country was pulling together in the same direction. These boys that would come home after a tour of duty or anything, anybody that would see a uniform would say, "Come here, let me buy you a cup of coffee, come on in. ... Sure you don't need something?" The whole country pulled together. It was the most wonderful feeling, it really was, and, but of course you know, we had been bombed at Pearl Harbor and it was pretty alarming, has anybody, have either of you ever been there? Unbelievable, and, of course, I'm going from one thing to another here. But if you've ever gone and...stood on the deck of the *Arizona*, which has never been raised, the people are still in it. Every once in a while you're on a deck and they have a veteran there...from those times, as many as they can to interview, to tell you what it was all about. Of course, [Siegfried Higgins] had been stationed there on his way out, I'll tell you that in a minute. But as you're standing there, all of a sudden a little oil drip would come up, pop right on the water... It is really....a very eerie feeling. All right, ...so in Pensacola they have to decide, you know, fighter pilot or bomber pilot. I suppose, I don't know who makes the decision, but...marvelous group of men in this Squadron 423 that was eventually founded in Cherry Point, North Carolina. So that whole section of North Carolina is Marine country and foot soldiers... or fighter pilots or whatever but he was transferred from Pensacola to Hollywood, Florida for navigation school and he knew he was going to be there for at least a month and a half and he said he thought it'd be a great place for a honeymoon. So it turns out that it was, and so then, of course, we came home and he had a few weeks at home and then he was assigned to Cherry Point. So after a certain amount of time,...we did go down and lived there in New Bern for a short bit. But...it was amazing because you would think that one person would get a room, in

Miss Sunny Folks, for instance, and for only one night so it was...like you were tramping from one to the other to find a place for the night. You'd think that one person would say, "Well, all right I know somebody that might be able to use," and so forth. We made it, but it was, and then they, in the town hall you could go and they would assign you, here there and the other place... But I think they probably made more money from doing it one night at a time. You'd think it'd be better then for them to have somebody they knew. But at any rate, he would go off to the base and leave me on the corner with the suitcase, can you imagine? [laughter] I mean, it was a very funny feeling. But you made very, very dear friends, which were our friends for the rest of our lives... So then they took the squadron and moved it north to a very lovely town called Edenton on the Albemarle Sound. It's a huge, huge body of water...not on the ocean but close enough to and Elizabeth City, North Carolina and Norfolk...were within ... We'd go too, on a bus to Norfolk. So we were very lucky and when we got to that stage of, in Edenton we actually got a room in the rectory at the church and he had two rooms in the church, up above in the church rafters sort of, and so another couple...and we stayed there. ... We stood up for them at the time, they were from Minnesota, and that was another thing about the war. Boys that had never seen anything than their own town or their own state, or whatever, and they were just, ...they learned more about their own country and, of course, I think that was good. I think it really made the country much stronger because people do if you have a way of building up these ideas that they can't prove or anything like that, for instance, these people came from Minnesota. ... For instance a man from Council Bluffs, Iowa, you'd watch them and they had the strangest way of putting eggs between pancakes, and so forth and so on, and you think, "How can they do this." There are all a lot of differences so that it was marvelous, just marvelous, because they were just the greatest guys. So we were in Edenton right through till the end of December, when they were transferred to California. But if you read in the book about the Italian prisoner of war camp on one side of, in the country, and then a navy base in Hertford and this one priest had to cover this Marine base in Edenton...covered the whole thing and he really probably should have retired, he did a very fine, but things were tough. Then when we moved to, when we came back and stayed in New Bern, again, when we returned, there was a German prisoner of war camp outside of that. The Italians, they were thrilled to death to be here. As I wrote New Year's, I mean...about Christmas Eve; they rode into town on the back of this truck, it had been sunny the beginning of the week and then the roses froze on the bush, cold; they were singing at the top of their lungs. We went to Mass and when we were going to Communion, right in front of us, is this man with a big PW on the back of his POW garb, you know, it was amazing. It was almost like a musical comedy... But it was a real war, believe me. So at any rate they, I did not go to California with him, but, so that's another story.

ML: Had you ever traveled growing up before?

JH: We had driven, yes, not traveled the way they do today, certainly not on a plane, but, yes, we had driven to Canada and you'd stay in tourist homes, delightful, and there, again, you learn more about the country. So we went all through New England up to Canada and to Quebec, to a place called Saint Anne de Beaupre, and Montreal and so I have very vivid pictures of that. We did, of course, have relatives in Maryland. A large piece of land on the Chesapeake has all these arms going in and so forth, beautiful huge body of water, and so one of my grandmother's sisters owned this very large piece of property on the water, and so we would go down to visit them. I

didn't go to Baltimore as much as my sisters had, but that was fine, ...but I don't, we didn't do much more traveling than that.

SI: Do you remember discussing events overseas like Hitler's rise to power or Mussolini's actions in Italy around the dinner table?

JH: To some degree, of course, there, we weren't boys for one thing. So they thought maybe and Dad, you know, he, it would, if there were more men in the family, or in that situation, I'm sure we would have, but we were all very aware of it and we would, and, of course, oh, here's the other thing, too. In the early days we had no radio. Radio was nothing, you know, my father, and many other men, made a radio and he made a big receiver, built it. This was the, a lot of the men did this sort of thing and you, it would be like a box of matches, hard matches, and somehow or another, I don't know how it is, but suddenly you would be able to get the sound out of the air. Well, I can remember him being so thrilled, he said, "Agnes, Agnes!" He said, "I've got KDK in Pittsburgh." Can you imagine? You know, so it was, everything was in, from the beginning... I don't ever recall a radio really and we were very musical. We had a beautiful piano and my mother played, my oldest sister played, we all sang. We had a huge, on Sunday afternoon you'd have a wonderful musicale, shall we say, and, oddly enough, my grandma, Auntie Sue, had been born and brought up in Ireland, so they said, "Oh, you think you'd have something better to do than this," and so forth. She couldn't quite understand this. Or if you had a date, you know, somebody would come by and you were going to some place, they'd say, "Ah, we're having more fun here. I think we should stay." You know, so it was a very cozy, warm spotlight. That's how you made your own fun, because you didn't have all these electrical equipment of any sort, or even just as I said, just a radio. I don't even recall when the radios first came in. Do you know?

SI: Do you remember listening to Roosevelt's fireside chats?

JH: ... It was definitely there because there were certain speakers that you listen to, you know, and I can, I can't remember. Later, you know, when we had our own family, and it wasn't too long after that, we'd listen to the *Lone Ranger* or [*Blair of the Mounties*], there was one with the...Canadian Mounties and so forth, and very enjoyable. You're using your mental equipment, you weren't leaving it up to them to make the pictures for you! ... But all these kind of evolved, I don't recall the first one, or how it all came about after that. So, yes, we did, you know, but of course maybe the adults did more talking about it than, I didn't particularly listen in to it, you know. But we were very aware of it and, of course another thing, in the early days, we were put to bed in the light...and it was sort of in between, but, you were already in bed at an early hour, you didn't stay up till ten, eleven, twelve at night, at all. One particular time, my father had many wonderful patients that would come and two young men that came to him, he had several priest friends that were, I mean, were patients, but these two young men evidently had listened to my father, who was a very fine man, he just lived his religion. He didn't preach it at all. He went, as I said, to Mass every morning of his life but he didn't make any fuss about it at all and so these two young men, evidently as patients, they entered the Jesuits, which of course is a very long drawn out education. So when they were made priests, I can remember being gotten out of bed maybe about eight o'clock or something like that, it was still light, I had to come down in my pajamas in the front hall because they wanted to give us their first blessing as priests

because...of my father they became priests. You know, so these are the, some of the things that stay in your mind, and, so it was a lovely, lovely way of growing up. It really was. One more thing, as I said, he went to Mass every morning of his life so this fifth grade teacher could hardly wait to see Daddy one morning...and she said, "Oh, Doctor Yunker, now listen, I've got to tell you," she said, "the other day I asked the class," big classes forty or more, "...is anybody aware of any modern day saints? Silence and so forth and all of a sudden one little boy put his hand, yes I know one, Doctor Yunker, he's at Mass every morning!" Of course he must have been an altar boy to see this...so she could hardly wait to tell him that he was a saint. But he also loved baseball, he loved all sports, and, of course that's one reason why I love to listen to them, love sports too, because he had no sons, so, you know, I filled in.

ML: You also played sports growing up. How was that different than say girls' sports today?

JH: Well, tennis, no difference, and it was just wonderful. But basketball was interesting because although I did play in grammar school but I was not the athlete my sister Betty was, Agnes, no, my oldest sister. But the basketball court was designed, divided into three courts and it was this basket, this basket, and the center, and you couldn't cross these lines and to make a play, you'd make a throw to the center, and so forth and so on, and you couldn't step on the line and whatever. Now I can't tell you exactly when that changed and then suddenly they made one line in the middle and it was this and this and, of course, it took a while before it was the whole court. So that was a change and they didn't have an awful lot of sports at Lacordaire other than basketball and the whole school went. I mean, I was in the sixth and seventh grade and we all went to wherever they were playing and it was not a big school at that time. As a matter-of-fact, I had three in my class from the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade and then in high school, oh, it was a big class, we were five, that was my particular class. Now my sisters class was a little more, maybe fourteen, or something of the sort, but it was a very, it was a lovely private school. It has grown quite a bit now...I'm very happy to see and I see they're competing in everything from lacrosse to soccer and whatever. We did try, I know I was the goalie and it was field hockey, ...which was kinda tough, that's really, but that was a little bit later on. So that was the only sports, not like this family and your sister is a soccer player and a runner and a basketball player so it's wonderful, really, but it was very different then.

SI: What were your favorite subjects in school?

JH: Well, my favorite subjects were English; I was always a very big reader. As a matter-of-fact I don't recall everybody, anybody, teaching me how to read and I knew how to read before I went to school and, also, they didn't have a kindergarten. They had them in public school, but I didn't go to kindergarten, I went right into first grade. I had been reading, you know, because no, there's nobody to entertain me, so I did it myself and I remember, just as an incident, that one of the nuns had died and they all wanted to go to the funeral. So my mother took care of the second grade at the end of the hall here, guess who was in charge of the first grade? Me, and I was in the first grade! I can see it to this day...having this, "All right, we're going to look at such and such and we're going to read this story about this...Roman widow and her children,"...and so forth. It was quite surprising. But I had no concern about it, it was just fun, so there you go.

ML: When did you meet your future husband, Sigfried?

JH: Well, that was interesting because on the street there was another family up above called the Gallagher's and they had two sons and daughter and they were in what would be my father and mother's crowd. She, the mother was, she was a widow, but she had a brother that lived in Brooklyn, I guess, or something, and so one of his children would come out and stay with them every once in a while and go to school, they all went, and Buddy Gallagher who was the closest thing I ever had to a brother because he was born about two weeks before I was. We all played all summer long on the court...all these guys and girls, but they all went to St. Benedict's. So Eddie asked me to come down to a game or a prom or, not a prom but that was later. Now, of course, the only way to get there was on the trolley car, so this other girl and myself we get on the trolley car and we'd go down to a track meet at the Sussex Avenue Armory, or we go to Benedict's. You wouldn't do it today in Newark but, we, wouldn't think a thing of it. We'd go to basketball and so, you do all of them you know, and so this particular time I had another dear friend, who was in his class, too, that lived on Church Street. His mother and sister and he and we were very good friends and so I would, ...he might ask me, you could have a date by the way, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, no problem. You didn't have to go steady at all, which is the perfect way, because you knew what you could stand and what you couldn't stand, you know. So this business of going steady is ridiculous, really, but to make a long story short, so at one time Eddie had asked me to a football game and I went to a Benedict's football game. So I hadn't seen, well, I'll tell you a little bit before that. I was a sophomore probably in high school and these folks were the year ahead of us, you know, so this is a junior dance. But in those days they would have a booklet, the boys, and they would exchange their date's names so you danced with his date, or that, back and forth and so forth, so when it came time for Sig to dance with me, I would get very nervous at these things, you know. I, it's exciting, it really was, and so I can still see him coming across the floor and I said, "I'm sorry."

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Please continue.

JH: So I said, "I hope you don't, I'm awfully sorry, but I really don't feel well, I'm going to go into the ladies' room and rest for a while. It's not you, it's not you." I can still see this. Never saw him till another year later. So we went to this football game and I saw him standing over there by himself and I said, "Eddie, maybe you could ask Sig, if he isn't with anybody, maybe he can sit with us." So that was nice. So several weeks later I was going to a movie with my...friend and we walked down Bloomfield Avenue to the Wellmont and Sig happened to be walking down, too, and we sat together and had a pleasant afternoon. So later on, at Christmas, my sister said, "Now look, I have tickets to the St. Vincent's tea dance," ...to Pal's [Cabin] the, that street, and it was facing, it's a beautiful, it's not the Beau Rivage, but it's something like that, huge place, where everybody has weddings at this point. ... It was originally a Jewish country club and then it was bought out and made into a restaurant and so this is where they had a tea dance, dances in the middle of the afternoon and my sister said, "Now I'm sure you can get somebody to go with you." I said, "I don't want to get anybody to go with me. All the dances that girls could ask boys to, I've asked him, I don't want to ask anybody again, I don't want them to think I'm anymore interested in them than I am, you know?" So to make a long story short,

she said, "Oh, come on, now." So anyway I said, "Well, I'll try." So I called Sig up and I said, "Do you think you could possibly go to the?" "Yes." Now he is a very, very handsome guy, if you want, I have a picture of him over here, and I think he probably never had to ask for a date because all the girls were asking him. People from grammar school and so forth and so on. So all right, fine. So that was our first date, and, of course, he drove...and from the dance, that was fine, we went over to Rod's... Of course, he said, "Well, are you hungry?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." Now, that's another thing I, I said, "Well, I think I might have a little turkey sandwich or something," and so forth and so on. Well, foolish me, you know, I'm sure he didn't have that much money, so, consequently, the turkey came and I wasn't really too interested in eating the whole thing and I said, "Aren't you hungry?" "Oh, I'm not hungry," and I said, "Would you mind finishing this?" ...So he was very happy to at least get some food. Isn't that silly? But when you're young these things happen, but it was, that's my introduction, okay.

ML: Then in high school, how old were you when Pearl Harbor occurred?

JH: Very interesting. Very interesting. You know, we were all dating, different situations, but by this time it was...a little bit more regular and my sister...by the way, is an artist. All the pictures around here are all done by her, and she was the art director from Norcross Cards in the city at this point. So a friend of hers from Long Island was having a party and so her friend, and eventual husband, and Sig and myself, Sig drove over, we were going over to this party in Long Island. It was November the first and it began to snow a little bit. It was the time Notre Dame played Army, in the city, and going into the Holland Tunnel; first of all, it's greasy there anyway and, of course, the snow is just gently coming down. Well, a car in front of the car in front of us, this car came in, cut it off, cut us off, that car ran into him and Sig ran into the back... The car was...his father's car was one that you'd open the door and you had to pull down the front seat to get into the back seat. Well, we hit. My sister behind me, hit the seat and I went through the windshield. You see this here, and also knocked the breath out of me. I mean, Sig just about died on the spot because I couldn't get my breath. I was the only one hurt in the accident that I know of, so the next thing ambulance came and Orm, my brother-in-law eventually, came with me in the ambulance to the hospital and Betty stayed with Sig, because of course they had to, the police were there, or whatever. I had eighteen stitches in here and, of course, if you have an accident like that, it anesthetizes you, you don't feel anything. Here they are, you know, probing and sewing up and so forth, but Orm couldn't stand watching it so he had to go out and get sick. [laughter] But the point is, they did a nice job so... I was in secretarial school at this point. I went one year to St. Elizabeth's and then I was going to transfer to business and my mother said, "Look if you're going to take business, you should go to a secretarial school." Turns out Berkeley is now a college also. So I had to stay home for a whole month and a month in this kind of a school is terrible because it's such concentrated practice, learning, and so forth. So on the Sunday we all belonged to the Mercier Club and met in the Glen Ridge post office, all these great young guys and girls, and they came and stopped to visit me before they went...to the meeting. This was the day that Pearl Harbor was bombed. They all learned about it and all these guys, they left very nice young guys, they came home and you could see that they knew that their lives were going to be forever changed that minute. It was amazing, the difference, you know. It was just like you pulled the shade down between one side of your life and here's the other side. Did I tell you that several of the, you know, colleges got together for the Civilian Pilot Training? So he was delighted that he had had that because and...they continued it and it made a big, big

difference, because he was always a leg up by the time he got into flight school. So, yes, that was definitely a pivotal moment.

ML: Now in high school...

[TAPE PAUSED]

ML: As I was saying, in high school, did you have any plans as far as furthering your education, or what you would do as a career if you were going down that path?

JH: Well, I knew that it was certainly nothing going to be with mathematics, because that was not my forte, so it was, of course, definitely going to be writing. Unfortunately, my, you know the foolish way you make up your mind, in those days we didn't have any sort of freedom of choice or thought, I mean, it was very innocent, very innocent years. So my mother said, "Well, if you're going to, why don't you try home economics?" you know. Well, home economics at St. Elizabeth's was not just washing and dishing tea, you know, cooking, or anything like that, a marvelous build up. Some of my classmates became vice presidents of this, that, and the other thing. I had never had chemistry. I had biology in high school, but I'd never had chemistry. I did pass the course but I knew I had nothing to build on...so that's when I decided to switch to business. Ok, eventually, thing was writing...all the time and as it turned out, after I insisted on continuing on, after I've been home the month after the accident, and they [Berkley] were not happy about it, but I did graduate, finished the course. It was very wonderful because they also had a placement service and, after the summer, you could go back and get a refresher course all on the same thing and so when I came back from being a counselor at camp that summer in Bear Mountain State Park, I went back and started a slight refresher course and they sent me down to the *Newark Evening News* for a job opportunity and that's where I worked and loved it, but for about a year... Newark was also a very peaceful place at the time, as far as I was concerned, and actually my boss lived right here in Spring Lake, oddly enough, two streets over. So suddenly my life, I didn't make many decisions, it was sort of made for me... Sig, his mother was a delightful, Irish lady, born in Ireland, marvelous. Mother was going to, I didn't realize he was coming home, I guess, it was in early January, well, no, I guess it was March, so my mother asked the family to come down...for dinner. ...I learned all this later, of course, and she said, "You're not going there unless you give that girl a ring." So that was fine, as I said, I knew nothing about that, so he drove down to Newark and picked me up at the office and he said, "You know, I have a little shopping to do over here. I said, "Fine." Good, so we go over to do this shopping, well, of course, it turns out to be at Wiss's [jewelry store] and he said, "Well, you can have anything right there." ...I saw nothing, ...you're in your own little world. There was another couple doing the same thing, exactly, and so that was great. I had been going to Mass every morning for Lent and at Immaculate, the Saint Joseph altar was just by the side door and, I could remember before I went off to work, I said, "Now, listen, I'm getting tired of worrying about it, is this what I'm supposed to be doing? Now, you're supposed to be the saint of good husbands, it's up to you. There!" and out the door. At any rate, here we are coming home and when I got home my sister said, "Let me see it, let me see it," and all of a sudden it occurred to me it was March 19th, St. Joseph's Day. It's true. So I've always rather thanked him for that. So, as I said, life just sort of happened to me. If I had a chance to choose, and, of course, today,

oh, my goodness, these girls, they've got such a list of things to do, and they're gonna be this, and so forth. It's tough, it's a little different, but life is what it is, you know, so anything else?

SI: Did either you, yourself, or your family, express any idea of what women should, or shouldn't do, like should go to work or...

JH: Well, no, both my sisters worked. My sister, Agnes, all the mathematical brains went to her, she was very, very bright. If they could have continued, I think she would love to have been an architect, and so, she did work for a marvelous firm in Montclair, ...Paul D. Adams, and Faber eventually Adams Erickson. They're both Princeton graduates. They built many of the beautiful homes on Upper Mountain Avenue and they had an office in Greenwich, Connecticut and she just loved it...and they loved her because she was right where she should be. My sister, Betty, went to Grand Central School of Art and Parson's, and as a-matter-of-fact I met Norman Rockwell because of her, because he was coming in to talk to these people, and so forth, delightful. So she was doing exactly [what she should be.] They were talented, I was not [laughter] that I knew of, you know. From that standpoint, there was nobody pushing us either way, or whatever, it was whatever we could do... I'm sure that, I, OK as a young girl I created a newspaper. For instance in Montclair, there's a Tony's Brook that comes down...from the mountains, but, of course, it's under some of the stores, the streets, at this point, but you do see it down around Glen Ridge Avenue and so I think it was when Amelia Earhart was flying...and so forth, I wrote this big newspaper, so forth and so on, [how she] managed to fly across Tony's Brook, and so forth and so on. So, yes, I think I would have headed in that direction, and I did work for a newspaper actually, you know, but that's as far as it went. But my boss gave me, and he was very, very nice, he gave me all sorts of advice. "Why would you get married at this point? Why would you even think of getting married? Listen, he may get home, he may be wounded, ...you might have to take care of him the rest of your life." Oh, that didn't bother me a bit, you know, so God was very good and just directed you to where he wanted you to be.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about your job, was it the *Newark Evening News*?

JH: *Newark Evening News*, which was the biggest paper in the state, really, and many of the same writers, as a matter-of-fact the *Star Ledger*, we would say, "Oh, heavens,...was nothing," so they did manage to absorb it. Yes, it was very interesting. I didn't get to do [any writing], I was a secretary...and I'm sure...had I wanted to push it, or something, but at that point there weren't too many girls doing that sort of thing. As a matter-of-fact, there were only two women in this department and so there was a great lot of teasing and whatever...and it was very enjoyable. I really would have continued it, whatever, but life didn't work out that way...

SI: What was enjoyable about it?

JH: Well, to be in the center of action, and they, the people that owned it, they also lived here in Spring Lake, two brothers, and they owned, aside from the paper, the big thing was that they owned two big paper mills and when it eventually disintegrated, it's not the paper that the people bought it for, it was these mills that they were interested in. But it was a very well-written paper and I don't know whether you have heard of Charles Cummings, a historian, ...he was very intense. When they went...under, Harvard, Yale, all the big colleges, wanted to buy their back

copies, you know, because this was history in the making, all the way through. He said, "No, it's gonna stay right here in Newark," and it has, and it's all on microfiche, and so forth. As a matter-of-fact, I have to call them up and go through with this, because the other big story, as far as I was concerned, of course was when we came home from Florida, naturally, I was pregnant so, consequently, eventually, he went overseas and I was home with Mother. My father was a very well-known dentist in Montclair and so was Dr. Fleming, so when it got time to deliver this child in May, just next month, I said, "You know, Dr. Fleming, everything that you said that was going to happen, and so forth and so on, nothing." He said to this day he doesn't know why he said to me, and they never wanted to do this, "Go down, get an x-ray at St. Vincent's [hospital]," where, incidentally, I had been the first patient when they first started. So they did, and, of course, my mother, my dear mother went with me... Everybody was, of course, war minded, she was going to be going off to the Navy as a nurse. So to make a long story short, she said, "Oh, Joan," and here I am lying on this cold, marble slab, ...she said, "Did Dr. Fleming ever say you couldn't have this baby normally?" And I said, "Oh," I said, "What is she talking about?" ... Then she went in and looked at the x-rays again and she said, "Did you ever have a fall?" And I said, "No!" I was just furious and, of course, Mother was getting to realize something was wrong. But it seems like it never showed up before. It really hasn't bothered me, but I, evidently, on this whole side I have a twisted bone and this...is all kind of not connected the way it would ordinarily be, and I had no pelvic opening. If I had been in a little...I'd be a mound on the prairie, you know. [laughter] So to make a long story short, I had a Caesarian the next morning... But fortunately, my father was still alive and that was a big help, and he was Joseph and so was my doctor, whatever, so it was quite an excitement...and of course the amusing part of it was I had this lovely private room, and so forth, and I had Sig's picture on the dresser, across from me, but at the same time his dear friend, Charlie Bahr, who was in the Navy, and Bob Meskill, who was in the Navy, and they all came in, in uniform, and so forth, to do the visit, and so forth, and the nurse said, "Which one is the father?" I said, "None of them. Here he is over here." [laughter] You know, so that was kind of amusing, kind of fun. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

ML: You were just saying about your having to have a Caesarian section.

JH: Right, and so I did, and, of course, they thought I was some sort of a miracle worker because, all of a sudden with all these women, I produced a male, how odd. So I got a lot of credit for that as well. I was just saying to Matt that it turns out that I had seven Caesarians. The seventh Caesarian was my daughter, Peggy, and that ended up in the front page of the paper, the *Newark News* and I want to get it from the *Newark Evening News*... backlog. I could, but I have to transfer to a library down here that has a connection with the state thing, so maybe you can help with that one day? But then I had another one and that is Matt's mother. So that was eight of them, which was just great, very, very, very good, and it was, I was very lucky, really and truly, so that was kind of exciting.

ML: So when did Sig go overseas?

JH: My husband. He went overseas right after North Carolina. They went by train all the way across the country and that's another whole story, train travel during the war, and I did not go

with him. Because his father and brother and a dear friend of mine, wife of one of the other squadron members that I'd gone to college with, we all drove home from North Carolina, because I was pregnant. But some of the girls did and they lost their babies, and another four of them drove over and they had all their luggage stolen, and so forth, awful. But anyway, they ended up in El Centro, California is where they were. Now Sig was very lucky. Of course these were, you know, two pilots, pilot and co-pilot, and he flew from El Centro to San Francisco and they flew from there to Hawaii and when they were in Hawaii, then they put the cannon, in the nose of these B-25s. He flew a B-25 and he never had to get on a boat or a thing. Then they flew all the way down, I think it was, he used to tell me... (Funafuti?), and so forth and so on, to Espiritu Santo. They were stationed in Espiritu Santo, originally, which is just north of New Guinea and then they were stationed at Green Island. Now their job was, the Japanese had a huge base at Rabaul and they had to keep them there, you know. So that's what they had to do, fly sorties over that and bomb them, and so forth and so on. Of course, they had a way of digging into the hills...you couldn't find them at all. But they were still there, as years later, on one of the other islands, this Japanese came out, he didn't even know the war had ended, you know, amazing, really amazing. They were there sixty missions, and two years, or more. But in between, they would fly down to Australia...for R&R. The Australians are wonderful, they really were. If you've seen *South Pacific*, you know, they had the watchers to see Japanese build up, whatever, and so forth, and spy on them from that standpoint. So this was a world we didn't know about...all these islands. But they also would fly to the Philippines to be protection for the warships headed in that direction... Fighter pilots of course, but the bombers as well. So, you know, it's quite amazing, an entirely different world that you wouldn't know a thing about, but on the other hand, you do what you have to do.... So as I said, listening, reading this thing of Jimmy Stewart's, it gives you the full picture of what they went through, and it was very difficult... Now they didn't have as much [flak] as over Germany, they did get a lot of flak...from Rabaul, but not as much as you would, for instance, over Europe. Then, of course, when they were through with their tour of duty, they flew all the way home. Some of them had to go by boat all the way, you know, that's fine, but, and here again, when he came home to San Francisco, oh everything, you know, all doors were open to them, you know. So he stayed at the "Top of the Mark." I don't know whether I should put this on here, but, at any rate, I guess two of them, they had to report to San Diego, which was a navy base. So they came down and, I guess, they stopped in Hollywood, you know, one night. Of course, people were there, people asked them in some bar, or another, to come up to a party in Hollywood Hills. Of course, they were, shall we say, a little different than Sig, were these guys, so they decided maybe they should leave and go to San Diego which they did. But they were lucky flying home, too. They got an airline going across to Texas...and to Miami and home. I must say, to this minute, that I still am thrilled to have him home because the strain that you're under when they're away. Today, you know, they put everything in the paper, where they are, where they were shot yesterday, whatever, not then. The *New York Times* had little slips, like this and the colonel's wife lived in Peapack Gladstone, the head of the squadron that point was from the family that owns Brooks Brothers, extremely wealthy, and so I would drive up there and we'd have lunch together. Oh, just a darling gal, you know, ...it didn't matter, but the point is that she said, "Now, I've read this in the paper and I have a feeling that's where they are." We had no idea where they were, you know, whereas today everything is right out in front of you.

SI: How difficult was it to be raising a child on your own while your husband was overseas?

JH: Well, there again, I was very lucky because I was with my family. They were delighted. I could hardly get a chance to hold the child because the minute I came they said, "All right now, I'm gonna feed him," and so forth, "This is my turn, this is my turn." I could hardly, you know, have a look at him. As a matter-of-fact it was a lot of fun. He knew he was raised head of, you know, he was king of the hill for a long time, absolutely, and when his father came home, eventually, he's sitting in the high chair in the kitchen and...comes in, "Huh?" Maybe, "Who's this? This is my world, what's he doing here?" He was, that's exactly the attitude. It was so funny and so that was fine. Then he went off to North Carolina after two weeks and another Marine, who lived in Upper Montclair, very, very nice guy, Doug Kitterman, was driving down, so he came down and we got the baby together, and so forth, and all the paraphernalia, and we went down to join him. Well, my sister and my grandmother, you'd think I was stealing the family jewels. "How could she do this?" You know, I was only the mother, but that didn't seem to have anything to do with it. So we drove down and we had, they had built a row of houses, this is New Bern, North Carolina, which is a very nice place to be, but any rate, out on the outskirts and they allowed them to live there, they couldn't buy them outright because they weren't finished with the whole development and so forth but one of the squadron had a house here, and our a house and then next door, and a few more around the block, and so it was beautiful. Now one of the squadron came from Albany, Georgia and his father was in the furniture business; had several stores in Albany and a big place in Atlanta. So they had to go on what they called navigation hops and so they had a navigation hop. Bubba Jones was his name. I think everybody in Georgia is named Jones, delightful. So at any rate we sublet, two families lived here, and we sent them a list of what we needed. We needed a chest-on-chest and a dining room with four chairs and in the living room we needed several seating chairs and lamps, and this and that and the other thing. So off they go, got all this stuff, and the Marine Corps shipped it up for us. Albany, Georgia had a big Marine shipping base, by the way, so we made out beautifully and, even so, all they had to do was pay a minimum amount of rent the little time we were there. So at any rate in August, about mid-August, the war ended. As a matter-of-fact I was cooking dinner and I think it was pork chops, I still don't know what happened to those pork chops, because all of a sudden a group of guys...with beer, I mean, things of beer and so forth, they all arrived at the house. We were having this huge party and about one-thirty, of course the children were already asleep. Fortunately, they were in lovely rooms down at the end of the house and we closed the doors on that. So finally about one-thirty in the morning I said, or whatever the time it was, we said, "All right, that's it. We're going to bed." We woke up in the morning and that place was clean. As neat as a pin...it was marvelous, and with such a crowd. Another thing too, of course, we were playing housekeeping all the time. One of the big project was building a shed to keep our garbage in here. Also a clothesline, big, long clothesline, and somebody from the base said, "Hey, the best thing is, ...is the stainless steel," this thing that keeps the tow, if they're learning how to shoot, you know, at the end of the plane, tow line, this is what we made our clothesline out of... It was really marvelous and, of course, at one time during this period as well, a hurricane was supposed to hit. They didn't care about all the people, it was those planes that had to get out of there. So the next thing you know, they had to...fly them, they were going to fly to Indiana, and, also, to the other side of Virginia. You know, I'm not sure if it wasn't Blackburn as a matter-of-fact, and so then, of course, we're waiting for them to come back, and, all of a sudden, we can see them coming. Here they are, flying right down

our street. All of a sudden all this smoke starts to come out of the back of it, but, fortunately, they weren't that far from the base but, so a lot of adventures!

SI: You mentioned earlier briefly that there were noticeable differences in the way people from other parts of the country did things and thought and...

JH: Yes, definitely, definitely.

SI: Do you remember any other examples?

JH: Well, yes. One was I told you about the pancakes, you know, their different methods of eating and some of their wives came as well. Now one awfully cute, little gal from California and we all were lucky to get a place to live...and they were staying with a family on the outside of town, and it was a small... So she had never probably washed anything, or whatever, and so all of a sudden she's hanging this out on the line and, of course, it got cold and it was stiff as a board. She was so worried, she said, "Oh, my, Mrs. So-And-So had some turkey soup on the back of the stove and did I wash it in that?" ... It was quite an adventure, really and truly, but the way they were, the way they thought, it was very good for them all to see that we're all the same in many ways...and just comparing was learning, too, about the country. One particular man, by the name of Joe Egan, we had a place right on the road that went out to the base and it was a gas station but it was also a restaurant, so we would meet there for breakfast many times, and he came in. He was just beside himself because they knew that they were getting their orders to go overseas and evidently his mother had given him her wedding ring to go overseas and he has lost the wedding, or mislaid it, I'm not sure which. He was very upset; we all practically scoured the place from top to bottom to look for this. He wasn't gonna leave unless he got that wedding ring. I hope he did. He turned out to be a New York state senator by the way, Joe Egan. They all turned out an outstanding group. We gave the first reunion here in New Jersey, because Colonel Winston was right here and had been made general in the Marine Corps Reserves, so that was a big honor, and he lived in Peapack Gladstone. So Sig and I and another couple, we wrote everybody we could possibly find and we all knew. We were still in touch with many, many of them. We had the most successful reunion, with the help of Ann and John Winston. ...On Route 10 some place. I got a big motel, you know, that had everybody in it and we drove over to the Winston Estate, it was all on their property. They had a tremendous amount of property by the way. They gave about a hundred or two hundred acres..., the nearest town, to protect one part of their property. That's how much they owned land..., and they had a pool. It was fantastic and also the Morristown Airport didn't know what hit it, because General Anderson who had taken over when Colonel Winston retired, and, by the way, he was the epitome of a Marine, fantastic individual. They said they'd all would have gone through hell for him, with him, you know, and he still is, he's so just great and so he flew in and Paul, several of them had their own planes. Paul Robison enjoyed being in service so much that when he was let go, he joined the Army and he became a helicopter pilot and served in Vietnam, and so did one of our ushers at our wedding from Iowa, and then, of course, the people that he had joined with, that I told you, became fighter pilots. They were called back for Korea. But of course Sig had quite a family by that time so he, you know, but he missed it so much that he would go down to Newark Airport and eat his lunch watching the planes go in and out. But to make a long story short, that was a wonderful, wonderful reunion. We had been friends. We could go to any state

in the Union and immediately be welcomed with open arms, sensational. But I hate to tell you, as a matter-of-fact, I just got a new thing the other day and you can see for yourself that they're all gone, with the exception of two that I am still friendly with. ...One lives in Charleston, South Carolina and the other one in Naples, Florida and this, the latest letter as you can see, they called it the *Seahorse Marines* and here is the "In Memoriam," isn't this awful? Honest and truly. This is a new person that's doing this by the way. They just had a reunion in Annapolis, which I'm sorry I didn't go down to, but they're gonna have the next one in Charleston and I may definitely try to have somebody take me down there...and here's about Norman Anderson. [Reading from a newsletter] "As a pioneer with Scott, he was assigned an executive officer of our squadron VME, before we left (Edenton?) for El Centro and then the Pacific. He was later promoted to lieutenant colonel, took command of the 423 when our colonel CO, Lieutenant Colonel Winston, was transferred to Senator, General MacArthur's staff." You know, there's money and whatever in everything in the world. He had loads of money, you know, and, of course, MacArthur would be delighted to have that, in July '44. Norm holds the record of most combat missions, in a PBJ with a hundred and ten, B-25, fantastic human being and you'd never know it. He's not tall, you know, just, oh, just a human, wonderful person. I'll tell you how, [reading from a newsletter] "No one can ask for a better commander than Norm Anderson." But, matter-of-fact we had reunions, two of them in Pensacola. We didn't get to the one in Miami, but also one in Milwaukee because, of course, the airport is dedicated to a B-25 [the B-25 is called the Mitchell Bomber] and the person that started them, and, also, they have a huge fighter plane museum at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, so we had one there, and it was the first time that Norm Anderson came. These boys, they were like girls going to a prom, they were so thrilled that Norm Anderson was gonna be there. It was cute, cute, cute, you know. But just a wonderful close-knit organization, every one of them. Many, of course, you knew better than others, because you knew their wives, or you lived together, or whatever, and, of course, they lost one of them. Not too long ago, they found the remains of the plane, you know, in Green Island and, of course, we knew who they were. But it was long gone, they couldn't do much of anything with it..., but this Ned Wernick, who lives in Pensacola, and we had several reunions there and, of course, they all worked in the Pensacola base. Well, I mean, of course they're retired, but, you know, keep track of the planes that come and go and the ones that are lost and the library you might say. So at any rate it's a lot of fun. It's a lot of fun.

SI: During the war when you first met these men and women particularly in flight training there's always accidents and when you get into combat there are combat losses, did the wives form kind of like a support group for each other?

JH: Oh, absolutely. We all knew, we all got together, and to this minute...I can pick up the phone. This Garney Gahagen, Garnett Edward Gahagen, was from Austin, Minnesota and we had stood up for him, with his first wife, in...(Edenton?) and we were very, very close to Norma, Garney and we went out to see them. We were on a convention and we were in Denver, and so forth, and they lived in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. I'll tell you, they lived in the same town that Hormel Meat and so forth and, there again, they all knew Georgie Hormel, ...who married the French actress who did *Gigi*? Okay, Leslie Caron, I think her name was. But the point was that he and the president's, the other son of the president, they started a feedlot in Scottsbluff, Nebraska and, of course, they did very well because Hormel was their big customer and out there they didn't have busses, or it would be no point in, well, having a car to go from here to there

because it's miles and miles of nothing, you know, so they all flew. Well, at any rate Norma died unfortunately but, as she said, "Garney, I have the right girl for you, I worked with her in the hospital," and so forth. They became very good friends and but I was afraid to meet her because Norma and I were such good friends so we were on a convention in San Diego and they lived in California, at Mission Viejo. By the way, one of the moving squadron had been a New York policeman and became a lawyer and he was in Nixon's law firm. He was in Nixon's law firm, so he came out to California when Nixon was...from San Clemente, where he lived, moving to the East Coast and he had a big party of all the people that he had known and so Bill was there and his wife, Larue. He came to visit Garney, too, they didn't tell him that we were here, so we had another reunion, in that situation and so they, I mean, you never lost track of them at all. But I was afraid to meet Betty, Garney's new wife that Norma had picked out for him, absolutely magnificent lady, really, and we were on the phone. She still lives in California, she had three very bright children, and Garney and...Norma had four and, at any rate, when the latest Northeaster hit, right away, I got a phone call. "I hear you're drowning in water out there, what's going on?" ...and so on, and so we had a marvelous, marvelous connection with all of them. The same one that went to Georgia to buy all the furniture with him, his wife Grace calls me all the time as well, and all over the country at any time. Unfortunately, many of them are gone and sometimes their wives as well, but we just could not ask for anything...more, you know, and they all became very important people in their own states. I think it was just the best. I'm sure other squadrons might do the same but I just never saw such a wonderful group of guys... So we felt very, very, very fortunate. Of course, we were in several wedding parties along the way and so forth but marvelous memories. As a matter-of-fact I just preferred to listen, once in a while I'll think, "Well, what will I think about tonight?" rather than turn on the television, more fun, you know.

ML: During the war how often did you write letters to your husband when he was overseas and how often did you receive letters?

JH: Very, many times, constantly, because it was your only means of communication... You felt as if you were visiting him and so that was the thing that would and he, too, and, I mean, many of them are repetitive in a sense because he'd say, "Well, honey, I don't have much to talk about now because I mean, we went off at whatever, such and such a time," and you know. But we did. As a matter-of-fact, when that first child was born, my mother wrote him...and gave him the details and he said, "Well, ...I came in, you know, from this mission," and he said, "Well, I knew I had some mail, and so forth, so I put it down there," and said, "Well, I'll get to that," and so forth... So he didn't realize he'd become a father until about the next day, about after breakfast, whatever, and, I guess, he was supplied with cigars. I don't know whether he was or not, but, yes, we would keep in very close touch... As a matter-of-fact, before I moved from Westover Road, many of them were repetitive, you know, so I went through the whole thing out in the back, I can see myself, looking in, sitting out in the back and I had a big garbage can here and I, ...the ones I was going to save, both from the time when he was studying in St. Louis. By the way, I went out to St. Louis with his father on the train and my father was a little bit concerned that I was going out after all. So I said, "I'm paying for it Daddy," you know, I was a working girl at the time and that was delightful, too. So, yes, I saved all the important ones and the others I burned. We kept in very close touch and then, of course, other people would write, if they'd stopped by and seen him, or all the other people that had been in the Navy in and around

us there in North Carolina, and, believe me, it was a tremendous link, tremendous link all the way around.

SI: You mentioned that not knowing was difficult.

JH: Yes, there was no way, and you didn't want to...let your imagination run away with you...and in some ways, you know, even with the war in Europe, which was very difficult. Of course I was home with the baby, and so forth, and I can remember D-Day day, June 6, you know in Europe, very well because...I remember just exactly where I was, and so forth and so on. People were very aware but, and not only that, but you know we had a lot of people that we knew growing up, the boys. For instance I hate to say, one just died, very handsome, nice friend. Sons of my father and mother's crowd, there were three boys in that family and three girls in this family, so we often got together. He was a stationed...Italy and his younger brother also eventually was over there and, fortunately, he was on a ship. I don't know whether there was an accident onboard ship, a boom came down or something, and he died there. But Charlie was a, Charlie Dial, and he, I don't know the circumstances of how he met her, but he met Sophia Loren when she was either a peasant...they were very good friends and even when she came to this country, years later, they would get together, and so forth and so on. He was just, just a nice, nice person and he was a marvelous musician and his son is a famous pianist, Gary Dial, and a writer. He was buried from Immaculate and I had Edward go to the wake, I mean to the, well, to the wake and to the funeral music much of it was written by them and I managed, thank God, to talk to him before he died. He was in North Carolina at Southern Pines. His wife was a very good musician, too, and golfer, and bridge player... So, yes, we kept in touch with everybody that had been in service as well... So as I said, it was something that you, united everybody, really. Nobody was arguing about it. They knew it had to be done...and I hate to say it, but very different from today's wars, ...even though my son was in Vietnam, my son-in-law was in Vietnam. Luckily, my oldest son was a Marine as well and he was a lance corporal, head of a group, and...roadside bomb. That's not quite what it is, anyway, they, some of the people in his group were killed and the men that were with him realized that he had sort of been injured, but he didn't realize it...and so they put him on a plane at Da Nang, wounded plane, to go to Japan and when they were there on the runway, ready to take off, was the first time Da Nang was bombed, so he was very lucky. We call it our million dollar wound because they sent him home and that was fine... So that's as close as I want to be wars if I can possibly help it...

SI: You had already been through that experience with your husband

JH: Yes,

SI: Being overseas, it must have been even more difficult with your son.

JH: Yes. Well, it was. But another amusing incident, too. Several people that we had known were stationed on the same battleship and I must have been writing to one of them or the other, to friends...and, of course, so that was kind of fun, so they could compare notes with letters that I've sent them...and, of course, the other thing is, too, all these letters had to be censored. For instance, the enlisted men...that was one of the things, they'd take a day and they have to go through all this to, not to tell them where they were, but it seems like they all had worked out all

these ways of telling their family, one way or the other, about something that had nothing to do with it, but they could add it up and that, they knew where it was... I didn't, but then what are you going to do, and what difference it makes, really? Now, I think that they changed the names of all these islands that were right back of Espiritu Santo, and so forth and so on. They've changed the names of those things and, of course, now, they're countries practically. But they did come across a plane that had gone down and they can identify them to a point...but, so that's become a new thing, to look for anything pertaining to World War II...

ML: And you mentioned during the war that you traveled by train.

JH: Well, that was another story. ...I was married the first, we were the first ones married, in August. My other sister was married in January, after that, and he was stationed in Fort Belvoir, Virginia and then Agnes and Jim...were going to be married the following December. Unfortunately, Daddy and Mother were going to the wedding wherever, but my father became ill and was in the hospital. So all of a sudden one day, here I am taking care of the baby...at this point and they said, "Well, now, Joan, now we'll take care of the baby." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, you're going to go out with Agnes to Salina, Kansas," the center of the country. The same Charlie Dial's father worked with Standard Oil and he was the travel agent; he could arrange to get the train tickets and the whole bit. So in those days you would go to Chicago and you have to layover in Chicago and the next day take a train west. Well, we had a Priest friend from Immaculate who was stationed in the Great Lakes, so he said, "Now when you get there, let me know when you get in." So we stayed at the Stevens Hotel and so we called him and Father Slattery came in, extremely handsome man, and that cross was very tiny on his sleeve...because when we came down to the lobby, here he was, we had to rescue him from all these ladies. So he took us down to Beachcomber's Don for dinner, and off we went the next morning to Kansas City. But as we were waiting in line, this Red Cap came up and he said, "Now listen, let me have your bags and I'll be sure you have a place to sit," and so Agnes said, after we did that, "Well, do you think we should have done that? Why I don't know that ..." I said, "It'll be fine." So anyway when we get in there, sure enough they are there, ...have bags on our seats, we have a place to sit. Everybody else was in the aisle sitting on bags, this and that; you have no idea what a mess. Now it turns out that Mr. Dial's sister was the secretary to Fred Harvey. Anybody remember Judy Garland and the Harvey Girls? The point is that they ran all the restaurants from Chicago west, on the trains, everything. So all of a sudden, about ten-thirty, eleven, here we are chugging along and he said, "Miss Yunker, Mrs. Higgins, Miss Yunker." "Oh, my God, that's me." Of course, I wasn't that used to being Mrs. Anything at the time, and sure enough, "Well, now, you're wanted in the dining car." She had set up a complete lovely dinner, luncheon for us, drinks, everything. We were called in early so we're climbing over this one and that one to get to the dining car. When we get in there, of course, and we're having this wonderful repast and in come these colonels. "How'd you get those drinks? How did you do that?" You know, so that was delightful. So at any rate, but the problem with all this was that from Kansas City then we had to take a train to Salina, which is directly in the middle of Kansas and past where Dwight Eisenhower had grown up and all these places. So we got there and it turned out to be very cold. So, okay, they got married, but guess what? I had to come all the way back across the country by myself. We did have somebody from the squadron who lived in Kansas City but I wasn't losing myself in that station. I wasn't gonna get lost, you know, and I had to wait and wait and wait for the Chicago train. So, finally, when we did, there was an awful lot of nice service

people, too, and so we got together and talked, and so forth and so on, and we're playing bridge and, all of a sudden, I said, "You know this is very funny, I'm used to green uniforms. You people are navy and tan, and I'm used to green uniforms." They said, "Honey, what's happened to, where are the Marines?" "Honey they're out fighting the war." [laughter] And they were, so at any rate, Father Slattery had said, "Please let me know the minute you get in," and he met me and he took me to the Palmer House for lunch and he made me eat, good food, corned beef and cabbage, whatever, you know, delicious. He said, "Because you don't know where the next meal is coming from," and that was the truest thing because going east, I think I had a stick of gum from there to Newark... But, of course, I knew immediately that it was a problem because when I got into Penn Station, here's my brother-in-law from Fort Belvoir, from Virginia, meeting me and, of course, Daddy was still in the hospital and, you know, not too well, but still with us anyway. So that was quite an adventure. I mean, this is why I say, life just happened to me. I mean, I would no more choose this, or make up my mind to go do it..., but, and then guess what? I come home to the house in Montclair and who's there? My sister I left in Kansas. They called her because Daddy was sick and she flew home. You know, you can't make this stuff up. So it's been an exciting life, very nice. So, unfortunately, Daddy did die the end of January. But he was thrilled to death to see his first grandchild, plus the fact a boy with all these women, so I guess we did a little something for him... So that's about it for that particular moment, you know.

ML: I also wanted to ask you about rationing during the war?

JH: Definitely, definitely. We would have little books, I should have dug this out and I may, in the meantime, and bring it with me, for sugar and for various things that were very... rationed, they definitely were. There was a chicken farm in Caldwell, on the outskirts, and people would go up and it was like a picnic; you'd be waiting to buy a chicken or whatever, very little...because it was all being spread out and shared. So, yes, that's a very good question. We...went hungry or anything like that, but, and this of course, previous to this, we ate like, I mean, you can't imagine. Because then for instance meat, was twenty-five cents a pound. This was pre-war, so we ate very well. We really did and there's another thing, too, when the three gentlemen arrived in the family, the husbands and so forth, of course, Auntie Sue and Grandma were amazing. On a Sunday morning they would, "Oh, come on now, Sig, have a, now come on, have some more, there's more bacon, more this, more that." "Oh," I said, "Grandma, please, I can't eat another thing." But after that, this was about ten-thirty or eleven, at one o'clock every Sunday we had a standing rib roast, honest and truly, and, you know, of course naturally men want to eat right? So they enjoyed it, but it was really a lot. Then my Auntie Sue, who was the cook, in order to get a little rest from the kitchen, she'd say, "Now, not another meal would be gotten in the house this night." ...So, of course, at five o'clock everybody was in the kitchen cutting little slices off of this, and so forth, and making sandwiches. But at least she got a little rest out of it. So when I was in North Carolina, and this is something that really disturbed me very much, I didn't realize, she went upstairs to a lovely upstairs sitting room called the library and she would...sit down on a chair and go to sleep and so forth. She died on Thanksgiving, but they never told me and I'm in North Carolina, and it just hurt me very, very, very much to think that I was no longer a member of the family, "Well, we thought it would upset you," because I was pregnant. "Well, that's fine, but..." so that was the first thing that poor Sig had to contend

with, that I was really in a state but, anyway, we finally got that worked out. But it's amazing these things that happen to you that you don't expect are going to, you know?

SI: Going back to the rationing, did you ever have any trouble getting anything for your son? Anything related to raising a baby?

JH: No, because in those days, also you'd have a butter and egg man, or something, and, of course, an ice man. The ice would, you know, there were ice boxes. They weren't refrigerated. As a child, ...we would love to go follow the thing, because they'd chip some off and you'd have all these nice chips of ice to eat. But no, it was delivered every day, milk and eggs, and so forth. I don't recall ever having a problem with that. Certainly he was fat and round and healthy, that's for sure, you know. But those were some of the things and you really don't, you just live it day by day and you almost forget about it sometimes... Of course, I didn't have the responsibility of getting it so that was another thing. So anything else?

ML: You also mentioned that your mom was an air raid warden during the war.

JH: Yes, definitely.

ML: What kind of things did she have to do?

JH: Well, first of all, she always had a hard hat, and she had to patrol, patrol the block and be sure that everybody had their shades down, no light would appear. You know Montclair was only eighteen miles from the ocean, you see, and so anything on the whole East Coast had to be dimmed out so that they couldn't spot you and so she would go out and, I mean, she was the warden, not my father, that's the funny part about it and then my sister would go over around the corner between The Crescent and Church Street...and they would set up a, as if you were having a problem, they would set up all the aid stations, doctors and things, and so forth, she would go over to help them with that. So it was good training and so everybody worked together, it was just really wonderful.

SI: Do you recall having any fears of an attack or bombing?

JH: Well, again, I didn't, you see because I didn't have an awful lot of responsibility in a way, but I don't recall that we had any incidents, you know. Maybe closer to the Shore, of course, down here they might have, and, of course as you know, they have found German submarines. They knew they were out there and they would find remains of them and so the Shore really had a lot of responsibility, to right down here, but even up in New York as well. I'm sure they kept watch on everything up the rivers, and so forth. But we didn't have any particular, but I'm sure they had to turn their lights down, too. It couldn't be "the great white way," believe me.

SI: Do you remember hearing rumors about saboteurs or spies?

JH: Well, yes, I think there were rumors of that. I didn't, you know, have any, I don't have any remembrances from it particularly but I know that was talked about and it was in the newspaper

...and of course, as I said, the radio. It wasn't an instantly communicated world like there is today. I'm sure those who needed it had a...communication but I'm sure somebody with more responsibility might have more memories of it.

SI: I was just wondering if there was an atmosphere of, you know, like, this person down the street might be radioing off information to some place.

JH: Well, I think there was, but I don't recall off hand... But, yes, I think there were a few and I'm sure there were a few. Now, for instance, even though our name was Yunker, there were some people that were afraid to have a German name...but somehow or another, we never had any concerns like that. I know up the street we had a rug dealer whose son we used to play with and his name was Buddy Badikiam, you know, so this was what? Turkish or something of the sort and...there were still a lot of different nationalities, but I don't recall any incidents of somebody being concerned... So, at this point, it seems like I was deaf, dumb and blind at that point, but it was just not part of the program...and it didn't keep us from doing anything other than, for instance when this phone call came in from Sig, all the lights were out and I was on the third floor. I mean, I practically killed myself coming down the stairs. The one phone was in the upstairs hall and to come down and answer it...there wasn't a phone by everybody's bed, and all that kind of thing, and so, as a matter-of-fact, my first thing is, "How come you're calling? There's an air raid." I mean, how did he know that in Pensacola, Florida? [laughter] So you know that's about my memory of that.

SI: You mentioned that people in Montclair would open their doors to GIs who were home on leave or ...

JH: Yes.

SI: Did your family ever do that? Do you remember anybody coming over the house for dinner?

JH: Well we had friends that did, but not particularly, what I'm saying is that we didn't, I don't think strangers particularly. But let me put it this way, if a man was coming in with a uniform or walking down the street in a city, or whatever, they were well received, smiled at, you know, so forth, slap them on the back, or something, or, you know, "Would you like to stop and I'll get you a cut of coffee," something like that. Everybody felt part of the war, that I'm sure they did. Of course, there were bandage rolling and all sorts of things like that, that went on, on a regular basis and for different things that they need, or getting things to send to the troops, whatever, but it was everybody working together.

SI: So when you were home in Montclair with your son, were you just focused on raising your son or did you do anything outside of the home? No?

JH: I did. It was a funny thing, each person, I mean, ...they had something to do in the house, or something. We were three girls as I said, and of course this was a little bit before the war, but they would make all our clothes, my grandmother and my mother, that's one of the memories of myself standing here up on a box, hemming the thing. "Now, turn a little bit. It's dipping over here," I mean, you were exhausted just standing there. [laughter] I'm not sure that I altogether

appreciated it because you think, “Gosh, if we could even go out and buy something in the store...” Isn’t that foolish, because they were beautiful, great and everybody used to, “Ah, that looks so nice, aren’t you lucky?” but, you know. And, my mother would make, coats and hats, everything, it was amazing, so that, that’s certainly a difference in the world today. But if something had to be gotten over at the store on Bloomfield Avenue, which was two blocks over, guess who had to do it? To this day I am more comfortable out of the house than I am in it because they kept sending me out to the store. “Now, go down to the Elite Shop, now you know they have certain kind of thread,” whatever or some place else and back and forth and back and forth. This is a funny thing, too. On Bloomfield Avenue, you know where the police station is on the corner? There used to be a theater on the corner but, of course, also Sears and huge glass window all the way, I think there’s a car dealer, or something now, and one of the men that were in with Sig. Daddy had a wonderful pinocle club that on his turn would, you know, we would meet. It’s a wonder I ever had a date because these guys would say, “Hey ,bring him in here, we want to take a look at him,” you know, and they’d say, “Do I have to go through this?” etc. [laughter] But the point is that one of them was PJ Farrell who had gone to school with my aunt in Ireland and, of course, he would come and tease her to death. He’d chase her around the kitchen table to give him a kiss...and so forth, all this nonsense. So there’s a big building right, if you’re coming down Bloomfield Avenue, here’s where Sears would be and right next to it is a big four or five-story building, and right on the top is the, it’s the PJ Farrell Building, okay? But also when the stock market crashed, now that would be what? ‘30, no, ’29, so I couldn’t have been anymore than, well, two to nine, okay, and when I heard “crash” the only thing I could think of was, “Oh, somebody’s run into Sears Roebuck’s window,” ...on Bloomfield Avenue. That’s the only thing that crash meant to me, which kind of is kind of silly, but that’s one memory...and so although I, and there again of course although I think everybody did quite well and continued to go on, maybe they reduced quite a bit in whatever they wanted to do, but I don’t remember any serious crashes, you know, as far as that goes. Really and truly.

SI: When your husband returned from his tour overseas and in combat during the war did you notice any differences in him, was he more quiet?

JH: No, I don’t think so. Well, in this regard because as I said, it was a family he was with and they were in a part of the world that they didn’t have, it was not hand-to-hand combat. It was not on the ground, such as...D-Day with the people...in Normandy and all of this, so no, that was not the case. He was always with a family, his squadron, and, of course, Bill Hopper was his pilot that he flew with, the whole plane, the whole crew were together. As a matter-of-fact, Bill Hopper, see this little doggie on the end there in that card up there, that’s from him, and he lived in San Francisco. He came from...Jackson, Mississippi. He still had a southern accent even though he was all over the world. He became a lawyer and he would work with this company that, he would come into Newark every once in a while. Sig and he would get together as well and we went out to visit him, too, in San Francisco. They decided they would not have children and he became a...professor at a place, Chabot College, in the lower bay in San Francisco. He lived on the top of the hill in Oakland, right at the top of Snake Hill, right on the top, the most marvelous spot you can imagine. We visited them and stayed with him. At the dining room table you could look at, the lights would go on and the whole thing was laid out right in front of you. It was marvelous. A very fine, fine man. Up until, every three months he would call me...from San Francisco and he was very good this way too because he was head of the criminal

justice department and he had this gorgeous spot that they built themselves and he would have one of the ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Please continue.

JH: So he would have certain ones stay with him. So over the years he kept in touch with them. One of them is a girl from Iceland and he visited her there. His wife died, in the meantime, and he was just a fine human being... So, yes, we've kept in touch with many of them all over and it's so difficult because I think I'm almost more concerned when these last threads keep breaking, you know. When Sig was, well, you remember, you were what? eleven, you and Joe were the same age and handed out the booklets at the funeral and so they came from all over and it was quite a fantastic remembrance. This is how close they all were. So, as I said, there's one in Freehold and there's one in Naples and there's one in Charleston, South Carolina and then one by one they keep falling by the wayside, you know. But memories they can't take with them and they're wonderful.

ML: After the war when the war ended, how did life change for you in general?

JH: Well, of course, we were living with my mother in my room and, of course, we had two children and, no, I guess we had one child and we had one on the way. So Sig was not used to living in someone else's house, he wanted his own place, you know. So he came home from service probably on a Thursday, or maybe a Friday, because, he had no other clothes but his uniform and just to digress for a moment. In Verona they did not have a Boy Scout troop at Our Lady of the Lake Church in Verona and so consequently his boss, Jim McNeil, said, "We're going to have a Boy Scout troop," and so he started it and his son and Sig's brother, Bobby, and so forth. Sig had never been a Scout but he made him the Scout Master, the assistant scoutmaster, and so he, you know, all the stuff he had to read them, he read them out of a book, and so forth, and so on. So this dear man, Jim McNeil from Jackson Mississippi, he was from Mississippi, too, very fine guy, and he said, "Now look, if you work for me the summer of your college years I'll take you into the business," and he did. So, of course, the first thing he did when he came home was go down and see Mr. McNeil on the weekend. He went to work on Monday, he didn't even have time to buy any clothes, and that's the last I saw of him. [laughter] No, he loved it. As I said, he stopped flying because by this time he had two kids and he would, as I said, eat his lunch by the Newark Airport to see planes go in and out but it worked out very well and eventually he got the business altogether. The son that had been a Boy Scout with him, oh, he was, well, a maverick. Nice, good guy, but, oh, he was the only boy in a family of girls and I thought it was the father that was tough on him, nuh-uh, it was the mother who was tough on him (laughter). So consequently, the father decided to retire. Okay, he had two guys taking care of the business; he decided to retire to Florida, but Sig and Artie just could not get along making decisions. Sig couldn't stand the way he operated, you know. He was, what should I say is, he just was a maneuverer, believe me. So, at any rate, they decided that they would go down to Florida and talk to the boss, or the boss came up to see them and he said, "Okay, if you two guys can't work together here, Sig, you'll have all of New Jersey, and so forth, and New York, and you go up to Pennsylvania and you can have all of Pennsylvania," to Artie, and that's what

they did. But for the rest of their life the only one he'd ever listened to was Sig, to the point when I said to him, "Look, I married you for better or for worst but not for Artie." [laughter] But he was a good goop, he was, you know, he was a good guy, he really was. I really kind of felt sorry, and then, of course, don't you know, we bought a house in Florida, right beside them, not right beside them but in the same town. So I've had him all my life. But even down to the very last, after Sig died, I went down and we had a boat, and a slip, boat slip, an apartment and land, and God knows what all I had to get rid of...and so finally when I got all that done, Artie lived there, he was permanently there, and he said, "Well, look, I'll tell you what," he said, "I have to go up to a wedding in Easton, Pennsylvania, and so forth, why don't you...send things home and whatever and as much," and he drove my car home all the way up. We stopped to see one of the squadron, Bubba Jones in Albany, Georgia on the way up and I said, "Now, listen, Artie, you have to be a gentleman. Now remember that, be on your best behavior." He was adorable...and they gave a dinner party for us and all that stuff, two people by the name of Jones in the squadron. But this was what was funny. We drove all the way up, stopped in North Carolina overnight, one time, and then we drove on up to Pennsylvania. We never even had the radio on. I knew exactly what to start him talking on, you know, so we talked all the way home. Can you imagine? But the only trouble is he dropped me off at the airport in Easton, Pennsylvania and then I had to drive home, so I thought, "Oh, I am not gonna drive all the way down to the Shore," so when I got to Summit, coming down [Route] 78, or whatever it is, I said, "I'm going over to see [Mary Ellen]," ...so I did. So that was a big break, and I went down, you know, a day or so later, but he's a very, very [good] guy, he really was. I really, just felt so bad. So work with what you have...and so that's what [Sig] did. He went to work right away and did very well, you know, and so then everybody, cousins, you know, all my sister's children, all worked for him at one time. We would go down and clean the office on the weekends; we were all part of the program. But it was very nice, very nice. And then, of course, we owned the building. So by the time we'd gotten to be [sellers], Sig was very good with that, too. He knew he couldn't sell it to the same people that used to live up on Forest Hills in Broadway, you know. By this time it was all Hispanic of some sort, ...so he knew this one guy who was...a go getter as far as the [real estate], and they sold, we sold it to an organization, it was called REMAR, the Rehabilitation of the People on the Margin of Society, from Portugal, and they turned the whole thing. One part of it, it was between two streets, and the back part was (where we stored everything, you know, because it was a building business, and all sorts of things) that became a church, really. They put a door in the big door that came down, and so forth, and pews, the whole thing. Their office up here, would be sort of his office, had bunk beds all over and it was a very good. It was all over this country and in the Chicago, Miami, San Antonio areas. So years later it was very nice, because you got a check every month from them, but they couldn't, I guess, speak that much English. But the people in San Antonio, all of a sudden I got a call from them, they said, "You know they would like to finish this thing." So my nephew, who is a lawyer,...we got together and whatever, and it was very nice. It worked out very well. So I've been very lucky... Except don't buy things in Florida. I hate, I really, they are something, because we had these lots that he must have picked up at one point or another and so, finally, I called Artie's daughter who was his, what do you call it? Was taking care of his estate, by this time he had died, too.

SI: Executor?

JH: Executor, yeah. So consequently, she recommended this real estate person, who was not a very nice whatever, and we, it worked out fine. But he, you know, got the thing worked out, but I never got a check from him so, finally, I called and I said, you know, "What's happening here? What are we doing?" So I called the place back and they said, "Well, we just wanted to check with Tallahassee to see if you had any other properties, any other business, you know, lots, or anything in Florida." Can you imagine? Now this was none of their business, at all, but you see to the last inch, so at any rate I'm very happy to be out of the state, but it's nice to visit but don't buy anything there. Okay.

ML: Do you have anything you want to add?

JH: I think I was very, very lucky with the people that helped me through all these things. I was certainly very aware of the war and many, many friends were in it. I don't recall any person that was killed at that time, you know. At this point, of course, we have some people that we have lost but it's only after the fact. But it was, we were all very personally involved, no question about it, but I had no tragedies, shall I say. So it was a very exciting time. You always felt, you all thought, that you were part of something very big, you know, and we were thrilled to death when the war ended. Of course, there was the Pacific War and the European War, but I would recommend you, and, oh, well, here's one more story. Of course, we became boaters with a very wonderful family from Verona and he decided that, he had been in the army, very bright, and he was wounded, you know, so many times. You see in the paper today, "Oh, I was in the Battle of the Bulge." Well, Mr. Bedell, my dear, our dear Commodore Bedell was in the Battle of the Bulge. He was left for dead on the battlefield. He had taken a bullet through his face and eye and out and he woke up having somebody trying to steal his watch off of him on the battlefield. So I would say two or three years he was in hospitals here and there, but in Washington he met his lovely wife from Florida, beautiful, beautiful girl, lady and they had four children and were big boaters. They were kind of characters, lovely characters, lovely characters. As a matter-of-fact, well, you're not in Verona anymore, in a sense, but they lived right there in the Wayland section as you come over the hill and down back to Bloomfield Avenue. So he built one of the houses there. But he loved, he would buy a boat and I don't know where he got them but every year he'd have a new one. So, at any rate, the first boat we bought, you want to go in and get it, it's on the shelf in the TV room, I had them make a model of it. It's...called *Mom's Ark*. I'm only telling you this for his story. So he was a diamond importer, but not the diamonds, these diamonds, diamonds that you work with,

SI: Oh, industrial diamonds.

JH: Industrial diamonds, yes, so he did very well. It's right up on the shelf, black and white, *Mom's Ark*.

ML: I got it.

JH: Okay. So we bought this boat from them. They took us out one summer and so we said, [pointing to model of boat] The keel of this was laid. It was built by the Navy in the Navy Yard in Boston. So this doctor from...Bay Head put this superstructure on it and it was marvelous. That's just what it was painted as and everybody loved it. So we lived aboard it for seven years

in Normandy Beach and we made it home, our [boat]. We had a...yacht club. We made him Commodore but every year he'd come with a new boat. I mean, I wouldn't go through all of the boats because they were terrific, but he had gone up the Hudson at Expo, he'd already done that, so the following year we all went up, too, four boats. Well, we went up by ourselves. We were so proud of ourselves because as we started to come up from, we were in Normandy Beach, and you have to come up into the Manasquan and out to the ocean and the, with the super, [pointing to piece on the boat] yeah, that's on the corner. The reason is because the doctor that originally had it, that was something that would bring his wife onboard in a sling. So to make a long story short, when Peter and he and Jimmy Bedell were going up the ocean, the water was, they should not have let you go out because it was very rough, so it would go like this, you know, and so forth. He broke a butt block just around Sandy Hook and, oh, Daddy was gonna beach it, but they just got around to this side of it, and here's the Coast Guard station. So they pulled it up and very heavy, very, very heavy and they pumped out all the water, but as soon as they pumped it out it would come back anyway. So they had broken a butt block. We went to (Mimm's?) on the Hudson, in Monmouth Beach and they said, "Now have them take it up in a sling." They wouldn't hear that, "Oh, no, no, we'll be able to do that." It never got altogether fixed. It was fun to start out, but, so we went off by ourselves. ...We felt like Columbus and we stayed the first night on Edgewater, and your mother was little like this, and it was gorgeous that night. By morning you couldn't even see the George Washington Bridge because of the fog. But we left anyway and you could cook everything so I made the coffee and off we went, and you could see from here to there, and when you got there then you could from here to there. We went all the way up the Hudson as far as Skylerville, which is old Saratoga, and here's the two other boats that we should have been with...the Bedell's and this other smaller boat. Well, you'd think we had dropped a bomb. "Oh, yeah! Woo!" Because you couldn't miss the *Ark* you know. So from then on, we went all the way across Champlain up into Canada, on port, Richlieu River and we had made arrangements to stay at this marina. We could have gone on into Montreal but because of Expo these things were all taken years before. So anyway we stayed there and, of course, all we had to do was take a bus to Expo and back again. But it was a marvelous experience, marvelous, and then we went across Champlain, over to Vermont and that's the only time we ever had anybody seasick, your mother, who was little, you know, and so forth. Oh, Lake Champlain was so rough... But we stayed on an island there, coming and going. We didn't know it but Captain Badell did, so all of a sudden he's in front of us and he's gone. Where did he go? It's a little place that you knew you could get in and then it opens up inside this island [Valcour Island] and this is where Benedict Arnold started the United States Navy. There were all sorts of things in there for the Canadian people, the people that had died from Canada and from our country. I mean it's something you couldn't buy, you really couldn't. But this is an Army man who really decided that he was going to live life; Commodore Bedell wasn't going to worry about anything. He'd already been through it, he'd already been to hell, so he didn't have to go back again. And so as I said, if you just react to things around you, life can be fantastic and you can write your own story. [whispers] I'll stop talking.

SI: Thank you very much. Is there anything else? Well I'm out of questions. Thank you very much, it was very informative and thank you Matt for getting your grandmother involved. This concludes our interview with Joan Y. Higgins on April 26, 2007, in Spring Lake, New Jersey. Thank you again.

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Reviewed by Matthew Lawrence 6/22/07
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/9/07
Reviewed by Joan Yunker Higgins