

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WERNER CARL BURGER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

and

JOSEPH SIVILLE

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 22, 2002

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Professor Carl Burger on November 22, 2002, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Joseph Sivilie: Joseph Sivilie.

SI: Professor Burger, thank you very much for being with us today.

Carl Burger: I'm very honored and I appreciate what you're doing. I really do.

SI: Thank you. We appreciate your cooperation. To begin, I would like to ask you a few questions about your parents and your childhood in Germany. Can you tell me a little bit about your father?

CB: ... Well, I find it very ironic, in that my father, at seventeen, was in the trenches in World War I and the reason I mention that is because ... it's funny how fate will work, because, years later, when I was drafted into the US service, I'll never forget the day he put me on the bus in Irvington, New Jersey. It was 1944 and I was 1-A and weighed 140 pounds and I thought I was too skinny to go in, [laughter] but I wasn't and he couldn't believe it and he said, you know, he had tears in his eyes when he put me on the bus, and he said, "You know, I never thought I would live to see a son of mine going to war." ... That's one of the reasons he left Europe, because of all that, and he thought he was going to come to a new life in this country. ... He never thought that this would be happening and was very, very upset, naturally, and I say this mainly, too, because, always, there's a stereotype about Germans, we're all so very militaristic, but I can assure you, it certainly was not indicative of my family, because my father was extremely anti-Kaiser, anti-Army, anti-military. He hated it and that's one of the reasons why he left [Germany], because there was that Prussian iconography going on for a while, but he was a very fine man. He was a jeweler. He was trained to be a jeweler and his name and firm are mentioned in the catalogue of the ... Newark Museum, by the way, when they had a large show a couple of years ago, called, "All That Glitters Is Gold," "All That's Gold Glitters," or whatever and was a show about the jewelry industry in Newark, which was primarily a lot of ... German-Americans. It was an interesting thing. So, that's the kind of tradition into which I was born and I was brought over into this country when I was six months old. My parents left Germany in 1926.

SI: Was your grandfather a jeweler? Was that a family tradition?

CB: No, no. My dad's family were actually Huguenots. Of course, as you know, it was a sporting thing, in the 16th Century, for Roman Catholics to kill off Protestants and Protestants to kill off Roman Catholics and he happened to be Protestant and they had to flee France and ended up in Germany. The name Burger, I don't know exactly where the roots of that name come from, but Dad was basically [German]. Of course, several generations later, of course, they're all Germans, but they were farmers and my mother's side was Swiss German and were more middle-class. ... My grandfather on that side was an insurance agent. I don't remember what agency he worked for, [laughter] but it certainly wasn't the Prudential or Met Life, but that's basically the history of the family and, economically, you know, Germany was in a very, very bad way after World War I and Father, being a highly skilled craftsman, was trained to work on

very high quality jewelry. You know, they made rings, set diamonds, everything and, when he came to this country, he worked for Henry Blank & Company in Newark and they used ... to make jewelry for Harry Winston, Tiffany, Black Star & Gorham, and Dad was very proud of the fact that he was instrumental and had set the diamonds for the cross of one of the cardinals or [the] Bishop of Romania. He used to tell me about how he had personally made that himself. ... As I say, we moved to Irvington, New Jersey, when we first came here and Irvington, in those days, was an up-and-coming town and was really a town of middle-class people. ... I was educated there and I must say, very honestly, even though it was the Depression, the town fathers ... still had the arts program and music programs and thank God for that, because I later on became an artist.

SI: Was the art and music program a WPA program?

CB: No, no. ... I may be old, but I wasn't that old. [laughter] ... My generation wasn't ready for that, yet. That was in, I think, ... right after the Depression, they started the WPA and I was still a kid, you know. [laughter] Right, no, that didn't affect me.

SI: Did your father ever actually talk about his experiences in the trenches in World War I?

CB: No, he only attributed to it his habit of being a chain smoker. ... He became a chain smoker, because, in the trenches, they often didn't have anything to eat and, here he was, seventeen, you know, and, to avoid appetite, they would smoke and he became, really, a terrible smoker after a while, ... but he did tell us what a terrible war it had been and what a useless, useless waste of lives [it was]. That's why he was very ... anti-military. ...

SI: Was he on the Western Front?

CB: Yes, he was on the Western Front, yes. ... I'm not sure, I believe he was wounded in the leg, I think. I forgot what it was, but he was wounded, either in the leg or the arm. I couldn't quite remember, but you'd imagine, being seventeen, at that time of life. They had gas warfare at the time, you know, and, luckily, he was not exposed to that part of it, but, you know, to think that the same thing would happen several years later, all over again. ... You're history people; you know, it's ridiculous what's happened to Europe over the centuries. It's constant warfare between the English, the French, the Germans, the Spaniards, the Thirty Years War, which, by the way, decimated Germany for thirty years. Germany never quite recovered from the Thirty Years War, according to historians, you know, yes, okay.

SI: What can you tell us about your mother?

CB: Well, my mom, she was a very strict Roman Catholic, was brought up in a very strict Roman Catholic family. The reason I speak of that is because it has something to do, later on, with my war experience and my brother and I were brought up as strict Roman Catholics. Dad was a Protestant, of course, and was very sympathetic towards letting the mother, you know, take care of the kids like that. He was ... a very free spirit, almost Libertarian, you know, [laughter] and we were brought up as Roman Catholics and that affected me in many ways, because, I'm not sure whether I'm allowed to digress yet, but it had something to do with when I was drafted.

During basic training, I remember, we used to go to the theater at the camp where we were, at Fort Dix, you know, the fort theater, and then, later on, when I was in the combat engineers, at Fort Belvoir. We had to see these Army films and they would teach you how to kill somebody and were very explicit about [how] you could grab someone from behind; you had to slit their throat. You do this or you have to immediately disarm them and I remember, during bayonet practice, we had to become extremely aggressive and gouge the dummy, which was made out of straw, and I was so embarrassed. I was really embarrassed about my humanity and this is the truth. I mean, it sounds very intellectual now, but, when I look back, here I was, eighteen years of age and you're taught about the sanctity of life and everything. Here, you're supposed to act like an animal. You're supposed to be very aggressive and vicious. So, I would camp it up by acting silly. I'd go, "Roar, roar," and I'd jump around. ... I had to somehow let it out of my system, because it was so demeaning. It's hard to put it in words and I remember the sergeant, Sergeant Ellender, a nice guy, at least he was understanding, because, in the Army, you don't do that. [laughter] He said, "That's funny, Junior, yes. That's very right, Junior, be funny. That's funny. Yes, wait until there's a Jap in front of you." Little did he know, ... they were going to send me to Europe instead. [laughter] He said, "Wait until the Jap's in front of you, then, you'll think it's so funny." ... It was experiences like that, which were really traumatic and it really made you feel, on the one hand, you're told, you know, you have to be out there and kill somebody you've never even met and no one will ever really understand that until they're put in that situation. I never realized what freedom really meant until I was in the service. ... That's why I say to even you young people, "Take care of this country and defend it, because we're the last hope." I could cry about it, because it really affects me, because, when you're in the service, you're ... beholden to another authority. You're not allowed to question. We were told that the equipment is more important than we are, that we're expendable. Often times, they told us, "Remember, the equipment is more important than you are. You're just soldiers. That's all you are." ... I remember, when we were taken down to Fort Belvoir, it was like an old Civil War train, I'll never forget it, I was in terror, because I didn't know what was going to happen to me. Here, I'm eighteen, I want to live and this emaciated looking guy came in. He looked like something out of a residual from the Civil War. He was a captain in the combat engineers. He said, "You men are now combat engineers. Our outfit has a very proud ... tradition," blah, blah, "but, remember, the combat engineers have the highest casualty rate of the Army and many of you will never be coming back." [laughter] Here you are, eighteen, you have to listen to this. ... That's it so far. So, if [there are] any other things that you want to ask about, I'll be glad to tell you.

SI: Can we talk about your mother?

CB: Oh, I'm sorry. How'd I get off on that tangent? Oh, the digression was because of the Roman Catholic background, yes, and Mother was, of course, a very sensitive, very kind, giving human being and that tradition remained in the family. I don't want to be sanctimonious or self-serving, but it has something to do with your psyche, you know, the way you were brought up, really. ... Mom also was ahead of her time. She was the type of woman who wasn't really meant for housework and being domesticated. Of course, in those days, strangely enough, women were still supposed to stay at home and hearth and cook and have supper on the table at six o'clock and Mom was sort of rebellious about that. She wanted to go out and do her own thing. [laughter] I remember, my brother and I and Father, we'd get on her and say, "What's the

matter? Supper's not ready. Where were you today?" and, you know, "How dare you? We're all here ... and that's your job as mother." [laughter] I remember, Father used to come home, he'd say, "What have you been doing all day? I've been working. What have you been doing all day? Supper's not ready," that kind of thing. [laughter] That was basically an ordinary family life back in the 1920s and '30s and '40s. ... Is that enough about Mother or do you want to know more about her?

SI: Would you like to say more?

CB: No, she was just a great woman, ahead of her time and extremely sympathetic toward me becoming an artist, yes, and, in fact, I remember, I was very much interested in art. I became an artist through puppetry. For some odd reason, I got turned on to marionettes and ... I started making scenery for the marionettes and, I remember, my dad used to say, "What kind of a boy is he? What kind of a boy is he, playing with puppies, puppy shows?" He called them "puppies," the puppets; he called it "puppy shows." You know, this is a German household; you're supposed to go make a living. [laughter] How can you make a living being a puppeteer? and my mother said, "Well, leave him alone, he's artistic," or something like that [laughter] and we had to take piano lessons. My brother had to take the violin. It's usual, traditional, middle-class family culture was part of it, but I owe a lot to my mother, her end of it, the female end of it, the sensitive part. "He's an artist," but he used to often say, my dad, "Well, how's he going to make a living?" and, ironically, you guys did ask something about the tradition of the jewelry. I remember, Dad was very disappointed that neither my brother nor I went into the jewelry business, but I wasn't really, particularly, very much interested in it myself, right. [laughter]

SI: It seems that you are all creative, though.

CB: Oh, yes. ... So, maybe it's a genetic trait. [laughter] Ironically, my grandfather on my mother's side, he wanted to be a teacher, an art teacher of all things. This is back in the 1800s, you know, when men didn't really become art teachers, but that's a funny thing, isn't it? ... So, here, several generations later, the grandson, it almost must be, maybe, reincarnation; [laughter] maybe I'm really my grandfather, because I suddenly went into teaching and taught in high school, high schools in New Jersey, and then, later on, got an appointment as a professor at Kean, you know, K-E-A-N. You're supposed to say, "Kay-ne," not, "Keen," right, okay, and I went to Rutgers. I was a Rutgers boy and I also went to Columbia, but my graduate work and my degrees were actually from NYU, yes.

SI: Did you leave Germany when you were six months old or six years old?

CB: No, six months.

SI: Okay.

CB: That's why I'm fortunate in that respect. I became fluent in both English and German. ... The German, unfortunately, now, is slowly disappearing. Often times, when we have friends I see that are German, ... we revert back to English. Even the Germans speak English more than German, because German is an unwieldy language. If you want to place a thought, you have to

put four words together to make one word, you know, whereas [in] English, one little word with four letters makes the whole thing. So, I was brought up, though, [speaking German]. By the way, ... it's strange how fate works, guys, you know, because, I remember, often times, I would be very embarrassed. See, in those days, diversity wasn't in. I remember being extremely embarrassed in class when the teacher said, "How many of you here are foreigners?" [laughter] I have to raise my hand, you know, and, when we'd go to a department store, Mother would speak to me in German and, of course, I would literally cringe and try to crawl under a counter somewhere, because I didn't want people to know we're foreigners and I often remember when she would say to me, "*Hier wurd Deutsch gesprochen deine mutter sprache*," you know, in your mother tongue, and, luckily, I don't want to use the word ironic again, I apologize, but years, years later, when I was in service, I was in a combat outfit, it was called [the] 1651st Engineers Utility Detachment and our role was to guard the refrigeration tunnels in Cherbourg, France, at the time. By the way, we were ... shipped overseas about eight weeks after the invasion and we landed on the same beach.

JS: Utah Beach?

CB: Utah Beach, Utah and Omaha, and, ... I'll never forget, being the artist, as we were in the flat-bottom boats, you know, when you land, I looked up at the sky and it was this magnificent [sight]. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when we landed, from the troopship, and the sky was like one of those [Meindert] Hobbema paintings, one of the Dutch landscape painters, and I said to my buddy, "Oh, my God, look at that sky." ... The guy said, "What's the matter with you? What do you think this is? This is a war." I said, "Yes, but look at that sky. It reminds me of a Hobbema painting," and ... we landed on the beach, right there, and we were a little outfit, you know. We weren't attached to any particular Army unit at the time, but we were on our own and our captain wasn't even there when we landed. The master sergeant, who was Armenian, Sergeant Eskigian, returned, we wanted to know what we were going to do here. We found out, later on, that old McNamara liked to drink and he was looking for his bedroll, because it was loaded with liquor. [laughter] ... He went off with the jeep, with one sergeant, looking for his bedroll and stuff while we were on the beach and it's starting to get dark and we finally went inland. I'll never forget, they put us right in a field. It was a farm. ... Normandy is a lot of little farms and the grass was so green. You'll remember, it's almost pre-autumn already and the grass [was green]. It was the Norman countryside and we had to put up our pup tents. They were these little tents and there was one guy to a tent and I went out foraging for some wire, because there was a lot of wire down from the bombing in the war, because, after all, there had been battles raging through there. In fact, we still had a sniper in the church at Etretat, in the tower. In fact, I think President Bush had gone there just this past year, remember, when he went to France and he went to Etretat. ... Anyway, I found some wire and I took four wooden posts from the woods. I chopped down some smaller trees and I made myself like a netting that I could put my blanket on, so [that] I wouldn't be sleeping on the floor. It was sort of a little hammocky thing. I made it myself and, I remember, we never had any fresh food. It was the rations they gave us, K rations, and I remember waking up one morning, it was misty in the morning, and I heard the clanging of the bell of a cow and at the far end of the field was a farmer and he was milking the cow and, in broken French, ... [I told him], "I'd like to have some fresh milk." So, he took my canteen cup, arm and all, and put it right in the pail. He doesn't care about sanitation. [laughter] He just put his arm, everything, into the pail, up came the milk and it

was so delicious and there were blackberries still and I picked all the blackberries and I threw them in this, you know, my little canister and ... it was like whipped cream with cream and berries. It was delicious. So, little things like that give you a kind of a touch of another time, but Normandy, we were stationed there and, I recall, one of my colleagues, or buddies, he was the company clerk and he was telling me, "You know, they're looking for German-speaking GIs, for military intelligence," and he's going to apply. So, I said, "Well, cut me in. I'd like to go, too." So, we both applied and our orders came through the ... day before the night of the Battle of the Bulge. Now, I don't know, you being history majors, if you recall the Battle of the Bulge, the German breakthrough at Remagen. It was something we didn't expect and, ... I remember, all of us were put on alert. We were going to move to the front and my buddy and I were left behind, because we were going to be shipped to Germany ... for military intelligence, yes. We were shipped to Paris first and I'll never forget the train. It was a night train to Paris and I was assigned to a particular unit and that's another very, very interesting story, ... and I owe that to my mother, who said, "You know, you never know, what you learn, how it could be used someday," and because I knew fluent German, that made me eligible for this particular assignment, see.

JS: Were you looking to get out of the combat engineers?

CB: Well, let's put it this way, survival is a very strong instinct. I'm a coward at heart. [laughter] That's why I asked my class the other day, I've got young men like you, so, I'm still teaching. I'm retired, but I like to go back and I asked the class the other day, I said, "Look, if you were in the service right now, be honest," I said, ... to all of them, "and you're, like, in Vietnam and you're out there," and like what happened to Senator [Robert] Kerrey, "and they're telling you that these guys, whether there's women, children or old men, they're all potential enemies, because they're out to kill you and, ... as a result, we don't know which one of them is legitimate or not. We have to kill them all, shoot them, shoot them. Would you do it? Would you have the guts to do it? Because, if you don't, you're disobeying a military order and you are subject to court-martial and could be shot, especially in wartime." That's a fact. In other words, if you disobey your officer, you can be shot, court-martialed and shot. I said, "Would you put your life on the line and be willing to die for your principles?" Do you know ... what the result was of that survey? Not one, [laughter] not one said, "Yes, I will die for my principles," and that's why I say to anybody, "Stop being so self-righteous;" some of these clerics, you know, who talk about Germans, this and that, and I say, "You know, war is a horrible thing. It puts terrible pressures on a human being and it is very, very difficult to say, 'I'm a martyr. I'm going to die, because I know what I'm doing is wrong.'" I'm not Jesus Christ, you see, unfortunately, and that's something people ought to think twice about. I'm not saying you shouldn't, you know, ... give your life, I say, but it's easily said. Philosophically, it sounds great, but, fellows, let me tell you, when push comes to shove, you think and say, "Look, I'm eighteen. If I survive this, maybe I'll have a good life," because, in line with this, philosophically, my dad had a friend who stayed in Germany and had a son by the name of Werner. My first name is Werner and I've often thought I'd like to write a book someday called *The Two Werners*, because my father's friend had a son named Werner. He was my age. They stayed in Germany, because they were wealthy and had a jewelry factory. ... His father, when he visited us years later, they came from Germany to visit us, showed us a photograph of Werner. Werner's laying under six feet of earth in Russia and there was snow on the ground. That Werner could have been me and, let me tell

you, that affects you. That affects you. So, sometimes, as I say, “Maybe there’s something watching over us.” I don’t know whether there is or not. I’m an agnostic and I’m proud to say that’s what I am [laughter] and I often don’t know what’s out there, but, if anybody’s watching over me, whoever you are, Deity, God bless you. [laughter] Maybe the Devil’s watching over you, who knows? You know, Satan takes care of his own, [laughter] right, yes, right, but I wanted you guys to know this and I want whoever, some day, ... maybe they’ll be listening to this, who knows? maybe they won’t, but maybe they’ll find out that the great miracle of all of it is that we are human, thank God, and the only thing which makes us different from the animals, I think, is something way inside that could be called a conscience, right? So, that was something I think I should tell you about, because it really affected me deeply, the whole situation.

SI: Did either of your parents have family still in Germany?

CB: Yes. That’s another story. Dad had a family that I’ve lost touch with completely and ... here’s an interesting story. My father had a brother who was in a concentration camp, because, you know, people often think only Jewish people were in concentration camps. Oh, no, they had homosexuals in concentration camps, they had Gypsies in concentration camps, they had anybody whom Hitler thought was unworthy in concentration camps. My father’s [brother], now here’s a man of conscience. I must admit, he’s a better man than I am. My Uncle Emil, my father’s brother, he was in a concentration camp. ... He was a Jehovah’s Witness and, if you know the religion, ... you’re not allowed to salute flags or deities, such as Adolf, you know, and my uncle, apparently, refused to do [the salute], because, ... they often say, “Well, all the Germans were responsible for Hitler.” You know, it’s easily said, but you yourself know we’re in a democracy and how much can you change, with our own government, right? You could vote and you still don’t get what you want and, if you have a *Gestapo* breathing down your neck and you have your own children who are going to squeal on you in school if you dare suggest anything other than being a pro-Hitler, Nazi Party adherent, you can get into a lot of trouble, but my uncle had enough guts to, I guess, stand up for his religion and he was in a concentration camp. Now, my mother’s side of the family, they were a merchant family. They were middle-class and my one uncle, Otto, he owned an appliance store in Pforzheim, Germany, which is the jewelry center of Germany, and they also made timepieces for the U-2 rockets, because they were making watches. That was their industry, but that was then transferred to making timing devices for the U-2 rocket, which were used to bomb London, and, as a result, Pforzheim, Germany, one night, was bombed by Allied bombers. ... Forty thousand people lost their lives in one night, forty thousand, including my Uncle Otto’s wife and my cousin. He showed me the little cigar box with their bones in it. So, I mean, there’s a lot of heart attached to this whole thing and Uncle Otto was a Nazi. He became a member of the Nazi Party and, ... when we were [with] military intelligence in Munich, we were a small unit and, one afternoon, the Sergeant; by the way, we were not allowed to fraternize with the Germans, you know. We were told, “Keep away from them, you know, they’re all poison.” ... One day, the Sergeant said to me, “There’s a man upstairs and he says he’s your uncle and he’s a Nazi.” I said, “Oh, my Uncle Otto.” ... Secretly, I said, “I like this guy. He’s got guts. ... He’s not afraid of those dumb Americans.” Sure enough, it was Uncle Otto and, you know, with a lot of reminiscing about things and he asked about my mother and vice-versa, and then, of course, ... being very, shall we say, what’s the word? sanctimonious, also, or self-righteous is a better word, I said to him, “Hey,” in German, “how could you have been a party to this thing, you know, the Nazis and Hitler?” and



he, in German, says to me, “*Du Rotsbuh, was weist du washier angegungen war?*” meaning, “You snot-nosed kid, what do you know what went on here?” [laughter] you know, and, of course, he owned up. He admitted it. What was done was done; he made no apologies. He said, “I was in business and the Party was in charge.” Of course, people will say, “Well, that’s immoral,” and it is, in a way, and, in another way, again, we get to this other situation. They claim all Germans knew about the Holocaust, you see, and I still say that is not true. I ask both of you, have you ever gone to Newark Airport?

JS: Yes.

CB: Have you ever passed the prison there? There’s a big prison there, right near Newark Airport. You tell me, do you know what’s going on in that prison? I don’t either. Do you? and I don’t give a damn and a lot of Germans probably closed their eyes. I’m not saying that should excuse them, but let’s not say they knew what went on. They say they did, but they didn’t, because I spoke to not only my uncle, but other people and they could have been honest with me and said, “Well, we knew, but what could we do about it?” but some of them said they had no idea. I know they say, “Well, there were the troop trains, you know, trains taking these people out,” but, at the time, the line was, “We’re moving these people to a camp,” but they didn’t say anything of what they were going to do there. They were going to isolate them. It’s like [how] we isolated the Japanese for a while, ... and don’t forget, to the Nazis, Jews and Gypsies, these were all considered enemies of the state and, “We’re going to cleanse the state and put them off somewhere,” because, in the beginning, they did try to ship a lot of the Jews out, but the ship was returned. The *St. Louis* was returned. FDR did not accept that amount of refugees at the time. ... You, as historians, I hope, if any of you want to ever do any real research on that, there are a lot of things that haven’t been written yet and it should be more objective. In other words, they have to look at war in a more objective manner. There’s cruelties on all sides, because I was witness to some of the cruelties perpetrated upon innocent German civilians who were automatically all put under one roof. “You know, you’re all guilty, you’re no good.” They would steal from them and even I was guilty of that, because the home I was quartered in, ... it was a villa owned by a German doctor who was a Nazi and I figured, “Well, because he’s a Nazi, I’ll take whatever I want. He’s a lousy rat, anyway. He deserves it.” So, I stole a book. It’s a big book, called *Des Kuntz des Deutchen Reich*, which is ... a composite of the artwork of the German Reich and Albert Speer, ... who was the architect for Hitler. It was a big book that was published about the German art of the Hitler era. ... I’m going to donate it to a library now, but I stole that and I remember some of my Jewish buddies, they would steal anything, too, because they felt, “Hey, these lousy Germans.” ... One guy stole a gauntlet from a museum. ... It was a coat of armor and there were two ... gloves made out of metal. He just took one. ... So, there was a lot of that going on and people were really cruel and mean and I always say to myself, “War brings out the worst in human beings,” because, let’s say tomorrow, if we were conquered by, let’s say, the Palestinians, they would say, “Hey, you guys were in on us being killed left and right by giving the Israelis all these armaments, you know. ... They’re your jets that are killing us and you’re all guilty. Where were the good Americans, where were the good Americans?” See, it can go any way ... you wanted it to. That’s why it’s very easy to be self-righteous and stand up there on a pedestal and say, “Well, we are noble, we are better, we would never be party,” give me a break, buddy. We’re all corrupt. [laughter]

SI: To go back to your childhood, can you tell us a little bit about what it was like to grow up in Irvington? What was your neighborhood like?

CB: ... Yes, I was a skinny kid and I always, like, picked on by other kids, you know. [laughter] I learned very early in life that it's the survival of the fittest, ... but, again, it toughens you, it hardens you. ... I was very active in high school, basically, with the yearbook and stuff like that. Other kids went into football, but I was skinny and I felt self-conscious about being physical. ... I remember, physical education was a joke, because, you know what they do, they throw a basketball at you, and then, you'd play ball. You'd play football and I was always lousy at all those games, because, I found out later on, that when a ball came to me, I would shy away from it. ... I found out that I had astigmatism. See, in those days, they didn't check your eyes or anything like that. So, naturally, when kids were lined up, ... "You, you, you," for the team, I was one of the last ones [picked], with the fat kids. I wasn't fat, I was skinny, but I was one of the ones they didn't want and it gave you a terrible sense of humility. Let me tell you, I was taught humility at a very early stage in life. I was skinny. I was gawky and I was picked on, everything to make you feel [that] life is horrible and, I remember, when I came out of the service; by the way, the service toughened me, again, because you're in with all these guys, you're in with a whole bunch of guys, you'd better learn how to get along. ... I'll be honest with you, you're not going to like this, ... in a very liberal atmosphere of the community of ... the University here, this is like being terribly unorthodox to say this in a liberal community, but I think one year of military service would be good for all young men. I'll tell you why, not so much the military end of it, but the idea that there has to be some kind of self-discipline, that there are certain rules, that there is a certain order to things, that you're responsible to yourself and to others, camaraderie and all that *schmutz*, you know. ... So, when I was a kid, I was sheltered and, of course, the military service did harden me. So, when I came out of the service, I said; I don't know, this is before your time, but there was a time when you didn't have all these health clubs, ... with all the gyms and everything. You only had the YMCA. That's all you had. You didn't join, what's it? Bally's or whatever the names of them are. You didn't have any of that. ... When I came out of the service, there was an advertisement, I forget the name of the guy, what was his name? They would throw sand in his face and he built himself up.

SI: Charles Atlas?

CB: Charles Atlas, thank you, good man, good historian, there you go, because nobody knows about Charles Atlas. [laughter] They know Arnold Schwarzenegger. ... So, I said, "I'm tired of having sand thrown in my face. I'm going to show them." So, I started working out and skinny Carl started developing a good build. I started looking at myself, I started falling in love with myself, see, Narcissus. [laughter] ... It's unbelievable what happened to me, overnight. I mean, overnight, ... I got self confidence. I became myself. I learned who I am and ... I attribute a lot of that to saying, you know, "You shouldn't feel sorry for yourself. You should look at the problems and see what you can do to solve it." So, my education in Irvington was an excellent one. We had tremendous teachers, I'm sorry to say, many who might have been the victims of the change of phonics, remember, when a lot of the kids can't read, often times? ... It's not because the kids are any dumber today than we were, but, when they changed, and you can attribute that to Teacher's College, Columbia, and all those hair-brained Ph.D.s out there, they had to qualify why they're there, so, they had to write some stupid dissertation. ... Of course, a

couple of them came up with the idea, ... the Gestalt Theory, that you see a whole word. You don't see the word in terms of little bits of phonics. You see the whole word, like, you say, "Establishment." Well, it's ridiculous. It really goes back to phonics. So, we had a good education that way, the same with the math and arithmetic. You were taught rote, the old fashioned way, but you really learned the rudiments of your education and that kind of thing. So, Irvington was a wonderful experience. It was a great place to be living in and I was telling my friend, Joe, here, about one of the greatest thrills you would have. On a Friday night, you'd go to the movies. That was a big thing, but, in those days, the movies were theaters. They had chandeliers. ... It wasn't a feeding frenzy, where the smell of popcorn would overwhelm you and people are slurping down Slurpees and making a mess of the place. ... They had carpeting and they would have Oriental rugs and the theaters were ... really like palaces. They were palatial. I don't know if any of you have ever been to one of these restored old Warner Brothers theaters. So, that was a great experience, living in Irvington and the thrill of being able to [do that]. I remember when Dad, even though it was the Depression, would you believe it? a movie would be a quarter for adults and ten cents for kids. I mean, that was the other thing in Irvington, being brought up in the Depression. That was depressing, [laughter] because everything was, "No, you can't have that. We can't afford it. ... No, no, you can't have this," and to get a dime out of my mother, my God, what you had to go through, ... and it was true. ... You could get a house in Springfield, New Jersey, for four thousand dollars. You could buy a whole two-story house, can you imagine? and cars; I remember, my first salary as a high school teacher, with a Master's degree, [it] was in Ocean Grove, I was offered twenty-five hundred dollars and that was my first salary. Can you believe that? and when I went to Kean, which was, at the time, Newark State College, the offer was sixty-five hundred dollars [laughter] and you lived on that. I even bought myself a Pontiac. So, that shows you how times have changed, right? I mean, you pay for a car now, where, for twenty-three thousand dollars, you could have bought a mansion with five thousand acres. [laughter] So, everything is relative, you see, I remember an old-timer telling me, one time, that in pre-Depression [days], back in the 1910s, in New York City, you'd go to a bar and, for a nickel, you could get all the sandwiches you wanted and all the meats and the beer would be what you'd pay the five cents for, ... but, again, the salaries were seven dollars a week, right? ... You're of Italian descent, aren't you?

JS: Yes.

CB: Yes. I remember, when I went to NYU, there was Little Italy right below us, you know, and a lot of my friends were Italian, you know, and I was invited, one time, for lunch at one of my Italian friend's and, I remember, the kitchen was always painted a blue. ... [laughter] They used a glossy color, glossy blue, you know, and ... they were great times and, there, too, again, we're ... poor, really, at the time. Everybody was, more or less, poor and there was no welfare, by the way. You didn't have any of that stuff, but, yet, we got by and, I remember, my Dad, often, was so despondent, because he would cut lawns. He would do anything to bring home a certain amount of money, but they somehow managed to pay their mortgage, believe it or not, because we owned a house and, somehow, he managed to pay that mortgage and they were tremendous parents. I honor them with all my heart. ... That's why I feel so sorry for kids who don't have parents that are worthy of having children. There ought to be a law about having children. [laughter] You can only have them if you have a license to have [kids]. Those people shouldn't be having children. They're too dysfunctional. They can't even take care of

themselves, much less take care of a kid, but don't get me started on that. [laughter] Right, okay, that's about it for that, you know.

JS: Did you have a job before you went into the military, before you were drafted, or did you just work odd jobs?

CB: No. I was, basically, an usher in the theater. ... I had the theater bug. I wanted to be a set designer, you know. That was my first ambition. I did do some set designs, by the way, later, for the Cape May Playhouse in Cape May, New Jersey, and, also, the Triple Cities Playhouse in Binghamton, New York, and, I remember, I did sets for Shelley Winters and Anthony Franciosa. They were mad about each other at the time. They were going together at the time and I did sets for Ethel Waters, Jeffrey Lynn, whom I don't think you would know now, and that was up in Binghamton, but I had a job as an usher in Irvington, at a little theater called the Liberty Theater, and, I remember, to get people into the movies in those days, they would have a dish night. ... Let's say, every time you went to a movie, bought a ticket, that night, you'd get a cup, but you had to go next week to get the saucer. ... [laughter] You know, [they would have] these little old ladies coming in with their kid and I used to hate it, because you'd have to lug all these packages of dishes around and I used to have to change the lettering on the marquee. That was the thing that stuck out on the top of a theater, it was called a marquee, and ... it would announce the future programs. I remember, on a cold winter night, you had to get the ladder out at eleven o'clock at night, climb up there, put up these damned letters and, I remember, sometimes, because of one lousy person who was still sitting in the movie, we couldn't turn the projector off and get out of there. I remember, one night, ... the theater was practically empty, but there was this one damned guy who was still in there and it was like quarter of eleven and I thought, "Why the hell doesn't he go home?" [laughter] and we had to wait until the end of the movie, you know, that kind of stuff. So, that was a little reminiscence you think about when you look back, but that was really the only kind of job I would have, and then, of course, I was drafted.

SI: How much of your German heritage was involved in your household?

CB: ... I would say it was very strong. There was a very strong [sense of it]. Being German, it's like any other nationalism and, by the way, the funny part about it, [that] you should ask that, I remember, pre-war United States, when they had the German-American *Bund* in this country. In fact, I don't live far from where the original *Bund* came from. It was in Andover, New Jersey, and Fritz Kuhn was the *Bund* leader. I remember, my mother wanted me to go to a German camp. You know, she was very Germanic. She basically wanted to go back to Germany. She thought the houses in this country were ugly. She used to call them *Bretterhütten*; ... they were wooden shacks. In Germany, everything is stone and Mom was [saying], "German this is good and German that is very good," and I remember being in Germany at the time, during the war, with this German lady, whom I befriended, we had tea one afternoon together and she brought out this little bottle of honey. She says, "You know, these are German bees. German bees made this honey and it's German honey." I thought, "Great, I didn't know that German bees were superior to French bees." [laughter] So, there was this nationalism rampant throughout my mother, not my dad so much, because he used to say, "Here's where my bread and butter is. We're staying here." She really wanted to go back to Germany. Thank God, she didn't prevail. She also wanted me to go to Catholic school, which, God forbid, I didn't want to go to, either,

and he prevailed. He was Protestant. He said, "Look, I'm paying taxes, they're going to public school." Thank God, I was saved from those damned nuns. If any of you are parochial school kids, you know what I'm talking about and confession used to give me diarrhea, I'll tell you that. [laughter] I attribute my stomach troubles to that religion thing, but, getting back to my mother, she was very Germanic and everything, you know, the food was basically German, but we did not always live on sauerkraut, as most people think. We had other food. We even got a little Italian food, once in a while, because we had a couple of Italian friends. You know, we made little concessions. We thought we'd mix with a few Italians, make it look good, right? [laughter] but, in general, it was very German and a lot of relatives, of course, my aunts and uncles, just like any immigrant group. You know, first came the aunt, then, came the uncle, then, came this, then, came that, ... but they all turned out to be very wonderful citizens. You know, they were very meaningful citizens. I remember, our one uncle, he was a designer for Merck, packaging for Merck, and another uncle was an electrician, and so on, and so forth, anyway, but I bring up this point about the German *Bund*. ... Oh, this is the funny part about it. At fourteen, because my Dad didn't take out his citizenship, he kept putting it off, procrastinated, I had to go to the post office in Irvington, New Jersey, and be fingerprinted as an enemy alien. Get this; so, four years later, they draft me into the United States Army. Right, first, they make me an alien enemy, and then, later on, they draft me. I got my citizenship in service, you see, but, getting back to this *Bund* thing, I remember, ... we had to drive over to Andover and my mother wanted to check the camp out. My mother was very naïve, politically. She really was. I'm honest with you. It was mainly pride in Germany's resurgence. ... You know, Germany was terribly humiliated after World War I and, again, you, as historians, might understand it better than the average citizen. That's a whole story in itself, what happened to Germany after World War I. It was one of the most [one-sided treaties], the Versailles Treaty; even a lot of people will admit, that led to World War II. See, Hitler had a lot of ammunition there, you know, the humiliation, the insulting, the exploitation of Germany, economically, right after the war ... and so forth. So, anyway, Mom was not really very political. She just saw Germany as, you know, coming back and the German culture, you know, Beethoven and Bach and, you know, the German philosophers, Nietzsche and the lot, and the music and Germany was a highly cultured country. That's what makes this so frightening, because it could happen anywhere, what happened. So, we went and they were marching around that day, you know, and, "*Heil*." I didn't want to go, because I was getting nervous about the thing anyway and I just didn't like the idea of being part of the camp. I'm a non-joiner anyway. I don't like to join things and my brother didn't want to do it either. I just didn't want it. My mother said, well, it'd be good for me, "He needs the discipline," you know, the usual thing. As a kid, you need this and I said, "I don't want to. I'm not going to go." So, thank God, my father said [no], but we found out, in the paper, it was the Newark evening ...

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

SI: Please, continue.

CB: Okay, the Newark evening newspaper had a headline the next day that the FBI had been down to Camp Nordland, I think it was called, and they took license plates. Well ...

... Mock some of the German friends, you know, when they got together, you know. They were lauding about how ... wonderful things are in Germany and this was before even you knew about [the] killing of Jews. ... This is before *Kristallnacht* and all that, you know, a wonderful thing, that he built all these *autobahns*. ... So, I used to say, "Oh, it's disgusting. ... It's embarrassing. This goose-stepping is stupid. I feel stupid being German." My father, one time, said, "How dare you be ashamed of your background? ... What do you think this is? You bear my name and any son that's ashamed of being German;" so, I was really anti-nationalistic. I was. I didn't like that idea of all this flag waving and all this madness. I'm not making this up. I was just always, instinctively, if you're for it, I was always against it, [laughter] no matter what it was. If everybody said, "This is good," I said, "No," like, even with Mother Teresa. Everybody says how wonderful Mother Teresa is. I said, "No, she wasn't wonderful, because, if she really was moral, she would tell those poor girls from India, 'Don't have any more children, because you've got nine already.'" No, but she followed her own conscience, which her religion says, "Keep procreating, keep procreating yourself right out of existence." So, she followed her conscience, because she wanted to get to heaven. So, she wasn't as selfless as people think she was. See, I always see the other point of view. ... So, I said, "Let's not always look at the thing the way it is, it's what's behind it," and that goes for our Pope, today, ... the same thing. As an ex-Catholic, I'm qualified to say that [laughter] and my friend back here is Catholic. He's going to hate me, probably won't even go home with me. ... Oh, he's sleeping, okay, good. [laughter] Okay, that's it.

SI: In your neighborhood in Irvington, were there many second-generation Americans or was it an older community?

CB: Yes. ... Irvington, at the time, was quite German and a lot of Polish people, Italians, and it was a typical European [community], a lot of immigrants, second-generation already, a lot of them, and a very stable community at the time. Yes, that's about it.

SI: Was it a working-class neighborhood?

CB: ... No, they were both mixed, white collar and blue collar, in Irvington. ... See, Newark, in those days, was still heavy in industry. So, Newark was a prime source of employment for a lot people. ... For instance, [the] banking industry was still in Newark. Newark was a wonderful town, one time, by the way. It's a shame what happened to Newark, but Newark, you kids will never know, unless you go back into history, like, they had breweries. Newark was known for its breweries, Feigenspan PON, Ballantine, the jewelry industry, and they had a marvelous way of life. Newark had five or six major theaters. They had an Empire burlesque at the time. [laughter] There was a burlesque theater there and things like that. ... So, mainly, the people drew their employment from Newark and the area, yes.

SI: Did you spend a lot of time in Newark as a child?

CB: No, only went down, once in awhile, to go shopping, you know, Bamberger's, which ended up becoming Macy's, Kresge's, Hahne & Company, and so forth.

JS: Did you ever go into New York City?

CB: Not much. Well, yes, we would go in to visit friends, sometimes, in Astoria and, I remember, I used to get thrilled by going to the Hudson, we used to call it the Hudson Tubes, which are now the PATH trains, and I would get thrilled by that, going down into the tunnel and come back [up], and then, later on, of course, being that there's a lot of museums there and I loved New York City, later, when I got older. ... That's why I went to NYU. I liked the idea of ... living in the city, yes, right.

SI: Did you take advantage of any of the cultural opportunities in Newark?

CB: Yes, we would go down to what is known as the Adams Theater and [that] ... was the era of the Big Bands. I don't know whether you guys are familiar with that, but there was an era of, you know, Tommy Dorsey and all the Big Bands. At weekends, that place was jammed with the young people. It was our equivalent of your rock concerts today and you'd go down to Newark. Newark was known for that. It was called the Adams Theater and, later on, I became an usher at Loew's State in Newark, which was a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer theater, and they had a Branford, which was a Warner Brothers [theater], and the ... Proctor's, RKO Proctor's was the theater, and then, there was, of course, the Paramount Theater and these were major theaters in Newark. They were big, big, major theaters, yes, yes, and I worked as an usher for a while down at Loew's State Theater. So, I went into Newark quite a bit, toward the end, and then, of course, lights out, because, during the war, they had to dim all their lights in Newark. ...

SI: In the 1930s, you must have followed all the events that led up to the outbreak of war in Europe and Asia fairly closely?

CB: Yes, you did, because I was terrified. I was hoping Hitler would lose. I was shocked when he kept going. The final blow was ... when he started the war in Poland. I thought he'd stop at Munich, you know, ... when Chamberlain and he had the pact. There's no question about it, I'm not excusing Germany for lending itself to this madman, but there's so many forces that have moved into it that it's very difficult to say; like, look, right now, what we're facing here in this country. Right now, some people are for the war in Iraq and others are not. Some people feel we're being pushed into war by the Republicans, others say, "No, no, we have to go." So, you know, once your country goes to war, what do you do, say, "I'm not going to go, I'm going to get shot by the military, because I'm not going to go?" So, I followed the war very closely, as a kid. I was scared to death, and then, when the time came that they finally instituted the draft, I went for my physical and my mother was trying to figure out all kinds of excuses, what should be wrong with you. "He's too thin. He's really too sick," and he's this and he can't do that, you know. She was very upset when she found out I was 1-A, which is, you know, [eligible]. She went to the draft board and she was funny that way. She didn't want me getting drafted. ...

SI: I know that in World War I, German immigrants and their children really had to be careful about speaking German in public.

CB: ... Shaun, I didn't find that [to be] the case, strangely enough. ... One thing, while I was skinny and picked on by brutes in elementary school, once I got to high school, I held my own and I had a lot of good friends. ... We didn't have that problem and, don't forget, too, there were

a lot of German-Americans in town, too, and, in general, you're right. You didn't flaunt your German background at the time, but, on the other hand, see, there's another thing a lot of people don't give us credit for. Did you know that two-thirds of American GIs in World War II were of German descent?

JS: I did not know that.

CB: That's a fact. Did you also know that, ... of all the immigrants in this country, because, a couple of years ago, we had a big, big fiesta about immigration, remember, what was it, the Ellis Island thing? Of all the immigrants, of course, the Spaniards and the Mexicans have it on us now, but it was mainly Germans; big German immigration from Germany in the 1830s in Texas. You look at the names throughout the country, a lot of German roots to those names. You look at Bucks County, all those beautiful, old stone houses, the Hessians. A lot of Hessian troops deserted during the Revolutionary War and they're living in South Jersey. They're called the Jackson Whites and things like that. Those are all descendants of German immigrants, some legal, others illegal, but Germans were a large segment of the American immigration situation for quite a while ... and, yet, you'll find [that] all those German-Americans were very loyal to this country when the war came. They didn't side ... with Germany. They sided with their own country, even if they were second and third-generation. So, that, I give them credit for, right, including your own family, right, because I could have easily been a conscientious objector, said, "I don't want to go. I'm not going to go there and kill my own relatives." So, I said, "I'm going to take my chances."

SI: You were very concerned in the 1930s, but did you ever think that the United States would get into the war?

CB: Yes, I was afraid we were going to, because England always has a penchant for sucking us into their problems. ... Listen, if anyone wants to look at history, they should look at English history. Eight hundred years of horrible monstrosities perpetrated upon the Irish, the Scots. [Did] you ever see *Braveheart*? They weren't pussycats and the Spanish were no pussycats either, what they did to Europe during the religious wars. One minute, it'd be the Spanish ravaging the countryside with the French, who were Catholics, then, the Protestants, with the Netherlanders and the English ravaging the countryside, back and forth it went. So, it's a sorted history, let me tell you.

SI: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

CB: When Pearl Harbor was attacked, I have to be honest with you, I don't remember where I was. Was I still in the United States? When was it again? ... Oh, I was still in the States at the time and, of course, that was horrifying, too. I thought, "Oh, my God, how are we ever going to do a war on two fronts?" unbelievable, yes.

SI: Was it a shock that Japan was the one attacking us?

CB: Yes, yes. I couldn't believe it, because they were still here, making supposed peace talks with us, and behind our backs, [they plotted] and that's what has me bitter, as a German-



American, is [that] Japan got away with a lot. ... Germany, they really sucked her dry with reparations. You know, they had to pay billions to Israel, billions to everybody else, and the Japanese, they got away with everything. Mitsubishi and all that, they were in on war things, too, you know. ... They didn't have to pay reparations and the Emperor should have been executed along with Tojo. He knew damn well what was going on. He was as bad as Hitler, as far as I'm concerned. He got away with it, because he supposedly represented the Japanese nation. So, that has got me a little furious and while we're giving, you know, Holocaust victims reparations and everything, they're not doing anything for those American GIs that were in Bataan. A couple of American soldiers are very mad about that, too, because they were slave labor and no one paid them, yet, the Germans had to pay for their slave labor in Europe, but the Japanese didn't have to pay the slave labor. Is that fair? no. If you're going to do it, do it [equitably]. ... I have a lot of faults, but I keep telling people I have one thing I'm proud of, I am ruthlessly fair. Where something is wrong, I will say, "That's wrong," even if it's my own kind. I mean, admit it, it's wrong; admit it and live on, don't cover up. That's my feeling. So, Germany, a lot of the punishment came down on them and a lot of it was deserved, but there were a lot of innocent Germans who had to die, too, a lot of civilians, but, anyways, ... it happens in every war. Collateral damage, they say, right? Don't you love it; the terminology makes everything so clean, clinical, right? ...

SI: Did you notice that the war was beginning to affect your community and your school?

CB: Well, there were drives, you know, funding and there were all kinds of rallies and posters and movies became more militaristic, you know, and the American was always shown as a saint, you know. [laughter] ... The enemy was the Jap and the German, you know, the Kraut, and, you know, we still have these residuals to this day. ... Don't you remember that one television program about, what was it? ... They made a real satire of the Germans in that. What was it? It was a TV program for a long ...

SI: *Hogan's Heroes*?

CB: *Hogan's Heroes*, yes, thank you, right, Shultz and the others. We were very stupid, very dumb, you know, and the Americans were very bright. We were always putting something over on those dumb Germans, you know, and those Germans were always in there, *Luftwaffe*, looking through their little lenses, submarines waiting for a ship with only babies on it. We were baby killers. Oh, please, give me a break. [laughter] So, that was about it, yes.

SI: Do you remember any hysteria in the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor?

CB: No. Strangely enough, it was amazing how everybody just rallied around the flag and got to work. ... It was really a miracle. We're really a miraculous people, we are. We got our act together. Our factories started churning out munitions and everything. ... Literally, we helped everybody, you know. The Russians, they should be on their knees to us, thanking us, [laughter] but that was about it on that, too. I didn't want to belabor that, you know.

SI: You graduated from high school in 1942.

CB: Yes, I believe I did. It gets hard to remember what I did. You know, when you look back, it's foggy, and then, I went to NYU for ... summer sessions. ... See, I always had a thought, "If I come back [from the war], I want to get right into college," you know. So, I figured, "I'd better get myself at least registered and get a little matriculation here, so that if I come back, I'll have priority over other people," and it worked that way, too, by the way, yes.

SI: Can you tell us about those first few sessions at NYU? What were you studying?

CB: They put me in a senior English class and, here I was, a raw freshman out of high school. I'll never forget, I was terrified and I was sitting in a class, there were about forty people in the class. NYU had a lot of people, you know, and it's summer session. Everybody's writing and I'm just listening to the professor. "Gee, this is terrific," you just listen to these wonderful lectures. The guy was good. It was English literature and it's funny, I suddenly woke up to the fact that everybody was very serious in writing. So, I poked the lady next to me. See, a lot of these were, sometimes, people going to graduate school. ... I don't think it was a graduate course, ... but, anyway, I poked the woman next to me, I said, "Why is everybody writing?" She says, "Well, we're going to have an exam." "Oh, an exam, oh." So, I started writing, too, really, you know, taking notes, but I think summer session only was like three weeks and I passed. I got a good grade on that and I took one other course, I forget what it was now, but one was English literature and another one might have been a course in semantics or something, you know.

SI: Did you have any idea of what you wanted to do?

CB: Be?

SI: What course of study?

CB: ... Well, I was on a track towards education. I thought I'd go teach art, because, "How can you make a living as an artist?" See, I was being practical, but I proved it, not only those who can't teach, you know, they do, or ... you've heard that one before, no, those who can't do anything, they become teachers. Well, ... I went out to disprove it. That's why, I just brought that little catalogue over there, which was of a show that I just had recently. I had a show at the State Museum a couple years back and I've been very fortunate in making a rather good reputation, here in New Jersey, as one of the major artists and so forth ... and teaching, naturally, was a means of livelihood. I also like kids, by the way. I really do. I love you kids. ... I tell them all the time, "Get on your knees tonight. Thank God that I've come back." I said, "You need me. You don't know how much you need me," I said. [laughter] They didn't even know who the Shah of Iran was. I had to explain that to them, at Kean, at least. I don't know about you Rutgers kids, but they didn't know what was going on down there. [laughter] Some of them are lucky they know that they're in ... Union, New Jersey, on the campus somewhere. [laughter]

SI: Before the war, were you active as an artist?

CB: No, no, not really. I did do some sketching in Normandy and I must admit, Corporal (Sweet?), who was a fellow by the name of Corporal Sweet, a Polish fellow from Boston, he and I used to go out sketching and we didn't realize, until years later, that what we did was very

dangerous, because the fields were all mined. You know, in Normandy, the fields were mined, because the Germans had been in there for [awhile], anticipating an invasion. ... I was just lucky. I tell you, I was just lucky. I could have my leg blown off or been killed and Normandy's just a beautiful place, yes, home of Joan of Arc, you know. I went to see ... [the] place where she was burned at the stake and I did some drawings there, but they were all lost at sea. I shipped a lot of my drawings home, but they never arrived. So, I don't know, to this day, where they are, in some fish, probably. [laughter]

SI: Were you also working during the year between graduating high school and entering the military?

CB: Well, when I graduated out of high school, I was still working as an usher in Newark, you know. That was my job, and then, ... of course, I was drafted. So, I didn't have much time, yes, right.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Did rationing affect you?

CB: Yes, rationing was in; it's funny, gasoline, a lot of things that you would take for granted was rationed, food. ... I've forgotten now whether you had to have a certain amount of stamps for something. It's vague to me now, because you don't remember a lot of those things, but there was definitely [rationing], you know, because ... all the resources had to go into the military, see? So, there was a lot of that, ... this, after a depression, no less. By the way, the war pulled us out of the Depression, [laughter] but, you know, I tell you, when you look back, it wasn't a very happy pre-adult life, when you look back now, and, yet, you made the most of it and I had wonderful parents who still; Christmas was very Christmassy, the holidays, and I owe that to my mom, you know, a very religious woman. ... They were good parents, but the times were not easy, fellows, but what times are? Look at you, what you guys have to face, too, right? You never know it. Don't listen to Art Bell [host of the *Coast to Coast AM* radio show] at night, because the prophecies are very gloomy. [laughter] They have guys on to tell you, ... "The Bible said this and Edgar Cayce said this is the year of the end and the Mayan calendar stops at 2016. Why does it stop at 2016? Because it was the end of the world." Of course, sometimes, some of these religious people, ... their prophecies are self-[fulfilling], they work because, as they say, "Well, when Israel is returned to the Jews, that's a sign of the end of the world," and, of course, everybody's got an atomic bomb and these crazies are out there, having the bombs. ... You guys are ... in just as nutty a situation as we were. So, hopefully, we keep surviving, right; just wear a lead suit, okay. [laughter]

SI: What was your family's political leaning? Were you pro-FDR? Were you Democrats?

CB: Well, they were definitely pro-FDR, because FDR was sort of socialistic. I mean, he was our real first socialistic President, ... but he instituted, I guess it was, the Social Security, wasn't it? I'm not really sure and, also, a lot of things [that] were very liberal Democratic, the idea of giving the working man a break and capitalists are a bunch of scroungy, rapacious monsters and that's been proven so, right? Look at our Enron situation, with that bastard, excuse the

expression, Ken Lay still out there. ... He took off with 115,000,000 dollars of my investments and yours and everybody else's and ... he's not been touched. So, the Democrats, under FDR, a lot of those programs came into being, the idea of welfare and you must take care of your fellow human beings. Of course, that also gets perverted, later, in another extreme, but, in general, yes, they were. My Dad especially was for the working man. He used to often say to me, "You pay your debts. The working man has to be paid." I remember, one time, I didn't pay a bill right away. He was after me, "You've got to pay that bill. You've got my name." He kept, always, saying that, "You've got my name, pay that bill. The working man has to be paid first." So, it was that kind of a philosophy of the working class and it was the beginning of class distinctions, you know, [laughter] the rich versus the down-and-outers, you see, although we were, later on, luckily, when the industry made a comeback, affluent. Dad had his own business then and they had a good life. They had an affluent life and he often used to say, "What a country this is." He always used to [marvel at] this wonderful country, wonderful system. That's why we'd better be careful and ... not be in the danger of losing it. You young people have to do something about that, see that we keep our minds on what's going on here, you know, and that we maintain our separation of church and state and all that. It's very important, very important, yes.

SI: Can we talk about when you were drafted?

CB: Well, I'd rather not. [laughter] I think, more or less, Shaun, ... I hope I've, in some way, covered that, in terms of what I said earlier, remember, about [how] it was a traumatic experience and Mom tried to see that I couldn't [be drafted], ... and then, the idea was, basically, the idea of being in the military, at Fort Dix, and, suddenly, you're no longer master of your own fate. ... Really, you're like a prisoner and it's the first time in your life when you realize that freedom is one of the most important things that you can have and, once you don't have that, it's scary, you know, because you're at the mercy of authority, which could be very arbitrary and, shall I say, very ambivalent. We had good sergeants, we had bad sergeants, we had good captains, we had bad captains. So, in fact, while we're still in Fort Belvoir, no, it was after Fort Belvoir, when I was down at Fort [Camp] Sutton and we were already in Europe, we brought an action against our captain, because he was really kind of an irresponsible person and the Master Sergeant and a bunch of us all signed a petition for the Inspector General to check him out and, wouldn't you know it, they had a hearing on it and we lost and, here, you had to serve under a guy whom you just put the finger on. So, that's another reason why it was a good thing I got into military intelligence, because, after that, Captain McNamara had it in for us. [laughter]

SI: How did you get into the Engineers?

CB: This is why aptitude tests are ridiculous. I'm no more an engineer than you are. I don't know how I got into it either. I couldn't believe [it] when they had me as a Combat Engineer. We were building Bailey bridges. That's the job of the Engineers, build roads and bridges. ... I can't even put a plug in a [socket unless] you show me where the socket is. [laughter]

JS: Did you go through a long testing process in basic training, like, classroom tests, or was it basically just one test to figure out what you would be placed in?

CB: Well, in the beginning, you had to take a lot of tests, of course, IQ tests and everything like that, and then, also, ... your basic training was basically a physical thing, you know. You had to do twenty-mile hikes with fifty-pound packs on your back and climb up and slip down and all kinds of stuff like that and it was a tough training. ... I remember when we had live machine gun fire firing over our heads and we had to crawl underneath this barbed wire and had to learn how to disarm a mine and stuff like that, when I think about it. So, there was a lot of that, you know, yes. ...

SI: How long did that training last?

CB: That training lasted, I think it was eight or sixteen weeks, I forget. We had a little basic training in Fort Dix, but only as we were being processed, shots and everything was there for a while, and then, you were shipped to your main [location], and then, from there on, when you were finished with basic, that was the scary part, because you never knew where you were going to end up. ... Again, you had no say in it and I remember ... the day, finally, I was put in a certain pool. You know, you waited awhile and you were told, "Okay, you're going to be shipped here. You're going to be shipped there." I ended up in the Combat Engineers, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Many is the time, when I go to visit friends in North Carolina, I see that sign, "Fort Belvoir," you know. [laughter]

SI: What do you remember about the men in your training unit?

CB: Well, they were all ages, you know, a lot of young guys, a lot of older guys, and I remember one guy, Phil Ambry. Phil must have been maybe in his thirties and he had a good sense of humor and he was my buddy and, many times, we'd have fun, at night, ridiculing what transpired that day, you know, the Sergeant, making fun of him, imitating some other captain or some officious upper-class officer or something like that. One thing I remember, it made me extremely sensitive towards class distinction. You know, you were a private and they were [officers]. I remember, often times, envying the Captain. You know, he'd come out in his nice, clean uniform and, when he was through doing whatever he had to do, he could take off to the club and we were the slobs. We had to go clean the barracks, something like that. ... I can understand what black people must have felt like, you know, when you're the one that has to serve others and ... you're looked down on and there's a definite distinction. It makes you really sensitive to the idea of your station in life and it made me extremely desirous of doing everything I can to enhance my ... self-worth and you can imagine, in a Germanic household, when you become a professor, that was the ultimate, a professor, you know. I finally made full professor, by the way, I want you to know. That's not easy, you know. There are four hundred other guys after it [laughter] and, I think, at Kean, at the time, they would give three or four promotions of full professorship in a year. Each year, you came up and you had to go through a committee. So, again, you see, a lot of things that you may think are negative in your life, if you look at and say, "I'm going to exploit this and do something about this," [you will overcome it]. That's why people who have it too easy, that's not very good. That's not good, because, ... you know, something that's worked over becomes stronger. "The tree that fights the wind is the one that survives," and stuff like that. It tests your mettle, M-E-T-T-L-E, of course, right, okay. ...

SI: Was going to Virginia the first time that you had really traveled far from home?

CB: No. When I was a youngster, we went to Germany one time with my mother and brother. I was six years old, I think my brother was four, we went to Wiesbaden and Baden-Baden, to the baths, because Mother wasn't feeling good and the Germans had what are known as spas, where you go. You go into one of these, like, Steamboat Springs, [Colorado], or something. We went to Europe twice to see my grandmother, ... who, later on, by the way, escaped Germany, also, because she was a Jehovah's Witness. ... That was about it, you know, and then, we didn't travel much, except for little local day trips. One time, we went to West Virginia, to the [Great] Smoky Mountains. Dad was good at that. He liked to travel around the United States. We did quite a bit of that, and then, my brother is in California. I'm not really a traveler myself. I like the comforts of home. I'll watch the Travel Channel. [laughter] I did go to Italy, though.

JS: Did you?

CB: Yes. You [Joseph] can be very proud of being Italian. That little country, I'm telling you, that is unbelievable, what it has done for Western Civilization. You can be proud. Don't let anybody ever put that down. Some of the Romans made us slaves in the arena, you know, the gladiators. They've got a nerve, picking on us Germans like that. [laughter] You know, I want reparations. I mean, they got a nerve, and then, on top of that, we had to guard your emperors, you know. They had the Germans, these six-foot, blond Germans, [who] had to guard Nero. [laughter] ... They couldn't trust their fellow Romans, because some of those emperors only lasted twenty-four hours, after awhile. That's a great history. I love that *I, Claudius*. Have you ever seen that series, called *I, Claudius*?

SI: I have heard of it.

CB: Get it, get it. It's fabulous, Derek Jacobi as Claudius, fabulous. Oh, I love the Romans. They were so distinctively snobbish, [laughter] you know, great, great. I'm definitely a student of, not just art, but art history and archeology and sociology and I feel a good artist has to be well-rounded and you can be proud of your major. I think it's a fabulous thing and I hope they bring history back to kids, make them really study it, because history is very interesting, not boring at all, right. There's a plug for you guys. [laughter] Do you hear that? Who is the head of this department? Give these two guys an A, okay. [laughter]

SI: After Fort Belvoir, you were sent to Fort Sutton.

CB: Yes, Fort Sutton, South [North] Carolina, because this was a shipping point. I was sent to an outfit which was just about to be shipped out and there were, I think, thirty-three of us and, if you ever are treated like an outsider, they did, because I was just shipped to them and the guys already had established their camaraderie, you know, and I was new. Nobody knew me, I didn't know them and I was sort of very isolated for a while there and my MO[S], they called it, was a sign painter. So, I painted garbage cans, "Officers," "Enlisted Men," [laughter] just like a dumb job. ... Don't forget, the Army had a lot of men. Somehow, you had to know what to do with these guys. Some of them were cooks, some of them were engineers, some of them were electricians. It was a utility outfit, see, so, that was that and we didn't have much of a training

down there and we were ... sent on a troopship and, as I said, the rest of the story is what I told you. We ended up on Utah Beach.

SI: You went directly to Utah Beach. You did not go to England.

CB: Yes, no. Oh, I'm sorry, you're right. First, we were sent to Liverpool, England, and then, from there, shipped over, right.

SI: Your first assignment in France was ...

CB: Guarding the refrigeration [tunnels], yes. Well, first, we were just laying around this field for a couple of weeks, until they found out what our assignment was. Then, we were shipped to Cherbourg and I remember, many was the time at night, we had steaks, three inches thick, with all the butter on top of the steaks, because our job, see, they would ship fresh food from the States for the men in the area, you know, and we were supposed to guard all this and, of course, many of the guys, at night, brought home a package, which was, like, thirty-six-inches-by-twenty-eight inches and about six inches high, all loaded with steak. Another package or box was loaded with butter and they'd bring that in there, into our outfit, and we'd have all the stuff. I never ate so much steak in my life. [laughter]

SI: It sounds like you had a romantic view of this whole adventure when you got to Normandy. You talked about the sky, what it looked like.

CB: Well, romantic in the sense that you have to live with it, you see. ... Sometimes, in order to be able to put up with this, you have to somehow involve your imagination and your sense of what we're all about and what the world is, that helps you to survive. You can't be completely down and out about it and you were always worried, though, because you never knew ... where fate would take you.

SI: Was there ever a moment where you thought that you were in danger? When was the first time that you thought you were in danger?

CB: Well, yes, we were in danger there in Normandy, because of the breakthrough there. You know, we were afraid they might break[through] all the way up to us. We always just barely missed combat. That was one lucky thing, you know, again, knock wood. ... Later on, when I was shipped to military intelligence, which I'll make as short as possible, I was stationed with a unit. They were all German Jews, refugees from Germany. We all spoke German at night, at the dinner table. There were about twelve of us in the outfit, a few Americans, but the rest were all German Jews and the captain was Hans Habe, his name was, H-A-B-E. Now, Hans Habe was a screenwriter and author and he wrote a movie, one time, called the *Cross of Lorraine* and the other captain was Captain Hans Walenburg and our job was to edit and publish the ... American occupation newspaper for Germans and it was a high-quality newspaper. It was equivalent to the *New York Times* and they had the top writers writing for it. I used to do cartoons for it, because they found out I was an artist, and I don't know whatever happened to all those [pictures]. I wish I could get my hands on some of that stuff, you know, and we lived in this villa. What a life we had; we had servants, all German Bavarians waiting on us. A cook we had. We had butlers and

everything and I had a German chauffeur who had a Mercedes. I had a Mercedes at my disposal, because I had to go acquire equipment for the newspaper, like rollers, rubber rollers, inks, paper, whatever, because, don't forget, wartime Germany was decimated. There were no material things and you had to look for them in various [places]. I had to go to the French Zone, I had to go to the English Zone. We never went to the Russian Zone, though, and many is the time, my driver and I would go through hostile territory. ... We could have been shot at or something, but I was just lucky, but I do remember, that was a very beautiful assignment, in the sense of the luxury we had during a war, and I remember driving on some of those *autobahns*. They were just beautiful, what was left, you know, with the countryside. The German countryside was still very beautiful, but the cities were in ruins. Try to imagine miles and miles of nothing but ruins; you see not one building standing and all you see are little flickery lights at night going through the basements. Everybody had to live in the basement. How those Germans ever survived is beyond me. It was a nightmare. It was a testimonial to the destructiveness of war. Nobody wins, you know, and that's about it, I think, yes.

SI: You mentioned that there was a non-fraternization order, but were you able to get around it?

CB: You know, the guys had their German girlfriends and I often forget, and Russian girls, you know, Russian refugees that the Germans had had as servants and I remember, my cousin, (Hela?), was my Uncle Otto's daughter, she wanted me to drive her around one night, all around town. I said, "I'm not supposed to be out with you. You're German." Oh, she used to ridicule me. She was very nervy. I remember, she used to write my mother for tennis outfits. So, I said, "What does she want that for? There's a war. She's lucky she's got clothes on." We were sending her clothes. She was into the luxuries already. She wanted stuff like that. [laughter] So, you have to laugh; see, youth, still, without. ... As I said, I saw both sides of that war and I want everybody, whoever hears this, to know that no side is all good and no side is all bad and what you rightly said, I think you said it, Joe, or did you Shaun? that the winners write history.

SI: Joe said that.

CB: Joe said it. Well, let me tell you, one day, I hope there's really a really ruthlessly objective study of all of this and, whoever hears this, I hope they know that my intentions are really very honorable. I'm not trying to excuse anybody and I say it how it is, at least that's it, but that war, while it was horrifying and terrible, there were some very good experiences. I was stationed, as I said, in Munich, which was a beautiful city at one time and, ... once in a while, I used to go to the opera house in Wiesbaden, because every German city had an opera house, you see. ... I was going to be assigned to Special Services, to do some set designs for it. They had a theater company, but I forget what happened with that and I befriended a couple of people in a little town called Schwalbach, which is outside of Wiesbaden, which was the most gorgeous [town]. I tell you, some of the parts of Germany are so gorgeous, it's unbelievable. ... It was like another world, you know, almost away from the war. It was toward the end of the war and I'll never forget the exhilarating feeling that I had when, ... this sounds awful, I know, they dropped the bomb on the Japanese. I wasn't exhilarated about that part, but I was exhilarated [by the thought] that, "Oh, thank God, now, there's no more [war]. It's going to end." Because Germany, by that time, had already capitulated, you know, and I said, "I'm glad this is over," and I couldn't wait to get back to the States, because I was offered a master sergeant's



promotion, if I would stay another two years. I said, "No, I want out of here. I want to get back to my civilian life."

SI: Were you concerned that you might be sent to the Pacific Theater?

CB: Well, if the war ... might have continued, you might have been right, but, ... as I say, thank goodness it didn't happen like that, you know, but, ... as I say, it's just when you look back now, God, it seems like it was forever.

SI: You worked on the newspaper during the occupation. Did you have any sense of what the agenda was that the Americans were putting forth?

CB: Well, it was a lot of editorializing, you know, and, of course, ... a lot of it was just news, whatever was indicative of current trends in time. They had guest writers, you know, and, I remember, we had a lot of Berliners working for us and they were the intellectual types, you know, they were very high class, highly educated, and the Bavarians, you know, ... sort of the lowlifes. They had to do the dirty work; they were the ones that drove the cars and the trucks. They had to mow the lawns. ... They used to hate each other. I mean, people often think that the Germans are a homogenous group. It's like the North and South here. The North doesn't like the South and the South doesn't like the North. They don't really like each other and Bavarians often said, "We should never, you know, have been sucked into this," and everything. They often blame it on the Prussians, you know, the Northern Germans, yes, okay.

SI: When you were discharged, did you go right back to NYU?

CB: Yes, right away. I didn't even waste any time. I was so eager, unlike you kids. [laughter] ... I was eager to get into college. We were motivated in those days, see, okay.

SI: How important was the GI Bill?

CB: That, I want to thank [FDR], that was a wonderful idea of FDR's and most of us did take advantage of it and ... I am for that, even to this day. Anybody who's got a brain and, by the way, that's one thing, as a former professor, retired professor, not everybody is made for college. I don't think we should automatically [enroll kids], just because you're walking, you should be put to college. They should have some kind of a GI Bill for any kid that can't afford it, ... because brains are important, but let's not, again, pervert it by saying, "Okay, everybody goes to college," you know; those who are meant for it, yes. ... The GI Bill also went for trades, you know, vocations, things like that, right, but it was one of the best things, ... again, the Democrats. ... I'm an independent voter myself, okay. [laughter]

SI: At NYU, in your classes, was it a mix of veterans and kids coming right out of high school?

CB: Yes. ... When you went to school, you were older, of course, and you had some young, snotty freshman next to you, ... but it's good. You had all this mixture. Yes, it was a great time. I'll tell you, fellows, the '50s were great. They were a great period of our history, I think. It was a wonderful time. Of course, if you're black, they don't think that, I can understand that, but, at

that time, there were no problems, like this now, I mean, all this politically correct stuff, none of that at all. You could say anything you wanted, well, with certain reservations, but, you know, there was a little bit more freedom of speech than today and, economically, the country was making a comeback and life was good. New York, in the '50s, was fabulous, exciting. I was really a New Yorker at the time, spent a lot of time there, right.

SI: Did you live in the city?

CB: For a while, I lived on the Upper Eastside, 79th Street, had a buddy who I lived with there for a while and I commuted to New Jersey, and then, I had a job in New Jersey, my first teaching job. Life was good, really. I owe a lot to this country, a great country, and thank those Founding Fathers, I'll tell you, those Englishmen. I always say that to my black students, I said, "You can scream all you want about your freedom, ... but, remember, I never heard of any Bill of Rights from Uganda, Rwanda or Mogadishu or whatever you want to call it, the Congo, or I know you're from Yugoslavia, I know you're from Germany. That came from a bunch of Englishmen and don't you guys ever forget it. ... We owe all those people something and let's not take it for granted." I said, "Stop this bashing of Caucasians all the time." You know, sometimes, ... some of the minorities are after us, if you're white, you know how terrible you are. I said, "Yes, we're terrible all right, but, next time you take a hot shower, think of Western technology. Would you rather live in a grass hut or you want to eat your meat raw or get a," no, I won't go into it, but, you know, let's look at the overall situation. Right, that's it, then.

JS: When did you come to Rutgers?

CB: ... I'd have to check my records, but I believe it was in the '60s. I took graduate courses here. ... I shouldn't confess this, it's embarrassing, but I was with the ... Educational Philosophy Department. Dr. Chamblis was over here and I took all the courses, because I was going to go for my doctorate, and I passed all the courses. You're supposed to take the GRE first, but I kept putting it off. I took all the courses; I got all As or Bs, no Cs, because you're not supposed to have any Cs. ... I had some tough professors, let me tell you. I love Rutgers. Well, the day came, finally, everything was ready and, of course, Dr. Chamblis, ... I told him what my paper was going to be about, the dissertation. He thought it was a good idea. It had something to do with Aristotle, ... Plato versus the contemporary art movement and various ... ideas of visualizations between, let's say, the Platonic theories of arts in his *Republic* and various things. Anyway, ... I finally had to take the GRE and I'll never forget, I walked in, I forget where they had it and my father was just dying of cancer at the time and I went in; I already had a good job, you know. I was already an assistant professor or associate professor and I ... sat down and I looked at the first question and I get nervous with anything timed. Well, the first question was, like, a car's going thirty-nine miles-an-hour uphill and there's a plane going left on the right-hand side, it's going left. How many hours is it going?" blah, blah. "I can't figure it out." I go to the next one. The next one's even worse. So, I went over to the ... verbal part, because I'm good verbally. Well, the verbal was a long, long, four-paragraph thing about some kind of a murder and you had to read it very fast, but, then, they would ask questions, "Well, who did what to whom?" and, "What about the doughnut laying in the corner?" [laughter] Well, you know, my mind froze. I couldn't stand this. I just got up and walked out and I never went back. I never finished that test and I never got my doctorate and I feel very, very badly about it. If it

hadn't been for that lousy GRE and I'm telling you kids, if anybody passes that, they must be a genius, because I know some perfect idiots I used to work with had passed. Why couldn't I? There were real nerds that became doctors. You know that. You've had them in class, I'm sure, as professors. [laughter] Probably, some of them, you say, "How the hell did this guy ever get a doctorate?" So, anyway, that was that.

SI: When you were at Rutgers, did you ever have Mason Gross as a professor?

CB: No, I did not, but I had some great professors. I had, as I said, Dr. Chamblis. I don't know whether Dr. Chamblis is still alive or whether he's even here, and then, I had Reggie Neal, Reginald Neal, a very fine artist for the Art Department. ... I did a lot of artwork here. I did printmaking here, a lot of courses in printmaking over at the, I guess, it wasn't called Mason Gross at the time, though. No, it was just the beginning of [that program]. ...

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

CB: You guys live in this area?

JS: Yes, not originally. My home is down in South Jersey.

CB: Oh, right, yes. Where did you go to high school?

JS: Holy Cross High School. It is a Catholic school

CB: Parochial school. ... Did the nuns hit you?

JS: No. Fortunately, we are past that stage now.

CB: They weren't allowed to? The nuns used to hit us, you know, very holy, very spiritual, let me tell you, yes, okay.

SI: Can you take us on an overview of your career, both as an artist and as a professor?

CB: Well, just in general, A, I attribute most of anything that was positive in my life to my parents and to some of the wonderful friends I've had. I've been very, very lucky in my life and I think it always starts in with the idea, ... "Honor thy father and mother." I know it sounds like a homily or a platitude, but it really does make sense and the other thing is, "Have respect for your fellow human beings," and what hurts me most today is when I look back on my life, you know, some day, you guys will be old, if you live long enough, you'll look back, too, and God knows what you'll be saying, but one thing I say to the new generation, "For God's sake, let's become more civil again." ... We're really in an Age of the Vandals and Vulgarity. We're really hitting a dark age, you know. I'm sorry to say that there's not really any real respect for education. There should be, but there isn't and I'm sorry to say a lot of the standards have been lowered and it's to our detriment. I feel that is a very serious situation. I've had students that I really feel should not have passed, but, due to pressures and all kinds of excuses that are made, [I have] and this diminishes a degree. It's that kind of thing. So, I owe the wonderful life I had to

my roots. I'm not ashamed of the fact that I was born in Germany, because, as I say, we're born, it's a Russian roulette, ... God knows. I often look at the six o'clock news and I'll see some poor black kid with a bloated stomach living in, let's say, ... Nigeria and I say, "There but for the grace of God go I. What kind of a future does that poor soul have?" or you see some kid from Romania who's been starving because of that lousy [Nicolae] Ceausescu, that Romanian bastard, excuse the expression, and I said, "Boy, I lucked out," because, often times, I say I never win anything. Yes, I do. I won the lottery and, remember, there are six billion people on this planet and fellows, I must say, you, from what I get of you, good looking kids, nice, clean-cut boys, Rutgers students, live in the United States, nice clothes, we don't know how fortunate we [are]. We don't realize it. We should bang that into every damn, shall we say, negative person around here, kids who are negative or who show antipathy towards their superiors. [By] superior, I mean someone in authority, and have no respect. I have a friend, he's teaching now, he says it's terrible, the way the students talk to teachers, you know. They degrade even themselves that way. They use four-letter words and I'm not a snob, believe me, I'm not, but it's got to stop. We've got to start getting quality back into our lives. If we don't have quality, we are going to be nothing but rabble. It happened to ancient Rome. That's what was the fall of Rome. It had nothing to do with morality. It was just [that] there were too many people from all kinds of places coming in from all kinds of cultures and the thing got so diverse that there was no cohesion and rebellion was there, and then, of course, you had the Dark Ages, you know. Look how long it took us to get out of that and we're catapulting towards it now. I don't care what we say. This overemphasis on materialism is not a good idea and, as I say, I'm an Agnostic, but it doesn't mean I don't have a feeling towards some kind of spirituality. ... I often tell my students, the only thing which, to me, is a clue that we're better than the average animal, because we are animals, I said, "Don't shave, don't wash for a couple of weeks and you'll find out what kind of animal you are, right, don't brush your teeth," I think, are the arts, music, fine arts, theater, ... [knowing] the difference between dining and feeding yourself and eating, the difference between going to a McDonald's and going to a really good French restaurant, you know, that kind of thing, and the difference between having really good clothes, you know, the clothes that you're selective about, rather than throwing some kind of a ghetto rag over yourself and looking like ... something that just came out of some wet swamp or something. I'm sorry, I just can't stand vulgarity. I can't stand it. The other day, I watched a highly disciplined group, a ballet group, the Georgian Dancers, from Georgia, Russia, right. They were over in Philadelphia, at the Kimmel Theater. What precision, what magnificence, it was a [magnificent performance]; it was so exhilarating. I got goose pimples when ... the orchestra came up and they danced in the magnificent costumes. It was a great ... physical, wonderful experience. You know, it really touched me. That's why I said, ... "This thing I'm watching, this MTV, they're gyrating around and jiving around. I mean, what the hell? What, are we going back to the tribal period?" We went through all that, bones in the nose, clips in the ears. Next thing you know, we're going to have people with headdresses, all kinds, made from God knows what kind of animal matter, [laughter] because look at the arts. The arts have become very vulgar. They use defecatory material in the art now, ... no matter what you do, if it's innocuous; this is the age of no talent, of mediocrity. Look at some of the famous people we have today, [the] mediocre talent that we glorify. Michael Jackson, my Christ, all right, so, the guy was talented in certain things, but, look, we're lionizing him. We're making him into some God-like creature. He's getting more money than someone who's working on some new medications or something, you know, or some guy writing beautiful poetry or somebody who ... has a voice trained for opera.

They get nothing compared to some women or bimbo screaming into a microphone and salivating all over the place. That's what's bothering me. So, ... I terminate this interview by saying, "Once, for heaven's sake, become a major instrument for bringing civility back to humanity, because there's a future for us. With the technology we've got, boy, the world can become a wondrous place, if a meteor doesn't hit us." [laughter]

SI: All right. Thank you very much.

CB: Well, thank you. I'm sorry I ventilated so much, but you guys are great therapy. How much do I owe you? [laughter]

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

Reviewed by Daniel Leary 11/15/04

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/30/04 & 3/16/05

Reviewed by Werner Carl Burger 3/21/05