

TRANSCRIPT – MAX HILL

Interviewee: MAX HILL, JR.

Interviewer: SERGIO DUNCAN

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Location: The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina. Charleston, South Carolina

Length: 54 minutes

SERGIO DUNCAN: If you would you please, state your name for the camera.

MAX HILL: Max L. Hill, Jr.

SD: Okay, the interview is taking place at The Citadel. My name is Sergio Duncan, and this will be a Veteran Oral History Report.

SD: The first question is, where did you get drafted or did you enlist in the service?

MH: Well, I first enlisted in July of 1945 in St. Louis, Missouri. I lived in Belleville, Illinois, about 10 miles southeast. And when you turned 18, you got a notice to report to the post office and register for the draft or whatever, and I had wanted to go to West Point and had been promised an appointment by our Congressman, so I wanted to go into the Army and not be drafted by the Navy. So I went over to the Army recruiting department over in St. Louis and enlisted in the army in July 1945.

SD: So you chose to go to the Army? Is there any preference towards the Army or—

MH: No, it was—had to do with the West point appointment, so what I didn't know was that I was going to turn 18 on August 15, and having just enlisted in the Army and waiting to see what happen next, I—They dropped the first bomb, then the second bomb, then on the 14 of August, the day before I turned 18, the war ended.

SD: Oh, no.

MH: And I had already been enlisted, and everybody wanted to participate. You wanted to grow up a little too fast, and it was the thing to do. So, anyway, I went up to report and they said, “Well, why don’t you go back up to Purdue for another semester, and we’ll call you up in November. But, as I said, the war ended after that, but I was up at Purdue when it ended in the ROTC, and so I had a year and half of college. I’d have to take the entrance exam to West Point, and I got the reception center because of so many veterans getting out at that point the war being over that I didn’t get sent off to boot camp. I guess they figured I had a year and a half of college and been in the ROTC, and so shortly thereafter ,I found myself as permanent CQ in the orderly room at the reception center.

SD: [Laughs.] That’ll do it.

SD: What were you studying at Purdue?

MH: I was studying Mechanical Engineering.

SD: Mechanical Engineering.

MH: Yes, sir.

SD: Was that also what you wanted to study at West Point?

MH: Well, they were—Everybody got a degree in Civil Engineering, but engineering—You know a lot of construction [people knew] a name for a man, my father’s uncle, Max Payne, and he was a big contractor. Payne Nolan—that company still exists. It’s headquartered—used to be in Chicago, but it’s up in the Milwaukee area—and they do a lot of roadwork up in Wisconsin.

SD: Okay.

MH: And my grandfather on my mother’s side used to be a big contractor, so I loved Civil

Engineering, but for whatever reason I studied Mechanical.

SD: So which wars did you exactly serve in?

MH: Well, because I had enlisted in July, I in left the Army in late January because I had got an appointment to go to the Naval Academy, so I was getting out of the Army and into the navy to go to prep school, so I forgot the question—[Both laugh.]

SD: That's totally fine.

SD: Which wars did you serve in?

MH: Oh ok, so I am legally a veteran of World War II because of that period I spent in there and having enlisted before it was over and so forth, but my active duty period was only about four months at Ft. Sheridan before I transferred out—or got of the Army and into the Navy to go to the Naval Academy.

SD: Where exactly is Ft. Sheridan?

MH: Ft. Sheridan is outside of Chicago, Lake Michigan, just north.

SD: Okay, is it there any reason why you decided to go to the Naval Academy instead of West Point?

MH: Well, I had a letter from the Congressman appointing me to West Point, and so I said I wanted to go to prep school in Amherst or West Point, and I had—I could just certify in because I had already had a year and half of college successfully, so I just want to leave Ft. Sheridan and go over to Amherst College and see what it was like. So I gave this letter that I had got from the Congressman, and they said they would arrange it. So about a week later I got called back in, and they said, “Congressman, West Point doesn't know anything about you, where did you get this fake letter appointing you to West Point?”

SD: Oh, no.

MH: So I called my daddy; he called the Congressman, and he said, “Huh, I musta appointed him to the Naval Academy.” [Both laugh.] There wasn’t much choice involved.

SD: Honest mistake, I guess.

Okay, so while you were in the service, what exactly were your assignments or jobs?

MH: Well, after I went to Naval Academy for four years, we were the first class in ‘51 that didn’t have to go to the Academy because the war was over. During, not exactly right—the fact is that a lot of people would rather be at the Naval Academy during wartime getting training and come out as an officer and so forth. So we were the first class that really didn’t have to go, but I wanted to go at this time, so I spent the next four years at the Naval Academy and that was ’47 to ’51, but in 1950 I was down here on a destroyer for my summer cruise.

It was a new experiment. Instead of going on a fleet cruise with most everybody else, 48 of us were taken from the first class roster and sent as junior officers to Charleston, so I was on a destroyer, a mine-sweeper, the *Gheraldi*, and it’s the sister ship of the *Hobson* with a misfortune cut in half by carrier. There’s a monument down at White Point Gardens for the *Hobson* crew—the ones lost in the collision at sea. But the Korean War broke out in June 1950, and I was here on a minesweeper, and we went back and finished our last year at the Academy. And when it came time, we commissioned in a variety of ways.

The Air Force had been founded in about in, I guess, 1947 or established as a separate branch and didn’t have an academy yet, and had plans in the works: They took 25% of West Point, 25% of my class, and they did that for several years, and we were commissioned as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants in the Air Force rather than Ensigns in the Army or Navy.

SD: So, Jack of all trades, I guess.

MH: Yes, then I decided I wanted to be a pilot, so when I graduated, I was sent to pilot

training.

SD: So how was that? How was pilot training?

MH: Pilot training is always an experience. I was sent for six months to Greenville, Mississippi, in T-6s. It was originally a fighter plane, but by the time the war came along, it was not sophisticated enough, but it was a 450-horsepower single engine fighter plane if you will; that's what we learned to fly in. And then, after six months, we were either selected to go to fighter training or bomber training; if you were over six feet or over 200 pounds you went to the engine, and being 5'10, I easily qualified for bomber. I weighed about 220 at the time. So I went, I finished my training in B-25s in Lubbock, Texas, and I finished that in, let me see that would have been in August of 1952.

And then we were assigned to B-29 transition to train for the Korean War and sent to Randolph Field in San Antonio, so I went down there and went through B-29 training. Unfortunately, the last day of training they came down and arrested my aircraft commander for writing bad checks.

SD: Oh, no.

MH: So we had to go back through the training.

SD: Different trainer, I guess?

MH: Well, you start all over with a new crew; however, one of my classmates who trained as a navigator, he and I were crewed up on the same crew for whatever reason. Well, anyways, I got called into headquarters after a couple of weeks and had not been reassigned to training but was told that they had a request from the strategic air command, SAC, in El Paso Texas for a copilot, and I was it. So I got transferred along with the navigator, Carl Jaffurs, to Biggs Air Force Base, and that's where I was to spend the next several years.

SD: Is there any fun stories or any memorable experiences while you were training there?

MH: Flying is always a memorable experience, [Laughs.] hours of boredom intertwined with a few moments of stark terror.

SD: I can imagine so.

MH: After you got there, they began training you with the strategic air command for their mission. and we were the atomic striking force—this was before the submarines or any other way of delivering atomic weapons, so I didn't realize it at the time, really until after the Korean War was over. But we were trained on how the bombs operated and were trained on specific targets, and we could find similar ones in the United States with the Navigators and Bombardiers would be able to recognize the similarities when we went on these missions if we were called to drop these atomic weapons, which we hoped never would happen, but because we knew how the weapons operated, what our plans were, specific targets, escape and evasion routes if you were shot down anywhere on your mission, you knew where to go to look for help if you survived to that point. So we were not allowed in combat.

The war ended up—bombers were flown by reservists who had served in World War II and were recalled, and they were put into these active duty situations where they were actually flying the bombing missions. It was an interesting time 'cause we had all the promotions; and we had all the equipment. We were the fair-haired boys, but you won't find strategic air command pilots that were decorated, because they didn't get to fight. However we sat in places like Guam, Great Britain, North Africa, and should the war break out at any place where they had to have—where they decided they were going have to fight another war and wanted to drop these weapons, we were always in position. And one of my more interesting experiences we can talk about after a while is when I was in Guam and such an occasion arose.

SD: And how long exactly was your time spent as a pilot?

MH: Well, I was in as a pilot for four years and two months. You remember things like that; I got out in August 5, 1955, after the Korean War was over and after I served my obligated time. Always felt you either—if you stayed one day after your obligated time, you're were foolish to get out, but I wanted to go back to civilian life. I had a child; my first child was born in '54, and I wanted to raise my family. And there had been a lot of politics in the Korean War, and it didn't make the military quite as attractive in my mind at the time. It was always sorta sorry they didn't debrief me and say why you are doing this.

SD: So while you were away, how did you stay in touch with your family?

MH: Well, of course being in the Air Force, I was living there in El Paso, so I had my wife with me. But I was in Guam when she was pregnant with our first child, but I was back—we were there for four months, took part in the first H-bomb test which was an interesting experience—but I was back in time for my child to be born October of 1954.

SD: Of all the places that you visited, which would you say was the most exotic, or the most out worldly you could say?

MH: Well, after living in the desert for three and a half years, we were assigned to Guam. We flew through Hawaii, Oahu, landed there, then to Midway Island, then onto Guam. When I say we flew in the planes, we cruised in at about 200 mph, which is a little slow by today's standard, but it was a 14 hour and 20 minute trip. We refueled in San Diego. Then it was 14 hours and 20 minutes over to Hawaii, so I know how far Hawaii is from the U.S., but we got there as it was coming on dusk, and we decided to do a 360 around the island at about 10,000 feet. And the ocean was such a deep blue, and there's always a bank of white, big white clouds over the peaks of Hawaii because of the uplift of the air on the mountainsides, and then the

vegetation is so green; virtually everything that grows in the world you can find in Hawaii somewhere. So as we came in and did a 360, these colors were so vibrant then. The lights in the valley—first of all, as they lost sunlight, they began to come on, and I was reminded—not that I had any experience—of being in a jeweler’s display case where they had folds of green velvet with diamonds and pearls, so each time one of those lights would come on, just like you were looking at jewelry in a jewelry store. And it was the most beautiful picture in my mind that I can remember.

SD: So we’ve learned that’s probably where I need to visit, I guess. [Both laugh.]

MH: Yeah.

SD: Do you still keep in contact with some of the guys you served with?

MH: Unfortunately, now I am 85. And I was a youngster then, and so many people I served with have passed on. Over the years, of course you make such good friends in the military and you could pick up at any time in your life and your right back on the same wavelength couple of occasions. I did make one of the reunions later on, but even then most of the people who were the senior officers had passed on, but one of the first aircraft commanders I flew with in El Paso was named Don Youngmark.

And Don, he was a husky fellow from Dixon, Illinois, land of Reagan, and he looked a little like Joe Palooka. He was a powerful, big man, and I admired the way he flew the plane. The plane was like flying, driving a big truck without power controls; it took muscle to maneuver the airplane, and Don was fully capable of doing that. But after I had left the service and hadn’t been in touch for a while—I read first of all there was an atomic bomb that was dropped outside of Florence. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of that, but I forgot when it was, probably in the 60s.

Now, the thing about atomic weapons is that they were 10,000-pound bombs, but the material was only about the size of your fingernail, and it's in a lead ball, inserted in the center of the bomb. Anyway, they would carry those, but they were never armed. So you were [carrying] 10,000 pounds of TNT; however, it's still a big bomb. And somehow or another this plane flying over South Carolina lost one, and it made a great big hole in a farmer's field up there. We hadn't had much trouble with atomic weapons, never did have. But on this particular occasion one week later, a B-47 taking off in Texas—I think it was Abilene—but it took off, and, as it rotated off the ground, what it did was crash off the run way with another bomber. So we had two of those bombs dropped in the same week, and that's lost to history today, I guess. Pretty much, they don't want to talk about it very much.

But I'm reading the article, and the aircraft commander on that plane was Don Youngmark, my old aircraft commander. Well, about five days later, I got a call on the phone, and he said, "Max, it's Don," he says, "I'm driving down to seek you. Can we meet this evening?" And I said, "Sure, you come on." What he had done after the debriefing on the accident so forth, he drove to Dixon, left his family, continued on to see me, and we talked all night. I do not remember the conversation, but he was—there was another thing I'll tell you about in a minute that lead to all this. We talked about the accident as he took off on that airplane. He rotated when he got to speed, fired the jet-assisted takeoffs, because he had this 10,000-pound bomb. And they like to climb out at 3,000 feet per minute now—we used to climb out at around 200 feet per minute or something like that in B50s, sometimes less than that when we were loaded—but the jet planes and B47s all go out at 3,000 feet, so it'd only take them 20 seconds to get to altitude after they rotated. So as he rotated, he fired the jet-assisted bottles, and one of them had a defective weld, and it exploded and blew the tail off his plane. So he was

going straight up, and he and his copilot ejected one way, and the navigator and bombardier ejected the other way out of the nose and were recovered safely, but that's what turned out to be the accident. Then they did make another big hole in the ground off the runway at that airfield.

So, my last flight at El Paso—that's another story, and I'm—we're a little disconnected 'cause I had just waved off landing. But I had just come out [of landing], and [because the aircraft commander demanded controls] I was then flying co-pilot, and we came in and landed too close to another plane, which then stopped on the runway. And we came up to it at the last minute; nothing was happening with the aircraft commander [who should have taken action to avert landing the plane so close to the one that just landed], so I reached over and grabbed the nose wheel tilt [to try to avoid a collision]. We veered off the runway, but we hit the B-26 Bomber anyway with two engines, number 1 and 2, with the 500-gallon drop-tank full of fuel, so we had a big fire explosion. But we hit them so hard, we broke free and did not catch on fire ourselves.

So when I walked back in the operations room—I had been in the left [pilot] seat, and the aircraft commander I had taken the plane over from was in the right [co-pilot] seat—but we had disagreed on whether we should land or not behind this plane in front of us; we were too close. And I can remember D.Y. sitting on the radiator looking at me like—you know, the first report said I was in the left seat and presumably caused the accident and so forth—anyway, I remember how he looked at me 'cause we were good friends: It was like a good boy gone wrong.

Well, after he had his accident, he wanted to talk to me. And as I said he went all that way nonstop from Texas up to Illinois to Dixon and back down to see me and back home to get his family and back to his base. But as we talked—just on a lot of things—but he knew I'd understand what he'd just gone through because, you know, my previous experience. So that's a

hard way to keep up with people.

SD: Yeah.

MH: He did call me for the one reunion I went to, said let's go to that, so I went. He was beginning to fail; he was heavy in the end, having knee trouble and ankle trouble. And I had—we really sorta lost touch after that, that meeting was up in Williamsburg, Virginia.

SD: So you mentioned Guam earlier? An experience in Guam?

MH: That was one of the more memorable ones. You're out there in the—war is going on, and you—the information you get is just what they provide you with, letters and briefings and so on and so forth. And so we would always drill for the eventuality that we would have to go on a mission for the bomb, but of course dropping the atomic bomb would be a very significant event, one we hoped we never would have to do. We would never have—but at that time during the Korean War, China, communist China, was threatening to take two islands off their coast: Quemoy and Matsu, which are actually owned by the Taiwanese. And they kept them after China was taken over by the Communists. Well, they wanted those back, and they said that they were gonna attack them, and we, the United States said, "If you do, we're gonna go to war with you; we're going to fight you on that issue." So this was in the background as we started one of our usual drills where we would have to get the plane ready for a mission, and all the machines would be fully loaded, all the—We had a bomb, in this case not a concrete-filled bomb, but a real 10,000-foot atomic weapon delivered, and that always took orders from a higher command, Washington, to release those things. And so we had that, then they brought out flak, now the flak cost thousands of dollars for an airplane to put in, and it's not reusable.

SD: What is flak?

MH: Flak is all these aluminum particles that you could drop to confuse in those days, that

was the state of our anti-radar devices.

SD: Oh okay like, chaff?

MH: Chaff, yeah, that's what it was.

MH: And so we, we're issued that, and those things cost thousands of dollars, and we had 10 planes there in Guam, so we had to load all of those. And this drill went on for a couple of days, and usually at a point along the way, they would stop the proceedings and say, "This was a drill." Well, this time they didn't stop. They kept giving us different things to put on the airplane that we normally wouldn't get, and then they delivered the trigger mechanism. Now that takes everybody—the President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff—with the president finally authorizing it. We never even had a real one; we had a dummy once before, but this was the real thing delivered by specialist weapons people. And then we were ready, having done most of the things, and they called us in the Ready Room, and they said, "We want you to get a good night's sleep and write whatever letters you want, and we want you here for briefing at 6:30 in the morning for this mission."

So we went home and wrote letters because this frankly was sort of a one-way trip: Our target took us down the length along the only known guided missile range in China, and I said, you know, do we get insurance? [Both laugh.]

They said, "They won't be there when you get there 'cause there's a wave kind of thing, and you come in at certain point." And I said, "I'm sure that'll work out." [Both laugh.]

Anyways, so we went to bed and wrote our letters. Then, the next morning we went to the briefing room, and they started out briefing the tanker crews, which would have to take off before us and get out in position, so when we got to a certain point, we could refuel.

I don't think I mentioned the B-50 was the first that we flew, was the first bomber that

could be refueled in mid-air, the first one to fly around the world non-stop. And General LeMay and the late Arthur Godfrey, who was a great booster of aviation and the SAC in particular, he and LeMay flew around the world in a B-50 to show it could be done. So that's what we were flying.

So our tanker crews had to get out in front of us, and so they got briefed and left. They were humorous because they only went so far, then they were safe; they could come back home. But we were going on into battle. Well, then, the Weather Officer got up and he was so shook-up, he couldn't give us the weather briefing; somebody else had to come in and give us the weather briefing. But he was pretty tied up then after we had our other professional briefings, and then as the meeting began to come to an end, to close, the Chaplain gave us last rights. And then—this had gone a lot further than any drill we'd had before—

SD: Yeah, I see that.

MH: So then the commanding officer wished us well. He turned and walked out of the room. And we picked up our mini bags with all our equipment and so forth, maps, and started to go towards the door. And the Colonel put his head back in and said, "Gentlemen, that's the way it'll be if we ever really do go to war."

SD: [Laughing.] They deserve an Emmy!

MH: Well, let me tell you what happened. Sixty years later at my reunion—at about 55 years from then, but 60 years since graduation—I'm back at the Naval Academy at a reunion sitting, like we're talking here, and I'm saying to one of my friends, Fred Gorschboth, I said, "Fred, what did you do in the Air Force?" He said, "Well, you know, my eyes weren't that good to fly, but I wanted to be in the Air Force, so they assigned me to special weapons and sent me off to graduate school to study special weapons and nuclear things and so forth and Nuclear

Engineering.” And he said then, “A group of us were put in charge of all the trigger mechanisms for the atomic weapon.” I said, “Did you ever have to deliver the atomic weapon? Did we ever get to that point? Because, if I’m right, the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have to authorize it.” He said, “That is correct.” And he said, “There was not a very efficient system because we actually had to hand-deliver these things because they wouldn’t let them out of anybody’s control and sight.” But he said, “The first time we delivered the trigger mechanisms ‘cause we were going to war was during, if you remember, the Quemoy-Matsu affair.”

So 60 years later, I finally found out that this thing that we had been through, all this extra drill, was the real McCoy. But China backed down at the last minute. I can remember the intelligence officer saying “Gentlemen, it’s always been a question whether we would drop the atomic weapon first or only in retaliation; this answers the question. We are going to go first in this affair.”

SD: Wow.

MH: And I thought it was a drill until two years ago.

SD: That’s insane.

MH: [Laughs.] It was—I mean, they were serious.

And the other thing that happened in Guam that was sort of interesting is that we were having Operation Castle down in Eniwetok. That was the H-Bomb Test. And so they were. They wanted us, too, since we were the primary force for atomic weapons; they wanted us to see what that was like. Now, the situation with the Hydrogen Bomb, you know, it’s a thousand times more powerful than the atomic weapon, which is measured in Kilotons, not Megatons, and so in Eniwetok, that was the testing site, it was called Operation Castle. And so while we were there, they were firing these things so we would have the experience to see what an atomic explosion

was like.

We were set down to participate in one of those, so we flew down to the Eniwetok. And it was interesting and all of it was a landing strip; now the war had been over at this point. There was a little shrub at one end of the runway. That was the only vegetation on that island; everything else had been destroyed. And then we flew a couple of hundred miles over to Bimini for the actual bomb test. The best part of all this was that while we were over there in the war zone, you eat powder eggs and powdered milk.

SD: Delicious.

MH: Yeah, Dried fruit and all that and when I came in here. They flew in fresh fruit, steak, milk—you know we had fresh orange juice for our breakfast before we took off on this mission at about 6—no, about 4 o'clock in the morning. We got—the test got cancelled three days in a row, and we hoped it never came through 'cause for three days we ate like real people. [Both laugh.] And it was amazing how the taste is. Well, so anyway we flew over and what we'd do, we did not have an airplane that could drop the atomic, the hydrogen bomb. We had a B-36, which could fly at 50,000 feet, which was high enough, but it only went 150 miles per hour with 10 engines, but the true airspeed was 300 miles an hour at that altitude. We were flying B-50s, so we couldn't go over 30,000 to 35000 feet, and we were at about 200 miles an hour—that wasn't fast enough. B-47s, they flew about like airliners; they were an advanced airplane, but they were not the speed of sound or anything like that. If they dropped even smaller weapons like that, they did it in a dive. They'd come down then do a 180; they'd do an immelman. You come down, up, then do an inverted turn, then you come out and you were back to level and that was so you tossed the bomb ahead of you and out of the way. So the way they fired the hydrogen weapon was to put them on a stand and fire them by a remote control.

But we would be flying above in a racetrack pattern of about, I'd say, 20 miles and we would turn and be flying away from it; it was sufficient distance, so it went off and we'd be safe. It'd be like we were flying fast enough to get out of the way so what was interesting about, couple things that are interesting about that; one is that we did photo reconnaissance before and after and you could see very well the crater because the atolls there are light and pale green, the ocean, the deep ocean, is darker and you can see all the white coral and so forth. So you'd see this great round hole down there the diameter of those holes from the H-Bomb were stretching 10 miles.

SD: 10 miles, wow.

MH: We had a circular air of about 125 feet by visual bomb sighting and about 175 by radar we could get that close. I said, "who cares." [Both laugh.] But it was an impressive thing. Now, when we got out there, we finally went, we had canvas on all the windows, and we had polarized glasses that you could look at the sun, and it was just a mere dot. It was dark, and this explosion would take place behind us, and when it went off, we both involuntarily put both hands over our eyes and you could see every bone in both hands for over 30 seconds.

SD: Wow.

MH: And then it was like riding a wave back at the beach. The wave from the bomb would come in and hit you and just toss you. And both the aircraft commander and I had our arms locked at the elbows holding the thing down, cause it kicked you. And it was interesting; it was bright.

SD: Oh, I bet.

MH: Behind us, as I said, it was still dark, but it was sort of an impressive thing. Then, we did a 180 and went back and looked at the mushroom cloud and so forth, just like the pictures we

had seen. What I discovered subsequently was that we did not get Hydrogen explosion; we only got an atomic explosion. They were trying different mixtures of things to see how they reacted, and this one did not give it the final kick. So it as impressive as it all was, we still did not, did not experience the Hydrogen explosion.

SD: Wow, makes you think what the Hydrogen explosion looks like.

MH: Woah man, and I'll tell you we had fighter planes with little collectors on the wing tips catching ashes. They were radiating those people; we didn't know enough about all that, I think. And we had pilots flying in and out of those clouds. Of course if you study the alpha, beta, gamma rays you know what stops and how far they go. There was a lot of interesting information that we were told and trained on. But that was an impressive event for us. I'm glad we never had to drop a bomb—that would have had so many political consequences over the years had we actually gone in China and fought with them at that time.

SD: Okay so you said after you were done with your service, you went back to school?

MH: Yes, after I got out, I went to law school.

SD: Where did you attend law school?

MH: I went to Harvard.

SD: Harvard? How was that?

MH: It was very, very interesting. Law is like mental chess, and I thought it would be detail-oriented, and in a way it is, but it is mental chess, and it is one of the most fascinating studies you can have. Unfortunately, my wife was pregnant as we got out, and she got sick and she spent three months at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. And while I had taken health insurance, BlueCross BlueShield is what I was used to having, it didn't cover pregnancy 'til after a year, and this was only three months after we got out; we found out she was pregnant,

and we were not insured. And that got to be an expensive proposition. And I was borrowing money to go to school—my career lasted a year. But the baby was stillborn and that was a sort of a traumatic experience, and it brought me down to Charleston earlier than I might have otherwise have come.

SD: So you got your law degree?

MH: Oh, I didn't say that. I was only there that one year.

SD: Oh, okay, you were just there that one year. So you never finished law school?

MH: No, went into real estate, and what I had [experience with while in law school] was personal and real property law, contract law, agency law, turrets, civil procedure, if you will, and criminal law—everything you need for real estate.

SD: Nice, the necessities.

MH: Yes.

SD: So, you went into real estate, is that still what you're doing now? What made you decide to do that?

MH: Well, first of all, when I was at the Naval Academy I learned about it. I had an American History professor named Henry Lumpkin from Columbia, South Carolina, and he was teaching at the Academy at that time. And the first day of class, he stood up and said, "Alright, you people have all taken Early American History." He said, "Winners rewrite the books; the South has been rewritten out of the history books, so y'all are going to learn about Southern History, particularly South Carolina history, because well over 50% of the battles and skirmishes of the Revolutionary War were fought in South Carolina. So you're gonna learn about that part of things."

I'm from Illinois, so I didn't know much about it. Believe it or not, I knew The Citadel

was here and Ft. Sumter, and that was my limit of my knowledge of Charleston. And so when I got—one of the things I learned in the class was that there were a lot of regulations, and penalties and laws that applied to the South only. One of the most damaging was the freight rates, tariffs, that if you manufactured or grew anything in the South and tried to ship it North you couldn't compete. Well the professor, this was 1947, October, so he said, "When do you think those regulations were taken off the South?" Well, we thought maybe around the turn of the century, World War I, something like that. He said the last ones were taken off two years ago. So the south had been held back for all those years.

You know, growing up in Illinois, we'd say the South's still fighting the Civil War. Yes—they were still being punished, and today even the passages in the Voting Act carry on' [they are] discussing that now; ask pre-court and see what happens. But when I came down here in 1950, I didn't think I'd be in this part of the world. I knew about the Battle of Breach Inlet; we lived in Boston while I was in Harvard, and they had statues of ten minute men killed here, so I actually took a cab to the Minelant headquarters, which was over where city marina is now, that's the old Minelant headquarters, so I rented a cab and went over to the site of the Battle of Breach Inlet. It wasn't even marked, and I was just sort of amazed. And Charleston in 1950, you know, even though the rules had changed, so when I got out in '56, I was ready to get back down here in the fall of '56. And I thought that waterfront and real estate were the two areas that would be most advantageous to me, and since the rules had changed, Charleston was one of the top five cities; it was with Boston and Baltimore [which] would be the third largest cities in this new land, and 'cause its port was so essential, that's why it was settled here and 'cause you go off the heart of Africa you come across and pick up the currents and the winds and come in through the islands and into Charleston in the days of sail—that didn't change until 1948 or something like that. So

when I'd go from here to Baltimore to Philadelphia to New York to Boston then back across—and in World War II we used that North Sea route again that's where the currents and so forth make a little difference in the speeds—so I thought the port here would be a great component of real estate.

So I interviewed around, but most businesses were family-run. Charleston was not very prosperous in those days; they were land-poor, and so the people, we had brain-drain, and people with talent would go off and run other companies or didn't have the opportunities back home, but your certain professions—lawyers and doctors and attorneys and so forth—would stay here, but a lot of people left, and so their family businesses and waterfront only had fewer businesses 'cause there wasn't much opportunity. The port dropped to something like 65th in the world from our previous lofty positions after the Civil War and so forth, so it was even harder than real estate, and I couldn't even find a job in real estate because there were mom-and-pop operations, father-son and so forth. So I got a job as a sales engineer, which means if you needed a sales man, I was an engineer, and if you needed an engineer, I was a salesman. A perfect cover, but the thing that happened was I learned the territory; I called on people to sell them industrial equipment from Georgetown to Beaufort. Hilton Head was not a factor in those days, but I went over to Orangeburg and Pawley Hill, so around a 78-mile radius of Charleston I would go call on businesses from hospitals to paper mills to machine shops; everybody had to have some of this industrial equipment or safety equipment, which we sold as well as medical gases and so forth; we had Oxygen and Acetylene and so forth.

So I learned the territory, so when I did go into real estate, it was such a help to me. Had I gone in immediately, I wouldn't have known enough people. The market was not that active then. I was doing other things like, I'd go into the YMCA to go get exercise; they go to work,

and I met lots of really nice people. I was asked to be on the board there, so it made it a lot easier. Now, you have to realize the difference in prices in living, which was about \$5,000 a year you'd get by. I thought \$12,000 was a king's ransom; then I met someone who made \$25,000. But even when you'd come out of law school, they'd tell you you'd make \$10,000 to \$15,000. In those days, you could have bought any house in downtown Charleston for \$3 to \$5 a square foot, and it cost \$7 [per square foot] to build a new one; then they marketed it to \$10 [a square foot]. I still remember all that back then in the early '50s, in the late '50s I should say. And people just didn't have the money; there was no business. We are so fortunate now because we have a well-rounded community, from academics, like you have here, to industry, to the port, to tourism, to medicine. We are very fortunate. And so Charleston—its problem is not growth, its managing growth and where you put things. And for years I would fuss at them because they would say, they would save an expensive piece of land and put industry there, and [leave an] inexpensive piece of land instead of deciding where it should be. And that's just a battle I fought over the years. But that doesn't have much to do with that.

SD: So how would you say your service in the military affected you in the long run?

MH: In many ways, starting with discipline, focus, because, left my own devices, I can just go to whatever, you know, go from one thing to another. I can still do that in real estate and go from one project to another, but the fact was that was the discipline. I spent five semesters at Purdue, and I was happy to start over because I realized I hadn't developed very good habits. I could remember the first time I squared a corner, and somebody said, "Hey you, mister." And I thought, "Couldn't you have done it yourself?" And I told myself that's why you came here, but you learned to persevere. You get a problem and you solve it and you solve it with others and you support one another. It took me seven years to get used to the selfishness of the civilian

world; now it's hard for me to remember some of the other ways, but it was everybody is for themselves, compared to the military where there was a support group for one another, and I miss that. And I thought that the civilian world would be better if we could have a little more of that.

SD: It sure would. Is there anything you would like to add into the interview?

MH: I'm trying to think in what direction—I think this is an interesting project that is going on. I've had lots of friends—you know, I was one year too young to get caught up in the midst of everything. If I'd have been one year older, I would have been in the fighting in World War II. And because they didn't—you know, when you turned 18 you went in, and you went to training camp. Then to you went to an outfit; then you go to war. But as I said, everybody was behind the war effort I can remember the paper drives and conservation efforts for materials in World War II when I was young. I remember wondering why, if it was so important then, why aren't we more conservation-minded today? So many of my friends who are just a little bit older that you grow up with, you know, you have friends that go off in front of you, and you wanted to be with them. But I was just young enough to get on the fringes of some of that stuff. But the friendships I've made—you can go back at any time with your comrades, the people you served with, and you are able to immediately pick up where you left off. The friendships are deep; yes, they really are. So I tried to keep up with them. But when you're raising children, you have business requirements, family requirements, so it keeps you pretty busy if you set goals for yourself. That's another thing you learn: you have missions to accomplish, so you're used to setting goals and making plans and taking action in those plans to achieve those goals and that's—I think I got a lot of that. But discipline is the main thing, focus.

SD: Well, I think that's it. Thank you so much, Mr. Hill.

MH: You're welcome. I hope I helped somewhat.

—END OF INTERVIEW—