

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH THEODORE HENRY BLUM

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SANDRA STEWART HOLYOAK

and

JAMIE WANG

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Jamie Wang: This begins an interview with Theodore Henry Blum on September 20, 2002, in Hillsborough, New Jersey, with Jamie Wang and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Mr. Blum, thank you for participating in this interview with us. I will begin with some questions about your background and your family history. Where and when were you born?

Theodore Blum: I was born in the Bronx, New York, March 8, 1927. Interestingly enough, my wife was born in the same place, about a year later. So, that's an interesting point.

JW: Did you meet when you were children?

TB: No, no, no. ... That's an interesting thing, too. My mother was a Central Jersey person, born and raised in Central Jersey. ... She lived in then (Whitesville?). ... Whitesville is near Jackson Mills and Jackson Mills, ... as "Mill" would indicate, had a pond, and Helene's uncle bought a farm in Jackson Mills and, as kids, we swam in the same place, we didn't know each other, on summer vacations. [laughter]

JW: What is your family's heritage or background?

TB: Well, let me start with my father's family, and I don't know as much about them. I'm not an ancestor worshiper, [laughter] so, I don't know as much as I probably should know, but, as best I know, my grandfather came over from Alsace-Lorraine. ... He came over in a time when there was a great deal of ... problems with conscription into the German Army and ... the Franco-Prussian War and so on. ... In Alsace-Lorraine, there are a lot of canals. Apparently, the family worked on the canals and I don't know if they were lock tenders or what, but they came over and the two things that I know of that the family was involved in was that, somewhere around Syracuse, on the Erie Canal, I think someone in the family, who, I don't know, was a lock tender and the other thing was that, in Schenectady or Syracuse, I'm not sure which, he had a liquor store, that he was a purveyor of spirits. That's really all I know, and my father's mother was a second wife. I think the first wife had died. My father grew up in Syracuse and he always used to tell me, as a kid, I would say, [being a] university, you know, football fan, ... "What college did you go to?" and he always said, "I went through Syracuse University," and he sort of smiled and, finally, I figured out that he really didn't go to Syracuse University. He walked through it, [laughter] but, anyway, he became a silk merchant. ... I don't know enough about it, but ... either he had a mill or worked with people in Paterson, and then, this made for the rest of his working life. He was involved with textiles. My mother's family were pre-Revolutionary [War]. Some parts of the family, you know, you have all these adjuncts of family, I'm not sure what, but some direct relations, as I understand it, were highwaymen and were Tories, ... before and during the Revolutionary War. So, we were on the wrong side there. I've been on the right side ever since, [laughter] and I don't know a lot about that, but that's the family story. My great-grandfather was a man by the name of James Webb and James Webb was a schoolmaster from Massachusetts and he came into Jersey, this would be another branch of the family here, in, probably, 1820 or something like that, '30. ... He taught school in Ocean County, had property there and had cranberry bogs and the cranberry bogs, at that time, were wild. They were swampy areas where there were cranberry ... runners, they were a vine [crop]. ... This man, coming from Massachusetts, may have gotten the idea from Massachusetts, it may have been his own original idea, but he is known as the first cultivator of cranberries in New Jersey and he was

“Peg Leg” John. He had a peg leg, ... and I’ve got books that tell about this. He walked through the bog, punching a hole with his peg leg, taking the vine, which, I guess, he held in his hands, vines, a number of vines, stick it in the hole, and then, smoothing it over after he took the next step with his good foot, and this is how he cultivated these [bogs], and he had a number of bogs around in then Whitesville and Cassville. Previous to the Civil War, he sold barrels of cranberries in Philadelphia for ships, so that the men, the sailors, aboard ship were protected from scurvy, and then, in the Civil War, he sold these barrels, hogsheads, of cranberries in Philadelphia for the Union troops, for the same reason, so that they didn’t develop scurvy. ... The other branch of the family, the one that were highwaymen, was named DeBow and my grandfather was named Jimmy DeBow. They called him Jimmy DeBow and Jimmy was the illegitimate son of a DeBow and he was a farmer and a subsistence farmer. I remember, as a child, going into the barn to feed the cow and a horse, but his big thing was, ... the way he made whatever money he made, he was a basket maker. He made harvest baskets, big, big corn baskets, and he made ladders and, in the wintertime, he had his factory, which was across the road, which was in the open. ... He would take these things and put them on to a wagon, in the summertime, after the crops were in and so on, and then, he would peddle them. He’s a peddler and he peddled up here, to this area, and I had an aunt who said that she remembered Neshanic, which is very close to us here, because he would say the prettiest place he ever saw was Neshanic, was the Neshanic Valley. So, I ended up here, accidentally. [laughter] ... My mother, during the First World War, worked as the treasurer of the Zinc Company, up in the northern part of the state, and carried a gun, and so, this, again, is family stuff. I don’t know how much of it is exaggerated or what. ... Both my mother and father were second marriages and I had a sister who is eighty-two now. She’s six-and-a-half years older than I am and a lot of ... how I got involved in agriculture was [as] a result of her, because she was engaged to a Marine lieutenant who got killed, I think, on Tarawa. ... Of course, that was a big blow to her and she left New York City, where we had moved [to] from Westchester County, and she’d worked in the Empire State Building, as a matter-of-fact, and graduated from high school at sixteen. ... Then, she went to work at Seabrook Farms, which is in Bridgeton, New Jersey, got to know some of the people in the agricultural industry there, was a secretary to Jack Seabrook, who was the head man there, and got to know ... the Rutgers Extension Service soils man, who was a man by the name of Lindley [G.] Cook, and, during the war, Lindley Cook was a great man, set me up with jobs. So, I think at the age of fourteen, probably in 1942, probably, the summer of ’42, I went to work at Seabrook Farms, at fourteen. This is the way things were and I had a kid that I grew up with, a fellow from Westchester County, who, his family and our family, we were like brothers. He was a little bit older than I was, but the two of us went down to Bridgeton, to Seabrook’s, and worked for the summer. ... We checked beans and we did soil samples and we lived in a room, the two of us, in a person’s house there, just across the highway, Delsea Drive, ... across the road from where Seabrook Farms was. ... Seabrook Farms, at that time, was, ... I think, probably the first company that was doing frozen foods and there was a big railroad yard and there was coal all over and there were big buildings and so on. ... While I was there, there were two classes of workers. There were black [workers], from the northeastern side of Florida, and they had crew chiefs, who brought these folks up, and they picked beans, primarily. They did that kind of work, pick beans. ... Then, there were what we called the hillbillies and the hillbillies were people from Tennessee, Kentucky, and they were the truck drivers and tractor operators and so on, besides ... the indigenous people from [the] Bridgeton area, the Cumberland County area. ... I could tell you all kinds of stories and I don’t know if this is what you’d like.

SH: Were some of these workers brought in from the Caribbean?

TB: No, they were Floridians, or the hillbillies were [from Tennessee and Kentucky], and I don't say that with any negative thing, but they were just people from the hills. ... They were Scotch-Irish, primarily, I guess they were, and they were from Tennessee and Kentucky. ... They were rough-and-tumble guys. ... For just an example, I remember, towards the end of the summer, somebody would take a pick-up truck, and, of course, this is [during] gas rationing, and they would go down someplace in the South and they would load up this pick-up truck with cantaloupes, or muskmelons, in straw. You know, they'd put [down] a layer of straw, a layer of melons, and then, they'd come up and sell them to the people that worked up there. They're very good. I had experiences where somebody was going to put a knife in me, ... one of the Floridians, because he thought I was bothering his wife. All I was doing was making sure she didn't have stones in the basket of string beans. You know, she had done that, ... but he was going to put a knife in me. Of course, it never happened. ...

SH: You are a fourteen-year-old kid at this time.

TB: Yes, yes. I was big. ... Look, I used to eat in the diner, down there at Seabrook, and I've got fond memories of the kind of music that was being played. It was Western, what I called, at that time, Western or "hillbilly" music. I remember, *I'm Dreaming Tonight, My Blue Eyes*, [*I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes*], [which] Bing Crosby sang and just a bunch of them. I've always liked that, maybe for that reason. I'm not sure.

SH: What do you remember about first entering grade school?

TB: ... Well, the first thing I can remember, I guess, ... what happened was that I was born in the Bronx, but we moved to Westchester County. ... I went to school, in kindergarten through fourth or fifth, it's not clear yet, I can't remember which, in Yonkers schools and we had neighbors, this is immaterial, I guess, but they were Danish. ... We called them Aunt Edith and Uncle, I can't remember ... his name, but, anyway, he was the American representative for the ... Danish-Gdynia Line, and Gdynia was a city in Poland. ... So, we had some culture relating to European [culture], probably Danish more than anything else. When we lived in Yonkers, and I can remember, before I went to school, we had a governess who was Danish and we lived in ... a place called Colonial Heights and, [for] my dad, it was in the Depression and things weren't going very well. So, we kept sort of going down in scale, as far as housing goes and so on. ... We moved from there to the town of Bronxville, but Bronxville is partly the borough or the town of Bronxville and part of Bronxville is Yonkers. We lived in the Yonkers part and the superintendent of the house ... was a Scot, Jimmy Fitzgerald, I think his name was, not Fitzgerald; anyway, it was a Scottish name. ... I remember, he made a big kite for me, like they used to fly in Scotland. ... We went up on the roof of the apartment house and tried to fly the kite, but it was just too heavy. ... Of course, that was before '39.

SH: Can you remember how your parents met?

TB: Not really. My father's wife died in childbirth. My mother's first husband, I don't know how ethnic you want to get here, was a drunk, as I understand it, and he was a railroad man. ... She had a daughter by him who died in the flu epidemic, which was, I don't know, 1920 or something like that, which was after the First World War, and then, she divorced him. So, both of them were single. Now, how they met, I don't know. However, they were both very cosmopolitan people. ... I mean, her father was this farmer. ... I don't know how far he'd gotten in school. [She had] two sisters, both became schoolteachers, ... they were younger. She went up there to work ... for the Zinc Company. I don't really know what she did after that. I suspect that they met somewhere along there, maybe even when he was working in Paterson, and married, and I can't tell you when they married, because my sister was born in around 1920. So, I don't know, it must have been fairly soon after she divorced Troy, which was the guy. ... Anyway, this daughter, the first daughter, is buried in the Holmansville Cemetery and the church there is the Holmansville Presbyterian Church. It's now some kind of a Bible church, but it's right there across from the Division of Fish and Game's quail farm and I had some relative who worked at the quail farm. ... That part of the family was named Horner and they lived in Lakewood. ... You want more of that kind of stuff?

SH: I just wanted to get some background on why you wound up in that part of Yonkers.

TB: Okay. Well, my mother, being a farm girl, I can remember coming down to visit my aunt, whose husband was the superintendent/principal of the Wall Township schools. ... She taught in Howell Township and we used to come down in the summertime. We'd go over to the farm and visit with my other aunt [and] my grandfather and, when we'd come down, we'd come down on the *Blue Meteor*, blue something, [*Blue Comet*], which used to be the Jersey Central Train that ran between New York and Atlantic City. ... We'd ride along [the farms], and sometimes in cars. We had a '34 Plymouth convertible. Before that, he had another car. That's the only one I remember. ... We would ride down and, as we ... went along, of course, there were a lot more farms. ... I guess to keep me busy, you know, she'd say, "Now, what kind of crop is that? What kind of crop is this? What crop is that?" ... So, I got to know what corn looked like and so on, and agriculture, ... farming, became a very interesting thing to me.

SH: Where did you go to high school?

TB: I went to high school in New York City. I went to high school at DeWitt Clinton and that's a point, too, that might be of interest to you. I was a big kid and I was athletic. I used to play ball all the time, but we played on the streets, because we lived in the city. The year I went to the school, I believe, was '42. I was a freshman and that was the last year they had a football team, because, during the war, they didn't ... manufacture that stuff. That was going into the war effort. So, I always thought I wanted to play football and I played a lot of football, but it was touch football. We used to play in the street. I was pretty good, too, ... but there was no school [team]. Now, basketball, there was, and I've got a story for you about that, if you want. When I graduated, it took me four-and-a-half years to get through, mostly because I was bored stiff. The school, when I went into it, I think they had eight thousand boys. I think they had an annex. ... When I graduated in January '45, ... the number of kids in the high school was at least six thousand and they graduated people on a half-year basis. So, our social group, our social basis at that time, was around the church. I can remember, ... I'm going off subject, but,

while I think of it, there was a fellow we used to call “Corp” and Corp was a guy who was a corporal in the Army. I don’t know what his job was, but he was assigned someplace in New York. ... He had a limp. ... They were taking people with limps and he used to be part of our young people’s group, as we went along. So, we had this association. ...

SH: Which church were you affiliated with?

TB: St. James Episcopal Church, which was right next to St. James Park in the Bronx, which was very nice, except that the L, [the elevated subway], the Jerome Avenue L, ran up alongside of it, but it’s a ... big park, it was very nice, and we lived about ten blocks, ... maybe eight blocks, from that. ... I’d like to tell you about that, but I want to tell you about this graduation thing before I do that. By that time, I had met Helene, which is another story, of a sailor and so on, and, when I graduated, because my social group; ... I guess they had proms. I guess I went to some kind of a prom or something once, but, ... as I say, our social activities were around the church and Helene ... belonged to a Presbyterian church in Riverdale, Riverdale Presbyterian. That’s where we got married, and so, her social group was there and my social group was at St. James. So, anyway, ... I knew kids from the neighborhood and the neighborhood, by the way, was about forty-five percent Jewish, about forty-five percent Irish Catholic, and maybe more than that, and then, there were we outlanders, you know, and there were two or three Protestant churches around. ... When I graduated, I didn’t figure there was many people [who were] going to know me, there, and it was a big auditorium, full of people, because, oh, my guess is, we had, probably, well, let’s see, probably five hundred to seven [hundred]-and-fifty graduates, maybe five hundred. So, we walked across the stage. So, I got to the point where you start to cross the stage and I was pretty tall and I started to walk across and there’s moderate applause, you know, because I knew some kids ... in the high school, also, some from the neighborhood that were there. ... I got about halfway across and the place erupted, tremendous applause, and I thought, “This cannot be for me.” Well, the guy behind me was a fellow by the name of Adolph [Dolph] Schayes and that Adolph Schayes was an All-American high school [player], All-American at NYU, was an All-American for the Syracuse Nationals, in the National Basketball Association. ... Of course, he wasn’t those things ... at that point, but he was the big star of the school. So, I got across, ... but that was, you know, sort of interesting. Do you want me to go back to how I met my wife?

SH: That would be great, and then, we will go back and talk about 1938 and 1939.

TB: Okay. I had a friend who was in church with me, his name is Billy Lukel, and Billy lived a big, long block from where I lived, in a nicer apartment house than we lived in, and the apartment houses sort of graduated from elevators to walk-ups, and we lived up on the fourth floor, for a walk-up. ... Billy was older than I was, went to [the] Bronx Science High School, which was a very good school, as Clinton was, and so, Bill was home on leave. He had gone into [the] V-6, I believe. ... You know [of] that, but these were college programs that, if you enlisted and you passed tests, they’d put you into college and gave you a degree, eventually, and V-12, I think, was the air thing, the same way. Anyway, Bill was in that and I think he was home on leave, boot leave. So, he called me and I said, “You know, I see in the paper that DeWitt Clinton is playing a soccer game up at Van Cortlandt Park,” and Van Cortlandt Park ... has a large parade ground, I mean, it’s really a big park, in the northern Bronx, “and I see Bronx

Science is having a game.” It’s not the same game, ... and they’re side-by-side, maybe three or four games going on at the same time. So, I said, “What do you say we go up and see that?” “Yes, we’ll go up.” So, we got on the trolley car, Kingsbridge Road, and, [on] the trolley cars, you could get transfers and they swayed back and forth. I sort of miss trolley cars. ... The trolley car went along Kingsbridge Road, down to Broadway, and, at Broadway, they had these big sticks that they would [use to make a] transfer and they’d put one up, put the other one down, and then, that would change the direction they were going. So, you’d take a transfer there and I got on the Broadway Line, we got on the Broadway Line, and we went up to Van Cortlandt Park, which wasn’t very far. ... As we went up, all these kids that were [on] the soccer teams were on the trolley car and Helene went to a school fairly close to DeWitt Clinton and I think she was on her way home. See, this is where she could tell the story better than I could. She was on her way home and all these soccer players were there and she says she never watched a soccer game in her life, but all these guys were there and they were, you know, flirting with her and so on. So, she went home, which was a block west of Broadway, and got her dog, which was a miserable mutt, a miserable mutt, ... she’s going to hear me, and she took it out for a walk. Well, by the time she had this dog out on the parade ground, you know, here comes Billy and I on the trolley and Billy was always very shy. So, I figured I would give him a hard time. I wasn’t the most outgoing person either, as far as that goes. However, I was the president of our youth group. [laughter] ... So, I says to Bill, ... “Hey, look at that good-looking girl over there.” Probably in those words, maybe a little bit racier, and he said, “Yes.” I say, “How about we get off the trolley here?” So, we got off and it was the right place and we happened to be between the two soccer fields. So, we got in-between and we watched both games. Well, this girl, this pretty girl with the dog, was over on the other side of one field there. So, I thought I’d give Bill a hard time. I said, “Hey, Bill, how about we go over and pick her up?” I figured this guy would figure a way to chicken out, you know. He didn’t. [laughter] He said, “Okay.” So, we went over. ... She was a very, very nice young lady and we both talked to her and I’m sure she was happy to see the sailor paying attention to her, amongst others. ... As we talked, this damn dog; now, we have a dog around here, whose name is; I can’t think of his name at this point. Well, anyway, we call him, I call him, “Damn Dog,” [laughter] because he’s a pain in the neck. He’s a nice dog, but he is a real pain in the neck, ... but this dog was really a damn dog and, as I stood there talking to her, this dog lifted his leg on my leg and wet on me. So, that’s been the story over the years. So, both Bill and I, I guess, made a play towards Helene and, the next Sunday, I went up to where we used to play sandlot baseball and so on. ... At that time, it was October 20, 1944, I remember the date, it was October 20th, ... we went up there, I went up, and some of the guys I played ball with went up. ... I quickly excused myself and I had looked in the phonebook. ... She gave me her name, and it’s Helene Louise McWicker, and I looked in the phonebook and I found the name. ... It was 5120 Post Road and I went to look at 5120 and, at just about the time, I don’t know, I see these two girls walking up the road and it’s her sister and Helene and I started following them. Maybe I did that first; maybe that’s how I got the address, I’m not sure, but it was 5154. The family had moved. Her father was a builder, and so, I telephoned her. ... Skating rinks were big in those days and she was a skater, she’s athletic, and I said, “This is Ted,” ... but it didn’t ring a bell, because her skating partner’s name is Ted. ... She was skating with him for some period of time and they never dated. It was just, you know, that they were skating partners and she couldn’t figure out why Ted wanted to go to the movies. [laughter] So, we went to the movies and, in those days, the subways were safe. Of course, I was

a big kid. I was a senior at that time. ... We went to shows and I had my fill of Broadway shows at that point and so on. ... So, anyway, prompt me here. ...

SH: Okay. When did you marry Helene?

TB: April 5, 1947.

SH: It was quite some time before you got married.

TB: Well, see, between that time, ... I went into the Navy, and then, got out and went to work. ... Well, that's another story, but I went to work and I bugged her and bugged her and bugged her to get married and, finally, she said, "Yes," and then, we got married on the 5th of April. We've been married fifty-five years.

SH: Congratulations, that is wonderful.

TB: Yes, I think it's wonderful.

SH: When you were in middle school, how aware were you of what was going on in Europe in 1938 and 1939?

TB: Well, we had moved back; ... it wasn't back for me, because I never knew New York, but we moved into New York probably in '37 or '38, I don't remember. ... We moved to the Bronx, very near to the ... Kingsbridge Armory. I don't know if you know [about] the Kingsbridge Armory. The Kingsbridge Armory is the biggest armory in the world. It ran along for four or five blocks, along Kingsbridge Road, and it's still there. It's a big, big thing. ... After the war, we used to go to ... midget car races there. It was just a big, big place and we'd walk up to school, along past the end of the Armory, on ... Aqueduct Avenue, and the school was PS 86, and then, her high school was the next school up, and then, DeWitt Clinton was about a mile from our house, very roughly, and there's a big reservoir there. It wasn't big, but it was a reservoir. ... About 1942 or '3, ... they brought ... the women into the services and they took over Hunter College, which was there, and Hunter College was just before Clinton. There was just a whole row of schools and it was the Bronx Campus of Hunter College. Hunter College is on 86th Street and I don't know what avenue, but they took this over for the female Marines, I think the Coast Guard, I'm not sure [about] the Coast Guard, and [the] SPARS were the Coast Guard, and the WAVES, which were the Navy people. So, every day, I'd walk up to school. I walked to school. You know, the days of school busses were way in the future, and we'd walk past these big apartment houses they'd taken over and the college. ... They had these drill sergeants; they were Marines. ... One of the funniest things, ... I just [will] never forget it, they had the girls out, the women, I should say, nowadays, the girls out, and they were girls. They were, you know, ... seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old, I guess, and they had the girls out in formation and they'd drill them, out on Sedgwick Avenue, which is a fairly broad street, and these sergeants would be giving them hell. ... There was one little sergeant. ... I don't know, he had a couple of stripes under his bars, so, ... he'd been around a while, and I remember, he had a mustache and he was just a little bandy rooster and, as we walked by, some poor girl had misstep-ed or something, I don't know what, and he was reading the riot act to her. ... As we

went by, she just went over on him ... and laid across his chest and cried [laughter] and it was funny. I felt awful sorry for her, but ... he got what he deserved, but we watched those young people, young ladies, drill and so on. So, you know, the war was around us. ...

SH: Where were you when you first heard of Pearl Harbor? Do you remember?

TB: Oh, I wanted to tell you that. It was Sunday and it was December 7th, as I'm sure you know, and it must have been a warm Sunday, because I just don't remember [it being cold], and the football games, the pro football games, were going and they used to broadcast them. ... Besides Sunday school, I was in the choir as a younger [child], and then, I was an acolyte, and then, I was the crucifer, you know, the guy that walks down the isle with the [cross]. So, I was always there at church. So, church let out, maybe noon, and you did a little bit of socializing with people and so on. By then, well, ... I guess I was maybe a freshman in high school, I was walking home and, as I walked home, I walked past this apartment house this Billy Lukel lived in and somebody had a window open and I heard the news report that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and that had a profound effect on me. I don't know why; well, I do know why, and I can remember thinking, you know, "I want to go," and that maybe this would be interesting. I had no idea, you know, [of] the results of a war. You know, it's just sort of a glamorous thing in a way and I can remember walking by, thinking that, and then, I went home and life resumed. Roosevelt was always a hero and the family always listened to the radio, ... to his speeches, and I listened, too, a little bit. ... You know, you continue going to high school and you see people, guys in church, going into the service and so on. A lot of the people who I knew, who were a grade ahead of me, went in before I did and so on. ...

SH: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was?

TB: Oh, yes, I did and I don't know why I knew. I was always interested in geography and history and I was good in those things and I read a lot. We had friends, the family had friends, who were members of the National Museum of History. It was just down along Central Park there and I could remember, they had lectures there every Saturday. ... The people's names were Frank and Adaline Grevet and they had these tickets for these things. Well, they didn't go, but they made sure that I got the tickets. So, for a long time, very often on a Saturday afternoon, I would go down there. So, I learned a lot of stuff, you know, and I don't know if I learned about Pearl Harbor there or where I learned about it, but I did.

SH: What about the draft for the eighteen-year-olds? Were any of your social friends from your school already drafted?

TB: You know something? I can't remember anybody that got drafted. I can remember some older brothers that got drafted, but I can't remember any of my cohorts that got drafted. ... The reason was, and I understand, I think I understand, what happened during Vietnam and so on, I think I do, but, at that age and with the propaganda, which was good propaganda, as far as I'm [concerned], ... propaganda's not necessarily a bad word, ... no way would I, and the people that I knew and so on, have done what a lot of the damn politicians that are hollering and screaming now did and figure out ways to get out. In fact, we couldn't have ... figured out ways [to get out] if we wanted to, because we didn't have rich daddies. They all went, as far as I know.

SH: What about lend-lease and the programs that Roosevelt established because of what was going on in Europe, like the Battle of Britain?

TB: Oh, yes, we were for it, you know. I mean, well, see, number one, my name's Blum and I have often suffered some of the prejudice that Jews suffer, okay. I can remember, walking on Kingsbridge Road, there was a tailor shop. ... On that tailor shop one day, in, I guess, chalk, not chalk, soap or something, there was a sign that says, "Kill all kikes," right. Now, you know, I knew nothing, well, I did know a little bit, about Jewish traditions. Why? because I lived right there. ... Hitler was a bad guy, and I guess maybe he was to all Americans at that time, I don't know, but I did have enough of this stuff and I did have enough culture, whatever you want to call it. You know, Dad read *The New York Sun* and *The New York Times*. Both people were literate. Neither one had gone to college, my parents, but, you know, we knew what was going on and, of course, the papers were around, so, I saw this kind of thing. So, I was very much aware of that.

SH: What was your father working in at that point?

TB: He was in textiles.

SH: He was still in textiles.

TB: Oh, yes. ... As far as I know, he never got [out]. Well, he did. After the war, he had people he worked with who were Lebanese. ... A couple of these Lebanese gentlemen, they're brothers, and he got together and they bought surplus war supplies and tried, ... because everything was in short supply after the war, to use these things for general use at the time, you know, and so, they would adapt things. Now, they had some kind of a woolen, I think they called [it] melton, and they made those into jackets, because they got this material from the Army, I think. They also had panels. ... I would call them plastic now; I don't know if they were. They were panels that were about three-by-six foot and these panels were used for aircraft, as targets, I think, for landings, you know, but they had this surplus. So, he bought these surplus ... and they tried to sell them, I don't know how much they sold, ... as things that people could go to the beach with and lie on to sun themselves, you know. There's all kinds of stuff like that. My father was a very intelligent man, but he may have been a little bit like I am. I'm a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none and he got involved in lots of things. ... Well, yes, when I was a baby, he was doing very well, that was in '27, '28, '29, but, after that, he got involved in stuff and was always trying to make a killing and never did, like a lot of people in the Depression. So, at that time, that was our milieu, the people in the neighborhood and the people at church and so on.

SH: You talked a little bit about your graduation. After your graduation, did you plan to go into the military? The war was not over yet.

TB: Oh, yes, oh, yes. When I graduated, a kid that I knew from church, he was my best man, been friends for sixty years or more, Charlie Kelly ...

SH: This is side two, tape one.

TB: Well, I mentioned Charlie Kelly and Charlie being my, our, best man. You know, when you get married, you've got to start thinking in terms of "our" and I've been trying to do that for fifty-five-plus years. ... Anyway, Charlie's brother, Art, was drafted and he went into the Army and Art saw some pretty heavy service and, of course, Charlie was always worrying about where Art was and so on. ... Charlie was a little bit older than I was. ... Charlie was of slight build, was about, oh, six-foot, or close to six-foot, and Charlie went into the Navy Air Corps. ... I wanted to go into the Marine Corps and I didn't make it and I didn't make the Navy Air Corps, the reason being that maybe I was overweight for one or the other, and I don't remember which. I know that [for] the Navy Air Corps that I went down to what used to be called Grand Central, not station, but Grand Central something [Palace], and it was a big, big building and that's where they held the inductions and so on. ... I went down for a physical and we had maybe twenty-five, thirty young men lined up and they gave us physicals. ... You're standing there in your skivvies, your underwear, and I was very close to six-foot, if not six-foot. ... As I understood at that time, and whether it's true or not, I don't know, [in] the Navy Air Corps, you couldn't be too tall, but George Bush made it, and there was a weight restriction, which was about 185 pounds, my guess, and I was probably 205 pounds. ... The examiners and doctors and so on, these are people out of civilian life, they were not military people, but they were in uniform, ... they lined us up. ... They talked to us and they looked at this and they looked at that and they [said], "Cough," [laughter] and so on, and then, they said, "All right, everyone, about face." ... We turned around. They said, "Drop your pants." This may get too graphic, but that's tough. So, we dropped our pants. ... They said, "Bend over." So, this doctor walked along behind us, and then, he said, "Okay, stand up," and he tapped me on the shoulder and he says, "Get dressed." He says, "I can't pass you," and I didn't know if I had some kind of a problem with my alimentary canal or what. [laughter] ... I did have a slight hernia, but that didn't measure into anything anytime, and I said, "Well, what's the matter?" I said, "I can scrunch down a little bit," I was thinking of the height, "and, if I have to, I could lose [weight]." He said, "No, you've got flat feet." ... This was for the Navy Air Corps. I've still got flat feet. So, anyway, I didn't get in then and, I don't know, ... not very long after that, I did enlist in the Navy. ... I think I went to the same place for examination, and then, ... I had three tragedies. I think it was April 13th, Roosevelt died. My sister, who had lost this Marine lieutenant, had met a guy in Bridgeton who was an engineer, an efficiency engineer, and she married him on the 14th, I guess. I was the best man, and then, on the 15th, I went into the Navy. So, there were three tragedies, all at one time. ...

SH: Where were you when you heard the news of Roosevelt's death? How did the people around you react?

TB: I honestly don't remember. I do remember this, though, that Helene has a brother who is a great guy, a dear friend of mine. I love him dearly. At that time, she was sixteen, I think, and he was; hey, Helene.

Helene Blum: Yes?

TB: How much younger is George than you?

HB: My brother? Four years.

TB: Okay, so, George was twelve, and I liked Roosevelt, of course. ... Very soon after his death, I went over to Helene's house and twelve-year-old Georgie gave me the business about Roosevelt, you know, that he had died. ... Helene's mother and father were, I guess you could say, ... staunch Republicans or questioners. ... In relation to Roosevelt, however, I went to work at Seabrook's, [as] I mentioned to you. The next summer, I went to work at a vegetable farm. I was trying to get a lot of different experiences. That was a cooperation farm. I went to work on a vegetable farm in Closter, New Jersey, and learned about the vegetable industry and, you know, I met kids there. It was interesting. My father had a broken hip. So, that was a good place, because I could go to the hospital and they moved into a hotel around there, so that he had an elevator and so on. So, that was a good place for me and I spent that summer working there. The next summer, I went to work on a dairy farm out here past Reaville, New Jersey, up in Ringoes, and the man that I went to work for, it was a big dairy farm, ... his father had been involved in Public Service and they were German, very German. ... Somewhere along the line, I guess just in talking, he figured out that I liked Roosevelt and ... his sympathies, I won't say were Nazi [sympathies], but he was not knocking the Germans. ... He used to give me a real hard time about what was happening and was very anti-Roosevelt. Interesting, his wife's name, I can't think of her first name, was Nightingale and she was British, had British heritage, and she was as nice a person [as] I ever came across, but he was a son-of-a-gun. ... Again, that was good experience and I got that job, again, through this Mr. Cook, who eventually became the director of the Extension at Rutgers; I mentioned that, maybe. So, you know, as I go along, I think of those kinds of things and I don't [want] to confuse issues by going back [and forth]. ...

SH: That is okay. Where did you go for boot camp?

TB: Well, I went to Sampson, which was on Lake Geneva in New York. Originally, the boot camp, as far as I know, was at Great Lakes, but, then, as they got more and more people in, they opened up new boot camps and the one for the Northeast, as far as I [know], yes, I know, was Sampson and I had a cousin; did I mention this kid, these people, Horner? Well, Billy Horner had gone to boot camp maybe a month before I did and what they would do was, ... they'd have different units at Sampson. These were big quadrangles, with barracks, and a roadway around the quadrangle. I think there was a mess hall, and so on, and so on, and, every week or so, ... however they were drafting [people], or not drafting, ... well, drafting and enlisting people, you'd be [placed in] this unit and I was in; hey, Helene, you want to get that thing off the wall, the boot camp picture? ... I think the boot company was 531 and ... each unit had a name [after someone] who was a hero. (Callahan?) was somebody that got killed in the beginning of the war and I forget what ours was. It was G, G unit, not Gilligan, but something like that; I'll think of it. ... Anyway, Billy was in, I think, Callahan, which was three or four weeks ahead of me, and I knew he was there, because one of the family had told me he was. So, he was contacted and he came over to the boot camp and he came and got permission to go into the barracks and we talked and so on. ... He said, "Listen, you're going to have a work program that you're going to have to do and the work program, you're going to have a choice of," or you're going to be

assigned or you'll have a choice of, "a lot of different things," and, of course, in the service, at that time, always, they say, "Don't volunteer," and he says, "Volunteer," he says, ... "for a learning session." They used to have these models, about seven or eight inches, of Japanese airplanes and Japanese ships and they were black. ... You'd go into a little theater, like, and you'd put these things up on a desk or a counter and they'd put a light behind it, and then, ... as part of the training, you had to learn how to identify the *Yamato*-class or this class or that class or a Zero this or a Zero that. Zeros were planes and, of course, this battleship, this *Yamato*, was a weird-looking thing, had superstructure all over it. ... That's the only one I can remember, because you couldn't miss it. So, he said, "Do that." So, when I had a chance and they said, "Would you volunteer?" I volunteered. That's the secret of success in anything, I think, is volunteering. So, I volunteered and I got that job. So, what I did was, I put these things up, I wish I'd stole a couple of them, because they were nice little models. Then, for work station, he said, "Take the lavatory." [I said], "Lavatory?" Now, these are wood barracks. These are the kind of things that you see in movies, you know, they say, "Take a toothbrush and scrub that," you know, that kind of [stuff], but, of course, toilets, sinks and so on are porcelain, easy cleaning in comparison to the wood. So, I volunteered for that and I had that, I think it gives you [them] for a week each, whatever, and I had that and that was good duty. I had no problems with that duty. That was all right. I had an experience, however; I'm intrinsically a slob.

HB: Yes.

TB: [laughter] And I don't shine shoes, if I can help it, and I didn't then. I guess I did; I had to. You know, they had this spit business, where you have to take your polish and you spit on the cloth and you rub it and you shine your shoes and so on, and so, we had a review and what the review would mean would be, some lieutenant, a plague on their house, [laughter] would be the person who would be reviewed. ... Then, we had these guys who were our company commanders and these guys were third class petty officers, guys that had been in service maybe two months, and they were all athletic guys. ... The guy that we had was a guy by the name of (Bogokie?) and [laughter] (Bogokie?) was a wrestler. He wasn't a big wrestler, but he was a wrestler, a professional wrestler, as I understood it. ... He was a tough cookie and, anyway, we got out in formation and he started inspecting and my shoes were not as shiny as other people's shoes. Now, I said that because I had size twelve and the rest of them had eight, nine, ten and eleven, that it was a different bunch of leather, but I never could sell that [laughter] and he gave me hell. ... We used to have to run around this thing, you know. They'd run us around and so on, but ... he gave me hell. Now, another boot thing was funny. There was a guy in our company; we had a lot of older guys and some younger guys. ... We went on a shakedown cruise to Rio de Janeiro. No, it wasn't a shakedown. It was after shakedown.

SH: Was it later?

TB: Well, yes, it was later. That's right, it was after the war. We went down there. The guys, the younger guys, a lot of them, went out and, as they would say today, partied, but I remember, they opened the ship up and this hangar deck on our ship is big, and so, there were always these (karayokas?) who marched around the deck, looking at things and so on, and there were a number of prostitutes [laughter] and there was one really rough-looking woman and this was fascinating to me, because I never had anything to do with prostitutes, and this woman walked

around the deck and she was getting no interest by anybody. I mean, she was too crass for these kids from Olean, New York, who were eighteen years old and really [naïve], and she was walking around the flight deck, going like this, up and down the flight deck, and that amused me greatly.

SH: Just for the record, it was some sort of an infamous salute.

TB: [laughter] That's right, an infamous salute, using both arms, one arm to the elbow. ... Anyway, at boot camp, we had these older guys and I guess ... I was pretty conservative, but because I was also enamored with my present wife, my only wife, I didn't mess around ... and we wrote pretty near every a day. ... That was interesting. When the mail came in, you got ten letters at one time, but, anyway, I sort of hung around with the older guys, or guys of like disposition, and so, I didn't [go carousing]. ... We had one guy who was probably, at that time, maybe thirty years old. He was one of the older guys. His name was Duke Farrington and Duke Farrington was a minor league baseball pitcher and he was pretty far up the minors. He was from Upstate New York and, when they drafted us, well, not draft; well, draft is a different word. They drafted you into a group that went to a certain place for training, out of boot camp, and, when they drafted us, the group that I got drafted with were New Jersey kids and Upstate New York kids and Duke was from someplace up there. ... This was running into fall and they had a thing they called cat fever. ... Cat fever was a low-grade flu or low-grade cold or something and, [imitates coughing], they'd be walking around, blowing their noses and so on, and, Duke, he had his way. He had been involved in chiropractic, through baseball, and, of course, I don't believe in that stuff now, but, ... if you started coming down with a cold, Duke would get you and he'd fold your arms in front of you, he'd grab your elbows and he'd jerk you, so [that] he loosened up your spine. He'd take your head and snap your head and so on and, amazingly enough, our company had very few cases of cat fever. [laughter]

SH: Where were you assigned? What training were you sent to from this camp?

TB: Okay, that's another story. At that time, the war was winding down, obviously, because V-E Day had occurred. No; ... it was close, anyway. Everybody knew it was going down, and so, the schools were not open and I took my tests and you went to see a psychologist, I guess he was, somebody who would assign you to where you were going to go. ... I had high grades and I can remember taking a test [in] this big building that they had at the unit and it was code, for radio school, and I didn't do very well. I didn't think I did very well, because I never memorized stuff and I've never been good at that. ... I've got no use for it. ... In school, I took algebra and I hated algebra, because it was, you know, you have to [memorize], and trigonometry, well, I liked trigonometry, but some of that stuff you had to memorize and I don't want to memorize. I figure, "Hey, if it's that important, I'll find it someplace." So, anyway, I had real high grades and he apologetically told me that he would like to send me to radio school. I said, "My God, radio school, I did very poorly in radio." "Oh, no," he said, "you got a good score," and on other stuff, too, but there was just no schools open. So, when boot camp was over, and I think it was ten weeks, ... I'm sure it was ten weeks, ... I went home on boot leave, which is another story. I was going with Helene at this time and, that particular week, she, her sister and some friends had decided they were going to go to a dude ranch in the Catskills. There was just something in the *Times* about that, [that it] had closed down, that particular area. ... The name was Sugar Maples

and she had paid. She was the youngest one of the group and I got home on boot leave, or I think it was then, or I wrote to her, one or the other, and I says, "I'm going to be leaving." I said, "I have a week, and then, who knows where I'm going? I may never come back," you know, the old sailor story. [laughter] So, she gave up a couple of days of her days at Sugar Maples and ... spent them with me, and then, ... she went, and then, I went back to boot camp. ... Then, at boot camp, I was sitting in the barracks, after I got back, and ... [in] this same big, great hall, or whatever it [was], they used to put big, big, mimeographed, I guess they were, [order] drafts, and there would be, you know, literally hundreds of people on these drafts, ... I would say thousands, and this was just for our unit, and I was sitting there and they posted them. Some guy came in and sat down in the bunk. He said, "You lucky [son-of-a-gun]." ... I said, "What?" He says, "It's on those drafts," and they're all going to Shoemaker, California, and Shoemaker, California, was the place that the Navy was training the amphibians and these guys were being trained to go into the islands and into Japan. ... So, this guy says, "You're on a thirteen-man draft to the Brooklyn Navy Yard," and all these people are going out [to California]. You know, in my mind, not being fatalistic or heroic or anything like that, but these guys were going to [war] and, if Truman hadn't dropped that bomb, you know, they'd have killed a lot of us, a lot of us. So, anybody that didn't like the atomic bomb, go to hell, I mean, in those terms, at that time. You know, that saved my life, as far as I'm concerned, but, anyway, so, I went to Brooklyn Navy Yard. I was assigned to the *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. Can you imagine? The *Franklin D. Roosevelt* had been originally given the name of the *Coral Sea* and there were three carriers in that class and that class were all [named for] big battles, the *Midway*, the *Coral Sea*; I can't think of the third one. ... When Franklin Roosevelt died, they immediately named that ship the *Franklin Roosevelt*. So, I went ... down there and was assigned to ... the receiving station at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, on Sand Street, and, of course, Helene was in the Bronx. So, I had a good deal, because I was assigned to ... F Division, which was firing. That's not fire [as in] taking care of fires, but it had to do with firing guns. ... Aboard a ship, at that time, you had gunnery divisions, the guys that threw the casings and so on into the gun, and you had, behind each gun, a guy in a little turret with an ensign. ... When the ensign said, "Fire," he would fire and that was me.

SH: Fire control technician?

TB: Fire control, yes, absolutely, fire control, ... but, you know, [when] you say fire control, people think of ... these guys that are fighting fires, which is much more dangerous, believe me. ... So, anyway, ... my work station, you had three stations, at that time, in the Navy. You had a work station, something else and a battle station. Battle station was in this little turret, right up on the flight deck, it was very interesting, and the work station ... was [as] a typewriter repairman. They had brand-new typewriters aboard ship and they trained me doing Underwoods, because that's what they did. Most of the ships had Underwood typewriters on them and that's what I learned. ... Of course, I spent most of my time traveling between Brooklyn and the Bronx to see Helene. ... She says [that] her mother thought [that] when I went into the Navy, that would be the end of me. [laughter] ... She wouldn't see me all the time and, this son-of-a-gun, I ended up at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, [laughter] foiled her mother, but, anyway, an interesting thing there was, when I was aboard ship, they had radar, some radar, but not a lot of radar, but, under every radar station, there was a room, down two or three decks, and they gave me one of these rooms that didn't have any equipment in it as my repair shop. So,

what I would do is, I'd go home. ... My mother was sick, ... but I would go home, see Helene and, you know, stay as long as I could. The last trolley, I think, left at twelve o'clock, so, I had to be out of there by then, and then, I'd go to the ship. ... When reveille occurred, I'd get up and do what I had to do, and then, I would go into this little shack I had and I had blankets in there and I could go to sleep. [laughter] See, I believe that anybody that was in the service that got through it physically without damage, mentally without damage or emotionally without damage, had a good deal, at one time or another. ... I think Tom Brokaw and *The Greatest Generation*, I think he's right and so on, however, we were lucky. We were lucky, because we learned and we matured, not like the ones that are getting drunk and killing themselves in cars, now, but, anyway, so, I was in the Brooklyn Navy Yard and [I will tell you about] one of the calls I got, to fix [typewriters], and these were new typewriters. It's a new ship, and so, one of the calls I got, I didn't get a lot of calls, ... was [from] the air department and, aboard ship, aboard a carrier, the air squadrons are assigned to the ship, but they're sort of different. They are part of the ship's company, but they're not and they had their own command and so on. ... This was up right under the island and it was a great, big area and there was yeomen, who are secretaries, I'm sure you know, and so on, in there, typing away, and lots of officers. All these flight people, ... the pilots and ... the support people and so on, ... that was their offices there, officers' country. ... So, I went up there and damned if they didn't have LC Smith typewriters. I didn't know a thing about LC Smith typewriters. Well, I've always been willing to say, "Okay, I'll try it," and maybe that was one time I shouldn't have, because they had, from the arm, there were a couple of, oh, nexuses, ... where you type down on a pad, and then, [where] the key would come down, there was a little round thing with a screw in it. ... I was too stupid to realize that there were little ball bearings [in there] and I unscrewed it, the first one, and the ball bearings [came out]. Ball bearings were all over this metal ... deck, "Ping-ping-ping-ping," and all these yeomen are looking at me and all the officers are wandering around, so [that] they don't fall, you know. This is a little exaggerated, I know, but it's a good story, but that's what happened. So, we had fun. I do also remember that docked right next to us, and the pre-commissioning detail; pre-commissioning is, the ship, ... the main part of it, is taken care of, but they've got all [new] equipment and the people have to get familiar with it and so on. There were thirty of us in the pre-commissioning detail, the thirteen that came [from Sampson], and then, another bunch that came from someplace else, and there was all these shipyard people working around, you know, welding things to things, and you can smell the smoke. It was interesting, but almost right next to us was the USS *Franklin*. You ever hear of the *Franklin*? The *Franklin* probably took the worst beating at the Battle of Midway of any ship and they thought it was going to sink. [Editor's Note: The USS *Franklin* was badly damaged by a Japanese air attack on March 19, 1945, and spent the remainder of the war under repair at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.] ... Somehow, they brought it back. They brought it back through the Pacific and through the Canal and up ... into the Brooklyn Navy Yard and that ship was there. It was terrible, I mean, you know, just all this metal and the chaplain off it was a guy who was quiet famous. He'd gotten a lot of press and so on, because he manned the gun and that kind of thing. It was something like Rafferty or I don't know, [Lieutenant Commander Joseph Timothy O'Callahan]. It was a good Irish name. ... Then, he came aboard our ship as the chaplain and I knew, I don't know how I knew, ... the chaplain's assistants. I wasn't going to church, but I knew those guys and I heard stories about him and so on. They weren't nice stories, really, and then, we were loading ammunition one time and we were at Bayonne, I think, at the Navy yard in Bayonne; oh, no, Earle. ... Earle is just out here, off Monmouth County. I think it was Earle. It was either Earle

or Bayonne and you had these big canisters, you know. ... One person could maybe carry it, but you'd get two sailors on it and you'd carry these canisters and I guess they carried them from trucks, I don't remember where we picked them up, but you'd carry them right along the whole length of the ship, to a place where they would load them, ... probably to an elevator, a side elevator for planes, I don't really know. ... Then, they'd put them down in the magazines and we'd go down to the magazines. Well, that's another story. Anyway, this guy was, I guess they considered it a morale [issue], you know, [you were] killing your hands. I mean, it really was really tough labor and he was there, like he was that sergeant ... with the Marines, you know. ... If I had any respect for that guy before, I sure didn't have it for him afterwards. Apparently, he got drunk on the sacrificial wine, in addition, but you don't want that on this. [laughter] I have some prejudices. Anyway, this is my boot company [picture]. ...

SH: Can you tell us about the commissioning? Were you loading ammunition before the commissioning?

TB: Oh, no. Oh, the commissioning was a big thrill. I'll show you pictures afterwards, if you want to see them, of the commissioning. The commissioning was in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It was a big deal. They had the whole ship's company, [which] was assigned by then, and, to get the ship under the Brooklyn Bridge, they had to take down aials and stuff like that that they had that they could take down. ... We had chairs for the guests. They'd had a big dance, either the night before or the night afterwards, for the ship's company. We went to that, on the hanger deck. ... Eleanor Roosevelt was there. Mayor La Guardia was there. General Marshall was there. ... I have pictures, so, you can get some of these names that I might forget. General Marshall was there. One of the admirals, ... I can't think right quick who, but there was just a big row of these people at this thing and, of course, ... I guess we were at ease ... and that was a big thrill.

SH: What was your duty station that day?

TB: We were all *en masse* on the flight deck. You know, there was no duty; ... I mean, I didn't have any duty. Yes, no, ... we were just all there in uniform, on the flight deck, and, as I say, it was a big deal. ... Having my political feelings and my patriotic feelings, it was a big deal. I mention patriotic feelings, you know, I'm emotional, but I cry, I haven't been able to not, on the second verse of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. Part of it goes, "As he died to make men holy, we will die to make men free." It gets me every time. I really believe that stuff. So, when people were spitting on the flag and so on, it was bad and I'm so happy that people really, now, start to understand about the flag.

[TAPE PAUSED]

... We had the compartments and, depending on the division you're in, ... you were in that department. The gunnery division is the guys who were in one division and they were close to their guns and we were in the aft division, fire control, and we had a compartment. ... In a division, you have everything from, maybe a warrant officer, who's a non-commissioned officer, to a chief. ... The chief is a guy, they have their own quarters, and they are the real movers aboard a ship, ... and then, you had first class mates, second class mates and third class mates.

Now, just as a point of interest, and I'm sure you must have it a hundred places, but, in a gunnery division, deck division, they call them, gunnery division, deck division, the chief was a chief boatswain's mate. ... The first class was a first class boatswain's mate. The second class was a second class boatswain's mate and the third class was a coxswain's mate and the coxswain is a guy aboard a boat who steers it and is the master of a small boat. If you went ashore, you'd get into this small boat, not always, ... and the coxswain [would] be in charge and it was, you know, usually motor-driven. ... He would run it into the dock and you'd get out, and then, he'd run it out to the ship again, get another load of guys and bring them out.

SH: The liberty boat.

TB: ... Liberty boat, absolutely, and then, in the same division, you'd have ... first class seamen, who are guys that are taking tests, you know, depending on when and where and so on, and then, you had second class seaman and apprentice seaman ... were what you were when you were at boot camp. So, I was a second class seaman. I never got beyond that. I was a second class seaman, and so, you'd get these bunks and I guess the petty officers and the higher-up petty officers, would take the upper bunks, ... and these things were at least three deep. ... They may have been more, but I think they were three [deep], because this was a fairly new ship ... and some of the older ships, I'm sure, had more than that, and even hammocks. ... We had hammocks, but we didn't use them. ... I can remember these guys going on liberty, perfectly decent, perfectly nice guys, you know, regular Navy, and they'd come home so drunk that you can't believe [it] and throw up, and then, they'd step on your face almost when they got in. They'd climb up on the different racks to their bunks. That was sort of interesting and I don't drink, I never have, and I suppose there's a lot of reasons, one of which was that I thought athletes didn't drink and I wanted to be an athlete. [laughter] Isn't that funny? ... One of them, I'm sure, was observing those guys; also, observing, as a kid, on Kingsbridge Road, probably, from where I lived down to the L, it was five, six blocks and, probably, in that five or six blocks, there were three, four, five Irish pubs or beer joints, and I didn't like the smell of them and I didn't like what they did to people. ... An interesting point, my sister, when she worked in New York, worked for two companies, one of which was Schenley Beverages, which was a liquor company, and we used to have all kinds of liquor in the house. I mean, she'd get all kinds of reductions, like anybody in a company. ... So, we'd have all kinds of stuff. I don't know what they were, because I wasn't really interested, but, whenever we had company or something, ... they'd have liquor, but I didn't like it. I didn't like it. I didn't like the taste and I still don't like the taste of it. So, I just never got involved.

SH: After the christening of the ship, what happened next, the shakedown cruise?

TB: Okay, shakedown cruise. Well, it took some time between the actual christening and the time we went to sea and we went down for a shakedown cruise. ... This is naval procedure, you go out someplace on a shakedown, you try different things and ... the air squadrons then come aboard. See, the air squadrons were at some airfield around Norfolk, I think, and they would come aboard the ship. So, that was a big deal. You know, you'd be, I don't know how many miles at sea, be forty miles off Cuba or something, I don't know, and then, ... you'd hear an announcement, "The squadron's approaching," and, as they're coming down, it was something to see and my battle station was in this little, I'll show you on the picture, ... cubicle. It was right

on the flight deck. So, I saw these guys come in. I saw them catapulted off. So, the squadron would come in, squadrons, and there'd be TBMs, which were, I think, what George Bush was on. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

The ship, we stayed aboard; we didn't stay aboard. We were quartered at the receiving station in [the] Brooklyn Navy Yard and, you know, this was a sailor town, let me tell you. I remember, I went out and bought some real ... bell-bottom trousers, instead of the Navy issue. These were some kind of a comp [composition], I don't know what they were, but they were much lighter and they flared out and they looked real sharp and you'd go to a tailor there and they'd have a bunch of tailors and you'd get these things made up to order.

SH: Real tailor-made.

TB: Tailor-made, and so, anyway, I was up on the third floor of the receiving station quarters and, again, I was commuting, but I was there when V-J Day occurred. ... I was not about to get stuck, with my girlfriend in the Bronx and me in Brooklyn, on V-J Day. So, over the loudspeaker came, "Now hear this." This is the way they announced things, "Now hear this, all leaves and liberties are canceled. All personnel should prepare for shore patrol," and shore patrol was in ... Times Square. I always told Helene, if I wasn't enamored with her, I would have been the sailor that kissed the nurse in the oh-so famous picture. [laughter]

SH: We have it in our office.

TB: Do you? Yes, well, just tell them it was me, [laughter] but, anyway, the building was maybe five stories high, I don't remember, but it was just barracks, you know, and there was a mess hall down at the bottom. Well, you had to go out through the quarter deck and, when you went out through the quarter deck, you saluted and, you know, the whole business. Well, anyway, they were letting people out through there and I found that out real fast, you know. I just sort of observed. The dining hall was on that same floor and it went out the back. It was one-story and it happened that that area was sloped, because this was going down to the water, you know. ... So, I went to the second floor and I went through the barracks, opened the window, and ... maybe other guys were doing it, too, I don't know, ... went in there, opened the window and hung down from the window to this slope, which wasn't very far. So, I said, "To hell with you boys." I went on liberty. [laughter]

HB: A traitor to your country. [laughter]

SH: What did you do to celebrate? Did you all go down to Times Square?

TB: Oh, we went down there a number of times. ... One time, Charlie Kelly and I went down. There was a girl from church that he was going with at that point and we have pictures of that, you know, sitting in a phony car, the two sailor boys and the two girls.

SH: Were you there for any of the tickertape parades?

TB: No, not that I can remember. I'm sure we weren't, but, you know, on dates, you'd go down there and, of course, the uniform, I don't know why we wore them, but I guess we didn't know enough to wear civilian clothes, but who wore civilian clothes? Why? ...

SH: A lot of men said that they needed to be in uniform, so that people did not ask why they, able-bodied men, were not in the service.

TB: Yes, I didn't see any of that. I didn't see people that were looking to cause trouble, because people weren't in it or something. People were pretty civilized, to be honest. ... I didn't have any problems. I find, too, that if you look for trouble, you find it.

SH: Was it after this that you took your shakedown cruise?

TB: Okay. Now, I don't know when; yes, it was after that, that's right. Then, after V-J Day, we went aboard ship, and then, the adventure in the guys climbing on me, the drunks and so on, and I had some fun.

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

JW: This is tape two of an interview with Theodore Henry Blum on September 20, 2002.

TB: Jamie, you didn't get the name right. Let me explain something; first of all, Theodore, I like to be known by Ted, but you didn't know that, and, as a kid, as a little baby, the aunts and all those kind of people used to call me Theodore Henry Blum Bunny.

SH: Let us talk about the *Franklin Roosevelt*, this aircraft carrier commissioned at the end of World War II. We talked a little bit about what happened in Times Square and how you managed to celebrate privately.

TB: ... Right. What did we do, Helene?

HB: I can't remember. I heard the question, but I can't remember, because I doubt whether my mother would have let me go down to Times Square. I'm sure we didn't go to Times Square.

SH: Okay.

TB: Well, we had to go out underneath the Brooklyn Bridge and ... that was an engineering thing, where they pulled down the antennas and so on, and then, I think we went from there directly over to the Navy yard at Bayonne. ... I remember, at Christmas, and I've got pictures of this, too, I remember ... Christmas in Bayonne, where they brought kids, ... kids without parents, aboard ship and we had a big party for the kids that came aboard ship. ... I can remember shoveling snow off of the catwalks. The catwalks are the walks that go along at the level of the flight deck. That's how you get around. You don't go up on the flight deck unless ... you have a reason. So, when you go places on the top deck, you would go that way. ... In fact, these are pictures of the kids coming aboard ship and so on. That was sort of nice and,

again, I was fairly close to home. ... Then, we sailed to Guantanamo Bay. That was the actual shakedown and Guantanamo Bay was interesting. Oh, either going or coming, ... we went into Tobago and the famous one, [singing], "The island from which I come," you know?

SH: Jamaica?

TB: ... Not Jamaica, no, no, the other one with a T, Trinidad, yes. Well, I had the wrong song, Trinidad, and then, we went in there and I guess ... it was a day, or maybe two, and it was, you know, I guess romantic I don't know what. ... In those kinds of ports, you anchor, and then, these ships, these boats, would carry you in from the ship, and then, you'd sort of wander around town and be sailors, and then, go back aboard ship, as late as you could. ... Then, we sailed into Guantanamo. Guantanamo, quite a base, ... it had some Cubans working there, but there were a lot of Indians and a lot of Chinese that lived there and worked there and were the personnel at the base that ran ... ship's stores and you could go and you could get a Chinese meal. They had a restaurant, you know, and that was one of the things you could do. ... I think that's what I did, but I don't know if there was anything else that I [did] and I like Chinese food. ... You wander around, and then, there's a beach and you went swimming and so on, but, ... for us at least, there was no business there. It was a place where you could relax, an R&R kind of place. ... Then, aboard ship, they were testing stuff. You know, the air squadrons would come in and land and I don't know if we did any firing there or not. They did a thing with what they called drones. We still have drones. They'd put up these drones and they'd have ... an envelope behind, ... a sleeve, and the sleeve would be carried quite a ways back from the drone, and then, you'd be in your gun turret and right down below me was a Marine quad-forty-millimeter emplacement. These are four guns that go, [firing sounds], you know. I think the twenty-millimeters they called "pom-poms." They were on the fantail and these things were situated around the ship and the ship was what they called, at that time it was a CVB and CV means carrier and CVB meant battle carrier and we had eighteen five-inch rifles, whatever they call them at that time. These were big guns, but they weren't like the eighteen or sixteen-inch [guns that] the battleships had and they were spotted along the sides of the ship. ... Then, they had these forty-millimeters that take care of aircraft that might bother you. ... So, I don't know, at that time, whether we did any of this practice or not, but what we would do [was], they'd blow battle stations, "Da-na-na-nana," no, well, anyway, and you'd go to your battle station. ... I had an ensign, really nice guy, his name was Smith. He was from Roselle Park and I often think that I should get in touch with him and the lieutenant that we had was a guy by the name of; I know it well, and he was from up in that area, too. So, they were just nice guys, and so, anyway, you stand up there and you had these big helmets. You know, there's helmets that go like this, but ... we were talkers. Well, he was a talker, the ensign. The ensign got the command to fire and he gave it to me and he had this big thing on and I just had a regular helmet on. ... The machine, the thing, was a little sight and it wasn't radar yet. It would eventually be radar, not while I was there. So, when he said, "Fire," you pulled the trigger. ... Then, these Marines ... kept throwing these cartridges into the guns, "Boom-boom-boom." So, anyway, ... somewhere along the line, we did practice on that, a couple of times at least, I don't remember how many times, and it was interesting. You know, you felt like you were a big deal. ... I never hit the damn sleeve, but they had tracers on them and so on, but that was one of the things we did. Oh, and then, the guys used to fish off the fantail and, usually, it was these petty officers, a guy like this, I wish I could think of his name, the guy that was the first class that was always drunk. ... He'd get a great, big hook and I don't

know what the hook was from. You know, it was like a grappling hook. It was a big thing, like this, and there were hammerhead sharks out in back of us, and so, they were fishing off the fantail for hammerhead sharks. ... They caught one, on one of these great, big hooks. [laughter] This poor, old fish must have been ... ten feet long, or longer than that, maybe, and they hauled him up. ... The hammerhead's got these eyes that stick way out on the sides, you know, and they let him hang there a while. There's probably a lot more I can tell you about that, but ... you'll never get out of here, ... and then, we went back to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. ... Oh, we went to Norfolk and, at Norfolk, I rode the trolleys. My mother was dying of cancer and Helene would go see her and so on and I got a message to call [for] emergency leave. Emergency sick leave, it was called. So, I can remember, I can't remember the sequence, but I remember riding on a bus through Virginia, in the middle of the night. ... I was sitting up, talking to, see, I talk, ... the driver and, as we drove along, all of a sudden, coming from the side, it was moonlight, ... comes a team of horses, bats out of hell. They come down ... in front of the bus, and then, up the road and, of course, this driver was a good driver, he was able to control the thing, and we followed the ... horses for a while and off they went, just, you know, a vignette. ... Some time in there, I may have gone home more than one time, I don't remember, I used to take the train. That was interesting, too. ... There's all these GIs on the train and you'd stand and you'd sit and talk to people and it was a lot of camaraderie. ... When I went home on leave, or when I went home on emergency [leave], I don't think I went home on emergency [leave] on the train, but ... I went to the Norfolk Airport to catch a plane to New York, because it was an emergency thing. ... I guess it was a DC-3 and, while I was waiting, they had a little building and, while I was waiting there, I see these people and, pretty soon, I realize it's Bob Hope and a USO tour group and I don't think they went on a plane with us. I think they were going someplace else, but that was sort of fascinating, because he had all these starlets [with him]. I don't know what else to call them. I don't remember who. ... What was the singer's name? I think I recognized her. ... You know, they used to take young ladies [to perform on stage] and the guys would like that. I saw Lucille Ball, one time, down at Pier 92, in one of these things. Anyway, they were fighting. They were fighting and I don't know, I'm not sure what they were fighting about, but, basically, it was that some of these girls wanted certain privileges and that would impinge on the other girl's privileges. ... I remember Bob Hope saying, he said, "I don't want to get involved in this." He says, "You girls figure it out." I remember that. He wasn't getting involved.

SH: Always the diplomat.

TB: [laughter] Yes, I suppose. ... I'm sure they had some kind of a manager that was responsible for that, and then, we flew home and I don't know where we landed. I don't remember where we landed, but, then, I went home to see my mother and so on. ...

SH: When were you discharged?

TB: I was discharged June the 15th, 1946, and I was a lucky guy, because we went on the shakedown cruise, which I should tell you about. ... When we came back from the shakedown cruise, the war was over. ... They were starting to discharge and they had a point system and the point system was [based on] how long you were in, where you served, etc., etc., etc., and I had only been in fifteen months when I got discharged. So, I was, as I say, a lucky guy and I really didn't like it. I mean, I have funny memories and so on, but I've never been one to have people

tell me what to do. ... In the military service, they tell you what to do and I just never appreciated it. I figured, "Who's this guy to tell me what to do, because he may be a little older or because, you know, for whatever reason?" and I thought that way when I was working for the University. I mean, I was in [the] Cooperative Extension and I, frankly, was my own boss. I really was my own boss and nobody told me what to do and I liked it. ... As a result, I accomplished some things. Anyway, I wasn't really happy in the service. ... Sometimes, I think, you know, if I'd stayed in [for] a certain length of time, I'd have had this retirement and so on, but it worked out pretty well for us.

SH: How did you manage to get out in sixteen months?

TB: I don't know. I just had enough points, for some reason. I mean, the guys that had really ... seen some stuff, they got out right ... as soon as it was over. ... As I say, I got out June the 15th ... and I got discharged from Lido Beach, Long Island. ... They had excess property, which they were selling to us, and I bought an electric drill, which I still have and use, [and there was] something else that I bought. I mean, they put out good stuff, you know. It wasn't any of this junk. [laughter] "I'm somebody, I ain't no junk," [laughter] you know, but I got discharged from there after being there about three days. They sent us from, I imagine, ... the New Jersey naval yard to the Long Island discharge center, and then, I was out. ... Then, I came home and I went to work. I didn't know what I was going to do. ... I mean, talk about history, most of these guys had no idea ... about college. The GI Bill and Medicare are the greatest things that ever happened to this country.

SH: Did they talk to you about the GI Bill?

TB: I don't think so; maybe. You know, they had a discharge situation, where they talked about things and they examined you. ... On my medical thing, they say I have a hernia, which doesn't mean anything. I didn't get any kind of compensation for it or anything, but it's there, and I didn't get it there, in the Navy. I had it before. ... The Veterans Administration, we got involved; you know, you got involved in the Veterans Administration and there were things, ... privileges you had, and I can't remember exactly what, maybe I used them, maybe I didn't, I don't remember. ... My old buddy Charlie got home maybe a little before I did, about the same time. He was on antisubmarine patrol, on a PV, off of the southern part of the United States, and I guess they got them out of the service fast and Charlie was home and we, you know, ... did things. He called me up one day and he says, "You know, Ted," he says, "Hunter College has got a program," ... and I had gone to work for Macy's, because I didn't know what the hell to do, and he said, "They've got a program, an educational program, college program, for veterans." ... It was up at this same place that I had walked by and seen these girls working, you know, the WAVES and so on, Hunter College. So, we went down and applied and it was late in the year. It was not September. It may have been November or something like that and we went down and that particular college or university, whatever they call it now, is right there on one of the avenues, I can't think of which, and they have a big entry with benches, ... not benches, and then, this big, nice entry and so on. ... We got there and, either on our way out or on our way in, there was somebody from *The New York Times* and he was taking a picture of these battle-hardened veterans entering Hunter College, [laughter] and I was one of them and there were about ... five or six of us and Charlie didn't get in the picture. Why? I don't know, but they sat

these girls down on these walls and there was a bunch of the coeds sitting on the walls, over here, and I've got that picture, too. It's in the newspaper, and then, these battle-hardened veterans, with books, [laughter] walking up toward the entrance, and I was one of the battle-hardened veterans. See, I was lucky, you know. Think of all the people that had things happen to them and, the rest of my life, I'm saying, "Wait, all the things that people had happen to them and I got [this]? I was lucky."

HB: Did you mention Rio?

TB: I did, a little bit. I did, a little bit.

SH: That was where the shakedown cruise was.

TB: No, the shakedown was to Guantanamo, but what happened was that a man by the name of [Getúlio] Vargas was being inaugurated as the president, so, they sent the ship down as something for his inauguration. ...

SH: To Rio de Janeiro?

TB: To Rio de Janeiro, yes. I kept telling her I'm going to take her, [laughter] but I haven't taken her yet. ...

HB: I've been to Thailand.

TB: [laughter] Yes, we've been to Thailand, but not there. So, we went to Rio and we anchored out in the beautiful bay and Corcovado and all these famous [mountains], Sugar Loaf and so on, were there. ... They did the same thing. They took you ashore in these, ... not the admiral's dinghy or whatever they called it, but ... all these other little boats they had aboard ship, and we wandered around and went to night clubs, which I don't remember, ... and saw things and got a little idea of the place. I guess we were there maybe two or three days and, while we were there, we went to the airport, for some reason, just visiting. ... I had two buddies, a fellow by the name of Rex Baylor and Rex was from ... Clearfield, Pennsylvania, and another guy by the name of George, he was from ... Massachusetts, and they were in the same division with me. So, we traveled together and we went out to the airport and we were looking for the airport and I look and here comes Fiorello La Guardia. Now, you know who he is, La Guardia Airport. He was the mayor of New York. ... He's the guy that read the comics, on [the radio], you know, your famous [mayor]. He was a little, short guy with lots of personality and lots of zip and he didn't let anybody put anything over him and he was a great man. So, I see him. [laughter] ... I told these guys, I says, "That's my mayor. I'm going to go talk to him." [laughter] So, I went over and I looked at him and he's about this high up. I reached down and shook his hand and I said, "I'm one of your boys;" oh, dear. [laughter]

SH: Did he talk with you?

TB: Oh, yes, oh, yes, but he was there with some official. I don't know what was going on.

SH: Maybe for the same inauguration.

TB: Oh, he was there for the inauguration, yes, oh, yes. He was there for the inauguration. He was Harry Truman's representative, ... as the ship was ... Harry Truman's [representative]. Oh, Harry Truman was, did I say that? at the commissioning.

SH: Really?

TB: Yes, and he's a hero of mine, for no other reason, for a lot of reasons, but mostly because he dropped that bomb.

HB: Eleanor Roosevelt was there.

TB: Yes, I did mention that, right. Yes, Eleanor Roosevelt was there. Well, I'm going to show you that picture before we get done. So, anyway, that was the trip to Rio and, very soon after that, they discharged us. ...

SH: What were you going to major in at Hunter College?

TB: Well, it was two years, and then, you went to someplace else. So, you had to make your decision at that point. ... None of us had any idea, and Charlie quit after two years, but I had this idea of going to [college], because I wanted to go to Cornell as a kid, because it's an ag [agricultural] school, but, as it worked out, I was able to go to Rutgers. ... I did have a little bit of ambition to go to college, but, you know, we weren't rich. We had no money. ... I can remember, I guess towards the end of the war, when my father used to bring home fifty dollars a week to support the family. ... I guess that was all right then, but it was certainly not like a lot of people, ... and so, you know, I don't know how I would have ever got to college if it wasn't for the GI Bill. ... I probably would have gone, somewhere along the line, if Charlie hadn't called, but, then, I had this Lindley Cook, [who] had become [the] director of the Extension [Service].

SH: Is that how you came to Rutgers, through him?

TB: Yes, yes, ... and then, we established residence. I had this uncle who was the superintendent of schools in Wall Township. We went down there and lived there for a while and established residence with him. Then, we moved over to Neptune.

SH: Were you married at this point?

TB: Oh, yes. We were married in '47.

SH: Was that before you got discharged?

TB: No, after. I was discharged in '46.

SH: You were at Hunter when you and Mrs. Blum wed.

TB: Helene, yes, yes. That's right, that's right, and we lived in an apartment house. She worked for AT&T, and then, when I moved to Rutgers, ... she transferred to New Jersey Bell, was a service representative in Asbury Park. ... We lived, see, in Wall Township, and then, in Neptune, which was right there, and then, we moved up to the Heights, up to the trailer camp, Hillside Campus, Rutgers University, and then, ... I got my degree at the College of Agriculture and I was going to farm. ... The luckiest thing was that I didn't farm, because, you know, that's a rough business. ... Anybody that's a good farmer ... deserves a lot of credit and the farm we were going to buy was a vegetable farm. ... This uncle was going to help us and he was a conservative man and, I don't blame him, he backed out, so that we didn't have the money. So, then, I had to go to work. ... I had gone to a party with some of the guys that I'd gone to school with, the College of Agriculture, and one of them, by the name of Al [Alan R.] Edsall, was teaching vo-ag [vocational agriculture] down in Delaware, and so, we got [to] talking and I was telling him, "You know, I don't know what the hell I'm going [to do]." He says, "Why don't you try vo-ag?" He says, "It's really, really good." So, I went back to school and took post-graduate, I guess you could call it, yes, that's what you would call it, and I took courses in ag education and in some areas of agriculture that I didn't have, like poultry, poultry husbandry and ... some poultry programs and so on. ... While I was doing this, I was working at Merck, over there by the college. ... I don't know if this belongs in here or not, but I'm big and people have always picked me out to take leadership roles. I mean, I had no more reason to be the mayor of Hillside Campus than anything, but I went down to Bordentown High School as a teacher. ... The first summer, ... all the teachers were really, really good people, and so, they had this extra job, you know, from an outfit called Colpitts and Coverdale. ... They were traffic surveyors and they were ... doing surveys for 206 and the Turnpike. So, we sat and listened to this presentation. One thing is, I look people in the eye. ... When they got done, the guys says, "Now, I'm going to give you this material and you're the crew chief," just like that, [laughter] and that's happened to lots of things in my life, you know.

SH: What did you major in at Rutgers?

TB: Well, originally, I was in plant science, and then, I took general ag, which fit into ... when I did go into teaching, which was; see, I graduated '51. In '52, I took this ... post-graduate [coursework], and then, in the summer of '52, I went to work at ... Bordentown High School and, in vo-ag, you teach twelve months and that was the thing. ... Then, after that, funny how things work, they got another call at the guidance department ... at the school, the high school, and they wanted people to work as toll booth collectors. ... So, that summer, I applied and became a toll booth collector on the Turnpike, you know, with the uniform and all. I was there at the Bordentown Exchange, and then, after two years at Bordentown, the salary was terrible. These people were nice, the superintendent was nice. ... We lived in a town called Crosswicks, [which] was a beautiful, nice town, made good friends there and so on, but I figured I had to go get some more money. So, for, I think, 240 dollars, I moved to Delaware, to a place called Milton, and that was the year that they said that "separate but equal" was not equal. ... I had gone to school with black kids and I didn't appreciate the whole South, to be honest, their attitudes, and they started to burn crosses and I said, "I've got to get out of here," and I taught the kids, who were vo-ag kids, farmer's kids, who, ... as you know, are pretty conservative to start with, and Sussex County is the lower county in Delaware and they thought they were further south than Georgia. You know, they were being Southerners and they were below the Mason-

Dixon Line and I talked to these kids and, you know, I wouldn't go for the "nigger" bit. That's no good. ... I never learned that and I didn't want to learn it, you know, after the Nazis and so on. ... So, one time, I came in to [school]. I had a [good] deal; I had this [large] classroom. I only had about thirty kids. I had three or four classes and I had a building all to myself, my own phone. Nobody bothered me, which is just what I love, you know. [laughter] So, I came in to school one day and they had integrated Milford, Delaware, which was a little bit north of Milton, and they burned crosses up there. A guy by the name of Bryant Bowles, may he rot, and ... the people in Milford were, you know, ... not liberal, but [it was] a fairly liberal place, and the school board, to their credit, [and] so on, and so on, but they backed out. [Editor's Note: Bryant Bowles, a segregationist from Florida who led the National Association for the Advancement of White People, organized rallies to protest the integration of Milford High School in Milford, Delaware, in September 1954. As a result, the school remained segregated until 1962.] ... So, there was big news that the Negroes, blacks, whatever you want to call ... the people who were being subjugated, were out of there. ... I came in to class that time and, on my blackboard, in my little classroom I was proud of, was a big sign some kid had written, in chalk, "The only thing black in the Milford schools today is the blackboard." ... In vo-ag, ... you take the kids around to their farms and tell them about things and so on. I had the opportunity [to speak with] with at least one, I think more than one, Ray, I can't think of his last name at this point, Ray (Warrington?) or something like that, big kid. I had problems with Ray. I mean, he's a nice kid, mild-mannered. ... So, on the way home with him one day, I said, "Ray, ... why do you feel about black," colored kids, we used then, "colored kids like you do?" and I said, "Is it because of the other kids?" and he said, "Mr. Blum," he said, "I guess that's what it is." He says, "I'm going to go into the Coast Guard when I get out," he says, "and I'll be living with them and working with them, so, I shouldn't feel this way," and I had a few experiences like that. They were good kids, they were good kids, but it was the environment that they had, ... and so, they felt that way. ... I'm sure it still is down there. ... Some of those people still think that they ... [are Southerners]. I had a guy that I taught with, the second year in Bordentown. His name was Louie Goldenberg and he'd been in school with me, though I didn't really know him, but he came and applied for the second job. See, I became the lead teacher. There were two teachers there and the other guy had left before I even started. I don't know if I was the reason, [laughter] but I became the lead teacher, and then, I had somebody, and then, I had Louie. ... Louie, you know, he was a happy-go-lucky guy and, some day, I said to him, "Louie," I said, "don't feel that there's no prejudice." I said, "There's people that don't like you because you're a Jew," and he didn't believe me, I don't think. Well, he wouldn't [admit it], and I saw him recently, fairly recently. He came up here to see me. I hadn't seen him for thirty years and I think he, at that point, realized that that was the case. When I was in Delaware, there was a store and you got to know the storekeepers and so on, and there was a store and there was this Jewish storekeeper and it was, I think, a dry goods store. I don't even remember his name, nice, nice guy, and so, ... we'd walk down Main Street, this is a little town, and I'd stop and talk to him and, one day, in the mail, there were communications from this Bryant Bowles and some other KKK types and they were blasting, primarily Jews, but other [people, too]. ... The guy who became the school board president was a button cutter. That was his job. He cut buttons. They got shells from the South Pacific and he sat there pumping his foot all day long. ... I mean, this is the kind of people [they had] and, you know, he may have [been] a nice guy, I don't think so, but ... he was the biggest segregationist going. So, this guy, and I can't think of what his name was, but I walked by one day and I said, "Did you get something in the mailbox?" He said, "Yes," and I

said, "Was it this Ku Klux Klan stuff?" and he said, "Yes." He says, "I don't have to worry." He says, "The people in this town know me." He says, you know, you donated to everything; ... Sam, his name was, and everybody knew Sam and I probably said something like, "Don't believe it," you know. I'd seen enough stuff, from, "Kill all kikes," as a kid, to the other things. ... So, a man by the name of [Rollyn] "Rolly" Winters, who was the 4-H leader, I met him up in the (Far Hills?) Inn. I knew him because I'd gone for a job with the Extension at one point, [due to] Mr. Cook, and he was up at a dairy banquet. We used to have dairy banquets. All the breeds would have banquets. ... A 4-H agent in Cape May County had to go in the Army, so, there was a job open there, but ... he was going to get his job back. So, to make a long story short, ... Rolly hired me, and then, before he came back, this job opened up here in Somerset County and I figured this was a permanent job and I liked the area better and so on. So, I took this job, and then, I spent twenty-eight years here.

SH: Who were your favorite professors at Rutgers?

TB: I can tell you some of the ones who weren't, but, see, this is my anti-establishmentarianism. [laughter] ... There's a bunch of them I liked. There was a guy by the name of (Havens?), a guy by the name of [Erwin R.] Biel, who were in climatology. Firman Bear was the soils man. He was one of these guys, but I liked him. There was a guy by the name of (Huff?), who said to me; one time, I said something, I was arguing with him about something, and he was a plant breeder, ... the fruit breeder. ... I said, ... "As sure as God made little green apples," I said, "that's what I saw," or something like that, and he looked at me and he pointed to himself and he says, "God didn't make little green apples. Huff made little green apples." [laughter] So, he was good. ... You know how professors get, a lot of them; a lot of them get to think that, well, I won't use that expression, that they're a little better, they can't do anything wrong, you know. ... I was on the University Senate, you know. See, we're part of the University, I was a full professor and I saw, up there, they do too much hemming and hawing and not enough action. ... They think they're right, but they don't want to really say they're right, because somebody might think that they're wrong. Not all of them, obviously, but there's a lot of them. ... I liked entomology. I had some real good profs for entomology, a guy by the name of (Schmidt?), [Clyde C.] Hamilton. ... Most of the ag professors were really decent guys. Where I had my problems, and I didn't have real problems, was with the ... liberal arts people. I had an experience with a guy; I took my master's in adult education and three of us went over there together, 4-H agents, and took a course in rural sociology and I don't know who this guy was, I forget his name, but ... maybe he'd had his PhD two years, maybe. ... He was the instructor or the prof and he started laying out what we were going to do. ... Oh, this was a big deal and, here I was, with a job, and, in my job, I worked nights. I mean, I worked long hours and I had some times in the day I was off, but I worked long hours. So, I told these other two guys, I said, "I'm not going to take this." I said, "I'm going to get out of this class," and so, I went up to him afterwards and I said, "Now, do you expect me to do this?" and I laid it out for him, what I do, and he said, "Yes." He says, "I worked for my PhD." [laughter] I'll bet he did and I said, "Well, then, just scratch me from the list." ... Then, I went and enrolled in Douglass, and I don't remember how I did this, but they had the same course, with a man by the name of (Philips?), who was a black man, who actually knew more about sociology than this guy ever thought of knowing and was very good and he understood and I got my coursework in.

SH: What were some of your duties as mayor of the Hillside Campus?

TB: Nothing. I can't remember. I can't remember a thing. ... You know, I can remember this; [laughter] I can remember, they had parties and, you know, you'd go over to this party, it was in this big rec hall they had, and we had these parties and we'd all go over there. There was always somebody's wife who would get looped and who thought of themselves as *femme fatales*, and I could tell you stories about that, and most of the wives would go home and most of the men would hang around, waiting for these women to take off their clothes. ... You didn't know men were like that? [laughter] ... Of course, the lavatories were communal lavatories and they were double trailers, with one half for men and one half for the women, where you could hear everything that would go on, on one side or the other, and, of course, the married students would get to know each other pretty well, and so, you'd hear them talking. Helene, I'm talking about the lavatories. I'm going to tell them about Henry Mann.

HB: Are you talking about living up at the campus?

TB: Yes. [laughter] ... We got a bunch of guys together and we went to a burlesque show, I mean, with couples. ... We went up to Union City or Newark. There were two burlesque shows, one in Union City and one in Newark. We went up there and, the day after or two days after or something, Helene was telling me, she was in the lavatory and this one guy, "Herky" Mann; go ahead

HB: He was saying, "Oh, and then, they did this, and then, they did that," and you could only imagine ... what kind of gestures he was doing. [laughter]

TB: This guy was a great, big guy. So, we had a lot of fun up there.

SH: Did you have neighbors very close to you?

TB: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SH: Do you remember their names?

TB: Oh, yes. ... We had friends who have been our friends ever since, Jack and Helen Whitcomb.

HB: Talked to him last night, on the phone. ...

TB: We had the Meehans, Tom and whatever her name was. She used to walk around in a big ...

HB: Margaret Meehan?

TB: Margaret, yes; ... the kind of robe, what do they call them, that Roosevelt used to wear?

HB: One of those big coats?

TB: Yes, a cape, a cape. ... She used to walk around in that and we used to call her the, ... not the dragon woman, but something like that, and there were lots of dogs. ... We had a dog that; well, we didn't have it. The next-door neighbor, whose names were Zimmerman, he's an engineer and worked over there in New Brunswick, Bill (Zimmerman?) and his wife, and they had a dog ...

HB: ... Named Mary.

TB: Named Mary, right, and Mary ... wasn't as good as she should have been [laughter] and Mary had puppies and we got two of the puppies. ... We kept one and we gave one to an aunt of mine, down in Freehold, but one of the puppies, I think it was the puppy they had, was the result of a large dog, maybe Mary, and it was like a daschund. So, that dog had little legs in front, like this, and long legs in the back, like this, [laughter] and it walked downhill at all times. Then, we had friends by the name of Roy and Alburta Shaw and Roy was the one who told me about the trailer camp and we went up and visited their trailer and we thought, "Hey, this is livable." We gave it a try. ...

HB: Everybody was as poor as we were. ...

TB: Yes. We paid twenty-six bucks for the big one.

HB: Twenty-six dollars a months rent.

TB: Yes, and Helene used to go out and wait on ... Brower Hill, ... anybody would, and somebody who was going into New Brunswick would pick them up and take them down, and that same thing happened when we were at the other place.

HB: Faculty housing.

TB: Faculty housing. ... Two of them were guys who were in ag, who I got to know much better later, a fellow by the name of Don Kniffin, who was the Extension animal husbandry man, and another one by the name of Randy Reed, who was a professor in animal husbandry. These guys were both beef and sheep, primarily, and so, they would take Helene down to work.

HB: I worked in New Brunswick.

TB: ... It was, ... you know, a nice experience. ... Who needs philosophy? but I give philosophy, free, I find that if you're nice to people, they're nice to you. If you talk to people, they talk to you. If you smile at people, they smile at you.

SH: When did you start having your family?

TB: ... We adopted Jimmy in ... 1962, time flies, yes, '62, and Betsy in '65. That's another interesting story. I told them I wasn't going to go to church, because they wanted me to go to church, and so, an outfit ...

HB: This is the adoption agency. ... They didn't think that we were religious enough to adopt a child.

TB: ... The woman who was our case worker, [her] nephew was Charlie McDougall, who was on the Extension staff, and she was very [nice], you know, she liked us, etc., etc., but the guy who was the director was the husband of a gal by the name of Phyllis Bradshaw and Phyllis was the family relations specialist on our staff, and we were good friends, but this guy, ... I don't know how devout he was, but he was Roman Catholic and he didn't want to let it go through.

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

TB: One of my pet peeves is how, after you retire, after you get older, they turn you out, and people have all kinds of talents. ... They don't come back and say, "We're not going to necessarily do what you think we should do, but it would be helpful for us to know about these things," and Jack Whitcomb is an example of this. You know, he's a guy that's got a real good, and he has a nice way of presenting it, ... knowledge of history, and nobody, as far as I know, in the University or at that level, has ever said, "Hey, we're going to have an interesting speaker in. This man's ... written a book and he's going to tell you about the President's life in the White House." He had all kinds of stories that are interesting. The same thing happens with the Extension. You've got all these people who have had successful programs and careers, not all of them have, but there are those people that have, and then, they get these [new] people to come in. ... The training is minimal and they've got all these people that could help them, but they don't ask them and they should. ... This is why I like oral history, because [of] all these things we lose because nobody's hearing them. There's a guy by the name of Dave Wood, who is also a veteran; also, he'd be a good guy for you to get. Dave is eighty-three. He was in the Army. He's a Cook College man. ... He's in Atlantic County and Dave, I'm sure, has got war stories. He never told them. I don't know what his war stories are, but he could tell people about things that he did in terms of teaching in Extension and involving people, but nobody's got this stuff. I could, too, but they don't ask and, you know, you can project yourself just so much on people and you say, "You know, maybe they don't care." So, it's too bad and this is why this is, I think, so important.

SH: What were some of the most rewarding things that you did while working in the Extension Service or in your career?

TB: ... Get me one of those catalogs.

HB: What kind of catalog?

TB: The fair catalog, [*100 Years of 4-H: Thousands of Reasons to Celebrate, 1902-2002—2002 Somerset County 4-H Yearbook & Catalog*]... thank you. It tells it pretty much in a nutshell, what happened. It was a great job, because you could innovate and, as I said, nobody told you what to do and I developed a lot of theories and ideas and so on, ... one of which is, "Don't be afraid of failure. Try something, try something, try something, try something. If you try enough things, something's going to be successful. The things that are unsuccessful, so what? You

failed. You throw them away. ... You will have success in things,” and, I’ll be honest, I had a lot of successes, but the reason was because I had good people and I let them do it and I tried a lot of things. I’m blowing my own horn here; I shouldn’t.

SH: That is what we are here for.

HB: You know, he was selected to the National Hall of Fame this year.

TB: The National 4-H Hall.

SH: This reads, “The National 4-H Hall of Fame inducts Ted Blum, April 11, 2002,” and it has a wonderful picture of Mr. and Mrs. Blum. I reserve the right to get a copy of this for your file. [laughter] It reads, “Theodore Blum’s twenty-eight-year tenure as Somerset County’s 4-H Agent earned him a spot in the National 4-H Hall of Fame, a commemorative designation that coincides with the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of this youth organization. Ted helped boost enrollment in Somerset County 4-H programs from five hundred to twenty-five hundred and nurtured the growth of the County 4-H fair. ‘He’s a dynamic personality,’ said Barbara Navatto, who prepared Ted’s nomination form. Ted said, ‘I strongly believed in creativity and self-confidence and not being afraid to try new things.’ Under his tenure, which ran from 1956 to 1984, Ted was instrumental in the concept and construction of the largest 4-H center in New Jersey. He was also involved in initiating the 4-H prep program for six-to-eight-year-old children that has inspired similar programs in New Jersey. He was used by other states as a speaker and a trainer for 4-H. 4-H has a banner slogan, ‘4-H isn’t just cows and cooking.’ Being flexible and innovative, Ted started the first horseless horse club, ski club, motorcycle club, 4-H exchange and a host of other evolving clubs as our county became more urbanized. Ted facilitated the concept that the Somerset County 4-H fair was to remain free to all and free of a carnival atmosphere. It was during this time that our fair grew to be probably the largest free fair in the nation and organized totally by 4-H volunteers. Ted liked to say and believed strongly in, ‘4-H is a family affair and, in 4-H, you are part of the family.’” That is wonderful.

TB: Isn’t that a nice write-up? I’m pleased with it.

SH: That is great. Is the 4-H aspect one of the most proud moments in your career?

TB: Oh, yes. Well, I’m not a shrinking violet. You know, there’s a lot of things that I’m proud of. I’m proud of my kids. Both of them are decent people who have a strong moral code. Neither one of them would hurt anybody or do ... anybody out of anything. I’m extremely proud of my wife. ... I mentioned ancestors before; ... my one claim to fame is “Peg Leg” John. I told you about “Peg Leg” John and the cranberry thing. So, I’m proud of that, I think, I think. What else am I proud of?

SH: Thank you very much for taking the time today to sit with us for this interview.

TB: Oh, listen, it’s a good opportunity to build your ego up and blow air. [laughter] The big thing that I recognize, I think maybe I mentioned it, and I recognized it as time goes on here, more and more, and that is that whatever you become, you become as a result of other people ...

and anybody that stands up and says, “Hey, I’m the real McCoy, I’m the works,” makes a mistake, because there are so many other people in your life that make it happen. I mean, this thing here, with the 4-H, that could never have happened if Barbara had not seen that there was a nomination form and filled out the nomination form. It could never have happened if the people that I worked with were not the kind of people they were and were willing to do things without any obvious return. If ... a man like Rolly Winters, who was, since, my boss, was not the kind of person who said, you know, “Go ahead and shoot for it,” if Lindley Cook wasn’t that kind of a person; you know, you’ve got too many people who are so stuck on themselves, that it’s got to be their way, and it doesn’t have to be that way. ... I think that’s the best way to failure, is that way. ... So, I’m lucky. I had those people and had the opportunity to do what happened, what we did.

SH: On behalf of Jamie and myself, again, thank you to both you and Mrs. Blum.

TB: Well, you’re perfectly welcome and, when you want to come back, ... come. [laughter]

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Reviewed by Patrick Clark Barnes 3/3/06

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/14/06

Reviewed by Helene Blum 5/2/06