

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BENJAMIN P. INDICK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

G. KURT PIEHLER

and

ANDREW KASS

TEANECK, NEW JERSEY

FEBRUARY 20, 1997

TRANSCRIPT BY

ANDREW KASS

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Benjamin Philip Indick, on February 20, 1997, at Teaneck, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

Andrew Kass: Andrew Kass.

Kurt Piehler: I would like to begin by talking about your parents. Both of your parents emigrated from Eastern Europe.

Benjamin Indick: Yes.

KP: One from Poland and one from Romania.

BI: Correct. My father was rather older than my mother. They met here in America and ... I think she probably was only about sixteen when they married. He was maybe fifteen years older than she. They cared a lot about education, but like many immigrants of that day, they took courses so they learned to read ... and my mother, much later, learned to write. For some reason it wasn't as important for women to learn those things and she really was very bitter for much of her years about that, but education of the kids was very important. I had two brothers of whom I lost one when he was just a child, to leukemia. My other brother is a year and a half younger than I. He went to NYU as an accountant, but ended up at Harvard for law and has remained as such. I have a sister who was born quite a bit later ... she became the doctor of the family. I was primed to be the doctor. I am not certain that I really wanted it. I was uncertain of that for many, many years and, eventually, after many years I decided, probably I would have liked it. [laughter]

KP: From the very beginning, there was some ambivalence about your becoming a doctor.

BI: I tell you, I really think I like literature the best in the world. Once in a while, I may be a bit garbled, you know, I told you I had that little stroke, so forgive that; but, I think I would have liked that. Even later, I thought about teaching or something, but I only wanted to teach literature at that point. Anyway, I wasn't that certain, but I also did like the sciences and my parents were very, very encouraging. They would have encouraged me to go to any school. Why I chose Rutgers, probably as I say, I was sort of a quiet kid, it was fairly close to home, I could commute, and so for the first year I did that and then I grew up a little bit and was willing to move to school and live there after that. ... I told you that I had some problems in my scholastic work. The first year my father probably felt a little bad about that, but he never complained about it and so, as far as they were [concerned], they never went to school here, I don't know what schooling they ever did have, but they were bright people. My father was a wholesaler in meats. He would buy from the slaughterhouses, in those days, in Elizabeth this is. They all had plants, Armours and Swift, which no longer exist. Today everything comes out of Chicago, probably, but he would go and sell it to many, many little butchers all around New Jersey here and I would sometimes drive with him on his route. My mother just stayed in the house; she never worked. When he finally did retire, by the way, he went into real estate. I remember as a kid, even then he was interested

in real estate. He would buy houses frequently. He once had quite a few he owned. That was, he told me this, up until about 1929 when he lost all of them, and he stayed with his meats still, but, eventually, he was happy with that ...

KP: It sounds like your family survived the Depression even though they took some hits.

BI: Yes. Oh, yes, they did ... I used to take my own children, [be]cause we lived in Elizabeth for a while, around to some of the places I had lived in. I could identify six different homes I had lived in as a kid, with my folks, but they were good parents and they cared. My father was a very little guy; they were both short. He was maybe five feet four [inches], she five feet three [inches], and his temper was about six feet five [inches]. [laughter] Wow, the slightest infraction ... this man would work so hard all day and he had these three boys running around the house making noise, [and] out came the belt, “pack-pack-pack” [laughter].

KP: [laughter] What language was spoken in your home?

BI: They always spoke in English.

KP: Oh, really?

BI: Yes, yes, they both spoke very well. No problem at all and no accent, either. As I say, she was quite young when she came here and he also was young when he came here, but to each other they frequently spoke Yiddish. I never really have been able to speak Yiddish, other than a nice handful of curse words, but I can still understand Yiddish to a fair extent and that’s thanks to them. At the time, this would be, let’s say in the thirties, I don’t know that I cared. You often read about the Jewish people of the era, assimilation and all that. It wasn’t considered a great treat to be Jewish. We accepted our own caricatures, which were handed to us. Just like the black people have accepted their caricatures for much longer ... it seemed, to them, perfectly natural that everybody said, “yazza mazza” and they felt bad about it. This was a caricature and we had the same damn thing to put up with, so, what happened was we didn’t particularly like it. This changed after the war, the things that happened, but the home was English.

KP: How observant was your family?

BI: They weren’t really very observant. We kept a kosher home to the extent that we didn’t eat un-kosher meats like ham and such, but, heck, I’m sure that the steaks and lamb chops and such kosher type foods my father supplied from his truck ... strictly speaking they weren’t kosher, but we never had un-kosher foods in the house ... As a kid, I was very timid even about, when I went out of the house, about ordering hot dogs somewhere.

KP: Did you separate meat and dairy?

BI: Yes, we did do that ... and the holidays were all observed, going to Hebrew school, all the boys and my sister, too, in her turn. All of those things were accepted.

KP: You mentioned that both of your parents took night school classes.

BI: They did ... my mother took them later.

KP: While you were growing up?

BI: They had, yes, they had taken some earlier. She was very, very self-conscious about her inability to write ... She could read, a little haltingly perhaps, and she felt it so keenly that she did take classes and she didn't become a linguist on paper, but she could handle herself.

KP: Your mother was a housewife. Did she ever work outside of the house?

BI: She never did, never.

KP: Did she join any organizations as a volunteer?

BI: She only did later on, as we all grew older and she did, too, then she did. She joined these Jewish groups, *Hadassah* and such things; she joined choirs and such, which she had never done. She was a good woman, but she tended to be with her children. She wasn't that much older than we were [laughter] and she did learn to drive fairly early, which wasn't always typical, and handled herself, I still remember, in some serious emergencies. One time a wheel came off the car, it spun around on the highway, [and] she ended up okay; didn't get bothered. So, she would take the kids around, take us shopping with her. I remember Union Square, New York had an old S. Kline's.

KP: Oh, yes.

BI: It was infuriating to us to have to stand there while she tried on every dress in sight and pointed out any little imperfection to the shop girl to ... save a little money [laughter].

KP: [laughter] You grew up in Elizabeth, which even today still has a large Jewish community.

BI: Yes, it still does.

KP: It is not as large as it was in your day.

BI: No. When I was ... born, we lived down in Elizabethport, which at that time was really the concentration of the Jewish people, especially Orthodox and religious people. ... My father was the hardest worker of a large family, he had many brothers and sisters, and he set up a number of

businesses, which he gave to his family. [He] set up a soda water business, a milk business, and he started a new one for himself. Eventually, when we moved, it was uptown to what's called the Elmora district. It's changed a lot now, of course. Elizabethport is all probably Hispanic and black by now and yet, uptown in the Elmora Avenue, as I understand, it's still pretty solidly as it was; mostly Jewish, probably a lot of Irish, too.

KP: Were most of your neighbors Jewish or did you have a mixed neighborhood?

BI: In any of our places uptown, it was a mixed neighborhood, yes.

KP: The bay area, however, was more ...

BI: Yes, down in the port, it was mostly Jewish in those days and I had many uncles down there. ... You know, as a close knit family, in spite of there being many cousins and uncles and such, every Sunday we'd get together at grandpa's house. He spoke Yiddish all the time. [laughter]

AK: Were these uncles and cousins from your father's side or did your mother have any?

BI: This was almost entirely my father's side, but yet my mother had one brother and one sister. ... We did get to visit them very often also; she was always very close, but neither lived in Elizabeth. One lived in New York and one lived in Linden, not far away. ... So that side remained ... very friendly, still, I don't see them much. ... My father's side was so large, it really took our attention and, in fact, maybe twenty years ago, I organized a cousins club, first cousins. There were so many, with all their children, and we would meet once a month, or so, for fifteen years. It was a very long run. Eventually, these things break up; people move away, children get older. While the kids were small, everybody liked it. It's funny, they were very disparate at first; some of the cousins wouldn't talk to each other. ... Under this, they all got together; every year a big picnic. It was very nice, [for] about fifteen years.

KP: Did you enjoy being a part of a large family?

BI: Oh, yes, yes. I really did. I have only two children of my own and I often used to groan about this to my wife, that maybe we should have had a third. She said, "You go have it." [laughter] This weekend I'm going to visit my daughter and grandchild; I have two grandchildren.

KP: You went through the Elizabeth public schools. Did you feel the school system was good?

BI: Well, the high schools in that time, I think now it's changed, but they were separate; a girls' school, which was called Battin, may still exist, I don't know, and Thomas Jefferson was the boys' school. Even though there were lots of Jews down in the port, in the Elmora Avenue area there weren't as many and so my memories of that and Elizabeth in general, is that the blue-

collar element was the strong element. They weren't always kindly disposed toward Jews. I can still remember one day I was walking across the street and I must have walked in front of a car who was about to move, something I still do [laughter], and I ... heard this voice holler out, "Kike!" That's an old curse, you don't hear it that much; it's an old slang word. I don't know what the derivation is and that's what would happen. ... There were a group of kids who would chase me down the street everyday when I was a kid. Every so often, they would catch me. [laughter] ... Holler at me all the, all the words they could think of. ... It never really was much more than shoving, but I do remember that. This sort of thing went on constantly, and yet it didn't really matter.

KP: Did you have any fraternities in your high school?

BI: There were some, I imagine. I didn't join any.

KP: You did not join any.

BI: I wasn't a joiner. I had only a few friends; we were very close. Ironically, my very closest friend, who wasn't Jewish, in junior high and in high school, is now one of my brother's closest friends and I hardly see him at all. [laughter]

KP: Really?

BI: Yes.

KP: How did you become friends?

BI: Oh, I don't know, we just had something together. His name was (Baird?) ... Harry (Baird?) who, I don't know whether he went to Rutgers or not, I forget; I don't think so. ... We were very close all those years. I think he was planning to be an engineer; he ended up as a doctor. ... Eventually ... he needed legal work and so, because he knew me and that I had a brother who was a lawyer, he went to my brother. ... So, now they see each other very regularly.

KP: So in a sense, you are still in touch with him indirectly.

BI: Yes, I only see him at Joe's house, though.

KP: Yes.

BI: Still friendly.

AK: Did you play any sports in high school?

BI: Nothing with the school. In fact, I didn't go out for any sports in college either. ... You know in gym, and such things, you sometimes did and I was buddies with one of our football players. We were, the college team was always inept; they still are, by golly [laughter]. ... They were really inept. ... His name, I think, was Bella Rieger, R-I-E-G-E-R, you may find his name in your records. He became a doctor I believe and we were buddies. He may not remember me, [but] I remember him ... so he would always make me a backfield man on his team just for the gym classes and such. [laughter]

KP: A number of people in the Newark and Elizabeth areas have described what were fairly significant German communities.

BI: Yes, probably those kids who chased me were from German people. I still remember one of my wife's best friends was a young German woman. She was a nice woman, but she married a man who was, remember this was before World War II [and] nobody knew of the terrible things going on. ... So that he ... perhaps was proud of his country, it seemed to be coming back. ... At the same time, the anti-Semitism was a known concomitant of that and, nevertheless, he was proud of it and I remember that my mother's friendship with this young woman was broken and she had known her for a long time.

KP: Over her husband's views?

BI: Because of her husband, yes. So, there was this fairly strong element. Also Polish people, quite a few in Elizabeth.

KP: And there was tension there between ...

BI: There was a certain tension, yes.

KP: Did you know if any of the students in your high school or their parents were *Bund* members? Did you encounter the *Bund* at all?

BI: No, I couldn't say that I had any direct experience with all that. I don't remember that Elizabeth really had any organizations that hit the newspapers. They may have, I don't remember, but it was nothing major.

KP: I have interviewed someone from Elizabeth who remembers very distinctly a great soda fountain in Elizabeth.

BI: Oh, yes?

KP: Do you remember that at all? I am curious because someone went on at length; he became a waiter and you had to memorize the entire menu.

BI: Is that right? I don't remember that.

KP: I was wondering.

BI: Probably it was pretty rare that I went out to eat or anything. [laughter]

KP: Your father sounds like a very incredible businessman.

BI: He was a good businessman, yes.

KP: Also, it sounds like he worked a great deal.

BI: He worked very late, six days a week, as I say, so on Sunday, it had to be quiet in that house and it rarely was. ... He worked quite hard. ... I remember as a kid we would sometimes go to these bungalow places, these colonies, up in the *Borschtbelt*, up in the Catskills ... later on, not much of that, they never took vacations, at that period. Later on they did, after we were grown already and my sister, who was the apple of their eye, she was able to convince them to do some of those things when she was just a kid. She's still a sweetheart, by the way. Lives in Maine, she's a doctor; husband's a doctor; their son's a doctor. [laughter]

AK: Was there any pressure on you to follow in the footsteps of your father, into the business world?

BI: No, no ... as a matter-of-fact, his pressure really was for the professional fields.

KP: He wanted to have sons who were doctors and lawyers.

BI: Yes, yes, ... later on, I'll tell you about when I wasn't able to make it into medical school. I did try, in a sort of a half-hearted style, after I came back. He encouraged me to go into pharmacy, ... [which] he felt was sort of allied to it, which is where I spent most of my life, for better or worse. I'm here.

KP: Your sister became a doctor. Did your parents want both the boys and the girls to have a college education and become professionals?

BI: They surely did. ... They didn't push, I mean, to some degree, it was sort of assumed that I would go for medicine, many Jewish kids did. ... They didn't really push upon that. Probably my brother, they urged him to go into accountancy, which seemed a logical field. It was his idea to go into law school and he sent one application only, and it was accepted so, he ended up at Harvard.

KP: Do you think your brother went to law school because of the GI Bill?

BI: I think his ambition put him there. The GI Bill certainly would have helped him ...

KP: Do you think he would have applied anyway, even without the GI Bill?

BI: Yes, and I think that my father would have supported him the best that he could, absolutely, I'm convinced.

KP: What did you know about what was going on in Germany and in Europe in general when you were growing up? How much did you follow?

BI: Well, we really did, you know, what I remember, I used to like to make a little amateur, little newspaper. I was doing my fanzine even then. I don't know; I just did it, just for us, and it would be concerned with the news events of the day. To most of us, we saw that Germany under Hitler was a danger. We didn't realize how bad it was, but we knew that, and so already they were the villains for us. So, I really was quite aware of Europe; I read my newspapers even then, you know.

KP: Besides the newspaper, what did you do for fun while you were growing up?

BI: Well, that was it. Of course, ... my brother who died, let's see, ... I'm a year and a half older than my brother Joe, the lawyer. I was maybe only about three or four years older than the other boy, so we had the three of us. He died of leukemia in ... 1943, it was the summer of '43, and, you know, it's in those days we knew nothing, six weeks he was gone. ... Until then, we had the three of us and we played together very, very much. We really were a unit; we didn't need outsiders. I can still remember driving my mother crazy. We had an old house in Elizabeth with a long alleyway and a garage behind it and ... we used to play a form of baseball, throwing clothespins. We ruined all her clothespins. [laughter] They landed in the neighbor's yard next door, a very un-amused family. They weren't Jewish, they never said anything, but they weren't too happy about this. They had a little garden with, pent up with clothespins in it, and that was the three of us. ... Really, it was a tight unit and we didn't need too much else. There were movies, very frequently movies, maybe twice a week even, but certainly every Saturday matinee. My mother would take us to New York, as I said, fairly often and although she knew nothing of it, she would try to go to museums, too, I still remember this. ... She enjoyed it, going to the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art], places like that, but it really was pretty much enclosed. I didn't have that widespread of friends. I did have friends and we would play ball. That was mostly our amusement, just playing ball together.

KP: Had you traveled outside of New York or the Catskills?

BI: Never.

KP: When the war came along, your experience changed.

BI: That's right. I never saw a Broadway show until I was already wearing a uniform. ... So our experience with New York tended to be the things that were free. We did like ... our parents would take us to the various beaches, Lawrence Harbor, which I still pass on the Parkway [Garden State Parkway] now and then, was very popular with them. It's not too far from Elizabeth. ... My father would sometimes, he would take a vacation once in a while, in the summer we'd go to Bradley Beach. In those days many Jews went there; I don't know if they still do and they would rent a bungalow for a while. He ... might bring his father down, who in the middle of the night could be counted on to go, "Ohhhh!", for an hour every hour or so. [laughter] ... My wife complains at me now that I do it. [laughter] Family inheritance, "Ohhhh," the whole world, [the] weight of the world is on his shoulders. [laughter]

KP: What did your parents think of Roosevelt and the New Deal?

BI: Strong defenders. He was, of course, the man in shining armor to all the working classes, yes, and it was unheard of to vote any other way.

KP: Even though your father was a businessman he ...

BI: Oh, yes, strictly.

KP: He was ...

BI: ... strictly Democrat and for Roosevelt all the way, yes.

AK: Were they involved in local politics at all?

BI: No ... he never got involved in any form, at all. He just was a democrat, that's it. He didn't even go to synagogue that regularly; he worked on Saturdays. He didn't go that regularly.

KP: You have described your father as a man who worked six days a week, rested for one, and went back to work for another six more days.

BI: Yes, yes, professional. We would listen to the radio at night. He would listen, I guess to Jack Benny and Fred Allen and all those things and he would listen to those things, he enjoyed them. Music, as such, he enjoyed listening, he would tap his foot; it meant nothing more than that to him. ... My parents didn't go to the movies as much; for us, every Saturday.

KP: Before we started the interview, you mentioned you applied to Rutgers because it was the closest.

BI: Probably.

KP: Had you thought of other schools at the time?

BI: I don't think I applied to any others; I don't think so. Maybe I just didn't want to go away from home or possibly, I don't remember, maybe he didn't really have that much money, he may not have encouraged going away; Rutgers was a little less expensive, too. To go further away would have entailed a lot more money. I have a feeling that maybe he might have not wanted one further away. My brother went to NYU for that account... and he commuted.

KP: He commuted into New York.

BI: Yes, yes, into New York every day.

KP: You had attended an all boys' high school and then to Rutgers, which was an all male ...

BI: ... College, yes.

KP: What was that experience like? For most people, high school had been co-educational.

BI: Yes, I never was much of a dater at all. I didn't go with girls really very much. I think that, in fact, I didn't really have a girlfriend, as such. ... My wife wasn't the first, although she laughs ... she knows who the first was and finds her, "Fat Shirley," she's referred to. [laughter] [You] better not quote that, her brother went to Rutgers. [laughter]

KP: We might have to leave that out. [laughter]

BI: Her ... brother went to Rutgers and for years he was a dear friend and she was a lot of fun. ... That was after the war, I didn't really have a girlfriend until then. I admired from afar. I once wrote a cute essay. I have done a lot of work in that fanzine field, written a lot of essays. I've had a lot of stuff published like that, that's [on a] more serious level. ... I once wrote a cute essay about my three Irish girls. These three girls I knew really only from afar, in a way. I still remember their names, which I will not tell you. [laughter] The essay they can print in the booklet, in the *Rutgers Alumni Monthly*, if they want, it's a pretty cute essay, "Me and My Irish Girls." ... I did like a pretty girl, my son likes a pretty fellow, what could I tell you. [laughter] I have no objections; he has a very nice companion. ... I did like a pretty girl, but I made no advances. Why? I don't know why. Shy.

KP: Were you fairly shy in high school?

BI: Yes.

KP: Even into college, you were still shy ...

BI: ... And into the army. Yes, I can't pretend otherwise.

KP: When students today look back at the *Targums*, it is clear that it was a very different social world then. I mean, there were the whole series of social events.

BI: Yes.

KP: There were the balls, the dances, and the fraternity parties.

BI: Yes. I went to none that I recall.

KP: Really?

BI: Yes. Well, if it's a fraternity, you know, I might go to the party, but ... everything would be stag for sure. I don't know, who knows, there might have been a date set up now and then. It would just be a formal date at most.

KP: Those types of social events did not appeal to you.

BI: It really didn't, I guess. Yes, it really didn't.

AK: What do you remember from the 175th anniversary celebration? Do you remember much of that?

BI: What year was this in?

AK: '41.

KP: '41, '42.

BI: Oh, no, I don't remember. That would have been in a commuting period, so that I really wouldn't.

KP: You both commuted and lived on campus. What were the differences?

BI: Oh, I found it much better living on campus, sure ... really did, and it became fun finally. I really had no fun the first year; maybe I would have done scholastically better, too, had I lived there. Living on campus, I was part of the school and it began to mean more. ... I was speaking before about my interests, like English. I remember I had a fine professor for the first year and I never got less than an "A" in English. He started it probably. What was his name? C. Rexford

[Davis], something or other, I don't remember, nice man. ... It was much livelier on campus, and all kinds of pranks were played in the fraternity house, too, I still remember.

KP: Do you remember any of the pranks?

BI: Yes, I remember one of these guys, God, it was so complicated. They had set up a pail of water on a top of a door; it was slightly ajar, the door, and I remember the reason, too; there was a fellow who was a real bookworm; you know, people always resented bookworms. Even when I was in the Army. ... I was once in a lab school, lab tech school, and they had a bookworm there, too, and they treated him [badly]. ... In Rutgers, I can still remember, they put up this pail of water on his door, which was slightly opened, and couldn't get him. They call him to come out, couldn't get him to come out, so they poured some cigarette lighter fluid on the floor [laughter] and started a flame, so it would look like there was a fire. He'd come running out and ... I don't think he got wet as I remember, but, boy, there was water all over the place. [laughter] The one in the army, by the way, we were in a barrack house and, you know, they had the beds one on top of the other. [laughter] He would go out and he'd study in his lab tech school, a few of us did also. We would fire questions at each other all of the time and that's how I got to finally learn how to study. ... He slept on the upper bunk. They removed his bed, put it out on ... that little balcony you see in pictures of those barrack houses and he came home in the darkness; he's fumbling through the room there and we could hear him cursing, "Where's my ... so and so bed?" [laughter]. Bookworms always got the works.

KP: You mentioned that you attended Rutgers to study pre-med. How well prepared were you for college? You mentioned your first year was particularly difficult. Even today, the number of students who study pre-med decline dramatically after their first year.

BI: Yes, yes. I probably was prepared reasonably well. As I say, on those placement tests I really scored very well. So they put me, I remember in a, for example, a German class. I was studying German [because] that was deemed to be the language of choice for science minded people. ... Unfortunately, the class was far too advanced for me; otherwise I would have been fine because I enjoyed language. ... I couldn't handle it. I didn't flunk that, but ... I was just unhappy, I wasn't doing what I would have liked to have done. I don't think I had quite the training I should have had perhaps for the biology courses, but I managed. I was far from inspiring in my work. I say inspiring; uninspired. [I] turned in routine stuff; this is the way I feel. I'm very critical about that phase, later on I was a better student, but that phase I don't think I did good work.

KP: Looking back, do you think you could have done better?

BI: I should have done better, and why didn't I do better? Well, as I told you before, I blamed the advisor for just simply looking at the record and saying, "Why don't you do this and do that,"

instead of really caring. ... Then again, ... nowadays, I say, well, he was a tired man and maybe he had a wife and kids back then, maybe he was busy. I can't expect him to do my work.

KP: It is interesting because even though Rutgers was very small, you have not been the first who has really talked about the difficulties you had with advising. You might imagine that in a small school the advising would be much better.

BI: Yes, you would think.

KP: Unfortunately, it was not.

BI: It was rote, it really was. They would just go by the numbers, that's all. "You're not doing well in math, why don't you study some more?" You know ... it's not enough. You should find out why isn't a good student doing better in some course, but he's not a psychiatrist. I don't want to be unfair, even now. ... For most of those years, I was unfair. I held it against him, I really did.

KP: You mentioned you had a very good English professor. What did you think of your professors overall, both in your pre-war and then post-war experiences?

BI: I think that ... I appreciated more the professors in those academic subjects than the sciences. I really think the professors in the sciences weren't that well versed, as I remember back then. For example, I remember after the war, I came back and I would take courses, which I wanted to study [that] I knew nothing about, art for example. I remember I had a fine teacher in art and I also took a Shakespeare course once, which may have been before the war, before I went in, and that was good. So, those teachers seemed to care more. The others may have, but, now ... Doctor Nelson, who I'm probably [going to] be very unfair to, because I think they named a hall for him, Nelson Hall, so, obviously he was a good man, but he seemed to me to be a little bit on a cloud somewhere.

KP: You mentioned before we started the interview that he seemed to care more about his research than his teaching.

BI: I think so, and perhaps a few really good students who worked well with him. I was a passing student, but not better than that; I should have been better.

KP: Had you not had this push to be a doctor, might you have majored in English?

BI: Yes.

KP: You would have skipped taking science courses.

BI: Even in pharmacy school, I managed to get a course in modern drama in. I tried to get one in the history of the Renaissance the next term, they wouldn't let me. I had to take personal finance. What the hell do I need this personal finance for? [laughter] Yes, I probably would have done... all of these things are subject to later change. I'll tell you ... later on.

KP: Besides being a small school, in many ways Rutgers was still a religiously affiliated school.

BI: As I have told you, we were compelled to go to Sunday chapel. Since I had failed to make an excuse for myself, a proper one, I literally was compelled to go and I was unhappy about that, but they cared. Every single Sunday you had to go and [it] didn't much matter; it was only an hour really. [We would] sit up in the balcony there making jokes with a couple of other jerks who forgot to get excuses. [laughter] It didn't affect the campus life in any other way, as I remember it, that religion was only that ...

KP: It was only the chapel.

BI: ... Just that, yes. It was not a religious school in any other way. You didn't have to walk around carrying crucifixes or Stars of David, nothing.

KP: [laughter] There were class rivalries before the war. The freshmen had to wear beanies. Do you remember any of that?

BI: I had to wear one, now, yes, that's right, I did. You had to say certain things when you saw an upperclassman; react in a certain way, which I barely remember. This can't compare to the hazing in military schools that you hear about. ... Yes, there was that sort of thing. We didn't have a propeller on the beanie, just the beanie. [laughter] That's right. It was sort of fun, though, we really didn't mind it that much.

KP: Did you experience hazing in the military schools you attended?

BI: When I was in the army, you mean?

KP: Yes.

BI: No, I never had.

KP: No.

BI: I doubt, by that time, if I would have taken it. ... I was a little older by then.

KP: Did you attend any of the football games?

BI: Oh, yes, sports was very big with my entire family. We went to every single one of them; hollered and yelled and screamed, probably still would if I went. [laughter] Yes, I have always liked sports.

KP: Rutgers placed a great deal of emphasis on athletics.

BI: Yes, they tried.

KP: Even if they were not very good at it, people were very into sports.

BI: Yes. Just to anticipate a little bit, by 1943, you see the atmosphere was different in those days, in terms of young people. We felt like slackers if we weren't in the Army; felt guilty. After Vietnam, that sort of attitude hardly exists, nor should it exist, as far as I'm concerned, but that's how we felt. ... I remember I just didn't care anymore, whatever happened in the school, you were just waiting. I was ... rejected because of my eyesight, but only temporarily. I was told, in three months I would go into the service. So I knew that I was going to go, in a limited way as a medic, and I just didn't care. I remember that I went to gym, I remember that last year, the first one or two times and never went again. Would you believe they made me make it up? [laughter]

KP: When you came back?

BI: When I came back, in 1946 or [194] 7, I forget which year it was, maybe [194] 7, I had to make it up. Ironically, because of my sports, maybe, I got to like it. I had to take two gym classes; one was the regular gym and one was this one. I remember we had a teacher who was a teacher, back in my high school in Elizabeth, a man named Wilfred E. (Cann?). [He] had a very gruff voice; seemed to be a terrible tough man. ... In high school I was afraid of him and we became the closest of friends and he used to love to tease me. I was probably a little overweight and so he'd have me running around this track, and round and round, and tease me all the way, you know. ... Oh ... I really didn't mind it at all. I made up my lousy year of gym, which I had missed. I made up that analytical geometry I failed, too. All of ... those things we just took in course. ... Sports was always big and Rutgers did supply that, yes they had.

KP: So while you did not go to the dances, you went to all the games?

BI: [I] went to all the games. [laughter]

KP: Because you were in the Class of '45, you experienced Rutgers before the war. How do you feel the war changed Rutgers?

BI: No, I didn't notice it that it changed it that much. I was there from 1941 through 1943, part of '43. I don't recall that ... I saw changes, even though I lived on campus for a fair amount of

that time. There was a, one could easily discern, a lack of interest in collegiate, in scholastic things. I wasn't the only one like that.

KP: So, were people just waiting for their time to be called up?

BI: For sure, yes, for sure. ... At the beginning, I would get deferments. I think my father probably urged me to look for the deferments. I really didn't care, because I wasn't that interested. As I told you, I was uncertain, but ...

KP: In seeking them, it is clear that your father wanted both of his sons to try to get deferments.

BI: Yes. ... Perhaps for a while we did, but my brother became a Seabee. He joined the Navy and he was in construction battalions.

AK: Before you left, did you hear a lot of war stories when you were a student?

BI: Not so much before I went. The best war story was on a ship one time. I used to go back and forth to England a lot and I was in a big convoy. One night I was in charge of a ward with many fellows who were psychologically damaged, they were in cages, caged doors, very touching. I'd be up all night and one night, oh, all kinds of hell broke loose. You'd hear noises; depth charges going down and whooping, "whoo-whoo-whoo," you know those noises. ... I don't know that anything happened, but the next day, I was walking on deck, and it was a British officer, and he told me about these U-boats and all the narrow escapes. That was the best war story [be]cause I thought it over later on, I didn't believe a word of it [laughter]. I think they were just being careful, but it was a huge convoy, such as you see in the movies, with destroyers running around it, yes.

KP: Were you exempt from ROTC because of your bad eyesight?

BI: No, I took ROTC. Yes, yes.

KP: What did you think of it?

BI: Didn't care at all for it. I didn't like basic training either, by the way. [laughter] No, I was not in favor of it.

KP: It sounds like you were not very much of a militarist.

BI: No.

KP: If World War II had not come along, do you think you would have been happy not to have served in the Army?

BI: Yes, I probably would have been just as happy not to go. I didn't really seek to escape because ... as I say, we felt guilty. It was immediately cured as soon as I got to basic training at three a.m. in the morning, off a train, and saw these, mud all over Texas, and these rotten little shacks to stay in. Immediately, that, if anything, strengthened my anti-militarism. [laughter] We came pretty fair, (quick?), too.

KP: Before leaving Rutgers, do you remember the ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program] at all on campus? Did you ever have any contact with anyone in the ASTP?

BI: Yes, no longer. ... ROTC we had a uniform, I remember, and we marched around and had some classes, and it was harmless sort of stuff, and no problem scholastically. ... I think we had to do ROTC.

KP: Yes, it was mandatory the first two years.

BI: Yes, but that was all. The other I had no contact with.

KP: How did the war affect your family? Your father was a businessman and, in fact, he was selling meats.

BI: Meats, yes.

KP: He was selling a rationed item.

BI: Yes.

KP: Do you remember anything about his business? He also drove, so he needed gas rationing ...

BI: Yes.

KP: Coupons.

BI: He was a scrupulous man, though. He wouldn't have done anything dishonest, but I don't think he did badly. You know, a lot of little people made some money in those years. Those products being rationed made it more desirable in some ways, if you could get it. ... He would just go all over the place to get his stuff, but I don't think it hurt him that much. ...

KP: Did your father engage in any black markets?

BI: Oh, no, no, no. He was very straight.

AK: How did your mother feel about the war?

BI: The war? Well, like most people in those years she'd be very, very worried. She didn't really want us to go into the army. She was afraid we might get killed, you know; really afraid of that. I don't know that seeing me in a uniform warmed the cockles of their heart any, but they knew they were like everybody. I'm sure ... had I stayed out, had I been really 4-F, the rejection category, probably ... she would have been happy. ...

KP: It sounds like you felt some social pressure to go.

BI: Definitely, oh, yes, yes. Especially, my brother went in before I did, as I said, and he's younger than I am. That didn't necessarily make me want to go that much, but it had its effect, I'm sure.

KP: Plus, I also get the sense that in your neighborhood there were probably a lot of service stars out.

BI: Sure.

KP: This even placed more pressure on you.

BI: Almost all of my friends, I don't recall any of my friends right now who didn't go. I think they were all physically capable and they all went in, yes. As I mentioned earlier, one or two of my friends died during the war. Occasionally, rare occasions that I go to the cemetery where the whole family is, I see their tombstones, yes. It was a different feeling, though. ... You were living on a sort of a borrowed time; you knew this. So, the course ... organic chemistry, the first term, I was lucky, I got a "C." I was even luckier the second term to just get a "D." They wouldn't let me make that up later on when I went to pharmacy school. I said, "I don't like it ... you want me to take the second half ... you want me to take something else, but I would like this prerequisite." He said, "Well, sit in on it if you like." So I bought a book, I got a book and studied the hell out of it. ... I just didn't care; you really just drifted through that period. Yes, ... the atmosphere of the war was complete. You were totally immersed in it, everywhere, entertainment, newspapers, whatever you did; you were immersed in the war. Vietnam created tremendous feelings in the country but it wasn't the same type of atmosphere, but, of course, that was the so-called "Good War."

KP: Did you think it was good at the time?

BI: Oh yes, yes, yes. ... As much as I hate it now, I'd rather see the leaders go to war and let the young people live. ... I see no alternative for that war, whereas, Vietnam, of course, is a strong

alternatives. You can support it if you like and you can be against it if you like and either case, I can't make much of a good case for supporting it. [laughter]

KP: You can understand how someone could.

BI: I can see that, yes. I can see that there [is] logic and there are arguments, but the other one there seemed no alternative. I was talking to some friend of mine today; he saw a movie about Stalingrad, the Battle of Stalingrad. Suppose Germany had won that battle? It would have changed things. It really could have been pretty tough.

KP: You were given several exemptions, but then you lost your exemption when the standards started to drop.

BI: Yes, yes, that's exactly right.

KP: Were you surprised when they finally drafted you, even though your eyesight had once been a barrier?

BI: Even then, I was 2,300 or something, you know. Surprised? Well, I guess, I really didn't object to it. I guess, I've never felt, thinking back, that I'd ever objected to it. I didn't go downtown with a flag. [laughter]

KP: You must have been somewhat surprised, however, because you had been rejected before due to your eyesight.

BI: Yes. You know, you felt somehow more mature, though. In those years, I guess, that I was conscious that I was immature in many ways and somehow being made into a soldier you felt a bit older, a bit more mature.

KP: When and to where did you report?

BI: I went into the service just about Christmas of 1944, at Fort Dix, and we were immediately shipped to Camp Barkeley, Texas, Abilene, Texas, and stayed there about three or four months. Basic training proved to me that the army was not [at] all the place that you might want to live in. It was hard, it was tough, but very quickly I began to learn those ropes.

KP: What do you remember most? You had really not traveled very far before this time.

BI: I had never traveled. You know, I used to think about what lay [beyond] the railroad station because I commuted so much. What was the next station like? I saw many, many stations here going all the way to Texas, the first time ever that far away. I didn't get to see Texas. There we were in a desert area, practically. Gee, every day the planes would blow all this dust into our

lungs. [laughter] ... Let's see, they had us marching endlessly, all of those things, eating fairly dismal food, and you better take every damn bit you took. It was a very different life indeed. I guess, I was missing home by that period, I probably was. I was, let's see, eighteen years old, just eighteen; I was born in August.

KP: You were very young.

BI: Yes.

KP: So you graduated high school when you were fairly young, when you were sixteen.

BI: Yes, something like that, yes.

KP: What do you remember about your sergeant, your drill instructor?

BI: They were very tough as mostly I remember and I remember disliking very much my lieutenant, the platoon lieutenant who, maybe he wasn't anti-Semitic, but ... he had that snide sort of attitude. ... I still recall one thing, they would ask you your religion and ... one day I said, "Hebrew." I don't know why. ... Remember, the word "Jew" ... was a pejorative term, you somehow didn't like it. It seemed like, you know, you had this wispy black beard and you walked hunched and grabbed money, all the caricatures. ... So he looked up and he says, "How come you said Hebrew, not Jew?" That I remember, I don't remember what my response was, or anything, but it was interesting that it happened. Now, he didn't say it in a nasty way, maybe I'm misinterpreting him.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... I remember that. Secondly, we would live in little shacks, these little pasteboard shacks. Underneath, they were raised off the ground, it was all mud down there; black widow spiders were there. ... One fellow used to collect them and put them in jars and feed them grasshoppers, yes. [laughter] ... In this little platoon I was the only Jewish guy, and maybe fourteen or twenty, I don't remember what it was. ... We had one guy who was rather ...

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

KP: You were saying that this guy was very vulgar.

BI: Yes, ... religion was a big thing, especially, you had a great many of southern guys there and they were very strong on religion. There was one fellow I remember who was rather pious in his way and when he'd get angry he would say, "Oh, shoot!" ... The guys would say to him, you know, they would tease him, "What are you saying 'oh, shoot' for? Say ... what you mean, say, 'oh, shit!'" [laughter] No, ... he'd be hurt by this. ... This other fellow was a big guy and it may

have meant nothing, I don't know, he was rather loud, so I jumped on him and we had a bit of a fight. Everybody broke us up and I will say that they were on my side and, finally, we became friends. Nothing like a good fight once in a while, and we became friendly. ... In my whole company, this was just the platoon, but the whole company, there was only one other Jewish fellow. He was a New York fellow. If I had caricatures, he really had the caricatures [laughter] and so he would get teased, but we had no other trouble than that. There was no racial trouble. Black people, of course, we didn't see. The black servicemen were kept by themselves.

KP: Were there any on your base?

BI: Blacks?

KP: Yes, in Abilene.

BI: I don't recall any now. There may have been some drivers and such things, you know, but I don't remember that. So, I was only there for like three months.

KP: You mentioned that you were the only Jew in your platoon.

BI: In my hut, I was the only one in my platoon and one of two in my company.

KP: Where were most of the people from? You mention there were some Southerners.

BI: Well, there were, I guess, there were people from the East, too. There were some older, paid men, I remember, who had families, some of them. They used to seem like grandfathers to us. ... Remember, they could draft them, I think, 'till they were about forty or some such thing. ... Maybe because it was Texas, that aspect remains in my mind. That was the first time, I think, I ever heard what we used to call hillbilly music, country music. All the time I would hear it, in the jukeboxes. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned that the mud had left an impression on you.

BI: Very strong.

KP: What else left an impression? Did you ever go into town?

BI: There was no real town nearby. Abilene was not much of a town, so you were really on the post. I guess, we would get weekends off; I don't recall anymore now.

KP: It sounds like it was incredibly boring, even when there was time off.

BI: It was, it was. Once I met a cousin of mine, though. He came from, that was from my mother's side, and we were very, very close. ... He was stationed briefly in that same camp and ... he was a clerk. He looked me up, he had been in longer than I, and he found me, but I didn't do much there. However, after a few months, they told us they were gonna do ... testing for people to go to lab tech school, various technical schools and this, I was dying to do anything to get out of here. ... So then, I remember we took the tests; this is when I worked hard to get a good placement. [laughter] ... I did all right and we were sent to Missouri, Springfield, Missouri, O'Reilly General Hospital it's called; probably no longer there. ...

KP: Before leaving basic, you were drafted to be in the medical corps.

BI: Yes, medical department, it was called; doctors were the corps.

KP: What did you learn in your basic training?

BI: You see, as a medic, you wouldn't handle weapons.

KP: So, you did not learn how to shoot.

BI: I had eyeglasses. That's right, you wouldn't learn to shoot. I never handled a rifle at all, in basic training, because you would have that big red cross on you, if you were in certain action. You'd have the red cross and theoretically they weren't supposed to shoot at you, that sort of thing, theoretically.

KP: I have interviewed people who aimed for the red cross.

BI: Yes. ... [laughter]

KP: [laughter] Please continue about your training.

BI: So, you did have to go through, one of my favorite other memories is the obstacle course, where, theoretically, and maybe for real, bullets were whistling over your head while you got as low as you could to the ground and squeezed your way through a ...

KP: So, you did go through that.

BI: Oh, yes, barbed wire fences and all. ... My favorite one there was, near the end you had to go hand ... by hand on a rope, over a stream. ... When I entered the service, I was about, over two hundred pounds and I lost weight quickly, you're bound to with all that you go through there, but not quickly enough, and I knew I'd never make it; I didn't have strong arms, I still don't. I knew I wouldn't make it over that river, that rope. ... You stand in line waiting, because you had everything on, full field pack, helmet, the whole business you'd have on. [laughter] You weighed

a lot and the guy in front of me would go plunk into the water, I'd laugh my head off. I always liked slapstick. ... The guy says behind me, "What are you laughing [at]? It's going to happen to you." I says, "Yes, but it's funny," [laughter] and, sure enough, into that water. When I came back, by the way, from lab tech school, I was older and wiser by a few months, and the finish line and the starting line weren't that far apart. So very casually, without making any notice, I ... walked over to the finish line because I would have been in that water otherwise. [laughter] ... The obstacle course and the mud, those remain. Also, let's see, if you get sick once in a while, if you got sick even a few times, they'd say, "Boy, ... what are you trying to get out of things?" You know, you'd find yourself on KP or something as soon as they could do it. One time I got angry, I started splattering water all over the place. Well, did I get it, "Private!" some sergeant hollers, "Heavy," they used to call me. "Hey, Heavy." [laughter] It's funny in retrospect.

KP: At the time, you must have really hated it.

BI: [It] wasn't too comical. I got to hate it pretty well.

KP: How many regulars did you encounter in basic?

BI: Regular army?

KP: Yes, were the drill sergeants regular?

BI: Probably quite a few of them were regular; I no longer recall now. They were a different type; they would be the guys who'd go to the bars all the time, all the time. That was their life, beer, yes. All through the army I would find ... when we were in England, the other guys would never have any interest in seeing anything. They'd just go to the first bar, or look for some woman, or something.

KP: Whereas you wanted to go see things?

BI: Yes, yes. I'm walking through London in a blackout; I still remember one time an arm goes into mine, she says, "You lonely tonight, Yank?" I took my arm out, I says, "No!" [laughter].

AK: Did you ever meet anyone from Elizabeth, or from New Jersey in Europe?

BI: Yes, you'd run into people once in a while, you know. ... It somehow was a nice feeling when you're far away from home to meet them, or people from the high school, you'd run into them every so often, which is the way the world is. You can go abroad and you'll meet people from home suddenly, yes.

KP: At basic training, did you learn any medical or any first aid?

BI: Not in basic itself.

KP: You really just do the marching and the drilling.

BI: Yes, ... it was just designed, it was only gonna be a, it could be up to six months, and then you might go into action, who knows. ... Generally, they wanted to put people in those specialized schools, so you studied just to get you into shape to do things, and in school, there, you really did concentrate. It was the first time in my life I really paid attention and I had a couple of other guys who felt the same. ... We didn't do it in a bookwormy style though; we just fired questions at each other. My theory, which I would propound for years afterward, in school when they would say, "How do you get an 'A'?" I would point to a sign on the wall I drew, "Memorize Everything!" [laughter] You're supposed to think, too, but I find memorizing didn't hurt.

KP: You were in Springfield, Missouri and the hospital was your training base.

BI: Yes.

KP: Who were your instructors? Were they medical people? Were they army people?

BI: Let's see, I never thought much about that. Probably they were, probably so. ... They were also very well trained because it was a very good course in all aspects, which you might encounter of the laboratory nature; ... everything, parasitology to regular bacteriology. You did laboratory work. It was serious; it wasn't just some perfunctory thing. You went over it very carefully. It was only a short matter, it was, I think about four months, enough to qualify you to work in a lab. I don't know how long people work today to run these local labs, ... but then I'm a pharmacist, I can train you in a half an hour to count pills. [laughter] So if they teach them for four months, that should be enough to take some blood out of your arm and that we had to work on, too because we might do those things. They didn't really train me that much for general medical work, it was laboratory.

KP: Your training there was very specific to the lab.

BI: It really was, and, yet, I never would really do laboratory work as it turned out. It was always more general medical work, yes, but we'll get to that.

KP: It sounds like Springfield was an improvement over Abilene.

BI: That was an idyllic state.

KP: Really?

BI: Oh, yes. Gee, it felt so nice, it was clean, you know. The barrack houses were beautiful. Everything was clean, the grounds were taken care of; everything was nice. You felt you had been in some sort of terrible slum before. You couldn't do anything with the Camp Barkeley, it was hopeless. First of all, so many thousands of people went through there, but the other place was spotless.

KP: Was the hospital in which you trained otherwise a civilian hospital?

BI: It was a military hospital.

KP: It was a military hospital?

BI: I doubt if it even exists anymore.

KP: So, it was not a civilian hospital, it was a military hospital.

BI: Yes, it really was military.

KP: So, you were on a base in Springfield.

BI: Yes, I probably was right on the hospital grounds.

KP: The hospital?

BI: We would get into town frequently, it was much more hospitable. I ... do recall having gone to some parties or, I didn't become a big dater-type person, but I did go to some. You really had to almost; people would invite you.

KP: Some people recall walking down the street and being invited into a home for a Sunday dinner. While you were in the United States, did you ever experience this?

BI: Nobody ever stopped me to invite me, no. [laughter]

KP: You never got the invitation from a total stranger.

BI: No, I never got that. It sounds nice, makes a good movie, but ... I don't know that it happened that much. It might happen, I suppose, with a person who had lost someone in the service, or cared like that.

KP: Did you ever go to the USO [United Service Organization]?

BI: Oh, yes, yes, frequently, yes, and especially later when I finished. You know, we went back to Camp Barkeley, now that was a different picture entirely. It's amazing how quickly you can learn. I felt different when I went back; I no longer was a "buckass," as they used to call us. I felt I had been through it, you know, and therefore you might, well, do like I did about the ... it was a game, that's all that it was ... not to get wet in that obstacle course. What the hell's the difference? I would get wet; they'd put you in the ambulance [and] drive you back, along with all the other guys being wet, and it was a game to just get one up on the army. That's how you felt. ... They shipped us from there back to Fort Dix, New Jersey because I was trained to be in the transportation corps. What the corps consisted of, they didn't have enough hospital ships. A hospital ship was an old scow, which they would paint white and put big red crosses [on], and they would go across the ocean in a straight line. Again, theoretically, as a matter-of-fact, it was practice; ... I don't think any hospital ships were sunk, as such, but they would be very visible. ... so it wasn't supposed to be a target. But there weren't enough, we had so many men who were getting hurt. So they had [the] transportation corps, which would use regular transports, and we would go to England on the first transport. This is the way it was to be done, the first transport available, and then when they had a ship load of men you would be in charge of their coming back, but that's anticipating just a bit. ... When I came back to Fort Dix, now I was already interested in seeing things more. We went into the city very often, all the way from near Trenton, wherever it is, you know, into New York and to the USO, constantly to the USO, which was very obliging. You know ... later on I even went to the Hollywood Canteen. But this was New York, the Stagedoor Canteen they called it. You'd see all the stars there of that era. I remember ... they would give you tickets to Broadway shows. I saw *Oklahoma*, the first show ever in my life, and I was just there last night in the same theater, the St. James. I told the girl, one of the ushers, some young kid, I said, "I saw *Oklahoma* in this theater before you were born." She said, "I'm sure you did." [laughter] "This old fart, what is he trying, to pick me up?" [laughter]

KP: It sounds like you looked at where you grew up in a different light, especially with guys from different parts of the country who had never been to New York.

BI: Yes, oh, yes, yes. You really began to change in many ways. It was a maturing experience for me in that way, yes. ... I probably was looking forward to getting on the ocean, but our first trip, they shipped us from New Jersey to Charleston. ... They put us on a hospital ship to take us to England ... and I'm probably unfair, I characterize them all as scows, lousy little ships; they're small. They took fourteen days, on a straight line, to get to Liverpool, that's ridiculous. It's a five-day trip by a ship and I was sick for the first ten. [laughter] ... Where we went to Liverpool, ... it was a new name to me, Liverpool, you know, and I hardly got to see it because they shipped us right to a hospital, an army hospital, sixty miles, I guess, north of London. Hertfordshire it was called. We used to hear the buzz bombs going by at night. You've heard about those things? The Germans, before they came up with the rocket bomb, they had a bomb that ... had a propeller and you'd hear this buzzing sound and they'd go right overhead on the way to London. I was there maybe a week or two, I forget. ... Then, I did; I went to London. I loved it, I still do.

I've been to London a few times; my wife loves London. "It's New York with class," one of my friends says. [laughter] ... What I didn't know, because I was just a callow youth, was that in Hertfordshire, now this gets me, there lived both Henry Moore, who did this lithograph there, and George Bernard Shaw. Imagine, I could have knocked at the doors, but what did I know about that? ... It was a whole different atmosphere for me, yes.

KP: It must have been very exciting to be in London, even though you did not have complete freedom because you were in the service.

BI: Yes.

KP: You still are getting this free trip to London.

BI: Sure.

KP: In the sense ...

BI: ... The ships weren't comfortable. Well, the hospital ship was a small ship and we had little bunks and small rooms, but on the transports, you'd sometimes be three and even five high, very high and crowded. Sanitary conditions were terrible. So that part was just something you bore with and after you'd made a few trips, after my ten days being sick, that's it; you develop your sea legs. You're not going to get sick anymore, generally speaking. You'd sit there and sneer at the rookies getting sick. [laughter] [Be]cause sometimes in the North Atlantic, you had terrible storms. You sneer at them as that GI can rapidly filled. [laughter] ... It was so crowded that you couldn't go to the deck; they would keep you down. ... At any rate, we went to London and then I would come back, after that we would have a shipload. We would help to unload the trains, the guys coming back from Europe. ... This was tough. It was tough to see this sort of thing. I didn't do anything of a medical nature there, in the hospital; we just were there, until they were ready for us.

KP: In other words, you were just waiting there.

BI: Just waiting. On the ships, however, we wouldn't do medical procedures. Basically, you just took care of the people. Yes, I would have sometimes people who were not entirely ambulatory. You would have to shave them, clean them, wash them, [and] console them. You really got into that sort of thing, and talk to them when you got back to America. They were feeling very emotional, especially what they had been through. You'd see the lights of Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn when we docked in New York. Oh, it was so exciting for them, especially those guys to come back to New York, see the Statue [of Liberty]. First trip, however, we landed in Boston, that wasn't exciting at all. [laughter]

KP: While in a sense your war was very limited, you went back and forth many times between Europe and the United States.

BI: Yes, I made five round trips to Europe in that period.

KP: However, you heard a lot from these guys.

BI: Yes, oh, yes.

KP: I mean, you really experienced a lot of different stories of war.

BI: Yes, I still remember, let's see, when was the Battle of the Bulge? This was late in 1944, you see my dates may be wrong on me, because I was on a ship during the Battle of the Bulge, and, gee, we would hear the short wave. ... All of a sudden, we're hearing these terrible stories of reverses, wow. ... All the guys, they'd be very alarmed about all they had gone through, yes.

KP: What were some of the more traumatic stories you heard?

BI: Well, ... as I say, the most traumatic trip of all was the one where I had the fellows who were psychoneurotic, basically. They had been through so much, and their minds had bothered them, and they stayed in caged doors, which you had to keep closed. They would ask you to let them out and walk around. You really couldn't, you weren't allowed to, they might get violent; you never knew, and these were just guys, they were soldiers. ... Then that night, I mentioned that we had the depth charges going off, you could hear it. It was like a huge "whoompf," which you just heard everywhere in the ship, and then the whistles going off and with all the gunners, we [were] brought to the posts. The transports had guns; they were not painted, they had to move. ... We had liners; I was on the ... *Queen Mary*, it was, that's out in California now. Yes, I was ... on other major liners, too. You wouldn't know it; everything was covered over. Their swimming pools were covered. You slept on hammocks frequently; sometimes you just slept with a mattress on a table. There were thousands of people on them. ... At any rate, after that night, gee, those poor fellows, I do recall now that we were allowed, in many cases, to keep their doors opened so they could get around, and we couldn't after that; it just rattled them so badly, all those noises going on.

KP: A lot of them must have been frightened that they could not dig a foxhole on the ship.

BI: Yes, ... you never know what might be on their minds.

AK: Do you know what service most of the guys were from, or was it a mix?

BI: Probably the army, in general. It could be mixed, too, though, sure. [Be]cause they wanted to bring them back anyway they could, to put them in hospitals here. I recall that one time we

had one fellow who ... when I had that ship load with the fellows with broken arms and legs and such, one fellow had been very nice and very quiet the whole trip. As we get into New York Harbor, he starts hollering and screaming. He wants an ambulance, and he's screaming and hollering. It was all put on, he just wanted to get off fast, and sure enough, somebody used an old line I've heard many times since, "How the squeaking wheel gets the most grease." Boy, they whipped him right off. [laughter] ... We, who were working on it, would have to stay there, watch everybody. Oh, the bands would come to the ships, you know, they would have the fireboats out there, the whole thing, just like you see in pictures. ... The USO would send down doughnuts and coffee and all the girls would come and stand there and all the guys would get off. We'd be on the ship; everybody would get off. When we finally got off, nobody was left. [laughter] It was interesting, though. To finish that up..., let's see, when the European war ended, in the middle of 1945, I was reassigned to the West Coast and I was going to finally be a laboratory technician. They had some old boat they had reconditioned, the *General Gordon*, I think was the name, and it was a crummy little old Liberty ship. I went on board it once, you know, a ship gets very greasy and I didn't like it at all, but that was it, I would have to run the lab. ... They filled the holds with concrete because it didn't weigh much, it was going to go to Alaska. ... What happened was, in the meantime I found out, I saw up on the bulletin board, they wanted somebody in San Francisco, who was interested in sciences and such. Quick as anything, this was California, I was about forty miles out, and quick as anything, I got into San Francisco and managed to get it. They wanted somebody to check. The war was getting close to over now, ships were coming back, and bringing back equipment, which could have a lot of dangerous insects. They wanted somebody to check [for] those insects, if they found any. So I would have to ... climb down into the various storage areas and holds, and whatnot, with my flashlight. I found a few bugs here and there, not many. I'd bring them over to Berkeley to the lab and they'd all look at them. Mostly, I just enjoyed myself. I got out of there; I got into Fort Mason, San Francisco, which doesn't exist anymore, not the city, the fort. I've been there a few times. ... It wasn't so bad and the *General Gordon* broke in half its first trip to Alaska. I wouldn't have liked that at all. I don't know what happened. It actually broke in half.

KP: Do you know what happened to the crew?

BI: No, I guess, they were okay, but ... gee, ... that was as close as I ever got to working in a lab in the army. [laughter]

KP: Going just back a little bit more to your voyages back and forth, did anyone ever die on the voyage over? Did you have any deaths?

BI: No, I don't think we ever had any fatalities at all, and I never had a scare otherwise either, in terms of, you know, U-boats.

KP: In other words ...

BI: Only that one trip, as far as I know. We never heard any depth charges in five trips. Our ships were pretty fast. Now sometimes you were in a convoy, which was an amazing sight. You'd see hundreds of ships, the whole ocean covered with ships and destroyers all around. It was an interesting thing. Once in a while, you had bad storms, ... that wasn't so bad in a way, ... I mean, the poor guys would get sick who weren't used to it.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... Once in a while, I would manage to sneak out onto deck, gee, just to see it. I've always loved the ocean since then, just to see this wild terrible scene and the ships, the whole front under the water and coming up again, wow, yes. ... As far as the fellows, I would just take care of them. They were pretty good-natured guys, they always appreciated what you did. Once in a while, they would be demanding, and you tried to help them.

KP: Were there any nurses on board the ship, or were you an all male crew?

BI: Generally, it was pretty much of an all male crew. There must have been nurses, also, but not many and probably pretty specific functions.

KP: Were you supervised by a nurse?

BI: No. ... It was a platoon, actually, that I was in, my transportation thing, and there was a captain, who was an MD. It was pretty medically oriented, too, yes, you sort of split up the duties. I had a couple of stripes by that time so I would sort of be in charge of various things.

KP: You mentioned you had a captain as an MD. How many doctors were aboard? Were there others?

BI: No, there would be quite a few, yes. They would generally sleep better and eat better. ... They were the officers; they were mostly captains. ... Once in a while, I remember there was a ship, what the heck was the name? Some South American name, they let us eat with the officers. That was a treat, that was good food. They ate very well; I remember that.

KP: You noticed the difference.

BI: Yes, we would just go with our tray with this typical stuff. Even then, though, I never thought ... it's like I've been in the hospital a few times, I don't really complain about those things. It's a situation you're in; you just accept it. You can gripe a little bit, but to get bitter about it, is nonsense and it was only a few days. The worst part was, we really couldn't wash, just only your face and hands, really.

KP: So you didn't get a shower when you were on the ships.

BI: No, very rare. I don't remember doing any. When you get, boy, as soon as you get to a post, I used to almost shower my eyes ... I felt just dirty.

KP: Yes, I can imagine.

BI: Your clothing, you know, you'd wear the same stuff. You'd go to sleep with it on because sometimes you were just sleeping on a table.

AK: How were the conditions at the hospital?

BI: Oh, they were much better, yes. Those hospitals were nicely set up. They were pretty good, yes. ... One time I worked in a postal unit, we were at Cambridge. I've always loved it since; it's just as pretty if you've never been there as, as you think it should be. It's beautiful, beautiful ... people riding in those sculls on the water, just like all the clichés, and it's true.

KP: I have actually spent a few days in Cambridge.

BI: Wasn't it beautiful?

KP: It is beautiful.

BI: It is; I liked it. It's prettier to me, even than Oxford, which is beautiful, too. ... Princeton is nice, too, for that matter. Rutgers isn't in the same class. [laughter] ... Cambridge was, well, we had to do something; they didn't have anything for a few weeks, [so] they put us into a postal unit. All these letters are coming through, most of them torn and broken, gee; it was almost like Lucy [*I Love Lucy*]. Lucille Ball, with that episode with the chocolate ... remember how, if you've ever seen that one, where the chocolates come through? Well, here's all this candy, loose candy is coming through and we're eating candy all day long, and there I was, a post office man.

KP: Your job was to track where mail should go.

BI: Yes, we would try to save as much of it as we could and to send it on, yes. Otherwise, very often in those hospitals, we did nothing. We would just be there a short time, maybe a week, or so.

KP: Were you able to go into town?

BI: Yes, Birmingham, I was stationed [nearby]. Birmingham is just an industrial area, but I was stationed there a week, or so, and we got in. ... London, I got in to a few times during the war; bought a map and I liked London a lot.

KP: What impressed you about England the most and what surprised you the most?

BI: You know, the first thing that I noticed was that everybody looked the same. I had never seen a place where [they are] relatively pure ethnically, the British. Today it's very mixed, but in those days they were really all white British. ... They all had these red cheeks and bad teeth, all of them [laughter] and they sort of looked the same. That was the first thing that struck me. Like many years later, I visited Israel, 1975; everything was in Hebrew all over the place. It's something. It's strange to see something, here, it's all in English, but I don't think of it as ethnically the same. ... That ... was the first thing that struck me and, secondly, they were quite friendly to people. We always had very nice relations.

KP: Did you feel very welcomed?

BI: Yes. You had a question, you just asked the first person. ... The pubs ... I'd go in once in a while with my friends; they'd want to sit there all night. I found that even the fellows with heavy southern accents would develop a British accent in only a week; it was amazing. [laughter] One fellow I remember, played a guitar, he liked to play a guitar on the ship at night, when everything was very quiet. There's almost nothing as quiet as a ship at night, ... I'm not talking about cruises and all that, but all you hear is the engine humming and sometimes the water. ... Here's this guitar; it was a very pretty sound. I tried to help him, I picked up a harmonica; I was quickly stopped each time. [laughter]

KP: Was there anything you did not like about England?

BI: The standard American sneer in those days was at British plumbing. It probably still is true. ... Their bathrooms, their toilets, they weren't as comfortable as America's. ... They didn't have much paper, they had this (dog?). I can still remember their toilet paper was ... sort of slick. What good is slick toilet paper? It has no absorbency. [laughter] You were lucky to find it at that. It's just like, in those days and maybe even now just for a tradition, if you bought fish n' chips, some fish filet and some potato chips, it would wrap it in newspaper. I bet you they still do, but that's a tradition.

KP: Were you surprised that England really did not have that much?

BI: No, they didn't. We all felt that way, yes, and I don't think they really did have very much. They were hard pressed, but I've always been pretty Anglophilic.

KP: You mentioned the buzz bombs earlier. Did they ever come close to you? Were you scared?

BI: No, we were about sixty miles away and they were pretty, well, the Germans had pretty good engineering. They could only land anywhere; it was just hit or miss where they would land. ...

The buzz bombs were bad, but the rocket bombs, which followed them, V-1's I think they called them, they made great damage. ... I wasn't ...

KP: You never actually ...

BI: No, but I did stay overnight in London occasionally. I remember I stayed in a[n] ... area called Berkely Square. Years ago there was a very popular romance they would play, an old play, ... I used to hear it as a kid on the radio. Berkley Square, a fellow goes back in time two-hundred years, when he sees a pretty picture of a girl there, ... a picture of a pretty girl, I should say, so he goes back in time. It appealed to me because I like fantasy and it was sort of a nice feeling to be sleeping in Berkley Square, slightly mitigated by the thought that a V-bomb might land in the house that night, but like everything in life, you do things. ... I never even heard one go off, but they did and we would see the ... results. ... By that time, this was already in 1945, the Luftwaffe had no influence; they weren't doing any bombing of London anymore. They were out of the picture, so we didn't see any air raids. That's why they went for those bombs. ... I never got to France, by the way, at that time.

KP: Would you have liked to have gone?

BI: Yes, I really would, I guess. I don't know, when I thought about the war and all. There was still a lot of warring going on, but I still might have liked it, by then. However, I was very strong for England and so it was good.

KP: How much had you known of England before going over?

BI: Well, I knew of some of the literature, from my teachers. I guess, I knew a fair amount about it. I had read. I had read books in high school; we were forced to read Dickens. It wasn't until later that I had found out he really was good. [laughter] In those years I didn't liked him much, but, you know, you pick up Dickens, and [it] has eight hundred pages, in a book to tell you all about things. So, I did have a fair amount of idea what I might see, but for me it was wonderful to actually see it; [I] took the Metro, well, they call it the underground, excuse me.

KP: It seemed to have spurred you to travel to England since then.

BI: Oh, yes. After I was married, Janet and I married in 1953, the next year we took a little tour through some of Europe, ended up in London. Now, this was only in 1954, England is very slow about things ... especially in those years. It takes awhile to fix [such] damage, all right it'll get fixed. Everything was in scaffolds and it was closed for the weekend and we were there on a weekend and, oh, she was bored out of her gourd about London. She couldn't see what I always praised about it. [laughter] [Be]cause I loved it and it was years 'till she went back. ... That was all different then; now, she, if I could offer, if I offered her right now, she'd be ready tonight to go [laughter] yes. She hasn't seen Scotland, I did, very briefly I saw Scotland.

KP: You went on hospital voyages from England across the North Atlantic and then to California ...

BI: Yes, then I went to California, yes.

KP: The change in culture must have been very different.

BI: Yes, yes, it was. I wasn't really keen about California. Even now, I don't know that I'd care to live there, but I like it a little more. ... At that time, it seemed to me that it was a very false, everything about it, the whole atmosphere. I guess, it was as you just put it. Thinking about England, where everything was down to earth, very concrete, there was nothing being wasted; they had to be careful with everything. California, everything went, but it was an easier going life, and by now I was a sergeant, and pretty free to do what I wanted. When I was in San Francisco, I'd get to go down and get a jeep, drive all over the place. Yes, I could go everywhere and it ... was very nice and I'm fond of California, probably more now than I was then.

KP: Really? At the time you did not think it was ...

BI: Yes. ... I had a, I remember, I had a friend one time who had a distant relative at MGM. He says, "What do you say we go to MGM and try to be writers, screen writers?" Well, I really wanted to go home; it was awhile already, you did want to go back home. It was a mistake, I should have gone to MGM. [laughter] ... One day he says to me, "How long should a novel be?" I said, "What do you mean? As long as you want it to be." He says, "But, how long is it usually?" I said, "Fifty thousand words maybe." He says, "Good, I have enough." I says, "What do you mean you have enough?" Turns out he was writing one of these, there was a private, a popular book called ... *See Here, Private Hargrove*, in which he just gives his memories of the Army; it's a pretty funny book, and so he's just been writing all these chapters. I don't know what happened to him; maybe he's at MGM, I don't know. [laughter] ... I remember that I went to Los Angeles just at the time of VJ-Day. We didn't know it, we knew it was close, but I went there and I went to the Stagedoor Canteen, and there was some radio show; every star, many of them. Oh, you would know them all: Bing Crosby and Bob Hope and Lena Horne, all of those people. It was a lot of fun and they had two showings. So, as soldiers, you know ... after the first show, we'd sort of circle around and come right back for the second show, and Bing Crosby looks down and says, "I saw some of you guys here before." [laughter]

KP: California was a much more prosperous land during the war even though it was crowded, compared to England. You mentioned that you got the sense that it was a false facade.

BI: Yes ... for some reason, I don't know just why.

KP: You cannot ...

BI: ... To try to pin that down, it [didn't] seem to have the sincerity of the East, which I felt at that time, I think to some degree I still feel that way. I go to the theater all the time; I don't see too many movies though, I see some. Theater's better. [laughter] I did feel that way and so I wasn't inclined to live there.

KP: Did you get to visit Hollywood?

BI: Yes, I enjoyed that. I have visited Los Angeles since then, too.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... Even then, yes, it was nice. [I] went by train in those days. I remember, one time I had a furlough from California, came back home, I felt like staying a little while later. I think, I had a girlfriend by this time. I sent back a telegram, we had a snowfall, "Can't make it, heavy snow," or something like that to the Captain. He sent me one right back, "You get on back here." [laughter] I did. Another trip I went out by, I think when I first was sent to California, I went by plane. Boy, it kept stopping; wasn't one of these like today, you know. In those days there was DC-3s, or whatever, with two propellers. Gee, what a long, long trip; I got sick on it finally, over the desert, bouncing up and down in the air there. ... I was embarrassed, I ... considered myself immune from such things, but I wasn't.

KP: You had become used to traveling by ship.

BI: Yes, even on a ship, no matter what they tell you, there are times when the wise sailor just sort of sits it out for a while. [laughter]

KP: It sounds like your job inspecting ships gave you a lot of autonomy.

BI: Yes, it did. Yes, I would have to check ... each day, the newspaper, to see what's coming in and what might be ... especially significant. ... The war ended, as I say, while I was there. So, then they really started shipping a lot of the stuff back and you feel a little queasy about going into a hold, which was completely covered; who knows what's down in there? But I would do it; climb around checking with my flashlight, finding very, it was almost disappointing to find so little.

KP: You did not find that many insects.

BI: My wife does much better right here in the house; she hates bugs. [laughter] Just today she found a beetle; it looked like the one on television that's eating up trees somewhere. I got rid of him in a trice. [laughter]

KP: [laughter] You had the opportunity, although it sounds like not very often, to interact with the University of Berkeley.

BI: Oh, yes, they were very nice. I went to the university frequently. In fact, I visited it once with Janet to show it to her, but it's just another college now. ... In those days, it was nice to get out there, go across the Bay Bridge, yes, I would. ... Only to the lab, though, I didn't really have much more contact with the college than that and in the army, the only educational period I had was in that lab, at the ... lab school. So, then anyway, around May of 1946, we came home to Dix [Fort Dix], we were discharged, and back to my old life. ... Once again, same mental problems; I wasn't certain what I really wanted. So I went to school, back to Rutgers. They were very nice; made me take courses, which I goofed on. I didn't really mind all that much. I think I got "As" in everything. You learn a little bit as you get older. You learn how to study and what to study and I took what I wanted to take, a lot, but I was thinking of psychology. ... Then I was a little afraid because when I finished, where would I be? Set up an office and hope people will come in? ... This is the way I thought. I was wrong, again, I should have gone into it. Awhile ago, I complained to my neurologist, you know, I've had this little trouble; I had some TIA's [transient ischemic attacks], that's like the forerunner of a stroke. So, I have a neurologist, and ... I told him how as you get older you tend to forget things a little bit. It may sound like I don't forget; some things are iced into your mind, but you do forget, short term memory loss they call it. ... He had me take a test with a psychologist there, an hour and a half, various kinds of questions. I won't go into that, it was sort of fun. But I won't go into it, but the bill was 850 bucks, which Medicare paid, I'm happy to say. [laughter] "\$850," I said, "for an hour and a half?" I told this guy later on, I says, "I should have gone into this field." [laughter] My father gave me this idea. He sees me sputtering around, not really knowing where I was going. He says, he suggests, "Why don't you go into pharmacy?" I had never worked a day in a pharmacy, and by chance, I found out that Ohio State had ... a school, was bringing people in, in the middle of the year for a course. ... So I went out there, and that was it. I really wasn't very happy with the field. School was fine, I loved school. I never had bad things to say about Ohio State; they never made me go to church. [laughter] ... Their football games were humongous football games. [laughter] Oh, I liked Ohio State, I had girlfriends and everything by that time; it was a whole other story. They used to call me "riverbanks." [laughter] Some smart aleck stuck that on me, but I don't tell Janet everything. [laughter] ... Anyway, I liked it there, but I had never worked a day in a pharmacy and the school wanted me to come back to grad school and, you know, later on, I realized their point wasn't bad. I could have become a teacher and I could have, for extra money ... go work in a drug store; you make decent money and you could do that at night. ... I always thought that if I was gonna teach, they wanted me to be a teacher, I'd rather teach English, even then. Many years later, I thought about it, one more of my many mistakes. I should have done it, but then again, what's the difference? I might not have met my wife; I might have married some woman who would drive me crazy. [laughter] ...

KP: It sounds like you liked being in school a lot.

BI: I do like the academic life, yes, I really do. I think I would have been quite happy with it. I used to occasionally visit my daughter who went up to Sarah Lawrence up here, and I liked walking around the campus there and see the teachers. Once ... I talked to the dean about her situation; she had a teacher who was giving her a hard time.

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

KP: ... This continues an interview with Mr. Benjamin Phillip Indick, on February 20, 1997 in Teaneck, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and ...

AK: Andrew Kass.

KP: Before you mentioned that movies are sometimes a lot like real life and you also mentioned loading stretchers late at night.

BI: Yes, yes. This is, we only had to do this a few times, but we did. I guess, the fellows were brought by ship across the Channel, for the most part, and maybe by plane, too, and just as in those pictures, you'd have these flares illuminating the scene, an eerie scene, with smoke and all. I'm really not confusing it with a movie either, because it did happen, and you'd have to take the stretchers. They could be pretty ... badly wounded, but, remember, we were stationed, most of my times, not all of my trips, but mostly on hospitals, so that we would take them right to the hospital. ... It would be nice, sometimes you would see them better. One time I had a very unhappy episode. This man was already deceased, he was a flier, pilot, and shrapnel had gone right through his eye, right through the brain, and they did an autopsy on him. ... The doctor, with whom I was friendly, invited me to come to the autopsy; I had never been to one and it was very funny, you feel funny about it beforehand, but during the actual event it's as though it's just an inanimate thing there. It's like a medical student in medical school. He very quickly gets by any queasiness because you're dealing with an inanimate object, but this was a man and it was very sad. He just cut him all up and filled him up with newspaper and all kinds of things, yes.

KP: Had he died in action?

BI: In action, yes, in action. Yes, he was dead when he was, I guess, the plane landed in such a way they could save his ... Either that, or he may have just briefly lived, but when I ...

KP: When you had gotten to him ...

BI: ... Yes, maybe he even died right at the hospital, I don't really know.

KP: You do not know.

BI: Probably you're right, probably he died at the hospital, or he wouldn't have been here.

KP: Yes.

BI: But it must have been a rule to do an autopsy, even though his cause of death was evident.

KP: Yes.

BI: I can't recall others.

KP: This autopsy was the first time you had been in a medical procedure of that type.

BI: Yes.

KP: What did you think of it?

BI: Well, you get over the queasiness very quickly and you sense something of the irony of it more than anything. He's a man, but he's dead and here they're taking out organs and filling him up with whatever they have handy; put the organs back, stuff him with some newspaper and other things ... and sew him up, put him in a bag. This was the war and many people died, but the doctor wasn't callous.

KP: Yes.

BI: He just did his job.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... I was never bothered the whole period. I remember one time, ... maybe this was during the army, one time when they brought many of us to an operating amphitheater, ... you know, in the hospitals. ... Gee, the first bit of blood that some of the people saw, they were fainting. I once saw a guy, in the army, one time we were in line, and they would take finger puncture for various things. He fainted as soon as they took a finger puncture; this big fellow fell right over. [laughter]

KP: Do any movies strike you as being very accurate depictions of World War II? Are there any movies, plays, or books that relate to your experiences?

BI: Well, I don't recall now. I have seen some, which I even remember, I can't remember the names, but I would tell my wife, "Gee, that's exactly how it was." Once in a while, I have seen some, which capture, I wish I could think of the name, but you remember I mentioned short term memory loss.

KP: You have seen movies that were accurate?

BI: Yes, I have seen some which were accurate.

KP: Yes.

BI: Really were.

KP: Or some that at least deal with your experience.

BI: Yes, yes, the whole milieu was caught, once in a while.

KP: Before the interview had formally started, you had mentioned that the hazing went out the window when the veterans came back. The veterans were a much more mature lot.

BI: I think at that period it's true. Later on, I don't know if it applies. Obviously, today there's still plenty of it. It seems to me that they were more of a no nonsense bunch. After all of the other stuff, some of them had gone through much more than I did and I at least was around, I had been traveled. I don't think you care ... for silly games. The business I mentioned in my own fraternity, when they gave us a hazing, which consisted of many foolish things including that business of kissing the (frat's?) behind, which they tell me they didn't really do, ... that was before I was in the service. After the service, I don't think I would have counted instead ... I did go back to my fraternity and some of the fellows, by the way I'm still friendly with who were of that era, a couple of them, I see them on rare occasions. But (Morty Gerschman?), who was at Rutgers. There was another fellow, I'm not sure that he's alive; he became a pharmacist, too, poor guy ... [laughter] oh, dear. But I went back to the house and it was nice; the guys were good guys.

KP: Was there a generation gap between those who had served and those who had not?

BI: Yes, yes, I sensed this always, yes... It was only a few years difference, but I did feel older and not part of their group. I think they approached life a little differently than we did in some ways. I guess ... maybe if we saw the records for the very late forties, this period, maybe we would see that already, something more akin to today's era, than it was to the older era. I don't see today's era quite the same, you know, the yuppies and all that. They didn't exist in quite that form as far as I know, back in the late thirties and such, maybe they did, but not the same way.

KP: My impression of Rutgers was that, I often use the term in class, that it was, in some ways, a poor boy's Princeton.

BI: Yes.

KP: Even the kids who had money really did not have a lot of money. There were a few notable exceptions.

BI: Most of us felt that way. It did seem like a poor man's Princeton and Princeton [looked] down its nose at Rutgers. Even today, I'm surprised when I see that Princeton and Rutgers are sometimes, you notice I put the word "sometimes," held on a par. I'm surprised at this, but I don't think it's true. I think Rutgers is definitely on a par with Princeton, and probably has a better football team, too. [laughter]

KP: That could be more debatable [laughter], but academically in a lot of areas they are equals. For example, the history department, I think, at Rutgers, is just as fine.

BI: Oh, yes.

KP: Especially in American history as Princeton's equal.

BI: That's great. I think so. Now, Princeton has a very fine museum, but ... Rutgers has made a good move.

KP: The Zimmerli [Zimmerli Art Museum] is really ...

BI: The Zimmerli is excellent. It's not like Princeton; the campus is filled with beautiful sculpture, but Rutgers, definitely a start, and they care. Zimmerli is good. I have a lot to say, and that's affected my feelings for Rutgers, too. Art is very important in my life. I took that one course ... see, this was after the war, I came back [and] I knew nothing about art. I felt I wanted to know something about it and I took this course. It was an elderly German man, the teacher, and he loved it so much. Most of my likings today are directly from him. I don't know his name.

KP: It sounds like it was also very helpful in courting your wife.

BI: Could be, yes, yes. I could give her a line. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned that one of your favorite professors was a post World War II professor, Mason Gross.

BI: Oh, yes, he was a wonderful man; I loved him. I ... took a philosophy course. Again, I wanted to know about philosophy. [He was a] tall man, would sit on the end of his desk all the time. He died I remember, some years ago, and I felt bad at that. I liked him immensely and he was this humor, and he could get across the sense of what he was saying and I've liked, occasionally, reading philosophy and much of it thanks to him, yes.

KP: You know, I have been struck because a lot of people, even who had no interest in taking another philosophy course, just have waxed on about how great of a professor he was.

BI: Yes, I don't think you'll find anyone who disliked him. I think there's a school named for him now, Mason Gross [School of the Arts], whatever it is and, you know, it's interesting, as you mention that, to think, some of these teachers [and] the influence on my life. The English teacher I had in ... my first year as a freshman, very important. He gave me the confidence, he would tell me this, really, he gave me the confidence that I could like and do well with English. He did and that man did. There was my teacher of mathematics, not in that first year, but after the war. He was a very good man. The art teacher, Mason Gross, oh, yes, these teachers. I'm sorry that my science teachers didn't do that for me.

KP: Yes, it sounds like you were a scientist trapped in a ...

BI: Yes.

KP: ... You were a humanist trapped in the sciences.

BI: Yes. You know, at Ohio State I remember I had one teacher in a course and I ... sort of thought I was a hot shot by this time, I guess, and the first test he gives us ... it was a lab course of some sort in pharmacy ... or chemistry. ... I got the lowest mark in the room and he comes up, and for some reason, he hardly knew me, he says, "How are you gonna get an 'A'?" I says, "I'm gonna get an 'A'!" ... It worked out because he encouraged, he really did. He gave me, (Rudolpho?) was his name, little man, and he gave me that sense that I could do it and that I would like it. ... So, a teacher is a very, very important person, more than just teaching you about a course; it's the human aspect that might come through.

KP: You mentioned that you were unsure about going to medical school. Did you ever apply?

BI: Oh, I did; I was turned down regularly. Just like when I send stories out in the mail now, most of 'em, I've gotten into a few, but most of them come right back. [laughter]

KP: Did you ever attribute it partly to the Jewish quota?

BI: I probably did, yes, I really did, yes. I think it was active. In my case, ... I did qualify to this extent: I said that, I think there is a quota, which makes it tougher, but especially if the person doesn't qualify highly enough, and I didn't. I had failures on my record; that's all they needed. So, if you're not gonna qualify high enough, then ... it gives them all of the outs in the world to can you. I don't know if that still exists; I don't know how strong it was ever, really, but I think it did exist.

KP: It also sounds like there was ambivalence there. You mentioned the fear of a practice. One of the things that struck me about interviewing physicians is that, well, now it is almost a license to print money.

BI: Yes, yes.

KP: It became almost a license to print money. It was still difficult for physicians ...

BI: Yes, yes.

KP: ... In the thirties, forties, and fifties.

BI: In psychology we, and I did like psychology and I had good teachers, again, at Rutgers where I took the courses; they were good teachers. ... Since, as I say, I had all "As" anyway, ... obviously their words got across, but I did have that fear. This was a failure in myself; it was a failure of confidence. You know, somehow, you thought if you have a drug store, you're bound to do all right. You can get a job, today it's true, too; it's true then. It seemed you could comfortably slide into a little slot. What a slot; it's a very, very enveloping, limiting slot, but that's how it goes, unless you're name is Mr. Rite Aid. Nowadays, they own the whole thing.

KP: Did you like Ohio State a great deal, as well?

BI: ... Not only that, let's see, after twenty years, twenty years after graduation, I was curious to see what it looked like. I hadn't been there in so long. I had my name on a few of these loving cups, you know, here and there; I was a good student there and I was curious to see it. So, I started up, from New Jersey, I started up a class reunion. They had never had one.

KP: Really?

BI: Seventy-five years, never had a pharmacy class reunion, and it worked. After a while, I got some of the local guys to work with me on it and it came through. I went there, in those days I had a nice black beard, and I put on a wig for the occasion; I used to wear it for fun. ... One teacher, whose name was also Nelson, he looks at me, a little guy, he says, "You can come out from behind the shrubbery, I think I know you." [laughter] ... After that, I was asked if I would write an alumni column, a column for their magazine, which came out three times a year. It's called "Spur," and I did that for thirteen years. I would make little cartoons to try to make the things interesting, because I've often said, [there is] nothing interesting about a pharmacist. [laughter]

KP: It sounds like there was a war within you, for many years ...

BI: Always.

KP: ... Over being a pharmacist, on the one hand ...

BI: Yes, yes, there always is, yes.

KP: ... It was a comfortable living.

BI: Oh, yes.

KP: It does give you more free time than a physician.

BI: Yes, well.

KP: A physician can be on call.

BI: In, the later years ... you add things up, and I had a family. I've had the wherewithal, you don't get rich at it, but you do have a living out of it. The hours, some years ago, weren't as good.

KP: Really?

BI: They were much tougher. I used to work for many, many years, thirteen out of fourteen consecutive days; I was lucky to have a Sunday off every two weeks. ... I finally went to work with my father-in-law and brother-in-law, both of whom were pharmacists in the Bronx, a little nepotism. It didn't work out as I quite had hoped, in one way. They said, "Come on, you'll work with us, you'll have more time." I was doing some playwriting also, and I had less time instead of more time. For one thing, they used to be opened a lot and long hours. I had a long commutation till I moved up here.

KP: Yes.

BI: I had lived in Elizabeth, Plainfield, and then here. ... Then, finally, my father-in-law passed away; we never had arguments, we were always terrific together. My brother-in-law is one of the nicest people in the whole world. ... During that time, about my father-in-law's retirement, my brother-in-law and I established an empire; we had about three stores, lost 'em all, for various reasons, started in again, became almost a game. By this time, I was really controlling a lot of those other things, hours and all that stuff, so it wasn't as bad. I only retired four years ago, I was sixty-nine, and I don't know why I waited that long, but [I was] comfortable, I guess. ... It wasn't making any money anymore. No wonder why I said, "The hell with this," but the hours were fine; I wasn't working that long.

KP: When you entered pharmacy, it was still very much a mom and pop type business, however, you mentioned the growth of chain pharmacies like Rite Aid.

BI: Yes, the first time I ever worked in a store in my life was after graduation. I went to a local store in Elizabeth. I got a job with this man, who was a mom and pop type store. A very hard bitten man, I guess, he was okay, but in my memory, he was a tough guy; you couldn't smile with him at all. Oh, I hated it, gee, and immediately, oh, like the first night or two, I began having dreams of money running through my mind, coins, dollar bills, because I had never done retail business before, and ... just a nightmare of coins and bills, I remember that. ... After a few weeks, I'd had it; I couldn't take him anymore. I told my father I was quitting. He says, "You have to hang on, hang on, you'll get used to it." So I hung on, I think, another day [laughter] because it wasn't that hard to get a job, and then I, unfortunately, at that point, I was ready to go back to school. Unfortunately, I found a very convivial guy to work for [laughter] and right then is when I met my wife, too, and that changed things entirely, my wife-to-be.

KP: Then you no longer had the option of doing whatever you pleased.

BI: Yes, that's right, yes.

KP: If you had gone back to school, what would you have gone back to school for?

BI: I would have become a pharmacy teacher, which wouldn't have been so bad, really. There are many interesting aspects. ... I always loved literature, but, heck, I loved science, too, and really, I probably would have gone for, I don't know, something involving the body in more ways than just chemical reactions with things, physiology of some sort. ... I probably would have worked for a while in the evenings, too; I knew teachers who did that and did very well thereby, and became very, when I was editing the ... column for that magazine, I became very friendly with some.

KP: Yes.

BI: And, yes.

KP: What aspects of being a pharmacist did you enjoy?

BI: Well, mostly it was dealing with people themselves, something which vanished over the years. Today it's almost impersonal, even in my store. Now when I had my, in the Bronx, the stores were in the Bronx with my father-in-law, we had these three stores and nearly all our customers were Spanish. Many spoke no English. One time I took an evening course in learning Spanish and I tried out a little bit one day in class. Now Spanish is a fast language and it's the last time I ever tried. ... You had no contact with people; I'd have to tell my clerk to tell them this, tell them that, about the medicine, you know. It lost something, but all those other years, I

would know an entire family and this was nice, it was pleasant to be with people, I didn't mind that. The retail aspects don't send me, I never enjoyed that.

KP: You did not like being a businessman?

BI: No, never, never at all.

KP: You did not inherit that from your father, who probably would have loved the idea of setting up stores.

BI: No, you're right. He never said so; he probably would have worked with me, too, probably.

KP: You did not enjoy that part at all.

BI: No, I wouldn't care, stocking shelves and all that business, big pain in the neck. I'm much more interested in the pharmaceuticals, what they do, the way they act maybe. [laughter]

KP: You mentioned in jest that you could teach someone how to be a pharmacist in thirty minutes.

BI: Yes.

KP: Tell them how to put things in bottles. Did you ever feel frustrated? Because when I was once a director of a dorm at Rutgers for a year, I had some pre-pharmacy students and their training is extremely rigorous, very demanding.

BI: Yes, sure.

KP: Yet, in a sense, if you work in a pharmacy, in a Rite Aid, a lot of your fancy training is not put into practice.

BI: ... It's true, it's mechanical and today especially. In the old days, we had to know how to make all these esoteric things: suppositories and lozenges, golly, tablets. Today you make nothing; you don't even mix liquids anymore. ... Yet, you ... should still know what it's about; you should still be able to. ... The reason why you should still know what the drugs are about is so that you can warn a person; sometimes, they may not be getting the right thing. I remember I had a patient once who had an ulcer and his doctor prescribed some steroids; it's not a wise move, ... you can definitely exacerbate that condition. I called that doctor up and got blown out for it, they don't like to be corrected, usually, but he did change it. That sort of thing can happen.

KP: As an undergraduate at Drew, I had a good friend of mine, who had a pharmacologist for a professor, and he said to people who were pre-med, "You know, you should pay attention in this

class, or you are not going to get it.” Then, he told some stories about how his wife had been prescribed something, which made her depressed. It was a completely wrong prescription.

BI: Sure, yes, this can happen, yes. The pharmacist ... may make a mistake himself, too. ... One reason I quit is [because] I used to work in a store where the fellow had his father, who was a pharmacist, helping out. He was a holy terror; he would always take the wrong thing. I had to watch him constantly; I won't go into the stories because sometimes I wasn't there to catch him, nothing bad ever happened.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... One time, well, just one story. There was a drug called Dramamine, which you've heard of ...

KP: Oh, yes.

BI: ... For motion sickness and a narcotic substance for pain relief called Dromaran, they really sound alike.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... A doctor's handwriting, they can even look alike. ... One day I came into the store, he used to stack up these prescriptions and I would put them away. At any rate, [I] came in the store, and there's an Rx I see there for Dramamine, and ... on the counter, I saw a bottle of Dromaran. I just knew he had to of given 'em a Dromaran. Now, today when you have a prescription, you have to put the lot number from the bottle on the prescription blank. So, I would have been able to know at once, but not in those days. I figured, well, the worst that'll happen, really, if those people take it properly, it was only a dozen pills, they'll feel sleepy. It won't cure their motion sickness much, but they'll be sleepy. [laughter] ... When the woman, I remember, oh, he was still there in the store. That's right, I came in late and it was already finished. The woman had her medicine, was about to leave, but he was talking to her, it was an old friend. [laughter] A few days later, I get a call from the physician in New York, he says, "Will you tell me what this prescription is?" I looked at it; I knew right away that was it. I said, "Gee, it's all crumpled up, it's hard to read this. It looks like it could be either Dramamine or Dromaran." He says, "It's Dramamine!" [laughter] ... She comes in later on in the day and she says, "I deserve a refund." I was glad to give it to her, [laughter] but that can happen, and once again, you should know what you're doing. Even now, last year, I don't work now, but I still have my New York license because my brother-in-law has the store and in case he needed me. Although I can't do much of anything there now, I can't even, it's all computer. I can't read his damn computer where it is; it's in a bad location. ... You have to have a pharmacist on the premises while your help is filling the prescriptions. These were just smart kids he had working, kids who had a little experience. Well, anyway, I'm sitting there and the kid's pouring out a

liquid sulfa medication and, “Gee,” I said, “look at that. I’m away from this business only a year or two and they’ve changed the color. It used to be a milky red substance, now it’s clear red.” ... I looked at it, the label was the same. So without a word, I put it back into the bottle, shook the bottle very well, poured it out; it came out a nice milky color. ... I said to the kid, “Always shake these liquids.” ... So, you see, you should know something about it, you just can’t work by routine, from a name on a bottle and that’s a hazard. That’s why I don’t care for these so-called pharmacy technicians, the kids who only take a short training, but the hospitals like ‘em.

KP: Where do you see the future of pharmacy? Do you think that corners will be cut?

BI: Yes, they’ll continue to cut them, especially now, it’s getting into a few hands here. Who was it? Revco bought out some big company or another, I forget now, but it’s just being concentrated.

AK: CVS?

BI: My, which?

AK: CVS?

BI: Yes, it was CVS. My brother-in-law, we had this once ... when we were knocked out of business. What happened is, the riots in New York destroyed one store and we were dependent ...

KP: This was in 1975?

BI: Yes, yes, one of the three stores he had. It looked like a tank went back and forth. ... Two other stores we had went out of business because they were dependent upon ... Medicaid centers, which went out. So we started over; I started this little store and found another nice one, which my brother-in-law took over and ...

KP: After the Bronx, where did you start the next store?

BI: In the Bronx still.

KP: Oh, still in the Bronx.

BI: Yes, there I was. I was very unhappy about that because it’s so dirty and miserable looking. I got tired of looking at it, couldn’t take it, that’s was one reason I quit. I couldn’t take it anymore, the graffiti and everything, and the hazards. ... I was robbed seven times at gunpoint in the various stores I had. Nobody ever hurt, but robbed, pain in the neck. One time ... this guy comes in and when they were holding the gun like this, you didn’t mind it as much. If they hold

it like this, you don't like it as much, but like this, they wanted some money. ... I used to keep about twenty dollars in the cash register because crack wasn't that expensive, for twenty bucks they could buy some crack, and that's all they wanted and they'd get out. ... Anyway, this time two guys came in, and one of 'em gets my clerk, who's just a nice Spanish kid, and he puts him into my, ... the store's a rectangle, with a little bathroom back here, he locks him in the bathroom, it's just a hook and eye. He says, and I didn't know this, he says to the guy, he says to him, "If you make a move, if you try to get out of here, I'm gonna shoot the old man." So, he told me this later. I says, "Oh, man!" [laughter] I used to lecture these guys sometimes, he'd come in, and he'd stand there with his gun, and I'd say, "What do you want to go robbing people for?" [laughter] I'd say, "If you need the money that badly, get on Medicaid or something." Invariably they would say, "Shut up and give me the money!" [laughter] I'd give him the money and that's what he said to me later, he says, "I thinking to myself, there he is lecturing him, he's gonna shoot him in a minute." [laughter]

KP: It sounds like you became accustomed to being robbed, but the first time it must have been very distressing.

BI: Oh, yes. Well, the worst, I think it may not have been the first, two guys came in screaming and yelling curses, that's what they do, especially if there are people in the store because it scares everybody, or, you know, "You lousy rotten fucking son of a bitches, you lie down, you mother fuckers, I'm gonna kill every one of you," and they'd get terrified. We had nine people in that store, it was a bigger store. [They] made everybody go in the back, and my brother-in-law and I, they made us face the wall, and that I didn't like. When you can look at 'em, it's one thing. ... As you say, one time, afterward, I got so mad, I got a steel pipe, I figured how am I gonna whip around with a steel pipe. ... A cop came in to talk to me about all this and he ... knew right away what the steel pipe was. He says, "Look," he says, "Give 'em the money." [laughter] He says, "Forget about it, just give 'em the money." He was right of course; I could never have done it anyway. What am I, a hero? [laughter] ... It's true, that after a while, in that other place, they'd come in and, and all of us, ... one or two men would come walking in, just like that, and you'd look up, people are walking in. All of a sudden, I see he's got a gun and you say to yourself, "Oh, shit." ... That's your reaction; you don't really get that scared anymore, but if you have a customer, it's terrible. Sometimes the young people, they'd be terrified, they'd have nightmares every night. It not a joke, it's bad, but you sort of can tell after a while.

AK: Did you ever think about abandoning pharmaceuticals and trying to pursue your writing?

BI: I did, once in a while, think about it, but I always came back. There was one period when I was, long ago, when I was writing. I had one a couple of competitions with plays and was studying a little bit about it and was thinking, maybe. My wife encouraged it, she says, "Why don't you try it?" She says, "I'll do the work and we'll manage to get by." ... I tell you, I looked, you know, you look at your bankbook, and the money is going out faster than it's coming in. I had two children, I just am not built that way, number one, and maybe I didn't have the

confidence, number two. ... Now, my son is a writer. He wrote the libretto for an opera, which was down in Lincoln Center last year.

KP: Oh, wow.

BI: *Harvey Milk*.

KP: Oh, yes.

BI: He's ... a good writer. He sometimes uses some tough stuff in his books, in his plays, but it's good. ... I ... heard him talk last week, so he has a talent; I couldn't approach what he has. He's a really good talent.

KP: Where did he talk?

BI: ... Oh, it was a little talk downtown, National Arts Club, and he read a first act of a new opera, which will be done later this year, called *Hopper's Wife*. It's crazy, like a lot of the stuff he writes, but we've become groupies; we run after him. We went back to San Francisco, just late last year, had a great time.

KP: You must have enormous pride in that because in some sense, he is living the career that you would have liked to have lived.

BI: Oh, yes. You're right. Well, I've often, sometimes when he gets very discouraged, I say, "Well, I tell you, Michael, you can always sell shoes." That thing gets him right back on the ball again. Once in a while, I used to say to him, "Why don't you go to pharmacy school?" ... Somebody pointed out, correctly, to me, ... when he was younger, too, I'm making fun of his father's profession and what's this gonna do for his feeling toward his father? It's gonna hurt it and they were right, really, and so I didn't make fun of that, I made fun of other things. [laughter] Nothing wrong with selling shoes, there's nothing wrong with handling garbage, if you're doing it honestly.

KP: What does your daughter do?

BI: Well, my daughter, she went to school. She went to Sarah Lawrence and such, and she started off, she wanted to be a director. I'm afraid my insidious influence got to the kids. She ... really wasn't bad with some of her school stuff, but she got discouraged because the school kids who were working in her shows wouldn't show up. They wouldn't do this and that. She went into business; she was pretty good at that. ... Now she's a full time mother, has two kids, her husband works in Washington, ... [they] live in Virginia. He works with NASA, he's not an astronaut, but my science fiction may have affected him. [laughter] No, no, hardly.

KP: Your wife has been an artist.

BI: Oh, yes. She was a teacher; she was a nursery school teacher, helped to organize a school here in Teaneck for [the] Jewish center. ... At heart, she's always been an artist and she quit being a teacher finally. ... Yes, she's very active with several groups. She has many pieces in ... museums and ... organizations; she has the piece at Rutgers and she's very proud of that, yes.

KP: It seems that you have been very supportive of that, although I should maybe ask your wife that question. [laughter]

BI: Oh, yes. No, I don't think ...

KP: It sounds like you have really enjoyed the work she creates.

BI: Yes. It's funny; we really share our interests. She loves theater, I love theater, so, we can go three times a week. I belong to organizations; I'm in Dramatists' Guild, sometimes it costs me nothing. I saw *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* with Whoopie [Goldberg], the other night, wasn't so funny. [laughter] I saw it, twenty, thirty years ago, too. It was funnier. An old fashioned play, now, Whoopie isn't quite into it, yet. She knows her stuff, but not too funny. ... Anyways, for three bucks, what the hell? I could laugh [laughter]; seventy, I couldn't have laughed as heartily.

KP: For someone who had only gone to the theater, initially, because you were with your GI buddies, you seem to really enjoy it now. Was that experience what drew you to the theatre?

BI: It really did. Yes, all of those things got to me and in about, 1960, I went to The New School, took a course in drama and writing. I really just, I just loved it. I still do like writing drama better than writing stories and such. I've had some stories published, a lot of essays published, too, commentary, but the plays were nice. ... There's nothing like it ... I guess being an actor is great, but I'm not an actor. ... If you write a play, to see your words fleshed on stage, it's a great feeling, you feel like God. ... As I say, I won a competition, a play for children that was done in Philadelphia in 1961. It was a lot of fun, yes. Janet, I said to her at the time, one of my friends had told me about it, I said, "I want to write a musical, but you gotta write the music for me." Well, she knew how to play the piano a little bit [laughter], a couple of songs. So, she managed something and it was sort of cute. ... After that, a few other things. It's a very hard field.

KP: In the forties, fifties, and even into the sixties, there was a very vibrant theater community that produced a lot of new stuff and you could still take chances. That has increasingly shriveled up in the last twenty-five years.

BI: Yes, yes. Look at Broadway itself, all these revivals, *A Funny Thing Happened [on the Way to the Forum]*, a thirty-year-old play or something, hopelessly out of its time, dependent entirely on a really good lead. *The King and I*, all that stuff, sure it's tough. My son it is really quite amazing that he's had some fortune. We've seen his opera in Texas, in California, in Germany, yes. ... I mean, you don't make much money out of opera, but it's a wonderful thing. How long are you gonna live anyway? ... He's writing a musical, hopefully for Broadway. He'll make some money out of that, I hope. [laughter]

KP: Does he teach at all or is he really trying to make a living as a writer?

BI: He really is, he has thought about it, but he is really doing this, and I've encouraged it. I'm almost like my father in that sense. I've encouraged him to work at it, sometimes even, not for quoting, slip him a few dollars if he needs. The fellow he lives with is also very nice. He's a manager of many small non-profit dance companies. I suspect he's helped my son quite a bit, 'cause he has more of an income than Michael does. Grants drying up hurt a writer today, too. ... Yes, I encourage him to stay with it, but if I were to try to write, it's tough to write plays. I wrote one little one, a ten minute one. It's funny; I promise you, it's funny. [laughter] I sent this to a competition I read about in the Dramatists' Guild newsletter. ... This fellow was doing an evening of ten-minute plays [laughter], ten-minute play. You might as well do a one-minute commercial or something. [laughter] ... So, this was a finalist for him; he writes me back. ... He was dependent on a grant, which dried up, and the whole thing went to putty; he went out of business. [laughter] He was all set; he had a theater and all, but he needed the money, didn't come, so, my theatrical career, which was about to be revived, went back down.

KP: Did you ever think of writing the "Great American Novel?"

BI: No, I did write a novel once; I never did anything with it. I didn't think it was very good, but some of the stories were better than others. I'm not really a great writer. It's funny, you want to say things, but when you ... get down to the writing of it, they don't always come. They're in here, and if you stay with it, the thing about a computer that's great is, you just change it.

KP: Yes.

BI: It's very easy. I'm a terrible typist, but the computer makes up for it.

KP: What are you writing now?

BI: Well, ... I'm helping the post office by recycling my stories to one after another. [laughter] Maybe one of them will take one. I do have an essay coming up, which will be of interest to some of your teachers. It's about George Bernard Shaw and science fiction. People don't think about the two together very often, but he wrote a certain amount of stuff, which veers on science

fiction and one long cycle of plays. He thought it was a masterpiece, it really isn't, but not like his great plays.

KP: Yes.

BI: *Pygmalion* and those.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... *Back to Methuselah*, genuine science fiction, yes. ... So, that's gonna appear in a book published, it's by The Shaw Society, I guess it is. Each year they put out a book of essays and Penn State University Press. I was hoping Rutgers University Press might do it.

KP: It is going to be Penn State?

BI: Yes, it'll be Penn State [laughter] and I will get seventy-five dollars [laughter], plus a copy of the book, and a bunch of reprints. ... You see, going way, way back to that freshman year, I can probably thank, you know, I can still thank that teacher for the way to write an essay. He gave me a form to go by; I have used it my entire life and I've had many, many essays published. Some I've done well on. I wrote one on ... some stuff, I've done a lot on Stephen King, within my field, although he gives me a pain, his stuff. Gee, his last two books were so bad. [laughter] He writes with his own formula, but he makes a million, zillion. ... This essay, some publisher wrote to me, he had read some of my stuff. He said, "Would you write me an essay for this book we're doin', the first book about Stephen King?" ... I didn't care to bother, really ... he didn't say quite it was a book and I'm gonna be in another magazine, I didn't care to bother. Finally, I did it. Well, he paid nicely, he paid a couple of hundred for that and he gave me some other things free with it, too, and then sold the rights to a major paperback house. I ended up making a couple of thousand dollars on it, that wasn't bad.

KP: No.

BI: My son should do as well. [laughter] I was sorry I didn't do some of those other things long ago.

-----TAPE PAUSED-----

BI: Now, that piece, by the way, that essay, I was reluctant to do it. I was approached because they had read some of my essays on fantasy writers and also some of them about theater and I was reluctant because I knew it was gonna be a university and I knew they would drive me crazy. Sure enough, three versions I had to write to satisfy them. [laughter] Gee, all this for seventy-five bucks, but the upshot, of course, is I'm pleased about it. ... I did get my way in one respect.

... First, when I wrote it, I had all kinds of summaries and all. "Well, the book will mostly be read by Shaw specialists."

KP: Yes.

BI: ... "They don't need summaries; they know everything." So, I had to cut all that good material out, but I did insist, I had a little fantasy in a sense, at the beginning, I pretend that Shaw was writing for the old *Pulp* magazines. He says, "No," he says, "these people will take that seriously." I says, "Tough!" ... In the next paragraph, I'll start off by saying this is all just whimsy or fantasy. ... Finally, reluctantly, he let it go through, and it's a good beginning. ... At the end, I have another paragraph in which Shaw is sitting at a table, stroking his beard, and he's thinking to himself, "Gee, I wrote all those novels which nobody ever reads." That's my little editorial, and it's true, except for Shaw people. ... "I wrote thousands of letters to actresses and such. Why didn't I just maybe write science? ... I wrote these essays telling people about these things. Why didn't I write science fiction stories?" Basically, something like that and ... it's a cute little thing, as he thinks about them, thinks about the women that he loved by letter. So, I'm looking forward to that essay coming out. Otherwise, nothing [is] planned right now.

KP: How have you liked retirement?

BI: Should of done it much earlier [laughter], much earlier. Yes, I keep quite busy, really. I have friends, I do amateur magazines, I read, nowadays I'm reading a little bit more because I'm writing a little bit less. ... It's good; I'm catching up. I haven't read all these books by any means, and, of course, as I say, we go to the theater very often. Let's see, this week, well, today is only Thursday, we only went last night, but [in] the last three weeks before, we went three times each week. I once was talking to a friend and he was retiring to Florida. I said, "I couldn't live there, I hate Florida." My mother ran down there after my father died and ... Janet's parents were there. Unfortunately, I've never enjoyed Florida; I've just seen relatives. So, he's retiring down there. I said, "Yes, but you go down there, what's in Florida? Once in a while, a road company comes through. Here, in the city, I go to the theater a lot." He says, "I know." ... I said, "There's the theater here." He says, "Yes, everybody says, but how often do you really go?" I said, "Well, I don't know," very serious, "maybe three times a week?" He says, "Three times a week?" [laughter] ... It was true; I'll go to anything. I was thinking tonight, although we decided against it because I have to pack and all that, to go down South, to my daughter's. ... There's a little show at Riverside Church; a friend of mine told me it's good. [laughter] I bet it's better than *A Funny Thing Happened [on the Way to the Forum]*. Don't spend seventy bucks. [laughter]

KP: My sister-in-law is trying to make it ...

BI: ... As an actress?

KP: She wants to act, yes.

BI: Well, it's tough.

KP: It is tough, but she has performed in some of these small venues.

BI: Yes, gee.

KP: Some of them are interesting.

BI: You know, in New Brunswick, you have a couple of good theater companies.

KP: Yes, oh, yes.

BI: I don't get up there to see them, but they have a very good reputation.

KP: Yes, particularly the black company [*Crossroads Theatre Company*]. They are very good.

BI: Yes, *The [New York] Times* always writes them up. The Jersey Times anyway, the Jersey section.

KP: Yes.

BI: They're quite good.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... Janet and I knew a girl, probably in her thirties, and she wants to be an actress. So, she sends me a card whenever she's in any little thing. She was in some little, tiny thing, for four nights it was only on; freebee, you know, from her part. It cost six dollars to get in and, you know, I didn't mind laughing, it was funny, you didn't mind, but it was amateurish. ... They'll do anything, your sister you said, or your sister-in-law?

KP: Sister in-law.

BI: They'll do anything to try to get ahead of it. You have to; you have to work so hard at it. It's like my son with his writing; you have to take a lot of crap, too.

KP: I am sure he probably has a whole file cabinet of rejections.

BI: Sure, very hard. The changes you're forced to go through sometimes. Right now his play ... I don't know. It's a strange play. ... It's about an artist named Hopper, presumably Edward, but

he doesn't get too detailed about that, and his wife. ... It gets pretty weird, but at one point that he, in this reading he gave, he told how Hopper went ... to Boston and he happened to get into some sort of peep show; this is a long time ago. ... He describes what he saw in that peep show. Pshaw! The whole triple-X and my wife is sitting peacefully there. She would have been out of the place had it not been her son. [laughter] ... He was still wondering whether he should use it or not. I don't know what to say; he'll get a lot of people who'll say don't, and he'll get complaints if he does. There are problems. The music is written for it. I just hear it, for that four-letter word, in a beautiful voice. Oh, it's rough ... what he wrote.

AK: I would like to change the topic, drastically. Where were you when you heard about the atomic bomb and what did you think of it?

BI: Oh, I was in California. Do you know that my first feeling was pride because I was a science fiction fan? ... I said, "We've had stories about that for years."

KP: Really, you?

BI: The first thought was pride that I knew about this. Most of these guys, you know, ... "What is all this about? An atomic bomb? What do they mean?" ... Even I didn't realize the extent, you know, ... the catastrophe of the thing. Now as a veteran of World War II, I am still in favor of Harry Truman's using the bomb. I do feel that maybe millions of men might have died in fighting for Japan and I was very strong on this. I remember, at one point, the Allies blew up a monastery in Italy, Monte Cassino was the name, marvelous, beautiful, old monastery, which was on top of a hill, and was a wonderful German lookout. ... I said, "Heck, if my brother's life was threatened, I'd say blow the goddamn place up." Nowadays, I still wouldn't want my brother to get killed; I might think twice about people I didn't know. [laughter] ... Seriously, that is a problem, that always is a problem, but the monastery has to go. ... I felt this way about the millions of men we were gonna lose, very possibly in that type of thing. So, I was in favor of it, but the first reaction was that. I was stationed still, this was before I went to San Francisco, I was in that camp. See, you remember the war wasn't over yet at this point, and it was from there that I went to California and that's when it was over, while I was in Los Angeles. That was a big celebration; everybody was jumping around, running around the streets. I didn't see the New York one for VE-Day because I was in England when that happened. ... Yes, the atomic bomb, those were traumatic things in a way, the atomic bomb, and as I mentioned, the Battle of the Bulge, we heard about it on the radio, and, gee, it was a terrible, terrible, terrifying thing. Yes, actually, ... it was 1945 that it had happened, at the end of '45. So ...

KP: Yes.

BI: ... I did go into the Army around Christmas of '44, but it was at the end of '44. We were just aghast, listening on the radio, of these losses. We thought it was just going to fold right

up. Giving the devil his due, it was a brilliant action by the Germans. They couldn't win it; they knew even then they couldn't win it. I don't know ...

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

BI: Now, I was in Los Angeles, the atomic bomb, I was in that camp. VE-Day, I'll be darned if I remember where I was; in England, I guess. I can't remember it, that's a long time.

KP: On VJ-Day, you were on the West Coast?

BI: Oh, I was in Los Angeles, at the Hollywood Canteen, being waited on probably by Betty Davis for all I know. [laughter]

KP: You joined the Jewish War Veterans.

BI: You know, I was in it for a while. What happened was that, Janet's butcher [laughter], the butcher was an important man. I didn't give a damn about it and he was an important man ... and I couldn't say no. He was the butcher; he was our own guy and so I was in it for a while and it was nice. It's a good group. I have nothing against it. I'm not anti-militarist in that sense, but after a while, I really got no interest out of it at all and so I dropped it. I don't belong to any other veterans groups. The other ones, I didn't much care for. American Legion, you see, in the old days, had a reputation that it was very rightist and reactionary, really. Probably that no longer is true, but I don't care. I don't bother looking it up.

KP: It sounds like you were very ambivalent towards the Vietnam War. Did that develop over time? Did you initially support?

BI: ... I think I never was in favor of it. I think so, never, I think. Not really ambivalent, I think I was always opposed to it. I never carried banners, but I felt bad about all of the terrible things that were happening.

KP: At the time, it sounds like you did not perceive it as a war like your war.

BI: Yes, it was a different type of thing. Even now, I can't perceive it that way. It was unfortunate that Johnson was a stubborn man, ruined his reputation forever by that. His better aspects, his civil rights are submerged. He was such a stubborn man, though, and yet, the theory was, you know, that unless you stop the Communists there, the whole business would be Communist. ... Monolithic was a popular word. It would last forever and look what's happened, even China, hardly monolithic Communism, not that I condone what they did.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... Vietnam didn't really much concern me otherwise. My son, how did he stand with that? I don't remember. Maybe he was too old already, I forget. So, he wasn't really involved in any way; he was never drafted for it. [It] had nothing to do with his particular choices, you know, "Say nothing, do nothing, tell nothing." That didn't apply then, maybe he was too young. I forget what the situation was, it just didn't affect him, and I'm sure he's opposed to Vietnam, too. ... I'm strong about that, yes. Any war I'm opposed to, I really am. To send all these young people out to die doesn't make any sense at all. I don't even like us to be involved in Bosnia. I'd like to see the situation helped, but, gee, I don't want guys killed there. You get the feel that much simpatico for all soldiers, for all people. "Hopeless liberal," my brother-in-law calls me, "hopeless."

KP: [laughter] Have you remained liberal?

BI: Yes, yes, I think I voted for Florio and I'm not crazy about ...

KP: That would put you in a "hopeless liberal" category. [laughter]

BI: That puts me in a stupid category. ... Whitman, she's disappointed me in some ways, but if she didn't have a good person against her, I would vote for her. In New York, if they put up most of those stumble-bums they have against Mayor Giuliani, I would vote for Giuliani. My brother-in-law still says I'm a "hopeless liberal." [laughter]

KP: You and your wife have always seemed accepting of your son.

BI: Oh, yes, no problem, whatever.

KP: You never had a problem.

BI: No, no.

KP: Many parents would not be as accepting of a gay child.

BI: I know. Well, he's been honest about it, once it happened. As-a-matter-of-fact, we didn't know about it. You know, you have suspicions, but all right, who knows? ... We didn't know about it until we happened to pick up a magazine, which we knew would have an interview of him. [laughter] ... I'm glancing through these pages, his name is right on the cover, *Opera Magazine Monthly*, it's called or *Opera Monthly Magazine*. ... I looked, and this word "lover" hits me across the face, "whoa". ... We were going to the Met [Metropolitan Opera] that night, we were gonna see *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, by Richard Strauss, a tough opera at best [laughter], an impossible opera that night. I don't even know why I bothered to go, that was a tough article. So, a few days later I called him up... He tells everything there, he tells it all, which was right; he should do that. Why should he feel guilty about anything? He wasn't hurting anybody; he

never lived in a profligate style anyway and he's been with this man for twenty years, they've been very good ... I don't think they do anything, frankly. Don't print that. [laughter]

KP: You can take that out.

BI: ... Anyway, a couple of days later I called him. I says, "Your mother made some dinner, you wanna come out?" He says, "Yes, sure." He only lives ... [on] Seventy-first Street. So, in the car we're driving back. I says, "Michael, I wanted to talk to you about that article, if you don't want to talk about it, we won't." So he says, "Yes, it's okay." ... So, ... what I asked him was, "Did you feel this way because you haven't been getting very far? Maybe, you feel you'd have liked to have gotten further, you feel uncertain, you need maybe the comfort of somebody with you there like this, yet you're afraid to be married," etc and any other question like this. ... "No!" he explained that ... even back in high school, he was uncomfortable with women. That was as critical as I ever got, and my wife, same thing, completely accepting. I'm open about it; I'll tell anybody. I sent the magazine to people. I even sent it to my mother, but she doesn't read that well, and ... even if she did read that well, she wouldn't accept anything she read. [laughter] She was still alive then, waiting for him to find a nice Jewish girl. [laughter]

KP: Was it a shock to open the magazine and read this about your son?

BI: Yes, yes, yes. It was still a shock to read it, yes. ... You know, I would of preferred it differently, be nice to have some children from his side of the family, too, but, okay, he's done pretty well otherwise and it doesn't affect me. When he spoke the other night, there was one other speaker with him, a woman, a writer named (Sara Schulman?), she's had maybe a half-dozen books published. She's lesbian and her books are resolutely gay in one way or another, powerfully gay, but she's good. She's a good writer and she's a nice woman. Yes, I have no problem whatever with that subject.

KP: I think some of your generation would not be as accepting.

BI: Yes.

KP: Do you have any thoughts on that?

BI: Well, I'll tell you. ... We very frequently get together with my ... brother-in-law, Janet's brother, who's married, has a lovely wife; his daughter just had a baby. ... I felt to her, just this far away from, if she were my own daughter, really ... "I share your pain," as President Clinton said, or was it Carter? I forget who said, "I share your pain." ... Anyway, all these people invite my son and his companion over with no compunctions, whatever. We all do enough, anybody I know wants to sneer at it, they never sneer to me about it; so, I don't really know. ... I've never had a wise guy crack from anybody. If I did, though, I would tell them. I would resent it

publicly. I wouldn't accept it easily, yes, and to me, in today's world, I don't think that's a problem anymore.

KP: What about in your day? Did you know anyone who was gay?

BI: Oh, yes. I forgot to mention that one other thing with my son, why he didn't say anything. He said he always sensed a possible hostility and, as I thought back about it, I did make jokes. You remember the movie, *La Cage Au Folles*, they just made the ...

KP: Oh, yes.

BI: ... *The Birdcage* was the same story.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... They had a musical, it was a good musical, *La Cage Au Folles*. Now, the book was by Harvey Fierstyle, Harvey Firestone [Harvey Fierstein], who's an outright gay. The music is by Jerry Herman, who's gay. Everybody probably was, and so, I had some gag or other I made up about that. All these different people who would naturally write this play, naturally I have to tell the whole family about my gag. ... So, little things like that, they may be meant only as funny, but they're really worse than funny. They really were a little nasty. ... So, when he was afraid, as he said, "Hostility," I think he ... could of told us and he wouldn't have had a hostile reaction, but he feared it.

KP: It sounds like he was not quite sure what reaction he would receive.

BI: Yes, I sometimes have a temper and my father had it, like I told you. He had a humdinger of a temper [laughter], and my son has one, too, for that matter. He would have hollered at me, worse than I hollered at him, and he would have won, he always beat me down. [laughter] ... Probably, he was right, yes.

KP: Have you been to Israel? It sounds like you are a firm supporter of Israel.

BI: It was a wonderful trip. Now, this was 1975, you could go anywhere. There was no whatever, Arab, Palestinian group there. ... They were quiet; there wasn't even trouble in those days. ... I am a firm supporter of Israel, being a "hopeless liberal," I really support what they're doing now, but it's a tough situation. It'll remain one.

KP: Were your parents Zionists while you were growing up? Were you a Zionist?

BI: I was, as a kid, I was a Young Zionist. They had a group they called Young Zionists; I knew nothing much about it. [laughter] My parents, yes, my father would always get letters from

charities, often from people who lived in then Palestine. He would always send them a little and for years, I always would answer these letters in the same way. I'm getting a little cheaper now; I [am] tired of them. [laughter] They got my name on some orthodox list and, you know, orthodoxy is strong. ... Now, in Teaneck we have a lot of orthodox Jewish people, they've moved in. I have nothing against them, but ... once you get on the list, you get letters from everywhere for money. This widow needs money, this one's marrying his daughter off, I finally throw 'em out; I can't take it anymore. If I can do it to the Rutgers Alumni Association, I can do it to them. [laughter] I do read the magazine, which they send.

KP: In terms of your relationship with Rutgers, it seems like you were mad at them for some time.

BI: Yes, yes, talk about ambivalence. It was worse than that for many years, but I eased, even before Janet had her piece in the ...

KP: The museum.

BI: ... The museum, there, yes. I eased off on it. ... One thing, ... people were calling me, who were the children of classmates of mine, "How could you be mean? I mean, for five, ten, twenty-five dollars you could, do you have to be mean about it?" [laughter] ... As I thought about it all, it just, you know, it just colored over with the warmth of memory and such, you don't really care as much.

KP: It sounds as though you have stayed in touch with some of the people you went to school with.

BI: Yes, some. My classmates, not many because, gee, I look through the names, I know very few of them, very, very few. I wish I were in contact with others, but even at Ohio State, very, very few, yes.

KP: Did you ever run into or stay in touch with anyone you knew in the military?

BI: No.

KP: You never ran into anyone in New York?

BI: For a while I did, I'm sure, but remember it is a long time ago.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... Now, I wouldn't recognize some old geezer coming up to me with a white beard. I don't think I know one single person anymore that I knew in the military. It's sort of fun to think about it, yes.

KP: It is interesting because some people still have stayed in touch.

BI: Yes.

KP: Other people have not seen them since.

BI: You see, the thing, one problem was, my platoons that I was in, even the ... lab techs where everybody at least had a course, we weren't really operating on the similar wavelengths. I'm not saying they were worse than myself, but maybe they were guys who liked to go to the bars, and I never cared much for that. I liked to go, on the other hand, to the British Museum when I was in London that first time and they wouldn't of ... wanted to waste time there. So, we would each feel the same way toward the other, but it wouldn't be for a lasting friendship, and that was true of almost every unit that I was ever in and very few that I was really simpatico. My tastes also, I guess, they kept developing as I got a little bit older. I would get interested in one new field after another. It was sort of getting out of the home in a way.

KP: I think the chance to go to the British Museum is worth the trip.

BI: Have you been there?

KP: Yes.

BI: That is worth it.

KP: I've only been there once.

BI: That is worth the trip.

KP: I spent the day there and I am eager to go back.

BI: I once got a postcard from somebody who's sending me a photograph of a reproduction he saw when in some country, or other, of the Rosetta Stone. I says, "I saw the real thing in London." ... Oh, and the British Museum with the Elgin, El-gin they pronounce it, Elgin Marbles and, oh, I never forgot that place, beautiful.

KP: It was really amazing.

BI: Yes, Oxford, too. We went into the Ashmolean Museum and they have all these wonderful hand-written letters by famous people, all under a leather cover. You lift the cover off to look. The library in New York, too, I love, Forty-second Street, the major branch.

KP: Oh, yes.

BI: ... The theater library at Lincoln Center, that's a wonderland to me. I love those places, that's me. [laughter]

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask?

BI: ... [laughter] No, no. ... It's just, I'm glad to see, well, one thing, in a sense, what do I think of the development of Rutgers now? I'm glad to see Rutgers becoming a really mature school now, from a parochial type thing. I'm really pleased by that when I go on the campus. I don't like to see that one building where they have a Herbert Ferber sculpture, in a sort of an alcove, inside, and it's always plastered over with graffiti, the last time I was there and pieces of paper; that I'm not happy to see.

KP: Yes.

BI: They have a Ferber Room in the museum, which is beautiful, environment, but anyway, ... I am glad to see how, gee, it's spread out. The Pharmacy School's on campus now, too.

KP: Yes, yes.

BI: I think it's across the river, but ...

KP: Yes, it is on Busch Campus.

BI: ... That's nice. I'm sorry for Newark, which is in such bad shape; could of used it maybe, but it was inhospitable to it. Now, they stuck a two hundred million dollar art center there [New Jersey Performing Arts Center], which I don't really think I'm gonna be visiting that often. I don't know. ... Do you get to Newark, too, in all your (prior expeditions)?

KP: I actually lived in downtown Newark before I came back to Rutgers.

BI: Oh, yes?

KP: Yes.

BI: ... Has it improved?

KP: The downtown is actually fine.

BI: Not bad?

KP: I lived downtown in the early nineties.

BI: So many areas still have the scourge of the riots.

KP: Yes, that is true.

BI: Yes, yes.

KP: The downtown, where the art center is ...

BI: You think that the art center is going to make a difference, hopefully?

KP: Yes, I think, it will contribute to what has been a very slow revitalization of the downtown.

BI: Because, you know, New York, Manhattan after all, it's a tight island and ... Lincoln Center has done miracles for New York.

KP: Yes.

BI: ... Then again, the potential was there.

KP: Yes.

BI: Newark, you're just pushing it in there, but maybe it'll work.

KP: Yes, there is more in downtown Newark. If you are not familiar with Newark, there is more to downtown than you might think.

BI: I know the museum. It's a marvelous museum.

KP: Yes, the Newark Museum.

BI: I love it; Michael Graves work, wonderful. I want you to know, by the way, if you have just one more minute. My wife once pulled a piece out of the museum. She was with a group that was having an art show in the museum, this is before Graves made it; if you haven't visited it, ... this architect did an amazing job.

KP: Yes.

BI: He bought an old Y[MCA] next door, combined the two buildings and you wouldn't recognize it; it's beautiful, wonderful museum. ... At any rate, they had all these artworks all over this place and her work was in a hallway. Unfortunately, there was a big sign right above it, "Men's Room" with a big arrow. She says, "I don't like that." This on the opening night. She says, "I don't like my sculpture," nice big sculpture, which she sold later, by the way, "I don't like it underneath that sign." They say, "Well, we have no other place, it's very crowded." She says, "Then I'm taking it out." [laughter] ... The director, Samuel Miller was his name, he says, "Really, I'd prefer you don't do that." She says, "Oh, no? Either it goes someplace else or I take it out." Well, they didn't put it anyplace else; she took it out the next day. [laughter] Now, most people would give their right arm to be there.

KP: Yes.

BI: It's a major museum.

KP: Yes.

BI: It's not the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art], but it's a major museum. She's been there subsequently. She did another piece, I was about to say, "it's over there," but she sold it. Big piece that was in the dining room; beautiful, big piece, yes. ... They loved it; they didn't offer to buy it, though. [laughter] She would have loved even more to have left it there; some company bought it. We hated to see it go, we had had it for, you know, she did leave it at the Newark, at the, University of Medicine and Dentistry. She loaned it to the library there for a number of years, and they took good care, never had any paper pasted on it or anything, but finally she wanted it home. So we took out [the] table, dining room table, which is here now [laughter], and the piece went there, yes. She has a bad back; she gets her stuff fabricated now, but a piece like this, she put together from found pieces, but she put it together herself. Now, this little piece here, she had to have it fabricated to her design. She does a lot. The stone she made, too, but in those days she could do it. ... With a bad back, it's very hard to bend over, even little things, yes. Paintings ... were what she started with, but she really likes sculpture. The one over there, that black one, you can see is a Holocaust memorial. She calls it the, you see it has a little tear over there, see the hole? ... With the Jewish people, when you have a funeral, they used to tear the necktie, but you know, they put a little piece of cloth over here and tear it. ... So ... that's "Mourning Star" with a "U," and it's like you took the star and shattered it into all the triangles and that was put up by a synagogue in Long Island. It's very touching, a very beautiful piece, gleaming black metal on a white metal base. It's in a little alcove, very pretty. Unfortunately, in one sense, it's very pretty, ... it's pretty by chance, and so every time there's a wedding or a *bar mitzvah*, everybody stands there with a big smile around what's supposed to be a very serious, somber memorial.

KP: It has an unintended effect.

BI: [laughter] Yes, so that's a history of the family for you. Quiet history, but we've had a few nice things happen.

KP: Well, thank you very much.

BI: Pleasure.

KP: We have enjoyed it a great deal.

BI: It's a pleasure. I hope you did.

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

Reviewed by Allison Mueller 3/07/05

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 3/15/05

Reviewed by Benjamin Philip Indick 4/06/05