RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WALTER BRUYERE III

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Walter Bruyere III on November 7, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and …

Elise Krotiuk: Elise Krotiuk.

KP: And I guess I'd like to begin by asking you about your parents. Do you know how your parents met?

WB: No, I really don't know how they met because my mother was a resident of Montclair, New Jersey. My father was a resident of Newark. … My grandfather in Newark was a doctor, and my mother's father was the chief civil engineer of Essex County at the time. This was back in the 1880s, 1890s. So they met some time, I guess, during the 1870s because they were married, I guess in, well, I'm a little hard on dates this time. They were married some time around 1905/ 1906.

KP: And your father … was a businessman, it sounds like.

WB: He was a salesman, and his main job was traveling to Europe and visiting manufactures of woolen goods, and material of that type, for import to this country. He made quite a number of trips, back forth to Europe, between the 1907 to 1920, 1930 almost, until the bottom sort of dropped out. [Laughs]

KP: So … your family had a hard time during the Great Depression, it sounds like.

WB: Yes, it was difficult. I had, well, there were three older sisters. But, we never had any problems. And there was always, I guess, a member of the family to help out every time we got into a problem, because …

KP: When you say your father went away to Europe to travel, how long would he be gone for?

WB: He'd be gone maybe a month, or two months at a time.

KP: Which is a long time.

WB: Well, yes. In those days you had to travel by boat back and forth. He … [Laughs] He was overseas when the *Titanic* made its maiden voyage, and he was thinking about coming back on that. [Laughs] Thank goodness he didn't, otherwise I wouldn't be here! [Laughs]

KP: Really? He told a story about, thinking, he was ready to take that ship?

WB: Yes. Yes.

KP: That was one of the ships he could have taken?

WB: Yes, something [came up] and he couldn't take it, so … [Laughs]

KP: That almost sounds like the great family lore story. [Laughter] Your parents were originally from the Montclair/ Newark area.

WB: Yes.

KP: But, they ended up moving to the Jersey Shore area, in Red Bank.

WB: Yes, we moved around quite a bit. From Montclair to, we were in Manasquan for awhile, and then in Red Bank, and moved three or four different times in Red Bank. And I guess the moves were caused by the situation at the time, in a Depression era where we had to move to another place that we could take care of. And it was a little, I would say difficult, in those days. … But, we always lived in Jersey, and we have never had any other thoughts of going any place else other than Jersey. That's why when I finally settled back down, I went back down to the Brick Town area myself, because I'm familiar with that country. It's worked out very nicely.

KP: So your parents were native New Jerseyans?

WB: Yes.

KP: And you, in fact, stayed a native New Jerseyan as well.

WB: Well, yes, my Bruyere family was a native in Jersey from … 1700s. And had a Captain James Bruyere, who was a captain in the Jersey militia during the Revolutionary War. That type of thing.

KP: Was either your father or your mother active in say, The Sons of the American Revolution or The Daughters of the American Revolution?

WB: No. No, they were never active in that area.

KP: They were not participants in the … social types of that nature.

WB: My father was always busy commuting back and forth to New York over time. My mother was busy taking care of the family, and taking care of the Women's Club in Red Bank. [Laughs]

KP: So your mother was an active clubwoman.

WB: Yes. Yes, she was quite busy in that type of thing.

KP: Any other organizations?

WB: No, no. Not that I know of. She was quite a faithful churchgoer, and my father didn't do very much in going to church. But my mother always had the sisters and myself attend church, probably every Sunday.

KP: And was your mother active any in church organizations?

WB: Not too much. No. She was active only from the point of tending service on Sunday, seeing that I went to Sunday school when I was young, later on seeing that I sang in the choir. That type of thing. [Laughter]

KP: The area that you grew up in along the Jersey shore, when you were growing up … the towns weren't very big at the Jersey shore. There wasn't much in that part of Jersey compared to today …

WB: No, not in that part of Jersey. And in the shore from Asbury Park on down, Asbury Park was still quite a place for the shore.

KP: Yes.

WB: And along on down through Sea Girt, and that type of thing, and Bay Head and the shore itself was quite the same. If you go along there now it hasn't changed too much.

KP: Yes.

WB: But you come a mile or two inland … and the thing has changed completely. What used to be nothing but piney woods or cranberry bogs are now strip malls or houses, or what I call "wrinkle ranches." [Laughs] These old folks homes. Don't get me wrong, I'm in one myself. [Laughs] But not to the extent, that I … It's just one of these places where you get your own house, you buy your own house, you have your own property, and things like that. It's not a home, or anything like that, it is just a, the only restriction is that you have to be fifty years old.

KP: Yeah, I guess, 'cause I've been to a number of the shore communities, in fact they are pretty much the same, but after, … as you said, if you went two or three miles inland … they're very different.

WB: Yes. Yes. It's terrible down there now, as far as the traffic and everything like that is concerned.

KP: And I partly ask because you were very active in the Boy Scouts. I read that you made Eagle Scout, and that you also were a Sea Scout.

WB: Yes. Well, my mother, I think, got me started in scouting when I just turned twelve, because you had to be twelve to be a Boy Scout in those days. And this was run by one of the churches in Red Bank. And I had a very good friend of my own age, who, he and I, went into the scouts together and we sort of went through all the different stages of scouting, up through Eagle Scout and everything else. And it was fortunate, I think, to have someone like that, where the two of us could trade back and forth and work together on everything. And it worked out very pretty well for us.

KP: Did your friend also make Eagle Scout?

WB: Yes. He and I made it at the same time.

KP: Wow, so you really … were a team.

WB: Yes.

KP: What happened to your friend? Did he serve in the military too?

WB: He spent about a year or two at Rutgers in '38, I guess it was, in '37 or '38. But I think he tried out for the Air Force Cadets at the time, and was involved in an accident, and I don't think he ever got any further in the service than what I knew about him, because I lost touch with him. I have not been in touch with him for years now.

KP: But, in a sense, it sounds like you even came to Rutgers together.

WB: Yes.

EK: Did you mother ever work when you were young?

WB: Work? No. Not for a monetary thing.

EK: Right.

WB: Yes, she worked!

EK: She worked but … was that of her own choice?

WB: What?

EK: Was that of her own choice?

WB: I think it was because there were four kids in the family, and my father was busy back and forth to New York all the time, commuting. And she had no choice in the matter. Okay, there's kids, you've gotta take care of them. But she did pretty well, because two of my sisters are still living. Celebrated the ninetieth birthday of my oldest sister. And I lost one sister about a year ago. She was quite a gal, because she had a problem back in the '30s, and was down in Florida for recuperation, and met a young man down there who was from Alaska. When she came back up, out of Florida, the young man followed her up. And I got a call when I was here, still at school, "Come home on Saturday and be my best man." [Laughs] So she did, and the two of them took off, back up to Alaska. She stayed up there all her life, raised a family of four boys and one girl. And the last time I was up there, about a year ago, she had quite a problem with emphysema. She still liked to smoke. [Laughs] When I was leaving, she looked up at me and

says, "You know, this has been a wonderful life up here, and I've enjoyed every minute of it." [Laughs]

KP: Where did she live in Alaska?

WB: When they went up there they lived, if you are familiar with the terrain of Alaska, the Aleutian Peninsula comes down, and on the western beginning of the peninsula, there is a little town called, Dillingham. And her husband, at that time, was mainly involved in salmon fishing. And in those days they salmon fished from a sail boat type of thing. And in the winter they had a cabin. And then things got a little bit better for them all the time. And she kept raising a family. And her husband got involved in … school teaching, and what little politics in the area. They moved over sometime, I guess maybe, after the mid-fifties, I guess, they moved over to a place just north of Fairbanks. No, not Fairbanks. The main city of Alaska.

EK: Anchorage?

WB: Anchorage. Thank you. That name always slips me. So, more about the girls?

KP: Well, I guess, only one of your sisters was able to attend college, and only briefly.

WB: She attended the Coop, NJC, for one year.

KP: The sister who …

WB: She was the one who went to Alaska.

KP: Who went to Alaska. … It sounds like she was something of an independent spirit.

WB: In a way, yes. Yes. And because she thrived on Alaska it was beautiful for her. She had, as I say, a wonderful life up there, and enjoyed every minute of it. And I don't know whether to believe this or not, but the reason she went to college for one year was she said, her mother found a diamond and cashed it in, and sold it, and gave her the money to go to college.

KP: And you're a little skeptical of that?

WB: Well, there used to be an old fraternity song about one of the fraternities, about finding a diamond someplace [Laughs] I won't repeat it.

KP: … What activities were you involved in growing up? You were in the Boy Scouts, you went to church regularly. Where you involved in the Y or any other …

WB: No. No. No. Boy Scouts. Then when I was old enough to join the Sea Scouts, because we were living in Red Bank at the time, and they [had] quite an active Sea Scouts troop there. … And I found that very interesting, and enjoyed it very much indeed, because I always enjoyed being around boats, and I spent many times, not only on the Navesink River, but also down at

Barnegat Bay at that time, too. So, it was sort of a natural thing for me to do, and I enjoyed it, and liked it very much indeed, but I had to give that up after I graduated from high school, and worked in New York City, for a couple of years before going to college.

KP: … When did you graduate from high school?

WB: I graduated in 1933.

KP: So you had quite a gap between …

WB: So for two years I worked in New York City.

KP: And you commuted in.

WB: I commuted. My father and I commuted all the time. My one sister was working at that time, too. She'd commute, too, for about a year, until things changed. But, I had the most important job on Wall Street. What they called a runner in those days. You're just a messenger boy, and started out at fifteen dollars a week. And when Roosevelt came along with the, I guess the NRA, it raised it a dollar. Boy-oh-boy! Sixteen dollars a week! Wow! But, it was interesting because in the wintertime, I mean, in the summertime my mother would pack us up in the car, take us over to Atlantic Highlands, and we'd take the old Jersey Central boat right up to the foot of Liberty Street in New York City, and then pick it up in the evening on the way back. And she'd meet us at the car. And that's another thing my mother did, was drive us all the time. [Laughs]

KP: I'm thinking, also, how cool it must have been on the boat because there's not as much air conditioning there, and so …

WB: It was great on that boat, I mean, after a …

KP: Right. Right. The breezes from the sea.

WB: After a hot day in the city … running on the hot streets all day long, to come out and sit on the deck of this little steamer, and spend, not quite an hour but forty-five minutes to an hour, for just refreshing and recuperation. … It made you glad to be able to do it.

KP: Growing up in a shore town, something of a tourist town, … you get a lot of visitors in the summer, and then … not so much in the winter.

WB: That didn't impress me one way or the other, as far as living at the shore and visitors. In other words, it was home and that's what home was. And we enjoyed it, and made the most of it.

KP: … One question we've asked a lot of people is, do you have memories, although you were very young, of Prohibition?

WB: [Laughs] Let's see, living in Manasquan at the time. That's when the rum runners used to come in the Point Pleasant inlet. When these big, old, gray, rum

running boats that they'd pick up a load from some mother ship off shore and bring it on inland. And the only reason I remember was, one where they had trouble coming in the inlet, and spilled everything overboard. [Laughter] I guess there were people gathering, miles of liquor for days afterward. [Laughter] And I know my father enjoyed drinking. Been travelling in Europe. … He knew what. I still have a pin of his that I remember. It's a little, small, about an inch by an inch-and-a-half, white, enameled pin with a big, old horse fly built up on it. And it says, "… So and So's New York/Paris Bar. And the pin says, "IBF." International Bar Fly. [Laughter] It is a famous old bar. Harry's New York Bar it was. Right. But he enjoyed his liquor. He knew what it was.

KP: … Did he go into any speakeasies during the Prohibition period?

WB: I guess he would, yes. Oh, yes.

KP: Plus, I guess, it must have been strange to go back and forth from Europe, where there is no Prohibition, and then come back to the States.

WB: Yes. It would be. It would be for him.

KP: Yes. Yes.

WB: Because when I started work in New York it was 1933. That was just about the time prohibition was repealed, and I'd meet him every once and a while for lunch, and … it was in the bars; still had free lunch with your mug of beer. And that was going back many years. So that, I mean, he enjoyed that very much indeed.

KP: Another question we've asked a lot of people is, have any members of the Ku Klux Klan marched through your town?

WB: I remember as a kid watching Ku Klux Klan activity in Manasquan. And just from seeing them, that's about all I knew of it because I had no interest in what they were doing, in that type of thing. Other than the curiosity of, "There are a whole bunch of guys walking around in white sheets, and what are we going to do about it?" [Laughter] "Are they insane?"

KP: Were they parading?

WB: Parading, yes. I mean, it wasn't a huge parade. I mean, there might have been fifteen or twenty people involved in it, but that was the extent of it.

EK: Well, I guess I was just going to ask you, what did you and your family think of FDR when he took office? And the New Deal?

WB: Think of FDR when he took office? I can't tell you very much about that because my family didn't discuss politics too much at home, or … while the children were around. So, as far as I was concerned, the only thing I knew about it was that when the banks closed I lost sixteen cents. [Laughter] One of the banks in Red Bank, at the time, they had the program in schools of collecting a nickel or a dime from kids and put it in the savings account. And I think I had sixteen

cents in mine.

KP: And you lost your sixteen.

WB: Yes. I lost sixteen cents. [Laughs]

KP: And you said you did get a raise from the NRA. The minimum wage from the NRA.

WB: Yes. … Up to sixteen dollars. But in those days, sixteen dollars, I almost think I had more money than I do now. Because your commutation ticket back and forth from Red Bank to New York averaged out about seven dollars a month. That was thirty days back and forth. And that included that boat in the summer time, so you didn't have to make a change because it was all run by the Jersey Central Railroad. So money wise, why, it was plenty.

KP: … When you were going to school did you know you were going to college? Did you want to go to college? Did your parents hope …

WB: They hoped I could. I was always in … the academic type of courses in high school. And I guess I was realizing that at the time that I wanted to go to college, but I knew the family had no way of supporting college at all, at the time. But my, I guess, intense desire to be able to go to college some time was the fact that I had a hard time learning French in high school. And the first year of French I got through it, but the second year … The first half of the second year I made it, but the second half of the second year it took me three times. The first time was a big "F," the second time was a "D," the third time I said, "Well, I might as well try for a 'C.'" I think … the teacher at the time was sorry for me, and said, "Okay, here you are."

KP: Well, it's funny you mention that because we found some of your old columns in the "Rutgers Alumni Magazine," and you had an experience of staying with a French couple in North Africa. And you were talking about your problems with their English and your French, in March of 1943.

WB: Yes. Well, this was when I first went to North Africa. I was with a, just a flunky, in Eisenhower's headquarters. And our job, the unit I was with, our job was to handle all of the essential requirements for the headquarters itself. That included food, building, paper, pencils, ink, and everything like that. And for people to live, well, you had to go out to the civilian and get, "All right, here's a nice house. We'll requisition this house." And the French had it set up so you could requisition. You present the requisition and the family would either make room for you, or else they'd move out someplace else. And that was all right in a way, but in my case, when I first went there, why I stayed with this French family and they were very interesting. I guess he'd been in the French army. And I often wondered what ever became of them, with the situation over in Algiers the way it is now. But I image they … He was, I guess, a World War I veteran so …

KP: Right. Did your French get any better?

WB: It, Comme-ci-va? J'ai vais bien. Et vous? [Laughs] That type of things, yes. But to be able to discuss an intelligent subject in French, no.

KP: It sounds like, in addition to Boy Scouts, … you were probably a fairly active athlete in high school. Were you?

WB: Yes. Yes.

KP: What sports did you play?

WB: Played football for four years in high school, and also track. I was a discus thrower. Football was quite something in those days. As a look back on it, what a big difference there is between football today and football when I was playing because I always remember the first football game I got into. I mean, high school level football. I was a third string sub at the time. Didn't even have a game jersey, just the old … gray sweatshirt on, and I guess, the last game of the season the score was about forty-two to nothing, in our favor. The coach says, "Okay, Bruyere, you can go in now." … And he says, "What position do you play?" I told him. He said, "Well, instead of playing that position, when you get in, tell him to move over." So I run in, and I say, "Hey, Tim, the coach says move over," and the whistle blew. The referee says, "Penalized five yards. Talking before the … first play has been run off." That was the rule in those days. Where as now … it looks like Broadway and 42nd Street every time there's a change.

KP: What other changes do you remember? Particularly now, looking at the way football is played today.

WB: Football today, to me, depends too much on the quarterback. In other words, he is the key man as far as the whole team, and the whole season, is concerned. Whereas in my day, the … quarterback was just a man who, like another back. In other words, he would receive a ball. Once in a while, the ball was passed from the center to either the halfback, or a fullback, or the quarterback. And it depended on the plays, and the development of the plays. The quarterback didn't have near as much activity as he does now. I mean, he controls the whole situation these days. And that's is why you get some team that says, "Okay, let's get the quarterback," why you're gonna have problems. But, as far as that's concerned, that's the main difference, I think, in the whole game now.

KP: Growing up, I often ask people, what did you do for fun? … Did you go to the movies at all growing up?

WB: Yes. Yes. We went to the movies regularly, Saturday afternoon, to the matinee. Buck Rodgers, Tom Mix, all those old horse opera characters. And the Strand Theater in Red Bank was the one we go to. They always had a newsreel, the serial of some kind, the "Green Hornet" or what ever it was, and then the Western. And it was a real Saturday afternoon ritual. You'd go into Woolworth's and spend maybe a nickel on a bunch of candy, or chewing gum. And movies in those days, I guess, would be about fifteen or twenty cents for the afternoon, and that was it.

And once in a while, why, a big evening, the family would take you to the Carleton Theater in Red Bank, which was the … brand new theater. I think it's now the Count Basie Theater, and for special showings, and something like that. Otherwise, entertainment was listening to the radio and reading. And then I liked to work with my hands and building little things. Model boats at that time, making them out of kits that came in that … stage and era. Nothing compared to what they have these days.

KP: Right.

WB: I mean, they were really basic ABC type of things. And model boats are what keep me going now.

KP: Really, you're still into …

WB: Absolutely. I'm up to my ears.

KP: This is a little ahead of the story, but given your interest in the sea, had you thought or would you have liked to have joined the Navy instead of the Army? I mean, 'cause you were, sort of, in ROTC. We don't have a Navy ROTC here. From my understanding, it didn't exist before World War II.

WB: I aspired to go to the Naval Academy when I was in high school. And in those days, you had to get an appointment from a senator. And I tried three times to take the appointment test that the Jersey senator ran at the time. And, I mean, it was an extensive test from English, Physics, everything down the line. You'd have to spend … I even came up here to … where the old post office used to be on the corner of George and the Main Street in town. That's where the post office [was] and … he ran the test there. But, with my student ability I could never make it. Never made it. So, when I got the opportunity to come to Rutgers, why, that's when I started right off in the ROTC program.

KP: But, you, ideally, would have liked to be a naval officer it sounds like.

WB: Yes. … That is what I really, when I was a kid, wanted to be. But, circumstances were such that I had to take an opportunity of what was available.

EK: How did the opportunity to come to Rutgers arise?

WB: A very good friend of mine. A fellow by the name of Dick Hammell. I knew him well in Red Bank. He was also in the Sea Scouts with me, and that type of thing. We were great pals. And when I was working in the city, why, he came to Rutgers in his first year. And he asked me to come over one weekend. So I came over and visited him, and he took me around, had a lot of friends in the old Phi Gam house, met another Phi Gam, who was Assistant Dean of Men at the time, Ed Curtin. And they just got me interested in it and told me about the Upson scholarship program that was available here at Rutgers. So I followed through on that, and applied for the Upson scholarship, and was informed that I would be granted one. So, when I got that, I said

"thanks" to my boss in New York City. He was very, very helpful. Very nice.

KP: … Before we talk about Rutgers, you graduated from high school and worked for a while.

WB: Yes.

KP: You've talked about commuting. How did you get the job as the runner?

WB: Let's say it was a family connection. I had an uncle that had his own house on Wall Street. And his wife, my aunt, I guess, had talked him into, "Can you get little Bobby Bruyere a job someplace?"

KP: Because jobs were very hard to get. Even if the job was bad. If it wasn't a great job it was still …

WB: So, evidently he used his influence with a very good friend of his, a small brokerage house by the name of Foster Marvin. And it was small. I mean, there were only about … twenty-five or thirty employees in the whole house. Bu it was a wonderful opportunity, and quite broadening as far as experience was concerned.

KP: When you say it was broadening, in what way? What did you learn … ?

WB: Well, let's say it's like a country boy going to the city. And here you are. You're thrown into the middle of this, all, thing, and it's either sink or swim, and you got to find your way around, you got to know what to do and how to do it. And from that point of view it was interesting, because it was new, and it was being paid for.

KP: … Had you been to New York very much before working there?

WB: Yes. … This uncle of mine, that got me the job, actually lived in New York City, and my aunt, his wife, would invite us up to the city every once in a while. In other words, I had a cousin who was living with them, and he had lost his mother and father years ago, and she was bringing him up, and he was about my age. So we'd go up and visit him, or them, in their apartment up in someplace in the city. And in, maybe, Christmas time was a big time we'd go up there. She'd show us around the city, and that type of thing. So, in a way, we were familiar with New York and what it is about, but not enough at the time to be able to do anything about it ourselves, because it was always a family proposition.

KP: It sounds like you had to learn how to get around in New York.

WB: Well, the easiest way to do that, I found, was just asking. I mean, "I have to go this building. Can you tell me which one it is?" Or learning the subway system at that time. At that time it was a nickel in the slot and you could ride the subway all day long if you wanted to, but the different routes, and everything like that, you just had to ask questions.

KP: New York's subway is a very intimidating system.

WB: Right. Yes. Because, yes, it is now more so, I think. I was in, a couple of years ago, and tried to find some information from one of the tellers in the booth. No. Not a word. You gotta put your money in the slot where they can't get into it. You have to reach in and pull it out like you're scraping money … out of a dish.

KP: … Wall Street had really, it's an understatement, had really been in the news because of 1929, because of the '20s.

WB: Yes.

KP: The great boom market that went bust. I mean, what was it like to work … on a Wall Street that's really in recovery. It would take decades for the stock index to recover to the levels it had approached in the late '20s.

WB: Well, I don't know. I must say that I've not too much ability to analyze the stock market in that respect because my job was, more or less, a footwork.

KP: Right. Right.

WB: But in those days, I mean, the big crash of '29, let's see, the volume on the New York Stock Exchange for that day was sixteen million shares. And if you look at the volume today, it's over, what is it, fresh over a … billion shares. And it's pure volume now. Which is possible because of the automated systems they have, the computer systems. Whereas in those days you just had the ticker tape. There was a fellow reading the ticker tape as it would come off the ticker, and he'd have a big board up in the office, and put down the various prices on each stock as it came across. But it was so much different.

KP: … What I sense is, that the job of a runner was a much more important job in your day than …

WB: Well, yes. It was the only way to get things around.

KP: Now you transfer electronically.

WB: Now you can fax anything you want to.

KP: Yes. Yes.

WB: But, no. Mainly, for example, they'd make a sale, and there were no book … A word I'm trying to think of. Well, in those day you had a certificate. You'd buy something, you'd get a certificate. And the certificate in the hand of the brokerage house might have the name of John Doe on it. So you'd have to take the certificate to a transfer agent, and have it transferred into the proper name. And that was, for example, every certificate you had, had to go through that

process. And for everything else you'd have to confirm all the sales by a little various slip, and you'd have to take it to the next brokerage house that sold it, and get a confirmation on it, or something to that nature. So it was footwork, and hand to hand, rather than punching a few digits on a machine.

KP: And hence, … I mean, runners were pretty important moving all this paper around between brokerage firms.

WB: You don't realize it's important when you're doing it.

KP: Really?

WB: No, you don't. I mean, you're given a wad of certificates. Maybe a whole bunch of General Motors stock shares. And you'd have to put these in a sack, and take them uptown to General Motors' building where they'd have to do the transfer. Then you'd have to go back some day and pick it up. But, you didn't think anything about the value of it at the time because to me it had no personal value. The only time I felt personal about carrying something was, … I was trying to try to go to college, before my friend had brought me over here, and … I had an interview with a guy [who] was interested in the University of Pennsylvania. And I had [met] with him, and then didn't hear anything from him, and I called him up on the phone. He said, "Sorry, we couldn't do anything about it," at that time. My next job was, "Take this thousand dollar bill down to the bank and get it changed into hundred dollars, so John Joe can go on his vacation." That hurt. That hurt.

KP: The same guy who told you he really couldn't help you, you know? [Laughs] The guy who told you to change …

WB: No, this was …

KP: That was someone in your firm?

WB: No, it wasn't somebody in my firm that I had interviewed with. It was a different outfit completely. But in the firm …

KP: Someone had …

WB: Yes. It was another job. Another job.

KP: Okay.

WB: 'Cause you had the head runner, and he'd allocate these things out to you all the time.

KP: … You were a small firm. How many runners were there?

WB: I guess there were five or six runners.

KP: And what were their ages? Were they all in high school?

WB: They were all fairly young. I was seventeen/eighteen/nineteen. They would be early twenties, at the most. Maybe twenty-five. The head runner was married. And I know he worked. His wife

worked. I don't know what he was making. I guess, he was making about twenty-five/thirty dollars a week. So, … that was pretty good money in those days.

KP: … Did you think you might stay in Wall Street, or this was just a temporary job until you could go to college?

WB: I still had the idea I wanted to go to college. And when this opportunity presented itself, why, then there was no question about it at all. … Maybe one of my motivating factors was, I still wanted to play football.

KP: Really? Did that …

WB: Yes. Yes. Even when I was working in the city, in the fall I would join, well, not a semi-pro team but just a local football team. And we'd play Sunday afternoons. … The game was up in old Leonardo High School, which, I guess, now is Middletown North, or something like that. … We played every Sunday afternoon all during the fall. And I'd come home in the evenings, maybe, two or three times a week, and rush in the car and go over, and … we'd practice for an hour, under lights. And we had a pretty good team that year. I think we won about ten games, tied one, and lost one. So, when, as I say, it was a motivating factor, I said, "Okay, college, I can still play football." … I liked it. I liked it at the time. I didn't have any serious difficulty with football at all. Anything of that nature. A few minor bangs and bumps throughout four years of high school, and two years of working, and four years of college. I got tired of football, right at the end of the war. I was in Frankfurt, Germany. … We were getting all the recreation facilities back into business. I mean, swimming pools, athletic fields, tennis courts, everything under the sun. And we also had organized football. And, okay, boy, I put on a uniform for one day and said, "Okay, you guys, you're getting younger all the time. That's enough for me." [Laughs]

KP: In the … Army there were some good players. I mean, they were professional players.

WB: Yes. Yes.

KP: Yes. … I have been told some bases' division commanders took football very seriously. That they …

WB: Yes. Right after the war, why, it was, "What else are you going to do?" You're over there in occupational status. And here you got all these old football players lying around just itching to do something. So …

KP: … You came to Rutgers with the Depression still very much raging.

WB: Yes.

KP: And we've read a lot of the *Targums*. It was tough. I mean, you had the Upson, but it was still pretty tough over here.

WB: Okay. I had the Upson. And also, you might say, that I had an ace in the hole because the Phi Gamma Delta wanted to pledge me. And I told them, I said, "Look, fellas, I have this scholarship. That's all I have. I don't have a red cent to my name." Other than, I think, I had fifty bucks, or something like that, that I saved up from working. They said, "Well, okay, we can get you a job in the, washing dishes, or in the kitchen and waiting tables." Things like that. So between that, and the Upson, and the fraternity, I was able to survive.

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

WB: Plus the first freshman year they had the National Youth Program, where you could work … for twenty-five cents an hour. And for about two times a week I would walk over, from the fraternity on George Street, to the cow barn over on the dairy farm, shovel cow manure for maybe an hour or two, walk back, go to the gym smelling of cow manure, taking off these clothes, taking a shower, taking a swim in the pool, and then come back to the fraternity, and wash dishes with suppertime. [Laughs] So, when I look back on it now, I say, "How the heck did I ever do that?" [Laughs]

KP: Why was your fraternity so eager to pledge you? Because you were …

WB: Well, let's see. I had made All-State football in my senior year in high school. That was a team run by the old *Newark Sunday Call*. That was one of the Newark papers at the time. And I also had the first place in the Jersey State discus throwing, which, in those days, I mean, if you could throw it out a hundred-twenty feet, why, you had it made. [Laughs] So, I guess that had some incentive to get …

KP: Yes. One of the things, Ralph Schmidt, who was part of the Class of '42, he was an Upson … scholarship holder. He said during his interview he got to the football field, because he'd gotten this Upson scholarship, and he got on the football field, … with the other freshman there, and they were also Upson scholarship holders. And he, sort of, almost realized that it's not an accident, in terms of the football team and the Upson scholarship holders. Did you have any sense of, not an obligation to play football, but that that was a real factor in getting the Upson scholarship.

WB: No. No, it never entered my mind that I had an obligation. That was my incentive, you might say my, basic incentive, because I wanted to play and there is no doubt about it. "Here's my opportunity, let's go to work on it."

KP: Right. But you didn't feel the obligation that you had to play football …

WB: No.

KP: … to fulfill the Upson?

WB: No, not at all. There was no pressure along that line, or anything like it, to cause me to feel that way. So, as far as I can say, it worked out very nicely.

KP: … You mentioned your first game in high school. What, obviously, one of the highlights for your football career was the great … victory over Princeton at the opening of the stadium.

WB: Yes.

KP: What other memories do you have of your … football career at Rutgers?

WB: Well, let's see. Along with that same thing, they had another rule, in those days, where coaching from the sidelines was a penalty. And every time I see now a short break the man comes in the scene, gets on the bench, and takes a drink of Gatoraid or something like that. In those days, "Don't drink water. Don't drink anything." In the half they'd give you half a lemon to suck on. That was it. And then in the time-out, the fellow would run out with a water bucket. And in the water bucket would be one of these old natural sponges. Dark brown natural sponge. And you'd take a bite out of it, get a little water in your mouth, and have to spit it out. [Laughter] Now this was all right, but when you're playing with a team that had people like, Rosati, Zucco, Mazza, Picone, things like that, every once in a while in the huddle, somebody would come up with a crack, and say, "Hey, Pedro, tell the Mama not to put so much garlic in the sauce next Saturday." [Laughs] I get exhausted, talking this way. [Laughs]

EK: Your team … is kind of a legend for having beat Princeton. Can you tell me what … that game was like, and what the reaction of the crowd was like, and everything?

WB: Playing it is just another football game. But the reaction comes at that final minute when the game is ended, and all you can do is stand there and say, "Oh, my God, we won it." Utter amazement in a way, because the previous year we lost to Princeton six to nothing. The year before that we lost twenty to nothing. Then in my freshman year, was one year they almost beat Princeton. We're ahead in the last quarter. Princeton came ahead and won. So it was just a matter of extreme pleasure, of being able to stand in the middle of that field while everybody is running around hootin' and hollerin', and just stand there and say, "Oh, my God! Thank God for it."

KP: 'Cause it was quite a spontaneous parade in New Brunswick celebrating the victory.

WB: Yes. I didn't participate in any parades after that victory. I always went down and went to the movie. In the evening … after every game. That was the way.

KP: Really? You would go to the movie. Sounds like that was a Saturday …

WB: That was the big State Theater. I guess it was.

KP: Right.

WB: They always gave us passes. And, at the time, you'd go there, they'd write you out a little pass. You go in and the fellow would take you up in the baloney and let you sit in the lodge

seaters. You'd really feel big as you sit there and enjoy it, relax, and get over your bumps and bruises. [Laughter]

KP: Are there any other memorable games that you remember besides the great Princeton victory?

WB: There's so many of them when you go back through them. But that, I guess, is the most outstanding memory that I have. Others were, well, a high school game. I played against a team from South River. Now South River, in those days, High School was a powerful team. Their center was Alex Wojochoski, outstanding All-American from Fordham, in those days. And three to four others like that. Also including a fella named Wally Pringle who was Rutgers quarterback here my sophomore year. I played against him there. And that type of thing is things you stick in your mind, as far as memory of various types of games. But, another game that I remember was freshman year. We had freshman teams in those days, and I must say, we had a team that wasn't very good. We had a game with Army plebes up in West Point. And the most enjoyable thing on that was the trip up and the trip back. [Laughter] We had mess in the Army mess hall, and that was very interesting, but the game itself, I guess, because we were behind, in the 30s or 40s to nothing. The Army plebe team, that year, was unscored on, untied, unbeaten, and that type of thing. Here they were. We were 30/ 40 to nothing behind them, back on our own three or four yard line, and had a little quarterback, Joe Dorrington. And he turns to our big halfback, Moon Mullen, at that time, and he says, "Moon, I don't know what you can do with it, but you can kick it, pass it, run it. Do what you think best." So I don't know what went through Moon's mind, but he decided to run, and went a hundred-five yards, with the only touchdown scored against the plebe team that year. [Laughter] It's like Larry Pitt always tells me that I scored the last touchdown played on Neilson Field.

KP: Really, you were the last?

WB: The last touchdown made on old Neilson Field was, what game was it? … I mean, it was Springfield, or something like that. And somebody had blocked the punt, and here was this football lying around, and I grabbed it. Took it over for a touchdown, and that was the last one made there. After that, we played everything, all the games, … across the river.

EK: Judging from how big a thing football was when you were here, how do you feel about the football team now at Rutgers?

WB: I wish you hadn't asked me that. [Laughs] It's disappointing in away because you see so much potential. And I feel sorry for the kids themselves who are out there trying to do the best they can, but everything seems to go wrong for them. And what it is, I don't know, but that's the way I feel about it. I'm almost crying in my beer over that, for them, because they are hoping to get someplace in football. Because you have to recognize now, that with the professional football the way it is, that a lot of these kids are hoping to be able to make it in the professional area. And when you're in a situation as we are in here today, why, their hopes and aspirations are really quite dampened. So it's difficult. I'd like to see 'em go ahead and win every darn game if you don't mind. But, sometimes it's just impossible.

KP: … Did you or anyone else on your teams have any thoughts of going professional? Playing professionally?

WB: No.

KP: No. You wanted to play, but you knew that …

WB: Pro-ball in those days didn't have the appeal that it does now. And it was, sort of, almost like a bush league or something, in that day. … I remember going up, took the team to see the New York Giants play in the old Polo Grounds. And it was just another football game, but there [was] no, let's see, thinking about graduating from college and then going into pro-ball. No. No.

KP: That was very alien.

WB: You are thinking about graduating from college and hoping that the next two to three years you could make a salary of $2500 a year, or something like that. That was your hopes and desires then.

KP: In addition to football, you were quite a "man about campus," in terms of your activities. You …

WB: I have thought about that many times and all I can say, … I think that fraternity that I was a member of, Phi Gamma, the people in the fraternity, did most of everything. In other words, I was, sort of felt like I was just rolling along … with the tide. Why or not, I don't know. I didn't give it any thought about at all.

KP: Besides playing football, you ended up becoming the student council president.

WB: Yes. Well, that's …

KP: You elected to take advanced ROTC, but you also chaired a lot of the balls, events, and dances you had.

WB: Yes. Well, … that was fraternity politics in those days. I think. Because there were about four or five other fellows who were members of different fraternities that we were, fairly, buddies. I think, we went from the Soph Hop, to the Junior Prom, to the Senior, and then Military Ball, and that type of thing. Purely, let's say, collaboration between the various fraternities.

KP: Because, in fact, that's what a number of people have told me, that their fraternities often will band together to elect their slates of candidates.

WB: Yes.

KP: And sometimes the commuters and the Barbarians will organize to oppose the fraternity slates.

WB: That's right.

KP: But often the fraternities are the victors because …

WB: Well, true. Yes. Because your fraternities, I would say, have a majority of the students involved at the time. But now, I'd say, it's quite different.

KP: One of the standard questions that we ask everyone is, did you know Dean Metzger and what did you think of Dean Metzger?

WB: Old Dean Frasier Metzger. I liked him. Very much indeed. He and I got along very well. And any problems, why, I got a little short of funds one time, and went up and talked to the Dean, and he loaned me seventy/seventy-five bucks for taking care of various things. And I finally was able to pay him back after a couple of years, … but I always liked him …very much indeed. And his assistant then was Edward Curtain, who I knew very well. I guess, he was a fraternity brother, also Phi Gamma Delta. I guess, he was probably one of the main factors, I guess, that I got the Upson Scholarship. So part of my job here, when I was working, was delivering newspapers in the morning.

KP: So you did that, too?

WB: Yes, every morning. *The New York Tribune* and *The New York Times*. [Phone Rings] You wanna go ahead?

KP: No. Go ahead.

WB: Okay. Delivering these papers, and I did have an old car at the time, an old Model-A Ford. And I used that. The papers you could roll up in a little ball and sling out, so they'd throw. And I had to deliver to Dean Metzer's house on, yes, College Avenue. It was right next to old Bishop House. In that area. It had a big plate glass front door. And one morning this paper went through and "bing."

KP: It broke the …

WB: Broke the door. [Laughs] I called up the Dean, "This is Walter Bruyere. I'm sorry about your door. I busted it." And he was very, very, very nice about it. He said, "Don't worry about it. We'll get it taken care of."

KP: Another question, 'cause it's closely related to Dean Metzger, did you attend chapel regularly? Did you go to chapel services?

WB: That's where I was working, too, because you had to take attendance in chapel in those days. And so … let's see, Monday sophomores … freshman, junior,

seniors … at noontime. So you'd have to take attendance . Everybody'd be assigned a seat, and you'd check 'em off, and give a report back to the Dean's office. For which they paid you. I made another twenty-five cents an hour, so … And so, Sunday was about the same thing, but a little different. And I know, after one Sunday service, I was walking down George Street towards the Old Queens. And the doctor, the University doctor at the time, was coming towards me with the key speaker for the Sunday sermon. He was the Dean of Yale Divinity School. And Doc asked me, "Well, what'd you think of church today?" I said, "Well, the only reason I go to church is because I get paid for it." [Laughter] So, there again, I don't know that I made any favors or not. [Laughter] Oh, my.

EK: You were a business administration major. Is that right?

WB: Yes.

EK: What made you choose that?

WB: I guess with my experience in Wall Street, and my natural desire, I guess, to look at things on paper, reports and that type of thing, rather than going into a profession of any type, or coaching of that nature. No, it doesn't have any appeal to me. And maybe business administration was, maybe, something I thought I could handle, rather than an engineering course, or something of that nature. Because I wasn't much of a student. I grant you that. … Mathematics would go over my head all of the time. And I mentioned my French. [Laughs]

KP: You had mentioned that Professor Reager was your favorite professor at Rutgers.

WB: Yes. He was a public speaking teacher. And the opening ceremonies for my senior year I had to give a speech to [everyone]. And at that time, they were practicing football down at the camp in Sea Girt, and I had to come back up here. And finally, I got together with Professor Reager, and he said, "Well, you don't know what you're going to talk about?" And I said, "No, I don't have any idea," at the time. So he wrote me a speech which I read off from the podium and got away with it that way. And then I took his pubic speaking class for that year. [Laugher] However, that helped me out a lot because in a military career you're doing a lot of speaking. You are doing a lot of formal instruction. I mean, as instructor at the infantry school at Fort Benning. I was a PMS&T assistant at the University of Hawaii, teaching classes there, too. … I mean, that's a formal type of speaking, whereas with a platoon, you're instructing men from platoon, company, battalion level on up. So, as I say, whatever he instilled in me, at the time, through his course, I had a great deal of benefit on it. I also had a great deal of benefit to my wife's persistence, and having practice, practice, practice, practice, which helped a lot. [Laughs]

KP: … Since you brought up your wife, you met your wife, … it sounds like, around the time you were in college. Or was it even earlier?

WB: No. I met her while I was still in high school.

KP: Okay.

WB: Yes. She was from Montclair. And I was up visiting a cousin in Montclair on, the New

Year's Eve Party. I met her there. That was the summer of 1932. I would go up and see her every once in a while. And … I graduated. I was still working in the city. She graduated from Montclair High School and went to Carnegie Tech, and, in their School of Dramatics, and she graduated from there in … 1940. She had one summer session with a playhouse out in Lake Erie. Evidently, it did not seem to tie into what she felt was an acting career, so, we finally decided, "Let's get married sometime." [Laughter] Let's see, at that time I was stationed in Massachusetts. And every once in a while, I would have money to make the trip back here to Jersey. And so, one of those trips, why, I said, "Okay. Let's get married." [Laughter]

KP: So I take it that you and your future wife went to a lot of the balls and dances here at Rutgers?

WB: No.

KP: No?

WB: No, we didn't.

KP: Really?

WB: No, no, no. Because she was always involved, most of the time, out in Pittsburgh.

KP: So you would write to each other.

WB: Yes, we always wrote back in forth, all the time. Two or three times a week. And so …

KP: You elected to stay in ROTC. I mean, you took the basic, but you elected to take advanced.

WB: Yes.

KP: Did you think that you wanted a career in the military?

WB: No, not at time. I guess, I was influenced by a brother-in-law of mine, who spoke to me before I went to college about the ROTC program and its advantages. And he said, "While you're there, you might just as well take advantage of it." Which I did. And so I went into the advanced. And then at the, right toward the end of the senior year the government … re-instituted a program of, instead of going into the reserve program when you graduated, you are issued a, if you wanted it, a regular Army commission. So I applied for it and received a regular Army commission at that time. In other words, that was the same status as if I had graduated from West Point. Only not having the "old school tie" and that type of thing.

KP: There's a lot of people who were in ROTC in the '30s. They … often didn't get active service. They just were put in the reserves. 'Cause there were no spaces, literally, no spaces for them.

WB: Yes, that's right. Yes.

KP: Did you think that that might, initially, that might be the case. That you would stay in the reserves and not get active duty.

WB: No, I put in for a regular commission just because …

KP: You were eager to go into regular duty.

WB: It was available and it was something, "Well, I might just as well to try for and see what I can get. Because, I think, at that time, well, I had been offered a job with Burrough's Adding Machine Company when I graduated. As a matter-of-fact, when I graduated, why, I worked for them for about a month, until I got notification from the Army that I was getting the regular commission. I had to take this in and show it to the boss and they said, "Well, sorry. Goodbye, boy." [Laughter] But, I suppose if I had stayed with Burrough's, why, it would have been another three or four months or a year before I'd be called to active duty again.

KP: Right. In late '30s, you mentioned that your family wasn't too politically active. What about your fellow Rutgers students? Do you remember, for example, the 1936 election? Do you recall what they thought?

WB: 1936? Not too much. There was quite a heated argument over Roosevelt's reelection in '36. Yes, that was the first one. I remember fraternity brothers arguing back and forth for, who was the, not Alf Landen …

KP: … Norman Thomas?

WB: No, no, no, no. No, I think it was Alf Landen who was running against Roosevelt at the time.

KP: Yes.

WB: And there are lots of pros and cons. Fraternity discussion. That type of thing. But, I did not enter into it much myself. I guess, I was too busy working away and doing things.

KP: There was also in the '30s, there was … some wide spread sentiment on a lot of campuses, strong support for the peace movement, and even some protest, on some campuses, over ROTC. Do you remember any of those … discussions?

WB: Not that it had a serious effect on anything. I remember peace demonstrations. Things like that. But not too much publicity on them. And, "Okay, if he wants to talk that way, shout his mouth off, or something like that, let him go ahead." Because otherwise, here's the status quo, and it's gonna go ahead this way anyway. … I guess in the mid-thirtyies you really didn't expect the world to erupt into a war the way it did.

KP: So you had no sense that …

WB: We were aware in my, let's say my senior year, of the impact Hitler was having on the world. And felt that something was probably going to happen, Lord knows when. But it's like I said, I received my regular Army commission dated, 1 September 1939. Which was the day that Hitler went into Poland.

KP: It's a great day to get a [commission]. In a sense, your Army service started on the first day of the war.

WB: Yes. Yes.

KP: Before going into the Army is there anything about Rutgers … we forgot to ask you about? Because you, I guess, you also acted in the Queens Players?

WB: No, I didn't act. I was behind the scenes. Stage manger and that type of thing. And … they had a couple of shows. My junior year we put one on over at the high school, and that one, I thought, was pretty good. 'Cause a lot we had, people enjoy it. Then, the senior year, I don't know, a couple of the guys putting it together ran wild. [Laughs] They put on this show at the gym, at that time, and somebody cooked up the idea, "Well, okay, let's have a traveling show." We took it up to Paterson. And we had to clean everything out of the gym after the last show, truck it on up to Paterson, and get it set up again for the next night. And I remember doing their driving. This darn truck which the Ford Company had loaned us. And packing everything into the truck, driving three or four times, back and forth, then getting things set up. And then, one night, show up there and then tearing it all down and bringing it back. [Laughter] That was about the time Easter vacation of our senior year. But, no. I wasn't an actor at all.

EK: What did you do during summers at Rutgers?

WB: I went home to Red Bank at that time, and handled ice for the Seaboard Ice Company.

KP: … Did you deliver ice?

WB: No. I worked on their icehouse platform, loading ice trucks. And the regular delivery trucks would come in and they'd pick up their load for the day, and about every hour or so a fellow would back up a big, huge truck and they'd have to load this with large cakes, three hundred pound cakes of ice, which he would take up to icehouses out in Seabright. And another one in the Atlantic Highlands area. So, I had to stand on this platform, and the fellow inside would take these ice cakes and put them through a scoring machine, which would score them into fifty and twenty-five pound ice cakes. … The ice then would then come out of the little chute, out onto the platform, and I'd have to grab it with the tongs, swing it around, lift it up, and … get it on the back of the truck while the truck driver would grab it and put it on the truck. These things would come out regularly, regularly, regularly. And his truck would handle, I guess, about fifty cakes. So that kept me busy in the summer time.

KP: That also sounds like quite a workout.

WB: Oh, yes! [Laughs]

KP: You mentioned going to the movies a lot. Do remember any war movies, in particular, growing up.

WB: … I remember some of them. Can't remember the names too well. Sometimes names, when you get my age, why, names and things like that, start to slip. I remember All's Quite on the Western Front. Things like that. I know my wife and I went to the movies, in Boston, on December 7, 1941. We were on our way from the camp into Boston, stopped to have … breakfast at this thing, and heard over the radio that the Japs had bombed Pearl Harbor. I said, "We can't do anything." So we went on into Boston and went to the movies, anyway.

KP: … You didn't report initially that …

WB: Well, no. We knew that we were still in Massachusetts and that was way out on the West. [Laughs] We were concerned, yes.

KP: Right. But you … had the sense that this reporting and sitting around was …

WB: The movie we saw was "Sergeant York."

KP: Really?

WB: Yes. [Laugh]

KP: I partly ask that because, what were your impressions from the movies and from other sources of what military life was like? Because you would end up spending a good part of your career as a professional officer.

WB: The movies, I don't think, gave me too much impression on what military life would be. In other words, the movies were just specific instances of people doing things or not doing things. Whereas in your actual experience, why, you're just living your life the way it should be lived. The way you think it should be lived, and doing what you think should be done right, or trying to obey orders and that type of thing. [Laughs]

KP: Looking back, particularly at your first year or two in the military, how good was ROTC in preparing you for military service?

WB: In a way, to get along with people, or how to handle, let's say, military types of situations. But the difference was, in those days, in '39, in the four years of ROTC all you did was your drill, was "squads right" and "squads left," and this type of thing. The old squad formation, with the old thirty-aught-six bolt action rifle. So when I reported for duty at Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island to Company F of the 18th Infantry they were involved in all the new formations, where you

did not have any squad right formations. It was all "company right" or "company left." Your rifle was the new Garand M-1 rifle. So here you are starting all over again. That type of thing. And that's another thing that was …, in that period, because I reported for duty in September of '39, and in that period, you might say, I had about September, October, and part of November, witnessing the old pre-war Army.

KP: I was gonna ask you about that … .

WB: All right. Here's the example. My first day of duty I reported in to this company. The company commander was there in the orderly room. And we discussed … a few things, got to know each other, and he said, "Well, let's go inspect the kitchen." So we went in and inspected the kitchen. And the mess sergeant, that time, already had a big meat sandwich laid out and a cup of coffee for us. So we had to eat that, and take care of that. And then he said, "Well, okay, let's go out and inspect the troops now." So you went out and there was about fifteen or twenty men out drilling, out of a company of a hundred-twenty/ a hundred-thirty. You'd look at that for a while and he'd say, "Okay, it's lunch time." So, okay, went out and got lunch and came back to the orderly room. And there was not a soul around. I didn't know what to do. Okay, here's a field manual. Started reading a field manual about an half an hour. Finally the company first sergeant poked his head in. He said, "My God, Lieutenant, what are you doing here in the afternoon?" [Laughter] That lasted until the middle of November when they packed the whole kit-and-kabootle of us, put us on a transport, and took it down to Charleston, South Carolina, took us by train over to Fort Benning, Georgia and said, "Now make a damned army out of it." And that was … my short experience with the pre-World War II Army.

KP: Because one of the things people told me was, while the Army was not as bad as the Navy, the pre-war Army was very ritualized. For example, when you got to the base you were supposed to have a total number of cards, and you had a round of places where you're suppose to deliver your cards to the …

WB: That's right.

KP: Even to the … daughters of the officers, you know.

WB: Absolutely. [Laughs] That was part of a ritual. [Laughs] However, this lasted a year, I think, maybe, into '40.

KP: Right. When things heated up a lot of those rituals, but initially …

WB: Initially, well, that was part of the Army life. You had formal occasions you'd have to go to. And I had my first set of dress blues, and I polished it all up, and some major and his wife had invited us to an affair at the officers club. So I got everything all spruced up, and cleaned up, and reported in. And was heading across the room towards the bar when the major's wife came up behind me and said, "Excuse me, Lieutenant." She took the price tag off the back of my coat. [Laughter] So that was still a carry-over of the formal type of Army. But as to a thing that amazes me, from what I experienced during that short period of time, what the Army was able to

do within a short period of time, let's say, within a year of putting together the mass that was required and what was required of it from '41 on. And I think a lot of what was able to do that was, well, Roosevelt's program with the CCC, where you had a lot of reserve officers called to active duty to run these CCC camps, which were in a sense, quasi- military.

KP: Why do you think that was so important?

WB: Because it developed the feeling of being able to initiate a program, get it started, have it accomplish something, and have people available to do it. Which is essentially the same thing you had as soon as you got into a war status where everything was blossomed out. And I ran into some of those CCC camps during my first year in the Army, in Louisiana. Because I was … stationed at … Georgia at the time. But, … things were expanding gradually. And we had to develop more maneuver territory in the Fort Benning area. So one of my jobs was to go out and visit everybody that owned a piece of property, to get them to sign an agreement to let the Army maneuver over their property. And I don't know whether I did such a good job down there at Benning. They said, "Well, okay. There's gonna be a big maneuver over in Louisiana. They need a crew over there to do the same thing. Go!" [Laughs]

KP: … What was that like to get people's consent?

WB: Sometimes it was like pulling teeth. Other times it was no problem at all. Or sometimes you get just plain, flat resistance to it. And when you had flat resistance there wasn't much you could do about it. … I only ran into three or four cases like that in Georgia. But what developed out of it I don't know. 'Cause last time I went back down to Georgia, after the war, … we had then gotten maneuver rights which was now part of Fort Benning itself. The government had bought it.

KP: The governement bought the people out?

WB: Yes. And in Louisiana there was no government installation there at all, at the time. This was in the '40s. And then they developed, afterwards, they developed a big post, Army installation, down there. Which, I guess, they had to do the same thing. As I say, I don't dare go back to Louisiana because, in 1940, here I was going around getting all these land owners to sign this petition allowing the Army to go on their property. And it was my name on there as a government for the witness. And they were still using the damn thing! [Laughs]

KP: One of the things that people have observed, both people I have interviewed, but in general, the pre-war Army was a hard drinking Army. Relative to, I mean, even though I've read that during World War II and after the Army, you know, but apparently the pre-war Army you really did a lot of drinking.

WB: Well, from my experience the, as I say, the month and a half I had with it … All right, there was not too much activity as far as Army work was concerned. In other words, you spend the morning or something like that, what are you going to do the rest of the day or the evening? We'll celebrate, have a party, and that type of thing. So I was aware of quite a number of officers in the Army, at the time, who had drinking problems. And many of those, I know, were weeded

out in the early part of '41/'42, after things got serious.

KP: And I've also read … that the enlisted personal could be, a lot of them, had been in the Army a long time and a lot of them, I don't know if "the wrong side of the tracks" is the right [phrase], but they weren't fresh faced kids at nineteen … .

WB: No, they were very experienced individuals. And, all right, this was an Army career as far as some of these guys were concerned. And you ran into all kinds. I mean, those who were out for blood, those who were out to make a buck, or those who were serious about what they were doing. And you could see the gradual change after they got this unit, this first infantry division down to Fort Benning in November and December of, … 1939 it was. And, okay, you gotta settle down to business now and make an Army out of this thing rather than a social program. [Laughs]

KP: 'Cause when you said, when you first got to the Fort, and, you know, you found out there were only fifteen or twenty people … doing anything. Where was everyone?

WB: Everybody's off on a detail someplace. I mean, the cleaning detail. "Mop up this." You had people who were, what the British call, "the batmen." They were over taking care of the officers' quarters. The company commander always had one man come over and take care of his house, get the furnace going, and do cleaning work, and that type of thing. And that … ran out quite suddenly in 1941. Whereas, after the war you could still get people to come in, if you had a large set of quarters, government quarters. And most of those, at those times, … had extra rooms where you could have an enlisted man and his wife come in and live, and they could do small things. Baby-sit, mainly.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Walter Bruyere on Novemer 7, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and …

EK: … Elise Krotiuk.

KP: And you were saying that the government quarters were now, that this arrangement would …

WB: Yes. Of course, in other words, the government looks at it from the point of view, "Well, okay, you're living in government quarters. And here's an enlisted man who's living in your same quarters. So somebody has to give up a quarter's allowance." And that, sort of, put the kabosh on that type of system. … I would say nobody has, in the Army now, has somebody who's their personal servant.

KP: Like in the old pre-war Army.

WB: Yes. Yes. Except when you get up into the general rank you do have enlisted aides that are authorized, that

type of thing. But, as far as the common, ordinary officer is concernend, why, no more. No more.

KP: I mean, how long would these batmen, of having an enlisted man in your house, sharing your quarters, how far down would that penetrate?

WB: It would go to company level, usually. And, of course, this was going back to the month and a half that I was in the old pre-war Army that, I would say, from my experience, was the company level. Because the company commander had control of the men in his company, and that type of thing. Well, okay. But, usually they would give them a few bucks for something like that. Particularly, when the pay in those days was twenty-one dollars a month. Deduction from pool table, laundry, movie, three or four other things, … the guy would end up with about thirty-five cents in his pocket. [Laughter]

KP: What about these sergeants? I mean, you were a young lieutenant. And I've often been told junior officers are very dependent on … their NCOs.

WB: Yes. Yes, they are. Most definitely. And, I mean, your problem as a junior officer, I think, is gaining the respect of some of these old-time sergeants that are used to having junior officers come in and sit on top of them. Not knowing how to handle things. So … I don't know. I didn't experience too much difficulty myself along that line.

KP: Do you remember anything about the first sergeant you met? Is there anything that sticks out about him or is he more memorable than others?

WB: I remember him very well. … I mean, he was the first sergeant. … He was the boss of the company. And the company commander at that time, I mean, okay, he exercised his right of command. But the things that got done were done by the first sergeant. In other words, I guess, it's still that way these days, because it's been so long since I've had experience at troop level. The last experience was at Fort Dix where I was commanding a regiment, for a training regiment. And there again, the sergeants were the ones doing all of the work. The officers were supervising and catching hell if something went wrong.

KP: … In the pre-war Army, you sort of talked about your first day, where you didn't know what to do, what would a typical day be like for you? Do you remember? 'Cause these were also your first days in the Army.

WB: Okay. If it had been that way ad infinitum, or for another three/four years, I don't know.

KP: Right.

WB: I probably would've settled down into the morning work routine. Whatever had to be done. Special jobs and things like that. You were always giving a special assignment. I mean, sitting on courts-martial, conducting special classes, conducting investigations, and this type of thing. All problems connected with running a military service. And I mean, I even had to, at that time, running a course on gases, the various gases that were know at the time. And I had to be

prepared in how to handle them. They finished the course by having a tent set up, and opening up a can of tear gas inside, and having everyone come in and take off their masks and go out. Just so they knew what it was like. … Or investigating accidents, or courts-martial. Things like that. That's why I say, I don't think that I can sit on a case now as a member of a jury. Because they would ask me if I had any legal service and I would say, "Yes, … I've been a prosecuting attorney. I've been a defense attorney. I've been president of the court." That type of thing right on down the line. [Laughs]

KP: What was your first experience with a courts-martial? Do you remember?

WB: Yes. I was called on to be the, what they called at those times, was the trial judge advocate, which in civilian terms is your attorney.

KP: Defense attorney?

WB: No.

KP: Prosecutor?

WB: No. Prosecuting attorney. And a fellow was accused for, what was it, not using, not brushing his teeth, as I recall. This is going back way far. And I know I started out by trying to give a summation of the thing and the president of the court, "Lieutenant, just get down to work now, and settle the thing. Don't give us any hoot or hurrah about this thing. Is he guilty or is he not guilty, and prove it." [Laughs]

KP: And was he found guilty of not brushing his teeth?

WB: I can't remember. I don't know. I really don't know.

KP: What was the most serious offense that you ever, at a courts-martial, participated in?

WB: Let's see. I got into some hairy ones when I was at Fort Dix. That was during the Vietnam War. You would get people who would refuse to go such and such a place. And you had trials of that nature. I don't remember sitting on anything that involved a murder case or anything like that. Most of it was offenses connected with military type duty.

KP: Which in civilian life might, you know …

WB: Yes. … In civilian life, why, it might be just a matter of appearing at the town court, or something like that.

KP: Or even, like, brushing your teeth is not a civilian offense. [Laughs]

WB: One case I do remember, that I was not on but I had to get some information, and this was Eisenhower's chief of staff, Bedell Smith. A general. This was in Algiers. He had gone to visit

one of the places in Tunis. And he'd come into the installation, and the guard on duty was probably, did not seem like he was awake. So, the General wanted to prepare charges against him and said that he was sleeping on the post. And I had to get a deposition from the General, rather than having him appear, about what he saw and what he did. This was presented to the court. The court found the young man "not guilty." [Laughter] So that was back in the days when you could call the court in and give 'em hell.

KP: And so this court got … [Laughs]

WB: … This court got sat down and talked to. [Laughter]

KP: But it sounds like … there was some evidence that, in fact, the guard was not asleep.
WB: There might have been. There was some, well, some doubt.

KP: There was some doubt?

WB: Some doubt in the members of the court. Yes. Even in spite of the fact that the deposition the General had signed said, "Yes. He was asleep … " [Laughs]

KP: Before we move to the Army that it became during the war, clearly not a sleeping Army, are there any other memories? Because you have such great stories about the sleeping Army. [Laughter] Are there any more memories, or impressions, that you have of it before we move to the war? [Laughter]

WB: I've gotta go back … to my file system, flip off the rotating file, and see what comes up here. I don't think too much right now.

KP: Yes. Don't hesitate to add to the transcripts.

WB: Okay.

KP: Or toward the end of the interview, if some story comes back. I guess, one question, you mentioned going to Benning with your unit, and also getting peoples' permission to do maneuvers. Had you traveled much before entering the military? Your father had gone to Europe frequently.

WB: Yes. Well, no. Well, yes, we did some traveling.

KP: Where had you traveled before the military?

WB: Well, the end of the junior year, my roommate and I were elected to attend a fraternity convention out in Portland, Oregon. And, "How are we going to get out there?" So that summer I was at the ROTC summer camp up at Plattsburg barracks, and met quite a few young ladies up there. And this young lady, one of them, had this 1931 Model "A" Ford roadster that she wanted to sell. I said, "Okay, how much do you want for it?" She said, "Sixty dollars." So I said,

"Okay, I'll buy it." [Laughs] So I got that. I drove it back, at the time, finished up the camp, we drove back home. And my roommate lived down in Manasquan. So we got together and put it in pretty good shape as far as, you know. Then we took off and headed across country. And we had quite a nice trip, … relatively speaking, because we stopped at a fraternity house, or uncle's in Chicago, places like that. [Laughs] And out into California, then on up to Portland, Oregon. And this fraternity convention was at the end of August and the first couple of days of September. And we had a new football coach, Harvey Harmon, who just came in. And he had football practice set up for the 1st of September. And here I was out in Portland, Oregon. So when the convention ended on Sunday, at about 5 o'clock on Sunday evening, Chubby Edwards and I got into the car, and on noon, Thursday, we were back home in New Jersey. We just drove it straight through, taking turns driving and sleeping, and that type of thing. [Laughs] And that was my experience on traveling.

KP: Had you ever been to the South before your military?

WB: No. No. That was my first trip to the South. This was my first trip across country. I had been up in a trip … through New England with, this was my friend Dick Hammell, who got me to come to Rutgers. I had just purchased an old …, I was still working in the city, at the time, and on two weeks leave, or vacation, not leave. And I had bought a 1921 Model "T" station wagon. Wood frame, and that type of thing. Beautiful thing. Paid seven dollars for it. Got that in running condition, then Dick Hammell and I took off on a trip up into New England. We went up … through New York State. And he had some people he knew were up in the area near, northern New York State. Elizabethtown, Ausable Chasm and that area. So we headed up that way, and I remember he said, "Well, this place, Elizabethtown, you take a road that goes out towards the West." And we started out on this road towards the little town of Keene, I think it was. And we came to a hill and started down this long hill. Low and behold none of the brakes worked! [Laughs]

EK: Oh, my!

WB: I say, Dick and I, we rolled down that hill quite a way. [Laughs] And we got lost trying to find this friend of his family. And finally came in a little back road, and had to go up a hill, and the car wouldn't move any farther. I mean, the Model "T" didn't have gears. They had a, what they called band type of thing, where the band would clamp on a cylinder to give it the reverse or low gear. And these bands would wear out every once in a while. So Dick got out of the car and then said, "Well, I'll go on ahead and see what I can find." He came back in about ten minutes later and said, "Well, they're just up the road here." [Laughter] They came up with a car and towed us in. We got the car fixed up and headed on across in, then over, … to Maine, and then back down. So that was the extent of my travels before the war.

KP: You had a lot of dealing action with civilians in the South, going to these people asking them to accept.

WB: Yes.

KP: What were your impressions of the South?

WB: Most of the people in Georgia I met, were strictly down-country folks. I mean, cotton growers, cotton planters, and that type of thing. In a way, they weren't too friendly, because here the military is expanding into their lands. Whereas, over in Louisiana, where I was working for the same type of thing, most people over there were quite friendly. Most willing, and no problem at all. With one exception. There was one name, or family, that we were unable to contact, because, initially, we sent out letters to all these people. Never heard anything from them, and the boss of the outfit over there, at that time, said, "Well, Bruyere, take this name and you go find it, and don't come back until you do." [Laughs] So I finally headed out, after many questions about where to go and how to do this, and turn here, and that. But finally ended up way back in the wild, piney woods, … where the country is Southern shack-type house. And drove up into this front yard, and here was this old fellow standing out in the front. And when I was talking to him about what we were doing, he was standing there with a shotgun, all ready. [Laughter] And, at that time, beside him, were about three or four of his children. Daughters and that type of thing. But I finally convinced him that here's what we're doing. We weren't here to take his son for, bottling, making booze, … or anything like that. We were just okay. So we walked around his property putting up these signs, "Off Limits." Signs to keep them off of the critical areas. [Laughter]

KP: You mentioned that your unit going on maneuvers, in many ways, you deigned this as the beginning of the end of the old … pre-war Army.

WB: Yes.

KP: I guess if you could describe a little bit about the maneuvers, in a sense, creating a real Army. … Can you describe what you did and also …

WB: … I didn't get involved in the maneuvers myself. In other words, I was still involved in this property business.

KP: So that really took up a lot of your time in '39 and '40?

WB: That took up all of my time.

KP: Okay. So you would just go off alone and do this.

WB: Well, yes. Go off alone.

KP: You didn't have a sergeant that drove you?

WB: Well, you had a driver driving a military vehicle, but that was it.

KP: Right.

WB: You'd go out everyday, and come back, and your boss would be sitting in the courthouse with all the records,

and that type of thing. And you'd contact as many people as you could.

KP: So, in many ways, you had to work fairly independently?

WB: Yes. Yes. You had a great course in how to get along with people. In Louisiana you'd drive up into some house and be greeted with, "Well, come on in and have a cup of coffee." There would be a pot on, with a fireplace, nothing but chicory. [Laughs] After about three or four of those for a day, why, you'd want to stick to a diet of milk the rest of your life. [Laughter]

KP: … When did your job in getting … permission rights end? Did that last through '39?

WB: Well, the maneuvers in Louisiana ended in, let's see, about the first part of May or June 1940. And, at that time, then, our unit was sent back to the Fort Wadsworth area. In other words, the 1st Infantry Division. It was Fort Wadsworth. Fort Hamilton, Fort Jay, all New York City subway riders you might say. We came back there for, I guess, we were there … until '41. No. No. In '40. … Wait a minute now. No. Sometime in '41. I think the beginning of '41. They moved us up to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, where the whole division was together, whereas you can't do very much planning as far as tactical maneuvering on Fort Wadsworth or Fort Hamilton, or anything like that. And they finally thought, "Let's get this unit together again," and moved us up to Fort Devens. And then, before the war, this 1st Infantry Division was involved in part of the planning of the landing maneuvers that were … conducted so many times during World War II. And three or four times they would take the whole division, take us out of Fort Devens down to Brooklyn Army base, load us on transports, and take us down off the coast of North Carolina. And there we'd practice ship-to-ship shore landing type operations. And it was quite something, I remember. The first time we were on that was an old Army transport, the hunter liggett, that was taken over by the Coast Guard. And the poor crew on this Coast Guard, they had these landing boats, and it took them all night to get the boats back up and then down again so they could use them the next day. And the next time we went out on this boat it had been changed. New davits had been installed and made it really adaptable to conducting a landing operation.

KP: It almost sounds like you knew in the first …maneuvers that this could be real combat, in a sense. Do you think that … ?

WB: Well, yes. Because the only thing we thought of at the time was, "Well, if you're gonna have a war someplace …" In other words, war was going on over in Europe at the time, and if we're going to participate in it, we'd either have to go through England, or we're gonna have to land someplace and conduct our own way, which worked out both ways. We went over to England and the first operation in Europe was over in North Africa. So, as I said, that was the, I think, working together with the Navy, the Army, together, .. and the Marines, on these landing type operations.

KP: You worked with Marines in numerous …

WB: Yes. There were Marine operated units in that same type of operations. Because what the area developed into [was] the large Marine Corps base, which is now in North Carolina, right in

that area.

KP: Yes.

WB: What's the name of the place?

KP: … I can't think of it, but I know which base, or at least I can look it up. While you returned to Fort Wadsworth, and then you're sent up to the camp at Fort Devens, what were your assignments?

WB: Well, at Wadsworth I was there only about, let's see, a short while. And then I was picked out to do a special duty job at Fort Dix. … This was just the beginning of the draft, and Fort Dix was a receiving area. And they had to set up a whole operation of receiving these draftees, getting them squared away, and that type of thing. And I was sent down there to Dix, and I stayed there, I guess, maybe six months with this type of operation. I then went back to Wadsworth again before we moved up to Devins.

KP: So, in a sense, you were a staff officer?

WB: I wouldn't say a staff officer. An officer on special assignment. Special duty. Yes.

KP: In other words, you didn't work with a company or squad?

WB: Very little. Very little opportunity to do that. Which I regret very much because it had impact on me later, in that it was, in a way, kind of disastrous. [Laughter]

KP: Really? In what way? You said you deferred it. In other words, you didn't get that experience.

WB: Yes, because, well, when you're commanding an infantry battalion in war, in mountainous country in France, and you had command of it for three or four months, and then you conduct a large operation which falls flat on its face, they feel there's something lacking in your ability to make this thing go. And that resulted in … another change of plans. Another special duty. [Laughs]

EK: Were you married to your wife at this time, that you were …

WB: Yes.

EK: Was she following you to all the different bases or was she just staying in Jersey?

WB: We were married when I was at Fort Devens on June 7, 1941. And when we moved down from there, they took the division right after war started, and moved us down to Camp Blanding in Florida for further maneuvers. Because, at this time, when I look back on it, they wanted the division used to warm weather training in planning for the North Africa operation. And … she came down. Followed me down. And then we came back from there to … Pennsylvania. A staging area where they took us there, about a month, then took us over to New York City and loaded us all

on, not my wife.

EK: Right.

WB: … On the *Queen Mary*. Fifteen thousand of us. And shoved off, and five days later we were in England.

KP: You mentioned the changes about pre-war Army before even the war begins, but … what change did Pearl Harbor have on the way the Army operated?

WB: There was much more urgency to get things done. To be able to know you're getting ready to be able to get involved in a fight. Because infantry, you're the main fighter as far as the Army is concerned. I mean, you're right down there in the beginning. It's not like the artillery, where the artillery exists. They exist just to make a nice thing out of a brawl. That's all. [Laughs] So that was the main thing that I noticed. And concern about getting people prepared to be able to operate under adverse, terrible, conditions, you might say.

EK: Did the attitude of the average soldier … change at all after Pearl Harbor?

WB: I think so. Well, yes. Because prior to Pearl Harbor most of the average soldiers, with the exception of those that had been in career, were either draftees or people who had enlisted early, and they were in the Army, let's say, because they had to be. And now they are suddenly changed because of having the opportunity to say, "Well, yes. I want to continue in the Army or I don't want to continue." Their thought was now that, "Hopefully, I am into it, and I gotta go in through the whole thing." So as far as what each individual thought, well, I can only give you a rough cross-section. [Laughs]

KP: … In 1941 there was a lot of dissatisfaction among the draftees.

WB: Yes.

KP: Do you remember any of that?

WB: Not too much. I knew there was some dissatisfaction because in, let's see, in 1941, November 1941, we were involved in large maneuvers in North Carolina. And here again you were filled with draftees and that type of thing. And as soon as we got back to our station, back at Fort Devins, after these maneuvers, people were saying, "Well, okay. I've done my time. Now, let me get out." And a lot of people did. But that lasted until 7 December, when things were changed drastically.

KP: … Were you surprised at the attack on Pearl Harbor?

WB: Yes. Yes. I think it was just as much a surprise or shock to me as it was to everybody.

KP: Were you expecting war with Japan before Pearl Harbor?

WB: No. No. We weren't as far as our level was concerned.

KP: Right.

WB: We knew we might … get involved in Europe because of the situation. There was a full size blown war going on over there. And we knew, well, like experience in World War I, that, "Okay. We'll eventually get into it." So we had that thought in mind. But Japan, I would think, was a complete shock to us. Just a complete change.

KP: You would not stay with the 1st Division very long after the war.

WB: No. I went overseas with the 1st Division.

KP: You went overseas with them.

WB: And was with them for about a month overseas. When I was special duty again. Assigned to London with Eisenhower's headquarters, was forming for the invasion of North Africa. And I ended up with this, let's say, the outfit that had to provide everything for the headquarters.

KP: Before talking about that. You were among the first troops to arrive in England in the 1940s.

WB: Yes.

KP: What was that like …?

WB: That was very interesting because you were a curiosity for most of the people. And they were interesting. In a way, they were happy to see you. And I wasn't there long enough to be, well, realize that if you turned these barrage balloons loose, why the whole island's gonna sink. I did not get that feeling. [Laughter] And while I was there in London, was, let's see, September, October, November of 1942. But there were no serious air raids, and all that, or anything like that. It was just a matter of office routine. That type of thing.

KP: So you experienced any bombings over there?

WB: Not in London.

KP: Not in London.

WB: But in Algiers.

KP: Okay.

WB: There were a couple of them. But, "close but no cigar," you might say.

KP: Because England, in a sense, would be overrun by GIs …

WB: Yes.

KP: And in fact, as more GIs came there would be a little bit more tension, just because you have to share an island.

WB: Yes. I never did get back to England. So I wasn't experienced with the great, let's say, throngs of GIs that came in there, and literally took over the whole thing.

KP: Did you get to know any English civilians, or English officers, while you were in England?

WB: Not as a close friendship or anything like that. Acquaintances, yes. But not for anything that you'd be able to say, "Well, okay, you're friends with these people." In other words, you were involved in your own little sphere of activity. And trying to get along with things. [Laughs]

KP: Did you go to the pubs at all in England?

WB: I went, no. Let's see, yes. I think I went once. But I have a very vague remembrances of things like that. Most of the things I was concerned about, well, you had to find a place to live in London. And the outfit I was with said, "Well, okay, here's a place. Go check it out." It turned out to be Mrs. So and So's home for gentlewomen. [Laughter] Rented out now as a boarding house. And here it was, on a third floor room and that type of thing. And you'd sleep there. For food you'd have to go to whatever is available around. They did have special areas, or places, for military personnel to eat. But then you'd go to the office and work up until eight/ ten in the evening, and that type of thing.

KP: So you worked long hours?

WB: Yes. Yes.

KP: You would be on Eisenhower's staff, in a sense, before Eisenhower became a figure. That even in wartime he becomes Supreme Allied Commander of the whole war effort. What was Eisenhower's staff like? Did you ever have any contact with Eisenhower himself?

WB: Not personally, but enough contact to be able to, well, he would see you, or he wouldn't know me from Adam, or wouldn't know me, or anything like that. I knew him as "the General."

KP: Yes.

WB: But his main feature, I think, was being able to take various types of individuals and people and get them to work together so they come up with a common … result on many of the

problems that existed. Because we had lots and lots and lots of problems there, and particularly from our end of it, where you're supplying everybody with everything that is required.

KP: Yes. What were some of your problems? Do any problems of yours stick out?

WB: Okay. Ike had a naval aide. And he came to our shop one day, and saw our supply people, and said, "Ike wants a sailboat." So, our supply people went out and requisitioned a sailboat in Algiers Harbor. It was about a twenty-four foot sloop. A nice little boat. They tried to sail it out of Algiers Harbor for about a couple of Sundays, and they couldn't get it out. They did not know how to sail it. And word went around, "Does anybody know how to sail?" I raised my hand, "Yes, I do." So I spend a very nice Sunday taking this sailboat out of Algiers Harbor, west along the coast of Algiers and the Mediterranean to a, what you'd now call "a marina area," a nice little cove, and that type of thing. Sailed it into there. A nice spanking breeze and came in full tilt, had this thing tied up, and had a wonderful day out there. And had to take this naval aide three or four times to show him how to sail the thing. Whether Ike ever knew how to sail the boat, I don't know.

KP: But he didn't. So you requisitioned this when you were in Algiers, not in London?

WB: No, this was in Algiers.

KP: Algiers. Yes. Right. Because Operation Torch was really our first major operation.
WB: Yes, it was.

KP: What were the problems in getting that operation together?

WB: First off, your one problem was working with the British. Because you had a joint-headquarters with the personnel. And getting used to many British ways, because you had to be dependent upon the British for transportation, and getting around from one place to another, as far as while you are in England. And then, also, you had the problem of handling so many different types of people. For example, in Eisenhower's headquarters you had American Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines; British Navy, Air Force, Army; French Army, Navy, Air Force; and that type of thing. And it was a real mess as far as getting things done. That's where I say, Ike had this great feature in getting all these people to at least come up with a common cause.

KP: Because one of my impressions of Eisenhower was, that he was generally well liked and respected by a lot of the, particularly, junior officers and enlisted personnel.

WB: Yes. He had a very pleasant personality. A beautiful personality, and always able to present himself in a very favorable light. So that you had an outward feeling towards him of being able to carry out whatever his desires were, as far as the junior officer level was concerned. And so, as I say, I didn't have any personal contact with him … .

KP: But I've been struck by people who were enlisted personnel at his headquarters, or just happened to be in the vicinity of him, and just the few, often very glimmering contacts with him

that just solidify their feeling of what you read in newspapers and hear. You know? One of the people I interviewed said that he once was riding in his jeep, and just gave him a nice salute, and smiled at him. He was, I think, a sergeant or a private at the time, and he got a feeling from it, that here was someone that he really admired.

WB: Yes, that's true. I think that is a very good way to put it. Because he gave you the feeling that you, yourself would feel pretty good about.

KP: What about his chief subordinates? Because you mentioned the great courts-martial, Bedell Smith.

WB: Bedell Smith?

KP: Yes.

WB: He was a real down-to-earth, cut and dry, yes or no. That type of individual. I didn't have too much contact with him. But anything personal, I had contact as I say, I had to get this one affidavit from him. It was no problem at all.

KP: When you were on Eisenhower's staff who did you report to?

WB: We had what we called the headquarters command. And this had responsibility for all the administrative work required for the headquarters: supply, security, and that type of thing. And my boss was, well, when I first worked for him he was a major. And was about, I guess a year, he was a bird colonel by the time he'd leave. Quite rapidly. But, I'm running out of words.

KP: Would you like a cup of coffee or something?

WB: No. No, thanks. Let's see. What else can I tell you?

KP: Where were you when the Torch landing, the actual landing, took place?

WB: I was still in London.

KP: You where still in London.

WB: Getting the people of the headquarters out of London, into buses, on trains, so they can go up to Scotland and get on transports, and the transport would take them down to Algiers. And I finally made that trip just before Christmas of 1942. I cleaned out the old Norfolk house in London, and was on … a British transport down into, which was a nice thing as far as the British were concerned. I mean, they knew how to run their transports. I went over on the *Queen Mary* you slept on a bunk three or four high, and the mess was once a day, back in some mess hall, restaurant, on the old *Queen Mary*. Whereas the British, you were in your own state room. There'd be a knock at seven o'clock. "Your tea, sir." They'd bring in a cup of tea and set it down beside you. [Laughs]

KP: So even as an officer, your voyage on the *Queen Mary*, you were in pretty sparse quarters?

WB: Yes.

KP: … Whereas in the British transport, it sounds fairly gentile.

WB: Well, yes, it was. I mean, I say that for the British. They didn't stint on any of their "life's necessities," we'll say. In other words, they went right along. And if the, as I say, "the other ranks," as they called them, were down in the hold, that was all right. They're there. [Laughter]

KP: … I've also been told that the British Army, much more than the American Army, kept batmen traditionally.

WB: Yes.

KP: Even in the midst of war you still, the officers still …

WB: Yes, they did. Yes. That was one of the problems of getting people out of London, was not only the officer himself but his entourage. Batman one, or two, or three, whatever it might be.

KP: … You're not the first to comment on the difficulties of working with allies.

WB: Yes.

KP: Particularly the British. Do you have any observations about what it was like to work with the British? And the differences between how the American Army thought, how you thought, and they thought … ?

WB: It's hard for me to answer that type of question, because most of my activities involved working with other United States personnel, and once in a while some of the British. Because I remember, in Algiers, the biggest problem we had with providing facilites, and things to go with it, I mean communications, telephones, and that type of thing, or setting up. The British would always want a buzzer system for so and so, and so and so, and so and so. You had to have your electricians go in and set these stupid types of things up. But other than that, why, I would say there wasn't too [many] problems, as far as my own person.

KP: … In Algiers had your duties changed at all? What would you work on in Algiers?

WB: I would say anything that came up. [Laughs]

> [Mr. Bruyere wished the following poem to be inserted:
> The following was composed sometime in 1943 while assigned to the Headquarters Command of Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers Africa. "Gives you an idea of the thoughts in my mind at the time."

ODE ON AN END TABLE

You have heard of the tales of the heroes so bold
The men who are fighting the foe
Of the battles they waged and the medals they won
and many a tale of woe
But listen my friend, you haven't heard yet
The worst fate a soldier can draw
Is assignment to duty with Headquarters Command
And slaving away for S-4

Sears Roebuck & Company has nothing on us
When it comes to supplying the mob
We furnish everything from "God Save The King"
To roasted corn on the cob
We deliver the goods so the war can go on
And reverently hope and pray
That someday we'll finish our horrible task
And return to the USA

For Generals and Colonels demanding their bit
Insisting they're winning the war
We provide them an amazing amount of things
And still they holler for more
You who have suffered from shot and from shell
May think you have been through hell
But brimstone and fire have little for us
If we forget a General's ink well

It's picayune things that make us so mad
That drive us completely insane
Relief from it all is not yet in sight
My God! We can't stand the pain
So all you warriors who wield the sword
Had better be glad you are free
From Generals and Colonels and various staff aides
Tormenting and pestering we.

Oh! It's pencils, erasers and paper and ink
Typewriters and ribbons galore
End tables and sofas, china or sink
Rugs to cover the floor
Bureaus and beds, and desk or a sheet
Mimeograph machines too

We cater to all, supply is our meat
What can we do for you?

KP: Well, you mentioned the sailing, which sounded obviously fun.

WB: Yes, that was fun. Another day, my boss called me in and said, "Bruyere, we gotta go find a place to put the WACS." This was the first WAC, Women's Army Corps, company sized unit to be shipped overseas. And they were coming, to be assigned to headquarters. Our job was to find a place. "Where do we put them?" So we got his car and headed up Algiers, to a little town just above Algiers. It's, sort of, on the hills above it, called El-Biar. That's E-L-B-I-A-R. And in this little town was a little convent, walled in convent. Not too large, but we knocked on the door, and the nice, little Sister answered the door, and with our broken French we said we were looking for a place for, "La femme soldat." So she took us in, and showed us the whole thing. There were two large buildings, like barracks buildings, and quite enough accommodations for them, an area for them to set up their own mess hall, and kitchen, and things like that. Then we went around and said, "Everything looked great." And we asked the little Sister, "Where are the bathing facilities?" "La bain! Oui, oui, oui." [Laughs] So she went into one of these barracks buildings on the first floor, … walked into a closet, rattled around for a moment or two, and came out holding a large, tin washtub. "Voici! La Bain!"

---------- END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE ----------
WB: … So, oh, my God. There are going to be a hundred fifty women with one tin bathtub, and all that. So we had to get our, we had an engineer utility attachment, "Come on, boys, put some showers in here right away. We need it within … a week." An outcome of that whole thing was, we got cots and things like that, but we were a little short on mattresses, so we got mattress covers and filled them with hay. So that was fine until the girls came in and they started complaining of itching. [Laughs] The things in the hay didn't leave. They stayed there. [Laughs] But, other than that, everything worked out pretty well.

KP: What was the WAC unit's assignment?

WB: They were … radio, telephone operations, driving, everything that was related to this type of thing. Communications, stenographers, that type of thing. And they were … quite a help to the whole headquarters.

KP: You stayed with headquarters company until 1944?

WB: Let's see. I stayed there from, let's see, okay. Now I have to go back and start thinking again. In '42 to '43 and September '43 I had to go over to Naples, Italy, just after the invasion of Italy, and help make arrangements for moving the headquarters to Italy. Which was planned to put it in the, it was a royal palace in Caserta. I and about three or four other officers were over there trying to get things set up. But, that was when, behind our back, Eisenhower was being told to leave there and go back up to England and get ready for the invasion across the Channel. And I was there a short while, and then, when Eisenhower left, they started reducing the people in his headquarters. I ended up with the headquarters of the 36th Infantry Division.

KP: That was in '44

WB: That was in … '44.

KP: It sounds very early in '44.

WB: Yes. Let's see. I'm trying to think when it was. It was just before the division moved up to Anzio, which was around May or June of '44. But, my job with the headquarters was, again, similar to what the job was at Eisenhower's headquarters. Supply and that type of thing.

KP: So when you went over to the division, you still had the same …

WB: Yes. Still the same type of work.

KP: The same type of work.

WB: Until, that lasted, when the division finally left Italy and went in on the Southern France invasion. And they moved on up rapidly from Southern France on up 'til they hit the Vosges Mountains. And rapid movements were out, so they said, "Okay, we don't need you to take care of moving the headquarters any more. Why, you go down and go with one of these infantry regiments." So that's how I ended up with the 141st Infantry.

KP: But you had very little line experience.

WB: Very little. That's true.

KP: I mean, you really, in a sense, did an important job, but you were staff. Your experience, it sounds like you knew how to do logistics, or got to know it very well. Moving a lot of people in wartime, I've read, is very difficult.

WB: This division headquarters, at one time, when we were moving it after the Southern France invasion, when, you may have heard of the Battle of Montelimar, where the division moved up and plugged the Rhone Valley from the German units fleeing out of Southern France. Well, I had the division headquarters scattered over one, two, three, four, five different locations, … none of them permanent, all moving and trying to get them to settle down to one location. With the General saying, "Well, okay. I want it here. No, over here." [Laughs]

KP: What general was that? Do you remember?

WB: That was General (Dalquist?).

KP: Johnny Dalquist?

WB: Yes.

KP: I guess, before talking more about the division, … one question I have, it is a general question about North Africa. I mean, North Africa is very different from even England.

WB: Oh, yes.

KP: What were your impressions of North Africa? I mean, it sounds like you have, you mentioned going to the convent, and you lived in a house at one point …

WB: Well, my impressions of North Africa, Algiers, for example, was strictly a modern city. I mean, the French had developed it to, for example they had high rise apartments. This is another story, too, I can bring up if you wanted.

KP: Yes, please.

WB: Okay. One of our jobs was getting places for people to live. And the process was through a requisition, which you get through the French authorities. So my boss handed me this requisition slip, "Walt, there's a apartment down the street here. I want you to go down and requisition it." So, I got an interpreter this time. We went down to the high rise apartment, up to the top floor, penthouse. Knocked on the door and the maid answered. I said that we had a requisition for the apartment. The maid said, "Well, come in please." So we went in. It was a beautiful, furnished, huge apartment. And this, while I was out there, the lady walked into the room. Quite a nice looking blonde, French gal, and I started to explain to her how we had this requisition for the apartment. While I was talking I was aware of somebody coming in the room behind me. And half way through I heard, "Hum, Major, this place is already requisitioned." [Laughter] I turned around, "Yes, sir!" One star. [Laughs] So, in a way, World War II had some amusing affairs. [Laughs] But the miscellaneous types of things, anything that would come up that would be related to trying to get people happy as far as working in the headquarters was concerned.

KP: You mentioned requisitioning a sailboat, and then you were delighted to have to sail this sailboat. What other kinds of, sort of, odd requests would you get from headquarters to service the headquarters? Because Eisenhower isn't noted, for example, MacArthur, I have heard, even from these interviews, countless stories of what it took to service him, what his peculiar trends were.

WB: Let's see. I wouldn't say that Eisenhower was the motivating force behind many of the things … we had to provide. It was based on, let's say, not having a simple point, or an individual who would dictate what was to be done or what wasn't to be done. The boss running the whole thing, I guess, was open to anybody that would come in and say, "Well, I need this," and if it sounded right to him, he would say, "Well, okay, go ahead. We'll do it." That type of thing. So, but it made for an interesting type of activity and many things that came up. Let's see. Another thing, all right, you get a message, a radio message that comes in, "Imperative that you have an officer meet flight So and So, landing at Mason Blanche Airport, at such and such a time, to meet So and So with a half ton truck." So the boss says, "Okay. Take care of it." So I

go out to the airport and meet this plane. American officer, major, gets off, "Okay, back up the truck to here, and opens the door, and starts unloading cases of Scotch whiskey. [Laughter] And he says "Okay, I need the location of General So and So," … and on down the line, "And we're going to deliver these cases, one each, per general." Which we spent the day doing. [Laughter]

KP: Did you get a bottle out of this assignment?

WB: Luckily he gave me a bottle, which I didn't dare open because it was cork. It didn't have a cap on it, just a regular old cork-type thing. And I saved it for a special occasion. And I had about three or four other officers in my same boat, majors at the time, and we were out someplace near Algiers. And I finally pulled out this bottle of Scotch. And this officer said, "I know how to open it, for goodness sakes. You don't have a cork screw, you put a pillow against the wall and you, sort of, bang it like this. See?" So okay. Bang, bang, everything broke. [Laughter] Everything broke. [Laughs] But, you know, that was one the of the fortunes of war because right after we were bemoaning the fact, some British officer stuck his head in the door, "I say there chaps, would you like a glass of beer or a drink of some kind?" So, the whole evening wasn't lost. [Laughs]

KP: In terms of the headquarters supporting staff, it sounds like you did an number of odd jobs, for example peculiar requests, like the truck.

WB: Yes.

KP: But what would a standard day, typical day, be like? What time would you report for duty on average? You know, particularly when you were in Algiers what time, in a sense, would you roll call?

WB: Well, I would get up, where I was living, about six-thirty/seven o'clock, and … go have breakfast at the mess hall, which we had to run. And go to the office, and go through paper work, if there was, and see what the boss needed or what he had in mind for you to do that day. And then go out travelling to find other places for people to live, and things like that, that were required. And just work out the whole day along that line. Some days there wasn't too much to do, and you'd be off on your own. And you could go out, in the same place where we put the sailboat, this, sort of, marina. Why you could go out there, and they set up a GI out there running one of the houses, and he had a grill, and could give you a nice, good hamburger sandwich and a … cup of coffee, and you go swimming. Something like that. I mean, that was leisure in a way. Then, another time, another special duty, was prior to the invasion of Italy. The British units were based in Tripoli. The maps for all their requirements were being made in Algiers. And they needed to get these maps to the … troops down in Tripoli. So with seven or eight two and a half ton trucks loaded with these maps, and a guard on the back of each one, they said, "Okay, take 'em down to Tripoli and get 'em there as soon as you can." So that was an interesting thing in itself. Of keeping track of all of these darn trucks to make sure that everyone got to where you were going, and down all across North Africa, and down into Lybia and Tripoli.

KP: That's a long journey.

WB: Yes. Yes, it took two days and two nights to make the trip. That was driving all the time, too, because you did not stop … On the way back, here I was with a lot of empty trucks. So I went to their supply people, said, "Okay, I'm gonna go back west. What do you have that needs going back there?" So we loaded, I think, in Tripoli, we loaded up with a lot of rations and took 'em up to someplace in Tunisia, dropped those off and picked up ammunition, took it up from there up into Bizerte. And at Bizerte, "All right, what do you got going back towards Algiers?" So they said, "We have a whole bunch of Italian prisoners who need to go to Constantine." So, we loaded these trucks up with about fifty Italian prisoners per truck. And whose going to guard them? So the French had provided territorial type of guard, a National Guard type of thing, with a rifle, and he'd have to get in the back of a truck with all of these prisoners. And to get there … he'd hand his rifle up to the prisoners and get up, and they'd give him his rifle back. [Laughter] We got to Constantine and, I think it was a good day's drive, and didn't lose a thing. Did make one stop of having to make a rest stop beside to vineyard. They poured out of these trucks and into the vines. So I fired a few shots, not in anger but up in the air. They got back in and we went on our merrily way. [Laughter] So …

KP: Did you ever have any contact with any Arabs when you were in North Africa, or what kind of contact did you have?

WB: I would say, no, very little contact. They, Eisenhower's headquarters, no, this wasn't, … no, I'd say no contact at all. Most of the contact I had was with French natives of the area, or other military personnel. I was thinking, well, the headquarters operated a rest center down in a little village called, Bou Saada, which was about two-hundred kilometers south of Algiers. And I had to go down there a couple times for business, to help straighten out books, and that type of thing. … But as far a dealing with the Arabs, no.

KP: It sounds like you worked with a lot of people, both on a sustained basis, but also in requisitioning trucks. For example, the fifteen trucks that you had and the guards, and so forth. What was your biggest assignment, in terms of these people you were involved with, in leading or cooperating as a team?

WB: My goodness. You put it that way and it is hard to pick out something that's, "How many people were involved in it?" I guess, at the time, I didn't give it too much thought, how much you we're involved in it. Most of it was involved with person to person, or trying to talk a Frenchmen into letting us requisition his house. I mean, I had one particular problem with one of the generals, who wanted this particular house and the Frenchman did not want to give it up. So I had to dicker with him a long time. But as far as a multitude of people, no, not to many.

KP: So the truck in some ways, this truck operation …

WB: Well, the truck operation, the trucks came from a military trucking unit.

KP: Yes. Yes.

WB: And for an example, on something like that, you had to call the unit and say, "Okay, we need fifteen trucks. We need so and so many men for such and such a day at such and such a time."

KP: But at the very time, for example, you are in command of that.

WB: I was in command only of this fleet of trucks from Algiers to Tripoli and back.

KP: Yes. … Which is still a lot of responsibility. And there are a number of men you were in charge of.

WB: Yes. [Laughs] I blew my top on the thing, on the final day of this thing, on coming back to Algiers. We had a whole bunch of stuff that we had picked up in, some place … off the shore of North Africa, and it had to be delivered to some English outfit … just on the outskirts of Algiers. And I had the darndest time trying to find out who I should go to. And I went to the English headquarters, and they said, "Well, go down to So and So." So I went down to this place and backed in and started unloading these things. And an English sergeant comes up and starts raising hell. So I started raising hell, too. And finally the sergeant, my head sergeant, he said, "Do you want me to take care of this guy?" And I said, "No, no ,no ,no, no. Let's leave it the way it is. See if you can get him to take you to where we unload this stuff." [Laughs]

KP: … What about working with the French? The French military and French civilian units?

WB: The French civilians, the French military was, well, I didn't have too much contact with them.

KP: So it was mainly the civil authorities that you worked with?

WB: Yes. The civil authorities [were] no problem. I had a couple of contacts with French officers at times. Very pleasant, very helpful, very friendly. One of them invited me to his house for lunch, at the time, and my goodness. I mean, to start out we had a … seven course meal there, for lunch. And it was amazing. At the time, we're used to a hamburger, or something like that, for lunch. His family was there, and that type of thing, so. Then, the French people you were dealing with would invite you to their house sometimes. And I know, on one occasion, I was invited at noontime to one family, and in the evening I was invited to another place. So they really put on some real meals, as far as that was concerned. And by the time I finished the second place I was really bloated. [Laughter] French cuisine all week. [Laughs]

KP: You, in a sense, were in the rear echelon, particularly with Eisenhower's staff. It does not get any …

WB: That's rear, rear echelon.

KP: Yes. What about the rest of the war that is going on?

WB: Well, all you could do was keep track of it as far as the information you received.

KP: Because, in some ways, you were also in a position to really know what's going on, because you run headquarters. Did that …

WB: Yes, well, we weren't on the inside of the group. We were on the outskirts, the outside of the filter, information that would filter down. And, you might say that the information we got was just general public information. As far as what was going on, that was the rest of the war in … Tunisia, or the war in Sicily and then … Italy, and that type of thing. Because the cross channel invasion had not started yet. So then the Pacific was something different. I mean, you didn't hear too much about that at all.

KP: … You went to Naples with Eisenhower's staff. … Were people disappointed that they didn't get to continue on with Eisenhower's staff?

WB: Yes, some of us were because it took the unit. The unit that we had was almost split in half. And he took the selected people to England with him. And the other people were left, let's say, "hanging dry" with, in Algiers. And that was a time when, you might say, they had what they called "a manpower survey" type of thing come over from Washington, and say, "Well, okay, you have too many people here not doing anything." So, bing, cut 'em out. And that's when I, let's say, fell under the ax, and found myself on a transport coming over to Italy and ended up with the 36th Division.

KP: So you had, sort of, set up this headquarters, but you never got to Naples as part of the headquarters. In other words, Eisenhower never told …

WB: No. No, I never did. I almost, well, let's say, I did. Because when I … got assigned to the 36th Infantry Division in their headquarters, they went in from there into the Anzio operation, then on up through Rome, and then north of Rome to Civitavecchia, and Piombino, and that type of thing, where they pulled the division out of line and pulled it back in, to get ready for the Southern France invasion.

KP: You joined the division in a unit. That division had seen a lot of combat already before that.

WB: Oh, yes.

KP: Particularly, the Rapido River.

WB: Right.

KP: … That was hard. They really got chewed up in that.

WB: Yes. They did. Because I joined them just after that Rapido River affair. And, of course, being with division headquarters I didn't have any contact with the people involved in, per se, with the attack on the river operation, with the regimental units. And, as far as having an effect

on … what I did, and what I know, my job was just to, let's say, keep the division headquarters and the division commander happy.

KP: … When you were with the division, your first … division commander was Fred L. Walker.

WB: Yes.

KP: What was he like and what kind of dealings would you have with him?

WB: He was, I'd say, a mild type as far as a general running a division was concerned. I only had … one run in with him, and that was on one of the movements. We had to set up the division headquarters on a field and he specifically told me, "Well, there are grape arbors here. Don't let anybody run into these grapes arbors." And low and behold, one of the units supporting the headquarters ran their truck into this thing. And he called me in on the carpet, "What are they doing there?"

KP: And why was he so concerned? Because it went over civilians …

WB: I don't know. I guess he just was concerned about the protection of civilian property.

KP: Yes. That he thought it was needless.

WB: Yes. Yes. And I got an apology from the unit commander who had the trucks. But he didn't go see the general. [Laughs]

KP: Who would you report to when you were serving the 36th? What was the chain of command?

WB: Usually I reported to the chief of staff of the division. That was usually a bird colonel .

KP: So, in a sense, where, on Eisenhower's staff, you were a junior on the chain, your …

WB: My immediate boss, though, was running the rear echelon of the division headquarters, where I was always with the forward echelon of the division. And I would never see him, except, maybe, God knows when, maybe a month or never.

KP: Right.

WB: But most of the direct information I got was with the division chief of staff.

KP: Or the division commander?

WB: Yes.

KP: You had a lot more contact with him?

WB: Yes.

KP: Whereas Eisenhower, and the chiefs of staff, were just figures in the tower.

WB: That's right. They were too far up in the tower.

KP: Whereas, in this staff, you really do know. What was your sense of how well, your reading, of the 36th division staff and commanders? Because you had a lot more contact and chances to observe them. We talked about the major general. What about … the division chief of staff?

WB: Let's see, who was the chief of staff at the time? I forget his name. But I got along with him all right, so I remember. And it was hard on that type of thing because you were in a fluid situation, and moving rapidly from day to day, and you start out in the morning and you didn't know where the division headquarters was going to be. And either you had a thought from the chief of staff, that, "Well, maybe it's going to be in this area or this area," but you didn't really know. So you'd have to follow along and try to find out exactly … where it was going to be. Or else you'd have to pick out a spot and say, "Okay, we'll have it here," and let everybody come and settle on this spot.

KP: … You mentioned at one point how you had elements of your headquarters in three or four different places. How hard is it to move a division headquarters?

WB: Well, in that time it was a little difficult, because all I had was a ton and a half truck, and jeeps, and that was about it. Because then I had to use this to shuttle everything back and forth, and unload and load and reload, and move it. When I finally got it settled down to a tent area they where running out of gas, because the chief of staff says, "Okay, take this truck and go, and don't come back until you get gas for everybody." So I had to take the truck and find out where a gas depot was, and know where to set up one, and have enough gasoline to keep everything in, moving.

KP: What's involved, in terms of, how many people would you have to move? How many would be in the headquarters company that you were responsible for moving?

WB: Okay. You'd have maybe twenty to twenty-five officers, maybe thirty to fifty enlisted men, plus all of the equipment, and some people who I thought never should have been in this advanced headquarters. They should be back in the rear area. [Laughs]

KP: Who should have been back there? It sounds like it is a funny story.

WB: I got a nasty note from one of them. It was a lieutenant colonel, at the time. One of the staff members. He said, his morale is rapidly being reduced because every time he comes to the mess hall there is no seat for him. So, scribbled on this was the chief of staff's note that said, "Bruyere, take care of this." So, okay. I had to take a separate field table and chair and make this separate for So and So. [Laughs]

KP: How far is the front line division from headquarters? How far from the front would you be?

WB: Well, at that time the front was very fluid.

KP: Yes.

WB: And at times you were the front. In other words, I was the first man into one of the French villages. On this advanced …

KP: This was when you where in France?

WB: In France, yes. …And accepted all of their greetings, and tried to find a place where you could set up division headquarters. Because the fighting units themselves were still not involved too much, at the time, because the Germans had stepped back again, retreated further, to another standing point where they were going to put up a fight. So that's … [Laughs] But normally, I would say, in your, when you finally settle down, your division headquarter was, maybe, from anywhere from a mile, to five, to ten miles back behind the actual front line. Which was more typical when we were fighting in the Vosges Mountains area, where it settled down to a day to day type of operation rather than the movement type of operation.

KP: When you had been on Eisenhower's staff, I mean, you were really rear echelon. And you're the headquarters staff, so it sounds like you get the best of everything, in a lot of ways. If there's a shortage, … you know, no one wants to make the headquarters company unhappy. Is that correct?

WB: Well, okay. I would say, as opposed to our thoughts about the British and their thought about tea every day, the US personnel were under the situation where they could work together and, if necessarily, live together. This resulted in, for example, back to Algiers, where a group of staff officers would get together, maybe four, or five, or six of them, and would take a large house and just take it over and live in that during the time they were there. And the lesser people would be out on the local economy, living with French families and things like that. So, I lost my train of thought here a minute.

KP: I'm just wondering when you are moving your divisional headquarters, it sounds like it is a little more difficult to make sure the mess is up in time for everyone to get a hot meal. There's a lot more …

WB: Yes. You're dependent then on your enlisted personnel. Who, let's say, have to do the work. And you need them to cooperate, and get things done when they should be done. And sometimes you have a little problem with these people because some of them are a little independent. … I had one sergeant who … just drank a little bit too much every time so I had to say, "Okay, buddy, go back to the rear now and we'll take someone else and do this work." [Laughs] But your problem there is to find a place, "Does it fit the requirements? Can everybody fit in? Do you have a place for this, a place for that." And if you don't, you're in a field. "So

okay, we'll set up these command post type tents," and you'd always have about four or five or six of those, so you are prepared to move into the field or you are prepared to move into a built up area.

KP: But I would get the impression that people preferred to live in a set up headquarters, in buildings.

WB: Well, in Algiers, yes. Well, because in a very rapid movement situation …

KP: That's just not …

WB: It's just not because the division staff, the generals, the division commander and the assistant division commander, each had their own truck that was fitted up with the rear end as a living quarters. And the chief of staff had one built up in a trailer. So they were mobile at all times.

KP: So in a sense, their particular, very direct headquarters, they were taken care of.

WB: Yes.

KP: You were really worried about everyone else.

WB: Everyone else, right. And all you have to do was find a place for them and say, "Well, okay now." They would usually have their equipment and gear and things like that on their jeep with them, and would unload it, and take care of themselves that way. But you didn't have to get in and make beds for them, or things like that type of thing, no.

KP: Right. I guess before leaving Italy, how much contact did you have with the Italian people in your job?

WB: With the Italian people?

KP: Yes.

WB: Not too much.

KP: Right. Not like with the French.

WB: Because, essentially, when I was first in Italy the job was the same. I mean, getting places for people to live, and requisitioning houses, and that type of thing, and dealing with the Italians in that respect. But as far as getting to know them or anything like that, no, I didn't. And I'm trying to think, no.

KP: One impression I have of the Italian campaign was in mud.

WB: The mud?

KP: The mud of some of the campaigns. Some people have talked about it. Do you remember any of that?

WB: No, I don't remember the mud. I remember dust because after the division went into Anzio and they broke out of Anzio and into Rome, the roads, and things like that were quite dusty. But I don't remember mud. [Laughs]

KP: I think that you hit it at the right time of year, because people who served longer …

WB: Yes. Yes, if it had been a rainy season there would have been lots of mud there. [Laughs]

KP: You made it into Rome then with the division?

WB: Yes.

KP: Were you with the division after they had landed in Anzio or before Anzio?

WB: … It was just before Anzio when I joined the division.

KP: So you took part in the Anzio landing?

WB: Well, the Anzio landing was not a wartime operation as far as this division was concerned.

KP: Okay. So they didn't land?

WB: They landed later on, after the initial invasion of Anzio.

KP: Sure. Yes.

WB: In other words, Anzio started, I think, sometime in January or February. Whereas the division didn't go up there until May or June, I think it was.

KP: Did you ever have any close calls, in either Algeria or in Italy?

WB: Close calls?

KP: From an air raid? … Ever come under enemy fire?

WB: I remember being on, let's see, when we first broke out of Anzio we had a division headquarters set up in an old German headquarters. And every once in a while the Krauts would lob a few shells in the area. [Laughs] And I know one time I was on my jeep, coming down the road, and something hit just in front of me. And out we go, into the ditch beside the road.

[Laughter] And there was a GI down there. I said, "Howdy, bud. How are you?" But in Italy, no.

KP: Before leaving Italy. A lot of people who served in the Italian theater have real opinions about Mark Clark. What were your, I mean, not that you were in the line, but you were definitely in headquarters, and I'm wondering, what was your sense of Clark, and what of the people in the division? Did they ever mutter anything?

WB: Let's see. When I joined the division initially the headquarters didn't have very much to say about the situation. Because, in fact, they didn't mention anything at all, as far as Clark or the, it was just after the Rapido operation. And I'm trying to think. It wasn't until you got to the regiment where the people, who had actually been involved in that operation themselves, had anything to say.

KP: And what did they say?

WB: Most of the division headquarters were old Texas National Guard personnel. And I would say their feelings towards Clark were … not of the most friendly nature. [Laughs] And I don't think they still are, down there in Texas.

KP: People were very critical of him, and they still remain.

WB: Yes.

KP: Go ahead.

WB: That whole operation was, you look back on it now. All right, you might say, it is the first time Italy had been conquered from the foot on up to the end. But was it absolutely necessary, as far as the result of the war was concerned? You might say, "Well, okay, maybe Winston Churchill had the right idea." Instead of going in there, they should have gone into Greece or Yugoslavia and on that side. Depending on the results of the Russian situation during the end of World War II and their invasion, you might say, literally, invasion of the other countries. It might have confronted some of that, but it is one of those things that you look back on, in retrospect now, and you can't say you're right or wrong. And, at the time, if this is what they did, if you did it right, why, fine. If you did it wrong, why you had people that were going to criticize you.

KP: You would go to France as part of the landing in Southern France.

WB: Yes.

KP: How quickly after the invasion did you … enter France?

WB: I landed with the division headquarters.

KP: So that first day.

WB: On the day of operations.

KP: The day of operations.

WB: Okay. I was on the Navy transport. … We loaded at Naples, and spent the night, and the next morning was the invasion. The personnel on the Navy said, "Well, okay, you have two landing craft to take your division headquarters ashore." One of them is the admiral's barge, which is a nice motor boat type of thing with a little cabin and curtains on the windows and everything like that. The other one is this, what they call a LCVP, landing craft vehicle personnel. One of these things that has a ramp on the front and flops down. So, okay, the admiral's barge. Okay, we're going to put all of the generals and rank on this one. [Laughter] All the lesser rank, including myself, on the other one. [Laughs] We go putt, putt, putt, ashore. Nobody shoots at us. It was a very quiet landing at that time. When we get to the shore, the boat I'm in goes right up to the shore, lowers the ramp, and you walk ahead ashore, and you don't even get your feet wet. The other one doesn't have a ramp. It grounds about fifteen feet from the shore. Everybody has to climb over the sides and wade to the shore. [Laughs] I think that's one of the things that got the General mad at me.

KP: He thought it should have been the other way around.

WB: He never expressed himself on it. He didn't have time to think about it. But that landing was, as I say, a very quiet type of landing. Not too much of a difficulty, as far as the unit I was with, in the 36th division area.

KP: And, in fact, initially, the southern campaign was, as you mentioned yourself, a very fluid one.

WB: Yes. Yes. On the shore there, we were only there about two or three days at the most, and then started the rat race, skirting the eastern side of the Rhone valley. Until we got up into the Montelimar area, where they could cut off the Germans retreating from Southern France. And that's where we had the division, located in about five different locations at one time, with nobody knowing where to go next. [Laughs]

KP: You, at one point, you mentioned by the time you got to the Vosges Mountains, the mobility really stopped.

WB: Yes.

KP: And in fact, the fighting became much more intense …

WB: Oh, yes. Because there the Germans decided, I think, to build up a solid type defense, rather than periodic retreat, step by step. Here they decided, "Well, okay we'll build up a solid wall in this Vosges Mountains area. And it was pretty hard slugging sometimes up in there,

because not only that, you were in the mountains and forests. And for a long time I had an aversion to forests.

KP: Really?

WB: Oh, yes. [Laughs] That's where things got a little close, every once in a while.

KP: Because you had been, in a sense, … you laughed when I say you started out as a staff officer, but, in many ways, you had not by choice become a staff officer. Now they sent you to a line unit, after really no experience.

WB: So with the line unit I was with, it was sort of a super numerery … with one of the infantry battalions.

KP: Which battalion were you with?

WB: This was the First Battalion of the 141st, and then when things changed I was assigned to the 3rd battalion and given command of the 3rd battalion. And this was when we were fighting, just before the town of Bruyeres. That's why I always say that Bruyeres is always a common thing as far as I am concerned.

KP: Before talking about when you were a commander, when you were assigned.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Walter Bruyere on November 7, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and

EK: Elise Krotiuk

KP: What was it like to go from a, basically, in some ways, a logistics officer, a staff officer, to someone who is on a line company mission?

WB: Well, it was a hundred eighty degree change from trying to provide things for people, versus trying to tell people what to do under a horrendous situation. And it takes a little problems from time to time to, "How do you feel about it? Are you doing the right thing? If they tell you to do something, do you agree with it, or do you go out on your own?" Sometimes I felt like, maybe, that was one of the problems I had, that I thought maybe, something, the way I wanted to do it, was a little different from, let's say, division headquarters wanted it done. But, so, I tried it most of the time, and sometimes it worked. But your main thing is to try to get your company commanders to follow orders, do what has to be done, and try and guide them and give them support so they can do it. That's the biggest problem of your command situation. … Not so much telling them what to do, but providing the support so they're able to do what is required of them.

KP: When you say providing the support, in what ways would you do that?

WB: Well, I'm talking now in a combat situation, is combat support. I mean, artillery fire, air support, any other thing that would give them assistance in accomplishing the objective that they have to achieve. So at a lot of times you have that support available, and a lot of times you don't. That's what is the biggest concern, I think, of your combat commander, is, "Do you have enough support to provide to these people so they can do what they have to do?" And sometimes it just doesn't work out right. You don't have that support. Things don't turn out too well.

KP: Being in the line you were also much closer to danger than in your staff position. Do you remember any close calls that you had?

WB: Quite a few times. [Laughs]

KP: What was the closest?

WB: Okay. … I was a major and they brought in a lieutenant colonel, who took over command of the battalion. I was the executive officer.

KP: Which battalion was this with?

WB: This was … the 3rd Battalion.

KP: 3rd Battalion.

WB: And we were still in the Vosges Mountains. And we just, not quite breaking out of the Vosges, but were pretty close to it, and got a call from my operations officer. And it says, "Major, you better come up here right away. We ran into a mine field and everything has broken loose." So I went up there and the regimental commander had gotten blast in his face from these, what they call, "foot mines," little box mines. If you step on one, it will blow your foot off. The new battalion commander had stepped on one and he lost a foot. The company commander … was killed on a couple of them, with a couple of GIs. So I had to find out where … everybody was in the unit, where the forward units were. And I was on with the radio operator and a couple of guides, going along this trail, along a ridge line, up towards where I thought the forward units were. [Laughs] Bees started flying all around. And I say, these bees were making big dents in the path we were on, was sort of … a worn path, so it had been worn down. So these dents were bullets coming in. [Laughs] So we flop down, and I don't know how long it was, but it seemed like an eternity, until there was a little, "plop," beside me. And it was one of these German potato mashers grenades [Laughter] "Okay, what do you do now, Bruyere?" Just about the time it went off, my operations officer, myself, and one of the GIs with us, took off like a bat out of hell, down the trail. I had taken about three steps, tripped on something, went head over heels, but kept running. And three of us got out and went. Finally, reached the forward company. And three or four GIs who were with us, I guess, were, well, I had to go back through that area and there [were] no bodies or anything like that, so I assume they were captured. But that was the closest operation, of the closest.

KP: That's pretty close.

WB: Yes, that's close enough. [Laughter] And stepping through an area where you know it has been mined, and stepping down, and you see just a "flit" thing. And, "No, nothing went off." [Laughs] Whereas, a poor GI coming through … a few minutes later, same area, "bing," it goes up. So, in a way, I don't know, maybe it was luck. I think luck has a lot to do with it. And you're there at the right time, or the wrong time.

KP: I have been told, and I've read, your dislike of forest was not, I mean, full combat in the forest was, in a heavily wooded forest, was extremely difficult.

WB: It's terrible because your artillery shells, or mortar shells, when they came in, will hit the trees, and will burst in the trees so it scatters everything around. I mean, I was in one situation where the battalion command post was nothing but a foxhole with a hand set telephone. And there were three of us in this foxhole at one time, and artillery shells came in and I know they weren't coming from the enemy side, they were coming from our side. And we were nestled three together like nesting spoons. [Laugh] And I remember one fellow, poor guy, one of these shells burst and a fragment caught his leg and part of his arm. And he was in quite dire straights there until we got an aidman to give him a shot and get him out, but that's another type of situation where you don't like forests because …

KP: Right. I've read … that was, in fact, one of the major fears, because it would turn trees into weapons.

WB: Oh, yes. And besides, you're always going uphill or downhill, and your fields of fire, if you wanted to take a shot at somebody, why, are not too good. In other words, forest fighting of that nature, back in those days, was just another slugging, man against man, and the ability to go ahead and push yourself ahead.

KP: Also the winter of that year, in terms of '44/'45, was among of the worst in Europe in a long time.

WB: Yes. There was a lot of snow, quite a bit of snow in the mountains, in those times. And now, I'm trying to think, did it have too much impact on us? No, I think we learned to live with it.

KP: Right.

WB: "All right, this is snow. All right. We still have to do what we have to do." And you gotta go ahead and do it, whether there is snow on the ground, or the sun is shining.

KP: What about your creature comfort, particularly when you had your own command? For example, how often would you get a hot meal?

WB: You could get one, maybe, … depending upon the situation.

KP: Okay.

WB: If you're in a fire fight or things like that, why, no, you have to exist on K rations, the box rations. Yes. They were the main of substance. The C rations, the canned rations, were available, but if you had a place to heat them up, fine. But K rations were your main substance item until you were pulled out of line and got back to where you could make your own mess facilities and serve hot meals. But … normally you would try to have your company cooks provide hot meals, as much as they can, everyday. And sometimes it was just impossible to do so.

KP: What about the creature comfort of, let's say, showers? How often would you get a shower?

WB: [Laughs] Non-existent. Non-existent. I was, we would finally [get to] a rest area. And the first time I had had a shower in, this was January of '45, and it must have been, maybe, three/four months. And we're in a rest area, and there was a hospital unit in an old school house in one of the towns. So, oh, boy, I went in there, "I see you have showers. Can I take one?" They said, "Sure, go ahead." Turned on the water. It was cold. Cold water only. [Laughs] But it was a shower. Otherwise, if you wanted to, you could take a bucket of water and try, or hot water in your tin helmet, and use that for washing wherever you could. [Laughs]

KP: I guess you had mentioned it earlier, the battle of Bruyere, which was fought in October, was very significant for you. It had, you were saying, … in some ways I didn't even let you finish because I wanted to sort of do it in somewhat chronological order, but could you maybe talk about your role and what had happened?

WB: Okay. Well, this was just about the time that I had been given command of the battalion. And we were in direct, in the valley, directly east of Bruyere. And our difficulty was in trying to broach the German defenses on, east of Bruyere, or west of Bruyere rather. … It was difficult because the unit I had, was, had been in constant situations since the landing in August. And here it was October and boy, your people get a little tired every once in a while. And I would say the fighting efficiency was not too good. But the thing that broke the Bruyere situation was the 442nd Infantry, that the Nisei outfit, Japanese-Americans, that did a circular operation and came in on the side and rear of it. And the only way I got to Bruyere was after it had fallen. And we went right through it. And we're set up in a command post, just the other side of Bruyere, for about a day. And then we had to move out into the mountains again, and conduct more mountain operations to keep the ball rolling. So, as I say, Bruyere was kind of a critical point, not only from that but, of course, because of the similarity of the names.

KP: And you mentioned that you think it hurt your career. What had happened … ?

WB: Oh, well, this comes on, later on in February of '45. This was in the open area around Strasbourg. And I was given, the battalion was given, the job of two river crossings, small river crossings, to knock out Germans defending a little village called Herlisheim. Incidentally, there's

a monograph on this whole situation in the archives of the infantry school at Fort Benning that I wrote when I was down there afterwards. But, when the operation started we had to cross over these split forces, two separate crossings. But low and behold, once we crossed the river, the whole area was flooded, two or three feet of water. So I requested permission to, "Let's call the whole thing off," because here we had an unknown situation. But they said, "No, go ahead." So we had to go ahead with it and they were able to get into [the] outskirts of the village, but that was the extent. Because, here again, artillery support was limited, and we were surrounded by fields that were flooded. But, included in these fields were about fifteen to twenty US tanks from an armored division that had tried to assault this area previously, but were there, now dead in their tracks. And my two forward units were able to get into the outskirts of this town, but were unable to go any further, so we said, "Okay, come on out. Come on back when you can." So they retired, retreated you might say, and came back. And that was demoralizing to the whole thing because, in other words, as I say, I lost control of the command, of the units themselves. And this item itself, you might say, was not too good as far as a military career is concerned. Same type of thing as in a naval ship. You run your ship aground, why …

KP: So you think this hurt you in your promotion later down the line?

WB: I was told by a friend that that particular item being on the record, had, yes, held up promotion, and further promotion as far as I was concerned. Because this friend of mine who was quite active in the Washington, DC area, who told me this. … However, the way things worked out, why, I guess, again, because being at the right place at the right time, fortunate in knowing the way things were, or doing what I thought was best, worked out all right. Because in the military situation of promotion, you're, well, it's quite a achievement, I think, to be able to reach the rank of bird colonel … where, let's say, maybe ten percent do.

KP: Right.

WB: And that, I think, was based on my, not only my experience after the war, in coping with existing situations as they were.

KP: Yes. … I mainly wanted to follow up because you had mentioned that.

WB: Yes

KP: That did hinder you in some ways.

WB: Yes, I think it did. Because I often wondered if this operation that I had, we had, to do had been successful, I'd often wondered what would have happened. No way of knowing now. I mean, it's like my father always said, if he'd done something different, he wouldn't be where he was now. [Laughter]

KP: After you lost control of the battalion, what happened then?

WB: Let's see. I was relieved. They said, "Go down and rest for a week, down at a rest center."

Then I was given various miscellaneous types of things to do. Then I ended up with the 7th Army headquarters. And here was, again, sort of a hanging in the breeze until something came along. And the fellow I was assigned to would say, "Okay, we have a little problem we need you to take care of." Said, "We got an USO show on the road, and they're having a hell of a time getting to where they are supposed to be, and a lot of problems. So here's a vehicle and a driver. Load your stuff on that and go to such-and-such a place, and report in to Marlena Dietrich and her USO show." [Laughter] So, we're gone, I don't know, a couple of months. I had arranged for this show to move, to get to another unit where they were suppose to have been arranged for the other unit to pick 'em up, put on a show, move it on to the next place. All this, again, in a fluid situation when the war started to break apart, after March/April '45. And the only outstanding thing I have of this little episode, was some German town, near Stuttgart, I guess it was, no, it was not quite that far. But, sitting in the kitchen of this little German house, eating limburg cheese and raw onion sandwiches was Marlena Dietrich and this gal, she had with her troupe. [Laughs] So, you might say, I went from the sublime to the ridiculous, as far as a military career is concerned. [Laughs]

KP: Marlena Dietrich. I was not alive. I have only seen her movies. But, I've read about her. She was really, quite a star, quite a figure. What were your images of her, seeing her in the movies, and then sitting across from her?

WB: Okay, let's see. I was about twenty-seven/twenty-eight, I guess. Okay, I won't say anything detrimental about it. [Laughs] But she was quite an elderly lady, let me say, not an old women, just an elderly lady. But very pleasant, very nice, very [easy] to get along with. No problem at all. The problem you had were with the people with the rest of her show. One male character who, yuck. [Laughs] She finally got fed up with him. The other male character, who was all right, she finally told him to, "Get the hell out of here and report to such and such a place." She got tired of him. So I ended up the war … in Frankfurt, Germany, putting together all the things required for recreation. Swimming pools, everything like that, athletic fields.

KP: When did you join the SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] headquarters? Was it in this time, before the end of the war?

WB: That was right at the end of the war, in June of '45. Yes, June, I joined them. And signed with their, what they called, their special service operation, at the time.

KP: … You had a lot of GIs who, in a sense, wanted to come home, in Europe.

WB: Oh, yes, after the war. Right.

KP: After the war. You were, in a sense, trying to keep them entertained.

WB: Well, that's the reason why we had all of this activity of recreational areas. I mean, swimming pools, tennis courts, putting on athletic track meets, and things like that. Getting the facilities in the Frankfurt area back into shape, including the Frankfurt golf course, which had been used as, sort of, a decoy area during the war. Where they set fires, so, to make, the airplanes

flying over would drop there bombs their instead of … [Laughter] So, but anyway, the German couple running the course, at the time, had been in the United States just prior to the war, running a, he was a golf pro at some course in Connecticut, and he went back to Germany to take over the pro at this course just before the war. … So we could converse with him well, without any problems at all, because he understood English and I understood no German. [Laughter]

EK: Was there a sentiment among a lot of the men, that they were scared they were going to get sent to the Pacific? Was there a fear of that?

WB: There was a little undercurrent, I would say, about that situation. But, it was only until they announced the A-bomb attack, what was that, in August. And then you had, "Okay, we want to go home. Yeah, we want to go home, we want to go home." And you had a few gatherings, not unruly gatherings, just people trying to express themselves.

KP: So you had some, in Europe, gatherings of, "We want to go home?"

WB: Yes. Yes. Those that fought the war, won the war over there, and now the war has ended over in the Pacific, they said, "What are we gonna hang around here for?" So, that was, I don't think, they hadn't decided on what they were going to settle on, as far as what troops were going to remain in Germany. Which they are still there now. [Laughs]

KP: What about yourself? I mean, you had not been home for years now. You were one of the first troops to …

WB: I was over there from July '42 to October '45. And I got a leave to come back to the States, and came back. I went over, I always say, I went over on the *Queen Mary* and came back on the Liberty ship. [Laughs] And spent forty-five days here, in the States, getting to know my family, and my son which I had never seen before. He was two and a half years old by the time I saw him. And then I had to go back, and was there, didn't want to stay, and my wife and family didn't want to come back over and stay, so I came back again in, about April.

KP: Of '46?

WB: Of '46. Yes.

KP: What was it like to have a son and not see him at all? You know, when you got home, there was your son.

WB: … It's a problem. You don't know what to expect, in a way, and in a way it's a delight to be able to know, "Well, okay, this is mine." My wife had done a dandy job on raising him, so it was a pleasure, I would say. A great pleasure.

KP: What about your son? I mean, you were a complete stranger. He had never …

WB: No, it took a while. It took quite a while to become accustomed again. Because I had that

forty-five days back in the States where you could start, but then I had to go away again. And then when I came back finally, why, then we began the process of becoming used to each other, you might say. My becoming used to him, and him becoming used to me being around.

KP: What about your wife? What did your wife do? She was raising your son, but …

WB: She stayed with her family in Montclair most of all the time. And just raised the son, and no, she didn't go to work at all. She tried to one time, get a place to move out from her family's house, but that fell through. So, she stayed there through the whole period I was overseas.

KP: How often did you write each other?

WB: Oh, my goodness! We were writing correspondingly, about, every day almost.

KP: Did she save your letters?

WB: No. No.

KP: So there're no letters in the attic?

WB: Talking about that, I mentioned this thing where I was in this difficult situation with the potato masher grenade, and getting out of that?

KP: Yes.

WB: About a month, again, I had a telephone call in the middle of the night. And the fellow says, "Is this Major Bruyere?" And I said, "Yes. Well, it's Colonel Bruyere now." He says, "Well, fine." He said, "I'm So-and-So. I'm in Sacramento, California." He said, "Do you remember running like hell after a grenade masher went off?" And there was this third GI in that situation who got out at the same time, who had picked up, gotten my name, I think from the situation they have on the computers these days. You can get almost anybody's name. And he gave me a call. [Laughter] Two days later, what do I get? A box full of letters that my sister, who had been in Alaska when she died, gave this box to her daughter, and her daughter sent it to me. And in it was every letter I had sent to my family during the wartime. So everything, sort of, came together there, as far as … [Laughs]

KP: So you have the letters then?

WB: Yes, I have. These weren't to my wife. These were all to … my mother and father. Yes.

KP: Well, if you don't have a place for them you can always give them to Special Collections at Rutgers.

WB: That's a good idea.

KP: No, we would love to have them. I mean, we really would.

WB: Okay. Well, thanks for letting me know. Yes.

KP: Yes. … We would definitely, I mean, you can think about it. We're not, you know …

WB: Yes.

KP: But we would definitely, I mean, that's partly why it's a leading question. … One person I just did an interview with told me they had just literally burned them a year ago, and I was just devastated, because they were … [Laughter]

WB: Literature burning [Laughs] Because the situation when I was running, getting away from this thing, when I say "I tripped and fell," why I busted my big toe. So I hobbled around until that evening, when the unit medical officers took a look at it and said, "No, you've got to go to the hospital." So I went to the hospital and had this toe taken care of. But the Red Cross then had notified my wife that I had been seriously wounded in action. She got the telegram and called … my mother. And my mother said, "Oh, yes, we already know. … We already got a letter from him." [Laughter] So that was a case where the mail was quicker than whatever means the Red Cross used. [Laughter]

KP: Your unit had, at one point, at the battle of Bruyere, the Nisei regiments … had really, in a sense, … played a crucial role. Did you have any contact with the Nisei regiments at all?

WB: Not too much, no. A couple of times, yes. We were up in this same mountainous area and they were still in the same area. And I know I was trying to find out something, and they had a crew up there with one of their hot lunches. And boy, they fed me some nice pea soup and a piece of apple pie. [Laughs] "You guys are doing pretty well here." … They were the first ones into this battalion that was cut off for a while, and then I had to go into that same area and relieve them, so they went back out. But that was the only contact I had with them.

KP: I partly ask because the … Japanese-Americans weren't treated too well during the war in the United States. And there was a lot of negative sentiment towards them, towards the Japanese, that extended over to Japanese-Americans. What were your thoughts on having this unit of Japanese-Americans fight next to you?

WB: No, as far as I was concerned, no problem. I mean they were just another military unit of the United States Army. And I ran into this again because I spent four years in Hawaii. And with my name tag "Bruyere," I'd get questioned many the times, "Oh, Bruyere, you weere there? Were you in Bruyere, in France?" These old Nisei guys out there from Hawaii were familiar with the name. So I had to explain to them, "Yes, I was there, but not … " [Laughter] But … there was no feeling about them being Japanese at all.

KP: What about the Germans as an enemy? Because when you were in headquarters, in a sense, they were the enemy, but they were a distant enemy. But you had some close calls when they

were trying to kill you, especially with the potato masher.

WB: That's right. That's right. They were trying to do their job, as far as the military was concerned. And maybe their motivation wasn't agreeable to what ours was. But as far as a fighting force, my God, they were damn good. Damn good. I mean, they wouldn't give up very easily and you had to fight for every yard that you wanted to take from 'em.

KP: … How often did you come across displaced persons, or any camps, any prison camps … or any concentration camps?

WB: No, I never came across any concentration camp. Displaced persons? Some of the prisoners that we would take claimed they weren't German. They were Romanian or a Yugoslav, or something of that nature, who had been pressed into the German Army. But, as far as running into, any detail with them, not very much, no. Well?

KP: … I'm curious for your comments about fraternization. The policy against fraternization with the Germans. It was a policy that, I've been told, was violated by almost everyone.

WB: I think it was, too! [Laughs]

KP: Because someone was commenting how, you know, "We violated, 'cause the officers were fraternizing."

WB: Well, now, I don't admit to it. [Laughter] Literally violating it myself.

KP: But …

WB: Maybe I reasoned with myself, but it's not a violation.

KP: But there was, even though there was initially official policy about fraternization, there was apparently a lot of fraternization.

WB: Yes. Yes, there was. No doubt about it. I mean, you can't help something like that. Where you have men who have been in a man situation, threatening situation, for quite some time, to be in an area where, "Okay, there are no more men around here, what are these? These are women again." So what are you gonna do? I mean, you got fraternization in the Army these days that gets a lot of publicity, but I don't know. You still got the problem: a man is a man and a woman is a woman. And you might say, "The twixt is always gonna meet." [Laughter]

KP: … When the war ended, had you thought of leaving the army? Had you thought of trying a civilian life job, or taking advantage of the GI Bill or, …

WB: Yes. No, I thought of leaving it because, mainly, the impact of the disaster situation was, well, I was kind of low, on my mind on the whole thing. But when I finally got back to the States for good, why, I had to think seriously about the whole thing. "Well, okay, here is a career that,

if you want to stay in it you can. There's nothing to hold you back. If you go out now, on your own, what are you going to do, and are you qualified to do anything other then try to tell people what to do?" So it was a matter of having confidence in yourself, of being able to do something like that, which, at the end of the war, I didn't have that confidence. I didn't feel too good about myself.

KP: … What you're saying is that, in some ways, it's great that you didn't, because in many ways the Army is extremely structured.

WB: Yes.

KP: I mean, you have responsibilities, but there are a lot of things you don't have to think about, unless you're in charge, in the Army. They tell you where to live. They tell you what to wear. … There's a very clear hierarchy.

WB: The thing that gets me as far as the Army is concerned, you might say, "Okay, they have a field manual for everything." I mean, you're gonna do this, they got a field manual for it. You're gonna do this, they got another field manual for it. It's spelled out, A B C D, what you are supposed to do. And as far as I was concerned, it didn't leave too much for … creative thinking. And this was reflected on my own feeling, about the whole thing, after I retired from the Army and got a job with a bank in Morristown. Where my job there was, the fellow that hired me said, "Well, we don't know what you're gonna do, but you're gonna make your own job." Which was wonderful for me, because here I was free, wide open, doing anything that I felt needed to enhance this situation that the bank was in. And I enjoyed that a hundred percent, because I could do what I wanted. I was my own boss. If something needed doing, I could do it. If it didn't need doing, I didn't need to do it. And that was a pleasure. I enjoyed that very much indeed. Until the bank got into a little straights and said, "Okay, your services, we don't need you any more." [Laughter]

KP: So in some ways, from your comments, in some ways, you appreciated the need for regimentation, but not if it drove people crazy.

WB: Yes. Oh, yes.

KP: Because … I've never been in the Army, but I did some work in the Army barracks in Carlisle. And just in my one day I was, sort of, struck by the regimentation, … particularly, working with the guard at the door, the person who greeted us sat at the desk, who initially helps you. My research assistant, her husband had been in the navy, said, … "NCO, very by the book."

WB: Regimentation, I think, is epitomized by when, just before the war, our division was moved down to Fort Benning in the tent camp. And the first thing they had to do was get out a sighting beam and line up the tent pegs. One right on the other. The mess sergeant would have to line up everything on the mess table; ketchup, sugar, salt, pepper; line it up, and that type of thing. That's carrying it too far. [Laughter] But that exemplifies the whole thing, I think, that is carried

on, not only the details like that, but "who's going to do what to whom?"

KP: You would stay in the Army, you had a long career in the Army, and in many ways a very successful one. You ended up retiring as a colonel. And you stayed past the twenty years. You stayed in for quite some time.

WB: Well, yes, because, again, I think I had a lot of luck involved in this whole thing. Being at the right place at the right time. Because the Army, if you are promoted at your time you should be promoted, well, fine, then you can serve so much longer. I was fortunate enough to be able to be promoted to a bird colonel. Not when I normally would have been about two or three years earlier. But, I was passed over a couple of times. Until there was a break, just before Vietnam, where things were breaking open again and they required more. So I say it was, sort of, a lame duck promotion. [Laughs]

KP: But you …

WB: But then again, when you reach the twenty-eight year level, if you haven't made, let's say, the permanent promotion, you're still the temporary promotion, then you have to retire. So at this time I was fortunate enough to be serving under a general who, I think, was very favorable for [me]. So that's why I ended up doing, like, thirty years, rather than having to retire at twenty-eight. So, again, there was, I think, a fortunate circumstance.

KP: Would you have liked to have been general? Was that ever an aspiration?

WB: You know it's funny. At the time, no. But now that I sit here today, looking back on it, with the more experience I have in my own self, my own ability, I'd say, "Sure. No problem at all." But at the time, why, it's funny, I guess, when you look back on it, "Why do you feel that way?" Oh, I don't know. I mean, you'd have to move all the time again, and all the problems involved in the thing. So, however, looking at some of the generals that you served with. Oh, boy! [Laughter]

EK: … I was reading some of the alumni magazines, and in some of them they called you "Boo-Boo" as a little nickname. And I was just wondering what the significance of that was. [Laughter]

WB: We're getting back to the fraternity days.

EK: Oh, are we? Okay.

WB: Where everybody got a name, as far as tied in with something. Boo-Boo, Woodshed, other things of that nature that was related to, usually, a Damon Runyon type of character. And I think it was just a common thing in our fraternity to pin a name on an individual that related to this type of activity. So Boo-Boo just came along. Now, what started that, I don't know. [Laughter]

KP: Before, sort of, going on to some of your Army assignments, I did want to make sure I

asked you a general questrion. You were in the Army when it was segregated, originally segregated, in the pre-war Army.

WB: Yes.

KP: And you would be in the Army when it integrates. In fact, in the Army into the 1960s, when it becomes more tumultuous.

WB: Yes.

KP: What were your observations about desegregation, and how it worked, and the struggles?

WB: Yes. It's funny going through something like this, through the whole cycle of the whole thing. Whereas, for example, when … they had the reception station at Fort Dix, we were assigned a negro officer. And we had to get a separate building for him to live in, and that type of thing. And that was the first contact. But this was back in the ’39/’38, I mean, yes, ’37. I mean, ’39 and ’40. But then, as far as integration of the units, that didn't come until during the Korean operation, where you had so much adverse publicity about the pure negro type of unit. And why, I don’t know. Because I don’t have any personal experience to back up anything at all. Just what you hear. But also, there was a separate Puerto Rican unit that had to be disbanded. Now why, I don’t know. I just heard it. So, as far as the unit integration now, I think it’s not a problem, except maybe the percentage wise of so many …

---------- END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE ----------

WB: … of the black race. Similar to the way the black race, you might say, literally, in your professional sports these days. And the question would come to my mind, "All right, if such is the case, what happens if, let's say, they get a leader of the Idi Amin or Khomeini type of leader, and decides they want to take over the whole thing?" All right, they have the whole Army in back of them. So, I don’t know, it’s just a thought.

KP: Were there any problems with integration?

WB: I don’t recall any problems. In other words, as far as my own person feelings would be, we just accepted it. It was the way it was going to be. And, "All right, you're just another human being, and this is the Army. Either act like a human being in the Army should act like, and don’t try to step out of line." That type of thing. So, it's an odd situation, I think, that is affecting the whole county, I think, these days.

KP: For as long as you wanted to talk, would you go through your other post-war assignments? … In the Army you're constantly moving, but back to the States, you would be, initially, sent to Fort Benning.

WB: Yes. I went through Fort Benning, through the Advanced Infantry Officers’ basic course.

KP: Because you never had had that. You had had really no advanced infantry training.

WB: No, no, no. I had never had that. This was my first military schooling, you might say. And that was a year course. And I was selected then to remain at the infantry school as an instructor. And I was quite happy because my initial assignment, with the infantry school then, was what they called "the defense committee." Which was the committee to belong to, if you're gonna be assigned as instructor. And I went on leave, and when I came back from leave they said, "We got a change for you." They said, "You're going to be assigned to the monograph committee." Now, this was a group. The monograph was an assignment for each student to write a paper on a military operation, personal, or if you didn't have personal experience, of a book type of thing. And then give a twenty-five minute speech, talk, on the thing. And when we graduated that first year, from the course, the assignments were given out. And everybody said, "What assignment would you like to have?" They said, "Korea or the monograph committee?" They said, "Oh, no, neither one!" [Laughter] So, all you had to do was present the requirements to the class and then read all their, you know, their paperwork and judge their personal appearance on the thing. And this went on for one year and started the next year when the Army developed a new concept of how to handle their logistical requirements and developed the comptroller concept. And they were going through records and saw my name was business administration, Rutgers University, "Uh-oh, you're IT." So I ended up in the comptroller business. I was there for a couple of years, then went to Fort Leavenworth to Command a General Staff School for a year. And after that, was assigned to Korea. But I arrived in Korea just after the war, just after the truce had been signed over there, and spent a year and a half in Korea. And came back and found myself assigned to the US Army Mountain and Cold Weather Training Command in Fort Carson, Colorado. [Laughs] Which, incidentally, was a very nice assignment. Because we had the job of instructing units and individuals in mountain type warfare and cold weather operations. And in the wintertime, about October, we'd move from Fort Carson up to Camp Hale, which is outside of Leadville, and spend the winter up there with winter operations, and then in the summer time, back to Fort Carson for the mountain climbing operations. What you see so much of these days, the repelling from … helicopters and things like that, mountain climbing, … that was our meat in those days. I became a skier, but I never became a good mountain climber. [Laughter] It was funny when I first arrived out there. I had my family with me. We were looking around for a place to stay. And I had heard something about this. And there's a canyon just outside of Colorado Springs that you drive up to, and there's what they call "the Pinnacle Rock," that sticks up out of this thing. And we came driving up there with my wife and family and looked up at this. And my wife, I said, "Yes, this is where we're going to conduct training exercises." And my wife said, "They don't climb that, do they?" [Laughter] I looked up at it, "No, they don't." [Laughter] However, I was wrong. Then from there, when I finished that up, why, four years in Hawaii, at the University of Hawaii, as instructor of the whole ROTC program in the Islands.

KP: It sounds like a nice posting.

WB: That was very nice indeed, because you worked at the university but you had about seven or eight high schools that you had to supervise in the program. So you're going around constantly to them, and also instructing the units, classes, in the University itself. It was very interesting

working with those Hawaiian people. Hawaiians, or Japanese, or Chinese descent. Why, they were really quite interested in the program. We always had quite a number of them who were given direct commissions at the completion of the service. And then back to teaching again at the signal school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. And there I was promoted, and they said, "Well, we don't have a job for you here at Monmouth. What do you want to do next?" … The department of the Army said, "Well, okay, we have a job as a comptroller for Fort Dix." So I said, "Okay, I'll take it." And when I reported for duty at Dix they said, "Okay, we have a little change for you here. We're gonna give you a year's experience running one of these training regiments." [Laughter] So that I did, and then … for six years I was a comptroller. I had an extended tour of duty down there, because my wife had become very ill, and, in and out of the hospital many times. So I felt that I couldn't go off and be assigned back to Korea, where they wanted to send me, or anything like that. So they said, "Okay, just stay where you are until you retire." Which was all right with me.

KP: You actually have a very long stint in New Jersey. Most military people are lucky to spend more than three years in a place.

WB: Yes. No, it worked out very fortunate for me, because her family was still in Jersey and my father down at the shore, in Bay Head. And so, you might say, we were able to have family reunions once in a while.

KP: I guess one thing to comment on, I'd be curious about your thoughts about the Korean War, and about your actual experiences in Korea, after the war, after the armistice.

WB: Well, over there my job was what they called the Secretary of General Staff of IX Headquarters, IX Corps Headquarters. And there you are the center point for all the communications generated by the staff before it goes into the chief of staff for approval or non-approval, and that type of thing. So it was mainly a desk-type of operation, completely. So, you get a chance to, many times, say "aye" or "nay" to a proposition, or a report of something along that line. And I had very good relations with the chief of staff at the time, and with two commanding generals of the corps headquarters. The third one and I didn't get along very well. [Laughs] He was known, I'll give the name here, but you can delete it. It was "Hangin' Sam." [Laughs]

KP: You were in the Army, I mean, you were still on active duty during the Vietnam War. What were your thoughts about Vietnam at the time?

WB: Well, after experiencing the tour with the Koreans, and the Orientals, you might say, I felt that there was no reason why we should be down there. Other than the SEATO operation that had been set up. That gave us an obligation, I guess, to go in. But, you're dealing with the Oriental again, where, as you say, it's an enigma. "What are they doing? Why are they gonna do it?" And it resulted in the same type of thing, where you, … the Army, I don't think, was allowed to do what it wanted to do. It was too much over control. Not only from the units themselves, but even directly from the White House. So you can't run a military operation along that line and have any success. It was interesting, because when I was in Korea they had the, it was just about

when the French were giving up in Indonesia. And they had a request for people who wanted to volunteer to go down there, and become a part of the initial group of American officers down there. And I gave some thought to that, but it was towards the end of my Korea tour, and I said, "Okay. I want to go back to my family for a while." [Laughs]

KP: What kind of stresses does a military career put on a family? 'Cause you are, obviously, absent a lot.

WB: Well, you might say, among all members of your family, there has to be a lot of independence, to be able to take care of themselves, to be able to know where to go for support or requirements. And not having somebody sit around all the time and be able to tell you "yes" or "no," or be the guiding principle of the whole thing. And I think that's the major thing, the loss, the family has when you're away on another assignment.

EK: I noticed that your son did not have a career in the military at all. Was he not interested? Did he not want to have the lifestyle that you led, or, what do you think his reasons were for it?

WB: I really don't know. My son graduated from Rutgers, here, in '66, I think it was. And I had a most difficult situation, family wise, at that time. My wife had had a complete breakdown when I was at Leavenworth, and had gone into a civilian, University of Kansas, hospital, with electric shock treatments and things like that. So, and then this … situation existed for the next, up until she passed away in '93. But I think it had an impact on my son, as to whether he wanted to do whatever he wanted to do. He was a wonderful kid, in a way, but I guess this trouble got into him somehow or another, and he got himself married, and was married about a year, and finally died under unusual circumstances.

KP: It sounds like you wife, and your son, suffered from depression.

WB: Yes.

KP: Severe depression.

WB: Yes. She, oh, well, let's not get into that.

KP: You don't want to talk about it.

WB: No.

KP: I guess, you would start a second career. I mean, 'cause you had been in the military for thirty years, and you have a pension, and you could have, in a sense, just sat on the porch.

WB: No, I didn't want to do that.

KP: But you could have.

WB: I could have, yes.

KP: Yes, but you …

WB: No, I wanted to go to work. The only thing was, I didn't want to work someplace where I'd … have to commute, because I commuted for two years and knew what it was about. So, that's why, when we settled down in Morristown, I walked across the street to the bank and said, "Do you folks need any help?" And this was the time, the beginning of the time, when the banks in New Jersey were expanding statewide. Usually, they were controlled to operate only within county wise. This was expansion period. So they said, "Sure, come on to work. We don't know what your job's going to be, but here's what it is. And we're building new offices throughout the whole part of the country." And I latched onto handling all of their voice communication type of thing. Which I found very interesting in dealing with the phone company. And it was very fruitful, as far as I was concerned, because nobody knew anything about this, as far the operation of the bank was concerned. People just sort of did things as they came through, and whoever paid the bills, why, whoever was responsible for paying the bills just paid them off. If you took interest in analyzing all these phone bills, … you'd be surprised how many errors there were. [Laughs] And the network, that's one thing that amazes me now when I go into a bank. To see these banks of computers, where people can press buttons and get your information right off the bat. Well, when I joined the bank they had a system, just initiating a system, that had, you'd press, on the touch tone telephone, the information for the account and the computer would voice the exact amount that was in the account, or the information. That now … is out-of-date many, many years. [Laughter] And it amazes me because of the complexity of the situation in those days, versus what they have now. … Every teller desk, and every desk in the bank, has a bank of communications equipment. And I think, "My God, how much money are they spending on these things?" Because … [Laughs]

KP: Because, in many ways, you were in the bank when it was still paper. I mean, there are computers, but still, there is a lot of stuff done on paper.

WB: Yes.

KP: You mentioned that you had to leave the bank, or the bank was running into some problems.

WB: They were in a low period and had to cut down. And my job was handling this type of work within one of the areas. And there was another fellow handling the same type of work in another area. So I guess whoever thought, "Well, you only need one man for the whole thing." …And however they arrived at the decision, I don't know, but, I ended up saying, "Thank you very much, fellows." Tear off the epaulets, take off the buttons, and escort you to the front gate. [Laughter] I think they gave me a couple of months salary, but no pension from the bank at all, because I hadn't been there long enough.

KP: Did you think of trying to find another full time position at that point?

WB: I thought about it but, again, here I was with the situation of my wife. That things are not

quite normal, let's say, as they are right now. We can both get along. We have enough income from the military pension, plus a few securities I had been able to build up when I was working for the bank. So I did have a couple of opportunities to try something, but I never followed through on it. I took up on my third profession. Building model boats. [Laugh]

KP: So you are really active. How many model boats have you built?

WB: Let's see, right off hand, there are about thirty-five model boats that were built and presented to the South Street Seaport in New York. These were various types of tugboats, ferry boats, everything under the sun related to New York Harbor and the Hudson River. And then, when I moved down to the Shore, I built, I guess, maybe fifty sailboat types of models. And I have reached a point now, where, if someone wants a model done, I say, "Fine. I'll make one for you, but I don't want anything for it." I'll give it away. [Laughter] I get more pleasure out of that.

KP: Well, we would love to have a boat. If you're ever in the mood to make another boat.

WB: And another one, I go back up to Red Bank about once a month. And in the end of Main Street in Red Bank is the Marascio's barbershop. Pete Marascio's and I played football at Red Bank high school together. But Pete is there no longer. I mean, he died about for or five years ago, but it still has the same name. And the little fellow running it, why, I get my hair cut up there now every month. And … he asked me if I remembered a schoolteacher from high school days, Mrs. Theodore Brown. I said, "Sure. I remember her very well. 'Brownie.'" He said, "She still lives over here. Go see her." So when I go back up there now, I give her a call, go over and take her out to lunch. She just had her ninety-fifth birthday.

KP: Wow.

WB: She's as lively and as sharp as a tack. And the last time I was up there was in June or July. I took her home. And sitting on her dining room table was the most beat up ship model you ever saw. A model, I would say, if it looked good new, it would have been a replica of the USS *Constitution*. That type of model. She says, "Do you know anybody that can fix this?" So, "Okay, okay." So I took it home and fixed it for her. Took it back up there again. She was quite happy with it. [Laughs] But I enjoy it. I enjoy working with my hands, and it's a pleasure for me. Keeps me out of trouble. And when I moved down to the Shore, why, I found this area down there with single unit houses that you purchase outright, rather than a condominium or anything like that, with two bedrooms. So one bedroom is now just littered with workshop. [Laughter] I know where things are there, but don't you try and find it, because you won't be able to. [Laughter]

KP: You never joined … any veterans' organizations.

WB: No. No, I belong to association of the US Army and Retired Officers Association. But none of these, VFW or Legion America. No, nothing. Nothing like that. I have never had interest in that type of thing.

KP: What about Rutgers? How active have you been with Rutgers since you got out of the military?

WB: Not too active. I started to become active when, let's see, we had our fifty-fifth reunion here in '94, I guess it was. And Larry Pitt, I don't know whether you know him or not, got me interested. Because I came up to the reunion, and the fellow, who had been the president, decided he wanted to step down and came over my shoulder and said, "Hey, Walt, how about taking this over for me? There won't be anything to it. Go ahead." "Okay." Next thing, I get a call from Larry Pitt saying, "We have a plaque that needs to be put up, or built, and put up in the stadium and there's another plaque on a stone bench out in the middle of the area that this class had donated. And somebody, they put a plaque up there, and somebody ran off with it. They put another plaque on and someone ran off with that. We need that taken care of." So that's how I got involved in getting these things under way again. [Laughter]

KP: I guess, one question I meant to ask earlier, but chapel in the military, particularly in World War II, how often would you go to services? How often would the men you served with go to religious services?

WB: Let's see. We had chaplains, but I don't remember a chaplain. Well, division headquarters usually had a chaplain, nothing lower than that. But, maybe there were in regiments. The thing that impressed me was the camaraderie, person-to-person type of thing, of the Catholic chaplains. Rather than the Protestant chaplains, who were more of the Episcopalian type, where the Catholics were right down-to-earth people, and that type of thing. But, as far as myself was concerned, no, I didn't do too much as far as attending chapel or services of that nature. But I'd say the coverage, as far as the chapel service in the military service, was quite ample and trying to do the best they can under rough situations.

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask?

WB: No. [Laughter] What I had for lunch? [Laughter] Let's see, what? I guess we about covered it.

KP: I guess one final thing, 'cause it's, sort of, a reflection … . Is there any movie or novel that you think accurately depicts some of your military experience, war movies or novels. Have you ever seen a movie and said, "You know, this is actually … very similar," or a novel, or even a documentary on any of your experiences.

WB: There used to be a show on TV, back in the '60s. What was it called?

KP: "Combat?"

WB: "Combat." And some of the things that they showed in that TV series were the nearest thing I have ever seen, as far as a movie or a TV program, that would relate to an actual type of experience. I think whoever put that show together must have had some experience themselves on the whole thing. But many of the things you see are just blown up too far or wide for effect.

That's all. But, other than that, I would say the movies haven't done too good a job as far as …

KP: Depicting …

WB: Yes. Depicting actual situation. And I guess, you run into the matter of censorship on some of these things, where you get into an actual situation. However, there is one military, government, produced film called "The Battle of San Pietro." That's one of these battles in Italy. You may have even heard of it.

KP: I've actually even seen the film. You think that's fairly accurate?

WB: Yes. Yes. That's fairly accurate, yes. I'm glad I brought that out, because that, I'd say, is the most accurate one that I've ever been able to see. Having been in that particular area, but not in that operation myself, I could appreciate what they went through and some of the things they did or what they shouldn't have done, why, … it's hard to rationalize some of the operations.

KP: And I guess, being a career military person you probably ran into people you served with throughout your career. But … are there people you still stay in touch with, and that you served with in World War II, or in the military?

WB: Some. Let's see.

KP: You mentioned the phone call you just recently got.

WB: Yes, but … that was "out of this world," for Pete's sake! [Laughter] But as far as people I've been in contact with, I don't have too much contact with them. Except if you hear or see somebody that you knew back in the period of XYZ, or whenever it was, then you go. … I don't go out of my way to try and relate, or retain, other than maybe sending a few Christmas cards to old friends and things like that. But, it's like my father said, … he lived to ninety-seven, and he always said, " … You know, pretty soon there's not going to be anybody left." [Laughter]

KP: It sounds like he had a good sense of humor, too.

WB: Oh, he did. [Laughter] He was remarkable, in a way. Excuse me if I digress a bit.

KP: That's fine.

WB: He, what was I saying? … When he left his business, things dropped out of the bottom of it. Why, he went into the real estate business during the war. He got into the real estate business down in Bay Head, New Jersey and got quite a name for himself down there, in the Bay Head area. But he never knew how to drive a car.

KP: Really?

WB: He never drove a car in his life.

KP: Oh, really? How did he do real estate?

WB: My mother always drove him around if he needed to go any place. But he always rode a bicycle. And he had to quit riding his bicycle around the town of Bay Head when he was ninety-four, because the town people in Bay Head were afraid he'd fall off and hurt himself. [Laughter] So …

KP: Unless you feel like saying more, that might be a good story to end with. [Laughter]

WB: Okay. [Laughter]

KP: Is there something else you wanted to say?

WB: No, I think that's about it.

KP: I never want to cut anyone short. There's … usually another good story. But, thank you very much.

WB: Well, it's my pleasure.

KP: We really appreciated it.

EK: Thank you very much.

WB: I am getting rid of some of these old things that have been hanging around in my mind for a long time. [Laughter]

KP: And, as I say, … when you read the transcript you can take things out, but you can also feel free to add. We'd love to have your letters as part of the archives.

WB: Well, okay. I'm glad you brought that up.

KP: Yes. We definitely would.

---------- END OF TRANSCRIPT ----------

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