

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BERNARD A. ESKIN
FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on May 5, 2008, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Dr. Bernard Abraham Eskin and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. I thank you both [to Dr. Eskin and Mrs. Eskin] very much for coming in today to talk with me. I am really looking forward to this interview. Could you tell me, for the record, where and when you were born?

Bernard A. Eskin: I was born on 2/12/28 in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

SH: Let us talk a bit about your father and his background. Prior to the recording starting, you told me that he too had a very interesting life.

BE: Apparently. ... First of all, he was born in Camden, New Jersey, ... in 1888, on Christmas. He went to college, how far we are not certain. We don't know if he graduated or [if] he didn't, but he attended Peirce College in Philly, and later, found his way to the University of Missouri, where he studied in a program that had to do with newspapers, [including both reporting and circulation management] which he was interested in. Dad's father was the owner of a number of supermarkets in PA and NJ, which were apparently, lost due to financial difficulties, or indifference after he died and willed them to my father.

[TAPE PAUSED]

BE: All right. ...

SH: Here we go; please, continue.

BE: Well, the thing was, Dad was the oldest son, so, therefore, he got all of the legacy, whatever dad's father did leave. I think my grandfather wanted him to partner with him but my father was then not interested in his younger years. Yes, I think he really desired to work at a newspaper; he jumped around with varied jobs, a number of them. It was pre-war [WW I] and Dad had part-time jobs while in high school and Peirce; later full-time work at Campbell's Soup, DuPont Powder Works and The Philadelphia Shipyard. He had a great sense of humor and his incidents at these places read like comic operas. Happily, after much kibbitzing, he ended up on the *Philadelphia Record*, which was an impressive, fairly well-known newspaper, where he remained several years. During the war, the First World War, he was in the New Jersey National Guard and was trained at Fort Dix; and then, went into the service [U.S. Army]. Whether he ever went to any camp except for Fort Dix or went overseas, I don't know. The active war time was very short, actually, for those people in the Army from the National Guard. He was in the infantry at that time, both he and his brother. His humor must have been doubled with his brother's presence. I was told (typically) nothing about it. He gave no details about the war, but photographs in uniform exist. He [would say], "It happened, I was in it; I joined, I'd have gone wherever." He was very indifferent, but felt strongly about the US and America's presence in the whole thing. He began as a member of the staff at the *Record*, after his military service but then, made no evident advancement. He had wooed and married my mother [1912] before the service. They had a child, my brother, Manny, a year later. It sounds like about five years and the additional college work may have occurred. Dad continued at the *Record* for a period of time. We looked this up not too long ago, and, at that time, he moved into a job that was offered [to] him in Atlantic City in 1924, at the *Gazette Review*, which was an advancement, whereby he

would be a bit more involved in his interests. ... There were two things he liked in newspapers; he liked being in newspaper circulation [distribution] and he liked editing; and these are what he did over most of his lifetime. ...

SH: Did he stay in Atlantic City?

BE: He loved Atlantic City. He had a car that he never drove. He had a bicycle he always rode. He rode [on] the boardwalk, and the police were inclined to overlook; you weren't supposed to, you know. ... He rode on the boardwalk and that was his travel, to get to either the circulation department or the newspaper office, wherever he was working at the time. So, he became quite a character in the City of Atlantic. They knew him very well, and he was very well-liked, so, there was no problem.

SH: Do you have copies of some of the articles and things that he wrote as editor?

BE: We didn't find anything relative in his belongings. We went to the newspaper archive briefly, although I really haven't dug in, to see whether there are any specific things. The circulation work yielded many evidences of his ability to promote the newspaper in the South Jersey area. We were flooded at home with his premiums that were given to attract new advertisers and readers in the area. Our family tried them first. As for his editorial work, except for a few articles I specifically remember, they were rare. He was more into line editing per se--and apparently good at it. If you knew him, you would never have asked him for accomplishments. He would do what he wanted to do. ... I don't think I ever asked him, or felt like I needed to. He was very happy with what he did. He retired from the newspaper in '65. Just before he retired, he actually found out that he had an additional year in age to go that they had forgotten and so, he worked in administration of the newspaper. ... It was kind of extra-enjoyable. Everybody, all my high school literary friends, and those that went into any level of newspaper business, had some junior columns in the city's paper because of him. They all knew him and liked to stop in his office. So, I felt good. Dad was a good guy.

SH: Tell me his full name, just for the record.

BE: Joseph H. Eskin.

SH: What was your mother's name?

BE: My mother's name was Goldie Celia Schwartz. My father ... was in a family that is rather intriguing. His family came to the United States in the '50s, 1850s, and they came from Moscow, which, at that time, permitted no one Jewish to live permanently, within the City. However, his family had been, essentially, educators and involved in the universities and academies all through the years, and still are. I don't know what the story is, but they therefore seemed to tolerate them, and I, as a doctor, have had the experience of having patients who were Russian, living in Moscow, who said, "I saw your name and that you were a reproductive endocrinologist. We came to you because we thought you might have some relationship with the present head of the department at the Moscow Institute of Medicine." His name is Israel Eskin. His two sons who are with him there hung on to their Father, Israel, and helped him, since all

were in a similar specialty. So, I'm very impressed. It's an interesting family. They came to America about 1852: they were a multigenerational. There is evidence shown that they were administrators in manufacturing and an agricultural program, which was called the Alliance [the National Federation/Agency Alliance], and it was supported by Baron [Maurice] de Hirsch. ...

BE: Oh, the other one. What's the name again?

DLE: Baron de Hirsch.

SH: Oh, it is not Rothschild.

BE: And, well, the Rothschilds and the Hirsches were related, weren't they, as I understand?

DLE: I'm not sure.

BE: Historically, that's an interesting aspect there, but I don't know how it was. They gave the Alliance, which included some of the Eskin family, a moderate amount of money to come to Norma, New Jersey, to set up a premier program for tilling the land. They chose this village just outside of Vineland and one area of it had a nickname of "Eskintown," since a number of "Eskins" were prominent in the village. The Eskins from my father's family essentially assumed care of the program when they had financial and agricultural problems. They built and owned a clothing manufacturing company and this was very lucrative and provided jobs and income. ... I'm not here to talk about that, [laughter] but it's an interesting aspect.

SH: This would be your father's grandparents.

BE: My father's grandparents--let's see, yes, his father's father, so, it would be great grandparents, to my father.

SH: Several of your father's grandfather's brothers came. ...

BE: To this country.

SH: To this country, and were part of that New Jersey community.

BE: Partially, my father's father was named Abraham, appropriately. The names in the family were, until recently, usually a limited biblical few. ... There were Israel, David, Joseph, I forget all the names, but Bernard [Baruch] was also common. They seemed to always take these same names. A number of immigrants left this area. Some went to Boston and Baltimore, New York, but all in the East. We have never gone up to follow it up and see where they landed. The thing is, they all think that they came in through Baltimore. I don't know, and we're talking about [the] 1850s, so, you're speaking of the South, really, when you speak of Baltimore, and this picture is rather intriguing. They established there in New Jersey, near Vineland, this Jewish settlement, which is still evident, that I hadn't known about. My father had mentioned it but I'd never known any details about it. Someone, one of the physicians whom I was teaching--an emergency resident, who earlier graduated as a Rabbi from Mt. Sinai in New York--moonlighted in a small,

little synagogue in the Norma area. He told Lynn and me about it and we went down. There was a big plaque to one of my father's father's brothers, Bernard Abraham, the same names as mine, as one of the founders. ... That gets pretty much overwhelming, when you first see it. Well, anyhow, he chose to go also into something else rather than agriculture, I guess. They had enough money from manufacturing to be able to provide some support for the agricultural people who were not doing well. It's a remarkable area. ... We have been going to Norma, now, for about the last ten years, maybe, and enjoy the ambiance. They have picnics and reunions out there, it's ongoing and very nice. My father had an interesting family, that was modestly wealthy. When they came over, they were not indigent, but needed support, obviously, to start new industries. ... Egg farmers were evident, and we know that from buying eggs in Vineland. The Eskin family had been in America since the early 1850's while the later groups, the Alliance, arrived in the 1880's. So Eskins had already established themselves and could be helpful. The Eskins had been in Philadelphia, but also in New Jersey, Camden, Vineland, *et cetera*. So moving to Atlantic City for my family was not surprising. I might say my father moved to [Atlantic City] for the work opportunity. However, my mother loved it on a vacation trip. Mother was concerned since she was considered as infertile, because she had had their first child, but then for almost fifteen years couldn't have any more. When they moved to Atlantic City and Dad started working at the newspaper shortly after they arrived, she was so surprised. She thought she was unwell and went to a doctor and he said, "Oh, you're pregnant," and it was me. [laughter] So that's it. That's the end of the transition story. After that, everything falls into place.

SH: There we go. How did your mother and father meet? Do you know?

BE: No, I'm not positive, I think it was a friend of a friend. My mother worked in Wanamaker's as a salesgirl. There were two other stores, Lit Brothers and Snellenberg's that were there. They are gone now.

SH: Strawbridge & Clothier?

DLE: Yes.

BE: It's Snellenburg's, Wanamaker's, Lit Brothers. She worked in those stores. She did not graduate from high school. I think she got through second year high school, possibly. I don't know. Her sister later received a diploma you get if you complete high school equivalencies and things, but my mother didn't want to.

SH: How much of an age difference was there between your older brother and you?

BE: Fifteen years.

SH: Fifteen years, wow.

BE: Yes. It was a lot. My brother initially was my babysitter, and then, my uncle. He was very important in my life. If I needed money or almost anything, I could count on him, and he had a very understanding wife. So, it was very nice, a pleasant relationship. ... That takes us pretty

well down to it. I never could figure if Dad got to a college in Missouri, that was the top of the line for newspaper journalism. I tried to get information. Peirce College, which was a junior and now a full college in Philly, said they had no record, but when I asked for those dates they said they had a loss of their records to fire, about 1900. I thought the dates would be somewhere around the single digits, you know, '03 or '04, or something like that. So, I really don't actually know what records they could have had. No computers.

SH: Is there a record of him working in the newspaper industry in Missouri?

BE: No. I thought of him as a student at the University of Missouri, and, that school has a history as a great journalism school, which it still does. ... I don't know if the journalism courses there were a year or two years or longer. You took, perhaps, a junior college program to get you enough knowledge to go, a pre-journalism. That would be something that only a person then in that type of academia would know. I don't know. ... I think I gave you as much as I have on my folks. Mother's history, I've given you, and, as far as ethnicity, she was born in Philadelphia, on 4/14/1896, and she died there in 1960; however, her permanent home was with Dad in Atlantic City.

SH: Were she and your father approximately the same age?

BE: No. ... My father was born in 1888. So, let's see, what did I say about her? '96. She was about eight years younger, yes. ... My brother ... went to Temple University and he was a CPA [Certified Public Accountant] who had a company in center city Philadelphia. He was successful.

SH: Would he have been in high school when you were born?

BE: He was, oh, yes, ... in Atlantic City High School, and that was right in the middle of the Great Depression of the late 20s and early 30s. And so, ... while people in journalism are looked at very highly by most people, they don't get paid much, I don't think they were making big bucks, but it was steady. ... We never had any problems with that. Since it was a steady type of income, Manny would make some of his own money in the summertime, because we were in Atlantic City, and so, he could build up a little cash for himself. ... Also, he worked for the newspaper when he went to school earlier and I think he made college money then, too. He started late in entering college, for two years; he took courses; what they called post-graduate courses before. They gave teenagers in AC a year free at the high school, in courses they never took earlier, to use as part of their college, because people couldn't afford to go to college, even though it was twenty-five bucks, or something like that then.

SH: It is true.

BE: So, Manny was staying in Atlantic City for an extra year, and, while he did, he was my babysitter, teacher, dear friend--things like that. After a couple of years he started college. I mean, my folks [helped], I'm sure, but they didn't have to. ... He really sought and got jobs without trouble, and handled much of his needs himself.

SH: What do you remember about growing up in Atlantic City?

BE: Oh, I loved it. I had a [most] marvelous time. I became a musician when I was quite young. ... I started on the violin, moved on to the clarinet, and then, with the clarinet to the saxophone, and to jazz and dance music in my high school. Actually, from junior high to high school. We called it junior high, it's now middle school. ... I was a pretty good musician. I played violin, clarinet, and alto sax, and then, ... one day, the orchestra director needed a violist, so, I became a violist. It's one of those things. I tried and was able to do it. I had a good feel for music, and so, it was enticing. I worked every summer. ... When I started out, I worked in places like linen stores on the boardwalk and learned how to stuff a towel, so that it looked bigger, [laughter] and, little things like that. ... All my friends, as expected, worked on the boardwalk. This was a way of life, and we all had a wonderful time. We really did. I don't think anyone could ask for better experiences, an education. You'd go to school by walking on the boardwalk. ... We had jitneys, [motorized public transportation, usually a small bus or van], and trolleys and, if it's bad weather, okay, we'd ride. It was an ideal place to grow up.

SH: Living in a vacation destination, did you ever go away on vacation?

BE: ... Funny, you know our vacations were true travel always, and, in those days, there wasn't that much of it. There were no airplanes. We would take trains ... to New York, Canada, New England and the South. We never went to Florida, because, I don't know why, but I think my father didn't like what he read about Florida. But we went to ... Washington very commonly, New York, a lot, and we would go to other vacation areas--Boston, Connecticut. The "Pokies," the Poconos and New Jersey farmland were places we liked going.

SH: Would you go with other family members or just you and your mother and father and your brother?

BE: The four of us would go, when I was very little, and Manny would take care of me. He would take me to children's places and such, and I'd be the little kid brother. It was fun, and, later, of course, when he was at college, the three of us would travel. Sometimes, we would go with relatives or friends, my folks had a number of them, but mostly with immediate family. We had a few other close local family members who would travel.

SH: Did your mother and father have extended family in the area?

BE: Well, Dad was what you might call the good guy, the pivot. If relatives or anybody got in trouble, they always got ... in touch with Dad. You know, he was a good decision-maker. He was working at that newspaper, even though some of the other family were pharmacists or merchants, oh, some rather intriguing businesses and things, but, ... if they needed help, ... they'd come down to Atlantic City. ... Usually, Dad would figure out how to handle the problem ... I don't know if he actually brought one of my uncles, his brother, down, but he was a character who built the first general store in Margate, New Jersey, a town which was a nothing but dunes at the time. ... Uncle Jack was a comedian, as funny as my father. He was an enjoyable person. He had, oh, a good way, and he used to drive a truck. He was also a huckster, besides his country store and had a big sign on his truck that said, "HI KIDS!! Here Comes Jack."

Call Mom." He became the head of the fire department in Margate. It was voluntary, and he became their first sheriff as well because, at that time, [laughter] they had no police. Atlantic City would serve, if they had something serious, but as you can imagine, Uncle Jack would be the one that they would get and ... that was like getting absolutely nobody. [laughter] He was smart. He was very funny. You're getting an opinion, but, you know, I thought he was. He had a lovely family of three girls, and his wife, my Aunt Ollie ... was a very nice person. To go to visit in Margate was almost like taking a trip, because you had to go a distance by trolley. Well, Dad could drive, but he hardly ever took that car out of the garage. ...

SH: Is there a story there?

BE: Well, as he once said, you know, for a nickel, he can ride the entire length of Atlantic City on a trolley and see a lot of sights. Why should he drive a car? You know, it was ridiculous. ... If he wanted to go to Uncle Jack's, he took the trolley. I loved going down there. ... It was a lot of fun. Then, one of my uncles got into all kinds of shenanigans. He was a very educated, knowledgeable, thinking person, and, of course, he called Dad. Even one in-law who eventually went to jail was helped several times. What was it he did? Oh, he wrote a few checks, but he didn't have a bank account. [laughter] So, he was jailed. He was an amusing guy who just liked buying things with bad checks.

SH: He had a sheriff in the family.

BE: Yes. We had one great-uncle that our kids just loved to tell about ... for show-and-tell. They would tell about Uncle Morris Eskin. That was the classic. Shall we tell her about it? [laughter] Uncle Morris went with the daughter of a mob boss and, eventually married her; I guess he wasn't a good bad guy, because they shot him. [laughter] Somebody shot him, let's put it that way. [laughter] I don't know why I mentioned it to my children, probably because I thought it was really rather timely from TV then. There were a lot of mob stories showing in movies, and so, I told them, "Oh, yes, it's like Uncle Morris." ...

SH: Then, you had to tell them the story.

BE: When the next year the children used the incident at school as their. "who is your most interesting relative." [laughter] It has a certain rather interesting religious finality to it. He and his wife were very much in love, and when he died, or whatever happened [laughter] she had him buried properly, right outside of ... the Jewish cemetery in non-hallowed ground, however, because of his activities and all. So, the kids were amazed at that. That was the absolute best. [laughter]

DLE: I was surprised they didn't want you to go look for the [grave].

BE: [laughter] When we were at the same cemetery for an in-law, we, Lynn and I, were shown the grave outside the actual cemetery. The kids were very fascinated. It's an interesting incident, I have to admit. We did have a lot of family in Atlantic City, and we had a ton of family in the City, Philadelphia, because of the big family that Mother came from. Visiting relatives is a story in itself.

SH: Your mother came from a large family in Philadelphia.

BE: Oh, yes, both were large families. Of course, Dad's family got reduced by one, but [laughter] there were three boys. There were originally four boys, ... and a girl, but it ended up three boys and a girl. ...

SH: Had your mother's family also emmigrated from Eastern Europe?

BE: No. She came from the Ukraine. ... Her family was, I would say, a picture of Jewish immigrants from that area, the Ukraine, Georgia, that area south of Russia. They were all from pretty much the same city. What was it? It was ...

DLE: Kiev?

BE: Kiev, Kiev, yes. The only reason I remember is because chicken Kiev is marvelous. ... [laughter] So, she was from Kiev. [laughter]

SH: We have to have all sorts of memories.

BE: Well, you've got to remember somehow, you know. [laughter] So, her family was highly successful. Every one of them went to college, except the girls. Yes, all the boys went to college. They were doers, and very smart in their chosen fields.

SH: Yes.

BE: They were doers. My father's family, on the other hand, was, "Hey, let's live a life." ... I think you'd have liked them. They were the kind of people that, when asked, "And what are you going to do now?" would say, "Who knows? Who cares?" It's different from my mother's family.

SH: You talked about being a musician prior to the recording. Were other members of your family also musicians? How important was music in your family as a young boy?

BE: Dad played piano. Dad, apparently, when he was young, was with a group called the Singing Newsboys. It would be like a rock group in high school now. It'd be about the same popularity, and they got billing on the stage at the Earle Theater and variety theaters like that. Pop could play anything you wanted by ear, and he could tell you what note it was on the piano. Well, he didn't have perfect pitch that he could tell you what note it is, but he could hit the note if you sang it to him. He could have been a musician, I'm sure. He's about the only one I could think of. I really didn't have too many others talented in music. Mother certainly was not. Manny, well, Manny ... had a wonderful tenor until he became thirteen, but I don't know what he did later. ... After that, he tried things, but it didn't sound very good in the shower, and that was about it.

SH: You talked about what a wonderful setting Atlantic City was for a young boy growing up.

BE: Yes.

SH: Are there other memories of Atlantic City that you remember?

BE: Oh, yes.

SH: Incidents that happened or things you would like to talk about?

BE: Oh, yes. They're all good. I mean, I really have no bad memories. You know, deaths and things like that are one thing, but there were good incidents. To start with, I was, myself, a musician playing for the public. ... As I said, I was in middle school where I started playing in plays and often playing music. I entered Atlantic City High School, at a time when at lunch hour they would have what was called the "gym band." It was a band, actually, a dance band of good size. I don't know if I have a picture of it here or not, but it's an orchestra that played for students to dance or listen to. Young school musicians strove to be head of the gym orchestra. Usually the ones chosen had it for a year, their senior year. For some reason, I was picked in my sophomore year, my second year, and had it for three years until graduation. I shared it one year. ... Sometimes, there was some bad blood, I guess, in a way. I still don't know. It didn't bother me too much. I liked the other characters, so, everything was fine. ... We had an orchestra that we put together in Junior High. I played and led it. Truthfully, there were four musicians who stood out in ability and musical sense. When it came to the competition--decided by the music teachers at school--I won. I am still surprised how the other three became good partners in the band with no problems. I kept it going for the rest of high school, but a competition with each member, who wanted to, was held each year. We called our orchestra the Island Serenaders and it became so popular that we were on radio. There was no television yet, but we had a regular spot weekly on the radio and we played a lot of dances, shows, proms, *et cetera*. ... The summers, by the way, were a different game. During the year, we would play for a lot of high school affairs and we would certainly play at the school--gym, stage, plays, *et cetera*. When the summer came, that's where you can make more money to put away, usually, for college. ... In the summer, I would have unbelievable jobs. I mean, starting in the year between my junior high school and high school, we had a four-year high school, even in that summer, I had gigs. I played jobs here [and] there. I'd play ethnic music. I played anything, Greek, Italian, Jewish, whatever.

SH: Really?

BE: Yes, I was all over the area with that. ... Oh, I loved it, too. It was fun.

SH: Did you play in Atlantic City?

BE: Well, we're talking only about the area that was the center. You couldn't go far away, because of the transportation and the time involved. We had cars that weren't worthy of being on the road. I wasn't permitted to drive; I was too young, ... I wasn't supposed to even be in the car, you know. Right, in this day and age, I'd have probably had to have a seatbelt, some kind of a seat, or they'd have to strap me in. [laughter] ...

SH: A booster seat. [laughter]

BE: ... But, the fact of the matter is, we had jobs, all the way down to the Cape and the Wildwoods. ...

SH: Really?

BE: Oh, yes; well, our Cape May, of course.

SH: Really?

BE: Yes, and we would have jobs as far north as Asbury Park. So, we were pretty active and my band, the Island Serenaders, was really doing very well. At that point, there was a very strong musicians' union. It was the time of James C. Petrillo, president of the Musician's Union of USA and he was very much in charge. Anyhow, ... anybody who was really very popular, or likely to play a lot, they would want to have in the union; and so, the local musicians were asking our four best to join the union and a lot of the bands wanted us. My first contract summer, I played with three others in a hotel on the beach block. These were small hotels. ... Nowadays, you know, everything is so big and cluttered, but these hotels had about sixty rooms or seventy rooms, and additional people would come in to eat and listen or dance, ... and then, you would perform. I played in those and they were steady jobs. ... The nightclubs always began entertainment [at] about eleven or twelve at night, and they ran into the early morning. People were not as afraid to be on the boardwalk or most streets because we were a much more peaceful and protected nation and this was a resort, I suppose. I don't know what it was. [laughter] You know, you really could walk on the boardwalk at four in the morning and it would have been safe. You'd have been [in] no trouble, but, well, years have passed. Let's talk of back then; and so, we would take jobs. When offered we knew naturally certain of my fellow musicians were better than others. I knew who was a good musician. Also, I knew who was, well, more or less, standing in place, marching in place. But, we had most of the jobs that were desirable. One year, I worked at the Morton Hotel, which was a step up, a bigger hotel. I worked later at the Ritz Carlton. I worked here, I worked there. ... Actually, I tried to stay out of places that had any booze, because that certainly was illegal, and I looked like a kid. I mean, I still did in my graduation pictures here [at Rutgers].

SH: That is what I was going to ask. Were there any child labor laws for kids working from eleven at night to four in the morning?

BE: No--well, apparently not tightly patrolled in Atlantic City.

SH: Really?

BE: Oh, no, no, they didn't seem to care. Well, I'll tell you one story about that in a minute. I got union jobs mixed in here and there. They generally paid more.

SH: You were able to join the union, as young as you were.

BE: Yes. ... Well, the union guys used to say, "Well, here he comes, here comes the Swinging Kid." They gave me a hard time, but it was fun. I had two close young union friends; one later became a professional musician, he was about a year or two older. One peer cat was as young, a trumpet player, joined me at the hotels. It was kind of fun for me. ... A story that was an enjoyable coincidence occurred at the Morton Hotel, a beautiful, pleasant full summer job. On Sundays, instead of having an orchestra for dancing, they had a string quartet and I played viola, and, oh, that was a great chance. I was getting in a little bit of my music training everywhere, and I loved playing classical music. I really do, still. In school, I was selected as a member of the New Jersey State High School Band and Orchestra every year as clarinet--band--and principal viola--orchestra. So, anyhow, the years go [by] and, one year, [laughter] I wanted to have my own band play a summer spot with liquor, ... and I thought I looked old enough to get away with it, and, also, my youthful tenor saxophone player, who I thought was really good agreed, and so, I auditioned for the full summer job. We tried out. ... Oh, big, older guys from Philadelphia and New York came to get that job, at the Dude Ranch, on the boardwalk in Atlantic City. ... By the way, it was not a bad place. Only beer was served ... and it was a good fun place. Sure enough, we got the job and we started playing for a few weeks, but, then, the ABC came around, the Alcoholic Beverage Commission [control officers], and they caught both of us and out we went. It was over. So, the rest of the band continued to play there and I, meanwhile, and my friend, Jay, had to pick up jobs around. ... We were union, so, we could take any job offered. My first job was to play in a burlesque house, in the pit. ... [laughter] I mean, all things that were for "good education," and then, [laughter] what we would do is, we'd play [at] several "goodie" places, like that, and, ... at night, we would play cabaret/nightclubs. Since we started looking for work late in the season, we were doing "temps" where either illness or other priors caused the job opening briefly and we worked for a limited time. ... However, we had the cabarets, still--one was one called the Chez Paris. I'll always remember that one. Jay and I worked at it; we were two kids, really. Well, Jay looks a little older, in a sense. I don't know. ... He's just like me, I guess. All right, so, the two of us play saxophone--tenor and alto. ... All the rest of the band was older, and, in fact, one of the musicians became a well-known international musician. They were good people and we were the two saxes, and the club was run by Tony. Tony was the then gang connection in Atlantic City. ... I don't know how I got into these positions with that, but they were useful connections. ...

SH: They did not know your uncle. [laughter]

BE: No, but they were lovely guys, you know, if you were okay. [laughter] Anyhow, so, what would happen is, ... they seemed to always know when the ABC was coming. It was the ABC people that tossed us out of the Dude Ranch. All of a sudden, he'd say, "Get the kids downstairs," and so, that would mean that Jay and I would go downstairs and have breakfast at a greasy spoon there. ... It was like a local hangout. So, we'd run through the back and we'd eat. We'd know, "Hey, they found out that the ABC is coming," and, sure enough, the ABC would show up, and I'm sure ... they were paid off and that would be the end of it. ... [laughter] We played jobs that, obviously, provided complete surprises every moment. Later, both of us played the Steel Pier with Alex Bartha, the house band there. During my last year of "freedom," before I was supposed to go to college, ... one of the Big Band leaders surprised me. Actually, ... the war was getting closer, to US participation; people were getting drafted, and young musicians were

disappearing. Stan Kenton's orchestra was playing on the Pier as the main attraction. We opened for them in the Pier Ballroom. At one session, without commentary, Stan walked over to me and said, "Would you like to join my band? I need an alto player." He was business, strictly business, the way he said it to me, and I said, "Oh, that'd be nice," I said "But I'm going to college when college starts this year." He said, "Okay, you can go to college, but ... I want you to play here, I want you to play up in one of the dance places in Jersey, Frank Daley's Meadowbrook, and at the Paramount in New York, the Earle in Philly," and a few different places, until school starts, and then, ... I'll have somebody else by then. I'll be okay." So, I played with Stan Kenton's Orchestra and that was a big [deal].

SH: That is a big deal.

BE: It was exciting. Jay played in later years with several top notch swing bands. He played with some of the well-known big bands after he went professional. He really always wanted to be a musician.

SH: Was he in your high school?

BE: Yes, he was a friend. You've got to understand, in the sax section, the first alto and tenor sax are the two leads. The alto leads the entire section and the tenor usually takes the rides [ad libs]. Less often the alto takes the rides, and I played clarinet as well, so, I took ad libs for clarinet. You get to know this tenor person as your side man. ... You seem to play harmony together a lot, and you like to have someone you know and trust in such a position. ... That was an interesting facet of it. So, I played that gig. Some of the other summer jobs were absolutely hilarious. I played a few gigs with Morris Engert, who was leader of a Jewish music group one summer. I would start off, at about six o'clock with Morris, play six to about eight o'clock at a Kosher Hotel. Then, in order to satisfy some of my friends at the school, I would play at the House of Jive, which was an inexpensive ballroom that was ... as I remember, over a bathhouse. We had quite a big band there, and that would start as soon as I could get there. After Morris, I'd go and play, and they were only about three blocks away. It was close. Well, I walked the boardwalk to the Hygea Baths, it was called a health center. ... I had to be finished there around ten-thirty in order to walk--boardwalk again--to my third job, Cabaret Le Chez Paree. Then, I would play the Paree until about two o'clock in the morning, but that wasn't the end. At two o'clock in the morning, ... with a couple of the musician friends, we'd get together, and we'd head down to the northern part of town, down Kentucky Avenue, off the boardwalk. Atlantic City was segregated and the north side was African-Americans and the fine black nightclubs. ... They had the Club Harlem, Cotton Club, and a few smaller clubs which were really good fun and they had good jazz musicians. So, we'd go over there to play, sit in with them, and the many musicians from around the city. This would include name musicians and headliners from the piers and hotels. That would last until about six o'clock in the morning. You ate breakfast. ... The sun came up and you walked home. ... It also shows that I wasn't worried about walking and carrying my horn in the streets, or wherever I was. ... Then, the next day, I'd sleep all morning and, if I felt like [it], then I would go on the beach, whatever seemed worth doing, or go outside in the yard or something, and then, start the game over again.

SH: Your mom and dad were perfectly content.

BE: I was fully trusted ... with occasional checks. Most of the summers were quite legitimate--theaters, hotels, piers, *et cetera*. However, a few times in the summer, I played at some wild places. My Dad spied on me. Interestingly enough, my father censored which ones that my mother could go to. There was one that was a gay bar. It was called the Jockey Club, and, tell you the truth, it wasn't bad. [laughter] It was a good job, and they had a red rope in front of the orchestra so that no one was allowed to bother the orchestra. That was the way they handled gays in those days. They weren't going to bother us, anyhow. ... That one, he wouldn't let Mom go to, but one of the nightclubs he took her to was a surprise. It was a striptease joint, [laughter] and, when the blue light came on and the band started going, "Bum-bah-duh, bum-bah-duh," and the sexy saxophone riff [Dr. Eskin imitates a saxophone], all over the place, ... out comes one of the women with whatever they were permitted to wear, which would be nothing as bad as you have on television [today]. ... It would happen. Then, he looked at her and he said, "I'm going to censor these from now on, Goldie." [laughter] The only comment I got the next day was, "That was an interesting place, Bernie," ... from Mom. [laughter] ... Dad was very liberal that way. ... [laughter]

SH: Did your brother ever come to the clubs to see you play?

BE: Manny, yes, he came early on. By the time I was in high school, he was married.

SH: Yes.

BE: ... He was in Philly by now. ... He was probably married by then. Let's see. Yes, he could have been married because, yes, he had a son that didn't live while I was a freshman at Princeton. ... So, Manny must have been married, and so, he remained in Philly. He, of course, was, at that time, building his CPA practice. ...

SH: Through all of these interesting jobs that you had throughout the summer, was earning money to go to college the goal?

BE: Oh, yes. ... I had a little black book in my instrument case and whatever money I made was recorded and then deposited. When I would play any of these nightclubs, I would get at least three times the amount I would get at any of those hotels, and, when I played the Steel Pier, even though it was an "A" play spot musically, as rated by the union, they still couldn't equal the money I could get at clubs. I wasn't a star. I mean, I wasn't coming out on a stage and doing a feature. I was either a pit band man which paid somewhat extra for doing shows or in the ballroom, part of the side men. The income ... that I made while in high school, was good, much better than the usual student income. You were lucky in those days to make a few dollars an hour. It went up quickly, as time went on, ... oh, and, of course, playing with Stan Kenton meant, at least for those weeks, quite a bit of money. ... So all the money was put in a savings account in the Boardwalk National Bank until the war bonds appeared. ...

SH: When you traveled with Stan Kenton, did you stay in the hotel or would you travel from Atlantic City, and then, go back?

BE: I stayed at a hotel. ... First of all, when we played in most of these gigs, you stayed in a hotel that was very close to where you worked. That gave ... them an opportunity to open up and rehearse some new ... pieces to do. ... Stan Kenton was, at that time, in his formative music years. He had just come from the West Coast and he was organizing and making his book of orchestrations, in order to play some of the big jobs that he later filled. He was having troubles, too, because a lot of people in the business thought that progressive jazz, his new type of music he presented, was too advanced. It seemed to need growth and familiarity.

SH: Really?

BE: Yes. Everybody was in to the Kay Kaiser and the Guy Lombardo type of band and orchestra, but Stan Kenton presented a new fashion of modern popular music, an interesting change ... with a youthful big band, which was very exciting.

SH: We are talking about 1936 or 1937.

BE: No, we're talking about the '40s.

SH: 1940.

BE: Yes. He came over to the East Coast ... during the summer 1942. It was the short time that I was with Stan Kenton. He played jobs and was not set tightly in the East and even later, was more accepted in the West. I really didn't save any good souvenirs, for Lynn and my children, when I played with his band although we did do some vague publicity and photos. When Stan came to Philadelphia and was playing at the Robin Hood, Dell, Gregg, my son, was in junior high and starting out in music; Gregg and I went to the Dell. I sent Stan a note backstage after his first set. Stan remembered me and called back the two of us. Then, he looked at me and he said, "I won't talk to you, Bernie. You went straight." Gregg was so impressed with the discussion, Gregg ... became a musician. ... I like to think that the conversation we had with Kenton might have helped him make up his mind. He's successful as a director of music and teacher at a middle school in our district.

SH: This is your son.

BE: Yes. ... He was so taken by the incident, you know, but I really didn't have any copies of pictures of me in the band or anything like that. My daughter, Catherine, working [on] her computer, ... found one. We took usually one set of pictures at the spots that we played. It was used for general publicity. It was just used locally apparently, I thought. Sure enough, she found it about six months ago archived on the web. She sent us all a copy of it. ... I've had some unusual experiences and what I always worry about is who can believe them. [laughter] You know, they're often unexpected, ... they do occur. I mean, for example, when I was in graduate school, at Brown, I met Leonard Bernstein. ... A friend of mine Bob [Sokol] introduced me to him after a concert with the Boston Symphony. Bernstein was his camp counselor, and so, we spent a relaxed evening in discourse with Maestro Bernstein. ... It's hard to believe, ... but these are the kinds of adventures that you bump into and you always wish you had something to show

everyone what you did. I played with Kenton a small part of that summer. It made for a great summer.

SH: Was this the summer between your junior and senior year?

BE: No, between my senior year and college.

SH: Where did you decide you wanted to go to college? I am assuming that you were a good student during the school year.

BE: Yes, I was. I had excellent grades in high school and graduated with high honors, as I said. Well, that's also a beauty contest. I won scholarships and I won the activity award, but admission committees take everything into consideration. They take [into account] the extra-curricular programs and interests.

SH: Tell me some of the things you did in high school.

BE: Well, at high school, besides the music, I was involved in starting a program for greeting and handling visitors at the school, which everyone thought was a great idea. ... I got very much involved in mathematics but was not alone, there were a whole bunch of us who began a mathematics club because we had an extremely interesting teacher, Miss Stanbeck. She really wanted to teach us higher math, and we learned to use the slide rule, an innovation at the time. You talk to a teen now about math and he speaks of his computer, but the slide rule was a preliminary to it. It was fast, it was good, and so, Lynn and I laugh about it. I still have my good slide rule. ... Some of the other things I did my friends and I really enjoyed. I was able to talk one of my close friends, Joe Grossman, into writing and directing plays at school; and musicals, instead of just plays, and we had fun. ... That way, I wrote some music for the shows. I was able to learn from a popular professional who wrote and arranged. He became chronically ill and couldn't travel or work actively anymore, therefore came to Atlantic City for rehabilitation. He needed to make a few bucks. So, he started a course at his home on arranging and taught young musicians how to write and arrange music for jazz groups. This ability comes in handy later. I'll tell you that story later, which is absolutely a riot. ... I'm sure I've left out some, ... but I can't think of all of them, enough? You know, how much can you rag on? Memoirs are a problem. ...

SH: This is your time. [laughter] Where did you see yourself going to college?

BE: Well, I had a choice. ... For a while, I thought of myself as a musician. I'd discussed this with Mr. Jaquish, who was the head of music at school, and I said, "What would you do?" He said, "Well, why don't we let some professionals really take a look at you, Bernie, and we'll see what happens. ... Get an interview with a top music school and see what they think of you." So, I said, "Where?" He said, "Well, you [can] go down to Baltimore, you can go to Philly. I wouldn't go to New York, because you [could] get lost in New York. Maybe Boston." I took his advice and applied to Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. I wrote them a letter and gave them a bit of my history. While I was doing all this jazz, I just loved the viola and I learned quartet playing from several musicians who were quite able in AC. I never considered myself proficient at

quartets. I don't know why, but I just didn't seem to feel comfortable with them, but ... being a violist, I was sought after, because there weren't that many people who played. ... The thing was, though, the Curtis Institute gave interviews and, if you passed this as a triage, you could then go to the Institute for an audition on your best instrument. You had to have two instruments, each from different families--such as strings, percussion, reeds, brass. After all, I had strings--viola--and I had reeds--clarinet, saxophone, oboe--which made me eligible. So, I went to Philadelphia and took Curtis's preliminary test. At the same time, I took scholarship exams at Princeton, Rutgers, Johns Hopkins. Where else did I take [them]? I truly forget. ... By the way, I passed at scholarship level in all the exams, so, I felt very good. Passing doesn't mean you get the scholarship, but it means you are eligible. We did not have SATs at Atlantic City High School.

SH: Was Atlantic City High School integrated at that time?

BE: No, not really. Well, partially; they would tell you, but I would tell you no. We had a few dozen black students, but the administration did a lot of very negative things. Our swimming pool, which was in the basement, was closed and all the swimming teams and all the students who wanted to swim had to go to the Presidential Hotel pool. The Presidential Hotel, though, allowed no blacks in their pool. That gives you an idea of the way it happened. The southern part of the city next to the ocean was white, the northern part of the city inlet waters was black. Atlantic Avenue cut the city in half, and there was an exceptionally good, I'm told, vocational school, with an academic program, as part of it, on the north side. Atlantic City High School itself was south, facing the ocean, you could look at the beach. It was located towards the suburban-like areas of Ventnor and Margate. We were near the ocean, beach, water and we did our physical education on the beach. If you played gym football, you played on the beach. During the winter, they shoveled all the snow away. ... The beach was cleared there. For any sport, we were outside. ... Junior high, too, we went to the beach and did all our activities there. Atlantic City provided a healthy program; you couldn't ask then for a better deal. ... You've got to go somewhere? Take a walk on the boardwalk. You don't have to cross any streets. You know, it's safe. It has a lot to be said for it.

SH: Did you graduate in 1940?

BE: 1942.

SH: I have you graduating before 1942.

BE: No, I couldn't, not that young, yes, but I was pretty young as it was.

SH: You passed the tests for Johns Hopkins, Princeton, and Rutgers.

BE: Rutgers and Princeton. I did some others, [too]. I'm trying to think of what other school. I think it was Hopkins, I tried out in Baltimore.

SH: How did Curtis receive you?

BE: They were very encouraging. They told me that, "It's very likely you'll get a scholarship," which means acceptance and so, I sought it, [laughter] I got accepted later than the colleges, to Curtis. ... The thing that was very important is the fact that, ... when I spoke with Mr. Jacquish, whose opinion I appreciated for general academics ... and I said, "I have Curtis," he said, "Go into what you really want." Because I had wanted to be a scientist, I chose to be a chemist. I was into chemistry because of a teacher in the fourth year. He was a marvelous teacher, a chemistry Ph.D., Dr. Whitmeyer, in high school. I always wondered why he left Dickinson College where he taught, ... but his wife was very ill. ... So, he moved to Atlantic City and taught at the high school and loved it. He enjoyed the kids and he gave an excellent course, ... it must have been pretty darned good, because I had no trouble [with chemistry] in college.

SH: What were you aware of, as a young sophomore in 1940, concerning the war?

BE: Oh, you're backing me up to sophomore year.

SH: 1939 and 1940.

BE: Yes, I'm pretty young.

SH: I know, but you are such a man of the world. [laughter]

BE: The truth of the matter is, when the war started, I was walking on the boardwalk with my dad and we went into a shoeshine place where Dad knew the owner. We were getting shoes shined, though. Shoe shining chairs and workers were lined up all the way around [the] active shop, this guy really sold the product. He was black and he was a good salesperson and a good guy whom I had gotten to know as a youngster. My dad had introduced me to him and we went in there often. This day, all of a sudden, he said, "Hey, guys, wait a minute, we're going to hear something important," and he had the radio on. It was President Roosevelt, who was saying, ... "brutal force from Japan, has attacked us at Pearl Harbor," and then for the first time I knew there was a war on. So, I asked Dad about it and he said, "Well, I never recognized the pain of the World War [I]," he said, "but I think it's going to be worse this time around than it was last time," and that was about all ... he said. He never liked to elaborate about bad things. ... That was not his [way]. He wrote about them more easily.

SH: Really?

BE: Well, he was a journalist, yes. He wrote about them.

SH: How did this news impact school the next day?

BE: I wasn't happy with the Japanese. I mean, you know, my feeling was that here was a perfectly nice country I'm growing up in and somebody had done something cruel to us and I didn't like it.

SH: Did you notice any of the upperclassmen who were anxious to enlist?

BE: No, I didn't, I really didn't. You've got to remember, I had a couple in my bands.

SH: That is what I was wondering.

BE: They didn't get too upset about it, yet.

SH: Okay.

BE: I really don't think so. I think they sort of took it as, "I'm an American and I believe in America." ... I never heard anybody say anything remotely belligerent.

SH: Okay.

BE: I mean, this is a war. If it's a war against my country, I'm going to do something about it. I don't think anybody was negative. I never heard anything about beyond the unexpected bombings. I always thought we were helping the Allies and the war would be coming from that sector--Nazis, Italians, maybe Russia ... if it came.

SH: Was your family politically involved at all?

BE: Well, you see, there are politics and there are politics. There are politics, like you're a Democrat and a Republican, and there are politics where you dislike these people or that people and you have personal antagonism. That wasn't the politics of my family. My family's politics were that everyone in Atlantic City was a Republican. That's the way it was.

SH: Really?

BE: Yes, oh, yes, or the occasional Democrat, if you liked somebody special. ... It depended on who was the top pol. They worked it out, so [that] it would satisfy everyone most of the time. They would choose the officials accordingly, but the person who made the choice was whoever was in at that time. My mother loved to be a poll watcher, or ... one of those positions. So, I don't even know if she knew whom she was polling for, but I know she liked the action. There was a politician who was running the city at that time, Enoch L. "Nucky" Johnson, Republican Party machine boss, ... and she did a good deal of ward work for him, and asked for little in return. She didn't really care as she enjoyed the flair. She was there with most of her friends and neighbors. If she wanted something related to the City, she needed only to go to Nucky, "Hey, I need this," and it was available. These were not big needs. They usually involved school or library improvements. ... Dad was in a position that he could get what he deemed important for his work on the paper. He was the kind of guy who never took advantage of his position or friends. He really didn't have to. He did what he pleased and no one ever bothered [him]. ... It was a good life to watch my father, because you know he's not going to end up in trouble, that's for sure. ... He took nothing that didn't belong to him. "This is what I do and this is where I want to go and I'm going to do it and that's it."

SH: What did your mother and father think of Roosevelt and his politics?

BE: Pardon me?

SH: Did your parents talk about Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, the WPA [Works Progress Administration]?

BE: You see, Herbert Hoover was the President before, and the only thing I ever heard about Herbert Hoover was he was a good engineer. ... They said that it was a bad scene for the poor guy, Hoover, because he came in and everything was falling apart and he was not a trained politician. He was a good engineer, and they should have let him build a dam, ... and not given him all the trouble that he fell into. ... When Roosevelt came in, there were a myriad of things he could do to improve the state. He'd have CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps], NRA [National Recovery Act] and all the other letters ... of bureaucracy that we never heard about before, and they were bouncing around the boardwalk, ... here and there. I kind of liked it. They had an orchestra for unemployed musicians ... in the city. It's something I didn't tell you before. In it, all the musicians from the union, who couldn't find jobs off-season and older standards guys who had a problem updating their music, made up a band and/or orchestra, and they rehearsed. They played all types of music, and performed free for the populace and at several schools. It provided free entertainment for us. What was the name of that group?

DLE: WPA.

BE: The what?

DLE: That's the WPA.

BE: WPA, Works Progress Administration. Through the WPA, they got paid a little. It wasn't a great amount of money, but they could practice this way. They would call me, [if] they needed a viola or a clarinetist, and one of my former teachers ... played in the [band]. By the way, they were good musicians. A lot of them were immigrants from Italy who were highly experienced and excellent musicians. ... It was kind of fun. I would go there when I could. ... I always remember, it was in the city hall of Ventnor City, contiguous to Atlantic City, and they had a big room and we'd practice. The conductor was well-known in the area and he played, in the summer, on one of the piers, or one of the *palazzos*, or even in the Convention Hall Plaza. About the threats and now reality of war, ... I don't think there was any crying or screaming about, "This politician is doing it wrong or that one's doing it right." There were those who didn't want us ever to enter the war, and again, there were those who thought that it would be a stupid thing to go into the battle, because, if we went to war, we couldn't send all the ammunition, arms, and equipment, and most of all we didn't have any of our own yet. ... "Give us a little time, build up. Then, we can directly help. Then, we'll go over [there]. That's what we did in the First World War, so, we'll do it in the Second." I don't think there was any real [dissent]. I can't remember it. "We're here, they're way over there."

SH: I was just wondering what role politics played. Thank you for talking about the war and the different people.

BE: I think there were others, but I don't think I did [hear of any dissent], and I was ... in a position where my Dad would have heard it all and possibly mentioned it, I suppose.

SH: Were there discussions around the dining table?

BE: You know, we never said anything violent concerning the action but we were concerned. In fact, in my immediate family we never used curse words. ... The news described advancements made in new American arms. ... We were all unhappy about the losses in Europe and proud of English spirit. Reporters on radio became popular, but little was described until the war appeared to be changing course. War movies usually showed training rather than battle at first. When I entered the service I began to understand what the earlier problems had been. However things got better and so did our information concerning the course of the various actions.

SH: Could you talk about the decision to go to school?

BE: ... I had planned to go to college, and saved for it. We discussed Music versus Science as a career. My folks were obviously for Science, but they suggested advice from Mr. Jaquish. When I decided, ... I went to college.

SH: Where did you go to school?

BE: Well, I went to Princeton, eventually. ...

SH: In the Fall of 1942?

BE: Yes, well, and then I signed up for the service.

SH: How old were you when you entered Princeton in 1942?

BE: I became fifteen, and I signed up for the Navy through the college program. When I became sixteen they accepted me for the service as a member of V-1 in the Navy.

SH: That took you into that V-1?

BE: They took me into the actual program within about five months, which was designated as the V-1. Shortly thereafter the entire program consolidated into the V-12.

SH: When you entered Princeton, were you going for a chemistry degree?

BE: I was listed as a chem major. ... I actually went back to Princeton after being taken in the service. ... You start at a staging center and then return to University as a student in the Navy. I officially signed in at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

SH: Okay. At fourteen and fifteen, you were in your freshman year at Princeton.

BE: Yes, well, I did my freshman year.

SH: What did you do in the summer of 1943? Did you play again in the band?

BE: No. Colleges divided the year into three semesters during World War II instead of two. When the college semester ended in June 1943, I was given a leave of several weeks at home. I reported officially to the BNY. Then I reported to a Navy Center at Princeton University where the NROTC had been and was then sent to my new quarters, one of the newer dorms, Walker Hall. I was given the rating of an Apprentice Seaman--lowest possible--USNR.

SH: Did they?

BE: I was in time to start back to classes after three days of orientation--i.e. uniforms, duffel bags, Navy GI accessories ... then textbooks and excellent school equipment from the University Store.

SH: At the end of your freshman year, you signed up for the program.

BE: I signed up before that, but as soon as I was allowed to. This was not related to NROTC [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps]. I joined the V-1 program at a Naval Station. I was essentially awaiting orders.

SH: In Atlantic City?

BE: No, NROTC for the Navy and Army were only at colleges. I don't know how I got away with it, because I don't swim. I mean, I could not swim what they required--75 yards. ... [laughter]

SH: At Princeton, was there an NROTC that you continued in?

BE: There was an NROTC at Princeton, but I was now in the Naval Reserve and functionally a member of the United States Armed Services. ... I started at Princeton Naval V-1 program in July.

SH: Of what year?

BE: 1943.

SH: 1943.

BE: And I'm talking about, ... "I'm a sailor" in the Navy. ... I kind of liked it. It was a very new experience.

SH: Where did they send you in July?

BE: What?

SH: Where did the Navy send you in July?

BE: I enlisted and therefore my Naval Center would be Brooklyn. But I was officially allowed to continue my activities home waiting for my orders, and then, I went to Princeton as an Apprentice Seaman in the V-1 on July 1.

SH: You did not have to go to a boot camp or anything like that.

BE: No.

SH: Okay. You just reported there in New York and they sent you back.

BE: They sent me the papers, my orders, by courier.

SH: Okay.

BE: In fact, it was very funny. I thought, "What a waste sending a courier," because they could have phoned Atlantic City, or they could have mailed [the papers]. Well, they didn't have Federal Express, I guess. [laughter]

SH: Not then.

BE: So, I went to Princeton and that was where things started to happen. I enjoyed it very much there. They put us in ... the best hall, at that time, and I was easily oriented. By the way, this campus is gorgeous over here. I loved the way they fixed up the College Avenue Campus. I hadn't walked it since last year and, boy, it's really nice. ...

SH: In July 1943, you were at Princeton in what was then called the V-1.

BE: It was V-1. I think that's why I had to go to New York. It was V-1 when I signed up, and then, it became V-12, [a Navy/Marines Corps wartime program in which cadets earned a degree and commission while studying at a civilian university], and the Army had an equivalent. ...

SH: ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program].

BE: Yes.

SH: What was the V-12 program preparing you for?

BE: Well, I was in chemistry. So, I was being prepared to be a line officer. ... It was very interesting. The guy in charge, a guy by the name of Guy, ... G-U-Y, [laughter] and he had turned to me and said, "Do you want to remain in the chemistry major?" and I said, "Well, yes." I said, "However, after my first semester, I'm getting interested in biology," but I said, "Could you change me?" He tried but couldn't change my program. Apparently, once the service has made the decision, they were prepared to have you as a line officer in whatever year they calculated your availability. So, I continued in chemistry, and that worked.

SH: Did they march you to and from class? How rigid was it at Princeton?

BE: You know, they started that way, then, after a month it stopped rather quickly. ... They gave us a lot of freedom. I felt like I was still at a college. I didn't feel that it was [that different]. The only thing that was a little different was that "mess hall," it was now called the mess hall, and it was the same place we used to eat, anyhow. Walker Hall was a new, big modern dorm that we were sent to as our barracks then. When Lynn and I were in Princeton recently, to my surprise ... it's small, little, nothing, compared to what it felt like then; and it's blocked in, due to all the huge construction almost as great as here at Rutgers. ... Oh, it was so peculiar, but in the Navy I saw a lot of men I had met at Walker. ... It was very convenient for me, because the chemistry building is a short walk. I had some good experiences and campus freedom as long as my grades were all right. You had to maintain a good average. If you didn't ...

SH: You were out.

BE: The door was locked. "Yes, you'd better study and we're going to come around and look." They were tough and, "If you don't get good grades, you're going to flunk out of here." You know, this was an important time. So, all right, I did the best I could, considering, but I still had my running around type of thinking and I wanted to be in the college band and the orchestra and it just happened; they let me.

SH: Did they really?

BE: They did.

SH: That was going to be my next question.

BE: I played in the band, I played in the orchestra and I had an auspicious time. But then, one day, I was playing in the orchestra, viola. I was first chair--principal--viola, and an elderly gentleman with a lot of hair came up to me and said, ... "We play quartets," and he said, "My ... violist in my quartet is going to be away for a few weeks. Could you come over and play a few times with us?" and so, I said, "Yes, Professor Einstein, I'd be glad to." [laughter] Albert Einstein was at the IAS graduate school, Institute for Advanced Studies, at Princeton and ... he'd come late and leave early, at the college orchestra several times. He didn't seem to want to be bothered with much conversation unrelated to the music. He spent most of his time, then, involved with the work on the atom bomb.

SH: You were playing the viola.

BE: Yes, viola, and I was in the first chair. ... We had an excellent conductor at the College. I was not playing quartets much since high school.

SH: Going back to Mr. Einstein's quartet, where would you play?

BE: His house. So, I had to inform the Navy, and, of course, my officers. They didn't mind. [laughter] In fact, one of them thought I was lying. ... I remember, one guy said, "Oh, come on, Bernie, you can do better than that." I said, "No." ...

SH: What did Mr. Einstein play?

BE: Violin. So, Albert Einstein and I, and I told him about relativity and he went ahead with it. [laughter] But, in any event, I played and I went to his house in the early evening; it wasn't that late at night. It was, like, about six-thirty, I think. We'd play for about an hour-and-a-half, no more than two hours, maybe, and have a little tea between the couple of quartets that we might play. Quartets, usually, they are about thirty to forty minutes, or something like that, and so, it's a nice break, and then, you might do a second one. That's enough for an evening.

SH: Were there other people there to listen or was this just for your own pleasure?

BE: ... The people who were playing, the four of us, his daughter; ... I think it was his daughter. I think it was his daughter with his first wife. I'm not sure exactly. ...

DLE: No, it was the daughter of his second wife.

BE: Oh, the daughter of his second wife, and a Ms. Duke, I remember, was there. She was like the housemother, major domo. She brought the cookies and the tea. ... We sat there and we talked. We talked primarily about music. There was very little said about war or current events. He was particularly fond of Mozart and had played some works with well-known musicians of that time from around the world who were available for him.

SH: Really?

BE: ... I was the only one in uniform, obviously. The other two members of the quartet were professors, scientists. ... When Lynn and I talked about it, we tried to figure out who it could have been who played viola and perhaps, had to do some work elsewhere. There were very famous men who were there at the Institute.

DLE: He was probably in Chicago.

BE: Yes, that was about the time. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

BE: He might have, for you see, I heard a lecture by Einstein later, after I'd played three times. I think my curiosity was to see whether he recognized me. ... He also gave a lecture to Princeton undergrads and the lecture room was always filled, as you can imagine, and he did it mostly in German. [laughter] ... I don't know if that was true every time he spoke, but the time that I was there, he started off a little in English and a little bit of [German], yes, and then, he continued in German. So, he might have been happy to have met someone who played the music and was German and they could talk in German. I'll tell you, truthfully, he seemed to speak English

rather well when I was with him in the times at his house, but he may have been talking about things then that he could easily talk about in English like the music.

SH: Had you taken German in high school in Atlantic City?

BE: No, and that's one of the funniest parts of it all. I began German in Princeton and I finished at Rutgers.

SH: Okay.

BE: I was the secretary of the German Department at Rutgers. This is hilarious, but it's true and it has a lot of meaning. I got to know them so well, those professors. There were no women, that I remembered, in the departments, but it was so uncanny. ... My activities with Einstein were strictly these musical ones. ... By the way, the time I went there to hear him and he spoke German, I walked down the [aisle]; it was a large lecture room, with rising stadium seating. I walked down like this. I was a little shy about doing this, ... because I had some friends with me. He looked over and he nodded and asked how I was, then continued with the conversation he was in. This was a friendly gesture.

DLE: Oh.

SH: Just like a ...

BE: And so, I said, "Fine." ...

DLE: Oh.

BE: And then, that was it. That was it. ...

SH: For the record, these were nods of recognition exchanged between the two of you.

BE: Yes. We just; he might have seen somebody in the back there, [laughter] no, but ... he really [recognized me] I want to think. ... It was very interesting, before I left his house, the last evening we played, I said, "You know, Professor Einstein, ... would you write a little something?" and he wrote on a card and it is, "Au Eskin," and then, he wrote his name and the date. So, we have that in ... my study. I thought that was a very touching time. I really enjoyed it. ... I had forgotten about the card which was lost in my usual dubious packing. It was in my books, papers, pictures mess... that I brought together with Lynn. Lynn said, "Bernie, what's this thing?" and it was the card. What's it, about the size of a calling card?

DLE: Yes.

BE: It's about the size of a calling card and it has on it, written in German, "To Eskin," with his name and the date written in European style. We have a picture of him playing the violin framed, hanging on the wall with the card in it, but, to me, it was an important time. ...

Nowadays, there are very few people, I'm sure, who have known him or seen him or talked to him. I didn't talk to him about science or anything academic ... but I played.

SH: Did he ever ask you what you were studying?

BE: Yes. You know, that would be the conversation, similar conversation, but nothing petty. ... He wasn't there to talk, with a bunch of, well, with me, anyhow, [laughter] and the rest of the people were scientists who loved music. He didn't even want to talk with them about science. They had enough. Probably, they had a day of work. So, I was the young man who joined them and I played viola. I must have been satisfactory because I played three times. I was very vague when I first thought about it. You know, how many times did I really play? ... It was a nice, little house on Morris Avenue and I just went to his house. ... Recently, there's been a lot written up about him and Lynn reads a good deal about him. I've read a few books that she has shown me, and it sounds like him. ... What's to expect? He was a man who'd had a lot of activity in Europe, and he'd traveled and ... he lived an impressive life. He was a real person.

SH: Were you in uniform when you played with him?

BE: Oh, I had to wear my uniform. I was grateful the Navy permitted me to go.

SH: Did you?

BE: You see, I was an apprentice seaman, for those years I remained at Princeton. ... I was an apprentice seaman in the Navy and I wore a uniform, the little scarf, all the cute stuff, and we didn't have top shirts and all. That would have been nicer, I think, but I wore what I was supposed to wear. Oh, I wouldn't play games with the service there. They were letting me do too much, letting me get away [with a lot], giving me a good deal of freedom.

SH: Did this last for just one year for you? Where did you go then after that first year?

BE: Yes, this lasted a little over a year.

SH: Then where did they send you?

BE: By the way, I had an orchestra there.

SH: Did you?

BE: Do I have that picture somewhere?

DLE: Everywhere.

SH: This was a big dance and show band?

BE: Yes. ...

SH: While you were at Princeton?

BE: Let's see.

[TAPE PAUSED]

BE: And, with my band spread out, it's beautiful, and I'm in front with my clarinet, leading a great swing group of my compatriots.

SH: Really?

BE: You know, it looks like this, ... only, of course, it's got Marines, too, because we had Marines in our V-12 program.

SH: Okay. They were all military, but they were all playing in the band and enjoying it.

BE: We played for the morale of the entire Princeton [contingent] at that time, because there were very few bands and things around here, and the students as well, you know, wanted to hear a real Big Band and this was a Big Band. ... Oh, I suddenly became popular and, you know, the people who ran the V-12 program were very complimentary, and they said to me, "You know, you're going to be more known than the commander. You might as well be." So, it was a very nice atmosphere. It was a true opportunity. I enjoyed it.

SH: How long did you stay at Princeton?

BE: I stayed there until August of the next year.

SH: August of 1944?

BE: I had joined the V-1 "line" officer program and could not be transferred into any other program at Princeton. Also, after my allotted time, if I passed, they couldn't send me directly to midshipman's school, because I would graduate as an officer too young. So, they said, "We've got to send you somewhere to age you." I said, "Well, send me home." [laughter] ... I was locked in, ... but they had been awfully kind to me. So, comes the big moment, this, you'll love. ... I had to have a physical, required as a "middie," before transfer. After my height measurement at the sick bay, they noted that I was too short to be an officer, according to the regulations for a line officer.

SH: Finally, they were doing this, right?

BE: I was five-foot-five and a half. All of them said, "Hey, we don't want to have you lose out, Bern. I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to send you back to sick bay. You'll stay there and sleep and, the next day we'll re-measure with a tape measure. When on your feet, the vertebrae lose height size).

BE: They used one. Then they got five-foot-six requirements, somehow. I don't know, but I apparently fulfilled the necessary requirements. ... I was now ready for middle school; that was next. I knew you'd like that incident.

SH: It is.

BE: You [would] never think anything like this could be appropriate, you know, but this was. ... Everything was according to Navy "Regs," regulations.

SH: Sure. While they were waiting for you to age, you now had to be somewhere.

BE: ... All right, we're waiting for me to age. Have I got that on my notes here? Oh, yes, I mean, all right, here we go. "Highlights of a Line Officer, Albert Einstein event." Okay, by the way, the Albert Einstein incidents were in 1944. On 7/5/44, I was sent to the navy base, Camp Macdonough, it's printed on these orders, in Plattsburgh, New York, "For officer's prep and aging." That's a pretty peculiar set of orders. That was my order, "to age." You know, you age wood, you age liquor, you age Bernie. This is "age Bernie."

SH: Good wine.

BE: Early on, after my arrival, I was getting bored, because, ... we're marching around, jungle survival tactics from the Marines, you jump up and down, calisthenics, KP duty, obstacle courses. ... So, I started a band. [laughter]

SH: I am so shocked.

BE: I don't know what it's like now. Plattsburgh, at that time, was one of the most boring places in the whole world. They had nothing. They had an old bar sitting in the corner of one street, but the service men ... who were permanently there [had no entertainment], and it was a big yawn to all the service men. Yet, they were on the periphery to some of the largest resorts, and expensive spas, in Northern New York State. ... Anyhow, I told the permanent staff, "I will form a band, so that the officers' clubs, the CPO club, the men's clubs, whatever it is. I'm going to ... form a group and we'll have music. ... We'll have dances and have parties and the like." They said, "You can't do it. I don't know how you could in this place Bernie," and [I said], "I can." So, I got around and I spoke to all the men in the camp and ancillary facilities that were there and I asked, "Who knows how to play an instrument?" I was able to get a few people having interest and experience together. This was a small group, around six people. We found ... old basic band instruments on the base there. I had my sax sent up from home, and the guy who played the trumpet likewise wanted his own horn; but the drums and piano, we found down there. ... The biggest "find" was a bass fiddle stuffed in storage somewhere. So, we had ourselves a band and started to rehearse and play everywhere. Of course, I said, "We can't march around and do all the routine things that you're requiring if we're going to be playing in a band at night. Don't you think that's right?" "Yes, okay." Oh, I was getting tired of the camp. It really was getting tedious and so, ... I had special instructions, for myself and the members of the orchestra, "my band," but we played a lot. We played many enlisted affairs, but officer events predominated. Naturally, the base loved us for the infusion of activities. That's the story.

[laughter] I mean, it's as crazy as that. I guess that's a way of doing good for everyone and the way the world was, but that's the way it can be. ...

SH: How long do you stay in Plattsburgh, aging?

BE: Well, they did that until middle school eligibility, which was a couple of months. I'll tell you, as the war was going on, they did reduce the age of [commissioned] officers and it now was down to an age whereby, when you finish midshipman's school, you could get aged in advanced training. So, you could go into further training, and then be ready to go to sea, and that way it worked more advantageously for the Navy. I was sent to the US Naval Reserve Midshipman's School at Cornell University and I graduated on 11/17/44, with honors in ordnance and navigation. I hadn't the slightest idea what ordnance was when I started. I thought it was a bird when I first went there, but I ended up learning a good deal about battle hardware. I loved navigation, I really did; so, the Navy, as you would anticipate, made me a gunnery officer. [laughter] So, that's just the way things work. I became an officer, ensign of the line. ... They sent me for advanced training. ...

SH: This was after Cornell.

BE: ... This is after graduation and commissioning at Cornell. Now, I think I have uniform pictures of Cornell here. It's a shame if I don't. Oh, here's Cornell.

SH: This is Cornell, okay. We are looking at the graduation class.

BE: No. ... Well, that's before we graduated. You know, we are midshipmen in that picture and here I am, as the short midshipman.

SH: All grown up and aged well. [laughter]

BE: Yes, and this is [when] my mother visited and these are the various things in the general grounds. ... By the way, here's the, "US Training School, Indoctrination, Camp Macdonough, in Plattsburgh," where I aged. That was my aging and musical program, and then, finally, at Cornell, I was an "en-sign," ensign.

SH: An "en-sign." [laughter]

BE: I finally made it, yes.

SH: Where did they send you next?

BE: Are you ready for this?

SH: I am ready.

BE: Okay. Now, temporary assignment, training in advanced gunnery for capital ships. I was sent to the Navy Yard Anaconda Washington, DC. ... All right? And the Ordnance and

Gunnery School under Commander E. C. Burke. I was sent there on ... 11/17/44 and I was to be there by 12/14/44. In the first lectures on the "Dual-Purpose Battery 1 & 2." Now, that must have been very exciting, ... when I think about it, but I loved Washington. As a kid, my family traveled a lot for recreation and we'd gone to the capital. Washington was a big place for us. Mom and Dad liked it very much, and particularly my brother. ... When we traveled, we traveled there a lot. There's a lot to see in Washington. It really is a wonderful tourist place. As part of the programs, I was sent as a gunnery officer aboard the USS *Wyoming* (BB-32) for hands-on training. They sent me out to other ships after Ordnance and Gunnery School. ... A little bit after, there were training cruises. ...

SH: Where was the USS *Wyoming* at?

BE: At sea, a lot. ... From what I remember of it, I had to go down somewhere into North Carolina, I think, northern part of North Carolina. ... I forget exactly where they picked me up. Someone said it was in Virginia Beach area on my transporter. I don't remember; I actually don't remember.

SH: Hampton Roads or Newport News, something like that. [Editor's Note: The USS *Wyoming* served as a gunnery training ship, primarily in the Chesapeake Bay region, throughout World War II.]

BE: Well, that's another story. I'll tell you that one, when we get there, and we may never get there today. [laughter]

SH: We will hustle along here.

BE: And so, now, I was re-assigned to Washington temporarily after I was given leave--fourteen days. I was told to report to Newport, Rhode Island, for the War College, Com 1--Com 4. I don't know why, that's also there--I'm reading straight from the orders--for duty on the USS *Fall River* (CA-131) which was under construction. I went to the War College there and it was rather good, ... overall seamanship and things of like nature. Then, on 5/23/45, I was informed of a change and that I was an officer in the Third Division, five-inch, thirty-eight [millimeter] guns on the USS *Providence*, (CL-82). I was to proceed to South Boston to begin acclimating the ship's company, as the ship was getting ready for a shakedown cruise to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. So, that was a whole [sea change]; reality was coming, ships were needed.

SH: What type of ship was the *Providence*?

BE: It's a cruiser, a light cruiser. If you'll notice, all of those I have been on have been cruisers. The *Fall River* was a heavy cruiser. ... That was the only heavy, but, apparently, that wasn't constructed in time for sea duty, and so, they put me [on the *Providence*]. I guess they had figured, "Let's get rid of this guy already, you know. Let's get him going. He'd start a band at the War College."

SH: [laughter] Oh, dear.

BE: Oh, we returned first to the shipyard. We proceeded then to South Boston to begin acclimating the ship's company. ... That's shown here now. That's that large base [photograph]. Then, after training at the base in Boston, we stopped in Providence and headed out to sea to Guantanamo.

SH: This is the shakedown. [Editor's Note: The interviewer is examining pictures taken by Mr. Eskin in Cuba.]

BE: This is part of shakedown program which took place in the Caribbean. We had liberty and some entertainment in Cuba. ... This is the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base. This at one of the Guantanamo Bay beaches outside.

SH: This is not another band, is it?

BE: Oh, yes, it is. [laughter] ... You don't think I'm going to go somewhere in which there's not going to be a band?

SH: Look at this, "On the cruiser, the *Providence* Band gets their instruments." You have got enlisted and officers playing together here in the large band.

BE: Here's the article on it, "Men from the Cruiser *Providence* entertained with instruments contributed by."

SH: "The B'nai B'rith of Providence."

BE: B'nai B'rith, yes, the local chapter. It was not uncommon to receive special, non-combatant gifts for the ship going overseas. They supplied many of the instruments as Steinway & Sons had done with the piano.

SH: ... Got your instruments. [laughter] Just for the record, they are all in uniform, enlisted men, and here you are--I recognize officers. This is wonderful.

BE: And then, from there, on the shakedown, this are the guns I was in charge of with the men and their assigned turrets. We won an "E, as seen on the turret." My men and team came in first--received the excellence "E" award, not my initial. [laughter]

SH: Named that entire gun after you.

BE: Now, ... we don't want to go anywhere yet. Okay, now, what have I done? Oh, yes, so, we were on a new ship, just coming out. This is the commissioning service. You get to know the ship well after shakedown. ...

SH: You are a plank member of the *Providence*.

DLE: Yes.

BE: Yes, and I now have the final plank. I received it at a recent reunion of the ship; the *Providence* was used after alterations in the Korean, Vietnam, and first Iraqi wars and was dismantled in the nineties. The new 2004 *Providence* is an atomic sub. The first USS *Providence* was a sloop and our first naval ship; and was captained by John Paul Jones. I was asked to give a history at a city-wide reunion and pointed out that I was not on the first *Providence*.

SH: That is great.

BE: How are we doing?

SH: We are doing well.

BE: Okay. ... This is getting to be too much information, isn't it?

SH: I do not think so.

BE: Okay, now, if you need any of the orders or something, they're all in here. ... All right, now, let me see, the ship gets commissioned and I have the picture of it. It was commissioned. A very formal occasion with some beautiful Naval traditions. Well, here are some pictures of the [ship] that were taken during construction. Oh, this is onboard ship. [laughter] Guess what? One of my bands.

SH: Another band playing onboard the ship, right on the deck.

BE: ... You'd have loved the picture of the Princeton V-1 Band on the stage of the McCarter Theater in Princeton. I think that's one of the best, don't you? [laughter]

SH: That is great.

BE: This is the band in the midst of generalized topside activities. We played for the deck-cleaning, bedding airing, washdown of lines and clothes and just plain recreational moments that occur. You know what you'll love, it shows the housekeeping activities of the men. You see, at these times, when they take out their bedding they could relax; we would play and everybody thought it great while the ship is steaming right along. ...

SH: At first, I thought this guy was dancing. Then, I realized he was just shaking out his bedding.

BE: Oh, yes. ... They were having a great time.

SH: You have the names of the band members and everything on here.

BE: Yes, we do.

SH: We are talking about June 20, 1945. It looks like a little different band; oh, his accordion is closed, I guess.

BE: Yes. The pianist plays the accordion when the piano can't get to the particular section of the ship where we were planning to play a program.

SH: I was going to say, I thought this was a new one with an accordion player.

BE: We'd have different people. The membership of the band changed according to the availability of personnel.

SH: Are you the only officer playing in the band?

BE: No, there was another commissioned officer on a trombone. Is he around? ... No, maybe next one; here he is. There were many non-commissioned officers in the bands. Note the shields on the arm.

SH: I see, okay.

BE: It would be whoever played a needed instrument. ... It could be anybody as long as they were good and willing.

SH: The Navy is known for separating the officers and the men from any kind of fraternization. This is very interesting to see as it relates to a skill.

BE: Well, it's very interesting, because recently we went to a reunion (2008) ... and the person that I used for helping set up a radio station that played throughout the ship's communication system, was there. I had disc jockeys and commentators as well ... I would pick these from the men who volunteered, and one of them returned to this reunion. ... When he learned from the roster that I was at the reunion, he was really excited. ... He came over and gave my wife a complete okay on me, that it's all right that ... she married me. [laughter] It was nice. He told her he never knew my name, he knew me only as "Sir." It was meant as and was a pleasant gesture. I worked with the ship's chaplain a good deal. I particularly used a variety of DJs because they represented music from the US and all the areas had their particular favorite type of music.

SH: You worked only with the orchestra?

BE: No, with general morale on board. ... Well, when I told them that I could do the orchestra, and I would do the radio by helping the programming, the Captain was particularly impressed. ... It has to be carefully done. We have to make sure that we have both an efficient and effective crew, and one that is comfortable, especially when at sea. Well, that's what I'm here for. [laughter] I said, "If I'd have been placed in another position like a navigator, we might have been even better." But he didn't take the hint. [laughter] I would have rather have been a navigator. I got used to ordnance and being a gunnery officer. So, I appreciated it after all;

probably because it gave me the opportunity to work directly with the crew. As it turned out, it was an adventure.

SH: The first shakedown for the *Providence* was down to Guantanamo Bay.

BE: Here we come to some difficult events. The early shakedown was just speeding into the Atlantic Ocean, where we were to become certain the ship's engineering was in "ship-shape." Then, we began the second shakedown after a short break ashore. After we returned, we were updated; which included announcing our future assignment to Task Force 58 in the Pacific Theater. We were to prepare for battle modes prepared for landings.

SH: The war has ended in Europe.

BE: Yes. The war was over in the European and Mediterranean theaters. The second run of a shakedown was to be with all the trimmings, a good practice for the real thing.

SH: What kind of reaction do you remember? Was there a celebration on the ship?

BE: Absolutely, oh, well, it was rather odd for me to understand since there seemed to be more than enough activity when we began working the ship. Some were feeling the anxiety of new participation and its dangers, others the desire to be a further part of the war. So, that may have been what it was about; I don't know. Anyhow, the war in Europe was pretty much over. By this time, the only thing in Europe we were seriously involved in was the damages of the Battle of the Bulge. We were very upset about the Bulge. I felt badly about the men who were caught in that last fling by Germany, a useless action. ...

SH: That is December of 1944, into January of 1945.

BE: Yes. Casualties reported from the Bulge were terrible, we lost so many GI's. I heard of a lot of friends of my crew who were involved.

SH: Was there a celebration on the *Providence* when the war in Europe ended?

BE: Yes, there was, there was by that time; but the officers and crew knew our assignment with [Task Force] 58. We knew that we were going to be a ship that was expected to go to Japan all the way to Tokyo and help with the shore batteries and the landings that were inevitable.

SH: What kind of a briefing did they give you on that?

BE: Ah-ha, I have an interesting tie to show you; how they briefed us. If you think [these pictures] are interesting, here is the remnant of our preliminary information. ... Here it is, Sandra.

SH: Oh, my.

BE: A bow tie. It's made from an accurate, complete sea chart, on a silk scarf. It shows Honshu and seas about Tokyo and its surroundings. It was given to us at briefing as a full chart in the form of a silk scarf. Many years after the war, I had the scarf converted into a bow tie. It's quite handsome.

DLE: Oh! That's the correct one. ...

BE: I can't wear it too much; apparently real silk unravels. Anyhow, we were told that we were [going in to Tokyo] and this was a usable token. We were to begin the trip now to the Panama Canal and that in due time meet our assigned task force in Iwo or in the Marshalls. ... At that time, I really started to realize how I needed to tune up our guns and prepare the men. Sea strikes by Japan on several warships showed the efficiencies of *kamikazes*. We were rightly scared of them, because the senior officers were getting reports that the *kamikaze* was being very effective. This is not a good thing for a newly commissioned crew to hear. ... I really felt, "It's no more fun now. We're going to have to go face reality and I don't want the men underprepared." I was much more the naval officer, in many ways. I was very serious about what I did, and I might have had a lot of bands and a lot of enjoyment with all that, but I didn't want our crew to go unprepared or ... ever get hurt.

SH: Did they talk about some of the statistics that they expected to encounter?

BE: Well, it entered the conversations in the wardroom and our lectures. Of interest to me was the fact that it appeared that the 5"/38 guns were becoming the best defense against suicide planes. Thus, their importance in battle was emphasized. K stats were not well established until much later. ...

SH: Because you were going to be the invasion force.

BE: We were it, we were it--Task Force 58 was expected to lead. It had an excellent record for landing preparation. ... I think it was [Admiral Raymond A.] Spruance who was involved and it was already a well-organized carrier group with big ships, guns, *et cetera*. I really thought this is the moment that the Navy can be a primary factor again after the Midway success.

[TAPE PAUSED]

BE: The silk map was certainly a token of the future, especially where the capital and the Emperor were. Tokyo, Honshu, the main island of Japan, where Tokyo is located. There are three other islands, but this one was of Tokyo Bay and was very clearly marked for use, if necessary. The chart was made of silk and all deck officers received one. The officers who were in any major position were to learn shortly all of the various destinations and permanent landmarks that were involved from more accurate charts. ... There were preliminary preparations planned for us in a generalized way so this wasn't going to be a blind thing. The landings or whatever were being prepared by the best the services had known. It was going to cause a lot of casualties and deaths. They figured about a million deaths at the time, and another million men injured. I never wanted to hear it; [it] was frightening enough. ...

SH: When you got to the Panama Canal what happened?

BE: I've got to back up a little to the second shakedown of the Providence, the really working ship. This time the job was more detailed than just the ability to steam through the water. It involved practicing general quarters, gunnery drills, sudden attack strategy, K protection, safety efforts, *et cetera*. Particular emphasis was placed on gunnery accuracy. Using both stationary and mobile targets, we became familiar with our gun responsibilities. One incident involved me when a shell misfired. The officer in charge has to enter the gun turret, get most of the men out, release the shell from its position and usually carry or roll it quickly to the ropes to toss it into the sea. We wear safety attire but this is tricky and the shell is hot. The heat often scalds or burns the protection near the axilla--armpit area--left or right. I finished the session but had a right burn for a few days. This healed poorly and is still a memory of the occasion. One of the ship's MD's kept an eye on it. I've since had some care with dermatologists. It resulted in a DV status which permits follow-up. My souvenir, but we did win an "E." Now, for the Panama Canal action. An interesting series of adventures, I can tell you. As we got into the first lock of the Panama [Canal], unconditional surrender came over the ship's intercom.

SH: In the first lock?

BE: In the first lock as announced. I still wasn't the navigator. We'd just gone into the lock. The entire trip through is a very [long process]. I was told there were as many as ten positions or "locks," but the first one is, like, just a minimal drop downward. As we went into it the overhead sounded, I heard, "This is the Captain speaking. I have good news for everyone," and then, he told us over the ship's speakers also that we would be the "victory" ships, possibly in New York City if we get there in time. ... They were establishing August the 8th as being the end of the war and that we would be among the first ships coming into the various harbors up the East Coast and New York City.

SH: How do you take this news?

BE: How do you get ready for it?

SH: How do we get back out of the lock? Do you have to go on through?

BE: Right. I'm no expert on this. The ship had a pilot and his travel group. But we were told that the first lock and the second lock permits you to be able to swing around, and then, there is a way that ... you can turn possibly, if you went into corners, but that's a very good question. By the way because I didn't have any idea, and still don't, maybe it was a good thing I wasn't a navigator. [laughter] ... I didn't have any clue, but one of my good boatswain friends explained it to me. ... You have a lock and the lock is a little bit bigger than the ship, and, it means maybe a quarter of a mile, but that's a little bit for the ship. So, what they do is, they go forward and ... they have the bow going very much towards the corner of the first lock. You can do it in there, I think he said the second lock too, you can do it. They can also back up, like you do a car, and then, apparently, you can swing this way. ... They fill the lock with water, and then, elevate the height you descended to get in there in the first place to the next lock. Now, they can't empty the water. Otherwise, you're going to have trouble. So, what they have to do is--they have to open

the other lock here, and then, you have to float into the next lock. I watched part of these processes from the ship. Most had to get off of the ship. ... All ammunition had to be tightly stowed. ... They took a lot of precautions. Then, when they turned it around, it was a positive move. They felt that was better than having us go through, turn around and come back again.

SH: Part of your escort would have already gone through as well.

BE: Well, I don't know who went through, but I know that we were the only ones left that turned around, or whatever we did.

SH: I mean, there would be some ahead and some behind. You would not be alone.

BE: No, well, there was nobody in the first lock.

SH: Plus, there has been an unconditional surrender.

BE: Yes. They stopped everything, all action. Some of the men were upset, because, when you get to the third lock--was it the third lock or the fourth lock? One lock, they stop and you can go on an overnight pass into Panama City for leave, so that they felt they had been cheated. There's always somebody unhappy, you know, but we didn't get to that. ... No, we never got real leave there. So, then, we started on our way, down the path, ... going the wrong way, of course, upstream, but, then, the stream narrows and goes right back into the Atlantic Ocean. You can apparently do it, rather neatly. Let me add that Lynn and I were recently (2000) at a Buffalo reunion of the *Providence*. We actually travelled down the "locks" of the Erie Canal. Much smaller, "but at least we went through," were the general comments. ...

SH: Where was your first port of call for this victory tour?

BE: We stopped at Norfolk. ... Then, we stopped at New York, Providence and Boston. So, those are the four that I recall.

SH: How were you received?

BE: ... At Norfolk, they had already celebrated themselves to death. I think they had had their party, you know, because this was a huge wartime naval base. Yes, but ... in New York, ... we got a wild reception with all the fireboats shooting water through the hoses. That was beautiful and a thrill as we passed the Statue of Liberty. Providence, of course, was *hallelujah* city. It was great and Boston, again, it was a happy city, they had been celebrating for a while. That was colorful there. I like Boston. It was a very warm welcoming city.

SH: The complement of officers that you were serving with, how much experience had they had prior to your joining?

BE: Well, remember, this is a capital ship. Capital ship complements were mostly ... men and officers who were USN, regular Navy. These were officers who graduated from the US Naval Academy at Annapolis or those going through the ranks, this was much rarer. Therefore, the

number of USNR, reserve Navy, usually through midshipman schools during wartime or NROTC, officers are much fewer and somewhat restricted. I would say, maybe, I was one of ten. I'm not sure, I have it on the crew's listings so ... I could actually tell you the numbers, but I think we don't even make up a tenth. I was told that USNR officers were rarely on capital ships before wartime. I never felt put upon, but I did feel differently.

SH: It is that heavy the other way.

BE: Yes, we were outnumbered. When the war ended Reserve Officers were the first to leave the service, so it was further decreased.

SH: Had they talked about any of the experiences that they had had prior to being assigned to the *Providence*?

BE: Oh, yes. A large number of my crew had been on a ship, oh, I think it was the USS *Toledo*, (CA-133). I don't know if I'm right. They had been on a cruiser that had been disabled and or sunk. ... Most of these men were regular Navy. It seemed peculiar. When I first "came aboard" that ship, ... after all, I was a junior officer, but I was assigned a ... higher responsibility than I would normally expect, and the only reason I think I got it was because of my history. ... Enlisted men look and if they see that you've been active or on another ship of the line with leave, they forget that it could be a casual finding. ... I found it interesting, though, that they had given me [an assignment] on the next new cruiser. ... The joke was, a friend of mine, Jack Bresee, who said he had a problem because he looked young, and he just was listed as a junior officer in his division while in mine, I was second officer. It was odd to get up in front of these experienced men and say, "All right sailors, at-ten-tion," and this little guy's telling them to get to attention, and they're all sitting there with combat medals and all kinds of longevity stripes. [laughter] Yes, it's more a USN-manned ship once you get up to the capital ones. There were some exceptions, but from the midshipmen's school, most of the graduating midshipmen, ... particularly if you squeaked through, ended up on LSDs and LSTs [landing craft] at that time, and fought a different kind of battle. ... I just always kind of liked the sensation of a big capital Navy ship. I dreamed of them, from seeing them in movies when I was a kid.

SH: Did you really?

BE: Well, yes. I used to draw ships, but I used to draw more the Errol Flynn type of ship, like ... [laughter]

SH: The swashbuckling type.

BE: Oh, yes. I loved the Navy and all that, but ... this is very interesting. ... It was almost a shocker, to most of us, to hear the Captain over the ship's sound system. We'd never heard the Captain for any other good events that occurred. The Captain doesn't say a word over the speakers. He tells somebody else what to say, and then, as the war ended, "Now hear this, now hear this. This is your captain," and then, he read a speech that he had written, apparently. We didn't know how we were going to get out of the lock we had entered either. Apparently we were in but not in far, I don't know what it was, but we got out, and we went back up the slip. ...

I got an opportunity to see real Navy, the USN Navy type of maneuvers that probably exist. It is interesting that during the war, even ships were still being constructed with wooden decks and with ...

DLE: Brass.

BE: Well, beautiful brass, lots of brass all over, particularly on the stanchions and safety lines. During the war, they built the ships with rich fixtures, but they sprayed all the brass and steel with naval gray paint.

SH: The gray battle paint.

BE: Yes, ... or they put on some irregular paint cove for camouflage. After the announcement we had learned we were going to several ports as a celebration. All of a sudden, the sailors who were regular Navy said, "Okay, we're going to holy stone the deck of this ship," and I said, "What?" "Holy Stone the ship." Holy Stone, I'd never heard the name, H-O-L-Y-capital-S-T-O-N-E, the wooden deck, and what it is, it's a true stone, similar to cement bricks, and they place a sweep rod to make it mobile, and they rub it over the blue-painted deck and it scratches off the paint and ... it leaves the naked hard wood. If you Holy Stoned your living room, you'd have a beautiful layer of wood which you could then varnish. All the men went up and down the ship's deck with the Holy Stones. ... And then, along the sides, the railings just were thick wires. Well, they took ropes, lines, and they would cover the wires by wrapping them with rope and would tie knots in them, regular and fancy knots, along the hand bars and supports as well. These were then rubbed with white paint or whitewash. The ship, after it was repainted and redone as we were underway became sparkling, absolutely beautiful. The brass was shined up, and this is the appearance of the *Providence* as we were going to go to the ports. We were almost finished when we reached ... Norfolk, Virginia, but we were at "ship's ready" when we went into New York City. It was exciting; and then, of course, everybody in their whites--uniforms--because it was August the 8th and we were wearing whites with the white hats and high-necked uniforms and all. It was a sight to see. All the officers in whites and gold braid.

SH: Did you get leave once you got into New York?

BE: ... In New York, ... I got a twenty-four-hour liberty. What did I get liberty for? I forget. Oh, I got ... some liberty and I took a few men down to the area where we have ... the naval station, but that was only for a few hours. No, they didn't give them leave. They said, "You'll have leave in Providence and Boston." They did give them leave there.

SH: Did you ever have to go and rescue anyone who did not make it back?

BE: One or two, you always have to. "Where did you see him last?" "Oh, I saw him. He was in this bar." "Now, was he sober?" "Well, I don't know. He might have been." "Where's the bar?" "Oh, it's across the street from." ... [laughter] We went chasing about because you don't want to let the shore patrol to become involved because they're not understanding, and so, you, officers and friends ... and sometimes family that they telephoned ... go after them yourself. We got

them all, finally. It was kind of funny, everybody was laughing about it and, you know, you were so glad to be back that ... it didn't matter.

SH: How long were you left on the *Providence* after the victory tour?

BE: I was left several months on the *Providence*. Then, things began to happen. ... We went up to Boston, as we were ready and prepared for "clean-up" duty. It turned out that the USS *Providence* was to do a service for the State Department, and that was to take the body of the ambassador from Turkey, who died in the United States, back to Turkey. Now, this was important at that time. During the war, Turkey, at first, was with the Nazis, and ... then, after both diplomatic and battle action, they turned around and they said, "We're with the US." ... We needed some friends in the Middle East. ... So, the best way of gaining prestige was to show some level of friendship of this nature. So, the administration said, "You will take the body back, and you will be joined by the USS *Missouri*." The *Missouri* ... was the battleship on which they signed the Japanese peace agreement surrender, and also to complete the special force of three, a "tin can." ...

DLE: A destroyer escort?

BE: No, it wasn't an escort. It was a destroyer, a group of the three ships, and big guns. Turkey issued stamps for the event for the honors of the three, "The *Mo'*, the *Pro'*, and the *Po'*." I don't remember what the full third name was. I have the stamps here somewhere. I remember seeing the stamps recently. [Editor's Note: The destroyer could have been the USS *Power* (DD-839).]

DLE: You wrote it down.

BE: Yes. ... So, we got to New York Harbor on the 9th. The 8th was the day that it was official. On the 9th, we arrived and celebrated. And then, we went to Providence and Boston, and then, I prepared a crew's orchestra for the ship, unofficial at first, since we were on a goodwill tour after New York. ... We were up in Boston, and I think we were in one of the neighboring ports, Quincy. I'm not sure, but one of the big Naval Yards. I have it in the orders here. They are the oddest orders you've ever seen. ... How was it notated? I forget the exact words. "Go to New York and after due deliberation buy a suitable piano for the ship." [laughter] It's the queerest set of orders you've ever seen, but I carried them out.

SH: I have never seen anybody get a chit to go buy a piano.

BE: I'll show you. I think I have it in here, if I may. I better have it.

DLE: Yes, you ... showed it to me.

BE: Yes. I mean, I've got more ... orders than it looks like anybody ever had. They must have really felt I needed them. ... It's a great thing to see. ... It's a marvelous sight.

DLE: You showed it to me.

BE: Yes, I know. ...

DLE: As you can see, we save everything.

SH: Go ahead, read it for the tape.

BE: You like that one, don't you?

SH: I do, 2nd of October 1945.

BE: "2 October 1945, upon receipt of these orders and when directed by the commanding officer, you will proceed to New York City for the purpose of purchasing one piano for the USS *Providence*. Upon completion of this temporary additional duty, you will return to this vessel on 5 October 1945 and resume your regular duties." [laughter]

SH: This is from Newport, Rhode Island.

BE: You know what's so wonderful about all these peculiar stories is, they were friendly and pleasant. ...

SH: You have got the proof. When one goes to New York to buy a piano and you are in the Navy, do you go to the Steinway studio? Where do you go? [laughter]

BE: You first have to figure out what size the piano should be. Another thing is how you're going to move that piano within the ship. You have a lot of Navy men to lend muscle, but, then, the doors, hatchways, are different. You know, they're raised up like this and, first of all, the rise is about six to eight inches. You can only put it through the hatch--you can't push it through. So, you don't want to get a piano that's bigger than the opening and you've got to get one that you can pick up. ... What happened that was so good, I went over to Steinway Hall and I told them the problem. I said, "What would you do?" He said, "I don't know. By the way, we'll buy you a piano you can use for your ship."

SH: You are kidding; really?

BE: Yes, "We'll buy you a piano." ... He called up a few places. He said, "Have you got an upright that we can fit into a doorway for a Navy ship?" He paid for it. He said, "You have to pay for the shipping," because the Navy gets free shipping through its agencies. That's all right. They bought us a piano that fit just right.

SH: Unbelievable, great story.

BE: He was so nice. I didn't try to discuss the problems with him. I just told him what I was there for. He felt he'd have to settle for that. He said, "Why couldn't you just have them say, 'Steinway,' on it?" or something. He said, "I will publish it." [laughter]

SH: I am sure.

BE: Yes, I went to Steinway Hall. It was the best place to go, and, now, I have an interesting article for you ... right now. ... We are in our little story, one of the men of the USS *Providence*, one of the enlisted men, [William Phelan], wrote a recent article for *Sea Classics* magazine, and he tells the story as he saw it.

SH: Wow, "The Post-World War II Goodwill Tour."

BE: Just read it. When you read; shut that off, I think. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Okay, it is back on.

BE: This event you'll like. We had just started to go to Istanbul with the body, all right. ... Now, we have an admiral onboard, as the *Providence* had Admiral's Quarters.

SH: I wondered if you had any other ambassadors or any Turkish personnel.

BE: Oh, yes. We had a few luminaries from the Turkish Embassy in Washington. I'll tell you about some of the other people we had later. However, the *Providence* had an admiral aboard as we were fitted for a Fleet Admiral and had quarters for the Admiral and any guests he may have had. Not all cruisers were, but as we mentioned earlier, it was likely that we were destined to be a lead ship in a Task Force for Tokyo. The Admiral had his band aboard and we had our crew's band, not for official activity.

SH: The piano was onboard.

BE: Oh, yes. We had it on ship, but, remember, that was for my band, but the Admiral carries ... a military band with him. They stopped placing bands on board just ... about three or four months after the war was over. They started disbanding military bands, but they kept only what they call the Admiral's band, and then, it came down to the admirals' ranking to eliminate a vice admiral's band. They were getting rid of sailors, officers were being replaced, and *et cetera*, but my crew's band was there. It was specifically for our ship. It was very popular and was even popular to the military band that came on, because we knew some of the musicians who were in it. The bandmaster and I, I knew him, came on with his group at a port on the Mediterranean. "Well, what's going on?" I said, "Well, we're going to Istanbul." I said, "You're prepared with the anthems' book with the music for entry, aren't you?"

DLE: National anthems.

BE: National anthems of the various countries are played as an exchange as we enter, theirs then ours. "You've got Turkish ships and welcoming troops waiting for you." ... He responded that they do have a book for all of the anthems. "Oh, my God, we don't have Turkey." I said, "Really? That's right, they were the enemy. What are you going to do?" He said, "I don't know what I can do. What do you suggest as ship's morale officer?" "Well," I said, "maybe, if you

called over to the Turks at the port, one of them could sing it to me, I'll write it down and, if necessary, I'll arrange it." [laughter]

DLE: It gets better.

BE: "Unless you can do it better." "I don't have that ability," he said, "and I don't know how to arrange. There are guys in my band who can, maybe, ... but I'm not sure. Do you really think you can do it?" So, I said, "I don't think I can do anything. I've never done it. I've never arranged anthems, ... but, when I was in high school, I learned how to arrange for a dance band, and so, I can get involved." He then said, "All right, let's do it that way. I'd really appreciate it. It'd be really wise to try." I said, "Good." So, we called up somebody at the shore communications and we said, "We just don't happen to have the Turkish National Anthem." Now, there's a good reason why we didn't have it. Remember, they weren't our friends before and during the war. So, we wouldn't have it. We then asked the guy at the shore. "All right, sing it," and he did. I listened through good earphones--clear as a bell, I had both ears going at that time. ... I put them over my head and he starts going. He probably thought he was singing in an opera or something. [Editor's Note: Dr. Eskin imitates his singing.] Remember, it's not our type of march music, either. It's quite Mid-Eastern music, and I wrote what I thought I heard.

SH: Was this a Turkish gentleman who was singing?

DLE: Yes.

BE: Yes. Well, we're not into the inner strait yet and there are no other American ships in the port. If there had been what we'd have done is send a courier boat over to them and get whatever we could, but probably they wouldn't have had the music either. ... We were actually the first war ships to ever come in because ... they were enemies before. This guy sings it and, I swear, it was terrible, ... but I wrote down what I thought he sang, and then, I put it in 4/4, 2/4 time. What else am I going to transcribe it in? I don't know anything else. A march, everything is a march and then, I arranged it as a jazz musician. I didn't know anything else. I arranged it, but with the arranging techniques that you would use for a jazz session, and the music was mighty unique when I finished it. What I did was an arrangement front sheet with chording on this, and then sent it down to the Admiral's band men. I figured that they were good musicians, professionals, and I said, "Just copy your part and transpose it off." Each musician copied it and then, they played it as we came into port. When we come into any port, the first thing we do is play the national anthem of the host, then we play the *Star-Spangled Banner*, and then the band stops playing. Usually the host, if they have a band present, will repeat the music in reverse order. Nobody made any comments, nobody said anything, nothing was heard. Now, years later, and this is after I was a doctor, I played in the Doctors Symphony Orchestra in Philly and the director was a musician by the name of Joseph Primavera. I knew Joe because he frequently conducted orchestras in Atlantic City. I was talking with him about the service during World War II. I asked, "What did you do in the war?" You know, everybody discussed that then, and he said, "I was in a Navy band." I said, "What were you on?" and he said, "Oh, I was in the band for ... an admiral." So, I said, "For an admiral?" and I said, "Oh, where?" He said, "Well, we were all over. In fact, we were in the Mediterranean, mostly, though." "Oh, really? Where in

the Mediterranean?" and Joe turns to me and says, "Well, one of the biggest things we did was to be the first ones to go into Istanbul." So, I said to him, "You were the first ones to go to Istanbul, huh?" I said, "Do you remember the Turkish national anthem?" ... Joe said, "Oh, yes." ... Then I asked him further about the incident. "I don't know what the hell we played. We played something that had been scored for us. But we played it as a march and everybody seemed to appreciate it in our band since it seemed like jazz. So, it was fine." I said, "Well, I wrote it," and he said, "What do you mean you wrote it?" So, I explained it to him. He said, "That's pretty good, Bernie. I didn't know you could do that kind of foreign stuff," with a big smile. [laughter] To complement this story, a few years later, about 1960 I was in an Obstetrics/Gynecology residency in Philadelphia at Woman's Medical College where there was a pediatric resident from Turkey. ... He was a very nice person. ... His name was Kirimli. Lynn remembers him. During a conversation I remarked that I was in Turkey once. I was in Istanbul when we brought back the body of your ambassador. He said, "Of course, I remember that. Do you recall when they introduced the students from the American University? I was the president of the senior students." "Oh, yes, I remember. ... There were a bunch from different departments as well." He said, "I was the speaker." I said, "I copied your national anthem for those in the band that was played as the ships entered port." "Is that what it was?" [laughter] He was there and such a coincidence; how it could ever happen, it's wild. He finished his pediatrics studies, and then, went back. ... He said, "Is that what it was? Students at the American University all tried to recognize what was being played. We thought it was some American piece in honor of the Turks." I said, "No, it was my interpretation of your national anthem." He said, "That wasn't our national anthem." [laughter] So, now, you know how successful I was with my effort.

SH: At any point since then, have you ever listened to the Turkish national anthem?

DLE: No.

BE: No, I haven't. I only heard it once, when the shore person sang it.

DLE: No.

BE: I never did. I should.

DLE: Yes, I should.

BE: Oh, no, you can't tell now, what they've done.

SH: That is a great story.

BE: Is there anything more impossible than that?

SH: No. It is such a small world at times. It is amazing.

BE: How could it be so small? ... I couldn't believe it. ... I know that Joe was on the ship, USS *Missouri*, because he showed me ... the stamps and we both have ... the same stamps. ... Only

the people who were there could possibly have had this special edition. Kirimli absolutely was right, because they had the seniors from the University at that event. ... It is very funny.

SH: You were going to tell me about what kind of complement you had. Did you have embassy people with you?

BE: We had a few emissaries. ... While the ship had, obviously, the usual visitors' accommodations where our captain had a stateroom, we had an admiral's quarters. The admiral's quarters, had three small suites. These staterooms have sleeping quarters, but would only serve visitors whom you might say [were] of moderate influence. You wouldn't put ... President Roosevelt in there. It's not that posh, but the ship had an admiral's quarters. Both the Admiral and his aides in wartime, at least, are usually not put on the major ship, in this case, the *Missouri*, not on the battleship, but on a cruiser or even one of the smaller ships, sometimes, even on a destroyer. ... He's the ranking and commanding officer of the fleet. The enemy would seek rank and you don't want him to be lost when you're having a battle. I don't know if that's the reason, but that seems like a good one. We had dignitaries, but we didn't have the premier. In this postwar situation, the important dignitaries were on the *Missouri*, at least during the day, because they had more room for comfort. ... They had probably fixed it up for General MacArthur when he was on that ship to sign the conditions and receive the surrender by Japan. So, that ship must have been well appointed. ... I didn't get up to the admiral's quarters on the "Mo." Frankly, I couldn't because the Admiral wasn't staying there; he was staying on our ship. I had no excuse to request it. He was a very humble guy. He was quiet and low key. ... On the rest of the ship, *Missouri*, they really had a beautiful setup. We went over there for a "cocktail" party on the fantail, non-drinking. American ships were not allowed to have liquor. So, we had non-alcoholic drinks. Well, it didn't matter, because you had good food, though. ... They had a nice quarters and staterooms on the *Missouri* as well.

SH: This was when you were in Istanbul.

BE: Yes. [The] *Missouri* was really the class reception ship there, but the Admiral stayed on our ship when at sea.

SH: How long did you stay on the *Providence*? First of all, how long did you stay in Istanbul?

BE: I've got a real ride yet. This gets somewhat complex. I remained there until I ... almost went home.

SH: Did you?

BE: Yes. We actually remained in Istanbul only four, five days, but then we began the tour of the Mediterranean. Later, after going to Beirut I became an acting admiral's aide. After a party in Lebanon at the Presidential Palace, several of the younger officers--all fresh from colleges--were called "on the carpet" for singing college songs with the President's daughter. She and a few of her young college friends sat at the table with us American junior officers. It was apparently a State Dinner since the President of the country and our Admiral were there. While other officers were given added duty, I was asked to be a temporary Aide to the Admiral. It's

hard to believe, but for a very short time when they were awaiting a replacement from the Naval Academy to come take the job. ... Then, from there, I went right to Italy and, from Italy, I picked up an aircraft carrier, the small pocket kind, and it brought me home. It had been traveling all over the Asian area. It was a nice craft to be on. You played tennis, baseball, and golf on it and everything was indoors. [laughter]

SH: There were a lot of goodwill tours after World War II.

BE: I guess so. I don't know. ... I don't think I've read much of that material. ... I don't think it was shown to us. What ... we were getting was just bulletins as to where ships were going and the large number of people going home. It was an exciting ending to a rather disastrous period of time. One thing that happened to me when I was the Admiral's Aide temporarily, ... I was like a confidential courier, so I would carry with me some of his highly important papers and, at first, I was frightened when they stuck a handcuff around my wrist attached to the case. ... They literally put on a handcuff. That scared me. I can see some of these enemy-type guys hacking off a hand. [laughter] But I did fly to different bases in Europe. I shouldn't make it seem like I did this constantly. A few times, I would fly to them and, one time I flew to Munich and, there, I delivered some papers in the case ... whatever they were. Then, the local officers there told me that they had just opened ... one of the concentration camps ... or that they were evacuating it... or something. I was young and curious. I went to it and it was horrible. I reacted poorly to it, and so, they said to me, "Are you Jewish?" and I said, "Yes." So, he said, "You're going to take a flight tonight to Paris, as we've mishandled this situation." Apparently, they didn't let Jewish service people into it who were not assigned for rehab. They didn't want to be responsible for any problems. ... Well, emotionally, it's very upsetting.

SH: It is.

BE: It is, and, you know, they weren't all Jews, but they seemed to be mostly Jews. It was bad and a horrible thing to see. ... It has turned me off, so, I really can't find it easy to talk about.

SH: Did you go by yourself?

BE: No, several other Navy officers whom I had met there went with me. ... In fact, they were the ones that recognized my discomfort. I'm usually quite happy and joking about this and that, and I just became, "flat-out depressed and quiet." I think about this and what's going on in some of the killings around the world. I can't believe that people would murder each other like that. I can see a war, as a battleground. But it's a war, it's the way we are, and, if I'm needed I go, but ... genocide is an atrocity.

SH: They flew you from Munich to Paris for a few days.

BE: ... Paris, yes. I went there and I spent a few days there, and then, returned to Italy. ... I don't think it was more than a couple weeks later that the new replacement officer from the Academy appeared. ... Then, I had to find a ship. ... The Admiral's transport office was very nice. ... Let's say they were thoughtful. "Why don't you take a boat ride? You'd be relaxed and

happy on the way home." This "pocket" aircraft carrier was really fun, because ... I'd never travelled on anything so big.

SH: Do you remember who you were the aide to, which admiral or captain?

BE: It wasn't Ryan. There were four admirals that I had, that I knew, and I have my orders here. ... See if I have it on here. Do I have it on that?

SH: This ends with the trip to Turkey.

BE: Did it have it on there?

DLE: No, it doesn't.

BE: Oh, here it is, here.

DLE: Ryan.

BE: Oh, here it is, Ryan. Zinn came in, also; Zinn was a vice admiral. Ryan was a rear admiral, and I'll tell you the story. ... Do you want to know why I was an acting admiral's aide?

SH: Sure, of course.

BE: Because I was short. Ryan was short. I think I'm right about it being Ryan. ... When we were on our trips later, we pulled into Beirut, then, a very nice resort city as well.

SH: This is after Istanbul.

BE: This is after ... we've given the body to the officials. ... Then, after that, we began a goodwill trip around the Mediterranean. It's a very interesting story, ... a beautiful story and I've got good pictures of that. ... I'll make this brief. The Lebanese government had a party for their President and they invited us. This was a lavish state dinner with many dignitaries present. ... It was officially being hosted by the President and his daughter who went to school in America at Vassar. ... I was with the young "officers," and so, I was at the table with her. ... We had some very nice-looking officers, Lynn can tell you, ... Irv, Bob, Jack and all, we've seen most of them since. Oh, they were really great party guys as well. So, we were sitting there and talking and the President's daughter started to joke about how it gets a little boring for her. She's there for this stupid thing and so, she starts to sing. ... I think she sang either a Harvard or a Princeton song, or something like that, and we all joined in. Hey, then we're singing away, and this is a diplomatic party and we've got a bunch of big brass from all over and the President of ... the country. ... The President of the country didn't say a word, of course, but the admiral told the rear admiral, the rear admiral told the captain, the captain told the commander and the commander told the Lieutenant Senior Grade, the next line officer, "Send those guys back to the ship and I don't want them to move out of their quarters, and put the Marines on guard." Oh, he was upset, and so, all of a sudden, ... in the reverse order through the ranks, each one of us were told to get up and go, and we got to the dock and they said, "Go!" We got on the ship's barge

and they took us back to the ship. As we got off the boat, there were the Marines, standing there, [laughter] and we were escorted right into our staterooms and confined there. The next day, we got word that the Admiral wanted each one to come separately to his cabin and speak with him. Remember, what it implied. ... Later on, I got to know him rather well. ... Each one, he assigned some miserable thing to do, like my best friend was told to take some of the men to sightsee Damascus. By the way, accidentally they broke a display glass in a store there. How would you like to take a bunch of sailors to a place like that? Other junior officers got extra duty, to do this, and so on. So, I came in to see the Admiral. I'm ready for anything. I could see myself cleaning the pots at the mess hall, back to KP. ... He turned to me and said, "How did you get in the Navy? How tall are you?" So, I said, "I'm five-six." He said, "You're not five-six." I said, "I'm five-six. That's what the Navy said." I don't want to be impertinent or have the dispensary caught. ... Then, he turned to me and he said, "You can see I'm about five-six." And then he said, "I'm sick and tired of them sending a six-foot-five officer from the Academy as my aide, and when I'm being introduced to a legion of other brass he looks down on me and he says, 'And this is Admiral Ryan.' ... For the next few ... weeks," I think it was just weeks, "in the next few weeks," he said, "my aide is going to be leaving and a new one's going to be sent." He said, "I'd like to have an aide who is going to be there and look me right in the eye and say, 'This is Admiral Ryan.'" And that's why I was assigned as aide. ... You now know the story of my life for promotions. [laughter]

SH: There are all types of credentials.

[TAPE PAUSED]

BE: Okay.

SH: Due to time constraint, this will conclude my interview with Dr. Bernard Eskin. I reserve the right to catch up with him to finish the story. Thank you both for coming in today.

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

Reviewed by Carly J. Dempsey 3/2/2009

Reviewed by Deborah Chang 3/4/2009

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 5/7/2009

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 5/17/2009

Reviewed by Bernard A. Eskin 6/28/2010

Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 9/20/2012