

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE MICKETT

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on March 30, 1999 with Mr. George Mickett in Van Dyck Hall of Rutgers University. The interviewers are Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Shaun Illingworth. Mr. Mickett, we would like to begin by thanking you for taking time out of your day to be interviewed by the project. We will begin by asking you to state for the tape where you were born, who you work for, and a little bit about your parents.

Mr. George Mickett: I was born April 26, 1924 in Rahway New Jersey. My mother's name is Helen. My father's name is Charles. In fact, they were married, I believe, in Rahway, New Jersey. Both my mother and father came from what is now Austria. In Austria-Hungary they lived near each other. They did not know each other, but they lived near each other at the time. They moved from Rahway to near Kingston and Little Rocky Hill, which is located in Somerset County, and both of them were co-owners of a convenience store at the same time. They were truck farmers on a small farm.

SH: Could you tell us a little bit about how they immigrated to this country?

GM: That is interesting. They came at the turn of the century. It was probably around 1910. They were about twelve years old. I think not much more than twelve, maybe a little bit more. There were agents that would go into other countries, and sought people to come over here. They did not have to pay for it. I guess the country paid for it. Hence, there were gads of young people coming from various countries on ships. The stipulation was that there had to be someone here, such as an aunt, uncle, or a relative. As long as they could prove that, they came over. The transportation was of no cost to them.

SH: Did your father and mother come separately?

GM: Separately, yes.

SH: Did they come with their parents?

GM: Oh, no.

SH: They came alone?

GM: They came alone. They came over here. They have never again seen their parents. My mother lived with her aunt. My father lived with his sister. But, that ended the communication. There was an occasional writing of letters and so forth, but after that, with the world conflicts, they had lost all kinds of communication with them.

SH: Now, the sister that was already here, on your father's side, how old was she when she left? Do you know?

GM: Probably around, twelve or thirteen, fourteen, at the most. She was quite young.

SH: How long had she been here when your father came?

GM: My father came first. I believe my father came first and then my mother came. They came close to one another. Then, of course, my father moved in with his sister in the Michigan area and my mother stayed in this area. Then, they seemed to have met back in this area, near the Rahway area.

SH: How long had your father's sister been here before he arrived?

GM: I am not sure how long, but she was here.

SH: Now, when they went to Michigan, was she a married woman or did they go together to work?

GM: That I am not sure of. I am not certain about that at all. I know at a later date she did marry and, of course, she had children. She moved from that area to Cleveland, Ohio. She remained there.

SH: Do you know what position, or what labor force your father was part of?

GM: He was an unskilled laborer and he worked for a number of places. He worked for the Ford Motor Company, when Henry Ford got started and I imagine a few other places. He moved around a little, too. He moved from there to Pittsburgh and probably worked at some of the steel mills. Then, he came back to New Jersey and worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad as a watchman. He had a hearing problem. I guess it runs in the family. He had to leave this job because of the noise, and so forth. Then, they purchased a home. I was about four at the time, near Kingston, Little Rocky Hill. They remained there until they both died.

SH: When they came to this country did they enter the school system or did they go immediately to work?

GM: They entered the school system on an evening basis. That is interesting. Neither my mother nor father graduated elementary school at the time. It was not unusual, but it was interesting because my father read the *New York Times* almost on a daily basis until he died. He died about ninety-nine-years-old. He had all of his senses at the time. My mother died at one hundred.

SH: You said your mother had an aunt here that she came to live with. Was she working for the aunt or was she part of the family?

GM: Well, no. The aunt was a sponsor, but what my mother did was a lot of housework and she worked for people. I am not sure where she lived. I think she might have lived with them or she might have lived with the aunt, one of the two. I am not sure. Maybe a mixture of both.

SH: Did any of their other siblings come over, after them, from Austria-Hungary?

GM: She had three brothers: Michael, Charles, and George. My mother had three children: Michael, Charles, and George. One, I am not sure which one, moved to Argentina and stayed there. The other two stayed in the Austria area. She did not see these people either. They lost contact and lost addresses and so forth, so that ended that. My father kept contact with his sister, who was located over here. I think he only had the one sister.

Shaun Illingworth: Your parents, their ethnic background is Austrian?

GM: Hungarian-Austrian, it was one group there.

SI: Did they speak any German at home to you?

GM: Not too much German. I understand my grandfather spoke German. But, they spoke a number of languages. They spoke Hungarian fluently. This is not uncommon because of that one area. They spoke Russian. They had a lot of dialects there. They spoke Polish. They spoke Slovak, which is another one, and, of course, Hungarian. I am not sure about the German. I do not think they were fluent in that area at all.

SI: Did they use these languages around the house when you were young? Did they encourage any of the children to learn these languages?

GM: Not as much as they could have, but they did not discourage it. I think we are the ones that tend to be Americanized, and so forth. But, did they speak? The answer is, whenever they possibly could. They had a neighbor across the street who was fluent in Polish and they spoke almost everyday. Every once in a while, they had Hungarian friends, and they would speak, too. Verbal communication was difficult for my father. He lost his hearing, so he did not speak as often as my mother. She spoke a lot. She was very talkative.

SI: Was this in Kingston?

GM: Little Rocky Hill is sort of north. It is on Route 27 about two or three miles north of Kingston, not too far from Rocky Hill, but still in the Somerset County, Franklin Township.

SI: Was that neighborhood predominately Slovaks or Hungarian?

GM: No, no, no, no, no. No, not at all. In fact, it was more or less Americanized. It was sparse. It was not exactly a crowded situation. I mean, people did not fall over each other, but we had a number of people. We had the German people, the Polish people, but most of it was Americans and there were a few black people there. But, it was a very conservative group. Conservative in terms of, there were no great parties on Saturday nights. No, it was just conservative. It was just quiet. Very quiet.

SH: Were there political activities or anything that interested your parents, or were they just mostly working?

GM: Well, they were never really involved in politics. They did not like Roosevelt, at all, because she had three sons. The three sons were in the service and that put Roosevelt on the back burner. But, that was his fault. But, they were in tuned to what was going on, especially my father. He read and he read a lot. He was a quiet man.

SH: Did they have hobbies or activities?

GM: Oh, no. Their hobbies were what they were doing, their work. These were some of the old stock. When I say old stock, I mean, very conservative. Very, very conservative. Go to the movies? Absolutely not, absolutely not. Go out to have these big meals, and so forth, at the Lobster Shanty? No, way. They stayed home. They did not stop us from doing it, but they did not do it.

SH: Did they maintain any of the ethnic and cultural rituals?

GM: In food, yes. They also brought some of their religion with them. For instance, on Good Friday, at first we did not eat. Later on that was not so. Then, Fridays we observed late, but did eat. Later on, that stopped as well. Now, as far as the meals are concerned, Easter ham, no question about it. We still have some of the foods and so forth, without question, and sauerkraut. Oh, I am sure some of the things they learned overseas, they brought them with them. They certainly brought over ethics. Back in the Depression, we had this little store. I think my father, nobody really had money, he fed half of that little community. He did very, very well by them. Honest as the day is long. There was no question about it. If you overpaid him five cents, he made sure you got it back. And, he was truthful.

SH: Now, how did they discipline three young gentlemen?

GM: That, too, is interesting. Believe it or not, my mother was the disciplinarian. My father never laid a hand on me. And, very, very seldom, the only time I saw him become angry at my brothers is when they fooled around with the shotgun. He was furious, but he never did hit them. They were under the bed and he could not get them. He is a small guy. Whatever he said, we did. We did. When he said, "George you are going to college." George went to college. When he said, "George you are going up to college and you are going to pay your own way." George did that. When he said, "You are going to have to pay a little rent over here, not much, but you're going to have to pay." That is the way we did. I never even questioned. I would not dare.

SH: Who was the oldest?

GM: My brother, Michael, was the oldest. They all went to college. My father never paid a cent, not even for a pencil, not even for a book, but we all went to college. My brother, [Charles], of course, you know, was here. Both of them were the bright ones, not me. Phi Beta Kappa.

SH: That is pretty bright.

GM: Not me, him. He's Phi Beta Kappa.

SH: Now, is he older or younger than you?

GM: Both of them are older.

SH: Can you tell us a little about some of the activities the three of you were involved in growing up in Kingston and in school? What were your interests?

GM: Well, of course, we had to work around the place. That was a given. A given is we had a little farm and we had to work. I probably was the laziest of them all. The least productive, but we still had to work. Things were hard. We used to pick wild blueberries and so on, and so forth. I used to go house-to-house selling them. We had to at the time. We did that in Kingston. We sold them out front, and so forth. As far as activities, we were always sports enthusiasts at the time. I worked when I was in high school. My brothers worked, too. During high school I worked at the golf club. I first worked as a caddy for a year. The pro-golfer at the time made his own clubs, and I worked there cleaning the golf clubs. It was no big deal, real heavy stuff. My brothers and I would play all the sports. When the pond froze we would play hockey. Out in the field near the cow pastures we played football. We were big on golf because we were affiliated and associated with that sport. We were always close. My two brothers, probably were the closest, because they seemed to be of the same age and they were more mature anyway. My brother and I, Charles, are close. We are extremely close.

SH: How many years separate you?

GM: Two.

SH: Two each set?

GM: About two, three, maybe. Then, my oldest brother, he was a Marine. You know those Marines, nothing else existed. He was and then he worked for the government. He did very well. In fact, at one time, everyone knows what the Federal Reserve Board is. Well, Federal Reserve Board takes care of the commercial banks. A larger group is home loan banks. That is a larger group. My brother was financial director of that. I would talk to him and ask him what he did last week. He would say, "Well, I had lunch with the ... emissary from Britain." The job killed him. It really did. My brother, Charles, worked for Borough in New York. Me, I went the human way. I started out teaching, and then went into psychology, to where I am now.

SH: Did you all go to the same high school?

GM: We all went to Princeton High School. We all went to different elementary schools. My two brothers went to Franklin Park. I started there, then went to Kingston, but we all graduated from Princeton High School. The oldest went to Rider. Charles and myself graduated right here at Rutgers, and he is a Rutgers fan.

SH: Did you pick Rutgers because of its proximity?

GM: Well, I would have to say, yes. But, I sort of wanted to go to Rutgers, and Princeton was out of the question. First of all, who can go to Princeton in the first place? It is very expensive as you know. We all wanted to go to Rutgers, but remember, I first started in University College, in the evening, because of work. My father told me I had to pay for it. So, when I went into the service and came back, they accepted me at Rutgers. Then, I went to graduate school. My brothers did not. I went to graduate school and stayed here. Then, I went to NYU and picked up some courses there and came back.

SH: When your father was reading the *New York Times* all these years were there big discussions in your home about what was going on in Europe?

GM: Yes, he spoke a lot about it. He was rather prejudice. If he did not like what the administration was doing he made sure, very quietly, we knew where he stood.

SH: Was there any discussion of Hitler and his rise to power?

GM: Yes, because he came from over there. He saw things a little differently than the rest of us. He did not favor Hitler, or accept what he was doing. But, he knew the turmoil that was happening there, because it was happening all over. Not only in Germany, but what was happening in Austria.

SH: The Great Depression, how did that affect your family? And, the policies FDR had before he took her three sons? What were their feelings?

GM: We struggled. We did not eat steak everyday, that was for sure. We used what we had. We had livestock. We had chickens, and the eggs, and so forth. This made meals for us, and we had the store. That helped a great deal. We stayed together as a family. As far as transportation, we had a bus that ran in front of our house. We did not have any trouble going to New Brunswick, which was a place to shop. School was in the Princeton area, so we managed. It was interesting.

SH: Did your family talk about any of the New Deal programs?

GM: Well, they did and I am not sure whether they saw any benefits to them because they had their own entity, as such. They liked Roosevelt until we all went into the service. I am sure he voted for him a couple times until that happened. I am sure they felt he had no excuse for doing that and you could not talk them out of it. Do not even bother arguing with him because it would be a fruitless discussion. They were ardent in their opinions, very much so. They were still conservative and family oriented.

SH: What religion did they practice?

GM: Well, that is interesting, too. If you ask my mother, she says she is Catholic. If we say, “Mom, when was the last time you have been to church?” She would not answer, but that did not make a difference. My father was the same way.

SH: He was Catholic, too?

GM: Yes. But, I do not remember when he went to church. We went to church more than they did.

SH: Did you do your Confirmation?

GM: Oh, sure. When I held my first Holy Communion they did not go. They just said, “Hey, go ahead.” That was no big deal. They had to take care of the place. It was an accepted fact. Parties, forget it.

SH: Did you ever interact with any of your cousins?

GM: Yes, but very seldom. My brother did more than I. I just never did. I went to visit them one time, but that was it. Very, very seldom. Our family was an entity within itself.

SH: So, you did not have a lot of company staying over?

GM: No, no. We had a small place. I have far more company now than they ever had in their whole life.

SH: What did you first major in when you came to University College?

GM: Economics.

SH: How many years were you here?

GM: Well, I started about the first year. Then, I got hurt. When I went over into the Army, I went from here to basic training, in South Carolina, at Camp Croft. That is interesting, too. I went over there in Camp Croft and it was infantry basic training. At the end of the fourth week, everyone was called in. It must have been the psychologist, he said, “I see by your scores you can go on. Are you interested in officer training?” I said, “What would be my major in officers training?” He said, “Infantry.” I want you to know right now, if there was one thing I did not want, it was infantry, and I said, “If I choose something else?” He said, “Your major is economics. We’ll keep you around here, and you could go into the headquarters.” I said, “Now, let’s see: infantry as a lieutenant, with a short life there, or I could stay here. Put me down for that business. I will take that.” He said, “All right, we will do that.” I said, “Fine.” So, now we have seventeen weeks of basic training and everyone is going home. Delay en route, they go home for two weeks and then they ship overseas. That is what everyone did, and I am left. I am waiting for the orders to come up from headquarters, except the orders came in, “delay en route overseas.” So, now I am in the infantry. Now, I am really into the infantry. I went over there

and we went from there to North Africa and I joined the outfit. Actually, I joined it over in Italy, really. I went into the infantry, armored infantry.

SH: Now, were you drafted, or did you sign up?

GM: I was drafted.

SH: Had your other brothers already gone?

GM: The Marine enlisted. The other one was drafted. Before I was drafted, I went to New York to apply for the Coast Guard. I waited in this line for four hours, then the fellow said, "If you do not have your birth certificate, forget it." Well, I did not know I had to bring my birth certificate, so I forgot it. Then, in the meanwhile, "You know your friendly neighbors are seeking your help," so I was drafted. Then, I went to the First Armored. The First Armored was a tough outfit.

SH: Now, you were just assigned to them?

GM: I was in the infantry. I was a mortar man, sixty millimeters. I did things like shoot guns, and so forth.

SH: No, training here before you were sent there?

GM: In infantry I was trained. Everyone had to go through seventeen weeks. I got into the First Armored and that would be battalion of infantry, battalion of artillery, and battalion of tanks. Dangerous times. That is what we did. I did not like the infantry. It might have been a queen of battle for some of these other people, but not for me. I did not like the infantry. I liked going to the store and getting ice cream and that was nice. Now, I had to go over there and eat C-Rations for one month at a time. I never slept in a bed again, never. When you are in the infantry and you are out there, you wear the same clothes for a month. You do not take a bath, either. You do not take them off. You wear the same clothes, that is it, and you eat C-Rations. So, we went to Monte Cassino, not too far from Sicily. We had a little activity over there. We did not gain too much up there. They were up there looking at us. Then, we made the Anzio beachhead. So, actually it was not so bad with the beachhead. They did not expect us. It was after we got there. I dug a foxhole and it became all water. The water level, it was high and that was a little rough. Then, we went to Rome. From Rome we went near Florence to the Arno River. Just before I got hurt I went to Florence. I was not going to, but the lieutenant arranged it. Here I am, a private. I did not quite make sergeant at the time. I had to wait about another four weeks to get the okay. The lieutenant, a young guy, about my age, a little older I guess about two or three, says, "Hey, George, let's go to Rome. Let's go to Florence." That's pretty good. So, we managed to go to Florence. That wasn't bad. The next day I came back and we had to move out. That is when I saw the pattern of the shells coming in and I became a casualty and that was the end. I spent about a year and a half in the hospital.

SH: Can we go back and ask some more specific questions about how you were sent from Camp Croft to ... ?

GM: Sure. From Camp Croft to Fort Meade, which is over in Maryland. Then, over to a shipping out area which is in Newport News. We went on the ship.

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship you crossed on?

GM: Something like SS *Alexander*, or something like that. It was a new ship. It was a maiden voyage.

SH: Oh, really?

GM: Oh, yes. It was not that bad.

SI: Was it part of the Liberty ships?

GM: No. The Liberty ship was slow. We came back on a hospital ship that was Liberty. It took us twenty-one days. Going over we had this other ship. It went by itself.

SH: Had it been originally intended to be a troop ship?

GM: Yes. It was a brand new one.

SH: What did you have to do on the crossing? If it went alone, it was pretty fast.

GM: Nothing, they just laid there. There was nothing to do. We were playing cards along the side and things of that type, but there was nothing. Go on the deck and not throw stuff in the water, that is all. You know, we could not let the Germans know we were there. Then, when we went over to Casablanca.

SH: That is where you went first?

GM: Beautiful.

SH: Really.

GM: Casablanca was beautiful. They had stores. Everything closes down from twelve to four. They had siesta time. Then, we went over to what was then called Iran and we stayed there. That was not so clean. Then, from there over to the Mediterranean, and then over to Sicily.

SH: Now, when you were in Algiers did you have any leave at all?

GM: No. They discouraged that very definitely. The announcements were, "Do not go alone, never go alone!" The word was, "Watch out. You may not come back alive, for your clothes, if

for nothing else. So, never go alone.” That is an education, too, when you watch these people. They would go from a distance into town to sell their wares. On the way back, they have camels and burros, and the men rode and the women walked.

SH: How were you housed when you were in Casablanca?

GM: They had these small tents. They fit six people, eight people at the most. This is how we stayed. From that point on you laid on the ground. We did not stay there long before they put us on the ship.

SH: Put you back on?

GM: Over to it.

SH: Was it the same ship that took you over?

GM: No, no, different ships. They went to Casablanca, only to Casablanca. From there we went across the continent in cattle cars. Thirty soldiers to a cattle car. You could hardly move and that took about two days.

SH: If you are traveling in the cattle cars like that, do they stop to feed you?

GM: Oh, no, you bring your own. You bring your C-Rations and they stop about every hour or so. It would stop and everybody would step out. About two minutes and you’d better have been back in again. I mean, they just stopped. I often wonder how many people were left behind.

SH: Had your numbers increased from the time you got into Casablanca and you began moving on the trains? Had you gathered more people?

GM: No, no, no. Whatever you got from Casablanca, that was it. It was sort of a nonstop. No, that was it X number of cattle cars, thirty per cattle car, and they were small cattle cars.

SH: Did you know where you were headed?

GM: No, I really did not know.

SH: How long were you in Iran?

GM: Maybe two weeks, at the most. Not that long.

SH: What did they have you doing in that two weeks?

GM: A little training. Very little training. It was just a shipping out center. It is a place of deportation. Very little training. Not much at all.

SH: Did you know where you were headed?

GM: We knew when we had to be over in Italy that area, why else? We were on a British ship at that time. Now, that was an experience, too, because that was about two days. Somebody must have eaten. I did not eat.

SH: Really?

GM: That is absolutely correct. I mean, they must have had very little food and first come first serve. The ship was crowded. What happened is somebody had a can of crackers, or dog biscuits, or whatever it is, and that was what kept us going. Oh, yes. That was quite an experience.

SH: Could you guess how many ships were traveling at the same time you were?

GM: I think it was about the only ship. When I went out there, I did not see any others. It was not a convoy. It was a single ship. Now, maybe later on they picked up convoys. Later on, I am sure they must of picked up some minesweepers or whatever it is. PT boats or whatever the equipment there of. I am sure they had to do something.

SI: On these voyages first across the Atlantic and then to Sicily did you ever have U-boat scares?

GM: Not that I know of. I know on the way back, on the hospital, I was in a cast at the time, that ship was really lit. You could see that for a hundred miles. I mean, a big red cross on it, and so forth. It would have been a perfect target, but slow, slow, mostly slow.

SH: Now, when you came into Sicily were you fighting your way in?

GM: In Sicily?

SH: Yes.

GM: No. We didn't go into Sicily, we went into Naples. Then, in Naples, joined the outfit there. That was at the time there were eleven battalions of the First Armored Division. We wore green coveralls, big deal. So, that made us distinctive. That helped us psychologically. Anyway, then immediately we went over to Monte Cassino and that stands out. That was big. That was way up on a hill and it was all mountainous. I was on post. My first job was to be on the post and they gave me a Thompson submachine gun. I never had a Thompson submachine gun. I guess I did all the other things, but never that.

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GM: Just to know that they have activities up north, a little yonder, and so we were going to go there. Especially when they took us to the LCT boats, with the flap down, we knew what our

destination was going to be. At least I kind of thought so, and it was true. We went there and off we went. Now, we picked up a lot of fighting activity there. Not when we got off, but we waited for a little while. Then, as we encountered battles and such, we had scrimmages. We won some and lost others. I mean, we tried to attack and we would lose a little bit. It was pretty heavy, the shells fell around our position. At my first real encounter, we moved at night, and so forth. It was at that time I was initiated. I was carrying mortars, the shells, which is heavy. About ten shells of about three pounds a piece, plus the other stuff. Oh, my shoulders were in pain. So, we would stop to check how close they were to our position. I was a young kid. I do not know from Adam. I was sheltered. We stopped near an intersection and at that time a shell did come in. A big shell. It did considerable damage. One person said, "Where is my arm?" The other said, "My eye." That was kind of rough. Every time you stopped, you would dig a foxhole.

SH: Oh, really?

GM: Oh, yes. That was par for the course because the shells would come in, and so forth. They had a lot of activity there. Then, we moved on, and then, we remained stationary for a while. Until around June. In June, we went off to Rome. We did not find too much activity in Rome. Here and there we did. We would hit areas, in other words, with a spot of resistance here. They would use us for attacks. Then, they would bring in the foot troops. Then, we might go over to a new area, using tanks, the infantry, and the battalion. This was what we would do all the way through.

SH: You did most of your traveling at night and then dug in for the day?

GM: Mixed, mixed. It all depends. Not necessarily at night. It all depends. It depended on what we're going to do. For instance, of course, night patrols would be at night. And, that is interesting, on patrols that have been on moves, too.

SH: Well, you will have to tell us about it.

GM: Well, the one patrol ... they have two kind of patrols. The combat patrols and the reconnaissance patrols. Combat is to draw the enemy fire and so forth, to see where they are. The reconnaissance patrol is one when you try to get into the lines itself and get as much information as possible. Do not draw any fire. What you do is you have two points, always two points, then maybe you have ten people on patrol, no more, and you have two back-up men. If anything happens, these people go back. They take all the information. I was a back up man on this one. That means I was the last one there. Coming back, I wasn't the last one there. And, when you do this you always avoid the middle of the field. We were always in shadows. If you have a line of trees, you go that way, because you do not want people to know you are there. But, sounds when you carry guns, of course, are unavoidable and if you are impulsive. For instance, I was near a hedge, trees, and any little sound was magnified, and right next to me I am hearing this moving sound in the bushes. I do not know why I did not shoot my gun. Thank goodness, because it was a bird. Patrols go all the time. We always send out patrols. And, holding an outpost in Anzio, an outpost, you're here and the other people are way back there. You are just there. There are only a couple of people in the vicinity. You see the Germans and you just hope

we are not detected. But, you are always ready for it. But, that is outpost. Sometimes, believe it or not, one of the people I had become hysterical. Hysteria is where, in psychology, you begin to lock out things or you develop things, like paralysis and it is real. And, the way you deal with that is using hypnosis. You have got to inform the person that he is not going to go back to the front lines, that you have to deal and, of course, you can work it out. But, hysteria can cause blindness as well as other physical problems.

SH: You did this on patrol? He became ...

GM: We were in a foxhole together, and I hoped he would not say anything. Keep it quiet. Just keep it quiet. The Germans were out there and we knew that. We could hear them talking. In fact, fifty feet away, that close. You just did not say anything.

SI: When you would go on these patrols, did you ever capture any German soldiers?

GM: No. I never was on a combat patrol, I was always on a reconnaissance patrol. That was not our function, because all we wanted to do was to obtain information.

SH: Did you understand any German?

GM: No, not at all. Not a word, not a word.

SI: These patrols that you were on, were they mostly the same people, like your squad? Or were they just the squad that you were on?

GM: Not necessarily. Different. They picked different people to do it.

SH: Were the people in your outfit at that point a real mix of people from the different areas of the United States ?

GM: Yes. Very definitely. For instance, a very good friend of mine was there, one from New England, another from New York, another, who was a graduate of the University of Mississippi. All of them, you know, they were good people. You learned to live with them.

SH: In the group, or your leaders, how much experience did everyone have in combat?

GM: Some had experience from activity in North Africa. They were with the outfit then. Mixed. We had a couple of new people that came in and asked me, "What about the hand grenades?" and I said, "Well, you have got to carry hand grenades. You have them on your belt." They noticed my hand grenades on my belt, you see. You have hand grenades and other ammunition. I will tell you about that, too. A little bit later on. Now, in the infantry if you got a break, everybody sleeps. You rest. So, these two new recruits just joined our squad. I explained to the recruits how to use the grenades. "Well, you have it, and when you want it, you just grab it like this." Just then, the pin flew off. Now, I got four and a half seconds. I can not grab it. As I attempted to grab it, it slips out. Four and a half seconds. Now, this is the miracle. And, where

does it land? Rolled right next to the corporal's head. The only thing I said was, "Grenade!" And, we all jumped over, and I said, "Oh, it went off!" and it did go off. I said, "I know it killed him." I went over there and opened my eyes and there he was, "Gates." He said, "How the hell did you get up here?" He says, "I do not know, I do not know." I really thought I had him, I really thought I had him at that time. Of course, one of the lieutenants yelled, "What happened back there?" "Nothing happened." Nobody ever admits to anything. Come on, go away. You got people fighting over there. Go away, do not ask me. The other thing is when I got hurt. It is cold up there. We are in the mountains. This is the Alps we are talking about. We are just getting to the Alps. And, what you do is always have two people sleeping together, so you used both blankets. One blanket is not warm enough, so you have both. Placing some grass underneath, that helps, too. I had a first gunner. I was the squad leader. Squad leader is the fellow who carries a walkie-talkie, binoculars, and a base plate. A mortar is about this [shows with hands] round, shells go in, and the effective range is six hundred to twelve yards. That is not too far. So, and what the squad leader does is indicate where that mortar has to be placed. He throws that base plate down and that is where he wants the gun set up and he crawls up and takes a look at the target. Well, the squad leader carries that. The first gunner carries the machine and the mortar. But, this was a little guy, so if he carried an extra blanket, I could carry that mortar. It was warmer that way. And, when that shell landed, a piece of shrapnel went right through the diversing mechanism. The mortar saved my life. The shrapnel would have gone through my chest.

SH: Thank heavens for that extra blanket.

GM: I'll tell you, see, I will say this, it taught me a lot. I mean, I began to appreciate things. It really did. I really learned a great deal. I guess this is why I started to go into my field. There is more to life than this. I really wanted to help in some way and I figured this is what I would feel comfortable with. I stayed confined in bed for a long time. You ever see these things with pulleys, and so forth? That is me.

SH: Can you tell us about the accident? When you got hurt?

GM: Yes. I knew when I was going to get hurt. Well, let's put it this way, we were making a daytime attack. It was on the highway. On the left was a deep, deep ravine. I mean, deep. So, you did not want to fall down. On the right was a very steep hill, going up there. Now, this is daytime attack, mountains, and we know that they have a lookout up there, and they did. And, they were firing. So, my first shell landed somewhere over there, not that far, maybe a three hundred yards away. In a few minutes, the second shell landed. What they wanted to do was hit that road. It was getting close. Then, the third shell, and I said, "This fourth shell is going to be close." We are marching now in formation 1,2,3. So, where is it going to land? I do not know. I do not know. It landed and it really landed practically between my legs. That close. Maybe it was good because had it landed further I might have gotten the shrapnel. Pieces went right through my legs. Took the bone and all that, okay. Now, I am bleeding. You learn to holler for medics. Well, the first four medics got hurt coming down, so now you holler for more medics. They came down, of course, to stop the blood and so forth, which they did. I was a little shocked. That part was painful. They put on a tourniquet that stopped the flow of the blood, and

so forth. They did not have any whole blood there. I must have had thirty pints ... [after] that. A total of thirty pints.

SH: Were both legs injured?

GM: Both. Both legs. The left leg was the worse because it cut the sciatic nerve and it cut the bone up and above the ankle as well. Now, when they took me to the field hospital, then they transferred me to another hospital. They did this surgery, and so forth. I am looking at them and my shoes are still on. They did not take my shoes off. So, they must have been busy. Can you imagine MASH? I am thinking, "This could [not] be real. My shoes are still on." But, that was painful.

SH: Were you aware of, when you were hit, of anything else going on around you?

GM: I was aware. I was awake the whole time. I did not pass out, at all.

SH: Did the shells keep coming?

GM: Oh, they were coming. But, I think there was only about one gun. They were angry. Those Germans were angry. They knew how to use that thing. They did it, too. Then, they took me back, put me in the ambulance, and off I went.

SH: So, where did they first take you then?

GM: They took me to a place near Florence, or Bologna. I think it would be not too far from where the Tower of Pisa is, because they said it was around somewhere.

SH: How long were you there?

GM: I was there, although it seems longer, in that hospital, at least three or four months.

SH: Were you aware of the number of injuries that were coming in behind you?

GM: No. I know there were some. There had to be. Why a daytime attack? I do not know. It could very well be because of the terrain. When it gets dark, it gets dark. You won't see a thing. And, I could see where some of these things were falling. People were falling off. They had quite a few, I think, they had quite a few injuries at that time, casualties, you know. I think. But, my brother, [Charles] did come and see me. He was in Italy.

SH: Did he?

GM: Yes. He was in Italy with an Ack-Ack group, that was an antiaircraft gun group, which turned to be an infantry group. That one time he came in, he did. Figures he would.

SH: Now, if you were there for three or four months where did you go then?

GM: I then went on a Liberty ship, a hospital ship, and then from there, to Charleston, South Carolina. From there they took me to a general hospital in Stanton, Virginia. That was supposed to be an orthopedic. Found out that they were not going to do too much with me there. I had a sciatic limp and severance so they sent me down to Louisville, Kentucky. But, obviously, they did not rejuvenate that nerve. I stayed there for, I do not know, I guess, for almost nine more, almost a year, little less. Then, I went over to a rehabilitation hospital in Long Island, Camp Upton. Cold out there, in the wintertime.

SH: Now, were you sent there because of the facilities or because it was closer to home?

GM: Facilities. They were not concerned about close to home. Facilities. It was a rehabilitation where they did a lot of physical therapy and that kind of thing. It was a nice place. It was cold and they said, "We cannot do anything more for you. You go home." That was it.

SH: When you were in Italy, what did you think of the care you received now that you look back on it?

GM: Well, in the hospital you mean?

SH: Yes.

GM: Or the service?

SH: Well, I ...

GM: In the infantry, the food is horrible. You only had C-Rations and they are terrible. They are absolutely horrible. You know, the same thing. You just could not eat it. And, remember, that is all we had, and coffee. We would use the same spoon, wipe it off. No, body got sick. The food in the hospital was not too good. I could not understand it. It just seemed to me it could have been better. The food in the States was much better. Much better. It could have been much better over there, too, and why I do not know. Because I think that people needed that, but they did not. They were a little short on entertainment. That would have helped a great deal, too, because they had a lot of sick people there.

SH: Sure.

GM: Most of them orthopedic. The food was not the greatest in the world. It was much better in the States, much better.

SH: What kind of activities did they have for you while you were in Italy in the hospital there?

GM: None.

SH: None?

GM: Absolutely none, because I could not move. I was bedridden. I was in traction.

SH: Do you remember any of your bed mates?

GM: Oh, I would talk to them. I do not know their names, but I would talk to them, and they were funny. They were a pretty good group. Some of them got hooked on drugs. They had some drugs to cut down the pain, that was a lot of pain. And, of course, the things that they would say, especially if a new aide came in, "You dropped my pills. Where are they?" They were nice people. I have no complaints. No, complaints about their personalities at all.

SH: And, the hospital, as far as the doctors and the surgeons that were there?

GM: I thought they were very good, considering all things. I am sure a lot of them did not have that kind of experience and were learning, but I thought they did well. I mean, I got all these broken bones and experimentations. Really, I bet they learned a lot. They were good. I had no problems.

SH: Shaun has some questions about the actual battle.

SI: Yes, just to go back a bit to your first engagement at Monte Cassino. I was wondering if you were there at the time of the bombing of the abbey?

GM: No, that came later. We were in the Anzio area at that time. I know it was, "should we, or shouldn't we," and so forth. And, later on they did, but I just hate to see that. That beautiful structure go, but they had to. They say there were a lot of Germans that came out of there. And, we did not have that much over there, very little activity over there. Most of our activity was certainly in the Anzio area.

SI: Talking about Anzio, since you are a psychologist, I read that the Germans used the Anzio beachhead for a lot of propaganda purposes, like shooting leaflets and making broadcasts in the area. Did you ever experience or see those?

GM: No, because if they had leaflets we did not know about them. We never got them. As far as the radio was concerned, we did not have those either. We did not have radios. We had nothing. No, radios or any of that stuff, so I do not know. In fact, when we would go in an area the people would go out, and they would evacuate. So, we did not have to see any people either. Very little. In Naples we did, but other than that we did not see that many people. Very, very few.

SH: Were there any interactions between you and the Italians?

GM: In Naples. In Naples, a little bit but that was it. Of course, when we went to Rome, surely, there were people. A lot of people there. We did not interact well with those, we just did not interact. That's all.

SI: Right.

GM: We saw what we had to see. We went together, then we got back on a truck, and we went home.

SI: What were your experiences in liberating Rome? Was the fighting mostly done by the time you got there?

GM: Oh, while we were there, then, of course, they left. As far as activities are concerned there were none. No party time, it was nothing like that. Well, I guess they did buy us some vino. There was no recreational stuff. None of that.

SI: It was just in and out for you? You went there for a short time and then left?

GM: Yes, we stayed, we were there for maybe a day or so and then we had to move out and continue with our assault.

SI: Going back to the Anzio beachhead, I guess a lot of your initial reactions. When you were in danger was it from artillery more than infantry? Actual German fire?

GM: Artillery, yes. Although, in Anzio we did have a lot of combat, a lot of combat there. More so there, than at any other time. I would say so because they were trying to hold off, too. That was a little rough. But, we always had artillery. But, we had a lot more that we gave them. The skies were constantly filled. It was amazing how many shells that were out there. Constant, like zoom, zoom, zoom. It was constantly all night. Must have had a million shells up there.

SH: Were you ever able to sleep through any of this or were you just awake?

GM: Oh, yes. You could sleep. Oh, sleeping was not a problem except for when we had to do something or we had to be on the alert. Then, sometimes it was pretty hard to stay awake. In sleeping, the biggest problem was to stay awake if you're on post. That is on guard duty. That was the biggest problem.

SI: How were you able to cope with the problems of the terrain, like mud, and the water like you mentioned before?

GM: Well, the water and the mud made it uncomfortable. You manage to cope. You manage to cope. In the wintertime, it was cold. Try to gather whatever you could, like grass. Grass is pretty good. Our trying to do this and sleep. It was not a great problem. When it rains you got wet. Really wet. We held our position at Anzio. We stayed and we did not do much. We stayed for, at least, about a month. Yes, we did not move. And, at that time we had a forest and we dug foxholes for two and we did cover them. We tried to get some trees. Then, put dirt on top, because if they dropped personnel bombs, that is like little hand grenades, then we were safe

from that. Then, when we made our move to get out. We had half tracks that would take us to a certain extent, and then we would walk.

SI: How did all the waiting for an entire month, how did that affect the morale in your squad?

GM: We had no problem waiting because we knew we were not doing anything. If they wanted us to wait another month, we would have waited another month. But, that was no problem. What we did was we went on patrol from there. There was very little activity. Once they had a little softball game but that was only once or twice and that was at the end of it, but there was no activity. Not much. You could sit and write letters and whatever you want.

SH: Did you have mail service?

GM: Oh, mail service, yes we had it. It was not a daily mail service. When the mail came in, it was fine. We had the V-mail, the V-letters at the time. We had other letters but V-letters, I guess, were easier. You could, you know...

SH: Now, where was your older brother, the Marine at this point?

GM: Over in Bougainville, whatever it is, over there in the Pacific fighting the Japanese.

SH: He had already started there?

GM: Yes, he was there. He was a Marine. No, question about it. You know these Marines, they think there is no other. You have seen them.

SH: Were you able to exchange mail with your brothers while you were there or was most of your mail coming from the States?

GM: The States. No. No, way of knowing where my brother would be. Just home. They would send back.

SH: So, your mom was a faithful letter writer?

GM: They never wrote that much. I know it was me going to them more than them writing to me. I would try to write to friends and that kind of thing. You know, "it is a nice day," and that kind of thing. You could not say too much. They had to read them.

SH: So, whom did you get most of your mail from?

GM: Various friends that I had. Just school people. People I had met, and so forth, male and female.

SI: You were the only one of your brothers to be wounded?

GM: That is right.

SI: That must have really affected your parents, especially since they did not want to send any of their boys off to war.

GM: They were not happy about it when I came in with crutches, and so forth. They wanted to send me back and say, "Why are you home?" They did. My mother asked, "Why you? You are not ready to come home. You cannot walk well. They've got to fix you up." This is what they had said. As far as my brothers, they were not wounded. I was the only one that was really wounded. Did I answer both parts of your question? What was the other question?

SI: Just how did your mother feel?

GM: Well, I was the youngest.

SI: So, you were the baby.

GM: I am the baby, you see, and they did everything they could to bring me home.

SI: Really. What did they do?

GM: Wrote to the Senator, who obviously wrote to the chaplain, who obviously wrote to the captain of the company and they brought me in. "What is this? You know we got a request to send you home?" I said, "Oh?" They said, "We are not going to do it."

SH: So, where did this come to be? Where were you stationed?

GM: Anzio.

SH: You were still ...

GM: I was still in Anzio, yes. I probably should have said, "Okay, I will go." That is it. They gave it a try. They said, "Hey! We've got three sons in combat. That is not fair."

SH: The chaplains in the area, in Italy, did you know any of them? Did you attend any of the services?

GM: The religious services?

SH: Yes.

GM: Yes, I did. At that time I went to Mass. They had Mass there. Later on, I changed my religion to Lutheran, but I went there. Yes. Oh, listen, everybody prayed. Oh, absolutely. We all said the same thing, you know, "Lord if I get out of this thing, I am going to go to church everyday." We never did. Everyone of us had said that. "I will lead a good life." We all said

that and we kind of forgot what we said, but we would repeat that on a number of occasions. Oh, sure. At different times.

SH: As a kid from a small town in New Jersey, and only a couple months of college under your belt, when you got to Rome and different places like that, were you impressed?

GM: Yes. Oh, sure. Oh, I loved it and especially Florence. I would have loved to have seen more. I did not see everything. We just did not have the time. But, we saw the buildings, and so forth, and, of course, in Rome. There is only one Rome, the Coliseum, the Vatican area, and that is so important. You do not forget those things, but I would have liked to have seen more of Florence. That would have been nice. My brother, to this day, is trying to convince me. He says, "Why don't we go back?" He is saying that, "Why don't we go back and we can go there and take a real good look at Italy as it is now?" He has a point, a very good point.

SH: Do you remember the first ruins that you saw?

GM: The Coliseum.

SH: You saw that. Was it in daylight?

GM: Yes. That was very good. I would imagine, well, that is our first ruin, but Saint Peter's was probably the first that I had seen. Rome is a very nice place. I did not see it as it is today, that is for sure. I probably would like to see it today.

SH: Did anyone in your group try to see the Pope, or anything when you were there?

GM: Not to my knowledge. No, I do not think it would be that easy to see the Pope, but that would have been nice. We came in. While we were there, we really could not move. We had to stay. We were confined.

SH: What time of year were you there?

GM: About summer. Summer. Because I got hurt in September so it must have been about July or August. July, maybe, maybe.

SH: Should have been pretty steamy in Rome by then?

GM: It was not that bad. It really wasn't that bad. But, it was interesting. It would be nice. People should see it. I still would have liked to see Florence. If I had a preference, Florence.

SH: I recommend it.

GM: You've seen it. Yes, really. Lucky. See, I did not see everything. You could not get in the buildings.

SH: Oh, I'm sure of that.

GM: Yes, because they would be closed. But, it would have been nice. It would have been nice.

SH: Did you see any of the townspeople in any of these places? What did you feel their reaction was to you coming?

GM: They avoided us more than anything else. Maybe a little inquisitive, but then when they saw us, they ran. No, I kind of think they avoided us.

SH: Were there scores of children begging from the soldiers?

GM: Always. If there were children, always, they made sure they did that. Count on it. But, we didn't see, to be honest with you, many people. In Rome, of course, we did, outside of Rome, of course, we did. Some of those places in Italy were very interesting, old. Well, you were there. How can they live in the side of the hills? Must be ancient, they were not complaining.

SH: I can not imagine being able to get armored tanks and all this stuff up these hills. That is the part that makes it ...

GM: Yes, it was a little difficult. Some of them had to take a different kind of route. And, our tanks were not nearly as effective. They did not compare to those of German tanks.

SH: No?

GM: Later on, they were bigger. But, all of ours were like pea shooters compared to those. I mean, some of those things were massive. Like a house, like a big building. Oh, tremendous. Tremendous. The most effective gun the Germans had was the .88. They used it for everything. They used them as Ack-Ack anti-aircraft guns. They used it for artillery. They used it for tanks, and so forth. I think ours, perhaps the .155 was the best.

SI: Were you ever bombarded or hear about the Anzio express?

GM: Oh, yeah, I heard it every night. Every night it would go over. We would hear a whistling in the air. Oh, yes.

SH: Was it nicknamed that when you were there and you were already ...

GM: That had to be a big thing. Maybe about sixteen-inch shell. I don't know. It was big. I don't know whether it did any great damage or not. I just don't know. We sent up a lot of them. We sent up a lot of artillery. We also had a lot of Piper Cubs up in the air.

SH: I'm going to ask you about the air cover.

GM: We had Piper Cubs. They were lookouts for our artillery. When we made our move from Anzio to the artillery, they came in.

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

SH: This continues an interview with Mr. George Mickett on March 30, 1999 at Rutgers University. This is Side One of Tape Two.

SH: You were telling us about your experiences in Anzio and air support ...

GM: As I said, we had a lot of airplanes up there and you could see droves of heavy bombers going overhead. Most of the fire-fights we had were probably the Spitfires at the time, and the B-40s and then the B-50s, and so forth, then fighter planes, and so forth. They would have hidden cameras, and so forth. But, at this time you could see the Germans did not have the equipment. We did and we outnumbered them so much and just in every area. We were really going to get it. We accurately bombed and destroyed. And, what did they have left? They would have some shells and they would send them out. And, they would have some planes but [not] nearly what we had. But, like I said, we always had a lot of fighters come through. Directly with the artillery. Once in a while we would get hit. It was interesting.

SI: You mentioned before that the RAF was flying air cover for you, the Spitfires. Did you ...

GM: That was ours, but we used them. It was our pilots.

SI: Oh.

GM: But, it was Spitfires. They used a lot of Spitfires over there, for a while. Then, we used, of course, our own. We had B-40s, B-50s, and some P-38s, but not that many. But, there were several out there. And, as I said, they went out in droves of bombers, B-24s and B-26s and that kind of thing.

SI: But, did you have any interaction with the British troops that were also in Anzio?

GM: Oh, yes. Sure did. We never thought the British were like us. They had a different philosophy. We were more aggressive. They were more conservative. They would question whether we should encounter, say, the Germans that were getting away. We would then encounter them because we should encounter them. But, that was the difference in philosophy. Next to us, we had the Rangers in Anzio. They are a fighting group. So, were we at the time. But, they are a good group of men. I'll tell you what I thought was an excellent group and they were attached to the Third Division, the Japanese-Americans. Absolutely fantastic. Fantastic. On a scale, you had to give them a ten. Absolutely fantastic. They were good. They were attached to the Third Division. They were very good.

SH: Did you have any interactions with them at all?

GM: No, they were next to us. I saw them. We did not talk to them. But, they were there and a most efficient group. Most efficient. They were good.

SH: Did you see any British “exotic forces” as they say?

GM: There are times when we would relieve some. As I said, they did not take the precautions that we did. They, you know, would light a cigarette. That is a mortal sin, in combat, to light anything in the dark. Unless you were covered as if you’re under 19,000 blankets. Not them. They lit up. And, we, as a rule, we were respectful to our officers. If you’re a lieutenant, I’d address you as, “Sir.” I think their training was a little bit different.

SH: Would you like to explain?

GM: They used a four letter word and they were quick to say that. Oh, yeah. But, I’ll tell you, at four o’clock that convoy that passed us would stop. As sure as God made green apples, out would come the Bunsen burner and we had tea. At four o’clock they had tea. I mean, if there is a major war going on they’d say, “Hey, hold off. We are drinking tea.” That convoy would stop. Dead stop. And, out would come the Bunsen burner and we have our tea. You know, it’s not too bad. If you stop to think, maybe that is a point.

SH: Did you swap stories with any of them at all?

GM: Well, yes, at the bars, especially in North Africa. Well, you know, they were loyal to their queen and king and whenever they would say, “God bless the king! God bless the king!” We did not say that. We would have a few choice words in silence, but it did not sound like, “God bless the king!” or “God bless the queen!” And, so, their retaliation was using those same words for Roosevelt. Now, I want you to know that we have been saying this about Roosevelt for a long time. And, that was the supposed to shock us. It was humorous. They had respect for that king. I remember we drank but so did they.

SH: What part of the empire were they from, for the most part?

GM: I would imagine probably from Wales. This is the British Isles. I am not sure. This is the southern part of Ireland. I don’t think so. They would say that. They might, but I don’t know. But, they were nice. We would swap cigarettes and we would do this. Oh, yeah. And, it’s nice if you get to talk to them. I mean, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it because they can give opinions and experiences. They loved our cigarettes. Theirs were not so good, but they loved our cigarettes, really. To exchange a pack of cigarettes with them you could really get on their good side. They were very good. That’s all right. They are all right.

SI: Did you get to interact with any of the other services like the free French or Polish units?

GM: The only time we would see the French ... Well, Morocco had a lot of French at the time. I think there were more Arabs than anything else, but there were some French. Seems like everyone had our jeeps over there. Just seems to be that way. They were not good drivers either.

Bang into everything. Just stopped dead. We did not intermingle. I did not intermingle. Maybe other people did with them. The Germans obviously had built their group by force, not volunteer. I think they had a lot of so-called Russians and they had that oriental look. They were not loyal fighters for the Germans.

SI: No?

GM: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. We captured some of those. Very little interaction. They looked like Viet Cong.

SH: Did you take a lot of POWs and what did you do with them?

GM: We took a lot. We sent them over to intelligence. And, that is all. That is up to them. We were good to them. Our outfit was very good. No, one called for aggression. Although I am surprised that they were not, because a lot of them were bitter. Later on, they could take it out, but they did not. They did not. They were very good. They did not. I never saw any of them shot deliberately, you know, out of anger, except maybe to protect themselves and what they had to do in the war. As far as a prisoner, that was something else altogether.

SH: At the time did they surrender willingly?

GM: Willingly. Yes. They put up their guns, and so forth. Then, we took them back and that is up to the intelligence people to do whatever.

SH: Did they look like regular soldiers or were they the very young? I mean, you said there were some you thought were Vietcong?

GM: No, most of those that we captured, that Russia group, they were not that young. I don't know how old they were. They looked to be in their twenties. I don't even know, a little older. I could not understand them at all. But, they had an oriental touch to them. So, I don't know whether they were the Ukrainians. They could be different. I have no idea. I think these were captured by the Germans when they went over to Russia. Probably. Possibly.

SI: Was there ever a fear in your mind of being captured, and becoming a POW of the Germans?

GM: Yes. One time we were cut off and I kind of felt, we could have been. We could have been, but under the circumstances if they were more powerful at that point, I think I would have been really more concerned. But, our tanks came out and we were all right. It could have been worse at Anzio.

SI: This wasn't Anzio?

GM: No. This was near Rome. It could have been worse at Anzio. They were pretty tough there.

SH: What were you instructed to do if you had become a prisoner of war?

GM: I don't think we were instructed to do anything, well, maybe, in basic training. I guess name, serial number and that is about it and that is all you were supposed to do. I guess that is what we were supposed to do.

SI: The head of your division was General Harley. Did you ever get a sense for what the leadership was thinking or did you ever get to see any of them?

GM: Once I saw the major.

SI: Do you remember who he was?

GM: Well, yes, he was looking over. It was interesting. He was in charge of the whole unit of ours. Our battalion and so forth and this is after Rome. It was interesting because that same major, when I was going from Charleston to Virginia, he came in from there. I just saw him several months back. About August or whatever it is and that was it, but he was there. Why he was back I really don't know. I know he wasn't hurt because he looked healthy to me. I guess that's what they do. The majors I really don't know. They sent him back and gave him good food.

SH: Was there any discussion especially like that at Anzio and outside of Rome where the men discussed what they thought of their leadership?

GM: No, they didn't. You are going to hear a certain amount of negativism, that is par for the course. Mark Clark was the Fifth Army commander. What did we think ... well, I don't think we really knew. So, we didn't discuss that. They thought he was a pretty good guy. I understand now he wasn't all that great but what did we know? We live with our environment right there and that was it. That was all we knew. We didn't know anything else. We didn't even know who really the commander was. I mean, other than our company commander but other than that we wouldn't know. Did we care? I don't think so. It would have very little interest to us. I guess we were concerned about our own immediate being in that environment. That's all.

SH: Did you feel confident in the people that were in command?

GM: I think so. I think so. The only time we had. We did. We had good leadership. The only time where I ... it wasn't us. It was another group. We were up beyond Rome at the time and we were dug in and in a deep ravine. It was the daytime and you know we weren't going to do anything at this point. Then, we had another group coming back. Where did they come from? I don't know. But, we had a group coming from the back and they were going to do some attacking and I remember the lieutenant said, "Over the top. Let's go." Well, that certainly was the wrong thing to do. It really was the wrong thing. I mean, they got hurt on that one. Why would they ever do that? I don't know. That would be poor leadership. I mean, that's not even thinking. But, we didn't have that. I don't think anyone ever questioned the leadership. I'm sure they did, but not in a most adamant manner such as this. You know, any time you had to go up

there you're going to hear a few choice words about anything, but, no. No. I really didn't think so. I had no complaints. I had no complaints about that. Even when we had some injuries, I guess this is what we knew we had to do and that's it. Did we know when the war was going to be over? No. Not at all.

SH: When did you first hear of the D-Day invasion?

GM: When I was in Italy and, obviously, it was successful. They had a lot of southern France. Before that, they attacked that southern part of France and then they came up there. But, the only information that we could possibly get, since we had no radio, was the newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*. You know that is not exactly the *New York Times*. But, it was good. We enjoyed it. The jokes, and so forth. You had to have a little humor.

SH: When you were in Anzio did you ever feel like it wasn't ever going to go forward? Like it wasn't ever going to break through?

GM: Oh, we knew it was going to break.

SH: You knew?

GM: Oh, absolutely. We knew it was just a matter of time. There was no question about it. We knew we were going to break through that line. We knew it. It was just a matter of time. We just waited for it. It had to happen. We knew we weren't going to stay there. That's for sure. We were surprised we didn't hit more resistance when we broke through.

SH: Oh.

GM: That's right. The resistance was before we broke through. Very little resistance. We had some resistance but you would expect some resistance. But, not that much. Shells would come in. They came in pretty close. We know we were on our own, too. You could imagine how powerful our weapons sometimes are. Planes got a little off on their calculations. ... Their bombs landed, too close.

SI: Were there and friendly fire casualties?

GM: Once in a while. I guess better off up there that they can't see. They think our artillery would not go off far enough, they would hit us but not that often, only on occasion. They were, "Get on the radio." ... They had rough vocabulary.

SH: I see you're not using that today.

GM: No. No.

SH: How long did it take you to lose that vocabulary once you got home?

GM: I don't think I ever used it. We never used it at home. Never! Just never. Just wouldn't think of it. Just wouldn't think of it. Boy, were we trained!

SH: When you were in the military hospital here in Long Island, when did you decide you were going back to Rutgers and when did you start thinking of teaching?

GM: There was never a question that I was not going back. I knew I was going back. ... There was never a question.

SH: So, from the time you left you knew?

GM: There was never a doubt.

SH: In the military you just were waiting to come back?

GM: As soon as I got out that summer, I went to summer school. There was never a question. I'll tell you I had a great VA representative and that was my middle man. He was my contact. He was super, a real super person and with his help I'm sure he got me into school early. I was most thankful for him.

SH: In the VA hospitals when you were recovering from your orthopedic wounds was there counseling for the emotional aspect of it all?

GM: There was a counselor, I think. I'm not even sure they had one. It wouldn't hurt to have one. I guess what they did is they sent the clergy. I'm not sure. I don't think they had one.

SH: Did you have a regular visit from clergy or chaplains at that point?

GM: No. No. I know there was one there. One came around and said, "Why don't you sing in the choir?" I went over to the choir and they were too good for me. I mean, you really had to know how to sing. First of all, these people had been in the choir for some time. They knew all that and Latin and everything else. Come on, I mean, I'm just looking. I never went back again. I think the director ignored me and rightly so because I was no help to them. I would have ignored myself, too, and I couldn't wait to get out of there.

SH: When did you come back to Rutgers?

GM: Well, I got out in April and that summer I started. Went to summer school and took a couple of courses, then I went on and finished up.

SH: Were you in rehabilitation with the VA and going to school at the same time or were you just studying?

GM: There wasn't much rehabilitation to do. There wasn't much. No. I had my foot straightened out and that was it.

SH: Mostly just surgeries rather than therapy?

GM: That was it. No, rehabilitation. I thought Rutgers was pretty good. It was good, but at the time most of the class members were asleep.

SH: You came back as Rutgers College?

GM: Right. I think, I have to stop and think. Yes, I guess I did come back as Rutgers College. When I first started off, I was late and I couldn't get that I was Rutgers College. I remember a football player, that was also at Rutgers College, he was funny. He says, "I got to pass this course."

SH: Did you help him?

GM: Oh, yes.

SH: Do you remember his name?

GM: I'm trying to think of his name. We had a couple of people that we helped through. You know, you have to help them a little bit. Not much. Listen, you know when we help them, we're only doing five percent. The rest they have to do on their own. You can't do everything for them.

SH: Now, when you came back did you live in New Brunswick or were you still coming from Kingston?

GM: When I came back, I lived at home, and I stayed at home. We went to the hospital, to have my foot straightened out, I met the nurse. That's the one I married. I was still going to school. She lived at University Heights.

SH: We wanted to ask you how you met your wife. So, now you can tell us.

GM: She was the nurse and a very nice person and that's it. And, that was it.

SH: Can you tell us your wife's name and where she is from?

GM: Yes, her name is Freda and she was from the Trenton area and she was a nurse, an RN. Then, in '47, well, I was a junior and we got married. Financially it was a tough struggle and we lived at University Heights with all the other married students.

SH: What had she done during the war?

GM: She was in the nursing program that was sponsored by the government, Cadet Nurse Corps. And so, she went through Saint Francis Hospital and finished her RN. But, it's interesting, that

little community. There was a great community over there at University Heights. Thank goodness. It was nice.

SI: You had attended the university before the war. Now, you were attending it after. What changes did you see, especially after the war years, as the classes came in and started to grow?

GM: Well, of course, I enjoyed it a lot more after. There was no doubt. Since most of the people there were veterans, you kind of felt at home. I mean, you had common interests. Bob Ochs, Ted Steer and these are just some of the people. The whole football team, they were veterans.

SH: Really?

GM: Yes, the whole thing. Yes they're all, oh, sure.

SH: I was going to ask what sense of community did you feel at Rutgers the second time?

GM: It was just the group. We would chat with our neighbors. It was okay.

SH: Were you able to just go to school or did you have to still work?

GM: There were times when I took on a part-time job, but I worked down at a clothing store here in town. It worked out well. Everything worked out well.

SH: Did you meet any other Rutgers men when you were over in Rome?

GM: No, no. Not a soul. I met other people from various other universities, because these people were drafted and they were older.

SH: So, when you came back to Rutgers College your major was?

GM: Economics.

SH: So, you stayed with it?

GM: Just a short time. Then, I decided that it was not what I want to be. Now, I had to think about, I had to get something. I wanted to go further, a Master's and I needed to get a job. So, how was I going to get a job? Well, I'm going to be a teacher. So, I went into education. Got my certification in education and I said, "Well, now that I got that, I'm taking as many psychology courses as I possibly can." So, that's about it.

SH: Where did you first teach?

GM: Metuchen.

SH: And, what grades were you teaching?

GM: First year I taught was in 7th grade, for one year, then I moved over to the high school. I was appointed the guidance director. I took courses and I moved out to make this progression here and I was promoted to guidance director and I stayed at that job for a while. This was until I became certified in psychology and then I continued until I was certified for the state in private practice. In steps.

SH: How long did you teach at the Metuchen school?

GM: Eight years. I taught maybe two. The rest was strictly guidance. Then, I went into psychology. I was the school psychologist there. Then, from there I went over to Brick and I was the director of psychological services there. Then, from there, I went to Manasquan and I became director of student personnel over there. Then, I decided, I had a hip replacement, and I said, "Well, should I go back?" and I said, "No, you're not going back. I'm going to go private."

SH: Did your wife work during the time you were at Rutgers?

GM: She was a nurse at what was then, Middlesex and is now Robert Wood Johnson. She only worked part-time. Maybe three days out of the week. That was it.

SH: Do you have children?

GM: Yes.

SH: Was she born at University Heights? He or she, I should ask?

GM: She was born in Edison, near Stelton. She was born in Saint Peter's. I have three grandchildren.

SH: Do they live close by?

GM: Two of them live in Las Vegas. One lives with his father. He and his mother got divorced in North Jersey. He's going to school there. He just graduated high school. He is going to school there. He spent one year with me. I think he likes that. I kind of liked it, too. He's good. He's a nice kid. He could stay there all he wants. But, he goes up there and it's close to stay with his father. I understand. I don't know what he is going to do. He'll be all right.

SH: Did your daughter go to school at Rutgers?

GM: No. Let's see, she started at Caldwell and then she went to Immaculata and then she got married. She didn't have that much to go if she wanted her degree.

SH: What would her degree be in?

GM: I don't know, right now. I really don't know. Probably it would be in some business area, dealing with personnel and organization. Something like that. I would think so.

SH: When you came back did you stay involved in any of the service organizations like the American Legion?

GM: Well, I joined the American Legion but I never went to a meeting. One meeting, that was the one I got talked into joining the Purple Heart Association. And, so I belonged to that, so I occasionally go to a meeting there, if I can. That's an interesting organization. They knew the turnout was not that large. How long is that Purple Heart going to last them? They got to get another war, or something, to get it going.

SH: Have you ever been involved in any type of politics or run for an office or anything like that?

GM: No, I don't know whether I would want to. My brother, yes. He ran for committee or counsel or whatever. He was also on the Board of Education. Would I? I don't know. No. I'll have a lot to say but I don't think so. I'm not sure.

SH: When you came back to Rutgers, did you get involved in any organizations here around campus?

GM: No, I didn't, because I was married and I did have to work and I'm sort of sorry about that. I really am because you really should. You really should. If I were to do it again, I would.

SH: Well, if you were tutoring the football players, did you go to the football games on Saturdays?

GM: Always. Always. Always went to a football game. Football, basketball, all the sports, all the sports. Yes, I'm still into the sports. Going to a football game is so thrilling. Even the tailgate parties. There is something about it. It gets into your system. It's exciting. To me, it's exciting. I took my grandson there. When we have the statue, you know, that sculpture, that's our class, I just want you to know that.

SH: Okay.

GM: That's about a hundred ten thousand. And, we gave our talks, and so forth. We also had a buffet with the President and there we saw the ballgame from the university box. I took my grandson there. It was really a thrill for him.

SH: Oh, I bet.

GM: It was nice. It was nice. I truly think he would like to be some kind of an environmentalist of some sort, but he may want to go into human relations. He wrote that down on his applications. He said, "social work." They asked, "why?" He said, "because my grandfather is."

SH: Now, do you interact with your brother Charles' family here? Are they a close family?

GM: Yes. We don't have too many. He has a son and a daughter. I know, because he has grandchildren and they're out in Oklahoma and Kansas. And so, I do see them, in fact, I see them usually on a weekly basis. We play cards. We talk a lot. We go to shows, and so forth. We're close to Atlantic City and I'll say to them, "You know, I can get some tickets here and we can go." I have a sister-in-law and brother-in-law, who sometimes get these comps, and so forth. I always say, "If you want to go, we can go." And, he is always saying, "Yes," so, we go.

SH: Shaun, do you have any other questions?

SI: I was just wondering you taught and were the guidance director in the fifties, right?

GM: Yes.

SI: That was a massive period of change in education.

GM: You know we are still changing, now, too. Yes. I do a lot of work in child study. Exceptional children, and so forth, and that has had dramatic change. That is dramatic, a lot of red tape. Unbelievable. With politics, it's just so exacting. Everything is so to the T, to the dates when letters should go. There are a lot of changes there. Education today is better. I really think the education out around in suburbia is a little different and I think most of us would agree to that. But, there are changes. The State has mandated a lot of things, in other words, standards and so forth and they're doing it for the students. The teachers I see are better. I really do. I think there is more pressure. Now, I can speak for the suburbia area. Now, whether the urban area [is] you would have to ask someone else to give a more realistic opinion. But, I think the teachers are better qualified today.

SH: Now, the practice you have now, what is your focus?

GM: What I like best, of course, is the psychotherapy. I have an interesting job. I'm a consultant psychologist for the school systems, as well. My duties are really varied. I do a lot of evaluations. Anywhere from ARC or education. A lot of education. I do police evaluations, as well. I've taught, in the 7th grade, high school, and Trenton State. I taught there. I enjoy teaching. I enjoy teaching, very much. I enjoy my work a great deal. As far as counseling is concerned, the easiest counseling is with adults. The most difficult is with adolescents. Do I have success with adolescents? Does anybody? Nobody has 100% success. I would say so. I'm kind of an expert in adolescence.

SI: Really?

GM: Yes. I don't want to say it that way. And, in the schools where I go, we have a different kind of arrangement. I'm part of a child study team and I do the evaluations. There's no questions about it. It's part of it, but I do counseling and in one of the schools, I spent three days

and I'll do counseling. Now, who do I counsel? It varies on a weekly basis, only the most difficult. And, on a weekly basis this will take me at least a year. Those are the people that I want and those are the people they give me. So, I set it up on an hourly basis, usually about forty minutes, and this is what I do. This is what I do and that's the way counseling should be, because we get some difficult people, I mean, acting out kids.

SH: Do you have any thoughts on how you came to be in this profession when you look back at the economics major at the University College in '41?

GM: Well, I really made up my mind when I was in the Army. I knew I was going in that direction.

SH: Did you?

GM: Yes. I knew at that time and there was steps I was going to take. I had it pretty well, but I also had that love for economics, and because of that, I started in that direction. I was going to continue and because I still enjoyed it. I still enjoyed it. I still like to read the business section. But, I said, "No." Most of my friends would say that's a sign of maturity, too. There is nothing wrong with change. So, I knew what I was going to do. It had to be with people.

SH: We thank you very much for being part of our project and for your support.

GM: My pleasure.

SH: With this we conclude an interview with George Mickett.

GM: My pleasure. My pleasure.

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Reviewed by Michael Ojeda 11/99

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 11/12/99

Reviewed by George Mickett 4/00