

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE BOGGS III

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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OCTOBER 19, 1994

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with George Boggs on October 19, 1994 at Rutgers University as part of the Oral Archives of World War II, with Kurt Piehler and ...

Edward Colavito: Ed Colavito.

KP: I guess I'd like to begin by asking you a few questions about your parents and your home town. Your parents, what were they like?

George Boggs: Well, my mother was the daughter of a German immigrant, and my father was an old time American from down in Salem, New Jersey.

KP: How far back did your father stretch? When did his ancestors come over?

GB: ... Some of the family came over with William Penn, and then the Wescott branch of the family came over on the Mayflower. ... My mother, I guess, had been an expert corseteer, which - they don't sell corsets anymore. (laughs) But that was her job, and she worked for R. J. Goerke in Elizabeth, New Jersey. And dad had come up from Salem, and his first job, I believe, was to act as a clerk at the Rahway Reformatory. Then he went through advertising until the big market collapse fall years ago, and he lost a new advertiser. I think it was called the New Jersey Advertiser. He lost that at that time.

KP: This was in the Great Depression?

GB: Yes. And he then went into the sales field, because he couldn't find anything in advertising. At that time he went with the Gulf Refining Company {later named the Gulf Oil Company Corporation}.

KP: And did he stay with Gulf for the rest of his career?

GB: He stayed with Gulf until he retired. Mother retired right after she got married and sort of duplicated what my wife did. (laughs)

KP: Did your father serve in the First World War?

GB: No, he didn't.

KP: Did any of your relatives serve in the First World War?

GB: None in the direct line. But there was a navy ship, a few years back which was called the *USS Boggs*, I guess it was named after an admiral way back that had been a member of the family.

KP: Yes. You grew up in Rahway?

GB: In Rahway, New Jersey.

KP: All your youth?

GB: All my youth was spent there, yes. I didn't leave there until I came to Rutgers. ... I went through all the schools. My first school was Columbian School which was a grade school. Then I went to Grover Cleveland School, which was advanced level. And then for junior high, I went to Roosevelt School and then to the Rahway High School. It was the old school before they tore it down and made a jail out of it. (laughs) But they built a new one for my final year there. And I had been quite active in school, taking pre-college courses and things like that.

KP: So you knew you wanted to go to college?

GB: I knew that I wanted to be an engineer. And I wanted to be a petroleum engineer, but Rutgers did not have petroleum engineering back in those days. So I selected electrical engineering, and then I decided I needed something more concrete because there was too much abstract work in electrical engineering. I then switched over to mechanical engineering. Do you wish for me to proceed?

KP: Oh yes keep going.

GB: ... In high school I had been a leader. I was a member of the National Honor Society. I headed the High-Y Club where I was president for two years in a row. That was affiliated with the YMCA, and it was a group of leaders in school. I graduated in '38 from high school.

KP: Did you know Tom Kindre in Rahway?

GB: I knew Tom Kindre. Also, before I came down here, I don't know how it was, but I knew Bob Moss and ... I'm trying to think, there might have been one other in my class, but I can't recall who it was right now.

KP: How difficult was it for your parents to send you Rutgers?

GB: Quite difficult, because they hadn't planned on anything. (laughs)

KP: They hadn't expected you to go to college?

GB: No that's right. So we took some government loans, student loans and things like that which I never defaulted on. (laughs) And [I] went on through the war years. I joined the Delta Upsilon fraternity in my junior year. ... Before that I had been a commuter, but then I lived in.

KP: So you would take the train like Tom Kindre from Rahway?

GB: Yes, Tom took it all the time. ... It got a bit boring. It was rough getting home and then having to prepare for the next day. So I was only too happy to go to or to join the Delta Upsilon

fraternity and live in. This would be right close to here if it continued being, but something went wrong after I left.

KP: What kind of difference did it make for you to live on campus versus commuting?

GB: Well, I think people treated you a bit nicer. Commuters were sort of looked down upon ...

EC: They are still!

GB: ... and weren't included in all activities and things like that. But it-- well it became nice because I could get to my studies earlier. I could use campus facilities which I hadn't used before. And they had way more-- even back in those days-- in Rutgers library than they had in the Rahway Library. (laughs)

KP: So you really felt that all around you were making better use of it?

GB: I benefitted by the change, yes.

KP: What about the social life? Did you have time for that?

GB: A bit. I did get into intramural sports, and I, being a member of the R.O.T.C. back in those days and working my way through the Scarlet Rifles, which I think ... [has] changed ... [its] name since then. We were an expert drill team, and we had quite a few performances. Then there were the Freshman Reception, the Soph Hop, the Junior Prom and the Senior Ball that we went to. I think they have changed the names on all the things like that.

KP: They don't even have those anymore.

GB: They don't have them anymore? I'll be darned! But those were nice social affairs. Then there were always the "Coop" [slang for Cooper Hall] across town. (laughs) [We'd] go over and see the different girls. I've played in intramural sports, and I also was on the junior varsity crew. We would do our "sweep swinging" [slang for rowing] along the Raritan River.

KP: Did you work while you were going to Rutgers?

GB: No, well I did in summers, but not during the year.

KP: In the summers, where would you work?

GB: I first worked for [the] Gulf Oil Corporation, my father's place, in the bulk station in Dunellen, and then I went with Merck and Company, manufacturing chemists in Rahway, New Jersey.

EC: Is that the pharmaceutical company?

GB: Yes, Merck Pharmaceutical, and I stayed with them throughout the rest of my schooling.

KP: And what did you do for Merck?

GB: I originally started out in the mechanical department as a helper, and then I ended up becoming a welder at times and a pipe fitter and what have you and worked a little bit into the engineering department, but mostly on construction work, digging ditches and laying new pipes on weekends, and cleaning boilers and things like that. So it was quite an eye opener for that type of work.

KP: Had you worked while you were going to high school?

GB: No, I can't recall anything, except maybe delivering some papers. But no, I had never done any manual work before that.

KP: Merck at the time, was there a union at Merck?

GB: Yes, but I wasn't part of it. I worked for Charlie Llewellyn. ... His son went to Rutgers, so I met him while I was down here. Charlie Llewellyn was the chief engineer at that time and when I finally left Merck, I asked him to get my older sister a job because she had been working in Newark at a bank or a savings and loan, and spent all her money on commuting. And there was nothing left. So, they did give her a job in the engineering department as secretary to Charlie Llewellyn at the time. And then she spent a long, long career there. But in the meanwhile the war came in between, and Merck had owed me a job because of the way the government was set up. ... If you were hired before the war, you were supposed to get a job after the war. When I came back, she was still working there. She had moved up out of the engineering department, but it still was against their policy to hire more than one out of any family. So, I volunteered to go elsewhere at that time.

KP: And your sister stayed working for Merck?

GB: She stayed with Merck.

KP: How long did she stay with Merck?

GB: She went a bit past her 65th year I guess. So, she stayed with them a long, long time. She started out with Charlie Llewellyn and worked her way up to secretary of the ... senior vice-president, a fellow by the name of Johnstone. And then when he retired, the company looked for a job for her, and put her on with a fellow named John Horan who was a young lawyer. They knew that John was going to move ahead, and John eventually became president, chairman and CEO of Merck. So that was quite a good job she had there.

KP: You said you originally wanted to go into petroleum engineering. When did you decide on petroleum engineering?

GB: I guess because my father had been with Gulf, and I just saw a future with Gulf Oil Corporation.

KP: So you had this vision that you would go to college and become an engineer?

GB: I originally applied for a scholarship at Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy and unfortunately didn't get a scholarship. (laughs) And back in those days it was if you can't go to college, go to the Rutgers. I shouldn't say that. But that's what everybody in town was saying.

KP: The notion was if you couldn't get a scholarship somewhere, you would end up at Rutgers?

GB: Yes

KP: Had you thought of any of the schools in New York or ...?

GB: After the war I went to NYU nights to get my master's, but I hadn't thought of any of the New York schools or anything like that. What I wanted was something that wouldn't cost me too much to get into, and I could get home on occasions ...

KP: Would you always take the train home, or would you occasionally hitchhike?

GB: I wasn't a hitchhiker. (laughs) It was always the train, or somebody would come by and pick me up and take me home.

KP: Who was your favorite professor at Rutgers?

GB: This is hard to recall. (laughs) I guess for being unique, Charlie Slade was one with his red hair and his British mustache and his cane and things like that. He was one of my favorites. But I ... could tell you who I didn't like. (laughs)

KP: Is there anything in terms of professors you disliked? You don't even have to name their names, but what didn't you like about them? If you want to honor their merit.

GB: Well, I'll sort of give away one of them. There was the engineering Eco. [short for economics] course that we had, and the professor we had, the minute he would open his mouth the entire class would fall asleep. (laughs) ... He spoke in monotone, and it just did that to you. It was just right next door over here. ... But he did sell at cost mimeographed notes of his lectures which all of us bought. I think it was ten cents a copy or something like that.

KP: Really, he would sell it to the classes?

GB: He would sell it to the class, so we had something we could read up on at night and know what we were supposed to have studied. That was the only one that I know of that I didn't like too well. I liked our Dean of the engineering college, Daggett. ... I had one of his sons as a classmate. I'm trying to think of what else. We've gone through a lot of deans since that time.

EC: ... I guess his notes were hard to follow. I guess he sold his notes to you knowing that he was a hard professor to follow.

GB: ... I believe that was the case.

EC: He must have moved very quickly.

GB: ... because no other professor did anything like that. ... I think he could feel right away that he wasn't getting through to us. (laughs) And it was good, because when it came to exam times we had the answers we needed.

EC: I was just going to go back to when you went to work for Gulf. Was it normal for a student to follow what his father did back in those days or did you feel compelled to do what your father did or was it something you enjoyed?

GB: No, back in those days, it was the only way to get a job. We were still in the Depression years, and there was no big job market at the time, so you went where the traffic went. ... It wasn't as challenging as a lot of other jobs. I was rolling drums of oil around. I was hooking up tank cars to their storage facilities there. And if I didn't get things quite right, you'd get a leak in the gasoline and go down and you'd have to run up back on top of the tank car and try to get the valve, the foot valve shut on time. So it was a learning experience. (laughs) But I had to do a bit of everything. If a window would break in the warehouse, I had to go buy the glass and put it back in and things like that. ... So you were a jack of all trades, but a master of none.

...

EC: Did you go to chapel? Was it a very common thing for students to attend chapel?

GB: It was required back in those days. ... You had to attend chapel once a week, and then you, from habit, you went on Sunday. But it was quite an experience to go to chapel back in those days. We'd have Soup Walter come in-- ... no, it wasn't Skip was it-- Walter C., choir director for years. I can't recall the nickname we had. But, so we had good music. Inspirational things.

KP: What did you think of Dean Metzger?

GB: Well, he was a fraternity brother. (laughs) ... He was quite a nice fellow. A lot of people couldn't become friendly with him, but I never had any problem even though my fraternity brothers would drop bags of water on his head. (laughs) I wasn't part of that.

EC: What was your initiation like?

GB: That was really rough. ... Initiation in a fraternity-- I think they should have canceled it years before it started. ... You had to make two paddles: one a stinging paddle and the other a bruising paddle, and most of the nice upper classmen would call you into a room for your paddling, and they'd strike a couch or something like that. And you would have to say, "Ouch!"

But then there were others that were out for blood, and they drew it at times. ... The one thing-- well, during hell week, you had to wear a baby cap and a bra and what have you. ... In the baby cap you had to have a couple of raw eggs. And so a brother would come along and see them. And Woop! And pound you on the head, and it'd go down. That was some of the bad parts of it. And then I guess it was the last day of your initiation service. Well there was more than that. But the last day, they-- let's hold a minute.

KP: Just continue talking.

GB: But they had all sorts of things. We had some swimming races down in the basement of the DU house. The brothers would squeegee water onto the floor. The brothers would start you off, and you'd hope that there was water underneath you when you were racing against the others. You'd be stripped, and it would be your skin against a dry patch. That wasn't something I really was proud of. And then they-- this one thing I wanted to tell you about earlier was- you had to take your big paddle and put it on the floor and put your forehead against it and run around ten times. That was fun. And then the brothers would hold you and release you and as the floor's turning up vertically, ... you tried to run the length of two rooms. But it wasn't too bad. We lived through it. I was happy when they eliminated that type of thing because recalling my high school days when I became president of High-Y, we stopped all this sort of hazing the members.

KP: When you were in college?

GB: When I was back in high school ...

KP: So you had a high school fraternity?

GB: ... The High-Y I called it. I eliminated that from our program.

KP: The High-Y, what was the High-Y?

GB: Well, it was honor students from high school, male and affiliated with the YMCA ...

KP: And they used to have initiation?

GB: That's right. The initiations were quite rough. They-- they took your clothes away from you and then left you out in a field miles away from home, and you had to work your way back some how or other. But I decided that this was not a thing to have, so we eliminated it. A bunch of people didn't like it.

KP: But your fraternity, you once again went through the initiation at your fraternity?

GB: Yes. ...

KP: Did you ever suggest to your fraternity brothers that these initiations are sort of silly?

GB: Yes. I didn't get that far. There were a few people like Ken Omley and quite a few of them that didn't go for it. And Archibald, Bill Archibald who later on, I think, became a two star general in the Army. He was one of the kindlier ones that wouldn't hit you with a paddle. Well, I can't recall too many.

EC: I was just going to say, were most of your brothers in the same major as you? Like, were your brothers engineering majors also?

GB: No, we were not basically an engineering fraternity at the time. There were a lot of other disciplines. ... Frank Maguire, from our class, was an engineer as I was, and there were some from Ceramics which was a separate school back in those days. Now it's affiliated with engineering I believe.

EC: Did you have limitations on who you could hang out with? In other words, a lot of fraternities seemed like they'd only let you fraternize with the people in the fraternity. ... Were there people off limits that you could not talk to?

GB: No, you'd have songs about all the other fraternities. (laughs) But there was no such thing as not fraternizing. ... I would hate to repeat any of the songs that we had back in those days.

EC: Just one? Off the record?

KP: You stayed in R.O.T.C.?

GB: Yes, I took it in my junior and senior year.

KP: Why did you stay in? Did you think we were going to war? Or did you ...

GB: I enjoyed the military aspect of the thing. I wasn't sure we were going to war, but all of a sudden I was sitting ... at a lecture in South Orange-Maplewood at the Columbia High School, and the lecturer interrupted his lecture and said, "I must announce that the Japanese just hit Pearl Harbor." And it was quite a shock to the audience. But no, I wasn't planning on fighting a war or anything like that.

KP: Did you read the newspapers regularly when you were at college? Or did Pearl Harbor really come out of the blue?

GB: It came out of the blue as far as I know. Later on we found out there was much hanky panky going on and that our government should have been well aware of it ahead of time. Or that our President Franklin Delano Roosevelt should have been aware of it. But it was quite a shock to me when it did happen, and the Japanese hit us. The first ones we declared war on were the Germans, and then all of a sudden they added the Japanese into it. So it was different.

KP: How did you feel when you heard Pearl Harbor had been attacked?

GB: I was really shocked. It was a little bit different than the shock I had later on in life when Kennedy was assassinated. But it affects you. I mean even though your in a different party or something like that, ... it does something to you.

KP: Now you were in R.O.T.C.

GB: Yeah.

KP: What did you expect would happen to you?

GB: Well, we knew that we would go up to summer camp, and when we finished we would be commissioned second lieutenants in the infantry. ... Because it was an infantry course and what have you. This I was prepared for, but I wasn't exactly prepared for war. But once it happened, I was anxious to get over there and do something. I must tell you that Bob and I both had the same experience, Bob Moss and I didn't 100 percent pass the physical exam, and so my mother had a fight with the government to get my commission. And we worked out a deal where we had to go down to Fort Benning, Georgia and go through a basic training course, different than the fellows they pulled out of ranks. This was all college fellows that either already had their commissions or were going to get one in a short while, and so that was quite a thorough course. And we learned ... the song that the boys had, the alma mater of Fort Benning. What was it? Far above by the Upotos proudly stands my alma mater, Benning school for boys. Follow me with map and clipboard. Work requirement, ten. Hand it in in twenty minutes. Hail oh Hail Fort Ben!
(laughs)

KP: When you say you that had to fight to get a ...

GB: A commission?

KP: A commission. Was this after Pearl Harbor?

GB: Yes.

KP: So there was still reluctance even in terms of the physical?

GB: Well, what I ended up with because of a physical disability-- which I can't recall what is was right now-- they gave me a paper that said I could go into the service as a technical sergeant right off the bat and because [of] my R.O.T.C. experience. But the commission looked too nice, and I thought it would help if an act of Congress made me a gentleman, (laughs) so I went that direction.

KP: You have fond memories of Fort Benning?

GB: Oh yes, yes. Very much so.

KP: Now you had been through R.O.T.C. How good was your R.O.T.C. training versus the training you received at Fort Benning?

GB: Well that made everything a lot simpler because I was used to night patrol works and things like that. The only thing different was that ... one of the young Rockefellers was a commissioned officer there, and he had charge of a lot of the tank operations there, so we got friendly and would go out with him at night in a tank and try knocking down trees. (laughs) It was very effective that way.

KP: Do you remember which Rockefeller it was?

GB: Winnie ... Winthrop and he later became a governor, I think, out in, was it Arkansas?

KP: I think so.

GB: Well we've had some bad problems with governors from Arkansas. (laughs)

EC: When did you find out when you were going to be going to the Eastern theater or the Pacific theater?

GB: Well, first I'd better tell you-- when I got my commission they sent me down to a camp in Mississippi to join the 31st Infantry Division. I don't remember whether Bob went the same route I did, but we were in the 3rd Battalion of the 167th Infantry. The 167th was left over from the Rainbow Division ... in World War I. So we wore a rainbow shoulder insignia.

KP: You wore the Rainbow Division ...

GB: ... Rainbow medal on our shirt or on our collar after a while but originally on the epaulets.

KP: And you wore it throughout the war?

GB: Well, I didn't want something shiny when I was out there fighting Japanese, but yes, it was part of the uniform and ... [the] DD on our arms-- it was the Dixie Division, the Alabama National Guard.

KP: Now Bob Moss mentioned about the 31st, that it was in many ways a National Guard Division initially.

GB: Yes. Yes.

KP: And let's say there were more competent divisions in the Army as he characterized it. What was your experience in terms of leadership?

GB: Well, all the leaders were members of the National Guard that had been there for years. ... Colonel Stubbs, our battalion commander, was quite good. I don't think he was one of the

Alabama men. He had been a regular brought over. But there were people like-- oh there were a couple of majors we had that were quite up in the business world, and they knew how to lead men, and they continued doing that.

KP: So in other words, from your experiences, you didn't find a real problem with leadership?

GB: No. No. No. Some of the people we cadred in might have had some problems with. But, no we had one Major Wormy Castleman, who used to be a postman in Anadarko- not in Anadarko, that's a place in Oklahoma. Anniston, Alabama. ... But they weren't the sharpest West Pointers or anything like that, but some sharp West Pointers aren't that good. ... I deviated a little while ago, but we-- I was assigned out there, and then our battalion moved up to Fort Sill, Oklahoma where we became demonstration troops under the Artillery School of Fire. And that continued for quite a while until it was time for us to rejoin the division, and we being the bastard battalion that had quite a bit of catching up to do. ... We went to the-- I don't know the order of these, but we went first to the "Mouth of the Seneca" and learned some mountain climbing by scaling cliffs and repelling off them. Then we went down to the amphibious school in Virginia and got ourselves wet quite often invading the beaches and what have you and became familiar with Navy terminology and things like that. Then I left to go home on a leave. I don't know how I got the leave, and all of a sudden I got a call from one of the non-commissioned officers saying, "You'd better get back in a hurry." So, I packed my musette bag and went on back and got there after the division had moved out. So I had to find out where they were. And finally I caught up with them at an embarkation port in, I think it was Hampton Roads. And that's where we boarded the *Aconcagua* which was a Chilean luxury liner that had been converted to a troop ship. And we were issued all winter uniforms and all like that. And we started out across the Atlantic when all of a sudden we broke away from the convoy and went down through the Windward Islands and got to the Panama Canal zone, and then it didn't look like we were going to Europe anymore.

KP: But you were originally issued winter clothing?

GB: Yes.

KP: And did you know when you left port, where you were going?

GB: No, No. We thought we were going to cold weather warfare. That was the reason for our mountain climbing. That was the reason for a lot of the invasion tactics. And well, we could use both of those later on, but it was stated that we were definitely going to be assigned to the European theater. And when we got down to Balboa, we tied up at a wharf there for quite a while, and they'd bring the girls in from the U.S.O. to dance down on the pier while we're all leering over at the side of the ship. And then we joined a convoy to go out to the Pacific, and we were, I think, only one day out there when our means of forward propulsion left us, and we had no way of continuing. So we just laid out on the water in the confines of dark. ... Eventually a sea going tug was dispatched out of the Panama Canal zone and pulled us back to Balboa again, so that we could be repaired. And so it was 42 days after we loaded at Hampton Roads that we unloaded at Milne Bay in New Guinea, which is down in the extreme eastern tip of New Guinea.

And we were top secret all the time we got there, and the first radio tuned on, it was Tokyo Rose welcoming the 31st Infantry Division, named the battalions that were encoded. ... So, I think the Japanese knew we were coming. (laughter) ... It was a little bit hairy out in the ocean. ... All of a sudden out of nowhere, some American plane would come and start dive bombing us or diving down as if to release a bomb when all of a sudden, they recognized it as an American ship because it had the profile of a Japanese ship, and they're reading profiles, and we could have easily been blasted out of the water a few times. But it was a long journey. We were assigned to guard the troops in the hold and instead of going on eight hour shifts, we decided on twelve hour shifts so you had more time off in between. And so you-- I don't know why I got the forward hold, but down there, there's minimal light down there, and I'd be reading a book or something like that and all the GIs and all these stacked canvas, they looked like litters actually on there. They were throwing up a mile a minute because-- and it stunk to high heaven, but I've never gotten sea sick or air sick in my life, so I weathered it. But it wasn't the nicest environment down there.

KP: What did the men do most of the time?

GB: Well, we every once in a while we had calisthenics on deck and things like that. And there wasn't-- I mean they didn't have a swimming pool or anything like that. They had good food in the officer's mess. (laughter) I don't know about the others. But it was a rather smooth voyage because the Pacific isn't quite as violent as the Atlantic. And well should I go on? We arrived at Milne Bay ...

KP: I just have a few questions backing up a little. You spent a good part of your time training in the South and the Southwest?

GB: Yes.

KP: Had you been to the South before?

GB: No, actually I didn't really care to be in the South.

KP: Why do you say you did not care to be in the South?

GB: Well, I like the Northeast, and it's quite a change to go down South and still is. And the only reason we moved down there after I retired was because the state of New Jersey made the taxes so high that I just-- well it was the state and the town and things like that-- ... I found that I could go down to Florida and not have any income tax and the real taxes were less because I had bought my house in Maplewood and the taxes when I bought it was, oh just about a thousand dollars. When I sold it 25 years later the tax was over 8,000 dollars. So, it was rough keeping up with taxes, and I couldn't see that into retirement.

KP: Had you traveled much before you entered the military?

GB: No. No, we stuck fairly close to home. I don't think I even had gotten down to Washington before I got in the military. So New Jersey, New York, and maybe a little bit into Pennsylvania and that was it.

KP: What surprised you most about the South?

GB: The slow way of doing things and what have you. The manana attitude. Everything leave till tomorrow and things like that. But the troops you had were real good fighters, which seemed to be inbred into them.

KP: So what did you think of the men you led? They were from the South.

GB: Well there were a few trouble makers because we did empty out the Birmingham jailhouse before we took off, and thus-- we got a few undesirables. When we were in Fort Sill, [there] were a couple that wouldn't go out on our forced marches with us. And so we were ordered to drag them along. ... You had quite a few people grabbing them and pulling them along until they couldn't stand the burning of the pavement on their bottoms. But it wasn't bad.

KP: Did all the men in your unit know how to read and write?

GB: ... Oh, ... I'd say it's a small percentage of that unit ... knew how to read and write. The ones that did got promoted.

KP: Really, they became the corporals and the sergeants?

GB: Yes.

KP: You were also at Fort Sill and you were detached from your division? How long did that last? Several months?

GB: It lasted several months, but whether it lasted over a year, I'm not sure. I remember out there getting double pneumonia and that was no fun. I went home on medical leave after that and all of a sudden got a call to come back because unfortunately when we were detached, I was made the class A finance officer [for the entire Battalion.]

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

GB: The class A finance officer was charged with paying each member in cash at the end of the month, and I-- when I was ill, I went home on medical leave, but I got an urgent call to come back because there that 40,000 dollar check was in my name and waiting for me, and there's nobody else to sign it and disburse it. So, I had to take a train to Chicago and then take a train south to Memphis. And then take ... the Rock Island Rocket to Oklahoma City and things. And I finally got there, but almost had a riot on my hands because they were waiting for the money. What I would have to do is take this 40,000 dollar check and give the bank, the local bank, a breakdown of how I wanted the money. We weren't allowed to pay them in anything larger than a twenty dollar bill. And so there were a lot of small bills, and I had to go into the bank and carry

this back. And then I found out why there's so many honest people in this world, because there's no way you're going to run with all that money in a suit case. (laughs)

KP: So you had a lot of responsibility?

GB: Yeah. Yeah, I did. That was-- one of the biggest ones there was having the payroll. And what you had to do when you got the money back from the bank, you had to count out the money into pay envelopes, and then you had to count it again when the fellow came to the desk and saluted you. And count it out in front of him. Then he had to count to make sure it was right. So there was a lot of counting in there. And most people, even if they didn't know how to read and write, knew money. (laughs) So it was a little bit of a drawn out process. I didn't look forward to the monthly payroll, but I managed. I was happy when I got rid of that job.

KP: You mentioned that you had some trouble makers in your unit. What kind of discipline problems did you have?

GB: I had ones that-- we went on a forced march, 51 miles through the-- I don't know what they call it-- above our camp, the Medicine Bluffs, I guess it was, through the Medicine Bluffs. ... There wasn't much dirt or grass you could walk on, so you had to walk on pavement. And it was rough, but you'd get out there, and you'd have a ten minute break ... after you went ten miles or so. ... And then there would be some of them that would take off and find an Indian girl, and they could have love with her. I didn't see how they could even walk. (laughs) But it was that sort of thing. They didn't have the inbred discipline that you would expect from your troops.

KP: What about gambling? Was there much gambling in your [division]?

GB: On our ship, our cruise ship coming overseas, there was a lot. The gambling was mostly on matching serial numbers on bills. In other words, you had to have the best poker hand. And so a lot of money changed hands. You were supposed to just bring your money out blindly from your pocket. But I think some people rearranged their bills, so that they would have the good ones. But ... you could go through quite a bit of money in a day's time and in 42 days.

KP: Did many of your men attend religious services during the war, in training, on the troop ship, when you made it to ... New Guinea? How often would they attend services?

GB: Well, whenever we had a service on a Sunday or something like that, they'd all be attending there. I don't know how many believers we had or how many unbelievers we had, but they knew that God was there to protect them. And they needed all the protection they could get. ...

KP: Were chaplains very important to your unit?

GB: ... We had different chaplains. They were important, but a couple of them were a bit far out as far as their sex lives and things like that. And it was somewhat of an embarrassment to have a man of the cloth that's out just looking for women.

KP: Really, these were Protestant chaplains?

GB: Yes. Yeah. So

KP: When you say they were looking for women, were they looking when they were in the United States or when they got to the Pacific?

GB: Well, I didn't have that much to do with their evenings in the states, but overseas yes. They were looking for anything they could get, even if it had bones through its nose and through its ears. They still thought it's a woman. (laughs) And I ... don't know, I, when I was assigned to Camp Shelby-- this is before I was sent out to the other-- was put in with a Christian minister of the Christian Church. And he wanted me to drive down with him to headquarters at Camp Shelby because he wanted to show me a certain woman that you would just love to do something with. (laughs) I didn't think that should come out of a chaplain. ...

KP: So some of the chaplains' behavior was a big surprise?

GB: Yeah. Yeah.

KP: Your men, did they ever get in any trouble? Was there any trouble between your men and any black communities when they were stationed in the South?

GB: No. No, my men would go out and steal a chicken from one farm and take it to another farm and ask the woman to cook it for them and make some biscuits and things like that. But no they didn't have anything like that. We had some problems overseas with black troops, but that was ...

KP: Where did you have the problem?

GB: Well, this was up in Morotai Island. The black troops were mostly Quartermaster, and we ... had been the ones who had made the invasion and secured the perimeter and then finally we were relieved to come back to the base zone. Other troops moved up to take our position. I must remind you, we weren't in there to take an entire island when we invaded. Our charge was to take enough for an air base, so that they could set it up and get their planes in and get a little bit closer to Japan or the Philippines. So ... these Quartermaster Corps were down to unload ships that were bringing in supplies for us, and they-- when ... we were relieved on perimeter and came back, the Quartermaster group had gone on strike, because they didn't want to unload anymore ships. And so we didn't fight them or anything like that, but we then were battle weary and had to take their jobs and unload the ships. We didn't look too nicely at that.

KP: Were there ever any fights between your men and black soldiers?

GB: I don't believe so, no. No, there was just the idea that most of them when this happened wanted to send all the blacks back on a ship and then get them out in the mid ocean and open the sea cocks and let them swim for shore. It was not a happy group, but ...

KP: Did you ever have any other contact with black troops in Mindanao or elsewhere in the Pacific?

GB: Well, in Mindanao we had the trouble of having all the Muslims down there, and you couldn't even look at a woman down there, or she'd have your throat slit. No. No, I never did have any trouble.

KP: Your unit first landed in New Guinea?

GB: Yes, Milne Bay.

KP: ... I want to ask you a good bit about New Guinea and the other campaigns you were involved in, but as a young second lieutenant, how important was your sergeant to your success?

GB: Well, he knew all the ins and outs of the games and was very important. I think he was one of the most important people I worked with. They were real southern boys too.

KP: So your sergeant was also a southerner?

GB: Yes.

KP: Was he National Guard or regular Army?

GB: He was National Guard. ... We were absorbed by the-- well not by the regular Army-- we became AUS, Armies of the United States, rather than U.S. Army. But, no we- the sergeants were very important to what was going on.

KP: And so you had a good relationship with yours?

GB: Yes.

KP: In New Guinea, what missions did you have?

GB: I'm trying to recall. This is a blank part of my existence. We advanced up toward the Dutch New Guinea, but I don't recall ever having gotten up there or how high we went. Whether we just went to Biak Island or whether we went below that. But we were holding perimeters there too, and it was a thing where you'd have to fire during the night. ... We had one thing where two of our battalions were pinned down by enemy fire until we found out the enemy was the other battalion. (laughs) You know, if the intelligence hadn't gotten through to locate the other troops, ... so you get fired at [and] you fire back. And it became quite a heated battle for a while, but I don't think there were any casualties at the time.

KP: Was mistaking your friends for your foe, was that a common occurrence?

GB: Yes, I'd say it was.

KP: So that wasn't completely unusual?

GB: ... You depend a lot on your battalion or your division intelligence officer to locate all your units. And you're given assignments, and you generally know where the others are, but you don't always know about it.

KP: How much contact did your unit have with the enemy in New Guinea?

GB: ... Well, when we were in one of the upper perimeters, and I still don't know where it was, we had gun fights every night, and they lasted through the evening, but we were dug in, and we had fairly secure positions there with sand bags on top of logs and things like that. But then I went out with a few scouting parties, and we were taken around to the rear of the Japanese lines and it was-- we were told to scout the capabilities of the Japanese and know ... where their concentrations were, and where ... their munitions dumps were and things like that ... and to take prisoners. But this was a hairy thing taking prisoners when you're behind the other persons' line because [when] you'd bring them through ... their own lines, you would have a chance of being killed because he'd warn some others. So, this was bad. At times you forget the Articles of War and after you would question somebody, you'd find a convenient bayonet or something like that and eliminate any possibility of him telling about you being there. It was just because of where you were ...

KP: How many of these raids did you go on?

GB: Oh, quite a few, but didn't always have the same results. But, we just wanted to know what the enemy was doing. ... Once when we were out and they started firing, I jumped into ... a shell crater and also a Japanese jumped into a shell crater, the same one [crater]. And that was a bit hairy. But my family had been nice to me and gave me a shoulder holster, so I didn't have to reach way down to get my colt, and I got out of that one.

KP: In mentioning that, it reminds me of a scene from *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

GB: Oh yes?

KP: You never saw ...

GB: I never saw *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

KP: ... where two people end up in the same shell hole?

GB: No. No. Well that's-- I mean you look for protection and if there's a hole in the ground, that's some of the best protection you could find. ...

KP: What's your most vivid memory of combat?

GB: Well, we'll have to get a little bit further along. I finally, while we were in this upper position, they needed a division morale officer, the regimental morale officer. And so they put me in charge of disbursing baseball bats (laughs) and gloves and things like that. So, I left the command of my platoon, and I worked with morale and things like that. And it was that job that set me up-- well, I'm getting ahead of it. That must have been up in Morotai, excuse me.

KP: Oh yeah, that's fine. ... But in New Guinea you did quite a bit of patrolling and ...

GB: Yeah. Well when I first got to New Guinea, the division sent me to the School of Tropical Medicine in Milne Bay so that I'd be acquainted with the problems facing us and things like that. And then I was supposed to disburse this knowledge to the troops and see that they got the proper medications to hold down the symptoms of malaria and this, that and the other thing. So I taught the difference between an anopheles and an aedes mosquito and things like that. But that was quite a few weeks that course. But it was good. I don't know whether I used the knowledge later on, but it was there.

KP: When you would go on raids, you mentioned sometimes you couldn't take a prisoner back.

GB: Yeah.

KP: Who did the interrogating of prisoners? Did you have someone who spoke Japanese?

GB: Well no. It was mostly pigeon that we would work in. ... We all had these guides to different languages and things like that. So it was a lot of body language. It was a lot of everything, but the locating of munitions dumps and things like that was just seeing the things and knowing where the traffic was going in and dropping off things.

KP: But let's say you did manage to get a prisoner back behind lines while on patrol. Who would then interrogate them? Was there anyone in your unit?

GB: Usually one of the sergeants as well as the officer in charge, and we would, both of us grab him and ask the questions. You generally could make out. Years later my wife and I got to Japan from Malaysia, and we ended up in Kobe and couldn't speak any of the language. It's a bad language to try to learn. But finally found our way to a railroad station, and it was the wrong one but ... (laughs)

KP: Your men, would they ever take souvenirs from Japanese soldiers?

GB: Well, everybody was looking for samurai swords or what have you. But such as ears and things like that, no.

KP: So none of your men engaged in this?

GB: No, they weren't cannibals.

KP: How many men did you lose in your unit?

GB: Well we're getting to another point later on in the story. I could almost say totally.

KP: But in New Guinea, did you lose very many men?

GB: No. No.

KP: How long roughly were you at New Guinea?

GB: That's another hairy thing. I don't recall. It seemed a matter of months, but it might have been less. I don't know, because they prepped us up for the landing in Morotai and that took more significance.

KP: Did you have much contact with the civilian population in New Guinea?

GB: Well the civilians were basically just natives in loin cloths and things like that. Most of them were red headed because they used lye on their hair. They would dip their head in lye, and it would change it from the black kinky hair to red kinky hair. But, no I didn't.

KP: Did your men ever trade with the population?

GB: We didn't trade. Men would get into a banana plantation and take their bananas. So there was no trade there. We'd get into a field of peppers or something like that and try to spike up our "C" rations and get sorry later on the following day. ... But no, I don't think we did any trading.

KP: Did any of your men go to prostitutes in the local population?

GB: I don't think so.

KP: Yeah.

GB: Some of them went to prostitutes in the Red Cross and things like that. (laughs) Some of those girls were in it for the money, you know, but no.

EC: I was just going to say, stateside sort of created this less than human image of the Japanese. Did you look or did a lot of your men look at the Japanese as these barbaric kind of people?

GB: Looked at them as some sort of wild animal, and yeah, it was hard to think of them as human, but when they died in your hands, they were human when they were In other words you could shoot one of them, and you shot him because he was the enemy, but when he was lying there dying, he was a human being.

KP: When you had shot that soldier closely, was that the closest encounter you ever had?

GB: That was the closest encounter I had. I've had some fairly close, but that was eye to eye, eyeball to eyeball.

EC: And after you did, did you stay there or did you leave right away? In *All Quiet on the Western Front*, I forget his name, but he got the fellow's name, he wrote to his family

GB: Nope.

KP: How long were you in the crater?

GB: It was a matter minutes. It wasn't any long thing.

KP: So you never, for example, you never got his papers?

GB: No, no, no. I was too anxious to wipe his blood off of me.

KP: So the blood spilled on you?

GB: Yeah. It splattered out. It was a close encounter.

EC: Were you more fearful of the Japanese than say the Germans? Were you more fearful of them?

GB: Well my mother was a German, came from German background, so I was never fearful of Germans. I don't know, but I didn't fight any Germans.

EC: Even after hearing about what they were doing over in Europe to millions of people?

GB: I didn't hear about that until considerably later. I was out of the service by that time, so I was unaware of it. But there were a lot of things the Japanese were doing that ...

KP: Would you have rather been in the European theater or the Pacific theater?

GB: Well my life since that date has brought me to every theater in the world. I've-- my company-- I've built factories in just about every part of the world, and so I've been to all these places. ... So I didn't miss anything not going to Europe because ...

KP: But would you have rather fought the German enemy or the Japanese?

GB: I didn't have any druthers. (laughs)

KP: Really, wherever they sent you that would have been fine?

GB: Yes.

KP: You mentioned, your mother was German, had some German background. Did she rest easier that you were fighting against Japan?

GB: No, ... she's an American, and so it didn't mean anything. ... She was born in the USA. Her thoughts were completely that way. At first, when we were little, we would tell our grandmother to speak Rahway. We couldn't understand her German language and things like that. So there was no real tie other than her immediate family was German.

KP: Do you have any other memories of New Guinea that we have not asked about?

EC: What was the jungle training like?

GB: Well, we had to do some training from-- what was it-- Port Moresby up over the mountain and things like that. And it was rough doing that, but then I'd been on British army ... commando things since then, and they were just as rough as anything down there.

KP: Did you ever have any contact in New Guinea with soldiers from other countries?

GB: Yeah, Australians. Australians oddly enough, had to keep the men away from them. But they'd come in and tell the fellahs that they had a Japanese tied up in the woods out there, and ... they wanted to kill him so that they write home and say, they killed their first Japanese, and it would cost them 20 dollars or something like that. ... The Australian soldiers were fairly-- but some of them were nice fellahs.

KP: Were there ever any fights between the Australians and the Americans?

GB: I imagine so, but not within my candor or anything like that.

KP: So you never had a problem when your unit came into contact with Australians?

GB: No. No. ... Later on if we still have time, when I talk about my last battle, it was under the command of an Australian cruiser and things like that.

KP: Well maybe we should move to Morotai because you took part in the invasion of Morotai.

GB: Yeah. Yeah we were in the first waves, and during that time in an invasion craft right next to mine-- it was just one of those, what was it?, LCPs-- it was MacArthur standing up there with his bright gold bayonet. He wasn't worried worth a darn, and he was leading the troops in there. Later when people said that he was not a good general, I felt that he was.

KP: So you were glad to see him?

GB: Yeah, yeah. It brought you together, and you knew you had to do some things.

KP: Was that your only contact you ever had with MacArthur, when you saw him?

GB: Yeah, yeah. On invasions and things like that. ... It was healthy to have him aboard, but I don't know whether you're aware of the difference in the theaters, the Southwest-Pacific and the Central-Pacific and things like that. Way back at the early part of the war, the Marines and everything were together under a unified command, and the Marines had been taught to go in on an invasion, but that was the end of it. They went in, and they set up their guns and didn't move in ten feet beyond the beach head. And MacArthur didn't like that. He wanted to order the Marines to go in and fight until something, until you accomplish your mission. And since this was not acceptable to the Marine commander, he finally ordered all Marines out of our theater. And so he had a bunch of people that were very gung-ho that were against him, because he did that to them.

KP: So you had no Marines in your operation?

GB: No Marines at all. It was always just the Army with some ships backing us. ... Our last invasion, we finally had some rockets rather than just gun fire on the first invasion. What we hated basically was we'd go in, and we'd cut in through the jungle with our machetes and felt as if it belonged to us, and then we'd come back and the 5th Air Force would already have their installation there, and it'd be off limits to us. And we felt that we had really worked to get in there, and this wasn't right and things like that. And then the 5th Air Force, every time they were alerted of a Japanese flying or something like that, they'd take off with all their planes so none of their planes would get hurt. And so everybody was anti-5th Air Force.

KP: So there was tension?

GB: ... And at night when the Japanese would come in at times, and they hadn't been forewarned, and the Japs would drop some phosphorus bombs, my troops would be out there cheering on the Japs, because they were wrecking the planes and things like that of the 5th Air Force. (laughs) And this was a heck of a thing, ... inter-service rivalries. And the Air Force was eating well, and we weren't. We had Australian C-rations and things like that, and everything tasted like mutton. Even the little 'ole wafers that were in there were made with mutton grease. ...

KP: So what was the difference between a K-ration and a C-ratio?

GB: C-rations were in cans. You had two cans, one of them was supposed to have a little stew in it and the other one, some candies and some wafers and things like that.

KP: You mainly would have Australian C-rations?

GB: They were all Australian C-rations.

KP: Throughout the war?

GB: Well, you have to remember another thing is this South Pacific was not important to the United States. And all the food, all the clothing, everything went to Europe. So any leftovers, we might get. But it wasn't till the end of the European war that we started getting some arms and rations.

KP: So you in many ways felt like a stepchild in terms of supply?

GB: Yes, we all were step-children over there. ... I imagine there was reason for this, but I can't really fathom what the reason was.

KP: How difficult was the landing at Morotai?

GB: ... No landing to me is really difficult. It's after you're in. That's why I hated to see ... the Marines go out because they never went in to have those real hand to hand battles until maybe sometimes in the Central-Pacific. But back in those really early days, everything on the beach heads is just eliminated because there's so much armaments that go in there. Everything's been blasted, so you have to go a little bit behind the blasting area so that you can get some hand to hand combat and things like that. So, the landing itself was not difficult, ... but the advancing to establish a perimeter out far enough so you that could protect any air strip that was erected there.

KP: What are your memories of the fighting on Morotai? How much fighting did your unit engage in?

GB: Well, my unit, when we went back all of a sudden, we were on a hill way back in the jungle and all of a sudden we [were] cut off. We were completely surrounded. So, it was ... just firing to keep alive and hoping you'd have enough ammunition to hold them off. Finally some C-47s, which is the old DC-3 came over and dropped some cans of rations down to us and that's when some of the first casualties occurred. They didn't use parachutes or anything. They just dropped them at low level, and there were a few of the troops that got killed by the falling cases.

KP: By cans falling?

GB: By cases, yeah, cases of foodstuffs coming down or ammunition coming down and hitting them on the head.

KP: How did your men feel about this? Did they view this as inept?

GB: No, they knew we needed the supplies. But there was no other way of getting them to us. No easy way. The rough thing about it in the jungle is you have a body there that becomes a stinking-- I don't know what-- and you're trying to keep it away from you and wrap it up in ponchos and things like that. And in a few days time, when things clear up and you could carry it out on a bamboo pole, it's bloated to about three times its original size. So its not a pretty sight.

KP: And you carried out your dead from this?

GB: We always carried out our dead, yeah. But a lot of those were not shot. A lot of them were hit by foodstuffs and ammunition that was dropped down, which we needed.

KP: So your men understood that, and you understood that.

GB: Yeah, we didn't think anybody was out to get us. But somebody ... was trying to help us survive. And it was unfortunate, but some got hit. But that's part of war.

KP: How long did it take before your unit got out of that situation?

GB: I think we were surrounded for about three days until they could fight through and open a path for us to leave that point. But it became a sailant on the perimeter. And it-- I don't know, it's too many years ago. (laughs)

KP: Did you do any patrolling like you did at New Guinea?

GB: Yes. Yes, we had to go on patrol. I'll never forget, one night, a Japanese came in, and we had our perimeter set up right on the edge of a marshy area. And he was coming through, and he got caught in some quicksand, and he was yelling for somebody to come and rescue him, but the guys just stood there and watched him getting sucked down. ... He was the enemy, you know.

KP: When you would take prisoners, what did you think when prisoners were in fact taken? You confronted the enemy close at hand. Did they seem like you in a way?

GB: Not until they were hurt or something like that. If they were injured, you know they seemed like us. But aside from that they were ...

KP: They were the enemy.

GB: ... the enemy, you know.

KP: How long would your unit stay on the line in New Guinea and Morotai?

GB: Usually it was quite a few weeks before they'd call you back, but they finally-- because of proper conditions and things like that-- they had to bring you back because you'd waste away there. So it-- I sort of remember back then to when you were on a beach, on your way up and everybody would, nobody brought a bathing suit with them over there, so you'd go into the surf and swim, and then they'd announce that a USO unit was coming. There'd be no nude bathing. (laughs) The guys would roam around and forget about the USO coming up than give up their bathing privileges. But it was difficult out there too, because you had no sanitary facilities other than a slit trench [a slit trench or straddle trench was used as a substitute for a toilet]. When you got the heavy rains it was rough trying to maintain your footing astride the slit trench until-- because it'd be like a clay there, and your feet would tend to slip out from under you. So it was difficult relieving yourself. (laughs)

EC: Did you ever get any tropical diseases? You mentioned earlier, that you got double pneumonia once.

GB: Well that was back in the states.

EC: Did you ever get malaria?

GB: Well, ... we had to take a pill called Atabrine which was a yellow dye. And I remember when I was flown back to the USA, and my parents saw me for the first time. They thought I was Japanese because my skin had yellowed, the pigmentation went into my skin.

KP: Really?

GB: My body was yellow, and this scared my mother. (laughs) She thought I had caught something bad overseas. ... No, at times I felt like I had malaria, but you can't get rid of the stuff, so I don't think I ever had it.

KP: What about trench foot or something else?

GB: No. You'd have to watch how you go through the deep water and things like that, where you have a lot of these banyan trees and things like that. Some leeches would get on you and start draining blood out of your system. But, that was about it.

EC: What about weight loss? Did you lose weight as a result of the lack of food?

GB: Well I left, when I left the USA, I was about, oh, I'd say 188 pounds, and when I returned to the USA, I was 146. So, (laughs) I guess that ... the pigmentation didn't make up for the weight loss. ... Well, shall we get on with after Morotai or do we want to get on ...?

...

KP: I had just one question regarding-- you mentioned that you became the morale officer.

GB: Yeah.

KP: And how did that come about?

GB: They needed a morale officer, and I guess I was the senior one there. So they gave me the job. But that came into my next assignment, which when my regimental commander came up to me and said, "George,"-- well I was being sent back to the states, George Washington University to learn more about the morale and things like that. I was supposed to take some courses there, and I was to fly out the next day, but the commander came to me and said, "George, I don't have any officers that have trained with our troops, and we got one item, and I think you owe it to the troops to go out and help lead this invasion." And I sort of was suckered into that. (laughs)

KP: Whereas you could have gone to George Washington University?

GB: I could've flown right out and been home without any problem, and then he asked me to do that, and I volunteered. And that's one thing you should never do in the service, is volunteer. But anyhow, we didn't know what our invasion was, and it was led off by this Australian cruiser I was talking about. When D-Day minus one, we got to open some secret orders and found out that we were to hit the St. David Islands, which were called Pegun Islands by the natives, P E G U N. But anyhow it-- they said there was no intelligence out of there for the last nine months because nobody they had sent out to scout it out had returned. So it was a little bit-- we didn't know what our enemy was, and what the job was to have a ship to shore operation for the first island. It was three islands on a coral reef.

...

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

KP: This continues an interview with George Boggs on October 19, 1994 with the oral history project of World War II with Kurt Piehler and ...

EC: Ed Colavito.

KP: So you were saying in terms of the invasion of this island ...

GB: St. David Islands, yes, we found out there was no intelligence on how many troops were there. So all we could see was the operation, and the initial operation was ship to shore on this drying coral reef. We landed on the first island which was just about, oh, I guess a half mile wide by about two and a half miles long. And we laid down rockets and everything, the first time I'd seen rockets in action and had no real opposition. I didn't hear any enemy fire at all. So, we moved up to the tip of that island and set up our artillery to fire on to the next islands so we could soften anything that was there. And so then it was a radio silence when you're going on an invasion. We all were in tracked landing crafts. It was like tanks but open top, and these were things that would float in the water and go over. So we went from the lagoon side to attack this next island, and it was radio silence, and the Australian cruiser was to lay down initial fire which was supposed to occupy at least an hour before we got in. And as we were moving out, we could see that the guns-- naval guns have a fairly flat projectory, and they couldn't clear the mask in the island. In other words, if they tried to clear it the stuff would go way beyond where it should. So the landing was out at a beachhead that hadn't been secured or anything like that by fire.

... There was no way to pull anybody back. We had radio silence. I think it was to H + 5 ["H" hour plus five minutes] or something like that, which meant that when we hit the beach we had 5 minutes before we could open any radios and things like that. That became unfortunate because when we opened the radios, we found that the Quartermaster Corps had forgot or the Signal Corps had forgotten to put batteries into our radios. So we had radio silence well beyond that thing. But we went in. ... The place we were to land at was right against a shelf on the island. In other words, the tracked vehicles couldn't get up on it. They came in and stopped. And the Japanese were set up with a cross-firing machine gun there. And since they were all open top, they fired and killed just about everybody in this reinforced battalion that we were going in with. So ... of course our attack plan called us to go over the side and then charge forward, and it was

rough to charge forward because there was a shelf there. But anyhow, the fire was rough and quite a few people were killed, just about the entire battalion.

KP: So you lost your entire ...

GB: Just about the entire battalion, yeah. ... I got injured on the way over, over the side, and it was a hard fall with all the equipment on. So there wasn't too much I could do. And I managed to crawl up the thing and do some firing. But all of a sudden the Seabees that they had brought along with them ... to establish some sort of a base there-- actually what they felt was there was a sonar station there. It was an early warning system for the Japanese, so it could tell all our troop movements. So I don't know whether you know where the Pegun Islands are, but they're up off the northwest tip of New Guinea. And so we had the Seabees on there to immobilize any of their equipment and plow it under and this, that and the other thing. But those fellows who were not trained to fight volunteered to go in and rescue our battalion. So it was the Seabees that saved us. They also used their tanks to dig up long trenches there to lay bodies one next to the other in a big communal grave, ... excuse me So anyhow, I can't go on.

KP: No, that's okay.

...

GB: In a couple days, they picked us up and took me back to the general hospital on Biak Island where I spent quite a few months lying in bed and seeing some of my friends that had managed it out of there just die because they couldn't pump anything else into them. So it was a long, long time and then all of a sudden my orders came through, and I was going to be flown back to the States and got aboard this hospital plane. It was litters from the deck all the way up and on both sides.

KP: How badly were you wounded?

GB: I had a problem with a shot against one of my vertebrae, and it splintered it. ... I lost action in my legs for the longest time. But anyhow, they flew us back to the States and our first stop was Johnston Island which was quite a bit west and south of Hawaii. And we landed there not before three of our four engines failed. (laughs) It was rough, especially when you're in a plaster cast, and you ... can't do anything about if your plane went under or so.

KP: How long were you in a plaster cast for?

GB: Until I got to Thomas England's General Hospital down in Atlantic City, and they operated there.

KP: So you were in a plaster cast for how long?

GB: For months.

KP: Which in a tropical climate must have been ...?

GB: Yeah, it's rough because you feel like everything's eating you up and things like that. But at least I was alive. ... So anyhow, now we're back to the states. We flew back to the states. We got to Johnston Island, finally got to Hawaii, and they flew another plane out to replace ours, because three engine changes [was] sort of rough back in those days. And then we flew to California-- which place it was, San Francisco or L.A., I don't know.

KP: You were in a cast?

GB: Then they flew us down to the Mexican border and then all of a sudden we're up in New Jersey. And [I] went to the Thomas England General Hospital. And my room there was the one that Rudy Vallee had as, for his honeymoon. But mine was no honeymoon. ... That went on for a while, and then they sent me down to-- what was it?-- Asheville, that mountain area in the Carolinas ...

KP: Yes.

GB: ... and put me up at the Grove Park Inn. ...

KP: So it took you a long time to recover from your injury?

GB: Yeah, and then, finally they put me on semi-active duty down in Camp Blanding, Florida, mostly office work. And then I was brought back to Georgia to the Lawson General Hospital, and one day they brought me before a retirement board, and-- it's almost like a court martial, the retirement board.

KP: Had you thought of making the military a career?

GB: Yeah, I had. And they thanked me after I gave my testimony and all that, and the doctors gave their testimony. And I was sent on terminal leave when I was mobile again. And I went home, and ... it was at the end of February in '46 that they-- I got a notice from the U.S. Army that I had been retired for medical [reasons]. So I was on pension for the rest of my life. This has been handy through the years.

KP: How long did you suffer from the wounds? Do you still suffer from them?

GB: I don't have any trouble. Once they relieved the pressure on the spinal cord, I got-- well through, what kind of therapy do they call that, when they're working on your muscles and things like that? It's rough if you don't use legs for quite a while. Physiotherapy. They got me back so that I could walk without any trouble. And I got back home after my terminal leave and on the 25th of March, I went with Colgate-Palmolive.

KP: And you remained with Colgate for your career?

GB: For my whole career, yes. I spent 40 years with [them].

KP: ... Did you talk much about the war after the war? What would you say to people?

GB: I didn't. It wasn't a subject that I liked to talk about, and everytime I would, it would bring tears to my eyes.

KP: So the war was a very painful memory for you?

GB: Yeah. I'll never forget though, when I was on maybe my second overseas assignment in Switzerland. We were over in Zurich, Switzerland for three years and three months and went to see that picture *The Bridge over River Kwai*, and that was a shocker to go to. When the planes started coming in, I dove to go under my seat in the theater.

KP: Really that movie had that much of an impact?

GB: Really, it was that bad.

KP: How realistic do you think the movie was?

GB: I thought it was very realistic and since that time, traveling about the Far East and things like that, it brought a lot back. I mean, I've been living in those areas. I've been living in the rest of the world, down in Africa, down in South America, in the islands and things like that. So it brought a lot of things to me.

KP: Have you seen other movies related to the Pacific war? Did other ones leave as much of an impression as *Bridge*?

GB: Can't think of any. I've seen films, short films on some of the bombings and things. I've seen a series on-- what's his name, that Marine colonel that had an heir? He was sort of ... not of a regular ilk. But he, I can't think of his name, but anyhow, all the things that-- but that's not quite as evident as that *Bridge over River Kwai*.

KP: It left a real impression?

GB: Yeah.

KP: Did you ever join any veteran's organizations?

GB: No I didn't. I've been asked to on frequent occasions. They still ask me, but now in a couple of weeks, I'll be 74 years of age. I can't see joining one. I never really wanted to get in American Legion and thought maybe the Veteran of Foreign Wars would be a little bit closer to what I had done, but I don't know.

KP You mentioned you went back to Japan. How did that feel to go to Japan?

GB: Well, Japan, I just went this time for the beauty of it. Well, I've been to Japan working, just on short term assignments. But this time, my wife and I ... and children had been over in Malaysia. It was Malaya when we first got there. It was right at the end of the emergency period. People were still living inside of barbed wire enclosures and things like that. So we stayed there for a couple of years on assignment, and then we went home. We flew to Bangkok first and stayed there for about a couple of weeks and then flew on to Hong Kong and stayed there for a couple of weeks and then got on a ship and went up to Japan. And I told you a little bit about Japan. And then we got back on the ship at Yokohama and went toward Hawaii and about two days out in Hawaii, I got the shingles. (laughs) So that was a heck of a vacation. ... But I've been all over the world with my company. I've built in Africa. I've been on a lot of the bigger islands off the coast of Africa.

KP: Did you think your military experience helped you in your career?

GB: It helped me realize that you had to work with other people too-- not everybody had the same go-gettiveness as Americans did. ... I'll never forget ... when I started to build a factory in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I decided that we'd make things a little bit simpler by using a combination of a concrete pump and a monorail to hopper the concrete out and things like that. And it wasn't till I started this thing in motion which was going to save me a heck of a lot of time in construction when they used it as I had intended. But then they got the hopper car. They had to stop, and it dumped out onto a sheet of plywood, and there were all these Chinese girls with the yokes and the galvanized pails at the end, and the guys shoveling into it. They'd walk up a long ramp and get over the building and pour the stuff. So I mean you have to get used to this stuff. I remember building in Switzerland when everybody in the neighborhood or wherever we were going to put the factory had to see a profile of the building to see whether it would spoil their view before we could start erecting anything. And then all the false work there was bamboo poles along the outside of the thing. And then since we had to buy the property from five different owners, it was a little bit rough because each one of them wanted to contract the building, so I had five tracked gantry cranes in my air space. It was hairy at times. (laughs)

KP: What has been your most enjoyable foreign assignment with Colgate?

GB: Well, I think my first one in Havana, Cuba although perhaps Batista broke that up a bit by his taking over from Carlos Prío Socarras, who was the elected President, who was one of the most dishonest politicians until I could name some later ones in the U.S. (laughs) ... It was quite a good assignment. In other words, I couldn't get a thing through customs way back and then the revolution came and Batista released everything from customs, so we could go ahead with our construction of our factory. And ... it was quite a job. I enjoyed that assignment. It was my first overseas assignment, and there are some beautiful places in Havana. But there was one young student at the time at the University of Havana that was causing a lot of trouble. He would take the furniture out of the classrooms and burn it out in front of the stoops and things like that. You most likely heard of him, Fidel Castro. (laughs)

KP: Did you ever meet him when you were in Cuba?

GB: Yeah. Well, as a student. In other words, not [as Cuba's leader] My wife warned the State Department when they started backing Castro. You know they were against Batista at the time. And she warned them. She said, "He's a communist. You'll never get him out of there once you get him in there." None of them would listen to her.

KP: You said your wife warned them. Who did she warn? Did she warn the ambassador?

GB: There was an assistant Secretary of State by the name of Dallas Townsend, who she warned and he laughed. "This can't be true." Since then he has died, and I guess he doesn't know the mess that was created over there. But this, I mean you could tell the character of somebody by what they do back in school at times, and he was a no good one.

KP: So this was widely known about his burning the furniture?

GB: Yeah. Yeah. I've seen the results of it. So it was a shame because Cuba was a nice country back then. ... We've had some wonderful assignments. Switzerland, we were there for three years and three months, and we enjoyed that, but the people are not quite as friendly as they were down in Cuba. And then our next big one was down in Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur where we were really part of the international set there. And that was very interesting.

KP: You mentioned you did some commando training. Where was that?

GB: That was in-- not training, but used their commando courses while we were up in Frazier's Hill. A bunch of the kids there decided that I should lead them on a march through this. And we got down to the bottom of this one hill. It was rough getting out there. Then a couple of the kids got hysterical. They wanted to go back to mommy, and I wanted to go ahead because I knew there was only one way. That was to go ahead. And they [knew] they had to go back, and I almost killed myself because I tried to climb up slopes that were only meant to go down. And so finally got them home, and the British commando officer filed out. He said, "That course is impossible to run backwards." And here I did it with a bunch of young kids. (laughs) We all were bloody when we got home. But I managed to get into ... one of these big galvanized pails there and soak in hot water. We were uncomfortable. It was quite a night. But then we, well we've been through Switzerland. We've been through Malaysia. I've had the family also in Denmark, and that they enjoyed tremendously. Especially some skiing vacations up in Norway and things like that. Denmark doesn't have any hills or anything, so it's sort of hard to do that. And then there's other places that I've even enjoyed without my family, like through Africa. My wife never wanted to go on assignment with me in Africa.

KP: So she stayed home in New Jersey?

GB: Yeah. ... She raised our three kids there while I was traveling around. And it's been an interesting life. Actually as I told you I was a mechanical engineer and mostly-- well that's about it.

KP: Yeah, I just have a few more questions. Did your wife meet you during the war?

GB: No, I met her in Colgate-Palmolive.

KP: Really.

GB: ... She was hired on as a clerk in our engineering office, and my immediate reaction to her was I didn't like her, and her immediate reaction to me was she didn't like me, and before you knew it, we were married. (laughs) ... We married in 1950. So we've been together a few years.

KP: Colgate-Palmolive was very aggressive in expanding overseas ...

GB: It was. It was.

KP: ... compared to say Proctor and Gamble.

GB: Well, Proctor and Gamble did a lot, but like on my Havana, Cuba assignment, I went out as an individual engineer building a complete detergent plant. And they had a similar job going on, and they sent twelve engineers down for it.

KP: So you had a lot of autonomy when you were out in the field?

GB: Yeah. ... On my Swiss assignment I had another American engineer along with me and over in Malaya, I hired local fellows that had been to American universities.

KP: Malaysians?

GB: ... Well, no. They were Chinese. All of my engineers were Chinese. In Malaya or Malaysia - the Malaysians are not ones that really want to work. They know that Allah will provide, so they'd lay down under a tree and wait till a piece of fruit drops in their hand, and then they'd eat it. So all their needs are provided for. ... And the Indians that are there are the bookkeepers and things like that. I also ran into this in the Fiji Islands where there are a heck of a lot of Indians, but good bookkeepers. And your technical people are generally Chinese. And your local people, you put on guard duty or something like that because you didn't want to challenge them too much. I think they're getting some better ones there now, because there was that university they had out in Kuala Lumpur that was quite a good school and what have you. The trouble is we went in there right after the emergency, and they weren't ready to lead off on a job. Another thing is the Malaysian, the Malay language is quite a basic language. To get a plural, you have to repeat the word. And their identification process is quite nice, because anything that walks on two legs is a *loki*. Wait a minute-- is an *orung* And a man of the jungle is an *orung utan* which we pronounce orangutan. And a man is an *orung loki* and a lady is a *orung perempuan*. And it's rough to say *orung perempuan*, *perempuan*. (laughs) ...

EC: Out of all the places you've been to for your company, where was the longest stay and how long were you away from your family?

GB: ... I was with my family in Switzerland for three years and three months. I went in and the company had already procured a site when I got over there. The Swiss decided that it would not be good because of the fish hatchery downstream somewhere from it, and they were afraid that if any of the detergents got into the water the fish would swim in an unorthodox manner. ... So that was the reason for that long a job. Most of the jobs with procurement and everything took two years. One of them I did in one year, but that was where something had been pre-procured and things like that. You'd run into things where-- I had finished a job down in Kuala Lumpur and was all set except my big main pump which was the heart of the operation never arrived. And I tried and tried and tried, and I had ... one of our sales force down in Djakarta, Indonesia. And he happened to walk out to the dock areas, and there he sees the thing with our address on it. And the trouble is that Union Pump Company had taken this triplex pump and put instead of Petaling Jaya had put Petaling Java on it. And so it was down in a Javanese area. So I mean, at times it's rough locating things. But ... in Africa, I had problems where I was building in Nairobi, Kenya at the same time building in Lagos, Nigeria. There's no easy commuting. You had to fly from Nairobi up to Addis Ababa and change planes there and then fly to Cairo ... and then down to Lagos. And it would be a couple days job flying across. The company couldn't understand that at home, because you'd look at the map. ... And then my company although they had been in international work a lot, I'd be out in New Zealand, and they'd say, "While you're out there drop in at Cairo because we have a problem there." It's almost impossible to get from New Zealand to Cairo. But if you work at it hard enough you can do it.

KP: So you spent almost your entire career abroad?

GB: Well I joined Colgate in 1946 and then in 1950 I started my first international work. It's been a rewarding experience.

KP: You have enjoyed doing this?

GB: Well, my children, like my oldest son, he wasn't quite three, started out in the kindergarten in Zurich, Switzerland. And he, in six months time, he was speaking German like a native or a Swiss-German. He also learned high German, and so that was handy for him, and then a little bit further in his career we were out in the Far East, and he had to go to the British Army School out there. And it was another type of schooling. In other words, there the British at the age of, I don't know, I guess it's in your, yes, in your eleventh year, you are picked to either go to a college or to a trade school. ... Once it's decided, you can't change it. ... So they pumped a lot into you. In about the fifth grade you had to know all the times tables up through 12 x tables, because you'd have the problem with pence, and so you need a multiple of 12 in there. ... They don't give you as broad an education as you do in the states, but the technical education in the early years is a lot better. It's been a challenge to the kids.

KP: Did any of your kids go into the military?

GB: No. No. My number two son wanted to go into the military, but they kept stalling him all the time on security clearance, because they couldn't rationalize why he had ... [been] so many places overseas. And finally, by the time the Air Force was willing to give him a commission, he

was over age for the grade when they decided that he wasn't going to go in. But the oldest son went with Delta in aircraft maintenance, and the youngest son went to IU out in Bloomington, Indiana, and ... he took geology and got his degree in geology, and it was just at the time when everything folded in the petroleum fields, especially. ... So he went into investments, and he has been through the whole groove of things. So he settled in his way. And my number two son went to Ball State University out in Indiana, in Muncie, Indiana. He went into the planning, municipal planning and things like that. He's working up in Rhode Island. That's where we're heading right now so.

...

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask?

GB: Yeah, there was a lot. (laughs) But we'll forget about those.

EC: What are your impressions of Rutgers now as you walk through the campus?

GB: ... Before I retired I went on the Board of Governors of the Rutgers Engineering Society, not the University Board of Governors. So I was very close to what the Engineering Department was doing and came in on quite a few things. And then when they took me into the Loyal Sons, I learned a little bit more about what's going on. But I think it's really healthy what they're doing. I hated to see them wreck that new stadium that was built ... in my freshman year, and now extended it. But I haven't seen the new stadium.

KP: ... They have not totally wrecked it. (laughs)

GB: I've been reading some things in some newspapers about railings that hung down, and somebody else mentioned something about some concrete not making good or being bad slabs.

Robert Lipschitz: The fence fell down at the Miami game.

KP: But I had not heard about the bad slabs.

GB: There was some other article, but they're going to correct all these things.

KP: Do you stay in touch with any people from your old military unit?

GB: No.

KP: You have lost touch with them?

GB: I've lost [touch]. ... I keep looking in things because I get military literature, and I ... have never seen a reunion of the 31st Infantry Division. I have to ask Bob Moss if I ever see him.

KP: Did you know Bob at all during the war? Did you ever see him?

GB: Yeah, I saw him, but then we lost contact. He didn't go off on that last invasion I mentioned into the Pegun Islands.

KP: So you saw him occasionally in the unit, but it was very ...

GB: It was sort of a distance. "Hi Bob!" But I've seen him since then, and I'm trying to think, did we have, no that was another outfit that had some reunions down in Florida and things like that. But I've seen Kindre fairly often. I've seen Ralph at times, Ralph Schmidt. ... I've seen Carl Bosenberg occasionally. My favorite postmaster, what's his name? I can't think of it. He came through the postal department, a Jewish fellow, I can't think of his name.

KP: Yeah, I have not interviewed him yet.

GB: ... Well I renewed a lot of things during our 50th reunion here.

KP: Because you had been away most of your career. I mean, you were very distinct

GB: Well whenever I could get back to a reunion at Rutgers, I would do it because I enjoyed it, and my wife enjoyed because she had a lot of friends here too.

KP: Did she go to New Jersey College?

GB: No. No. My younger sister started out at Douglass, and then she transferred to, in Brooklyn, a design school, I'm trying to think of the name, ... Pratt Institute. ... She got her ... [BFA]. I always kid her about it, because she got a baccalaureate in fine arts, and it doesn't sound very good with me. (laughs) In fact that's the one I was just visiting down in Virginia. But that's it. It's just a start.

KP: Thank you very much.

GB: Thank you, I've enjoyed talking. My wife will kill me now.

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

Reviewed: 4/19/96 by Linda E. Lasko

Reviewed: 12/10/96 by G. Kurt Piehler

Corrected: 2/18/97 by George Boggs

Entered: 2/28/97 by G. Kurt Piehler