

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRY HODULIK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

NICHOLAS TRAJANO MOLNAR

GREEN BROOK, NEW JERSEY

JUNE 14, 2012

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Nicholas Molnar: This begins the second interview with Mr. Henry Hodulik on June 14th, 2012 in Green Brook, New Jersey. Thank you again for having us. To begin, I just want to follow up with some of the things we talked about in the previous interview. Did you ever have parachute training before?

Henry Hodulik: None, nothing.

NM: Was this the first time that you actually deployed your parachute?

HH: Yes, ... no training whatsoever, nothing. ...

NM: Did anyone on the crew have training?

HH: The pilot may have and the copilot, but the rest of the enlisted men--including my engineer and the armorer, tail gunner, myself--that I recall, we did not have any. ... Our transition in flying time was such that we got to the base in Barksdale Field, Louisiana, first time I ever saw a B-26 was then in the latter part of December of '43, and we were on our way to Europe in February of '44. So there was very little time for any training, except for flying, you know.

NM: How many other crew members were on the B-26 with you?

HH: The total crew was six--pilot, copilot, navigator/bombardier. He doubled up. Most of the time he was not a navigator because he was a bombardier primarily, and his position was in the turret in the front of the ship. That's the three officers; pilot, copilot, navigator/bombardier, myself (radio operator/waist gunner), the armorer/tail gunner, and the mechanic/top turret gunner, all three who are the enlisted men. So, it was a total of six in the crew.

NM: I read that many American crews would often name their planes. Did your crew have a name for the plane that you used?

HH: ... As I recall, no, because we didn't have the ship that long, it was on loan to us to take overseas and we didn't fly enough missions together so that we were not an organized crew in the beginning, okay?

NM: In the last interview, you talked a little bit about how you were eventually taken to the rail station and taken in by the French. Could you talk about what happened to the other five crew members?

HH: I really don't know what happened to them, initially. We all got out of the ship. The first ... guy that went out, to my knowledge, was the tail gunner, or the armorer. The next guy was my mechanic/crew chief. He came out of the top turret. The next guy out, I think was me, then followed by my navigator/bombardier, and finally, the copilot and the pilot. Now, I didn't see the other guys bail out. I saw the armorer/tail gunner, slip out of the waist gun position. My crew chief, or the mechanic, he went out next, also out of the waist position. ... Of course, when the pilot summoned me up front to send an S-O-S, I had to come from my waist position, which was, you know, in between the two .50 caliber machine guns. I had to come through the catwalk

to the front of the ship to get to the radio and to see him, okay, or to speak to him. I just went to the cockpit, he asked me to come up front to send a ... message or an SOS, so I went to the radio, and it didn't respond, so I went up to his position, and said, "I can't get any answer," and then he said quickly, "Bail out, bail out, we're going to go," okay. So I just turned around, and with that, he opened up the bomb bay doors, and I blessed myself, and jumped out. ... I said to the good Lord, "Hey, save me from this, and I'll never forget you." Blessed myself and jumped out. As I descended, I didn't pull my ripcord right away, and I can recall being on my back, and spinning on my back as the plane went by, and then, subsequently, I pulled my ripcord.

NM: Approximately what altitude did you bail out at?

HH: About five thousand feet. Our normal flight height was about nine thousand, but I think we were even lower than that, but I'm not sure, but they tell me it was near five, or maybe between three and five. ... That's when I went out.

NM: Can you continue where you last left off in the previous interview? You mentioned that you were at the rail station and that you would see German soldiers when you used the restroom.

HH: ... I think the last time I said that Frenchman came on that horse and took me to town, and I said to him, you know, he told me to make believe [I was French], I was saying, "Bonjour." So we got to the rail station, and he drove the horse and wagon around the rear of the station, which was like a garage, and he had told me to pick up the hay, which was bundled, and bring it inside, bring it inside, that is to say like in a basement, okay, and that's what I did. That was to camouflage, my mission, if you would, okay. As soon as I got inside, as I remember, they took me upstairs. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: So as soon as I delivered ... that bundle of hay, and it was like packed, they whisked me upstairs to the first floor, which was the waiting room for passengers or to get a train. ... Then, they took me to the second floor, and eventually up ... in the attic, where I was supposed to hide out, or I did hide out. So, that was my initial experience at the railroad station. There's a story going around that I went to the ticket master, and asked for a train, or a ticket to Paris, but that was not the case. ... That was a rumor that was circulated that that was my initial attempt to get away from the town, if you will okay, but I didn't. I simply let them take care of me. That is to say, they knew the situation, they knew exactly what they had to do, or at least they knew. So up to the attic I went, and I was up in the attic, it was not really an attic, it was like another room, and I had a window up there, and that's where I stayed until they took me away from the station, okay. Now, you asked me about, while I was there, pretty near a couple of weeks, and all I did was eat, and sleep, and watch. While I was there, this town was, I don't recall if I described it the last time, but it had a "zillion" Germans there. They had ... a boy's school the town was built around, or at least the activity was for that boy's school if you will, and it was occupied by the Germans as a hospital. They had a great big cross, you know, a Red Cross symbol, painted on the roof, huge, so that the bombers would not take it out or try to take it out--that is to say the Allies--and they had troopers all over the place. That is to say, troops, not troopers. So, I would watch them during the day and their activity and so forth. The Allies would come by in fighter

planes and buzz the town. On some occasions, there was some strafing done on the railroad, but there was no strafing to the troops or anything kind of like that. It was just maneuvers by the Allies to get them off guard, I think. ... It was primarily the British. I recognized Typhoons, some "Spits," Spitfires, and a couple of other ships come by, but they would, on occasion, down further from the hospital they did some strafing. ... Some of the times, the guys, they were pretty wild so that some of the ammunition would sort of get into the passenger side, okay. So, I was ducking bullets, I thought they were, but I don't know how badly it was. So, there was strafing by them and they always had troop activity. I recall an incident that impressed me with the Germans. In back of the station, was a big field, and the troops would come out, and march in that field, a lot of them, and periodically, but inevitably, they would march to "Lili Marleen." ... They would march, and that was the cadence for their marching, okay. I was very impressed because they were in military order, and they seemed to be well organized, but that was their activity, singing and marching in the fields that is, but there was always activity in the station, because there was a place where the troops would go to either a hospital or whatever, there was a lot of movement from the passengers, okay, or from the passenger side. Outside of the building was the toilets, and they were open. You did your business standing up if you will, okay, or squatting. There was no seat or anything like that. So, on occasion, I find myself side by side with a German soldier, in the men's room. ... Well, actually ... there were no women around or anything like that so it was supposed to be, I guess, for both sexes, but I never saw any women there, okay, at all. There was a lot of activity in the hospital, if that were a hospital. Sometimes I get the impression it was like a camp out, but it was designated as a hospital from the standpoint of the Cross, okay, American ... Red Cross. So that was the plan at that time, and I was there hiding, sleeping and/or observing, and eating. ... A couple of weeks and then I guess it got pretty hairy, they just moved me out of there in a couple of weeks to another place, okay. Now the name of this town was Mesneirest-en-Bray. ... When I went back years later, the church was a beautiful little church, the village itself was just beautiful, okay. I found out after I went back a couple of years later, that the town was another home of my helpers, Madam and Mr. Dumouchel, that was the name of the people, they were the helpers, they were the ones that took me in from this railroad station to their home in Neufchatel-en-Bray, and that's where I stayed for another [period]. Well, my crew chief, or the mechanic; he joined me in that house. They brought him there. So, we stayed in that town, Neufchâtel-en-Bray until we were moved to the next place, which was the farm. Now, his name was Oscar. I called him "Pappy" because he was a couple of years older than I was, and Oscar Young, nice, very capable guy, but very, very competent. Actually, he got me, he annoyed me to some extent because he was always a bragger, but he was capable, a very good mechanic. He was very knowledgeable. He was married, and he had a family while he was in the service. He came from Omaha, Nebraska-- Oscar Young. Anyway, so we had our ups and downs. We had a couple of fights, stuff like that, but he was a good guy. Sometimes he would annoy me because he was always a bragger. Anyway, now from that, wait a minute, I'm getting ahead of myself. ... I'm trying to think of the guy that was the station master, ... Henri Follet, F-O-L-L-E-T. Oh what a neat guy, he had one arm missing. His left arm was amputated for some reason or other, and, you know, we couldn't converse because I didn't speak French and he didn't talk English. In any event, Henri Follet, I regret to this day, and all the days, that I didn't get to know the guy well enough, and that after the war, I didn't write to him the way I wrote to the other people I got friendly with, okay. I guess we're both responsible because neither one of us did any writing, ... he and I, but he tried to get in touch with me after the war and I did write to him a couple of times, but eventually, I

guess he passed away, but he was a nice guy. God, he was a nice guy. So, again, I regret not writing to him, and being friendly with him. So, he was the station master, and he was also in charge of the operation right there, okay. Strange, when you were asking me questions last week, I couldn't remember his last name. Here it is, came back, right back to me, Follet, F-O-L-L-E-T. Now, that was a town, Mesneires-en-Bray, and I mentioned Mr. and Mrs. Dumouchel, who were my guardians or helpers in Neufchâtel-en-Bray, which is another town, oh, about ten to fifteen miles away from Mesneires-en-Bray, but they had a house in Mesneires-en-Bray, this little village where the hospital had laid out. So, they had a little beautiful home there in Mesneires-en-Bray, which they brought me to. ... Mr. Dumouchel, he passed away, but anyway, when I went back years later in 1982 with my son, they took me to Mesneires-en-Bray, and Mrs. Dumouchel, she was getting up there in age, I would call her Mama Dumouchel because she was older than I was, and she was a good lady. Anyway, they had this house in Mesneires-en-Bray, and they had two daughters. One was Francoise and the other one was Arlette, A-R-L-E-T-T-E. Arlette got to be an doctor, and she had an office in Paris eventually. Francoise lived in England, and she married an Englishman, and lived in Oxford, England. Francoise was what you call a "real" lady. Arlette was a doctor, but Francoise, and I have been trying to get hold of them for a couple of years now, and no response from any of them. That's just terribly disappointing, probably my fault. Anyway, so the Dumouchel's had a home in Mesneires-en-Bray, they also had the house in Neufchâtel, and Neufchâtel got to be a dangerous place because there were Germans there all the time. ... So, they moved us out of Neufchâtel to the farm, but I got to know Mesneires after the war more so than I did before the war or during the war. What's my point now? On Mesneires, so how long was I there? About two weeks, maybe a little bit longer, and eventually, they, it got to be so that they didn't want the Germans to catch on to me, so they moved me to Neufchâtel-en-Bray. That's where Mr. Dumouchel took the photos of us and made our identity cards. ... You have a copy of that somewhere, you saw it, right, okay. The house in Neufchâtel also housed the tax collector's office, and there was constant activity in the house because of being a tax collector. They had a couple of clerks there. One of the clerks we got to be a little friendly with, which is, you know, just a little bit, and I got to know a couple of people. A guy by the name of, what the heck was he, he was nothing, but he hung around that place quite a bit. His name was Mr. Hermantier, H-E-R-M-A-N-T-I-E-R. He had a big mustache, and he was a mean looking guy, but he was a nice guy. ... He had a glass eye, and he always wore boots, ... hip high shoes if you will, okay. So, he was a mean looking guy, but he was not really mean, but that mustache, oh brother, what a mustache. Anyway, so this was the tax collector's office, and this is where Eugene, ... Oscar, his name was really Oscar Eugene Young. ... That's where we stayed for another God knows how long, another three or four weeks, and it was sort of like, it had a fence around the back, it had a barn in the back where they also had some belongings, and there was a ladder up there. Anyway, that's where Gene and I hung out. That's where we exercised, and that's where he and I got to know each other from the standpoint of fighting. I would hand box with him, and he was a bigger guy, but he was not, he was not quick. I have a better left than he did, ... and I would take him on anyway. He was a bigger guy, a heavier guy, and strong, but I took him on anyway. So that's where we hung out. The Germans never came there, however, they didn't, that is to say the Germans didn't come into the office, except to the tax collector's office, and they would just be nosy and they walked out. So, it got to be so, they said that it was dangerous for us to be there so they moved us out again and back to the farm, or to the farm. Now, I have pictures here somewhere, just prior to our going to the farm, the Americans came over and they bombed the town, some parts of it, and

they knocked down half of the house that we were staying in. Now, I didn't know this until later on, and they told me, Mr. Dumouchel and Mrs. Dumouchel told me that the house was almost totally destroyed where we were staying. So half of the house was taken out completely, and there are pictures of us in my album, I believe, that showed where half of the house was destroyed. So, luckily, I guess, that we got out of there because the Americans were bombing us, you know.

NM: You talked about moving around a lot, being a few weeks here and a few weeks there. At the rail station, you mentioned that the Americans and British would buzz over occasionally. Did this happen in other areas where you stayed as well?

HH: Not really, not really, except for, we witnessed a lot of bombers going over, big bombers, 17's, 24's, but they didn't bomb the town when I was there, okay, it just didn't happen. So, I witnessed, along with my engineer, the ships going somewhere, probably to Germany itself, because that was '44, now. ... What's the point I want to make here?

NM: I was asking about seeing the British and American airplanes, and you said that you would see these bombers going over the towns you stayed in.

HH: Yes, they were going somewhere, where, I didn't know. ... There was just a lot of activity. I would see--I'm sorry. Occasionally, you'd see artillery fire, flak being thrown up and some ships getting hit, and I witnessed some ships get hit, and guys bail out ... and just burst in flames as it went by, okay. So, this was the time when they were on their way over to some place in France, or in whatever, other countries, and getting hit by the German "ack-ack" (artillery).

NM: Was there anyone among the French that you could communicate with in English to? Was there anyone who served as a translator between you and the French?

HH: Mrs. Dumouchel was a teacher, and she did speak some English, a "little" little, and she could write in English, but I wouldn't have seen any of her penmanship, and whatever she'd try to get to us in English, I just don't recall how much of a conversation we had. I should tell you something that's rather humorous. Her maid, what the heck was her name, not a very nice or neat person. Anyway, they would wash the clothes by hand over a, what do you call it, a (Riboehka?) in Slovak they call it. It's a, you know, you use your hands over this? Oh, God, what is it? You know what I'm talking about? ...

NM: Something you use to wash clothes.

HH: Anyway, they did, and then they would do this by hand, and I promised Mrs. Dumouchel that when I got back to the United States, I would buy her a washing machine, okay. Why did I know that? My mother had a washing machine, but it was real old. It was a washing machine that had the ringers at the top, and sometimes if you don't watch your hands, you know, you'd get your hands caught in the ringers. Anyway, I said I was going to get her a washing machine. Guess what? I never did. I don't know, life goes on, so I never got her the washing machine. When I went back to visit them, back in 1982, she was alive, and I did say it again. "Hey I owe you a washing machine," whatever, okay, but that was it. ... Excuse me for interrupting. Mr.

Dumouchel, I don't know what kind of a job he had, but he was always dressed in a suit. He had a bow tie, always dressed nicely, so I don't know what he was doing. Mrs. Dumouchel was a teacher. What she was doing there, I don't know, but that was their occupation. ... He was a gentleman and he commanded a lot of respect, I think, but what it was, I don't know, except that he was the guy that made, or had made, the cart identities (IDs) for us. ...

NM: I did want to ask about the ID card that was made for you by the French. Did they ever tell you what to do if you were stopped and asked to show your ID card?

HH: Not really. They'd point out, I think it says, I thought they had me down as a deaf mute but I wasn't. ... My occupation was a farmer. I can't remember the words, but I could decipher it if I saw it now. ... I was a farmer of some sort, but, you know, for a guy that was a farmer, he took a good picture. I think it was rather handsome, my cart identity, a good looking kid I think I was, so I was not in a military uniform. It was just a ID card with a German stamp on it, which sort of gave us some recognition, you know, or that it was official.

NM: Did they make an ID card for "Pappy" as well?

HH: ... Oh yes, yes. We got it the same time, yes. ... I think the background of that picture shows us outside, and it's the part of the building at the back of the house where we stayed, okay.

NM: Did you have any knowledge of the French resistance before they helped you after you parachuted out of the plane?

HH: None. ... We were not schooled about any of the resistance. They simply gave us, you know, we used our dog tags, other than that, no. We were never told anything about the resistance. I don't think we really were schooled. Again, the number of missions and the number of times that I was always exposed was very limited. ... It was totally--what you'd call, a greenhorn--somebody that didn't have any knowledge if you will, okay, about what the activity was. I honestly think that I went into a battle, and I don't know what the hell I was going to do except to fire a gun, you know. It was just a short period of time when you stop and think about it from gunnery school to combat in a couple of months.

NM: You mentioned in your autobiography that you had to use the ID card a few times.

HH: Oh, yes, yes.

NM: Could you talk about that?

HH: Well, now, you're ahead of me a little bit. However, never used the card at all until we were on the farm, and this was an instance where myself and Pappy, this is a particular day sometime in August, I believe it was. ... We were assembled all of us, whether we had a picnic or a party, I don't know, but if you look at the pictures, ... it tells you who is there. My engineer, me, Mr. & Mrs. Adam, A-D-A-M, ... they owned the farm. Visiting was a Scotch flyer, Eddie Gardner, Gus Bubenzer, he was a flier and he got shot down in a, what the heck was the name of the ship, anyway, he was in another bomber, a Douglas, another outfit. So, there was Bubenzer,

Bishop, another flier, Wilkenson, English, off a Lancaster. You know, I have to look at the picture who was there. Anyway, ... what we were doing, I just don't recall, but it was a gathering of some sort. ... Then, the Germans showed up. Now, there were four guys, four Germans, all with rifles. They had a tripod machinegun they set up in the back of the garage, back of the shed, and they assembled all of us in front of the barn. Now, four or five of them, all with pistols and/or rifles. They put us in front of this barn, honest to God I [thought], simply, we were going to be executed. ... They were going to knock us off, when you stop to think about it, lined up, okay. Now, the one, the guy in charge came over and asked for everybody's identity card, and everybody handed them out. When he got to me, I didn't have my ID card. It was in the house some place, but where I don't remember. Anyway, he came, wanted to know where my card was, and I didn't have the ID card. So, then he, ... very harshly, he yelled at me, "Cart identity." That sort of threatening like. So then, I said, somehow I mumbled out, "Dans la maison." That meant, "In the house." So, he grabbed me and pushed me aside and almost threw me down, and I went into the house. ... I had a sweater on. I don't know what the hell it was, it was a sweater of some sort. Anyway, I went into the house and I found my cart identity. I brought it out and handed it to him, and he roughly picked it up, and looked at it carefully, and pushed me back in line. Now, he had my, that was the episode. Now, why they lined us up and put us in front of this gun, who the heck knows, I don't know, but the explanation at a later date was that they were there because they were looking for food. ... They were confiscating food from the French people. They would take butter, and, you know, vegetables and things that they could take back to somebody. Anyway, they did, and at the same time they wanted to take one of the horses. Now, this farmer had three horses. ... He wanted to take one of them. They pleaded with him, "Please don't take our horse." Eventually, they gave up, didn't take the horse, because they cried and so forth because that was their method of getting around, and as a farmer, you need animals, okay. Now, on the farm, we had the horse, three horses, pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, rabbits, what else, ... farmers. So, they gave up and did not take the horses. Now, one of the guys kept saying to me that they took one of the horses, but to my knowledge, they did not take one of the horses. ... Memories fade, so we got away with it okay, and that episode, from the standpoint of threatening, they let us go. ... There were other episodes where they, you know, where the Germans were in the area. For example, there was one episode, one incident where the farmer wanted, Mr. Adam, wanted to take his cow to get fixed, you know, to somebody's bull. So, he had the cow with him, and he had a rope around the cow's neck, and he would take this cow down to another town. It was a couple of miles away ... and he did. He took it there, and the bull did his job and so forth, and on the way back, I'm on this horse ... and a German tank comes up. Now, this is a huge tank. Whether it was a Tiger, I can't remember, but it came up the road towards or behind us, and it sort of rattled the horses, okay. Now that's a huge, and there were a bunch of soldiers sitting on the tank. Where they were going, I don't know, but it was, now this was in August. Now, the invasion took place June 6th, so they were going someplace, anyway. They rattled the horse, I was on a horse, and he knocked me over, and they laughed like the Dickens when the horse threw me. ... There I was lying on the ground, and they laughed like the Dickens. I'm saying to myself, "You son of a bitches, if you only know who I was," like a big deal, you know. Anyway, they had a big laugh, and I was on the ground, and eventually, I got on my horse, or the horse. It didn't have a saddle ... and they took me back to the farm, but that was a situation where, you know, there was a bunch of troops, ... there were troops all over the place, okay. Now, that's that episode. Now, not too far from where we were on the farm, there was a site some place where they had the buzz bombs. It was a launching site

not too far from where we were staying. This launching site would, ... I don't know if you ever saw a buzz bomb, it would be launched off, and it was destined to England, and there it would run out of fuel and so forth and crash because it was destined. ... It was programmed I guess to go so far in the direction of England. ... It would make an awful loud noise to launch this thing. ... Now, visualize if you will, ... what do you see down the shore, ... visualize a roller coaster, okay, and that's how they'd launch this bloody thing. Now, this is a straight thing if you will, okay, not like a roller coaster. Anyway, and they would take off. Sometimes they would misfire, and while it was up there, or the gyro did something wrong, and it would start circling. Now, these things were programmed, and it just didn't go right to England. They took off, and then, there were many times, not many, several times when they would circle the area where we were. Now, this thing would put out, it was something like six cars, ... crazy, all at the same time. Anyway, it would circle us, and you would never know when it was going to come down and stop, and there it would be total silence until it blew up. ... It would blow up when it hit the surface, okay. Well, when that was circling, it would pass over the farm, and you know it was going to stop, and we all would run in fear, run over there, hopefully it would not follow us if you will, okay. So, anyway, it never did land where we were, but it was threatening as the Dickens, okay. ... It was kind of a thing that the fighter pilots ... can knock down before they went to England if you will, okay. So that was one of those other experiences that we had with the troops and/or the activity in the area. Amen.

NM: After staying at the tax collector's office, you moved to a farm. How long were you at this farm?

HH: Until we got liberated. I'd say, now that was in, backup, we were liberated from the farm on September 2nd, so all the month of August and part of July.

HM: If I recall from your autobiography, there was an incident where a German officer had left his briefcase behind on the farm.

HH: Oh, yes. How did I get over that one? This was in the farm. The Germans did not move their armament to the front, or, you know, to the invasion site, during the day. They'd lie low, and then they'd move at night. This was a day that they picked our farm, whatever, to lay over so they all got out of the bloody place and they ate there. What they ate, I don't know, but they saw the vegetables that the Frenchmen had there and in the kitchen. When they showed up, latter part of the day, early evening, to get out of sight and so forth and so on so the Americans didn't, or the British and Americans didn't spot them, they laid low. Now, they ended up being in the kitchen with us. Now, when they came in, my engineer and I scurried into one of the bedrooms. Now, they were in the kitchen. There was a big shot, somebody, whatever he was, but he was an officer, he had a briefcase. Now, why he didn't take it in the kitchen, I don't know, but he left it in the barn where the cider was, and where strangely enough, one of the French guys, French kid, his name was Emil, Emil Adam. He was hiding in this barn where the cider was, and animals. ... I know that's where the briefcase was. Anyway, they were in the kitchen, he and somebody else, and they were discussing, and they ate there. Now, my engineer and myself were immediately adjacent from the kitchen to the bedroom, there's only one door, and ... we could hear all the conversations but what was going on, I don't know, okay. I recall the guy saying to Madam Adam, now the old man wasn't there, now, where he was, I don't know, but he was a big

guy and he had rough looking mustache. I just don't remember where the heck he was. Anyway, Mrs. Adam was sitting there, and she was feeding, and she was nice to them, okay, or trying to be nice. I remember the conversation that this guy would say to her. "Madam, in six months the Germans would push the Americans and the English back into the English Channel, in six months." Now, why I remember that, I don't know, okay, but to my knowledge, that's what he said and how I interpreted it okay. All this time now, we're talking about early evening until it got dark and so forth and so on, and I'm in the bedroom. Now, I had to go to the bathroom. Now, it was a terrible situation okay. I couldn't make a sound. They have a pail where if you had to go to the bathroom, while you were at night if you will, you go and you do your business there and you take it out the next morning in the barn. Well, I wanted to use the pail, but if I did, I know it would make some noise, so I held it all this time. It was a terrible experience I remember--terrible, terrible, terrible. Eventually, they left because now it was dark, okay. A couple hours later, ... it had to be after midnight or whatever, we slept in the attic, my engineer and I, we slept in the attic of this house. In order to go up into the attic, you had to go outside and climb the stairs up, and I think I have the picture of the house, shows how you go upstairs. ... The attic, the French people, they use it to dry the corn out, for some reason. ... Now, we're in the bed or whatever, and we're sleeping there or trying to sleep, and you could hear this knocking, and they were making a big commotion downstairs. My engineer, ... he was saying, ... "Junior, they're here, they're going to pick us up now." ... I thought, "Hey, the guy came back for his so and so. Shut the hell up," and so forth and so on. So, yes, that's what it was. The guy came back for his briefcase, okay, but he made a big commotion, and he woke the whole house up. Who was staying there, I can't remember, but there was more than just us, their daughter, the old man, Mrs. Adam, and I think there was some other guy there too. Anyway, so they came back, this guy came back for the briefcase, and you could tell ... that he got the briefcase and as soon as he got it, he took off, and that was the end of that, okay. ... It was another situation where it looked like they knew who we were, or where we were, and so forth and so on. ... Anyway, it didn't happen. They left, and that was the end of that day.

NM: While you were being moved around, and you are on this farm, were you constantly on edge whenever the Germans would be around?

HH: Yes, you know what? I'm not what you call a calm individual. In a situation like that, yes, I was always nervous, you know. Why, but I was, and when they were around, you felt awful unnerving, you know. It was just one of those situations where when they showed up, it looked like somebody had discovered who and what, you know, so, yes. We went about during the day while they weren't around, we went to different places where he rented property, Mr. Adam, and he was growing hay, and then we would go there, and cut it down, and then take it, you know. We never, I don't know if you ever saw a bundle like that. You learned how to collapse this hay and tie it, ... and you make a nice bundle out of it, and it looked like a big football, a great big, ... that's the way they transported it ... and eventually took it to the farm and put it in the attic okay and that's how they fed their livestock during the winter.

NM: Approximately how many acres was this farm that you were working on? It sounds like it was a pretty decent size.

HH: Yes, well they had more than one. ... The immediate spot was, I would say, about ten acres or more, because they had a lot of apples, and, you know, cider was their main drink if you will okay, cider. I got to tell you, my initial exposure to cider, and I think I told you, when I first met the guys in the woods, and they gave you some cider and some ... cheese, it was disgusting, but I got to know this cider or taste it, and it ... almost could be addictive. It was so delicious, okay. ... They had apple farms. Every place you went to, apples, because they use the apples to make the cider, okay, and it was delicious. ... A lot of that land I talk about where the initial farm was, where the buildings and the livestock was, ... I would say at least ten to fifteen acres, okay. ... The places that he rented, I think, were similar, but because they just harvest it, all the hay, cut it down, and transport it to the farm.

NM: You were on this farm for almost two months, maybe a little more. What were some of your duties or chores while living there? Did you help pick apples?

HH: ... I had to do everything that is, you know, initially when we were exposed to the French people, they thought we were big shots, you know, they were afraid to ask us to do things. Well, after it was all over, I was cleaning the barns, I was shoveling manure, I had to take care of the pigs, everything you had to do, and it was all slop. You did it, you had to do it, because it was part of what you were expected. You were almost expected. No one ever asked you, but I was volunteering. I'm a soldier, my engineer, ... we churned milk into butter. We did everything, okay. Now, one other instance, they never had an outhouse. My engineer and I built an outhouse. ... We dug the ground, so and so, and whatever wood we could use, we made a outhouse, even made, my engineer ... carved the moon, okay, and the seat inside. ... These people, they marveled at an outhouse, never had one. They just went to the barn and so forth and so on, okay. So it was an experience if you will, okay, and they enjoyed it. That is to say, they were grateful, but you wonder why they wouldn't do that before.

NM: It sounds like there were other airmen who were taken in on this farm as well.

HH: Well, they weren't taken in, yes, they visited us because there was this crew from a Lancaster, a guy by the name of Bishop, Gardner, Wilkinson. These are three crewmen that we got to know there, they visited us, and we went to where they were staying on occasion, but it wasn't frequently. ... After the war, I wrote to all these guys, and give you an instance, Eddie Gardner was a great guy. When he landed, ... he hurt his feet, he broke his ankle, and so forth, he's a great guy. I visited with him, or my son and I visited with him when we got back in 1982. He came from Granton-en-Spey in Northern Ireland, I mean Scotland, I visited with him. Bishop, an Englishman, he was on that same crew. He came to visit with us with his wife. ... Wilkinson, he migrated to Australia, and I wrote to him many times. He has passed. Everybody has passed away now. Those are the three people from the Lancaster that got to know me and I got to know them. I visited with them when I went there to Europe and/or in '82 and then again in '94. So what was the question?

NM: I wanted to know if you had any interaction with other flyers, but you explained it.

HH: ... Now, this guy Gus Bubenzer, that's the other guy, he got to be a good friend. He was from ... Anderson, Indiana, got to know him very well, wrote to him until recently, and not too

long ago, he passed away last year. He came to visit with us two times from Anderson, and we went there, and I went back in, Indianapolis. ... Anyway, I visited with him. ... They came to our house and they saw all my kids. They went down the shore with us and to New York City. Incidentally, the Frenchmen came over, and I would take them to New York. I remember the clearly French, the Quillens; I remember the old man, and I would take him to the city, but as I drove and I drove to the city, we would go over and under the Pulaski Skyway, no the Turnpike. In any event, I remember going under the Verrazano, and he's making the, now this is funny, "Ooo la-la." He would see the skyscrapers and stuff like that. This was the favorite expression with them, when something was excitable and new to them. This is the old man, he would say, "Ooo la-la," you know, and it was just, ... it rings in my ear till this day, ... how impressed he was, and again, Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, I took them all over there, every one of them that came to visit me. My wife would say (oh, my dear wife, Pauline), "Who is this? You got somebody coming from Europe every day," you know. [laughter]

NM: While you were working on the farm, did you have any news of how the invasion was going after D-Day in June of 1944? Was anything communicated to you by the French?

HH: Not really, no. ... Some of the guys had a crystal set, and would listen to the news, but I don't think the French people knew either, nobody knew, or they didn't communicate with us with how the war was going, had no idea. You know, it's strange that Paris was liberated on or about August 15th. We were not liberated totally until September 2nd, so we didn't even know how far they were, okay, or where they were. ... There was one episode where, I forgot to tell you, August 15th, which is a "holy day of obligation" throughout the Catholic world, and they call it, I'm sure you're familiar what I'm talking about, it's the day that we celebrate, we Catholics, celebrate the Assumption of our Blessed Mother into Heaven and that was on, that's on the day of August 15th. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

HH: ... We had to go to this other town, and what the name of that is, I don't know, that's where we went to Mass. Now, the Mass was the Assumption, August 15th, Feast of the Immaculate Conception. They had us on the altar, myself and my engineer, and had Mass. They sang, all the French, ... you know what the French national anthem is, it's a beautiful thing. ... They sang that, they sang the Star Spangled Banner, now this is right in town, and loud, had the whole Mass, and after the Mass, we went to eat. ... They cooked a slaughtered small cow, as I remember, anyway, and they put it on the grill. ... I remember the liver, it was not quite done, and we ate that almost, whatever, and I got sick. Oh, God, did I get sick. Now, there was a lot of wine, cider, and this liver that was not well cooked and I got sick. Anyway, this is Assumption Day 1944, August 15th, and I'll never forget it, but ... I got plastered, I think, and so you asked me a question, and I said, "yes."

NM: You said that you were observing and watching the Germans that were in your area. Were there ever any acts of sabotage against the Germans?

HH: Not really, ... but I would say this, that they had no arms. ... Somebody had maybe a pistol, or something like that, but you know we're not in a position to go and tackle anybody with

any resistance whatsoever, we just weren't, so we were not the brave type, or even the Frenchmen were, they didn't want to go tackle anybody. We had no arms. So, they just laid low, and knew that something was happening, so let's wait it out, okay. That was the approach, I believe, that they took, and they warned us not to be a type that would try to take on somebody without any particular, you know, reinforcements, okay.

NM: Can you talk about your experience when the town was liberated by the Allies?

HH: Yes, when we were in Neufchâtel-en-Bray now, when it was liberated, some of the collaborators were picked up by the French people, and their hands were tied behind their back. They weren't beaten, but they were spit upon, their hair was shaven, somebody would nudge them if you will. ... The French people disliked the collaborators, ... and who they were, I don't know. They never exposed us to some of the people that were organized, they didn't let us know who. I guess they just didn't want us to be exposed, and/or in a position to rattle their movements, you know, if you will, and/or their reinforcements on their own. So, they just let it alone. Some of the guys that I got to know after the war, yes, I became aware of who they were, and what. They came to the States, they visited with us, but they were real leaders of the resistance. However they didn't take us in their confidence at all, they just didn't. So, I didn't know anything about any of the resistance, no. ... They just didn't make us part of the team and I can understand that.

NM: You were talking about the town being liberated.

HH: Oh, yes, yes. So, to what extent, ... what they did with the collaborators, I don't know. ... They paraded them through town, and they mocked them, and they, again, I said, I didn't see anybody tortured or nothing, but they were just shamed. ... Now, maybe they took them some place and did something to them, I don't know, but they didn't let us in on it. So, after we were liberated, my engineer and I, we got to be so that we wanted to go home, and I did, I know I did. While this was a good experience, it still, you know, home was home, and everybody wanted to get home if you will, at least I did. We could have stayed there, and nobody would know we were there. ... We could have hung out for God knows how long because we gave ourselves in. We went to them, they didn't come to us, you know. We made ourselves known to the military, but they had a job to do. They were still, you know, we're talking about being in Normandy, we were one of the last ones to be liberated, and they went all around us, like I said before, to Paris, before we were liberated, okay. So after we were exposed, or got to know the troops, mostly the English because the Americans were prevalent in our situation, and everybody had their own problems, if you will. All I wanted to do was ... to drink and smoke, at least it felt that way anyway. ... I recall we partied a lot after we were liberated.

NM: Was it the Americans that liberated you?

HH: No, primarily it was the British and the Polish people, other branches of the service, yes. For example, on the farm, when we were liberated, it looked like it was going to be another move by the Germans because the tanks were coming up the road, and we had no idea who they were or what, but it was the Polish and the Canadian people who came in before any American troops, okay. They came in with their armaments. My engineer and I would, ... we were

drinking, or starting to drink and smoke. We wanted to smoke and smoke and smoke, okay, and that's just what we did. Yes, we were liberated by the Polish, and what did I say?

NM: Canadians.

HH: Canadians, yes. That was the initial group, and there were a couple of guys that were knocked off because the Germans ambushed them as they came in, and particularly right on the outskirts of Neufchâtel. There's a couple of spots that are still revered by the people in France every year where these guys were ambushed and killed, Canadians primarily. I could take you to one of the places right now.

NM: Were the Germans still in the area or had they fallen back?

HH: Most of them, ... they were trying to get out of there, bicycles, horses, just, it was a route, and wherever they could get out, they got out. So, yes, I'm sure that I saw a lot of fighter planes strafing the guys, you know, and there were dead horses on the road because this was a massacre. The Americans wanted ... whoever was in charge, ... who was leading this thing, I don't know, but it was the Germans who wanted to get the hell out.

NM: Did any Germans surrender in the town?

HH: I don't know. They didn't show us any of that, ... and, you know, strange, we almost didn't care, you know. It was like, ... you ask me a question, I don't know. I don't recall guys raising their hand and walking into the, I just don't recall. ... There was panic before us to get out so the rest of it was rather calm if you will. ...

NM: I wanted to ask, because it was not clear. Had you smoked before you came into the service?

HH: [laughter] Yes, gee whiz, yes, I started smoking when I was seventeen at Buffalo Tank. I remember smoking, I had to get a couple of things out, me and the people that worked with me, and we would stay up almost all night because it had to be done, and smoking all that time, yes. I started to smoke, Nick, ... I was seventeen, or before, even when I was at home. ... We would burn corn, looked like a mustache, you know, the end of the corn?

NM: The husk.

HH: No, it has that little.

NM: Yes, I know what you are talking about, the little furry thing.

HH: Yes, exactly. We would roll that up and smoke them even in high school. ... We'd go up into a barn someplace and sit there and smoke, so yes, I was always smoking or wanted to smoke. So, you asked me the question, yes, in the service, you know, you got cigarettes sent to you by people that you used to work with, by organizations. Everybody was sending you cigarettes, and we'd see cartons everywhere, you know, and that's what happened. ... When we

were shot down, oh, that was another thing I wanted to tell you, when we were in France on the farm, no cigarettes. Oh, I got to tell you this one. I'm ashamed of myself. The French they had to, from the Germans, they got a little bit of tobacco. What's the word I'm looking for, ... rationing. So, they got a little bit of cigarettes or tobacco, and they'd roll their own, and there were papers if you will, okay, and they would smoke them. Now, I watched the farmer, Mr. Adam, what he had, he had a little tin can with the tobacco in it. You know how terrible you can be? I watched him and what he did with that tobacco. He put it some place in like a china closet in the living room, no, in the dining area, and he would hide it ... and I watched him. You know, Nick, I stole that tin can of tobacco. You know, my engineer was encouraging me, but I stole it, and I would take that tobacco, and we would smoke it. I told you that on the farm, they had a loft where you ... put the hay and so forth. I climbed that loft and that ladder, and I took that tin can of tobacco I recall, and I hid it under, the so and so. Now, a month or so later, they were putting this hay up in the loft, okay? The French are up there, and they're throwing this hay to him, and he's catching it, and he's stacking it, and he spots this tobacco can. He comes out with the tobacco, and he has it in his hand, and he looks at me, he looks at so and so. "La tabac, Henri? ... He was accusing me right there. I guess my face turned beet red, and he recognized it and then what I did, I stole that guy's tobacco, and to this day I regret what a terrible sin that was to steal. Here's a guy saving my life and I'm stealing his tobacco. What a jerk. So, you asked me a question that led to that. On the farm, we didn't have that luxury if you will, tobacco, so we would take the ... apple leaves, and pick them up, and chop them up, and put them on a tray, and put them in the oven, her oven, and roast the leaves, you know, apple leaves, and then cut them up small and take paper, whatever paper we had and we smoked, that's the way we smoked. That's what we were smoking until the day we were liberated and the guys are throwing cigarettes at us, okay. So, yes, you asked a question. ... These guys, these Polish troops and the Canadians, and whatever, they threw these cartons of cigarettes, and we would sit there and drink and smoke. One of the guys drank so much, and they had what we used to call, "White Lightning." What was that liquor called? Calvados. Anyway, he almost died from it because he drank so much, you know. It was good stuff, good liquor.

NM: This happened to one of troops who had liberated you?

HH: Yes. ... The French people would make good liquor out of the apple juice, okay, or apples, and it was good. Oh, come on Henry. Anyway, it was made out of apple juice, okay, and this guy, he drank so much he almost died. That's the answer that I gave you. You asked me about smoking.

NM: The reason I asked that is because a lot of servicemen started smoking during the war.

HH: Oh, yes, everybody, yes, yes. ... Excuse me, you know it was such a common thing for people to smoke that when you have a break, you got a ten minute break and you walk around, now, then you had to pick up the butts okay but if you didn't smoke you weren't part of the gang, everybody smoked, everybody had a ten minute break ... where we were, okay. So it was a normal thing, ... terrible. Go, I'm sorry.

NM: After your celebration, at what point did you and your engineer decide that you were going to try to make it back to the United States? Did you want to go to Paris or England beforehand?

HH: You know what Nick, I don't recall ever saying, "Let's go to Paris, let's stay in France." We just never talked about it, you know. We wanted to get out of there, we wanted to go home. I recall I wanted to talk to my Mom. Strange, what did we want to do? ... Took us a couple of days after we were liberated, we spent a couple of nights in Neufchâtel. We had these good people, oh my God, people that I knew, and saved my life. Serge Flambart, real good friend, his wife Yolande, Y-O-L-A-N-D-E, their children, they had three kids, but they always took them some place out of town, away from, in the country, and we stayed at their house a couple of nights after we were liberated. They fed us well and then we just made up our mind somewhere we were going to go. ... When you stop and think about it, here we were in this strange country for several months, and all we wanted to do is get out. Now, we knew that the invasion took place some place south from where we were, so we said, "Okay, we're going to go down there and meet the troops." So, we hitchhiked on some trucks, the GIs. Now, we weren't even, we just had our identities and our dog tags, but ... how we thought we could make a go of it without any other identification, is beyond me. I just don't know. Anyway, we hitchhiked on trucks that were going south. Now, what was down south? Canne, C-A-N-N-E, Sainte-Mère-Église, ... or we could go north to, north and west to Dieppe, but we really didn't know where Dieppe was, we just knew where the (flow?) was, we were like wandering. So, what we did was to go, oh I know what, we were turned down from going any further south somewhere along the line and somebody said, "Go to Dieppe," or north if you will, okay, and that's north and west. So, we ended up going to Dieppe, and we got to Dieppe. That was where we embarked to go to England. Now, it took us a couple of days to get on a boat, on an LST, and, you know, we were hitchhiking. We were, you know, begging to go. We just didn't know who was going to take us or how. So, we somehow or other, we must have befriended some of the people on the boat, an LST, and they took us to Dieppe. There was a situation on that boat, true or false, but it was sitting in the channel, ... and apparently when it, it was sitting for so long the tide went up and down or whatever, but somebody said that it had encouraged some sort of disabling situation where the back was broken. Anyway, we got on the bloody boat. The weather wasn't that good. It got windy, rained like the Dickens. I was holding on to a pole or a mast, and they took us to England. Now, when we got to England, ... okay, we're almost in England. ... Well, when we got to England, geez, you know, the White Cliffs of Dover. ... I remember somebody saying the White Cliffs of Dover, you know, and that's exactly where, I don't remember, but it was there. Somebody met us. Somebody took us off the boat. Somebody whisked us away and we went for interrogation. Now, they gave us different clothing. ... I hate wool. I can't stand wool on my body. It irritates everything, okay, it's got to be, but every little clothing they gave us was wool. ... Gee, it's terrible. So, anyway, they took us to interrogation. ... They questioned us forever, and we got new clothes. Before you know it, they let us go. That is to say, they put us some place where we could stay. How long we were there, a couple of weeks. While we were there--are we almost done?

NM: We are getting there.

[TAPE PAUSED]

NM: I will conclude the second interview with Mr. Henry Hodulik. Thank you for having us here today.

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

Reviewed by Katie Ruffer 2/22/2013
Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 6/18/2013
Reviewed by Henry Hodulik 9/1/2013