

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARL S. BRODOWSKI

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

ADINA WEINTRAUB

and

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

COLUMBUS, NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 11, 2006

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Adina Weintraub: This begins an interview with Mr. Carl Brodowski on October 11, 2006, in Columbus, New Jersey, with Adina Weintraub and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. To begin the interview, I would like to ask you where and when you were born.

Carl Brodowski: Trenton, New Jersey, 1924.

AW: How did your family end up in Trenton?

CB: Well, we're going back to the late 1800s, [early] 1900s. I believe my father was--well, he was born in Trenton, New Jersey. My mother was born outside of Philadelphia in a little town called Manayunk, which is part of Philadelphia. They both moved. I think my mother moved to Burlington, which is not where we just came from, and my father was born in Trenton, New Jersey, and so, that's where I was born, in Trenton, New Jersey, back in 1924. I had two brothers and three sisters. That's the scope of our family. I lived there most of my life, going to parochial school, Trenton Catholic Boys High School, 1938 to '42, and that's where we start, just about, with the war, war stories. [laughter]

AW: When did your father's family come to America?

CB: I have no idea.

AW: Where did they come from?

CB: I think my father's family came from Prussia, actually. You ever heard of Prussia?

AW: Yes.

CB: Okay. They're distant. My mother, I don't know where she came from, but it must've been strictly Eastern Europe, Poland, right, someplace like that.

AW: Growing up, did you speak Polish in your house?

CB: My mother and father spoke Polish when they didn't want us to understand what they were talking about. [laughter] I've never learned a word of Polish.

AW: Was your neighborhood predominantly a Polish neighborhood or was it a mix of different ethnic backgrounds?

CB: No, it was different.

AW: Did religion play an important role in your household while you were growing up?

CB: Definitely, very strict Catholics.

AW: Did you attend church regularly?

CB: Oh, yes, from parochial school through high school, Trenton Catholic Boys High School.

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Where do you fit in the family tree? Are you the youngest, oldest, in the middle?

CB: In our immediate family?

SH: Yes, your brothers and sisters.

CB: Okay, one, two, three--I would've been the fourth child. I had one older brother, two older sisters, who were twins, myself, and then, my younger sister and a younger brother. So, I was just about the middle.

SH: What was your father's occupation?

CB: My father started to work, from what I understand, when he's thirteen with John A. Roebling. Now, I'm pretty sure you know Roebling Wire and Steel. They built the Brooklyn Bridge; they built the Golden Gate Bridge in California. Where are we?

SH: Where he worked.

CB: All right. He started out, I think, as just a common laborer and, when he retired, he was superintendent of one of the plants at Roebling. I'm just thinking--Roebling New Jersey, which is when you turned off to come in here, well, Roebling is about four miles straight out, a factory right on the Delaware River, runs like so and curves up into Trenton and Roebling had a plant in Trenton. Then, one of the sons moved to Roebling, established Roebling, actually, the little town in Roebling. He retired as a superintendent of the mills, with a lot of other foreign people who had moved here. In fact, I believe the Roebling Family brought them here to work, specifically, because that town--there's about three different churches over there, Hungarian, Catholic, I think there's a Greek church over there. I'm not too familiar with that, but that's not too far from here. It's a little town. If you go by it, in fact, you'd say, "There's Roebling." Well, that's it, but, in back, off the river, it's huge. Then, they were bought by Colorado Steel and they closed these factories down and it became one of the--you can help me--areas where the factory was built, with all the soil?

SH: Superfunds?

CB: Superfunds, right, right, and that's been being pushed off and money from the government [is] going elsewhere. So, it's still the same now.

SH: It still needs to be cleaned up.

CB: Oh, yes.

AW: What did your mother do?

CB: She had me, [laughter] and I don't know too much about what my mother did in regard to prior to marriage. I don't know if she worked any place outside of being [a mother]. At that time, much before your time, when all the women stayed home and worked and they were housewives, that was it, that I knew about her, besides bearing six children.

AW: How important was it for your parents that their children go to high school?

CB: Very important. In fact, that was when my father, primarily--I told you that it was a strict Catholic family. After I got out of grammar school, I wanted to go to Trenton Catholic Boys--it was an all-boys school--and they had problems getting the money together to send me to Trenton Catholic, because it was thirty-three dollars a year. Now, you talk about, right now, Princeton being forty thousand dollars a year. [laughter] So, that's what it was and I went. Somehow, they got the money, someplace, to send me. I was the only child that went to Trenton Catholic High School, believe it or not.

AW: Did your brothers and sisters go to different high schools?

CB: No, they went to public schools, public highs.

SH: Why did you want to go to Catholic school?

CB: Good question. I would imagine I watched the girls from Trenton Central High go by this school. [laughter] Over the fence, we used to watch them go by. Well, it was all-boys, all-male. Our teachers were all priests, Franciscan priests, and I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it to a point. I wasn't really crazy about it, but I figured I wanted to go to school there and that was it.

SH: There was not a special area you wanted to study.

CB: No. I was not a very good student--I mean, not that I didn't do what I was supposed to do, but I didn't go out of my way to do extra things, let's put it that way.

AW: What was it like growing up in the Depression? Was your family affected by it?

CB: Yes. We had hard times, with six children especially, and I was born in '24, so, I don't know too much about it, but I knew it was hard on my parents. I know my father wasn't making much money. They were talking about the Depression era and it was difficult.

AW: Do you have memories of any particularly hard moments?

CB: Physically or mentally, morally, which? [laughter]

AW: Did you have any money issues?

CB: Oh, there, yes, I think I was jealous of some of the students, because I couldn't have high top boots or anything like that, or we didn't go into one of the better stores in the City of Trenton. We would go down to South Broad Street. There would be a place for clothes, like in a factory, and get my clothes there, or our clothes, not mine, me in particular. Yes, it was difficult. We used to be on credit, from week-to-week, at the bakery, which was right down the street from us. We'd have to go over and say, "Can we have this today or can we have a pie or cupcake or a donut? You'll get the money," and Mrs. (Tilton?), who was the matriarch of the family, "Oh, yes." Since our alley was here, the bakery was here, you'd run right down the alley and pick-up a donut or something like that. Yes, it was difficult.

AW: Going to a private school, was everybody affected by the Depression equally?

CB: No, it was different levels, yes, definitely.

SH: Were there programs that your older siblings took advantage of?

CB: No.

SH: Did they go to CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps?

CB: No, not that I know of, no.

SH: Were politics a part of your household?

CB: That's later on--oh, in the house, my parents?

SH: Yes. Were your parents supportive of Franklin Roosevelt?

CB: Definitely, Democratic, yes, but not too much involved. They weren't too much involved.

SH: Were there unions involved with your father's work at Roebling?

CB: I don't remember that, no.

AW: Throughout your elementary and high school years, were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

CB: I played baseball. I was a cheerleader--all-boys, remember. [laughter] I played tennis. I was in the library club. I didn't like Latin. They taught Latin, by the way, which is a foreign language today, and French. You must remember that when I was in Trenton Catholic High School, we had all priests and they were tough. They were really tough, on anything. I mean, you walked a straight line, not a gray line. You walked a straight line. I can remember my French teacher. He was left-handed and, if you fooled around in class, he would just take a piece of chalk--remember chalk? she's too young--wing, he'd throw that piece of chalk down and hit you in the head. "Pay attention. You're in here to study."

SH: Did you ever entertain the priesthood as something that you would do?

CB: No.

SH: Did any of your siblings?

CB: No, I don't think so. I don't think so.

AW: What do you remember about December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

CB: I was watching a football game--sorry, I was listening to a football game, that's better--1941. I think the New York Giants were playing and it really didn't affect me that much, that particular day. "Oh, so, it's way out in the Pacific," and I didn't know anything about it. I knew the war was in Europe, that was the big thing, but I never envisioned that we, myself, would ever be involved in the war, but, at that particular day, all right, so, they interrupted the program and said that we had been attacked. I said, "Good. I want to listen to football game." That was it. [Editor's Note: On December 7, 1941, the New York Giants played the Brooklyn Dodgers in New York City's Polo Grounds.]

AW: What grade were you in when the war broke out?

CB: Which war?

SH: World War II.

CB: World War II, you mean you're talking about D-Day?

AW: No, when it started.

CB: In '39, right. Well, I was in my second year at college--I mean high school.

AW: What grade were you in when the US entered the war?

CB: I had graduated from Trenton Catholic.

AW: How did the war change your school experience?

CB: I think it took away my youth, believe it or not. My wife doesn't like me to say that, but that's it. I mean, I graduated, and then, a few months later, I was drafted, and then, for the next three years, I was in the service. I always said I didn't have a certain part of my youth, to enjoy standing on the corner of State and Broad, which was the big thing, and Loft's, which was a nice candy store, and to go out on Saturday nights and whatnot. I mean, that was all taken away from me and you could say I was bitter.

SH: In 1939, when Hitler invaded Poland, how was that discussed in your family and school?

CB: It wasn't discussed at all.

SH: Really?

CB: No.

SH: Were you aware of it?

CB: Of?

SH: Of the invasion of Poland in 1939, that the war started there.

CB: Oh, yes.

SH: Were there current events in school?

CB: Not that I remember, no.

SH: What year did you graduate from high school?

CB: '42.

SH: You were in your senior year when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

CB: In '41, I was a junior.

SH: You would have been a senior.

CB: I was a senior, right.

SH: Had you started dating yet, as a young man?

CB: Yes, five years old. [laughter]

SH: When you got back to school on the Monday following the attack on Pearl Harbor, did the school listen to Roosevelt's radio program?

CB: That, I don't remember. I'll tell you right now, I don't have a very good memory. I just about live for today and I don't have that kind of memory.

SH: Do you remember registering for the draft?

CB: Oh, yes.

SH: Tell us about that.

CB: Well, it wasn't a case of, "Do I remember?" I got a letter saying, "You are to come down to their certain place and sign up for the draft." That was it. That was in March of '43. Prior to that, after I got out of high school, I went back to work at the post office, because I had been working--not I alone, but a few of us from school, from high school--we worked every summer at the post office. So, when I got out of high school in June, the superintendent of the mails, his son was a friend of ours, mine, and he said, "Well, you guys, I want you to come back and work for the summer," which I did. So, I went to the post office and worked there, and then, in March, the following March, '43, and I got my notice to be drafted.

SH: Had your older brothers been drafted already?

CB: I had one, my older brother, he was in the National Guard. I don't remember the exact time that he went in. It was near the same time that I went. He was in--I don't remember. All I remember is his life in the service, a little bit.

SH: He was in the Army as well.

CB: He was in the Army and he received the Silver Star. There's a story in that itself, because we were both in the service, he and I, but he went to Puerto Rico--for what, I don't know--and I was in the States from Georgia to California training. He got out of the service, got out of World War II, but he was called back for Korea, the Korean War. There, to the best of my knowledge, he was wounded twice, came home and I think he was forty-six, he had a heart attack and died. I found out, because I helped his wife get his insurance, the insurance that they were giving us at that time, that he had won--was awarded, not won. I don't like to use the word. Anybody's got a medal, "won" is not the word. It was awarded. I never knew just what it was, because that's a high medal. That's the second-highest [third-highest] medal in the country. I wrote to our Congressman at that time, because my brother--I had learned that he had been shot or wounded--and I wrote to the Congressman and I said, "Can't you do something or can you do something?" Within three weeks, my brother was home, which I was very grateful for, but he wasn't on level one and that upset me quite a bit, but, to go on, now, with all this new stuff that we have today--our number two son, Leon, I said to him, with all of the computers, he could find out anything, I said, "Try to find out about Uncle Norbert. I want to know why he was awarded the Silver Star," and, darn, within a couple days, I had the entire history of why.

SH: You had the citation.

CB: Right. They were in Korea and the Chinese--he was an infantry officer--and the Chinese were attacking one night, a portion up around the 38th Parallel, and he lost fifty, sixty percent of his squad or platoon or whatever he had, company, at that time. The Chinese, which were fighting at that time--I'm sorry, I keep looking at her--Chinese were part of the Korean War, you get right down to it. He went through all this firing and whatnot and placed the men where he wanted crossfire, etc. They repelled the Chinese Army. It was up on one of the hills and that's how he got the Silver Star. In fact, I've got a copy of it in the other room.

SH: He came back from Korea quite injured.

CB: Yes.

SH: He was in bad shape.

CB: Yes. His wounds were okay, but his mind was not.

SH: Thank you for sharing that story. Let us talk about your induction.

CB: Okay, got the goodwill letter [laughter] and went right down here to Fort Dix. I was down there for, I think, a week, two weeks, and then, I went to Camp Gordon, Georgia, where we were assigned to companies, 293rd, Company B, First Platoon, and took basic training in Camp Gordon, which is now Fort Gordon. I forget whether it was four or more months of basic training. Then, we were going to go out--the African War was still going, Tunisia and whatnot. So, they sent our company, our battalion, out to California, via Tennessee and the different states all across the country, and I think--what do we have, fifty states now?--I think I've been in every state in the Union, believe it or not.

SH: For a young kid from Trenton, New Jersey, what was it like to do all this traveling?

CB: It was nice, because we didn't have that thing, that you're a soldier and you're going to go in the war, and then, you may be killed right away. I mean, there was no talk like that. We were training, we were getting our bodies bigger. I weighed 120 pounds at that time. I don't weigh that much more right now, but 120 pounds, skinny. Anyway, we took basic training in Camp Gordon, and then, we went to California, to the desert, outside of Yuma, Arizona, which was very close to the border from California. We spent about four months out there, taking desert training, because they said we might go to Africa. Well, that never materialized, because we won the war in Africa. So, the next thing was, we were sent back to Boston, port of debarkation, embarkation, I guess, and we went to England. We left Boston on Lincoln's Birthday, got to England on Washington's Birthday.

SH: Ten days.

CB: Ten days, and we were in convoy and I was sick every day of the trip, seasick, and that was me and four thousand others onboard ship. [laughter]

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship?

CB: Going across was *Empress of Australia*.

SH: Did you go alone or in convoy?

CB: Convoy. So, that's up and down. That's why it took us [awhile] and that's why we used to stand onboard ship against the wall, but, then, you had ten guys to the railing. So, if you were throwing up, you're just missing the guy in front of you, for ten days, and it was a British ship to

begin with. We were served two meals a day, but they served fish in the morning and it was terrible. The food was terrible, but we made it. We landed in Liverpool.

SH: From basic training, you were sent to training in the deserts of Arizona and California. What were you being trained to do?

CB: Same thing. Our battalion was the combat engineers, so, it was both infantry training and building bridges, making roads, things like that.

SH: Were you given a special assignment or given training on a special piece of equipment?

CB: I used to be able to drive one of the big things that cleans the roads.

SH: A Caterpillar?

CB: Caterpillar, right. Yes, I did learn that, right, among other things. In the meantime, I was promoted to a corporal.

SH: Before you left the States, you made corporal.

CB: Yes.

SH: That is pretty good.

CB: Yes, and, well, that was it until we got to England, but one of the big things was playing craps. [laughter] I remember, we would play for nickels and dimes and that took up a great deal of time, because there was nothing else to do. I think I've crossed the country seven or eight times, completely, during that period of time. One was the Southern trip and one was the Northern trip and there was one through the middle. That was when I was given a leave of thirty days, that we came back, and I remember St. Louis very much, forefront.

SH: Did you get any liberty passes?

CB: Yes.

SH: What did you do?

CB: Go to Mexico. [laughter] We were right on the border. There was Mexicali, El Centro, California, El Paso in Texas, but where we were in the desert out there, if we were to go on pass, we would go early in the afternoon, which was 110 degrees, and come back at night not feeling too good, but it was freezing, almost to a freezing point. So, we were laying just about on top of one another by the time we got back to camp. So, we were way down south, all the way down south, California.

SH: Did you win any money on these cross-country trips playing craps?

CB: I guess not.

SH: Did you lose any money?

CB: I guess; broke even. [laughter]

SH: Did you send money home?

CB: Not at that time. We were making twenty dollars a month, I think, and I really didn't have that much money yet to pass around.

SH: Did you leave a girlfriend home here in Trenton?

CB: Friends.

SH: Were you writing or getting a lot of letters?

CB: No, I didn't. I didn't write too much, because everything was censored. You can write down, "I was out with such-and-such last night," or, "We're here now, but I don't know where we're going next," stuff like that.

SH: How long were you in Boston?

CB: Oh, it was real fast. I don't think it was any more than a couple days we were onboard ship.

SH: Do you remember what year you landed in Liverpool?

CB: Yes. It would've been February 22nd.

SH: Of 1944?

CB: Of '44, yes.

SH: What did they have you do in England?

CB: Same thing as we did in the States, training, making airfields, helping to make airfields.

SH: Where were you sent from Liverpool?

CB: Down to Chester, England, and then, to Oxford, which I found very interesting. The only thing--I'll tell you this--when you had to go to the bathroom, we dug trenches, right, and you were not allowed to do your thing in "the Queen's land." Now, what that meant [was] that you had to go in a bucket, right, and you went in a bucket and what happens to that after, I don't know. There was a squad just for that, but you couldn't do anything to the Queen's land, even if you had to. [laughter] So, at any rate, then, we went down. Yes, I was never in London; Oxford, which I liked very much.

SH: You said you were still in training and building things. Did you have a sense of the bombings?

CB: I can't tell you anything about them.

SH: Okay, you did not experience any of that. You did not have to use any shelters.

CB: No.

SH: In the following months, was there a buildup of forces?

CB: Oh, yes, it was very noticeable. Then, we had received orders, prior to June 6th of '44, that we were going to go and be in, more or less, the forefront of the invasion of Normandy, and so, we were doing mostly military stuff. No construction bit, we were doing infantry stuff. [Editor's Note: The Invasion of Normandy was a joint invasion by the Allies that began on June 6, 1944.]

SH: You were still in Oxford when you started that training.

CB: Yes, in Oxford, right, and Chester. Chester was nice town. It was one with all these big walls around the entire town. It was nice, very historical.

SH: Were you given any special instructions on how to deal with the British, other than to leave the Queen's land alone?

CB: No.

SH: Were you allowed to go into town?

CB: Oh, yes.

SH: Did you enjoy the pubs?

CB: Oh, yes. Always, in fact, until today, I laugh because of all these restrictions and everything. You turn on the television and the only thing you get is, "This is going make you feel better, that's going make you feel better. It's going make your heart feel better, it's going make your liver do its business," your feet, whatever, but, at the same time, they served us elegantly with cigarettes and beer.

SH: Warm beer?

CB: Warm beer is right, dark beer, but the cigarette thing, everybody got just about a pack a day.

SH: Were you a smoker then?

CB: Yes. I haven't had a cigarette for about thirty years now.

SH: You did not start smoking until you were in the military.

CB: I was about ten years old, actually. [laughter] No, actually, believe it or not, there was a corner store around from where we lived and they used to have these cigarettes, which were about yay big.

SH: About eight inches long?

CB: Yes, for a penny apiece, and we'd go around the corner and buy one or two, whatever we had. Then, there was a lake right down here and we'd go down towards the lake and light up. Then, we come home and they start with this cigarette bit being no good, and coffee, also, coffee, not beer too much, because we only got beer when we went into town. So, it was cigarettes and coffee.

SH: What were your duties when you were in England?

CB: I was the assistant squad leader.

SH: What does that entail?

CB: In case the squad leader got killed or injured, one of the two. [laughter]

SH: What does the squad leader then do?

CB: Oh, he has--there were approximately fourteen, fifteen men in a squad and forty-five men, forty-five soldiers, composed a platoon, and then, you multiply along that, and he was just like a foreman in any shop, store supervisor, right. That was that.

SH: Were you sent from Oxford to somewhere else in England?

CB: No, went right there, and then, we were embarked on trucks and we went down to Southampton, from which we got on the ships to go to the invasion of Normandy.

SH: When did you assemble in Southampton?

CB: I would say maybe about the middle of May.

SH: What did they do to contain that many soldiers, sailors and airmen for that long?

CB: What did they do?

SH: What were you doing?

CB: We were restricted, strictly military stuff, whatever.

SH: Had you heard of the different landing sites? Did you know anything?

CB: No, no. I had no idea where we were going or what kind of ships we had, because there was--well, you've seen pictures. Well, everybody's getting together.

SH: Was there any training to learn how to get off of one of the ships?

CB: Yes, we climbed over the railing on to rope ladders and went down into landing craft, which was very dangerous, because you slip. The rope, about yay thick ...

SH: About three inches?

CB: Not quite, because most of us couldn't grab three inches, regular rope, and that's the way we went over.

SH: You practiced this before, in Southampton.

CB: No, we didn't.

SH: No practice?

CB: No practice, not to get off the ships.

SH: Would you say that this two-week stint, from the middle of May to June 6th, was chaotic or did it look very orderly?

CB: It was orderly; it was definitely orderly, no fooling around, no nothing, no.

SH: You were restricted. What could you see from where you were?

CB: Nothing much, really. It was done like on a spur of the moment, from where were bivouacked and where these ships were.

SH: When you were bivouacked in a certain area, that was where you were restricted to.

CB: Yes.

SH: How much time was it from the orders to break camp?

CB: A couple days.

SH: You had that much time.

CB: Yes, because, after all, we had to drive to the wharfs, wait in line for hundreds of thousands of men, or men and women, I should say.

SH: Who were you assigned to and what was your unit?

CB: At that time, we were still the 293rd Combat Engineer Battalion. I can't tell you what outfit we were assigned to, outside of we were with the Third Army. That was Patton's Army, because he had been in Africa, and then, I guess they were putting things together and they assigned us to the Third Army.

SH: Had you seen any of your commanding officers above the rank of captain?

CB: At that time, lieutenant colonels, yes, because we didn't know where we were going, outside of the fact we were going to Normandy, and that wasn't much fun.

SH: Can you walk us through it?

CB: Okay, we got on the ship, onboard ship, and here again, they were called the Liberty ships, if you remember. They turned them out like clockwork. That was Kaiser Shipping. There were all these Liberty ships and we didn't know which one we were going to go on. We had our trucks and whatnot to get going with us.

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

SH: Can you tell us what kind of equipment had to be loaded on the ship, as well as the men, for a combat infantry group?

CB: We had trucks. They were called six-and-a-half, six-by, or something, and we had that. We had no artillery of any kind, cannon, nothing like that. All we had was what we had on our backs and that was it.

SH: How much did that pack weigh?

CB: More than I weighed, at that particular time. [laughter] That's the way it felt, anyway. That was just what you had for your life and they were yay big and very long, especially.

SH: About two feet high?

CB: Oh, they were a good three feet, yes. There were a lot of guys that were about my size. Of course, we were mostly all eighteen, nineteen-year-olds and they were heavy, because we had everything in there, a rifle. That's where the combat comes in. We had our own ammo, we had our own rifles, bayonets, and we used to tease the infantry guys, because we said, "We went in ahead of you," because we had to go in and dig for mines before the infantry could come in.

SH: You were one of the first ones to leave Southampton.

CB: Right.

SH: You were on a Liberty ship.

CB: Yes.

SH: Tell us how long it took you to cross. Was it daylight or dark?

CB: It wasn't far. It's only thirty-nine miles or forty miles across. So, it didn't take us any time, but it was sitting in the ship or staying in the ship until we got orders to go. That actually was about three or four days that we were onboard ship.

SH: Had you taken off from Southampton prior to the 6th or right on the 6th?

CB: It was after the 6th. I don't remember the exact date.

SH: Were the naval ships still bombarding the beaches?

CB: Not as much as at D-Day, no.

SH: What day did you land and where?

CB: We landed in Utah Beach, on Utah Beach, not Omaha, and it was almost a week after D-Day.

SH: Like D-Day +6?

CB: +6, or however you want to say it, yes. Then, to get off of the ship, that wasn't any fun either.

SH: This is when you went down the rope.

CB: Yes, into the landing craft, and then, the trucks--the ship had to go in closer to land, to make sure they were going to hit land and not sink.

SH: Did you walk ashore or did you drive a truck ashore?

CB: I didn't do nothing. I wasn't a driver. At that time, I was a sergeant, yes, because I'd gotten my sergeant's stripes shortly before, in England. So, I had a truck, but I didn't use it. I didn't use it at all. It was still a very dangerous place to go in.

SH: What do you remember when you first saw it? What were some of the scenes that you saw?

CB: "Thank God there was land." We didn't care too much about the ocean, because there, again, seasickness.

SH: Did you get seasick again?

CB: Oh, yes. I still don't go fishing. [laughter] I really don't, but it was, "Well, this is France and we're supposed to go here." That was in the southern coast, towards the south more.

SH: What was the first thing you ordered your men to do after you got off of the ship?

CB: Run like hell.

SH: You were still under enemy fire.

CB: Yes. That was in Normandy. I have--we have, I shouldn't say I--we have a citation from the French people about the invasion of Normandy, which was something we had to do. We knew the Germans were here, we were here, and it was one hedgerow after another.

SH: How long did it take you to get your men off of the beach?

CB: I guess a day-and-a-half, two.

SH: As a combat engineer, what are you doing from the time you get on the beach?

CB: Keeping our heads low and hoped that we made it up and there would be some kind of a road that our trucks could run on without too much trouble.

SH: Were the trucks fully loaded when they came ashore?

CB: With our equipment, with what we needed, yes.

SH: Did you lose any men when you went ashore?

CB: Not when we went ashore, no.

SH: Did you see evidence of the fighting that had taken place in the days before?

CB: Yes, saw plenty, would walk by and see a German soldier sitting, say like I am now, dead, up against a tree, and then, a little more, somebody else laying out--saw a lot of casualties going even that short mile on to French soil. It wasn't a very pleasant thing, because I had never experienced any of that, nor did any others.

SH: Once you got your men and your trucks, you obviously must have found a road.

CB: It was almost a continuous thing, as far as flowing, that we got into Normandy and, right away, it was, "Keep moving forward, moving forward, moving forward." St. Lo, I don't know if you remember St. Lo. [Editor's Note: In Operation: COBRA, July 25 to July 31, 1944, the Allies broke out of the Normandy hedgerow country at St. Lo. The attack commenced with a massive strike by nearly three thousand fighter-bombers, medium and heavy bombers. Miscommunication between the ground and air forces led to some US Eighth Air Force aircraft

bombing Allied positions, resulting in hundreds of casualties, including US Army Ground Forces commander Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair.]

SH: You were involved in that.

CB: Yes.

SH: Can you tell us about what you were doing then?

CB: I think we didn't do too much there, but that was one of the towns and there was--I can't think of it right now. See, I have a lot of, quite a bit of, what we did. We had a historian and I have my papers in the other room. I can't tell you that. I don't remember, really.

SH: When you first were pinned down, do you remember that or were you able to keep moving?

CB: No. We were pinned down various times, yes, because the Germans weren't going to give up too easily, and we needed air support. We were too far off the beaches for the ships to begin with, and so, it wasn't a pleasant thing. Then, we started going east towards Nancy, France, and all these little towns that you might have heard about. That was where I really got my first killing experience. We reached a little town--I don't know if it was Nancy or not--at a crossroad. We wanted to cross the road, because there were railroad tracks up yonder, but, right across the street, say from here to a house across the street, there were Germans in that house and we were in this one over here. They were in this, like this, okay. We came in through, my platoon, came through the house, a hallway, and my platoon sergeant--I was in front of him--and he says, "Sarge," he says, "let me go first." I said, "You stay back there." Well, he took a step in front of me and [Mr. Brodowski imitates a bullet shot], there was--I don't even remember the sound--but, oh, I turned around, because he was in front of me. He wanted to go in front of me, I wanted to go in front of him and he got shot right in the neck and died right there. His blood just--I held him like that and that was my first bad, bad experience in regard to the war, to killing, outside of the ones I told you about, that I saw along the roads or wherever we did. I think we hiked all across Europe to begin with, but that was the most traumatic experience, because the blood squirted. He got hit right in the Adam's apple and he died instantly in my arms, but--do you know?--that was the last time I ever saw him or ever heard of him, outside of reading in the clippings that I have, Sergeant [Raymond] Deddens had been killed.

SH: What was his name?

CB: Deddens, D-E-D-D-E-N-S. He was a good, old Southern boy, and then, we went on from there.

SH: Where were most of the men in your unit from?

CB: Oh, I was just going to tell you that, because I was thinking about it--North Jersey, Fort Lee, Newark, Jersey City, Brooklyn, Bronx. I was the only one from Trenton, New Jersey. How the hell did I get in that outfit, all these guys from Jersey or New York with their accents? Boy, now, "What did you do?" "I took numbers." "What did you do?" "I shot dice." "Didn't

anybody work up there?" That was when all the families, the crime families, were prominent, a lot of them, Costello and I can go on. I just finished that book there.

SH: Do you recall any of the names of the men you served with, other than Sergeant Deddens?

CB: Oh, yes, (Purcell?), (Demarest?), (Fox?), just a few. That's all, yes, and then, I don't know where you want me to go from there. That was a terrible experience.

SH: What happens when someone is killed like that while you are under fire?

CB: You just go. It's up to the individual. I mean, you could stay in there. We got across that particular intersection, wiped the Germans out, and, there again, that's where the combat word in our outfit came from. We got down to the railroad tracks and we had a fight there. We just continued going east, wound up in Luxemburg, and we were there for quite a while. Well, we were there for maybe a month or so, I'm not sure, but the next thing I can remember is the Battle of the Bulge. [Editor's Note: The Battle of the Bulge, also known as the Von Rundstedt Offensive or Ardennes Offensive, was the failed German attempt to break through the Allied lines in the Ardennes Forest in Luxembourg and Belgium launched on December 16, 1944, and which lasted into late January 1945.] They said you have to--that was when the Germans were overcoming Belgium, Bastogne, and they called Patton's Army in. In the meantime, we had been someplace. I remember seeing General Patton.

SH: What do you remember about him?

CB: He was big and he had a dog and he had his pearl-handled revolvers and whatever you might have heard about him, slapping some GI or something, I don't know.

[TAPE PAUSED]

CB: [He had] his own trailer and his own aides. So, we joined the--well, we were in the Third Army, like I told you, and we were in Luxemburg. We'd taken over Luxemburg, the Duchy of Luxemburg. Well, we were sent north to Bastogne and we hit the southern border of Bastogne. The Germans had encircled Bastogne and we came up from the south and it was Christmas Day, Christmas week, and it was so cold, so cold. Snow was abundant. Our tanks slid off the roads. So, it was very difficult. That was a big battle that we were in, big battle. One thing I didn't know about is, it's been sixty years now, sixty some years, yes, I wrote for a medal, I wrote our Congressman, for the Battle of the Bulge. I got a reply saying that there was never a medal given to the troops who fought at the Battle of the Bulge. I thought to myself, "Now, wait a minute, I get these military magazines and they got all kinds of medals, anything you want." You want to be a general, you can be a general. [laughter] All you've got to do is have the money, write for them, tell them, "I want to be a star general." I was really surprised, because, in these books, they have the Battle of the Bulge Medal and I thought, "Wait a minute." I got my papers out. I have the proof that we were there and I got a call. In fact, my wife will verify it. She says, "Who's that?" I said, "Mrs. Jones," or whatever her name is, "from Congressman Smith's office," and she said I had to send papers in, verifying, because we had joined up with the Fifth Ranger Battalion and they were crazy. [laughter] These Rangers were ...

SH: You were talking about trying to get the medal.

CB: Yes, and they said that the Army said they didn't give medals out for the Battle of the Bulge. I was really surprised, because, in my magazines, they show any kind of medal that you want and a couple outfits. I was really surprised. Well, anyway, it was a big thing. It was a big thing.

SH: Did you call it the Battle of the Bulge at that point?

CB: Yes. It was Bastogne; it was known as Bastogne, probably.

SH: When was the first time you had to build a bridge?

CB: Oh, that was in Luxemburg and we used to build these bridges out of steel that weighed six hundred pounds apiece and they hooked together and cross the river. I think it was the Our River, yes, right. As far as the Battle of the Bulge, we were there and the conditions, the weather conditions, were very, very bad. We got through that and it was getting late. I mean, it was Christmas, but, then, after that, we were moving, still moving, east, with Patton's Army, but we had joined up with the Sixth Cavalry Group, which were really a good outfit, and we became a unit within that army. It was the Rangers, the Combat Engineers, cavalry and an artillery [unit] and we were the spearhead right into the bottom of the circle around Bastogne. That was one of the reasons why Patton got through and they made a big thing out of it, after the war. I don't remember too much afterwards, because the war seemed to turn after the Bulge. Patton wanted to go to Berlin and the bigwigs said no--the Russians, actually--and the English, well, they were good. They were with us, meaning the Allies, and I don't remember much after that. Now, I remember, one day, they said, "Sarge?" "Yes?" "Come with us." I'm thinking, "What the heck did I do?" right. Well, they took me to the hospital. What is now known as PS, post-traumatic, PT ...

SH: Post-traumatic stress syndrome.

CB: You got it. I can never remember that.

SH: They called it "battle fatigue" back then.

CB: Well, that's no longer used, but I remember where the hospital was, was the Duchy of Luxemburg, her summer home. I was surprised, but very nervous, very, very nervous. I got there and they put me to sleep and I was asleep for a week. All I got was, they would wake you up and feed you, and then, they'd give you another pill, put you back to sleep. This was recovery from combat fatigue. One day, I can remember, everybody's rushing around the hospital, that's what it was called, and I said to somebody, "What's the matter?" "Well, we're missing a person." One of our guys was missing from the hospital and I said, "Oh, okay, I'll help you find him." So, we're going all over the place looking for this person, missing person, until somebody came in, "Hey, Sarge." "Yes?" "Come with me. You're the man we're looking for." [laughter] So, that was something. So, I was in the hospital a little over a week, but, then, they sent me right back

to the frontlines, and then, it started to--well, the war, like I say, was just about in the ending stages and we didn't do much more. The only thing we did do is, we're up to May 8th, I believe it was, the war ended in Europe and we became part of the Occupation Army. [Editor's Note: V-E Day was declared on May 8, 1945.] Then, the next thing we knew, we were in Le Havre, France, and we're onboard back to the States.

AW: Where were you when the war ended? What do you remember about May 1945?

CB: I just finished telling you most of it. [laughter]

SH: Were there celebrations?

CB: I imagine so, but we never got to the towns. The towns were--it was pretty destroyed. They were pretty well destroyed, yes. So, I can't really tell you what happened afterwards. Well, we were glad. May 8th, some of those dates I can remember, I do remember.

SH: Was there any thought that you would have to be sent to the Pacific?

CB: Oh, I'm getting to that. We came home on ...

SH: From Le Havre, was it Camp Lucky Strike? [Editor's Note: Camp Lucky Strike was one of several receiving camps, dubbed "Cigarette Camps," established by the US Armed Forces in the vicinity of Le Havre, France.]

CB: I don't know whether it's Chesterfield or Camel, but I remember Lucky Strike. I don't know. Yes, I knew that. We got home on the USS *Santa Rosa*. We had four thousand troops onboard ship and it only took us seven days to get home and I wasn't seasick that time.

SH: Really?

CB: Well, I had reason to be. We landed in New York, August 14th. We landed in New York and that was V-J Day. We were going to be sent to the South Pacific. So, we had a thirty-day leave after we landed, came back to Fort Dix, had thirty days at home, and they shipped us out to Tacoma, Washington, to Fort Lewis. They were going to send us to the South Pacific and they dropped the bomb and that was it. We had a point system, just like they have now, and I had seventy-two points, which was enough to come home and get discharged, which I took. Now, if we had any smarts, we would've said, "Well, Sacramento, California, or San Francisco, we'll buy an acre of land with the money." I think they gave us, I had eight hundred dollars, I think, and I had to pay my way back across the country, of course.

SH: You had to pay your own way back.

CB: Yes, right. Well, that was included in the eight hundred dollars that we got, or whatever it was. I don't remember exactly and that was it. Actually, it wasn't, because, after the war, there were so many clinics all over the country for GIs. I used to go to the one in Trenton and, for every combat fatigue person, they used to give us hundreds of pills, little bottles, phenobarbital.

SH: Really?

CB: Didn't make any difference what was wrong with you, you went, "How do you feel?" "Shaky," and they would give us phenobarbital. Do you know what it is? She does.

SH: It is a tough narcotic.

CB: Right, and I used to go every two weeks to get a refill. In fact, until this day, I still take pills, yes. Sixty some years, I have a letter, I have letters.

SH: Do you think your care was good?

CB: Yes. Do you mean after the war, when I came home? Oh, sure; anytime you wanted anything, you just go to the VA [Veterans Administration] clinic, but it wasn't until a few years ago that I started to go to the VA clinic and I now go on a regular basis. They treat me very well. In fact, there was an article in the paper saying that if anything a veteran wants, they'll give him, but that's a lot of baloney, because they are so many veterans that can't even get into the VA. If they want to apply, it takes them maybe a year or better to get an appointment to get into the VA, because what they're doing now, with the war on in Iraq, they're cutting a lot of the benefits off that the older guys were getting. So, they're closing clinics. I can't complain one bit about the VA that I go to in Trenton, not one bit. The doctors are good, the nurses are good to me, but, outside of that, I'm fine. Outside of being a diabetic, I'm fine, and I can't blame anything on it, why I got diabetes, outside of hereditary.

SH: Did you want to talk about Paris?

CB: Oh, Paris was ...

SH: Was that a leave?

CB: It was a leave. It was a three-day leave, which I can only remember one.

SH: You came in from Nancy.

CB: No, no, it was up toward the Hurtgen Forest, up that way, and we had a three-day leave. I tell my wife that I can remember--in fact, I have a picture of us underneath the Arc de Triomphe and that took about five minutes, I guess, walked up the Champs-Élysées. Three days, it was warm and I can remember one, one out of three days. [laughter]

SH: Was it the wine or the calvados?

CB: Calvados, oh, yes, we drank that and whatever else we could get our hands on. [laughter] Yes, that was mostly on the Continent, not much in England at all, outside of their brown beer or dark beer or something, but, anyway, that was supposedly three days--two days in the gutters,

one day awake. I mean, you had your choice. You'd get all kinds of amusements in the Pigalle in Paris, entertainment center of the war at that time. [laughter] Yes, that was enjoyable.

SH: Were there any USO [United Service Organizations] or Red Cross shows?

CB: No, no, we never had any big stars. The only one, I can remember somebody saying, "We saw Marlene Dietrich." I said, "Maybe you saw her, but I don't remember." [laughter] No, we never had anybody. Oh, if I had--do you remember the picture I have coming back on the *Santa Rosa*?

Geraldine Brodowski: Christine has it.

CB: Would you like to see it?

[TAPE PAUSED]

CB: There was one thing that I can remember, in fact, two, in regard to people and things that happened. Now, before, I told you about the sergeant that was killed. That time, when we were going to go into Nancy, I wanted to know if my rifle was still working--I mean, was working--and I turned the gun around backwards and shot up in the air. Then, we went down the street into that crossroads that I told you about. I had to use my rifle again--it was jammed, never fired another shot, for a couple hours, I guess, before I checked my gun, piece. They used to call it a piece, not a gun.

SH: Your piece.

CB: Yes, and, well, that scared the hell out of me, I mean, before the other thing. Then, at that particular time, one of our guys in the Second Squad, the Second Squad, First platoon, he stepped on a Schu-mine and the only thing that was left was his ankle being held on by skin, just the skin. I took my bayonet out and cut his ankle off--I mean, the rest of his ankle. I did.

SH: How far back was the medic?

CB: He wasn't even with us. I mean, there are only so many medics. I never saw him again. He was from Jersey City.

SH: You were able to stop the blood and send him back.

CB: Yes, but that was exciting--exciting, that's the wrong word to use, anyway--and then, there was a time when there was a tank battle going on. I was talking with somebody and we were, like, distance ...

SH: Two or three feet?

CB: A yard, and a shell came, went out or was dying, and a shell from one of the tanks firing, they were firing this way, but this hit something and went this way.

SH: A ricochet.

CB: It hit right between us and landed right in back of us.

SH: Oh, my word.

CB: And lots of laughter. That was one, that was another one. Then, another one of our guys got hit, another one of our people got hit with a bullet, right here. It had ran out of its trajectory and it hit him in the forehead and it was sticking. [laughter]

SH: No kidding.

CB: That was ...

SH: Was it in his helmet?

CB: No, in his forehead, right here, like my finger's sticking there.

SH: Did he faint?

CB: No, he didn't, just shocked--I mean, everybody was. Yes, that happened also.

SH: When you were building these bridges, what was the most difficult part?

CB: Picking them up.

SH: You put them down.

CB: Yes, and you pushed it out into the river or water. I mean, that was all done by hand, by hand power, and you would put these big, like, screws or nails in and hold them together, various sections. Each section weighed six hundred pounds and there were times when we'd get the bridge halfway built across the river and the Germans would come in and blow them up. [laughter]

SH: The German artillery, usually?

CB: Right.

SH: You would have to start all over again.

CB: With as much material as we could, yes, whatever we had, rather. It was an interesting thirty months that I spent in the service.

SH: I can see.

CB: And I wouldn't wish it on anybody. Today, it's entirely different, with all the buttons that you've got to push in, it happens the way the human part of us would do or be, but, then, it was all manpower. Like I say, we walked across Europe, just about, most of us, anyway.

SH: Did you often get a hot meal?

CB: Yes, meals were [hot]. Yes, we had the truck with us.

SH: I am fascinated by how you could build a bridge over a river that is flowing hard and fast. It was cold.

CB: Right. It was very difficult, because there would be a lot of times when you would get out here, say the river was here, and that water would be so turbulent that it would blow a part, that part of the bridge, down and you would have to figure out, "What are we going to do now?" either continue or try to continue or let it go and start over again.

SH: How exposed would you be?

CB: Very exposed. You had shells coming in all the time on us. I mean, to hit a bridge would be pretty difficult, and then, if it was floating, it would be more difficult. So, yes, we were under fire most of the time.

SH: If you built a bridge across the river, did you then disassemble it to go to the next one or would you get new supplies?

CB: No, you would get new stuff.

SH: How were your supplies brought to you, by truck?

CB: Yes.

SH: Were you ever short of material?

CB: Oh, sure.

SH: Were you part of the group that ran out of gas, when Patton's Army went so fast that it ran out of gas? Do you remember having to just wait?

CB: Right. That's all we did was wait.

SH: "Hurry up and wait?"

CB: Right, "hurry up and wait."

SH: You had to wait for the material to be delivered.

CB: Yes. So, there was always a constant fear, "Am I going to get killed or am I going to become injured?" That was always on your mind once we got into combat.

SH: Did you hear about how your brothers were doing? Did you know where they were, what they were up to?

CB: I had a younger brother who was after me and my other one, no, we had no connection whatsoever. He was over here and I was over there.

SH: You were in Europe at that time.

CB: I was in Europe. He was in Puerto Rico for a while, and then, he went someplace else. I don't know where he went after that; never had much communication, no.

SH: Okay.

CB: But, the war had a great deal to do with his demise.

SH: What about the labor camps and the concentration camps? Did you ever see any of those?

CB: No. The closest we came to them was in Czechoslovakia, but we never actually saw the camps.

SH: You got as far east as Czechoslovakia.

CB: Just about.

SH: What was your duty as part of the occupation forces?

CB: Nothing much, really, nothing much. It was just me in power.

SH: Were you helping to rebuild or were you providing support to American troops?

CB: No, we didn't; yes, and no rebuilding or anything like that, no. This is what burns me now. I mean, we go over there, we're blowing things to pieces, and then, we're rebuilding, or not only that, these people who are in camps, prisoners, "I want this, I want that, I want the other thing." That's a bunch of baloney.

SH: Did you ever take any prisoners of war?

CB: Yes.

SH: What was the procedure? What did you do?

CB: Just send them back. You never saw them again. There was another outfit, the Quartermaster Corps, actually, that would pick them up and take them. We had them in Trenton, you know that?

SH: Really?

CB: I mean the prisoners of war; yes, right down not too far from here.

SH: What were they doing? Did they have them working?

CB: Yes, they had them working in--we had tomato plants up here or soup plants, Campbell's Soup, right up the road--and they were there all day. I guess maybe Geri would know about that, but she don't like me to talk about the war.

SH: When you took prisoners of war, were they young men, old men?

CB: They were mixed, but, after a while, you started to see the younger people; couldn't be any much younger than we were.

SH: Right. I was going to say, you were eighteen, nineteen.

CB: Nineteen, right.

SH: What about the civilians that you encountered in Normandy and Luxembourg? How did they treat you?

CB: Loved them, very, very well, yes. They were very grateful.

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

AW: This continues an interview with Mr. Carl Brodowski on October 11, 2006, with Adina Weintraub and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

CB: Carl Brodowski, also. [laughter]

SH: I was asking about how you befriended the children.

CB: Clothing, food, cigarettes, the basics that we had that they didn't have, at that particular time.

SH: Did you ever see or interact with any other Allied forces?

CB: No.

SH: You never saw any of the Australians or the British.

CB: No, no--Canadians.

SH: What did you think of them? Did you know what was going on with them at all?

CB: No. They were north of us and we didn't know much, if anything.

SH: Did you get mail from home?

CB: Yes. That's what I was looking for. I was going to show you some of the letters that I had sent home and how they looked when they got them and what was cut out. They would actually cut out words, certain words. I don't know what I did with them, but I still have them someplace. Anyway, I don't have them right now. Yes, I remember them; details, no.

SH: Did you get anything for Christmas? Your first Christmas overseas, you should have been just outside of Bastogne.

CB: Right. Well, we were down in Luxemburg.

SH: Did you go to services at all?

CB: No, we had priests saying Mass right on the hood of our jeep, or his jeep, and that was the extent of it, of our morals. [laughter]

SH: Did you go to Mass any other time?

CB: Oh, yes.

SH: You had that opportunity then.

CB: Right.

AW: What was the general feeling in Germany in the months after the war ended?

CB: Happy. [laughter] You mean us as individuals?

AW: You and, also, the Germans.

CB: Mainly, with the Germans, it was friendly.

AW: Did you speak with any German citizens?

CB: I don't think so. I don't think so.

AW: What do you remember about when the war ended in the Pacific?

CB: What do I remember? I was getting off the boat in New York City and I was very elated. [laughter] In fact, when I get off, let's see, it was August 14th and I had been at Fort Dix and I came home. We had the regular bus system and the bus, I asked the driver to stop right in front of the church that we went to, which was right around the corner from the main street, from Main Street/Broad Street. There was a girl who lived, I think, right next to the church, who I knew, and I got off the bus and she took my bag and carried it across the street. I said I wanted to go into church and that was it. I really liked that very much. I mean, it was the church where I went all my life and grew up, Holy Angels School and all that sort of stuff. She carried that over and that was pretty neat.

SH: The first place you went when you got home ...

CB: Was church, right off the bus, into the church, yes.

SH: Thankful to be home.

CB: Oh, many, many thanks.

AW: What was the interaction like between the higher ranking and lower ranking officers?

CB: Very cordial, it was; they were cordial. Yes, we could live with them, [laughter] because they were in the same boat as we were. I mean, of course, they called the shots, but they were with us. So, I would say it was pretty close.

AW: On your pre-interview survey, you wrote that you received five awards.

CB: Yes.

AW: What were they?

CB: Everybody got this--Geri'll laugh--Good Conduct Medal.

SH: Not everybody got that.

CB: Well, I got one--maybe they had extras that day [laughter]--Good Conduct Medal, ETO Medal, which is European Theater of Operations, Battle of the Ardennes and a couple others, but, anyway, it's five or six of them I have.

AW: Did your feelings about the war change in any way throughout the time that you were fighting in Europe?

CB: Yes. I wished I were home, [laughter] anyplace except every day or every night wondering what is going to happen.

SH: Had there been a real sense of patriotism?

CB: Oh, yes.

SH: Before you went over?

CB: I would think so, yes.

AW: Did you become good friends with other soldiers in your battalion?

CB: Oh, yes, used to get drunk with them, like, every other Sunday, yes. [laughter] I used to drink. I haven't drank, had an alcoholic drink, in thirty-five, forty years now. No, I gave it up, and cigarettes, I don't smoke either. We don't smoke.

AW: What did you think about the German soldiers, based on what you had been told about them and when you actually got into combat?

CB: They were in the same position as we. So, I would say that they were either scared or didn't care one way or another. So, that's the way I feel about that, or anybody, except these fanatics now that are raised. The German people, actually, there's no difference in the terrorism that's going on now than when Germany--and you'll, I think, back me up--Germany was all Aryan, blonde hair, "I am the best," because they were taught that from the age they were this big or the time that they were so big. That's what's going on today, is these people have this pounded into their heads and this is what they believe. I believe in God, I believe in the Catholic Church. Well, when did it start? When I was baptized, probably, or any of us like that, but that's the way they were trained, also. They were trained; we were not trained. That was part of our schooling, our religion.

AW: Did you feel like there was a contrast between what you were told about the German people and soldiers before you actually met them?

CB: No, I would say no.

SH: Were you thankful that you went to the European Theater, as opposed to going to the Pacific Theater?

CB: Yes, definitely.

AW: When you returned to the US, what was the general feeling of the country? Do you think it was as patriotic as it was before you left or had the feeling changed?

CB: There was a great deal of, "This is what we're supposed to be doing," and we did it.

AW: Did you have negative or positive feelings toward the military, more or less patriotic feelings when you returned?

CB: I disliked it. Like I told you earlier, I had thought my youth was shot. I use the word youth casually or whatever. Yes, I wanted to be home, chase the women around, all the young girls.

AW: Was it hard to readjust to civilian life? Did everything seem like it had changed tremendously?

CB: I could've gone to school, I could've gone to college and I didn't want to, didn't want to use the GI Bill. I just didn't feel like I wanted to. So, you can blame, today, like, that I'm not a millionaire on the fact that I didn't go to college. Of course, I could've flunked out of college if I wanted to, but we were given that choice. You got your college education, thirty-six months.

AW: How did you find out about the GI Bill?

CB: They told us. [laughter]

AW: Did you share your war experiences with your family and friends?

CB: Very little, very little, no.

AW: What did you do when you got home?

CB: They were paying us twenty dollars a week for four months and I went back to the post office first, and then, I quit and said, "I want the twenty dollars a month," for four months.

AW: To do what?

CB: To spend. That was our reward. That was like a bonus. [Editor's Note: The GI Bill included a "52/20" clause, which provided twenty dollars a week for fifty-two weeks to discharged servicemen while they looked for work.]

AW: You did not want to go to college at that point.

CB: No. I went for six months. I went to Rider College in Trenton. I think it was six months; I'm not sure now. I went to business and to whatever. It wasn't a serious thing. It was at nighttime. I had a daytime job and I just went to college. It was a business school or it is a business school, rather.

SH: When you were in the Catholic high school, did you have hopes of going to college?

CB: Seriously, no.

AW: After you went to Rider College for six months, what did you start doing?

CB: Went back to work at the post office, and then, I was working four to twelve, steady, which meant that I was still young and my life was being curtailed by the hours I was working. So, one night, I said to one of the fellows working with me, "Let's quit." Just out of the clear blue sky, just, "Let's quit," and it was around maybe ten o'clock at night and he took off his apron, I put the mail down that I was sorting, walked out, just like that.

AW: How did you meet your wife?

CB: She was walking down the street; Geri, get her in here.

[TAPE PAUSED]

JB: In St. Raphael's Church.

CB: Not when, where did we meet?

JB: Where?

CB: Walking down the street on a Sunday afternoon.

JB: Carl, we met when we were like seven and eight years old.

CB: I'm sorry about that, I forgot about that.

JB: You were an altar boy. You came to St. Raphael's to serve Mass.

CB: Forget that, I was too young.

JB: That's when we met. [laughter]

SH: When did you meet as "girl and boy?"

JB: As grownup people? I guess the first time I saw you in a long time was the night of V-E night, when I met you in town.

CB: V-E night? oh, yes. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brodowski recalled coming home on V-J Day, not V-E Day, earlier in the interview.]

JB: I was with Audrey, Walt and Jimmy Kelly and you were with ...

CB: Well, I said I met you walking down Broad Street, on a Sunday afternoon.

JB: No.

CB: We went down in Philadelphia's (Arcade?).

JB: I know where we went, but the first time I met you, when you came home and we were going out, was V-E night. You were coming up Warren Street, I was coming down State Street.

CB: See? argument, just over how did we meet. [laughter]

JB: Well, you asked me a question, I'm answering it. You're trying to rewrite history.

SH: How long have you guys been married?

JB: Fifty-nine years.

SH: Okay, good. Then, I am not worried. [laughter]

CB: All right, I made a mistake.

SH: When was your first date?

JB: Well, that was the Sunday that he's talking about. That was in January of 1946.

CB: She's got wonderful memory.

JB: We went to Camden to see Vaughn Monroe. Do you remember Vaughn Monroe? You've heard of Vaughn Monroe?

SH: I have heard about Monroe.

JB: Yes. Well, he was appearing in Camden and we went to see him.

SH: Who was the better dancer?

CB: Me.

JB: I'd say I was and he'd say he was. [laughter]

SH: How long did it take you to propose?

CB: It was in the car, wasn't it?

JB: A year-and-a-half.

CB: Yes, but it was how long, a year-and-a-half?

JB: Yes, we were married at a year-and-a-half. We decided to get married in April. We got married in July '47. I don't know if he actually did propose. It was just kind of a thing.

CB: "Here's a ring."

JB: He did go and ask my parents. I remember that, but I don't remember him ever getting down on one knee or anything.

CB: And, today, we get down on one knee, we can't get up. [laughter] She brought it up, blame it on her.

SH: Thank you. After you quit at the post office, where did you start working then?

CB: C. V. Hill, Trenton; they made commercial refrigerators and that was after I said we quit that night. Then, we took a couple months off, and then, went up there. They were hiring anybody out in the factory and went up, got a job just by knocking on the door and stayed for four years. Now, I'm retired. I've been retired since 1986, twenty years.

SH: From looking through your photographs and the newspapers, when you came back on that ship, you were also onboard with the Glenn Miller Band.

CB: Yes.

SH: You said they played every night.

CB: Every night and every afternoon.

SH: Did they?

CB: On crossing.

SH: Did you dance?

CB: No, I wasn't that guy, no.

SH: Did you know that the Japanese ambassador to Germany's wife was onboard?

CB: No.

SH: Or he was as well?

CB: No, not interested.

SH: It was in *The Daily News*.

CB: Right, that great newspaper.

SH: You said your aunt was able to pick you out from that photograph. That is truly amazing.

CB: Yes.

SH: She lived in New York at the time.

CB: Brooklyn, she lived.

SH: As a young man, had you traveled to New York at all?

CB: Oh, yes.

SH: Are there any other questions?

AW: Do you feel that the war had an effect on your adult life and the choices you made?

CB: Well, like I told you, outside of not going to college, education wise, let's put it that way--it was my own doing and I've regretted that over the years.

AW: Did you ever share your war experiences with your wife and children?

CB: Probably some, off and on, but not much.

AW: It was not a big thing.

CB: No, it wasn't anything until I learned about--well, I knew about the combat fatigue. She knew about it, and then, when I mentioned it at the VA, "Well, no way, we don't call it that anymore. We call it ...

SH: Post-traumatic stress syndrome.

CB: Right.

AW: Did you ever encourage or discourage your children from joining the military?

CB: No. I don't know where they got it from, but all the boys are in law, believe it or not, our family. I don't know where it came from.

AW: Would you like to tell us a little bit about your children?

CB: Sure. Christine is the oldest. She's a registered nurse; she was. She has three children of her own. That's three girls. Our number one son Larry, he's married, lieutenant, retired, State Police. They have two children, one boy and one girl. Then there's Leon with two boys. Then there's Michael. They have three girls, a set of twins in there, and then, there's Brian, they have one child, and they're all successful. Brian's an attorney, Michael is a master probation officer at New Jersey Courts, Leon and Larry are retired State Troopers, also. Christine's now manager of a real estate company now. In fact, they're building a new house in Rehoboth, outside of the Rehoboth Beach. Are you familiar with Delaware? Henlopen Acres. They were up over the weekend and they brought pictures of her house that they're having built. He has a house, if you're interested, that's on the bay outside Ocean City, Maryland. It has five buildings, it has five thousand square feet of built house and he's put it up for sale for four million dollars, just now. Christine's house, she had that built a few years ago herself and her house is up for sale for two million dollars. So, in the housing market, it's rough, getting rid of it right this minute. Last

year, it would've been snapped up. Christine's house is only three blocks from the beach. It's really cute; it's a nice cottage, but it's very expensive. So, successful, yes, all of them and we're very proud of them.

AW: Did you keep in touch with any of the soldiers that you served with in the war?

CB: Yes, people from North Jersey. It used to be almost a monthly thing, get loaded and reminisce a little bit, and I don't think any of them worked. I think they were all gamblers. [laughter] Really, I really do.

AW: You wrote on your survey that you joined the American Legion. When did you do that and why did you do that?

CB: I never did it as soon as I came out of the service, but I've been an active member--active? I've been a member--for something like fifty years now.

AW: Why did you decide to join?

CB: Camaraderie and we had boys. The Legion sponsored all different kinds of things, primarily baseball, and our boys were always interested in baseball and played sports, yes. One of our grandsons was ranked fourth in the country in decathlon. In fact, he's been out a year-and-a-half from college. We're very proud of that. In fact, he graduated from Muhlenberg. I don't know if you've heard of it or not, but, anyway, he went out to get a job. I think he was in business and he went out for an interview. This is hearsay now, that's all I can tell you--they went through his interview, resume, and something was said. Well, he was smart enough to take all his records from Muhlenberg that he had set, as long as it's been around, and he says, "Well, just to add, here's my resume of what I did in the sports world," and that really put him in touch with Suisse Bank, of some company I can't think of, of Europe and, now, they're over here. He got the job. Now, he's been living in New York for the last two years now. He got a very, very good job, but the athletics were prime. I mean, his attaining that level of athletics in the United States was really something to admire, if you get right down to it.

SH: Are there any questions that we did not ask that you would like to put on the record?

CB: I'm not going to tell you about them. [laughter] Really, no, I think we've done pretty well.

SH: All right. We thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us.

CB: It's been a privilege. Thank you very much, the both of you.

SH: Thank you.

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

Reviewed by Mohammad Athar 2/13/2015

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/31/2015

Reviewed by Molly Graham 6/25/2015