

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GERALD MICHELSON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Gerald Michelson on October 26, 2002, in New York City, New York, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

David Glass: David Glass.

SI: Mr. Michelson, thank you very much for sitting down with us today.

Gerald Michelson: You're welcome.

SI: To begin could you tell us a little bit about your father and where he and his family came from?

GM: Well my father was born in Trenton, New Jersey but his parents, my grandparents, were born in Europe. My grandfather, my father's father, originally came from Riga, Latvia. He lived in England for a while before coming to the United States back in the nineteenth century, late nineteenth century. My father's mother, I think, came from Germany and also came over late nineteenth century where she met her husband, here, and they settled in Trenton, New Jersey where a family of four sons was raised and one daughter.

SI: Do you have any idea why the family came over from Europe?

GM: Where they came from?

SI: No, I mean the reason for the immigration?

GM: Well, like all other immigrants, I think, for a better life, more opportunity and to escape aspects of persecution, which erupted from time to time in Eastern Europe. I'm sure it was a combination of those reasons. Unfortunately, and to my regret, I never really spoke to my grandfather about his early days. I think he came here when he was about maybe eighteen or twenty, or something like that.

SI: So there were no specific stories in the family about *pogroms*?

GM: No, ... not from my father's side, not from my grandparents. I never heard of any ... as a kid growing up, I never thought of asking or inquiring about it. I think, as I say to my regret, I wish I had learned more about his background in Europe.

SI: What about your mother's family?

GM: Mother's family was from Russia. My mother was born in Russia near the city of Minsk in what is now Belarus but then it was all Russia. ... Here, there were some stories about her father, my grandfather, who was drafted into the Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese War ... He, from what I recall being said to me, just could not tolerate the life in the army and the food. They were Orthodox Jews, which meant that they were restricted from eating certain things, yet, these were the only things that were offered. You know, such as pork constantly, I suppose. So, it evidently created a major problem not only for him but for his and the other

people with Jewish faith who were drafted into the army and he took off. He escaped and told me stories of hiding him in the barn when the police came to look for him and he eventually got out and came to America and settled near Paterson where he developed a dairy farm and then was able to send for my grandmother and three sons and the one daughter, being my mother, and they all came over. They had quite a journey across Europe from Russia and ... they recall that they left from Belgium, I forget the name of the port there, a major port there. Antwerp was the port that they would have left from. They recall the name of the ship and how sick they were coming over on the ship. But, they finally got here and, you know, settled where my grandfather had set up shop. My grandmother, apparently, was a very kind, well, as I know her she was a very kind, caring, person and she brought others over with her, traveled with her. [She brought] not Jewish Russians but Christians who really liked her and she brought them with her and they lived with them for a while in Paterson, until they had the wherewithal to go out and you know have jobs and have their own homes ... So they grew up in Paterson, which was apparently quite different in those days then it is now. Mother, I think, was a quick learner and she learned the language fast. I don't recall whether she actually entered high school or just finished grade school there in Paterson. She came over around in the early 1900s but she got a job. She took some business courses, got a job as a secretary for a very demanding architect and, again, these were stories that she used to tell me, how tough he was to work for, but, she was the only one who can handle him and here she was only about sixteen years old, maybe, at the most, seventeen years old and she worked for him until she met my dad.

SI: It sounds like your mother was very independent.

GM: Yes, she was at that time. She had a brother, the oldest son, who came over, who joined the army, the America army that is. This was just before World War I and he was in the Army under Pershing when they went after Pancho Villa in Mexico. I don't know whether you know about that period there, the Mexican revolution taking place and border raids across the American border. So, Wilson the president, sent in the army to go after Pancho Villa and my uncle was one of those who was in the army at that time and went there and I say this to you because he loved the West and as a result later on, after he got married and began raising his own family, he went out there, because he wanted to live out there, and he settled in of all places, Las Vegas, Nevada, which was nothing then, just a little sleepy village, not hotels like they are now, nothing like that and [my uncle] started a business, worked hard and raised his family there. In fact, I just came back from Las Vegas. I was there a few weeks ago where I saw my cousin. His son and daughter still live there in Las Vegas. So that's a little bit of history there.

SI: Did he ever tell any stories about going after Pancho Villa?

GM: I only met him [my uncle] once during World War II. He came east to visit the family. He had been away since the 1920s; this was when he went to go Las Vegas. Incidentally, he also was in World War I. He served in World War I and he and my mother had quite a correspondence during the war. She would talk to me about that, how she wrote to him and got letters back and forth and she was like the contact for the family as to what was happening to him. He was in the military police, I think. Because he had already been in the army and when we got into World War I he was there already. He was among the first to go over and among the last to come back. So, he came over during World War II when I was just in high school at the

time and that's the only time I met him. I think he came over to see his daughter, who was in nursing school in Johns Hopkins University. So, he wanted to visit her and he visited, you know, the rest of the family and I remember taking some long walks with him, then along the boardwalk down the Jersey Shore and in and out of Asbury Park, Bradley Beach where I lived. But did he tell me any stories? Not stories, he didn't talk much about his service in World War I because I was curious and so forth. Here we were in war again and he was reluctant to discuss. He said, "I saw some terrible things," and just didn't want to talk about it.

SI: I would be interested to know if the correspondence survived in the family.

GM: I've never seen any. Yes, that would have been nice to have been able to refer to. I've never seen it so apparently they didn't, you know.

SI: Was any of the family left in the Russian areas?

GM: I don't know. They didn't speak of anyone being there because if they had, who knows what happened to them, in both World Wars. No, they never spoke of any family being there on my mother's side. On my father's side, yes. In Latvia, in Riga, the Latvia family remained there, my grandfather's family. Some left during the period between the wars. Some went to South Africa where they still live. Some went to Israel, or as it was then, you know, the League of Nations mandate of Palestine and lived there and I've met them since I've been to Israel. I paid a visit to Israel about thirty years ago ... and they come over here. Some of them have traveled over here, so, there's a kind of a loose connection. I haven't been in touch for quite a while. Several nephews of my grandfather were the ones who came over with their families. There's quite a few though, over there, and living in Israel. There was one major contact with them; an older cousin of mine who lives here in New York, but, she hasn't been in touch much with them ... lately, so I don't know how they are faring in the present crises there.

SI: Did they speak of their experiences in Estonia during the wars?

GM: They weren't there. They left; well, they were there during the First World War. No, didn't talk about it in Latvia. During the First World War, I don't recall whether the Germans got that far or not. I know in the Second World War they did. But, I don't know whether in the First World War, I know they got into Russia, which eventually precipitated the revolution there, but I don't know whether they got into as far as Latvia during the First World War. Good question, I have never thought about that ... but they never mentioned anything. The relatives I met when I was there were probably just, you know, perhaps weren't even born yet, or babies, or children because they came over as very young people and after [a] while they came into Israel either in early '20s or early '30s among those who settled in the *kibbutz* and ... in farms and have been there ever since.

SI: Now your mother's family, once they moved to Paterson, some of them were farming?

GM: Yes. As I recall, my grandfather had this dairy farm and what happened beyond that I don't know. He passed away at an early age really. I think he was around fifty-one or fifty-two when he passed away and his sons, my uncles, Al, Abe and George, were working in different areas by

then, except for one younger son, Lou. The youngest one, it must have been pretty tough for him and I'm not sure where he lived at that time. [It] is a little hazy. I'm not clear on just what transpired, but, I know I'm named after this grandfather who had passed away before I was born. Apparently, this must have been shortly after my parents were married. They were married in 1922 and they met there at the Jersey Shore, in Bradley Beach. A cousin had introduced them. I guess, they were staying in Bradley and certainly out on the beach ... and it was love at first sight and that's, I guess, about a year before they got married. ... [In] 1922, they were married and then my grandfather must have passed away short time after that.

SI: Was there any sort of family profession on your father's side?

GM: My grandfather, his father was mostly in sales. He was a salesman as I knew him as a kid and he was still doing it. He sold; he worked for a meat processing, or meat packing company. He had a specific route which is what brought him from Trenton across the state to the New Jersey Shore so he could better function on the route that he was working. That's the only profession that I know he had. I don't know what he did when he first came over to America [or] what sort of work he did. I really don't know. As I say, I do regret not knowing more about his particular life at that time.

SI: Your father joined the army around the time of 1918?

GM: No. Not my father. This was my uncle who was in the army. My father was ill. This was [during] the First World War, so he was about seventeen or eighteen and he had to drop out of high school because of illness. It was never clearly explained to me just, it was, ... as a result he did not serve in the army. [He] wasn't drafted. So, he didn't have any contacts militarily at that time, in the First World War

SI: Did your parents ever talk about what it was like to be on the American home front during the First World War?

GM: No. I don't recall them saying too much about it, if at all, to me. I'm trying to recall, [but] I remember seeing photographs, maybe my father might have been in and then had to be discharged because of his illness. Maybe he got a medical. I remember photographs of him in uniform, one of these old-fashioned uniforms, you know. It had to be the First World War but he couldn't have been in [service] very long. [As for] on the home front? I don't think there is, nothing that they spoke about other [than] the main thing [which] was this correspondence between my mother and my uncle. That was the main thing as far as she was concerned, but, nothing on my father's side, nothing much that I can recall.

DG: So your grandfather did the sales also?

GM: This is my father's father, who was a salesman.

DG: Your father did sales also?

GM: My father was also in sales.

DG: Is that a family tradition?

GM: Well, it sounds like it, although he was the only son ... [that] went into sales [while] the other three brothers went into different professions ... The three of them went to college and for some reason my dad did not go to college. He was the oldest and he didn't go for whatever reason. I'm not sure.

SI: What role did religion play in your parents' lives? You mentioned that your grandfather was from Russia and was Orthodox.

GM: They were Orthodox, like I said, probably [like] most of the Jews who were in Russia and other parts of Europe. However, when they came over here, I mean, they maintained the Orthodox faith. My grandmother lived with me when I was a child because her husband, my grandfather, passed away as I mentioned before ... I guess, it was kind of a tradition that it's up to the daughter to look after the widowed mother and from early in their marriage, I think, my grandmother lived with my parents and I remember her, of course, [when] growing up. She helped take care of me and she was with us until I was in high school when she passed away. She stayed with us; actually we lived at that time in Pompton Lakes, which is outside of Paterson, a very small town at that time. It's really grown now. Wayne, New Jersey, Wayne Township, that whole area has really grown ... There were some relatives who lived in Paterson and some who lived in Pompton and that's how my father was able to get a job when they were married, managing the ... movie theater in Pompton Lakes and then, eventually, he managed a chain of theaters in Pompton Lakes, Newark, New York City, the whole chain. This is during the '20s, so, of course, then it was silent movies. He used to talk about that a lot, about his career as a movie manager but it wasn't good for the marriage because he was working evenings, which was not a good idea for a newly married couple. He worked until the last show ended at eleven o'clock, midnight, [or] whatever it was, and as manager, I guess, he had to be there every night. So, eventually, he was persuaded to accept a job, a daylight job, which brought us down to the Jersey Shore, because my grandfather got my father a job with his company, the company that he worked for, and that's how he switched into sales from show business. I say show business in the broad sense, [but] they not only had movies in these little theaters but they had vaudeville [as well]. Apparently, there were different levels of performance in the vaudeville circuit ... [There were] the really top people but they would [also] have different levels all the way down. I guess, they had the corniest or those actors that weren't the greatest on this lower circuit, which would perform all over the country in small theaters. So it provided entertainment for people [to] see a silent movie and vaudeville show which wasn't silent ... [My father] was involved in that and I think he liked that. He liked it very much. I know he often spoke to me about the shows that he was seeing in New York when he came in on business. He and my mother, or he alone, saw a lot of the big time Broadway shows during the 1920s and often spoke to me about these plays [and] the musicals ... He had kind of gotten the spirit of theater in to me, in terms of wanting to go and see, and, sure enough, [when] I was old enough he started taking me to shows here in New York and I've since continued the tradition of being an avid show goer, theater goer, [and] concert goer.

SI: So your first few years were spent in Pompton Lakes?

GM: In Pompton Lakes, yes, the first five years, right.

SI: Do you remember anything about that time?

GM: Not a heck of a lot, except from what they tell me, I was pretty difficult to handle during those years. Now, why? I'm not sure. Maybe it's because my father was not around that much and now that we're talking about it, I never really thought of that, but they always kidded me, later on. Some of the cousins who were older than me, who would come to visit us, say I was a real, real, rascal, [and] very hard to control. But, then my parents tell me I changed overnight when I entered school. That did something to me. But, as a matter-of-fact, as far as school was concerned, we were still living in Pompton Lakes and my parents were very friendly with the principal of the school there. I think, he was a neighbor and he encouraged them ... as far as I was concerned, to start me in school at an earlier age, [at] age four instead of five. My mother, who told me this story and often warned him, said, "No, don't do it. You won't be able to handle him, he's not ready yet. He's too wild." He insisted, and I started but within a couple of days they requested that I be withdrawn. So, at the early age of four, I was expelled from school, to resume when we moved down to Bradley Beach and there it made the difference. I, apparently, made some kind of adjustments and started school there the following year.

SI: So most of your childhood was spent growing up on the Jersey Shore.

GM: Yes, right. Going to school there and making, you know, good friends there and two of whom went to Rutgers with me and still having, you know, a soft spot in my heart for that whole area. I consider that my home area. I lived there and worked there, really, in the Shore area until around, probably, around 1970, '71, something like that.

DG: Did you go down to the boardwalk there as a child?

GM: Oh, sure. One of the big events, actually, this is going back into the '30s and I was just a child, would be to go down to the boardwalk on Sunday night, walk the boardwalk, dressed, and you probably would be amazed; men wore dark jackets and white pants and women wore lovely dresses, gowns, and walked the boardwalk and that was really a big thing to do, big pastime almost every Sunday night. Why Sunday? I'm not sure. That's my memory. It was difficult to get parking, I remember, always hard, because everybody would come in there and park and walk the boards and they had the many activities on the boardwalk, miniature golf and other games, and, so forth, and so, all through high school and on into college I worked on the boardwalk and helping to support myself through college at different jobs on the boardwalk and yes, it was quite different in those days. Asbury Park is a dead place now. I don't know whether you've been there recently or down to the Shore. Ever since the riots there in the late 1960s; it never recovered from that. It's a shame.

SI: Was there the same kind of, maybe, rivalry is not the right word, between the people that lived on the Shore and the Bennies coming in?

GM: And who come in?

SI: The Bennies, out in the Shore we call them the Bennies, the people who come in for the summer.

GM: Oh, yes. It was a kind of a, it was a friendly kind of rivalry. We would say on the one hand, I think, we guys kind of welcomed this, welcome the people coming down, because it meant there were all the new girls on the beach, and on the boardwalk and so forth, but then by the end of the summer, we would say, "Ah, it's good they're leaving. We have our towns back to ourselves," and you know, "it's quieter. It's great they're going back," and we know they would go back to school and things that are a little more normal. No more, you know, heavy traffic and everything that goes with, you know, crowds of people coming down to the shore. But, we had some good times in the summer though with, you know, a lot of people. Made friends with a number of people who would come down and, especially, with the girls.

SI: Was the main attraction the beach or where there other attractions?

GM: There was Avon, Belmar, Spring Lake, all those towns, yes.

SI: What were the boardwalk attractions?

GM: Yes, well, they were attractions for people coming, of course, and even for us. I can remember going down to the boardwalk meeting friends down there and, really, the objective was to meet girls. That was our main goal and this was during high school days, which was during World War II, '42 to '46. So, all the amusements and everything were going full blast at this time, sure, and, you know, we would sometimes play miniature golf, or sometimes there were some of the other things but it was kind of secondary really.

SI: There weren't performances like diving horses?

GM: Diving, no. But what there was, now that you mention it, I don't whether you're familiar with Asbury; there is a convention hall on the one end of the boardwalk and at the other end adjacent to Ocean Grove, it was called the Casino building. But in the convention hall for a number of summers during the war they would have big bands. The really top bands would play there during the summer and that was a major attraction, getting a date and bringing someone there. I mean, you know, whether you remember these bands or not . . . like Tommy Dorsey and Harry James, Benny King, Glenn Miller Band. They all played in Asbury during the summer, which we thought was great. So, that was a major attraction during the summer. Some jazz bands, I'm trying to think of the guy, who was a real Dixieland jazz man, that played there, too. . . . Actually, I haven't thought of them for a long time. But, you know, it was fun.

SI: You went to elementary school in Bradley Beach. What do you remember about those school years?

GM: Those years?

SI: Yes, anything that stands out. What was your favorite activity in school?

GM: Aside from academics, in which I was okay, I never had any problems there. I never gave my parents any problems there, in that respect, behavior wise. I remember having detention for talking too much probably, and I remember that, at times, happening, but, I got along well, had some good friends, as I say. Active in sports in elementary school and, let's see whether, they had basketball and they had a baseball team. There weren't any Little League teams or anything like that, that didn't exist. So we would organize ourselves and played; it was really great. We didn't need any adult supervision or ball fields to play on and this continued through high school. Well, in grammar school we organized our own team. We called ourselves the Bradley Beach Eagles and we played teams from the other side of town, or from Asbury Park. We organized, see, how we did this, we had meetings one night a week. On a Friday night we would meet in somebody's house and the mothers would provide some soda and doughnuts, usually that sort of thing, and we would talk about the games; how we're going to play, and what we were going to do, and it was a lot of fun. I look back on that now and it really was great and we did it without any real kind of adult supervision. We organized the plays for the team. I was a plunging fullback at that time. I can't believe it now but that was a lot of fun. ... We had our games set up every Saturday morning. We had games with another team. So those were some of the highlights. There were social events as we got into the seventh and eighth grades; there were parties with girls. Groups got together and had parties, and so forth.

SI: Did you ever go, into the city or North Jersey to see any sports games?

GM: Yes, as a matter-of-fact we did. This is when I, I think my dad started bringing me in to see some baseball games and I became a real fan of baseball. Became a follower of the old New York Giants baseball team, now the San Francisco Giants. So, I'm rooting for them, because I was originally a Giant fan back then in the late, I think, I was around nine years old when I became a Giant fan and I became such a fan that, that was my goal career-wise. I wanted to be a baseball player and I remember writing, yes, I have to do a paper something, I guess, I was in the eighth grade, about what I want to be when I grew up, and so forth, and baseball and I put together a whole scrapbook of the players in those days. I remember cutting it out of the papers and magazines and so forth, the pictures, putting that together when I wrote what I wanted to do and I enjoyed it very much. I didn't get too far toward being a professional ball player, but I liked it. In high school I played on the high school baseball team. Played on the football team for my freshman year in high school but too many guys were getting broken legs, I remember and, I think, I chose to go to work part-time after school, after that, for a while. The family needed some help at that time. My dad became ill and couldn't work and I figured I better start saving toward college, too, if I was going to go.

SI: How did the Great Depression affect your family and, also, Bradley Beach in general?

GM: Well, I don't think it had a terribly negative effect on both my father and grandfather who were employed in sales and managed to keep this job, selling. They were, you know, selling foods and people still were eating, so they sold to hotels. They sold to, I guess, butcher shops, and so forth, both selling meat. So, they continued to work, and, I think, my dad tried late in the '30s, tried to go into business for himself for a while but it failed. It did not work. It was not a good time to go into business, even that kind of business, and he had to go back to getting a job

at the time, I remember, and the only job he could get was as a milkman in Newark, which is just outside of Newark, Irvington, so he would commute up there, had to live up there, had to stay with a family up there during the week, working in this job and only was able to come back for one day a week. That was pretty tough at that time. This is when he became ill, also, and couldn't work for a while and then medication helped him and he was able to. Then the war came and he was able to find a job in the military, not in the military but working at Fort Monmouth, or one of the bases there, a civilian job.

SI: Now with Asbury Park High School, how would you rate that education? Especially in the light of going to Rutgers do you think it prepared you well for college?

GM: Well, I think it did, yes. It was a good high school then. I don't know how it is now. It prepared me, with one area of weakness, I think, in writing and writing skills because, I think, I had to take some kind of a make-up course upon entering Rutgers in writing, I recall, for the first semester. What do you call it today when you take a course like that? It wasn't make-up but it was a ...

SI: Remedial?

GM: Remedial kind of a thing, yes. They didn't call it remedial then, but it seems most freshmen were in these classes. Introduction to, very few got into the actual English requirement course in the first semester. But aside from that, the education was good. The teachers were okay and, I think, it was a good experience in high school, both educationally and socially, and of course, we were in the war at the time so everything was different. I remember the first casualty that was suffered, as far as school was concerned, was when I was in the eighth grade. The class trip was canceled because of the war. I was in the eighth grade when Pearl Harbor was bombed and we, of course, would have taken the trip the following spring to Washington, but all travel was really curtailed so that was canceled very, very quickly to our disappointment, but that was the least of it really.

SI: Before Pearl Harbor was bombed, how much did you know about what was happening in Europe, or in Asia?

GM: I knew a lot in spite of being about the age I was, you know, nine, ten, eleven, twelve years old. I was very interested in current events and history, and still love history and current events and politics, and followed everything pretty closely. I can't tell you how I got started in it. I guess, talking about the First World War, which at that time seemed such a long time ago to me. It really wasn't and the rise of Nazism and Fascism. I could follow all this closely and then when the war broke out it was, for a kid, exciting to see this happening. In fact, I think, when, I was ambivalent about it as I recall. I knew I should, I remember when they had the Munich Pact and Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, met with Hitler and Mussolini and they gave in to their demands, you know, appeasement and war was averted. This was in 1938. I was a little disappointed but felt guilty about being disappointed. As I say, I was really ambivalent about it then. When the war broke at first I really followed it very closely, every day, in the papers following what was happening. So I was aware of what was going on and then being in high school then, being in high school during three years of the war, it was, you know, a major topic

of conversation. The graduates going off and serving. You know, someone who graduated '42, '43, '44, went into the Army right away and hearing about what's happening to them, and so forth, people that, guys that we had, that we had met who were older than us, and so forth, very interesting times.

DG: What was your reaction to Pearl Harbor when you found out?

GM: Shocked, couldn't believe it. I remember I was in the movies that day, that afternoon, Sunday afternoon. They're behind us in time, aren't they, the farther west you go? At any rate I was in the movies in the afternoon which would have been I guess around two to four o'clock or something, so I knew nothing about it. But I remember the picture I saw which was called *A Yank in the RAF* and I went to the movies right there at Bradley Beach. I don't think I went myself, must have gone with a friend, or something, and came home to hear the news about what happened. It was really quite a shock to me. It was such a surprise, because I didn't know that we were that close. I knew that negotiations were going on in Washington. I was aware of that, but the main area of warfare was Europe and I thought if we were going to get in the war it was going to be with Germany right away, so that was a surprise to me, that it was Japan that had attacked us. They were pretty exciting days then, following that. Never, never really knew how serious things were in spite of my following what was happening. I can remember in 1940 when France fell which was unexpected. Everyone expected, even me, as a kid, that, "Well, it's going to be like World War I; they're going to settle down and fight. Eventually, the Allies will win and that will be it." But when France was overrun even my mother was in shock. I knew it must be serious then if my mother who was not too political [was shocked], but I can remember her shock and chagrined when that happened and my grandfather was really, really upset by all of the early days of the war and, of course, of the persecution of the Jews in Europe by the Nazis. I remember him being upset to the point of I think he became an atheist, not formally or officially, I mean, he still was a member of the Temple in Asbury Park but he just was losing his faith. He couldn't believe it was happening.

SI: So, I guess, within your family you were very aware of what the Nazis were doing?

GM: Yes, well, we knew that they were persecuting. No one knew, really, until toward the end of and after the war about the holocaust that had taken place, although word had gotten out, but it wasn't public. Word had gotten out from, as we now know, some who had escaped and there is an underground and word did get out to the political leaders and so there was awareness on their part, but, the general public didn't know about this until after the war, as far as I know.

SI: To step back before the war. What was your neighborhood like in Bradley Beach? Did it have any specific ethnic identity, or was it tied to specific industries, or what not?

GM: No industry other than being a resort. There were a couple of factories, not in Bradley, but in Neptune, which is adjacent to Bradley Beach, just on, you're aware of the area?

SI: I grew up in Hazlet, which is by Matawan.

GM: Yes, right, okay, sure. Yes, there were a couple of factories there. I never knew what was manufactured in them because they were closed. I think they were vacant through the Depression. The large factories standing there empty, just on the other side of the tracks that divided Bradley Beach from Neptune Township. So, there was no real industry there. It was just a resort, that was the main industry. So many people, you know, counted on that bringing money into the region with people coming down there for the beach in the summer, which continued all during the war, and that didn't stop in spite of oil being washed up on the beaches from tankers being torpedoed off the coast, which happened constantly. We'd get home from the beach with the bottoms of our feet black from oil, you couldn't avoid it and they had people trying to clean up the beach but then they couldn't do it really, totally. I can remember the first summer of the war they had, actually, had soldiers with rifles, helmets, walking on the beaches. I felt so sorry for these guys in that heat. They were wearing, ... I think they were winter uniforms, they had on khakis. It was ridiculous, these woolen outfits. I don't know why they had them patrolling the beaches. I think that was really in the beginning, I guess, when they were very concerned about security, and so forth. Yes, I was down there a lot because my first job was as an umbrella boy on the beach in Bradley Beach so, I was on the beach everyday and then when I got older working on the boardwalk in Asbury Park.

SI: What about those first few days after Pearl Harbor? There was a lot of panic all over the country but the coasts were particularly fearful of either an invasion or something ...

GM: There was a lot of excitement and panic and I can remember radio reports coming in that Japanese planes were sighted on their way to Chicago. A lot of crazy stuff like that was going on. These rumors were going around ... I remember riding back and forth on my bicycle to go down to the boardwalk during recess time, I guess. Well, during lunchtime, I'd ride down to the boardwalk just to see what was happening in the ocean; if there was anything out there, but it was pretty quiet. Actually, I do recall, during the days immediately following Pearl Harbor there were a lot of planes, warplanes, flying over on patrol, all along the coast and that didn't continue throughout the war but the blimps did, who were good for anti-submarine warfare. We'd see them along the coast. They were small; they weren't the large Zeppelins like the *Hindenburg* was, that I remember seeing as a kid passing over. You remember the *Hindenburg* and the crash down there in South Jersey in Lakehurst? You don't remember because this is before the war. Yes, it just brought back the memory of *Hindenburg* and that disaster which occurred during the mid 1930s.

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GM: ... *Morro Castle* [September 18, 1934] that put Asbury on the map, just in time after Labor Day when everything goes. When people leave this is when this happened and then, I think, it was on a Labor Day weekend, and here this big ship comes in almost crashes into the convention hall and tides turned it around and there it is, beached, a terrific tourist attraction for September and October and November until they towed it away.

SI: So did you go out and see ...

GM: Oh, yes, sure, sure, I went down there. It was big, in fact, we saw it burning when the news came on. I remember it was a day just like today, you know, only it was drizzly and raining in September and we got the car and drove along the ocean highway, the ocean road there and you can see the ship burning out there. Planes flying around over it, doing what they could do taking pictures of it, I guess, and then listening on the radio to survivors being interviewed when they were being brought in by the Coast Guard to different towns along the shore. That was something.

SI: We interviewed somebody who was on the *Morro Castle* ...

GM: Oh, really?

SI: I didn't do the interview but my boss did and he talked a lot about the controversy on what really happened. Did you hear about that at all?

GM: Well, there was controversy about that. Controversy about the *Hindenburg*, too. *Morro Castle* controversy, I'm not clear on what that might have been, what started the fire?

SI: Whether it was an accident or sabotaged ...

GM: Yes. I don't know why it would have been sabotaged. Maybe the person was confusing it with the burning of the *Normandie* during the war.

SI: The possibility of arson ...

GM: Yes, arson possibly, yes, that was uncertain but there was the question of whether the *Normandie's* burning and capsizing in port here was sabotage or whether that was an accident. They were refitting it to become a troop ship. That was a big thing at that time. But the *Morro Castle*, I don't recall any major controversy about it. Probably an accident of some kind, a bad, bad one.

SI: So it sounds like you were very aware of U-boat activities off the shore?

GM: Oh, yes, definitely, definitely. We would, if we thought of it, and we did from time to time, we'd say, "My God, there are Germans actually not too many miles away." Actually, the enemy is out there close and, of course, the boardwalk, they didn't want to have all the lights on, on the boardwalk because that would then, a ship could be silhouetted in the water for a nighttime attack. So, I remember they put up these canvas, I guess, it was canvas, all along the boardwalk to block the lights. All during the war they had that up so that if you were on the beachside it was dark, no lights there, but there would still be some kind of a light that's shining above the canvas but that's the best that they can do. I remember during the war, too, that there were civilians, like my father, who was like an air raid warden. We had practices in the home where we pulled the shades down, you know, and there was an alarm that would sound, an air raid alarm would sound, as if there was going to be an air raid. I always felt, you know, as a kid, "How can they get over here? They can't fly that far," you know, with the planes that they had at that time, so I always wondered, but it was, again, precaution, precautionary.

SI: Did you have to paint the headlights; I mean, did you have to paint it half black?

GM: Yes, I think they were. Right, you're right, the headlights on the cars; the top half I guess were, again, to prevent a halo light effect ... Preventing ships from being silhouetted in that light from the shore at a distance.

SI: Do you remember any rumors about Germans saboteurs or agents coming ashore?

GM: They weren't rumors. It actually did happen. At one time in New Jersey, or Long Island, you may not be aware, yes there was that sort of thing. In fact, I was in the Boy Scouts and we had a mobilization day to prepare for a lot of things. This is just before we got in the war. It was interesting. I remember it was in November 1941, we had this mobilization day where we would, our job was to, I don't know, take messages and go down to the boardwalk area. I mean it was just crazy. I don't know what, we're running around doing different things and [I don't] recall all the things that we did except that they set us in the gymnasium of the Methodist Church in Bradley Beach, had baked beans and, after being outdoors all day, I can remember how great they tasted. A bowl of the baked beans was our food supply. But, they had people masquerading as Germans coming ashore on the beach, thinking that's how they were going to attack us, if they were going to invade us. I mean, here they were unsuccessful in invading England, just across the English Channel yet they were going to cross the Atlantic Ocean and invade the Jersey Shore. So, even then it seemed to be a little farfetched to me even though a kid but, again, it was preparation for something that fortunately never happened.

SI: I would imagine you probably watched movies a lot as a child.

GM: Yes, going to the movies was my favorite past time, right.

SI: Do you remember any movies about World War I or about World War II that kind of shaped your idea of what the war would be like?

GM: Yes, yes definitely, a couple of World War I movies stand out, *Sergeant York*, Gary Cooper and *The Fighting 69th* with James Cagney and I don't know whether you recall or you know the names of those actors, know of them? Yes, those were two of the more outstanding ones and then there were pictures like *This Is The Army* there with Irving Berlin, which was the show originally, which, again, all this built up morale for the war, you know, prepare it for the war. *Dawn Patrol* is another one, with Errol Flynn, World War I picture. Hollywood's role in preparing us all for what lie ahead. A variety of pictures, *Abbot And Costello In The Army*, you know, making it seem like it was really a lot of fun and others. Well, pretty good ones and not so good ones, but, there was a flood of pictures during the war but the ones I just mentioned were really the more outstanding ones.

SI: Did you notice through movies or other forms of media that the government was trying to get you in a certain mindset towards the Germans and the Japanese?

GM: Oh, definitely. Oh, yes. There's no question about it. The Germans and the Japanese were the enemy and they were beneath contempt. So, there was a strong anti-German, anti-Japanese, not so much anti-Italian feeling, especially, when they dropped out of the war around September of '43. I think it was about halfway through and they became one who was called a "co-belligerent," which is interesting. But, we weren't even aware at the time about the amount of German and Italian prisoners that was brought over to the United States. I only began to read about this and see it on the History Channel. How they intermingled with the civilian population out West and that many of them had American girlfriends and married, brought them to Italy, and then they came back and lived here. It was interesting. It was more of the Italian prisoners than the Germans. Germans tried to escape. The Italians were happy to be here and not escape to go back to fight again. They didn't care to do that. I can't blame them for it.

SI: I remember my grandmother, who lived in Matawan at that time was talking about how there were Italians POWs nearby and on Sunday they would just let them go to join the Italian community and have dinner and come back.

GM: That's right. Isn't that amazing, the prisoners of war? That's news to me. I wasn't even aware that they were that close. They had Italian prisoners.

SI: I think they were working on tomato farms in Monmouth County.

GM: Yes, yes, they could have. I could see that, sure. Interesting.

SI: Do you recall, before the war, if the German American *Bund* was very big in the area?

GM: Yes, I wasn't too aware of that, although, I've read a couple of books, even then, when I was in grammar school about the *Bund* and other kinds of organizations that we had here that were kind of fascist oriented and they were Silver Shirts an organization known like that and this book was a big expose about them. I was the only person who read about these things. In school there were people who didn't seem to know too much about them where we were, I mean, they were active in different parts of the country. The *Bund* was active in North Jersey, in areas where I ended up living for a while, in Montvale, in that area.

SI: Do you remember anybody expressing any pro-German and pro-Italian sympathies before the war, or pro-Hitler and or pro-Mussolini?

GM: No, I don't recall knowing anyone really who was a, we were pretty much sympathetic toward the English. Certainly, I can remember, you know, after France fell collecting aluminum pots and pans for England.

SI: Bundles for Britain?

GM: Bundles for Britain, right, right. Was anybody in correspondence with anybody in England, that sort of thing? No, we were very, very pro-England, pro-Allies. I think going back to, you know, World War I; Germany was the enemy then. So Germany, again, became the enemy, a more vicious enemy even than World War I. I find myself looking, even last night, I

found myself looking at a program on the History Channel about Hitler Youth, learning things about it. I wasn't aware of how they were indoctrinated and how they, toward the end of the war, at the ages of fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen, were fighting.

SI: How long were you in the Scouts?

GM: Well, let's see, when did I get into the scouts? Seventh grade or sixth grade...? There were no Cub Scouts. I don't remember being a Cub Scout. I was a regular Boy Scout, I guess, until high school. It wasn't too active, the group there. It was the thing to do for a while and, I think, I probably kind of phased out once I started going to high school and got more involved in the activities there and, I think, the Scoutmaster left, or something, and the troop kind of disintegrated, Troop 38 in Bradley Beach.

SI: I imagine the war must have had quite an impact on the tourist industry in Bradley Beach.

GM: Well, yes and no. Families still came down. I mean, you didn't have guys, a lot of young guys, they were all in the service. But people still came down to the Shore with families and children, so, it was pretty active, pretty busy even during the war years. They ... either came down by train, which was a short ride, or came down by car managing to get gas and gas was rationed, so, people would save up for it and come on down and stay there. People would stay there for longer periods. They wouldn't go back and forth in a day like they do; there was no Garden State Parkway, you know, it was traveling on the state highways going in and out of town, so, it was a much longer drive. So, people tended to rent a home for the summer, or for a month, or something like that. Families would stay down and the wage earner, the father, would stay either in New York or Newark, wherever they lived, and stay during the week and come down on weekends to join them. Some of them commuted during the summer.

SI: You mentioned that a lot of people from your high school, and all the people from your neighborhood went off to the military, so it was a very marked absence.

GM: Yes, well, they weren't there. Certainly, I can recall, although I'm not aware of casualties, and so forth, so much in Bradley, Asbury Park, but, once in a while, you'll hear about somebody. I'm thinking now, I can remember, a young guy who went into, I guess he maybe, might have been the Class of '42 or '43 and he went into the, he was in the Naval Air Corps, and I remember his cousin, with whom I was friendly, she was very upset, came to school very upset, when he was killed in the Pacific. Beyond that there were others, naturally, that I didn't know. There was another one from Bradley Beach, just a few blocks from me, a large family, and one of their sons, was missing in action in December 1944 when the Battle of the Bulge started. He was among those overrun by the Germans in their surprise offensive at that time and is missing in action to this day. I mean, he was killed, I'm sure. So those are the two I think that I can recall, that come back to me.

SI: Did you correspond with anyone who was in the military?

GM: No, I didn't. But, there is someone else that I did meet, that I got to know briefly, and I have thought of him. This must have been early 1944, I say March of '44. [He was] a nephew of

one of my mother's good friends in Bradley Beach. He was from Chicago. He was, I guess, after he got his basic training, transferred to the East Coast for going overseas and I can remember this guy to this day. I spent some time with him. I showed him around. Took him into Asbury. He was eighteen years old. He [was a] tall guy, but, a kid, you know, eighteen years old. Just, you know, you're not much older than he is. But he went off and he shipped out to Europe and then during the summer I can remember his aunt coming in, saying to my mother the guy was killed in Normandy. That I recall. That kind of brought it home to me because I got to know him personally and well. Then a cousin of mine who was just a few years older than me, but, was dating different soldiers, and so forth, and I can recall what happened to some of them that she dated. We found out one was killed in North Africa, another one was killed in Europe and how upset she was about this, guys that she knew. I met one of them, I remember, during the summer he came down to Bradley.

SI: Was Bradley Beach a place where you could find a lot of GIs and sailors from local posts?

GM: Well, yes. The area was that, yes, they were at Fort Monmouth, of course, that's a big installation and Dix was a basic training place, farther south. What there was also during the war, stationed in Asbury Park, was the British Navy. I don't know whether you're aware of that. For a couple of years during the war they were there and stayed in the Berkeley Carteret Hotel and there was another hotel, I forget the name of it, which has since been torn down, a long time ago. But, they took over these two big resort hotels for R&R, rest and relaxation, and they really took over the place. Girls were dating them left and right and we were kind of making fun of the girls, you know, but, they were there. I can just see them now in the boardwalk, in the summer time, all these British sailors. But, before that, an interesting story, I met a person recently who was in what they called then the V-12 program, I think, for the Navy. They also stayed in Asbury Park. I think it was before the British came in there, they had the V-12 guys there and I'm not quite sure, these were guys who were in a specialized program where the Navy was training them for certain things. Whether it was just a holding situation for them in Asbury or whether their training took place in Asbury to some extent, I'm not sure. I met somebody who was in that program just by accident, we started talking about it. I met him on a trip out West recently and he says, "You know, I was in that V-12 program. I know Asbury Park. I was sent there after my training in Upstate New York. They didn't know what to do with me so they sent me down to Asbury Park there for a couple of months there in this program, and then I was sent to the Pacific," or something, when they found a spot for him. But, yes, I can remember these guys. They used our school facilities for physical activities, you know, for running on the track and they're doing other things, working out, doing these things in the high school grounds. Yes, these were all guys who were like in their early twenties and for the most part, had some college and maybe were getting into certain specialized programs... Speaking of sports, and so forth, were you aware that the Giants and the Yankees trained at the Shore and had their spring training? Yes, yes, it came back to me when I was visiting a friend a couple of weeks ago down in Bricktown and we went to Ocean County Park and we both remembered the Giants trained there, for about, like in the spring of '42, '43, '44, maybe even '45, because travel was restricted and they couldn't go elsewhere, so, they would come down here and the Yankees trained in Asbury Park using our high school grounds as their training facility. So what a big [thing it was] for us to see the Yankee ballplayers out there, such as they were in those days, the older guys and the guys who were 4-F, unfit for military service, but, they could play baseball. Apparently, the

decision was made to continue major league baseball to keep the home front morale up, you know, one of those things to do that. But, they trained there. In fact, one of the great catchers of the Yankees, who was on the team at the time, Bill Dickey, I don't know whether you know that name or not? He was the one who handed out the varsity letters in the ceremony in the high school auditorium, I can recall that well. I was just talking with this friend of mine who lived down in Bricktown; we're trying to remember the names of the Yankee players at that time. We even came up with about four or five names that we remembered who were on the team at that time.

SI: Could you tell things were being affected by the war? What you just said reminded me that during the war the Steelers and the Eagles joined and became the Steegles.

GM: Right, you're right, yes, you're right, that's what happened.

SI: Could you see things buckling under the pressure of the war?

GM: Well, not personally. Yes, there were various restrictions, certainly. Not terrible things going on, you know, a can of gasoline, sugar, I think that possibly, coal. I remember we had a coal furnace in the home, as most people did, and we had to get, I think I was sick or something, we didn't have enough coal, the house was getting cold, and my mother had to get a special dispensation to get extra coal to heat the house, to be warm enough for me, I think, and it must have been during the war. I don't think there were any restrictions during the '30s, I mean, during the Depression. Those things were available. I don't recall any great deprivations during the war. I mean, you know, here we were lucky. You know, we weren't in any way, shape or form, you know, subjected to the fighting and the destruction that occurred in Europe and Asia during the war. We still had the oceans protecting us then. Which is something it seems that we've lost since then. Food was available. I really don't recall any great restrictions. We didn't go hungry; we ate as pretty much as we always did. There may have been shortages here and there, different things had to have been then, you know, with the war was going, but I don't recall being deprived in any way, you know.

SI: Do you know if people from Bradley Beach or if there are any local war industries a lot of people entered?

GM: Well, yes. Not industries, as such, but, a lot of people came down to the Shore and to Bradley, Belmar, who had jobs either in Fort Monmouth or in various labs, extensions of Fort Monmouth in different places. There were labs out west of Belmar, I remember, where people were employed. A lot of people from the city, who had the engineering and the scientific training, came down at that time to live in the Shore and, I think, continued living there after the war. I remember a family across the street from us in Bradley Beach. I think he came down with his family and he was employed at Fort Monmouth and later he got involved in the atomic bomb testing in the Pacific. Every once in a while he would disappear. He was gone for maybe a month because he went to the Pacific when they had the different testing. This is after the war, in the late '40s and early '50s when that kind of thing was still going on, but, they used those labs. I know the first signal to hit the moon was from one of those labs out there near Belmar. Did it become a Bell Lab? It wasn't known as a Bell Lab, they were federal laboratories out there.

SI: Signal Corps labs?

GM: Signal Corps lab, I think, yes. Well, my father worked in the Fort Monmouth, too. I mentioned before he got employment there.

SI: Did he ever talk about what he did?

GM: No. He wasn't involved in any confidential work, or anything like that. His job there was in security, really. Going around the base making sure that everything is okay.

SI: What did your family think about Franklin Roosevelt?

GM: Oh, very much for him, yes. I know everyone was very pro-Roosevelt, even before the war. I don't recall anyone here among my friends who was during the elections, I can remember the election, not so much of 1936, I was kind of young then, but, I remember the election of 1940 particularly. Wendell Willkie was the [other candidate] and then in 1944 when Dewey was the candidate against him. He was quite popular as president, at least among people I know.

SI: Do you remember when he died?

GM: Oh, yes, very much so, yes, yes. I can remember where my close friends were running over to the house late in the day, really shocked, and bewildered, and almost frightened. "What are we going to do?" Because he was the only president that we knew. He was elected in 1933, he became President, right? Election was in '32, so we were only four or five years old then. He is the only president that we knew growing up during all those years and so he died in '45 and so my friend was really troubled and I had to calm him down. I said, "It'll be okay, it'll be okay, Harry Truman will be President, he'll be all right. He's the president and will continue, we're winning the war." This was in April of '45, so there was no, shouldn't have been any fear about everything is going to be reversed, that was not going to happen, but I can remember how surprised I was that he was so upset. I was saddened by it but I knew, you know, it wouldn't make any difference as far as the progress of the war was concerned. I felt that.

SI: Most people we talked to on the home front kind of remember always thinking, "We're going to win the war." Was there any wavering?

GM: Any doubt about it?

SI: Yes, or, maybe, "We were not doing so well right now."

GM: Well, we knew we weren't doing too well in the early stages of the war but we felt it was just a matter of time. I think we really were surprised by how successful the Japanese were earlier. We had, you know, we felt, I think, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor we thought, "Ah, we're going to knock them off. In a couple of months it will be over," not realizing how tough it was going to be. So, that was kind of a surprise to us that it was continuing. In fact, I can even remember once mentioning to my mother, this was late in the war, maybe about 1944 or so, I can

recall having a conversation with her. I guess, I was getting war weary. I'm really getting tired of everyday, you know, because I was reading about it. I was really immersed in it and I must have been reacting against it, wishing for some kind of normalcy to return other than war. You know, to think and do something other than what's happening around the world and the war and expressing that to her and she said, "It will be over soon. Don't worry, you know, it's going to end." But I don't remember any fear of not winning. It was just a matter of time.

SI: Are there any moments that stand out, like the invasion of Normandy?

GM: Oh, yes, sure, and the various battles, and so forth, in North Africa and then Sicily, and then Italy, prior to the invasion at Normandy, yes. Again, casualty reports coming in and being kind of really shocked by that. Particularly, I think, the first real casualty reports coming in from the fighting in Tunisia, for a while when we didn't do so well initially. This was our first combat for American troops and then, again, in Italy, landing on some of the beaches there, too. I think it was Salerno. There was one in Anzio and so forth. There were a lot of casualties. At least, they were made known to us for the first time. That was upsetting, certainly, to hear. ... There was a big question whether, I remember, whether the picture should be shown of American casualties in *Life Magazine*. If I remember, the first picture had occurred in the fighting, I think, in New Guinea. That kind of shocked the public to see actual, you know, "Gee, these are Americans, these are our guys, casualties, dead." I recall that being a kind of a shock and being upsetting.

SI: Did you know that what you were seeing was censored, or filtered, or did you just take it at face value?

GM: Well, we weren't too aware of the censorship that occurred. Sure, they had to do some censoring, I think. We weren't aware that we were being, you know, fed the information concerning, particularly, the bombing raids, and so forth, over Germany. We weren't aware of the high cost of those bombing raids in terms of planes shot down, guys lost. We really weren't, at that time too much aware of that the news was slanted to indicate how highly successful they were. We only found out afterwards that places that were bombed were back in activity within, you know, within days or weeks of their bombing, like the oil fields in Romania, and so forth, which was a costly raid. So, I guess, there had to be some kind of protecting the public from knowing everything that was really going on and how bad it was in terms of casualties, to keep the home front morale up.

SI: What do you remember about V-E Day and V-J Day or before that?

GM: Well, I can go back a little bit before that. I mentioned about Normandy, certainly, and the landings there were exciting but I think by then we were, we in some way had been prepared for casualties, you know, and then a little disappointment that it took so what seemingly, it took a long time to break out of Normandy. The fighting continued, June and July, and then suddenly we broke out. They were kind of heady days in August and September with the liberation of France and parts of Belgium, and so forth, and we all thought the war was going to end. Not realizing it was going to go on for another winter and then into the following spring. But, finally when we knew it was just a matter of time at that point, beginning probably by March ... March

of '45 it was just a matter of days, or months, or weeks, before it would end because we were just advancing everywhere. But as far as V-E Day, yes, it was exciting, even along the Shore. I can remember, we must have had these open, double-decker busses, with open tops like they used to have on Fifth Avenue. I think they used them in the summer there, because they were riding up and down with the flags flying and people yelling and then, you know, then on the boardwalk everyone, you know, dancing and running around and so forth. Nothing like Times Square, because we didn't have the population. It wasn't quite the summer yet so it wasn't that crowded there but there was a real happy feeling, kind of tempered by the fact that we still had Japan to defeat, not knowing anything about the atomic bomb at that time, the public didn't know anything about it. When that occurred we were very happy. That was going to end the war; it did end the war. We didn't realize what a horrible bomb that, you know, what it did for us. But at the time we had no misgivings about it, or the bombing raids on Germany. You talk about civilians being killed today, then, there was thousands and thousands of civilians being killed. Whether it was atomic bombs or the traditional bombs, didn't matter, you're dead, you're dead from the explosions. But, we had no [misgivings], at least I didn't, and I'm sure most people felt that way, "give it to them," you know, "They deserved it. They started the war, they did it to us, let's give it back to them and then we'll end the war," and that's how we felt about the atomic bomb. Glad that we had it and they didn't. But, it was pretty horrible for the people who experienced it, no question about it. Maybe, that's still in our psyche here with respect to Iraq and everything that's going on today, you know the fear of that. [Editor's Note: Interview conducted October 26, 2002, shortly before the Second Persian Gulf War]

SI: V-J Day that was the same?

GM: Yes, V-J same thing, right. There we were on the beach celebrating. I recall that, that was, yes, September. Everyone was glad it was over. I could remember my mother saying, "Oh, I am glad it's over, at least you won't have to serve." I was just turning in '45, what was I turning then? Well I wasn't even eighteen; I was just turning seventeen in September of '45, just going into my last year of high school. I knew I would never have to serve in the war because I knew how it was going in the last year or so. I was kind of disappointed. At the same time I really, you know, I didn't want to think it was going to continue and more people being killed just so I could serve in the war. But, you know, when you're young like that, you feel you kind of missed out on something you know the big adventure kind of attitude. It's silly.

SI: Based on what you said earlier it sounds like college was on your radar screen early.

GM: Yes. It was something that was sort of like a given. I was going to go to college, but, there was no thought given as to who is going to be paying for it. My parents couldn't afford it, but, somehow or other I was going to go. So I was saving for it. Of course, tuition was much lower then. It was a fraction of what it is today, you know, but, nor was there any serious planning for it on the part of my family, or the school in terms of teachers and counselors. There was one person in the school in charge of guidance then. There was hardly any guidance program in high schools in those days. There was one person who was a part time counselor; I never met her. Never sat down to talk with her about college or anything. We did it on our own, like we had our own football team. We planned for college, me and my friends, and we decided to go to Rutgers. We visited, we went up, I remember our team was playing, the high school basketball

team was playing in the tournament and they used the Rutgers gym for the tournament. So we went up there and we looked around the campus. We liked it so, "Let's go here." We applied to other places, too. I remember I was accepted to Penn and NYU only because I had just heard of these schools, or somebody I knew went there, and so I applied to them as well. But, why did we all apply to Rutgers and decide to go? It's hard to say. Close by, relatively inexpensive, state school and I got a State Scholarship to go there, so, that took care of tuition such as it was then. So, all I had to worry about was enough money for room and board, which I was able to make working summers. Believe it or not, you can make enough to, I put it in the bank and I drew upon it when I was at that school for my room and board, wherever it was, and my social life. I worked part time at Rutgers too, when I was a student there. That helped a lot. Doing a variety of jobs I pick up through the placement office there.

SI: Did you take a test for the State Scholarship?

GM: No. I don't recall any test. I think college board scores were looked at and I remember ... getting a letter of recommendation that was probably for the application and this was like crazy; I know, my father said, "Go into Such-and-Such's office. He's the president of the senate now, he has something to do with Rutgers, go in and ask him for a letter of recommendation." I didn't know who this guy was; he was a lawyer in Asbury Park. I can't think of his name but he's passed away. But, he was like next in line to be governor of the state, if the governor had died, as the president of the senate, I think. So, I go in, called and spoke to his secretary and said, "I'd like a letter of recommendation." I forget whether it was for the state scholarship, or whether it was for just getting into Rutgers. I don't think you need a recommendation for the scholarship as it is pretty cut and dried, dependent on your high school average, your SATs and, I think, need was a factor then, too. It became an important factor later on for the financial aid programs. So, that put me over the top.

SI: Had you known anybody who was going to Rutgers?

GM: No. No, I remember a cousin of mine visiting me when I told him I was going to Rutgers. He is an older cousin and he actually had served in the Army during the war and I remember him telling me, "Ah, Rutgers, it had a pretty good crew team. Why don't you go out for crew when you're there?" And I said, "All right, I'll look into it," and I never did. I was too busy.

DG: What were the social events that you did at Rutgers?

GM: The social events were connected mostly with the fraternity that I joined. Somehow or other, my friends and I got involved with this club that became the chapter of the ZBT fraternity. So we became charter member of the fraternity chapter and that became the basis for our social life. Everything that was involved with the fraternity and the fraternity house provided a social life. Prior to that we were on our own socially. I mean, you know, we went over to NJC as it was called then, New Jersey College for Women, and went to dances and things of that nature there. I met girls there. But, then the fraternity became the main social center for us.

DG: What was your first impression with regards to Rutgers as a student?

GM: First impression? I remember it was pretty hot and it was crowded and me and my friends stayed at a, we rented rooms in the top floor of a house on Codweis Avenue opposite the home where Joyce Kilmer was born. There's a plaque on the house. It was a couple of blocks from the railroad station, on the other side of the station away from the Rutgers campus and that's where we lived for our freshman year and just walking to campus, it was, you know, within an easy walk. I remember going over to what is now Douglass College to check out the girls there some day that they were all lined up, signing up there, or something. Maybe I was a sophomore doing that. I know initial impressions as, I said, it was warm because it was September. It was crowded and had all, you know, GIs coming back, ex-GIs coming back and where they were living all over the place. I mean, the place mushroomed from a small college of what, three or four hundred, to over a thousand in our class alone, which was the largest class at that time and guys, you know, who were just a few years older than us, we were eighteen, and I felt, I guess, a little bit inhibited by these guys who had been through so much during the war. So, I was kind of quiet in the classes I think for that reason, initially, during that first year or so. Who was I to say anything? These guys had been through hell, some of them, and I don't know where. And a lot of guys were married, have children. If not they were single. They would stay out late at night and there was one guy I knew, he was a friend of mine who didn't stay with us in Codweis Avenue, got a room somewhere else, and so did the guy who was in the Navy. My friend became friendly with this ex-Navy guy and he said, "As I was getting ready to go to bed at night after studying, this guy was going out." Such was his, you know, background having been four or five years older than us and having been in the Navy. He was a man and we were still boys compared to him and many others.

SI: In general how did the GIs and the kids coming straight out of high school get along?

GM: Okay. They would, I think, they would kid us a lot. Being in the ROTC as was required then and you can hear all the catcalls coming out as we marched down College Avenue from the gymnasium. We marched to Buccleuch Park there where we did our drilling once a week and these guys would, I'm sure they were ex-GIs and in different fraternity houses, or just there, they would be really making fun of us, really, but not in any terrible, sadistic way, necessarily.

SI: What did you think of ROTC?

GM: Well, I had mixed feelings about it. I really didn't care to be in it. It was time consuming and, I think, I was jealous of the time that it took and after the war I saw no need for it. The war was over and so I didn't have a good attitude toward it, I think, at that time. What happened, I certainly didn't intend to continue to go on to the Advanced ROTC, but, then we had a little thing called the Truman Doctrine and the beginning of the Cold War and the resumption of the draft and so a bunch of us decided to stay in, go in to the Advanced ROTC but the only branch they had was infantry and after seeing *All Quiet in the Western Front*, the movie, I said, "Oh my God, this is not for me," but I was in it. What could I do? What happened was when we went to summer camp at Fort Meade, Maryland between the junior and senior year, I was in it for the full third year. We go to summer camp. I had a problem with my feet and so I was discharged.

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

SI: Please continue.

GM: Okay. So to make a long story short, I was discharged from there during that summer camp and I wasn't too unhappy about it. There were certain things I didn't like. The army was still segregated then and a lot of us didn't like when we were up again, didn't like this when we got to that camp because the black guys, the few black guys that were at Rutgers and who were in the ROTC had to go to a separate barracks and we protested against that but to no avail. They hadn't really done away with that. Truman would do that shortly afterwards, but, it hadn't been done away with yet so that was kind of upsetting to us, I recall. So that ended my military career at that point, to be resumed later.

SI: Just out of curiosity, was the Air Force ROTC on campus at that time?

GM: No, no. There was just the infantry. We had no choice. There was no Naval ROTC and no other branches. The Air Force was just in the process of becoming separate, a whole separate division there. Yes, there was the Army Air Force, of course, during the Second World War and the Navy Air Corps, too, separately. But there was no separate Air Force.

SI: In the fraternity, was there a mix of veterans and non-veterans?

GM: Yes, there were the older guys who were veterans, exactly, and they were kind of the serious students, the leadership in the fraternity, and the ones who had the stories, their war stories, which they loved to regale us with. Some of them like, you know, dancing with the Hollywood stars, the actresses out of the Hollywood Canteen during the war. "I danced with So-and-So, she was really nice," and so forth and so on. We sat there wide-eyed, "Wow, gee what we missed."

DG: Did they speak often of their experiences?

GM: No, no. I don't recall guys talking too much about it, their experiences, in that respect. I remember one fellow I met that was on a B-29 bomber and he was on a number of raids over Japan but he didn't get into talking about it. One guy did. One guy was almost captured, I remember him Sid, yes. Saw him recently. He spoke of the experience. He was in the infantry and he was hiding out with a couple of other GIs in a barn and Germans came in there looking for them. That was his frightening experience, almost captured but they avoided it. I'm trying to remember some others. No, really, the war stories were usually funny stories that they concentrated on, you know, or their exploits at the Hollywood Canteen and that sort of thing, but I didn't hear of any horror stories that anyone cared to share with us.

SI: Did you ever see any veterans who maybe had trouble re-adjusting to civilian life?

GM: Not on campus. I don't remember anyone having a tough time. That doesn't mean that there weren't those who had some adjustment problems, but, I don't recall anything outstanding in that respect. They kind of blended in. They're all on the GI Bill, which was great for them to have that. No, I don't think that, I wasn't aware of anyone having any major problems. There may have been there. I'm sure there were those who dropped and couldn't cope with it, whether

it was going on, or whether it was due to their war experience, or just due to the fact that they weren't cut out to be in college. Maybe just starting because "Hey, the government is going to pay for our shot at," you know, but I'm not aware anyone having a problem in either of those respects.

DG: How did you decide on economics as a major?

GM: Well, I think I was influenced by an uncle of mine who was in business here in New York and I felt that this would be a good background if I wanted to go into business. So that's why I chose economics and then actually combined it with business, I guess, business administration, thinking this is what I wanted to do; until later on I changed my mind.

SI: Are there any professors that stand out in your memory?

GM: Yes, the Spanish professor that I had was an excellent teacher. I should have done better. I did. He was so good that he made it for me. I had, let's see, two years of a language was required so I had him for at least a year; Charles Stevens was his name. He had been in the diplomatic corps, which kind of appealed to me, too, during the war and he was an excellent, excellent teacher. Who else was good? The music teacher, my music appreciation teacher, whose name was Marty Sherman, was also very good. He got me interested in classical music for the first time, which has influenced me, you know, since then and the rest of my life, so I owe him that debt. Let's see who else could have been? In economics, there was somebody in economics who was good, too; whose brother was the president of CCNY, possibly, at that time. I don't recall his name now. He commuted into Rutgers from the New York. He was good. He was a good teacher, too, in economics. History, there was a good guy there, too, that I had but he was good and yet I didn't do well in the course initially. I guess this was part of my adjustment to everything there. Here was my favorite subject and I was struggling with it for the first time in my life. Charanis, I think his name was. Do you recognize the name?

SI: Yes, I recognize it.

GM: I don't think he's there anymore, I mean, I think it was Peter Charanis, yes. He was good but I was running a three in the class. I was upset until I took the exam and I figured out what was going to be on the exam in terms of the essay questions. I didn't figure out exactly. I said the essay has got to be from among these five areas so I studied all five areas and two or three of the essays were from there. So, I hit it right on the nose and I was always good on multiple choice, so I'm not that dead, and I got a one on the exam, which raised my grade one whole point which was terrific, but, in the meantime, I had to register for the next semester. So, I dropped out of his class; took somebody else, a younger professor that was supposed to be good, too. But, he wasn't as good as Charanis was. I regretted having done that but I couldn't do anything about it, especially after I got that one on the final exam.

SI: Did you follow the sports?

GM: Yes, oh, yes, definitely. I was heavy into Rutgers sports, yes. They didn't have a losing season in football like they have now.

SI: That's why we have to hear these stories.

GM: Yes, they were so like, well, I guess, there's a lot of golden years in Rutgers sports, so many years of it but this immediate, the post war years, were pretty good because they had all these GIs coming back and they had these older players as well a sprinkling of good, young players just out of high school because they couldn't get in anywhere else. Several of these were outstanding players who, in normal times, would have gotten scholarships to top football schools but they ended up in Rutgers because the flood of the ex-GIs and the football powerhouses, they had their pick, and so, these guys ended up going to Rutgers and they were very good so there was a nice blend of veterans and good, young players just out of high school. So we had four terrific years of teams in football and basketball was good, too, and the baseball team, they were all good. Swimming was always good at Rutgers. I don't know how it is now but their coach then was a nationally known swimming coach. Riley was his name. So, Rutgers sports were good. So, that's why when you hear all the alumni like me grumbling about what's going on now. I don't know. It's incredible that they can't seem to come up with a decent season. But maybe they don't belong in the Big East. I don't know. What do you guys think now on campus about this?

SI: We always hope it will turn around. Each year is a promise.

GM: Yes, every five years a new coach to turn it around. Maybe it will. Northwestern did it after being the doormat of the Big Ten for years and years and years, right? Then that was due to outstanding coaching. So, hopefully it will turn around. Basketball team shapes up as pretty good for this year, I think, from what I've heard. But girls' sports had been pretty good. Girls' basketball, I can't complain about that I guess.

SI: I was reading an interview with one of your classmates the other day and he remembered being in a game at Palmer Stadium in Princeton when a plane buzzed the stadium.

GM: Really?

SI: I was wondering if you remember that. If you were there?

GM: Well, I was at a Rutgers/Princeton game at Palmer Stadium, definitely, I remember that. We won, I believe, we won and there was one player who was really outstanding and I don't recall his name but he was a little guy and I think he scored a couple of touchdowns. I don't recall a plane buzzing the stadium. Could be, could be, but, yes, those were big games with Princeton and the other Ivy League schools, on and off, we played Harvard, Princeton. I don't recall playing Yale. Oh, Colgate, not Ivy League, but we played Colgate; played NYU. They had a football team then. Columbia, what a great game against Columbia. I remember, my freshman year I didn't appreciate it then and I went home for the weekend and I remember watching the game on television in a store window going by. Television was new then and they televised the game, black and white, of course, and the game was one of those games where Columbia had two great players then. One became their athletic director or something to do with ... no, he was in broadcasting and he only died recently. There were, too, Lou Kusserow, and

another guy who passed away. He was big in television sports broadcasting, maybe died about five or six years ago. But, they were on the team. They had a great team and a great end. This is the team that went on to beat Army and stop their like, I don't know, forty game winning streak or something. West Point, because they had all these great players during the war they won every game. But, at any rate the game was like twenty-seven to nothing in favor of Columbia like at half time and Rutgers lost thirty-four to twenty-eight, terrific come back.

SI: Was that '47?

GM: It could have been the fall of '46 or '47. It might have been '47, it could have been '47, yes, that was some exciting game. A couple of friends of mine went and they said, "Boy, did you miss a game." I saw part of it on television ... They were good, good sports years for the school and academically the school was, it was a big challenge for the school; to house everyone, to feed everyone, I guess, to get the classes, the instructors from all over the place, you know. It was pretty hectic for those running the place and I can appreciate that now, looking back on it. The old gym, I remember in our freshman year became the cafeteria. That was the cafeteria until they built the current cafeteria, not in the shape that it is in now but, basically, that's where they had these, what do they call those, pre-fabs, and they threw out this cafeteria for us and I worked there in that cafeteria for a couple years. That's how I got my food, that's where I ate. But, they had since, you know, expanded greatly as I've seen, you know, I go back once in a while.

SI: Were a lot of the buildings prefab or war surplus?

GM: Well, this was and then they built the Quonset huts as they were called, prefabs, all along the river, I remember, where there is now dormitories and a student center. We had classes in these places, I remember, and they were either too hot or too cold depending on the weather outside. But, each one was a classroom and as they did that then they had guys living in, I don't know what kind of facilities, because I never got out there to see them, across the river somewhere over there in, the what do they call it?

SI: Barracks?

GM: Barracks, yes. I guess they were barracks for a while. What was over there at the barracks? They had an arsenal, Raritan Arsenal, that was it, so, they ran a bus service. Guys were not happy, I remember. Whether they were veterans, or one of the guys just out of high school, it was a real drag. It's not what they thought their college would be like and I felt lucky that, you know, I had this room just adjacent to campus, so, I didn't have to put up with that commuting by bus everyday. But it was tough. It was tough, yes, in that respect for a lot of guys starting; I think that's why a lot of guys transferred. I know people who transferred after the first year there. They wanted to go to greener pastures. "I'm going to Michigan. I'm going to go to Tennessee, it's so much nicer out there."

SI: What were your some of your other activities at campus?

GM: On campus aside from being active in the fraternity where, after working in the school cafeteria, I continued with my desire to make sure I was fed, so, I became the first steward in our

fraternity house that we had there and I was able to obtain my meals that way and I was on *The Anthologist*, had something to do with advertising. Yes, I got advertising for *The Anthologist Magazine* and played intramural sports, baseball and touch football. We had a team we played and not much else because my job was to do well in the courses and I had a lot of part-time jobs as I mentioned before, so, that would take time, too. That was about it. Can't think of anything else.

SI: I get the impression that in that day fraternities had a much more prominent role on the campus.

GM: They did and even before that it was even more prominent when the school was smaller and their percentage of students was therefore higher, but, yes, I would say, I mean, I'm not sure what it has become now. For a while it would seem to be dying out. I guess, during the '60s was the tough time for fraternities and had they made a comeback now?

SI: Somewhat, but not to the way they were.

GM: Yes, they were pretty strong because we were concerned about having a social life but there was no other kind of a facility to facilitate having a social life and there was the Student Union building, which was an old house on the corner of College Avenue; it was on the corner of a block that had a lot of private homes that were converted to university housing for offices, and so forth. Ford Hall was across the street, sort of down the street. ...

SI: It's probably Mine Street or Hamilton.

GM: Mine was the next block down, I think Hamilton, yes, yes, Hamilton. Hamilton bisects Queens Campus and what's the other campus called, I don't know, is there a name to the other campus, when you cross the street?

SI: Voorhees Mall?

GM: Voorhees Mall, is that what it is?

SI: Where Milledoler and the library were.

GM: Yes, where the old library was, right, exactly. But, on the corner there of College Avenue was this old Victorian house, which was a student union. Well, as a matter-of-fact we used it for our fraternity parties before we had a house. I was the social chairman in that year and it was up to me to make arrangements for parties and dances and we used that facility and we used the Hillel Foundation facility in town for parties and dances and then we had a big installation dance in there when we were installing new guys in. We went out to the Far Hills Inn, I think, in Somerville. I remember going out making all these arrangements. I was the social chairman of the chapter then, so, it was kind of fun, too.

SI: Was it an all-Jewish fraternity?

GM: Yes, that what it was but it has since changed I think, right? It no longer is, right? Which is what a fraternity should be I think. That really bothered me a little bit, that the fraternities were broken down by religion. But, that's the way it was, that's the way it had always been, so we kind of accepted that. There were three other Jewish fraternities, Tau Delta Phi and Phi Epsilon Phi and Sigma Alpha Mu, right. Yes, I don't know, had they all mixed together with other fraternities? I don't know what the story is.

SI: Some of them might be predominantly Jewish but then there's no one fraternity; you can't segregated the frats anymore.

GM: Yes, that's good. I'm glad that's the situation; the true meaning of fraternity, I suppose, in that respect.

SI: Before we leave Rutgers is there anything else?

GM: Anything I want to add? We covered a lot quite well. I did end up in the military by being in the Air Force Reserve. I finally went into the Air Force when I was working here in New York and the Korean War was raging and I decided to; word came down to me and some friends that they were starting taking enlistment, an Air Force Reserve unit out on Mitchell Air Force Base, on Long Island. I said, "Okay, I think I'll join that," not knowing that it was going to be, as soon as we joined it, activated and we went on active duty about five months after joining and so I was in for about, from May of '51 until about eighteen months or so. Until we were deactivated in stages and I got out in the Fall of 1952. [I] met a guy who I knew at Rutgers and here's this guy who had been in the service before and been in the reserve and he was called up, too. So, there we were. But we never left Mitchell Air Force Base and I was really disappointed. I was hoping, "Gee, I'm going to get in, maybe I'll get over to Europe." I had never been to Europe or anywhere, I said, "Maybe I'll get over to one of the bases in Europe, that would be great." Nothing. They were just starting NATO and building bases and they asked for volunteers. They needed a few guys to go over there, like an advance party to France and some of the veterans said, "Don't do it. It's not going to be good at this stage." So I didn't do it. Some guys went, and, sure enough, they said, "Geez, we were sleeping on the grounds, sleeping in pup tents on the ground. It was awful sleeping in mud. We wish we weren't there," and these guys came back maybe a year later and told us about it. So, I missed my big opportunity to travel. But, I have done a lot on my own since then so I can't complain.

SI: When the war ended, World War II ended, you kind of expected you wouldn't have to serve and then a few months after you graduated from college, the Korean War breaks out.

GM: Well, actually, it broke out in June of 1950, a couple of weeks, boom. Well, at first we thought, well, we wondered, "Is it going to affect us? What's the story here?" A friend of mine, who was a good friend of mine who was from Belmar originally and now lives down in Brick, the fellow I was just visiting a couple of weeks ago, was in the ROTC and had started in Michigan Law School that fall but was called up. He was called up and spent a year or so. He spent a year in Korea training other troops from other countries, and so forth. So, he got called up, but others who were in the ROTC with me, I forgot to mention to you, I worked at CBS for a while after getting out of the Air Force and I had access to their newsroom where the teletype

would come over. One day I started reading the teletype about an action in Korea and I said, "My God, I know this guy. He was in the ROTC with me," leading a raid into a North Korean trenches or something. I said, "Oh, wow." It really brought it home to me and I said, "Gee it could have been me if I had stayed in there. Could I have done that?" You know, I ask myself, "Could I have done what this guy did?" ... This was shortly after getting out. He was still in the service there.

SI: What was his name?

GM: I don't recall. I almost had it on the tip of my tongue. When I came back in reading about that and here's the teletype printing out and I recognized it right away. If I look in my 1950 book I'll recognize it, my yearbook. Yes, we didn't know what was going to be and, of course, my friend being in the ROTC knew that it was inevitable; he was going to be called up. So, then I wondered what the heck I was going to do? I was working in New York at the time. My first job after I graduated Rutgers was working on an executive training program for Allied Stores Corporation who are no longer in existence. I think that's when I saw this great influence on my life, which was *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the original movie. When I was living here in New York on my own I saw the movie. I said, "I'm not going to get in the infantry. I better make sure I get into something other than infantry if I'm going to have to go." So, that's when I decided to and I left this job and joined the Air Force Reserve and then I was called up in the following May and I left that job with Allied Stores. So, there you have it.

SI: What was it like to live in New York at that time in between college and the service?

GM: Well, it was kind of exciting because I was with a group of people on this training program who were from different parts of the country and who were living in New York, too. A couple were from New York City, and others were from other states and one of them was a veteran, was a Marine veteran, who was from Texas, very nice guy and so he was in it. He was working for Allied, too, wanted to become an executive in retailing and so forth. So, it was fun. We kind of hung out together, as you say now, going to restaurants, shows and stuff together. Going to each other's apartments and having and meeting other people. So, it was kind of fun, because it's always fun when you're young and in New York. I see it here. This place is like another college campus around here with all the young people in these different apartment houses just off the campus, one year, two years, three years. Every year we get a new, new supply comes in. I don't know how the recession is affecting that right now. How the jobs are on campus these days for, you know, for graduates in business. I would think in certain areas it would be pretty bleak, in financial services.

SI: I know from other interviews a lot of people feared a recession in '49 and '50, was that a concern for you at that time not being able to get a job?

GM: No, ... it certainly was a concern of some friends of mine, that I remember, in the fraternity. One guy graduated in '49 as an engineer; could not get a job as an engineer. That I recall very clearly now that you mentioned that and he took a job with the fraternity and became a traveling secretary with the fraternity and lasted for many years working for the fraternity and then turned that into, finally, doing something that he was trained for in engineering. Ending up with the

New Jersey Highway Authority, the Garden State Parkway Authority as one of the top managers in that.

SI: Is that Mel Kohn?

GM: Yes.

SI: I didn't interview him but I know his story.

GM: How do you know him?

SI: He was interviewed in 1999. He has a ring from the Parkway.

GM: We're fraternity brothers. He was first or second president of the chapter down there, second president, probably. He was, I think, a Navy veteran and, yes, he liked, he enjoyed, he traveled all over the country working for the fraternity and then finally got into this thing. I met him down in Puerto Rico once on vacation. He was living there I think for a while. I think he lived in Puerto Rico for a while. I don't know what he was doing there. But, then he came back and is living in New Jersey and you know of him?

SI: Yes. The two people who did the interview said that he talked a lot about building the Parkway.

GM: Yes. He was involved in that and maintaining it. I don't know where he lives now. He did not come to our last fraternity gathering that we had here in New York about three years ago, our fiftieth anniversary of the chapter, he didn't make that one. This is wrong, let's see. [Mr. Michelson is looking at his pre-interview survey] I'm remarried. Should I put it down here, bring it up to date?

SI: You don't have to, maybe if you want to put it on the tape?

GM: In other words, when I get this for correction or something, I can add it or something? I can add it now. I'm married to my wife, Anita Michelson from Bangor, Maine, but she has lived in New York for the last thirty plus years, so I'm no longer divorced.

SI: Now when you entered the military. Did you go through basic training or induction period?

GM: We went through a kind of a pseudo-basic training at Mitchell Air Force Base, the group of us who were in this reserve outfit. In fact, we didn't even have complete uniforms yet. This is when the Air Force was phasing out of Army Air Force to US Air Force, with khaki to blue, so, some of us wore khakis; some of us were still in civilian clothes. A few of us had the new blue uniforms. It was really a crazy quilt, as far as uniforms. Eventually, we all had our blue uniforms and, as I say, during that spring and summer they put us through a kind of a quasi-basic training kind of thing such as the Air Force can do. I mean, we even had some marksmanship training there at Mitchell Air Force Base and marching around a bit, you know, drilling and that kind of thing but it was mainly, we worked, mainly, you know, in what our particular jobs were

with the troop carrier wing. We had winter maneuvers up in Vermont the following winter, went up there for a while and stayed at the University of Vermont dormitories, during Christmas vacation while the kids weren't there. They had Operation Snow Drop, so that was my big military experience.

SI: From other interviews with Korean War veterans it seems as though the whole military was caught off guard by Korea and in the beginning especially they were just sort of throwing reserves in, slapping things together.

GM: Right. Guys who were on occupation duty in Japan who were having, you know, lap of luxury there but it threw these poor guys into the battle and all. That was bad to them until they finally turned it around and then it got bad again, after turning it around. We got as many casualties there as in Vietnam, and we were involved in Vietnam for a longer time than Korea.

SI: But it seems even at Mitchell Air Force Base, perhaps it was partly because the Air Force was emerging as a new branch, but did you get a sense that in the beginning they didn't know what to do with you?

GM: Well, yes, there was a little bit of uncertainty. Here they had activated a lot of reserve units but, "Now what are we going to do with them? Where do we need them," you know? I mean, as I told you, I thought when this happened I was kind of looking forward to it in a way as a chance to do some traveling, but we just stayed there and I don't know what we accomplished, you know, staying at Mitchell Air Force Base. We didn't even get to go anywhere really, other than Vermont.

SI: So what was an average day of duty for you?

GM: I worked in an office there in a supply squadron and sharpened up my typing and made good friends with a guy that I've been trying to contact again, here in New York. He was a New York City guy and we had some great ping pong games together and I did some heavy outside work, too, for a while at a lumberyard. I don't recall why. I wasn't being punished for something. It was just part of it all. That was in a warm weather season, but I ended up in the main office of the supply squadron. What do they call it, now? I've even forgotten what they called it, like a headquarters office, yes, it was still was a soft deal, really. Had weekends off. I would come home to the Shore to go on the beach every weekend, hitchhike home. Or hitchhike, take a train whatever, you know, whatever I could do as long as I was back by Sunday night. It was like a five day a week job.

SI: There was another man I interviewed I think he was stationed at the base on Governor's Island and he said there was perfect opportunity of going to the city and the shows ...

GM: Oh, yes, from Governor's Island, sure. I did, too, that one season, fall, winter, spring season, I saw just about every Broadway show. Unfortunately, it happened to be not a good year for Broadway. I always went to lousy shows, saw some good ones, but it was nice just going into the canteen and getting tickets for the shows. I remember once going into a canteen and they said, "There's a big party, we need GIs to go there, big party there. The people want to have

guys, servicemen, there," and what it turned out to be was some kind of an awards dinner, of some kind, in the new television/radio industry there and we were up in the balcony and they said, "Now have a salute to our wounded veterans up in the balcony." [I said] "Wounded? I'm not wounded. What am I doing here? What is this?" That was strange, but, it was good getting in and they whether you know it, right down the street here, Lexington Avenue, is a Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's building which goes back to World War I, and I used to go in there once in a while to get tickets, and so forth, and lo and behold, when I moved in here and took a walk down there; there it is doing business, veterans and current servicemen can go in there, they have rooms and they're relatively inexpensive rates compared to what hotels charged. It's like an old brownstone building that's been converted.

SI: Did you come to the USO in New York? Were there any USO?

GM: There wasn't any, well, there was just this place where you could get tickets for shows. This might have been part of the USO but there was no canteen like where we can go and dance with stars from Broadway, which would have been nice. It would have been fun. But, they had nothing like that. They did have dances for us out at the base, I remember. They brought in girls from different colleges around there and that's how they had some dances like that. That was it.

DG: When I was doing research on Mitchell Air Force Base, I saw they were the 1952 National Drill Competition winners. I was wondering if you saw that or knew about it.

GM: 1952, I was there, that's very good, the only active unit was this 514th Troop Carrier, which was a reserve unit, stationed at Mitchell.

DG: This was under Captain Jorge Montevilla, does that sound familiar?

GM: No, Jorge, I don't know maybe this was. ... What could it have been? Boy, it doesn't ring a bell at all, any special drill unit was it, marching unit, was it . . .

DG: They said it was the 1952 National Drill Competition Champion.

GM: National Drill Competition Champion, boy, that's news to me. This could have been another Mitchell Air Force Base somewhere?

DG: No, it said it's yours.

GM: The one in Long Island, New York? Well, I don't recall anything like that. I recall playing on the softball team, the base softball team. Boy, they had some good players down there, we were up against, from other bases. Some guys who were really champion softball. They would throw that ball into you and you're lucky if you fouled it off. They were terrific players.

SH: How did people in the service and any civilians you talked to at the time feel about the Korean War?

GM: At the time how do we feel about it? Well, I think one of the reasons why I joined the reserve unit was I felt that if I was going to, that I should go, and then I would regret not having gone. If I stayed out, if there was some way of staying out, I don't know how I could have stayed out because the draft was on and even continued into the late 1950s I think. You know, I remember having that feeling, talking to my father about that, when we discussed it and so he encouraged me to do what I was, you know, was right. I felt our going into Korea was the right thing to do. That's what I felt then, and I think that was the right thing to do now, to hold the aggression before it spread. I mean, this coming from knowing all about what happened prior to World War II, what led to it, and how the Nazis and Fascists got away with so much stuff, and here it was, so, now it was Communists and this was a blatant invasion. It wasn't like, you know, we're going in there for the fun of it, or something. So, I think if the UN was going to survive, that was a real test of it at that time. Easy enough for me to say, I never went over there. I never suffered you know in any way as a result of being in the service, but, from a historical standpoint I would still agree that it was the appropriate thing to do. There was no room for negotiation. No time for negotiation, boom! They, the North Koreans invaded and you either did it, or didn't do it.

SI: Did the Cold War and the communist/capitalist struggle weigh in your mind at all?

GM: I wouldn't say it weighed on my mind. I was, you know, we were aware of it certainly; of the ongoing threat and I think my own feeling about it was, "Well, let's," you know, "continue the stand off. Let's continue to negotiate," ... I was pleased that the various openings we had, cultural openings with Russia now. Americans going there and the different musicians and artists, and so forth, and I felt that was a good thing and I felt that war could be avoided as long as we kept talking to them. We didn't necessarily have to go to war. We don't have to approve of their system any more than they approved of ours but going to war was like unthinkable, in terms of the atomic bomb threat really, nuclear, so I think, that was a stand off for forty years. That's what kept us, unfortunately or fortunately, peaceful. Now, of course, it's paid off and they've collapsed and we're the only super power left and we don't know what to do about it, I guess, at times. That's the problem now. That's our current issue, isn't it?

SI: Working in the office at Mitchell Air Force Base, did you have a sense of the mission of the carrier unit, or where things were being sent, where things were needed? Were you focused more towards Europe, supplying Europe, or was it a global supply mission?

GM: There was no real connection with anything overseas that I was aware of. We were just functioning on the base there. We were just, instead of being in reserve, we were on active duty in the same place. Yes, planes would come in occasionally so it was an Air Force base. I remember one time this huge plane, of which only one was built, it was developed during the Second World War but never used. It was a six-engine bomber, three engines on each wing. This was before the jet came into being, so immediately this plane was outmoded but we still had it and it was flying around from base to base and it landed on our base. It was a huge, huge plane, bigger than, what's it, the B-29s, or the planes at the end of the war? This was the next phase.

SI: Was it the B-32?

GM: B-36, I think that is what it was B-36, yes, yes. The last, I guess, it was the last of the piston engine planes that was built, but, only one was built. They just, you know, they stopped, with the coming of the jets, that finished it. I guess, they junked it eventually.

SI: Once you were discharged did you remain in the reserve?

GM: No, I was not active. I finished up my reserve enlistment and then was discharged. I was actually not discharged from active duty. I was released from active duty and then honorably discharged at the end of my reserve term, which was around 1954.

SI: What was your first job?

GM: Well, what I did was to, when I got out of active duty, I worked as I mentioned before. I thought I'd try something different. I worked at CBS for a while in broadcasting and then I decided, well, I didn't like it. I didn't like what the opportunity, I thought it was going to be a glamorous kind of a set-up there. I guess, looking back on it and, yes, it was for a while but it wasn't the kind of work that I wanted to do, what I was suited for. I had done some teaching in the Air Force and that's when I decided, "I'm going to go back and get a masters degree so I can teach," which is what I did. I had the GI Bill and I could do it more easily, than when I was going to Rutgers, with the GI Bill money. So, I was able to get a Masters at Teacher's College, Columbia and then started teaching and went into counseling, director of counseling and guidance, and so forth, in different schools.

DG: I was just curious that at CBS were you just doing like the voice about commercials?

GM: Well, almost. In those days, and maybe it is the same today, anyone who wants to start regardless of their background, you start out in the mailroom. That's what it was in those days and I started out next to guys, who had graduate degrees, who had other professions and so forth, but, they all started in the mailroom and then we went in different directions. From the mailroom at CBS on Madison Avenue I went to [tape paused] ... From CBS headquarters building I bumped into a lot of famous people who were working for CBS at that time.

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

GM: The master control studio above Grand Central Station, I worked there until I decided that it wasn't for me, then I went to graduate school starting in the fall, and I enjoyed that very much at Columbia.

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

Reviewed by Kevin Bing 4/14/2004

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/10/04

Reviewed by Gerald Michelson 7/5/04