

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK
AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT KENNEDY
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEWED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This is an interview with Bob Kennedy on July 14, 1994 with Kurt Piehler. I guess I would like to begin by talking about your parents and ... the first question I have ... [has to do with your] father's job with the telephone companies. It seems to have been influential in your life. How did he end up with New York Telephone or its predecessor?

Bob Kennedy: I really don't know. The only thing I know is that it seemed to me that ever since I was a very small boy we were a telephone family. He worked over there in New York every day, and it seemed like that was the thing you should do.

KP: Work for the telephone company?

BK: That's right.

KP: Did other members of the family, uncles or cousins, work for the phone company?

BK: No.

KP: But your father worked consistently?

BK: Yes, he was there.

KP: Did he work through the Great Depression?

BK: Yes. He worked through that whole time, you know part-time they had ...

KP: So he had reduced hours during the Great Depression?

BK: Yes, that's right. That's the way they did it.

KP: Did your father's working for the telephone company influence your career direction?

BK: Yes, very much so. I thought that they had treated him very well, ... and I felt that that was the kind of an outfit I'd like to work for.

KP: Your father served in the Merchant Marine?

BK: Yes.

KP: How did he end up in the Merchant Marine? Did he volunteer?

BK: He volunteered for the Merchant Marine. ... The thing was that somehow or other he was not able to get into the regular Navy. I guess maybe they were restricting the entry at that time. He really didn't want to be in the Army, so he wound up volunteering in the Merchant Marine.

KP: Did he see any hostile action? Was his ship ever subject to any U-Boat attacks?

BK: No. He went up to Boston and the flu epidemic of ... 1918, ... 1919 broke out, and he was in charge of the hospital accommodations on the ship there for I guess seven or eight months.

KP: Did he talk about those experiences during the epidemic?

BK: No, he really didn't. He didn't do too much talking about that period of his life at all

KP: Did your father ever talk to you about the First World War and attitudes toward it?

BK: No. ... Never with respect to anything other than, you know, that was the time he met my mother and he was very happy to have been up in Boston.

KP: So he met your mother at Boston?

BK: At Boston during the war, right.

KP: How did they meet?

BK: He didn't say, and she didn't tell me.

KP: ... You indicated on the survey that your mother was an Alsatian German. ... Did she speak German?

BK: Yes. She spoke sort of-- ... She was not fond of German. ... She went to a Catholic School in St. Louis that ... was very much an ethnic kind of school. They taught both German and English, and she did a lot of writing in German script. She was not fond of the discipline that they meted out.

KP: In terms of her schooling?

BK: Yes, that's right, Yes.

KP: Did she have any attitudes towards Germany? Did she think that Alsace should be part of France or Germany?

BK: No. She never expressed anything like that. She was very thankful that her folks had come over here. Incidentally, they came over long before.

KP: Before the actual ...

BK: Yes. This was ... in 1840 or 1850 in that era when a lot of people from the continent were coming over. They were farmers, and they moved out to Sedalia, Missouri. And then they worked their way back to St. Louis. But-- they were neighbors of the James's, ... Jesse James. One of those people. It wasn't pleasant. They were a very rambunctious crowd. They grabbed

our great grandfather or great-great grandfather and threatened to kill him if the family didn't pay so much money.

KP: Extortion money?

BK: Yes. His wife, my great-great grandma or whatever she was, she talked him out of it. So he got away without either having to pay or losing his life. That was the most momentous thing that happened.

KP: On your mother's side of the family?

BK: Yes. In my remembrance.

KP: So this would be something you talked about in the family. Jesse James was the next door neighbor.

BK: Right.

KP: Your family was Catholic in the 1920s.

BK: Right.

KP: ... Did you experience any nativist sentiment growing up in the twenties or thirties? For example, my step-father told me stories of when he was growing up in Clifton. The Ku Klux Klan used to burn crosses to drive them out. Did you experience anything?

BK: They had that in the town that I lived in. I lived in a town called Wood-Ridge. It was ripe with Ku Klux Klan, but there was ... a ... divided sentiment and maybe more than divided. In other words ..., more of the people were against the Klan than were for it. ... When the Klan would put on their parades, there would be large groups of people out there booing them. But it never came to bloodshed as far as I know. It was just unpleasant at the time.

KP: ... Your parents at one point moved from New York to New Jersey. How did that come about? Your father worked for New York Telephone through his entire career.

BK: ... Well, he went over there while my mother and I were out in St. Louis. He went over to see some houses that were being built by a fellow named Charles Reis who was a big developer of the day. He thought, ... [they] are pretty neat and ... pretty cheap. They were 4,500 dollars or something like that. He said, "Boy that beats paying rent, and ... it would be wonderful to be out in the country. It would be excellent." So he bought the house and [my] mom was very upset.

KP: He hadn't consulted her at all?

BK: No, so that put a cloud over the whole issue for many years, but it was wonderful living out there.

Kp: So this was in ...?

BK: This was in '28.

KP: And which town was it?

BK: Wood-Ridge.

KP: Is that near Rutherford?

BK: Yes, yes. I went to Rutherford High School because Wood-Ridge didn't have a high school at the time. I went to ... St. Joseph's Grammar School which was in Carlstadt. ... After I graduated from there I went to Rutherford High School, so I never really went to a Wood-Ridge School as such.

KP: But Wood-Ridge did have its own schools?

BK: Yes it did have its own. A very nice school too. I was sorry I hadn't gone there.

KP: Why do you say that?

BK: Well I liked the teachers there, and the kids were neat Maybe its ...

KP: The grass is greener on the other side.

BK: Right.

KP: You went to St. Joseph's School and that was a Catholic School.

BK: Yes. ... It was all right. ... I probably was the proper age to accept discipline when I went there I came back from St. Joseph's and the first year I was in Wood-Ridge in what they called a junior high school at that time in the ninth grade. The teachers were much more understanding and much more devoted to trying to teach you on your terms. The nuns tended to be, you know, *Achtung!*

KP: Which order was this?

BK: The Franciscans.

KP: You found they were much more rigid in their teaching?

BK: Yes. They have a certain agenda and that was it by George. They made sure that you followed it. I didn't enjoy that as much, right.

KP: How many from your high school went on to college? Do you have any sense? Was it more than half or was it less than half?

BK: I would say it was probably more than half Rutherford was a pretty upscale community at the time. ... Although my friends from Wood-Ridge, many of them didn't go to college, not at that time. They did subsequently when they got back from the war.

KP: They went on the G. I. Bill?

BK: Right.

KP: But, Rutherford proper was a much more upscale community?

BK: Yes, right. Than Wood-Ridge, yes.

KP: Did you find there was a tension when you went from Wood-Ridge to Rutherford High between the Rutherford people and the ...

BK: Yes, of course They felt they were better than most, certainly better than those upstarts from Wood-Ridge. ... Whether they [actually] felt that way or not [I don't know, but that's the impression I got].

KP: What led you to Rutgers? Why did you choose Rutgers?

BK: It was a state college, and it was all I could afford.

KP: You hadn't thought of say, trying to go to a Catholic School, like St. Peter's or ...

BK: No.

KP: You knew you wanted to work in electrical engineering?

BK: Yes. Right from the start-- way back I always admired electrical engineers I thought ... that would be wonderful to be able to do that.

KP: How important was the state scholarship in your ability to come to Rutgers ...? How crucial was that?

BK: I was pretty near certain that I wouldn't have been able to continue with college if I didn't have that kind of help. It doesn't seem like very much help today, but at that time it was a lot of help. Three hundred dollars is what they gave me and ... that was every year.

KP: And you were able to live on campus for all four years?

BK: For all four years, yes.

KP: What did you think of living on campus? ... One of the things I've noticed is that there was a real difference between those that lived on campus and commuters.

BK: Yes.

KP: That the two were going to somewhat separate schools because commuters had to leave.

BK: Yes. It was tough on them. I thought it was very tough on them. I don't really know how I could have done it if I had to go home every night. ... In my case, I enjoyed it very much. ... I met a lot of great fellows that I have kept in touch with over the years, and I don't think that would have been possible if I had been a commuter. Although one of my friends, one of my very close friends was a commuter at the time.

KP: You never joined a fraternity?

BK: No.

KP: Why?

BK: Well what happened was that during rush week they brought me over and Lambda Chi Alpha seemed to be the one that I leaned toward, but I ... got the impression that when I talked to the people there that their interest was in having lots of fun. And I really wasn't thinking that way. I was thinking this was serious business.

KP: So you probably shied away even because ...

BK: Because I thought they would be a distraction to the main purpose of my being in college.

KP: In your college record you made Phi Beta Kappa.

BK: Yes, right, in junior year even.

KP: In the sciences too History tends to be a little softer on grading.

BK: I don't know about that.

KP: What divisions did you see on campus? You mentioned the divisions between residents and commuters. Did you see others? Did you feel that by not joining a fraternity that you missed out on Rutgers?

KP: I don't think I missed out on anything, but it did seem to me that there was a sense of family between the people that were in the various fraternities. And that was an enviable sort of thing, but not to the point where [I felt I was really missing out].

KP: Some have said there was also a split between those on scholarship, those who had to work and those who did not have to work. How did you come down on that?

BK: I didn't notice that at all. I mean ... the only one that I knew that was on a full-scholarship was Ralph Schmidt. He was in our dorm, ... and I had nothing but admiration for anybody who could do that.

KP: Which dorm did you live in? Winants Hall or ...?

BK: Well, ... I lived in many of them ..., but I started out in the Quad. There was ... one on the river side

KP: ... Ford Hall

BK: I lived in Ford Hall for a couple of years. ...

KP: Did you make it to Winants?

BK: No, I never made it to Winants. No, I was ... in the quadrangle ... I think for two years and then two years at Ford. ...

KP: You had mentioned that Fred [H.] Pumphrey was your favorite professor.

BK: Yes.

KP: What struck you about him? Why did he become your favorite professor?

BK: Well, he was like a mentor you know. He would tell me things that other people who were trying to be my friends wouldn't tell me. He was always very supportive and pointed out the paths that were more appropriate for people who were in the engineering business. I would have selected on my own.

KP: So you think you would have made some mistakes if you didn't have him?

BK: Yes, I think so. I mean that is what I think a mentor is for really, to show you the ropes. ... He was very good, but he got himself into a bad deal toward the end of the time I was here. He was very much devoted to teaching, very much devoted to seeing that the students learn their lessons well. And about that time there was a lot of grants coming out that were associated with research of various kinds and the university was very anxious to get into that, and so he didn't get marked very well for his lack of participation in that. He was supposed to proselytize the fellows in the class ... and get them into doing ...

KP: Research?

BK: Papers. ... That was the deal.

KP: He ended up not getting tenure?

BK: No. He got tenure, but he apparently didn't fare too well in terms of monetary rewards. ... Basically, the way it was, was that the money went to those who did the research and there wasn't much for those who were doing teaching. ... So then he was so upset that he finally left, and ... I understand he went to the University of Florida at Gainesville, which at that time was very much a pedagogy. I don't know whether he was happy after that. I didn't really keep in touch.

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family? Your father was working part-time but how else?

BK: Yes. That was part of it, but ... basically what it did, was it made things in effect more expensive because they weren't available. ... People talk about not having the money, but there is also the thing that even if you have the money you can't get it. That basically was the way the Depression was. Everybody seemed to be working a lot harder then they had ever done before. I can remember that I just didn't appreciate the fact ... that the elders had to get out there and work for their families until that time. They were out there ... shoveling dirt off the streets, ... putting up walls, building roads in some cases, an awful lot of things that were sort of foreign to these people because most of [the people] that came to Wood-Ridge, for example, were really clerical kind of workers.

KP: Then they would end up in Public Works Programs?

BK: ... That was the only work that was available to feed their families with. So it was tough. Then ... you began to see the first of the people that knew how to handle themselves in those times. I remember one guy got into advertising. ... How do you make a living at that ... , [but] he made out like a bandit.

KP: Did you expect to get a job when you went into electrical engineering?

BK: Oh, yes. I expected to get a job, no question about it. I had many, many offers and the one I chose was the one that gave me an electrical engineering opportunity.

KP: So you went into college fairly confident that you would be able to get a job. Because I know the chemists said that they were a little bit unsure in the late 30s.

BK: Well that may be, but I had never thought that there wouldn't ... be a job available.

KP: Did you expect to work for the telephone company?

BK: Well, I thought I might if they offered me a decent opportunity. I thought about GE for a while. ... Others just didn't appeal to me, so I basically only thought about those two. ... I didn't get ... any bid from the Bell Laboratories and that's where I really wanted to go, but Bell Laboratories didn't offer anything at Rutgers at that time. It wasn't on their hiring list. ... After I

got to work, and I worked, I guess maybe ten years or so, then Bell Labs asked for my transfer over to them, and then I went over there for a while ...

KP: That was one of the things when you were going to college [that] you dreamed of?

BK: Yes, but it was too late, too late by then, ... because what I wanted to be was right in at the beginning of development. They had a wonderful program for developing their new hires to learn ... grown-up things.

KP: About post-graduate education?

BK: Yes, that's right. ... By the time I got over there all of the people that were my peers so to speak had all gone through that, and they were vastly more experienced in that phase of work. So I wasn't wildly happy when ...

KP: When you finally made it?

BK: Yes. I finally made it over there. ... So ... I came back to AT&T.

KP: You had left the R.O.T.C after the end of your second year. Did you

BK: I didn't care much for the program at all. ... It emphasized the infantry which I thought I'll never get into the infantry.

KP: So the R.O.T.C turned you against the infantry?

BK: Yes, right.

KP: What about the leadership? I heard a story about Mortar Mallone?

BK: That poor guy. I am so sorry for him. He was a Major, and he was demonstrating ... all of the different firepower that an infantry or a platoon or company might have, and one of the things was this mortar. I don't know how but a live shell [got in there], and it ... went through the roof.

KP: Your weren't there were you?

BK: I was there.

KP: How scared were you?

BK: I wasn't scared. I thought why doesn't anybody check this stuff, you know. It seemed very inept. But I felt sorry for him because I'm sure he didn't put the charge in there. ... Somebody among the crowd did that and embarrassed him a great deal. ... They were their own worst enemies, the military people, because they either acted like Mallone who treated us like raw recruits, who were not really being raised to be officers, but more like privates.

KP: Like privates?

BK: Right. Then there were others who treated us so much like officers that we didn't know what they were talking about. ... I can't remember the name but, there was another Major there, and he was always telling me these bathroom stories ... and stuff like that. [I said] you're not my buddy

KP: So you saw the tension in R.O.T.C between people like Mortar Mallone who treated you like a private and guys who treated you like an up and coming officer?

BK: Yes.

KP: You definitely learned from R.O.T.C that infantry was ...

BK: Not my bag!

KP: ... When did you think the United States was going to enter the war in Europe or in the Pacific? Had you thought much about it looking back?

BK: Well, I thought about it. I guess I hoped against hope that we wouldn't have to go to war, but I guess I thought at the time that I didn't see much chance that we wouldn't get into it. ... By the time I was in my senior year, it was very obvious that we were going to have to go to war. That's when I looked ... around for opportunities to go back into the military.

KP: You did have the idea that you should try to get back in?

BK: Oh yes, absolutely. I found there was a Colonel Latin. I don't know to this day where he came from, but I think he was a professor up at MIT. He was given the job of assembling a core of people in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Well there wasn't an Air Force then, but the group to push radar. That was a real electrical engineering thing ..., so I was very interested in that.

KP: ... When did you start expressing interest in that? Was that before Pearl Harbor?

BK: I guess it was right after Pearl Harbor ... because I don't think anybody took anything serious at that time until Pearl Harbor. Then it was pretty obvious that we were in for it. ... So then I went down to see this Colonel Latin to see if I could get into this thing, and he said yes. So that's how I got into the Signal Corps.

KP: That was ... your first choice? You wanted to be in a technical branch, ideally the Signal Corps?

BK: Yes, ideally the Signal Corps, that's right. Well, as a matter of fact I tried first for the Navy, but I failed on my eyesight ... so then I had to take second choice.

KP: Where were you when Pearl Harbor occurred?

BK: I was home. I remember that Sunday we were-- I lived on campus, but I would come home periodically to see the folks. ... I was home that Sunday, and we were listening to the radio and what's this! I could remember [we were] all standing around and saying, "oh gee, there is going to be war." But that really was-- I wasn't anywhere momentous. I was in the bosom of my family at the time.

KP: After graduation you were inducted into the military in August.

BK: What happened is I told you I went down to Washington to apply ...

KP: You had to go to Washington to do that?

BK: Yes, right, the Munitions building. I remember I went into an office there, and I saw this man and I thought, gee, he looks familiar. It was General Marshall of all people.

KP: So you saw General Marshall and applied?

BK: But, I didn't apply to him, but I said [to him] I'm looking for Colonel Latin. He said, "... he's downstairs and over to the right." He answered me right then and there, and I was absolutely amazed to see a big guy like him directing traffic. But in any event, he was very nice. I went down, and I saw Colonel Latin. He asked me about ... what I would like to do in this war, and I told him. He seemed satisfied, so I became a candidate for radar training. The next thing I got ... was a telegram telling me that the Adjutant General wanted me to take a physical exam to see if I qualified. ... I took that, I guess, in ... April or May ..., just before graduation in any event. Then I didn't hear anything for a while. Then about the latter part of July I received a telegram which read, "You will be ordered to Fort Monmouth on August 4th," and that was it.

KP: So that is when you were inducted [into the Army]?

BK: That is when I was inducted, right.

KP: Did you undergo basic training?

BK: Well, it was basic officer's training. It was a six week course, and really it familiarized you with the types of things you ought to know so you didn't make a perfect ass out of yourself before the troops. It made you familiar with what their organization was and how they got the orders down to you.

KP: So this took place at Fort Monmouth?

BK: This took place at Fort Monmouth. It looked an awful lot like R.O.T.C, but it was much more urgently developed than anything in the R.O.T.C.

KP: How would you compare the two? Did you think that your training at Fort Monmouth was better than your R.O.T.C training?

BK: Well, I thought it was better in the sense that it was a more urgent requirement at the time.

KP: So you were sort of set up more when you were there?

BK: Yes right. It wasn't the sort of thing where you were ... listening to war stories. You were getting ready for one. ... I guess the other thing about it was [that] they were very much interested in being sure that you understood that you were in the Signal Corps and not in any other part of the business. So when they talked about things, they talked about it from the Signal Corps standpoint

KP: So in other words, your training to be an officer was very much patterned to be a Signal Corps officer?

BK: Absolutely.

KP: So what were the differences that you figured out?

BK: The differences were that they talked about communications. They talked about all the methods that they had. They talked about the history of the Army was the history of the Signal Corps and had nothing whatsoever to do with ...

KP: So the Army really existed from a real perspective from the Signal Corps.

BK: All the names that you heard were ... like Olmsted, ... the engineer that built Central Park ..., and there was another one. In any event it has been long enough, so that I don't remember all the names anymore. But the Signal Corps was what was emphasized, and I was pleased with that They didn't have [good tape recorders] back then, but they had radios and switchboards and that type of thing.

KP: ... How good was your Rutgers education in terms of being able to master the techniques they used? How much was new to you?

BK: That was really not a technical education. I want to stress that those six weeks were simply getting you into the environment of the Army. The Army Signal Corps. Then they sent me to the Army Electronics Training Center, and that was up at Harvard University and then MIT. ... We went to class every day, and you had exams and you had laboratories and you really got your fill of doing things. They were attempting to take a bunch of fellows who were engineers, and they were all very good. One of the guys was Robert Sarnoff, one of my class buddies. That reminds me of a pretty sad case though. He was getting engaged at that time, and he took a bunch of buddies that he liked to be with, and he took them out to the Coconut Grove on the fateful night and about half of them were lost, burned up. His celebration party was something to remember, but it was awful. My roommate, ... Eugene Goss, was one of those who died. He

never got out of the place. Anyhow, that was when we were young and began to realize these kinds of things happen.

KP: ... Most people when they lost people in units they often lost them in battle, but you saw part of your class die before they went out.

BK: Yes. In any event the other thing about Fort Monmouth before I went up to the Army Training Center was the shots (inoculations). That was a distinct remembrance. But then up at the Army Electronics Training Center at Harvard and MIT-- in Harvard it was a more traditional kind of electrical engineering course; training was done very well. They had a series of experiments and a series of lectures that you had to attend and be tested on regularly It was done very well. But it was not beyond my capabilities by a long shot. I mean Rutgers had prepared me very well for that. We went to MIT,-- that was in the Atlantic building in Boston, and it really wasn't a MIT course. It was a course run mainly by the people who had developed the magnetron. They were very intent upon having people learn all about high frequencies and the way they acted in circuits so that you would be able to determine whether a thing was working well or was not working at all. ... They were very helpful courses, very well done, but I had to go to all of them. ... Some people went there, ... took preliminary tests, and they didn't have to go through the first month or the second month, or so forth.

KP: You went through the entire program?

BK: I went to everything, beginning to end. ... At the end of that time, we were hustled off to a place down in Florida. It was called Camp Murphy. ... We stayed for a short time in Bradenton, and there we met practitioners for the first time.

KP: You mean people who actually used the equipment in the field?

BK: Yes, and this was where they [actually] let you get your hand on the radar equipment for the first time and ... tried to run an outfit. Incidentally, I saw Bob Bunnell down there. I don't know whether you know that name or not. I think he was from the previous class, but I ran into him down there. I ran into a lot of people.

KP: And they were in the Signal Corps too?

BK: Yes, because they were in electrical engineering.

KP: These were your classmates in electrical ...?

BK: Yes.

KP: Before leaving your training at Harvard and MIT, what did it feel like to live in Austin Hall at Harvard and be on the campus?

BK: ... We lived in the community. We did not live at Harvard in the dormitories. We walked to and from classes, and I lived at a home on Brattle Street. Some man that was an executive with the fellows that make razor blades.

KP: You mean Gillete?

BK: Gillete, right. He apparently felt that he ought to take some of these fellows in. He had a big apartment, and he let us live in there. We used to walk from there each day over to the Harvard Square Pierce Hall is where we were at. ... It was pretty late at night [when] we would get back. ...

KP: So you didn't get to see much of the town?

BK: No, no. We didn't, very little really. Anyhow that was the experience we had up there. We lived up there from the time we got up there until we left in, I guess, it was March or early April. ... We went up to Fort Monmouth in August, and we left Fort Monmouth in October. ... We were up in Harvard ... [till] April 1943 [and then we went to] Camp Murphy [in] Florida.

KP: How long were you in Camp Murphy?

BK: ... We went to Drew Field first. ... We lived at Bradenton, but we worked at Drew Field. I guess we were in Drew Field for a week or so, and then we shipped over to Camp Murphy. There we were supposed to learn how to repair radars, and they gave us these radars. ... That was the first time I got troops, so that [was when] the tough part started.

KP: So your unit was being formed in camp?

BK: It was being formed at that time but no final assignments were made. In other words, saying you are in this particular outfit, or you are in charge of this outfit, or you are reporting to this particular commander. But they were amassing the people, and they were teaching us how we might interact with one another in running a radar outfit. Then after that they sent us back to Drew Field again, and we spent the time-- they actually put the units together, and we got what were called detachments. Detachments were essentially ... squads. They consisted of twelve to fourteen men and an officer. ... We stayed at Drew Field ... until ... October of ... 1943. We were then sent to the port of embarkation which was up in Boston. We went to Camp Miles Standish.

KP: So you went from Florida?

BK: Yes, right. All at the wrong time. If you notice we spent all of the cold months up in Boston and all of the hot months in Florida and then back up there [to the] cold [again]. Anyhow, ... we got over to England, in Scotland actually. Glasgow is where we landed on ... December 28, 1943. ...

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

KP: You were talking about ... your unit and getting equipment. Could you continue where you left off?

BK: Yes. Let me talk about the SCR-602 first because that was the easy stuff to get. That was developed by some company in the states. It was delivered to us, and they were mounted in very small trucks. They were like jeeps at the time, and they had the equipment mounted inside of it. Then you needed a VHF radio to be able to talk to the network of people that you needed to get your orders from. ... To talk to your pilots, you had to do that. ... We had to learn how to set those things up and how to operate them. ... So we spent time doing that. ... One of the things ... when we had been down in Drew Field in Florida, we had done what they called maneuvers, and ...[these] maneuvers-- we used exactly the same set, but it wasn't ours at the time. We would come up on the beach in one of these landing ships.

KP: So you practiced amphibious assaults?

BK: Yes ..., and this was all like we were going to the battlefield. The wrong theater as far as we were concerned. It seemed as though we were going to Southeast Asia.

KP: That was your plan to go to the Pacific?

BK: That's what we thought the plan was. They didn't tell us anything. I mean, they said ... "Now we are going to do this." This is a landing ship tank ... or an LST You rode up to the shore, ran up on the beach, and you put up your radar, and you put up your radio, and then you tried to make it work. Those who got on the air first ... won.

KP: How successful was your unit?

BK: When we got over to England, my guys knew enough about this stuff that they were very thankful that it was in a truck. It was in a little lorry ... about the size of a jeep. ... They made sure that set worked all the time so they had learned a lesson very well, and ... it was very easy. We fooled around with that stuff for a while in England on a network I guess we were contributing to the make believe stuff that was being broadcast over to the Germans at this time to let them think our guys were really working. In any event, we then got called off that, and we were sent to a place ... near the Winchester Cathedral. I think it was Stone, and we were visited by a man from Bell Laboratories who came over with a new set. It was the SCR-584 which was a gun laying set, one that the artillery also used. It had been modified, and it was used for tracking our own aircraft. ... It could be used to ... keep contact with them and know exactly where they were and tell them where to go. ... We got into eventually-- we didn't know it at the time, but we [eventually] got ... into a thing called close coordination. But, at the time, we were learning to operate the set, and we got ... a full set of equipment. In fact we got two sets, one to substitute for the other and also a vast increase in radio equipment.

KP: So you were ... seeing these technological changes.

BK: Oh, yes.

KP: It was very noticeable to you at the time.

BK: Not only very noticeable, but we had to work like the devil to keep up with it, because once these guys left you had it. I mean ... it was like ... not only a brand new car, but it was your livelihood.

KP: And the owners manual still hadn't been fully written ...?

BK: Well that's true. They didn't write the owners manual until about five years after the war, frankly. I never saw a manual on this stuff before. They would have schematics

KP: So you literally had to do quite a bit of figuring out as you were going along?

BK: Oh yes The men that I had fortunately, were very well trained. All of the sudden they decided that fourteen men couldn't handle this kind of a thing. So what they did is bring four units together, and they formed a platoon ... but they still called it a detachment. We were part of the Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion, and ... I had about a hundred men in my detachment. There were ... several other detachments like this, usually three in each of what they called companies.

KP: What was your rank at the time when you were in England?

BK: I was a lieutenant.

KP: What was the command structure? Where did you fit into the command structure?

BK: I had a detachment.

KP: You had one of these units of about how many people?

BK: About a hundred people. Actually it was about 89 or something like that, but it hovered close to one hundred.

KP: And you were one of three ...?

BK: ... There were three in a company, [and] ... there were at least three companies in the battalion. The battalion had the great big microwave early warning system which was a radar that covered the whole continent. There were two of them I think covering the continent of Europe. Then each of those units-- each of those that had a microwave early warning-- there was one in the south, and there was one in the north. They had, I think, three companies maybe four, and they each consisted of three detachments.

KP: You were leading a detachment?

BK: I was leading a detachment, right.

KP: Of ninety people, which was a lot of men to ...?

BK: It was a lot of men in that kind of a situation. It was not ... as hard as an infantrymen's job, but it was ... a lot more technical. ... It was very hard to keep those sets on the air for a while, but then we got the hang of it, and everybody learned their part, and they knew what was needed and so forth.

KP: What was the makeup of your unit in terms of the background of your NCO's and your enlisted men?

BK: ... The fellows that were in the outfit ranged from ... people with a high AGCT score which was the Army Intelligence [test]. They ... were very ... capable young men, but they were not college graduates. They had finished high school, but they had not gone to college. ... They had gone to a technical school at Fort Monmouth. Or an equivalent one at Fort Crowder out in the St. Louis area. Those people were extremely capable.

KP: They could pick up stuff?

BK: They could pick up stuff and learn it. The only thing is that in order to get them started, they had to have officers who [knew] what was going on and that's why we were given all of this training because we really did know.

KP: So you trained them?

BK: Yes, we trained them. ... But then they out paced us in no time at all because they were doing it every day.

KP: When you say they out paced you, they just became so familiar with the equipment?

BK: They became so familiar with the equipment and all the different kinds of troubles and all the applications. They were inquisitive. They learned how to do things with it that they hadn't been told. So, they were a very competent group and then That's the cadre. Then the next group down were the operators, people that sat at the scopes. They were talented, but they were sort of average students. They were not stars like this cadre. Then I had grunts, people ... [who] had AGCT scores in the 75's and were excellent soldiers, but they weren't able to do anything technical with the equipment. ... That was that part. Now the officer cadre consisted of a bunch of guys like me.

KP: So you didn't have any regular Signal Corps people or regular Army people in your group.

BK: No. No regular Army people.

KP: ... Most of you were ninety-day wonders or R.O.T.C people?

BK: Right. ... I guess we had one guy that had had West Point training.

KP: But, he was really the exception?

BK: Yes, right. ... We didn't have much emphasis on that It was a struggle staying alive.

KP: What do you mean when you say that?

BK: You know the normal duties that you take for granted. Like making dinner and housing the people and getting fuel for the fires and getting fuel for the equipment that you had and getting all the stuff that you needed to replace the parts you broke and so forth.

KP: This really dominated your time?

BK: This dominated the time. ... You had a great deal of that and that's what war is. A big logistics mess ... and then a few instances of great capabilities showing So anyway, we did that for ... this period ..., learning about these new sets. Then we ... finally found out that the Allied Command had invaded the continent, and we thought we'll be going any day.

KP: So this was in June of 1944 [that] you heard about D-Day?

BK: Yes, right ... Well, we knew that something was coming, but ... we didn't know, when or where. I guess people became very agitated about the later part of May or maybe even middle May on. But we thought, we'll be going. Now, they did take some men from me to go to a special organization. They went around and took four from here and twelve from there and so forth So I lost a few good men that way. But other than that they didn't bother us at all except one unit which had twelve or fourteen people in it and still had the old SCR-602 sets. They took them ... bodily with the set, and they landed on D-Day.

KP: So part of your battalion landed on D-Day?

BK: ... Not from my unit, but guys that I knew very well. They landed over there, and they did their thing. ... People that had landed on D-Day would say now ... I was in the first wave. They were in about the fourth wave. Well the fourth wave was a lot better than the first wave But in any event, they came through unscathed. Nothing happened to them at all. They got their set up, and they did it. ... They did a lot of good work. But we didn't hear anything, and we kept asking, "Are we going home?" ... The tension was that if you weren't going over to the continent, then maybe they could say you were surplus and send you over to the South Pacific. ... That was wonderful! ... Originally when we all came into Fort Monmouth, classes were split in half. They sent half to the Pacific. That's how it came out ultimately. They didn't tell us at the time. But, then we would be corresponding with those guys, and they would say things like [they] had a terrible bout with malaria. ... They had to put up with that, living conditions were terrible and there were snakes and all kinds of things that were distasteful.

KP: So you thought England was ... cushy in that sense. You didn't have malaria?

BK: Yes, that's right We thought that was just absolutely beautiful. So anyhow, we went on for this period and finally at about 89 days ...

KP: After D-Day.

BK: ... They decided that we were going over. And they didn't waste much time, pack it up and go. ... We landed in France on Utah [Beach]. You know everybody went through that, either Utah or ... Omaha. We didn't go to Omaha which was still a mess. ... Not that there was anything other than fortifications left down there, but it was not an easy place to get off. But on Utah you came right off the beach. They took us by plane from there to a place called Charleroi in Belgium and that was lovely. We were then sent to Verviers and stayed ... at the College of Textiles, and it was beautiful. We thought, this is really living ..., but that was only softening us up because two days later we were sent to Aachen and the siege was on up there. ... They wanted us to provide close support for the Air Force and that's what we did. ...

KP: How close were you?

BK: We were not very close to Aachen ... maybe five miles or something like that, but we were on the ... ring around Aachen and that's where most people were. They were five miles out. ... I found a beautiful radar sight. I couldn't believe it, and I was wondering how come nobody put anything here? I put up the set, and I got the troops all organized and everything. I could never get my guys to dig fox holes. The Army was always talking about how you should set up the encampment and dig fox holes right away.

KP: Your men would never dig fox holes?

BK: They would never dig fox holes.

KP: That was infantry?

BK: Yes, right. So the end result was that that night we were shelled. I'm telling you mercilessly. ... None of them landed at the place we were, but they would be going woooo-boom, woooo-boom, all night long. So the next day everybody was digging fox holes. I couldn't believe how much they learned during that one night of shelling. That was our experience up there. They weren't shelling us, of course. What happened is [that] I went out there and did a little more careful reconnaissance than I had done to find the spot in the first place. I found out my neighbors were the First Army Artillery dump. The main depot for the artillery for the whole area, but they never hit it thank goodness. We came out unscathed up there, but finally Aachen fell, and it was pretty devastating The Germans finally decided to surrender and then when they came out with their white flag somebody from our side shot one of the officers coming over. So they went right back to Aachen and started up again, and it went on for a couple more weeks. The whole town was rubble and there were no prisoners or anything.

KP: How widely known was this shooting of this German [officer] with the white flag?

BK: We heard about it.

KP: Through the grapevine?

BK: Yes, through the grapevine. We had no idea ... why they ... started out and everybody was told ... that the German commander had finally decided to surrender. That they were coming out at noontime or something like that. ... Then we thought, this is great. We can get out of here and go somewhere else and then it started up again. ... So we were told maybe that it might have been just a story, but we were told that one of our troops shot an officer, one of the emissaries, not just an officer. So anyhow it went on for a couple more weeks. ... That was Charlemagne's capital at Aix-la-Chapelle, and anyhow it was a mess, and it was really bad. So then after that

KP: What time were you at Aachen? When roughly was the Battle of Aachen?

BK: ... It must have been late September [1944] ...

KP: You eventually ended up at Malmedy?

BK: Yes, right. We had to work our way down there. The next thing we did was to go The next place they sent us was down there. They sent us to a place called Camp Elsenborn, which was a Belgium camp that the German's had taken over. When we were at Elsenborn the SS made a raid and captured a bunch of new troops and killed them all. That was the massacre at Malmedy. The Second Division, the Texas Division, decided that there were not going to be any more SS troops captured for interrogation purposes, that they were all going to be found dead and that's what the Second Division Force did, they murdered every one of the SS troopers.

KP: And this was widely known?

BK: Oh, it was widely known, yes. I mean, they were going around, wait till I get my hands on them, get me a gun. Elsenborn was also the place where we had our first taste of enemy infiltration The SS was very clever. They did things like they dressed up in American uniforms, and they came into the headquarters. ... We were out front of the headquarters, the division was behind us. We were attached to a division. ... The SS went in there to look at the war room, you know they have maps where they mark the status of things, and this guy is on the telephone getting the information. And they went in there, and they did a very good job up until they made some mistake that tipped off one of the fellows there. He said, "He's not one of us." They threw him out in the street, and they shot him.

KP: ... Which division headquarters was this?

BK: We were in the First Division.

KP: How did you hear of this story that they caught him?

BK: They were, you know, like across the street neighbors. ... They looked very official. ... I saw these guys, and the next thing I saw was them shooting officers and I wondered what was going on.

KP: So the Germans had infiltrated the American command into the division headquarters?

BK: Oh yes. The SS came right into the division headquarters because they wanted to find out what the Allies knew about the disposition of German troops and what the disposition of the allied troops was.

KP: And so they were discovered and executed?

BK: Yes. But I'm sure that that wasn't the first time. They did things like that all along. They flew in paratroopers, and they were dressed up as Americans, and so you never knew.

KP: You were in the Battle of the Bulge. Where were you around at the time the battle began? Where was your unit?

BK: I was right there. What happened was that we were ordered ... to a town called Goesdorf. I think that was the name of it. We went there to set up our radar That was the first time we saw a V-2, you know one of those armed rockets. Our radar went [crazy] tracking it. The SCR-584 tracks automatically. We were getting ... a lot of action on the radar. We were getting many missions as we called them at that time and were running them against targets of opportunity. ... Then one day a jeep stopped at our place and a general asked, "What outfit is this?"

KP: Do you know the general's name?

BK: No, I don't. He was a brigadier. And he said, "You better get that equipment out of here You've got classified material in this unit. ... Get it out of here. Get it out fast." So we packed it all up and went back, and he told us to go back to Liege, so we were fortunate in the sense that we bypassed the German troops that came in. What happened was the German breakthrough came at Trier.

KP: How far were you from the breakpoint?

BK: About five miles, I guess.

KP: So if that general hadn't have come up then ...?

BK: ... Oh yes, we would have been captured and the unit lost. ... The thing that they were very afraid would fall into the German's hands was the magnetron. So if you can't get the equipment away, you had to blow it up because they didn't want it to fall into enemy hands.

KP: So you [would have had to destroy the] equipment?

BK: Yes. You had the authority to destroy the equipment, but we didn't have to do that fortunately [because] we took off and got up to Liege. But in any event, in the course of going back, we ran into the commander of our battalion, ... a pretty important guy. And he was out there on the road, in effect ..., hitching his way back to Liege. We said, "What happened," and he said, "... the Germans overran us. ... We had to blow up the set." That's the M.E.W., you know, the main control for the continent. So anyhow we took him back up to Liege and ...

KP: So the unit he was in was overrun?

BK: ... Right. Their equipment was damaged beyond repair. They had to get new stuff, and they got it pretty fast, within a week or two. He came back with us, and he had to collect all of his troops. They were all dispersed all over the place. They got back the best way they could. ... Ours at least were all in our trucks We had all of our equipment, and we were all set to go. ... That was fine. Then as a result of that we got ordered down to Camp Elsenborn. ... Our job there was to run missions against the town called Saint Vith, and we ran missions all day long and all night long and weekends too.

KP: And this was providing close support?

BK: Yes right. This was to-- ... because the area was all fogged in after we got down there, and they couldn't and we couldn't see the Germans. The Allies had to get Saint Vith out of commission because that was the supply route for the Germans. So the thing was to kill that town completely, and that's what they did. They went in there, and we directed one mission after another into that place. ... We were ultimately successful. I don't think that the people of Saint Vith felt that way.

KP: ... Did your Signal Corps battalion lose anybody?

BK: Nobody. We never lost a man [during] the whole war.

KP: What about the unit that was overrun at the Bulge? The other Signal Corps unit. How did that unit fare?

BK: I think that they lost one or two men out of the whole headquarters.

KP: Did you know any of the men who were killed at Malmedy?

BK: Oh, no. Those were all infantrymen, the 77th ... Division They were brand new. They were brought over-- the checkerboard division. They had a little checkerboard on their shirts. They were all brand new, and they were stuck in between the First and the Second Divisions because they thought they would be safe there, and it would give them a little chance to see the battle. Then the Germans came right through there, grabbed those troops and killed them. That's why the Second Division was so upset because they felt they had let them down. They were supposed to protect those guys, and they were very upset.

KP: What ... was the general sense about surrendering after Malmedy? Were you concerned when this brigadier pulled up and said, "Get out of here before you are overrun?"

BK: ... That was before Malmedy, but I knew nothing about people wearing uniforms that didn't belong to them. ... That brigadier could have been ... a phoney, but the point is that what he told us was very good advice. We got it out, and we saved the set and so forth. It was important because what happened was that we needed it at Saint Vith. We never would have been able to stop them if we weren't able to bomb that supply center because they were coming along gang busters, you know, through there. They would come through Saint Vith, and then they would fan out all over the place. Fortunately, somebody identified the place where the supplies were coming through, and they clobbered it. So then we were finished with our business at Elsenborn. Then we crossed the Bridge at Remagen and that was really something. They said, "Well we're going [to go] across. We are going to go to the east now." So the first thing we did was to go to - ... it was very sad. This was on this side of the Rhine, and we commandeered an estate owned by somebody near Kassel. We were living like kings in this mansion. We noticed that the owner of the place was being very secretive, and it turned out that what had happened was that his son had been wounded mortally apparently. He was taking care of him, and he didn't want us to find him. Our men were very sympathetic to a situation like that. In any event we left them, and we did what we could to make the place like it was before we took over. We were sort of ashamed of ourselves.

KP: Why?

BK: We took their house away from them, ... and we acted like Prussian troops. That isn't really the nature of American soldiery. You don't do that ordinarily, not easily, and so then we were ordered from there, ... down to the Rhine to Remagen was the place. ... The bridge had already been seized, and the area was organized as an inter-artillery zone ... where you hear aircraft sounds up above and the next thing you know it looks like the whole ground goes up in fire. ... So they managed to keep the [German] planes from bombing the bridge ... for a while. It was up for about ten days. ... Just about the time we were scheduled to cross, they said, "Nope, the bridge is not safe enough, and so you are going by pontoons." We went across the pontoon bridge, which was quite an experience Then we got on the other side. On the other side it was like a battle you see from the Civil War. There was a lot of home guard troops. No more SS. ... The soldiers we saw were in green uniforms which meant that they were the home guard, and they were fighting out in the field. They looked like people who would work in the field.

KP: That struck you even though you were in the Signal Corps?

BK: Yes.

KP: Were you ever fired at by infantry? You were shelled.

BK: Well, I was going to tell you about the incident at Elsenborn. After they caught these guys, then they became much more alert to all the things in the neighborhood and they noticed us for the first time.

KP: So in other words your unit was sort of operating independently?

BK: Yes. Well what we did was we came up, and we would report to the division, ... to the major in charge of the Air Force coordination. ... We would say, "We're in the neighborhood. Where are you going to be," and so forth. And we would now be put on their network at that point and that's it. Then the fellows would never bother us. They would come out, for example, and say, "Hey, we got these flight orders today and maybe you could help us with this one." Our controllers would call the flights and give them verbal directions to the target of opportunity with the help of our radar tracker. It was sort of organized chaos in a sense, but as we got experience it got much better. ... Anyhow, the ... fellows went out. I always kept a guard out because I never knew what was going on out there, and I figured we ought to have a guard just to tell us. Anyhow, one night the guard goes out. They gave us a password. You always got the password. One night a group comes in, and they grab one of my men. They have a knife across his throat, and they said the sign countersign sort of thing, and he didn't know it. ... They started-- ... like the American troops, they can't bring themselves to just killing a guy, so they ... asked him things like, "Who's on the Yankees? What are the Yankees? ... What's a nickel?" and so forth. And so they finally established the fact that these were probably Americans. They said, "You better learn your password," ... but ... my men came in a panic and said, "Hey they are picking us up." After that the guys learned the password and another ... little lesson of war. That was really the only close call we had.

KP: Except when the brigadier pulled up and told you to get out of there.

BK: Also, when they were shelling us. That was a pretty bad one I mean. ... If they really had just aimed just slightly, very slightly over then

KP: Is shelling your most vivid memory in terms of the war?

BK: Shelling was a very vivid memory, but let me tell you the rest of the story. ... After we crossed the bridge at Remagen, things were moving very fast. The Germans were collapsing, and we were told to go to the Elbe, and boy that's pretty far, you know. Dashing across Germany there. We got to a town called Muhlhausen. Thuringia was the name of the Province, a very ancient sort of place. ... We established ourselves in ... an abandoned school, and we really felt like we were living like kings again because we had been living in tents all this time. ... So one day an old lady comes along, at least I thought she was old at that time. I was 22. Anyhow, she says, "Read this paper," which said we have some pictures and statues and so forth from Krefeld, and I'd like to have you come and commandeer these things or tell me what to do with them-- because ... the Russians were coming and the populace knew it. What had happened was that in order to save the contents of various museums, they picked them up, everything packed up nicely and sent them out to farm houses and in this case it was a castle. They put it down in the keep in the dungeon I guess it was. I didn't know this lady from a hole in the wall. I wondered whether it was just somebody coming over there to ferret out some secrets or something. Anyhow she tells me to come with her, so I take my rifle and my driver and I tell the guys [that] I'm going with this lady over to that castle over there When we get to the castle and crossed a moat, I

thought, ... I'm really in for it if ... this is a ... case ... where she is trying to pull something over on us. I went into the castle with her, and she took me down several flights of stairs, down into the ... dungeon ... It was a very sparsely furnished building. It had protective bars around various areas. I came around one corner and there were two German soldiers standing there. I didn't know what ... to do. It turns out that they were more afraid of me than I was of them because they were there to guard that treasure. ... The lady showed me the stuff. ... You know everything that a museum would look like if you took every single thing out and put it down in a basement. ... I said okay. I would call on G-5. We had what they call a G-5 unit which is a military unit responsible for administration of the civilians in a war territory. There are four G's that run the war, and there is a fifth G that runs the civilians I went over there ... and said this lady's got the museum of Krefeld in her basement, and she is very much afraid that the Russians are going to come in. G-5 said, "She is right." Then he said, "Where is this place? We will have it out of there today." They brought in fifty trucks to move the items.

KP: Did you ever find out what happened to this stuff?

BK: Well it went back to Krefeld ... because the war was done over there. What happens in the ... case of the G-5 stuff is that they have depots where they keep the stuff until they can bring it to the place where it is supposed to go. But I don't know what they do in order to be sure the material is safe Even at that time there were a lot of people stealing stuff from these [places]

KP: Did you know of people that were stealing stuff?

BK: Oh, yes sure. I had one man that I lost to the military ...

KP: To the Military Police?

BK: To the Military Police, yes. He set up an office, and he collected money from all of the people in the territory. He told them that he was exchanging the money for new money that the Allies were bringing in ...

KP: So people were giving him money?

BK: Yes, they were giving him all of their money. Anyhow, the MP's ... whisked him away, very rapidly. But we were very much afraid that anybody we would turn this stuff over to might be bogus and that the only thing they were interested in [was the stuff]. So what the British had done-- they were very good at procedural things ...-- they had observers that came in.

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

KP: This is the continuation of an interview with Bob Kennedy on July 14, 1994 with Kurt Piehler. ... You left off talking about your transfer home. You were spared fighting in the Pacific.

BK: Yes, well what happened was that it took the month of September to get us organized to go home. Fortunately, we went home before anybody else did because all of them were going through the normal processing or de-processing. ... We were surplus in the port of embarkation, port of debarkation in that case, and so they wanted to get us out of there. And they said, "How many men do you have?" I still had my eighty-nine or ninety men. They said, "Great that's just exactly what we need for this ship," and we went out on the ship that night.

KP: So in other words by being sent possibly to Japan ...

BK: Yes, we were way ahead of the game. We came over, and we wound up in a place called Camp Patrick Henry down in Virginia.

KP: You stayed there for quite a bit of time. You weren't discharged until January 1946.

BK: Oh no, no. That's not the way it is. What happened was that I went there, and they de-processed me in maybe twenty-four hours, maybe, thirty-six hours. It was very fast. Then they said, "O.k. you're going to Fort Dix in New Jersey because that's where you get demobilized." We went to Fort Dix, and I really just passed right through there. That date that you see there that I put down was the date when I was finally separated. The date that I left the Army was October 12th.

KP: So you were on terminal leave for all that time?

BK: Yes, I was on terminal leave. From that point on.

KP: You really did get back quickly.

BK: Oh, very fast. I couldn't believe it. And I was so glad to see my folks, so it was really wonderful.

KP: Had you thought of making the Army a career at all?

BK: Well they gave us that option, and I really didn't think I'd like that as much as I liked the telephone company because the telephone company was ... more dedicated to continued Signal Corps work so to speak whereas I couldn't be sure that that was the situation in the Army.

KP: You mean you might be taken out of the Signal Corps?

BK: Well, not only that. The Army had a way of getting so involved with administration that you really weren't doing any of the things that you really thought that you were going to be doing. At least that was my thinking at the time. I didn't realize that that was the way of the world. It's always like that everywhere.

KP: I just want to go over a few things in your Army [career]. You've actually covered a lot of the questions I was going to ask, but one question was how far had you traveled before you came to Rutgers? ... What was the farthest ... you had gone?

BK: Well let's see, ... I guess the farthest west I had gone was St. Louis.

KP: Because of your mother's family?

BK: Yes, my mother's family, right. ... I guess the farthest east I had gone was New York City.

KP: Had you made it to Washington, D.C.?

BK: No. I never got to Washington, and ...

KP: Never really left New Jersey?

BK: I really never left New Jersey, New York and New Jersey, right.

KP: Except for a trip to St. Louis at one point?

BK: ... Well, it was a couple of times but, it was ... definitely just for that purpose.

KP: So what did you think of the South as someone who had never really been past New Jersey when you were transferred down South for the Army?

BK: I guess I felt that they were much nicer than I thought they were going to be. I guess my ... knowledge of the South was the propaganda from the Civil War. I had feelings that they were ... haters. Great haters and so forth. A: didn't like catholics. B: didn't like black folk and so forth. It turned out that they were not anything like that.

KP: Really, so you found the South much more hospitable.

BK: Yes ..., I had great friends down there, very nice.

KP: Did you get off base a lot when you were stationed in Florida?

BK: In Florida, I lived off base.

KP: So you actually lived in the community?

BK: Yes, right. ... I guess really in both places, except for Camp Murphy ... [where] we couldn't live anywhere but on the base because it was out in the deep wilderness. I used to call it the Everglades, but it turns out it had nothing to do with the Everglades. It was the forest on the East Coast of Florida and very inhospitable. The mosquitoes out there-- ... I mean I used to talk about Jersey mosquitos, but these fellows would pick you up.

KP: Have you been back to the areas you trained in Florida since the war?

BK: No, I haven't. I got a note from one of the fellows that had moved down to Hope Sound--there's a community down there. ... He sent me a newspaper clipping of the retirement of Camp Murphy. It had pictures of what was left of the barracks. ... It looked like a barracks. It didn't look any different from what you would see at Fort Monmouth.

KP: Any other impressions of the South or experiences when you were training, in terms of food or ...?

BK: I don't know. It seemed to me that they had a very nice life. They were all very nice people. I did visit one place down there in the Bible belt and that was an experience

KP: Why was it such an experience?

BK: ... They do a lot of singing, ... old-time religion and all that kind of stuff.

KP: So this was a real surprise for you?

BK: Yes, I didn't think they did that anymore. I thought that was strictly Hollywood stuff They were really very much enthused about their religion. ... That and I guess the food was fine. I guess the thing that got to me was that they would kill a chicken and eat it right away. That really was new to me as a city boy, basically. We buy our chickens and mom cooks them. Here these people are pulling off the wings and the feathers and so forth.

KP: You mentioned that you enjoyed England a great deal. Did you have a lot of contact with the English population?

BK: Yes. They were very good. They were amazing. They were living through a war that was devastating their homeland completely, and yet they were very pleasant, very generous, helpful. The only time they weren't helpful was when I was bringing those big rigs from up in the north of England to where they were needed down south. They would not tell you the route. They took all the signs down incidentally. There were no signs in England and their roads looked like county lanes. They didn't have those nifty highways they have built in more recent times They were just roads Could be a paved cow path for all I knew. And you would ask if they could you tell you where Leamington or Stoke is ..., and they would say, "Well its down the road a piece" [We] would ask, "That way?" "Well that sounds like a good way," you know. That was the most direct information I got. Most of the time they would just simply say they didn't talk to strangers They were not about to let anybody know where anything was over there, and I guess that was in connection with the ...

KP: German invasion?

BK: Yes, yes. They were much more alert to that kind of thing.

KP: Of the men under you, how many would go to religious services? It sounds like your unit was sort of out on its own. Did you have any contact with Army chaplains?

BK: We went to the local churches is what we did. ... In Florida and in the states, but we did the same thing overseas.

KP: So you would go to mass in the local church?

BK: Yes, and I would say that maybe a third of the fellows were Catholic or they liked the idea of going to mass. I mean I didn't take a poll of who was what, but we would say things like, "Church call will be at eight o'clock tomorrow morning and anybody who wants to go" So then they would show up, and we would go there. We generally had to walk because we didn't have any regular bus service We could have taken them by truck I suppose, but that was a little tenuous sort of thing, and we didn't really think that was appropriate.

KP: So one of the experiences that you had in Europe was attending services at a range of churches?

BK: Oh yes. We went to one, ... I remember the one in England, it was so much like a Catholic mass that I didn't know that I was in ...

KP: So you went to an Anglican Church and ...

BK: Yes, right and I didn't know and brought the whole group in who wanted a Catholic mass. ... I got to one part there where they got to what they call the collect-- ... "This isn't what we"-- ... and so anyhow ... it was fine.

KP: In England, where were your men quartered?

BK: With me. When I was in England, the first thing we did was to set up a camp in Henley-on-Thames, how about that! We rented basically a field from a local farmer and put a bunch of tents up there and put duck walks and all that kind of stuff

KP: But, basically you were living in tents?

BK: Yes. We were living in tents. We were living in tents all the time in England.

KP: You never saw a barracks?

BK: Never saw a barracks, no, no, except when we were sent to a school ... that I told you about. There we were in a regular house or a barracks. The only time-- when we went over to the continent then we got into houses more often. ... We grabbed them. ... It was catch as catch can. It was quartering the troops on the populace

KP: ... You said that the English population was quite receptive to you and to your men. Was there much fraternization among your men with local women?

BK: Oh I'm sure there was, but I didn't make a big point of checking into that.

KP: As long as your men were there for roll call and doing their job it was all right?

BK: That was their job to be there, right.

KP: Did your men ever have any problems with the town? ... [Y]ou had the one guy who started this black market operation but was there anything else?

BK: Yes, they got into trouble now and then and ... you [would] have to make peace with the authorities, but nothing very serious. ... Rowdy kids, you know, and that's about it.

KP: You had contact with the British Army and British technical divisions.

BK: Yes. Just before the siege of Aachen, we saw the Eighth Army fellows come back who had been caught up there north of Aachen. ... They were trying to free the Dutch areas, and they were clobbered. ... They were coming back. That made a big impression on me. I felt really sorry for these guys. They felt like they had been beaten down, ... which they had been, by the Germans. They were still of good spirit but discouraged.

KP: That was the only contact you really had with them?

BK: Yes.

KP: You spent a lot of time in Belgium and some time in France. What was your contact with the French and Belgium populations?

BK: Well the Belgians were very nice. ... They really liked Americans. They invited us in for dinners and everything else. We used to share our rations with the populations that we visited. The French were standoffish. They tended to be somewhat suspicious of Americans and maybe they had good reason, but I never did get along with them very well.

KP: What was your attitude towards Germany as an adversary and the German soldiers and the German people?

BK: They were the enemy. I didn't have any qualms about taking things from them. They were-- the people on this side of the Rhine tended to be nicer in the sense of soft-spoken and less militant. When you got to the other side of the Rhine, they tended to be of the old Saxon variety.

KP: So you could notice a difference between the western part and the eastern part?

BK: Yes, and they were quite different.

KP: You mentioned several cases of contact with Germans ... while the war was still going on, the rescue of the art work. Did you have others? What was the nature of your contact? How much fraternization went on between your men and the German population before and after the war?

BK: I don't think there was much fraternization while the war was on. We had usual things There are so many incidents that you could talk about, and they don't come to mind quickly. ... For example, you ask, what was your interaction with the populace? I can recall now, one of the things that I had to do was that I had to choose sights where we were going to go and that was a personal responsibility of the officer-in-charge. He had to go out there and find it. ... Then you had to find a place for the troops. ... If you didn't find a place for your troops, then you were going to have to live in tents. I mean, that's the deal. You had to find rations, arrangements and all that type of thing. But, when you went out you would typically go out with one or two fellows who had rifles. You had your own rifle, and you would go to the area that you wanted to put your radars in, and you would then try to get yourselves houses. ... You weren't greatly admired in those places. They were very upset with us. ... I found that to be a difficult part of the work.

KP: In all of the countries or particularly in Germany?

BK: No, in Germany I'm talking about They were sullen, but they ... didn't use knives or anything like that.

KP: In other words, they were not greeting you as liberators.

KP: No, no, oh, no, no.

KP: They were very standoffish?

BK: [They were] very much upset about the whole thing. Even those who really didn't care much for the war, like for example the ones on the west side of the Rhine. They didn't care much for the war. They were relatively peaceful people as far as I could see, but they were not happy about being invaded and occupied. People on the east side of the Rhine tended to be more antagonistic to the troops, but ... I can understand that very well. I can't remember other cases, but I know that I constantly seemed to be going out on trips trying to find a new place to put a radar up, ... and I know ... I was very lucky. For example, that one case I was telling you about, I went out in this area to find a sight, and I stayed at this house. The people weren't overjoyed about it, but they at least accommodated us. I found out that right up the road not more than half a mile they killed General [Maurice] Rose. You remember that ambush over there. That was a general. He went out doing much the same as I was, except he was doing big things He was up there, and he ran into a group that was not enamored at all with his presence. They ambushed him and killed him

KP: So you're going out on these sort of ...

BK: Yes, you really don't know whether you're in friendly territory or not. I mean it's sort of like going out here and asking, "Do you have any belligerents on this street ...?" And they say, "No we're not." ... That's the way it is.

KP: You are in your jeep driving around?

BK: You're driving around. It's very much like-- ... did you see Gettysburg by any chance?

KP: No, I have not seen it yet.

BK: Well, that's the kind of feeling you get. ... You know the big picture, but you have absolutely no idea whether these people in front of you are with you or against you. ... You don't know whether they are the enemy or whether they are trying to help you.

KP: ... Did you always report to the Second Division?

BK: No. It was the First Division.

KP: Were you assigned to that division for the whole war?

BK: No. What happened was that about the time of Elsenborn, they decided to put us under the Ninth Tactical Air Command because we did other things besides ... help the fighter pilots drop their bombs in appropriate places. We also dropped spies at night in various places. We would carry the man out to a place and say, ... "[Go]." We had a Norden computer sight. ... The Norden computer predicted where a man would land if he ... jumped out at this particular point, so it was a useful tool to get agents into particular areas, so we did that.

KP: Would you directly talk to the air crews?

BK: ... They assigned an Air Force pilot as a controller. He was in the van at the time that the mission was taken, and he was in charge of that van even though they were my men ... and my van. He was the one in charge because he was directing whatever was happening. So we would get the orders, and we would give them to him. He would carry them out with this group and that's it. It was just like when he would fly a mission, and he hated it! And they all hated it! ... Living out in the mud, they were so used to living back on tarmac.

KP: It might be dangerous when they fly, but at least you had nice clean sheets to sleep on. How big was the Air Force complement?

BK: Generally, two at a time They would come in, and they would be available night and day. ... When they were done, two more would come along and two more and two more. What happened was that we would have bizarre things occur. Like, for example, they had never done this before so they would say, "Okay all you guys group together so we can get the bomb off all at once." Well, a bomb on a fighter is far different from a bomb on a bomber because a fighter is so light that when you let the bomb go, the ... plane goes up in the air or out or whatever. We

had one session ... where we got them all tight They did more cussing: "What the hell are you doing? You're killing us up here." ... So ... the controllers were then not allowed to do that anymore. We got a visit from the general on that one. He said, "What are you doing up there? Why are you doing this? ..."

KP: Which general was that?

BK: Quesada, Pete Quesada. ... He was in the regular Air Force After the war he was put in charge of ... one of these civilian air ... control agencies, ... like the ... CAA ...

KP: FAA.

BK: FAA, right ...

KP: Is there anything else I forgot to ask you about your experiences in the military in World War II?

BK: It is so difficult. It's looking back ...

June Kennedy: Can I mention a couple of things you might have forgotten? ... Did you tell them that you joined the telephone company the day after you graduated Rutgers?

BK: No. I didn't tell them that.

JK: Did you tell them that you were offered the opportunity to teach at West Point?

BK: Oh, yes that was long after that. ...

JK: Or that you had been in Buchenwald and Auschwitz?

BK: ... We went there. We didn't free them. We were just visiting They captured a camp where they had these displaced persons, I guess that's what they called them. ... We went over there to see ..., but it was like going to a museum or anything else. It was just a place.

KP: In other words everyone had been cleared out at that point?

BK: No, there were people there. The people were still there, but it was something that another unit had done. They were the ones that had the credit, and they were the ones that were responsible for doing whatever had to be done. So we went there, ... and we saw these people.

KP: How shocked were you?

BK: I thought it was terrible. ... It was worse than what Schindler's List showed. ...

KP: Even though you had not been part of the initial liberation? It was still terrible?

BK: ... Oh yes, oh yes. They were lying there unable to get up, and there were huge piles of corpses. They looked like cord wood. I thought that's what it was at first, and then I went up to it. It was bodies

KP: Did you or any of your men get sick seeing this?

BK: Well, I didn't.

KP: The story I have read was that Patton threw up when he saw one of the concentration camps.

BK: ... I don't throw up that easily, but it wasn't pleasant. The smell was something, the smell of death. But, I had been through things like that all along. For example, the Battle of the Bulge. A couple of our officers froze to death on the battlefield

KP: And you encountered them there?

BK: No. They were bringing them back, ... and they were in the back of a truck. I thought they were sleeping. ... Those kinds of things were more everyday then you would find nowadays

JK: What about [General Lesley J.] McNair when he told you that the bombs were dropped?

BK: Around D-Day, but I was not in it. She's giving me credit for something I had nothing to do with. Our early advance units had gone onto the continent, and they were doing their thing with radar, but they didn't have these neat ones. McNair went in there with his troops. They went to St. Lo, and he got caught by the Wehrmacht, and so he was killed. Now, it turned out that if he had had the kind of support that we later got, and probably we got it because he was killed, that wouldn't have happened at all.

JK: ... Our bombs, and planes killed our own boys.

BK: ... Oh, that was the other story

JK: ...

KP: Was that a concern that our own planes were killing our troops?

BK: Yes, that was the concern all the time: that you got the right target and that you didn't bomb your own people. ... I guess you're right. That's the McNair incident. There was another general that was killed down there though, and he was killed because he didn't have information about the enemy in that area. It was the Wehrmacht that killed him

KP: You mentioned Rose.

BK: Rose, that was another one, but they killed him on the ground. That was just a streak. I think I'm dry.

JK: ...

KP: ... When you went off to war you knew that you were going to return to Long Lines?

BK: Yes, right.

KP: Did you expect to stay at AT&T as long as you did?

BK: Yes. I thought I would stay there for life. I didn't have any ambitions to change jobs. I thought that I would rise in the hierarchy of that outfit ... and do great things for communications in the U.S.

KP: [In] your initial career you had a grounding in most parts of the company. For example, you were a plant test room engineer and commercial representative in accounting methods. Did you see yourself moving up the hierarchy?

BK: Yes, I thought I would do that.

KP: What is your evaluation of the Bell System? How successful do you think it was and should it have been broken up?

BK: Well, I thought it was very successful. I thought it did a very good job. I thought ... there was a difference in the way people looked at life or what their government should do or what their industry should do after a certain point in time. Obviously, those who were engaged in the business of providing communications were pretty happy with the way things were going. Those who were on the outside felt that they could do it better. I think that what happened was probably a good thing for the industry, but I'm not sure it was a good thing for the people. I think that what really happened was that we have a lot poorer communications They say, we can do this and we can do that. They can do it, but its sort of like the very special operations that doctors can do given [an] unlimited amount of funds. It is the same thing with the communications industry. They can do these things, but they don't do the standard things, ... everyday things very well. ...

KP: The universal coverage?

BK: Yes, right ...

JK: There is more material about ... Ma Bell was your mother ...

BK: ... What am I going to do about it?

KP: What did you originally envision for your career at AT&T? Was it to work at Bell Labs and on inventions?

BK: I guess I had an imperfect picture of the thing, but I guess I thought that as more demands were made for communications, that I would be in a position to provide those kinds of things and develop ... in the industry in a technical way. ... I guess I really had not thought about the fact that you have to control all those troops, you know, and so forth That wasn't really my bag, at all. I didn't go for that too much. ... That was a disappointment in effect, yes.

KP: You ended up becoming a supervisor at Bell Labs.

BK: Yes, I was a supervisor at Bell Labs.

KP: What areas did you work on at Bell Labs?

BK: Generally in the data area and data communications was the big area. ... We had a contract with the military to put together a worldwide communications system, a secure one and I helped with the development of that. Then after that I worked in data: data communications, capabilities ..., modems and all those good things. ...

JK: Remember, the trans-Atlantic cutoff ...

BK: ... That was long before that time.

KP: You were with Long Lines?

BK: I was with Long Lines, and they came up with an invention called TASI. ... Basically we were able to identify pieces of speech and know when there was a pause and then fill it up with another. They could get about twice as many conversations on the same wire, but now they have these wires that have 12,000 conversations going over them or whatever.

KP: When did you join the American Legion and the VFW?

BK: The American Legion I joined early because we had one right in town. I joined it practically when I came out of the Army, and it was a lot of fun. I was in that for ten, twelve years active and then we moved out of the area, and I wasn't active anymore. The VFW I just joined recently [with] the group of friends that live in town. It's sort of like a club, you know.

KP: How did you meet your wife?

JK: I was a newspaper reporter in 1947, and he was the Adjutant of the American Legion and then he was the Junior Vice-Commander. I couldn't go to a legion meeting because I was not a veteran. So I had to wait until the meeting was over to find out what happened. I worked for the Bergen Record in Hackensack. So I had to speak to the Adjutant about what happened in the

meeting, and he would tell me. After the second month he mentioned there was going to be a dance and asked me if I would go with him.

BK: There you go.

KP: So this was after the war.

JK: I met him in '47, and we were married in '49. We had the use of the American Legion for our wedding reception because he was one of the Vice-Commanders.

KP: ... Is there anything else?

BK: No. I don't think so. If anything momentous comes to mind after this, I will drop you a line or give you a call, but I think you have ... emptied the contents.

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

Revised by Linda E. Lasko 6/3/96