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AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. MILTON KLEIN

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G. KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Milton M. Klein on April 10, 2003 at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with Kurt Piehler and ...

GARY MCLAUGHLIN: Gary McLaughlin.

PIEHLER: And, let me start off as—you were born what year? When were you born?

MILTON KLEIN: 1917.

PIEHLER: And you were born in New York City?

KLEIN: Yes.

PIEHLER: And uh your parent's names, your parents what were their names?

KLEIN: Uh, first names?

PIEHLER: First, yeah first ...

KLEIN: Okay, my father's name was Ignatz, I-G-N-A-T-Z, Klein and my mother's name was Margaret Greenfield Klein, and they were of Hungarian descent. Well they were Hungarians.

PIEHLER: Could you talk a little bit about your parents?

KLEIN: Yeah I could. Unfortunately I was the youngest of four children, so that ... they died, really, when I was quite young. ... my mother died when I was—in 1940 how old was I? Twenty-three?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KLEIN: My father died in 1956. I think he was a very quiet man and I'm very very sorry I didn't spend more time talking to him about his past. But ... like most kids of European origin in those days you didn't want to show off your ethnicity. It's the reverse. You went to a school with kids with names like Jones and Brown and Smith. And whose parents were similarity named and you wanted to be like them too. So my parents would talk Hungarian when their relatives and friends came and instead of listening and learning, like an idiot, I'd run out of the room, you know. I'd say, speak American speak English. It's too bad because I wish I knew Hungarian. It's a very difficult language. It's one of the Euro-Altaic languages and it's supposed to be related to Finnish, but no Finn could ever understand any Hungarian. And I picked up a little of what you might call ... kitchen Hungarian. However, when you learn that as a kid your accent is very, very good. I've been to Budapest five times now. And on several occasions I had one of those Berlitz books and we'd get off the train or the plane. I guess it was a train, and get into a taxi and ... I'd give him the name of the hotel. He didn't say anything. As we passed a public building, I said to him *Mi az*, which means; "What is that?" And of course, the accent was so good he immediately said Brrrrrrrrr. (Laughter) I had no idea what he was talking about, so I said to him very slowly, I do not understand Hungarian very well and so he

said how did you learn it? And I said, “My mother and father were Hungarian” I said. But ... it was interesting to look in store windows and see objects you know, chairs, furniture ... shirt and in Hungarian and be able to understand and identify [them].

PIEHLER: But you, you had a sense you did not want to learn Hungarian growing up?

KLEIN: No, that would make me a foreigner.

PIEHLER: Um hmm.

KLEIN: I’d be a—I was born an American and I wanted to be an American, which is stupid. Kids now I think are are a little bit smarter. You know learning a second language is a marvelous ... you know, thing. And I’m glad we had so many kids who went over to Normandy and learned French, you know. Although French is not the best language, as a second language, to learn anymore. But ... I’ve been to Budapest five times now and my Hungarian has not gotten any better. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What did your father do for a living?

KLEIN: He was an automobile mechanic. In Europe he was a tinsmith. I do not know what his father did. My mother’s father—again you see like an idiot I should have done oral history with him. But ... I was simply not interested in that sort of thing. I was interested in what was going on in the United States. I—my mother had pictures, which showed that her stepfather had a large family. I think her mother married twice and they were farmers, which was very surprising to me because Jews were not usually farmers. I’ve asked that of a number of living relatives, and there aren’t many my age and they say that doesn’t seem possible. But I can swear on my scouts honor that my mother had pictures of all these people and I said, “Who were they and what were they doing” [and she said], “they were on our farm,” so there must have been some Jews that had farms.

MCLAUGHLIN: And your mother was a housewife?

KLEIN: She was a housewife and my father married her and came to this country first. That was the custom. The men came first and they ... waited a year or two and try to get a job. And then she came over. She came over with a child who died in infancy and I never knew him of course. All of my brothers, all of my siblings, that’s two sisters and a brother, they were all born in this country. Now the older ones and my oldest sibling was thirteen years older than I. She and the next one and the next one all spoke Hungarian fairly well. And at first I ignored them, but later in life I envied them.

MCLAUGHLIN: Sure

PIEHLER: Your father, he was a mechanic. Where did he work? Do you remember?

KLEIN: In New York he worked for a Cadillac company downtown somewhere. Where he did something we don't do anymore, which is to bang out ... you know uh cracks, not cracks, what am I talking about?

MCLAUGHLIN: Dents?

KLEIN: Huh,

MCLAUGHLIN: Dents?

KLEIN: ... dents? In a car. Now you know they either rip them off and put a new one on and before then they used to cover them over with some kind of paste-like thing ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Bond ...

KLEIN: ... but he did the old fashioned thing. And he worked very hard for a living because ... we lived up in the Bronx and he worked downtown in Manhattan. And he use to get up at 5:30, 6 in the morning and ... my recollection of him mostly is that he'd always fix a big bowl of oatmeal and then we'd all have oatmeal before we went to school.

PIEHLER: How—did he stay employed during the Great Depression?

KLEIN: Uh, no ... well, yes. (Laughs) I think he retired just about the time the Social Security Act went into effect so he was eligible for Social Security, which was very, very modest. But we did not suffer during the Great Depression. And one reason, of course, there were three siblings who were working. I had a sister who was a secretary, another sister who was ... artist's assistant and a brother who was a musician in a band. And there were four incomes, my father's and theirs. I could go to school without worrying. I don't think I ever worried about food. I went to the movies when I wanted to for five cents, unlike most people. The only thing I remember that was unusual about the Depression was one week the city schools, the city ... civil servants were paid in scrip. (Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: Like miners almost.

KLEIN: They had no money.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: The city had no money.

PIEHLER: That must have been 1933.

KLEIN: My sister who was thirteen years older than I, she was very upset she lost all her savings in something called, the Bank of the United States.

PIEHLER: That was ...

KLEIN: ... it had nothing to do with the Bank of the United States but it assumed that name and ...

PIEHLER: That was a major bankrupt.

KLEIN: She was saving there and I think she lost a hundred dollars. That was a lot of money then. She was crushed. There wasn't a dime in the ... I had no money, so. But to give you the value of money, when I went to City College and won a scholarship it was a major thing. It was fifty dollars a year and I gave it to my mother with great pride you know, so she could use it.

MCLAUGHLIN: Was it a rough neighborhood you lived in?

KLEIN: No, no, no never.

PIEHLER: What neighborhood ...

KLEIN: ... there were no rough neighborhoods in those days.

MCLAUGHLIN: Really?

PIEHLER: What neighborhood did you grow up in the Bronx?

KLEIN: Well there were two neighborhoods. I don't know if you know the Bronx at all but one was the ... lower Bronx about 177th Street and then we moved when I was about five or six to 180th Street. You moved up and north, you know. Then we moved to an area that was just beginning to be developed. It was so primitive. It was a row of two-family houses on one side of the street and the other side of the street was ... unoccupied. And there was an Italian farmer who raised goats (Laughter) and we also dumped our trash there. Because they didn't have trash collection until a couple of years after we moved there.

PIEHLER: When you went to the movies, where did you go to the movies?

KLEIN: The local movies.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to the Grand Concourse?

KLEIN: Oh that was ... as a child you couldn't go there but later ...

PIEHLER: But later you did.

KLEIN: ... that was the place to go when you were a young adult and wanted to take a lady out to a ... evening you went to Grand Concourse. Especially ... to its largest movie, the Loew's Paradise which was like our ...

PIEHLER: The Tennessee Theatre.

KLEIN: The Tennessee Theatre. Uh ... does the Tennessee theatre have a ceiling with stars?

PIEHLER: Yes.

KLEIN: Okay, this had the ceiling with stars, a huge stage. I remember seeing *Gone With the Wind* there. And being stunned when in the middle of the picture, the curtain came down and there was a brief intermission because the damn thing was about three hours long, you know, and I never sat down that long for a movie. (Laughter) Then everybody went outside to the lobby and bought snacks and then we went back in, but that was an expensive thing. That may have been a quarter. But uh, a typical New Years Eve date when I was nineteen or twenty was to—and there were groupies, you never went out alone I was ... you were almost weeded if you went out alone. But here three or four of us went out with three or four young ladies. And we would go out to dinner and the cheapest place to eat was a Chinese restaurant, where for a dollar or a dollar ten you could get a whole plate of all kinds of things from the menu in the Loew's Paradise and that was a big thing. Then afterwards you went to someone's house and danced and listened to the radio and so on and that was a big deal.

You asked about rough neighborhoods. New York was so safe that I lived in the Bronx and most of the kids on Saturday nights—we didn't have real girlfriends. One of my friends did and got married then and has been married since. He's the same age as I am. Unfortunately, I can't see him very well—he doesn't see very well but we communicate because he's my oldest friend. He got married very young. He got married on ... about 1940. But in these other cases four or five of us would go to a dance. These were advertised in the newspapers, you know "Singles Dances." You'd pay a dime or a quarter whatever the admission was and you went to this dance hall. All the boys would line up on one side and the girls on the other side. The music would start and it took awhile for someone with courage, one of the boys to walk over to ask a girl to dance. Well, so I did that and the typical thing if you had the last dance and if you were a gentleman—and most of us were gentlemen in those days. You'd say, "May I escort you home?" "Oh that would be good." [You'd say] where do you live?" and [she'd say] "Brooklyn!" (Laughter) Well that was like going from here to Oak Ridge you know, so you got on the subway, nobody had cars, and it took about an hour to get out to Brooklyn and if you were flush you'd go to an ice cream parlor. An ice cream parlor was a fancy place where they'd have little round tables. You know, you've seen ice cream chairs. You'd order a sundae which was ... you know, fifteen or twenty cents and get a couple of gobs of ice cream with goop on it and so on and you'd walk her to her house. You never went in the door of the apartment and say goodnight and by now it was midnight. And you'd go to the nearest subway station and get on and the train would come along. There were both motormen who drove the train and also conductors who just walked through to see that things were right. As the conductor would walk through the train that was empty I'd say to the conductor, "my station is Allerton Avenue would you please give me a wake up at the station before?" Then I'd go asleep in an empty car. If you do it now, of course, you know you'd be mugged three times and be killed. (Laughter) Then sure enough before my station, "Young man, your station is next." And I'd get off. And that's how safe it was.

MCLAUGHLIN: A very civil time.

KLEIN: Well it was safe. It was safe even in the bad neighborhoods. I went to City College which is located on 137th Street and St Nicholas Avenue, which is the Westside of Manhattan. To get to it from the Bronx, the easiest thing was to take the Eastside subway to 135th Street. So you had to walk through Harlem and then up flights of steps through this park called Saint Nicholas Park to get to the college. And ... I often worked on, I worked on student newspaper as a reporter or whatever and we worked late you know putting the paper together [with] the latest news. And then at eleven o'clock, I'd say goodnight and I'd walk down these steps in this absolutely isolated ... park and walk across 125th to 135th Street, which was Harlem to the subway station and never gave it a thought.

Kids did not listen to the radio, especially to the news. So, one day I remember walking through the street and finding police stanchions you know, and shattered glass on the street. This is one of the few riots—I can't remember if it was 125th Street or 135th Street. These were riots by blacks who got fed up with the fact that the big department stores, which were all there, employed whites only and yet catered to blacks. This was early in the game. This must have been 1935 or so and they demanded that some blacks be employed. There had been, apparently ... window smashing during the night. I had absolutely no knowledge of it. I blindly walked through, you know, stepping over the glass and not a single person accosted me. And I walked up to the college and that was that.

MCLAUGHLIN: It made a big impression on you.

KLEIN: No! No impression at all. I had no idea what had happened. What I'm trying to indicate is that there was none of this ethnic hostility, black/white, in those days.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, you said you didn't really listen to the radio growing up, so ...

KLEIN: No, I listened to radio news.

PIEHLER: Radio news.

KLEIN: Oh we listened to radio entertainment.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: ... Do our kids watch television news? They get their news from the Beacon.

PIEHLER: Yeah. (Laughs)

KLEIN: Yeah, worldwide news!

PIEHLER: What radio programs did you listen to? What were your favorites?

KLEIN: You probably remember ... name some of them. *Show Boat* was one.

MCLAUGHLIN: *The Shadow*?

KLEIN: Oh *The Shadow* was one. Somebody gave me a tape of *The Shadow*. I haven't listened to it. There's apparently a station around here that does them, or you buy them somewhere, *The Shadow* ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Rudy Vallee?

KLEIN: No the guy who had Tonto as his ...

PIEHLER: Oh, the *Lone Ranger*. (Laughs)

KLEIN: The *Lone Ranger*. But our biggest entertainment I think was either *Show Boat* or one of these other ... entertainments with a big band. On Saturday night we'd all gather around in the living room and listen to this. But I go further back than that. My brother ... who was eleven years older than I was, hell it was the musician, the only brother I had. He fooled around with radio and he made a crystal set. Do you know what that is?

MCLAUGHLIN: Yes.

KLEIN: For a volume, you take the earphones and you put them in a huge bowl, and that increased the volume. And it was amazing to me, how could sound come out of these little wires you know. I don't remember a program but ... we heard some noise coming out of it. I'm sure he—I don't know whether we ... the first broadcast of a national election was 1920.

PIEHLER: Yes.

KLEIN: I was only three years old myself ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: ... so if we heard I didn't remember it. Television was another thing that was very, very—I think the first television program I saw was the ... first National Convention that was televised. That was ... Truman in 48, wasn't it?

PIEHLER: Yes.

KLEIN: Truman and uh ...

PIEHLER: And uh Dewey.

KLEIN: Dewey. With the third party Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond.

PIEHLER: And Henry Wallace.

KLEIN: Henry Wallace too. Well the Henry Wallace convention was the first one that was televised. Television was so new that you'd walk along the street and you got to a radio station, a

radio store. It always had a television set and people crowded around (laughter) because it was hard to conceive of this image being conveyed to us from Chicago or Dallas or wherever it was. But that was much later, of course.

MCLAUGHLIN: Were the heyday of ... the competing amusement parks gone by the time you were a teenager?

KLEIN: No, we went to Coney Island—didn't go, Coney Island was a long way off and ... a major ...

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to ...

KLEIN: ... Luna Park that was the biggie. Yeah. But it was a long distance. You'd take the train or the subway. Nobody was unaccustomed or upset by traveling an hour or an hour-and-a-half. We had relatives in Queens and, you know, you'd take the subway down to 14th Street and then you'd change and get on the Queensboro train and you'd get out there in an hour and you'd come back in an hour. How else could you get around? The only car that I ever—my brother had a car and it was a ... I think he once took us for a ride. It was—I always asked my father why he didn't have a car. He used to tell me that in the shop you know. He'd drive cars around, you know, as he had to. You know, he was a ... working class man and he couldn't conceive of working class men ...

PIEHLER: Having a car ...

KLEIN: ... owning a car or owning a house. We lived in a two-story, two-family house, which was typical in those days. These were row houses, two families. During the Depression, the owner went bankrupt and the mortgage was taken over by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. We sent the man around to feed the coal in the ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Stoker.

KLEIN: ... stoker in the wintertime. And, you know, the insurance companies did not want to be in the business of running houses. So they pleaded with my father, you know "for fifty dollars, a hundred dollars, a thousand dollars, buy the damn house! We'll give it to you." He didn't want the responsibilities of home owning you know. If you were a renter, you know and the plumbing went bad, you'd called up and somebody came and fixed it. If you were an owner, my God you were responsible for things yourself and there were not a lot ... of trades people who would come and fix things. We never owned a house, which always bothered me. I said, "All these years, you know we lived there and could have bought that house for nothing." Then of course it'd increase in value so that by the time I went to—my mother died in 1940 and we moved from there. We would have been ... homeowners. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: I'm curious, one of the Bronx institutions I wanted to ask about was also the Bronx Zoo. Did you go there?

KLEIN: Often. Not at any—Bronx Park was even more interesting than the Bronx Zoo. One of my favorite activities on Saturday was to walk. And I ... God I wish I could do it now. It was a couple of miles. Walking through Bronx Park through Fordham University, which was ... on the fringes of Bronx Park or in Bronx Park. I can't remember. Then walking to one of the major branch public libraries in Bronx ... on Valentine Avenue. I'd load up with books and walk back again. I was always impressed with Fordham University because you know it's Gothic style and of course it had all these priests wandering around and they'd scare the hell out of me ... they'd eat me up. (Laughter) But ah ... the libraries, the public libraries were very good. There was another interesting library I never dared borrowing from. There was the Socialist Party, the Socialist I guess, I don't know, the Socialist Party and they built homes for ... poor people at lower rates. One of them was the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the other was the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. One of them had a huge row of apartment houses. I mean, I don't know if there is anything like it even here in Knoxville. Huge rows. And they rented them at very very low prices. In the winter time, for some strange reason if I wanted to take a break when I was in college from studying, I would bundle up and I'd take a long walk and I'd always drop into their library. And ... is this on tape? All right, I was just fascinated by all this literature. The *Communist Manifesto* and all this stuff around you know. I had no idea what it was, but I'd look at it and I'd sit there and warm up before I started back for my walk back home. Those houses still are in existence, apparently they were very well maintained.

PIEHLER: I wouldn't be surprised if they were still owned by the Amalgamated Union.

KLEIN: Now later on you know insurance companies, like the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, built a series of houses like that; Stuyvesant Village, Cooper Village, and one up in the Bronx, the name of which I cannot remember called ... I don't know. They all did it then and they charged a lot more and they were a lot fancier. But ... the initial ones I remember were built by labor unions.

PIEHLER: Yeah... my parent's lived—my first memories were living in these ... style apartments in the Queens-Fresh Meadows was a life insurance ...

KLEIN: That would be fancy.

PIEHLER: Yeah, oh yeah. No this was ...

KLEIN: I had an uncle ...

PIEHLER: ... they were ...

KLEIN: ... who lived in Fresh Meadows and ... I don't know. Who ... built those?

PIEHLER: I think those were Metropolitan Life. That was one of the much later ones. But I know exactly the style ...

KLEIN: Based elevators and ... —and no I had an uncle who lived in Fresh Meadows and getting out there was a—I think by then I had a car. This was after the war of course.

PIEHLER: How, how—you mentioned the public library was a major place you would go to. What's the youngest memory you have of going to the public library? Were you five, six or ...

KLEIN: No, no, no. There was none in the vicinity of ...

PIEHLER: Your neighborhood.

KLEIN: ... In the neighborhood where I grew up as a child. It was not until I was about thirteen that I learned that there was a library and it wasn't in our neighborhood. It was a couple of miles away and that was when I began going. And it's when I was in college that's where I went to get books, because getting them from the college library was a nightmare. (Laughter) You know, it was a very very complicated system. I don't know what system, it wasn't the Dewey Decimal system, but it was something that antedated that I think. And I don't know if you were here when we had ... the library here ... our library, Hoskins, was divided in half by glass, heavy glass partitions so that you could get two stories out of one. It always scared the hell out of me being on this thing looking down and seeing that I was on glass. Of course, some of the books you had to get there. But there was—at City College there was a history reading room. All the history majors knew that they would spend their lives in the history reading room, because most of the books were on reserve and there were multiple copies there. When I got here and asked for multiple copies, they had never heard of such a thing. But ... you know ... I could mention some books of which you've never heard of course, which existed. These were World War II books. One was—the authors were Cook and Stickley. These were documents on World War I because World War II hadn't occurred. And ... they put us through rigorous reading. We'd read the Treaty of Versailles and we'd read the Sykes-Pekoe Agreement. We'd read those, and of course, you'd have to take notes on them you couldn't borrow the books, the books were this big. (Gestures) We got to know the librarian who was God, because if you opened your mouth ... you know ...

PIEHLER: He'd shake his hand at you?

KLEIN: Every history major of my generation remembers the history reading room.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go—I know the New York Public Library use to maintain a history reading room too. Do you ever go to that one?

KLEIN: Oh I lived in the New York Public Library when I was a graduate student. The New York Public Library was open 365 days a year. That was the 42nd Street library, the reading room. And ... you wondered—again you took the subway down, you wondered, “What the hell are people doing here on New Year's Day or Christmas Day.” But those were—if you were doing a dissertation you ... (Laughter) The manuscript room was not open ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: ... but the main reading room was a magnificent place. The only trouble is that you had a little slip and you went up and turned in the card and there was a huge board with flashing numbers and you waited for your number [for instance] number sixty-two. Then you went up and got the book. Sometimes it took them forever and sometimes [they'd say], "unavailable." "What do you mean?" "We can't find the book!" Oh, you were just furious. I don't know what the system is now.

PIEHLER: Oh it's still the same system.

KLEIN: But the New York Public Library is a magnificent place. Of course, the manuscript room was even better. Once you got known to them they greeted you like a regular, you know, ... customer. You were working on X papers or Y papers and they would pull them out. They were very nice. There were Russian reading rooms and separate reading rooms for almost every—art reading rooms. They always had something on exhibit on display on the main floor. If you had time and Rutgers students didn't have time, I'd stop and glance at it but, you know. When you were doing a dissertation, the urgent thing was to get the damn thing done.

MCLAUGHLIN: Now you ... mentioned some of the older books. The first book you read was like the *History of the World* volume or something as a youth?

KLEIN: I ...

MCLAUGHLIN: ... I thought gosh, "I wondered if I could find that book," the multi-volume...

KLEIN: No, no, no. When I began at City College I took History 101. What do we call it here now? What the ...

PIEHLER: It's like 242, 243.

KLEIN: They changed them. That was history one or two or three or four. One and two were I guess the history of civilization or ... yeah I guess or European history. This was—I entered City College in 1933. Hitler had already assumed power, which was September of '33. My instructor was a man named Louie L. Snyder. And ah, he told us stories about himself mostly, because he had never taught a day in his life. He had gotten a Ph.D. at Bonn or something with a book, which I [can't] remember the name of ... it was a book critical of Hitler. So, they threw him out. He didn't think it was safe. He was Jewish, didn't think it was safe. He got a job at City College and he told us frankly; "I've never taught this course," but he says "but we will learn together." There was a syllabus, which was a printed syllabus, which everybody followed. Everybody apparently selected his own textbook. And for reasons I do not understand, he decided we would use H.G. Wells' *A History of Mankind*. Have you ever read it?

MCLAUGHLIN: No, but I was going to ask you about it.

KLEIN: Read it! This book half of it consisted of pre-history, Neolithic, Pale ... I was just fascinated. I suppose if I had continued in that course I would have become an anthropologist because this was absolutely Greek to me. In high school, we never learned history like this.

Here was a guy who would come in and say, “How did you like that last chapter?” Because he said, “I read it for the first time too.” And that was ideal teaching you know. That’s how I learned to teach and that’s the way I taught right through college ... you know, I shared my, you know, I read that and I turned to the class and asked “what did you think?” Then we had a discussion. His book was *Nordicus*, look it up sometime. N-O-R-D-I-C-U-S—and there was a subtitle but he was thrown out for it. *Nordicus ... The Challenge to Power*, I don’t know. For the second half—of course, that’s how I became fascinated with history. In a million years later when my mentor, my Ph.D. mentor, Richard B. Morris was retiring and they gave him a retirement dinner at the Faculty Club at Columbia. I was asked you know to the podium and ... I was asked to be one of the speakers as his first doctoral student. Well I went up to New York, and I remember, with a tuxedo, which I carried in one of these bags you know. A small overnight bag, because I was only staying overnight. And I stayed at the Commodore Hotel, which was right above Grand Central Station. I checked in, and I got dressed in this thing and I was so ashamed—I had luckily not an overcoat, but a topcoat. In New York we had seasonal coats. You had topcoats for the spring and you had winter coats for the winter and then you had ... spring coat, too much money spent. Anyway, I had this spring coat and I covered up—I didn’t want anyone to see the bowtie on the subway. They might think I was some kind of rich goof. They might rob me. I got off there and the speakers included people like Alfred A. Knopf who represented his publisher, who published most of his books, and the head of the department, the president of the university, and I guess me. When I went in sat up there and looked around and I saw people at tables, there I saw Louie L. Snyder, my first teacher, you know. He had grey hair. So, I went over to him and I said, “Dr. Snyder you don’t remember me, but I had you in 1933.” And I said, “And it’s because of your course that I became fascinated with history.” And he answered it very properly and said, “I wish you had told me.” I discovered then, you know that kids don’t tell their teachers, at the time they’re taking them, what a good course it was or something, because they’re asslickers or something. It’s like when I went into the ... eyeglass store right behind Hoskins. You know the store? I went in there with broken glasses after I was retired. Here was this young lady there, who was the son (daughter) of the owner, said, “You’re Dr. Klein aren’t you? I had U.S. History with you.” And I said, “What are you doing now?” “Oh she was teaching in the public schools.” I said, “Did you like the course?” “Oh it was just fascinating, you were wonderful.” I said, “Why didn’t you tell me so?” (Laughter) “Oh I was too embarrassed.” So, the moral of the story is if you have a good teacher, tell him!

PIEHLER: I want to go back just a little bit ...

KLEIN: Alright.

PIEHLER: ... to some of your other education cause you were a product of, well you were really a product ...

KLEIN: This doesn’t have to do with World War II, does it?

PIEHLER: We’ll get to World War II and we’ll get—could you talk a little bit about your earliest education back in PS, is it eighty-one?

KLEIN: Eighty-nine.

PIEHLER: Eighty-nine.

KLEIN: Where the hell did you get that information?

PIEHLER: That's from your pre-interview survey.

KLEIN: Oh really?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: Oh I wrote it out.

PIEHLER: You wrote it out. Yeah ...

KLEIN: PS 89 was an elementary school—well I went to two schools before, PS 6 when I was I guess in ... kindergarten, the first and second grade—and all I can remember about that is that it was about three blocks away and either my older brother or sister would walk me there you know, holding my hand. Then I went to another school for three years, 66. I can't remember. Eight-nine [PS 89] I was there for three years from the age of ten to thirteen. And it was about ... ten blocks away and of course, we walked. We had a lunch hour and we walked home for lunch—there was no lunchroom so nobody could eat uh there. It was, I guess a pretty good school. It was in ... the boonies, it was nothing surrounding except woods and trees. Five, seven years ago I went to visit a friend in New York and he said, "Let's drive up there." He had a car, he was in Queens, [he said] "Let's drive up." We drove up and the place is surrounded by housing development now, but otherwise the street it was on was very, very much the same. It was largely Italian and a little Jewish and there was a church and it had a shrine they had created, you know. Madonna, and spring water, and people came there like going to Lourdes you know, left their glasses and so on. That shrine was still there. The only thing different about the school was that it was surrounded by houses. But ... it was a pretty good school and I guess I was smart enough to be selected to take the test for a special high school called, Townsend Harris High School, which was a preparatory school for City College. And the virtue of it is that ... if you went to a public school—if you went to a regular elementary school and then to a high school you had to take a special test to get into City College and it was fairly difficult. I don't know if you needed an 85 average, that would be a B+ average in high school, and then you took the test and passed and so on—if you got into this Townsend Harris High School you were already in. You were automatically allowed into City College, because it was the prep school of City College, you see. But you had to take a test in the elementary school to get into Townsend Harris. I took the test and passed. I don't know whether that was a good thing or not, because—I think there were three of us who used to go down together on the subway. The high school had been on the City College premises, but it had—the college outgrew—the college wanted the building. It was called Townsend Harris Hall High School named after Townsend Harris who was our first ambassador to Japan. He was also the one who introduced the bill to create a city college in 1847. So the building was named after him. And ... I think I took the test for getting into Townsend Harris High School in that building, but thereafter I didn't go there. We went to a newer building, three floors in the business college that they had just opened way down at 23rd

Street and Lexington Avenue, which again was like, you know going to Oak Ridge on the subway. It took an hour to get down there. Well kids didn't mind, you fooled around you know, you poked each other and ... the conductors did admonish you [at] this time and the adults always looked at you. We tried to behave, but it was difficult because we were kids. But if it were ... serious business like a test coming up we would study. We had a whole hour to study. So we went down there. The school unfortunately was abolished by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia during World War II as an excess expense. Hunter College, which was a sister college of City College, also had a high school and it has been preserved to this day. They did not abolish it. But the advantage of going to Townsend Harris was, one that you could automatically get into City College, and two you did the four years work in three ... whether that's an advantage or not, I do not know.

Years later in the 1960s, the Carnegie Foundation began studying ways of teaching gifted students, gifted and talented students. One of the techniques that they decided was brand new was advanced placement, that is, taking kids who were bright—and most of them agreed that in the fourth year of high school they did nothing. They fooled around. They were just waiting to get into college. So they said, "Let's just skip the fourth year, give these kids an entrance examination and if they passed, let them get in as advance placement students to college, to the University. And Yale, Harvard the other, all participated. After studying it for three or four years, they decided to abolish it for a number [of reasons] number one, they said, the kids were not socially mature enough. You know sixteen—I was sixteen when I went to City College. So they lost that opportunity to become a year more socially mature and two, it was an all boys school, which was awful. I never learned. I never met a girl. And, of course, when the high school ... had its prom, woo! How could I go to a prom? (Laughter) So you lost some of that.

But the teachers in the school ... many of them were people who had applied to teach at City College and were on hold. They had no jobs for them so they temporarily put them, asked them if they'd teach at Townsend Harris until an opening became available. I'd say mostly they were lousy teachers. They were very, very bright scholars, I could name some of them to you who became great scholars, but they lectured and ... they were dull as hell. (Laughter) I'll never forget some their technique was just stupid ... one of them who was a cryptographer during World War spent a lot of time letting us know he was a cryptographer and some of the kids you know would develop some kind of crypt and put it on his desk before he came in. And we were in before he came in and he'd take one look at it and he would put it in the trash basket, "Elementary!" (Laughter) Another one I remember who was a real jerk was the math teacher who is ... who had white hair. I don't know how old he was, he must have been sixty, maybe sixty-five; but apparently he was strong as an ox. And to demonstrate that we should not fool around with him, the windows in these schools ... were very, very high windows. Have you seen any of those?

MCLAUGHLIN: Yes, I've seen ...

KLEIN: There is a school up the street here that is now an office building ... or Tyson Junior High School? The windows of—and there were window poles, which you used to pull down the top of the window. This guy would go and get a window pole and put it on the floor and then lift it like this, you know (arm motion), which is hard as hell. [He'd say], "Anyone else who can do

that get up here and do it.” Well no one had the strength to do that, you know. And that was to impress us that we were not to fool around with him because he would beat the hell out us.
(Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: The curriculum, was Latin mandatory?

KLEIN: What?

MCLAUGHLIN: Was Latin mandatory?

KLEIN: No ... you could either take the Latin course or the French and German course. I took French and German. I had some good French teachers I suppose. The German teacher ... was the one that was interesting. ... I can't remember his name. Hitler came to power we were still there, and of course we kept asking him and his answer—I believe he was either a Nazi or Nazi inclined. His simile was this, he says “Why did people vote for Hitler?” He said, “When people are drowning they will grasp at any straw.” You know, which is a lot of shit because there were a lot of other straws they could have grasped at ...

PIEHLER: That was his ...

KLEIN: ... but this was his explanation for Hitler. For the second half of German, we had a young fellow who had just gotten his Ph.D. or was about to get it, and he taught like a real teacher. And ... I don't know if he's alive or not. Townsend High School was revived maybe ten years ago as a high school in Queens as an adjunct or related to Queens College. I'm not quite sure what the relationship is, but they called themselves Townsend Harris High School. It's a four year school and apparently the kids there are quite bright. I don't know if they take an entrance examination to get in, but I get their newsletter but it means nothing to me because you know, it's a younger generation. But it's amazing—I guess they do better when they admit brighter students. The newsletter shows how many Asian-Americans (laughs) are graduating at the top of their class and then going to Hunter College or City College.

But we all ... out of loyalty, we said it was a shame that Townsend High School was abolished, but I do not think so. I think it was a mistake to put kids into three-year schools. You simply lost a year of schooling. For example, I'll never forget, in English ... we read Macbeth, but there was not time to Hamlet. You know, there's a limit you know. I took three years of French and two years of German. Of course, I took another two years of German in college, but I could have taken more of the language. The sciences were limited, I mean, I couldn't take chemistry, biology and physics. I could only take one science. I took physics. [They were] taught very poorly without lab, except the lab for demonstration purposes. So you lose something. Unless, its one of these newer schools that I have not visited. They have these schools for the gifted and talented now in New York City. I'm sure they're four year schools and not three year schools. And I'm sure they are fully equipped with all kinds of, you know, modern equipment. We were deprived. The theory was we were so bright we would learn on our own, which is simply not true. (Laughs) Bright kids need help just as much as ... poor kids.

MCLAUGHLIN: Have you retained any of your languages?

KLEIN: French is the easiest I think because when we went to Paris, I got a Berlitz book and I was able to ask questions and get some answers. German is a little more difficult. But, you know when I went to Budapest. The first or second time ... all of the taxi cab drivers and many of the hotel employees all spoke German. Why? Well they were under Nazi occupation and under the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was before World War II. German was the official national language, so even Hungarians learned German. So, my German wasn't fluent, but I could ask questions and get by. I never took any here, I wish I had taken some refresher courses. My wife keeps saying she'll do it when she retires, but I don't think I could take it anymore. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: You were not so ... Townsend was ... you're not too far from Union Square. Um and ...

KLEIN: Yeah ...

PIEHLER: ... and do you remember any demonstrations or rallies in that area?

KLEIN: No. When I was a kid I did not participate. City College was more active in those days.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: These are the days that Irving Howe writes about, you know. He was a generation, not generation—he was a year or two behind me, so I never knew him. City College ... had an unusual physical arrangement. There was a kind of basement ... they had gym lockers there. The cafeteria was there. The gym lockers were awful, because kids coming out of the showers and these smelly clothes, you know. You went and got your food and almost everybody brought something and then you ate at a standup table, because there were no tables and chairs. But in addition, there was a series of what you call alcoves. How should I describe them? They were parts of the building, which had long benches and big tables in the middle. Ideally they were designed for eating, but the kids of course immediately learned that the tables were about the size of a ping-pong table. So they brought ping-pong nets and everybody in his free time went and played ping-pong. But, the alcoves soon developed into ideological bastions you know. The Stalinists were in one, the Trotskyites were another, and the Jay Lovestonites were another. Were there any Catholics? There were a few Catholics. They were in another. I always used to stand on the outside and the arguments were the most vigorous. I thought ... brilliant. I mean, I couldn't speak the language of these people. They were quoting Marx, Lenin, Trotsky. (Laughs) Whether they knew what they were talking about, I do not know, but I think they did. Many of them came from socialist homes, so they heard all this stuff at home and they argued. I was fascinated, but I never became involved.

MCLAUGHLIN: Too much ...

PIEHLER: Hold that thought.

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

PIEHLER: Oh go ahead.

MCLAUGHLIN: You were talking about the bastions of intelligence ...

KLEIN: Yeah, yeah.

MCLAUGHLIN: ... and we had spoken some about all of the demonstrations. Now there were twenty-one students expelled and ... quite an uproar on campus because of the fascist Italian students being indicted.

KLEIN: I was there ... at the assembly program when it happened. (Laughs)

MCLAUGHLIN: How did that impress you? Did you protest?

KLEIN: (Laughs) I was not very politically active. The Great Hall at City College—have you ever been to Great Hall?

PIEHLER: I've never been to City College.

KLEIN: Magnificent, old gothic building. And I don't know what kind of assembly this was. I guess it was a special assembly to greet these visiting Italian students, and of course the activists all figured out that ... they must be representative of fascist Italy. They ... one of the kids—the president introduced them so on and so forth. I remember one of the Italian students getting up to microphone, and beginning to speak. Rush of kids from the front rows, probably all pre-planned, went up there and grabbed the microphone away from him. [They said] “This should not be haven ...” And ... the president came over and tried to separate them. And what interested me was that I was working on the student newspaper. And the student newspaper took a lot of my time. It was printed somewhere down around ... college, it was a cheap printer. And we were up on 137th Street. So after class at 4:00, we'd go down and work on the newspaper. My job was to write headlines. I remember I got there about ten or 11:00 getting the word that x-number of students, twenty-one students were expelled. And I had to write the headline that would fit the space. You know, this was so much tension. Twenty-one students expelled, you know! (Laughter) But that did happen. I don't think the kids, the Italians got a chance to say anything. ... I ... what should I say? I was unimpressed one way or the other. I mean, I thought it was the perfect right of these kids to protest. I felt sorry for the Italian kids. I don't think they knew much fascism. (Laughs) We had another demonstration. I was trying to (Laughs) remember that much, it ...

PIEHLER: Did you have any strikes for peace? Any walkouts or strikes for peace?

KLEIN: Not in my day. But I'll tell you one thing that I ... must admit I think participated in was the Oxford Oath. Know anything about that?

PIEHLER: Yes!

KLEIN: Okay. The Oxford Oath was taken by students at Oxford, began at Oxford University shortly after World War I ended. ... I guess it was during the '20s, students got fed up you know because World War I had been a disaster, you know. They wanted to end war, not end wars—the League of Nations was not succeeding in ... stopping dictators, you know, like Mussolini and—who else was around? The Spanish?

PIEHLER: Franco.

KLEIN: Franco. And so this oath was devised by some body: “We solemnly swear that we will never take up arms in defense of our country. We will never take up arms, even in defense of our country.” And, of course, this came to the college. And I’m sure I stood up and took the oath regardless. I mean we were absolutely anti-war and actually pacifist. Ironically though, (Laughs) I joined the ROTC. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Why?

KLEIN: Why? You had your choice of two years of physical education. And you know I’m no athlete. I didn’t want to get into all these things, or two years in the ROTC. Or you could also join the band. (Laughs) I said, “I’ll join the band.” They taught me how to play the trumpet, which I could never really play well. But there was a bugler in the drum corps, you know as well as in the band and we played on occasion. So I was in uniform for two years. I’m glad none of my friends never saw me those days when I had to come dressed up in a uniform. But ... it meant nothing to me. I mean obviously getting out of physical education. And I guess I did during my freshman and sophomore year because physical education was required. That requirement ended a few years ago. It was a requirement here too, for many years, you know.

PIEHLER: I know Columbia had it. When I—I didn’t get into Columbia, but I applied and they had a Phys. Ed. requirement.

KLEIN: Many schools had.

PIEHLER: Did you get any stipend for being in ROTC? Any, or was it just, do you remember?

KLEIN: I don’t think so.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: I just learned to play ...

PIEHLER: And you never —because you were such an ideologically divided school, you were never—I’ve talked to someone who was in ROTC in that era, and he ...

KLEIN: ROTC was ... bitterly hated by the pacifists. There was one famous occasion when, I guess the band was not involved. The president of the university, Frederick B. Robinson, broke up a demonstration that was itself against ROTC. And ... he was allegedly, he stormed into the

mob with his umbrella, you know ... began beating people. (Laughter) That was the caricature of Frederick B. Robinson, who was the president, that has been remembered by people forever ... with his umbrella! (Laughter) But yeah, many of the kids in ROTC were ... ideologically driven. I don't want to make this a generalization, but I suspect most of them were not Jewish. These were the Catholic and Protestant kids, which we did not have many, but ... Jewish kids by and large came from socialist families, pacifists—not my family, we never discussed politics in my house. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Did you family subscribe, get a newspaper growing up?

KLEIN: The only newspaper we got was a Hungarian newspaper, which my father read. A local newspaper called *The Bronx Home News*, which my mother and the rest of read. But we, *New York Times*, papers like that ...

PIEHLER: Or *Daily News* or ...

KLEIN: *Daily News*, I guess I occasionally read. It was too expensive, it was two cents. (Laughter) But I'd pick it up, you know in the subways because people left their newspapers on the seats you know. So expensive I guess. I pick it up and read it. What I indulged in was ...—I guess we did get the *Sunday Times*, because there was a section it, of pictures done in a technique, which we no longer use, called Rotogravure, brown ... and I was a World War I buff. I cut out pictures of General Pershing, so—I don't know what the hell I did with them. I cut out pictures from that, but I don't think I read the newspaper. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Did you ever watch any of the veterans, Armistice Day parades in New York? Any of the big Armistice Day parades? They used to gather around 23rd Street in Madison Square Park.

KLEIN: No, I don't think—no, no my favorite was the Memorial Day parades, but that was after World War II.

PIEHLER: You never went to say to the Memorial Day parades that were around Grant's Tomb?

KLEIN: No ... it was too far away. The parades I engaged in ... one Lindbergh returned, then my Boy Scout troop went down and paraded in that one. And the other was the return of Admiral Byrd from the South Pole or the North Pole, which—he went to both didn't he?

MCLAUGHLIN: Yes.

KLEIN: So, Lindbergh was what '27?

MCLAUGHLIN: Ah yes.

KLEIN: So I was ten years old. I was old enough to carry a flag. I was a flag carrier. It was just exhausting, because the flag was very heavy and stuff around me. Byrd about the same time

or two years later, I don't know. But those were the only parades I participated in. The Memorial Day parades were the ones I watched afterwards.

PIEHLER: You were a Boy Scout?

KLEIN: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: How long were you a Boy Scout? And who sponsored your troop?

KLEIN: Every kid on the block, you know, at a certain time became a Boy Scout. And ... one the advantages of it, you would go to Boy Scout camp very cheaply. I went to Boy Scout camp—my parents could not afford to send me to a private camp, but I went for three years—'29, '30 and '31, I think. And ... the cost was ... fifteen dollars for the first two weeks, and seven and half-dollars for every week there after. I don't remember where they got the money, but I stayed for four weeks.

MCLAUGHLIN: Could they afford to buy you your uniform? Your Boy Scout uniform? I know that one ...

KLEIN: Oh, that cost a fortune. I was such a lousy kid that I insisted on everything being, what was called official. You know had to have the official stamp. There were a lot of ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: ... non-official ones. I was afraid they would bar me from the camp, scaredy-cat kid. So my mother ... I don't, well I say, I don't think we ever wanted for it, there were three siblings who were earning money, and they turned the money in to my mother. And ... '29, '30 and '31 I guess my brother may have been married by then, but my two sisters were living at home and ... they must have the money to buy an official blanket, and you know, shorts and shirts. Boy Scout camp was great, but it was primitive as hell, you know. We went to this area where they were building the camp. And our merit badges came from hacking away at trees, and merit badges, forestry, or binding together ... stalks to make a ... handrail for primitive bridge down to the lake. And you got a merit badge in bridge building, or something. And the meals were just awful. I remember that a typical meal—each table was served by a server, you know. And I remember the server coming out and getting a big bowl—these were all kitchen size things, slices of bologna. (Laughter) The thing we all enjoyed most was that there were mounds of bread. Of course the cheapest and the worst bread, white bread. And something called cow flop, which was apple butter. Of course, we just lived on apple butter and bread. When the parents' days occurred periodically, on a Sunday and ...—one of my friends father had an automobile, and drove my mother up. Then, of course they gave us chicken on Sunday. (Laughter) So that the parents could see how well we were really fed.

PIEHLER: Where was the camp? Was it in the ...

KLEIN: Ten Mile River, New York, up in the ...

PIEHLER: Was it in ...

KLEIN: ... in Sullivan County, I guess.

PIEHLER: Okay.

KLEIN: And there were no highways then. I remember ... we took the bus, I guess down to the entry port where you got on the big bus. Then we went up by bus, and what would take you an hour and half now on the highway, you know, would take all day. You know, you stop for lunch somewhere and you finally get there at three or four o'clock after an all day trip. Which must have been hell on the driver because, you know, how could you get kids to sit still for that much time? (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What rank were you as a Boy Scout?

KLEIN: I got as high as Star Scout. I couldn't make ... Eagle and what's the other one?

PIEHLER: Life and Eagle.

KLEIN: Because I couldn't swim well enough.

MCLAUGHLIN: It was a one-mile swim.

KLEIN: Yeah, I couldn't pass the swimming test.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like you liked the Boy Scouts quite a bit?

KLEIN: Well ... we met Friday night in the local, in the elementary school, and you played basketball, you fooled around, we learned Morse code.

PIEHLER: Did you learn the signal—the flags?

KLEIN: We learned semaphore ... it was fun.

MCLAUGHLIN: Learned your knots.

KLEIN: Knots! Yeah.

PIEHLER: And the neighborhood kids that all joined, I mean were they Italian, Jewish or ...

KLEIN: Yeah, a mix.

PIEHLER: A mix. So ...

KLEIN: Yeah, yeah. Religion was never mentioned. I just—one of my buddies, three of us who were in the group, sent me a picture of a banquet we attended. And he circled me. And I

said, I can't remember that banquet at all. I said, "What did we eat," you know. I think I was pretty kosher then. I can't imagine me eating pork chops or anything like that.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: But I ...

PIEHLER: Did you grow up in a kosher household?

KLEIN: Oh yes, very kosher.

PIEHLER: So they had separate dishes?

KLEIN: Huh?

PIEHLER: Separate dishes?

KLEIN: Oh yes. Great fun was Passover when you not only got rid of your dirty dishes, but you got dishes that were stored in the basement. That was the advantage of this two family house. We had this basement. And Passover dishes—I don't know if you know what we're talking about.

MCLAUGHLIN: I took a religion course.

KLEIN: Oh okay. Passover dishes were always ancient, chipped enamel, so you only used them for seven days. The only thing I remember about Passover for some reason my mother always bought a crate of eggs. You know what a crate is? It's—how many dozen? Ten dozen? 'Cause everything was baked with ... eggs. There were limits on what you could cook, I guess. She was a good baker. Hungarians are supposed to be good bakers and they are. She baked everything, the breads and the cakes and so on and so on. That was a fun time. We stay off from school. No, we didn't stay off from school, but we were given you know, our own lunches to take. You know, Matzos. We used to call it hemstitched cardboard because it was just awful. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did your family belong to a synagogue growing up?

KLEIN: No, because belonging to a synagogue cost money. What they did was to attend the high holy services in which case they bought tickets.

PIEHLER: Bought tickets.

KLEIN: But to be a regular member of a synagogue was just too expensive. I went to Hebrew school, of course. I went as far as Hebrew high school for a year. I gave it up, because it was when I began Townsend Harris and I simply could not do the work at Townsend Harris and also Hebrew high school at the same time. So I just quit.

PIEHLER: Had you been bar mitzvahed?

KLEIN: Yeah, sure! Sure. Went to a ... after bar mitzvah went to my first year of high school. As a young man in college, the rabbi—who was very modern, used to have Saturday afternoon classes for the young men. That's where I began turning against organized religion, Jewish religion, because some of the stuff was absolutely ridiculous. I'm not making fun of the Jewish religion. I'm a Jew, was a Jew. But read the Schulchan Aruch, which are rules of living. And some of them were absurd. First of all, there were blessings to be said for everything—you know, washing your hands ... but I was appalled when he said if you farted, there was a blessing. And I was in college then, and I think realizing there is something crazy about this you know, illogical, irrational. I didn't leave ... the church then, but I think that's when my first doubts developed.

PIEHLER: And this was at City College, this ...

KLEIN: Yeah.

PIEHLER: This was a rabbi who was with ...

KLEIN: He would take us, he would take me particularly to the basketball games, for City College had a great basketball team. He was a big basketball fan, and he would take me to the games.

PIEHLER: Was he a Hillel rabbi? Is that or ah ...

KLEIN: He was a youngish man. He was with Young Israel.

PIEHLER: Okay.

KLEIN: Which I guess was a little bit more modern ...

PIEHLER: Modern.

KLEIN: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Was there an active Zionist movement at City College? Everyone talks about some of the other political divisions. What about Zionism?

KLEIN: No, I don't recall. They were not involved at all. Lets see—how active were the Zionist in the '30s?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KLEIN: I don't, you know, I think they were much more active after the State of Israel was created, weren't they?

PIEHLER: There was also another thing a lot of people had memories ...

KLEIN: I wrote a paper on Zionism in America, which I could let you have. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: This was in the '30s?

KLEIN: No, a few years ago. Hadassah of Oak Ridge said that they were looking for someone to give a talk on Zionism in America. I said, "Call Gilya Schmidt." [He said], "We've had Gilya so many times we want somebody new, a fresh face." I said, "Gee, I don't know anything about that." I hung up, and my wife said "Come on, you can look up that stuff just as easy as you look up anything else. Tell em you'll do it." (Laughter) So okay, I'll tell them I'll do it. And I think I had a pretty good paper. What upset me was they were the only ones who invited me. I thought after I was through with it, maybe Hadassah out of Knoxville would invite me to give a paper. I still have the paper.

PIEHLER: Oh go ahead Gary.

MCLAUGHLIN: Ah well we were talking about City College, and I don't know if you want to get that far ahead yet 'cause there is so much in your youth ...

PIEHLER: Well one thing I want to ask about your youth—before college, what did you think you'd like to be, you know? You didn't see yourself as a historian?

KLEIN: Never gave it a thought.

PIEHLER: And you were the only one in your family to go to college?

KLEIN: Right.

PIEHLER: What happened with your brothers and sisters?

KLEIN: Poor things, I mean my eldest—well they had to support the family. My eldest ... sibling, it was my sister, she was thirteen years older than I was. There was a real gap between us. I was like their baby, you know. (Laughs) I'm told that they used to fight with each other for the privilege of wheeling me around in the carriage. So, you know, I can't remember much about them 'til later. One of them was very talented as an artist, unfortunately she could never make it. She took lots of, after high school—she took, after high school every one, every girl was expected to go to work in working class families. You know, not many in '30s went to college. And she got a job working for a greeting card company designing greeting cards. The house was full of ...

PIEHLER: So maybe she did practice her—she was an artist. I mean a graphic artist.

KLEIN: Yeah, and she also designed clothing, which we found fascinating. My daughter-in-law has some of the old ones. They were kind of a flapper design. You know what a flapper was? Well my daughter-in-law, she took six of these flapper drawings and had them framed. And it's

a prized piece in her house. My other sister, obviously just took, what was called, a commercial course and she learned short hand. And she went to work as a stenographer. Anti-Semitism was so ... violent, so pronounced in those days that she virtually changed jobs every year. She was blonde and blue eyed, had no trouble getting a job, but when the High Holy days came, like Rosh Hashanah. And she said, "I'd like to take tomorrow and the day after off." And the guy would say, "What for?" "It's a Jewish holiday," and he'd say "Don't come back." (Laughs)

PIEHLER: How ...

KLEIN: She changed jobs often. She got married fairly early I guess, and so her husband could care for her. My brother, tragedy, he—can't remember much about him because he died when he was twenty-eight. And if I was eleven years younger, how old was I, seventeen? Yeah. I had just begun City College, the first year and was told he had died. He was ... he learned to play—all of my siblings learned to play the piano. That was the thing to do. You taught your children to play something. He somehow got into a band, a jazz band. In the process, he learned to play, on his own, the saxophone, the flute, and the clarinet. And pretty soon began going out to night clubs making money. My mother was very upset by that because you know the family would convene for dinner and he would, he say, "I'm leaving now." And he'd leave and come home at one o'clock in the morning. And she was always worried about him. As it happened, he developed what they called rheumatic heart. How that happened, I don't know. I think in those days, they did not know how to treat that. And she kept worrying, you know, about to engage in these—in addition he got married very early. The view in those days was that sex would kill you, if you had a bad heart. And ... I remember him with absolute devotion. He was my big brother. I don't know about you kids, but every kid wants a big brother. And he was my big brother. And he played with big bands, you know the (Paul Weigand?) kind of thing. And he invited me and my mother down to the Roxy, the Capitol or one of the big theaters like the Tennessee Theater. Free tickets and we sat in a loge, each of these things around the side, where you really couldn't see much. But a good view of the stage. I was so proud my brother was playing there. (Laughs) I'll never forget, once he invited my mother and me down to see a movie—there was a movie with the intermission show. He said, "Would you like to come down and see the *Big Parade*?" My mother said, "What parade?" It was a movie with John Gilbert and Renee Adoree called the *Big Parade*. It was a World War I picture. (Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: Yes, I remember ...

KLEIN: So you went to see the *Big Parade*, did ya?

MCLAUGHLIN: Yes I do.

KLEIN: I forget the ending, and then I think a truck is leaving. She's waving to him and running after him, and he's in the truck. Is that the way?

MCLAUGHLIN: Yes. And what was the first movie you ever saw? Or was that unfair?

KLEIN: No, no, no. I think it was one called *Lilac Time*. (Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: I don't know that one.

KLEIN: No, well look it up. Ah ... these were the days of silent movies. And my brother and sister to make money played music at the front of the theater. Yeah, you know. They made ... the music up as they went along to fit the mood, you know. How they did it? They were clever. And I went to the Ritz Theater, and I think the movie was called *Lilac Time* with Colleen Moore or something, I don't know. You got one of these books of movie ... like Muldowny has books ...

PIEHLER: I have one at home, but ... So, your first movies were silent movies?

KLEIN: Yes, yes. I remember going to see Al Jolson ...

PIEHLER: *The Jazz Singer* when it first came out?

KLEIN: Oh my god, it was incredible to hear somebody say something.

MCLAUGHLIN: Did you think that halfway through—when the movie started and there was no sound. Did you think what a rip-off, they've cheated us?

PIEHLER: No, no, no.

MCLAUGHLIN: You knew ...

KLEIN: We didn't expect sound. How could you expect sound? (Laughs) It was unbelievable.

MCLAUGHLIN: Do you remember the, do you vividly—like I remember of course, JFK's assassination. Do you vividly remember "Black Tuesday"?

KLEIN: Not particularly, no. (Laughs)

MCLAUGHLIN: It wasn't a big thing in your neighborhood?

KLEIN: I was a kid, you know. What was I? Twelve years old.

PIEHLER: I'm curious about ...

KLEIN: You've got to remember there is a script in all of this.

PIEHLER: You talked about the anti-Semitism a few minutes ago that—you sister for example, every time they learned, you know, she was Jewish they would fire her ...

KLEIN: The one who was an artist, she worked for a Jewish company so there was no problem.

PIEHLER: That was no problem. How aware were you of that—particularly in college and thinking of careers, you know your job. What were your thoughts about anti-Semitism and what would be possible?

KLEIN: Almost every kid, almost every Jewish kid unless he was rich expected to go ... into a, you know, rich kids was expected to go get a master's at Harvard or some place—Columbia. ... we all expected to go into the public schools to teach because there was no anti-Semitism there. You took an exam, and they didn't ask your religion and the public schools were filled with Jewish schoolteachers and non-Jewish administrators. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, it was the teaching ranks were open. And that was a ...

KLEIN: It was just automatic.

PIEHLER: So the idea of sort of going ... getting your career that you would have. The idea of going to say Columbia or Harvard for a Ph.D. ...

KLEIN: Out of the question. Now I did get a master's, but at City College. One, we didn't have the money to afford ... Columbia or any other place. Although some of my friends apparently ... got fellowships. I had no one to guide me. I didn't have a brother. I had no one in the family to guide me. So I knew nothing about these things.

PIEHLER: But also, it also sounds like you were very conscious of the quotas and the discrimination. Is that ...

KLEIN: No, it was unconscious. It was just assumed. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well yeah. But I mean ... your sister was constantly getting fired.

KLEIN: That was routine to me too.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that was just ...

KLEIN: It was a given.

PIEHLER: If you hadn't gone to City College, it sounds like you wouldn't have been able to go to college at that time. Would your family been able to ...

KLEIN: Afford me?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: Private college, no never.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Not even a master's. Though some of my friends did have enough—their parents were wealthy enough to send them to Columbia for a M.A. I had to take an MS in

education because that's all they gave at, and my minor was social studies. But my major had to be education.

MCLAUGHLIN: You spoke about the political diversity that you enjoyed at City College. Is that what got you interested in Moses Finley for your dissertation?

KLEIN: No, that was not my dissertation.

MCLAUGHLIN: Oh I have ... well now, William (Hemingson?).

KLEIN: William (Hemingson?)

MCLAUGHLIN: In some of my research ...

KLEIN: Moses Finley was just one of my teachers.

MCLAUGHLIN: Oh.

KLEIN: Moses Finley.

MCLAUGHLIN: Finley.

KLEIN: No, I just happened to have him as a teacher.

MCLAUGHLIN: Now he was persecuted over ...

KLEIN: Moses Finklestein, changed his name to Finley. And he taught Ancient history in summer, one summer. And ... brilliant. He made us read stuff which our graduate students couldn't read. I mean ... rough stuff, social and economic history of the Roman Empire. I mean, powerful stuff and I was—if I had known Latin and Medieval history too. If I knew either Latin or Greek or studied it, I would have gone into Ancient history because I loved it. These things were just overwhelming to me. How could they know so much about the Ancient world, you know? American history, yeah all right, you know, easy enough to learn. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: One thing I want to make sure I ask because it's been a very vivid memory for some who lived in New York at the time was the New York's World Fair of '39.

KLEIN: Yeah, I went to it.

PIEHLER: Any memories you have of that?

KLEIN: Oh yeah, yeah. One I was teaching by then. I was a ... teacher in training. I guess I was a teacher in training. What you did was take an exam and become a teacher in training, which was like a—I don't know what they call it. You needed, you had to have a year of teaching in training before you could take the examination to become a regular teacher. And that teaching in training, you taught two classes in the fall and three in the spring, and you were

supervised by the head of the department. In my case, I got (Byrd Burton?) supervision. But in any case, I joined the New York City Association of Teachers of Social Studies. And one of their meetings was planned out at the World's Fair. So we went out there and I remember walking around with some of the big wigs, you know the heads of the departments that I knew of and admired, trailed after them. We looked at many of the sites. I also remember going out after that with three, two cousins; two male and one female. And she was then teaching at the bank school, or one of these private schools. And she said, "Are you dating anyone?" I said, "No." And she said, "Would you like to date someone?" She had some classmate, good-looking classmate, and she linked me up with her. And I did date her for a while. But I remember the World's Fair ... I believe the Russian building was very—and, of course, the second year, the German building was closed.

PIEHLER: What about the Russian—you mentioned the Russian building left an impression on you?

KLEIN: Yeah. The thing was so overwhelming. I mean the grandeur of it. The long walk. And what is it? The stratosphere and ..., the pylon [perisphere and trylon] and the stratosphere you know, hemisphere. Which was it? Pylon or stratosphere? Just an overwhelming experience. And the subways took you directly to there and just a marvelous experience. We saw television for the first time. You got into a booth, and you spoke and then other people could see you on it. "Oh my god, we saw you." And ... General Electric had one of the buildings on the home of the future, you know. And electric irons, things like that and my mother was still using an iron, which you put on the stove you know, and heated it with the gas then ironed. (Laughter) She said it was much better than the electric one, because you could control the heat better. And of course, I went to the second World's Fair too, which was not as interesting.

PIEHLER: See, that's my earliest childhood memory ...

KLEIN: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: ... is the '64 World's Fair.

KLEIN: The first World War Fair, and, of course, there was Billy Rose and what's her name, Eleanor Holm the famous aqua maid. Seems like ancient history to me, but seems like ... prehistoric history to you. (Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: No it sounds fun. Was the Hippodrome still in existence then or when did it go away?

KLEIN: Yeah, yeah. I'm not sure if I ever went to the Hippodrome. I don't know when it went out of business.

PIEHLER: Did you ... politically, who did your family—was your family Democrats?

KLEIN: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: How about ...

KLEIN: Franklin D. Roosevelt until he died, in fact I kept voting for him afterwards. (Laughter) He was the only president we knew.

PIEHLER: What about LaGuardia? What were?

KLEIN: He was interesting, but I began hating him after he abolished Townsend Harris High School.

PIEHLER: I knew an alumnus who—you know, I was once asking him about LaGuardia and he had been a Townsend grad. And he was not pleased.

KLEIN: In retrospect, I remember going to a meeting down at the roof where there was a—Townsend Harris alumni come down and protest. I say, the more I thought about it. The more I thought there were deficiencies that we had overlooked. The teachers were generally lousy. When I began teaching in the public high schools, and I did for ten years, I found the teachers were infinitely better, because these people had no training. They were simply people waiting to get into City College. And most college teachers are not very well trained in teaching. And these people were equally untrained in teaching. Now they may have been great scholars. I don't think they had yet reached that stage. And, of course, we all considered ourselves somewhat bright because we were going to get through in three years. By then, I had—what year was it '39 when they abolished Townsend Harris? By then, I had done enough work in education to realize that was not the best way to teach gifted, advanced students, there were other ways. In fact, that was one of my fields of interest was teaching gifted and talented students. Enrichment. There were only three ways of doing anything with bright kids. I was asked some years ago, ten years ago, by—there is a local organization here, parents of gifted children, if I would come and talk about recent developments. Hell! I haven't been in the business for forty years, but I wrote to the U.S. Office of Education and they sent me some pamphlets. I was appalled looking through it I found that there would have been nothing new had happened in forty years. (Laughter) There were three things you could do with bright kids. You could skip them, you know, advance them a grade. Or you could keep them in their class and just give them more to do. That was called enrichment. Or you could segregate them put them in homogeneous classes with other bright kids. That's all that we know. And you know, our imaginations have not developed anything newer.

I was active in this movement of the Ford Foundation that subsidizes Carnegie Foundation for the advancement of education program for gifted children. I got a year off. I applied for a year off, when I was teaching high school, to study because I was teaching honor classes. These were segregated kids. I wanted to find out if they had learned any more or better in those classes, than in regular classes, because I also taught regular classes. I had a wonderful experience traveling around the country. I picked a couple of dozen of my graduates, and went to visit them in college because they were all in college. I sat down and interviewed them ... what was better about it? What was worse? What did they learn? Did you enjoy it? And then I went to some forty schools in thirty states that had programs for gifted children to see what they were doing.

They were all doing the same thing. I mean, a variation one or the other. The only place that impressed me was a place called George Washington High School in San Francisco, I never ever looked for it. Where a teacher, must have been a marvel, had a class of about 25 or 30 kids and each child was doing something different at the same time. (Laughs) Two kids were developing an opera and three kids were developing something else, four kids were working on an experiment. And I said, this is not a program, this is a teacher. I mean, you know.

PIEHLER: He was a unique teacher.

KLEIN: You can't develop a program on the basis of that sort of thing.

PIEHLER: What year was that ... you did this—what was the year that you had this Ford Foundation Grant?

KLEIN: Did I say? Let me think. It's ...

PIEHLER: It was while you were still a high school teacher.

KLEIN: I was a high school teacher, and I was going to Columbia at night.

PIEHLER: So this was in the 1940s.

KLEIN: You tell me. It was '50 to '51,

MCLAUGHLIN: Ah '50

KLEIN: ... '52 to '53. Let's see. I got my degree in '54, got a job teaching high—it must have been '56, '57 or '57, '58.

MCLAUGHLIN: '55, '56.

KLEIN: '55, '56? All right, if I said so, it must be. I traveled around the country.

PIEHLER: When—after you got your master, that's when you got your teaching job in the school system. What was your first job? How did that process go? You obviously passed the exam for to ...

KLEIN: It was a nightmare. First of all when I got out of the service, I did not want to teach.

PIEHLER: But before? Didn't you start teaching before the service?

KLEIN: Yeah, that's true ... and that was too good. I was teaching in a good school, George Washington High School, which was in the upper Bronx. And when I got through with this teaching training program, they gave me evening session teaching. I was a substitute teacher, which was a miserable thing. What you did was get up every morning, and wait for the phone to ring and somebody in Brooklyn would say, "Would you mind coming out and teaching a math

class.” “All right.” “Do you have a car?” “No.” “How long will it take you to get there?” “About-an-hour-and-a-half.” “Okay.” You get there by 11:00 and you stay until 3:00. And you sit and take the roll, and you get paid eight and half-dollars, and that was fine. But after a while, I got fairly steady employment in the evening session of George Washington High School, which had among its students people like Henry Kissinger, that’s were he went to school. Washington Heights was the haven of ... dispossessed ... Jews from Hitler’s Germany. And they all happened to settle up in Washington Heights. And they all wanted to become citizens right away, so they went to school in the evening. I taught civics. I taught history. And they all wanted to become citizens right away. I did not have Henry Kissinger, but a friend of mine did.

PIEHLER: Did have him.

KLEIN: She remembered him, yeah. And he went to school there. And that was fine ... but it was after ...

PIEHLER: When did you start teaching?

KLEIN: From there I went directly into the service. Came out of the service and I was still on the regular teaching list. And I keep asking for leaves of absence, obviously they had to give it to me. When I got out, I didn’t want to go back to school. So, I got another leave of absence and by then I was an historian, a military historian. And I was offered a job as a civilian military historian at Mitchell Field, New York. And I accepted that, I loved it. And after a year, I got a note saying, “Your year’s leave is up.” You know, put up or shut up. Well this was the time of the Eightieth Congress, which cut the budget and cut the military. And ... it didn’t cut my job, out but it reduced me in grade by one. And like a fool, I thought that was an insult. And I said, all right, I’ll go back to teaching. (Laughs)

So, first assignment I got was the Brooklyn High School of Automotive Trades, a vocational school. I went out there and talked to the principal. I came back, and I said, “I am not going to do it.” I mean these kids were just wild. I mean, vocational teaching at best is bad, but this one was a bad one. And uh, what did I do? I happened to see an ad in the newspaper in regards to social studies for a school up in the Bronx called Evander Childs High School. I took a chance I went over and visited the chairman of the department. And she said, “Yes we could use you.” To the principal I said “Look, I’m already signed up for Brooklyn High School.” Well this happened to be the only high school in the city that had a Jewish principal. (Laughter) And whether that impressed him, the fact that he’d have one of a few Jewish teachers or not. In any case, he went to bat for me. And he called up the Board of Education, which was like God Almighty on a throne. And he got me transferred and I began teaching at Evander Childs High School, which also was a nightmare. Here is a guy who had been a captain in the service with, you know, secretaries and lieutenants at his disposal and even as a civilian at Mitchell Field I had secretaries galore, and I would review their work. I wouldn’t be doing anything. I go into this high school and you find like our mailboxes out there, only about twice as many. It was a school of four thousand students, and hell of a lot of teachers. And you’d go to your mailbox and pull it out, and here are fourteen notices. You know, one to make sure you collect the milk money. Two, take attendance. Three, if anyone has been absent more than three times report. And you had something like ten or fifteen minutes of what was going to be official class you know, to do

all this. Well I tried for a week, and then I wrote a letter of resignation to the principal. I said, "I can't take this." Well later—I guess the Board of Education, he called me and said, "Would you come in and speak to me please." A very, very wise man and I told him, "I just can't—how can anyone do all these things." He says, "First you have to learn the principle of selective neglect." (Laughter) "Don't do half of these things. Number two, how many student secretaries do you have." I said, "What do you mean?" "You got to take three of four bright girls who are in the commercial program, and ask them if they would like to be your secretaries. They love it. So you have one take the attendance, one collects the milk money, one does this, one does that and you do nothing, except lead the Pledge of Allegiance." And so I learned that's that the way you manage. (Laughter) I got so good you had a free period, you now. And I got one or two of the girls who were in the commercial program to take dictation from me. And I talked to them, and I said where you going to type these. Don't worry, these kids are so smart they found a typewriter somewhere in somebody's office. You know they all had connections with each of the principals, and they'd use these letters and I signed them. It got much better then. And then of course, I was considered one of the prize teachers in the school because I was taking a Ph.D., and they gave me the honors program ... to teach. And they were the very bright kids. And I enjoyed that enormously, and I put in a lot of work on it. And then I got this Ford Foundation Fellowship for a year. When I came back they put me in charge of what was called the honors school, which was a very interesting experiment at the time. Nobody had—any kid, who was in more than two honors classes, or maybe two or more, was called a member of the honors school. And they had to have me. We had special assembly programs, when we invited people in to talk to them. You know, I would invite some professors from Columbia I knew, others would invite scientists in. We had special musical programs for them. And that was just wonderful, but kids felt very selected because they'd had been. It was kind of a homogenous grouping, but these were five or six hundred kids you know, out of a school of four thousand. I don't think it lasted very long, but as a result of that I became interested in learning something about gifted children. So I applied for this Ford Foundation Fellowship and spent the year studying what other schools were doing. And I wrote a couple of articles on that, which I've stored away. Anybody who is interested may have them. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: I once talked to Maxine Lurie ... I believe ...

KLEIN: My student.

PIEHLER: You had had her as a student in high school, and she said that you were always interested in the link between high school, and elementary school and college, because of that sort of pivotal that most of us—I have no teaching experience at high school, except going to one.

KLEIN: Yeah. Well in high school, especially in the honors classes, I had to do something different for these kids. The kids were bright ... one of the things I did. I said—one of the things I found that was intolerable was raising hands. You know, you ask a question and nineteen kids raise hands. What are you going to do? Who are you going to pick on? If you pick on some kids too often, then they're teacher's pets. If you ignore others, they will be insulted. So I said, the rule in these—in the honors class will be this, I said, "It was like carrying on a discussion at home and there were five or six of you, would any of you raise hands?" I said "No, you would

just speak. Well in this class if you have something to say, just stand up and speak.” Well somebody said, “Well suppose five or six of us stand up.” I said, “Well, like at home if five or six of you started speaking, you would decide among yourselves voluntarily. Somebody would shut-up and let the other speak.” And that’s what we did in my class. I’d ask questions, five kids would stand up and I’d go to the back in the room and sit in a chair and just smile. And finally, somebody would start speaking and the others would argue with them. The kids liked this, because it was different. It treated them with respect. Waving hands you know, they said was one of the worst things they hated in school. The other thing I did was use—I had lots of discussion—one of my favorite techniques was to start a period off. I always had—you learn very, very quickly that there were very talented kids if you found out who they are. I found out who all the art students were and one my favorite techniques was to—I was reading the *New York Times* then, and I cut out a cartoon, you know. And ... it was either ... Theodore Roosevelt putting a dagger into the heart of Panama or something like that, you know. And I’d say to them, could you blow this up. (Laughs) The kid would get a big piece of drawing board. I never paid for this, I don’t know where they got this. They said, “We’ll get it,” you know. They had art teachers. I don’t know whether they stole it, and they’d draw this thing. And I would just pin it up on the board. Class would come in, and I’d say, “Suppose you saw this in the newspaper in 1901. What would your reaction be?” And most started talking. Or I’d have a bulletin board, and ... I’d put stuff up there, and I’d send somebody to the board. And I said, “What’s your reaction to that?” Send someone else [I said] “What’s your reaction?” And they would argue, so I enjoyed the honors classes. One class I did not enjoy, they gave me a class called civics. I didn’t know what the hell it was. It was how the sanitation department collects its wastes and how ... the street cleaners. And I said, “How the hell do you teach this crap?” (Laughter)

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Milton Klein on April 10, 2003 at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with Kurt Piehler and Gary ...

MCLAUGHLIN: McLaughlin.

PIEHLER: And you were—the tape ran out just as you were telling a story about civics and how you really didn’t want to teach this course.

KLEIN: It was a useless course and I think they dropped it eventually. But I went to the person who was in charge, the teacher. He was telling me how you could dramatize it and how important it was for the kids to learn about the firemen and policemen and so on so—I suppose that I survived it, but they never gave me the course again. Luckily, I don’t mean to be immodest, but they considered me too good for that stuff. They saved me for the honors classes and the American history classes and ... other assignments like that; not the SAT, but something ... similar that I administered, you know. Some standardized test ...

PIEHLER: The Regents, did you administer the Regents?

KLEIN: Well we all participated in the Regents. Ah, that was a nightmare. All these kids took them and we sat around in little groups. You know just like the SAT is done down in, where is it done now, Texas?

PIEHLER: You mean the advanced placement.

KLEIN: Yeah, yeah, Muldowny ...

PIEHLER: Muldowny, I know.

KLEIN: ... and Elaine [Breslaw] met there. You were thinking of a standardized answer, you know, and then you went through ...

PIEHLER: And tried to ...

KLEIN: ... trying to give points. It was a—I don't believe in them. But to pass several of those, if you passed several you got a Regent's diploma, which was considered, you know, a high achievement. I don't know if it was considered such by colleges. Certainly at City College it made no difference whatsoever and I don't know whether it made any difference to private schools either. I don't know if they're still giving them.

PIEHLER: I think they still are. I think you can still get a Regent's diploma. You were very conscious of refugees. You talked at several points about German refugees, German Jewish refugees you had at City College ...

KLEIN: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: ... and when you were teaching at, Morningside at Upper Manhattan.

KLEIN: Yeah, it was Washington Heights, yeah. No, as a matter of fact I'm sorry to say that ... during the years before I got into the war, we, including most Jews, except those who were in Zionist organizations or others were really uninformed, very poorly informed. *The New York Times* reported it badly, insignificantly on page seven, you know. It was reported that some Jews ... it was very, very poor coverage of what was happening and we knew little about it. Of course, I'm ashamed to say that when I was in the service I read no newspaper and ... I knew even less about it. I never got to Germany and we were very, very poorly educated. I think the Army almost deliberately avoided the subject because it was military policy not to get involved in that. You know Roosevelt ... his policy was the only way to save the Jews was to defeat the Germans. The less emphasis there was on the Jews—I don't think the term Holocaust was used at the time—the better. You know, he turned down every one of Morgenthau's proposals and others to do something to save the Jews. And he ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Of course, well the anti-Semites in the State Department.

KLEIN: ... would say, "Nah, the only way to save the Jews is to beat the Germans. So let's beat the Germans and the Jews will somehow take care of themselves." So I never knew any relatives

I knew of—my mother had a sister who obviously must have died ... but I'm sorry to say that I only learned about the Holocaust after I got out of the service.

PIEHLER: What about the coming of World War II? I mean you had taken the Oxford Pledge and there's a lot ...

KLEIN: I forgot that. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How did you sort of, or do you remember having any sort of feelings strongly about say, modifying the Neutrality Act, or Lend-Lease or aid to the Allies?

KLEIN: I'm sorry to say I was absorbed in teaching. I used all that in my teaching. I remember this bulletin board. When the war started, *The New York Times* had on the front page, the course of the war, you know, outlined it and I cut that out, cut those out everyday and put them on the bulletin board so that the class would know the progress of the war. I used to use in my teaching Gallup Poll results and handed them out. Especially in 1938, '39 to show that—the '37 poll showed that what interested Americans most was Edward VIII's abdication. That was prime news— ... developments in Ethiopia or Italy or Germany were unimportant. Americans were really isolationists, at least the ones I knew. We just didn't discuss it. I'm sorry to say ... and disappoint you but I think that was the general attitude. I don't know how many people you found who said, "Oh yeah, we were all excited about it." No, Americans went about their business hoping that it would not affect us.

PIEHLER: So you didn't know anyone say from your high school class or your college class, any friends of yours that had joined say the Abraham Lincoln Brigade or how about anyone who you knew from City College who had joined like the R.A.F.? You didn't know of anyone in your circle of acquaintances? How much of shock was Pearl Harbor then?

KLEIN: Well it was a ... shock. I didn't believe it. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: At first you didn't ...

KLEIN: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: How did you hear the news?

KLEIN: Unbelievable. (Laughs) Well it's a silly story. A friend of mine and I disagree. We were both members of a ... club. His parents were Hungarian too and there was something called the First Hungarian Independent Lodge. All of these ethnic groups, these immigrant groups had these organizations. Lodges for the purpose of burying themselves in ... plots that they had bought in advance because burials were a big thing. Where the hell you get buried. If you died and didn't have a ... burial plot, you'd be soaked by the lousy cemeteries. The other thing is to have a family doctor. You didn't have family doctors in those days so they'd have a family doctor associated with the group. You know, if you were Slavic, it was a Slavic doctor. Well any case they were having a meeting on a Sunday and this was 1941 and I organized what was called a Young Folk's League. You know, the younger generation.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KLEIN: And our principle activity was partying and boat rides together and things like this. And this was December and we were very concerned where we would have our New Year's Eve party. We checked around some hotels and we just didn't have the money. So I and this friend of mine were delegated to go down to the lodge meeting and ask for a subsidy for renting a room in a hotel so we could have a New Year's Eve party. And the day was December 7, 1941. It was a Sunday. And in the middle of the meeting, some guy gets up and in English says, "Why are we discussing nonsense like that when the United States is at war? The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor." Everybody about snickered you know. My friend and I say, "That crazy guy, what's he talking about, you know?" (Laughter) We got out of the meeting and it was on 125th Street or something and we walked up the street and we kept looking at these newsstand kiosks. You know, in New York? They were all shut. And I said, "Hell, if anything happened it'd be, you know," what do you call them?

PIEHLER: Extra?

KLEIN: Extras you know. I had a girlfriend who was staying with ... his wife. He was married and had a house. We went up to the Bronx and we rang the bell and opened the door. They were on the second floor and I looked up and were there the two of them, my girlfriend and his wife staring, "Have you heard the news?" "What news?" "The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor!" And we looked at each other and said, "My God, it wasn't a joke!" (Laughter) What I kid him about is this, I say, "I know exactly when your first child was born!" Because they conceived that night! He wanted to get out. He didn't like it, and he thought having a child would help. I'm shocked. I registered of course with the others and I continued teaching and ...

PIEHLER: Now you registered for the peacetime draft, the '40 draft?

KLEIN: Yeah, I registered.

PIEHLER: And you hadn't been called up in the '40 draft?

KLEIN: No, never called. So I reregistered and one of my friends, he registered for the '40 draft. What was ... was in October?

PIEHLER: Yeah, I think. It was in the fall.

KLEIN: And it ended in ... '41. And this friend of mine said, "I'm gonna get this damn thing over with and get my year over with." He got assigned to Staten Island and he lived at home and went out there everyday and came back. I don't know what he did. He was about to get out and was boasting to us when Pearl Harbor happened and he stayed in. (Laughter) I don't know where he was assigned—he's dead now, I heard. I was ... drafted ... for the second draft and then Pearl Harbor came and I expected momentarily to be called. And December went and January went and we were in February and I hadn't heard. And unlike the Vietnamese War where, you know, apparently some people considered it to be a vile act to join the service or be

in the Army, it was considered unpatriotic for young men to be walking around in civvies. You were either physically incapacitated, 4-F, or somehow you had friends at court. The thing to do was get in there and fight! I was just as ashamed as anybody. So I went to my draft board and said, "Look I was registered in December and I haven't heard a thing." "What's your name?" They looked through the files. "I don't know. We can't find your name here. We'll let you know." So I went home. (Laughs) The next day the lady called and said, "Mr. Klein, no problem, we finally found your file. You know what happened? Somebody pulled the drawer out and your file fell out on the bottom. And somebody pulled out the bottom file and there was your file lying flat. So we're delighted, you'll get your notice tomorrow." (Laughter) It could have sat there for four years and nobody would have known. So I was given an induction date of February 21, 1942, right yeah. And I was told to report to—I already had my physical exam. That was a joke too in the family because I was rather hypochondriac. I had, in 1940 I had developed a severe allergy to ragweed. During the ragweed season, I couldn't breathe. That was from August 15 to September 30. I couldn't breathe. I used nose drops and all that and everybody said, "That'll surely keep you out." Number two, I had bad feet, a little of what they call flat feet. I wore arches, which were so god damn heavy I don't know how I walked around with steel arches. So ... my mother, no my mother was dead, somebody said, "make sure you take all these things down with you, a note from your doctor and so on." I remember going out to Governor's Island, this is where the exam took place, stripped, and I said to the corporal, "I have these x-rays." "Leave them in the locker room!" (Laughter) "Leave in the locker." So I walked around naked like the others and they examined me. My eyes, [they said] "Oh you'll never get in," because I'm virtually blind in one eye and always have been. Of course, I cheated you know, everybody kept glasses on—give me a piece of paper. They'd say, "Cover this eye." This is the bad eye (demonstrating how he cheated), well I cheated, and I went like this you know. I read with my good eye, I wasn't going to be booted out of there. "1-A." (Laughter) And on February 21, I was invited to come out to Camp Yaphank and join the army.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of enlisting and picking your service?

KLEIN: No. Not many of my friends did.

PIEHLER: You were just gonna wait till you—you expected to be called?

KLEIN: I expected to be called immediately! What was the point of enlisting? Most of my friends were and that's why I was so embarrassed. They'd say, "What's wrong with you Klein?" We went out to Camp Yaphank. I don't know where the hell that—the place that ... Irving Berlin categorized as Yapank in his movie you're *In the Army Now*. Camp Yaphank was out on Long Island and I remember my sister and my father coming down on the subway with me to Penn Station, where we were to assemble and put into groups and they'd take us out on the Long Island Railroad to Camp Yaphank. That was a miserable three days, you know. They gave you every shot that they could think of. Just the other day I was looking through these papers and I see typhus, cholera, smallpox, everything you could think of then. You were miserable for a day just lying there in pain on these cots. And the next day I remember, I was put on KP, you know. You were wearing fatigue clothes that made you look like the worst thing, sloppy hats and you know now they're considered prestige garments. It was awful. While I was in the midst of literally peeling potatoes, I did peel potatoes. [They'd say], "Klein, you have visitors." "I have

visitors. Who are they?" [They said], "there out there." And don't you think—my brother in law had a car and he drove my sister, my other sister, my father and my girlfriend out to visit me. And I was so embarrassed to walk out there in these clothes. (Laughs) Knowing, feeling sure that I was starved, they had gone to the delicatessen and had three huge paper bags of corned beef and salami, pickles and so on. And I was literally embarrassed, you know. (Laughter) That didn't happen again. Within three days, you know, they posted ... the calls. Day one, they wanted thirty-four for the signal corps. On day two they wanted forty for the engineers. The day I was picked they wanted X number for the Air Force. And that's how I got into the Air Force. So ... they put me on a train and sent me to Keesler Field, Mississippi, which is Biloxi, Mississippi. That was I think a four week basic training period, which was non-basic training because one of the field training you know ... drill was with wooden rifles. There weren't enough rifles to go around. We had simulated wooden rifles. There to my dread I learned to smoke cigarettes because the sergeant would stop and say, "All right men," instead of taking a break he'd say, "Take a smoke." And everybody that was anybody dug into his pocket and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. And I'm standing around like a dummy. So I bought a pack of cigarettes and practiced smoking. I threw up. I choked. I practiced until I got it right. (Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: How old were you then?

KLEIN: I was one of the older, I was twenty-four.

PIEHLER: I'm curious ...

KLEIN: I was one of the older ones because most of the kids were eighteen or nineteen. So ...

PIEHLER: I'm curious, growing up and ... earlier in your career, had you—how far outside New York City had you traveled?

KLEIN: Once in my life my—I graduated in '37, I ... was a teacher in training '38, at the end of '38 a cousin of mine said to my mother, "I'd like to take Milton on a trip up to Canada, it's wonderful." So he had friends all the way up and we drove up into New England and we drove into ... Canada about twenty miles you know. (Laughter) I have a picture of myself standing at a sign saying, "Cherbourg, Canada," then came back. That was a totally, my first experience overseas. (Laughs)

MCLAUGHLIN: So Mississippi was a ...

KLEIN: Mississippi was a—they were just developing the base. And some Congressman had sold them the property. (Laughter) And it was a swamp. The first job was to fill the swamp in. And the first assignment they ever gave me down there, getting off a train, and ... you know this would be criss-crossing the country. I was up in New York and took the train all the way down to Mississippi, right? The immediate assignment the first day, I don't know if it was the first day or second day, first day, "fall out the barracks" whatever, and begin marching. We began marching. So we began marching. We'd march, and march, and march, marching through the camp. And like a fool I said, "Isn't this interesting, they're a giving us a little tour of the camp." (Laughter) We get to the fringes or outside and here's this huge can, this huge pile of what you

call G.I. cans. You know what G.I. can is? They were like hotel cans—when you buy fruit or something. Sam’s would sell it. You know, this large. (Gesture) And here were all these empty cans this size (gesture), and he’d say, the corporal would say, “Take a few of those and stamp on them until they’re flat!” (Laughter) They were filling in the swamp that way you see. And that’s what we ...

PIEHLER: That’s what you ...

KLEIN: ... luckily it began raining and some of the wiseacres just ran away and the corporal ran away, so I ran away back to my barracks. And that was my first experience. (Laughter) The guy who sold them this property made a fortune. All right if we’re going to eat ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: Mississippi, and filling in holes in the swamp and ...

KLEIN: Apparently a Congressman had sold the ... property to the government and they were taken advantage of I’m sure. I was down there for—I guess it was four weeks of basic training. My wife would say that I was there from February 21 to March 25 and then again we were assigned on an arbitrary basis—oh the interesting thing, they classified you there. Some corporal who wasn’t very knowledgeable would sit you down and say, “What can you do?” Well, the interesting thing was that those people who could do nothing got the best assignments. [They said], “Would you like to go to ... navigation or air ... meteorology school,” or something. I unfortunately said I was a schoolteacher. “Nah, that doesn’t do us any good. Do you have any skills?” I thought, I said, “I can type.” “Type, how many words a minute?” [I said,] “Oh, about forty.” “Clerk/Typist. You get no advance training!” I didn’t need any. You know, clerk/typist. They were desperately in need of male clerk/typist, because obviously as the Army was expanding. The Army moves not on its stomach but on its paper. And they obviously, they couldn’t use women, so they had to have men. I was classified as a clerk/typist and I did not have to go to school, which always bothered me because my friends you know, learned cryptography, meteorology, gunnery and all kinds of things. I was classified as a clerk/typist. And after four weeks of that again there was a posting and I was posted to Presque Isle, Maine. First I thought Presque Isle, knowing something about French, meant nearly an island, no island there at all. Presque Isle was a little town in Maine close to the Canadian border. We had decided to build an airfield there—well there was already a civilian airfield, quite small. Because under the Neutrality Acts, we were not allowed to fly airplanes to Canada made in the United States for Canadians. So what they did was an unusual thing. They hauled the planes to the Canadian line and then they were hauled over and a Canadian pilot took over. (Laughs)

Presque Isle was the loveliest place anyone could ever imagine as an assignment. There were no fences around the field. ... I’ll never forget, we were brought there from Keesler Field by train, of course. And the train moved very very slowly, because under the law trains were supposed to use tracks that were within the national rail system under the land, the old land-grant system. Because they were cheaper than using private uh ...

PIEHLER: Private, private ...

KLEIN: ... tracks. So we must have gone around half the country before we got up to Presque Isle. I remember the evening before we got there and some problem as to whether we were going to arrive or not. You know we had ... Pullmans. You know, upper and lower and they were made up every night by porters. But this last night there was uncertainty as to whether we were going to get in or not so the porters didn't do it. Well by 2:00 in the morning the kids were pulling down the top themselves, the sleepers and sleeping there. Finally about 6:00 in the morning or 7:00 in the morning we arrived at Presque Isle on March 25, 1942. And most of the kids, I'm sorry to say were from Kentucky and Tennessee. And they looked around in amazement, "What's that?" This was snow on the ground and they had not seen snow on the ground. So the northerners you know, being very very superior said, "That's snow!" They hauled us off and you know we'd just been treated rather crudely as recruits at Keesler Field. We went out, put into trucks and taken to barracks, which were luxurious by comparison to the ones we had. They were two stories and each cot had a footlocker in front and a tall locker along side each individual. Almost as soon as we got in there was a shout, "Breakfast being served!" We went down into the trucks and they took us over to this lovely mess hall. It was freezing cold. The mess hall was so hot my glasses fogged up. And you got on line and some guy behind you would say, "How would you like your eggs?" Well, you know, we thought we were at the Waldorf Astoria. It was just wonderful. That afternoon there was a meeting. Everybody had to turn out. And there was this little fellow, a lieutenant, can't remember his name. He stood up on a chair, I guess he was so small. He told us where we were and he said, "This is one of the nicest places." And he said, "Don't get into any trouble with the civilians and stay away from the girls, keep your pecker in your pants. If you want a ride into town all you have to do is walk out to the road—there was no main gate, and just hold your thumb out and somebody will give you a ride. You'll be off for dinners and lunches. Everything will be offered to you free. Don't spoil it for us." He said, "If there's anybody who could type, please see me at the end of the meeting." (Laughs) So I went up and said, "Lieutenant, I'm from the Bronx. He said, "Hey, I'm from the Bronx too." I said, "I can type." "Good, tomorrow morning you report to headquarters." The next morning I reported to headquarters. The other fellows there said, "Can you type?" [I said], "Yes." "Well, you can type the payroll."

Typing a payroll was very, very important. The finance department during the war, in the United States anyhow, I don't know how it worked overseas, was run by civilians. And ... they were going by their old rules, which were very very meticulous. If a mistake was made, they took a ruler and a red line and just drew your name through it, and you were redlined, which means you weren't going to get paid. And what the line with your name on it had to say was ... where you had been transferred from, and when you had been transferred from. And it was relatively simple, but a lot of people couldn't do this. You know, I being smart was able to do this. So, I was held in high esteem by the other fellows, because getting the twenty-one dollars a month you got for the first three months, and then you were raised to twenty-eight dollars was important. So I became the squadron finance clerk. I stayed at Presque Isle for a while. Of course everything gradually became, how should I say ... not advanced, it improved in the sense that they put a fence up. You could still walk out and get a ride ... and then air activity increased considerably. The reason Presque Isle was there was because they had created a number of

transport divisions or wings to transport goods, supplies and planes to various overseas theatres. So there was one, an Alaskan wing, a North Atlantic wing, South Atlantic wing, and of course the famous one over China-Burma-India, the China-Burma-India wing ... flying stuff from China ... from India over into ... Chiang Kai-shek and his forces. Well this was the—Presque Isle was part of the North Atlantic wing. Its headquarters were at Manchester, New Hampshire and there were a series of stops. Why, because the planes could not then fly very far and ... they had to have intermediate stops. So I think the wing began at New York and then went ... to Presque Isle. And then it went to a place in Quebec. Then it went to Labrador and then the next stop was Newfoundland; two places, Gander and another one Harmonsville. Then two places, two airfields in Greenland, which were so secret that they were given names like: BW1, BW3. There was also BW8, then Iceland where they landed in Reykjavik. And then the terminus was Prestwick, where they were in the theatre of operations. The problem was, in 1942 getting the Eighth Air Force, by then we were in the war of course, getting the Eighth Air Force over to Britain. Well, there were two ways of doing this. You could take these fighter planes and collapse them and put them on a ship and send them over. One, it took a lot of time and trouble to do that, assemble them and disassemble them, and two there was the danger of submarines. So they decided on an experiment of flying these P-38s particularly. These were the planes, you know, with the double wings you know; I mean double tanks and double wings and flying them over. But these were pursuit planes that were designed to go up ... shoot the enemy down and return. They only had a one-man crew. It had limited range. It had no navigation equipment on it, and I mean impossible to fly them over. Someone, Ira Eaker, who was commander of the Eighth Air Force I think, came up with the bright idea of having a B-17 mother these ships over. So a B-17 would, with a full crew of navigators and so on, would be their mother ship and four P-38s would fly along side of them. And visually you know, be navigated to these stops. The P-38s had to stop periodically to refuel, because they had limited fuel, and Presque Isle was one of these stops. And about the time I was there the Eighth Air Force began coming over in droves. And it was quite exciting. I was out on the line to see these big planes and the P-38s. At the same time, they had to man all of these intermediate stops. I remember the thrill of my life the first time I was overseas. Let's see I got up there in—well to give you some idea how rapidly promotions occur, I made a note here. I got to Presque Isle on March 15. On May 29, I was promoted to corporal, on June 14, I was promoted to sergeant, and August 1, I was promoted to staff sergeant. So that was pretty rapid promotion. In July, having been there March, April, June, July, I was apparently well versed enough in payroll techniques to be sent up on temporary duty overseas to Goose Bay, which was the first of these intermediate stops. Goose Bay, Labrador ... to help train a local crew to do the same thing I was doing. This was very very exciting. One it was the summer time. What did I tell you it was a, August was it ...

MCLAUGHLIN: July!

KLEIN: I went up there with my thin jacket on and when I got there I was freezing. Most of the plane crew consisted of infantrymen who were being moved over. I'll never forget ... the difficulty. They were all young, they didn't, hadn't flown much and must have eaten large meals. They all began throwing up. They threw up into their helmets, you know. I must have had an iron stomach, because I fought hard not to throw up and I didn't throw up luckily. I was happy to get out of that plane. I got there and there was no American base yet. It was still a Canadian base that we were manning. I remember the kick I got out of going to, not the PX, but

the canteen is what they called it, and buying some candy. And the candy was all you know, Canadian candy. They accepted my money but—what’s the famous English ...

PIEHLER: Cadbury?

KLEIN: Cadbury. There was all this Cadbury, which I had never seen in my life and I thought it was very unusual. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: How’d you like the Cadbury?

KLEIN: It was very good, very good, very good. I stayed about two or three days and resumed the training and I was glad to come back. I said to myself, look—and they began moving people from our base, at Presque Isle, who had some training into these other bases. Each one of them had to be staffed and I said to myself, “Look, if I’m going to be moved over there I want to move over as an officer. Not an enlisted man.” So I applied for Officer Candidate School in ... August and I was accepted. So I went down to Miami Beach, Florida, which was Administrative Officer Candidate School for the ninety-day training period. When we got out as first, second lieutenants we were all called in derision, Ninety Day Wonders, you know, because you certainly can’t train an officer in ninety days, but they needed us in a hurry. And these were not combat officers, but administrative officers: supply, and engineering ... personnel, all kinds of things. And we lived in—you know a lot of people thought we were living in luxury. We did live in former hotels. But the hotels were stripped, absolutely bare. Instead of the luxurious rooms housing two, there were three cots you know, one double-decker and one regular. And the lobbies were stripped bare of rugs, of chairs, of everything. It was just the counter. I’ll never forget arriving there the first day from Presque Isle. I left Presque Isle when, in ... August did I say? It was still cool, I guess up in Presque Isle, in any case, I had winter ODs on. I got down there and they emptied us out and began talking to us and the first thing I did was keel over and faint. It must have been a 102°, you know, and we had no summer clothes and then they began walking us around to pick up supplies. You know blankets and this and the other thing. And pretty soon it got dark and they were still walking us around. I’ll never forget a man in charge, a corporal had a flashlight, which was ... dimmed by a red cover because we were on the ocean and there was danger of submarines. And they walked us around until we got to our hotel and then which, of course, it escapes me—I remember we went into this lobby again, a little lieutenant, he stood up on this counter and he was stripped to his shorts. And his name I remember. He said, “I’m Lieutenant Trapp.” And he said, “I’m your squadron commander.” And he said, it was now 11:00 or something, he says, “You have until 6:00 in the morning to strip any stripes you have off your—cause everybody was equal, you know, sergeants only—make sure your shoes are shined so that they gleam.” You know, “Make sure your belt buckle is shined, everything is shined and roll out here with your belt buckle on and your rifle, I guess we had been issued rifles, and line up in the street here.” So at 6:00—oh, oh, how could we do all this? You got into the room, and of course, the blinds were drawn because you couldn’t allow light to escape so that the German submarines ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Blackout.

KLEIN: ... wouldn't come in. Yeah, black out. The only room in this one room suite that had no windows was the bathroom. So we took turns going into the bathroom to do our shining and so on, and no air conditioning of course, and with a temperature of a hundred. And the door closed so that no light—we sat there in our own sweat. I mean we must have been taking baths. It was just sweat pouring out but we got it all done. We got our stripes off and we turned out and had our first day at Officers Candidate School. The ninety-day experience was very interesting. People like me who were not used to this sort of thing adjusted fairly easily I suppose to routine. I don't know what that says about me. I don't know who was thrown out ...

PIEHLER: I've been told, I think the term I think was used, there was a lot of chicken shit as part of this training. Like the shining of the belt buckles, the inspection ...

KLEIN: We didn't have ...

PIEHLER: ... you didn't have much of that?

KLEIN: No, no, everything was done by routine, I don't know if that was chicken shit. I don't know how many suits of clothing we had. We just had shirts and pants. You know khakis. And to get into the laundry, you know, down at the PX, we walked in formation. You couldn't do anything except in formation. Some corporal would tell you, "Anybody got laundry here?" Six people, we'd march everywhere. I remember we went into the ocean. And we were marched to the beach. A whistle was blown, into the water, another whistle was blown, and out of the water and that was swimming. So if you call that chicken shit, yes. But ... then, of course, we got assignments to study at night you know, recognition, aircraft recognition, and ... what the hell else. In ninety days they taught us everything.

PIEHLER: What about eating, did you have to eat in squares?

KLEIN: No, no, no, no.

PIEHLER: You didn't have that kind of stuff?

KLEIN: The one thing we were encouraged to do was to drink plenty of this fluid, which was not Gatorade, some colored water because you know the danger sweating, dehydration was great and we were encouraged to have at least two, four, six salt pills a day and drink plenty of water. The meals I do not think were that bad. There was no leave time, not even for a weekend, I guess for the first three or four weeks. And then ... we had Sunday off or something. Some of the wisecrack kids would take a taxi and go out one of the hotels. The nearest fancy hotel was one that was—who was the famous—the one who was the Atlas man who practiced you know, exercising?

PIEHLER: Jack La Lanne?

KLEIN: Huh?

PIEHLER: Jack La Lanne?

KLEIN: No, it wasn't Atlas though but somebody like, but he had (McDorvill?) whatever his name was. He owned the place. We went out there. We had a dinner, you know, and the boys of course drank beer. And every Sunday at 2:00—you were allowed to sleep late on Sunday—there was parade. The parade ground was an old golf course. And you lined up and, "Present and accounted for and so and so." And of course all these guys who were loaded up on beer, just keeled over. They couldn't take the combination of beer in their stomach and the sweat coming down. We practiced on the field. I didn't think I could do it and I didn't. I was no athlete and we went through this ... you know the ...

PIEHLER: Manual of Arms?

KLEIN: No, not the manual, that was no problem. You know, running through the ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Calisthenics?

KLEIN: Huh?

MCLAUGHLIN: Calisthenics?

KLEIN: No, running through the trail. You know.

EVERYONE: Obstacle Course!

KLEIN: The obstacle course. I could never manage to climb over ...

MCLAUGHLIN: The eight-foot wall.

KLEIN: So I just ran around it. It didn't bother them. They wanted every human being they could get through to get through and they weren't going to complain about it. As a matter of fact I did very, very well. I was second in the class or something. Not because of that, but because of the other things you took. You know your paper and pencil exams ...

PIEHLER: Where was—you said you were in everything. What were the classroom instructions? What were some of the areas you studied in administrative?

KLEIN: Public speaking. (Laughter) I'll never forget the routine—this was a civilian in military clothing. We met on parade grounds somewhere ... or the grounds of one of the fancy hotels. In public speaking he said, "Three things you want to remember, first you tell them what you're going to tell them. Second, you tell them. Third, you tell them what you told them." (Laughter) I'll never forget that. You don't forget these things.

MCLAUGHLIN: No.

KLEIN: I'd say there was aircraft recognition, venereal disease, health, ninety days of this crap I don't know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What about Air Force procedures, did you learn—since you were in the administrative end of it?

KLEIN: I can't remember, I don't think ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: No, I, no, no, none of that . It's funny I can't remember the basics, a few of those, I can't remember. Then finally—oh one day, I'll never forget, we were on the parade grounds, having gone through exercise and they put up a long series of drinking fountains consisting of a huge pipe and you know, fountains. And here I was ... two sides, two strips of these and I'm drinking and I look up and opposite of me is Clark Gable. (Laughter) He was in OCS at the same time in a hotel down the street. Everybody had a lot admiration for him, because he was I think over forty when he entered. And at that age and with his reputation he could have entered what they called Officer Training School. The difference between Officer Candidate School and Officer Training School was that Officer Candidate School, you started out as an enlisted man and you remained an enlisted man until your commission. Officer Training School was for people who got direct commissions. If you had a Ph.D. in history, I'm sure would get a direct commission. And then there were ninety days of training, not as rigorous as ours. Because for example, instead of making your own beds, they had maids, you know. Instead of waiting on tables yourself, or buffets, they had waiters and waitresses and that sort of thing. And people like ... Clark Gable could have gone to Officer Training School, but he declined. He said he wanted to go to Officer Candidate School. It was not surprising then that after ninety days, there we were lined up, and very impressive you know. Hundreds maybe thousands, there were several classes I think, my squadron was O or something and there was a general on the platform you know. Giving us, commissioning us all at one time and having us raise our hands and said, "And now we will hear from your valedictorian, Lieutenant Clark Gable." (Laughter) I don't know what the hell he said, but obviously ...

PIEHLER: I think one of the things that is interesting, I've heard a number of stories. I've heard of people who served with Clark Gable and also with Jimmy Stewart and I think a lot of people reading this interview won't—who don't know a lot about World War II, won't realize how widespread service was. You know that Clark Gable was really in many ways was treated just like another officer candidate.

KLEIN: Yes, yes. But now Jimmy Stewart, I did not think went through—he went through flight training.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah. He was an officer in the beginning. He ...

KLEIN: Clark Gable went to, was assigned to Aerial Gunnery School. And I believe he engaged in two or three operations. And then they decided he was more valuable going around on bond tours.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: Sitting up there, you know, and so that's the last I heard of him.

PIEHLER: Where Stewart flew a lot of combat missions.

KLEIN: Yeah. Yeah, he became a colonel. All right ... your ninety days are up and you are assigned someplace. Well it seems that the Air Transport Command wanted its own people back. Any enlisted men who went on to Officer Candidate School who had been in the Air Transport Command, they wanted back. So I was reassigned this time to the Alaskan wing of the Air Transport Command with its headquarters at Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. So here I was again, I traveled from New York to Presque Isle to Miami Beach and now I'm going up to Edmonton, Canada. (Laughs) I got up there in, I guess, November 1942, and ... again it was a civilian airfield taken over by the U.S. Air Force. There was still civilian traffic, they'd taken over a few buildings, but there were very few buildings to take over. They began building barracks. And this is the first time I saw black troops. The black troops were setting up tents. They were euphemisms we called engineers, but they were ditch diggers. I mean they were setting up tents for enlisted men. Officers were told to go find living space in town, in private homes. So I and another fellow who I had come down with me, went to the housing office and we asked for somebody and they gave us a reference and we took the trolley car out to somebody's home and the lady said, "Yes, I have a room with two beds," and we took it. It was quite a way out and my memory fails me, but I think it was almost—this was November did I say? Yeah, November ...

PIEHLER: November '43 ...

KLEIN: Four, '42.

PIEHLER: '42, excuse me.

KLEIN: Yeah. The next day the snow began falling. (Laughter) And it fell all day and we couldn't move. Nineteen inches of snow fell, didn't mean a thing ... to the people there. The home was a very nice home. It was the home of R.C.A.F. officer. He was an older gentleman, maybe forty and he was a recreation officer at the nearest encampment of the R.C.A.F. And he had a wife and two teenage children. After the snow the next morning, he got out his skis (Laughs), he skied to his barracks. Us poor schnooks, you know, we got on the phone and called, "We're stuck out here!" "Stay there and we'll come out and get you." Well they sent out this huge truck, you know, with its wheels sitting, you know, ten feet above the ground. And everybody in the neighborhood came out and watched this unusual truck come out to pick up the two officers. By then we had been issued parkas you know. Sheep-lined boots, all kinds of arctic equipment with this headgear and we felt kind of foolish, but we were uh ...

PIEHLER: Hold that thought.

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

PIEHLER: This truck picked you up, but you got your snow gear so to speak.

KLEIN: In my snow gear. When I reported, uh ... you reported to the commanding officer. Edmonton was rather new. I thought this was a year after we were in the war then, and we were still feeling our oats. In the first place, we had never operated in arctic or desert climates. You know, the U.S. forces ... had operated in Mexico. They operated in France in World War I, but we had no experience in these exotic places. So, who did they use—I should have backtracked and went to Presque Isle. The famous incident where a plane went down in Greenland, you know, and was never recovered. I remembered the search—I was up all night although I had nothing to do with it. The people they had to enlist to help them were old, grizzled trappers and ... you know ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Civilians ...

KLEIN: ... civilians from that area. And ... we had no experience as a military in operations in arctic climates, similarly in the Alaskan division. So, I remember reporting to duty in his office and there was a grizzled captain completely out of uniform with his hat misshapen, 'cause the ring was taken out, which you are not supposed to do. Sitting with his flight jacket on, and his feet up on the desk. "Yes, who are you?" "Lieutenant Klein, sir. Reporting for duty." "What can you do Klein?" I said, "I used to be a school teacher." "Useless, useless! Anything else you can do?" I said, "No." "Well," he said, "We'll make you assistant personnel officer." "All right, sir." I don't know what the hell that meant. So I went and reported. I can't remember what I did for a ... week, but then I was called back to him again. He said, "We have enough personnel officers. But what we need is a photographic officer." I said, "Sir, I don't even know how to take pictures." He said, "Lieutenant didn't you learn in Officer Candidate School that a good officer can do anything!" "Yes sir!" "You're photographic officer." So I was made photographic officer, and what was the duty of the photographic officer. As these planes came in, you know, there were numerous accidents. And the first and most important job of a photographic officer was not to take a picture, but to take a picture of the accident for the accident report. Sometimes I think we got there before the ambulance, nobody cared about them, pilot or if anybody was sick, take pictures for the report. How did I get it done? I was very clever. ... You had—I don't know whether you know the old IBM files. You remember when these new files slipped into ... bars—cards, what was that system called? That's the way they were—well these were large cards, and they had holes around them you see, with numbers. And if you were crypt typist 405, they punched a hole and made a V instead of a hole. So if you had a hundred of these, and put this piece of steel through four or five and shook. All those that had Vs would and all those would fall out and you would have all the 405s. So I went to the personnel office and did this for whatever the under photographic enlisted man was. And a couple of them shook down. This is a guy who owned a photographic studio in New York City in Queens calling in—he was a staff sergeant I believe, a tech sergeant. "How would like you to open a photographic studio?" What he was doing was something utterly out of his line. "Love to, sir." "Okay, here's a book." And if you were in Canada, you were considered outside the limits of the continental United States. And you could order anything you wanted without accounting for it. If you were in the United States and you ordered a cup of coffee, or a cup, you had to account for a dozen cups. Overseas you accounted for nothing. If you were in France, can't begin accounting for things. So I said, "You get any equipment you need, order it and build a photographic studio." The guy, he loved it. This is his business. He did this. He built a

photographic studio. He got seven cameras and I had a jeep. Every time we heard the horn blow, call sergeant so-and-so and, you know, we would rush down to the line, and he'd take pictures and I did nothing.

I was also though appointed assistant to special services officer. What is special services officer? This is the recreation officer. And I reported to the special service officer. He happened to be a former public relations officer from Las Vegas, or what's its competitor?

PIEHLER: Reno.

KLEIN: Reno. And we chatted for a while. He was in a tent. All the officers were in tents. And ... "What can you do Klein?" Well he said, "You can help me out in a number of ways." That's fine. And this was, what did I say, November. He said, "I'll tell you one of the first things you can do for me." I think this was, while I was photographic officer. I'm not sure. He says, he pulled a box out, and he gave me fifty dollars of Canadian money. He says, "Now I want you to go downtown to Edmonton. Go to Woolworth's, go to all the card shops you can find and buy up all the Christmas cards you can. Then I am going to send you up the line." Now I gave you the route for the North Atlantic wing. Route for the Alaskan wing was, started at Great Falls, Montana. Then it went to, I guess, Calgary, which was in Alberta then Edmonton, which was headquarters. Then I can't remember, Fort Nelson, Fort—all the way up to ... Nome. We had men stationed all the way up the line for the same reason as before to ferry these planes. In any case, we had men stationed at all these places. He said, "These men are so isolated." He said, "Christmas is coming. We want them to have cards to send to their families. Take these and distribute them free to any of the kids who want them." So here is my first assignment was to get in an airplane, fly up to Fairbanks, Alaska, you know. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And say here are the Christmas cards.

KLEIN: Yeah, distributing cards. (Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: You got to see so much ...

KLEIN: I was telling about—they think everybody in the army did something glamorous. These were things that were important to the kids, you know, and they had to be done. I would have never dreamed of it. So I did that and that was just an offshoot of my duties. Special Service Officer also was in charge of visiting troupes. You wouldn't remember her, a movie star name, Fay Wray ...

PIEHLER: Oh yeah.

KLEIN: ... I always thought of her a tall. She was a midget. I mean, she was so small, you know. She was rather ...

PIEHLER: You probably—I mean, she was in the famous movie *King Kong*.

KLEIN: Oh, was she in that?

PIEHLER: I thought she was ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Also in the original *House of Wax*.

KLEIN: No, no Fay Wray was not in *King Kong*.

PIEHLER: I think she was.

KLEIN: All right, all right.

MCLAUGHLIN: She was big with RKO. I know this stuff.

KLEIN: All right ... I met her and her troupe wherever they were. I escorted them to barracks and so on. And put them on the plane, and they were going up the line, you know. The other reason for having these ... bases was that we had been cut off from our oil supplies in East Asia. You know, Indonesia. And ... the alternative was to use the oil wells in Prudhoe Bay which was in Upper Canada. And uh, you had to build a pipeline of course to get the oil down. Well a commercial company called Canol was commissioned to build a pipeline. But to build a pipeline then you needed supplies. How do you get the supplies? You had to build a road. Now called the Alaska Highway, right. Well to build a road, you had to haul the stuff up there. Well the trucks could do it in the wintertime, when the road was frozen solid and you could move. But in the springtime and summer it was moosh, you know this tundra came up, impossible to walk or drive. So the airplanes, cargo planes carried the stuff to these bases where these commercial people, you know, took it and built the ... pipeline. Pipeline incidentally was completed about the time the War ended, where upon it was useless. I think we sold the whole pipeline to the Canadians for a dollar. (Laughs) But ... I went up and down the line frequently doing whatever I was doing. Dawson's Creek was where the Alaska Highway actually began, because the rail had ended then. From then on, it was all air traffic or truck traffic in the wintertime. But the Special Service Officer was in charge of any kind of entertainment or recreation. I was kind of bored with that, so in January or March—well I should say by March of 1943 which was ... I was promoted to first lieutenant and promotions came fast. I was living off the base all this time. Well, they began building barracks, so by July 1943—having been up there since October. What was it six months? I moved on to the base to the barracks. It was a real officer quarters now. We had an officer mess and we had a bar. Life was very good. One thing I cannot remember, nobody can convince me. I don't know how I got paid. (Laughter) I remember being a paymaster for enlisting men. Typical way that was done I was given a bag of money, signed for it. And then we'd get a table from the ... kitchen, cover it with velvet cloth. And I stand behind it and then these men came up, and I look at the payroll. So and so is to have so much. He'd salute, I'd salute and I'd shell out the money. I don't think that's the way officers were paid. I was told that I was paid by check. I can't remember what I did with the check. Did I open an account in a Canadian bank? I simply cannot remember these things, but it must have happened because—of course, there was a bond I always had taken off sent to my father. My mother had died by now so that my father got this bond. I always seemed to have enough money. A lot of people were married by then, I was not. And they were buying things like Hudson Bay blankets they were very popular. And they'd go down to Hudson Bay, which was like Macy's and buy

these blankets and send them home. And they were buying other things at bargain prices. But I was not interested, because I had no dependents to send anything to.

MCLAUGHLIN: Did they try to get you into any of the gambling?

KLEIN: What do you mean gambling?

PIEHLER: One question ...

KLEIN: I know only nice people.

PIEHLER: How much did you actually interact with the Canadians? You were living—particularly in the beginning you were living in a Canadian house. But how much other interaction did you have with Canadians?

KLEIN: Well I had so much interaction with this family that I am still in contact with them.

PIEHLER: Really, after all these ...

KLEIN: Oh yeah. The ... father, after the war, the father who was in physical education came down to take a master's at NYU. He stayed at the YMCA downtown, and [I] visited with him and had lunch with him often. Then ... his wife died, very nice lady. She kept me at least once from marrying a Canadian who I was all excited about ...

PIEHLER: When you were ...

KLEIN: ... up there. She said to me, very wisely, "What do you think your family would say?" Thank you very much, and I dropped that. (Laughter) But she died, then her two daughters, I remember as well as they did. They were fourteen and twelve. The other fellow moved out first, so I was there alone. I don't know where he moved to. But, I had to move out back to barracks eventually. I'm a nice guy. At Christmas they invited me to Christmas dinner, so I brought gifts for the kids. And ... the kids now—one is a grandmother, the other is gay and has a lady friend so she never had any children. But the one who is a grandmother whom I've visited twice now, she reminded me, she said, "You know, we were just so pleased with that Christmas gift, the Christmas gifts you gave us." Now, I have been up to visit them twice now. And they took me out—they live in Calgary, but we drove up to Edmonton to see the old airbase. But I couldn't see anything there that I recognized except, there were a series of hotels that the ... Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific, Canadian Pacific Railroads built, you know, at key spots to house people. And these hotels are always, you know, Gilded Age hotels, beautiful. And whenever we had any money in Edmonton, we would go down and have Sunday lunch or a drink at the bar. And the damn hotel is unchanged, and I insisted we go down with these people, and have a drink. I was telling Margaret this is where I sat, and it hasn't changed at all. But I keep in touch with them ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: ... for a long time with that family ...

PIEHLER: With that family.

KLEIN: Yeah that family. Ah, the others were ... the girlfriend whom I didn't marry.

PIEHLER: But you were real smitten with her if you were thinking of marriage?

KLEIN: Yeah, I was smitten with her. But she overwhelmed me by advances I remember. She sent me mail or something to the office, a little 8.5 by 10 poster she had painted. That showed her standing on her tiptoes me in my uniform ... kissing her and then two crossed flags Canadian and American. And on top it said "United Forever." I showed that to Mrs. Byrd that's when she said, "What would your family think?" (Laughter) I dropped her. Met a lot of women there it was ...

PIEHLER: Well all the men were in service they ...

KLEIN: Anybody who wanted a woman could have one. Ah ... somehow as Special Service Officer I got to be acquainted with a lot of these entertainers in town. When visiting officers came, they always asked me for dates. I gave them phone numbers of people. They took them to a place I think was called the Red Barn, where you went down by yourself and picked up women to dance with, very easy to find women. Indeed I think almost at first, second or third night I was there before the ... I went down to the movies by myself. And ... do you remember the days when they had ushers ushering you down?

MCLAUGHLIN: With flashlights.

KLEIN: So this usher ushered me down, and I looked up and she was absolutely gorgeous, so I uh, I said to her "When do you get off duty?" (Laughs) I was a shy guy, but when you put a shy into uniform and he suddenly becomes different, assumes a different persona. I would never have dared to say it that way. She said, "I get off after the second show." I'll meet you outside and walk you home. She said, "Okay." I think after the first show, I went to the cafeteria and ate something. I came back and walked her home, got her name, got her sister's name so I had two names already in my book, you see. Well okay ... I said I didn't like this photographic business. I was appointed as Assistant Personnel Officer, which was more to my liking. Because this was the office that assigned people ...

PIEHLER: You had originally been assigned that, but then they ...

KLEIN: They took it away after a week, and made me a photographic officer and Assistant Special Service Officer. And I said I was fed up with that. So they named me Assistant Personnel Officer to the Personnel Officer. And I really resented, I really ran the Personnel Office and this assistant was a half-drunk Irishman, who was never on duty, and was never, I don't know, who he had it in with, but I did all the work. One of the things that amused me, I saw in my papers the other day. One of these kids came up there to Edmonton you know without basic training. It was so urgently needed, you know ... uh they knew how to—they were

engineers. ... They knew something about airplanes, but they didn't know the school of the soldier, how to drill or anything. They couldn't get promoted because they didn't know how to fill out what was called a morning report, or payroll or anything. The adjunct of the assistant, who was a young fellow, who was a friend of mine, I kind of hung around him. I said, "Look I was the only school teacher in the whole damn group." He said, "Do you think you could draw up a two-week course?" You know, it's the course, you know, I knew enough to have the organizational skills and I drew up this course with various members of the officers you know, talking on various subjects and I had, one of the things was drill. And here is Milton Klein shouting, "Right leg first, left leg." (Laughter) I could just see myself doing it. I must have been laughing because how the hell am I knowing how to do this, I could barely do it myself.

Well, about 1943 ... I can't remember the exact date; I think it was in October. A letter came out from Franklin D. Roosevelt to all military personnel in command and so, saying that they were starting a historical program. The reason was he was persuaded that the war should be written about while it was hot. And anybody with any historical training could apply. So I had begun my Ph.D. work at Columbia on a part-time basis while I was teaching high school. And I completed, I don't know how many credits. But I never completed the degree, but I applied. And sure enough I was assigned, guess where, back to the North Atlantic Division, where I'd been only to Manchester, New Hampshire, which was the headquarters. So I reported there and I became the Historical Officer of the North Atlantic Wing of the Air Transport Command. And Manchester was its headquarters, and my job principally was to write a quarterly report, a historical report. Now what the heck happened, you know, I don't know. And to do that, of course, I had to have data. Well as a result they put the Historian Officer into the intelligence branch, because intelligence got intelligence reports everyday. And equally on each base, we appointed someone as Historical Officer. Rarely an officer, more often an enlisted man, a sergeant or something like that. And what he did was write a monthly report, which he sent to me, which I then amalgamated into a quarterly report, which I then sent on to the Historical Officer in Washington, D.C. which was headed by an anthropologist named Oliver LaFarge, who had won a Pulitzer Prize for his book called *Laughing Boy*, which he lived with the Hopi Indians I think. And another historian, two other historians and I would send them to them and they would put it together into—well it helped to make up the history of the Air Force when it was written Craven and published.

So in addition to sitting there and—I had a typist to type this stuff up. I used to go up and down the line as often as I could to train these people, because some of them were appointed Historical Officer, but they didn't know what the hell to do. Some of them began sending in scrapbooks you know, with pictures of ... the local bands or something. Well I wondered about that then I said, "Hell how else are they going to know about these things unless they do put them in?" So I said, "You send the scrapbook, I'll write this history." You know, you can't expect to make them historians. I said, "Gather up as much as you can on what's happening, newsletters and so on, put them in a book and send them to me." And to train them I went up the line to visit these places. So I got to Goose Bay and I got to—again, Goose Bay by now was, I finally admit this, I told you I had been there as an enlisted man that was in '42, this is now '44 I guess. And I went up there and I was just stunned at how much Presque Isle had changed. It was a real base, you know, with visiting officer's quarters and towels and little bars of soap, like a hotel you know, and a dining room. (Laughs) And I went up to Goose Bay and similarly it had been improved,

and ... I went to Newfoundland and then I took a trip mid-Atlantic. The North Atlantic has two branches and the second branch went from New York City to Bermuda to the Azores to ...

MCLAUGHLIN: To North Africa?

KLEIN: Yeah to North Africa, but I can't remember to Casablanca I guess or to. I don't know. Well I ... decided to take that route too. That was the scariest flight I took. The ones up—one scary flight going up into Fairbanks, I was on this weather plane with this guy. I don't think anybody else was on this plane, except the plane crew. And he said, "I can't get the wheels down." And he said, "We'll circle round and I'll dump gas." As I looked down, I saw all these people with their white uniforms, you know, with the crash, and all the fire engines lined up waiting for us. He said, "Now you begin pumping." You know I began pumping this hand thing to lower the—finally after the last minute I got the damn wheels down and we landed. But that scared the hell out of me. I guess that would have been a crash landing. In the case of the Azores trip, what scared the hell out of me was that, you know, if you are on Bermuda it looks like a fair sized island. From five thousand feet up in the air, it is a dot in the Atlantic. And I kept saying to myself, how the hell is he going to find it? We finally landed in Bermuda I was amused. This was the first time I had been to Bermuda. Have you been to Bermuda?

MCLAUGHLIN: No, I've heard it's very proper because of its English.

KLEIN: Well yeah, the thing that was interesting is, you see they have no water supply. I mean no water table. So they get rainwater. So every roof has pipes and barrels and they save the rainwater. I thought this was funny as hell. Then I went over to the Azores. This is a story that I guess has been written, but I haven't seen a good account of the Azores during World War II, I don't know whether you have. The Azores were not American property, they were owned by the Portuguese, but we needed it as a stop over on the way for these airplanes.

PIEHLER: And Portugal was neutral.

KLEIN: What's that?

PIEHLER: Portugal ...

KLEIN: Portugal was neutral which meant it was a haven for spies—there were Germans, French and Russians. Everybody, every country has an agent there. We wanted to build an airbase and we did. We got permission from the Portuguese to build it on an island called Santa Maria, which was not the main island. And the interesting thing, we got permission to build it on grounds that no uniforms would be worn by any of the officers or men. They built this field, Santa Maria, which we used. I don't know if it's still there. But they also had a headquarters at ... Loggins, which was a mount Loggins, which was the main island in the Azores. The reason I went over there was because they had an historical program that was a part of my ... wing. And I got there in February of 1945. Now what was happening in February of 1945? The Yalta Conference was about to take place, but I didn't know this, nobody told me. I get there and the man in charge of the historical program, as I told you, was in intelligence. So I bedded with the Intelligence Officer whom I had met anyhow before, was a friend of mine by now. And he said,

“Look I just got a call, I got to go over and meet the provost at Casablanca. Do you want to come over with me?” I said, “I don’t have orders to go.” Well he said, “Well you have orders to visit me. And I am going there, and what is the point of you sitting here.” So I went to Casablanca. It was an experience. (Laughs) We were in Casablanca, and within three days he gets a call to hurry back to the Azores, because General Marshall is coming through and all the big names. See Roosevelt came by ship, but all the others came by planes. And he was to be there to see that they were all protected. I didn’t have a high rating as a Historical Officer to go back. I sat there on Casablanca for about a week, reporting each day to the Operations Officer. “Is there a space for me?” “No not today, sir, call back tomorrow.” So I did nothing but sit in the hotel lobby. I must have drunk a lot too. What else do you have to do there? Try to read French, and finally I got a ride back and went from Casablanca, home. I read my report on the trip, ‘cause I had a regular report to the Colonel who was in charge of intelligence at ... Manchester, because he was a gruff bastard. First thing he said to me, “What the hell were you doing in Casablanca for a week? I didn’t send you there.” I said, “Well sir you know Major so and so went there because I couldn’t stay by myself.” Hell of an experience.

I got back and I stayed in Manchester, New Hampshire for a little while longer. I was promoted to captain. It was now March of 1944 and I was—I gave you the dates there. I was in Edmonton from November ’42 to ... March of ’44, when I went up to Manchester. I went over to the Azores as I told you in ’45. I came back and I was ordered to Washington, D.C.—change of station. I got to Washington, they said, “We need a new Historical Officer at Orlando, Florida. Would you like to go?” I said, “Why not.” Orlando, Florida was the headquarters for something called the Army Air Force Center. The Army Air Force Center had been developed a year or two before, and included a number of subsidiary units one of which was called Arctic, Desert and Tropic Information Center. As I explained to you when the war started, we didn’t know anything about what happens to a pilot who gets lost in the arctic or the desert. You know, we did not know enough to tell them how to survive. So they studied survival techniques. We also did not have any maps. So we went to the National Geographic, borrowed their maps then drew our own maps. So this Arctic, Desert and Tropic Information Center, which you should have a copy of in your collection because I wrote that history marked it secret and then I gave it to Charlie Johnson because I brought it home with me.

PIEHLER: Oh okay.

KLEIN: It’s a paper typed thing, it’s in a green folder and it must be in the ...

PIEHLER: Collections.

KLEIN: ... collections somewhere yeah, yeah. You should find it. History of the Arctic, Desert and Tropic Information Center. In addition, they tried out new flying tactics. They had a number subsidiary airport around, airfields, including Eglin Field, which is a big one. And there they practiced new tactics and techniques utilizing the experiences of pilots that came back from overseas. Having completed their missions, they came back and taught these guys the real stuff, you know, the new pilots. And ... our historical office was writing these all up. One of the things I thought was the funniest was—anything they developed they wrote up a report on. I went over Eglin Field and a guy said they had just completed a report on the left hand monkey

wrench. I said you are kidding. He said, “No we found a lot of mechanics were left handed, and the regular monkey wrench and didn’t suit them.” So we developed the left, and there’s a little ten-page report on the development of the left-handed monkey wrench. Well all of these things ... were going on and the war ended and I remember August 15. One of the fellows had a car, and we drove around Main Street honking our horns and so on. And of course, everybody was planning to go home. Well you didn’t get home unless you had enough points for overseas service and I didn’t have enough with my temporary duty points. So I stayed—everyone said you are the Historical Officer, you will be here well after the end of the war writing about the end of the war. Sure enough they kept me in till 1946, well after the war ended. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah you didn’t ...

KLEIN: I wasn’t decommissioned until September of 1946.

PIEHLER: Oh wow, they did really keep you. (Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: Were you already a lieutenant colonel or did that come in reserves?

KLEIN: No, no, no. I was promoted on retirement to major, if I wanted it. If I took the rank of major, I didn’t get separation pay. (Laughs)

MCLAUGHLIN: That’s not fair.

KLEIN: I said I rather have the separation pay, so I took the separation pay and retired as a captain. But joined the reserve, and within a couple of months they promoted me to major, then to lieutenant colonel in the reserve before I got out. End of story.

PIEHLER: Well I have a few—the Army Historical Office they in a sense have ...

KLEIN: The what?

PIEHLER: The Army Historical Office they sort of had common training together, you—when you became Historical Officer they ...

KLEIN: They had no such thing.

PIEHLER: No ...

KLEIN: They picked people who already had some historical training and then you learned on the job. Now I must say, I earned two commendation medals, right there in my file, and of course, it was still part of the U.S. Army Air Forces. So I have the Army Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, you know, the second time you get one, you get a cluster. And it was as performance as Historical Officer in the North Atlantic Division and in the ... at the Air Force Center. The one thing that was funny about staying in so long, by ’46 everybody had gone you know. The nature of the postwar Air Force was unknown. I told you that the Historical Office was usually put in the intelligence branch because they had the easiest access to the materials,

the reports that were coming in. The Historical Office in Orlando was in the combat intelligence branch. And pretty soon the Combat Intelligence Officer was separated so I was named in addition to my duties, Assistant Combat Intelligence Officer. Pretty soon there was nobody left but me and couple of enlisted men, and I was named Assistant Chief of Staff A-2, which means Assistant Chief of Staff Intelligence. That was the highest position that I ever achieved. (Laughs) Mainly because I was the only officer in the intelligence branch, nothing was happening. There were no reports coming in, except, I don't know what they were, maybe things you could read about in the newspaper, but they had to have it.

PIEHLER: Somewhere on the table to organization?

KLEIN: That's right, that's right.

PIEHLER: So you never had say a conference about—you sort of were given, this is what I have to create?

KLEIN: No. The few times I was in Washington twice and spoke to these people. Once on my way from the Alaska division to ... pick up the job in Manchester, New Hampshire they gave me some instructions. And then when I went from there to Orlando, I stopped. I noticed there were a couple of times I went on temporary duty up to the District of Columbia to the Pentagon. I don't think I got any instructions. I think we went out to eat, and I chatted with the people. And they gave me some idea of what they wanted that maybe I wasn't giving them in the quarterly reports. We'd like more information, particularly after '44, of the number of ... wounded that returned, because they were returning wounded directly from Paris, which we had seized, to the United States. Before then, people who were injured on the battlefield were shipped either to England, or to a ... navy hospital ship. And apparently, this was not as good for morale as a kid being transferred directly from a battlefield station, you know to his home, to the United States. They wanted to know more about that. So I gave them quarterly reports on the number of wounded who returned. I also reported on some of the interesting developments in the Air Transport Command. I don't know if you know it or not, we had no eating facilities on the East Transport Command. The seats were all bucket seats, you know. You know what a bucket seat is? You didn't have seats like this, they were on the side and in the middle there was all kinds of crap, supplies. And what you ate from was a ... box, a box of cold lunch. ... The people who ran the Air Transport Command from the start were largely civilian executives from the airlines: United Airlines, American and so on. In fact the commander was Lieutenant Harold George who had been Chief Executive Officer of, I don't know, US Airways or something like that. Of course, they were the only ones who knew how to fly, you know, commercial aircraft.

PIEHLER: The only people around, yeah.

KLEIN: Well the U.S. had no experience flying commercial aircraft, you know. We depended on them. And they began thinking of how the hell do you develop hot meals to serve, especially to these wounded. So they developed a scheme, which seems quite simple, you know, hot water in kind of containers, you know, with food on it that would remain hot. Now we wonder about not getting proper meals on planes. They developed hot meals.

PIEHLER: And that was done in your command that ...

KLEIN: Developed in the Atlantic Division, yeah.

PIEHLER: That's where the idea ...

KLEIN: Then, of course, it went to all the others.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: I think I may have met an officer from one of the other commands ... from China-Burma-India Command, who was going over, through Manchester. Hell he was more of a historian than I was. (Laughs) They gave him the job.

MCLAUGHLIN: I read something you said about this period, and I might be paraphrasing but you said something to the affect "the best way to learn to write history is to write history."

KLEIN: Right. Right.

MCLAUGHLIN: I suppose this was your honing period?

KLEIN: Right. This is the way I learned. I wrote these quarterly reports, they got better as I went along. You know, its fine to talk about how to write history, but the only way to learn is to write it. And I got better as I wrote. And I learned ... by reading good reports which they sent me. If they got one from some division that was particularly good they'd send it and say this is a particularly good one you might like to read it. And I'd read it, and I'd learn from that. Benjamin Franklin said the same thing. He said the way he learned to write was by reading the *Spectator* and *The Tatler* and these other English journals. That's why I tell kids, I mean, if you are doing research, stop doing research and start writing, because the only way you are going to learn to write, is to write. And if I am any better writer than I was or I ever was it was because of that experience of writing, writing, writing every quarter ... in a historical report. I had to organize it, I can't—I looked at this one report I had the other day. If you look at the Desert—I wonder where we could find it online—Desert, Tropic Information Center is was extraordinary how little we knew about these places, how much we had to learn, particularly to develop survival kits for the people who came down in these climes. We simply had no experience in these parts of the world. Here are these people flying over the China-Burma-India Theater, they had no experience the jungle. Jungle warfare was all new. So I learned a lot then, so just briefly postwar.

I did not want to go back to high school teaching. So I took another leave of absence and I became a civilian historian at Mitchell Field. I stayed there for a year, until they, well, told me to put or shut up. You either stay there or—that was very interesting because I, the Chief Historical Officer, there was a little old lady who had been one of Arthur M. Schlesinger's students. She used to baby sit for Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. (Laughter) And when I left she gave me a whole set of *American History Life Series*. But I didn't think she could write very well, but she taught me. There were three or four others of us and I was the assistant chief next to her and when

people turned stuff in to me, I ...—the way I did the students, holy to the cause. I criticize and send it back to them. Some of them were pretty angry, some of them stayed in and remained historians for the rest of their careers then retired on a hell of a lot better retirement pay than I got. But they all told me they learned to write by my criticisms, from my criticisms.

PIEHLER: I'm curious in these reports you would write, how honest could you be?

KLEIN: These were all classified.

PIEHLER: So ... and did you ever ...

KLEIN: Classified secrets.

PIEHLER: Did you ever have any concerns speaking frankly about a commander then what you put in the report? You didn't feel ...

KLEIN: I tell you what was even more interesting. When I was historian, as a civilian, at Mitchell Field, I was a member of the Commander-in-Chief's staff, and I attended Lt. General Stratemeyer staff meetings. And at the end of the staff meeting, it was marvelous, I'd take notes, and I go up to Brigadier General X and say, "During the meeting you said the only way we could do this if." They were trying to divide the—it was the headquarters was the Air Defense Command. And they were trying to figure out some way of defending the United States, and dividing it up into sectors. And I'd ask him, "What did you mean by that?" Can you imagine a historian being able to go up to George Washington saying, "George what did you mean by crossing the Delaware." (Laughter) And here I ask and they'd give me an answer, and I'd write them all down.

PIEHLER: So people—it sounds like you got a lot of cooperation?

KLEIN: I had access to everything.

MCLAUGHLIN: So you had high security clearance?

KLEIN: Oh yeah, I had top-secret security clearance. To fill that thing out, it was, oh my god, it was pages long. You know, your mother, your father? Did anybody ever live overseas? Where did you live? How many? Every place you ever lived. Oh my god! I had top-secret security clearance. That's why I ... it was so difficult for me to return to high school teaching. I was a nobody. Here I was, you know, top-secret clearance I could talk freely to lieutenant generals and now I have to bow to a chairman, or to a principal. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Had you—though it sounds like you had flirted with staying in as a civilian historian, or staying in the Air Force ...

KLEIN: Yeah, if I would have, if not for that ...

PIEHLER: You mentioned the Eightieth Congress and the ...

KLEIN: Yeah, yeah. If they had not cut my—they didn't cut my pay. They cut my rank. And that irritated me. That was stupid. (Laughter) Of course my friends who did stay in did very well. The Air Defense Command moved out to Colorado Springs. They moved out to Colorado Springs, I got George Billias his first job. After he got his Ph.D. he couldn't get a job. So I got him a job as a civilian historian with the defense command ...

PIEHLER: Sid Hart once mentioned that to me that he worked in the ... Sid Hart once mentioned about George Billias that he ...

KLEIN: Yeah. He was a civilian historian, and some of the others stayed. Some of them shifted from there to the National Park Service. One became the historian of ... Historic Philadelphia. He wrote beautiful reports on Benjamin Franklin's home, and the site of this and that, the liberty bell. These were real historians writing real history.

PIEHLER: Did you have any responsibilities in terms of record preservation ... as a historian? So that was not part ...

KLEIN: That was all done in Washington ...

PIEHLER: That was done ...

KLEIN: Now what they did with the records, I don't know. Now after the war, I was asked to come down to Maxwell Field where they moved the historical office and take a job there. But I had to make my mind up, did I want to make that a career, or was I going to get a Ph.D. and be a teacher. I decided I had better go ahead. So I got the Ph.D. and made less money than I would have—of course civilian historians did very, very well and retired on very good pensions. And of course, some of my friends, whom you would know ... became chief historians. Richard Kohn, do you know him?

PIEHLER: Oh yes. He's coming in May ...

KLEIN: Is he?

PIEHLER: ... to the Society of Military History meeting you'll have to ...

KLEIN: Make sure you tell me. He still has relatives here. He had an aunt here, but she died. Yeah, yeah. Dick Kohn was of course ... John Morrow was down there on special assignment. And he was offered the job and didn't take it. Who were some of the others besides Dick Kohn who were Chief Historians? They were ... you know scholars.

PIEHLER: No, we have a good group coming in from ...

KLEIN: What's Kohn going to speak on?

PIEHLER: He's just coming to attend the conference. It's the Society for Military, we are having the Society for Military History Conference. He's definitely ...

KLEIN: I see the conference ...

PIEHLER: You'll have to come to some.

KLEIN: Make sure I meet him. One of my other friends, Herb Johnson is coming from ... he was at South Carolina. He has written at least one history of the Air Force in World War I. It's called *Wingless Victory*, do you know that?

PIEHLER: I've heard that.

KLEIN: Herbert A. Johnson and he said he is working on a second volume. He is really a legal historian but he remained in the reserve, but when they put him on duty during the summer, they always made him a historian. So he got enough material to write this book. He's coming over to the conference 'cause he is going to stay with me.

PIEHLER: Oh good!

KLEIN: I'd certainly like to get together with him and Dick Kohn ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: ... and others that—and Harold Hyman, of course, is a good friend of mine.

PIEHLER: Well we will have to ...

KLEIN: Invite me to lunch or dinner or something.

PIEHLER: We will definitely, I'll talk to you after we get done. Just tell Cynthia what you would like to attend.

KLEIN: Well Harold Hyman, and Herb Johnson, and Dick Kohn—I didn't know who else, I didn't look at the list to see. What are the professional military historians?

PIEHLER: Well I know there is a whole group coming up from Maxwell Field, there are about twelve of them.

KLEIN: Yeah.

PIEHLER: I don't remember all ...

KLEIN: They are probably too young for me to know.

PIEHLER: Yeah. There is a whole group that are coming up.

KLEIN: The people at Maxwell now, I do not know. Well now they've written—I have a history, I suppose I should give it to you. I wanted to know if they had a history of Edmonton Air Base. And I did get one, but it was so blurred. They sent me the microfilm and I had it printed. It is so blurred, that it's almost unreadable. I wanted to know more about what happened at Edmonton after I left. I suppose I should give it to you. I have ... a couple of others. I'll clean out the attic pretty soon now. You should have that, and this, and another one I got ... Now Oliver LaFarge wrote the first history of the Air Transport Command, a thing that is called *Winged Victory*. I was amazed that ... of course it was unclassified so he couldn't tell a lot. It was an amazing story. Of course, I told you about the plane that came down in Greenland. You know, that last year ...

PIEHLER: They found it, I know.

MCLAUGHLIN: The P-38.

KLEIN: I went out to the party you know. I tried to get into the hangar. I was one of the people who was there at the time, couldn't get close to it. A lot of damn politicians were getting up there speaking about how effectively they had run for office, I'm running for office again. I did see real pictures, slides, as they were taken by the guy as he was uncovering the plane. And it was shown at a meeting of the local chapter of the Air Force Association. That was extraordinary, you know, the snow preserved them beautifully.

MCLAUGHLIN: I bet it was a beautiful flight to see.

KLEIN: Huh?

MCLAUGHLIN: I bet it was a beautiful flight to see. Did you go to the ... flight?

KLEIN: We made it to the flight. And we waited and waited and waited, it was supposed to happen at three or something, but nothing happened. Everybody kept saying this will never get off the ground and so on. And we began moving out, because our car was parked a mile away. And suddenly there was a shout, "It's going up, it's going up!" At least you saw it going to the end of the runway, and it went up. It flew. I don't whether it's flown since. Has it?

PIEHLER: I don't know.

MCLAUGHLIN: Go back for re-servicing, and then he is going to take it on a nationwide tour.

KLEIN: He must have paid a fortune to have that done. But I'm trying to think of anything interesting that I have missed, but I will let you ask me, or I'll forget.

MCLAUGHLIN: Wasn't it about this time that you started getting the legal bug?

KLEIN: No, the legal bug was ... no.

PIEHLER: Actually let me ...

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

KLEIN: It was a minor command, but it was major one because, hell they hauled all the supplies. The most famous of course, and you should find somebody I hope you have one who's been on the Hump. You know, the China-Burma-India, have you ...

PIEHLER: I've interviewed people from, on the Hump. Yeah.

KLEIN: The Hump was the most dangerous. It was the only combat area in which Air Transport Command Pilots flew. All the others were non-combat areas you know. We flew the planes, for example, up to ... Nome, where the Russians took over. The China-Burma-India Theater we actually flew them over ... to Chunking, for Chiang Kai-shek.

MCLAUGHLIN: I read somewhere that your command got up to nearly a quarter of a million men by the end of the war. It was a gigantic command.

KLEIN: Yeah. The funniest thing is the trouble with it I was never—see my friend George Billias was a medical officer, a medical supply or an administrative officer with the unit, ... you know, the XYZ unit and they have regular reunions. I was never with a numbered unit long enough to have an identity. And it was only recently I learned that they have organized Air Transport Command ... You see the Air Transport Command was late in being organized. The first thing they organized was something called the Ferry Command. Their job was to be to ferry the planes from factories to airfields. Well they all had group numbers and they had identities. And they retained those identities after the war so they have reunions. Then finally they decided they were all dying off. There weren't enough of them so the ferrying groups became part of the Air Transport Commands so they renamed the thing the Air Transport Command. Well I heard about it not more than six or eight months ago on the internet. I wrote this lady and said I was in the Air Traffic ... "Oh the next meeting is in New Orleans and you must come." "Okay," I said, "I'd like to see a list of the membership." She said to me there were only three people who were actually in the Air Transport Command who were not in the ferrying command. The others were all pilots or engineers who had you know, ferried the planes. But people like me we had no identity. There's never been a reunion of all the people who were at Edmonton, you know.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KLEIN: Most of us are dead now. But I'd love to see who ever is alive. Most of us were at Manchester. Headquarters of the North Atlantic Division it doesn't mean as much as being part of the ... third squadron of ... a combat unit. That's all right with me, I mean, I'm very proud of my service. It was the most exciting experience in my life. It really was. A ...

MCLAUGHLIN: A young man starting out on adventure.

KLEIN: Not only that but absolute freedom to do whatever he pleased. You could order anything, you know. I mean you had no worries in the world, and no dependents. I sent money

to my father. I was young. The world was my oyster. It'll never happen again and I'm glad. I feel sorry for these people over in combat, you know. Many of them joined as you know to get an education. They're stunned that they're being called upon to fight in the war. Their wives have said that. You know, "We thought joining the reserve was a way of making some money." And ... talking about the reserves, I stayed in a reserve unit that met in downtown New York and I went out on two-week active duty tours.

PIEHLER: How long did you do that for?

KLEIN: Until my twenty-year period was up.

PIEHLER: So you did retire from the Air Force?

KLEIN: Oh yeah, yeah. I was in for four-and-a-half years and I had to stay in for fifteen-and-a-half more to complete twenty years. I didn't want to stay in any more. At the end I was up in Fredonia, New York, where there was no unit meeting. And you either go into Buffalo or you take ... correspondence courses, which I did. My wife claims that she's owed much of the money because I gave her the courses, I said, "You take this." The dumbest courses, you know. Courses—there was a booklet, and then there was an exam. And what you do is look at the exam question first and then find the exact sentence in the book to match it. You didn't learn anything. (Laughter) We met down at the downtown New York somewhere and it was an interesting group. People consisting of all kind of professions, vocations, somebody from Brooklyn College, somebody who's an exterminator of ants and things like that. A ... municipal judge ... an Assistant District Attorney from New York and I went on active duty tours for two weeks usually to McGuire Air Force base, which is the nearest one, that's Fort Dix. And the funny thing is, I went Mitchell Field when it was in existence, it's not there anymore. But the year was 1950. And it was June. And I was on a two-week active duty tour. And the Korean War broke out. And everybody said to me, "You'll never go home. They'll never let you out." But the Korean War was run in the most peculiar way. The organized units, if you were a member of an organized unit, you were not recalled to active duty. But friends of mine who remained in the reserve, but didn't want to go through all this rigmarole of meeting once a week or once a month, once a week, I guess. And for going on to active duty, they were part of the unorganized reserve. And they called them up for active duty. Why? The organized reserve was needed for the defense of the United States. So maybe it was doing nothing but meeting—and in the reserve I was an education and training officer. What I had to do was go into these classes they were having, and, you know, rate these guys who were teaching, who were not professional teachers and giving them hints on how to teach and rating them. But we were retained. We were not summoned to active duty. I think it was the 9212th, was the name of the squadron. We had a—after it was disbanded we had annual meetings and I still have some of the notices of the meetings, but the damnest thing, here I was at Mitchell Field when the war broke out—I went home. Alright enough of that, I'll take a break and let you people ...

PIEHLER: One question, you talked about 1930s New York and how much anti-Semitism there was. What about in the Air Force? Did you ever encounter any anti-Semitism?

KLEIN: Uh ...

PIEHLER: No slurs even or just—did you observe any of the holidays while you were in the Air Force?

KLEIN: ... It was very difficult. I observed it once in Edmonton, Canada. I went to a Synagogue, Rosh Hashanah just because I happened to be there. Nobody invited me to dinner or anything so I said, “Screw you.” I mean I lost interest. In Orlando, I think, I got to know the Rabbi and I went to his service. He was a young fellow. But ... I lost interest I’m sorry to say. But I was so observant of ... Kosher that I remember at Presque Isle, I didn’t eat in the mess hall. I’d used to skip and go to the PX and buy milkshakes. (Laughs) But no I—there was one incident I remember in Orlando where somebody, an Irishman named Cavanaugh, sneered at me and said, “Klein you’re Jewish,” he says, “You’re all doctors and lawyers aren’t they? Is that what your father was?” And I said to him, “No my father was an automobile mechanic and my brother-in-law is a plumber.” Well he stopped dead in his tracks. You know people have these uh ...

PIEHLER: Misconceptions.

KLEIN: ... picture ...

MCLAUGHLIN: Sure.

KLEIN: ... and he was just stunned. How could anybody be Jewish and not be a doctor or lawyer? That’s the only guy who ever said anything to me that I recall. Now they may have thought it.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KLEIN: But they never said any—well I was a captain. Shit they weren’t going to say anything to me. Not my enlisted men or my junior officers. Or as a lieutenant colonel education and training officer who was rating them, they sure as hell were not going to offend me.

PIEHLER: But in the enlisted ranks, you didn’t ...

KLEIN: I don’t remember. Well when—there were a number of Jewish kids at a ...

PIEHLER: At Presque Isle? At Keesler?

KLEIN: At Presque Isle yes there was, not—incidentally (Laughs) there was a picture of me and a little story in the City College Alumnus about this New York book that came out. I think I got an e-mail saying, “Is that the Milton Klein, who arrived at Presque Isle?” This guy named Paul Liebl whom I had known there, he lives—we corresponded for a while. He’s not Jewish but he’s a very nice guy. He got married they didn’t have any children. His wife was Edna. And we’d pal around a lot together and he’s—I was a little surprised I hadn’t heard from more, but he’s one. But as far as Jewish kids, there were a number I knew in New York who came through. There was one in particular who came through ... Manchester. He was on his way to Greenland as a weather officer. Poor fellow, he died. He was Jewish. There just weren’t many Jews in the

Army that I recall. There was a Lieutenant Greenfield or something that was to be a historical officer at some base who came through Manchester and we chatted. And I don't think we exchanged Jewish remarks or something we simply did not want to call attention to the fact. But look ... it's very difficult. I don't understand it. Is this off the record?

PIEHLER: You're on the record again. The G.I. Bill, did you make use of that?

KLEIN: Yes, of course. Otherwise I would have never got my Ph.D. I don't think.

PIEHLER: Cause you had started Columbia before, before the war?

KLEIN: In the evening.

PIEHLER: Evening.

KLEIN: Evening courses, and Saturday morning courses. That's why as a colonial historian, I never managed to take a course in colonial history. (Laughter) They were taught on Monday and Wednesday mornings you know and I couldn't do it. But with the G.I. Bill, by then I'd completed all of my courses and I was able to use a year to write my dissertation. Or at least complete my research, drive around the country, and what was most beneficial about it was I began accumulating a library. Because Allan Nevins, whom you may ...

PIEHLER: Oh yes.

KLEIN: Allan's belief was everybody should own a library, every historian. And part of the G.I. Bill permitted you to assign textbooks you know, to your students. And he said—I took a course called "The U.S. History since 1865." And he said, "I don't believe in assigning text books." But he said, "Here is a list of books I suggest you buy." He wrote down twenty-five books. (Laughter) He knew very well what he was doing ...

PIEHLER: And, and ...

KLEIN: ... and the G.I. Bill paid for all of them.

PIEHLER: All twenty-five books that he put on the syllabus?

KLEIN: They were on the syllabus, yeah. It was the most magnificent bill ever passed I think by ... Congress.

PIEHLER: Because without the G.I. Bill, it sounds like you would have stayed in the New York School System. Is that a fair prediction? Well one never knows, but do you think you could have finished your doctorate?

KLEIN: No, I'll tell you how I got into the University system. I may have mentioned it there. I got my degree and then went back to the high school and was named Director of the Honors School and I thought that was fine. And then Harold Syrett who was editing the Alexander

Hamilton papers asked me if I would like to teach a course, a U.S. history course in the evening, on Wednesday evening at Columbia. I said, "Yes." And I taught that for a year. And then my mentor, who was Richard B. Morris said, "Milton, we have a one-year lectureship." That's lower than an assistant professorship, you know. It's a nondeterministic type of thing. In the School of General studies, which was a school they opened for adults. What they found at Columbia was that returning G.I.s felt very uncomfortable as undergraduates in Columbia College, which was filled with seventeen, eighteen and nineteen year old kids. So they organized the School of General Studies for adults. And [he said], "Would you like to teach in that school?" I said, "Yeah." "You'll have to take a leave." So, I took a cut in pay by half, I think. And I taught for forty-five hundred dollars. And my mentor, Richard B. Morris said, "The only way you're gonna get into the university system and out of the high school system is by getting into it." So I got in and I began teaching. I thought it was wonderful. I taught two courses. Allan Nevins had retired, but I was allowed by him to use a desk in his office. He had an office twice the size as this, which was filled with books from ceiling to floor and piled high. And if you were at Columbia you were immediately well known, you know. A newspaper or journal would call me up or a publisher, "Would you review this book for us?" And I wouldn't know anything about it, "Yes Sir," and I'd look on Nevins' shelf and find three books on the subject. (Laughter) You know, they didn't know what a reader was. A reader could be, you know, a lecturer, could be a ... visiting professor from Cambridge for all they knew. So I did that. And during that year, an opening occurred for the Chairman of the Department at Long Island University. And one of my colleagues came in and said, "Would you like to try out for that job?" And I said, "Me, with one-year experience?" So I went out there and they interviewed me and they liked me and I ... jumped from lecturer, to full Professor (Laughs), with tenure, and headship of the department. That was so funny when, I was invited by Phi Beta Kappa here, to give the Phi Beta Kappa Spring Talk or Fall Talk or something, a man who was introducing me was somebody from the English Department named Bain Stewart, who is still alive. And Bain got up there and he said, "I must confess I have some difficulty introducing Dr. Klein. I looked up his vita, and I could not find when he was an assistant professor, or an associate professor or an instructor. I just find that he was a full professor." (Laughs)

MCLAUGHLIN: A little professional jealousy there.

KLEIN: No, no, no he was absolutely stunned because, (Laughs) this doesn't happen.

PIEHLER: Well you're, I mean you're being very modest. I mean Columbia then, Columbia's still a very good program but then it was ... I mean maybe only Wisconsin which you really put in the same ...

KLEIN: They had names like Henry Steele Commager, Allan Nevins, Robert Livingston Schuyler, Jacques Barzun, and in English history, William Westman, in Ancient history Frank Tannenbaum and Latin American history and these were ...

PIEHLER: Richard Hofstadter was there.

KLEIN: Richard Hofstadter ... he was just beginning.

PIEHLER: He was just beginning?

KLEIN: These were these were some guns. Garrett Mattingly. Garrett Mattingly was a renaissance man. I'll never forget being in the elevator with him one day and he had a batch of blue books. I said, "My God, it's going to take you a long time to read all those blue books." And he looked at me and said, "You do not have to eat a whole meal, to know whether it is good or not. You simply have to savor some of its contents." (Laughter) He was going to read the first page of every third book and—yeah I met—and this helped me enormously when I became head of the department at Long Island University when I went to conventions and I needed to hire faculty, I knew all these people who were turning out Ph.D. students. I should also like to note for the record that my City College class had three Nobel Prize winners, which I think is a record. And one of them is a dear friend of mine whom I visited in Buffalo recently and on the mantel piece he had this, I thought it was a medal but it was a gold-plated replica he said, "The medal itself is solid gold and I've got that in the vault." Herb got it in Chemistry.

PIEHLER: What was his last name?

KLEIN: Hauptman, H-A-U-P-T-M-A-N. We went to elementary school together. We went to Townsend Harris together. We went to ...

PIEHLER: City College?

KLEIN: At City we separated. He took the science course and I took the social science course. But I knew as soon as he got—that was announced over the television, Herbert A Hauptman, Herbert Aaron Hauptman, I knew there couldn't be any other. I nearly called him or sent him a telegram or something, "Congratulations." The other two won it jointly. In medicine, uh ... if you had the World Almanac I would look it up. ... No, no, Herb and Jerome Karle, , K-A-R-L-E, won it jointly. And the other is Arthur Kornberg who is medicine, who earned it in medicine. And when I was up at Fredonia I was Dean of Graduate Studies and the President called me in and he said ... very formal, "Dr. Klein, Dean Klein, we need a new chairman of the Physiology department, or the Biochemistry department, you're in charge." I thought for a while and I said, "Would it help if got in touch with Dr. Kornberg at the..." "You know Dr. Kornberg?" This guy was a physicist. I said, "Yeah, he was a classmate of mine." I did call up Arthur up and tell him who I was and he was such a sweet guy. He wrote me a lovely letter recommending somebody and says, "I'm just so impressed that you're a Dean." (Laughter) Here's a Nobel Prize winner saying I'm so impressed that you're a Dean. I invited Herb down here. I was very, very disappointed with this place. Here's a Nobel Prize winner coming in and nobody paid much attention to him. I called the newspaper downtown, asked if they'd like to interview him, called the *Beacon* and asked if they'd like to interview him. Where did they put him up, ahh, they put him up in, what's this house we own here, this little private house?

PIEHLER: I don't even know ...

KLEIN: You know the Black Cultural Center on that street?

MCLAUGHLIN: I know the house you're talking about but I don't know what it's ...

KLEIN: Well we own it now. Put him up there. And I took him over there. And I said to the woman in charge, "Where will he get breakfast?" "Well, I guess he can go over to the cafeteria to get breakfast." So I said to him, he said, "I'm glad I didn't bring Edie," his wife along, Edie having been my first girlfriend. He said, "Last week we were in New York and we stayed at the Waldorf Astoria." That says something about Tennessee, and that's when you are talking about image.

MCLAUGHLIN: I read something else you mentioned when you were working on the Constitution and the Birthday, September 17 ...

KLEIN: Bicentennial.

MCLAUGHLIN: And you were very disappointed at the turn out here. Less than a thousand people I think you said.

KLEIN: Yeah, we had a big affair down at the Amphitheatre. It was beautifully designed by the committee. I was really like Eisenhower, the chairman of the committee. There was a committee in charge of the dance they had, a committee in charge of the symphony, and the symphony came down. Edye Ellis who was on the ... news, a major television reporter, and Bill Williams they were going to be reciting, reading a script from each side of the stage. Wilma Dykeman was going to participate. There was a play on Benjamin Franklin speaking and so on. It did not get an ounce of publicity in the newspaper before or after it was performed. We had a big luncheon, which was one of the best things I'd ever seen. There was a reenactment of the signing of the Constitution. The chief, I invited the Chief Judge, or Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court to be the speaker. He was there. The ladies, I mean there are ladies around here, you know, that run this Dogwood Art Festival. They were in charge of the table arrangements. They had gotten little scrolls, miniatures of the Constitution. They were on this paper that kind of looks like parchment with a little American Flag. Put in each cup, you know, they had bouquets of flowers. I mean they did a marvelous job, not a mention of it in the newspaper or anyplace else. I was so upset by all—incidentally we also had a ... planting. We planted a chestnut, an American chestnut, which was popular in the eighteenth century at the City/County building. And we had a ceremony. We had a flyover of planes from McGhee Tyson Airfield. Not a word from the newspaper, I was so upset about that, I wrote a story about it. And I asked the East Tennessee Historical Society to let me talk on it. I said, "And then we can publish it in your records so that there was a record because I had no idea what Knoxville did in you know, for the fiftieth anniversary which we did—for the hundredth anniversary." It was ...

PIEHLER: 1877, uh 1876.

MCLAUGHLIN: 1887. Yeah.

KLEIN: No idea, no mention in the newspaper of that. I said I don't want the same thing to happen to 1987. Because ... the Chief Justice of the United States who was the Honorable Warren Burger wrote us and said that we had the best local program of any in the country. And

so there is an article by me in the East Tennessee Historical Society laying it all out so that posterity will know that we had a big affair. (Laughter)

MCLAUGHLIN: I don't know if you'll want this on the record, but I was curious you have such strong opinions about the Constitution and education or what I've read, let me correct that, do you feel that its being taught any better today than, it used to just be?

KLEIN: I don't know enough about high school teaching now.

MCLAUGHLIN: Okay.

KLEIN: When, that year I learned a lot about it and we did a lot to help. We had help from a lot of wealthy people here who provided money. For example, we were designated, as result of Jack Reese, he was the Chancellor, as a Bicentennial University. And to get that kind of designation you had to promise to celebrate the affair from 1787 to 1791. Seventeen Eighty-seven being the drafting of the Constitution, '88 being the ratification, '89 the first meeting of, oh the inauguration of President Washington, in '90 the meeting of the First Congress, and '91, the ratification of the Bill of Rights. You had to have something on that theme each year. And ... we did that. I remember the '91 one, I we had—I can't remember all the things we did, but one of the things, and I asked one of the art, graphic arts classes if they would run a competition for a poster, you know illustrating the Bill of Rights. You know, our class hit. And the kids did a beautiful job and then I was asked with two others to judge and we picked one out. And I said to myself, "Now that we've picked one out, what am I going to do with it?" Here's one copy. So I went to Mr. Haslam, the head of Pilot Oil, and I said, "Jim," I said, "We did this, we got this, it doesn't do any good. I'd like to have about five hundred of them printed and then give them to each of the schools." But I said to him, "You won't lose any money on it because I'm sure you could sell them for a dollar a piece in your stores." "Sell em!" he said, "How much do you think it's going to cost?" And I gave him the figure. "Well, who is the printer?" And I told him and he said, "Just tell him to send me the bill." This guy was marvelous. When this big event occurred on the evening of September 17, 1987 down at the arena, not the arena ...

MCLAUGHLIN: The Amphitheatre.

KLEIN: The Amphitheatre. I didn't see any publicity for it, I said, "Nobody will know about it." I asked Harry Moskos, I said, "Have you put a free ad in for it?" "No." I said, "I want to put a free ad in." I called, it cost five hundred dollars. Who do I call? Haslam. He said, "Tell Harry to send me the bill." He really is ... I mean although his focus is on football, he is a man I respected for those things. I think I better get the hell out of here, my wife is forgotten.

PIEHLER: Unfortunately this concludes an interview with Milton Klein on August 10, 2003, at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville with Kurt Piehler and Gary McLaughlin.

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Reviewed by Travis White 11/10/04

Reviewed by Cinnamon Brown 9/10/05

Reviewed by Kurt Piehler 10/23/05