

Mr. Kapp: This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of the District of Columbia Circuit Court. The interviewee is E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr. The interviewer is Robert H. Kapp. The interview took place at the offices of Hogan & Hartson, L.L.P. on the 19th day of March, 1996, shortly after noon.

Mr. Kapp: Barrett can you just state your full name and your date and place of birth?

Mr. Prettyman: Elijah Barrett Prettyman, Jr. June 1, 1925.

Mr. Kapp: What can you tell me about your ancestral background?

Mr. Prettyman: Well, as I understand it, a Mrs. Forrest came over here from England in 1608 and settled in Jamestown, Virginia, and a John Prettyman settled in St. Mary's County, Maryland in 1634. And I think they're the earliest known ancestors we had. My parents later went back to England and discovered a small town (whose name escapes me) where our ancestors came from.

Mr. Kapp: Now what about your grandparents. Did you know them?

Mr. Prettyman: Yes. When I was quite young I did know them. My Grandfather on my Mother's side was a doctor. He had been a farmer but went to medical school, became a doctor. His name was Dr. Henry Hill. And they lived in Baltimore and he was quite a character. I remember that when I was quite young, he would tell everyone he was going to take me bowling, and we'd go off and see Jean Harlow movies. *[Laughter]* So, I mean, he was really that kind of a guy; he

just had a great sense of humor and he was kind of a cut-up. On my Father's side, it was quite different because my fraternal Grandfather was a Methodist preacher and his wife had a rather stern visage and he was a very serious man. I used to love to hear him preach because he had a very effective manner. He would begin his sermon in, not a loud voice but a strong voice, and I didn't realize this until years later because I just didn't notice, but as he got further and further along in his sermons, his voice would get lower and lower until at the end everybody in the church was leaning forward in the pews trying to hear, and it was very effective. I mean, it was like seeing a stage play, it became quite emotional, so I used to love that. So I knew, briefly, my Grandparents. I remember, for example, sleeping on the porch at my Grandfather Hill's place in Baltimore and hearing the ice trucks come down the streets -- the old trucks that used to carry ice to the various houses -- that's a memory I carried with me because of the distinctive sound.

Mr. Kapp: Did you visit your Grandparents from both sides with any frequency?

Mr. Prettyman: I suppose in today's terms it would not be frequent. But in the early days because of the locomotion, the difficulty of travel, even going out to Rockville which is where my Grandfather lived (the preacher Grandfather) for quite a time, we'd have to make a special trip on Sunday afternoons in the old Model-T Fords with what do you call that thing in the back that opened up -- the rumble-seat. Anyway, my sister and I would sit in the back there, and we'd all

drive up to Rockville. But it was like a full half-day trip to go up there and get back again. Going to Baltimore was even more of a trip. So we would go to Rockville every few weeks and Baltimore not as often, just because of the difficulty of getting there.

Mr. Kapp: I didn't ask you where you were born.

Mr. Prettyman: I was born here in Washington, D.C. at Garfield Hospital, and interestingly South Trimble, who is a local attorney and a friend, his mother was in the hospital at the same time as mine, both of them having children. So I am a few days older than South, which he of course kids me about all the time. I might add, thinking about my Grandfather, I neglected to mention that he (Grandfather Prettyman) was Chaplain of the Senate during Woodrow Wilson's time, and my Father was a great admirer of Woodrow Wilson. I have no idea whether that was totally independent of my Grandfather's service or whether it was connected, but I was always taught that Woodrow Wilson was a great hero.

Mr. Kapp: And indeed he was. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Prettyman: Yes.

Mr. Kapp: Just to talk a bit more about your Grandfather Prettyman. Did you have discussions with him at all about his view of religion or his religious philosophy or did he do any proselytizing? *[Laughter]*

Mr. Prettyman: Teaching, I would call it teaching. Sometimes. I must say that it didn't take very well. I didn't pick up on it very well. I do

remember, however, a near-death bed scene when he was really dying and I went to see him and he told me, you know, to be good and to do good things and to do them in the eyes of God and so forth. So that impressed me because of the seriousness of the scene, the occasion. But the other talks that we had were not in any depth, really; he was simply expressing his strong religious beliefs, and my Father had them too and also expressed them as I grew up.

Mr. Kapp: Can you tell me anything about the relationship between your Grandfather Prettyman and your Father?

Mr. Prettyman: Surprisingly, very little. I had the impression that there was deep affection and respect on both sides, but neither was terribly demonstrative so there was not a lot of, you know, hugging and saying loving words and things of that kind. They seemed, perhaps it was simply the times, but there was less demonstrative love than perhaps you might expect now. But I certainly never questioned their deep allegiance to each other, and certainly my Father always spoke with the utmost, utmost, respect for his Father. As a matter of fact, to be honest, it's very much like my own feelings for my Father, complete respect.

Mr. Kapp: Were your Father and your Grandfather in regular or frequent contact as you were growing up?

Mr. Prettyman: I have only the vague impression that they were but I don't remember everybody dropping in on everybody else all the time or anything of

that sort. I have the feeling that my Grandfather followed my Father's career very carefully, but I really can't pinpoint that in terms of how often that happened.

Mr. Kapp: Maybe you ought to give us the names and dates and places of birth, if you know them, of your own parents.

Mr. Prettyman: I don't know them. My Mother was born in Baltimore and my Father in Lexington, Virginia.

Mr. Kapp: And your Mother's name was?

Mr. Prettyman: Lucy Hill.

Mr. Kapp: And your Father's name was?

Mr. Prettyman: E. Barrett Prettyman.

Mr. Kapp: What can you tell me about your Mother?

Mr. Prettyman: My Mother I remember mostly as having a great sense of humor. She was very funny, she looked at things from a humorous standpoint and she had very close friends, all of whom really cared for her a lot because she was so much fun to be with. But she never graduated from high school, she never went to college. She became a nurse by going to nurses school and I think she always felt that lack of education, much more than she should have. I would kid her and tell that it was ridiculous and for example my four years at Yale had not really taught me very much. *[Laughter]* I could as well have spent them elsewhere. But she always felt that she was essentially uneducated and of course becoming a nurse was not easy in those days and she worked I understand twelve

hours straight on many many occasions and she was proud of that. But she still felt that she had missed the tutoring of basic education, and some books she felt she did not understand because of that lack of education.

Mr. Kapp: Where was the family home as you were growing up?

Mr. Prettyman: I went from Garfield Hospital in D.C. to 37 West Irving Street in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and that's where we spent a long period of my early childhood. We have movies of me on the sidewalk with a Model-T Ford there and me just barely walking, just toddling, and I actually remember growing up there pretty well. I can see my room facing Irving Street and I can see my desk and my bed. I remember that pretty well. My first friend in the neighborhood was George Ferris, whose father began Ferris & Company, and George is now the senior person there. And another close friend who remained a friend during high school lived just a few doors up, and that's George Goodrich, who later became a judge on the Superior Court and has only in recent years gone on senior status.

We would go to the movies every Saturday. I think it was a quarter. And you'd see previews and cartoons and news and serials that showed every week like the Green Hornet and so forth [*Laughter*], and finally you'd get to see the movie. We'd sit in the balcony and throw popcorn on the people below, and we did the usual things that you did growing up. And we'd all come out with headaches. I also remember one particular incident which remains very clearly in my memory. There was an elderly couple up the street that we didn't like, they scared us, they

were very serious and they looked kind of strange, and they never had children and we just, we didn't like them without understanding why, exactly, and I remember one Halloween we got all of the leaves in the neighborhood and after dark we put them all on their lawn, and the next morning when we got up they were all on my lawn. They had moved them back. They knew exactly, *[Laughter]* they put their finger on who had done it, and that remained very vivid in my memory because I thought they were so smart to be able to detect right away who the principal evildoer was. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Kapp: Was the Irving Street house the family home all during your parents' lifetime?

Mr. Prettyman: Until I was about sixteen, and then we moved to Woodlawn Avenue in Kenwood, Maryland.

Mr. Kapp: And your parents were still both alive when you made that move?

Mr. Prettyman: Yes.

Mr. Kapp: Tell me a bit about your siblings.

Mr. Prettyman: I have one sister, Courtney, whose married name is Paddock, married to George Paddock. She is six years older than I am. She's still alive, she lives in Evanston, Illinois, just north of Chicago. George is in the insurance business. They have never had children, and Courtney and I have been very close, particularly in the last twenty years. When we were young, because of

the disparity in ages there was a certain amount of competition. I was always making fun of her boyfriends and stealing her books that had pictures of movie stars in them and things like that. We once had a big fight where I kicked one of her teeth out. But we weren't enemies, we just had the normal conflicts that you have when you are kids and particularly when you are a few years apart. I really couldn't understand the stages she was going through, and she didn't have a lot of sympathy for the stages I was going through. *[Laughter]* But even though we are very different and have different interests and lead very different lives, we are very, very close, we talk all the time, and it's a wonderful relationship. And when we get to it I will give you an example of an incident during the War that was quite memorable to me, relating to her.

Mr. Kapp: Just, maybe, to return for one more moment to your Mother. Would you describe what influence you think she had on your life and on your choice of profession. Whether she had any impact on that in any way or how you practiced?

Mr. Prettyman: I think less of an impact than my Father. She impacted primarily I think in terms of personality, a certain devil-may-care attitude. I just enjoyed her a lot. I thought she was kind of neat to be around, but other than encouraging me in every way and really not standing in my way, she said no when I was about to be bad but she did not put on the brake. I remember, I guess we'll talk about this later, when I was standing on the bridge at Ocean City

about to hitchhike across the country, and she and my Father were there, and I know now that they were scared to death, but they never said a thing, they acted like it was going to be a really good time for me, and so she did not stand in the way of things I really wanted to do.

Mr. Kapp: At what age did that hitchhiking incident occur? How old were you?

Mr. Prettyman: That was in 1946, the year after I came back from the War.

Mr. Kapp: Aside from what you've mentioned about your Grandfather Prettyman, can you tell me what role religion played, if any, in your family life?

Mr. Prettyman: Well, it played a strong role early on because we went to church every Sunday and I went to Sunday school, and there was always my Grandfather's influence. I have to tell you that it became less significant as time went on, so that I very seldom attend church now. It was almost as if I had a reaction to so much religion. I reached a point where I felt I was not getting that much out of the sermons and in some respects I regret that, but that's just the way it happened to develop.

Mr. Kapp: At what time of life did that occur?

Mr. Prettyman: I think certainly around the deaths of my parents, if not slightly before.

Mr. Kapp: And those occurred when, Barrett?

Mr. Prettyman: My Father died in 1971 and my Mother died a couple of years later, in 1973.

Mr. Kapp: Maybe we could return here to some of your early memories. I think it would be helpful if you would tell us a bit about your earliest memories of schooling, elementary schooling in particular, if you have such memories.

Mr. Prettyman: The first school I really remember was Somerset School in Somerset, Maryland, halfway between Chevy Chase and Kenwood. And the principal thing I remember there is that one day one of the teachers, a female teacher, got mad at one of my young classmates and picked him up by the hair, and that impressed me tremendously, as it did everyone else. But I really remember very little about that school, other than the usual playing in the playground and trying to absorb mathematics and all the rest of it. Then I went to St. Albans, and I boarded part of the time but not for very long -- I think that was mainly when my parents were away on trips. And of course I remember that much better, much more clearly. At St. Albans I was not much of an athlete; I tried to play end on the football team but I was awfully light, and I tried to play soccer but I wasn't very good at it; played a little bit of tennis. Essentially I was into writing and drawing. I was managing editor of the St. Albans News, I did some writing and drew the cartoons for the yearbook, and so I was much more into that side of things. My two best friends at St. Albans were George Goodrich and Jim Birney, and we were

known as the “threesome” because we always stuck together. I had a lopsided time at St. Albans because I was into all kind of devilment and would get thrown out of class sometimes, and one term I had fifty-eight demerits, and if you get sixty you’re expelled. I had about a week to go, and Jim and George accompanied me around school all day to prevent me from getting the last couple of demerits so that I wouldn’t be expelled. *[Laughter]* And I finally caught onto the system and was elected a prefect who gives demerits rather than gets demerits, so I beat the system that way. But I had a wonderful time at St. Albans. I would get a lot of A’s and F’s, which drove Dr. Lucas nuts. He was the headmaster, an ex-Marine preacher who just despaired of me because he said I wasn’t concentrating and giving my all and doing my duty, all of which was completely true.

Mr. Kapp: When you were at Somerset School, how did you perceive yourself as a student, if you remember Did you think of yourself as a good student or poor student?

Mr. Prettyman: I don’t really remember. I remember a general feeling that I was never a top-flight student, at least until I got to Law School, although I did well at Yale, I mean I was on the Dean’s List in my last year at Yale, but I had the impression that I did things that I really enjoyed doing, that I was interested in, and my attention flagged on those things that didn’t seem to have much relation to me or to my life. I was terrible in languages, for example. I took six years of French and could hardly say anything. But I did do well in Math for some strange

reason and I did extremely well in English, writing, literature, that sort of thing, so it was really what captured my interest.

Mr. Kapp: What role did your parents play in your earliest education? For example, in your elementary school education? Were they active in regards to your education? Did they talk to you about it?

Mr. Prettyman: Very. They were very concerned. They would go in and have conferences with Canon Lucas. They would have long talks with me about my future, how I was not going to become anything if I didn't settle down. They were very concerned. They were very supportive. I think they had between them a nice attitude, and that is they were obviously loving, they cared, they wanted the best for me, but they weren't going to put up with just anything I wanted to do. And I had, you know, I had to work. *[Laughter]* So to the extent that I didn't succeed, I don't think it was their fault in any way. It was purely my own untoward spirit.

Mr. Kapp: You grew up in Depression times and came to adulthood shortly after the Great Depression. What do you recall about the Depression and the impact of that on your family and discussions that your family may have had during that period -- do you have any recollection about any of that?

Mr. Prettyman: No. It's interesting that my sister does, and she has stories about how difficult times were and the fact that they could barely make ends meet. But I wasn't aware of it at all. To me it was just a perfectly normal, regular

life with no deprivations. I just wasn't aware of it. We ate three square meals a day, you know. Had a nice house over our heads.

Mr. Kapp: Can you tell me about your reading interests in elementary and secondary school?

Mr. Prettyman: I loved the normal things, Treasure Island and Les Miserables I remember. I loved S.S. Van Dyne, the mystery stories, I loved Kidnapped, Treasure Island, The Three Musketeers. And earlier than that, I'm sure I read the childhood mystery stories. I don't remember the names of them but I always loved mysteries and I'm sure I read those when I was young. Like the Hardy Boys, books that like. But I read quite a bit.

Mr. Kapp: It was a significant part of your early life would you say?

Mr. Prettyman: Yes, I would say so.

Mr. Kapp: And when, do you recall your earliest experiences of writing?

Mr. Prettyman: Oh yeah, I still have my themes that I wrote in high school and probably earlier than that. And this is the kind of thing my Father would do: I would take the comic strip Dick Tracy or Dan Dunn and I would concoct a story and I would draw the figures and write above them and I'd have a new sheet -- just as you do in a comic strip -- I'd have a new sheet for each scene as the plot developed. My Father collected those and put them into book form. I still have two books that I wrote when I was God knows how old, I mean, maybe ten or something.

But that's the kind of thing he would do to encourage me. And I took six years of art when I was living on Irving Street in Chevy Chase. There was a woman up the street who taught art, and that had a big impact upon me, I loved art work. I was never terribly good at it but I enjoyed it. My Father knew that the art and the writing combined with the reading were important, and so both he and my Mother both encouraged me to do that as much as I wanted to.

Mr. Kapp: Can you describe your travel experiences as a youngster?

Mr. Prettyman: I was never on an airplane until World War II. Part of that was probably because my Father had a fear of enclosed places, and so he never went on an airplane in his life.

Mr. Kapp: His entire lifetime?

Mr. Prettyman: Yes. When he went on senior status he got a letter which he showed me with some amusement from the General Counsel of the FAA, and it said in effect, "We're sorry to see you leave. You'll be interested to know that we keep statistics and you've written more air law than any other Federal Judge in the history of the country." *[Laughter]* And my Father said, "My God, I hope this doesn't get out," and I said, "Why," and he said, "Because I've never been on an airplane in my life." So we would go either by car or by train, and even if he sat on the Ninth Circuit in California by designation, he would take a train. So we saw quite a lot of trains. But during the summer, partly I think because of finances, we always went to Ocean City, Maryland. I was at Ocean City before I was born

because when my Mother was pregnant with me we were in Ocean City, and we went there virtually every summer. Now those were the days when of course you did not have a bridge over the Bay but rather old ferries, so you'd go down and you'd wait in these long lines, miles long, and finally drive on to the ferry and that was a 45-minute ride across the Bay, and then you'd get off on the other side and drive on. So you didn't just run down to Ocean City every weekend *[Laughter]*, it was a big trip down and we stayed for at least a month and then we'd take that long trip back. And years later when the ferry was still going and I would hitchhike down to Ocean City, I would hitchhike to the end of this long line and get out of the car, walk a few miles, get on the ferry, and hitch my next ride on the ferry and get down hours before the guy who gave me the first ride. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Kapp: Did your family have a home down there?

Mr. Prettyman: No, never did, which is interesting because they knew they were going every summer. My sister thinks that that's partly because of finances, they just never had enough to purchase a home, and perhaps partly because of the Depression. My Father had a fear that the ocean would come up or that the roof would cave in in a storm or something, and he just didn't want that responsibility.

Mr. Kapp: And you've continued yourself to go to Ocean City with some frequency?

Mr. Prettyman: Yes, I go summer and winter.

Mr. Kapp: And you now own a house down there or no?

Mr. Prettyman: I own a condo. I owned a house which I gave to Noreen McGuire.

Mr. Kapp: Still on the subject of traveling. You mentioned earlier that you had taken off from Ocean City on a hitchhiking trip. Can you tell me about that?

Mr. Prettyman: Yes, it was after the War and I just had that urge to get going and see the country, so I had a little bag, had a few toilet articles, a change of underclothes in it, it was a very small bag, and I got out on the bridge at Ocean City. I kept a diary of it which I still have. I'll never forget the first ride. This old farmer gave me a ride in a jalopy and we were put-putting down the road, and he said, "Where are you going?", and I said "San Diego". *[Laughter]* He looked over at me and thought I was absolutely out of my mind. *[Laughter]* Dropped me off about a mile down the road. But, yeah, I hitchhiked across country in the summer, went through the hottest parts of the United States, you know, Kansas, St. Louis. I didn't have much money, so I slept in the park sometimes. I slept in "inside," closed hotel rooms that didn't have any windows because they were on the inside of the hotel. But they would get so hot that you had to leave the doors open because otherwise you'd suffocate. Sometimes you'd wake up and there'd be a drunk on the floor of your room who had wandered in during the night. *[Laughter]* But I went all the way out to Salt Lake, down to San Diego, up through California

on the West Coast, back through Canada, through Massachusetts, Connecticut and down again. Took about five weeks. Had some wonderful adventures.

Mr. Kapp: Why don't you tell me about those?

Mr. Prettyman: Well, one I remember particularly. I was on the other side of Denver just before the mountains begin. I had been standing in the rain for a long time, and this guy stopped and opened his window. "Do you drive?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Okay." I got in and he said, "Now we're going to Salt Lake City, I don't want you to stop. We're going straight on through," and it was then just getting dark and he climbed into the back seat. The next thing I knew a bottle came out the window past my ear, and I looked back and he was out cold. So we drove up into those mountains, and it got to be the middle of the night, practically no cars, totally black, and I made a sharp turn and the back right tire went off the road and the whole car went around and straight down. And I thought I was a goner, but when the car got quite a ways down it crashed into some heavy brush, so it was sitting there facing almost straight up. And way up there you could see the road. So I got out and tried to get this guy awake and I couldn't wake him. I was slapping his face. Finally, he came around and I'll never forget the look on his face. He was still about half-zonked. He gets out and he looks at me and he looks at his car and he looks up at the road, he looks at the car, he's rubbing his eyes.

*[Laughter]* He obviously is thinking something strange and horrible is going on.

Well, anyway, I climbed up to the road and finally flagged down a big truck, and the

driver rolled the back of the truck over the edge of the road and lowered a hook way down, and it reached the car. We put it under the car and he pulled it up to the road. And this guy, the former driver of my car, said, "Well, you don't know what you're doing, and he gets into the front seat and instead of putting it in forward he puts it reverse, and we almost went right off the edge again, just barely stopped in time. So he said, "Okay you drive," and by that time I was very awake and drove the rest of the way. I was with him two or three days, until we got all the way down to San Diego, as a matter of fact, and he was drunk the entire time, absolutely bombed, and we finally got to his house, and the little wife was there on the porch, and he invited me in for a meal before I took off again. I went in and it quickly became apparent that she was very religious, very straight, and she did not have a clue that he ever drank a drop. In fact, it was clear from a few things she said that she had the impression he had never had a drink in his life. *[Laughter]* That's one memory I have.

Another one is that I got violently ill, food poisoning, around the Great Lakes, and I was in a room that fortunately had a telephone. And I called down in this creaky old hotel and they got some doctor over who obviously was on his first case *[Laughter]*, he was so nervous, and he came in and thought I was dying, and he gave me some medicine. I was there for a couple of days, just staggering downstairs to get some tea and crackers and then staggering back up again and being sick again. It was a really terrible case. Ptomaine, I'm sure. Anyway, I kept going.

Mr. Kapp: You had something more you wanted to say?

Mr. Prettyman: I just forgot to mention that in my early friendship with George Ferris, we had the P&F (Prettyman and Ferris) Shoeshine Company, and we had a wagon with all of the paraphernalia on it to shine shoes. We would go from door to door and solicit shoes and most of the neighborhood people gave us shoes, and right there on the sidewalk in front of the house we would shine all these shoes up and give them back. I forget what we charged, like ten cents. And we were doing just great until two girls our age came along, and they went into competition with us [*Laughter*], and they did it for less and did it better and they were driving us out of business. So finally all four of us agreed to split up the neighborhood. They would do one side of the street and we'd do the other, and of course my Father got a great kick out of that because he said it was clearly an antitrust violation, [*Laughter*] and we all ought to be ashamed of ourselves for dividing up the territory. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Kapp: Tell me about your earliest recollection of having dreams and aspirations and ambitions for your future and what those may have been.

Mr. Prettyman: I did not have a clear idea at all of what my future would be. I had a feeling that it might involve writing of some kind, simply because I liked to do it and I was getting good grades on themes. I enjoyed using my imagination, I enjoyed the writing. But whether I was going to be a teacher or what, I just had no concept at all. You have to remember that I went directly from

high school into the Service. Certainly in high school I was having no real dreams of a future because the War had begun in '41 and I was graduating in 1943, so for the whole last two years we were thinking of nothing except the service and what was going to happen to us there. We were not thinking about future careers because we didn't know whether we were going to have any future. So during the last two years of high school when we would normally be thinking about our chosen profession, we were not thinking about that at all.

Mr. Kapp: Why don't you tell me about your military experiences?

Mr. Prettyman: I graduated in June of 1943. I went into the Service in August. I was briefly at Johns Hopkins University at one of those programs that's supposed to get you ready for officer candidate school. I didn't like that. I got out of it and got right into the Infantry, which my parents thought was absolutely insane to do, but you know in those days the attitude was so completely different. I was 18 years old, we were all caught up in the War and the fervor of getting over there and killing Germans. It was just something that got hold of a lot of us, me included, and I did not want to go to Officer School; I wanted to be in the Service that would most quickly get me over there, and that was the Infantry. So I went into the Infantry, trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, and was...

Mr. Kapp: You were how old then?

Mr. Prettyman: I guess 18 when I got out of high school, does that add up right? 1925 to 1943 -- 18. Yes. I was 18. And training camp was very rough.

Went over to England on a ship that was not fun. *[Laughter]* There were so many troops on it that we had to switch from being on deck one time to being below deck the other time, and then we'd switch around again, and when we were below deck everybody was sick. Some of the soldiers who were there were having serious second thoughts about going into combat, so we had a couple of people who shot themselves in the foot, the hand, whatever, to get out of service.

We landed near London and went by truck to an encampment site, where we continued our training, waiting to move on to France. At one point headquarters got the idea that gliders would be needed, so we had a crash course in how you get yourself and all your equipment in and out of them. Later, the GI's who actually went over in those gliders were sitting ducks, and a lot of them were shot down, so although I trained for that, I never had to fly gliders.

It was during this time that my sister, who was in the Red Cross in Scotland, arranged one night for her to come to England. She got some kind of special pass and came all the way down, and I walked -- it seemed like about fifteen miles -- to this little town that we'd agreed to meet in, because I think it was the nearest town to where I was training. And we got there very, very late at night, and it was a tiny inn, and the landlady was so impressed with what we were doing that she put the last charcoal she had on the fire, and my sister and I met there and we wrote a letter to my parents. One of us wrote the whole first page, and then when you turned it over it was the other one of us, so you couldn't tell that we were

together until you got to the second page. *[Laughter]* But that was a very emotional time because neither one of us knew what was going to happen to the other, and certainly it sealed the love and friendship that we've had for each other ever since -- not that it was lacking before, because we obviously did this to see each other, but it certainly gave us something in common that we've always remembered and my parents were thrilled to get the letter. And then I had to walk all the way back, and as I recall I got back about dawn and we had something like a 20-mile hike that day. *[Laughter]* I was in no shape for about a week. But anyway, this was during the period of buzz bombs so I experienced that for quite a bit, which is an unexplainable sensation, those bombs that you would hear coming, and then there would be no sound and you had no idea where they were going to land. Anyway, finally they put us on these landing craft and we went over. I was in the Ninth Army, 84th Division and just a private, and we went over and landed on Normandy Beach, which fortunately had been taken *[Laughter]* sometime before but nevertheless....

Mr. Kapp: You were crossing the Channel at that point?

Mr. Prettyman: Right. But I acquired through that landing the most extraordinary respect for those people who had taken that beach, because I still don't understand how they did it. The cliffs overlooking that beach and the fortress that that place represented were amazing, and I just don't see after being so seasick and landing on that beach how in the world they ever got up there and took it. I

still think it's a miracle. And years later I visited that cemetery several times and was very, very moved by it. We certainly owe those people a lot. Anyway, we moved by truck across most of France, getting bombed here and there, but we didn't hit our real combat until we got near Aachen, inside the German border. That was the first time in the middle of the night when our truck stopped that I heard German voices, people in the town. So we took Aachen and then moved out beyond it. It was very interesting. I have no concept of time at this period. I have no idea how long this was. I remember we would go out on patrol, which was absolutely frightening. I was what they called a sniper scout, which meant that I carried a carbine and would be out in front of the squad. I thought it was to rout out the enemy but I think now it was to draw fire. *[Laughter]* I was expendable, to say the least. And I remember particularly when we would go out on patrol, everybody would try to avoid that duty because it was so dangerous. But there was one fellow -- big guy who'd been a cop in San Francisco -- and he volunteered for all these patrols. It turned out he just loved to kill people. He had a semi-automatic and would like cutting people in half. That's a mentality that I have seen since, but that's the first time I'd ever seen it. Very frightening. Good man to have on your side. *[Laughter]*

Anyway, this went on for some time, and finally one day we were out in a field and I think we were lost. I don't think we were supposed to be there. There was a huge field and way over beyond were trees, almost impenetrable trees,

and we were walking along and rifle fire started, and the first shot went right by me and hit the guy in front of me. I remember he was from New Jersey and I remember that he had told me he had a family, a wife and some kids. We all dived for holes that the Germans had built and left, and I remember that guy -- we couldn't get to him and he just died slowly. You couldn't crawl out because by now everything was coming in. This was in November. My hole was partly filled with water and it was very very cold, and I don't know how long we were out there, but at least several days, and I remember when we woke in the mornings we'd yell around to see who was left. I remember particularly there was a very nice guy who was in one hole over from me, and he was there until the last day and then he didn't answer. But anyway, when it finally let up I crawled out, and I really didn't realize there was anything wrong with me. I think I was just so frozen and in such shock, but I couldn't walk, and they dragged me back and cut off my boots and my feet were frozen. So they took me back, which turned out to be the thing that saved my life, I mean it was wonderful that it happened because my unit was mostly destroyed later in the Battle of the Bulge. That outfit went on to the Battle of the Bulge and was virtually wiped out. So anyway, they put me in a tent, I remember it so well, and a nurse came in and she started talking in a very soothing voice. I was lying on a cot, she kneeled down and she took my hand and she started talking to me in this very soothing voice, and I broke into tears, just absolutely hysterical. I must have cried for an hour, just everything coming out that was all pent up, but I

had just been so scared for so long, under tremendous pressure and not really realizing it, because you're just thinking about the next moment, how am I going to get through five minutes from now, so you don't realize that you're bad off. She knew exactly what she was doing because you got a lot out of your system.

And then they put me on a train which went through Holland and Belgium back to Paris, and I was in a hospital, a unit, that was for GI's with frozen feet. And you'd lie in bed with your feet uncovered, and they'd come in and stick pins in you to see if you had any feeling, and they were always taking these guys out to cut their toes off or cut their feet off. Your feet were black, and so you didn't know whether you were going to lose your feet or not. And they told me later that I came within half a day of losing one foot. But eventually the shell cracked, came off, and I still had my foot. So I lucked out again. Then I flew on my very first flight -- I still couldn't walk -- they flew me to London. I was in a hospital there. They flew me from Paris to London, and I was in the London hospital. The reason that was so interesting was that they had a unit there for people who had sort of gone over the edge, and they had a little band that didn't have a drummer. And so they got me out to play the drums, even though I couldn't work my feet too well.

*[Laughter]* I played the drums -- you know up, above but not the bass -- and it was really strange because everybody in the band was cuckoo except for me. And all of a sudden right in the middle of a song, somebody would fly off the handle and drop his saxophone and run off. *[Laughter]* You never knew quite what was going to

happen. *[Laughter]* Then they sent me back to the U.S. on a hospital ship, which was wonderful, completely different from the ship coming over. *[Laughter]* We had room, they treated us well and we had good food. That was a great trip. And then I was in Camp Butner in North Carolina, so I was off my feet. But anyway, finally I got out of the Service after close to nine months in the hospital.

Mr. Kapp: Tell me what, if you can remember, what your attitude about that War was at that time. Do you have a recollection of that?

Mr. Prettyman: Well, it changed. In the beginning I had this glorious concept that I was going, if necessary, to give my life for my country, and that the other side was made up of horrible people, and that I was on the side of right and justice, and I could hardly wait. And then reality sets in. And you're frightened all the time so that you're ruining your clothes, you're sick a lot. I only weighed 125 pounds when I went in, and God knows what I weighed by the time I got back to Paris. I don't know, but my guess is I'd lost all kinds of weight. And what you find out is that the Germans are scared too, and they come from families. They're having the same frights and terrors that you are. You find the reality of it is that it's just a horrible, horrible experience. Years later I experienced that again in Vietnam. Very, very different war, but you find that there's nothing glamorous about it, and there's nothing good about it. Which doesn't mean that it doesn't have to be done sometimes, I'm just saying it's not fun, it's not glamorous. It's just a horrible experience. Having said that, I do honestly think I'm a better person and a

happier person for having gone through it, and I've said this a lot and really mean it, that in that hole, when I really thought I was gone, I remembered thinking to myself, if I ever get out of here by some miracle, I'm going to eat a lot of steak and drink a lot of beer and know a lot of women, and I'm just going to wake up happy in the morning because if I ever get out of here it will be a bloody miracle. And that has affected me. Not many days go by when I don't think about that -- when I'm feeling down or lousy or have a cold like I do now, whatever -- I'm thinking hey man *[Laughter]*, done a lot of living since I thought I wasn't going to live at all, so it's okay.

Mr. Kapp: What about as you look back on it do you have a view with respect to the righteousness or lack of righteousness of the cause?

Mr. Prettyman: Oh yes. I don't think we had any choice. In the same way that I don't second-guess Truman on the dropping of the bomb. I just think that there are some things you have to do when confronted. Now I don't agree with all the times that our leaders have thought we were confronted. *[Laughter]* I mean, I did not believe in Vietnam. But in a situation like this, whether or not you think Roosevelt was trying to get into the war or not, the fact is we were attacked, we had absolutely no choice but to counter-attack, and I think there was no question but that Hitler had grand designs. I just don't see any point where he would have stopped if he'd taken Britain. Maybe, but he and the Japanese certainly had grand designs so I don't second-guess anybody on the fact that we had to fight that war.

Mr. Kapp: Is your thinking about that war affected in any way by the attitudes, whatever they were, that you developed during the Vietnam War?

Mr. Prettyman: To this extent, I suppose. Having been through that and seen that same kind of fear and bloodshed and wounding and killing visited upon a new generation, you want to make very very sure that it's for a good cause, that it's essential that you're there. I think no one who's been through it could possibly think that you want to do that except under the most extraordinary circumstances. And I guess I was never convinced of the extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, there was so much phoniness about Vietnam, which we can talk about later, that that was depressing too. The fact is that, at least in World War II, the reports were basically accurate; people were getting a slice of what was going on.

Mr. Kapp: Before the Vietnam War I think many Americans thought that America was always right in its decisions in respect to war. Our generation tended to think that way. Was your thinking about that affected by your view of the Vietnam War, would you say?

Mr. Prettyman: No, I don't think so. I don't think I assumed anything. I did assume it during World War II because I was young and I had the admirable view that most young people have, but I didn't second-guess myself later on that. I always observed that in a war, we just plain had to fight. But I did not go from there to assuming that the United States necessarily was always right. I

think I took each war in its own perspective. And that's why I was always somewhat confused about Korea, because in a way I admired Truman for taking positive action at a time when it really looked like there was a threat to South Korea in a way that could impact us. I suppose it's the same sort of thing as if China attacked Taiwan today. But at the same time, it's difficult to put your finger on exactly what our interest was in Korea. So I've never had a definitive opinion about Korea. I can see both sides of that question, easily. I don't feel the same about Vietnam.

*This concludes the interview held on March 19, 1996.*