

Interviewee: J. Stanley (Stan) Hill

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 21 December 2002

Location: living room of the Hill home in White Bear Lake, MN

Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, December 2002

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, January 2003

Stan Hill was born on 24 July 1914 in Merrickville, Ontario, the younger of two boys. The Hill family moved frequently when Stan was young, making brief stops in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and New York before landing in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, in 1923. Here Stan attended local schools, finishing high school in 1929 at age fifteen. The following year, 1930, Stan started at Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance in St. Paul, in the actuarial department. He was married (1938, wife Doris), living in St. Paul, and working at Minnesota Mutual when in February 1941 he was drafted into the US Army.

Stan had duty stations at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and, after completing officer candidate school (OCS), as a training instructor in Pennsylvania. In 1943 he was made an actuary; specifically, as an Army actuary Stan's job was to ascertain what types of replacement troops the Army would require, and, based on casualties, how many would be needed. His duty stations included Washington, D.C., New York, and Italy (1944-45). In late 1945 Stan was rotated back to the US and discharged from active duty; he remained in the Reserves until 1955, retiring with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Again a civilian, Stan returned to Minnesota Mutual, where he worked in the actuarial field and, later, computer applications. He left the company in 1969 to begin his own business, Digiplan, and also was involved throughout the 1970s and 1980s in other business ventures and with community service.

At the time of this interview (December 2002) Stan and Doris Hill lived in White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

Interview Key:

T = Thomas Saylor

S = Stan Hill

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is the 21st of December 2002, and this is our interview with Stan Hill, at his home here in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. First, Stan, on the record, thanks very much for taking time this morning to speak with me.

S: You're welcome.

T: We've talked for a few moments here and I've learned a little bit about you. From that and from reading your book, *Confessions of an Eighty Year Old Boy*, by Stan Hill, published by Red Oak Press in 1994. You were born in Merrickville, Ontario, on the 24th of July 1914. Also, you spent some years in Canada, including living in Saskatchewan and in Manitoba, and your folks came to this country when you were what, seven years old, Stan?

S: When I came to Rochester [New York] I was eight years old. When we came to White Bear Lake I was nine.

T: That's Rochester, New York, by the way. What was it that took your folks around so many different places? That's five places in just a few years.

S: Starvation (*chuckles*). My father was allergic to nine to five jobs and he was really an adventurer. He persuaded my mother that farming would be a very interesting adventure. It was a struggle for him and it was a disaster for her, and we starved off our first farm in a little town called Gainsborough, Saskatchewan, which is just north of the North Dakota border. We left there almost literally with nothing but the clothes on our backs. The bank owned everything else, the property, the house, the farm buildings, the farm implements.

We started again in Austin, Manitoba, which is eighty-four miles west of Winnipeg. That was an equal disaster. My father's sister, one of his sisters, persuaded him to come to St. Paul, Minnesota, to find work where he could support his family. He had no money to buy a home or rent a home, and so we more or less camped out with my mother's sister in Rochester, New York, for a year. We weren't able to pay anything towards rent or board. We just camped out.

T: You had one brother I know. Did you have other siblings as well?

S: No.

T: Just the one brother?

S: Right. He was four and a half years older than I am. So after a year in Rochester, New York, my father got well enough established to buy a home in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and we moved there in April 1923.

T: You were just about nine years old at this time. A few months short of nine years old.

S: That's correct.

T: Living in St. Paul as a young person... you were in St. Paul, or White Bear Lake, I guess, until you went into the service, is that right?

S: I lived in White Bear Lake until early 1937. I was the sole support of my family at that time. Actually, it was cheaper to pay rent on a home on the East Side of St. Paul than it was to make the mortgage payments, so we walked away from our home in White Bear. It was foreclosed, and we rented on the East Side of St. Paul. I met my wife in White Bear Lake. That was before I moved to St. Paul. I moved my folks to St. Paul. After we were married in 1938 we lived in a very modest apartment house on lower Summit Avenue in St. Paul. I realize now that that was bordering on being a slum at the time, but I could afford the rent. I was making the magnificent sum of eighty dollars a month when I announced our marriage plans to my boss. He didn't think it was fitting for any married man to make less than a hundred, and I got a twenty-dollar raise, which was big money.

T: Yes, it was in those days.

S: Yes. The coin of the realm was ten to eleven times now what it was then, or reverse if you please, in terms of buying power. But even a hundred and forty dollars a month converted to... for inflation is still so far below the poverty level today, it's laughable.

(1, A, 95)

T: It sounds like your folks struggled during the Depression, Stan.

S: Very much. It was particularly hard on my mother.

T: In what ways?

S: She was embarrassed to be poor. I tell in the book. I don't know... you probably haven't read that part. We went to the Presbyterian Church in White Bear Lake and they conducted what few churches do now, an every-member canvass. In other words, every member's home was called on. On that Sunday my mother would pull

the shades down. We had to be very quiet, and people would knock at the door and when they realized there was no one home, they would go away. My mother would very carefully save her ten cents to put in the church collection. She couldn't afford to belong to the women's society because they had dues like twenty-five cents. It was very hard on her.

T: Did you notice that at the time as a young person, or is this something you learned about later?

S: I was quite aware of it at the time. Probably it meant more to me later, but I was very conscious of it at the time.

T: What did your father do to make ends meet in the 1930s?

S: When he came to St. Paul he got a job with the Northwest Jobbers Credit Bureau and remember this was... it wasn't in the Great Depression yet, but a lot of small stores were going bankrupt. The wholesalers were their big creditors. They would hire this organization called Northwest Jobbers Credit Bureau to go out and liquidate the merchandise, and that was my father's job.

T: Did he do that for a number of years?

S: Four or five years, and then he just couldn't stand the routine any more.

T: What did he do in the early to mid-1930s then, when economic times were a little more difficult?

S: He became a lecturer on Chautauqua, which is a word that is not fully understood today, but Chautauqua was a movement that brought culture to small communities in the days before TV or even much radio. He was a lecturer. He had spent a number of years with Cecil Rhodes in South Africa. Cecil Rhodes, the founder of the Rhodes Scholarship. He had a dream of building a seven thousand mile railroad from Cape Town [South Africa] to Cairo [Egypt]. It never was completed, but my father's job with Cecil Rhodes was to go into so-called "darkest Africa" and negotiate with the tribal chieftains to obtain right of way for the railroad. He had such interesting experiences during that that he was successful as a lecturer.

T: So he could actually make a living at that, then, he found out.

S: For a few years. Then radio came in. I think the radio pretty well killed Chautauqua. Chautauqua was held in tents so in the northern belt of course this was only in the summer months. In the winter there was a similar program called Lyceum.

T: You were working at Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance beginning in 1930 so you started there as a young man.

S: Sixteen.

T: Sixteen years of age. So you really kind of grew up in a hurry, didn't you?

S: Yes. I think my experience is worth recording. At the tender age of fifteen I walked into the office of the Associate Actuary, James Macintosh, a dour old Scotsman, and he looked at this kid in his doorway and he said, "What do you want?" I said, "I want to be an actuary," and his body English [body language] spoke incredulity more than anything else. I can still remember his precise words. (*In Scottish brogue*) "The work is hard and I don't think you can do it, but if you want to try we'll take your name." That was the sum total of my recruitment interview.

(1, A, 170)

T: Brief and to the point, right?

S: Yes.

T: What kind of work did you do, Stan, because you didn't go into service until 1941. You worked for Minnesota Mutual for those eleven years?

S: The first half of that period I was a clerk in the actuarial department or, as my boss, Mr. Macintosh, called it, I was a "clark" [British pronunciation of 'clerk'] I ran a Monroe calculator. There was no such thing as computers in those days. The Monroe calculators were big, noisy machines with a motor several inches in diameter on the side of it that drove these machines. We just did tons of computing work on those machines. Kept what were called Valuation Records that were large books of the policy data necessary to calculate the liabilities on the policies. We had by then what were called Electric Accounting Machines, which were the IBM forerunner of the computer. These machines weren't very sophisticated. They could sort and they could tabulate or record, and that was about their limitation, so we would get these monthly sheets of what were called accretions and decrections, additions and subtractions. They all had to be manually extended... totals on them. I learned because it was so much easier, to do that in my head and to add and subtract from left to right, which is kind of an unusual talent.

T: Was your job, or was the company, impacted greatly by the economic downturn of the 1930s?

S: Oh, yes. The largest problem was with our investments. We had a lot of farm mortgages which were foreclosed. Then there was a moratorium on banks and to some extent on insurance companies, which prevented a run on the banks and also prevented or limited the amount of money that people could take out of their insurance policy.

T: Really?

S: Yes.

T: Was your job, yourself, impacted by the economic downturn, or did you pretty much do the same thing?

S: Oh, yes. We went for years without any salary increase. Just very happy to retain our jobs.

T: Was it a question of even retaining your job? Were there times when you feared you wouldn't be able to keep it?

S: There were fears, but the company proudly never laid anyone off.

T: Really?

S: Yes.

T: So you kept your job. Now you were married in 1938, at age twenty-four.

S: Yes.

T: Had your job changed by that time from when you had started?

S: Yes. I went there to be an actuary and to accomplish that you had to pass a series of very difficult exams. I had no college training or experience in higher mathematics really. I tried courses at the ICS, the International Correspondence School, and frankly I found it very difficult to apply myself at that time. I guess I could really be called a bit of a goof-off in that I didn't pass my actuarial exams, and as a consequence I was transferred from the actuarial department to the group insurance department, where I earned my living as a clerk-typist for a while. Although I never had any typing training. I became before World War II the head of this little group administration department. It didn't involve sales. It merely involved administering the records. That's what I was doing when I was inducted [in 1941].

T: After you were married in 1938, was it difficult to find an affordable place to live with your wife?

(1, A, 232)

S: I don't remember it being particularly difficult. We did a little shopping and found this apartment. I can tell you the rent right now: it was thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents for a third floor walk up. One room. I truly mean one room. The bedroom was a little alcove, and we felt very fortunate that we didn't have a Murphy bed, the

kind that pulled out of the wall. Our bedroom was a little alcove off the living room, separated from the living room by a curtain and then the very tiny bathroom was off that alcove. The kitchen was what was called a Pullman kitchen. There was barely room in the kitchen to walk up and down the narrow aisle which ran beside the cabinets and the stove and the sink.

T: But it was affordable and available.

S: It was affordable and available. I was just contemplating the other day... I do a lot of work now on affordable housing, and we consider that everyone should be able to afford a house. The definition of that is thirty percent of income. Well, thirty percent of a hundred and forty dollars, my wife was making forty, and as a said I got raised to a hundred, thirty percent of that is forty-two dollars, so we were well in affordability. The really nice apartments were in the front of the building, but they were two dollars a month more and we didn't want to spend that.

T: When was your first child born?

S: George, our eldest son, was born in August of 1942.

T: So after you had gone away to the service.

S: I was actually in Officer Candidate School in Washington, D.C., when he was born.

T: But when the US entered the war in 1941, you were twenty-seven years old.

S: Yes.

T: A working man for a number of years. Let me ask you, the 7th of December 1941, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor: do you remember, Stan, what you were doing when you first heard that news?

S: Very vividly. It was on a Sunday, and I had spent part of the previous day preparing an application for a hardship discharge because my wife, on whose forty dollars a month we depended... I was making only twenty-one dollars a month, no benefits. I was really, including my Army work, holding down four jobs of part time work in order to make ends meet. One of the lieutenants—I was a sergeant at the time—one of the lieutenants that I worked with, a very good friend, they gave me the advice to apply for a hardship discharge. So I looked up the regulations and filled out my application for discharge, and on Sunday morning, December 7th, took it into the office of the first sergeant, who really ran the company. We had a captain, but the first sergeant really did all the administration. He was a tough old regular Army sergeant, and he looked at this application for discharge and he just very ceremoniously tore it in two in front of my eyes and threw it in the wastebasket and said, "You ain't goin' no place." *(laughs)*

(1, A, 278)

T: So bad timing. Had you submitted that a week or a month previously you may have had a different answer.

S: That's right.

T: How did you react to the fact that the nation was now at war? I mean, being in the peacetime military is one thing. Being in the military when there's a war to be fought could be something different.

S: As I say in my book there, the clouds of war hang heavily over us psychologically. Many questions. We would get together with our young friends. Many questions. Would married men be drafted? Was I too old to be drafted? All these were of course hopeful questions, for which the answer was always the wrong answer.

T: Yes. Because you were drafted.

S: Yes. Technically I volunteered, but I would have been drafted. I had the lowest draft number in our company.

T: How did your wife react to you joining the service?

S: About the same as I did. We were both very regretful. We had been married only a short time. I loved her dearly, and she loved me, and the idea of separation was not a happy one at all. But we saw it as inevitable, and accepted it.

T: When you say inevitable, inevitable because of the looming conflict or just because that's the way it was? Being drafted, I mean.

S: I was quite sure that the United States would become involved in the war. Of course, the majority of the population was against it and FDR [President Franklin D Roosevelt] worked hard to try to change the opinions. As eloquent as he was, he was unsuccessful. The Japs did the European allies a great favor, really, because that was the catalyst that made FDR's job very easy.

T: Very easy indeed. What do you remember about Basic Training, Stan?

S: My Basic Training was... I won't say laughable exactly, but it was a bit of a charade because we were required to take, I think it was like six weeks of Basic Training, but by that time I was well established in a noncombatant job. I was an interviewer in the replacement depot at Fort Snelling, and was quite sure by that time that I was destined for a noncombatant role. But nevertheless, the regulations required that we go through Basic Training. But as I say, it was all a bit of a charade. I did make marksmen with an old Springfield rifle. I think the part that would have been very, very mentally traumatic if I felt it were for real was bayonet training, conducted by a

hard-bitten old Army sergeant who said, "You know, you not only put the bayonet in, but you twist it." It was pretty gruesome.

T: Yes. Did you ever envision that you would make a transition to more of a direct combatant role, away from the office work that you were doing?

(1, A, 324)

S: Not really. I went through a period where I felt that I had the mental qualifications to be an officer, through OCS as it was called, Officer Candidate School, of which the graduates were called "90 day wonders." It was a ninety-day course. My first two applications were rejected for the lack of a college education.

By that time I had become good friends with Lieutenant FitzHarris, an Irish officer who ran our placement operation. Our job was to interview the recruits and determine enough of their background both as to education and to civilian work experience that we could give them a classification as a military occupation.

T: In other words, you could put them somewhere that matched kind of what they had done in civilian life.

S: In fact, that's what our department was called, the classification department. It was very interesting work, but not very well paid. This Morris FitzHarris, we had a high degree of mutual respect. We didn't fraternize socially because officers didn't fraternize with enlisted men, but we were very close and he became enraged at my second rejection, and he wrote a letter that could have gotten him court-martialed it was so strong. He was really angry. But the letter got results. I was accepted as a result of his letter.

T: The experience of Officer Candidate School, was it a positive one for you, or a negative one?

S: Very positive. I've always liked learning and I excelled in the classes. I was often called up by the instructor to help teach the class. While the other candidates were complaining about the long hours, I think we were working about fourteen hours a day, I felt as if I was on vacation because holding down these four jobs I had been working seventeen hours a day.

T: Did you feel yourself that getting into this OCS training was the right step for you?

S: Oh, yes. Mostly economically, but also the standing in service. Enlisted men looked up to officers.

(1, A, 356)

T: How hard was it for you to make the transition from enlisted to officer?

S: It wasn't hard at all. Very enjoyable experience.

T: Where was the OCS that you went through?

S: It was in an area called Fort Washington, which had been a Boy Scout Camp. It was originally back in the Revolutionary War days a significant strategic outpost.

T: Where is it located?

S: Ten miles down the Potomac from the D.C. area. And the only public transportation was a boat called the *Francis Scott Key*.

T: That's how you got there?

S: That's how we got into Washington and back.

T: No kidding. Your job in the service was primarily as an actuary.

S: Well, first I was a school teacher.

T: That was the first stop after OCS?

S: Right from OCS to Washington and Jefferson College, in Washington, Pennsylvania. Sometimes known as Little Washington. W and J, as the college was called, was very historically significant. It was the second private college established in the United States, so there's a lot of history behind it. The situation solved a problem both for the college and for the Army. The Army needed space to do this...

T: And needed it quickly, right?

S: Yes. Fourteen million men were placed under arms in, I think it was, about a fourteen month period. A social upheaval. It was almost impossible for people to understand today, but remember then that we had less than half the population of today. Can you envision twenty-eight million young men being pulled out of the infrastructure of the country?

T: It's amazing the infrastructure didn't collapse, really.

S: That's right. And parts of it would have. Like Washington and Jefferson College would have gone bankrupt--

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 383.

T: The college would have gone bankrupt except for the fact of...

S: Half the college campus being rented by the US military.

T: Stan, what kind of teaching were you doing there?

S: I was teaching the same thing that I had done as an enlisted man, that is, classifications.

T: Were you teaching others how to do that?

S: Yes. They were enlisted men, but they were very carefully hand-picked. Eighty percent of them had at least a bachelors. I think twenty percent of them had higher degrees. They were bright people. I can remember one experience very vividly with them. Here we were, instructors, having to design and administer our own exams and grade them. No standards for grading; we had to invent them. So grading on the curve was somewhat common, but I realized very quickly that grading on the curve was unfair because of the very skewed nature of the exam results. There would be a very, very quick falloff on the high side and a long tail on the low side. So, being a mathematician by that time, I developed a method which I called a split sigma, which was really made the process much fairer. Of course, these folks knew enough to know that grading on the curve was unfair, and we had an open door policy. I could see these Ph.D.s coming into my office and telling me, "Lieutenant this is unfair because, because..." I said, "I'm glad that you came in, because I think I have developed a method for correcting that." And I would begin to explain the mathematics of my split sigma and their eyes would glaze over because their Ph.D.s were not in mathematics. And I would say, "Sergeant, I wish you would go away and think about this, and come back and tell me whether you think that I've accomplished my purpose in making this fair." I would never see any of them again (*laughs*).

T: Was that rewarding work for you there, Stan?

S: Yes, I enjoyed it. It was a challenge. We had a commandant, a fiery red-headed Colonel Giddings. Pretty quick temper. We would have a faculty meeting. We would have the opportunity to criticize an operation of the school and (*chuckles*) he didn't want any criticism but he had to ask. I was bold enough to criticize the examination structure and he said "Very well, lieutenant, effective immediately you are totally removed from the classroom teaching. You will become the examiner of the school. You must develop the examinations, grade them, score them and critique them." He thought he was punishing me. I took it as a great challenge. As exam officer I now had an office with the assistant commandant, a Greek major, Cristobal. We became very close friends born of a high degree of mutual respect. He taught me a lot. My mother was a very humble person and she taught us boys to be humble, but I had an overdose of humility up to that time. Major Cristobal pointed that out to me. He said, "Lieutenant, you've got to stand up. Be more self-confident." I learned a great lesson from him on that.

(1, B, 474)

T: You liked this work, and yet you didn't stay there.

S: That was very interesting how I didn't. I was called down to the commandant's office one day. This fiery red head didn't particularly like me, because I had criticized him, and I thought, "My god, what have I done now?" He introduced me to at that time a Major Horchow, Reuben Horchow. He was a Jewish major and very bright and very creative. He had developed this idea of having all of the military occupational specialties, of having the casualty rates of each of these military occupational specialties determined.

T: A mathematical model for expected casualties.

S: Exactly. Exactly. But he was lacking an actuary. He had no ability to do this himself, but he had the concept and he needed an actuary. I've told you already about Army classification. There were no computers at that time, at the beginning of World War II. They were developed during the war, too. But we had nine by twelve [9" x 12"] McBee key sorting cards. These were cards on which a lot of information about the soldier was recorded and around the edge were codes punched and one of those codes was the military occupational specialty. You took two needles that looked like knitting needles with handles and you'd sort these cards into a particular... so you could select. You could have a particular occupation drop out.

T: By a number of criteria.

S: Yes.

T: Leaving you with precisely those MOSs that you wanted.

S: Yes. And through that process Major Horchow had one of his assistants find my card, because it was the only actuary card that they found.

T: So they matched up and they found you by this method.

S: Yes. Major Horchow was there to offer me a job at the Pentagon. I had mixed feelings about that because I had gotten well enough established in this college, the very best life really, teaching classes.

At first [in Washington, D.C.] I lived in the George Washington Hotel, a lovely hotel in downtown Washington and walked to the campus. It was a very pleasant life and was able to bring my wife down, rent a small bedroom apartment in the upstairs of a home there. I still remember the landlady, Rose Stein, who was just so proud of having an Army officer as a tenant there (*chuckles*).

T: So life was okay for you there.

S: Life was very pleasant there. My life was established and George, my son, was there as a baby. We really had a nice life. So it was kind of a tough... you know, the Army can't make you do anything, but they can really make you wish you had. I had this feeling that even though I might have mixed feelings about taking this job I'd better take it. And it did for me offer new challenges.

(1, B, 534)

T: A promotion as well, or not?

S: No.

T: You were a second or first lieutenant now?

S: At that time I had been promoted to first lieutenant.

T: What time is this now? You were in the service since February of '41. About what time were you at Washington in Jefferson?

S: 1943 and 44. Early 1944.

T: And then early 1944 you took this job which moved you to the Pentagon.

S: Right. I was there only a very short time in the Pentagon. Until some smart guy realized that the Army was violating the Constitution, which allowed only thirty thousand men under arms in the District of Columbia. Kind of an odd law that had existed. So the smart Army officers got around that by putting us on detached service, in New York. So my office was moved to [New York City, to] 270 Madison Avenue (*laughs*).

T: You could do work from New York City, too.

S: I never brought my wife to D.C. but after I got established in this office at 270 Madison Avenue it looked like permanency, if you can call it that. I moved my wife down to New York, to "Long Gisland," as the natives call Long Island.

It was a very pleasant life again. A very enjoyable experience until May of 1944, when then Lieutenant Colonel Horchow realized that he wasn't making much of an impact in the bureaucracy, called the Army, and felt that he could do better if we moved into a smaller arena, namely a theater of operations. He chose the Mediterranean theater of operations. So in May of 1944 I had my first flight on what we might consider a commercial plane. It was a DC-4. Four motor plane. That was quite an experience. We got on that plane in Washington National Airport. Took off, circled the field, came back; we knew we were headed someplace but our orders were sealed. We didn't even know where we were going. Took off, circled the field a couple of times, and landed with mechanical problems.

T: You hadn't gone very far.

S: No. But they got those fixed and we took off again. We went to our next stop. It was Gander, in Newfoundland, for refueling. The next stop was the Azores [Islands, in the Atlantic], for refueling. Our destination in that plane was Casablanca [Morocco], where we changed to a DC-2 and flew to Oran [Algeria]. The pilots said that you could smell Oran thirty miles out to sea. It was just a filthy town. In fact, there was an expression that was probably used for other places too, that if the Good Lord ever gave this earth an enema, that's where He'd put the tube in.

T: For you, Stan, first exposure to a different continent, different people. Coming from Washington, New York, two very cultured metropolises, what were your reactions or observations in Algeria, the first place you were?

S: One of great thankfulness that I hadn't been born there.

T: Did you make a point to get out and look at things, sort of collect observations or experiences while you were there?

S: Somewhat. Time was very limited. I worked very hard over there, but when I could I did. And we got into some very nice homes, too. I can remember, I think it was a friend of mine who didn't work quite as hard, an Army friend. He didn't work quite as hard, and developed pretty good relations with some of the French families that lived there. Some of them were quite wealthy, and I can remember spending this Sunday on the Mediterranean seacoast. Beautiful weather, beautiful swimming and we had... I have saved, I think, three lives in my life, which is quite an emotional experience, and that was the first one. This very friend who got me involved in this, we would take what were called mattress covers. They were made of heavy cotton duck material and you pulled them over a mattress. We would take those and wet them in the ocean and then hold them up to the wind until they filled with air and then tie a string around the open end and we had the hugest water wing you ever saw. I was a good swimmer but my friend couldn't swim. We were swimming and got into an area where the water was much over six or seven feet deep. He fell off and panicked, and I had to pull him to safety or he would have drowned. But anyway, there were some very pleasant interludes.

(1, B, 613)

T: How long did you stay in Algeria?

S: Not very long. Six weeks is my best recollection.

T: Being an American there, a positive thing or a negative thing as far as the population at large was concerned?

S: Largely [the local population] ignored us. The Arabs ignored us. The French families made friends.

T: From Algeria you moved to Italy.

S: Yes. Took a troop ship from Oran to Naples [port city in southern Italy] and transported in an Army truck, a half ton six. They were the workhorses of the Army. The half ton six has six wheels and all six of them are driving wheels. In fact, while I was still stationed at Fort Snelling, some of us were sent on maneuvers in Louisiana and my job as a classification officer... there was just nothing to do... they were short of truck drivers. They came through looking for people with truck driving experience. I think I stretched my experience a little bit, but I got to drive a half ton six and sleep with these truck drivers. Boy, did I get my vocabulary extended (*laughs*). It was mostly one four letter word and various derivatives of it. It was quite an experience and the most exciting and somewhat terrifying experience was driving in maneuvers at night with the blackout. You had no lights.

T: So you couldn't see in front of you?

S: There were little pinpoints of taillights on the vehicle ahead of you.

T: You'd follow the vehicle in front of you.

S: Yes.

T: When you got to Algeria or Italy, Stan, can you describe the work you were doing?

S: Yes. It was a continuation of what I did in the Pentagon. I would get these what we call TOs, Tables of Organization, and they were Top Secret because they showed every unit in the Army and where it was stationed. We would use those TOs to develop our worksheets, which were not classified, on which we would tabulate all of the jobs by military specialty. Then we had casualty reports. The number of men in that specialty was the denominator, and the number from the casualty reports was the numerator, and we just worked casualty rates for all these people.

T: So you knew what a full strength unit should have or did actually have, and from that you could subtract casualties. Was it also the type of casualties, that is what happened to these people?

S: We classified them in two classes, battle and non-battle casualties. Much to most people's surprise, including mine, there were more non-battle casualties than there were battle casualties.

(1, B, 661)

T: What qualified as a non-battle casualty?

S: Plane accidents. Mostly as a passenger. Truck or vehicle accidents. Illness. Serious illness that required discharge from the service.

T: Vehicle accidents. Were those common?

S: These guys could check out a jeep from the transportation office for a weekend of joyriding, and they'd get liquored up and drive it over a cliff, or run it into a bank or another vehicle.

T: What did you do with this information you tabulated? You could figure out total strength or ideal strength and then casualties. What did you do with the information that you were processing or creating?

S: That information was shipped back to the Pentagon or to Army Headquarters. Army Headquarters was the one that made use of it then, so that they could requisition replacements. See, the old method before the replacement concept came in, in replacement depots, the old concept was, you'd throw a regiment into service and when it had enough casualties that it's no longer in fighting capacity, that regiment was withdrawn and a new regiment was sent in there. Replacements...

T: That's inefficient though, isn't it?

S: Yes, very. This was Horchow's dream, that you could replace... Now, he didn't dream up the idea of the replacement depot. He dreamed up the idea of putting the military occupational specialties into a replacement depot that would be needed. It took a lot of missionary work on his part to convince commanders of combatant units. Their idea up to that time was: give us riflemen, give us riflemen. Then they would take the riflemen who had been shot up, but not badly enough to be discharged, and put them in noncombatant jobs.

T: For which they may or may not have been qualified.

S: Exactly.

T: I see. That's grossly inefficient.

S: Yes. And it was a tough sell. But much more effective. It was in the Pentagon [that this was decided].

T: So, in theory, a unit would requisition those particular specialties that they needed.

S: Right.

T: One of these, or two of those.

S: Exactly.

T: As opposed to generic riflemen, who may or may not fit that particular need.

S: Exactly. You've got it.

T: For you, Stan, was it mostly office work, or were you also out traveling or moving around talking to people?

S: All office work. I was a working fool. I would work seventeen hours a day because I wanted to get the job done. I had quite a bit of help, enlisted people. We had these Monroe calculators, but work that I couldn't delegate or didn't feel I could delegate very well I would do, and I would work myself to a point where I would... Dysentery was very common in the Army. I developed a case of dysentery and had to go in the hospital for a week. Come back out and start the process all over again.

T: Where were you stationed in Italy?

S: Our first office location was in the King's Royal Palace in Caserta. Caserta, as you may know, is a small town about thirty miles northeast of Naples. And for some reason or other, and I don't have a clear recollection of why, we had to move out of there and into tents in the Volturno Valley. The Volturno River ran through between the mountains there. And we slept in unheated tents, both officers and enlisted men. The only difference between us was that enlisted men were eight to a tent and we were two to a tent. So we had more space. The same tents. And the evening routine was always the same. We had potbellied stoves to heat our office. And at night we would build the fire up in the stove, take our canteens out of their canvas and felt covers, fill them with water up to the top, and put them on the stove and bring the water to a boil. Put the tops on. Run for our tents. You never really got undressed. You just took off your outer clothes and slept in your long johns. We didn't have sheets. We had shelter halves; two shelter halves make a pup tent. We slept between these pieces of canvas.

(1, B, 717)

T: So it was cold.

S: It was freezing. You'd put the canteen in. You'd crouch up into a ball at the top of the cot and you would gradually push this canteen down ahead of you until you were stretched out and by that time you were asleep.

T: And a hot water bottle, Army style.

S: Exactly (*laughs*).

T: In what ways was this work challenging or satisfying for you?

S: I really felt we had a mission. It went all the way to our commanding general, who felt we had a mission.

T: Were you in Italy when the war ended in May of 1945?

S: Yes.

T: So you spent over a year there.

S: We stayed there until after V-J Day.

T: So you were there at least until August 1945.

S: Right. And the reason for that is that there was no way to get the troops home. There was great pressure to get the troops home.

T: Once the war had ended, you mean.

S: Yes. But there was just no way to get these millions of men [back].

T: Not all at once. Physically impossible.

S: Most of them had to go by troop ship. Battle casualties, deaths in the family, something like that, would get on planes. I had my own office as assistant personnel officer of the theater, and really not a lot to do. One day my first sergeant came in and said, "Major, how would you like to fly home?" I said, "You're kidding!" He said, "No, your number is up." The number was the number of months over. The number of months in service plus the number of months overseas. You got double credit for being overseas. And he said, "Your number is up and we need an officer." What was happening, I better explain that. All the records then were still "manual" and the name, rank, serial number and address were on dog tags. In addition to the dog tag there was another plate made and put into your classification card. Someone got the bright idea of...

T: Wait just a minute. Before we move to that postwar years, I wanted to ask you about your time in Italy. You spent over a year there, and I'm wondering if you could talk about your observations of people, of the Italians, and the kind of interactions you were able to have with people around where you were stationed.

S: My feeling about the "I-ties" [pronounced: Eye-ties], as we called them (*chuckles*), is about the same as I would feel about people in this country. There are all sorts of classes and all types of people, good people, bad people. Met some lovely people. My biggest regret in Italy is that I worked too hard and didn't have enough, didn't take enough time, to really get well acquainted with the Italians and learn the

language. I could speak a fair amount of Italian when I left, but not as much as I wish I had.

End of tape 1, side B. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.

T: Nonetheless, Stan, you did mention you had a chance to make some observations of the countryside and of the people. Can you talk about that, or about some people that you did meet?

S: Yes. Yes, I did meet some nice Italian families. I also occasionally visited places where, if I had been looking for sex, I could have very easily found it. Relatively nice places where things were... kind of dance halls and so on.

T: Frequented by military people?

S: Yes. And civilians. As I said, there were all kinds of people, just as there are in the United States. I found the people to be very cordial.

A very interesting thing I found is the pecking order in Italy. We were stationed in the vicinity of Naples for most of our time there. I was over in North Africa and Italy together a total of, I think, seventeen months and most of that time was in Italy. And the Italian time, most of the time was within a thirty mile radius of Naples. The Neapolitans looked down on the people further down in the boot, [in cities like] Bari, Foggia, and that area. You ask them why they felt that way, and they'd say, "Sporca, sporca." [That's the Italian word for] dirty.

T: Really?

S: Yes. And the people in Rome, where we ended up, in an office in Mussolini's Military Academy just south of Rome, that was our last office. That's where I moved into Theater Headquarters. They looked down on the Neapolitans. "Sporca." *(laughs)* Florence, Firenze [in Italian], and Leghorn, or Livorno [in Italian], interesting cities and very cultured cities. They looked down on the Romans as having a past, but no future.

T: Really. So you perceived a north to south pecking order.

S: I never got north of there, but I suspect the same thing existed when you get up into the really progressive parts of Italy. Then I had occasion to go up to Florence, and I'd like to tell you a little experience about that. I had time there to do a little sightseeing, and there's the old Ponte Vecchio, the old bridge, very historic [and the oldest bridge to survive the war].

T: It's one of the icons of Florence.

S: Yes. Very interesting place to visit. My experience actually is in the transportation process. Jerry Gerg was a bomber pilot, shot down, wounded, but

not sufficiently to be discharged, but sufficiently not to go back to combatant duty. He became the pilot for our commanding general, and on the days when the general didn't want the plane, I got to use it. So I did quite a bit of flying with Jerry, and he was a very pleasant guy. One day, we were flying back from Florence...

T: The war is over now.

S: Yes... ah, (*pauses three seconds*) I don't remember. See, we were always in a noncombatant area. I never heard or saw a shot fired in anger.

T: That's interesting. So your experience was really the rear echelon.

S: Yes. That's right.

T: So the end of the war for you, it seems, wasn't a real cutoff as it was for a frontline soldier.

(2, A, 82)

S: No. No. That's correct. So we're flying back and we're in this Aronca. It's a two-seated plane, fore and aft, open cockpit. You have to wear a helmet, but you have intercom radio communication with the pilot. Jerry said, "Would you like to fly the plane?" I said, "Sure." I've learned a lot of things out of a book, including flying a plane. I read the Navy flight manual. Jerry said to take over the controls, the stick and rudders and all. He was going to tell me, left rudder, left aileron, right rudder, right aileron, and these things. I said, "Jerry, why don't you just let me fly, and don't say anything unless you think I'm making a mistake." God bless his heart, he did that, and I flew and made some banks and turns and pretty soon he said, "Where did you learn to fly?" I said, "Out of a book." This was the first time I had ever been at the controls. Anyway, things were going fine until the plane began to lose altitude. I was pulling back on the stick and of course had to push the throttle forward so we didn't stall. I finally firewalled it, as we say. I had the throttle all the way forward and we should be climbing, but we were still losing altitude. I was puzzled. I didn't understand the phenomenon until suddenly we started gaining altitude. Then I realized that over the mountains, you had these huge downdrafts and updrafts and I had gotten into a downdraft. So it was a very exciting experience.

I had one other exciting experience with Jerry. We flew again to Florence, and the little field where we landed was just a plowed field. It was winter. The weather was mild and we were having dinner. I said, "Jerry, you look worried." He said, "Yes. I hope it freezes tonight or we'll never be able to get off in that mud." Well, it didn't freeze. I said, "Jerry, you decide what you want to do. If we should stay here it's fine with me. You do the safe thing." He decided he'd like to try it and I can still remember looking out the window at those wheels sucking their way through the mud and wondering if we could pick up flying speed before we got to the end of the plowed field.

T: This was not an airstrip at all.

S: No.

T: It was just a field.

S: Right. But we made it. I'm still here *(laughs)*.

T: You must have made it. Stan, when you were in Florence, what did you think of the city?

S: [Florence] was a lovely city. Very cultured. Very nice people there.

T: And you were in uniform all the time.

S: Yes. I was never in civilian clothes while I was overseas.

T: You had to wear your uniform all the time?

S: Yes.

T: You came back to the States when, sometime in early fall 1945?

S: Yes. Seventeen months from May. Where does that take us to?

T: October 1945.

S: Yes. October. I wanted to tell you a couple more things about there. I said there were all sorts of people in Italy. A lot of them were very, very poor. And life didn't seem very precious. I can remember these people hanging onto the outside of trains and risking being brushed off when they went through a tunnel. That kind of thing.

I did a foolish thing one day with my tent mate, George Arms, who later worked for MPR [Minnesota Public Radio]. We made a trip with the Red Cross up to the top of Mount Vesuvius. They made two trips a day, and George and I decided to go up on the morning trip and then cut out of the trip on our own and then come down with the afternoon trip. So we had quite a few hours to ourselves, and we walked around the rim of Vesuvius; it had been active. It wasn't spouting lava or anything like that, but there were still gas ports where you could throw down a piece of paper right under your feet and it would catch fire. One of the things we saw there was a British two engine plane that had flown into the mountain and caught fire, but the landing gear had broken free out of the fire. The British had been up there and gotten the bodies, but the I-ties [Italians] had been up there and cut the rubber off the wheels, because you could make sandals with that rubber.

(2, A, 169)

T: So salvaging the pieces from the wreckage.

S: Right. And along the same line, in Rome I can remember going to the Colosseum, and I invited the driver to go into the Colosseum with me. He said, "I don't dare leave the Jeep. If I did, when I get back..." The Jeeps had leather seats." When I get back, all the leather would be cut out of the seats." So he had to stay with the vehicle. So you had crime there, born of poverty, born of desperation.

T: Was this something you could really see in front of your eyes, the class differences and the poverty?

S: Oh, yes. Especially in Rome. The most important thing on our motor vehicle there is the horn. Also we did R and R, Rest and Recreation, at the Albergo Victoria Grande, the Grand Victoria Hotel, on the Sorrento Peninsula. We had ocean front rooms facing the Bay of Naples, looking across at the Island of Capri.

T: Very nice.

S: I had made a trip to Capri. The author Lloyd Douglas wrote a book called *The Robe*. Part of it, it's a very gripping book. It's well worth reading. Part of it takes place on the island of Capri. We call it Capri (*accents last syllable*) but the natives call it Capri (*accents first syllable*). Part of it takes place on Capri, and laying on a chaise lounge on our veranda there reading this book and looking at the Isle of Capri was a very moving experience.

T: Sounds like you had some enjoyable, positive experiences while you were in Italy.

S: Oh, yes. I consider my whole Army experience positive, because I learned so much about people, about the world, but particularly about people. I saw generals cry in frustration, really, and realized that they were not super human beings on a pedestal—they were men that put their pants on one leg at a time, just as I did.

T: Stan, your Army experience lasted over four years.

S: Yes. Including the terminal leave, almost five years. The terminal leave lasted into January [1946]. My memory is coming back on that now. I can't remember the exact date, but I can remember the terminal leave lasted into January.

T: In what positive ways did your military experience change you as a person?

S: It made me much more self-confident. Assertive, not aggressive, but assertive person. I guess this... young man lacking self-confidence before the service.

T: By the time you got out of the service you were thirty-one years old.

S: That's right.

T: You were a bit older than many other veterans.

S: Oh, yes.

T: So you were more assertive, more self-confident, as you describe it. Was there a way that your service experience changed you maybe in a negative way?

S: I can't think of any. The whole thing was a very positive experience.

T: You left as a major and went in as a...

S: Buck private. Thirteen different grades.

T: Wow. So by the time you left you were certainly earning more than twenty-one dollars a month.

S: Oh, yes. Yes. In fact, my big concern about transition from military [to civilian] life is to whether my civilian life would support me in the manner to which we had become accustomed (*laughs*).

(2, A, 222)

T: So life as an officer was okay with you?

S: Oh, yes.

T: Were you a person that considered the military as a career?

S: No, because I felt I had a very promising civilian career. Although I stayed; I was an Active Reservist for a number of years.

T: Ever consider going back into the service after you got out?

S: No. No.

T: So the almost five years that you spent were enough.

S: Yes. It wasn't that I was fed up with those five years. It was just that the civilian career was much more attractive in all ways—money, lifestyle.

T: Let's talk for a few minutes, then, before we finish about adjustment and being a civilian again. How would you describe your initial reaction to being out of the military?

S: I must tell you briefly of the process of coming out. The orders were, I flew to New York. There I was relieved of ninety-four pounds of Addressograph things, and the orders were to get on the train, change trains in Chicago, and get off at Camp McCoy.

T: That's in Wisconsin.

S: Yes.

T: Discharge place, I think.

S: Yes. That's where I was. They didn't call it discharge.

T: Separation center, right?

S: Separation center. Because I wasn't discharged; I was just separated from active duty. I'm pretty anxious to see my wife and my two children. I was in Italy when my oldest daughter was born. My wife always hastens to tell people that I was home in between (*laughs*). Anyhow, I got on that train in Chicago in the morning and was due to get off at Camp McCoy at, I don't know what time, around noon. And the longer I rode those four hours on that train, the more I thought, I'm getting in here late on a Friday afternoon. There's going to be no processing done until Monday. So I went A.W.O.L. I stayed on the train (*laughs*).

T: And went to St. Paul?

S: Came right into St. Paul. Called my wife from the Union Depot. She was incredulous. "Where are you? Where are you?" "I'm in the St. Paul Union Depot." "No, you're not!" "Yes, I am. Can you come and pick me up?" She was staying with her mother at the time, and her mother said she's never seen Doris fly out of the house so quickly as she did into that car. Came in and picked me up, and of course it was a marvelous reunion.

T: Unexpected for her as well, right?

S: Yes. Of course, Monday I had to get on the train... or Sunday afternoon I had to get on the train and go back to Camp McCoy.

T: You still had two days. As a civilian making an adjustment to civilian life, what for you do you think was the hardest thing about adjusting or readjusting to that?

S: Well, I had none of the emotional problems that combatants seemed to have. I had no post-traumatic syndrome or anything like that. My principal concern, as I've said, was what kind of money I going to make. I was making a hundred dollars a month when I left. Maybe I was up to a 150 or so at the time. I was getting pay and benefits as a major by then.

My boss's boss, when I reported back to the office, invited me to lunch. I thought, "What's he going to tell me?" As I've said already, the office had been stripped of able-bodied men. They had hired a Canadian man an actuary. His boss, the Vice President actuary, took me to lunch at the Minnesota Club, and this was a little heady experience for a guy who was a lowly... wasn't even a department head when I left. I thought, "What's he going to offer me?" He offered me more money to come back than I was making as an officer. I couldn't believe it. I was speechless. He thought that it wasn't enough.

T: And you thought it was quite okay.

S: Oh, more than okay! (*laughs*) Then he began to apologize, You know, pay scales and so on. He just couldn't justify paying any more. I finally said, "Yes, I'd come back."

T: Did you seriously consider looking up other jobs?

S: No.

T: You wanted to come back there. They just didn't know that?

S: Oh, yes.

T: They weren't sure you were committed to that.

S: Right. I was unconsciously playing hard to get (*laughs*).

T: They certainly perceived it that way.

S: Yes. I came back and went to work for Walter Rupert, this Canadian that had come down here. He was a great boss. Very understanding. But in effect he was saying, "Here's the actuarial department. You run it. You have no skilled help, really. Your job will be to keep that department going and to recruit actuaries." It was really almost a double job. So I worked very hard when I came back. At the same time I needed to complete my examinations. I had actually taken a couple exams...

T: But you didn't finish them all and you didn't pass them all before the war, did you?

S: Oh, no. In fact, I passed... there were eight exams at the time and I passed number three in the service, I think. I passed number four in the service.

(2, A, 300)

T: So that left four more, right?

S: Yes. So I had to work hard at the office. As I say, practically two jobs, and then study for the exams and catch up with my family. It was a very demanding time.

T: Was it hard to recruit people? Was there a manpower shortage, or were there plenty of good people out there?

S: There were people, but they were in great demand. I finally realized that companies were buying actuarial students at prices that I couldn't justify, and so instead I decided to become friendly with the heads of the math departments at Minnesota colleges and the University [of Minnesota, Twin Cities]. To do that I joined that the American Mathematics Association and became a local chapter officer, presented papers at meetings and so on, and got very well acquainted with these professors.

T: Their connection helped you to recruit people?

S: Oh, I would go to them and say, "Who are your best students?" and give them the pitch. I would counsel them. It took a B+ average in college to have a decent shot at the exams, so I was counseling people, both in and out of the profession. I became known as the best of the insurance companies to go to work for, and the job got relatively easy at that time. But it was a lot of work. I would study four hours a night.

T: Where were you living at this time?

S: Palace Avenue in St. Paul. The house that we had bought before I moved out of Fort Snelling.

T: In 1941 then.

S: Yes.

T: How did your wife Doris make ends meet, pay for the house and everything, while you were gone?

S: I got my brother to go halves with me on the house with the understanding that it would be an investment for him, and that when I became able to I would buy out his share for its then market value.

It paid off for him. He lived with us for a fair amount of time. I would study four hours a night for the five weekdays, and then eight hours on Saturday. So I was studying twenty-eight hours a week in addition and also meeting my family obligations.

T: You know, that's interesting. With all the work that you were doing, was there any kind of pressure from your wife or your kids to like, hey, focus on us?

S: My ever-loving wife was very accommodating. Happily she had trained the kids to go to bed very early. I would play with the kids. We had dinner together and I'd play with the kids until they went to bed. Then I would start to study. All my life I've had a problem staying awake unless I'm physically active. It doesn't matter how stimulated I am mentally—I go to sleep. I found that I could sit, I would say to myself, I will study as long as I can stay awake and then I'll take what's left of the four hours and set the alarm clock that much earlier in the morning. And that was quite a motivator to stay awake (*laughs*). I maintained that regimen until...

T: You passed those exams?

S: Yes.

T: How long did it take, this process of getting through all those things?

S: I got my fellowship in 1947.

T: So it took you a couple years to get through all the exams.

S: Yes. I was on very much of a crash program.

T: Let me ask you, to conclude, two questions. Number one, what did the war mean for you personally at that time? You were on active duty the whole time.

S: I felt very positive toward the whole process. I felt that I had done my duty and that American had done its duty to save us from Hitler at that time.

T: Did you see yourself as part of a worldwide crusade, or did you feel you were simply doing a job that had to be done?

S: I was doing a job that had to be done, but I really felt that I was playing a significant part in the whole process.

(2, A, 359)

T: In the larger process. In a macro sense, not just in a micro sense.

S: Right.

T: Finally, what's the most important way that the war changed your life?

S: As I've said, it made me more self-confident, more assertive; better able to communicate with people.

T: So really, almost changes of character.

S: Yes.

T: And internal changes, as opposed to those external things.

S: Yes. Right.

T: And I think I heard you say earlier that you don't regret your military service at all.

S: No. In many ways it was my college education. Except for my military teaching experience at Washington and Jefferson, I never saw the inside of a college classroom until I began teaching in the Carlson Graduate School of Management [at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities].

T: What's ironic, as you mention in your book, during your time at Washington and Jefferson, really, you stood in front of a class before you actually sat in one.

S: Right.

T: Which I thought was very interesting. Any final thoughts or things you want to add before we conclude, Stan?

S: I have gone on to have, in my opinion, an incredibly successful life. Now I don't say that in any boasting manner. It's just that I have come so much further in life than I ever expected to. And developed a philosophy of life which stands me in good stead. I've been able to communicate that to my family. Life has been a very positive experience for me.

T: You talk about the time before the war. You talked about describing times in the '30s. Things were tough and you hadn't described a vision of a successful life in the long term...

S: Oh, no.

T: After the war you seem to describe yourself much more self-confidently, and much more looking towards a positive, prosperous future.

S: Right. Before World War II my wife and I were convinced we never would be able to afford a home. We would be renters.

T: Wow. Things have really changed.

S: Oh, yes.

T: Let me thank you for your time this morning. I enjoyed this very much.

S: So have I. It's been a very pleasant experience.

END OF INTERVIEW