RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH SAMUEL E. BLUM

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: [This begins an interview with] Samuel E. Blum on July 8, 1994. I guess I'd like to begin with your parents. Why did your parents come to the United States?

Samuel E. Bloom: Well, as best as I could know, primarily they came for the economic opportunities that were here, I'm sure. To get away from pogroms in Russia, or the Ukraine, which is where they lived, and possibly, with my father, he was sent by his parents when he was fairly young, possibly to get away from serving in the Czar's army, which was twenty-five years in those days. In any case, they came here in the teens. I think my mother got here in around 1914 and my dad somewhere around 1915. My mother was about 14, 15 years old, and my dad was maybe 17 or 18, 19, something like that, 20 perhaps. And they came here...My mother had some family here, a couple of brothers and my father had no one here. I think he had one cousin [here] actually, who did died during World War I, so he had nothing, no family here. But they came here anyhow and my mother initially settled in Chicago and my dad in New York. And he had a trade of sorts, he was a photographer, but he couldn't find work in that and in one manner, way or form got to work in a print shop and became an apprentice and eventually learned the trade and that's the trade he worked in all his working life. They were married, my dad was in the service in World War I, in the cavalry here in Long Island, Camp Upton, and when the war was over, my dad and mother married. That would have been 1918. And that's about it for them. My mother worked for a time in Chicago in a glove factory, as a seamstress of some sort or other, but the rest of her life she was a housewife. And we initially, I was born in 1920 in New York, but even at that time, my father and mother summered out here in what is Piscataway Township, Stelton, a place called Ferrer Colony, actually. And it's about no more than five miles from here. And they would come out, they built some kind of a shack or something that they summered in, and I summered in, until about the age of about 10. And winters we lived in the city and I went to the city schools. Somewhere around, oh, I don't know, '32 or '31, '30, dad got his World War I bonus and that gave him enough money to build a house out here. So we built a permanent winter home here right off Metlar's Lane and we left the city. I was then in the, I guess I was in 6A, the first part of sixth grade, and I was supposed to go into RA, which was rapid advance, which they did in New York in those days to push the students through quickly,... but when I came out here I enrolled, I was enrolled, I didn't enroll, I was enrolled in the Fellowship Farm School, actually they pushed me back a little time because they said I was too young, I don't mean they by that, I mean my mother and their friends said, Well, what do you have to push him? He doesn't have to get out of school at 12. He can get out at 14 and all that. So I went to this Fellowship Farm School, which is now on Stelton Road in Piscataway Township. It's a two room schoolhouse there, two teachers there, Miss Schuller was my teacher. And she taught the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. And I was in the 6th grade there. And after getting out of there I ... went to Newmarket School and did the 7th and 8th grades there, and I got out in 1934. At which time I went to Roosevelt Junior High School in New Brunswick up on Livingston Avenue, and of course after a year there, for the 10th, 11th and 12th grades in New Brunswick High School and I got out in 1938. When I was a boy, we lived in what is today suburbia par excellence, but it was then country. And although we didn't have much land, it was kind of a farming type of existence. The town we lived in was self-sufficient in the sense that it relied on no support at all from the community, from the township government. The roads were our own, we paved them, we didn't pave them, but we kept them clean and we got gravel for them. We had no amenities, no electricity, well, there was in 1929 or thereabouts, but there was no city water...

KP: Initially there was no electricity?

SB: No there was nothing. No, no. Electricity, as I recall, we got in 1929, which was about a year before we moved out there permanently.

KP: Did you have an outhouse or a toilet?

SB: Yes, we had a privy, an outhouse.

KP: How far from Busch Campus?

SB: Well, the Busch Campus is the one on Metlar's Lane.

KP: Yes.

SB: Ok. Davidson Road? About 2 miles from Davidson Road. You cross Lake Nelson and right there was where I lived.

KP: And that was... you called it?

SB: The Ferrer Colony. F E R R E R.

KP: And who lived in the Ferrer Colony? Who lived there? How big was it?

SB: Well, there was several hundred families living there.

KP: And most from New York?

SB: Well, they were people...most of them had left New York to organize a school of their own choosing called the Ferrer School based on the principles based of a Spanish martyr named Francisco Ferrer who was executed in Spain God knows when, the turn of the century. And the school that they organized there, the principals were to allow the child to enjoy childhood, to be a child, to be anti-authoritarian, we didn't like that, we didn't like the way, I mean the community, whatever you want to call the community. We'll leave that to somebody else to define. But the principles of the school were to allow the child to enjoy himself, to enjoy Froebel's fruits, Froebel was an educator of the 1800s who was a great believer in nature and letting the child enjoy nature, whatever that means. And they did not force the kids to do anything he didn't want, but they did have a kind of discipline. The discipline was to respect the other kid. You could do what[ever] you want but don't hurt or interfere or bother somebody else.

KP: Don't bunch someone, don't...

SB: Yes, yes, totally unregimented in a way, but on the other hand when you made a decision like if you wanted to work in the woodshop, then they expected you to work in the woodshop, when you

got finished to clean up, things like that. Now I didn't attend that school, I went to the city schools. But the community had many kids that did go to that school. And...

KP: Most people were from New York...

SB: Yes. A lot of the people...oh, ethnically. They were mainly Russian and Jewish in the broad sense, but of course there were Italians, Spaniards...

KP: And one of the key things of this community is the school.

SB: Initially it was.

KP: Yes initially. Then it expanded to include other people coming from the city? Were most people...?

SB: They had a draw, in a sense. I mean the school itself, and the principles of their education, had a draw, like Ariel and Durant they were a part of it. And there were other that believed in that kind of teaching. Although not everybody in the community, myself included, did not go to the school. But there were these kinds of feelings and beliefs that spilled over into the community. And of course they were basically politically left wing.

KP: How many, was this Ferrer School, was this one of a kind or was this...

SB: No, there were several others that followed him. I don't know them all, there as a whole kind of thing about the schools that follows the principles of Ferrer. And also today, in today's world, there are the schools that want to be independent, want to be independent of government. And they're not always left-wing, and they're not always political, sometimes they're extreme right wing, the religious right, for instance, want to educate the kids their ways, and the people in this community wanted to educate the kids their way. [...] is written about this, the Ferrer School, or the Modern School movement. They were called the modern schools.

KP: To your knowledge were there any book written the Ferrer School in Piscataway and this colony.

SB: Yes, Paul [Averridge] wrote one, primarily...Yeah, he's a professor at Columbia and his main field is the Modern School movement, anarchism in the United States, and things like that. ...Those kind of subjects.

KP: You mentioned the colony was very separate from the rest of Piscataway. You had your own school...

SB: Well, we also had a public school there. There was both.

KP: ... There is a public school, but many people went, in fact, to the Ferrer School.

SB: Well, many of the kids did go. I would say of the kids I grew up with, possibly half went to public schools and the other half went to the Ferrer School. Now, the Ferrer School was, of course, a private school.

KP: You had to pay tuition.

SB: Oh, yeah. It was very nominal but people couldn't really pay in the Depression days. If you had to pay three dollars a week that was a lot of money in those days. We're talking about people who, when they were working, would maybe make $30 a week and that was good. ... This antedates the Depression. In the Depression they were lucky to get that much. And a lot of people were out of work. So that was sort of the flavor in the community and, but as I said not everybody went to those schools, like I didn't, and quite a few of my friends, two friends of mine, the brothers, one went and the other didn't, for whatever reason. Maybe the parents just allowed the children the freedom of choice. Presumably that was a big thing amongst our people. You know, that you be able to do what you want providing you don't hurt anybody. That kind of thing. It's a kind of a...they say, if a child, there's somehow, some people get the feeling that if a child has freedom, along with it will be irresponsibility and licentiousness and all of this, well it wasn't the case at all. ... Freedom can be very responsible, and you still could have your freedom. So that was the ideal state. Did that mean every family was that way? No. Does that mean no father there hit a kid? Oh no, it doesn't mean anything like that. But these were the kinds of things that they believed in.

KP: Even people who may have sent their kids to public schools, this was a fairly wide spread sentiment among many ...?

SB: Yeah. Even if you didn't send your kids to that school... For instance, one of the things that would happen in that school was that they never used to force a kid to read. When he wanted to read, when his own interests would drive him to want to read, then he would learn to read. Then somebody would be there to teach him. Now, I being a product of the city school system of course...six years old I was reading, if not before. Certainly by the time I was in the first grade I was a reader. ... But the kids there, some would read, some would never read until...the school, by the way, if I backtrack a little, forgive me, the school only accommodated kids up till about the 8th grade. Now, if somebody stayed in that school, in the private school, until the 8th grade. Then they'd have to go to high school. A lot of them that year they would learn to read. They'd say, o.k. you're going to go to high school, you're going to go to Roosevelt High Junior High, in New Brunswick, that would be the one they would go to. So they'd sit down, they'd have to learn to read that year. My friend Izzy, I think he learned, I think he must have been 14 or 13 before he bothered to read. His brother, by the way, was a classmate of mine, he went through the regular schools. He was valedictorian in my high school class. Class of '38 in NBHS. So it was a kind of a mixed bag. But it's important, I think, to realize that the idealogy was freedom for the kid and allow the child his childhood. Don't take it away, don't discipline him, don't make him. On the other hand, like when I was a kid I had chores. Nobody whipped me for doing them, but hey, listen you have to take care of the chickens. You got to clean the roost every Saturday morning, that's what I did. You fed your pigeons because that's your hobby, you take care of them. It's this kind of thing. ...So, that's what I was used to and that's how I was brought up. To sort of have a feeling of responsibility, but there was a great deal of freedom, a great deal of freedom. A lot of doing what you want, things

like that. Also I should say that in the sense of things of religious, it was an irreligious community. As far as I know we had no churches, no temples, no synagogues, no nothing of that nature. Not in that community.

KP: So it was very free thinking.

SB: I would like to say free thinking, whatever that means. Put your definition to it.

KP: Well, in other words, did people go to synagogues or churches?

SB: No they didn't, none of them did. As far as I know.

KP: A form of atheists, of free thinking.

SB: Yeah, if you wanted you could say they were atheists. But I'm not sure that each and every one was. But in some nominal way, like we were a non-observant home. Oh sure, we knew the holidays, but my mother never lit candles on the Sabbath. Although when my grandmother would come visit, she would. But my mother never did. Never did. My father was totally non-observant. And the interesting part, I might say, in a little aside, I often say gee whiz, what would have happened if I had to break with the religion with the norm. But I didn't have to break, neither did my father, so you have to go back three generations and it was broken several generations before. In other words, the non-religiosity was there already. It was just established, you just didn't even think about it. So you never had to rebel, never have remorse and go into Freud and into analysis and find out what happened.

KP: What was the relationship between this colony and the rest of Piscataway?

SB: Well, they weren't liked particularly. We were an oddball group. Something that happened before I was even born. I think it must have been somewhere around 1917 or '18, so this was way before I was born, I think, now you could look it up in the Home News, I remember reading the article years and years ago, I think they raised the red flag there in sympathy with the Russian Revolution. About 1917. And the militia, or some group of horsemen came out from New Brunswick to tear it down. ... It's that kind of thing. You are really not part of the community and there's a great deal of animosity towards you and you feel it. You feel it at school, when you went to Newmarket School, people would be rough on you. But by and large that, although it existed, it wasn't a dominate thing in your life because your life was completely...I mean, you say you went to school and somebody there was anti-Semitic or something and called you a Jew bastard, so what? Or, they'd say it in Polish. So you would say, o.k., so you'd come home and you'd tell your father or your uncle and they'd say, come on, forget about it, this is the way it is. So you glossed over it. Not that you didn't feel hurt, and not that you didn't understand it, because in a way, when I was young I didn't understand, I'd say I'm not religious so why should you pick on me for my religion, but of course they weren't picking on me for my religion, they were picking on me for what I was or had come from. And it took me years to understand that. But anyway, so there was this kind of animosity so to speak or dislike of the outer community. But on a day to day basis, it didn't matter,

because you were within this community. You [were] not really interacting with it. And your interaction was only at school. It just didn't really matter that much. O.K.

KP: Your father served in the military.

SB: Yes. My uncle did, too. My father and my mother's brother were both in the U.S. Army in World War I, and my mother's kid brother was in World War II. He was in the Navy.

KP: Your father...I don't want to use any term to describe it. Was he drafted or did he volunteer for the Army and how did he feel...?

SB: Well. I would think...I don't really know if he was drafted or he volunteered. I know this, though. He wouldn't marry to stay out of the war. He thought people who did that were cowards.

KP: Oh, so he didn't...

SB: He did not, for instance, say, O.K. Eva (my mother's name), let's get married and I'll be able to stay out of the draft. He wouldn't do that. And he despised, looked down on people who did that. He thought that was a little cowardliness. He was in a way patriotic. Hey, o.k., if I have to serve, I serve. But I'm not sure if he volunteered or he got drafted.

KP: In other words, he was not an opponent of the war that you could tell.

SB: No, not particularly. No. Although, you know, I figured this would come up. This is a very hard thing to deal with because in a certain sense I'm a pacifist. And I think my parents were, and a lot of people I grew up were pacifists but they would fight. I mean, you know, I think they understood war and what it was and they realized the economic and nationalistic aspect of it which they didn't like. However, as would come to bear, when a Hitler comes along you do something about it. And my Hitler started much earlier than 19, what is it, 1939, September 1, or September 2. Much earlier. The Spanish Civil War. That's when my Hitler started. And that's when the people in my hometown decided and did something about fighting Hitler then if not sooner than that.

KP: So the Spanish-American War was a very formative event for you.

SB: Oh, yeah. In fact in my community it was a very unifying thing in a way. Why was it unifying? Because, I told you it was a kind of a left-wing community. The left wing is a lot of, all kinds of left wings, and some of them were really rabidly against other aspects of it.

KP: Your community was very much...would you have divisions in the community, say, between your honest to goodness reformers, progressive types, New Dealers, but then maybe communists...

SB: Oh sure. There were all that. We had communists, anarchists, God knows what. Socialists of several kinds. Plus New Dealers who people, who really were so pleased with Roosevelt because Roosevelt really did a lot, he got us out of the Depression, so to speak, although literally he didn't, not until the war started. But that's beside the point. He at least could focus on national needs and

the problems and have something get done, WPA, PWA, NRA, whatever the hell they were. All these things. So it was a good kind of thing and so the people were for him and for those programs. But there were also extreme left-wingers who were anti-capitalists, those who were pro-Russian or Soviet. So it was a mixture. However, when the Spanish Civil War came, somehow, at least in the groups I was in, united to do something against Hitler and Mussolini going into Spain. It was like our war, you see.

KP: Had you had members of your community volunteer?

SB: One guy went into the Abraham Lincoln brigade.

KP: And...

SB: He came back, yeah. But only one guy went into... The rest of us, of course I was young, I was middle teens. What we did, we wanted to raise money to aid the Spanish loyalists. What we did, we had a theater group, we gave plays, and we'd go around to various little places here in Middlesex County primarily, South River I remember once going, Manville, you know, and we'd give these performances of the plays. And the money we raised we bought an ambulance and sent it to Spain. So that's what we did. And an ambulance, oh God, it was a lot of money in those, as I recall it was like $1,500, holy smoke. Boy that was a lot of money.

KP: Especially in the Great Depression.

SB: Oh, yeah. This was '36, '37, '38. Those were the years. And it was nice. It was nice because it's fun to give plays, it was fun to act. I enjoyed that, although I'm not an actor, but I enjoyed doing. And the idea that it unified disparate views because a lot of people that were together in the theater group politically were.

KP: So what was a common front really worked in your community?

SB: Yes it did. O.k. In that case it did. It did. And believe it or not in a lot of other issues it never worked.

KP: What other issues?

SB: Oh, it ... didn't work on how they felt about the Soviet Union. How they felt about Stalin. There were people there thought he was a god and there were people there thought he was the worst thing since Caligula. You know. Really. I...so just because these people were all Socialist types, left-wingers, but they were different. You can't cast them into one mold because they just weren't. They just weren't.

KP: Where did you come down in the '30s? If you had to identify which group did you...

SB: I wasn't part of any particular group. And that has to do with possibly my father, who was also a very good observer of the political scene. For instance, the realization that things, now remember

my father still had family in Russia, the Soviet Union then. And uh he would correspond, he had a sister and a brother primarily, and they were both in very strong, powerful positions in the sense that they were educated and upper class, whatever that meant in the Soviet Union. But when things went bad there, which happened as my recollection is, in the middle '30s, he saw through it and he didn't like what he saw. And he realized that in some way, the revolution if you will was betrayed. And this is the era when [Vashinsky] did the trials as I recall in the middle '30s. So this is the thing. A great deal of skepticism. My father was a good skeptic about things. He didn't believe everything he read. He was a very wise man in this way. Although he himself and myself were never really politically active.

KP: You weren't enamored by the socialists...

SB: Well, I liked some of the things they stood for. In today's world it's very easy to see things clearly but in those years who but the left-wing and blacks themselves did anything about black rights, negro rights, colored rights, whatever you want to call it. The left-wing did. So those parts were fine. But on the other hand you had to also see what was happening in the Soviet Union, what Stalin really was, and to be able to differentiate and still not throw out the baby with the bath so to speak. It's not easy because sometimes evil people will stand for good things. I'll give you an example. Farakkhan in today's world. You know, he's for black dignity and working and cleanliness and dressing up and all of that and at the same time he's a fascist. So what do you do? It's not easy. It never was and it's not going to be.

KP: You seem to have that sense of what was waiting in the 1930s?

SB: Oh yeah. And I give a lot of that credit to my father. And also we were a home in which things got discussed. Politics were a big important thing. The farm, too, but politics, what was happening.

KP: When you say the farm. How...

SB: A small farm. We had a few hundred chickens.

KP: So that's how you got into pigeons, pigeon racing.

SB: Well that was a hobby. My father...there were two guys where he worked. Gee cripes, one was Jimmy Costello, I forget the other guy's name, oh Sam Howard. One was English, the other was Italian and they had homing pigeons. That was a very common thing in New York in those days. In fact, it probably still is. People had lofts on their roofs and they sent out a flock of birds and birds were captured, stray birds would come in and they'd butcher them. It was a source of meat, just as it is in England where they have the dovecotes. I don't know if you know that but in England if you go to places like the Cotswolds they'll have these big dovecotes and I said My God, there are birds there by the hundreds. Why do they have them? Well, they have them because it is a source of meat in early days, in the 17th, 16th, god knows maybe for all I know since 1066. But in any case so that's where these people in New York would do it. And so through these days that my dad worked with I got homing pigeons. Some of them used to race birds for the fun of it. So I

got the homing pigeons and that was my kind of hobby. And I kept it up from about 1930, '31 until I was a freshman in college and then I got busy with college work and I didn't take care of my birds so my mother did the right thing and that's what we had on the table. We ate them. Very traumatic period.

KP: Did you, now you had the small farm. How did that help you in the Great Depression?

SB: Well, let me say that knock on wood, for my dad, he never lost a day's work, he never, he had a good job, he was part of what people would call, he was a blue collar worker. He was a printer but he worked for a law book publisher and he was good. And he had this job and he never missed a day. And he worked for a law book publisher, Shepherd's Citations, they are now owned by McGraw Hill.

KP: Where did he work?

SB: It was down on Lafayette Street right across from the Tombs in New York.

KP: So he was commuting...

SB: He commuted.

KP: He would leave from the New Brunswick train station.

SB: Well, it was Metuchen.

KP: Oh, o.k.

SB: It was Metuchen.

KP: O.k., but he used to take the train.

SB: Right, everyday. And come home every night. And as a matter of fact I'll jump ahead, when I was in college I used to carpool with a friend and every other day I would take my car and I would get up early and take dad to the station, come to Rutgers here and classes were always over by 5:00. In any case, dad's train always came in 6:30 at night so I'd pick him up. So that's what he did. He commuted. Right. He commuted and o.k. He loved gardening, that was his great passion. So out of this lousy little acre we had several hundred chickens and he would take the eggs to his co-workers and sell them, which was a source of income which was used for my tuition.

KP: So in other words, you went through the Great Depression, you were successful.

SB: We were very, we were comfortable. Listen. We built a new house in 1930, '31, o.k? Dad lacked only $1,000 to finish it which he borrowed from a relative and then paid it off within two years. In '36 we bought a new car. I mean we couldn't have been poor. We were quite comfortable. In many respects much more comfortable or equally comfortable than I am or I was when I was

working making God, over 20 times as much money as he made, ever made. But that's something else. So that was the community I grew up in. And that was the home. I have a sister, a kid sister, who I just spent three weeks with, she and her husband.

KP: I guess, how did the Depression affect the rest of the community?

SB: Bad. Yes, yes. There weren't too many that worked completely. I would say ..., I don't think that out of 50, 60 working men, I don't think 5 had steady jobs. One was an optometrist here in New Brunswick who did well, another guy was a lawyer who was a rich man. Another guy was the guy who ran the school buses and did snow plow work in the winter. He did well. And then maybe one or two others. I would swear I can't think of, I can't think of 5 guys in those years, 5 families who would buy a new car. And this was out of a community of several hundred families. Maybe a couple hundred, I don't know, I haven't counted them. So we were quite comfortable. Yes. And even then, though, going to Rutgers was quite a burden financially. Tuition was, let's see, $340, $170 or $183 or $173 times two plus, since I was a chem major, breakage fees. Which was a lot money, $30, $40, $20 a year depending on how many lab classes you had. So it was a lot of money. ... And then, when I was a senior in college and I had to decide..., excuse me, a senior in high school, had to decide where to go to college, I had 3 or 4 colleges I wanted, I loved Princeton, it was so beautiful and so near. Unfortunately, in those years, and I bet it was the same way today, you had to live on campus and that was a no no, because in no way could I afford to live on campus. Tuition was $450 a year and that we could swing, but by the way, the arrangement between my father and myself was, Sam if you can come up with half the tuition, I'll come up with half the other. So I had to work. I had to come up with $200 a year, and he would come up with the other $200. Of course I lived at home, so that was fine, and somehow the books got paid for.

KP: Had you been accepted at Princeton?

SB: No. Well, I found out I had to live there. So that was out.

KP: So you didn't even bother...

SB: I didn't even bother to apply. I was also interested in Urbana, Chicago, the University of Illinois. But the idea, it would be tough there. And I was also interested for reasons which are hard to remember now, the Missouri School of Mines. For some reason I must have been interested in mining or geology at the time. O.k. So much for that. And of course Rutgers. But Rutgers was good because I had very fond memories of Rutgers. I mean very fond things happening to me with Rutgers. But let me just finish up the schools. There were two other possibilities. One, is that I live in New York, change my residence and go to City College. That to me was the lowest of the decisions because CCNY, although academically it was great, it was a tough place to graduate from and get a job. City College was a pariah in American industry because it had a left-wing reputation.

KP: That's interesting, because historians looking back at CCNY it was just viewed as the real Ivy League of [...] of the 1930s.

SB: As it was then. And academically it was...

KP: But going there really marked you.

SB: Yeah yeah yeah. One of my recollections was, I won't even remember the rest of it, I don't want to, but City College graduates need not apply, that was an ad put in by the Dupont Company. And they meant it, they wouldn't hire City College graduates. I'm certain you could find that ad if you went back into the New York Times archives. In any case, so City College was out, and NYU I didn't like, also it was terribly expensive. Columbia was out of the question, it was even more expensive. So of all the schools, New Brunswick and Rutgers was so good for me. Also, I have very pleasant memories of Rutgers. And what had happened was, ... in grade school, 6th, 7th, 8th grade, we didn't have a library in Piscataway Township, finally we got a little dinky one, but at the time we really didn't have a library. In order to get books, what I would do is I would write to the State Library in Trenton, send them a postcard, please send me the following books, and you'd list one or two and they would send it to you. And you would return it a month or two later and you would send it back. So that's how you borrowed books. When I got to the 9th grade in New Brunswick I found out there was a possibility I could get a membership, not a membership, a withdrawal card, a library card, from Rutgers University. So I went down and asked, it was where the museum is now, not Ziegler, Zimmerli, Nelson was it, Nelson Library? I forgot. Anyway, so I went there and they said you have to get a note from your teacher or your mother or something like that. And I got it and they issued me a card. And when I got into that library, it was a whole new world to me. The stacks and the...it was exciting. So I was able to draw books from the Rutgers University Library. This was in the 9th grade, and I continued that all through 10th, 11th and 12th. So it was a great place.

KP: So you have very fond memories of the library?

SB: Sure, the library. Most especially the library. Of course in those days I had no idea what I would major in and I didn't think, I could take whatever I wanted. They also had a closed section, but I didn't know about that in those days so it didn't matter. So I had very fond memories. And the idea of going to Rutgers was pretty good by the time I was a senior. And I took the exam to get a state scholarship but I didn't make it, which miffed me in a way. Not so much that I didn't get it but my best friend and classmate who was valedictorian in the class...

KP: He didn't make it either.

SB: He didn't get it. I never found out why he didn't get it. You could say, well, he came from that community and that was it, but I don't want to be paranoid about it.

KP: But you're not sure...

SB: He didn't get it, that I'm sure about of. I didn't get it either. There is one aspect you've got to understand. State university scholarships, as opposed to the Upson and some other scholarships that were given, and still are, I think the Upson is still given here, but the state scholarships were, they were pro-rated by county, and Middlesex County, being where Rutgers was, had the greatest number of people applying to begin with, so the competition was much greater. If you came from

Gloucester County or Warren, my god, you took the exam, you got in, whether your grades were high or not. In other words, they didn't segregate by grades, they segregated geographically. The toughest place to get the scholarship was from Middlesex. I'm not saying that's the reason that's why my friend Sol didn't get it or [why] I didn't get it, but the truth of the matter was it was tough to get it from here. Maybe we didn't do as well. They gave us a kind of, I'll call it an SAT exam, whatever it was, but you had no idea how you did.

KP: They didn't tell you your scores.

SB: No, oh my God, no. No score. You got a notice that we regret to inform you that you didn't get the scholarship, or hey, congratulations you got it. Some of my friends got it. Ralph, for instance, Ralph Schmidt, I think he had an Upson, he had a football scholarship. O.k. I mean, you look at him, he was in 5 sports, and there were a few others.

KP: Well, Ralph alluded to that. When he got out on the field and everyone else had the same scholarship. ...

SB: ...But at the time I didn't even ... [think] of the Upson, but the state scholarship would have been great because it would given me ...it would have paid my tuition. Hey. Let me say something else too. I don't know if you know this or whether it comes out. I was in the School of Chemistry, Rutgers College, RC. Some of the guys, suppose you didn't have enough money to pay the $373 tuition. Well, you could knock off 100 bucks, I think it was, if you went to the Ag School. So a lot of the Ag students were really [Rutgers College]...they took the same courses but they were in the Ag College. Of course, they had to take some Ag courses. But there was this kind of thing always operating. But you see, to have...it's hard to say. My own interest, initially, was to be an M.D., way back then. And I was very good in those kind of subjects. But there was also something involved in being an M.D. You couldn't borrow money, you had to do it on your own with your own money, and it was a terrible expense. And it was an expense in no manner way would I put my folks through. Although I'm sure had I said I wanted to go to med school and all that they would have worked their ass off for the money. But I just didn't want that. I just didn't want. So I said chemistry's great, I love it.

KP: In terms of being an M.D. during the Great Depression, you read about doctors working for the WPA, dentists being hired to work...

SB: No, I never thought of that. The only time when there might have been some efficacy for doing that was going into V-12 or Navy or Army M.D. program. But by then ... I had given up on it. I didn't do that well in biochem or physiology when I, I did alright but not really that good. You know, there's a timeliness to some of these things and after a while you say, oh the hell with it. In any case, I don't know. I also. Well, we get into a whole kind of area of what it takes to become a doctor today in America, as opposed to somewhere else perhaps, and one of the things is a phenomenal memory and I'm not sure I have that good a memory. Maybe I would have in those years but today I certainly don't have it. Can't handle detail that much.

KP: So chemistry, ... was that...

SB: ... But by then it was o.k. ... By the time I was a senior in high school I knew it wasn't going to be medicine. ..,By then, the decision had been made. So what was I going to major in. So I said, well I'm going to major in chemistry because I like chemistry. I liked it in high school, I liked to talk to a few friends of ours at home that were chemists and when I decided to take chemistry a lot of people in my hometown said you've got to be a damn fool to take chemistry, where are you going to work? Who are you going to work for, I.G. Farben? You know, things like that. And chemistry was a tough nut. It ... wasn't easy to get a job, easy to get work. But as things turned out, the field opened up on December 7, 1941.

KP: But at the time going into chemistry was viewed by many as risky [choice]?

SB: Oh, my god, yes. It wasn't a well... For one thing, chemistry then is not what chemistry is today. I don't know whether chemistry today is what it was 20 years ago, because it's not either. But the point is .... What are you going to do with it? How are you going to get a job? Where are you going to work? But if I liked it as I did, I didn't think of it at the time. So I didn't do it. [tape ends]

KP: You went into chemistry with uncertain prospects.

SB: I didn't want to even think of prospects frankly.

KP: You just concentrated on really doing it...

SB: Well, I took what I liked. I liked it and ...

KP: Do you think that the fact that your family was more secure you were better able to take risks? ...

SB: Well, that's a funny question to answer, a difficult one. Because sometimes I used to say, gee I wish my dad would have made it so I that I could take risks more easily. I feel I don't take risks particularly easily, but whom am I to judge. Let somebody else judge. But I didn't...I know I wasn't really thinking of how am I going to make a living. I took it because I liked it. Now in 1938 it was very difficult to know what you could take that would serve you well when you have to go out and make a living. Of course there was also the possibility of going into some trade, to learn some skill, whether it is in the construction industry, or what have you. I certainly didn't want to work as a clerk in a store, which I had done. I did that in high school and up to my freshman year, I worked in a grocery after school in my hometown. And none of the trades really appealed to me, although my dad always said boy I wish I could teach you the printing trade because you know it is a good trade and it would be easy for me to teach you. So I said, well gee, you couldn't do that it took you years to learn. He said, nah, nobody taught me in those day, you had to learn on the sly. I would teach you everything. Six months, three months, you'll know just as much as I know. Which is a nice thing for him to have said and it probably was true. But also I had no opportunity to do that... No, I didn't particularly care for it in that sense. Chemistry was fine, I liked it. But I didn't really go into thinking too deeply about where it was going to lead to, where a job was going to come from,

because frankly in those years, there was no sure fire thing you could do that would guarantee that you were going make a good living. ... You wanted to make a living, but there just was no one thing that you'd say, except M.D., dentistry, law. I'm not even sure about law. But M.D. and dentistry were the only two professions where you were pretty sure you would do well. And it's true today, too. You do well in those. But those two were the only two things that you could be certain that you could do well. Even if you could write, it doesn't mean journalism was for you. It wasn't easy to get a job as a journalist. And I don't know about any of the other professions. Even at school, as I look back in the yearbook, I say my God, these guys took B.A.s in business and things like that, where were they going to find jobs back in those years. I don't know.... Of course, some of them had, came from families where they were going to work in that family. We had quite a few that did that. But the average guy, there was nothing that he knew he could take there that would work for him.

KP: Now you, in some sense you lived very close to Rutgers and you obviously had a lot of interaction. How would you character the town and gown relations?

SB: What?

KP: The town and Rutgers. What was the relationship between...was your experience with the library unique?

SB: I don't know that it was unique, but I don't know that too many people did it. Frankly. I just don't know. In my home town one guy got his Ph.D. the year I got my, got out of high school. One guy had just gotten his bachelor's degree at Rutgers and was going off to med school. Another guy was in the department of education here getting a master's degree. That's three.

KP: There were a number of people who went to Rutgers.

SB: Oh yeah. There were a few who went to Rutgers. And they did well. One was Phi Beta [Kappa].

KP: Did people go to say football games, follow Rutgers football?

SB: I did. Oh my God yes. Oh sure. I went to my first Rutgers game probably around 1934, '35, '33 somewhere in there. It was, I've forgotten who arranged it but the school buses took us down to Princeton. Princeton was playing Rutgers. And I rode down...two things I remember about the game, one I'm certain of. That is it was raining that day and everybody was holding newspapers over them. When the rain stopped they would all wad them up and throw them at everybody. And the other thing of course was that Rutgers didn't win. That was after the fact. I don't think I even remembered it except that I know they didn't win in '34. But yeah, I went to the football games, I also went to the football games in high school. I enjoyed them.

KP: Would other residents go to the football games, Rutgers football games?

SB: Not that I know of, no.

KP: You didn't go with a bunch of friends to Rutgers.

SB: No, no. I went with, I would go...well, there would be guys that I probably went to high school with who were also going to Rutgers. Quite a few of my fellow classmates that got out of NBHS with me ..., quite a few. And we would meet and I don't know we just went. We had good seats in those days, it was very nice. And after Nelson Field was over with and the new stadium was inaugurated, it was a great stadium, it still is. Well, I don't know what it's like now but it really was. It was a beautiful stadium, not a large one. But it was a nice stadium, it was just nice. And it was good spirits and of course we beat Princeton that year so that was great. Which led to something that I've never forgotten. After the game the students marched down George Street, that is east, south towards NJC I guess. And I got the funniest feeling. I enjoyed being with the guys in the victory march but I also got a kind of apprehension to say the least of the mob. And yet I don't recall that we broke any windows or anything, but yet there is something about a mob like that that I don't like. Unless ..., It was like a mob, not like a march, not like a demonstration which I've been part of in recent years. But you got the feeling, oh my God. This could really be terrible. Just my emotional feeling about it. But it was very nice winning. And it was possibly the best football game I ever saw. What else can I say? I'm sure a lot of my classmates will feel that too.

KP: Did you participate in any sports at Rutgers?

SB: No, no. Well, I went to gym and all that but I was never in any organized sports, I'm not a particularly good athlete. I played...but I didn't do any organized sports. Also being a commuter being involved in a carpool you can't really do alot of that.

KP: So you felt...many people have talked about this. There were big sharp differences between commuters and residents. Even though you lived in Piscataway you still felt...

SB: Yeah, because I had to come home, pick up Dad at the station. Whatever it was. Now, as a chem major, Ralph [Schmidt] will tell you this. We had full days. My class day started at 8:00 and ended at no earlier than four. No earlier than four. And for many years, many terms, there were Saturday labs. Many, ... organic and other courses, we had, I had friends who [said], Jesus Christ, I'm stuck with a 9:00 class. I said, what? Anyway, we really had a full day and so that if the days over at 4:00 and you don't live on campus and you have to go pick Papa at the station, you'd better go pick Papa up. You had no choice. Had I been an athlete maybe I would have found a way but I really wasn't. The only thing I did do at Rutgers that I enjoyed very much I did alone. I learned to play golf at some summer job I had where they had a golf course. And I used to go out and play at the Rutgers golf course. All alone and I loved it. It was nice. I always appreciated the golf course. Of course I'm a 150 player but what the hell.

KP: Did you go to chapel or did you get excused?

SB: Well, we had to go to chapel.

KP: So you didn't try to get excused?

SB: Oh, Sunday chapel, no. As a commuter you didn't have to. But the regular, oh once...thereby hangs a tale. Because the one who led us in the chapel was Dean Metzgar, who was the Dean of Men, who was a strict, maybe I'm not exactly right, but he was a strict Calvinist type and he would put a heavy on you, forgive us for we sin, forgive us for we cheat, forgive us for we lie, ... and I didn't do anything of those things. And I don't know why the hell he was asking for forgiveness. But anyway, that was the kind of guy he was. He was a tough nut in that way. And very stern. I mean, a real kind of, I don't know, even if he smiled I wouldn't believe it was a real smile. He was a tough nut. So but yes, I did go to the daily chapel. I mean once a week we went.

KP: ...What did you think of the whole experience of going, especially given the community was...

SB: Going to chapel? It didn't bother me, it doesn't bother me to go to a church, I don't take Communion but I've been to where people do. And listen it's there thing, it's just not mine. But I feel that way about going to a temple. I'm not a religious type. So it doesn't bother me. That aspect of religion doesn't bother me at all. In fact, I...but you come a long way. Certainly when your young you have certain feelings and prejudices and bigotries even and all of that and when you get older I hope you lose them. If you go on a civil rights march and you've got a thousand nuns walking in front of you you feel pretty good about it, frankly. So those things go by the board. It never bothered me in any case, in no way. It just doesn't bother me. If that's the way they are, that's the way they are. I don't know what I'd do at a KKK meeting but that's something else.

KP: Before I leave that question, were there any...New Jersey had a high level of klan activity. Did you...

SB: Oh, yeah, we knew about...up in the Watchungs. Up in the Watchungs, oh yeah, they used to burn the cross in the '30s, early '30s. Yeah, they'd have cross burnings.

KP: Was any directed at your community?

SB: Not that I know of. I don't think we ever got a cross burning excepting for the incident I mentioned earlier on which appeared around, it was in the Brunswick Daily Home News around 1918 or 19. Other than that incident, I never...

KP: You never had...

SB: No, I don't recall anybody coming ever coming and putting a cross on our lawns or anything.

KP: In your community...

SB: I just don't remember any of that ever happening. That doesn't mean that there wasn't any antagonism but we didn't get that kind of demonstrable outpouring.

KP: ...People talk about the division of Rutgers between commuters and residents, those with money and those without. What other divisions did you see at Rutgers?

SB: Well, it was kind of interesting. Before freshman week, I got, I guess sometime in August, I got invited to come down to a smoker at a fraternity house. And it was a Jewish fraternity house, SAM, Sigma Alpha Mu. I went down there and ... it was just a bunch of guys doing a lot of smoking, and in those days...

KP: They actually had smokers for smokers.

SB: In those days I didn't smoke so it was no big deal to me. And there was a kind of a ... camaraderie, back slapping kind of gathering, what a great house SAM is and this guy is in that sport and this guy's in that and all of that. So, which was fine, but I kind of knew that I wasn't going to join a fraternity. Now there were three Jewish fraternities then, ... Sigma Alph Mu, Phi Ep and Tau Delta, I can't remember. Phi Ep was upper middle class, the kids were rich and came from educated homes. The SAMmies were in the middle and the other guys were like the radicals. Now, that's my recollection of it. But the only house I was ever invited to was the SAMmies. But the Phi Eps were pretty interesting because I had a lot of friends who were Phi Eps and they were good. At one time the grade point average of the Phi Ep house was Phi Beta Kappa average, 1.8. It was not a 4.0 scale, 1.0 would be a straight A. And 1.8 was an A-, B+ average and these guys and the whole fraternity had that average. You know, they were smart cookies. But other than that the commuters, we commuted. We went home. What can I say? I didn't feel any...

KP: What about politically, on campus?

SB: Ok, basically, I was not active politically. I had my sympathies and all that but I really had nothing to do with the politics. I was talking to Louis, as a matter of fact, when we were at the library thing. It was the first time and he started mentioning things I remembered, but I wasn't involved with the politics locally. Because I was involved with my hometown, that was where I did my politicking. That's where, whatever I did was there. So I wasn't part of any of the clubs here. And I don't even know what they were. I really don't. I'm sure there must have been guys that were, there was a Socialist club, there must have been. But I wouldn't know which one, I wouldn't [know] which Socialist club it was. There probably was, might have been a Marxist club, whether it was a theoretical Marxist or a hard core Communist, I don't know. Just like there was a Newman club and Hillel and all those, which I wasn't part of either.

KP: So in other words Rutgers for you was very much chemistry and lab work.

SB: Yeah, it's going to school is learning something. You know, this is my, I have to learn something, I gotta graduate, I gotta to get decent grades and things like that. And the other aspects of college life were absent. Occasionally and very enjoyably, I'd stay late and go to CT and have a few beers with the guys I knew. I wasn't a stick in the mud or anything like that. But I had very little to do with campus affairs, very little. One of the nice things that happened, in my senior year, I told you I had a friend who got a Ph.D. in '38 and in 1941 he was an agronomist, a soil chemist at the Ag school. And he needed an assistant. And he told me I could get a NYA job, which was the National Youth Administration, which was a kind of equivalent of the WPA and the PWA and all that. And it was an organization set up to give students an opportunity to work at the University

and get money. And my recollection, I think somebody might refresh it, we were getting fifty cents an hour, which was tremendous salary. And I worked there every Saturday and perhaps one day a week, two days a week after school. And I did routine chemical soils analysis, which was particle size analysis, nitrogen analysis, whichever was required. I felt very, very fortunate, A, to get it, and, B, because it was the first time I could work in what was destined to be my field. And I had never had that opportunity. Now some of the guys in my, the chem majors had it, a few of them in south Jersey worked for Dupont and Hercules, or what have you. But I'd never had it and this was the first time and it was a great thing for me and I enjoyed it.

KP: You mentioned you had a close...before leaving work, where did you work as a waiter?

SB: Oh, well, I did lots of odd jobs as an undergraduate.

KP: Before you got your NYA?

SB: Yeah, yeah. In high school I worked in the local grocery store. I worked 25 hours a week for a year or so, a year and a half before I got out of high school, before I entered Rutgers in my freshman year. Then I would work part-time for the New Brunswick book shop, which was down near the corner of George and Albany, it used to sell books in competition with the Rutgers Book Store. And the thing is where they could compete is they could sell second hand books, and Rutgers never sold second hand books. So that was a big thing. So anyway, I worked for this guy clerking, working in his book store. And then in the winter time if we got a blizzard and we needed snowplow work in Piscataway Township, this guy in my home town would hire me and I didn't drive the truck but I ran the plow. In those days you had to crank them up and down, whatever you had to do with the plow. So that was the kind of work I did. In the summer times though I worked initially as a bus boy, then as a waiter for three summers up in what was called the Borscht Belt.

KP: So you did work in New York?

SB: Oh yeah. As I tell people now every once in a while in jest that, hey, don't mess around, I'm a professional bus boy. Anyway, that's what I did, I work in the summertimes as a waiter, initially as a bus boy then as a waiter up in the resort hotels. ... So that is what I did for a living.

KP: Your favorite professor was C. William Reiman...

SB: Caspar William Reiman III.

KP: And why did he become your favorite professor?

SB: Well, A, he was an excellent teacher. He really was a good teacher, I mean good. There were a few others I had, Wilson in mathematics was good, and [James B.] Allison in physiology and biochemistry was a fine professor, but Reiman was good. Also, Reiman did something that I liked very much which worked to my advantage. He had a way of teaching, he would lecture. Well, one thing he was definite in his assignments. The book we worked out of was one that he'd wrote. Quantitative Analysis by Reiman, (Naiman, and Nuss.) And he would lecture on a chapter and say,

well, we're going to cover this chapter and start to lecture and O.K. Then, after he'd finish the lecture he'd ask if anybody in the class, were there any questions they had. So you could ask him a question. If the questions continued the rest of an hour, so be it. However, when there was a fall off and there were no more questions he said well, I'm going to ask some questions now and he would hold a recitation. Send one or two people up to the board with a problem to solve and then he'd go round the class willy nilly, who knows what his system was, it wasn't alphabetical, I know that, and he'd ask you a question and he would grade your answer. At the end of the term, if you did well, he would exempt you from the final. Now, if you're going to take five finals and you get exempted from one, hey, it means an A. You know you got an A in the course, which is great. And B, you have, it's much easier for your studying. You know, exams were held for a whole week, there was no classes. So if you only had to study for four exams rather than five, hey this was a good thing. But he was basically, he was a good teacher, he was a really fine, fine professor. And he knew his stuff and all of that and he was nice, nice, good professor. And that's why he was my favorite. Besides I always got "A"s from him, even in graduate school I got "A"s with him. I don't really say I like him because of that but he really was a fine professor. He was always prepared. In his graduate school courses, the afternoon, I'm certain that every graduate school course I took with him was held at night. I mean he lectured at night. And he told us, the afternoon that he does the lecture he closes his office door and goes over the lecture. He was prepared, he was a good prof.

KP: Now you had left ROTC.

SB: Now, I had two years. I didn't apply for the advance. No.

KP: Had you thought of it?

SB: No, not really. Not really. I didn't really want to do that. It just wasn't the thing I wanted. What I did want to do, let me just say one thing that I didn't do that I would have liked to have done. The chem major had a tough curriculum. It was tough. And until my junior year there was absolutely no chance for an elective. I mean you just didn't have an elective. Oh sure, you could have. Well, maybe that's not true. Yeah, I think in my junior year you could have elected. So I elected physiology and biochemistry and then in my senior year I elected sewage and water treatment, which was a kind of bread and butter course given up at the ag farm, where I figured hey, you learn how to run, take care of a water and sewage plant. Maybe you could get a job, because that's where, there was a guy Sol [Sith] who handled the New Brunswick water and sewage treatment plant and he was out of Rutgers so you knew there was good jobs to be had. It was sort of like a good civil service job. So I took that course. But then I said, you know, I want to take one snap course, so I took music. Not that I'm a musician but music app was easy. I never had to study and I always did well and that was the one easy course I took in my life.

KP: Which left quite an impression.

SB: Yeah, ... it was nice, because it just happened I knew a lot of music. Not as a musician but as good listener.

KP: What music appealed to you?

SB: What music appealed to me? Well, for one thing I was brought up with, liking music. We always had music in the house. My parents don't play but we had good records, you know, the Caruso stuff and all of that.

KP: Did you like jazz at the time, was that your...?

SB: Not really. That kind of music was purely for dance. If I went to a dance, alright, but just to listen to, I didn't. I didn't get to appreciate jazz till much later. Yeah, I liked it. I know all the songs of the period, of the '20s and '30s, you know I know all the early Al Jolson junk and stuff like that, but, and I liked it. But when it ... comes to just sitting down and enjoying music to listen to, I would listen to classical music. And regular music, like the big band era, which was of course a big thing, that was fine for dancing but we didn't like listening to it. At least I didn't. But we enjoyed it but it wasn't the thing I listened to. So I like classical music. And of course the course was purely classical music. It was just easy. It was a snap course. I said I'm going to take one snap course, and that is what I did and that and it turned out it was a snap course and it was good.

KP: How did you feel, you were going to college in the late '30s and the '40s and you mentioned the Spanish Civil War, how did you see the approach of war and what was your...

SB: Ok. Well...

KP: Had you thought the United States was going to get into war?

SB: I don't know if I thought that far ahead. Of course what I sensed and felt was that England and France and the countries that could have stopped Hitler never did. You know, Munich is just one example but there are others. They just never stood up to him, they let him get away with it. I sometimes have a political understanding of what happened, that they said hey, let him go, the son of a bitch, he's going to take care of Russia next.

KP: But at the time did you have that sense or...

SB: That he was going to take care of Russia? Oh, that the British and the French, Chamberlain, absolutely. That was my feeling about it. They didn't do anything to stop him in Spain, they didn't do anything to stop him when he went into the Sudetenland, they didn't do anything to stop him when he took over Czechoslovakia, etc., etc. They could have done something but they didn't.

KP: What did you think of the collapse of the Common Front, when the Communists do...

SB: Which collapse?

KP: In '39, when you had the non-aggression pact.

SB: Oh, I thought it was terrible. I felt it was terrible. Now, I heard communists give me all kinds of ex post facto reasons for it but I'd never buy it. And they instituted a campaign then, you see,

because Hitler was the prime enemy of the communists, American communists, Russian communists. The prime enemy, up until ... August, '39, and then, of course the American communists ... completely swung over to the Yank are not coming. They used to wear buttons saying the Yanks are not coming. Meaning oh it's a capitalist war, it's an imperialist war that's going on between Britain and France and Hitler and so we should be neutral. Well, I was dead set against that. I mean, no way was I going to buy that. Of course, all that changed on June 22, 1941 which is when Hitler invaded Russia, the Soviet Union. But in that period, in no way did I feel that the wars character had changed just because of the non-aggression pact between the Soviets and Hitler. I mean I had no idea why it took place, I thought it was horrible, and that's how I felt about it.

KP: When Pearl Harbor occurred, where did you think you were going, what did you think was going to happen?

SB: Well, I knew we were in the war. I said, o.k., we're in the war.

KP: Did you think we'd enter earlier with Lend Lease or...

SB: Well I didn't know. I thought Lend Lease was o.k. I mean I wasn't an isolationist, far from it. On the other hand, I just didn't think Germany would attack the United States. I always had kind of a secret feeling about the United States which I'm glad proved to be true. And that is, that if and when, we'd be formidable. We would be a formidable enemy because I thought we had the greatest industrial plant in the world and I felt that way, and I feel that way to this day, ... the Japanese notwithstanding today. That's how I feel. I feel the wealth of the people and their skills and the natural resources and just our industrial plant is, we're tops, that's how I feel. And so I felt that when Roosevelt and boy this was a tough statement, he made the statement right after we got into the war, and he said that we shall build 50,000 planes a year, it was mind boggling and yet I felt, hey, I bet you we can, because we stopped building cars and we used to build them by the millions so why can't we build 50,000 planes? All that seemed ok. I don't know, I'm trying to visualize just what I felt. Well, I felt sad about what was happening, but on the other hand there was a kind of a feeling that hey, we were going to win. Sooner or later we were going to win.

KP: Did you try to enlist in the military initially, or...

SB: No, you're getting a little personal. That's ok.

KP: I just thought that you were, you worked in a munitions plant...

SB: When I got out of college...for one thing, we really only glossed over the Depression. The Depression was a formidable period in our lives. Jobs were hard to get, you were insecure about what you were going to do when you got out of college.

KP: Even while the war was brewing you were still...

SB: Yeah. Oh my God, yeah, you were still under the Depression mentality, and I dare say I still am to this day. What is this, 1994. I still think I have a Depression mentality in certain aspects in the way I look at problems, the way I think, the way I feel that you have to fight very, very hard and very bitterly sometimes for the things that you believe in and that you think are good, come down to Clinton's health care plan, maybe not exactly the way he has it. But it's not going to come unless you fight for it. Just like getting jobs, was not going to be easy. In any case...

KP: You were mentioning that the Depression was a formative thing and you were concerned about employment.

SB: O.k., you went into jobs. So when Pearl Harbor came around...Let me just say that the class of 1941, and I knew a lot of guys, I'm talking about the chem majors, the class of 1941 came out and they got jobs, God knows what they got. Some of them didn't get jobs, some of them went to graduate school of course. But a few of them, 4, 5, 6 or so were lucky enough to get jobs right down here in, not Spotswood, oh hell, it's right near there. Anyway between Spotswood and Englishtown. A company called Peter [Schwitzer]. They were making $25.00 a week and they were lucky to get the job. And what [Peter Schwitzer] did was manufacture cigarette papers. What they did there, I don't know whether they did routine lab analysis, tensile tests, who knows, that's what the wage scale, those were the kinds of jobs they got. O.k. that is what I remember from 1941. In 1942 when I got out we were able to get better jobs. And I got a job for the U.S. Rubber Company and they used me as a trainee, and then eventually to man a TNT plant they built in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Ralph went to work for Merck, two other guys went to work, I think Phil Quinn, I think those two anyhow, and maybe John Weise went to work for Merck. Flitcraft, who's name came up, was a $50,000 potential today, he went to work for Monsanto, ... and myself, maybe one or two others went to work for TNT plants. My friend Bruce Clyman, who was my closest buddy in college and until he died...

KP: Chem majors initially were drafted.

SB: Oh wait a minute. I wasn't drafted and I'll tell you why. I was too young. Clyman was too young, we hadn't even signed up for the draft.

KP: Because you weren't of the age.

SB: We weren't of the age. We were still too young. That was as of Pearl Harbor. And so I had a job in the defense industry when I first had to register for the draft. When I did I had a defense job, so I got a 2B classification. Now, the 2B classification would keep me out. And I worked for the U.S. Rubber and I started up, I and a team of guys, started up this TNT plant in Pennsylvania.

KP: Where is it in Pennsylvania?

SB: Where? In Williamsport, Lycoming County, north of Harrisburg.

KP: And you started up a new TNT factory?

SB: Brand new. ... In the Deer Valley, 110 mile by 110 mile square. And they built this TNT plant there. Anyway, I built it. I mean, I didn't build it, but I was part of the crew, the start up crew.

KP: And your responsibilities were what at this plant?.

SB: Well, alright, without getting too technical. There are several aspects. One is that your in the nitrating houses where you put the first nitrate on it, on the (taluwing?) wing, the second house puts the second, the third puts the third nitrate, then you purify it, then you box it and ship it out. ...I was working in a (cheloid) plant, which manufacturers the material that's used to purify the TNT. O.k., that was my part. And also to build the boxes that it's boxed in.

KP: Now, were you part of management?...

SB: No, I was start up crew and then production, production crew.

KP: So, you were in a sense, you were shop? Factory?

SB: Factory. Yeah, yeah. Now, why did they hire maybe a hundred or more with bachelors degrees for what were basically operator, chemical operator jobs? Well, ... because they could use our smarts to learn how to start up the plant first. Two, they could get a deferment for us easily because, hey, these were professionals. It was a gold mine, this is a professional, he's got a bachelors degree, and all my fellow workers, we were all that way.

KP: So basically you all had B.A.'s?

SB: Oh yeah, they were all B.S.'s.

KP: Very skilled.

SB: We were educated, we're in the field and so it would be easy for the U.S. Rubber Company or Pennsylvania Ordnance Work to get a deferment. Which is fine. Now of course, getting a deferment wasn't a bad thing to me. Don't get me wrong. A, you did defense work, B, what could be more necessary than making munitions? ...I worked for them over a year, a year and a half or so. But then I said, oh hell, this war, I've got to join it. So now I did.

KP: Did you feel pressure to join?

SB: No. Not only that. I had a possibility of working, of going to the Manhattan Project, which I didn't know anything other than the name Manhattan, but I knew they were doing something nuclear, that's all we knew. And if I had tried to get that job and gotten it, I certainly would have continued the deferment [and] probably would have continued to have the deferment if I stayed where I was. But I sort of felt, I don't know, I don't want to clothe myself with undue patriotism but I felt I wanted to do something more active. And I had a couple of friends, one was a friend from Rutgers, another guy, John Wallace, was a co-worker of mine, we both, all three of us were looking into the Navy. Initially, there was the allure of this great unknown, radar, you know. So I went

down and I thought radar, and there was another thing which was a really romantic, which was PT boats, don't ask me why.

KP: The PT program appealed...

SB: Oh yeah, the idea of a small ship a little fast mosquito boat type thing. So I went down,...down on Pine Street in New York and I went to apply for the Navy. And they said well gee, you have a bachelors degree you should apply for a commission. I said what. And they said you have a science bachelors degree. So I filled out the forms and fine, and son of a gun if I didn't get a commission. So I got commissioned right out of civil life and I quit my job. And I didn't get sent into the radar program, which I thought I would get and PT boats, forget about it. So they sent me to UCLA into meteorology. ...And my friend Bruce Kleinman, who was also my class and was president of the chemistry club, we lived together out there. He was a class ahead of me. And it was just a delight to be with him because he was really my closest friend probably of all time. ...So that's where I was. So I had a year, just about a year, it was basically graduate school in the physics department, meteorology is that kind of a course, and when I got out of that they shipped me to Floyd Bennett, then I got sent to [Dougway] Proving Ground in Utah where they taught what we'll call gas warfare but which scientifically is really micrometeorology, which means the meteorology of the first few feet of the ground, off the ground, which is very important for gas warfare, because that's where it counts, not way up there. And then they sent me to Alaska and I was in the fleet weather central. And I was there for a year, Kodiak. And basically the job was just to clear planes for flights, ...analyze the weather maps, etc, etc, run the meteorology station, or part of it. And that's where I lived out the war, so I never saw hard action. What we did experience up there was the, not slow, but continual buildup for the invasion of Japan. Everyday.

KP: So it was like a staging...

SB: Oh yeah. Well, it wasn't really at Kodiak, but it was at ...Cold Bay, there was a place called Cold Bay, it was one of the Aleutian ports, and they were just getting all ready for it. So when the war was finally over boy, were we glad because we knew it was going to be rough to go into Japan. We were very thankful. So then after that I happened to get an emergency leave because my mother was ill. And I went down to Washington and I asked them if they would put me on a ship because I had never been on a ship. They said what do you want to go on a ship for. Well, I said, I'm going to have to decide whether I want to go regular Navy or not, and I've never been on a ship.

KP: So you thought of going regular Navy?

SB: Well, at that time, yeah. I thought gee it would be nice. They were nice. They gave me orders, they changed my orders, and I got sent on a little carrier. Then I got transferred to another carrier. Then I went out with a Marine group to train them. We went out to Hawaii and we trained them around, what the hell are those islands, the islands off L[os] A[ngeles]. We trained these guys. Then after Hawaii we continued training them. And then there came a time when I had to decide whether I wanted to stay Navy or not. Now, it would have been good, it was a good life. I must say that professionally, my job as a meteorologist was probably the most satisfying job I ever had. It was really good. It was a lot of responsibility and I felt very good, I happened to be a very

good weather forecaster which was very nice. ...So I enjoyed that...but, I also could see if I were to become regular Navy I would become like every regular Navy guy and be half a booze hound.

KP: The drinking really struck you.

SB: Not really the drinking. But there's a whole kind of social aspect in being in the Navy, the officers and, I don't know, it was ...that kind of atmosphere, and I said, gee I would succumb to it.

KP: You might drink more?

SB: No, it would become the thing, after work all day, you go out to the O[fficer] club, you'd have a few drinks, which I did. When I was up in Kodiak that's all we did every night.

KP: But you thought maybe 20 years from now this might get a little stale?

SB: Yeah, I thought, my God, it just didn't seem like the thing. Now of course, also if you came out of the Naval Academy, then your values are different, because then you're going to get a command, that's what you strive for. To get a command, maybe when you're only a lieutenant you'd get a command.

KP: Whereas, if you weren't a Naval Academy...

SB: But I'm not Naval Academy, I'm a specialist, I'd be a weatherman all my life. It would be a good retirement and all that. In a way it's a cop out, it's an easy way out, assuming you could even last the 20 years, because you don't know what can happen. But it just didn't seem right for me. ...And there was the G.I. Bill then.

KP: So the G.I. Bill was really central to you continuing...

SB: So then I quit the Navy. I mean, I quit, my time was up, I had enough points.

KP: But you did stay in the Naval Reserve?

SB: Oh yes, 10 years or so, 15, whatever it was, until finally they said hey, enough time. ...I enjoyed being in the Navy. ...You say you don't know too much about the Navy. The Navy is a very class conscious organization. I mean it really is.

KP: Because the Army strikes me, there is this sort of George Patton with his silver pistol [tape ends]

End of Tape One

[This continues an interview] with Samuel E. Blum on July 8, 1994 with Kurt Piehler.

KP: We left off talking about the class system of the Navy.

Could you elaborate as you observed it?

SB: It was a very class conscious place. The difference between officers and men was tremendous. For instance, I can give you a couple of anecdotes. Aboard ship once, one guy who had a gun crew under him, an ensign, his crew were painting whatever they were painting, guns, the deck, who knows what. He got bored, he got bored just standing around. So he grabbed a brush and he started to paint. And he got caught. Whether his commanding officer caught him or the captain or the exec, I don't know, but somebody caught him. And they censured him, and they kept him aboard ship for two weeks. He couldn't leave the ship. We were in port then.

KP: He was bored.

SB: He was bored, he just wanted to paint. An officer doesn't paint. How are the men going to respect, I don't know what the thinking was. So that was one instance. And then, let's see I had another one that illustrates...I just can't, I lost it. But the point is the Navy is run by the officers and those officers which really run the Navy are the ones that went through the academy. And maybe rightfully. Maybe it's like in whatchamacallit, Mr. Roberts. There's a reason for it, because they're trained to run a ship and all of that.

KP: Which leads me to a question. It seems, ...because people on smaller ships, one of the things they liked about it was, it seemed to be a different Navy, it was the dungaree...

SB: Oh yeah, o.k.

KP: There was more camaraderie. And the officers, there was still a difference between the officer and men, but...

SB: I can imagine that that was so.

KP: But the aircraft carriers, you saw that.

SB: I was on an aircraft carrier at one time, one carrier, the Pedoing Straits. We also, it wasn't much of a, it was just an aircraft carrier, but we had the flag on it, we had an admiral. And the admiral has his own section of the ship. And it's admiral country, and it's different,...[from] the pipes that lead up to the, you know, the banisters, they're full of rope, ...it's different. Everything is different for the admiral.

KP: So what did the admiral get?

SB: What does he get? Well, he's in charge of the flotilla presumably. Although this wasn't much of a flotilla, but we did have an admiral. The captain runs the ship, the admiral runs the flotilla. So the admiral can't tell the captain what to do in running the ship. But nonetheless there's this demarcation. The admiral staff eats in their own dining room, they have their own cooks, everything is theirs, it's different from ours. And even with our captain, the captain eats alone, he

doesn't eat with the men, with the officers. The exec eats with the officers, but the captain does not eat with the officers. Now, Captain Barker...

KP: Now, was your captain an Annapolis man?

SB: Oh yeah. My captain was a very distinguished captain, incidentally, because he had been a specialist. That is, when he got out of Annapolis he specialized, and it so happened he specialized in meteorology. And once you specialize you cut off any possibility of ever having command of a capital ship. I mean, you can't be both. It's almost an unspoken thing. However, he did the weather work for Eisenhower, I think, in North Africa. And Eisenhower was so pleased with what he did he gave him the highest recommendation and so they gave him a capital ship, they gave him a ship to command. Now, me being the weatherman on the ship, you know it's not exactly nice to have the captain being one of the best weatherman there are. But he never gave me a hard time. He would ask me my confidence on a forecast and all of that. We had a couple of close calls but it turned out I was right and he didn't question, hey you're wrong.

KP: But you were very aware that he could.

SB: Oh, my God, yeah. But he wouldn't interfere.

KP: What ship was this?

SB: This was the (Bedoing Straits. It was a small jeep carrier, the 116, [CVE] 116.

KP: And that was the...

SB: The (Bedoing Strait).

KP: And it was Captain Barker?

SB: Barker.

KP: And he was a good captain. Now. What were the other officers like?

SB: They were alright. They were fine. I got along with all of them.

KP: Were there any Annapolis in there or were you all...

SB: Oh sure, there must have been some.

KP: How many officers were there?

SB: Oh, God. Well, there were only about 1,000 guys on the ship, it was a small ship, 1,000, maybe 1,200 and about 50, 60 of them were Marine pilots. That's the air squadron. And the rest were just mechanics and what have you. Guys who run the ship and guys that run the planes. Now,

I want to say something about the captain. We were once in port and I had the watch. That's nothing, you just got the watch. And all of a sudden an alarm goes off and what is it, it's a fire alarm. So you find out where it is and you run down there. And the fire alarm was in a ammo hold. And you don't like running down there. What are you going to do? You gotta go. And I ran down there to get there. And I'm not quite there yet but who comes barging past me is the captain. He went in first and I went in second. Now I had a lot of respect.... We don't know what's there, all we know it's a fire alarm in an ammo hold.

KP: So he was the first one...

SB: He, while I wasn't, he pushed past me to go ahead of me.

KP: He literally pushed you out of the way.

SB: He went past me. I'm running to get there and he's running faster. And he was a big beer belly guy, too. But I'll tell you, I had so much respect for him. Boy, you know, he could have lingered awhile. Oh no.

KP: Even though he wasn't on call.

SB: Well, he was always on call, the captain. I had the watch, but the captain always has the watch. The captain can never, you know how they say it happened on so and so's watch, he has the responsibility, and the captain can never, never avoid the responsibility. On the other hand, such a marked demonstration of responsibility to go into God knows what, where you have a fire alarm in an ammo hold, Jesus. Would you, would I? Well, I had to but...

KP: But would you go out of your way to try to do it?

SB: Well, you don't even think in those terms. It's just what you have to do and that's what he had to do and he did it. And I had a lot of respect for him. So I don't want to take anything away from the Naval Academy guys, but its their Navy, no ifs, ands, no buts, its their Navy first and the rest of us are sort of there too but not quite. You know, like Animal Farm, we're all equal but some are more equal.

KP: Now, you were on a large ship. What officers, what kind of contact did you have with the officers?

SB: At the best point, but it isn't always this way. Initially I was just the weatherman, I reported to another officer, and then we were in the air department so we reported to him. But then we lost a couple and I became the senior guy there and I had my duties as a meteorologist, to analyze the maps and make the weather forecast and clear the planes for flights. In addition to that photography was under me so they had to report to me. And what photography did they took pictures of every landing there up on the bridge, they were covering everything photographically in case there's an accident, whatever. Standard procedure. And then also CIC, which is the radar. That was great, because administratively it came under me but I really didn't know much about radar, but that was

under me. And then I reported...to the head of the air department. And the air department has not only these services, like photography and search radar and meteorology, but he also has the squadron under him. You see, he's the chief of... that's his main duty really. His babies are the flyboys. And we had two kinds of planes, we had F-4Us, which were gulf wing, gull wing fighter planes, ... Marines used them alot, and a T-BF, which was a bomber. It had a three man crew, as I recall. Yeah, three men, there was a pilot and a co-pilot, maybe co-pilot navigator, and the other guy was in the bomb bay. They were nice, it was fun.

KP: Now, as a meteorologist, would you have much contact with your average seaman, or would you...

SB: Just the guys that worked for me.

KP: How big was your...

SB: Well, weathering, I had two men, two mates working for me. They'd enter the data, and send out data, do the rates on these, and the pie balls, which are the balloons that we'd send up to get data from aloft and the winds from aloft. And they'd enter the data on the maps, decode whatever they have to do, and I'd analyze the map. And I put out the forecast.

KP: And how much in terms of your particular tasks, how much input would they have, would they ever help you with forecasting?

SB: No, never. Not their specialty to begin with. Whether they'd be good at it or not I don't know, I never would find out, they just never did it. They just didn't do it. It is just nothing they did. They could have been good, you know. In Kodiak, at the fleet weather central, some of the guys were very sharp, I'm sure they could do alot. But they really weren't trained to do weather forecasting or weather map analysis. They just weren't trained in it. But as in anything else, if you work in it and you got the smarts, you're going to learn, and I'm sure some of them would be good. But weather forecasting is a kind of interesting science. If you listen to the weather man today you know it isn't all science to begin with. There's a great deal of intuition that goes into it, feeling for the subject and experience and things like that. So that you, let me put it this way. We had maybe 200 people in our class at U[niversity] C[California] at L[os] A[ngeles] and just because someone got the best grades didn't mean that he was the best forecaster.

KP: So you had learned how to become a forecaster...

SB: At UCLA, yes.

KP: And ... meteorology is a regular advanced degree. How did they compact sort of what is often a B.A. or an advanced degree? What was your training like?

SB: Let me say, had I been at Caltech, where there was also courses parallel to the ones at UCLA, they gave the guys a master's degree, don't ask me why. At UCLA they didn't give you a degree, they gave you a certificate. Don't ask my why. I often feel cheated, I said, gee, I ought to put down

master's degree here. I never bothered getting one in chemistry, for instance. Do you know why? Because it meant going down to Winant's Hall and filling out a form and who the hell, what's a master's degree mean when you get a Ph.D.? Here at Rutgers, the guys, I can only think of one right now, but maybe there was two, that got, that didn't pass the qualifying or whatever the hell it was, and they gave them masters and they went bye bye. One of them taught, taught out of Wagner or somewhere in Staten Island for years. A competent man, but just didn't pass. What can you do?

KP: So in terms of meteorologist, you had really the equivalent of a master's, you just never got the master's degree.

SB: No, they didn't award a master's, they awarded a certificate.

KP: ...how long did the training last?

SB: Well, it was one solid year of academic work. Laboratory work every day, map analysis. The courses that we covered were Synoptic Meteorology, which means what's going on, Dynamic Meteorology, which is the theory course, which is tough. Climatology, Instrumentation, which are just the tools of the trade, if you will. And it was a very good course. And I'll do one bit of braggadocio, I was number one forecaster in the class. I never knew why, but I know I was. And it led to a very, we had a very fine faculty there, we had a guy named [Beirknus], whose father was of the Norweigian school and so was he. And we had lab techs, they weren't techs, they were faculty members, but they took care of them, they supervised the map analysis class. And one day, this guy came up to me and said hey listen, Professor Beirknus wants you to lead the map discussion today. I said, me, why? He says because you're the best forecaster. ...I had no idea, so I had to get up in front of the class and lead the, and then he disputed me on something and I stuck to my guns, and I was right. It was really a great experience. It was one of those funny kinds of things. But it just so happened that I was a good forecaster. I had no idea why, I couldn't tell you why.

KP: Had you thought of going, after...

SB: Yeah, after the war I thought of it. There were good opportunities and let me just say, the opportunities I heard of paid very well, they paid like, if I remember correctly, $8,000.00 a year in 1945, '46, alot of money. An assistant prof at Rutgers didn't make $3,000.00, or maybe he made $3,000.00. But, you see that thing there, you see Australia, do you see California. Well, it was one of those stupid islands there you'd be a weatherman, Kwajalein or Johnson Island or something like that. And who'd you work for, something like ...Pan Am because they had the trans-Pacific line.

KP: Pre-satellite weather?

SB: Oh sure. All along here. You can see all these islands. All the small islands between Hawaii and Australia.

KP: So you'd be making thousands but you'd be stuck.

SB: Yeah. It wasn't. There were ... a couple of [other] opportunities. There was one that I really seriously thought before I got out of the Navy. And that is, it was rumored but I never found out whether it was true that...Well, two things. One was to take, take part of the atom bomb tests in, where was it, Bikini, and the other was, this was a rumor, that they were going to send a carrier down to Antarctica to try, experiment on aircraft operations with carrier and polar waters. And that would have been nice, but there was a personal reason I couldn't go. My mother was ill, it was kind of terminal and we knew that so I got out of the Navy.

KP: So, you also had gone to meteorology school, and during the training, you trained as a meteorologist, but you also went to gas warfare [school].

SB: That was part of the Navy training, yeah. It was a short course, and they sent you to Dougway, Utah, which is out where Bonneville Salt Flats are, it's about 100 miles from Salt Lake City. And they have this installation in the desert, and they teach you about poison gas. A, what it is, how to use it, and the main thing is how to apply it effectively. Because ... poison gas is applied either by bombs or by artillery shells into a zone, and if the weather conditions aren't right, A, the gas can blow toward you. That's the no no. And B, you want the gas to stick there and kill whoever you're going to bomb.

KP: That was part of the meteorology training?

SB: Yes, yes. You had to know meteorology, everybody in the class was a meteorologist.

KP: Ok. This isn't a separate course or school?

SB: It's a short course. And some of the guys were in the 8th Air Force from England, one guy a major, I remember, ...they sent him to find out. Now, you gotta know in '44 we didn't know where we were going to go, what we're going to do. And gas warfare was never quite out as an option, there was always a possibility.

KP: Is that the sense you got from the school, that there was a possibility that we were going to use this or it would be used on us, or both.

SB: Oh no, no. We were learning to use it on them, on the enemy. Oh, absolutely. This wasn't a course in defense against gas warfare, it was to use it as a weapon should we have to. But my feeling was then and it is now, that we would...It's one of those statements you make it, you're not quite sure of. But I don't think we would have used it first. But God, if they, we were prepared [to] learn [how] to use it. Absolutely.

KP: Now how secret was this? Did people know that you were going to gas warfare school?

SB: No, nobody knew.

KP: So this was something you were told...

SB: I didn't know until they sent me there.

KP: And when you were there did they tell you not to tell other people or tell them what you were doing?

SB: Well, it was all classified work.

KP: Oh, so you were...

SB: It's just...you don't have to tell people. Hey, this is classified. Every document's got classified, top secret. So you know you're not, you don't talk about it. You talk about it amongst yourselves but...

KP: But otherwise...

SB: Yeah. What did you do? Well, I went to Dougway. Oh, yeah, what did you do? Gas warfare. That's all, but you don't go into details. I don't think any of those things are secret in that sense. Let me go back. You're taping this? O.k. At luncheon I made a kind of a whimsical memory remark about a Colonel [Quimquist]. And then somebody said, hey remember Major Malone. Now, these two guys were ROTC men. Now, [Quimquist] was a dandy, he was one of these guys really dressed well. Malone was what we called a mustang. He came up from the ranks, he probably was a sergeant or something in World War I and he was a real toughie. Once I remember something came up in the class and somebody said something about secrets, war secrets, military secrets. And he said let me tell you something, an old military secret. The only secret we have is, he says, what we would do, for instance, if we had to invade Great Britain. Now, he says, you may not think we're ever going to invade Great Britain and most likely we're not, but he says somewhere in ...[the] war college, somebody has been given that problem, more than one guy, and they've drawn up a plan on what to do to invade. Those are the kinds of things that are secret. But a particular weapon, nah. They don't have it today, they'll get it tomorrow. Of course, in retrospective, there are some beautiful exceptions, and one of them is radar, of course.

KP: And the Manhattan Project.

SB: And the Manhattan Project, yeah. Although we thought the Germans were on to it, too, you know. It wasn't that sure that we were, that they didn't, that they couldn't come up with it, or wouldn't. Yeah.

KP: In terms of your training for meteorology and gas,...what was your other naval training, in a sense. How, you know...

SB: None.

KP: None. In other words...

SB: When I went to apply, ... enlist and the guy said, hey you know, you should apply for a commission. And I said how come? He says, well you have a bachelor's in a science, you have calculus, you have math, you have these backgrounds, and these are the kinds of things we could use and we will give you a commission because you have that kind of an educational background. Which was a surprise and a delight to me, I didn't want to be in boot camp.

KP: So in other words, for officers, especially if you were into a specialty, they sent you right to [a specialized course]. In other words you didn't go through a 90 day wonder school and then they sent you to meteorology school. In other words you're given your commission, you're...

SB: No. But in the class, we had an interesting class. We had about twenty girls. Girls, they were women, who were commissioned. Ensigns, one was a JG, I think one was even a lieutenant. In other words, people who had been in the Navy for some time. The great bulk were like myself. There were some who came out of V-12, I think. The kind of OCS that the Navy had, that got commissioned and were sent to the school. And there was, I don't think there were any enlisted men. And there were about twenty who were from the Latin American countries. Who they are? I don't know, they were all from like big shot families, ... this kind of thing, at least that was the reputation. Yeah. But everybody else, all the Navy guys were officers. And I don't, I'm trying to recall, ... in some of the meteorology classes they had Army cadets that didn't have a commission yet and then they got commissioned when they graduated, but not in my class. I don't think so, I'll have to look at the picture when I get home, but I don't think so. Yeah, so the reason I got selected was at that time they wanted people with that particular background and they were sending them to this particular course where they figured they would need training in ... specialties. It's a fluke, toss a coin.

KP: Now, one of the...you joined the Navy. You hadn't considered the Air Force?

SB: At one time I did, but I said oh, I don't want to go through a year of training.

KP: And you didn't want to slog around in the mud?

SB: Oh, no. I didn't want that. I didn't want to be a dog face.

KP: And even though you had been through two years of ROTC.

SB: Oh, but that's different. I knew what being in a foxhole would be. I mean, that was no fun.

KP: Now, it's a question I should have asked earlier. Growing up, what's the farthest you had travelled?

SB: Oh, o.k. We were lucky, as I said. The family took little trips. The biggest trip I think we ever took, we motored to Niagara Falls, and we would go up to Watkins Glen from time to time because we liked it. The family would get a place at the shore for the summer.

KP: So you had vacations, but you didn't...

SB: Yeah. The biggest trip I ever personally took was when I was sixteen, I wasn't seventeen yet, I and a neighbor friend, we took some rucksacks and a blanket roll and we got out on the highway and we hitchhiked, initially to Washington, D.C and Baltimore, and then to Chicago, where he had his grandparents. We stayed there awhile and then we came back. That was the biggest trip I have ever taken.

KP: And then you, you didn't go farther south than Washington?

SB: At the time, I think, yes. That was the further south I'd ever been.

KP: What struck you about Washington, you saw Washington, pre-war Washington, or your experiences...

SB: Gee, Oh, I don't know. I think I'd been to Washington, no no, I hadn't been, that was the first time I was in Washington. I just liked it, it was nice. You know, the Washington Monument was nice, I know where we slept the first night. We slept on a loading dock at the Uline Ice Company somewhere. And that's what we would do, we would sleep wherever we could. We didn't go into motels, we'd sleep in places like car lots, abandoned car lots, you know, junk, junk lots. Get out from the rain and the weather.

KP: And you hitched the whole way?

SB: Yeah, we hitched the whole way. That was an experience in itself, but it was nice. It was a good kind of experience. My recollection is that we each left home somewhere around the beginning of August and we got home before Labor Day. And we each had ten dollars on us and I think my dad sent me five bucks more somewhere along the way.

KP: And you made it all the way to Chicago.

SB: Yeah, except that in Chicago where we mooched with my friend's relatives. We would go in and buy a six pack of rolls or something, and that's all we would eat, a bottle of milk and split it. I can't recall, but I may be wrong, I can't recall going into a restaurant once in the month that we were away. Just can't recall.

KP: Now you joined the Navy. You had travelled some, you had been to Chicago. And then you're sent to California.

SB: Actually, I was sent to Norfolk for a week, I didn't write it down, then I came home and then they sent me out to California.

KP: What struck you about California?

SB: Palm trees. I got there at the beginning of December, as I recall, maybe the end of November, and I vividly recall Christmas Day because I went into the ocean and went swimming. And I

telephoned home and said, guess what, I swam on Christmas Day in the ocean. You wouldn't do that around here.

KP: Had you, what were your images of California before?

SB: Oh, it was glamour. The Hollywood aspect of it. That was the only...

KP: You didn't think of the Okies and the...

SB: Oh yeah, I did, but not really. For one thing, the Okies. I don't know, I didn't really think of the Okies.

KP: Not the Okies, but it was Hollywood...

SB: The Okies was a different part of California, anyhow. But...

KP: What you wanted to find in California was Hollywood, that was...

SB: Well, when I came there, my friend Bruce, Bruce Kleinman, was there and so he already had an apartment there. So I had a place to go and, but, I remember, it ... was November and it was so warm and nice and the palm trees. I'll never forget that. Then I took a bus out (Wilshire) Boulevard from downtown, all the way to Westwood and it was just nice. Of course, ... it's not that nice today, by the way.

KP: You've been back?

SB: Oh, my God, yeah, I get back once a year or so, sure. Nah, it's not as nice today as it was then.

KP: What struck you as being so pleasant?

SB: Then?

KP: Yeah.

SB: A couple things. I don't know, pleasant. One of the things I remember is, I said, My God, California makes me more money conscious than I ever was in New York. Why? If you go down Fifth Avenue or Park Avenue or any of those fancy streets, you see a big building, so you see a doorman there, right? So you see big windows, you know there are big apartments there. But it's just another big apartment. You go to L.A., you see a home with land, with lawn, and that struck me. That when you had, the evidence of wealth was so obvious there, in the residences, not in the other places, but in a residence, it would be obvious and it hit you. And then, in Westwood, Westwood was an upscale community, very upscale.

KP: Now, were you billeted in a Navy base?

SB: No, not in Westwood. No, we got our allowance, and we...I could have lived in a dorm. But no, we rented, Bruce and I rented an apartment.

KP: So really it was like another, it was the first year of graduate school.

SB: Yeah, it was very good. It was a very good period. I learned to drink, I mean hard liquor. We had a good time. And we worked hard. I worked hard, academically. The study was hard, but the relaxation was nice, too. It was very good. And I met some nice, nice people. It was just nice. What can I say?

KP: Then you got sent to Alaska.

SB: Well, not quite. I got sent, when the course finished, I got sent to Floyd Bennett, which was in Brooklyn. And I was there, not long, a few months, and then they put me on a research project at N[ew] Y[ork] U[niversity]. And I worked there about three months.

KP: What was your research?

SB: The research project was entitled "Storm Tracks of the Northern Hemisphere." And there were six or eight or ten of us, and what we did is we look at weather maps from the turn of the century till 1943, '44, and we tracked each of the storms, the high pressure and the low pressure areas on each of the weather maps, and identified the type of high and low, whether it was a degenerating or a building up low, building up, decreasing low. And then we would plot them. And the [object], this was all under the supervision of the weather bureau, and the guy who was heading the project, what he wanted to do was analyze what the storm tracks are in the northern hemisphere. You know, one of those kind of projects that people do, we've all done those kind of things, and that was his. And he needed the people to actually analyze the storms and track them. And it was a lot of work. So we had this room and this building in NYU up in the Bronx and I guess I was there for three months or so. And then I got sent out to Dougway. And then from Dougway I got sent up to Alaska. ...

KP: And Alaska. What did you know of Alaska before? Growing up...

SB: Well, I didn't know much about Alaska. I certainly knew very little of Kodiak. ... Kodiak is an island that doesn't have trees on it, it's beyond the tree line. Just at the border line. The next island east of it has trees. [Fognack] is the name of that island. And, I don't know, it was just a weather center. The town was a dinky little town with wooden sidewalks. It had a reputation that there were big, big, long, long lines waiting for the whores in the year before I got there. But when I got there there wasn't anything obvious like that.

KP: But initially the reputation was for a lot of prostitutes?

SB: Well, yeah. In the early years, in the year before I got there, yeah, because a lot of ships were coming in there. See, the Japs were in Dutch Harbor just a couple of years before, and in that period they were putting in a lot of Army, there was an Army base there and a Navy station and all

of that. So that was the things they said...also the town was the only place you could get liquor. We were talking about the difference between officer and men. On our base, the men could not get liquor and we could get all the liquor we wanted. We had all we wanted in the Officer's Club. We could buy a bottle a week at two bucks, two fifty a bottle. And the men had to go into town and buy it. Anyway, so those are the kind of things. So, it was a kind of a wild west town prior to maybe in 1943, '42.

KP: So you get there in '44 and it's pretty much...

SB: Well, it's placid. You know, we're busy because we're building up an (Cold?) bay. And the planes are coming in and boats are coming in. It was innocuous, we were out of danger. The possibility of a Japanese bomber, none, none. So it was just a year there, that's all.

KP: Did you have any contact with Eskimos?

SB: No. We didn't have Eskimos. We had Aleuts. Euts or whatever they called themselves. There were some there, and the usual things apply. When they're young they're very pretty, very broad faced. I didn't see too many. But what happens is that a lot of them, they get on booze, like a lot of Indians do.

KP: So this was apparent to you.

SB: Yeah, a few you'd see. Yeah, yeah. Not a helluva lot.

KP: You had very little contact, in other words.

SB: Yeah. Very little. Only if I go into town. Otherwise you wouldn't see them. They don't come out on the base. They weren't brought in. We had ladies working there, you know, American woman, maybe a hundred or so worked there in clerical and other kinds of jobs like that. So they were the ones you would take to the dance on Saturday night. Nobody ever brought an Aleut in, as far as I know.

KP: What about other people who lived in town? What was your relationship with them?

SB: Well, they were in fishing and small boat industry and things like that. And merchants, I suppose.

KP: ... But the base was very much separate?

SB: Oh yeah, a few miles out, 4 or 5 miles out. We had no... the only time you'd have anything to do with downtown if you went down for something. But the downtown never came to you. Besides, you know you had to go through the gate and all that. You can't just come into a base.

KP: In other words, the base was pretty much a self-contained...

SB: Oh sure. Just the way it is. It was military, it was war time.

KP: You mentioned that there were a hundred women on the base. Are they in the military or...

SB: No, civil service, civilians.

KP: But they lived on the base.

SB: Yeah, yeah. They each had little apartments. And, you know, the guys dated them. I think on Saturday nights they'd go to the Officers Club on a date for the dance, and on Friday night to the Chief's Club and another night to the Enlisted Men's Club. Yeah, they passed them around.

KP: There were a hundred women, how many men?

SB: Oh, there must have been 3,000, 4,000 guys there. A lot of them were lonely. I mean, a lot of the men were lonely. The women didn't have to be. I mean, if they didn't want to, nobody was going to force them to date. But it was certainly, much like Alaska became later, and possibly still is today, where it is a good place for single women to go where there are opportunities to meet men. I don't know whether that was the driving force or patriotism or who knows.

KP: Did you find that as an officer you had a better chance of getting a date than say an...

SB: Oh, I wouldn't know that. I don't think that that was...I mean, I knew some. I didn't date one. I liked Gladys Hunnicutt, but she...I forgot their name. But I really didn't date too many. If you went to the dance, fine. So you spent the evening sitting around drinking, but no romance developed between me and any of them.

KP: One of the grievances, among the enlisted men in Hawaii, was the fact that there was so few women and then officers, there was a real hierarchy, and they felt very envious, even hostile to these officers who could so easily get a date.

SB: Well, I don't know that there would be...I'll tell you, I know that some of the officers...no, that's not the right way to put it. Some of the women were kept by officers. In other words, the officers lived with them. Paid their rent, maybe, their provisions, who knows. They used to call it shacked up, so they shacked up. Some of them, but not all of them. But I would say a minority of them were shacked up. And even though I use that word, I really don't want to imply anything sordid about the affair. I mean, to me it was an honest affair between a man and a woman and their own business.

KP: What was the Navy's, you were on both a ship and a land base, what was the Navy's attitude towards...The two people I've talked to about the Navy, for example, when ships get into port, it's really like sailors just get out and do whatever they want?

SB: Ya. Whatever they did. You know, if you're out at sea a while, for a while... when you're [in your] twenties or younger, is a week. That's a long time already. Your libido builds up and all of that. Of course, I'm sure. And when we got to port, we all wanted leave even though I had, when we were in San Diego, I had a girlfriend in L[os] A[ngeles], and I would go up Friday nights, and I was supposed to be back by Monday morning at muster, and I'd always be two hours late and nobody said anything because it didn't matter, nobody looked for me and things like that. The enlisted man couldn't do that, he'd have to be at muster and things like that. How much of that went on, whether I took advantage of a situation, I don't know. But the men...were held to much stricter rules than the officers. Up and down the line.

KP: Well, the reason I asked in terms of shore leave or attitudes toward prostitution and other things is that in terms of, the Army for example, employed people to ride the train to make sure soldiers were in uniform when they were on the train.

SB: Oh really, o.k.

KP: And in the United States, there was a very stringent. Although I'm curious, there's a story presented by a collaborative effort by the War Department. But in talking to, I have a limited field so far, but the Navy's attitude is really like the men could go into port, as long as they don't shoot the place up, it seems that the Navy had a different...

SB: I don't think we kept track on it. I know like that when we were in port, where was I, in Tacoma, San Francisco, San Diego, and in Hawaii, wherever...well, San Diego is a seaman's town. And they'd go off and they'd carouse and they'd bum around and they'd go to pick up joints and whatever they do, I don't know what they do. ...As long as they don't get in trouble with the shore patrol, nobody is going to bother them. And they're nominally well comported. I never saw...

KP: So officers didn't have this notion that they really had to worry about their men when they were on leave. That this was really their own time.

SB: Yes. I would never worry about the guys that I had. Sometimes very funny things happened. If you had the watch, like in San Diego you had the watch, and there's the gangplank and they'd go down. ....[There's] a little standing desk you have there. And you have this box with these foil wrapped condoms, because you want the guys, you don't want them to get the clap.

KP: That was one of the things you were concerned with.

SB: Oh sure, sure. And the guy...it is funny, this one guy he would take a handful like that. It was a guy I knew, it was a photographer's mate. I said, you sure you got enough? But other than that, I don't know. They're people, and as far as I was personally concerned, I didn't want to have anything with what they do. You don't want them to get into trouble, of course, but...I don't remember any incidents of shooting up or even fights. I can't remember a one.

KP: Tom Kindre had an incident where he had to rescue a guy who shot up a house of prostitution in Naples.

SB: He went berserk?

KP: He didn't hit anybody. Tom had to get him out of MPs. He had one or two other similar stories. That's in part why I ask. The Navy seems, the impression I'm getting is that [...] really didn't get into trouble.

SB: I can only...Of course, there were a lot of incidents I recall, but very few violence. I can't even recall. But you see, when I was...in Alaska I don't remember any kind of untoward incidents, none at all, I just don't remember any. In San Diego, which is a big liberty town, even there I don't remember any fights developing or anything. And sometimes the scenes are very sordid. I mean..., I'm not going to say there were whores all over the place, but there were a lot of loose women and the guys are horny as hell and all of that. But somehow I don't remember anything.

KP: The Navy, then, you could tell were very accepting of this...

SB: Whether they were officially accepting or not, I don't know, look what happened with Tailhook. Who knows?

KP: Partly, I raised this earlier today, when you're an historian, you often work, a lot of historians work with paper. From paper it looks like the military makes an effort to keep men away from prostitutes.

SB: I was never under that impression. No. We sure didn't want anybody to come down with a dose, I know that. We wanted them to use condoms. There were pro kits right there. I mean, you had to be a fool to pick up somebody and if you don't protect yourself and not use a pro kit. ...And listen, there wasn't any penicillin then. Syphilis and gonorrhea were tough enough. There was no AIDs thank God. There was no quick cure then. Not then, not until penicillin. Strep came in and strep was only developed in '45....

KP: ... You were on a very big ship. What struck me about ships, people look at me when I ask this question. But even on an aircraft carrier, there's more room than on some of the smaller ships. The living quarters, even the captain's quarters. I looked at it on the Intrepid, I said what is that. To be honest, I had the image shaped by movies, and captain's quarters are viewed, I had this image, and I looked at it and I said you don't do this with the furniture, at least when you're on a ship with the living quarters. What struck you, you had been on base which is different, you got more room, when you get on a ship, even on an aircraft carrier which is different, because you have more room, it's huge, what struck you being on a ship.

SB: O.k., there are a couple of things that struck me. I had good quarters. I roomed with the chaplain, which was nice. Nice, kind of like Coffin, you know that kind a Wasp chaplain, intellectual.

KP: Which...

SB: William Sloan Coffin, he's the guy from Yale.

KP: Oh, William Sloan [Coffin]. You roomed with him.

SB: No, not with him, a guy like that. An intellectual, book reading, he'd handle the library and all that.

KP: Was he Episcopalian?

SB: Oh, probably.... He was fine, nice, but you know, nice guy. We had two bunks. ...We each had a little ...desk. It was like a small room. I don't think the room was more than 9 X 12, something like that. Not bad. The men, however, could have very bad [quarters]. They had hammocks. There were several of them, three or four layers, and the commode could be right next to them. Someone sits down right on the, and the commode is nothing but a trough with saltwater running through it. And these guys are sleeping there or they're in a companionway, which is a hallway, and that's where they sleep. And they'd try [tape ends].

KP: You were talking about the tightness.

SB: As I said, they were in the companionway. And their belongings are hanging above them or they have a small locker. And no privacy, forget about it. They just don't. But the ship is an interesting thing because the ship is a thing unto itself and it comes, it's a thing you preserve at all costs. I wanted, once I had some helium gas stored in a locker, and the locker somehow was getting condensation so the tanks were in water, and all I wanted to do was drill a hole to let the water to come out and come into the section right below where the elevator that takes the planes up from the hangar deck up to the flight deck. And you can't just drill a hole. You had to get the first lieutenant and they have to find out whether it's legit or not because you must never threaten the integrity of the ship. That's all it is. So you get to know that the ship comes first no matter what. And you'd behave and you act accordingly. ...I didn't find it onerous. Of course, like I say, I was an officer and I had a room with a nice guy.

KP: And you had very little contact, except for the two people under you.

SB: The people I worked with, yeah. I never really got to know say, the aircraft mechanics, who were all Marines. I got to know the pilots, some of them.

KP: Because they were officers.

SB: Well, also, you share certain duties aboard ship. I was on the legal committee and things like that. If we had a court martial, I worked with guys and things like that. So I got to know them that way.

KP: You just mentioned a legal committee. You went, you worked...

SB: Legal, yeah. I went. Naval justice, which is an oxymoron of course, everybody knows that. No. They sent [me] to a one month course on the, basically, it's how to run a court martial because there are four, there were four, I don't know if there still are, there may only be three, there's mast, summary court martial, and then the big court martial. There used to be four. So, what you had to do was learn how to deal with it, to be a lawyer. Or to be the judge or to do something like that. And so they sent me to this school in Port [...] in Oxnard, Ventura County, California and there I learned. I learned how to do these things. And basically it's how to handle the paperwork of a lawyer, of a trial at sea.

KP: And so your position, you were trained to do court martials.

SB: Yeah, yeah, you were supposed to.

KP: Did you try cases?

SB: I'll tell you, ...I've never tried a case. I had one case in which, I can't even remember whether I was the prosecutor or the defense attorney. I think it was the defense and the guy's name was Marshall and he was accused of having robbed the post office aboard the ship. That's what they accused him of. What had happened was he was in a poker game, he lost some money, he disappeared for a while, he came back, he had money. He played, I don't know, then the post office had been broken into and money had been stolen, so therefore the circumstantial evidence pointed to him. So we had to try him. So this guy, gee, I can't think of his name, but he was a great guy, he won a Navy Cross, a pilot, a Navy Cross, from Oklahoma, a Navy Cross at Guadalcanal. He was really a good pilot. And so we're, he had whiskey, of course. You had to keep a guy with a Navy Cross, he was a Marine captain, came to his room and we split, we had a couple of drinks, we discussed Marshall's case. And I was the defense, and I said, listen, we can't try him because this was my defense of him. Because if he committed it, there was no way we could give him sufficient punishment under a summary court martial. Therefore, for this heinous a crime, he should really have a general court martial. That was my way out. He agreed with me and so we recommended that the guy have a general court martial. Whatever happened to it, I don't know.

KP: So that was your only experience...

SB: That was my only experience in the courtroom.

KP: Did you do any other work with military justice aboard your ship?

SB: No, that was the only thing that ever came up aboard the ship, thank God.

KP: Because it was a big community, 1100 is big.

SB: Yeah. Things happen, but most of them were minor, like the guy caught painting. Well, for one thing, he was an officer, so the exec took care of it by punishing him, he was restricted to the ship for two weeks. But you know, I never really got involved with it. But presumably, you know,

I, if something happened, then of course you're part of the investigation. You're either on the defense side or the prosecutor's side and that's it.

KP: Have you ever been through a typhoon?

SB: No. I've been through a hurricane in New York when I was at Floyd Bennett in '44. That was magnificent, I enjoyed it. And I've been through a few hurricanes around, but never aboard ship. However, the big one in the Pacific that alot of our ships capsized, I was in Kodiak then, and we read the report, I think Admiral Nimitz made it, in which he just bawled the hell out of the captains. Because what had happened there is they were, they were, you know, the squadron, a hundred ships, who knows, they were, they had some prearranged formation they had to follow, and the typhoon hit them and these dumb captains were trying to maintain the formation no matter what. And Nimitz says hey, under these conditions you've gotta save your ship, and if it means going into the storm this way, you don't try to keep on the formation by going. Take care of your ship first before you worry about being in formation. It was a very interesting letter that he wrote. I'm pretty sure it was Nimitz. Very good. No, but I never was in...

KP: Because the people in the Navy, I'm limited so far, that was one of the things they really remember is...

SB: They probably were in that one, the one in '44, in the South Pacific, near Japan. Yeah, that's the one. No, I was in Kodiak, lucky.

KP: Is there anything else about the Navy that...

SB: Well, all in all, I liked it. As I told you, being a meteorologist was very satisfying to me, I liked it very much. It was good work and it was the best, it was the best of all worlds. And of course, since I didn't get shot at that was good too. But at the time you didn't really think of that. But I felt good about it. I felt good and competent, so that meant a lot to me. The camaraderie amongst my fellow officers and the men that I knew was very good. One of the them was First Class (Aerographer's) Mate Sam Patella, he's from Bound Brook. I haven't seen him since Kodiak, but he was a delight to work with, and a few others. They were nice. We, in a kind of way, there were two of the enlisted men's rates that are kind of special in a way. They're special in that promotions are very hard to come by with them, and when you give them an exam for promotion, the exam has to be approved by the Bureau of Personnel. In other words, they have to take the exam, the exam has to be sufficiently professional so that they can advance. And the two rates that are that way, one is the medical corpsmen, and the other is the (aerographer's) mate, the meteorologist mate. ...So these guys are pretty sharp guys. They're good in math, they're good. In the old days you'd say they're college material. And I don't want to really put that kind of distinction on but that's what you would have said a long time [ago]. They were smart, sharp guys and they were all good. Because they had to do a lot of kind of things that involved...math skills and things like that. Coding, decoding, I don't know, they were just sharp, they were good kids to work with. And they were kids, most of them were kids. I was, God, what was I, 23, 24, and most of them were younger than I was. It was nice. And aboard ship I still think being aboard ship is a

great experience, even if you're crowded. It's something nice about being on a big ship that's, especially today, now that they're going to have ladies aboard. God, we didn't even have that.

KP: Did you tie up in any ports in the Pacific when you were on the aircraft carrier?

SB: Nah, nah. Only when I went to, it was Oahu, Hawaii, in the Pacific.

KP: What did you think of Hawaii?

SB: Oh, it was very nice. It was, when I was there, because the war was over. I was thinking of going back to school, which is a complete another subject.

KP: You were thinking, when you were in the service...

SB: Oh yeah, by then I was starting to think, what am I going to do, I'm going to have enough points to get out soon. And I was thinking, toying with graduate school. And so I thought, boy what a nice idyllic place this is. But then I said, no, no way, I would never be able to study there. You know, it's 80 degrees and balmy all day, ...365 days a year.

KP: But you thought, the idea...

SB: Oh yeah, I said, oh, it's so nice here.

KP: Did you feel the same way about California because of the...

SB: Yeah, at one time I liked California. Oh sure. I loved California when I was there. And I tried, after I got out of graduate school, I went back to California to try to establish myself. But times were a little rough then and it didn't work. I worked but it wasn't a particularly good job and it ended. So I had to come back East to get work. So, yeah, I thought at one time I thought California was great. Today, I think, well, it's hard to say. The problem is, that anytime there's a nice spot it seems to get spoiled, and the spot I'm thinking of now is San Jose, California or thereabouts, which I lived in for a year or so and I thought was marvelous, too. From a climate standpoint, it's the best, I think, I've ever been in, it's just lovely. But it too, it's become, all the computer industry there, and it's crowded, the whole Santa Clara Valley, which used to be a vegetable and orchard place, is now full of suburbia, and it's just right...

KP: That must, it's sort of jumping ahead, but has this surprised you, what's happened to Piscataway?

SB: Well, you know, Sharon [Suarez]. Sharon's from South Plainfield, and we had a talk one day, we were talking, she asked me where I was from. So I said I'm really from Piscataway Township, and she said you know, I'm from South Plainfield. I said, my God, we're neighbors. Now, yet, there must be 30 years between us, but we were talking about how it was when she was young, and where I lived was really country, that's the only way I can describe it. And now it's cheek by jowl suburbia. C'est la vie. What can I... And California's done it, and Seattle's done it. My son lived in

Seattle and he left it because he didn't like that happening to it. I don't know what you do. It's just the way it is. Listen, there were a 120 million people in this country when I was in grade school or college, and they're double that now. Where are they going to go? I don't know, that's your problem.

KP: Now, you had considered grad school and you left the Navy. Where did you...now, you wanted to go on for chemistry or you weren't sure?

SB: Yeah. No, no. I wanted to go...well, what I realized is this. When I started to go into chemistry, and you asked me what I wanted to be, I would say production chemist. I wanted to run a factory that made chemicals.

KP: Like Ralph Schmidt.

SB: Yeah, yeah. That's what it was, production chemist. There was no literally, well, not completely, almost no such a thing as research and development. Any kind of research went on in the universities and oh, those old fuddy duddies basically they teach and they do a little research. But there was no research industry as we know it. To the best of my knowledge there was the Dupont Company and General Electric were the only two big, and maybe U.S. Steel and a few like that, but very few companies had a research department. However, when I got out, after I got out and got my bachelor's degree and worked in industry in production chemistry, I found that I wasn't a particularly good production chemist because what I like to do was fool around with things. I, had the kind of thing that manufactured something. But I liked to push it to the limit, so how fast it can go, how slow it can go, how much I could heat it up, I tinkered. And that's not a good way to produce things because you have a production schedule and procedure and that's what you're supposed to do. So I realized hey, this wasn't for me. Then after the war, though, now especially what happened with the Manhattan project, research, and development work came into its own. And more especially so, after 1948 when the transistor was discovered or invented at Bell Labs. See now I'm in graduate school then. But now there's a whole new world, a new kind of profession opening up called research work. By that time I'm in graduate school. Now I went to graduate, I'd like to say I went to do research work, but partly it was that and partly it was after discussion with my father. And he said, you know, you just have a bachelor's degree and I have this friend who's also a chemist, and he says that you gotta have more than that. In order to do this much, get this kind of a job you should have that much qualification. And it would be a smart thing to go to graduate school. And I wanted to. I had a couple of job offers, but I didn't like them. They were technical sales type jobs.....

KP: You decided to go to graduate school.

SB: So then, after talking to my dad, I said you know I have this job with this S. B. (Pennick) a drug house somewhere up here in Jersey City or something. And they want me to do technical sales and this and that. I said, you know, I really don't want to do that. I have the G.I. Bill, and he encouraged me. My father was always, in fact my family, from my grandmother on, and my aunts and uncles, they all were, what you put in here stays, you know, you can't lose it, this kind of stuff. Typical thing a lot of immigrant people had. And so he said, it'll be much better for you in the long

run. I said o.k., fine. So I came down to Rutgers. Initially, I'd wanted to go to Caltech because Caltech had a great reputation for chemistry...

KP: And you liked California.

SB: Oh yeah, I loved everything about it. But my mother was ill and she was terminal, and I said what the hell. So I...applied at Rutgers. Of course, I had no problems...

KP: Did you apply elsewhere, Columbia or Princeton or...

SB: No, for graduate school, didn't even bother. I came back to Rutgers because I wanted to be home and all that. And I got in, I guess there was no problem.

KP: Now, I guess I have two questions. What was the standing of Rutgers as a doctoral program in chemistry? Who would you sort of...

SB: Oh. Well, when I got...let me go back to when I got my bachelor's degree and tell you what my prejudices and my feelings were then. There were certain schools that were thought of very highly. University of Chicago is one, maybe Cal[ifornia] at Berkeley but I don't think so much then, but alright, I'll say Cal-Berkeley, Caltech, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, MIT. Now, when I worked at the TNT plant I worked with guys from all over, most of the guys were from the Midwest, but there were some from Harvard and MIT and then the aura disappears. They weren't any better than I was, they weren't any worse than I was, they were just guys. And so the feeling that I might have had that somehow Rutgers, the other schools were much better, disappeared. (_____) who got his bachelor's with me and we were in school from the sixth grade on, he went to Ohio State, got his Ph.D. and his M.D. there, and we discussed this. And he said no way was any chemistry course as tough or as thorough or as good as Rutgers was. And I believe him. I really think, it was an excellent course. And so it was fine. Now, what else can you say. ... But I thought it was good.

KP: So your thinking really changed by being in the, since the experience in the military and interacting with these...

SB: Oh sure. You kind of ... you know a lot of people, now I don't want to take anything away from Harvard. It's a great school, they've got great faculty and all that. But it's not the be-all and end-all. And you know, they're just guys.

KP: In other words, some of your images really had been deflated by the war.

SB: Yeah, well, I have a more equal, egalitarian view about everybody, about things you know, you know Pauline went to a very small school in Oregon. What's going to a big school mean? I don't know. I don't know. I just know that I felt much better about Rutgers afterwards than I did...well, what I want to say it was Rutgers, it was a school I went to. It's just like [a lot] of the high schools in New Jersey, I went to NBHS. It was a fine school, but I think the one, Ralph went to one in Newark and Atlantic City High and New Brunswick High, I would rate those three as...top

high schools of that era,...the late '30s. Now whether I'm right or wrong and how do you prove this, who knows. I don't...know how you prove it.

KP: Now, I guess,...you had been to Rutgers as an undergraduate and now you're a graduate student so you stood between, I remember when I was in graduate school, you stood between two worlds. You're still a student and now a professor, you may be a T.A. What did you think of the changes at Rutgers?

SB: Oh, they were phenomenal. Tremendous. For one thing, all the freshman junk went out the window. The dinks. You don't remember that. Freshmen wore a dink. He wore a green tie and he tucked it in. He wore white hose and he tucked it into his trousers. He had to carry matches should an upperclassman stopped him for a light. And if whistled at on Queen's campus, he had to run. If an upperclassman whistled, it didn't have to be an upperclassman, if anybody whistled, you ran. You carried your stuff in a shopping bag. You wore a button with your name and you know. And come on. With these G.I.s coming back after the war, in '46, '47, you think they were going to do any of these things. They'd laugh at you. You couldn't do it. It went out the boards, out the window. It just was completely different. And the new guys that came in, ... many of them were guys in '38 ... [and] even though ... they were [smart], [they] couldn't afford to go to college. And that was good. The G.I. Bill was a great leveler and a great thing. I can't say anything bad about it. And I think it was a great thing for the country...and all that kind of stuff too. But it gave guys who never before would have had an opportunity a chance to go to college. Now, college was also something very different in the '20s and early '30s, I mean, you know, the raccoon coat kind of baloney, and the proms and all of this. Whether that's good or bad I don't know.

KP: But a lot of that went out. You could see, that went out.

SB: Right away it went out. Even when I was an undergraduate Rutgers wasn't that kind of a school, they had these freshman silliness, but I didn't sense anything like the raccoon coat Ivy League stuff. It just wasn't that kind, because it was a more plebeian school. People came from ordinary circumstances. Look at all the guys you're interviewing. How many of these guys come from rich people? Very few. Ordinary. In that sense, ordinary. But not ordinary in another sense. I'm sure that...anybody that sent his kid to school in the '30s of our people had to sacrifice to do it. And that was a commitment and something they believed in and it was good.

KP: And it's interesting, the rituals and the dinks came back, I think that's probably the story of the '50s with the G.I. Bill, that's very interesting because the Rutgers Picture Book talks about college customs, and the ...was in fact brought back and sort of survived until about '67, '68 and it just fell away. What struck you about the intellectual caliber of the school, now that you were a graduate student?

SB: Well, as a graduate student. Well, I enjoyed the intellectual aspect of the guys. There was...

KP: Did you see improvement in terms of the facilities or in terms of new professors hired or?

SB: Well, there was. Well, for one thing, in graduate school, that was the transition period. That's when we had the Quonset huts, and the faculty housing, I guess that's the Busch campus, isn't it, off Davidson Road. You know, that was all starting. The chemistry building got built and got inaugurated my last year here. I mean, I never really was in it.

KP: So you were in chemistry, on Mine Street.

SB: Right here, right near Willie the Silent. That's right. That building is now an office building or something. And the Engineering building was there, the Physics was across... Now there was something very nice and charming and lovely about Rutgers and traditional and Ivy League without being the Ivy League. It was a nice school. I liked it, God damn, I liked it.

KP: So you enjoyed your graduate school...

SB: Oh my God, I enjoyed graduate school, I enjoyed undergraduate school, I enjoyed it. I've got to say something about myself, too. But I enjoyed kindergarten, too, and first grade, second grade, third grade. I don't remember ever cutting a class. I had friends who used to cut at every opportunity. I always enjoyed going to school. So hey, it was a natural for me. I enjoyed graduate school, too.

KP: Do you think if you hadn't gotten the G.I. Bill you would have gone to graduate school easily, or that might have been more of a ...how much did the G.I. Bill help?

SB: Look, it was a great...hey, it's there. Now, I have friends who could have used it and didn't. They're bitter in a way. I'm not saying they're bitter because of that but...

KP: They regret it.

SB: I don't know, they dig me sometimes. Oh well, not all of us went to school you know. Some of us had to work for a living. Well, I don't say, hey you son of a bitch, and this is a close friend of mine, hey you son of a bitch, you chose to build a house, you built a house with that money. You could have gone to graduate school, get your bachelor's degree. He taught here at Rutgers, even though he didn't have a degree, but he was teaching his trade and all that. And there's this kind of thing that some people...Well, I think, look, you can only go through once unfortunately. And if you chose one thing over another that's your choice. Thank God you have a choice. But I don't want somebody to be mad at me because I was able to go to graduate school and they didn't. I suppose if I wanted, had other values, or I wanted something else worse, I would have done that. But at the time it was great for me. And frankly, there was also a big question. You had no knowledge that you were going to make out and be better off by doing it. As a matter of fact, when I got out it was just the start of the Korean War, it was pretty rough. Finding a job was tough then. But fortunately, I also hit the job market very near the time when science had a renaissance here. It started at the Korean War and it certainly got a great deal of impetus from Sputnik. And I'm sure Ralph and myself and others are the recipients of this great period in American science, which now is maybe dwindling, I don't know.

KP: You said at the time, that science, that you weren't taking a gamble like you were in '39 or '40 in terms of going to graduate school?

SB: Oh, no no, I didn't feel there was a gamble then. I did it, as I said, I did it because it's best to be best prepared. What else can I say? And it was my way. Maybe because school was easy for me. I guess if school wasn't easy for me and I had other priorities or I wanted to have a home so badly or a marriage or whatever the hell it was, maybe I would have done things differently. But for me at the time it just turned out, it was o.k. And as I say, and all the guys I worked with for 30, 40 years all say the same thing. We came into science in its halcyon years and we think it was marvelous. We wish it would continue again but it wouldn't surprise us if it just doesn't. Maybe today getting into stocks and bonds is the thing. But it wasn't with us, and I said this so much, it's a cliche, it's a marvelous thing if you can work at something you love to do, if it's fascinating and intriguing and you still make a decent living at it. That's what science was to me and I can't bitch about it. Not one bit. No regrets on that score.

KP: Now you had...in terms of graduate school, was there a sense that we needed to get people, I wouldn't say through the door, because you said people didn't make it, there were people who got [...], but was there a sense that you really think that we needed to produce people because there were opportunities? Did you get that sense?

SB: No, I didn't get that sense.

KP: There was still the notion that we were going to try to weed people out.

SB: Oh, at the university. Oh no. No, I think, hey, you had to qualify, you had to take your qualifyings. They would give you another chance in certain cases. In one case, I know of a guy that they, he didn't do well in his qualifyings and they gave him another chance. And the reason they did it, I won't mention his name because it's immaterial, it doesn't matter, it's meaningless, the reason they did it, and they did it rightly, because his research project was magnificent. Hey, he demonstrated there. So academically he wasn't so sharp on his exams, I don't know. Listen, I've goofed on questions that I've kicked myself in the ass for not remembering the answer, you know. So he had three of them and I only had one. It's that kind of thing. But, I think that's the only case that I know of where maybe they bent over backwards a little bit.

KP: Now you were, after you, had you considered going into academia?

SB: Yeah, I did. I did. At one time I wanted to, but my wife was dead set against it.

KP: Why was she...?

SB: Oh, she said, come on you've got to go into the real world sometime, you know, this kind of thing. Which is alright. But I never really, really did it. I never really seriously did it. But I must say that at one time I thought, gee, it might be nice to teach at some university.

KP: Did you ever teach part-time?

SB: Yeah, I taught here. I was a teacher's assistant. And I handled recitation classes. My first year, I was a I guess a T.A., a lab assistant, whatever I was,...I worked in the lab. And then I got a fellowship. The first thing I got was a teaching assistant appointment. And the second year and the rest of my graduate years, I had a fellowship. And the fellowship gave me more money and it also gave me the opportunity to handle recitation classes. Which I enjoyed. I enjoyed getting in front of a class and...I enjoyed it, it was nice. I'm sure if I have to lecture on something, especially if it's in my field, I have no trouble at all, I enjoy doing that, too.

KP: Your first position after Rutgers was at [...]

SB: No, that's after graduate school. No, I had another position. I went out to California. Oh, things were rough there, it was really rough. But I was lucky to get a kind of o.k. job with a small paint manufacturer. And this guy was expanding and trying to go into, he was expanding. And whereas prior to my coming there, he had this small thing and he was the big boss and his brother handled the laboratory work, experimental work as well as maybe running the factory, I don't know, it was one of those kind of things, but the guy decided he was going to try to expand. And he hired a specialist in alkide resins, which is what they were making, from General Electric. A man some years older than I was, he must have been in his thirties, oh my God, he must have been in his middle thirties, had a wife and children, and he hired him from General Electric, and he set him up to do research work. Then he hired me to do research work. So the two of us did research work. Research work there was basically not what I would not call research work now, but it was product development. You knew what you wanted to make and you were trying different formulations out to make it. O.K. And I worked for them for some months, and then something ill befelled them. Which was some customer got dissatisfied with something he sent them and shipped back a whole carload full of alkide resins and the guy had to pull in his horns and he had to lay off anybody except the bare bones production crew. And so I went by the boards. ...It was called a layoff, but there was no promise of coming back. I didn't feel so bad for myself, although I didn't like it, but the other that they took from, induced him to come from General Electric, I felt bad for him because he had a wife and kids. And they really recruited him. They just hired me because I came through the door, so to speak. So I worked there until this happened... And then I tried finding something else in California but there was nothing. Also, the period which my father died, he was in Colorado, I went back to Colorado and he died. And then I said to hell with this, I'm going back to New York because there was no chemistry jobs there. It was very bad, California was very bad in those years. So I went back to New York and I got a job at Patel, in Columbus, Ohio. And they do contract research. So now, that's real research in a way.

KP: And they do contract research for who?

SB: The government, one thing. Only, like, they don't want too much government. You know, they want enough government but not too much. Because too much, the government wants to look into you, and to see the books. So they'll take up to 40%, 45%, but they don't want more than that. And then other companies. The first company I worked for was a company making, creosote importers. Now, they're technical problems involved there. And then I worked on underwater piling cameras to inspect for worm deteriorations of pilings. And then I worked, finally got into

semiconductor materials. And that's where I remained from them until I retired from IBM 35 years later.

KP: Now, I know you were at IBM a long time and I feel like there's a need for someone to interview you on your technical [background] because I found in your file a press release, I went through this and I thought I will need to defer...

SB: Where did you get this?

KP: This was in your file, this was in the alumni office file.

SB: How the hell did they get this?

KP: Apparently IBM sent it to them.

SB: Oh my God, this was ages ago. I got an award for this.

KP: I know. That's in part why...

SB: Oh yeah, hey. I got better stuff than this that I did but that's...

KP: Did you really? Your file was one of the leaner ones, and when I said at the meeting that we might meet again, [...] or I might even, if I can get a chem major or some chem grad student.

SB: Sure, we can meet again. Sure, I'll bat the breeze with anybody.

KP: But I wanted, there are some questions I... You were with IBM for most of your career after you left Patel.

SB: 31 years.

KP: The initial question I guess, I will probably ask of anyone from IBM. What did you think of IBM culture, which had quite a reputation?

SB: Let me just say something. I come from what Archie Bunker calls a "minorority." And I'm aware. And when I was young I was very aware of being in a minority that was not hired easily, if at all, etc. etc. I'm not even going to mention anti-semitism or anything like that. But clearly you can do anything you want with it. But jobs were harder to get for us. And when I was a senior there were four, five or six of us that put in an application, for example. And the company was Monsanto. And I can't think of the man's name who was then the personnel guy that used...to try to get interviews for the guys. It was my senior year, and he was on the phone with the personnel director at Monsanto and he said, hey listen, we got these six guys pretty good, but three of them are Jewish, do you want to interview them? Oh, if they're unusual, O.K. Exceptional, I think that was the word. Well, one of our guys, when he heard this he just wouldn't go for the interview. I hope

you get to interview him.. He's Al Nisonoff, he's up at, in Massachusetts. Al was just so shook up, Al was naive.

KP: Where does he live in Massachusetts?

SB: Near Boston, I think he teaches at Brandeis.

KP: You know him?

SB: Oh sure. He's the one guy I have to look up. Remember I volunteered to get in touch with, and I will. Anyway, Al was so shook up, Al was the youngest one. Ask Bill Bauer about Al, Bill Bauer thinks that Al is the brightest guy that ever came through, and he was. He was a bright kid. And Kleinman and I were the other two. We went, of course we got nothing. And Bill Quinn went, too. Bill Quinn was Catholic-Irish. And none, neither the Catholics or the Jewish guys got called for a second interview. Well, the other guys did. Well that was one of the things you grew up with. But where was I going with all of this? The point is...

KP: IBM was...

SB: So now. ... I knew certain companies just wouldn't, Dupont would never hire, forget about it. And IBM was another one, and a few others. There were exceptions, though. One of the exceptions was General Electric, because for one thing they were an exception. But a lot of the other places just didn't hire minority people, any kind. And so now, in '58, '59 when I met with a friend who had been my co-worker at Patel and left and was working at IBM. He said, hey listen, they're opening up an area in your area of expertise. Why don't you try come work for us? I said, IBM, Jesus. Come on, don't be that way. So I went there, had an interview and all that. And it had changed. There was none of this. Because the research laboratory, to begin with, is not the general IBM, and never was and never will be, probably. It's different. Why is it different? Listen, did you ever see how these computer nuts look, with their long hair and their forouks, and we've got them there now. But they don't look like the salesmen. They don't look like the IBM salesmen. The research lab they tolerated alot which they never would...

KP: You didn't have to wear the blue suit?

SB: Oh no, never had to. The only time I wore a suit...we're not priggish and we're not stupid, but you know if I go to a technical meeting and I have to stand up in front of an audience I'm wearing a suit and a tie. There's no doubt about it.

KP: But IBM in the 1950s was almost the classic company of conformity, of blue suits...

SB: Oh sure, but the research broke it down. It didn't exist in the research lab, and it never did. I don't know if it exists today, oh sure, once you get to be second level management then you wore a tie.

KP: Then you did the IBM rituals....

SB: Oh sure. But the workers. Yeah, come on, these guys, the science workers are pretty good guys, very well educated and the best of bold thinkers. ... Generally speaking, they're non-conformists. That's not saying they're all that way, of course. But they're good, and they've got good heads. And they come from all over the world. The lab. Just name it, we've got them.

KP: Now, IBM is a company that recently, there's a lot of criticism of its corporate culture and its technological development, its organization. What's your take on IBM's history, from your perspective. Why was it so successful from what you could tell and why...

SB: Whatever it was is probably right. It was a staid kind of company, we'll take it up to the middle '50s. But with the advent of the transistor and the use of, and computers, and semi-conductor computers, the chip especially, which happened when, late '50s, even earlier. See I got there in '59, beginning in '59, and the lab itself. They had a lab for a long time at Columbia University. A building with top rate physicists, who could do anything they want, so to speak. They were not concerned with the day-to-day product. But then around 1954, '55, they built a new laboratory up in Poughkeepsie. Now this is their first real lab devoted to research work. And there was a great deal of autonomy that the people enjoyed. I mean, you know, O.K., you were going to work in let's say (electoluminescent) material. So you want to work in transistors, or you want to work in three five compounds, which is what I did. Fine, they'll support you. The thought being, hey, this is worth while to support because sooner or later something good will come out of it. After all, I have an outstanding example, where one man named Carruthers by his invention has supported all, all the research work that the Dupont Company has ever done. And what did Mr. Carruthers discover? Nylon. I mean, QED.

KP: So IBM's thinking was...

SB: When you support research, it's really a commitment to a certain kind of reality that statistically something good will happen. You can't point to any one guy when you hire him and say, hey, listen, this guy was number one in honors at Cambridge and therefore he's going to produce. You can't know that. But if you hire a thousand guys, you know you're going to get something out of one or two of them. .... That is a statistical way of looking at research work.

KP: Do you think that is changing at IBM or...?

SB: Right now? Well, right now we're in a bad period because of things that the research guys didn't do. Upper management did it. They didn't see the import of the personal computer. They didn't, they gave away the cake to Gates. They didn't have to give him DOS and all of that.

KP: So you think that from your perspective, IBM, the problem wasn't research, it was a question of management.

SB: Oh yeah, they made tough management, bad management. Look, you know, I don't want to bite the hand that fed me, but if you say, and people do, that IBM is in trouble and that's why they're

downsizing and doing this and cutting that program and that program, re-evaluating and getting into agreements with Microsoft on this and that and the other thing and Apple. And mind you, this business part of the world is really not...I read what you read. The reason why they're in trouble has got to be an upper management thing.

END OF INTERVIEW