

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRY HODULIK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Nicholas Trajano Molnar: This begins an interview with Mr. Henry Hodulik on June 7, 2012 in Green Brook, New Jersey with Nicholas Molnar and Kyle Downey. Thank you Mr. Hodulik for having us here today.

Henry Hodulik: My pleasure and I'm honored. ...

NM: Could you tell us again when and where you were born?

HH: I was born in Irvington, New Jersey on July 25, 1922.

Kyle Downey: Can you tell us where your family came from? Where your parents came from?

HH: Yes, my parents, both of them, were born and lived part of their life in Slovakia. Actually, it was Czechoslovakia, but when they became independent countries about ten years ago, anyway, they were born in Slovakia and migrated to the United States individually, and found a place to stay with relatives who also were from Slovakia, and eventually they got married. They knew one another in Slovakia. Incidentally, the name of the village is Horne Oresany. That means "Upper" something in Slovak. Anyway, so they got married here, and lived a couple of years in Irvington, and then moved to Dunellen in 1926, bought a little piece of property, which they called a "farm," but it wasn't much of a farm, three and a half acres. ... That's where we lived until I was old enough to go on my own. ... What else do you want to know about it?

NM: Do you know around when your father and mother came to the United States?

HH: It's written somewhere and I've forgotten. Anyway, I would say, my dad came over in about 1908, and my mother shortly thereafter, 1910, something like that, and then they both found a place to stay. My dad went to Ohio for a while, my mother went with I think her cousins for a while until things happened. ... I can't give you much detail about that, but that was their initial place they came to stay here in the United States, okay, and they loved it. However, they did tell me that the trip here was quite burdensome and unpleasant. It wasn't what you'd call a cruise. Anyway, they ended up in Dunellen in 1926.

NM: Did your parents ever talk about why they immigrated to the United States?

HH: Yes, they were told by other people that migrated here that it was a nice place to stay. They had freedom. They tasted freedom almost initially. In any event, but they knew they had to work hard, and they just wanted to have a different life, because things were kind of tough over in Slovakia too. So they just wanted to do something. Their friends left, a lot of their family left, so they wanted to get out too. Now, Slovakia, I would say, compared to the United States, I don't know how fluent they were from the standpoint of education and so forth. ... I don't know how, also, how wealthy they were if at all. They were just peasants so to speak, you know? At that time, if I can remember correctly, the guy, was a dictator or somebody. No, he wasn't a dictator. Anyway, Franz Joseph, that's the name of the people that ran the country or the powerhouse if you will, okay, and my folks were like feudal, you know. My folks sort of admired him. They said he was a fair ruler.

NM: Did they work on the land in Czechoslovakia?

HH: Yes, they had a little piece of land of their own, but exactly what they did, I don't know. I don't know what my dad did. You know, funny you should ask that question. I don't know what he was doing. I know my mom was just a young lady, so she did some housekeeping, I think, but that's it.

NM: From what you are saying, it sounds like your parents already had family and relatives in the United States before they came.

HH: Yes, they had, prior to their moving, I know my mother's brother--two brothers--came to the United States, and they were in the area, exactly where, I don't know, but the property that my folks bought in Dunellen, which was then what we called a farm, was owned by my mother's brother, and that was my Uncle Martin. So, they had a place to go, but it was just a piece of property if you will, okay. As a matter of fact, a lot of the period of time that we stayed there, it was like in a flood plain, and the place got sort of flooded, but they still built a house there. ... It was not what you called easy living, but it was a new house.

NM: You mentioned your mother had brothers and sisters. Did your father have any brothers and sisters in the United States?

HH: Yes. ... You said sisters. Gee, I couldn't remember if my mother had any sisters here, gosh, but my father had a sister who lived in Ohio, a brother that lived in Wheeling, West Virginia. My mother had a brother, just Martin, he was, oh yes, that's right, Martin and Joseph, two brothers, so that makes it two brothers, so they had somebody. They had some guiding influence for my mother, although they didn't tell my father what to do, and he just did it on his own. So, yes, strangely enough you could say that, because, yes, they didn't come on their own, you know. They came with some help, financially I don't know. In any event, they knew they had some place to go to or get some assistance from somebody.

NM: Do you know what your father did when he came to Ohio?

HH: Well, he had some sort of machinist background, but nothing to really brag about. I think he was just a plain laborer, and you know, desired to work and stay, but I don't think he even had a trade. He learned a trade here as a machinist, and if you're asking me to go a little further than that, he eventually became a machinist, if you will, in Irvington, and that's where he worked and that's how he earned his money to take care of his family. He was a machinist, a rather raw one if you will, but he stayed there and he lived in the machine shop. He was ... a machinist. ... He was also a custodian. ... He made himself as a resident in the machine shop. He had a room. We remember a little bit about Irvington. He used to go to a bakery there, trying to think of the name of the bakery, and on weekends, when he came home from his job, he'd bring a lot of baked goods from there, you know, cakes and stuff like that okay, and he bought the whole week of papers. So, that's his experience. What my mother did was mostly housekeeping or cleaning and stuff like that, just earned a few bucks, if you will.

NM: When your family bought this plot of land in Dunellen, did your father still work at the machine shop?

HH: Yes, he did. They had the house built by another friend, if you will. He did a terrible job in my opinion. In any event, it was built too low, and it was just a shell so to speak, but the nut of question is?

NM: I wanted to know if he still worked at the machine shop. Was the plot of land you bought a farm before your family had built the house?

HH: It was all open space, a part of which, my folks have a parcel adjacent to other peoples. There were houses built there that were older than what we had, okay, or my folks built, so yes, it wasn't what you call a real residential, it was hit and miss. I don't think they had much trouble getting a permit or to build and so forth. They just did it if you will, in my opinion, okay. I could be wrong. However, I don't recall any officials telling them what they could do. As a matter of fact, my father, there was no water there, ... he had to dig a trench and add piping to bring the water in from ... at least a block away, no sewage, or anything like that, okay.

NM: When you got this plot of land, did your family immediately start growing crops and raising animals?

HH: Yes, they had animals, ... chickens, ducks, geese, rabbits, really, that was the extent of it. Some of the neighbors had cows, but my folks didn't have any of that, and we didn't have any pigs or anything like that. So, it was primarily chickens and ducks and rabbits if you will. ... My brother and I ... had to go out and cut grass or pull grass for the rabbits to eat and so forth and so on, okay. My father built the old chicken coops and ... a lot of people had similar pieces of property that they built chicken houses on themselves, okay, comparable to what we had.

NM: The farm was primarily a chicken farm?

HH: Yes, actually, it was chicken and ... for their own use. In other words, they didn't do any selling of the farm products, none of that until later on when we got older. I would go out and solicit needs from people that wanted corn, for example, and ... we would pick the corn and then deliver it to their house.

NM: What types of crops and vegetables did you grow on the farm?

HH: Well, again, primarily for our own use, okay, except the corn, and that we sold some of the corn, but, you know, carrots and beans, and all the vegetables that we possibly could grow pumpkins, some fruits. My father would plant trees for apples and pears, and eventually ... crop from those trees, but it wasn't what you'd call a mass production. It was for their own use, the apples and peaches, and stuff like that, okay, and grapes to make wine. ... Every person ... in that area grew their own grapes and had their own presses and made their own wine. Yes, I used to help to stomp the grapes, and squash them in a barrel, and then from there they put them in presses and they made it, but everybody had wine. We also bought more grapes in the open market to make more wine.

NM: Was your family self-sufficient to a degree in terms of food?

HH: No, not really. You know, my dad at least had a job. A lot of people didn't have jobs at all, but he had a job, and he would give the money to my mother, and she would shop and buy butter, canned soup, for example. We didn't have our own supply of milk, so we had to buy bread and stuff like that. ... They were self-sufficient from the standpoint that my father had made enough funds to keep his family going probably.

NM: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

HH: I have one brother. He's younger than I am, right now he's eighty-six and I'll be ninety, and two sisters, and they're both older, and they have both passed away. So, yes--two sisters and a brother.

NM: Growing up, did you and your siblings help out with the chores?

HH: Everybody had something to do or better do something. Yes, they all had to contribute, and eventually my sisters got jobs as they got older. ... They would clean houses. My one sister got to being a seamstress and the other one was also a seamstress. One of them who was in the, what you call, worked for somebody else, a contractor, and made coats and things of that sort.

...

KD: Would your father come home on the weekends from his job in Irvington?

HH: Oh, yes. ... He was not away all the time. At one time, he would work locally. They had a rather large fabricated steel construction business down the street from us. They would bring in steel beams and so forth, and then they would make the products to build bridges in the area, if you will, okay. So, that wasn't always a job. He might have gotten laid off then went to work in Irvington again. ... Does that answer your question?

KD: Yes. When your father was gone, did your mother run the household?

HH: Yes, exactly. ... That was the tough part. Primarily, I can recall, my dad being away for a whole week, and we're just the kids on our own so to speak, you know.

NM: Can you tell us what Dunellen was like when you were younger?

HH: ... I had pictures--ah, what did I do with them--but it was, you know, a small community, although the railroad was responsible for a lot of the layout in the town. The "Central Railroad of New Jersey" ran right down the middle of Dunellen. There's a south side and the north side. They laid out the, to my knowledge, now, you really should, if you want to know more about Dunellen, get some of the historians who have written things like that and it's all available at the library. It's very well done. A fellow by the name of Wes Ott was a historian. In any event, it was not what you call a strictly rural, ... if you go through Dunellen, you'll see some really nice

laid out streets, and the houses that were built, and I think, architecturally thought out by the railroad. ...

NM: What kind of entertainment was available in town? Was there a movie theater?

HH: Yes, eventually, a new movie theater was built and operated in 1922. ... It's Dunellen Theater, and it's still operating, okay. When I was a young guy, I would work for the theater. Two partners ran the theater, a guy by the name of (Marx?), and the other guy John Serravante. We would deliver circulars through Middlesex, Dunellen, parts of Plainfield, and strangely enough the circulars that advertised the movies were small things, and ... they would employ us to deliver the circulars. ... You were supposed to drop the programs under the carpet or something on the porch if you will. Well, you know, we were "smarties," we would fold the program up, and take them, and throw them ... so they ended up being really a piece of paper, and who would be ... looking for a little piece of paper. ... That's the procedure that we followed if you will as kids. Strangely enough, I myself, personally, was elected to be a foreman (leader), so I had about four guys deliver circulars, and the pay that we had was limited to one pass to go to one movie and a dime, and that was for two days employment after school. I would pay these guys off. They would work Thursday and Friday and I would pay them off at Clinton Avenue in Plainfield, and give them their dime and their ... pass. I got fifteen cents, a nickel more than they did because I was the foreman. ... When you think about what happened then and how much two days employment after school from four to six. ... It was a bunch of guys, well, I say bunch, six or so. Well, does that answer that question?

NM: What about the makeup of the community? Were there people from Czechoslovakia or was the town made up of different ethnicities?

HH: It was a rather diverse combination, okay. There were a lot of Polish people, Slovak people, Irish people, English. ... I would say that the "better part of town" was the northern part. The lower class was the southern part, and we lived in the southern part. ... It was just everybody. ... In the beginning, the only school was a small, like a house school. Then the elementary school was built, Whittier School, it still is a magnificent building, and back in 1937, they built the high school, but it actually was a junior high school. ... It opened up in 1937, as I remember, but until that time, my sisters went to Bound Brook to school. So, the schools were Lincoln and the high school on the north, and Whittier on the south side. They had to take a trolley and/or bus, trolley from Dunellen to Bound Brook.

NM: As a young child, what would you do for recreation and entertainment?

HH: Kick the can, that was you had a can, you know, in the middle of the street and you'd play kick the can. There were older guys, ... somewhat bullies. ... I was only a little guy, so was my brother, and my sisters were just plain sisters and brother. We always had to try to find some kind of employment. We had, in our house, we burned firewood. Where did the wood come from? Some of the trees that my father cut down. Where else? There was a manufacturer in Dunellen known as the Art Color Printing Company, and they had, they brought in the huge rolls of paper, but the paper had to be taken to the factory in railroad cars, and they would toss the wood outside. ... It was blocking for the paper rolls in the train. ... We would pick up the wood

and take it home and cut it up ... as firewood. ... That was the approach to heating and cutting down on our heating bills if you will, okay. Rarely did we buy coal, but coal was more expensive than picking up the wood ... or my father cutting trees down. Entertainment wise, honestly, when you could go to the movies, that's where we would go. Locally, ... Art Color had a baseball team which we used to watch and they played in Art Color Field. Gee, there's not much entertainment I can think of, but, you know, we found things to do, and ... I tried to nail down the entertainment.

NM: Did you join any organizations like the Boy Scouts or join a local sports team?

HH: No, I didn't. Neither did my brother. However, there was an organization that was an offshoot for the Slovak people. They had, what you call, an organization that did a lot of calisthenics, and at night, and you go after school, and you go down, and they have instructors on calisthenics. Some of the guys took part in like ... parallel bars and stuff like that, you know, but I never played. I wasn't big enough to play, and didn't want to play. There's too many big guys around so, yes. We played a lot of field stuff, you know, football and baseball and softball, yes, but, and track. So, there wasn't much planned entertainment except for what the school provided.

NM: Can you tell us where you went to school?

HH: Yes, I went to, my elementary school ... started out in Whittier School in Kindergarten. That was Whittier, the school was built then. ... Then, I went to parochial school, St. John's in Dunellen where it was run by nuns and that was an experience, extremely helpful people. I loved them all, ... some of the nuns were, gosh, God given. ... To this day, I remember one of my teachers. Her name was Sister Christina. I was so enthralled with that person that when we were blessed with our first daughter, we named her Christina after that nun, you know. In any event, yes, I went to St. John's all throughout grammar school to eighth grade, and then, from there after graduating from--my brother did the same thing--I went to Dunellen High School. By then, Dunellen had its own school, and again, it was a junior school, and it became a full four year school, and it's there right now. Of course, it's expanded, but it's right on First Street and Dunellen Avenue. No, First Street, Dunellen Avenue, and Lincoln Avenue.

NM: You mentioned that you really enjoyed going to this parochial school and Sister Christina in particular. What were some of your favorite subjects in parochial school and why did you like the school so much?

HH: I can't think of any real subject that I enjoyed that much, probably a little bit of history, but why did I enjoy it? ... Because, they were so good to us, and, you know, the kindness. Some of them were kind of rough, some of the nuns, you know. If you got out of hand, you got spanked on the hand, you know. They'll hit you with a ruler, stuff like that. Yes, I got my punishment there, but by and large, the nuns and the priests and the pastor, they were fine people, gosh. Then, we had our own beautiful church. I don't know, there's something about the place that rubbed off on some of us, you know, and I think it rubbed off on me but there were guys that, you know, were bullies, big guys. ... I abhorred people like that, or, you know, I hate to be picked on. [laughter]

NM: Was this a Catholic school?

HH: Yes.

NM: Was going to church and the Catholic religion an important part of your life growing up?

HH: Yes, yes. You know, every Sunday you went to church, you know, had Mass and during the week when they had special masses or special activities, we were asked to go, the kids, my mother and father would take us, primarily my mother because my father wasn't around, but he was working. ... You got to know some of your colleagues, and they became real close friends. ... One of the guys that I knew, and still know, he's three months older than I am, he's still around, ninety something; he and I are probably the oldest guys around now, yes, anyway.

NM: Were there any activities that the church organized for the youth?

HH: Well, in my instance, it was primarily track. There was no football, there was no baseball, primarily it was track, and we had some good track coaches, and we would compete locally, and then in the diocese too. I remember being taken to Trenton where they had track meets and stuff like that. I was a pretty good runner but not that fast, ... didn't win all of them, you know, but yes, that was one of the activities, and some of the guys played tennis. You needed money to buy equipment and look like a tennis player, but by and large, it was more, I guess being poor, you had to find your own entertainment. Nobody provided it for you, okay. You had to find it on your own. It was not what you'd call organized sports if you will. Some of the tennis players, hey, their folks had their own tennis courts, or things of that sort, you know.

NM: You mentioned in your memoir that you were an altar boy too. How long were you an altar boy?

HH: ... Oh, yes, sure, I'm sorry, you're right. I was an altar boy for, gee whiz, several years. ... If you volunteered to be an altar boy, you had certain Masses you had to attend, and, you know, seven o'clock Mass before you went to school. Yes, I was an altar boy for several years, which reminds me, I was employed too after I was in high school, even in grammar school, as a ... milkman's helper. ... We would get up early. The milkman, he would drive. The creamery for the milkman was in Perth Amboy, so we had to go get our milk and then deliver it in the area. Am I jumping too fast?

NM: No, go ahead.

HH: ... We went to Perth Amboy, picked up the load of milk, and started out in Middlesex, and made the rounds all the way to Plainfield, and then, quickly ran home, and washed up and went to school. ... I would do that every day, five days a week at least, six days a week, sometimes seven, yes, right. ... You reminded me, yes. The guy's name was--Dunellen Dairy--and it was Hughie Kane, he was the owner. He was an Irishman, he drank too much, and that's why we didn't make [as much]; he drank too much. We spent too much time waiting for him to come out

of the bar to get done at least on weekends. In any event, that was my job, so I, then my brother followed me in that respect, and that's how we made our extra money.

NM: You did that all throughout high school?

HH: Yes, all the way through high school, yes.

NM: You mentioned that your brother also followed in your footsteps. Did your sisters have any part-time jobs in high school?

HH: Yes, mostly cleaning and some sewing. One sister did a lot, she was a little more skilled with a sewing machine, Helen, but there was no organized employment, you know, no benefits, obviously.

NM: Let us move on to your time in high school. Can you tell us where you went to high school?

HH: It was Dunellen High School, and it's still there, right at the same spot.

NM: Can you tell us about some of your interests in high school?

HH: You know, I don't think that, and I hate to say this, but I have to say it, my folks were not very good guiding lights from the standpoint of education. That is to say which direction you should go, okay, they just weren't, and I say that because, I wish I didn't, but I had to. They were not, see they were not known people in education at all or worked at it. My mother was a little bit more desirous from a standpoint of learning. I have to hand it to my folks, they went to night school themselves because they didn't talk any English. They had to go to night school themselves, and they did, and they learned how to. They were totally, totally non-English language, okay, nothing. So, they talked with their friends in Slovak if you will, okay, or Polish. So, yes, I hand it to them, very much so, and they both became naturalized citizens. ... They were proud to be citizens, my God, it was amazing, so, yes. I say yes because they earned it, okay. It was not handed to them, and there wasn't too much guidance from the standpoint of people, okay, except for the politicians who wanted their votes, so they guided them in certain directions.

NM: What languages were primarily spoken in your house?

HH: A little English, ... we did English, but primarily Slovak.

NM: You and your siblings would speak Slovak?

HH: I would say no, no. When we got to school, it was all English. So my folks, there was no Slovak speaking in our house except when my mother and father brought home their friends, and then we got to know. As a matter of fact, if you want to talk about how much did, my brother can't talk a word of Slovak. My sisters were not thrilled to learn, but they did learn, because of their influence from other friends, okay. My sisters were in an organization, also in the athletics,

and marching skills, and stuff like that, yes. How much speaking? ... Very little Slovak. They struggled to be American, and they wanted to, they were proud of it, my mother and father, both of them. They were extremely proud. ... I don't think they got too much help from the outside, did it more on their own. Isn't that strange when you stop and think about it, because today, you get all the help you want in language, or anything for that matter, right? You didn't then. People had, were struggling too much on their own. Okay, go, I'm sorry.

NM: In your community, were you cognizant of the tough economic times in the 1930s?

HH: No. You know, it is strange that you ask, make that statement because I knew a lot of the politicians and they were very nice guys. They were very influential. They did too much for, the mayor, the former governor was mayor and council, and they governed the town, and they were influential in a lot of areas, so, yes. What was your question? I'm sorry.

NM: I was wondering if the Great Depression affected the community of Dunellen in any visible ways.

HH: Oh, yes, there was not much employment whatsoever, okay. Eventually, the government had public works, ... WPA, Works Progress, WPA. ... They provided employment, or started, Work Progress Administration, that's what it was, okay? So, again, they made streets or they had found financing to make streets, to improve streets. Yes, we had our own public works group or department, yes, but when you're talking about certain politicians, the mayor and council, my folks ... knew the council people. They knew they were friendly, and they were good to me, or that is to say, I knew them all. ... I think I went out of my way to get to know some of the guys. For example, the one long time mayor was Mayor Morecraft, and all the councilmen, I can name them all, Skinner, et cetera, and gee whiz, Apgar. ... Anyway, I think that's all.

NM: You talked about some of these public works projects. Were these projects in Dunellen?

HH: Yes. They must have gotten the financing from the state, and then it was filtered down to the community. ... They performed the works that they applied for. ... Now, exactly what they did, except for roads, trees, sidewalks, things of that sort, you know. They may have begun some of the sewer works, but not, that needed a coalition, for example, you know, more than one community to get a sewer situation, okay. It had to be more than one community, yes.

KD: While you were in high school, was there any talk about what was going on in Europe? Did any of your teachers talk about Germany invading Poland and France?

HH: Yes, we had a sister, I mean a history teacher in my class, in high school. She was Mrs. McElhenny and she had impressed on us the dangers that were brewing in Europe then, okay, you know, the Nazi party. She would talk about that, ... not only she, but also another history teacher, Hilda Moore. She was English, oh, god, what was her name? Mrs. Timbken. Yes, but there was a lot of emphasis on the growing dangers that were brewing in Europe, yes. ... It filtered down to us. I myself personally took a lot of interest in those world events. They sort of, like, because my folks came from Europe, and I know that they were fighting in the war somewhere, my uncles, although I did never meet them, ... they were part of the Russian

coalition. ... They were anti-German. In any event, yes, there was a lot of emphasis by some of the teachers in school, and I remember, because I said my background and my folks, it was filtered down because my mom, my grandmother and grandfather were still living there, but I never knew them. ... Just word of mouth, and somebody, whatever, came from them, so they didn't tell us too much about my grandmother and grandfather. ... I know that my grandfather had to take a side in the fighting ... even before the war started, World War II started, he was required to join some military organization, I honestly can't remember who.

NM: Would your parents keep in touch with your relatives that were in Czechoslovakia?

HH: Yes, they tried to, but there was not much from our standpoint, or that is to say, our end of it, not much communication from there, okay.

KD: Did you ever think that America might get involved in the war prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor?

HH: Yes, but you see, there was a lot of people didn't want us to get involved. There were a lot of people that said you would never get involved until FDR got in there. There was not too much sympathy for World War II. Some of the teachers, however, would say it's unavoidable. Somewhere along the line, you have to take a position, and, you know, they were right.

NM: In some communities there were ethnic German organizations or people who could be considered isolationists. Were there any type of organizations in Dunellen that were like that?

HH: I can't remember any, no, but there were some organizations that were pro-German, yes, exactly who, honestly, the Bund. ... There was some activity in Watchung. No, it was more in Warren. ... It was an offshoot of something, but I can't remember who yet, but there was always some kind of a movement that was pro-German.

NM: You mentioned that you worked as a milkman throughout high school, and, at some point, you also worked as foreman at the theater.

HH: Yes, but that was, see the theater part was when I was real young. ... When I got to be a milkman, or a milkman's helper, was ... high school.

NM: Did you have any other jobs besides the milkman job in high school?

HH: No, not really. Maybe, ... I remember snowstorms, you know, then you were hired by the railroad to shovel snow away from the switches and stuff like that. ... That was only a fleeting employment, you know, maybe a one day affair or more. ... You'd want to make as much money as you could. As a matter of fact, we would climb the railroad cars and steal coal. ... Climb down, and then throw the coal over so we would take it home and burn the coal, okay, but everybody tried to make a buck, and you had to.

NM: Could you describe how your house was heated?

HH: ... The house was built with a central system, it had a furnace, a rather large furnace, where it burned coal and wood. For fuel, we would, as I said, burned the wood we can get free. We would buy coal, and then, when the winter was severe, then use the coal. ... If you have any knowledge whatsoever of coal, you know, you'd start a fire, and then you would hope that it would catch. ... Then, at night, you'd "bank" it. That is to say, exactly how I did this, one of the things you leave open, just so that the fire was moving, or that it's still "alive," so the next morning you wouldn't have to start from scratch, and build a fire in the furnace, so it was banked. ... It was done either by wood or coal, okay? If you started burning coal, then you should be burning coal, because then you don't have to cut as much wood up, and ... it wouldn't be as labor intensive. ... That one furnace had pipes, ... steel, large, that filtered to the other rooms if you will okay, from the furnace itself.

NM: What year did you finish high school?

HH: 1940.

NM: What were your initial plans after you completed high school?

HH: Honestly, I had no plans. I had no plans whatsoever, and I just wanted to go get a job and earn some money. I had no, as I said, there was no influence from my folks, which way to go education wise, okay, none whatsoever. So, I worked as a laborer after high school, I got a job in this printing outfit, which was known as Art Color Printing Company, okay. It was a rather huge printing firm. It has, you know, beginning with the setting of the type, the rollers, the paint, and so forth and so on. So I went to work, and then that particular factory is at least three blocks long. It's right down here in Dunellen. It's still there. ... I got to work there after high school, and I was working as a jogger, in the web room, which is to say taking the print off the press, and picking it up in your hands, and then jogging it so it would be all flat, and then put it on ... a skid. Drop it on the skid, and a guy come over with a tractor and pick it up, and put it on the truck. ... That's where I started working, and I worked there for several months, hated the job. It was "man against machine," and so forth and so on, and then finally I got a job with Buffalo Tank as a clerk. ... I got a job there in April 1941 and worked there until ... 1980. Not continually--the war changed everything.

NM: I also understand that you took night courses at Rutgers.

HH: Yes, that was before, yes, in the beginning, in ... September 1941 we started.

NM: So you were working at Buffalo Tank already.

HH: Yes.

NM: What were your initial duties as a clerk at Buffalo Tank?

HH: Everything. I was a messenger boy, blueprint operator. ... The blueprint machine was down in the basement, half of the time there was water in the basement. I learned how to be a typist, ... I learned to be a good typist in high school, yes, clerk typist, yes. ... I got a job doing

everything ... in Buffalo Tank. As a matter of fact, the president, he had a farm also in Far Hills, New Jersey and he would ask me to go up there, and once in a while, take care of the cows. He had a couple of Angus cows up there and I would tend to them for a couple of hours periodically. So he, a nice guy, wonderful man. He was the president of Buffalo Tank, took a liking to me, so did the guy that eventually hired, or did hire me, Mr. McIver, who was a very, very marvelous gentleman. ... I started as a messenger boy, and when it was all done, I was the assistant to the vice-president. It took me a long time. As a matter of fact, we acquired a couple of other places, and I was a vice president of (Lane Metal?) Products. ... It was a title job. [laughter]

NM: You mentioned that you took some night courses while you were working. What were the courses in?

HH: What were they? I needed, had no math, and in order to get to college, you needed some more math background, so I went for math. You see, that's the bad part if you don't pick out or have a goal. If you wanted to go to college, for example, your parents, by and large, or somebody in the guidance department should say to you, "Do this or try that." The guidance teachers that I recall, were not that type, or my folks were not guiding, if you will, so I was not prepared to go to college.

NM: How many courses did you take?

HH: I took English and math.

KD: Were your parents happy that you took night classes at Rutgers?

HH: ... My grades in grammar school were good. They were not too good in high school. I fooled around too much. I had some, that's a confession, I got, my friends were "goof offs," so I became a "goof off" too. I goofed off at night, sit on a corner, tell dirty jokes, eat ice cream, and talk about girls, and on and on and on. For what? Nothing, you know. It was just a waste. So, you asked me a question, what was it? ...

KD: What encouraged you to take night classes at Rutgers after high school?

HH: Nobody. Nobody said to me--on my own--but nobody. The teachers never encouraged me, to my knowledge, okay. I just can't remember. My folks didn't because they wanted me to have a job and that's it. So, it just happened, that's all. But you see, that's the point I think I want to make is how important the encouragement to do things comes from your teachers and/or your folks. ... Some of the teachers, I thought, were lax. They were more critical than helpful to me. You know what I mean? If you weren't a stand out, or your folks weren't behind you and going to the PTA meetings and talking to the teachers, who cares?

NM: Do you remember where you were when you first heard about Pearl Harbor?

HH: Yes. I was at a wedding in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, decorating a car for the bride and groom. It was about ten o'clock in the morning, and I just remember something like that, and it came over the radio, and then somebody says, "The war has started. Pearl Harbor was bombed."

I was in Pennsylvania. What year was that? ... December '41, December 7th, what the hell's the matter with me, that's how I heard. ...

KD: Did you have any idea where Pearl Harbor was?

HH: After they told us it was in Hawaii, yes, but I don't recall, you know, Pearl Harbor, what part of the country was Pearl Harbor, I don't know, but when they said Hawaii, yes.

NM: Did you think that you would join the military at that point?

HH: Not really, not really. I just had no, I was stunned, and nobody was, you know, hey, what was I? ... Eighteen, nineteen, just eighteen, so I wasn't concerned about the war, the military then, no.

NM: What led you to join the service then?

HH: My envy of my fellow men. I tried to get into different employment with Calco Chemical, and I went to take a physical, and they told me I had a hernia, so they wouldn't hire me. That's how I got to Buffalo Tank, if you will. They wouldn't hire me, and then I started inquiring about the service. The guy said to me, "Hey, you can't get in. They won't let you in with a hernia." So, I just let things go, and I was being treated on the outside with medicine, ... they made injections to your side to strengthen the area. Nobody would, you know, so I went all the way to, where was it? White House, New Jersey, some surgeon there would give me injections in the right side, and I just hoped that was going to work without going to surgery. It didn't. What's the point here? I wanted to go, but I couldn't go unless I went for surgery. So, eventually all the guys were going, so I had to go for surgery, and I did. I went in November of 1942, surgery, and surgery for a hernia. I had to stay in bed, couldn't get out of bed for twenty-one days. That's how long it took for a day of surgery. Today, one day, and next day, or the same day, they let you go, you know. Twenty-one days in bed, isn't that terrible, I'd like to die all that time. In any event, eventually it started to heal. Then my number came up, so I went, and they took me.

NM: You were drafted into the service?

HH: Actually, I was drafted, yes. ... I was lucky to get in then, because one of the doctors said to me, now this is, how true it was, I don't know. He said, "You're still bleeding down there and you want to go to the service?" ... He was being funny, but it was still, you know, it was, I had to wear a belt. Anyway, I did.

NM: If you did not get the hernia surgery, would you be classified as 4F?

HH: Yes, I think I had to volunteer to go for surgery. They didn't make me go. If you were still 4F, you stay home.

NM: Tell us about your initial training in the military. Where were you inducted?

HH: I was inducted in Newark, New Jersey, yes, and then went to Fort Dix for, you know, not basic training, that's where we went for the initial phase of the military, okay. I was accepted, and so forth and so on, and I was there for about three weeks or something like that, and then put on a train ... to Florida for basic training.

NM: At what point did you get into the Army Air Forces rather than the Army?

HH: When they were accepting recruits down in Miami. I don't know, they picked me out to go. I wanted to go fly, and then they said, "Okay."

NM: Was this something that you volunteered for?

HH: Yes, because, yes, if I didn't volunteer, I guess they would have put you in the infantry, or whatever. So I said, "I want to fly."

KD: Why did you want to fly?

HH: I always wanted to fly, ... but I had no encouragement to go to fly because, you know, it was costly as the dickens to try to learn how to fly, but yes I always wanted to fly. I had no fear for flying for some reason or other, and, you know, as soon as you got in, you went to basic training, but basic training was nothing but marching and calisthenics and stuff like that. Down in Miami Beach it was a terribly good, what's the word I'm looking for, branch of service or whatever. Basic training in Miami, you know, beautiful. ... This was February, my God, you wouldn't want anything better. I remember the instructor say, "You better stay off the beach, and make sure you have [protection] so you don't get burned." ... I remember saying it to my friend, another guy was saying, "Oh, don't worry about me, I don't burn, I tan." I laid in the sun, and I got terribly burned, and as a result, because I didn't follow orders, put me on KP, and I had big blisters on my body. ... That's how you were punished. That's how you learned. [laughter]

NM: You mentioned that your basic training consisted of calisthenics and marching. Did you find any part of that initial training challenging?

HH: No, no, I just enjoyed it. I truly enjoyed it. As a matter of fact, I enjoyed the food, I enjoyed the camaraderie. We had, we were in, our barracks were a hotel, nice big room. It was just fabulous, you know. Here we were in Miami Beach. Anyway, that lasted about three weeks, and then before you know it, then they put me in radio school at Scott Field, Illinois.

NM: Tell me about your experience at radio school.

HH: It was, for me, it was difficult, you know, Morse Code, you had to learn all that, and you had to do your duties, you know. Everything was just, it was challenging there, okay. I had to stay with it. The Morse Code didn't come to me easily, but after a while, I got to be pretty good at it, and before you know it, I would say I was there ... three months or more.

NM: Did you have any experience with radios in civilian life?

HH: No, none whatsoever. I didn't even, as a matter of fact, radio, in radio school, you had to build your own set. It was a little ingenuity sometimes, and it was difficult for me too. It was just challenging, I don't know, but I mastered it somewhere along the line and graduated.

NM: Were the people that you went to basic training and radio school with from all over the United States?

HH: All over the United States. I got to know some guys well, and yes, all over, all in the barracks, big barracks, you know, and honestly, I think that some of the stuff, it was just good. I enjoyed the marching, I enjoyed my instructor, I did. I didn't fight it, I didn't fight the food, I just fell in line.

NM: After your training in radio school, where did you go after that?

HH: ... We were sent to gunnery school in Las Vegas, Nevada.

NM: Can you talk about your experience in gunnery school?

HH: Yes, you know, it was primarily using a gun, a .50 caliber machinegun. ... First of all, it was a .30 caliber and then you graduated to a .50, and, you know, when it was flying time, you had to go up with an airplane, and, you know, fire at a target, and the target being a sling. ... Initially you went up in a two-seater ship with a .30 caliber machinegun, and then the pilot would just take off and you'd be there with that gun and you try to fire it. I remember almost losing a finger there at the top of the magazine was in there, and it was stuck, and the cover came back, and almost took this finger off it. Anyway, but it was, you know, when he took off, and he did a roll, you know, you're almost hanging from the, you had your seat belt on, but when you did a roll, you were upside down. ... That's when the darned thing hit my finger, but that was part of it. ... Then you did so much of that, and then you were doing ground fire, you know, a .30 millimeter rifle and then a .50 caliber machinegun on the ground with a target moving, you know, on a railroad car, and then try to knock that off. ... Then, up in a B-17, you know, had to take care of a .50 caliber from a B-17.

NM: You mentioned that you found some aspects of radio training difficult. Did you find any aspects of your gunnery training difficult?

HH: No, not really. ... It was a matter of, all of this took time and effort, and the more you did it, the easier it got, you know, in radio as well as the gunnery.

NM: I remember there was a little anecdote that you had in your memoir about gunnery school and how you talked to the pilot.

HH: Yes, I was having a tough time, and I said, "If don't get a good grade in this, I would flunk." Now, that's a terrible thing when you stop and think about it, getting through ... radio school, and then go to gunnery in a position to be washed out then, after all of that? So, I pleaded with him, so he did, he got me as close to that sleeve as he could and I fired away and boy, oh boy, I put a lot of holes in that sleeve I think.

NM: In your radio and gunnery training, did you see fellow soldiers flunk out of school?

HH: ... I know some of them did get washed out. It's just like everything else, you know, some could or couldn't. For a while there, I thought I was going to get washed out, yes. Some guys ... made it easy. ...

NM: After gunnery school, where did you go?

HH: Okay, we got a leave of absence. Then, I had to report down to Barksdale Field, Louisiana to be assigned to a crew.

NM: Did you know what type of plane you were going to fly?

HH: No. When we got there, we saw B-26s, Martin Marauders. ...

NM: Did you have to learn about the airplane?

HH: Yes, yes. I never saw a B-26 till I got there. As a matter of fact, I know the pilot and the copilot, the rest of them did, but myself, the engineer, and the tail gunner or armorer, they had no idea either to my knowledge. ... That was the crew initially, oh, what a crew. Pilot, copilot, great guy, navigator, bombardier, myself, crew mechanic, and the armorer or the tail gunner, oh, what a group.

NM: Did you get to know the rest of the crew well?

HH: ... While we were together, yes, you see, but that was, how long we were there I can't remember, close to two months, not even that, yes. ... We'd take trips from our base to the Gulf of Mexico, for gunnery training, and then cross country if you will. My pilot and copilot would take us to the low lands in the Carolinas, almost on ground level, and it scared the dickens out of the cattle, oh, my God. Anyway, that's some of the antics that we did, you know. Anyway, that was it, yes.

NM: At what point did you receive training on how to use a parachute?

HH: None. I don't recall if anybody told us, just told us where it was, but no jumping experience, no nothing, very little. I just don't recall getting any training, just told that they had a backpack or chest chute, and we ended up with chest chutes, but no training, at least to me they didn't.

NM: Was this the same B-26 that you used when you were flying over France?

HH: No. You were either part of a group or assigned, but ... in our case, we had to take our own ship over, the southern route. We took off from, we went from the Carolinas down to (Homestead?) Field, Florida, and took off from there. ... Then, we went to Puerto Rico, to Trinidad, to British Guyana, Belem, Brazil, Natal, Brazil, Ascension Island to French Liberia

over the ocean. That was a nine hour flight, from Natal to Ascension Island, it was at least, gee whiz, seven or eight hours, and we had a navigator who could navigate celestially, you know, and then I would assist him with the radio, try to get a beacon, and that was about seven or eight. ... From Ascension Island to French Liberia, that was another nine hours or eight hours. ... Then, from there to Morocco, to England, and then subsequently to Ireland, that's it.

NM: Prior to making that trip across the Atlantic and up to England, did you have an idea of whether you were going to Europe or to the Pacific?

HH: No, no. ... Common sense, I guess, that we were going to be in the European area because we were in Europe, okay, almost in Europe from Africa, then eventually went to England, okay, and then Ireland, but prior to that we were told nothing. I don't think anybody knew. The pilot followed the flight and I think that was it, really.

KD: When you arrived in England, what was the atmosphere like? Where were you stationed in England?

HH: Northern Ireland.

KD: Was it near Belfast?

HH: It was not too far from Belfast, yes. As a matter of fact, one of the excursions that we took, we were able to go to the, oh God, ... Seven Wonders of the World, what the heck was the name of that? "Giant's Causeway." ... There were all kinds of rocks that were shaped by the ocean and so forth and so on. So that was it. How did I like the English people or the Irish? Wonderful. On Sunday, we would go to Mass, or at least I would, and can you imagine, I never experienced steak and eggs for breakfast on a Sunday morning. Can you imagine that? Steak and eggs, oh, boy. Anyway, yes, what else?

KD: Were you eventually stationed in England or did you stay in Ireland?

HH: No, Ireland, that's all, and then from there, the group was moved to ... the base in England. What the hell was the name of that base anyway? ... Rivenhall.

NM: What was the name of the group that you were with? What was the group designation?

HH: 397th Bomb Group. ... The group was the 397th and the, gee whiz, it was the 596th ... Squadron.

NM: Did you continue to train while you were in Northern Ireland?

HH: Oh, yes we did and we transitioned flying in Ireland, yes. It was colder than the dickens there too. ... They had the potbelly stoves there for heat. ... I remember lying in bed, and it was colder than the dickens, and I was wrapped around a blanket, and something was bothering me, and it was a mouse in my jacket. ... I squeezed it and I killed it, you know, by squeezing it,

because I didn't know what it was going to do. I didn't know what it was, so I squeezed it and I killed him, but boy, ... it was so cold. Even then, I didn't like the cold.

NM: Did you have any contact with civilians?

HH: No, although, once in a while, you'd see in Ireland, ... if you're walking down the street and so forth, and the ladies were on bicycles, you know, you just say, "Hello," and all that, but no contact to my knowledge, and the people that gave us the steak and eggs, I thought was thrilling, you know.

NM: Were you still together with the crew that you initially trained with in Louisiana?

HH: ... When we got to our permanent base ... when we were assigned, I knew who our crew was, and I would see them somewhat frequently. However, my pilot, myself, my engineer, I think that was only one mission that we went on, and after that it was a pick up crew, so that the copilot was not our regular copilot. He's the guy that's still living. We never saw the day we got, all the time we flew, and incidentally, I got shot down on my sixth mission, anybody we knew, we just didn't know, it was just pick up, so the day we got shot down was my regular pilot, and my engineer, and the tail gunner, yes, okay. The rest of the crew, the navigator, copilot, and that's it. So, the regular crew was my pilot, myself, four of us were regular crew, two guys were not. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

NM: Can you talk about your first five missions? In general, what were your missions?

HH: Let's see, Paris, outside of Paris, another one along the coast, English Channel, and that's a railroad yard outside of Paris. That's three. I can't remember specifically which one it was or what they were. I just don't remember.

NM: During these initial missions before your plane was hit, did you come under anti-aircraft fire?

HH: Yes, in all cases, yes, but they didn't hit us. ... There was anti-aircraft fire at us, but they didn't hit us. ... I recall sticking my head out the waist gun position, and when we landed, no, no I'm sorry, my engineer, who was in the turret position, he said, "Will you get your head inside?" If you were going to get hit, that thing would go right through you, but anyway, he just wanted me to shield myself as much as possible. ... I did have a helmet on, but he didn't like my, he didn't report me or anything like that, but I was just enthralled to see the bombs going down because it was rare that we, in combat, to see that, you know, the shells hit, and it was only a few missions, okay, so I didn't experience that at all.

NM: Did you have any fighter escorts during these missions?

HH: No, the missions that we went on weren't long enough to have fighter escorts. ... The furthest we went was Paris so that would be about 120 miles, something like that, maybe a little more, yes, 150 miles, yes.

NM: Was your crew concerned that you might encounter German fighter planes?

HH: I don't recall anybody saying anything about it, no. They knew it, that is to say the pilot and copilot and so forth, they knew how much distance and, I think they did anyway, what would require an escort.

NM: Can you talk about your sixth mission, where you had to bail out of your B-26?

HH: Yes, well it was the mission going to the O-I-S-S-E-L bridges outside of Paris over the Seine. They were twin bridges, and we're supposed to knock them out to my knowledge, okay. Almost immediately, as we approached the bridges we encountered heavy flak. ... It wasn't too much longer after that that the "ack-ack" or the artillery began firing at us that we were hit and it was the right engine and it disabled the ship to a degree that we couldn't stay with the flight. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: ... We pulled out of formation, and continued to try to stay afloat, but we were about twenty-five miles outside of Dieppe, when I say twenty-five miles, from the coast, and I was in my waist position, and the pilot said to me, "Radio operator, come up front. We may have to send an SOS. We may have to ditch." Anyway, so I left my position, and went across, now the catwalk, I'm sure you guys know what a catwalk is. You go from the one position over the bomb bay doors. ... I had to go over the catwalk to my position, and when I got there, I couldn't get any response from the radio. So, he didn't tell me, as I remember, go ahead and send an SOS. In any event, I tried ... the radio and got no response from the engine, or from the radio, and then I went to him, up to his position, and said, "I can't get anything on the radio," and immediately, he said, "We're going to bail out. Bail out, bail out." So, I heard that command, and the guy in the tail gunner position, Marion Rose, he went out the waist position, then my engineer went out from the turret position to the waist and bailed out of that position. ... Then, with that, he opened the bomb bay doors, and then that was my [signal], he said, "Get out." So I went to the bomb bay doors, blessed myself, and I uttered something to the good Lord. As a matter fact, "Lord, if you save me from this, I'll never forget you." Anyway, did the sign of the cross, and bailed out. ... You want me to go on? When I got out of that ship, I didn't pull my ripcord right away, but, you know, I think they told us to count to ten. So, I was floating around, and this thing was, I think I was on my back, and I was floating around, and when I counted to ten, I pulled the ripcord, and before you knew it, it opened up quickly. ... It was a chest cord, chest chute, and the cords on the chest chute was such that it grabbed my nose so to speak, okay, and it hurt. ... I don't know if it was bleeding or not, but anyway, it grabbed my nose, and I thought my nose was going to come off. ... The chute opened up, but as it did, the strap was in my testicles like, so when it jolted, I thought I was going to lose them, you know, because, and it hurt. Oh, there's something I should tell you before that. When we were getting ready to go to get on in the ship at the base, gee whiz, I should have told you this. Anyway, one of the guys that came over to our ship had said goodbye to me was a guy from Dunellen, a guy by the name

of Bob Estrin, in high school, together, my class. He came over to say goodbye to me, and he said, "I'll see you at chow." "See you at chow." Now, he's in another ship down the flight line somewhere, I can't remember where. He was a flight mechanic, a sargent. He came over, and he boosted me up into the airplane, but before he did, he put my harness on. He said, "I'll see you at chow." This guy's name is Bob Estrin. As a matter of fact, he's in the hospital right now down in Florida, bad shape. ... That's before the flight took off. ... I said, just now that when I pulled the ripcord, I said to myself, I guess, that, you know, the harness was grabbing my testicles so to speak, ... so it opened and it was serene as the dickens, okay. It was like floating in heaven or something, but as I descended, and I think that they told us that it was about three thousand feet that we bailed out, and I think that they were firing at us, but I'm not sure, okay. In any event, as I came down, and it looked like it was going to be forever before the chute was going to take me to the ground, but as soon as I got to the ground, bang, it just jolted the dickens out of me, and the parachute dragged me somewhat. ... I was scratched up here and there. Anyway, as soon as I hit the ground, there's a guy, a Frenchman, plowing the field, and I got my chute off, collapsed it, and ran to, like I saw like a ravine, and why I went there, I don't know. ... I took off my chute, and crumpled it up, and put it in this ditch. Then, I ran to him, and I remember saying to him (I had a card, and it has French phrases on it) "I'm an American," "Je suis un Américain." "Where is the enemy," it said. "Can you help me?" So, he said, "No," you know, he was. There were Jerries [Germans] all over the place, and that's why he didn't want to help me, because if he helped me, then the Jerries would come and shoot him. So, I had to go on my own. Anyway, he kept plowing or whatever, and I saw like a mountain up ahead of me. So, I just took off. Now, and I ran like the dickens up to this mountain, and it was, I thought it was steep, but when we returned a couple of years later, it didn't look that steep. ... Anyway, I went there, ... top of the mountain, now I'm a nervous wreck, the Jerries are all around. You could hear the talk, or the shouting, and whatever they were saying, and so forth, and so on. Didn't sound like it was a welcome, ... okay, so I'm trying to find a place to hide. There was a big tree, I said, "You might try to climb the tree." I tried climbing that big tree. No way, I couldn't get near it because it was huge. I went to the other side of the mountain where, whatever that was, hill, and I could see the troops down in the valley, the activity, and the troops and the vehicles riding around. So, I tried to find something to hide in. I ran over and there was a shed. ... I went to that shed, and it looked like it would be something that somebody would be drawn to it, you know, hiding in a shed, so I abandoned that. I was still running around trying to, I tried to bury myself in the ground. Finally, there's a, the ground, the weeds were probably about that high, and as I was over the weeds, two guys are coming towards me. Now, how come they didn't see me, I don't know, but as soon as I saw them, I hit the ground, and buried myself in the weeds. ... I hugged the ground and laid quiet as the dickens. So, they came by on either side of me. Now I'm here, one guy there, one guy there, and I'm in the middle. They missed me, and they were talking together, you know, two Jerries. I said Jerry, Germans, okay. So, they keep walking and walking around when they get to like a haystack, and they knocked over the haystack, kicked it over. They were looking for me underneath it, and I just peeked up ... trying to see. They kept going right down on this hill if you will okay. I didn't see them there anymore, so, after a while, I don't know how long I laid there, but I did, so I got up from there because things were quiet and I found a place to hide, a better place. It was like in the ravine, bushes. It seemed like, I think I had, seemed like it had thorns in it. Anyway, I went in there, and I hid myself and covered up the best I could. Now, I had ten cigarettes on me, you know, I think I had Luckys, but I'm not sure. It could have been Chesterfields. I had ten of them, so I lit one up, had a cigarette there,

that's nine now, and stayed there until it became dusk, not dark, but it's starting, things going on, it was a beautiful day. So, I should say this, that every time, May, now, it's June now right? Every time the weather changes and it gets to May, now this was May 8th, 1944, the weather was beautiful, beautiful, and I say to myself, "How come it's not nice now here as it was there when I was in May in 1944," okay. I made some kind of analogy myself if you will, okay. Anyway, I stayed there as long as I thought it was safe to move, and I could hear voices in the background. Now, I got enough nerve to get up and go, and I could hear guys talking, and I could hear a saw. ... I go down into a little bit of a ravine and I could see these guys. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: ... Guys are cutting wood, right, okay, there were three of them there were, sitting on a log, and they were talking or whatever, and I walked over and I said, "Je suis un Américain." That means, "I'm an American." They got up like they were startled. So, I still had my flight clothes on and they offered me, we got friendly to some extent, they offered me something to eat. Now, I thought it was like a meat, but it just didn't taste good to me. Then, they handed me something that was cheese. Now this was, this was real, Neufchatel, real good cheese, brie-like, okay. You know brie, don't you, but this was the brie that was real strong, okay, and I hated it, spit it out. Then they handed me cider. I didn't know what the hell it was, but it was cider, okay. I didn't like that either, but let me just back up now. After I got to know what the food was like, whatever that meat was, I ate it, absolutely delicious, okay. The cheese was out of this world, and the cider, I got to be a drunk. It was so good, that was apple cider. Anyway, so they gave me some of this. ... I think I ate my last candy bar. I think it was three I had, but at least two, okay. So, I ate my candy bar, and they motioned to me that they would be back. Now, why the guy just didn't stay with me, I don't know. They'd be back at ten o'clock, they put it on their watch, okay. So, they left. Comes ten o'clock, nobody's around, nobody shows up. Now, it's dark, but the later it got, the brighter it got. The moon was absolutely beautiful, and, you know, your shadow was visible everywhere. So, I decided, this is midnight or thereafter, okay, I decided, you know, you're supposed to start walking south if you, they told us. You try to go over the Pyrenees and find your way over through the Pyrenees and then to Spain. Well, that's me, talking to myself, that's where I'm going to go. I'm going to go south. You know how far that is? It's about five hundred miles. ... Anyway, I'm going to start walking, so I did. Started walking, and as I came down this hill, okay, the moon is behind me, and my shadow cast hundreds of feet, beautiful. So, I walked until about five o'clock in the morning, and where I was walking, I didn't know. I could see my compass, it says south, but I couldn't make it out really clearly so I kept walking that way, and I walked until I was tired. ... You could hear dogs barking here and there. I got to a place where I thought I would have to, I should take it easy now. So, I hopped over this fence in a ... farm, and it was still dark and whatever I was feeling, it felt like a haystack. It was a haystack, but it was more than a haystack, it was more like manure, but it was still nice and soft, okay. So, I crawled into that thing, put my hanky over my face ... and I fell asleep. How long I was there, I don't know, but I could hear, as I stood up, there's a girl walking over with a pail to a pump and she comes to the pump. ... Anyway, she has a dog with her, she goes over to the pump, I stand up, and she drops the pail, and the dog starts barking at me and so forth. So, I get up and I follow her into the house if you will. ... I don't know what time it is, and I followed her into the house, and these people that are sitting at the breakfast table then, or at the table I should say, whatever it was, they invited me in. ...

Before you know it, I was sitting down to my first meal in France. It was horrible. It was warm milk with bread in it, okay, and a spoon and it didn't taste good to me at all. In any event, I don't know if I got anything else to eat, but I ate something, and I wanted to stay there, and they wouldn't let me stay. They wanted me to go because they were afraid of the Jerries, okay. So they gave me a belt, no, gave me pants, a new sweater or something, and I took everything off, including my flight jacket and so forth, and kept only my shoes and my socks. ... They didn't give me anymore food or I didn't want it, so I got up, and they told me to go because they mentioned "Bosche" or "Boche." That's their name for the Jerries, "Boche." So I took off and went and, yes, I walked as far as I could. ... I came to this point. I could hear the vehicles, trucks going by, and this is the Jerries going by, and I would hide until they went by. ... Then I would cross over the road, and as I got to the point where this hill, mountain, whatever, fell down like that or went down, I could see in the background, there was smoke activity coming from this village or whatever it was. I visualized it being a small community, a village. So, I say, "That's pretty good," and I walked down that hill until I got to a place where another guy was plowing. So, I went over to him and the guy, he says he couldn't help me. So he told me to sit in this what you call ravine, little ditch, and I did. I sat down there, and he said he would be back, but motioned to his watch. So, he left me. Now, I'm not going to go there, this is all open now, I'm not going to go running somewhere. So, he left me, and I sat down and put my head back and fell asleep. I don't know how long it was, but he came back. He came back in a single horse, like, you know, a buggy, behind you have some place where you can store things or carry stuff, and he asked me to come in and sit, so I sat next to him. He gave me a cap, now, I got all kinds of different clothes on, okay. Now, we go through this town, and he coaches me, "Bonjour, bonjour." ... He wanted me to signal to these people who are in the town. Now, we go through this town, and there's Jerries all over the place, and I'm going, "Bonjoir, bonjour," like I knew what I was doing, and I'm sitting on this, you know, you've seen these farmers. ... I'm sitting in this front seat if you will, and he takes me right through town, a "zillion" Jerries all over the place, and I might as well tell you this, it was a hospital. The town or the town was built around this hospital, but actually, it was a boy's school turned into a hospital, and it had this big cross painted on the roof, and that's this part of this town, okay. Now, I could see that place, but they didn't stop there. They just veered off the road to the backyard of a, it turned out to be the station for the railroad. ... They asked me to pick up this pile of hay, I'm sorry, compressed bundle of hay if you will, okay, which I carried from the back of this thing ... like a garage. ... Then, they took me and put me in the attic of this thing which happened to be the station for ... trains, okay. This is where you get your ticket and so forth and so on, and there was a bunch of Jerries hanging around, so they scooted me upstairs into the attic, and I stayed there for about two weeks. Now, when I had to go to the bathroom, I have to go outside. A couple of times I was down there, and I go "wee-wee" or "poo," whatever, and there's a Jerry sitting, standing, next to me. ... Anyway, then I had my meals in a room upstairs, or sometimes with the station master. Oh, I hate myself. To this day I can't, his name was; he had one arm missing. Henri? Oh, it's in there somewhere, anyway, his name was Henri Follet, nice guy. ... I stayed there, and I slept there ... for a couple of weeks, and they moved me out. Okay, guys, that's it. I'm tired. ...

NM: Thank you for your time today. We will continue in the next session.

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Reviewed by Katie Ruffer 2/22/2013
Reviewed by Nicholas Trajano Molnar 6/14/2013
Reviewed by Henry Hodulik 9/1/2013