RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

# AN INTERVIEW WITH OGDEN C. BACON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK
and
SEAN D. HARVEY

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
MAY 30, 2000

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Sean D. Harvey: This begins an interview with Mr. Ogden C. Bacon, Jr. on May 30, 2000, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Sean D. Harvey and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. We'd like to begin by asking you about your father and his service in the World War I.

Ogden C. Bacon: Well, my father, Ogden C. Bacon, Sr. served in World War I as a hospital corpsman aboard the USS *Siboney*. He made thirty-two crossings between the United States and France, picking up the wounded and bringing them back to hospitals. … So there is a little bit of the Navy tradition there in our family, and so that's my father. He was a Philadelphia person. I was born in Philadelphia in 1927.

SSH: Was your father born in Philadelphia, too?

OB: Yes.

SH: Do you remember what year?

OB: I believe he was born in … 1895.

SSH: What did he do in Philadelphia?

OB: Well, he didn't have that much of an education. He was more or less self-educated, but he had worked for, after World War I, he worked for the *Philadelphia Record* newspaper selling advertising, that is, getting people to purchase advertising. … He worked for a company that made fabrics for awhile, and then he ended up as an exterminator and that was his primary position in life. He ended up at Fort Dix … in charge of extermination in Fort Dix … ended up in Palmyra, New Jersey.

SSH: From the stories we've heard, it sounds like Fort Dix could have used an exterminator.

OB: I had a rather rough childhood, because we experienced the Depression and my parents lost their home, the home they were trying to buy. My mother contracted tuberculosis when I was five years old and died when I was twelve years old, in 1939.

SSH: Can you tell us a little bit about your mother? What was your mother's name was?

OB: Yes. Her name was Geraldine Lucille Guild, was her maiden name. … Her dad moved all over the country, in a sense. She was born in Florida. Then they ended up in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, back and forth. I guess, she lived in Yardley, Pennsylvania when she met my Dad.

SSH: Do you know the story of how they met?

OB: Oh, well, they were both in our church, and I'm a pastor and have been raised in a church, so to speak, so they met at our camp at Deer Park in New Hope, Pennsylvania and then were married soon after that in Philadelphia.

SSH: Do you know why her father moved around?

OB: Well, he was a technician, so to speak, but did a variety of jobs. … One of the jobs, he worked for, what is now, I guess, Exxon Oil, for awhile, at the very beginning of their development as an oil company, and so forth. … He was a chauffeur for rich people for awhile, just a variety of jobs that he worked at. He was very versatile. He died before I was born. Both grandfathers died before I was born.

SSH: Were there other siblings in your family? Did you have other brothers and sisters?

OB: No, no. I was a single child, because, of course, with my mother getting tuberculosis, why, you know, no more children.

SH: As far as your father's military service, did he ever talk about the war effort? Did he have any stories about that?

OB: Well, I guess, I do, yeah, but primarily, why, it was just what you experienced taking care of the wounded aboard … what was basically a transport ship. It wasn't a combat ship, and so from that sense, why, he didn't have the combat experience that you would get other than possible submarines now and then. I don't know whether submarines were a problem then in World War I, I guess not. No, his experience was basically taking care of the wounded on, as I say, thirty-two crossings on the USS *Siboney*.

SSH: Had he any education about being a medic?

OB. Well, no, no. He was a very intelligent person, but I don't know whether he ever really completed high school, but he was a great reader. He was very, you know, anything there was to read, he read it and absorbed it. So from that standpoint, you know, he, as I said, he was self-educated.

SSH: Were your mother and father from large families or small families?

OB: My father had two siblings. [He] has a stepbrother and a stepsister and then a full brother. My mother had, I guess, three that she had. She was a family of three daughters, but they weren't large families at all.

SSH: You said the Depression really affected them in their ability to buy a home. Was this in Philadelphia?

OB: Yes, this was in Philadelphia, down in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. … They were purchasing a row house, four rooms, you know, four rooms and a bathroom, and they

couldn't keep up with the mortgage payments and so had to pay rent. Then after, when my mother developed the tuberculosis, and she went into a sanitarium, hospital and sanitarium, for a full year, I was farmed out to other church families, here and there, that took care of me. … Then when she was released, why, then they bought an apartment, not bought it, they rented an apartment farther out of town but still Philadelphia.

SSH: Did your mother work outside the home before you were born?

OB: No, no, she didn't, no.

SH: New Hope is a rather small area. Do you know what sparked your parents to move to Philadelphia?

OB: Well, New Hope was our church camp, it still is, and so that was the meeting ground. We would have church activities up there, and so that was how they met at New Hope. So Yardley isn't far from New Hope, and so that was, they both happened to be there at an activity and met each other and then courted and got married in Philadelphia.

SH: What kind of recollections do you have of the Depression?

OB: Well, we were still cared for. I mean, we were never without food. One of the reasons for that was the church family, so to speak, the congregation, really stuck together and helped each other, so that you weren't without the necessities. But at the same time, why, you know, my father didn't get a car, I guess, until about 1940, something. You know, we didn't have that transportation or anything, but, so, you know, they just told you, "Don't waste anything and save what you got."

SSH: Do you remember any ways that you personally saved or recycled, as we would call it these days?

OB: Well, of course, as I say, I was farmed out for a year to different church families in the area, and so, you know, I would be staying with one family maybe a month or so, and then they'd ship me to another one in the neighborhood, and so forth. So that was, you might say, during the Depression, that would have been basically 1936, something like that, '35, and so, no, I can't think of anything specific. Now, when we moved farther out of the center of Philadelphia, why, there was an empty lot next to the apartments that we lived in. … Somebody started to build something and then couldn't finish it, so my dad found the owner and asked if he could plant a garden there. So he trimmed that up and planted a garden, and I had to learn to garden, because that helped the food supply, and I still garden. I have been gardening for forty-five years now, vegetable garden.

SSH: To go back, could you tell us about your education? Was that during elementary school that your father planted the garden?

OB: Yes, that's correct, yes. … As I said, my dad was an avid reader, and so whenever he and I were around, he would be telling me this and that and asking me what I remembered, and so forth, so I learned to read, I guess, just as fast as anybody could in school. Then when we moved to the suburbs there, and, why, then they, you know, made sure that I did the best I could with what I could do in school. … Then, eventually, why, after my mother died, my uncle bought a house near New Hope, because we were active in the church camp, town of Wycombe, and so then we moved there as tenants in his house. … I had started junior high school in February, rather than in September, so then when I moved up to Bucks County, why, they made me take a test and I gained a half year then. So that's why I graduated when I was seventeen years old. So I had, you know, to be serious about my education.

SSH: As a young man growing up, what do you remember of what was going on in the world? How well informed of what was going on were you as a young man?

OB: Going on what, in the nation in general or …

SSH: The nation and the war in Europe and …

OB: Well, of course, my dad was always very interested in the news, since he worked for a newspaper, and so he kept up on current events, and, you know, we always had to listen to the news on the radio, and so forth. So he was active in politics, you know, just as a party member, Democratic Party, and so forth. So from that sense, why, you know, I was impressed with what was going on.

SH: Having been involved in World War I, what was your father's attitude about the Second World War?

OB: Well, he felt that we had to defend our country and other countries also, and so he was certainly supportive of the fact that we had to defend ourselves, particularly after Pearl Harbor, and also side with England and France, and so forth. So I know he was certainly supportive of World War II.

SSH: Being in the Democratic Party, what was his feelings about FDR and the projects that he was …

OB: Well, my dad, after the Depression, why, the first employment he got was WPA, and so that was, you know, was certainly a help. With his self-education, rather than having to go out and dig ditches, and so forth, with his experience in the garden, in the housing project, they assigned him to help people that were moving out of the city into the suburbs, in this housing project, to teach them how to garden. … That was still WPA. [He] got the same pay as, you know, as he would [get] doing just the manual labor. … So, no, he was all in favor of most of FDR's activities, projects.

SSH: What did you do as a young man after school? Did you have a job?

OB: Well, I had to work in the garden during that summer. I had to shovel snow. It seemed that we had more snow back then. Then, as soon as I was, I guess, ten years old, the apartment that we rented was across the street from a bakery, Bond Bakery, and so my dad said, "You could sell them newspapers." … So I started with newspapers and then started selling *Life* magazine, stand out there as the employees came out, you know, and sold magazines, and so that was my experience then. But then when we moved to … Bucks County, why, I realized I wanted to be a farmer, and so I started to work on farms then, when I was fourteen years old. That's when we moved out there. My dad, my grandmother, after my mother died, my grandmother kept house for us, so that my dad could spend full-time working, and so the three of us lived there in part of the house that my uncle bought.

SSH: What was your favorite subject in high school?

OB: Science. We had sort of … what wouldn't even be considered a laboratory today, but, you know, we had a sink at the front of the room, and, you know, they performed some experiments. … Of course, I'd started then vocational agriculture, and so, you know, I really enjoyed that, because we got into it and many of my fellow students were on farms. Their parents had farms, and so I would visit them and realized what I was going to be, what I want to do the rest of my life.

SSH: Were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

OB: Not that I can remember, no. I didn't have time for that.

SH: You would later become involved in dairy farming. What kind of farming in your younger days were you involved in?

OB: Dairy. There were dairy farms outside of our village. I could walk a half-mile to a big dairy farm and they needed help, and so, you know, I did a little bit of everything. That was the first farm I started work on. They didn't have a tractor, it was all horses, you know, and so I learned to work with horses and then milk cows and do all those things.

SH: Clean the barns.

OB: Oh, sure, sure.

SH: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

OB: Yes. That was before we moved to Bucks County, and I can remember it was a Sunday night, I believe, when the news came on, on the radio. I remember my dad's just getting all excited, you know, and trying to figure it out. Then when we went to school, why, then, of course, they filled us in that, "This is a momentous occasion." Then, of course, I can remember the broadcast of FDR saying, you know, that we were going to be involved to defend ourselves.

SH: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was when you heard about it?

OB: Yes. Well, sure, at school, of course, they had the maps, and, you know, they showed us and, you know, that it was part of the Hawaiian Islands.

SH: Did you have feelings right away that when you got out of high school that you wanted to participate?

OB: Well, at that point, let's see, at that point, I was thirteen years old going on fourteen, and so, you know, I thought, "Oh, they'll probably win the war long before I have to go to war."

SSH: But then you ended up going.

OB: I sure did, yeah.

SH: Were you drafted or …

OB: Oh, no, no. I enlisted at seventeen years old. You didn't have to sign up for the draft until you were eighteen. Yes, I was seventeen. I enlisted.

SH: Did your father have to sign for you, since you were seventeen?

OB: Yes, yes. He certainly did and he supported that.

SH: Where did you go for training?

OB: Well, the first training was the Memphis Air Training base, Memphis, Tennessee. … See, I signed up in October and then wasn't sent to active duty until November 1944. … They gave me a test and they said that I would qualify for combat aircrewman training, and so that was the base I went to. … Then you had to select whether you wanted to be a mechanic, air mechanic, air gunner or radio operator, and, of course, everybody was a gunner, as far as operating machine guns, but, I mean, you know, that would be your specialty. So I decided the radio operator and took that training. But after a couple of months, they had a typhoid epidemic on the base, and I was infected and I lost a full month of the training there. … Then, also, we were getting rumors that because they were not losing as many aircrewmen as they thought they would, why, what you went through from your basic training on, your specialty, then you went to gunnery school. That was about three weeks, I guess, and then you went to operations, where you actually trained aboard the aircraft. We were then a dive-bomber crew. … We got the information that instead of passing them through operations, they were holding them up, because they weren't losing as many men as they thought they needed. … So I thought, "Well, you know, I may never get to do anything except these bases," so I applied for transfer to war duty, and that's when I was assigned to what they called … "Echelon Tessie." Echelon, I guess, is a term for, you know, an operation. … Their purpose was to build this ship repair base on Okinawa. … So from Memphis, Tennessee, I was shipped down to the New Orleans Navy base. I was just two weeks there, and they gave us a fire control training, ship fire control, not gunnery, but, you know, controlling operation of the ship. … Then, from there, I was sent to what they called, it was in San

Francisco, let's see, I've written down the name of the base, San Bruno, California. I don't know the technical names, but it was NABPD, whatever that stood for. But that was to train people then to go into the combat areas, and so then that was just a couple of weeks. … From there, we were put aboard the *San Saba* at Treasure Island, off of San Francisco, and that was about June 1, 1945. [Interviewee's editorial note: It was not the San Saba. I cannot remember the name of the ship, and I cannot locate it on the Internet. The San Saba was the ship on which we returned to the US after the war was over.]

SSH: I want to back up a little bit before we get to the June departure from Treasure Island. First of all, you enlisted. Tell me why you choose the Navy.

OB: Well, of course, my dad had been in the Navy, and so I felt that, you know, that was a tradition and all the stories that he had told me, of course. We were always interested in boats. He had canoes that I learned … and I was a swimmer, and so I thought, "Well, the Navy is just the natural thing and so I'll enlist there."

SH: Had you been in Boy Scouts at all?

OB: Yes, yes, yes, and I'd been a Sea Scout. Our church had an active Boy Scout program, and then after you were a First Class Boy Scout, why, then you could go to the Sea Scout program. … We had a Sea Scout crew at our church, which also used our church camp at Deer Park, Deer Park, New Hope, and, of course, we used the river, and so forth, so that helped, too.

SSH: So your Sea Scout tour was on the Delaware River then.

OB: Well, just boats. There again, boats, you know, but, I mean, yes.

SSH: How far did you get in the Boy Scouts?

OB: Well, as I said, I was a First Class Boy Scout, and that's as far as I got. My son was an Eagle Scout, but that's years later.

SSH: As a young man in high school, with those four years of the war going on, at that point, what did you hear and how do you feel that the war was portrayed to young men and women in your high school?

OB: Well, it seemed like every morning there would be a class, in which they would bring you up to date on the news, so that all the students there knew what was happening, in a very brief way, so that we could be aware of what was happening in our nation. … I credit the teachers for saying, you know, "This is important. We can't ignore it," and so from that standpoint, why, you know, we were kept up to date. The school there, again, was a farming community, you might say, and so you related the rationing and the need for certain crops, and so forth, and gasoline preservation, you know. All of those things reflected very much so on the families that were in agriculture, so we knew we were part of the war effort, in a sense.

SH: You worked at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station before the war.

OB: Yes. I didn't mention that, but when I decided that, and my dad agreed, "Okay, if you want to enlist, rather than be drafted, why, this way, you can be sure to go in the Navy." … So one of my classmates, this was in the summer after I graduated, he had a car. I didn't have a car, but he had a car. He worked on a farm, or his people had a farm, and so they had some cars. So he said, "Hey, I got a job down at the naval air station at Willow Grove. You want to apply for it?" I said, "Sure." So I would walk to his place a mile and then go down to work with him, and so I worked at the naval air station for, it was only about three months, I guess, four months, before I enlisted.

SH: What was your job there?

OB: Well, start off with labor, but I was assigned as a mechanic's helper on … heavy equipment. We greased heavy equipment and, you know, brought parts and stuff back and forth for them. That was what we did, primarily.

SSH: Did you run into any veterans of the European Theater, at that point?

OB: No, no, no. Most of the people there were fairly new.

SSH: In your high school, because it was in an agrarian area, were there any deferments given to young men?

OB: Not that I know of. … Of course, all of them, the young men in the class, knew that they would probably be drafted or had to enlist, and so there was much conversation on that, what you wanted to do. Of course, some of their brothers, older brothers, were in the service, and so that was about the communications we had.

SSH: Were the recruiters coming into the school at all?

OB: No, no, they did not.

SSH: What about war bonds and things like that?

OB: Yes, yes. That was certainly a factor, and my dad, I don't know that he was able to buy any war bonds at that time, because, you know, we were relocated, so to speak, and so forth. But I can remember, you know, the talk about war bonds. I didn't have money to buy it.

SSH: What about the Red Cross? Were there any people that you knew involved in that or the USO?

OB: No, no, none. Of course, we were rural, you know.

SSH: I just wondered if there were people wrapping bandages or …

OB: Not that I remember, no.

SH: As far as the church goes, what kind of activities did they take part in during the war? It just seems you were very involved in the church at that time.

OB: Yes, well, the congregation was in Philadelphia, and we had moved out to the country, so we went there on Sunday but didn't spend a lot of time. But I know that they were involved in many volunteer activities, because there were many young men in the congregation who had ended up in the military. So I know that they were involved, but I cannot be specific as to the activities.

SSH: Could you tell us about traveling across the country? It must have been quite an experience for someone who had never done much traveling before.

OB: Well, of course, traveling across the country was a great experience. You traveled on a train, and so you had a chance taking a look out the window. Going to New Orleans was a great experience, because they gave you all of the leaves, the short leaves, that they could, along with the training that you had. You didn't have to do watch hours and that sort of stuff, and so I got to see New Orleans. That was quite an experience. Then, of course, going from New Orleans to San Francisco, why, I got to see the Rocky Mountains, so that was a good experience, too. One thing I want to add to it, we got aboard the (*San Saba?),* and on deck, they had fifty-gallon drums lashed to the bulkheads that had oil, a special oil in it, that was used for smoke screens. Here, two days out of San Francisco, we hit heavy weather, and half of those barrels of oil were broken loose with waves coming over the ship, and we had to dump them overboard, you know. That was a great start for an ocean voyage, you know.

SSH: Were you seasick?

OB: No, no. I didn't have that problem. There again, my dad, you know, told me how to keep from getting seasick, as far as what you eat and drink and, you know, how to handle that, so that was not a problem.

SSH: Now who was traveling with you onboard? Describe all the different contingencies there on the ship.

OB: Well, this was a specific mission to the ship repair base project, and so all of the men onboard were part, that were going to be embarked, were part of that crew that was going to be used to do the construction and then hopefully the mechanical work afterwards, which never did come to pass.

SH: Now was this in preparation for the invasion of Japan?

OB: Yes, yes, because nobody knew that they're going to drop the atomic bombs, and so they figured, "Okay, we've go to move up north from the Philippines and from the other bases to be closer to Japan, so that we can supply whatever is needed to make the invasion."

SH: Had Okinawa already been taken?

OB: Yes, yes, but the way the Japanese operated, why, they never gave up, and so you would clear an area, they cleared the area where we had to build this base, but the Japanese, their technology was to hole in, into the hills and the mountains, and so that you never knew where they were. So, yes, the island had been taken, but the Japanese were still there and were still definitely a problem, so you never worked alone. In other words, you never went to do a job without a support group that was constantly looking for resistance. … One of the things I'll never forget, here on one of those pictures that shows how the base was built there, here was an older man. We were kids, but then the men that were technicians were older men. Here was a bulldozer operator leveling a space that we were going to put a Quonset hut on, and I forget what I was doing, but I was working on something. He got shot, by a sniper, on the bulldozer, and so we all hit the deck, and so forth, and the men that had their rifles available, you know, tried to find out where it came from, weren't sure, and so forth, and so called for backup. … They couldn't find anything, they went up in the hills, couldn't see anything, and so here they carried the man who was hit off, and another man got right back on the bulldozer and kept working. That takes courage, you know, because they couldn't find where that shot came from because of the detail in the hills, where the Japanese were holed in, that was the problem.

SSH: The training that you received in the States for this mission, what, specifically, was that?

OB: Well, I started off as a radio operator on a dive-bomber, you know. Well, that never came to pass. … So basically I was just labor, but because of my experience on the farm, and so forth, with equipment, and so forth, why, you know, I was versatile, and they could figure that out and got you to do whatever you could do. In other words, I was driving some big trucks when I was eighteen years old. … They checked you out, and if you know how to double shift, why, "Good, okay, you take it and watch out for yourself." … Of course, you never went alone; you always had a man with a rifle ready to protect you.

SSH: The trip over, were you traveling in convoy?

OB: Yes, yes, definitely. Convoy and the zigzag that you had to go through. Kamikaze planes were a problem and this is another thing that I'll never forget. I volunteered as crew and I was not a gunner, at that time, so the closest I got was down in the hold, putting the ammunition on the elevator that took it up. But anyhow, every dawn and every dusk, you had your kamikaze watch there, because that's when they flew their missions. We had some, but never any that targeted our ship. But after we had docked or anchored out in the bay, and we were discharged on the landing craft to go into our area, it was the next day, the kamikaze hit our ship and took off most of the superstructure, and several men died, mostly officers, because they were on the superstructure. Kamikaze hit us after they had disembarked whatever we were, 600 men, I don't

know, 700 men. So that was a real experience, and we could still see that ship from where we were when we got up in the higher levels there and could see what had happened.

SSH: How long did it take you to cross?

OB: I would say, probably three weeks.

SSH: Did you stop anywhere else?

OB: Oh, yeah. You had to stop to refuel, see, and … we stopped in the Marshall Islands, I remember. They said they need a work crew and so they sent a hundred men on the island to do some work there and things like that. Then another thing that happened was that we were on our way up to Okinawa, I guess, I forget now just where this happened. Anyhow, the captain got on the PA system and he said, "All hands, pay attention." He said, "We have just lost the machinery that takes the saltwater out of the seawater to provide for the water that goes into the steam engines." So he said, "That is a serious situation," and he said, "We're on water rationing. Anybody that is wasting water would be put in the brig and you'll go back for trial in the United States." He said, "The closest land is," I think, it was, "250 miles." He said, "That's Japanese held." … So from there on we had to, you know, be very careful of the water, because we lost our one desalinization system, but we made it anyhow.

SSH: Did you receive any supplies or anything while you were traveling?

OB: Oh, yes, yes, sure. Yeah, because there were other ships, you know, that would be harbored there to refuel, and, you know, they give you supplies, yes.

SH: Other than the Marshall Islands, do you remember where else you stopped?

OB: No. I can't remember. Well, we did pull into, not Pearl Harbor, but I can't think of the bay now in the Hawaiian Islands. But here, as we pulled in, here was an aircraft carrier, the large-class aircraft carrier, and the two front corners of the bow, the flight deck, was just bent down like that, like a giant had just taken it and bent down. So right away, they got on the communicator, you know, and said what happened, you know. … They said, "Well, we hit a wave," and this was like sixty-five feet above the waterline, you know, but they were in a rough sea and hit a wave and that ruined the flight deck there. That was in the Hawaiian Islands there. I can't tell you the name of the port that we pulled in.

SSH: Did you get liberty when you pulled in?

OB: No, no, no. The only thing we had was when you were on a work crew on one of the Marshall Islands.

SH: What kind of things did you do, while the other crew was off on the Marshalls?

OB: Well, you had to do the routine lubrications and taking inventory and all this sort of stuff, basically. My main job was as a lookout, you know, as a volunteer.

SSH: What did you do with the time? A lot of people talk about the boredom and the different activities.

OB: Well, of course, you were on deck as much as you could just to see what was happening and seeing what the other ships were doing in the convoy and then watching the rest of the crew, who were doing active things. Then, of course, your bunk was like about eighteen inches, and so you didn't spend much time there. They had some literature to read that they would pass out, and you pass everything to everybody else, you know, so, you know, that everybody got everything that they want them to read. Of course, there were always guys that had decks of cards, you know, and were, you know, playing cards, and so forth. That's one reason I volunteered as a crewman, you know, so that I had the four-hour watches for the lookout, and that was interesting. We did run into some minefields that we had to be very careful of. … I can remember, we stopped to try to shoot this mine, and they were shooting it with the twenty-caliber machine guns, aircraft machine guns, trying to hit it, and they couldn't quite line up on this one mine. So one of the sharpshooters just took one of the rifles and was able to explode the mine with his rifle, when they couldn't hit it with the machine guns.

SH: You said they had literature on board. Did you have news available on what was going on in the war?

OB: … Only what the captain decided he would announce or one of the other officers would announce of what was going on. But, no, while we're going over, why, all you knew was that you were headed somewhere.

SSH: Did you see any submarines?

OB: No, we didn't see submarines, because we didn't have any submarines in the convoy. What you had was your troopships and then destroyers, and so we didn't have any of our submarines. … The only thing you knew about submarines was that when you, you knew that the zigzag directions, you could tell, you know, that about every thirty minutes, why, you change directions. You could see that happening. But then when the submarines were in the area, you could see the destroyers changing position, and then you didn't go on the regular changing directions, you just took off, so you knew there were submarines or something had to do with them. They were sighted, and, you know, so they were getting out of there, because the submarines, when they are submerged, aren't fast, so that you can get out of the way, hopefully.

SSH: Could you talk about what you were doing at Okinawa then?

OB: Well, on Okinawa, as I say, well, I was basically labor. Then when they realized that I could drive a truck, why, I started driving a truck. … Then we were unloading the lighter crafts that could come up and beach and drop down the ramp and take supplies off of that and store them wherever you could and then move them back to where they were needed, and so that's

what I was doing. Then I was on the shift … four p.m. to midnight. … To get from our base to where we could unload the crafts was only, maybe, I don't know, three miles, something like that. … In the daylight, it would take you maybe fifteen minutes to get there, but then coming back at night, you did not use any headlights whatsoever. You had to drive in the dark, because the snipers were ready to get you, and so just to go those three miles, after midnight, would usually take a half hour longer to get back to where you could get to your cot.

SSH: I can't imagine driving in the dead of night.

OB: Yeah. Well, that's the only safe way. Now, you had these little indicator lights that were shielded, so that you could see who was in front of you and who was behind you. But as far as looking at it from the side, why, you know, no lights.

SSH: I forgot about that. I thought you were doing it in total blackout. The pictures that you brought today, indicate a rather hilly terrain, so …

OB: All right, so that was my basic experience on the ship repair base and helping with construction. … Then the typhoon slowed things down. That was in August and that was before the surrender, before … Let's see they dropped the bomb on, I got the date here, anyhow, the typhoon happened before that.

SSH: Tell us about the damage that the typhoon caused.

OB: Well, it just, most of our constructions were Quonset huts. There were a few that were a little heavier buildings, but the Quonset huts just blew away. I mean, they were a complete loss. Then you had flooding from some of the streams that were in the area, because where we had set up our tent area was basically little fields that were banked so that they could put water in them for the natives' rice patties, you know, and so these were all flooded. … So what we were told was, "You're on your own, head for the hills," and so each person grabbed what he could grab, his rifle and what food he could grab and whatever else he thought he might need and "you're on your own," so to speak. … In that experience, we found some of the Japanese encampments that had been dug into the hills. … Here you find a little hole that you can just about fit through, you know, maybe three-by-three, and, of course, we all had flashlights. … So you're going in there and you go back maybe twenty feet, and then here you've got a cave with bunks in it that they had built for their barracks, so to speak, in the hills.

SSH: Did you use them?

OB: Yes, we used that, because, you know, they're not here, so we might as well, and we stayed there until the typhoon was over and then came back down to the base and tried to put things back together.

SSH: How long did the typhoon last?

OB: It lasted, I'll say, not quite two days. In other words, you had one day it was stormy and then they realized it was going to get bad, and so they came through with a jeep and said, you know, "You're on your own, evacuate." … So you did that before dark and holed in overnight. … Then the next day, it was still wind, heavy wind, and then, I guess, by that night, it subsided, and then you decided when you could get back.

SH: How many men were involved in this?

OB: Well, the ship repair base, I'm going to say, had 400 men, as I remember, about 400 men and officers all told, not that many.

SSH: You were talking about the Japanese and where the snipers were hiding. Can you describe that for the tape a little bit?

OB: Well, the Japanese were very effective in survival in natural conditions. In other words, we think of our people in foxholes, see. Well, they didn't even do foxholes. In other words, they would, more or less, live on the land very effectively and were very mobile, and then, of course, they knew the population there. There were people that lived in the hills, also, in their huts, and so I think they capitalized on that. But you never knew where you're going to find them, is what I'm saying, and so you always had to be alert to see, you know, what was going to happen next. They were, you know, as I say, they were very efficient in survival in natural conditions.

SSH: You were talking a bit, too, before the tape began, about the crypts, the cemeteries, where the Okinawans had been hiding.

OB: Yes. That wasn't frequent, but it was just enough that we knew that any one of those burial crypts were a potential place for gunners to be. … When they did use them, they usually had machine guns then in those areas, where the rest of the time, why, they were just their individual rifles. So that was something that, you know, you had to be aware of in that area and find out, you know, if you're gonna be there, you better find out whether they're in there or not.

SSH: How did the typhoon affect the natives that lived around the area?

OB: Well, the natives were used to typhoons. It was no surprise to them.

SH: You were saying that the Quonset huts just couldn't survive in heavy winds …

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

SH: You were saying about the Quonset huts.

OB: Yes. The Quonset huts just couldn't survive heavy winds like that. As I remember, I think the wind gust, that they said, was like 120 miles per hour, and so the Quonset huts couldn't survive. But the native huts were built in areas where they knew the prevailing winds, and so

they just took advantage of the natural shelter, so that heavy winds wouldn't hit it nearly as much as it would where we had built all these Quonset huts. So they were efficient.

SSH: When you were building the Navy boatyard, how did the typhoon affect the ships and things in the harbor?

OB: We had, I'll say, at least six good-sized ships that were beached. In other words, they had been out in the bay. This was Buckner's Bay, incidentally, where General Buckner, who was in charge of the Okinawan campaign, was shot, and so then they named that bay after him, Buckner's Bay, and that's where the ship's repair base was on. … We had, I'm gonna say six good-sized vessels that had been out in the bay, a half mile away, and so forth, anchored, but they were beached because of the typhoon. … So, you know, it made heavy waves that washed them ashore and then, also, lots of supplies floating around, too, you know, that we kind of salvaged, that could be used.

SSH: What kind of process was required to get the ships back out into the harbor?

OB: Well, they had to bring in what would be tugs, what would be similar to tug ships that, or else you get in maybe three of your landing craft-type vessels that would act as tugboats to haul those back out. But some of them weren't worth getting out, and there were some that they just left where they were, as long as I was there, just left them beached, because they were so damaged. It wasn't worth hauling them out.

SSH: What was your priority when you came back out of the hills? What did they tell you that you were going to do?

OB: Well, salvage was the first thing, of course. Everything that had value, you had to salvage it, and they more or less agreed, "We're not gonna build more Quonset huts, because we don't know when the next typhoon is coming." But there were one or two buildings that were structurally sound, more or less, so they were repaired, so you stored what was worth storing in those buildings. You didn't have any mess halls or anything like that anymore, and so it was more both a combination of survival as well as salvage. Of course, we had tents, and most of the tents you could find them somewhere and drag them back and put them up, you know, so what you lived in was that. So, you know, the typhoon was a disaster, so to speak, but at the same time, you were used to it. I mean, you were ready to do whatever had to be done. As I said, the typhoon was in October, but the … atomic bomb was dropped in August, see, August 6, 1945, so this was after the Japanese surrendered, so we weren't concerned with salvaging the ship repair base, because it was no longer needed. Then they said, "We don't need it any longer," and then I was transferred to the naval supply depot, which was farther north on Okinawa.

SSH: What types of ships had you been working on in the repair base?

OB: Well, we never got around to really doing anything with ships. We built a pier out into the bay, enough that you could moor a sizable ship for supplies, but that's as far as we got. We

never got to really do anything as far as ship repairs, so it, you know, it was just one of those projects that it's a good idea, but it didn't work.

SSH: So you were transferred to a supply depot. What were your duties involved in that?

OB: Well, I drove a truck, primarily, there, and then I was a crane operator, light-duty crane that you could move from place to place and unload trucks on that. One of the experiences there was that they would assign the different places to other units to help them out, and I was assigned to one unit, where they were using Japanese prisoners to load and unload trucks. … So, of course, you had a lot of guards there, but I said, "Can you talk to any of these guys?" … They said, "Some of them understand English," and I said, "Well, you know, I'd like to talk to one." So he said, "Try that guy there," and so I went up to him and I said, "You speak English?" He shook his head, you know, and I said, "What was your rate?" He says, "Machine gunner, aircraft," and I said, "Yeah, are you?" … Planes were flying and I said, "What's that?" He says, "That's a B-24, guns forward and aft, flies about 500 miles an hour." I mean, he could identify the plane. I often could not, but having had the original training as an aircrewman, you know, I knew whether he knew what he was talking about.

SSH: Did he say where he learned English?

OB: No. No, he didn't, and I wasn't supposed to be talking in the first place, but I thought that that would be interesting.

SSH: You talked about finding some Japanese. This was after the truce had been signed, so to speak, and you used the wire and you talked about how that was developed. Was this before you went north to the supply depot?

OB: Yes, it certainly was. This was while we were still building the ship repair base, and the Japanese that would be caught in the hills, which not many of them, but some of them would try to infiltrate at night and steal something, food, and so forth, and that's when you would catch them. … One thing I got to mention about that, when you knew that you had a definite threat, why, you would call one of the support groups and they had Japanese Americans. When you're born in Japan, you're an Issei, and then first generation is Nisei. … So these were Nisei Japs, Americans, and these men would take a speaker, a bullhorn, and go forward in front of their squad, talking to the Japanese and tell them that they were coming up to get them, and that if they would surrender that they would not be shot, and so forth. Now that's bravery. Here's these American Japanese convincing the Japs up there, that are holed in, to come out and surrender, and if they didn't, why, they just threw hand grenades in whatever opening they could find, you know.

SSH: Can you describe the camp? How was it set up and how did you get people in and out of there?

OB: Well, it was up maybe fifty feet above the beach area, elevation-wise, and so you had to, most everything you did was in vehicles to be efficient …

SSH: We talked about the wire and how …

OB: Oh, that wire was just for the Japanese that we took prisoners.

SSH: What did you call that?

OB: Concertina wire, I think that's the right term, and it's just great, big, six-foot rolls that you don't try to handle them. You just get hold of one end and pull it and you end up with a scroll or tangled barbed wire.

SSH: You said there were two on the bottom and one on the top.

OB: Yeah, yeah. That's the way we used it. No, you could use them individually, six-foot fences, you know, but …

SSH: When you found a sniper, or someone who would surrender, how did you get them into that fenced area?

OB: Well, we had heavy equipment, and so you had front-end loaders, and so they just take a front-end loader and they would get in the bucket of it and you'd raise the bucket over this six-foot, well, at that point it was twelve-foot, and lowered as much as you could and make them jump off in there. There were no gates. In other words, they just had to survive in there. … Then they put in food and water, as they decided that they needed it, and there again, dump it in. … Then the rest of it, as far as latrines, and so forth, why, they were on their own. … They'd throw in blankets. Of course … you didn't need it, as far as heat was concerned, but, so that was how we handled prisoners. When, as I mentioned, when we would be coming back at midnight, after midnight, from working out on the unloading areas, why, you knew when you're getting in the camp, because you could smell the odor coming from that prisoner enclave there.

SSH: Did you know if there was someone chosen among themselves to be their spokesperson, or did they have any kind of chain of command inside?

OB: I didn't have enough contact to know how that worked, no.

SSH: How were they affected by the typhoon?

OB: Well, the typhoon was after the surrender, so, no, they were released then.

SSH: Oh, that would be true. I've got August and October mixed up. You'd also talked about the suicide cliffs. Was this here or was this when you were with the supply depot farther north?

OB: No, that was near the ship repair base. That was just south of the ship repair base, more or less, overlooking the ocean. I mean, it was beach below it, and not beach, but land below it, and

so I'm guessing that the drop was maybe fifty, sixty-foot straight [down], and so that many Japanese just jumped off there.

SSH: Was that before you got there? Is that true?

OB: Well, I'm not sure when it happened, probably, but I'm not sure. It may have been, no, I'm not sure how that worked. It may have been after the surrender that they felt they weren't going to surrender. I'm not sure of that, because I didn't get a chance to look at it until after the armistice was signed.

SSH: So it was after the armistice that the Japanese Americans would be on the bullhorn and ask them to surrender.

OB: Yeah. No, no, that was before. That's when we were just starting to build the base and yet the Japanese were still fairly well entrenched. See, because at the highest point above us, they had artillery, Japanese artillery bases, on the tops of the slopes to overlook the beaches, and so forth, to fire on incoming troops. So that was, you know, within half a mile, a mile from where we were, so, you know, they had, they definitely had enclaves there to man their artillery.

SSH: Were the Japanese Americans part of the Japanese American units or were they just regular ...

OB: Oh, they were regular enlisted men.

SSH: Were they part of another Japanese group or were they just …

OB: No, they were Army, US Army.

SSH: I understand that, but I know that there were also separate units that fought as Japanese Americans.

OB: No, I don't think they were. I don't know how those men were designated, but they were definitely designated, but we were just, in other words, they'd be the only Japanese American in the group that was there, and the rest of it would be regular servicemen.

SSH: African American troops were still segregated at this point …

OB: Yes, and they were also segregated at the naval supply depot up to the north. They had their own barracks area, and they, you know, they were segregated, too. When you needed labor, why, they would send out a group from there for the specific jobs. In other words, they were not used in the mess halls or in … what eventually became warehouses, and so forth. They were just used for …

SSH: Had they been part of the outfit that was building the ship repair base?

OB: I did not see any African Americans at the ship repair base when I was down there.

SSH: Had they been on the ship with you when you traveled over?

OB: Yes. Yes, they were. Now, where they were sent, I don't know. I don't know how that worked. … I'm guessing that there, maybe, oh, there might have been … fifty of them. … After I'd heard them, I'd watched for them to see when they would go in the mess hall, and so forth.

SSH: Is this onboard the ship?

OB: Onboard the ship, yeah.

SH: Were there any attitudes that caused tension, at that point, because of the segregation?

OB: Well, not that I know of, I mean, I don't know, because they more or less kept them separate aboard ship, so I don't know that there was any friction at all between whites and blacks, at that point.

SH: How about between the American Japanese soldiers and the white American soldiers?

OB: I did not have enough contact with them. All I did was see them in action, so to speak, and trying to keep myself out of the line of fire, and so I didn't know how that worked. I just knew that … their specific purpose was to be able to talk Japanese to get them to surrender. I know one thing was that when you'd see them, they were usually smaller than we were, you know, and so you'd see this guy coming up with the bullhorn, you know, and you think, "What's that kid doing with that." … Then you look behind and realize that that's what he was doing, and then, of course, you'd hear him trying to get up to the people that were holed in.

SH: In the photographs you showed us, you have a lot of photographs of the natives. What kind of interaction do you have with Okinawans? Did you eat any of their food or interact with families or anything like that?

OB: Well, yes. I didn't interact myself, because I felt that from the standpoint of sanitation, why, their sanitation was not very good, you know, and so I thought, you know, "I don't need any contact with them," but many of our people did ... Some of our people got in trouble with trying to find women, and so forth, native women, and so forth. But then once we got to the supply depot, why, then, they hired Okinawans to work, and I have one experience there. I drove trucks and so I would go with maybe three, four trucks to the village to pick them up in the morning, and these men would climb on the trucks and we'd take them back to where they were going to work. … Then early evening, why, we'd pick them up again and take them back, so I did that off and on. … Here I am, going back to the village, going down a dirt roadway, down like a cliff into their village, and I'm coming around the curve and here's another guy coming up on the other side. … He was, you know, he didn't give me much room, so I pulled over toward the side, and the road collapsed and my truck turned over, did a complete flip over. Now, we held on, but it rolled over and two of the Okinawans that were on the truck were killed. … It was within sight

of the village. The villagers all came up, you know, and tried to help them, and so forth. … They put me on trial to decide whether I was at fault or not, that is, the navy did, and decided, "No, you did what you had to do and it was the fault of the road not being that stable at that point." In other words, I didn't drive off the road, but I was close enough to the edge that it collapsed, and so I was not, didn't get any discipline for that. But that was when they said, "Would you like to do something else?" … I said, "Well, I can operate a crane," because when I worked at the Navy base, I had experience with that, so I went from a truck driver to a crane operator.

SH: At what point did you take part in gunning the Japanese?

OB: I never did. I never did, no. I was a gunner's mate, but the reason I got to be a gunner's mate was, why, when I got to the naval supply depot, why, here they had the literature that if you wanted to apply for a higher rate, you could. … So I got the information I needed, studied it, took the test and got my rating as a gunner's mate third class, but I never worked at that rate, never worked at that rate. I guess, if we'd still been repairing ships, they probably would have sent me out to work on guns, but we weren't repairing ships there at that point, so I never really worked my gunner's mate rate.

SSH: I wanted to ask you about the dropping of the bomb, but before I ask that question, where were you and do you remember when FDR passed away?

OB: He passed away, I believe, before I left for Okinawa. Yes, and I can remember, you know, on the … news, on the base there. I forget which base, I think it was, I was still in Memphis, when they gave us the information, and the reaction was, well, "We're still at war and we're still going to win."

SSH: Was there any discussion at all about the confidence that people had in Truman taking over?

OB: Not that I remember. Not that I remember that there was any concern.

SSH: Let's leap ahead again. While you were at the ship repair base, the bomb was dropped.

OB: Yes.

SSH: The first bomb was dropped.

OB: Yes.

SSH: How did you hear about it? Did you understand it, or did you hear about the dropping of both of them?

OB: Well, they didn't make a general announcement. In other words, it was available, I think, on … bulletin boards and things like that, rather than getting on a PA system, which we really

didn't have, you know. But it was done in a way that would not raise a lot of misconceptions, that, "Okay, now we're going home or whatever." … So as I remember, where we got our food, which in most cases you went up and you got your K-rations, why, you know, it was posted there that the Japanese were getting ready to surrender. But they did not make a big celebration of it until actually the surrender was official, and that took awhile.

SSH: Did they talk about the atom bomb, and did you know what it was?

OB: No, we did not know what it was. We just knew that there had been a substantial bombing that took place and that the Japanese were ready to surrender.

SSH: Was that inclusive of both bombings, or was it after each took place?

OB: Oh, as you know, the two bombings took place within, what, a couple of days of each other and it, yeah, one on August 6 and August 9. They did not give you any details about it, just saying that it had happened and that the Japanese were going to surrender. … I think the one reason for that is, you know, well, you figure, "I don't have to worry about the Japanese in the hills anymore," and that was not true, because many of them did not want to surrender, and that's when some of them went over "suicide cliff." … So it wasn't until actually that they surrendered in September, officially, that there was any celebration.

SSH: How was the announcement made to the Japanese that were hiding out and to the Japanese armies, in general, that there had been a surrender?

OB: Well, there again, it was the Japanese American Army men that tried to inform them that this had happened, and, I guess, there must have been a communication system still among the Japanese through their radios, and so forth, that I imagine they got the word, but I'm not sure. I don't have anything definite about that. But one thing that happened was when they finally made the official announcement, why, some of the men, who should have known better, that had their rifles and pistols, started firing into the air and everybody cheering, you know. … You went out and a couple of people got injured from bullets that shouldn't have been where they were. In other words, it was friendly fire. Nobody was killed, but, you know, and so they came around and picked up all the extra rifles that, you know, you didn't really need.

SSH: So it was, more or less, a discipline problem.

OB: Yes, right, yeah. … I mean, that was sad that somebody was shot by their own men celebrating the Japanese surrender.

SSH: Had you ever heard any discussion of what they called "the false armistice," which was when people had celebrated too soon?

OB: No, no.

SSH: Where were you when you heard that the hostilities had ended in Europe?

OB: Oh, I'd have to look that up on the calendar, to tell the truth.

SSH: I was just curious about whether you noticed that you suddenly had more supplies than you'd had before.

OB: No, I can't relate that. One other thing that I want to mention about the Japanese, the bombing of Japan, was after we went to the supply depot, and I was traveling around the island, driving trucks, and so forth, I heard that if you had time and could get to one of the Army Air Force bases that they would let you fly on a mission. … So I was more of a night shift than day shift, so I borrowed a jeep, my friend and I, the same one that I have in this picture there, and we went to the first airfield that we could find and asked the sentry, and he said, "Yeah, go ahead in." We went in and they directed us to a flight crew that was ready to take off. You asked the commander if you could go along, and he said "Yes, okay." … So we went on a B-29 and we flew over Nagasaki, where the bomb had dropped. This was, of course, after the armistice, but they were still flying patrols, and we flew over where the bomb had dropped and took a look at it. One of the other men, which I didn't know was the chief petty officer, but he had a camera, and so they tilted the B-29 so he could take pictures of that. … Then coming back to Okinawa, again, why he dipped into a volcano on one of the islands so this man could get a picture of the volcano crater there. … I had told them that I was a gunner's mate, you know, and had trained … for flight crew but never got that far, so they let me sit in the gunner's position, you know, not that I did anything, but that was an experience, too.

SSH: Was that your first flight?

OB: Yes, yes.

SSH: It was some flight.

OB: Some flight, yeah, four hours. It was a four-hour trip.

SSH: Were you close enough then to see the destruction?

OB: No, no. We were probably 2,000 feet, I don't know, but you could see just one great, big, brown hole.

SSH: For a farm boy from Pennsylvania, that must have been quite and experience.

OB: That was quite an experience. Yes, it was. I'll never forget that.

SSH: One question that I would like to ask, too, which we usually ask, how much interaction was there between the other forces, the Army, the Air Corps and the Marine Corps?

OB: It was close, in that we were bringing ships in with supplies, and some of the supplies went to them. … So their trucks would come in and we would load their trucks, or at times, we would

deliver supplies to their bases as needed, not continuously, but as needed, so there was definitely cooperation between the Army, the Navy and the Marine Corps. After the armistice was signed, and we had the supply depot, Navy supply depot, why, then we no longer carried arms at all. The Marines did all of our security work at that point. They took our rifles away from us. We each had a rifle, it was smaller than what the Army got, so they took our rifles away from us, because they said that now the Marines do that.

SSH: Was there any of that old rivalry between the Marines and the Navy?

OB: A little bit, yes, but we certainly cooperated, yes.

SSH: Tell us more about what it was like to be then, after the armistice, in the northern part of Okinawa. What were your duties?

OB: Well, there it was basically supply, that you were continuously unloading ships for what was needed and delivering it to wherever it was needed and cooperation more with other services. Like I say, they cooperated when you want an airplane ride. … So it was not combat anymore, but at the same time, why, you still saw the effects of combat when you drove all over the island and saw the results. Then we were working with the Okinawans as labor and cooperation, and so it was certainly a different atmosphere than it was.

SSH: Were you considered part of the occupation forces then, at that point?

OB: Yes, yes, definitely, yes.

SSH: When you had supply duties, were you also sending things back to the States, or were you stockpiling supplies?

OB: That is an interesting situation, in that they were discarding things that were no longer needed, and they just made a junk pile. … We wondered why they were doing that. … I can remember, specifically, radio equipment. Of course, I had some experience with radio equipment, so here are these different things just being trucked out and dumped. … Here the Okinawans would then come into the trash pile and pick up all the stuff, and here's these little ladies … picking up a great big transformer, you know, and putting it on her head and walking off, figuring that they must have some value, somewhere. … Along with that, in the Korean War, they came back to Okinawa and picked up some of that stuff in the junk piles that was needed to take to Korea. Now, I mean, I wasn't there then, but, I mean, I heard that from some people that said, "Yes, some of the stuff that you threw away, which had value, had to be taken to Korea, because it was needed there." So it wasn't as efficient as it could have been, let's say.

SSH: One of the questions I'd like to ask you, how did you celebrate your birthday in situations like this? How did you celebrate Christmas and the holidays?

OB: Well, of course, at the ship repair base, why, you know, you were under tension and you were working. In general, you were working eight hours, specifically, but then the other duties

that you had took up another, almost, eight hours. … So the holidays, we had a chaplain and he would come around with a group. … I can remember they had some Christmas carols in one of the Quonset huts, but they said, "We're not going out caroling," because we'd get shot walking around. So the holidays, as long as the war was going on, were certainly just between close tentmates. But then after the surrender, and so forth, up at the naval supply depot, as a truck driver, why, they said, "All right, we're not going to do any supplies. We're not going to do any trucking on Christmas, Christmas Eve, but we do need somebody available if there's an emergency. Do we have any volunteers?" I volunteered to be there, ready to drive on Christmas Eve, because I was not a drinker, and I knew that that was what the big celebration was back in the camp. … So I sat there and they said, "You got a call. Report to such and such," and so I got in the truck and got there. Here, it's the chaplain and he has a choir group, and so I was there with the truck to truck them around the camp, the big camp. … Of course, I knew the carols, too, so I was able to sing with them. So that was a blessing, you know, to celebrate Christmas when I was on duty. So, you know, there were religious opportunities for both Christmas and Easter after the armistice was signed.

SH: What other kind of services were there? Was there church every Sunday?

OB: Yes, yes. There were church services every Sunday that they had, and as I say, the chaplains were available for counseling and this sort of thing, so, yes.

SH: As far as leave, did you ever get an opportunity to go take a few days off and go around to visit any of the islands or go to Hawaii?

OB: No.

SH: Were you on duty all the time?

OB: Yes, that's right, yes, yes.

SSH: What about mail? Were you able to get a lot of mail back and forth?

OB: Yes, they … felt that that was essential to keep in touch and get the support of your family back home, so just like you saw that little Christmas card, that's what I sent to my family on Christmas in 1945, and they, you know, that was essential. The mail was censored, and there were times when my dad told me later, you know, he saved the letters, I don't have them now, but he said, "They blocked out two of these. What were you trying to say there?" … I said, "I guess I was giving a unit that I was involved in," or something, and that they felt, "No, that shouldn't be identified."

SSH: As part of the occupation forces and being where you were in Okinawa, we talked about how the Americans treated the Japanese that they took as prisoners of war. Were you ever in contact with any Americans who were freed with the armistice from Japanese prisoner of war camps?

OB: No, I was not. … In fact, I had no knowledge of any existence, that the Japanese took any prisoners on Okinawa when the hostilities were in action. I don't think they took prisoners there.

SSH: There were some that were taken from other areas that were sent to work in the factories and the mines and munitions plants and things like that in Japan. I just wondered if you'd had any contacts with any who were freed after that.

OB: No, I have no knowledge of that.

SSH: Go on and tell us what it was like then to be part of the occupation forces and some of the things you saw.

OB: Well, of course, once we established a relationship with the Okinawans, when all of the Japanese soldiers were then taken to a facility, and I don't know where the facility was, because I never had contact with that, why, they, of course, treated us as heroes, so to speak. … As long as you were respectful of them as individuals, why, we had an effective relationship. … As I say, there were some of them who spoke Spanish, and one of the men in the pictures that I have here was from California and spoke Spanish. … So he and I went around together, and he would find Okinawans that could speak Spanish and he'd talk to them. … I thought I ought to learn Spanish but never bothered.

SSH: Did you have any inkling of how they came to speak Spanish?

OB: I did not do enough, ask enough questions on that to find out where that came from. In reading up, afterwards, why, I realized that when the Ryukyu Islands were first inhabited, as I say, some were Chinese, some were from India, and there must have been some immigrants that for some reason had contact with Spanish-speaking people, maybe from the Philippines. I don't know.

SSH: When you enlisted, how long was your enlistment? What was your enlistment?

OB: Well, I don't remember that there was any limit put on it. I think you were enlisted as long as they felt that, you know, that you were needed. I don't think you could … say for four years. Of course, in the Reserve, when I signed on for the Reserve, that was four years, and that's the way it worked out.

SSH: How long did you think that you would have to stay then at the supply base? Did you know from rumors where you would be sent?

OB: We knew that there was a system based on the number of months that you were in the war zone. Now, I did not get a combat star. I was not considered a combatant, and I agree with that, so I would have gotten more credit if I have been in actual combat, but that was the basis on which they said, "Okay, you served, and now you can be discharged." Now, if you wanted to ship over, you could, and they tried to influence you, you know, that, "If you want to sign over,

why, you know, we'll do this and this." … One of the possibilities would have been as a deep-sea diver. I thought about that, but I thought, "No, I better get on."

SSH: Were there any other educational opportunities put forth to you to train in other areas, rather than ...

OB: Not on Okinawa, no, no. You … could get your literature and take your tests for a higher rank, but that was it.

SSH: The people that were serving with you at the ship repair base, were they from all over the country?

OB: Yes, they were certainly from all over the country.

SSH: What do you think their educational backgrounds were?

OB: Well, I don't remember anybody that wasn't high school educated, because our group was, technically, people that could build something … Okay, I got a high school education and I'd been on a farm, where there were older men who were mechanics, electricians and different jobs like that, who were senior on projects. So we had the, I think, they were selected for effectiveness to do the job. … They called it "Echelon Tessie" and I think that that was designed for the project.

SSH: Were they men who had been in the military before World War II began that you were involved with?

OB: No, I don't remember meeting anybody like that.

SSH: So everybody was enlisted or drafted like yourself.

OB: Yes, yes.

SSH: When did you find out that you would be leaving Okinawa? If you were going to leave Okinawa, were you coming back to the States and being discharged?

OB: Well, they had, there again, on notices, they had the information that you could look at, and if you could figure out what your dates were, why, you could say, you know, "Okay, I think that I can apply for discharge." … I applied for discharge then, having the numerical qualification that was needed, and if I hadn't, why, then I would have asked for, you know, continued assignment, and then they would have told me, I think, how long I would be continuing on the assignment. But, you know, I asked for discharge. I only had actually twenty-one months of active duty in the Navy, in total.

SSH: Did you have a plan then? Did you plan to come back to school, or to go back to work? A lot of people talked about how hard it was to get a job then …

OB: Well, I heard about the GI Bill, and so I wanted to go to college, you know, from high school days, eventually, and felt, "Okay, I need to go back and get ready for college." When I did get back, I found out and I applied to Rutgers, because my father had moved from Pennsylvania to New Jersey. He'd remarried. … So I applied to Rutgers and found out that my grades in high school were not good enough to qualify for Rutgers, and so instead, I went to Delaware Valley College. The reason I'm explaining that is that I, you know, I had college in mind all the time but realized that I hadn't done as good a job as I should have in high school for college entrance.

SSH: What did you do at DelVal then?

OB: At DelVal, it was a junior college, and Rutgers was assisting them and developing them into a senior college. … So the person I talked to at Rutgers said, "If you go to DelVal, do a good job there, you can transfer back to Rutgers, and you're a New Jersey resident and GI Bill," and so that's what I did. I went to DelVal for a year and a half and then transferred to Rutgers and was able to graduate.

SSH: Did you come to campus before that to talk to someone? Do you remember who you spoke with?

OB: No, I should, but I don't.

SSH: Did you have a major, a focus, for your study right away?

OB: Yes, I wanted agriculture and I felt that dairy would be what I was interested in, and that's what I ended up in, as dairy husbandry.

SSH: When you came back to campus, not knowing too much about DelVal, were there a lot of returning veterans, like there were here at Rutgers?

OB: Yes, oh, yes, definitely.

SSH: What year was this then that you started at DelVal?

OB: Well, I started at DelVal in February of 1947. In other words, I was discharged in 1946, July, and I worked a few jobs here and there. … Oh, I had to take some courses in geometry. I took two, the both halves of geometry, plain geometry, at Temple University High School, while I was working in the area, so that I'd have that in my resume. So then, your question was ...

SSH: Returning veterans.

OB: Oh, yes, many other veterans, yes.

SSH: Do you think you were advised well in going and getting that geometry, or was this something you knew?

OB: I was advised. In other words, the person I consulted at Rutgers looked at my high school resume and said, you know, "You need this and this for that major, and you didn't take that in high school." Instead I just took vocational agriculture, see, and so I knew that I had to make that up at sometime, and, you know, that was good advise.

SH: Did you get involved in any of the fraternities, or sports, or anything like that?

OB: No, no, because I knew I was going to get married pretty soon. I had my girlfriend back in, she was in Philadelphia then, and so I thought, "No, what I need to do is make the best grades I can." … I lived in Highland Park, had a motorcycle, and then we got married in June of 1949. … Then I lived on Hillside Campus, you know, Hillside Campus, the trailer park. We lived there. She had graduated. She went right out of high school into college, Juniata College, Pennsylvania and was majored in dietetics. … So she was able to get a job as a dietician in Perth Amboy and then ended up in what is now Robert Wood Johnson. Then it was Middlesex General.

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

SH: This continues an interview with Mr. Ogden C. Bacon on May 30, 2000 in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Sean D. Harvey and …

SSH: Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

SH: You had left off talking about your wife and going to Juniata. We were just curious, how you had met your wife? Was this before or after the war?

OB: Yes. We were in high school together and lived in the same town, Wycombe, and so, you know, we were interested in each other. … Then as I say, she went to college and started to work, and once I got here to Rutgers and knew where my course was going, I thought, "I'm gonna look her up." … I went down to Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, where she was a dietician, and we ended up getting married and living here.

SH: You lived in Hillside. So you had moved from home and started working here full-time. I assume you supported yourself through college.

OB: Well, with her job and the GI Bill. Of course, I had to work in the summertime, but then I took courses in the summertime, too, to get through as quickly as I could. Yes, I worked on farms a couple of months in the summertime, farms that were in the New Brunswick area, while I was here, yes.

SSH: When you came here to the Ag School, you did not find housing here on campus. You said you lived in Highland Park and rented a room.

OB: Yes, rented a room in a private home.

SSH: The courses that you were taking, did that require you to work in the college farm?

OB: No, no, it did not.

SSH: How did you find your jobs in the area?

OB: Well, I forget now, except, I guess, they were posted, and you could call and, you know, talk to the person, see if it worked out.

SSH: Now you'd mentioned the Reserve. Can you tell us how it came to be that you were in the Reserve?

OB: Well, when I was discharged originally after twenty-one months, why, then, I signed over in the Reserve, inactive Reserve, so there was no pressure, except that if they had an emergency, they can require you to come back on active duty. … While I was going to Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, why, I heard that they had training courses in submarine activities at the Navy base in Philadelphia. Well, I was not that far away. I had a motorcycle, so I signed up for that, and I would go down, I don't know whether it was every Monday night, probably, two Monday nights a month that you went down there for a … three-hour session on submarine training. … Of course, they had a couple of submarines based there, but you didn't go out on, you just, you know, they took you through them and explained what they were talking about. But then they did have training cruises at New London, Connecticut, where you would go up for a two-week training course, up there, and so I did that twice in, I believe, one was in January, when you had your vacation, and then again in July. I guess that was 1947, and so I had that training. They don't need many gunner's mate on submarines. They do need a couple of them, but that's all, you know, so I never qualified as a submariner, because I didn't go through everything that I would need to be a submariner, if I wanted to continue in the Navy. But then 1950, why, my Reserve period was ended, and so I didn't sign up again.

SSH: Which boat were you on?

OB: I was on the *Piper*, USS *Piper*, and the USS *Quillback*, and they were both what they called O-boats, which had been used in World War II, and now they're antiques, you know. … One of the interesting things was that we went out into Long Island Sound area and we did maneuvers with a captured submarine, a German submarine. … We tried to track that submarine, and it was faster both on the surface and submerged than what we were. Now, it had American crew, obviously, doing these experiments, but it was faster and more maneuverable than the O-boats were. One of the reasons was we had a five-inch, twenty-five-caliber, what they call, gun on the deck, and then we also had a twenty-mm quad antiaircraft gun. The German submarine didn't have that, so, I guess, that was part of the reason. … But, you know, that was an experience to go through that, checking out what the Germans had. … Also, we understood that the Russians grabbed up everything from the Germans that they could that had anything to do with submarines and took it up for their development.

SH: So this was really in preparation for the Cold War.

OB: Yes, yes.

SH: Do you feel that you wouldn't have gone to college, when you returned from the war, if it hadn't been for the GI Bill?

OB: I think I would have had a very difficult time, because my dad did not have that much reserve, cash, and so forth, and I don't know how I would have gotten enough money to get through college without the GI Bill.

SSH: When you were here at Rutgers, were you still going through your Reserve training, also?

OB: No, no, that was when I was at DelVal.

SSH: When did you first come to Rutgers then?

OB: Well, it would be September of 1948.

SSH: Was the campus pretty crowded with returning GIs, such as yourself?

OB: Yes, yes.

SH: Did you ever to go to classes in your uniforms or did you …

OB: No, no.

SH: We hear about many people who couldn't even afford to buy civilian clothes. They had to continue going to class in their uniforms.

OB: Of course, I was at DelVal when I, it was my first college, so, no, by that time, I had what I needed.

SSH: When you were here and at DelVal, was there a lot of talk about their war experiences, or were people pretty quiet about it?

OB: It was continuous, because you had the variety, you know, of Navy, Army and Marines. I don't remember any Marines at DelVal, but it was continuous of the experiences that we had. … Some of the men at DelVal were still suffering from injuries or illnesses that they had gotten in the war. I didn't have that problem, but some were still reliving what they had in the service.

SH: How do you think the presence of the veterans affected the atmosphere in the campus?

OB: It certainly matured it, in that we were not there for fun and games, as you might be just coming out of high school. We were there for serious education, and we realized that families

were important. … I think that there was a higher sense of discipline, than might have been with a younger group that say, "Hey, I'm away from home, I can do what I want to now," you know.

SH: Do you really feel that your presence kind of matured the younger students in a way?

OB: Yes, yes.

SSH: Was there much interaction? Did you see a meshing between the two groups?

OB: Well, I think that the veterans were always obvious, that the ones that weren't veterans realized just by watching who were veterans. … I think that there was that separation, but as far as friendship, and so forth, why, yes, you made friends with everybody there.

SSH: You said you had lived in a room over at Highland Park, and I think Sean asked you if you had to work at that point. Were you able, with the GI Bill then, to focus strictly on your studies at Rutgers?

OB: Yes, at that point, I was able to do that. Knowing that I had to go to college, the few jobs I had before I started college, in other words, from July of 1946 until February of 1947, why, I had several jobs, and I was living with my dad, lived in his home, and so I just saved everything I could … so that I had enough to be able to do that with the GI Bill, so that I didn't have to work.

SSH: When you came to Rutgers, how long were you here then?

OB: Two and a half years. Yeah, because it would be from September of 1948, and I didn't get all my credits until September of 1950, and I took summer courses to keep going.

SSH: Who was your favorite professor?

OB: I can't come up with his name and I have my yearbook, but they don't list that, 1950 yearbook, doesn't list any of the faculty. … I can't come up with his name and that's some research I ought to do.

SSH: What did he teach?

OB: Well, he taught feeds and feeding for livestock, and he was more or less a general on dairy husbandry, the actual cow work, and, you know, he was very effective and …

SSH: Had he been here at Rutgers for quite awhile?

OB: I think so. Judging by his age, yes, I think he had been. Of course, while I was here, Selman Waksman discovered streptomycin. … I can remember him. We'd see him, you know, and they'd say, "That's Dr. Waksman" you know. … Here his laboratory was up on the highest floor of, I can't give you the name of the building, but it was the building that had a library in it. I should know that, unless they have changed the name. Anyhow, and so once they realized the

value of streptomycin, then they gave him a new lab. But I can remember, I was in the library, and the floor of the library was maybe five feet lower than the entrance, and so here was a stairway. You went through the door of the library and then the two steps going down either side, and the chief librarian had her desk right there below. … I can remember sitting near there doing some work and Dr. Waksman coming in and looking around and taking a pile of papers and just dropping them down there on her desk, you know. Now, she wasn't sitting at her desk at the moment. … Then he'd look around and went out, and she came over and she said to me, she said, "He never did a thing like that before he got all this fame," you know. I'll never forget that. I don't know if that ought to be on record or not.

SH: Dr. Barlett was the head of the dairy department while you were there.

OB: That sounds familiar.

SH: Do you have any recollections of him?

OB: I think that's the person I'm trying, I would have to double-check that. I don't know why I can't remember that, but, I think, yes.

SH: There was also Professor Helyar.

OB: Helyar doesn't ring a bell. Barlett, yes, the one who was, more courses than any of the others.

SH: Helyar was the head of the Ag College at that point.

SSH: Do you have any interesting recollections about your experiences in agriculture?

OB: Oh, yeah. I could go on and on. Well, when I graduated, why, then I went to a farm, dairy farm, and went up to Newton, New Jersey and worked on a regular dairy farm. But my wife's family was in Bucks County, and so she would rather get back to there. … Here were people, who during the war, families, who during the war had made money in their businesses and owned farms and then wanted to compete with each other for the beautiful Bucks County farms, and so, me, having a degree in agriculture, in dairy husbandry, why, I was considered a good cowman, and so I went to work for wealthy people in Bucks County that wanted to get the best, be able to say, "We have the highest production record," and so forth, and so on. So I worked for several families, one after another, doing that in Bucks County, and it was interesting. But then I knew that I probably would never be able to buy my own farm in Bucks County, and so then I went to work for a contractor and then went back to dairy farming but finally figured I'd better get into the dairy industry. … So I went to work for a milk plant and worked for them for a little while to get experience and then went to work for a dairy testing laboratory and then applied to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and I ended up for twenty-seven years as a milk sanitarian for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

SH: What does a milk sanitarian do?

OB: On my desk, and you weren't at your desk very much, because you were all over the state, but on my desk, I had a sign and it said, "Milk sanitation, we keep it yummy from the teat to the tummy." … So what you're responsible for is the quality and the safety of the milk supply, right from the cows through to the consumer.

SSH: Did Mrs. Bacon continue working?

OB: Yes, until we start having children, yes. … She worked as a dietician in hospitals, and then after our kids were born, why, of course, she stopped for awhile. But then when they started school, why, she started working the school lunch programs.

SSH: Was her dietician program part of the military training for dieticians?

OB: No, it was basically foods and nutrition, hospital dietetics.

SSH: When she worked at Perth Amboy, were you already married?

OB: Yes, in fact, she was at the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia. You've heard of, I can't think of his name now. It will come to me in a minute, but he was United States Surgeon General.

SSH: Koop.

OB: Koop, yes, C. Evert Koop, thank you, and he was on the staff at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia when she was a dietician there. But then, of course, when we were married, why, of course, she transferred to Perth Amboy.

SH: Were you married in Bucks County?

OB: Yes, we were married in Philadelphia, in our church in Philadelphia.

SH: So then you moved to Hillside. Tell us a little bit about living on Hillside.

OB: Well, they had these little trailers, and in the trailer, the only plumbing you had was a little sink. … Then they had the restrooms, male and female restrooms, general. … You didn't have room for many vehicles, so I had a jeep and a motorcycle, and that's all I had room for, and so she drove the jeep to work and I drove the motorcycle to classes. But you had … good communication with your neighbor, you know, because they were all young married people, and so it was a real positive experience there at Hillside.

SH: Did you run for any politics? I know they had a mayor at Hillside that would serve a one-year term, I think.

OB: No, we stayed out of that.

SH: Did you get involved in politics, like your father?

OB: No, no, never did.

SH: At what point did you start studying for the ministry?

OB: Well, in 1957, it was the first time, starting at a laboratory, off the farm, we're working for contractors, that I could say, "Every Sunday I can go to church," and so I started going to church regularly. … The pastor there said, "I feel you have a calling to be in the priesthood," and so I started to prepare for it and then I was called to priesthood. … So I was ordained in 1957, originally, and I have been involved in church work ever since.

SH: What seminary did you go to?

OB: Well, we don't have a seminary, per se. We have courses, home study courses, and then classes that you have to take to see that you're prepared, basically, and it's probably not as formal as many of the denominations are … None of our ministers, our local pastors, are paid. We're volunteer pastors. Now, we have many men that are full-time that travel in our denomination that are sustained money-wise, but the local pastors are considered to be volunteers. … Then we have our priests, are such that it's not just the pastor, but you would have a team of other ministers that, you know, help you with your responsibilities.

SH: Just for the record, did you say which denomination it is?

OB: In fact, I brought a tract, you know, that more or less tells you who we are, and we're the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. … The first question we always get is, "Oh, you're Mormons." No, we're separate and distinct from the Mormon church. We're much smaller than they are and not as rich, but we're still a worldwide church. We're in forty different nations and we have a membership of about 250,000, I guess, worldwide. So that's the church. So if you want to verify that, why, here it is. [On April 6, 2001, the name of the church was changed to "Community of Christ."]

SSH: Can you talk about your children?

OB: Yes, well, we decided that we would start our family … once I knew I had a job. … Our first children were twins and they were born on February 28, 1951, and so a boy and a girl, and then we had another girl in 1956. So they're all happily married and have substantial jobs. The youngest daughter, she'll be forty-four at the end of this month, and she's finishing her dissertation for a doctorate in archeology at the University of Pennsylvania. … Then the twins, why, my daughter, Patricia, got her Master's in library science here at Rutgers. … All three went to our church college in Lamoni, Iowa and then transferred to finish out their specialty. … My son is a graphic designer. He is production manager for a print shop, a print company, in Santa Cruz, California. … All three are married. We only have one grandson. … So we're thankful that, you know, that they're substantially earning their own livings and have secure marriages.

SH: When did you retire?

OB: I retired in 1988 from Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture after twenty-seven years, and I did a little consulting work for Hershey, the chocolate company, for their dairy operation for another eight months and then haven't worked anywhere since, except doing church work …

SH: So that's your hobby now.

OB: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

SH: You became a pastor in 1961. Had you been involved in both the ministry and dairy farming, or the sanitation aspects of it, all the way through from 1961, simultaneously?

OB: Yes, yes. I didn't become a pastor until 1961. I was ordained as a priest in our category of priesthood, and then I was ordained an elder in 1961. … They needed a pastor, and so I was a pastor then and had been a pastor in different places since then, off and on, so to speak, but you know, I certainly continued my job right up until 1988. Now I'm a pastor in Middlesex, New Jersey, is our congregation, small congregation.

SH: What is the difference between a priest and a pastor, because most people think of a priest as Catholic and pastor as Protestant?

OB: Well, if you want to get into the scripture, why, in Hebrews, I can't give you the verse, chapter and verse, but it says that the offices of the priesthood are, deacon and teacher, and then it leaves out priest, at that point, because the priests were in the Jewish faith then. But then it goes on to elder and high priest, but the priests are part of the Aaronic priesthood. … So that is that specific office that they perform, and then the elders are a priesthood that are more or less responsible for leadership, so to speak, so you have a team.

SSH: Before we end the interview, I'd like to ask, as the man here today, what effect do you think World War II had on you?

OB: Well, it certainly increased my faith in prayer and dedication to Christian principles, in that I realized that my life is in God's hands and that I had to find out why I survived when I knew other people didn't, and that I had to take a serious understanding of what my purpose was in life and realize that I had to fulfill that purpose, both in terms of education and in terms of integrity, and try to do my best, even though I made lots of mistakes in the meantime. But the fact is that it matures you, I think, in ways that you can say to people now that what you see on television and what you see for entertainment is not entertaining, and if you had been in combat and seen what you had seen, you'd know that this is not entertainment. … So you have a respect for life, in general, that you don't get just from the sidelines.

SSH: Having worked for Pennsylvania and having been part of the GIs that came back on the GI Bill, what impact have you seen that the GI Bill had on this country?

OB: Well, it made it possible for people that had experienced dedicated service to continue to be educated in such a way that they could use that integrity in a way that would not affect just their lives, but also the quality of business and entrepreneurship, and so forth, that would raise the moral standards, I think, in general, in our community, in our society.

SH: Before we conclude the interview, is there anything that you would like to add on a personal note or any other stories or anecdotes?

OB: Well, of course, I could go on and on, anecdotes, you know, and I don't think it's necessary. … I feel that Rutgers has an integrity, a sense of value, that is something that's priceless, in terms of helping people achieve their goals in a way that is over and above just the academic. … I think part of your activity right now is an example of that, that you're trying to give people a base for dedication to principles, American principles, that are something that is essential, and so I think that Rutgers can be certainly thanked for helping that to be achieved.

SSH: Thank you very much.

SH: Thank you. This concludes an interview with Mr. Ogden C. Bacon on May 30, 2000 in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy 6/18/01
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/26/01
Reviewed by Ogden Bacon 7/01