

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BERNARD E. STARK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

and

STEPHANIE KATZ

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

G. DOROTHY SABATINI

Sandra Holyoak: This begins an interview with Mr. Bernard E. Stark on October 20, 1999, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The interviewers are Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Stephanie Katz.

SH: Mr. Stark, thank you so much for taking time out of such a dreary day to talk with us today. We will begin the interview by asking when and where you were born.

Bernard Stark: ... I was born in Trenton, New Jersey, seventy-seven years ago.

SH: Can you tell us please, your father's name, and a little bit about him?

BS: My father was Louis D. Stark and he ... owned, along with his partners, the largest grocery store and meat market in Trenton. It was sort of like the advent of the supermarket. ... He had four delivery trucks on the road. In addition to that, he had a terrific voice and he used to sing at concerts in Cadwallar Park in Trenton. He also played the saxophone and was in the (Tall Cedars?) Band. He used to go on conventions. ... He was a great man.

SH: Where was he born?

BS: In New York City.

SH: How did he come to live in Trenton?

BS: I don't know.

SH: Do you remember, approximately, the year that he was born or anything else about your family?

BS: Probably around 1884. ... His father, according to my brothers, ... was the first rabbi in Trenton.

SH: He may have come to Trenton with his family.

BS: He may have, I don't know. I never met my ... grandparents.

SH: Do you know where your grandparents are from?

BS: No. Well, my grandfather on my mother's side, I think, came from, ... I think, Russia and his name was Kimmelfarb. When he got to Ellis Island, it became Stein. Everybody there was Stein, no matter what their name was, and he went to England from Europe and went as an embroiderer and he ended up in New York in (Chauncey?), New York, which is near Armonk, NY, it's in Westchester. There was a mill there and he worked in the mill and his wife, my grandmother, I never knew. She was walking on the railroad tracks chasing her dog and the train didn't stop and so my mother became a mother for her two brothers in (Chauncey?). My mother was born in New York City, also.

SH: So you did not know either set of grandparents at all. Tell me about your father's business which he owned with his partners. How did the Depression affect the business?

BS: Well he finally went bankrupt there because ... the elite of Trenton had bought stuff from him and they would run up bills of 2,000 dollars a month and pay him 1,000 dollars. ... It kept going on and on and on. He also had a crooked partner who stole him deaf, dumb, and blind.

SH: What did he do after the bankruptcy?

BS: They opened up a little grocery store outside of Trenton, in Hamilton Township. ... [Do] you know the Trenton area at all? Where do you live?

Stephanie Katz: I live in South Jersey in Vineland. My friend, lives in Trenton, so, I have been there.

SH: Let me ask you a few questions about your mother. You spoke about your grandparents on your mother's side. ... Your mother was born in New York City. Do you know what year she was born?

BS: Same [1884].

SH: The same year? What kind of educational background did your parents have?

BS: They probably went to eighth grade.

SH: Do you know why they did not go to high school?

BS: No.

SH: Did any family members participate in World War I?

BS: No.

SH: Did they discuss the war at all?

BS: No. [They] talked about the flu and there was a flu epidemic.

SH: How did that epidemic affect your family?

BS: Well, they knew people that had died in it, you know.

SH: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

BS: I have two brothers.

SH: Older or younger?

BS: Older. One died at age eighty-five, two years ago, and one just turned eighty-five this weekend.

SH: You definitely are the youngest.

BS: Yeah, there's a fifteen years difference between my oldest brother and there ... is an eight [year] difference between my older brother.

SH: What were their education backgrounds?

BS: They were both lawyers. ... [They] both went to Penn. My oldest brother, when he died, was the oldest living alumnus of the law school at Penn. ... My other brother became a bankruptcy judge until he retired, and he went to New Jersey Law School. ... Originally [it] was called Dana, ... which then became New Jersey Law School, which, in turn, became Rutgers Law School. You know that? How do you know that?

SH: We have researched the law school for this project and, because some of our interviewees were graduates of Newark.

BS: My oldest brother was in the practice for over fifty years, and the Judge went into the firm in the early '30s, and it was just he and my oldest brother, and now the firm is in Lawrenceville, with a Princeton address. Everybody in Lawrenceville says Princeton. [Laughter] ... It started out as seventeen lawyers. My nephew is the head honcho. My oldest brother goes in. I mean, he's not part of the firm anymore, but they gave him an office, and my nephew's daughter is in the firm. My niece's son is in the firm. ... If you ever need a lawyer ... [Laughter]

SH: Why did they go to Penn and not Rutgers? Did you ever consider being a lawyer?

BS: Yes. ... There was no comparison ... at that time, [between] Rutgers and Penn. ... The oldest one went to Penn, then, the next oldest went to Penn and I had no choice. ... Remember, my oldest brother was not really in the Depression. My father's store was doing very well. ... The middle brother, the business was doing pretty good and because the oldest one went to Penn, he went to Penn. I was at the end of the Depression, and we lived in New Brunswick at that time, and I could walk over or ride my bicycle, and the student union was on the corner of College Avenue and, in back of Old Queens, what's that street?

SH: Hamilton.

BS: Right. ... It wasn't an old [house], but, I mean, it was a house, and the student union for commuters was there.

SH: When did your family move from Trenton to New Brunswick? How old were you then?

BS: ... I was a senior in high school, and there used to be a Five and Ten at the corner of George and Albany Street called (MH Fishman?) and we were offered the opportunity to open up a twenty-foot square delicatessen counter in the basement. ... So we came to New Brunswick.

SH: Tell me about going to elementary school in Trenton. Was your school located in Trenton? What was the name of your school?

BS: I began at James Moses. I went to Hamilton. ... I went to junior three and then I went to high school.

SH: What were your interests as a young kid?

BS: Don't go away. ...

[Tape Pause]

SH: This is the 1940 Bobashelia. Can you tell us about this?

BS: What's it look like?

SH: It looks like a yearbook.

BS: That's what it is. ... There was no high school like Trenton High School at that time.

SH: Why?

BS: There were three separate buildings. There were two Olympic-sized swimming pools. There was an exercise gym and two humungous gyms.

SK: Were you involved in any extracurricular activities, clubs, etc?

SH: I am trying to find it.

BS: I've got my picture in this thing. Where are you?

SH: I am in "D," let me turn to "S." Were they divided by seniors?

BS: Yeah, they are all seniors.

SH: Okay, Bernard Edward Stark. Starky was your nickname. Academic Forum, the Quill and Scroll, treasurer of the Class of 1940, hall patrol, swimming team, *Spectator*, junior assistant, What was the *Spectator*?

BS: A newspaper.

SH: You were also the *Spectator* business manager. What does "Service 'T,' 1939" mean?

BS: They give you a little letter.

SH: A minor 'T' in 1939?

BS: Right, that was for swimming. I was the manager.

SH: You were in the National Honors Society. What year were you elected to the National Honors Society?

BS: Junior year.

SH: Junior year, wow. Was the Academic Forum like a student senate?

BS: No, the Forum ... was the prime boys club, no girls. [Laughter]

SH: What about Quill and Scroll?

BS: That was the national honor society for newspapers and, who was the guy that takes the big polls in Princeton? ...

SH: Gallop?

BS: Yeah. We were invited to his estate in Princeton. I was cute, wasn't I? [Laughter]

SH: Yes.

BS: My Rutgers yearbook, I think, is downstairs.

SH: Thank you for showing us this. Since you were following your brothers through high school, did your teachers often compare you to them?

BS: Oh, yeah. I mean the teachers that had my brothers were still in the high school and when I graduated and got into Rutgers, it was to become a lawyer. ... My middle brother said, "You take education," because lawyers were not making that much money back then, and you got to have something to fall back onto, so, I went into the School of Ed, and after I graduated, I applied to law school at Columbia, and I was turned down. ... I got into TC at Columbia, so, I felt, you know, if I got my Masters degree from Columbia maybe I can get into the law school. ... In 1948, I got my Masters degree and was turned down at Columbia and accepted at Rutgers. ... I was to go into law school at Rutgers in September of 1948 and that summer I got a call from the superintendent of Trenton wanting to know, who knew me, if I wanted a job teaching in the junior high school, 2,500 dollars a year, with a Masters degree. ... [In] 1948, I was twenty-six years old; nobody ever asked me if I wanted a job. So, I took that job and I never went to law school.

SK: Do you know how your parents met?

BS: I have no idea.

SK: When you were growing up, did you work in the grocery store and help them out?

BS: Did I work there? No. My brothers did. I just went to eat the cookies. [Laughter]

SH: Did you have an after school job, either in junior high or high school?

BS: In junior high, my first job, I was like a delivery boy, and clean up boy, and clean up the rat traps, and things like that for a drug store for five dollars a week. ... I worked long enough, I think maybe three or four weeks, to buy a bicycle and I quit.

SH: What did you do with your summers?

BS: ... We played on the street. You know, there was no such thing as camp. I was not a Boy Scout. Just played where the high school was. With a big field, we would go over and play ball and play with your buddies.

SH: Your father was very involved in music. Did you or any of your brothers show any interest in music, also?

BS: My brother played the violin in the University of Penn band, orchestra, and my brother played the trumpet in high school. I don't think he played in college. ... I'm very musical, I have two flat feet. [Laughter]

SH: Did you take up an instrument?

BS: My mother gave me piano lessons. I think it was fifty cents a week. I never played. We had a player piano. I could pump it. My mother gave it away, gave it away.

SK: You were involved with the newspaper in high school. Did you do any writing outside of high school?

SH: Did you go to Hebrew school? How religious was your family?

BS: I ... never [had a] *bar mitzvah*. The rabbi didn't want to marry Rose and me.

SH: Why not?

BS: Because I ... [never had a] *bar mitzvah*.

SH: Did you talk him out of it?

BS: She did. She said do you know this rabbi from Syracuse and they were ... buddies because we didn't belong to any temples or synagogues. ... My mother and father, even though my

father's father was the first rabbi, supposedly, my oldest brother ... [had a] *bar mitzvah* and, supposedly, you can't prove it by me, the other one was, too. ... They became very active in the congregation Har Sinai in Trenton, but my parents never practiced anything. My mother often said that her mother and father were atheists but they never denied that they were Jewish.

SK: Were you ever exposed to anti-Semitism growing up?

BS: Did I?

SK: Yes, or anyone else in the family?

BS: Not really.

SK: Did you know anything about the plight of the Jews in Nazi Europe? When did you find out about the Holocaust?

BS: Probably not until the end of the war.

SK: Not until the end of the war. Was the topic discussed in your town?

BS: I was in the war.

SK: No one in your town knew what was going on in Germany?

BS: There were no Nazis in Germany.

SH: He is trying to say that the Germans denied any affiliation with the Nazis.

BS: Every time, you know, every time we would liberate something, you know, "*nicht Nazi, nicht Nazi*."

SH: I do not think Stephanie understood.

BS: I know. I saw the look on your face.

SH: Can you explain that for the tape?

BS: If you were alive in Germany, you were a Nazi. ...

SH: Before we get into the war, let us talk about Rutgers. You were a commuter student who literally walked to school, as you said. Tell me about your professors and some of your activities from your freshman and sophomore years. You were in a fraternity.

BS: Well, that was after the war. I went in there in 1940 and I left in 1942, I guess. ... The only professor I remember is a Dr. Hall who was a Latin and Greek professor. I remember him. He was a tall man, lived in Princeton, great man. ... At that time, he was wearing trousers with no

cuffs. I remember Dean (Parch?), he was the Dean of the School of Ed and Dean Metzger who, his home was where the student union is today at Rutgers up near where Bishop campus was. ... I had a job for forty cents an hour filing for Dean (Parch's?) secretary. I made ten dollars. That was a lot of money then.

SH: You came to Rutgers on a State Scholarship. Did you get that through Trenton High School? Did you take the exam there?

BS: I didn't get the state scholarship in my freshman year. I got it in my sophomore year and primarily it was because of Dean Metzger. I really don't remember if it was a state scholarship or some kind of financial aid. Tuition was 360 dollars a year. What is it today?

SK: About 12,000 dollars.

BS: Just for tuition?

SK: Oh, no. Tuition is about 6500 dollars.

BS: Really, for state students?

SK: Yes. It is twice as much for out-of-state students.

BS: My granddaughter is graduating from East Brunswick and then I'm taking her up to Ramapo ... [in] the first week of November, and I just figured out that room, board, and tuition was about 6,000 dollars.

SH: For somebody who paid 360 dollars that is pretty steep. Can you describe the campus that you arrived at in 1940? How many people were here?

BS: Not really. I mean some of my classes were held in the School of Ed. ... It was nothing more than a converted house but in back of the student union across from J&J was a building and I forget what it was, it was a decrepit, old building. ... My Latin and Greek classes were held there. My contemporary civilization [class] was on Bishop, and again there was a nice green walk going up to this Bishop campus building, which again, was really nothing more than a converted house. You can sleep through the course, as long as you read the book, because the professor wrote the book and all he did was regurgitate the book. ... I got through. I had maybe a 3.4, or something like that.

SH: As a freshman, were you initiated by the sophomores?

BS: Not really, we wore dinks. Do you know what a dink is? ... It's a little beanie.

SH: Did you have to wear your pants tucked into your socks?

BS: No. No, that was the extent of it, a beanie.

SK: You were on the freshman crew squad?

BS: I was a coxswain.

SK: Was there a team initiation?

BS: No. No. I was like a second string coxswain and my greatest experience was calling off the count. I mean, today, it's all amplified, but, I mean you only called it off. ... We were down where the boat house is now. ... We're going up toward the bridge over the Raritan, toward here, the one that went over to go to Edison, and one of the men, in the scull, his foot came out of the stirrup and went through the bottom, and we sank.

SK: During a race?

BS: Yeah. We didn't win.

SH: Could everyone swim?

BS: Yeah.

SH: Was your freshman year the only year that you rowed crew?

BS: Yeah.

SH: Did you take any of your newspaper experience to the *Targum*?

BS: No.

SH: Did you have any interest in the *Targum*?

BS: No.

SH: What kept you busy as a freshman, other than ROTC?

BS: Well, I went to work at my father's delicatessen counter.

SH: What was your specialty?

BS: Where, in the counter?

SH: Yes.

BS: Well, eating, tasting.

SH: You moved up from cookies to ...

BS: To ham. Needless to say, we weren't kosher.

SH: What was your opinion of ROTC and mandatory chapel?

BS: Yeah, I guess it was mandatory. You went, that's all. I mean, it really wasn't a religious experience. It was more or less an announcement experience. ROTC? I was in it for two years. That's as far as I had to go. ... I was playing handball in the College Avenue gym with another person and I broke my foot, but it was ROTC day and I got dressed into the ROTC boot, you know, and I went, and then I went to the infirmary and the doctor, he turned out to be gay. I mean nobody was gay in those times. This guy was gay and they plastered it and I walked around with a crutch for a number of weeks. Then later, in education, you had to take a physiology course and he was the teacher. ... I hated it and he gave me a four. You know, that's a D, and I went and I cried. ... He said, "You're lucky, I should have failed you." That was the end of that. Of course, it raised hell with my point average but it didn't matter. Nobody ever asked me what I got in physiology when I went for a job.

SH: Did any of your classmates discuss the orientation?

BS: Chapel? You mean the first day?

SH: Right.

BS: You better be kidding me. This is fifty-five years ago.

SH: Was any part of the convocation memorable?

BS: No.

SH: Do you remember any of the dances, or the bands that played at them?

BS: I was in love with a girl from Douglass and it was NJC at the time. ... She was older than I, so we went to her senior prom in the music building over at NJC. We had the military balls and I think I went to a couple. I think Doris Day was one of the singers there.

SK: You were a brother in ZBT.

BS: Well, that's a funny story. I came in out of the war and both my brothers had been big wheels in AEPI in Penn and the middle brother was an officer in the national AEPI and there was a club that met in New Brunswick, on Church Street called the, I don't know what the hell is the name of it. It ... was Hillel on Church Street and my brother said, "If you can get them to become AEPI we'll get you a house and all kinds of expenses." So they came and they talked to the group. We were all set and one of the guys said, "You ought to look into other fraternities." ... One of the fraternities was ZBT and lo and behold, they voted to become ZBT. ... They rented space in a home right by Saint Peter's and that was their home and then ZBT bought the home on Union Street, which burned down, and I was the first president, for a week.

SK: Before ZBT burned down?

BS: No, they held new elections. So that's how ZBT came on the campus.

SK: You were one of the founding fathers.

BS: Yeah.

SK: Was your fraternity involved in the community?

BS: I graduated that year. ... Now, they have been kicked off of campus and now they ... [have] come back on the campus, so just this month I got a letter saying, "We're gonna meet this Sunday, how much do you want to give," and this bit. I never return those things.

SH: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

BS: I was not in the service.

SH: Yes, but, you were still at Rutgers on December 7, 1941. What were you doing? Do you remember?

BS: No.

SH: Did you wait for the draft or did you enlist?

BS: There was something called Enlisted Reserve Corps for the Signal Corps, and it consisted, in New Brunswick, of going to a radio class up on George Street, and the man that taught it worked at a radio shop called, Henvel. ... I figured, you're gonna be drafted, so I might as well join this, the Signal Corps, and when I have to go, they will send me to Fort Monmouth. So I dropped out of school, and I joined the ERC. It kept me out ... over a year. ... Then I started into Fort Monmouth in July of 1943. They sent me to Neosho, Missouri. People were dying from the heat, literally. So that's how I have an enlisted reserve number instead of a draft number.

SH: How did you travel from New Brunswick to there? Did you go by train? As a young man who had not traveled much, what was it like to travel halfway across the country? What do you remember about the trip?

BS: Nothing. When I got to Camp Crowder Missouri, they decided I should become a teletypist. ... I think the course was, maybe, in addition to the basic training, maybe three months. I flunked it. ... Then they figured that we were gonna go overseas and if you didn't want to go, you had your choice of going to college training detachment or the air cadets. ... I decided ... [that] ... the air cadets would be better, and lo and behold, I got in the air cadets and out of the Signal Corps. In January of 1944, we were at Saint Louis in Jefferson Barracks, I think it was called, doing calisthenics, with the weather about ten below zero and from there we went to the University of Wichita for the college training part of air cadets. We were really

sharp looking in those uniforms and going to Wichita at the USO. It was really great. ... The courses were not that hard. April Fools Day of 1944, they woke us up in the morning and we come down and they said, "You're now in the infantry."

SH: During this time, were you in correspondence with your girlfriend at NJC and your parents here in Brunswick?

BS: Oh, yeah. She worked in New York. ... She would read all the letters, figure out what was good and what was bad and later got a Dear John letter.

SH: She was working as a censor.

BS: Yeah, she was a censor in the post office in New York.

SH: Were you ever stationed at the University of Cincinnati?

BS: No.

SH: Tell us about April Fool's Day.

BS: I went to the University of Wichita. On April Fool's Day, because of the Bulge had happened and they no longer needed air cadets, they needed infantrymen. So, you know, for the convenience of the service, we were all put in the infantry.

SH: Where did you go next?

BS: I went to Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri.

SH: Were you retrained as an infantryman?

BS: This was when I got into the Headquarters Company. You weren't trained, you just pick up a shovel and, I mean, we were awakened one night ... in the spring. Fort Leonard Wood was maybe in the middle of Missouri, but now we're gonna go to the Mississippi, and they put us on an island, it's flooded, in the cow pasture, at night. Guess what I was sleeping on? Kind of lumpy, you know.

SH: Why did they put you on an island in the Mississippi River in the springtime?

BS: To try to stop it from flooding.

SH: You were moved there to ...

BS: ... To sandbag it.

SH: Were you successful?

BS: I'm here, aren't I?

SH: Where did your training take you next?

BS: Well, from Fort Leonard Wood we went to California and that's near where he lives, Camp San Luis Obispo. From there we went to Pendleton to do amphibious training, issued all summer clothes. Guess where we were supposed to be going? ... Then, the Bulge came and at Christmas time. They decided now we need you in Europe and so from California, we came back to Camp Kilmer and at Camp Kilmer we were getting ready to be shipped overseas. ... McBride and I decided that since it's so close to New Brunswick, we'll go through the hole in the fence, where the taxicabs were waiting. ... We went through the hole and came home. We went back to camp around five-thirty, six o'clock, and they're gone. They're gone! They were over getting on to the train. We just made it.

SH: Did you suffer any repercussions?

BS: No, not that I know of. I mean, the repercussion was getting on that troop ship.

SH: Did you get on the troop ship in New York?

BS: In Hoboken.

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship?

BS: The *Admiral*, something or other. They had six bunks, and I was on the top. The guy on the bottom, I can imagine what he had in his face. The only time I ever got seasick. I was greener than that paper over there.

SH: How long did it take you to cross the Atlantic Ocean?

BS: We landed in France and went to a camp called Lucky Strike and from there they put us on a forty and eight. Do you know what a forty and eight is? Forty men or eight horses, it's a boxcar. You know, like the holocaust people went into. ... They were loaded with straw and one of our poor guys had hay fever. We got off ... the train across the river from Dusseldorf. ... We could see the Germans washing their clothes in the Rhine and lobbing .88s over at us. Really, the only time I ever came under fire, because we were following Patton ... along the Rhine, and we crossed the Rhine at Cologne. ...

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

BS: The only time I ever fired my rifle was to kill a chicken.

SH: Did you get him?

BS: Yes.

SH: You made good soup?

BS: Yeah, you know, filthy, dirty, mud, and the boots, and everything ... We would go into these homes of the people that weren't Nazis, and, you know, take over their homes and their feather bed. We were horrible people. ...

SH: You were following Patton's army through bad, muddy, weather. You were twenty-two?

BS: Yeah.

SH: Tell us about the make-up of your company.

BS: I was in Headquarters Company and the platoon that I was in was called the ammunition and pioneer platoon and we dug the slit trenches. You know what the slit trench is? It's an outdoor toilet. Have you ever been to Spain? You know what the stepping stones are? Well, that's somewhat of a slit trench, only our slit trench was like this and one foot here and one foot there. Anyway and we also had the job of going ahead of the company with detectors in order to see if it was mined. I only did that once. I didn't find anything. ...

SH: What was your job within the company?

BS: Well, in the beginning, I was a pain in the ass to everybody, trying to get out of everything. ... In Europe there was guard duty, which I fell asleep on. In Wiesbaden, I liberated a motorcycle, I mean, this is the story that they all know. ... The only way that you could stop a motorcycle was to run into something. [I did] and the damn thing fell on my foot. ... That was the day that President Roosevelt died. Because of that accident, I went into the medical center and they were playing the *Pomp and Circumstance* and all kinds of dirge music. ... I wanted to know what it was about and they said President Roosevelt had died. ... Truman became the president. ... So, we went to Czechoslovakia and that's where the war ended. ... In a matter of weeks we were on our way back to the States and on our way to Japan. So we were the last Division to go into Europe, the first Division to go out of Europe, and one of the first Divisions to go into Japan.

SH: After the war how long were you with occupation force in Germany?

BS: We weren't occupation. ...

SH: Did you leave right after V-E day?

BS: That's right. In Japan we went in. ... Fortunately, the atom bomb was dropped. ... We were in right near the Philippines when the bomb was dropped in August. ... In August we went into Japan and we went to two towns called Hibashi and Takasaki and the captain started a school. That was Captain Pierce and I was a teacher in that. ... We [also] started a little radio program for the GIs. ... I finally got promoted to corporal and ... later on, I became the company clerk and after we were ready to come home, the captain said, "if you stay here, I'll make you first sergeant." I said, "Goodbye," and I came back and went back to Rutgers.

SH: When you first arrived in the European Theater, you landed in Camp Lucky Strike. Were they already processing through the GIs that had enough points to come back to the States or were they still sending men forward?

BS: There was a Tarrington, there was a Camp Camel, and there was a Camp Lucky Strike. They were all named after the cigarettes, which didn't kill at the time, twelve cents a pack, but I didn't smoke. ...

SH: What did you trade your cigarettes for?

BS: Well, anything from food to sex.

SH: Were the men in your company from all over the country or more mostly from one region.

BS: Well, the original cadre ... was put together in Texas and it was a hodgepodge of people. They hated the cadets coming in because we all thought we were superior. ... They really gave it to us. ... I had people that had been in the field artillery who also were put in the infantry, it was really a hodgepodge division at that time.

SH: When did you first meet a seasoned veteran? Were you trained by any veterans who had returned from the war in Europe?

BS: Oh, you mean from the war? No. ... Frank Zalusky was hurt ... I really don't remember, but he was the driver for one of the platoon leaders, one of the lieutenants, and he ran over a mine and he's lost a foot. The lieutenant didn't really suffer too much. ... Frank was discharged at that time.

SH: Did Frank come back much sooner?

BS: I have no idea.

SH: Did you know him then?

BS: Well, you know, I knew him in the company, evidently, but I really didn't.

SH: How reliable was your mail service? How much information did you have about what was going on in the States? Did you hear from your family often? Where were your brothers stationed?

BS: My oldest brother was chief of the OPA. You know what the OPA is? It was the ... Office of the Price Administration. Gas rationing, everything, and he was in the Empire State Building when the airplane ran into it. Did you know that an airplane ran into it? He wasn't hurt. He wasn't in the airplane.

SK: No, in the building.

BS: He was in the building, yes. ... My older brother had feet that went like this. They were so flat ... and he had horrible sinus trouble. ... He was drafted. He was, I guess, thirty when he was drafted in the engineers, combat engineers. ... Lo and behold, he went to officers training, combat engineers, and he was wounded on Saipan.

SH: Did he have any troops under him?

BS: I really don't know. I don't think so. I mean, there were no blacks in my division, in my company.

SH: What about Native Americans or Hispanics?

BS: Not that I know of.

SH: When you were chasing Patton, how did you travel.

BS: In trucks.

SH: In trucks?

BS: And train.

SH: What kind of support did you provide? What were you doing, other than setting up the base?

BS: You mean for the division? Well, the headquarters company had three, A, B and C companies, and we would supply them with, you know, canteens and K rations, whatever they needed, the motor pool.

SH: Did you interact with any of the other services at all?

BS: No.

SH: What about civilians?

BS: No, just a mix of Nazis. I really didn't see any people that I knew or Czechoslovakians either, you know, because we were out in the hills, the country.

SH: Did you see any other Allied foreign nationals?

BS: No, not even the Free French. We were pretty much kept to ourselves.

SH: Was Captain Pierce with you from the time you left the States for Japan? When you returned to the States, what route did you take from Europe?

BS: We left in France and we came in, to New York, and we got on the train and we went to North Carolina, Fort Bragg, and my brother was a Captain at Fort Belvoir and I called him and I said, "You know we're going back overseas." "No, you'll never go, never go." I said, "Somehow or other, get me into your company." [He said], "Don't worry about it, you're not gonna go." A week later, I was in Seattle, and we left from Seattle.

SH: How quickly did they change your uniforms so to speak? You mentioned before that you were issued summer clothes and wound up in Europe in the winter.

BS: Well, it didn't take long.

SH: You were actually on a ship bound for Japan when the atomic bombs were dropped. Did you stop anywhere along the way?

BS: Just go. I mean, we were in the Philippines and we were supposed to get off the ship there but when they dropped the bomb we went right on.

SH: When you were in Europe, how did people react on V-E Day?

BS: We were just glad it was over.

SH: How did the troops react?

BS: I guess they drank liberated wine. I mean, our canteens never had water in them.

SH: On your voyage across the Pacific, were the travel conditions aboard ship the same as your journey to Europe?

BS: Just as bad, for enlisted men.

SH: Did you travel in a convoy?

BS: I don't remember.

SH: What kind of devastation did you see when you landed in Japan as compared to Europe?

BS: None.

SH: Tell us about being part of the occupation forces. You told us about starting school for the GIs.

BS: When we first went in and got off the ship, south of Tokyo, the Japanese would get down on their knees and bow to us. They wouldn't look us in the face. A week later, they were selling us our cigarettes back. ...

SH: Did you get any kind of leave that allowed you to travel around Europe?

BS: In Europe, no. Some of the people in our division in our company did manage to get to Paris. I didn't. In Japan, Takasaki and Mabashi were pretty far north of Tokyo. ... We did get into Tokyo several times. There was no devastation that we could see in Tokyo.

SH: Did you see any USO shows?

BS: In California, I did. We went to the USO in Hollywood. Hollywood came ... a couple of times. ... If we had an overnight pass, we would go to the Hollywood jail and ask them if we could sleep overnight and we did. You know, this McBride and I, they woke us up around five-thirty in the morning because they were bringing in a couple of prostitutes. They wouldn't let us stay. I went swimming in Jackie Gleason's pool. He would invite some soldiers out. ... One time, we were hitchhiking back to our camp in San Luis Obispo and (Red Buttons?) picked us up. I loved California and I had hoped to retire there. My daughter lived in California sixteen years ago. She lived out there maybe ten years before that, and I'm ready to retire, and my wife said, "No way." Because we would be in my daughter's apartment and the place would begin to shake. What's gonna happen, is gonna happen. ...

SH: Having served in Europe and Japan, how did the American GI perceive his enemies?

BS: I have no idea. I really didn't, you know, I really never faced an enemy. The closest I came to them was watching them do their wash on the other side of Dusseldorf.

SH: You have no idea how the Germans and Japanese were perceived.

BS: They were trying to kill us, I guess.

SH: About the Holocaust and the camps?

BS: I have no idea. I had no idea what they were doing.

SH: Did you know about the camps before you left Europe?

BS: I don't think so. I didn't see any.

SH: Did you have to acquire enough points while you were in Japan to come back to the States as ...

BS: ... Everybody else.

SH: When did you return home?

BS: In March of 1946.

SH: Were your parents involved in any war activities, bond drives, blood drives, or anything like that? Did they continue to run their deli in New Brunswick?

BS: No, they closed the deli and they opened a laundromat on George Street and I went to work there also when I came home.

SH: How did you return from Japan?

BS: ... Troop ship.

SH: You landed in California. Were you discharged from Camp Kilmer or Fort Dix?

BS: Yeah, Fort Dix.

SH: How long did the discharge process take?

BS: I have no idea. To tell you the truth, I have no idea. I know that I got out in March of 1946.

SH: When were you informed about the GI Bill?

BS: Probably at Fort Dix, which I took advantage of. They paid for Rutgers, they paid for Columbia, and there was a stipend of fifty-two something or other that we were able to get, like unemployment insurance.

SH: You finished up at Rutgers, then, went to Columbia for your Masters.

BS: I had to make up two years and I did it in a year and a half. So I graduated in 1947.

SH: However, you are still considered a member of the Class of 1944.

BS: We had our choice.

SH: How did Rutgers change while you were in the service?

BS: Not too much. They hadn't started these big buildings program. I mean, we were still the middle three and could win a football game.

SH: How strange was it to go to school with eighteen and nineteen-year-olds and as a veteran?

BS: Well, a lot of us were veterans. I mean, it was not a real young class.

SK: Did you keep in contact with the woman from NJC?

BS: No, she married somebody else.

SH: What did you get involved in when you came back to Rutgers?

BS: Just the fraternity and that was only because of my brother. I really wasn't active, too active in it as far as socializing.

SH: Did your parents live in the same house as before you left?

BS: They moved from Elm Road. When we first moved here, we lived on Jones and Comstock up near the college and what's it called, Corwin, it was Douglass then, so, it was near there. Then we moved down to Elm Road, and then from there, they moved over onto George Street, over the laundromat. ... They moved back to Trenton. ... We bought the lot out here. ... I kept the business till it burned down and I went back to teaching.

SH: When did you met Mrs. Stark?

BS: Probably in 1949.

SH: Were you already teaching by then?

BS: In Trenton. A friend of ours asked if I wanted to meet somebody and so we met. That's it.

SH: Is there a story behind that?

BS: No, not really.

SH: What were you teaching in Trenton?

BS: English and social studies. It was in the second year that the school had been integrated. This is 1948 and there were segregated schools in Trenton.

SK: How did you feel about desegregation?

BS: I didn't mind it. You know who resented it? The blacks. We took their school. There was an all black staff. The principal was black, the vice-principal was white, and part of the district was Jew town, and here we brought in these, and they weren't too happy about it, but they were the geniuses of the school system. ... Of course, they had assumed all the kids that had been part of junior five which was an elementary and junior high school. ... Trenton had five junior highs and four of them had swimming pools. It was a great school system. ... Today, you'd be crazy to go there, like New Brunswick

SH: Even the segregated schools had pools?

BS: Oh, yeah.

SH: It was separate and equal.

BS: Yeah.

SK: Were you a coach?

BS: Coach? What did I do there? I really didn't do much.

SH: Did you get married while you were still teaching?

BS: No. We married in New Brunswick in my mother's apartment when I was still teaching.

SH: Where is your wife's family from?

BS: Syracuse, but she had two sisters that lived down here and ... she was living with her oldest sister and I met her there.

SH: How did she come to New Brunswick?

BS: When her eldest sister became ill, [she] asked Rose to come down and help with the family. So she came down and never went back. She wanted to go back, because she had a good job that she left with General Electric, but she never went back.

SH: Did your parents ever discuss gas rationing and all that affected them during the war?

BS: Not really.

SH: Was this one of the first washeterias?

BS: My mother took her laundry there. They were really unemployed at that time but she took her laundry to this launderette on George Street that time it was going up and she liked it and they bought it. It had twenty-five washing machines.

SH: Did your wife join you in working in the laundry mat?

BS: Yeah. ...

SH: How many years did you own it before you returned to teaching?

BS: About eight or nine. ...

SH: Tell us about your daughter?

BS: One daughter is a rehabilitation director of five nursing homes. They are part of the John F. Kennedy combine and she went to Penn as a physical therapist. My other daughter is a speech therapist who went to Northwestern in Wisconsin and she is a speech and language teacher at Greenwich Country Day in Connecticut. She lives in Stamford. The one that lived in California now lives in East Brunswick.

SH: What was it like to go back into education after an eight-year absence?

BS: It was fine.

SH: Where did you teach?

BS: At Roosevelt Junior High School.

SH: How long were you a teacher?

BS: I was there three years and then I resigned to sell encyclopedias. Another teacher and I, we pooled our orders and we became the number one sales person in the country. ... At the end of summer, they asked us if we wanted to work full-time as managers for 13,000 dollars a year. ... I was making 3,600 dollars a year as a teacher. We came back in August and resigned and that lasted for two years, and they said, "We only need one manager," so the other fellow said, "I'll go back to teaching." I had already gone back, we both did, and I taught for half a year in Edison. Then they said, "We'll make you the state manager," instead of the district manager and that lasted for maybe four or five years. ... I had an office in Newark, which in turn we brought the office back to New Brunswick and they walked in one day and said, "You're now fired." I went across the street and went back to teaching.

SH: Were you selling encyclopedias to individuals, schools or school districts?

BS: Everywhere. It was my job to hire people, you know. ... [I] would sell an encyclopedia to you and then sign you up to become a salesperson. It was like people selling magnets today.

SK: Did you have to travel a lot?

BS: Just in the state.

SK: How old are your daughters?

BS: One was born in 1953 and one was born in 1955, ... [and] we moved down here in 1957. So they were both raised in George Street.

SH: Did you become an administrator or did you continue to teach?

BS: I taught in high school in 1967 and I stayed there until 1970 and then I went into administration. I became principal at almost every elementary school in New Brunswick.

SH: Did you prefer being an administrator to teaching?

BS: Oh, yeah.

SH: Are there any programs that you are proud of?

BS: None.

SH: What did you feel most forced into implementing?

BS: Just whatever they told me to do. I really wasn't that innovative.

SH: When you look back, are there things that you would like to change about the school system?

BS: Not really.

SH: There is probably a good testimony there.

BS: Yeah, I'd like to stop "white flight" but I don't know how to do it.

SH: Do you think that the scholarship programs are well endowed?

BS: I would say if you are a decent student at New Brunswick High School, you know, white, black, anything, Chinese, you name it, you get a good scholarship. They've got kids going to Harvard and Princeton, ... but they also got the other, druggies, rapists, and you name it. So that you can probably count on one hand the number of whites that are in New Brunswick High School today. I built this house instead of moving to East Brunswick because in 1957 East Brunswick had the worst school system. Highland Park had probably the tops and New Brunswick was right up there with them, but not today.

SH: When did you join the American Legion?

BS: When I came out, I joined the American Legion and the Jewish War Veterans then I just dropped out. I don't belong to anything.

SH: Before we began recording, you told us about going to a 97th Infantry reunion ten years ago. Why you wait so long to become involved?

BS: As far as keeping in touch with anybody from the Division, the only people that I knew were McBride and Captain Pierce. Nobody ever contacted me and I never contacted anybody else. But now they're trying to hold reunions every two years and my suggestion was they hold them every two weeks.

SH: Why?

BS: It's a dead issue. [Laughter]

SH: Is there anything else that you would like to add to the tape?

BS: Oh, I went to school, in junior high school and high school, with a general, he became a general.

SH: Who?

BS: There were directors too. Now you tell me.

SH: Kroesen?

BS: Kroesen.

BS: But Frederick Kroesen's father was the commanding officer of the 112th Field Artillery, which was horse-drawn at that time in Trenton, in Ewing Township, and Frederick lived in the Commandant's home in Ewing and went to Trenton, because Trenton took Hamilton Township and Ewing Township in Trenton as (sending?) districts. The same as New Brunswick at one time, took Edison, and Highland Park, and Piscataway, and Somerset. ... Frederick, ... all the ladies loved him in high school and junior high. He was a handsome blonde. Have you ever met him?

SH: Yes.

BS: If you ever talk to him, tell him Starky was asking for him. I think he lives in McLean now.

SH: Would you like to add anything else to the tape?

BS: No. I think I had taken enough of your time and vice versa. ...

SH: Thank you very much.

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

Reviewed by Kathleen Ruck 01/03/02

Reviewed by Dustin Elias 05/02/02

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 05/22/02

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