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Jack Kerins oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, April 21, 2008

Jack Kerins (Interviewee)

Michael Hirsh (Interviewer)

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[Transcriber's note: The Interviewee's personal information has been removed, at the request of the Interviewer. This omission is indicated with ellipses.]

Michael Hirsh: Okay, just so I have it, your name is Jack Kerins.

Jack Kerins: That's right.

MH: K-e-r-i-n-s?

JK: Right.

MH: What's your date of birth?

JK: 3-30-12 [March 30, 1912]. I'm an old man now.

MH: How old are you?

JK: Ninety-six.

MH: Ninety-six! Wow. How old were you when you went in the Army?

JK: I was—let's see, forty-three [1943]. Forty-three [1943] and twelve [1912] would be thirty-one. I was thirty-one years old.

MH: Thirty-one years old. And you lived where at the time, before you went in the Army?

JK: I lived in Farrell, Pennsylvania.

MH: In where?

JK: Farrell, F-a-r-r-e-l-l, Pennsylvania.

MH: What were you doing there?

JK: I was—at the time, I was the owner of three service stations, Gulf service stations.

MH: And you enlisted in the military?

JK: No, I didn't. I was deferred because I was my mother's dependent—I mean—

MH: Sole—

JK: —provider, and I had a deferment.

MH: And—

JK: So, then they drafted me anyway.

MH: So, what you're saying is they were getting desperate.

JK: (laughs) Yeah, they were when they picked on me.

MH: Yeah. Where did you go to basic training?

JK: In Van Dorn, Mississippi.

MH: Okay. And then—

JK: It was with the 63rd [Infantry] Division.

MH: Okay. And how long after basic did they send you to Europe?

JK: Well, I was in Van Dorn a year and a half, and then I was a year and a half in Europe.

MH: What was the first battle your unit was in?

JK: The what?

MH: What was the first battle that your unit was in?

JK: I'm losing your voice.

MH: Oh, I'm sorry. The first battle your unit was in.

JK: I can't hear you.

MH: Can you hear me now? Can you hear me okay?

JK: Is it my phone or your phone?

MH: I hear you fine. Do you hear me?

JK: Yeah, I hear you now.

MH: Okay. I was saying, what was the first battle you were in?

JK: The first what?

MH: Battle. The first fight.

JK: I didn't get what the word was.

MH: The first battle your unit was in. What was the first fight?

JK: Oh, the first fight—combat, you mean.

MH: Yes, combat.

JK: Combat. It was in December of forty-three [1943, *sic*] in France.¹ We were at Gros-Réderching, which—the American army had taken or driven the Germans out of the Maginot Line. See, they occupied the Maginot Line, and the Americans before us—I think 44th [Infantry] Division—they drove the Germans out. Then we were put in because the Germans—well, the outfit that—

Are you hearing me?

MH: Yes, I hear you fine.

JK: The Germans were the 17th SS Panzer Division, and they attacked us. They attacked the 44th Infantry, actually, and were driving them back, and they rushed us out. We had just gotten in. We landed in Marseilles and went up to Camp Over-something [Camp Oberhoffen]. Over—

¹ Kerins means December 1944.

MH: I can find it.

JK: I have to get my book.

MH: I can find it.

JK: And they rushed us to the line. We weren't really ready, because we come over with two other divisions, and we didn't come with any of our supporting troops. We were just infantrymen. They pushed us in to back up the 44th, and that was at Aachen, France. There was two Aachens. There's Aachen, Germany, and Aachen, France. It's in the Saar Valley. They were driving the 44th back, and they put us in as a backup. When the 44th came to our area, we stopped the 17th SS Panzer. They didn't move any farther than there. That's our first combat.

It was very difficult for us, because we weren't coordinated. We didn't have communications; we didn't have our supporting artillery, all the things that are necessary for a division to operate correctly. But we held them, and drove them back out of Gros-Réderching. That was when the [Battle of the] Bulge was on. They sent the 17th SS Panzer Division, I guess, to our area to keep Americans from taking any divisions from the 7th Army to go north to help the boys at Bastogne.

MH: Did you take many casualties?

JK: Yeah, we had a lot of casualties.

MH: Were you hit?

JK: What, me? Yeah, I got a Purple Heart. I got it later on. I got hit when we attacked the Siegfried Line.

MH: How badly were you wounded?

JK: I had a concussion. I should send you my history.

MH: Okay.

JK: I don't know whether you want it. You want just about going to—

MH: No, but I'd like to see your history as well.

JK: They have a history in the Smithsonian Institute. My division historian had a request from them. They wanted some stories from—not the generals and colonels and so forth; they wanted them from the lowly infantrymen. I was a staff sergeant then, and I was in charge of two machine guns, heavy machine guns. And it's a long story. I'd like to—

MH: I'd like to read it.

JK: Well, I could take a copy of it, but I don't know how soon I can get it out to you.

MH: Whenever you have time. But let me ask you about what was happening when you came across Landsberg. What was going on in the war at that point?

JK: When you came across where?

MH: The concentration camp.

JK: Oh, that was after we broke through the Siegfried Line. My battalion was the first ones to break a breach in the Siegfried, and that allowed the 6th Armored Division, which was lined up right behind us, to make a road over the—they blew the tops off some of the teeth, you know, the dragon teeth. And they had a bulldozer blade on the front of a tank, and under fire, that fellow went out there and pushed dirt up over and made a road.

As soon as we broke through, the Germans retreated from the Siegfried. Then the 6th Armored broke right in and started after them. We raced all the way to—we chased the Germans until we got to the Rhine River. Of course, they had all the bridges blown, and we were held up a couple days there. We had to wait until they built three or four pontoon bridges, and then they gave the priority to the armored divisions. I think there were three armored divisions lined up to go across first, and then we went across. And we went down to fight at Heidelberg. We fought up to Heidelberg and then fought from Heidelberg after we went around there, and we fought all through the Kocher [River] and

the Jagst River valleys. And then they took off again, and we raced them, chased them into Landsberg, across the Danube [River] into Landsberg.

By then, I was in charge of a platoon. It's quite a story about the second lieutenants who were sent in. I was a tech sergeant then, and I was running the platoon. And when we got down into a little town called Bötzingen, we were having quite a firefight there. A messenger from the battalions came up and wanted to know if I was Tech Sergeant Kerins. I said yes, and he says, "You have to come back with me. There's a major back here who wants to talk to you." I said, "Are you crazy?" He says, "I'm not crazy, but he's a major, and if I were you, I'd go back and talk to him." So, I went back and found him. He had his back up against a creek bed, trying to protect himself, and he said, "Soldier, you're now a second lieutenant."

MH: (laughs)

JK: I said, "Sir, I don't want to be a second lieutenant. I'm satisfied being a non-com [non-commissioned officer]." And I remember he stood up and stuck his finger right in my chest and pushed it, and he said, "You're a second lieutenant. Now, you get back up there and take over your platoon." So, I became an officer that way.

Well, then when we broke through there, my platoon, we had five Jeeps, each one had a .50 caliber machine gun on it. And we were at the tip of the battalion. With us, ahead of us, were two tanks, and they were loaded with GIs. They were hanging on anywhere you could get on them, and then my five Jeeps, which were supposed to give aircraft protection. One day, we made thirty kilometers. We were chasing the Germans that fast. That was after we went over the Danube River. We were almost to Landsberg, and a German jet buzzed us from a treetop level. It scared the daylights out of everybody. And it was so quick, coming around and going back. He could've really slaughtered us with machine guns, but he never fired a shot at us. He didn't have any guns on it. We found out afterward there was a factory right there, not far from where they took off.

Well, we got into Landsberg, and I got to the far side of Landsberg, and a messenger come up and said, "Hold up, don't chase the Germans any farther than right here," and that's when I saw these pajama-clad prisoners coming down the little street. And the boys were directing them back, you know, to where there'd be somebody to take care of them. I decided I wanted to go up and see what the internment camp was like.

MH: Did you know there was a camp there?

JK: Well, yes, when I saw all these prisoners coming down. They were coming down; there were some holding each other. A lot of them could hardly walk—a lot of them couldn't walk—and they just stayed in the camp, but the ones that could, they were gone. A lot of the others that were more able were holding them up and making them walk. I went into the camp and looked it over, and I described it. Well, that was the end of our combat, because that was the twentieth of April.

MH: Twenty-eighth of April?

JK: Twenty-eighth of April.

MH: Okay. Did you know who these prisoners were?

JK: Did I know they were there?

MH: But did you know who they were?

JK: No, but they were mostly Jews. I think there were a few that were political prisoners, too.

MH: At that point, before you got to Landsberg, did you know about the concentration camps?

JK: Did I know about it?

MH: Yes.

JK: Not before that, no. I had no inkling there was—I knew there was a big one in Munich, but—

MH: But you didn't know that—you didn't know anything about the concentration camps before you got to Landsberg, right?

JK: No, I didn't.

MH: So, what's going through your mind when you see this?

JK: Oh, it was a terrible thing. I saw prisoners that were dying from starvation. And I told about—I went in the little kitchen they had, and there was a half a barrel of sawdust and a half a barrel of flour, and they were mixing flour and sawdust to feed them, mostly sawdust. And there was a big trench there with an array of bones, dead people. They just threw them in the trench. They hadn't had time to cover them up.

And the GIs, they were—some of the GIs were crying, and I had tears in my eyes. I couldn't help it. The GIs, they were swearing revenge if they would let them go on and catch some of those guards that got away. They all took off when we got there. And then they told us that the 36th Division was to go through us and continue chasing them to Hitler's redoubt down in the Austrian mountains. Did I say any of that in the letter?

MH: There's some of that in the letter, yes. Did you see any—what about the German civilians who were near there?

JK: The Germans in there? There wasn't any.

MH: I mean, the Germans who lived in the towns around there.

JK: I didn't understand you.

MH: The German citizens who lived around there.

JK: Oh, the German people.

MH: Yes.

JK: Well, I didn't interrogate many of them. A lot of them said—my fellows talked to a lot of them. They said they didn't know it was a camp like that. But they knew it, because you could smell the burning flesh that was created from them incinerating a lot of them. But I think I told you about my Jeep driver; he spoke good German.

MH: Tell me about him.

JK: Yeah. He went—this one fellow came over; the guys started calling him Joe. He had two teeth in his head, and he was small and he could hardly stand up. Of course, the GIs, all of them dug in their pockets and were giving them chocolate bars and K rations and loading them up. I told them, “Be careful, boys, you’ll make them sick. They’ll be sicker now than they were before, because they’ve been starving, and if you try to overload their stomach, you’ll kill them.” I tried to explain that to them, that they couldn’t feed them then.

I said to my Jeep driver, “There’s a nice house right there,” right where we were parked. “Go in there and see if you can get some clothes to put on them. Take those pajamas off them.” And he did. He went in, and when he went in there, I went on up to the camp, so I toured the camp and came back, and here he [the prisoner] was. He had a tall silk hat—you know, like when you dress with a tuxedo—and he had a jacket that was an undertaker’s jacket, full dress, but he didn’t have any pants and no shoes. He couldn’t find a pair of shoes to fit him, and he couldn’t find any pants, but he was happy, he was smiling.

We were then getting ready to turn around and go back, and he waved at us and thanked us. He kissed my hand. He kneeled down and kissed my hand. He was just so happy that somebody had got him out of that place. And I, of course, never heard what happened to him.

MH: Right. Did you have to worry about—

JK: I’ve lost your voice again.

MH: I hear you. Do you hear me okay?

JK: I’m sorry; I’ve lost your voice.

MH: Okay. Do you hear me now?

JK: Yeah, a little bit better.

MH: Okay. Did you have to get food for the prisoners there?

JK: I can't hear you.

MH: I said—do you hear me now?

JK: No, I can't hear you now.

MH: Okay, I'm gonna try—

JK: Barely hear you.

MH: Okay, how about now?

JK: Is it your phone or mine?

MH: It's your phone.

JK: My phone?

MH: Yep. Do you hear me okay now?

JK: If you wait a minute, I can go on the other phone.

MH: Okay, I'll wait.

JK: Can you hold a minute?

MH: I'm holding.

JK: All right. (switches phones) Now can you hear me?

MH: I hear you fine.

JK: My battery's running down, too.

MH: Oh, okay. There's another letter I got that was written by somebody who was in H Company, and he talked about having to get food for the prisoners in Landsberg. He said they took hand grenades and threw them in the river and stunned the fish, and then they brought the fish onto land and cooked them for the prisoners.

JK: Well, that was a common practice among the infantrymen, either that or shooting a rabbit or shooting a deer to change the menu.

MH: Ah, I see. He also talks about somebody else who's writing a story about really going after the townspeople, the German citizens, for saying they didn't know this was happening.

JK: You mean the people didn't know?

MH: The people who said they didn't know.

JK: They said they didn't, but I feel they were smart people. They knew it. They couldn't help but know it, by the smell.

MH: How long did you stay at Landsberg?

JK: Well, we stayed there about three or four hours waiting for the 36th Division to catch up to us, and then when they were ready to go through us, they pulled us out and sent us back north. We went back to—I was to take charge of a town by Bad Rappenau, R-a-p-p-e-n-a-u, a nice little town. I had one factory there that made parts for 88s, and they were very concerned about the Russians, who were following us up, going through these factories and places. Somebody told me they even had trucks with them; they were putting some of the machinery in the trucks to haul it back to Russia. A general came to my town and wanted to go into the factory, and I wouldn't let him in. We had quite a confrontation.

MH: A Russian general?

JK: Yeah. Oh, he was mad. He was going to have me court-martialed and everything else. I said, "I'm sorry. I'm only a second lieutenant, but those are my orders. Nobody's to go in that factory." They never court-martialed me, though. I never heard any more about it.

MH: When you left the concentration camp, were there medical people there to help take care of the—

JK: Well, yeah, there were our medical people; and I think later on, you know, the division would send the medical division in there. I really can't tell you what happened afterwards. If I happen to—let's see. In 197—oh, I can't remember. In the latter part of the 1970s, I went over there with my family with the 63rd tour, and we went back through there. The factory was all torn down and obliterated.

MH: What—I mean, this is now—

JK: Now I'm losing you. It has to be you, because—

MH: I'm on a regular phone, though.

JK: I have a regular phone.

MH: I'm on a regular phone. I'm not on a battery phone. You hear me okay?

JK: I'll probably have to—

MH: Do you hear me okay?

JK: Pardon?

MH: Do you hear me okay now?

JK: Yeah, I can hear you a little better, but speak a little louder.

MH: Okay. My question is, how do you think that concentration camp experience affected you, years later?

JK: Affected me?

MH: Yes.

JK: It affected me quite a while, you know, the first couple of years. But the memories faded; and still, lots of times, I'll wake up in the middle of the night. The concentration camp didn't bother me as much as some of our combat, when we were overwhelmed. One place, we were—see, I happened to meet—I chased a tank that came with 200 *Wehrmachts*, you know, common soldiers. They were helping out the 17th SS because they had so many casualties. They had to have—they took help. That's when we were attacking the Siegfried Line.

Oh, my mind's starting to roll now. I have to get my book out and start telling you about it, because I wrote it when I—I didn't write my history until I came back from a convention that the 63rd had. They have one every year, and they had this one in San Antonio, Texas. We come back from there, and while I was at the convention—the fellow that was the president was from San Antonio. He was in B Company of the same battalion as I was once in a while attached to. I didn't know him. He was a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle] gunner. And we started talking about the battle of the quarry. There were three or four other fellows around, and they said, "Oh, we were in that," but two of them, particularly, were injured the first day and they never knew what happened, any details of it. So, I said, "Well, I have a diary. When I get home, I'll write you the story of the battle of the quarry."

Well, anyway, toward the end of the battle, we had driven the Germans almost to the Siegfried Line, and there were only about, at the most, fifty soldiers left out of the battalion after that battle. Now, they weren't all casualties; a lot of them just didn't make it, but a lot of them were.

Are you still hearing?

MH: Yes, I do. Fifty people left out of a battalion?

JK: Pardon?

MH: Fifty people left out of a whole battalion?

JK: Yeah. Well, that's fifty in the group I was with. I had only seven of my—I had twenty men at that time, and two machine guns. I had seven men out of twenty. But it was just confusion, because we were hand-to-hand fighting, practically. When we got through—oh, my train of thought starts drooping along. Anyway, when I got home, I dug out my diary and I wrote just the battle of the quarry.

MH: What's the name of the city you're saying?

JK: Pardon?

MH: The battle of what?

JK: The quarry, q-u-a-r-r-y. It was a quarry.

MH: Oh, okay.

JK: Very difficult to fight in. You'll have to read my story to get it. Anyway, we fought them up to the last hill, and we could see. We were under a lot of fire, and we had some good officers with us. They said, "We're gonna get up on top of that hill," because they had the maps. I didn't have a map, so I didn't know what was up there, but they knew, because they knew if they got to the top of that hill, they'd have observation of the town of—oh, I can't think of the name.

MH: That's okay.

JK: It's a big city, about a mile visible of the Siegfried Line. That's why they didn't want us up there. We'd have perfect observation. Well, I wrote the story, and I got a lot of letters from other fellows who'd heard about it.

MH: When you came back from the war, what did you do?

JK: I came back, and I was kind of banged up. I was buried by the largest shell the Germans fire, a 210mm shell, and it hit within two or three feet from me, right alongside the dragon's teeth. I was talking to the commander of the company, B Company. I went up and reported to him. That's my job. I'm supposed to go up and report to the commander that I have two machine guns to use wherever he wanted to fire. And he said, "Good," that's all he said, and he stood up. He had a map with him, and I didn't have a map. They don't give non-coms a map. But I got up and looked.

I was standing right next to him and looking at the map, and he fell over dead, right in front of me. And I knew he was dead, 'cause I could see where shrapnel had hit him in the helmet. He had a hole in his helmet and was bleeding from the head wound. And I didn't know what in the world would I do now, and I didn't have a chance to think much, because I heard the shell coming, and I knew it was a big one. I thought maybe it was—it wasn't an 88, it was a slower projectile.

I dove for—I saw a place where they plowed the field one way and come back on the same plow the other way, so it was a pretty good V there. I don't know why, but I saw it, and I dove for it. And just as I got my head down in there—I didn't know anything, but I found out afterward. Three months after the war was over, I went out there and found the hole. It was about eight feet across and about five feet deep, so it was a big shell, and I had a concussion from it, that's why I couldn't relate much. But I got a lot of it from my Jeep driver. He saw me walking around after the shell landed. He said I was cussing the Germans, and I was looking for my rifle, and I couldn't find it. And he said he pulled me down, because there was a lot of flak coming in. And he saw blood coming out of my ears, and I had a wound on my right elbow where shrapnel had hit it, but it wasn't very deep, fortunately. But he took me to the aid station.

Well, from then, I gotta tell you. I gotta write to you, because it's a fantastic story. I was in the aid station, and they put cotton in my ears and told me to sit down by some duffel bags, and when they got through taking care of the seriously wounded, they'd take care of me. But I didn't stay there. I got up and got out, and I don't remember getting out. I remember being out in the street, and I went over to see where I was. I looked at the identification on the truck, and it said 6th Armored Division, and I knew exactly where I was. I was about three-quarters of a mile from the Siegfried Line, because the whole division, 6th Armored Division, was lined up bumper to bumper with tanks and trucks, all kinds of vehicles. And I made my way back.

It's a long story from there, but I don't remember anything till the next morning. One of my sergeants was holding my arm and guiding me down. I said, "Where are we going?" and he said, "We're going to the Jeep. You're going to your Jeep." And I said, "Well, what's the matter? Where are the Germans? There's no noise, no nothing." He said, "Oh, they pulled out during the night." See, I never remember hearing or seeing anything.

MH: When you came back to the States, what did you do?

JK: I was very fortunate that I was—I didn't have enough points to go back. You had to have 95 points now. I had enough points to go back with my 10 points that I got for Silver Star and a Purple Heart. If I'd had stayed as a non-com, I would've gotten home and discharged, but I had to stay another year because of being an officer. The clerk told me they were gonna send me to take charge of a DP [displaced persons] camp, and a friend of mine, just a couple days before that, told me, "Do anything you can, but try to get out of that. Do anything, even shoot yourself in the foot."

MH: Oh, jeez.

JK: Well, I wouldn't do that, but I had my Jeep driver. I said, "You know, I saw some fellows riding around in military government cars, and they all have cars. I'm going down there and see if I can get a job." I went into the military government office, and the girl said, "What do you want to see the colonel for?" I said, "I want to get a job from him." And she laughed and said, "How do you get a job by going to see the colonel?" I said, "I just want to talk to him." Well, she didn't think they'd let me in, but she called the adjutant. He was a captain, and he was a nice fellow. I talked to him, and he said, "Well, you can go in and talk to him; see what he says."

I went in, and told him that I was decorated and I was too proficient to be a guard over a DP camp. He said, "I have only one job available in my battalion." It was the first military battalion in Stuttgart. He said, "It's an assistant motor officer," and I said, "Good, I'll take it." (both laugh) And he said—well, he was looking at my MOS [Military Occupational Specialty], and he said, "You've had some experience in the garage business; you ought to be able to do a good job. I have a captain there; he's no good, but I can't get rid of him. But I need somebody to go down there and straighten that motor pool out."

Well, I went there. There was over 400 German vehicles and about 100 American vehicles, and we did first and second echelon work there. We must have had—oh, I don't know, about 300 people there. We had 40 GIs, and the rest were German civilians. So, that's why I got to go back quite often to places we fought, and I took pictures. And there

are a lot of my pictures on the Internet on—no, I don't know what. They're on the Internet, the 63rd Division. Ever look at it?

MH: I did today, yes.

JK: Huh?

MH: I looked at it a little bit today, yes.

JK: Yeah. Well, you'll probably see—I gave them about fifty pictures that I took in the space of about three months after the war was over. I had a lot of tanks disabled and vehicles. I don't know whether they used them all.

MH: Did you take any pictures of the concentration camp?

JK: No, I didn't. I never went back there. That was quite a distance.

MH: Do you have a photo of you from World War II?

JK: Do I have what?

MH: Do you have a picture of yourself from back then? A picture of you back in World War II?

JK: Oh, yeah, I have lots of pictures.

MH: Because I'd like to get one, if possible. Do you have an e-mail address?

JK: Have a what?

MH: Do you have e-mail?

JK: I can't hear you.

MH: Do you have e-mail?

JK: I can't hear the last word you're saying.

MH: Do you have computer access?

JK: Yes, but don't tell me. I screw that computer up—I'm self-taught, and I screw it up more, and I have to get one of my employees to come and straighten it out. I'm not on the Internet. I haven't learned that yet.

MH: Oh, okay. I'm gonna send—if I send you my address, could you send me a picture of yourself from World War II?

JK: Yes, I could.

MH: Okay. When you came back to this country, what business did you go into?

JK: Well, I went back to the service stations. I had only kept one while I went away, but it was a good one, a very profitable one. My brother was not drafted. He had a family, and he took over for me and ran it while I was gone. I had a lot of trouble with my back. The concussion had disturbed two vertebrae in my back, one in my neck and one down in the tail. And the cold weather just got me. I couldn't—I did the next best thing.

I married the little girl who was waiting for me, and we went to California, intending to settle out there, because a friend of mine worked for Boeing. And he said there's lots of jobs out there. I got out there. I stayed—well, we took three weeks to get out there, because we'd never been farther west than Ohio in our life, and I didn't like the country. I didn't like the atmosphere or the environment, either one. So, we came back.

I can't hear you now.

MH: I didn't say anything.

JK: Oh, there you are. We come back. I woke up one morning and said, “Mary Lou, I’m going home. I don’t like this kind of country. It’s too fast for me.” We come back home, and a fellow came to see me. He said, “You know, Tam O’Shanter is for sale,” and I said, “Oh, it is?” He said, “Do you want to buy it?” I said, “I don’t have any money to buy a golf course.”

Well, a lot of things happened. I went to see the man that really owned it. He was an industrialist, had two big mills here. Well, he was favorably impressed by me, I guess, and he sold it to me. It was very difficult. He said, “Go to this bank; they’ll give you a mortgage.” He was on the board of directors there. And I went to see him, the loan officer, and he said, “Jack, you’re crazy to buy a golf course. You can’t make any money on that.” And it was in bad shape. They let it go during the war. Anyway, I went back and told him. He called the loan officer, and he said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah.” [The loan officer was] telling him, “In the book it says they’re a poor risk.” He slammed the phone up and said—after he talked to Mary Lou and I both together, he said, “I’m gonna take the mortgage myself, and I’ll sell it to you.”

So, we got a hard time the first couple of years. We didn’t have too much money, but enough to get along. And then we did a lot of promotion. We got Sam Sneed here in 1949. I got him—he came for \$1,000, and I charged everybody \$1 apiece to come. He had just won a tournament in Chicago, and he was then playing in Detroit. He was coming to Pittsburgh to play in the Dapper Dan the next week. I said, “Well, I’m halfway in between. How about coming here and giving an exposition next Wednesday?” He said, “Do you have \$1,000?” I didn’t have \$1,000. I said, “I’ll have it for you.” He came and shot 65, the course record. Can you believe that? Never saw the golf course.

MH: And he shot a 65?

JK: My wife and he and I became good friends. In fact, we were in Pittsburgh when the Tri-State [Professional Golf Association] honored him as Man of the Year, and they honored me as Golfer—Pro of the Year, that’s what it was. I saw him just—that was the year before he died. We used to see him at the show a lot in Orlando.

MH: Do you still play golf?

JK: Yeah. All my life.

MH: What do you shoot?

JK: I shot anything I could shoot. I was a hunter, too. (laughs)

MH: No, but on the golf course, what do you shoot?

JK: I was never a real good golfer, but I was never a bad golfer. I worked so hard before I went to the Army, and after I got in the golf business, we had a beautiful golf course. We advertised it as “Pennsylvania’s finest public golf course.”

MH: Hmm. Where exactly is Hermitage, Pennsylvania?

JK: Pardon?

MH: Where is Hermitage, Pennsylvania?

JK: If you look on Interstate 80, it bisects Interstate 79 at Mercer, and ten or twelve miles west is Hermitage. It’s where [U.S.] 62 and Route 18 joins 80. You know where that is?

MH: No, but I’m going to pull up a map and look at it.

JK: You’ll have to look at a map. We’re about twelve miles from Youngstown, Ohio, and about fifty miles from Pittsburgh, north of Pittsburgh, and sixty miles south of Erie. That’ll give you an idea of where to look.

MH: Okay. Did you have children?

JK: Pardon?

MH: Do you have children?

JK: I have two boys and a girl. The girl is a counselor at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and the two boys are in the business with me now. I’m not active anymore. They’re running it.

MH: Does one of them live across the street from you?

JK: Pardon?

MH: Does one of your sons live across the street from you?

JK: Who lives across?

MH: Does one of your sons live near you?

JK: Oh, yeah. One lives almost out my back door, on another street.

MH: Right. I think I left a message on his machine.

JK: Oh, you probably got a hold of him.

MH: So, if he asks about it, tell him it's a mistake. (laughs)

JK: That was recently?

MH: Yeah, tonight.

JK: Oh, tonight?

MH: Yes. I'm going to send you a letter with my address, and if you could send me a couple of photographs, that'd be great. And I would love to read your history.

JK: Okay, I'll do that. And you can get on the Internet now, and the 63rd, you'll find a lot of my—they may not have my name on them, but a lot of them are mine.

MH: Okay. I thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me.

JK: What was your first name?

MH: Mike.

JK: Mike?

MH: Yes.

JK: That's a good Irish name.

MH: Well, close.

JK: Are you Jewish?

MH: Yes, I am.

JK: Uh-huh. Well, I have a lot of good Jewish friends. They're almost better than my Irish friends. (laughs)

MH: I see. Well, I thank you for what you did in the war. I really do.

JK: Yeah. I'll try and make a copy.

MH: Okay.

JK: I probably have twenty or thirty sheets.

MH: Okay, and I'll put this letter in the mail to you so you have my address.

JK: Okay.

MH: Thank you very much.

JK: Okay. Bye now.

MH: Bye-bye.

End of interview