Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Thomas H. Bach on March 19, 1998 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and ...

Dennis Duarte: Dennis Duarte.

KP: I would like to begin by asking you a little about your parents, beginning with your father. He was born in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Thomas Bach: Right.

KP: How did he end up coming to Vineland?

TB: I really don't know. He ... had several brothers and sisters, and his mother came to Vineland and lived, oh, maybe, three quarters of a mile from where my mother and her family lived. How they got together, I don't know, except this close proximity. And, why they came to Vineland, I don't know. I think, at that time, as it originally started, as most towns in New Jersey start, it was a real estate developer. And, maybe that's how. Maybe there were ads in the New York or North Jersey papers. My father left Fort Lee when he was very young. I don't know how old, but, definitely, before he got to be a teenager, and maybe even younger than that. I remember one time, when I was a teenager, probably just before World War II, we drove up there, and drove around the town, and things had changed so much that he really didn't recognize very much. ... Of course, he lived there, to get an idea, before the bridge was built. And, of course, these days, with the apartment developments, and the bridge brought a lot of building in more recent years. ... He died in 1960, so, he didn't really see many of those.

KP: Those changes?

TB: Right.

KP: Your father served in the First World War in the Navy? Or, no, excuse me, it was after the war.

TB: After the war, right.

KP: How old was he when he joined up?

TB: He was a young man. I'm really not sure. He may have been a late teenager or in his early twenties. ... I had some pictures around ... when he was in military service. A seaman, and I don't exactly know what he did, just enlisted personnel. Being in the Army, I don't know what they call it in the Navy.

KP: Did he serve on a battleship?

TB: No. He served on a small ship and I believed they were based in, from pictures I've seen, he didn't talk too much about it, ... Cuba. This is, of course, way back when Cuba was ...
KP: Basically a protectorate of the United States.

TB: Right, yeah.

KP: How long did he stay in the Navy? Was it more than two or three years?

TB: I don't think so. As I say, I'm not sure. He didn't talk much about it. We had a couple of these pictures around. ... I could probably put my hand on it, but I don't know where, right now.

KP: Your mother was a native of Vineland. She was actually born there.

TB: Yes. And, in fact, she was born in the local hospital, but, her mother had lived in the same house where I live now. And, she lived in that house, I guess, pretty much, all her life. Her father died before they got married, and I'm not sure, but, I think, they moved in with her mother there, in the house. So, it may have been a short intervening period, but I think, in effect, she lived in the house all her life. And, she ... used to tell about how she helped her mother, as a small child, plant, ... what is now, a huge tulip poplar tree by the house.

KP: She just put in the ground ...

TB: Right. A small sapling, I guess. She never said exactly. ...

KP: Your father worked in the glass industry in the Vineland area. Do you remember what company he worked for?

TB: He worked for, what was originally called, Kimball Glass Company, and now, ... continues to be a subsidiary of Owens Illinois Glass Company. Now, since we're talking about World War II, I don't know whether you were going to get into that, but, during World War II, he worked as a welder up at the New York Ship Building Corporation, in Camden, and they were building big ships for the Navy there. It was a very prosperous, very big operation. And, he used to commute every day with a bunch of other people, men who worked there.

KP: Had he been a welder before the war?

TB: No. Before the war, ... well, let me go back. When they first married, he was a teller in a local bank. The bank, the Depression, collapsed, and he was out of work for a while. But then, he started, and, for a number of years, worked as a bakery delivery [man], delivering to small stores and homes, bakery goods. I used to go with him, at times when he was going on vacation, or have an operation, a couple of times, to learn the route, and then, somebody else would do the driving. ...

KP: But, you would know where to go.

TB: Yeah.
KP: And, what got delivered where.

TB: Yeah. But, of course, ... my memory wasn't perfect, and so, sometimes, we'd go up a street, “Well, let's see, I'm not sure whether this,” you know. ... I forgot whether I did that during the war or not, just before, anyway. I couldn't have done it during the war, because ... there was a big demand for welders and he took some welding courses, and then, he started working at New York Ship.

KP: Did he start there before the war?

TB: I'm not sure. Right about. It might have been a little before, but, I think it was a little after.

KP: What did he do in the glass factory? Was he a glass blower?

TB: No. ... I don't know exactly how you would describe it, but, he wasn't a skilled glass blower or glass worker. He ... worked on the, I guess you’d call it, ... production line, or assembly line. I don't know whether they had those, but it was something similar to that.

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

TB: Well, of course, I was born in 1928, so, I don't really remember too much. I know, you know, being of a young age. I know we were not wealthy, by any chance. My grandfather had been a farmer, had farmed twenty-five acres around the house where I live now. He had died, I guess, in early '28. But, you know, ... through what funds my father was earned, and, also, what my grandmother, who ... we lived with, it was her house, really, she inherited from her husband, [we] seemed to, you know, do all right. [We] never had ... a lot of money. I mean, a big deal, for my little sister and I, I have a sister a year and a half younger, would be to go to the local Woolworth store, when they had the candy counter at the front of the store. I think some of them do now, but it's all ... pre-packaged. It was a big deal. ... Our big treat was to pick out fifty cents worth of whatever kind of candy we wanted. But, we had a car. I mean, it wasn't ... a magnificent car, but, it was transportation, ’cause we lived a little ways out from town. ... I remember, my grandmother, I think, probably influenced me ... in not talking about ... how well off you were. Not that we were that well off, but, of playing down whatever ... wealth we had and, I guess, I've sort of continued that way today.

KP: As part of your family history.

TB: Evidently, yeah, my grandmother.

KP: Vineland was a center for the agricultural part of the state. It still is, today, much more agricultural, while this area has almost all been built up. Could you maybe talk about your memories of Vineland being an agricultural center?
TB: Well, just a little about ... right around the house and my grandfather's farm, it was approximately twenty-five acres, give or take a half acre. ... That's what they described it as, and, it was pretty much all cleared. There were two acres of woods, which I used to enjoy playing in, cutting paths through, and that sort of thing. But, the twenty-two or twenty-three acres, I guess, early on, I don't even remember this. After my grandfather died, it started to go to ... grow up in trees, and so forth. So, my grandmother, I don't know how they found each other, but, made an agreement with a local farmer to clear the land, and keep it cleared, except, for this, maybe, two acres of woods. ... In return, she would rent the use of the land to them for a ... relatively nominal fee. I can remember, for example, we had a couple of these large peach trees, just south of the house, ... and the farmer would plant a couple of rows, ... maybe twenty-five feet of peppers for us. I can remember, before they pulled it out, ... there was an acre or two of pear trees my grandfather had had. ... Of course, the big thing, and it's gotten ever bigger, and well known, is, they'd have a produce auction. The farmers bring their produce and it’s auctioned off to buyers, now, from supermarkets and things like that. ... I have pictures of my grandfather and grandmother standing in the vegetable garden, ... near the house, and it's in part of the area where I currently have a vegetable garden. I maintain it.

KP: How many acres stayed with the house?

TB: It was divided in, I'd say, [the] 1950s. I have some, and we can talk about it later, pictures. ... When it was divided up, that was a big deal. I'd say, '50s, it was probably after I had graduated from Rutgers, in 1950. ... So, now, it consists of, approximately, three-quarters of an acre. It's essentially a big double lot, so to speak. And, of course, the farm, they subdivided [it], and put in water and sewer [pipes], ... paved the roads, and sold, generally, to the developers. Occasionally, individual people will build houses on it.

KP: So, it's all developed now?

TB: Yes.

KP: Except for your lot?

TB: Yes. ... It's interesting, and I'm always amazed at some of the trees. There were no trees there at all. ... There are four or five houses in that two acres of woods there. I have pictures of what it used to be. ... Occasionally, I’ll mention it to some of the new neighbors and they're curious. [laughter] And so, I'll bring out the picture and ... all it shows is a little rolling field, with, the farmer, as I recall, his big crop was sweet potatoes. He'd plant, pretty much, all in sweet potatoes. We had sweet potatoes to last all winter, if we wanted them. Of course, now, it's gotten to be a big deal, because it's a natural source of estrogen for the women. ... In those days, we didn't know anything about that. [laughter] ... It was available, so, we ate it.

KP: It sounds like you spent a lot of time outdoors growing up?
TB: Yes. And, again, we can talk about it later, I have some pictures of my sister and I when we were very small, whether you'd be interested in something like that or not, you know, playing around, and I won't go into detail. ...

KP: What else did you do for fun? Did you go to the movies very much while you were growing up?

TB: Not very much. Somehow, my parents were not into that, although, I can remember a big deal, ... I guess this was right before World War II, there was ... a road show, showing ... an old movie called Gone with the Wind. And, you had to make reservations, like in a theater, for a particular show, and a particular seat, and so forth. ... I remember [it was] a big deal, going down to make the reservations. Generally, ... my mother and grandmother, they ... went together, they would go places. They'd bring my sister Ruth and I along and, you know, making reservations in one of the local theaters. There were actual three movie houses in Vineland, at the time, and one opened about the time I was there in high school, a new one, and that was a big deal. That's the only one still around. One was torn down, the third one was renovated for a bank building. [laughter]

KP: Unfortunately, there have not been that many theaters that made it. There is one in New Brunswick that made it.

TB: And, I guess, I'm trying to think when I learned to ride a bicycle. Fairly young, and that was a big activity. I used to ride back and forth from school. Of course, the elementary school where we went was a two room school, and there were six students in my class. ... When I was in kindergarten through sixth, the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades were in one room. And, we had one row ... going back to the back of the room, for sixth grade, and then, there were one or two rows, because it was a little bigger, for the fourth and fifth grades. So, it was sort of interesting, because, when we were in the fourth grade, ... we could sort of sit there looking at a book and sort of listening to what the teacher's teaching the fifth and sixth grades. So, in some ways, you got advanced [teaching], but you didn't quite understand it, 'cause you didn't have the books. [laughter] I enjoy telling this story. My two room school, I sort of choke up about it, a two room school and three classes in the same room. ... Occasionally, now, at Harvard Law School reunions I like to recite how, that was my early education.

KP: I've interviewed some people who went to one room school houses, and two rooms, but, increasingly, even in your day, they were becoming more uncommon.

TB: Yeah.

KP: It is a part of Americana that, even in your day, was numbered, particularly in New Jersey. Now, I am trying to think if we have any left.

TB: [laughter] No, the school existed for a while, and then, it was torn down, where I went, the two room school.
KP: So, you went through elementary school in this two room school. Through what grade?

TB: Yeah. Six.

KP: And then, you went to a junior high?

TB: Yeah, and that was a big deal, because that was in town. Going to the elementary school, I took a shortcut. I could go around on the roads. ... It was about, maybe, three-quarters of a mile from where I lived. But, if I cut through the farmer's fields, it was like cutting through the diagonal. When I think about it now, I haven't been up that way, I used to, occasionally, go up that way and see, but, again, it's been developed. There are houses there, subdivision, you know, walking through somebody's backyard. [laughter] “I'm reminiscing here.”

KP: Did you listen to the radio very much growing up?

TB: Yes. I can remember, ... it's sort of a precursor, somehow, I was interested in what was going on in the news, and so forth. ... One of the local radio stations, I think it was out of Philadelphia, we also could get New York stations, too, ... and my father was an avid radio player. I guess, I got my own little radio, I forget what year, but, it was probably before I got to high school. Somehow, I had gotten pneumonia, and, in those days, bed rest, prolonged bed rest, for pneumonia, was the way to cure it. ... My grandmother was very indulgent and she bought me a radio, so I could lie in bed and listen to the radio. Of course, my sister, sibling rivalry, would say, "How come Tom has got a radio?" [laughter] So, Ruth got a radio, too. She didn't have to suffer through the pneumonia. ... The thing I particularly remember was, there was a program, and I think it was out of Philadelphia, I'm not sure, and it was sort of similar to what we have now. They called it, "The Newsreel of the Air," and they would present a fifteen minute to a half hour, I forget exactly how long, of the news headlines, much as we get it today on some of the programs, all day, you know. And then, they would repeat it. It was unbelievable. This must have been when I was ten, maybe twelve. So, that's ... almost sixty years ago. So, sometimes, now, they say the, "All News Program," they think of it as being new, but, ... it shows you how little there is really new, except for some of our remarkable technology and medical discoveries that we have today.

KP: So, you were following the news fairly early?

TB: Yeah. Somehow, that was my thing. My father ... had a sort of a hobby of railroads, and so, I got into that, too. ... One of the big things was ... getting an old, what they called, ... Official Guide of Railway and Steamship Navigational Lines in North America. And, it had all these maps of the railroads, and schedules, and so forth, and we use to peruse that. ... He'd take me on trains, and we had a passenger line through Vineland.

KP: Yes, through that whole area. You were served very well.

TB: Pretty good, yeah.
KP: You had an interest in railroading. Where would you travel?

TB: Not very far, when you think about it. Just around ... Vineland, maybe a couple of stops north or south. One of my little things, I sort of ... was interested in just watching the trains, and we were about, there were two railroads, the Central Railroad of New Jersey from Jersey City and the Pennsylvania/Reading seashore lines from Philadelphia, and they run, each, about a half mile, three-quarters of a mile, from my house. ... [In] those days, they had the steam engines, with the loud whistles, and so forth. ... One of the things that I would do, ... I could see, you know, when they moved slowly, because they'd have to go through intersections, and then, there was an exchange where they crossed, and they'd have to stop there and reset the signal, anyway. And so, I'd get on my bicycle and I'd pedal down to the nearest railroad crossing and, you know, just watch the trains. ... My father also got, ... what they called, a railroad magazine, which gave stories about railroading, and rosters of engines, and so forth. This is in the steam engine days, so, I'd write down the number. ... Generally, we'd go up to Philadelphia, you know, on that line. By the time I got older, the passenger service through Red Bank, through Jersey City, was discontinued, although, they occasionally had excursions. I can remember a steam engine excursions, my aunt coming down, ... she lived in Brooklyn, on an excursion through the, you know, Central Railroad of New Jersey, through Winslow Junction, and Lakewood, and that area. So, that was, you know, big excitement at the time.

KP: Did you collect models, the Lionel trains or anything?

TB: We did, yes. But, it was, really, only set up at Christmas-time. And, my father was, really, the one who set it up. He had tracks on boards, and so forth, and it was not maintained other times. So, it was interesting, but, somehow, I didn't get into that.

KP: You liked to watch the real trains?

TB: Yeah, right.

KP: Did you have any thoughts, growing up, that you would work on the railroad, or was it just a hobby?

TB: No, I think it was probably a hobby. I don't remember thinking of ... 

KP: Being a conductor?

TB: Yes, sometimes, even today, when I come down, like this morning, coming down, I ... check out the ... conductors, and engineers, and that sort of thing. ... It's changed so much. ... 

KP: Oh, yeah. It is very different, particularly from steam to electric.

TB: Right.
DD: You said that you listened to the news a lot. Did you find that you knew more about what was going on in the world than the other kids your age?

TB: Probably. I say that softly, ... because, like my grandmother was about, “Don't brag about things.” I tend to be more modest. ... Yes.

DD: So, were you aware, especially when you were in junior high, about what was going on in Europe, with Germany, and Hitler, and all that?

TB: Yes. I mean, how close I was. I mean, my father was [German], and I have maintained his name, a German name. He spoke very little German. I speak a few words. ... We didn’t have relatives over there, we had no ... feelings about it. ... I don’t remember us, me, with a German name, being connected with the Nazis. ... My mother’s side of the family, and that tended to dominate more than the German side, ... my grandmother was of Irish decent, even though she was born in New York City, in Manhattan, I think. ... My grandfather was born in England, and come to Canada and lived there for a while, and then, came down into New Jersey, to Vineland. So, really, ... my mother and grandmother did the cooking, it was English-style cooking. ... My father didn’t particularly push ... the German thing. ... I was baptized in the Episcopal Church, which is English. So, I really didn’t think of myself as being German. I don’t think of myself today, although, my friends, sometimes, will say, “Well, you have certain characteristics.” ... I tend to be very organized, they say.

KP: Was your father very organized?

TB: I don’t know. I guess in some ways, yes. Let’s put it this way, although I play it down a little bit, I like to think that I’m a little more organized than him. Of course, my grandmother used to say, “You got more education.” My father dropped out of school. I guess, he finished the sixth grade.

KP: Your father did not go to high school?

TB: Right, to support the family. He was the oldest son.

KP: It was expected that he would quit.

TB: Yeah. Yeah. And, he had, I think, five brothers and sisters, a couple of which, ... we’ve kept in contact with, but, most of them died off now, and their children.

KP: But, your mother did finish high school?

TB: Yes.

KP: I take it that she worked as a saleswoman, for a time?

TB: Yes.
KP: Before she got married?

TB: I think so, but, I’m not sure.

KP: Did she work outside the home when you were growing up at all?

TB: I don’t remember, and, of course, my grandmother, also, had worked ... in, like, a clothing store once. ... I think she must have, because my mother tells about how my sister and I would play in the store under the racks of clothes. ... We had a great time playing hide-and-seek, but they didn’t like that, of course. [laughter] So, we must have been around, but, most of the time that I can remember, ... I can’t remember them working, my mother and grandmother, and it was the old style of, they stayed home, took care of the house and the children, and my father went to work.

KP: So, even during the war, your mother did not take a job in a defense factory?

TB: No. I know my grandmother, and maybe my mother, maybe even before the war, ... she made certain, I think it was, crochet articles. The company would ship them to the house, and they would do the crocheting, and then, send it back. ... She was very good at that. ... She could do it, practically, ... while listening to the radio. Seems funny now, talking about radio and not TV. [laughter]

KP: Since we are talking about the radio, and since you were such an avid listener, do you remember the War of the Worlds, the famous Orson Wells radio play?

TB: Yeah. But, that’s ... up here, just [on] the other side of New Brunswick. I vaguely remember that. I was not into that sort of thing. I was more into no-nonsense, although, I must say that I had my “favorite programs,” like, ... I forget who it was now, but, kids had their favorite programs then.

KP: Tom Mix?

TB: Yeah, something like that. ... I forget what it was, exactly. And, I can remember, you know, sometimes, we’d have supper a little earlier, and I’d say, “I can’t come right now. I’m right in the middle of my program.” ... But, I was never much into the [fictional shows]. ... Sometimes, what we’d do as we got a little older, maybe in high school, ... I don’t think in junior high school, the family, the four of us, my sister, mother, my grandmother, would go up to bed, [and] we would play games, various types, you know, board games, generally, what we call board games now. I learned to play pinochle from my father, which I understand isn’t played much. I haven’t played in years.

KP: I have heard pinochle a lot. I have no idea how it is played.
TB: [laughter] I sort of forget. I’d have to look at a book. Of course, in subsequent years, ... when I was in college, I don’t think at Rutgers. I think it was after I graduated, maybe it was in law school, I met some women, particularly, who played bridge. So, I got to learn to play bridge. You know, a nice, sociable time, but not really that interested in it.

KP: Were you ever a Boy Scout at all?

TB: No. I, somehow, never got into the Boy Scouts. I think, probably, it was because there was not a Boy Scout troop in our local Episcopal Church. ... I think that was, probably, the determining [factor], as I look back now, could have been other factors. And, the other thing I never did, a lot that young boys did, ... I never delivered papers.

KP: That was very common?

TB: Oh, yeah. You deliver papers for a few years, and it was after school, that sort of thing. I never got into that activity.

KP: What activities were you active in?

TB: Well, I was in the public speaking area in high school. There were eight of us who made the final cut, and we would have a program, one evening a year, and we would recite whatever we had learned, you know. We had to memorize it, and so forth. I remember one year, for example, learning and reciting the Gettysburg Address. ... I was also active in the French Club. ... I can remember, ... when I was a sophomore in high school, it was a rainy day, much like today, in the fall, in September, coming home with my first French book, and I was really fascinated by learning a foreign language. ... I found, over the years, it’s been helpful to me. ... I never was fluent, but I’m pretty good, and I’ve used it a number of times since then. I seem to pick it up when I’m in a French area. [I’m], in some ways, a francophile. I used to like to go to a French area on vacation. ...

KP: So, French, really, from high school on, is a big influence.

TB: Yes. I continued in college, here, and I think I took ... three years in high school, I guess, and two years in college. I was an officer in the French Club here at Rutgers. ... We used to meet, it was right down College Ave, right across here. I forget the names of the professors there. ... I can remember people saying, you know, accent, and so forth. We’d adjourn, after the meetings, and go down to one of the taverns on Easton Avenue, ... have a beer or so, and someone would say, “Well, you know, you have a little wine or beer, your French becomes better.” [laughter] Whether you’re not inhibited, I don’t know, or less inhibited. But, let’s see, what else did I do down there? I was sort of the gardener. My father, of course, had a power-push lawn mower at the time. ... No, I guess it was a push, at first. It was later on that gasoline mowers came in, and ... my grandmother had a ... vegetable garden on one side of the back of the house. ... She had a flower garden on the other side. And so, I was the one who helped plant things, under their supervision, of course, at a fairly young age, and then, I was the one who cultivated, and pulled the weeds, and ... did all the dirty work-type stuff. ... Later on, I think, I
got an allowance for it. But, I enjoyed it and, ... to this day, I have kept a garden. I know some of my neighbors, who had moved in ... since then, don’t think of me, because I wasn’t getting down there, except two or three times a year, maybe four times a year, on big holidays. ... In Vineland, they thought of me as being in New York, where I’ve worked since 1956, and one of them, at one point, said to me, ... “We wondered, ... you always seemed to have a nice garden, ... coming from New York, and then, we realized that you were born and raised down here.” [laughter] And, of course, that’s a large part of it, but, I was interested in that sort of thing, and it’s been very helpful to me. The Rutgers Extension Service, they have a couple local, since it continues to be a good agricultural area, ... experimental farms, nearby. ... I would write to Rutgers, The College of Agriculture, this is even before I thought of going to Rutgers College, to get pamphlets on growing things. So, I supplemented it.

KP: Did you have a victory garden during the war?

TB: Oh, yes, very much so.

KP: You must have had a wonderful victory garden.

TB: Extensive garden. And, of course, I was, again, the cultivator, and the weed-puller, and helped plant the things, and picked them, but, it was my grandmother, in particular. ... My father wasn’t into it, much, because in Fort Lee, and even when they moved to Vineland, their area, it was not where they lived. ... I don’t know that they had a garden, even, but, it was, really, my grandmother, under the influence, I’m sure, of her husband, who had been a farmer there. So, I can remember, ... tomatoes, of course, were the big deals we had now, and then, they tried to go into new things. I remember there being some health claims, I think, or something, for something called kohlrabbies, K-O-H-L-R-A-B-B-E, and we had that, and, you know, a few other things. So, ... that was a big deal. And, they would can a lot of the vegetables and we ate them during the winter. The house, even today, has an unfinished dirt basement, and my father, evidently, constructed, I don’t remember them, sort of places where they could store the jars of ... canned produce, and we would have that ... during the year. ... That was a big deal.

KP: So, it sounds like you grew a lot of the food you ate?

TB: Yeah, the fruits and vegetables. Particularly, the vegetables. Although, I can remember my mother was a big fan of the ACME markets which ... existed. The one that had been in Vineland closed and they opened a big new one, you know, the mall-type thing, but, a good percentage. I don’t know how much. And then, of course, ... the flower garden was a nice thing. She liked to have exotic-type things.

KP: You mentioned you were raised Episcopalian. How active were you in the church growing up?

TB: Quite a bit. I was one of the choir boys that leads the procession of the choir and holds the cross. And then, the thing I used to really get a kick out of was, before the service, we would go in with our appropriate candle lighters, I forget now what you call them, and light the candles,
and there was a particular procedure. I found, since, that every religion, I don’t care which religion, has a particular procedure, and it’s, generally, a little different, but, essentially, it’s the same throughout the world and through all religions. But, everybody’s got their own little shtick, to quote one of my Jewish friends, in how they observe that sort of thing. And, of course, certain religions [celebrate on] different days. Of course, the Jewish people don’t believe God has come, you know, that sort of thing, so, that’s the difference. ... I was right into it.

KP: The Episcopal Church is very ritualistic, especially if you are a High Episcopalian.

TB: Well, we were sort of moderate, we weren’t High Episcopalian, and, in fact, one or two years, I guess, I was, you know, disciplined, or not running around too much. So, I was appointed by, I don’t know who, ... student superintendent of the Sunday school, and I would get up to the lectern, and start the Sunday school proceedings for the children, after the service, or maybe during the second part of the service, when the children left the church for that. So, I was very much into that. ... Both my father and my mother, particularly, my mother, were active on the governing body of the local church, and, also, active in other associations, New Jersey Diocese, that sort of thing.

KP: They were very active in the church, it sounds like.

TB: ... Of course, in those days, things were sort of segregated by gender. I mean, the vestry, generally, were men, and the women did other things, were altar guild, that sort of thing, as far as putting the flowers, arranging the altar, ... that sort of thing. ... My mother was very happy when I transferred to the Episcopal Church in New York. It’s about one block away from where I live, but, I seldom [attend services].

KP: Which church did you join?

TB: It’s the Church of the Heavenly Rest, on Fifth Avenue and 90th Street. ... I make a contribution each year, but, I seldom go there. I’m considered a member, the official procedure for transferring, that sort of thing, but, it’s not really a ... big thing.

KP: Were you active at the YMCA at all?

TB: Yes. You know, I’d forgotten about that. That ties in with the World War II activities, too, because, I don’t know how, or why, I got active in the YMCA, but, again, I was considered a responsible child, I guess, or teenager. And so, in the evenings, particularly on the weekends, maybe only on the weekends, I’m not sure, the Y, and it was a small one, it was, like, on a second floor, and the big deal they had were Ping-Pong tables, and so, I learned to play Ping-Pong. ... I was pretty good at it. I haven’t played Ping-Pong [in a long time]. I wouldn’t have thought of it until you mentioned it. Anyway, particularly on the weekends, in the evenings, it became a club for servicemen, and, during World War II, there were two camps. ... Down in Millville, there was a US Army Air Force base, ... small, and then, there was also an Army base, not too far away. I think it was primarily a prison camp for Italian, maybe some German, but, I think, Italian prisoners of war, and the Army people were the guards there. And, in that regard, I can
remember working, I guess it was in the summer, I generally worked in the summers, with a ... surveyor whom my family had known, and we were surveying an area for a new building. And, there were, actually, Italian prisoners of war doing some of the ... digging and lifting there, under guard from these Army guards. So, it was really ... brought home to us. ... I don’t think they were German, ... but, I could be wrong. ... One of the things, talking about World War II, there was a time when they recruited some of us high school students to act as aircraft spotters. And, they would pick us up at high school, and it was nice, because we got a chance to get away from our regular classes [laughter] and go out for an afternoon, and they brought us out to East Vineland, which was a flat farming area.

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

TB: ... We’d brought a sandwich, or something to drink, but, I really don’t remember those details, and ... we were given instructions how to identify. In other words, from the bottom of the plane, looking up, we could see how many motors it had, how the wing designs, and all that sort of thing. ... We were asked to, if we saw planes flying over, ... identify the type, ... which direction they were going in, that sort of thing, and we called into some sort of central, whether it was a military or civilian, ... headquarters, and, I guess, they were plotting these movements during that time.

DD: Did you have any false alarms, any scares? Did you spot anything?

TB: No, not that we knew. I mean, we couldn’t see, really. Some of them were very high, and, I assumed then, and I know we are now, on a flight plan for some planes coming out of New York and, also, from Philadelphia. So, it would be normal to have some [air traffic]. Oh, and the other thing, of course, is, Fort Dix is ... about fifty miles north of Vineland, and then, I forget, at that time, I don’t think they had the air base there. It was after World War II, I think, but, I’m not sure.

KP: Being a plane spotter, you must have felt very important during the war, particularly, to get out of high school?

TB: Well, it was sort of an honor, because I think they only picked students who had fairly good grades, and they didn’t want to send goof-offs, who would give then another excuse to have low grades. So, yes, to that extent. You know, again, I say it modestly. ...

KP: Also, at the time, the fate of the war was in the balance.

TB: We were doing something, yes.

KP: Yeah, but, at the time, people were taking this very seriously. They were trusting you with a very important job.

TB: Yeah. Now, the other thing, talking about the war effort, is, I can remember, I guess it was my grandmother, ... you can see my grandmother had a great deal of influence on us children, and
we would buy savings bonds, or they would buy them for us, using our savings, we worked, and savings stamps. They had twenty-five, fifty cent, a dollar stamps, and we had books of those. That was something toward the war effort.

KP: So, you would buy your stamps in an effort to buy a bond?

TB: Right, yeah.

KP: So, you can remember that, like saving your quarters?

TB: ... Just like, you know, the green stamp booklets.

KP: I remember those.

TB: These were savings stamps. [laughter]

KP: Your parents were Republicans. What did they think of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal?

TB: I don’t remember my parents saying very much, but, my grandmother was very opposed to him. ... She wasn’t his favorite at all. I can’t remember any particular ... comments about it, but she was ...

KP: She was a Republican’s Republican.

TB: Yeah, I’d say so.

KP: What about the coming of World War II, 1939, 1940, 1941? Admittedly, you were very young, but what was your sense as we were going into this war? Did you give it some thought?

TB: Yeah, I gave it a lot of thought, because, I guess, I used to ... listen to the radio news and, I guess, it never seemed that close, because I was in this small area, particularly in ’39 and such. I never traveled very much. I think one of the furthest we ever went, perhaps, was New York, a couple of times.

KP: Had you traveled past Philadelphia, going west?

TB: Only, maybe, to Gettysburg National Park.

KP: Never to Washington?

TB: Yeah, we went to Washington. Of course, our ... senior high school trip was to Washington. So, that was really about the limits. ... Oh, let me go back before that. One of the things, in following the wars, and so forth, that I remember, was the Japanese invasion of China.
KP: Oh, yeah.

TB: That was a big deal, at the time. And, that was a sort of a precursor of ... World War II. ... The papers played it up a great deal and such.

DD: Did you have any memories about Pearl Harbor, when you heard about it?

TB: Yes. It’s vague. It’s almost like a dream, in that somehow it doesn’t fit in, but, I can remember, one time, coming home from church, and we would buy the Sunday paper, the Sunday Philadelphia Inquirer, and they had big headlines. I don’t know how that ties in with the actual attack. I was too young, really, to appreciate that. And, I guess, the closest association with it would be other young men. There were two young men, lived across the street from us, and they both served during World War II. They were called in and that was a big deal. They were in the Navy

KP: Did they make it through the war okay?

TB: Yes. ... We still kid them about it, occasionally. One was assigned to, in effect, submarine spotting. He served, most of this time, in the Caribbean, on a blimp. [They] used them to spot, because blimps could ... hover over an area very closely. And, the other one, ... I’m not sure, it must have been toward the end of the war, he actually served on various types of Navy ships, primarily, as I recall, in the Mediterranean. But, I think, part of that was after the war. ... I don’t really remember, ... I don’t think either of them were injured, you know, in a fighting-type operations. ... [I remember] hearing about Great Lakes Training Center, out near Chicago, for Navy people. ... I guess, the biggest thing I can remember is, there were shortages. ... We had to get ... gasoline, ... it was very restricted. We were, really, too far away to walk to ... a deli, what we call a deli, now. I forget what they called [it], a little grocery store. So, it was very restrictive, as far as where we could travel, what we could do. And then, there were other shortages. I can remember, for example, butter. I think, Mother used to get margarine and color that. Somehow, that was unrestricted.

KP: It did not have a coloring, then. Now, margarine is all colored.

TB: Right, yeah. My mother colored it herself. There was a color ... you got it with it, and it was white, and you mixed it up. You know, you think of these things ...

KP: Once, a teacher of mine talked about oleo, and he said that margarine sort of looked like lard.

TB: Yes.

KP: Like putting lard on your toast. It was very unappetizing.

TB: Yeah, but, ... she colored it up. ... Of course, there were restrictions on things, ... meats, as I recall, were, you know, tight.
KP: What about blackout restrictions? Did you have blackouts?

TB: Not really in Vineland, but, I remember, very vividly, the blackouts, ‘cause we used to go to Atlantic City, occasionally, ... along the shore, Atlantic City, Ocean City, Asbury Park, because, supposedly, ... [it] would silhouette ships in the ocean that the Nazis would torpedo, and it was a eerie sight, ... occasionally, not on a regular basis, ... going down to Atlantic City and seeing the lights. As I recall, the portion of the light towards the ocean was painted black, the globe. And so, it was just a little light on the land side, and it was very dim, and, occasionally, you would get stories about ... Nazis, the Germans, landing in remote areas. ... Of course, there was that story that was made into a movie, in New York, A House on 92nd Street. I sometimes think of that, because I live a few blocks away. I live on 89th Street, a few blocks away from that area, and I’m not exactly even sure where the German spies were supposed to have been on 92nd, but, that movie sticks in my mind. [laughter] And, ... if that movie was ever on TV, I’ve never seen it, I would probably want to go see it just to see where ...

KP: So, you have never actually seen the movie?

TB: ... No.

KP: I saw the movie, but a long time ago. ... How did the war affect your high school? For example, was there greater emphasis put on gym class?

TB: I don’t remember. I don’t think so. Now, starting, maybe, in my sophomore, junior year, I went out for track, and ... I describe this, I was on the third team. In other words, I was never that good, and my particular specialty was running the hurdles, the low and high hurdles, which I look at now and think, “God, at my age, I would never even try to attempt that.” ... I tell people about it, “I wish I had a picture of me going over the bars sometime,” because, ... looking at me now, it’s hard to imagine that I would do something. Even the skiing, I mean, I bring out the skiing pictures. And, of course, we were excused from gym, because, when I was in the Army, during the Korean War, every afternoon, we would go out, what they called jogging. We called it running cross-country, to keep in shape, get in shape, for that. Increased activity? ... Maybe, somewhat, I really don’t remember, because, I remember, in this two room elementary school, we used to have play periods and we’d be out ... running around, playing games, or whatever, you know. ... There’s girls’ games and boys’ games, I mean, it was very gender segregated, and the boy’s games tended to be a little rougher, and tended to be more strenuous, and the girls would ... skip rope, you know, that sort of thing. So, there may have been, but, I don’t really remember too much about it.

KP: Even in your high school, after the war, there was not a renewed emphasis, let’s say, to build an obstacle course for the gym class?

TB: I don’t remember that.
KP: Did you take cross-country with the notion that this might toughen you if you had to serve in the military?

TB: I don’t think so. I think it was an activity. My parents encouraged me, and the track coach was a friend of the family, they’d known him, and so forth, and ... it was an activity, that I should get into some sport. ... I was small and slim and, you know, a contact sport, like football, ... I was too short for basketball. ... How I got into the hurdles, I don’t remember, except, maybe, they didn’t have that many hurdlers. [laughter] The coach said, “Gee, we have an opportunity in the hurdles,” so, I said, “Oh, let me try it.” And so, I tried it. ... I was never that good at it. ... I remember, ... early on, beginning of school, one of the activities, ... somehow, I don’t remember the girls there, but, at least the boys, we ran around the football field. It was a track, I guess, a standard track, and I can remember, I guess I was pretty good, ‘cause I was slim, ... I didn’t have a lot of weight to carry, and so forth. ... Having worked back at the house, and in the garden, so to speak, I guess, I kept in pretty good shape, and playing in the woods, you know, constructing these little pathways for my wagons, and so forth. I guess I was in pretty good shape, in addition to being slim, and so forth. So, I was, generally, able to end up either, you know, just by luck, ... there were a couple of classes out there, I would, generally, hold back a little bit, and then, I would come up, and, if I didn’t win, I’d be very close to the winner. ... That was one of the things, I guess, ... other people were watching, and said, “Gee, why don’t you try track?” So, I think that’s how I, personally, got into it, but, I really don’t remember.

KP: What other things were you active in, in high school?

TB: ... Generally, I started even in junior high school, that was an interesting experience there, in the high school play, and, generally, I think, the teachers choose those who were responsible, and had good grades, ‘cause you had to spend some time rehearsing on this. ... They picked me, at one point, for a small part, but, in some ways, it was a key part, because I had to, as part of my part, in the high school or junior high school play, I forget which, smoke a cigarette. ... I didn’t smoke. My father was a steady smoker. He died of lung cancer, later on, and ... my parents didn’t stop him. You know, it’s not like today, where they have the cancer, and everyone smokes outside the house, and so forth, but, he smoked in the house. ... It always seemed to be, you know, my parents, my mother, my grandmother ... there were enough negatives that they didn’t ... discourage me from smoking. ... So, it was a perfect part for the play because, here I was, fumbling around, lighting my cigarette, and holding it in such an odd way. It must have been comical to any of the audience. It was to the other staff, except that, some of my classmates did smoke, a number of them. ... They would always come over to me, after I had lit the cigarette, and say, “Hey Tom, can I have a drag of that cigarette?” And, I was never, ... really, smoking it, because ... it tasted terrible. ...

KP: Those were unfiltered cigarettes for the most part.

TB: Could have been. I don’t remember. ... I think a lot of the activities were more centered around the family, and the house, there, than other people. I would go out, I can remember, I guess, in junior high school, or, even in elementary school, ... the teachers had chosen me, I was captain of the safety patrol. That was a big deal, and, particularly in that school, because it was
on a state highway. So, we were part of the state safety patrol, and a state trooper would actually supervise our particular [patrol], ‘cause we were on a state highway, and we had to cross children, across this state highway, in front of the school. ... We had a special, different type badge, and that sort of thing, and, again, ... I was considered a responsible boy, and ... I would listened to them, and I didn’t give a lot of ... talk back, so, I was chosen there. ... I can remember they had an annual dance, and it [was a] big deal, because this was way before I could drive at all, ... and I had a date, one of ... the five other students in my elementary school class, and I asked her out. I took her out to the safety patrol dance. ... I can remember, we sat in the back, and my father picked us up, I got in the car with him in that back, and then, we picked up the girl. ... We called, and we arranged a time when he’d pick us up and bring us home, and that sort of thing. ... Interesting enough, talking about ... other activities, of the six, there were three boys and three girls. ... There was one girl in the class whom I took out. ... Since it is a small place, and most of them stayed around there, I’m, really, the only one of the six who’s moved out of town, and even though I’ve kept a place there. ... I haven’t seen them in a long time, I haven’t seen any of them for a long time, but, through mutual friends, I keep track. I think two or three of them have died now, the girl whom I dated there, and we went to junior high school, she died a couple of years ago, and I used to see her, and some others, at my high school reunion, every five years. And, I continue to go there, because ... I enjoy it, and I’ve gotten, more and more, to be sociable. In those days, I don’t think I was particularly ... a party-goer-type, although, I do remember, my mother encouraged us, my sister and I, to take dancing lessons, and we would go out to a dancing school once a week, or once a month, or something like that. ... It was okay. ... She and my grandmother, they were willing to pay for it, because they felt that [we were] acquiring the social graces, so to speak, or, I guess, that sort of thing. ... I learned the various dances, you know, it was no big deal for them. ... Let’s put it this way, if they hadn’t really pushed it, I don’t think I would have gone. ... I forget why we stopped. My sister enjoyed it more, I think. ... It’s interesting, because, now, ... I’ve gotten to be a lot more social, and a lot more active in things, and really look forward to going with people, and can work a room, so to speak.

KP: You would not have been the one to work a room in high school?

TB: I don’t think so. No, I was more shy and ... I really didn’t feel that comfortable. Even at Rutgers, I wasn’t that [comfortable] working a room. ... I don’t know exactly what happened, how I got into it, but, one thing sort of led to another.

KP: Did you think that you might actually have to serve in the war, particularly when the war first started?

TB: I’ve thought about that, in anticipation of coming here, and I couldn’t really think of anything.

KP: You were very young when the war started. In some ways, it would not be surprising if you did not think you would serve.
TB: I don’t really remember. ... I’ve tried to think about that, and, maybe, it’s a type of thing, it was a negative, and, as you know, as we get older, we tend to forget negative things and remember only the better things.

KP: You mentioned the rationing and, also, your contact with the soldiers, and the airmen, and the prisoners of war?

TB: ... Let me go a little more into the Y. Again, because I was a responsible guy, I guess, and ... they could depend on me, I was asked to be, and I was actually paid, I was a counterman. In other words, I was sort of the ... YMCA’s guy there, at the counter, and the soldiers would have to sign out Ping-Pong sets, or cards, or whatever they were doing. Actually, I guess it was the USO, because there’d be women there, too, and such, and ... I would close up. I guess the Y was still going on when I got there, it was open, and then, the USO would take over, I think it was only on weekends, and I actually got paid. ... It was a nice few bucks to buy my savings stamps, or whatever, which my grandmother encouraged. ... Nowadays, I walk home from that particular town to my house, but, in those days, it seemed like a long ways, and I would get the last bus, public service bus, from that area to my home. ... That was a very responsible [thing], ... at that time, for that age, I guess. I wasn’t that old.

KP: Had you held any other jobs when you were growing up?

TB: The first job, outside of the home, I guess, was for a ... neighboring farmer. He was about ... three-quarters of a mile away, and I had wanted one of these, what they called, an express wagon, four-wheel express wagon, with sides on it. ... The big deal, at that time, my parents were very much into, and they would get every year, and ... purchase from, the Sears Roebuck catalog, the very thick catalog.

KP: Oh, yes.

TB: And, there was a picture of an express wagon, and they encouraged me. They weren’t going to buy it for me, but, they encouraged me to work. And so, I, in season, picked blackberries for this farmer, and I’d get a few cents, whatever it was, a quart, and you had little things, and ... I didn’t mind it. It wasn’t the best thing, you know, ... and then, the farmer who farmed the land, who rented the land and farmed it, I got to the point, in the fall, blackberries were in spring and summer, and then, in the fall, ... I would spread lids out for the bushel baskets that they’d packed in. ... They would pick up the baskets on a truck, and I would steer the truck, and I could remember, this was way before I learned to drive, it was right ... on the farm there, being down there and learning to push the accelerator, ... and steer this. It was, you know, a very, I wouldn’t say strenuous, but, I mean, not having done that, and they’re loading the baskets, they’d say, “Stop.” ...Sometimes, I would take my foot off, “Whoops,” ... and it would stall, and they’d start it again. And then, later, ... another thing I think about the war was, I worked for a farmer who had the next field to the south, and he would grow vegetables, but, also, grow flowers, and, of course, the restriction on fertilizers and chemicals, ... for the vegetables, fine. He had unlimited, ‘cause they wanted to grow as much as they could, but, for the flower crops, he had to grow a certain amount of vegetables to get things for the flowers, and so forth. ... I worked for him in ...
just about everything you could think of, planting, he had a large greenhouse. ... Of course, right after the war, maybe even the first year or two I was at Rutgers, I would worked during the summers on his farm. ... For example, one of the big things he grew was Baby’s Breath and I, mostly, in my lifetime, have picked thousands of bunches of Baby’s Breath. You pick them, put a rubber band around then, and put them aside, then, you pick them up later. And, I’d really never seen Baby’s Breath. Of course, now, particularly in New York, and the cities, it’s all over the place. And, the funny thing about it was, the Latin name was *Gypsophila annual*, and the farmer would call it Gyp. He wouldn’t call it Baby’s Breath, you know, it was Gyp. ... Once in a while, he’d bring things up, and, once in a while, I would go with him to the Philadelphia wholesale flower market. And, one year, he encouraged me to grow some, I think it was Asters or Chrysanthemums. Asters, I think it was, and, somehow, the weather was bad in the South, and other people in the North, ... no, it was early Chrysanthemums. Anyway, ... what he grew, and the few that I grew, we had the corner on that particular flower, in the Philadelphia flower market, so, we did very well comparatively, money-wise. That’s one of the reasons that I got to know flowers, ... particularly annuals, ... working with him, and planting, ... associated activities, cutting. ... One of the side things, I was dating a girl who went to Douglass, who I met up here, and she lived in Millville, which is an adjoining town, and I would see her on the weekends. ... Every weekend, Charlie the farmer thought it was great, he would have flowers that he couldn’t bring to market. They were short, or they were deformed, or whatever. So, he encouraged me to bring a big bunch of flowers to my girlfriend. So, ... her mother thought this was terrific, because it would last over, ... still had the flowers from last time. ... She was [from] a middle class family, so, they didn’t have flowers, and here, every week, I was bringing down a big bunch of flowers, [laughter] which the farmer ... encouraged me to do. “Here, or I’ll throw them away.”

**KP:** Did you ever go to the Philadelphia Flower Show when you were growing up, that you could remember?

**TB:** I don’t remember. I don’t think so, maybe once, but, I don’t think so, because it was a little beyond our [range]. As I look back, we were fairly provincial. I can remember going with my mother and grandmother to some of the big department stores along Market Street there, Gimbals, and Wannamakers was the fanciest, biggest one, and Strawbridge and Clothier, and some of the others, ... and then, Sears, over in Camden, when they didn’t want to go to Philadelphia.

**KP:** That is a very early memory. Sears is long gone from Camden.

**TB:** Yeah. Are you from that area?

**KP:** No, but, I had a friend there, so, I spent a lot of time in the Camden area.

**TB:** ... That’s the other thing that you might remember, maybe, ... or heard of it, there’s an intersection, and it used to be a traffic circle, and, now, is really under an overpass, ... as you come out from Camden, but, it’s often referred to as the Airport Circle.
KP: I always heard about the Airport Circle, which, by the time I was visiting, did not exist anymore.

TB: And, that was one of the early trips I remember as a kid. Dad would drive the family up to the Camden Airport, and they actually had ... DC -3s, the two-motor, Douglas plane, ... flying out of the Camden Airport. My father, on Sundays, when we didn’t have the gasoline ration, before the war, liked to take us on trips, and he wouldn’t tell us exactly where we were going. So, we’d often drive out to ... Salem County, which is not very far away, and there was a Richmond’s ice cream plant, and we’d have a bowl of ice cream. That was a special deal, and that sort of thing.

KP: And, he would also take you to the Camden Airport?

TB: Right. The family, the whole family.

KP: And, the airplanes were still very glamorous.

TB: Yes. You mentioned Camden, ‘cause we’d have to go by the airport to get to Sears, and then, gradually, the airport faded away. The other thing about the war I can remember is, one of the influences of the war, a businessman in Vineland, Gene Mori who, of course, ... constructed the Garden State Racetrack, and he was building it just before or as the war started, and there were great restrictions on materials he could use, and then, there was the gas rationing. So, when they opened it, there were all kinds of novel things, ... and people came there from Philadelphia, or other places, in horse and wagons, ... fancy, that sort of thing. And, that was a big deal, because there was some criticism of using scarce materials for the racetrack, rather than the war effort, that sort of thing.

KP: Did you ever go to the horse races when you were young?

TB: I can remember, the farmer I worked with on his flower farm, brought me up there once or twice. ... I can remember going out to ... where they exercised the horses. ... You’d look at the horses and say, “Gee, he looks like he might do it,” or something like that. ... But, that’s about it. I’m not a ... horse racing fan.

KP: Did anyone you know, from your neighbors or from your high school, go off to war, particularly some of the juniors and seniors, and not come back?

TB: There was one man, during the Korean War, was very close. ... Maybe you want to wait until we get to that. ... There were a couple of people that I heard of, I’d read about in the paper, but they were never that close.

KP: Someone you knew?

TB: Yeah. And, my two neighbors across the street.

KP: Yeah, you mentioned they survived the war unscathed.
TB: Now, there was one man in the neighborhood, their age, who was in the Army, and in the fighting, and he was captured by the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge, and he was, actually, a prisoner of war of the Germans for some period of time, and he got certain compensation as a former prisoner of war. He died within the last year or so. And, I’d see him. Now, he never liked to talk about it.

KP: That does not surprise me. Prisoners of war often do not talk about it.

DD: Do you remember anything about the atomic bomb, when Truman announced on the radio that we had dropped the bomb?

TB: I vaguely remember it. Of course, I’m not a science-type person, ‘cause I didn’t appreciate ... the scientific, what should we say, difficulty, or advancements, in making that. ... I heard about things being made. ... As I recall, when you mention that, the war in Europe stopped earlier, and then, it was Japan, and, I think, maybe, when it was continuing in Japan, I may have started to think about myself, and wonder, you know, what’s going to happen, and that sort of thing. So, that’s really ... vague. Again, it may have been a negative, so, I didn’t really follow it that closely. I can remember hearing about it. Of course, it was very hush-hush, Pearl Harbor, how bad it really was for us, how many ships had been knocked out. And then, reading about, and hearing, the many battles with the Japanese in the islands, and the casualties, and Iwo Jima, and the flag raising, and that kind of thing. And, maybe there was some, as I recall, vaguely, some feeling, ... fear of myself, or hesitation, about what would happen with me.

KP: You had graduated in 1946. Do you remember any people coming back to high school on the GI Bill to finish up?

TB: Now that you mention it, I vaguely remember one or two. But, they were not particularly close to me, ... but, there was one particular person, I remember, you know. It was a plus, “Gee, ... he was finishing and he’d been in the war,” and I forget exactly what he had done. ... It may not have been any ... active, you know, shooting-type thing. But, I do remember one or two there.

KP: How do you think the war changed Vineland?

TB: Well, from my own point of view, it gave me a sense, or a feeling, again, really starting back when the Japanese invaded China, of world politics, of world geography, really. And, of course, in Europe, ... the papers had great coverage. I think there, that was the big newspaper coverage, and radio was, ... now, sort of summary, and so forth, of the Nazis ... invading the various countries, ... and then, of course, the Japanese coming down into the Malay Peninsula, into the Philippines, and into Indonesia, and ... that area. Again, it was a very sketchy thing, and I didn’t really appreciate all the ins and outs, but I had some feel for the geography. ... My grandmother, particularly, encouraged us. ... She bought us, not the Encyclopedia Britannica, but a set of books, you know, and if we indicated an interest, like in maps, or something, she would buy a set.
KP: You had your parents, but, you also had your grandmother, who was raising you in part.

TB: Yeah, yeah. And, it’s interesting, because, I don’t think it was unusual, particularly for a woman, at the time, ... my grandmother, she may have gone to high school, but, I don’t think so. But, interestingly enough, maybe because of that, she and my mother were very active in this two room elementary school Parents’ and Teachers’ Association. Both of them had been presidents of it and this was their activity. I think, initially, when my grandmother and grandfather came to Vineland, it was mostly a group of farmers, and they were primarily English, and this was their social activity. This was a social group, that they had dances, or dinners, or whatever, and it revolved around local activities, ... and, of course, as primarily a farming community, you didn’t really need ... advanced [education]. It would have helped, I’m sure, but it wasn’t that bad. I know my uncle, who was my grandfather and grandmother on my mother’s side son, my mother’s brother, he went to Rutgers College, and that was a big deal. ... He was, what we now consider 4-F, because his eyesight was bad, and then, he was the motivation for me coming to Rutgers, and then, ... he went on to the Harvard Law School and, I’m sure, that was my motivation for becoming a lawyer and going to Harvard Law School. But, I think, really, World War II, ... I guess, it brought Vineland, and that area, more into, at least me, ... a realization of the big world outside there, the geography, and, somewhat, the politics.

KP: You also had service people come into the area. Were they welcomed into the community, or were they resented? Were there any fears?

TB: I really don’t recall. I think they, pretty much, kept to themselves. ... They would come to the USO ... and I got to talk to some of them. ... There were two different groups, I mean, and ... the Air Force and the Army, ... they didn’t get along, generally. ... There were a couple of, like, night clubs, we would call them night clubs today, where they frequented, and, you know, it was a little too outgoing, or wild, for most people in Vineland, I think. But, on the other hand, they brought in the money, and provided jobs, and that sort of thing. So, I think that sort of opened up [Vineland], ... made it less provincial, so to speak, shall we say.

KP: Did your parents hope you would go to college?

TB: Yes, particularly my grandmother and mother, and, also with my sister, and we both did go to college. I remember my ... mother saying, “You know, we wondered sometimes how,” like parents do today, “put two children through college, and so forth. ... [It was] amazing how ... we paid, pretty much, the first year at Rutgers,” and then, after that, I had various sorts of job where ... they didn’t have to contribute, or very little. My sister went to college out in Rockford, Illinois, Rockford College there. It’s gotten bigger now, a liberal arts college, a four-year college, graduated from there. ... I took college preparatory, there was a different track, what they call tracks, now, in high school. I was in the college preparatory track. I think they gave us an IQ test, or something like that, and ... the tracks were determined by ... what your abilities were, whether it was commercial, ... a couple of other tracks. So, yes, and it was pretty well set that I would go to Rutgers. I can remember coming up here with my uncle. ... He was active,
and I joined and became active in the Kappa Sigma fraternity, and the registrar, Luther Martin, you may have seen his name around ...

KP: Oh, yeah. There are people who have talked about Mr. Martin quite a bit.

TB: Yeah. Luther Martin was a Kappa Sig, and I can remember visiting him, and he was the one who made the decisions as to who would be admitted, and I met my uncle here, and this was a big deal because New Brunswick, at that time, I didn’t have a car. I could barely ... drive, I think. But, anyway, I think I came up here, there were no direct buses from Vineland to here. Even now, there really aren’t. I had to take the train to Philadelphia. ... So, it was big deal up here, and I can remember, at that time, his son. ... They lived, at this point, in Maplewood, in Essex County, and then, subsequently, I think just before the war, they moved down to Loch Arbor, which ... adjoins Asbury Park on the north, and my cousin still lives in Ocean Grove, and his family, his wife. Winants Hall, for example, was my ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Thomas Bach on March 19, 1998, at Rutgers University, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

DD: Dennis Duarte.

KP: And, you were saying how Winants was the center of student life, in a lot of ways.

TB: Yes. I can remember that was the post office, and there were mailboxes there. Students got their mail there. I think there was also a bookstore, but I’m not sure. And, I think, also, there was a cafeteria, but, I’m not positive. You can check that out better than [I], but, I have a vague recollection. Of course, the only thing that’s still there is Old Queens, and Van Nest, and Winants, of course, has been [refurbished]. You know, I still marvel at how ...

KP: I know. I saw Winants in the 80s, before they did what they did, and I wish I had taken more careful note, because it is nothing like the old Winants. How old were you when you first came to Rutgers?

TB: I think I was seventeen. My birthday is in December, December 25. ... I ... just about got into that class, so, I was always one of the young persons in a particular class and, I guess, they let me in because I seemed to be bright enough. ... Of course, I started out, in elementary school, when it ended up, I forget, before the fourth grade, there may have been one or two more in my class, there were only six. So, it was natural. ...

KP: So, it was appropriate.

TB: Yeah.
KP: Had you thought of any other schools, or was it just natural that you were going to come to Rutgers, because of the family tie?

TB: I think it was just a natural. I don’t remember, ... and it was a big deal for me, because there was no direct transportation. I had to take one train or bus to Philadelphia, and then, take the railroad up here to New Brunswick.

KP: We particularly welcome your interview about Rutgers because we have interviewed a lot of people from ‘45 to 51’ on, but, almost all of them have been GIs, and you were a civilian. Being here, with the campus full of GIs, what was that experience like? What was that experience like, to have people sitting next to you who could have been at Guadalcanal, or a bomber pilot?

TB: They were more mature, as I generally think, ... and they were more serious, ... which all fitted in with my frame of mind, at the time, ... you know, of listening to the news, and doing things, and ... that sort of thing, and not partying. I didn’t really appreciate, at the time, how the usual freshman hazing, or whatever you call it, now, exists, because it did not exist at that time. But, I didn’t really appreciate it.

KP: So, they did not try to haze you as a “traditional freshman”?  There was no hazing your year?

TB: Yeah. I don’t remember. Or, very little.

KP: Did you feel that the GIs were a separate group, in the sense that they did not really want much to do with you? Did you ever get that sense, from a traditional student’s perspective? The GIs would give me a range of answers.

TB: Right. Well, it depended. The one thing that, I think, was really different was, I believe, right after World War II, they started the married student’s housing, I think there were trailers, over on, what we call University Heights.

KP: Yeah, now Busch.

TB: Yeah. [laughter] And, they seemed different, but, since I was more interested, really, [in] the education-type thing, that’s were we were in common. They were here to get an [education]. ... And, I remember, ... I think it was in my sophomore year, I lived in one of the dorms here, in what we called the Quadrangle, I think it was Wessels. I don’t know whether they still call it Wessels, and there were three of us in a room, and one was a high school graduate, like myself, and another was a veteran, Kelly, I remember. I haven’t seen him since, ... I heard of him at the last reunion, and, hopefully, he’ll be back for the fiftieth. And, he was more mature, and I could see the other high school graduate, just out of high school, was less mature. But, I wasn’t as mature as the veteran, but, on the other hand, I could relate better to him, I thought, than I could to this other fellow, who ... was at our last reunion, who still seems less [mature]. [laughter]

KP: You do not have to name names.
TB: No, I won’t. ... And, in the fraternity, I joined the fraternity in my sophomore year, and there were certain ... veterans who weren’t around the house much. We ... had a pledge system, and we had to make a paddle, a wooden-type thing, so to speak, but, and I remember one, ... we talked about, I’m not sure, there was a certain amount of a ... very minor-type thing, but, it wasn’t much, because, generally, what it was is, ... new people coming in would be on work details, like cleaning up the house, or painting, or something like that. ... To me, it fitted right in. I didn’t appreciate what, really, being a freshman, and getting accustomed, [was like]. ... But, I was serious, I was a student, and it fitted in quite nicely.

KP: So, in some sense, because the veterans were here, it was a much more serious culture, and, that part, you liked a lot. It sounds like you would not be too enthusiastic about being hazed as a freshman, having to wear a dink and such.

TB: I don’t think so. I probably would have gotten along with it. ...

KP: But, it is not something you were pining to experience, and, it sounds like you initiation was not that strenuous.

TB: No, it wasn’t, at least, I don’t think so.

KP: I have heard of people who really remember hell week as something very memorable.

TB: Now, one of the things I remember, in our classes, the veteran-types were more serious, more ... eager to get on to things, and I vaguely remember a little disagreement, or a little non-harmonious feeling, between the veteran students and some of the instructors, who, ... maybe, hadn’t been in the war, or [were] younger than some of the veterans. ... There seemed to be some feeling there.

KP: You mean tension because the veterans were thinking, “Why hadn’t he served?”

TB: I don’t know what it was. ... And, I think there was a deference, by the instructors, to the veterans who had been in the war. One of the things I, particularly, remember is, how crowded it was, because, I think, the Class of ‘50, when we entered in ‘46, was the first thousand member class. And, I remember, the sidewalks along College Avenue, ... they were made for maybe one or maybe two or three people abreast, and we would constantly be having to walk on the grass. I mean, I felt sorry for the groundskeepers. Because, ... of my garden, and so forth, I was very conscious of the lawn. [laughter] And so, there was ... two or three on the sidewalk, and then, one or two on the grass, when classes changed, because most of our classes, if not all of them, were right here ... on, what is now called, the College Avenue Campus. And then, of course, fewer people were over at the Ag School.

KP: In many ways, you were all congregated in a very tight, by our standards, part of the campus.
TB: Toward the end, there were a couple, I think the Selman Waksman Building was one of the first out there on the Heights.

KP: Why did you decide to major in history?

TB: Well, I majored in history and political science because it was the, supposedly, or thought of, as the pre-law school major. And, I guess, even in high school, because of that, I had taken certain courses concerned with, particularly the political part of the local politics, and so forth. My folks were never that active in local politics, but, I sort of followed things along, and had more of a knowledge of that sort of thing on the local level, and then, in reading. I was a great reader. One of the things I wanted to mention is, and I enjoyed it, the political process, and the history, and public administration, it’s sort of almost a natural for me, then, to go into public finance. ...

KP: It does combine the disciplines.

TB: Although, I had no idea that I would go into public finance as a lawyer. I thought of myself, I was interested in figures and finance, that I would probably go into corporate and not public, but, I was offered the opportunity when I graduated law school, and I took it. One of the things I wanted to go back to, a little bit, is, when I first came to Rutgers, the first semester, I don’t know how it was set up, but, somehow, I was assigned, my dormitory, was a former Army barracks, out on the Raritan Arsenal. Have people told you?

KP: No, you are the first person to talk to us about it.

TB: All right, let me go into some detail.

KP: Please do.

TB: And, ... this particular Army barracks, evidently, we were told, and there were certain signs ... in Italian, had been an Italian prisoners of war barracks. It was two stories, open bays, two rooms at one end for, what we would now, I guess, call, the proctor, and then, we had double-decker bunks, maybe twenty or us, and there was a footlocker, more or less like the Army. ... In some ways, we felt comfortable that way. ... So, it was all a part of, sort of, the war setting. Here we were, in an Army barracks, and so forth, ... and it was communal. It was nice, you got to know people from all over the state. ... The University provided Suburban Transit buses, what else, between here, we’d go through Highland Park.

KP: That is some distance out. How did that affect you wanting to get involved in campus activities?

TB: We ... didn’t really have the time. We would stay late, maybe study at the library, because it was very difficult to study, because somebody would have a card game, or be talking, and this open barracks, ... it was very difficult. But, it was an experience, you really got to know, I don’t know whether I knew, there were four of us that came up from Vineland High School, and I
don’t think any one of them were out in this Army barracks. It was just one barracks. How I got into there, I have no idea, but, ... I was assigned, and I accepted it. ... And, those were the days when, mail, for example, we’d have to go to the Nixon post office, which is on the main road out there, and that was a little walk, and, as I say, I guess I often waited, and stayed in town here, as I think of it now, on campus, and study at the old library, which, of course, is now the Zimmerli, right, and Voorhees Hall. I mean, that was a big deal there.

KP: Where would you take your meals?

TB: I guess, I really don’t remember. I guess at the, what we called the Commons, and I’m trying to think now. I guess, I think that had been built where [there are], now, offices. You know that big building, down ...

KP: Records Hall.

TB: Right.

KP: That was the Commons when you were here.

TB: Yes. And, that’s where I think, ... I took my meals. I remember, occasionally, I would go to what is now Newbies and had been Rafferty’s. ...

KP: Actually, maybe we should put that on tape, because you had mentioned, before the interview had started, that you had lunch at Newbies, which is on, what street is that?

DD: Somerset.

KP: On Somerset street, and I proceeded ...

TB: Easton Avenue.

KP: Somerset and Easton, and I proceeded to say that I remember it as the first place of Rafferty’s, but, you remember it as a coffee shop. What was the name of the coffee shop?

TB: It was the Mayflower. And, it had booths, and it was relatively, ... sparsely decorated. I walked in today to Newbies and ... they’ve got it partitioned off, and it’s almost private, ... and nice tables, and it’s really a cut above, and ... it’s still quite cheap. The Mayflower was as cheap, of course, in those days, it was even cheaper, because we didn’t have inflation, fifty years ago, almost fifty. And, it was convenient, ... particularly, when I lived at the Kappa Sig house on Union Street. But, anyway, ... we used to have fun. One of the things I remember is, when we’d ride through Highland Park, ... waving or yelling at the girls, ... [laughter] as we went by, and they would, ... generally, be friendly. Not all of the time, because they knew we were in the buses, we were at Rutgers, and it was a cut above, maybe, some of the people. ... But, I got to the point where I felt it was too much, and I couldn’t really study, and it was a real drag. As you pointed, it was quite a ways away.
KP: It is far out.

TB: ... A number of fellows felt the same way, because, gradually, [it] would dwindle. So, the second semester, I guess I talked with my parents, it was a little more expensive, and we didn’t have a year contract, as you do now, and I think that the University appreciated that this was not the best situation. So, I found a room, and I don’t know how I found out about it, in a rooming house on Easton Avenue. It’s still there. It’s like a large, double, wooden house, if you think of that area, you’ll probably remember, down from the church. The church is on the corner there, Hamilton, and then, there’s another house, and, I think it’s the house after that. It’s an old double-family house. And so, I had a room there for the second semester of my freshman year. And, my grades improved and I had more time. I can’t remember getting into any particular activities. Of course, as I describe it, coming from Vineland, New Brunswick and ... the city were much bigger than ... Vineland and environs.

KP: Even to this day, there is not a lot around Vineland. I get the sense that there was just Vineland, and then, there were just farms. [laughter] But, people have said that New Brunswick was pretty much a small city.

TB: On the other hand, I can remember, ... there was one course, particularly, that I was having trouble with, and, at times, it would, I guess, these days, ... you would get depressed, or whatever, and I can remember taking a walk around some of the city, down toward the river ... and just sort of looking at things, and looking, and deciding. ... It was just sort of a relaxation-type thing, and then, coming back, ... particularly, when ... I was at the Raritan Arsenal. ... And, there was one course that I probably got my worst mark in, at that time. I always blame it because I didn’t take my, I forget the names of the courses now, the third year math course, I think, trigonometry, in high school, because I didn’t think I’d go into that. ...

KP: So, it caught up to you.

TB: It caught up to me here. ... And, I had been very good in the first three years of math in high school, but, ... I just didn’t. So, other than that, ... that was a big thing, and that was depressing. As I look back, of course, today, I came down from New York, and I’ll go back there. I’m going to a lecture up there this evening on IRS reform, a couple of former tax commissioners and everything, ... but when I first came up here, it was a big deal. I seldom went into New York. ... One of my roommates, one year, over at Wessels I guess it was, was the son of, some people thought of him as a well-known playwright, producer, something, on Broadway, and we didn’t have much in common. He wasn’t there a great part of the time. Although, the family, we had visited New York a couple of times, and stayed overnight there. ... I guess I was not mature enough to appreciate it, and to be comfortable with it, as I am now.

KP: Now, you are very much at the center of New York.

TB: Yeah, it’s two different worlds, from Vineland, here, New Brunswick, is somewhere in between, and I acquired more ... ability to mix, ... to work the room, so to speak. ... But, I don’t
think, even then, I was really, I was going through the transition, ... that comfortable. At some point, I continued some of the same activities, maybe in my sophomore year, of public speaking. I was on the debate team at Rutgers.

KP: What would you debate? Do you remember?

TB: The National Debating Society, or whatever it was, would determine, I think they still do, a topic for that year, and, ... all around the country, college teams would debate that topic. ... It was always a topic which had a pro and con. Something like that. I remember, one year, it was the United Nations. Should the United States ... be a part of the United Nations? It was pros and cons. And, as I said, my sophomore year, I joined the fraternity, and that was more social. You had people there, again, all new, really. Three others from Vineland had ... gone to other fraternities, or other living groups. I very seldom saw them. Somehow, I got into going to Douglass, to mixer dances, or something, and I would date Douglass girls. Sometimes, they would go over to the Rutgers library to meet guys, the boys, and ... you’d meet them there, or something. ... I guess, in my junior and senior year, I often times went over there and spent some time. There was, what we called a nightclub, today, called The Spinning Wheel. I don’t know whether anybody’s ever ...

KP: No.

TB: Are you interested in that?

KP: Oh, no, we want more of this. I have some more questions, but keep going.

TB: Okay. The Spinning Wheel was a very popular place. The girls I dated seemed to be, generally, in what is now, we called it Douglass, but, since they call the whole college Douglass now ...

KP: NJC.

TB: Yeah, it was New Jersey College for Women. ... Some people would say it sounded like a penal institution. [laughter] ... That’s one of the things I’ve missed, and ... I talked to people, because one or two of my class members married Douglass girls from that vintage, and I say, you know, I miss not seeing some of the girls we knew at the time, because our reunions are completely different.

KP: Yes.

TB: And, one of the guys said, whose wife is over there, ... Bob Arnold, I don’t know if that means anything. He was not a veteran, so, he probably doesn’t mean anything to you.

KP: Yeah, there is another Arnold that I’ve interviewed, but he was a veteran.
TB: He said, “You know, next year, let me know,” or the fiftieth, whatever, “you come back with me,” because I guess he’s a little bored. He’s one of the few ...

KP: Men who go.

TB: ... And know people, because most of the guys who come, the girls married them after. They weren’t Rutgers people, and I would know a few people, and just curious. ... Of course, then, one of the girls I met at Douglass lived near Vineland, that was sort of an attraction. ... I guess I went over to mixers, that was sort of the thing to do.

KP: My students, and Dennis had to do it, too, take a semester’s worth of the *Targum*, or the Douglass Caellian, and discover there was quite an active social world going on. They do not want to recreate everything from your era, but, I think a lot of them appreciate how much is missing today. You had Soph Hops, the Military Ball, the Junior Prom, the fraternity parties.

TB: Right. And then, there were just informal things, when he go on, what we called, study dates. And, of course, those were the days when things were very conservative, ... except for, what is, I think they still call, Jameson. ... There were small houses, and the men weren’t allowed outside of the living room, upstairs, so to speak. ... I remember, one time, ... the woman I was dating, there were some complaints about some of the women who, either didn’t have dates, or, when I’d come over, during the day, and we, and maybe another couple, would study, or sit, and maybe we’d neck, or whatever, in the living room. And, this was disconcerting to the other girls in the house. [laughter] But, The Spinning Wheel was a very popular place, in that, I forget what the campus is called now, but, it’s the one out by itself, down Nichols ...

KP: Now Gibbons?

TB: Not Gibbons, the one beyond that.

KP: I thought it was called Gibbons.

TB: ... Maybe it is, but, it’s the one beyond, now Corwin. ...

KP: Yeah, it is by the back of the library, in a sense, closer to Route 1.

TB: No, the other way.

KP: I am not sure.

TB: Okay, whatever it is.

KP: Is it the Horse-shoe Circle area?

TB: Yeah.
KP: I cannot remember.

TB: And, the French House, my friend, my girlfriend, was in the French House, and I used to have her over at the fraternity parties, and ... that was a big deal, at the time. The other thing, of course, that people still kid about, but we actually were there, ... it was referred to as Passion Puddle.

KP: Yes.

TB: The Pond. Now, I go over and say, “My God, what, ...” but, there it was nice. We’d go over in the daytime, and sometimes in the evening, and it was ... a very bucolic, ... it sort of fitted in with my coming from the country, and Vineland, and so, forth. And, as I said, ... now, not too many fellows at the fraternity house dated Douglass girls. I think this is where the age groups of the veterans and the non-veterans, ... that made the difference, because, I think, the veterans, a lot of them were married, living over on campus. ... The Douglass girls, maybe, were too young. It’s not like today, where the age difference doesn’t seem [to matter]. But, as I think back, it was probably hard for the girls over there, because there wasn’t too many people, the men of Rutgers, although, there were more of us.

KP: Still, a lot of them were veterans, and a lot of them were married.

DD: Did you still listen to the news a lot when you got to Rutgers?

TB: ... Actually, when, I guess, I was a senior, or maybe a junior, in high school, I sort of got tired. I was looking, certainly, a little more serious at my hobby on railroads than just listening to the news in general, so, I said, “Let me try to think,” one study hall in high school, “of something that I’d be interested in, and I could make some money.” ... I said, “Let me look into the stock market.” So, I started to write up things. I remember, one time, my mother, when I came home, I wrote away, you know, the New York Times school. ... Not even that, it was a Philadelphia paper. We didn’t get the Times.

KP: The Inquirer?

TB: Yeah, the Philadelphia Inquirer, and ... brokers would advertise. ... They have this sort of brochure, and they would making up a mailing list for people, and, when I came home from school, one day, my mother had told me there had been a man around, turned out he was a broker, they were making house calls, and he was looking for Mr. Bach. ... My mother couldn’t think of, “Oh, you must mean my son.” And, I had sent away for these things, and, you know, he thought I was an investor.  [laughter] ... And, she says “Oh, no, he’s a student in high school.” ... Anyway, so, I got into that, and that, ... sort of, replaced the railroads, and whatever. ... I can remember pursuing, there was Schwabacher book on traditional stock market analysis, but, very few books in the Rutgers library, at the time, even fewer really. ... But, I sent away to Merrill Lynch, I remember, on futures, ... we didn’t really have options at the time. So, that was my activity, and there really was only one course in investments, at the time. I remember, economics was sort of my tertiary minor, and taking that, and, since I had pursued these other things, and
reading, pretty much on my own, because my uncle had, evidently, invested a certain amount of money in buildings and loan, which are now called savings and loans, and doing it prior to the Depression, in the 20s, and had lost some money in the Depression. So, he was against stocks, and my parents were, ... [it was] nice to see that I was learning about these things, but, they really were, you know, because of my uncle’s experience, they were not friendly.

KP: I remember that stock ownership was not really common until the 1980s for the average person, even a middle class person.

TB: I don’t remember when it got common.

KP: Yeah, but, I’m not surprised that they would be ...

TB: Worried. Hesitant. So, that was another activity that I got into here. ... There was this one semester course, and, since I knew a lot of the terminology, ... I can remember, it was one of a few courses that I really enjoyed doing the final for. [laughter] And, I would write on, there would be a general [question], and, at times, maybe I’d say, “On the other hand.” Maybe, I was actually critiquing ... the exam question. And, as a result, I got an ... A+, or whatever. ... It was one of my better courses.

KP: Since we are on the subject of courses, you mentioned that Professor Rich was your favorite professor. Why does he stand out?

TB: I took several courses from him, and you had asked earlier, ... well, I remember one particular course in ... public administration, and it involved political, and the structure of government in Washington, and the state, and so forth, and, since I was aware of these things, and sort of kept on the current things, he would ask a question, and I would raise my hand, and it got to the point that I was ... monopolizing the class. So, he would ignore my hand, and I got the signal that other people ... I was real interested, and eager, and I had the answer. I wasn’t always right, but it was generally on target, and ... he appreciated that, and, I guess, that was the basis of a mutual admiration, so to speak. And, I took several courses in Bishop House from him. And, I’m trying to think if there was any differentiation between the veterans and the non-veterans. I don’t really think so. I got the feeling that, generally, as I said, in fraternity house, they, generally, weren’t around. They had more serious things to do. They weren’t, generally, as I recall, being supported by their families. They did have the GI Bill, but, they hadn’t had this other exposure to things, and interests in other areas, which helped.

KP: Did any of the GIs who were here at the time, did any of them talk about the war?

TB: No, I don’t remember very much at all.

KP: A lot of the GIs say to me, when I ask them, “Did you ever talk about the war?” and they almost look at me, like, “Why would I talk about the war?” To me, it was striking how little was said about the war, even though you were full of people who had been through all aspects of the war.
TB: Absolutely. Occasionally, of course, all of us had to take the first two years of ROTC. ... The veterans were ... .

KP: Were exempt.

TB: [laughter] So, that was a sharp demarcation between veterans and non-veterans.

KP: That you had to wear the ROTC uniform.

TB: Yeah.

KP: What did you think about mandatory ROTC, because a lot of the people who had graduated before the war remember ROTC? What were your thoughts about ROTC?

TB: Well, I thought it was, in a way, a pain in the neck, the first two years. It was one of those required courses. There were other required courses which, ... if I had my choice, I wouldn’t have taken. And, the thing that I, particularly, didn’t like about it, I guess, was when we’d have a parade, or ceremony, or something. I’d have to get dressed up in this special uniform, and ... all that sort of thing. But, it was something I ... put up with. The courses were relatively easy, I mean, the actual material, and it was ... a factual-type thing. It was interesting, and the war, having just occurred, ... we heard about the war, there was some basis for studying whatever. I forget now what we really studied. ... Take apart a rifle, or something, and I was never very good at that, in mechanical-type thing, that was always a chore. But, it was tempered a little bit, in that, one of the things I did to work my way through Rutgers, I decided to take the last two years of ROTC, where we got paid, a small amount, but, some pay. So, there ... was a positive to it. So, my overall ROTC experience was not that negative. On the other hand, there were certain negative, funny things, I can remember. You can imagine, a couple of groups marching in that gym on College Avenue, and I was never a great one on this, and I could remember, one time, I was commanding my particular unit, and I gave a command, such that, the troops who I commanded were marching right through another group of troops on the floor. [laughter] I don’t know if they realized that, or whether it was on purpose, but, they went right through, and they passed in between. They did it very nicely. It was almost as if, “Hey, gee, this is something new.” [laughter] ... Nobody said, “Hey, Tom, what are you doing?” except, maybe, one of the Army officers who was attached, said “Bach, what are you doing?” [laughter] I felt embarrassed afterwards. ... It was almost as if we had planned it, this as a new type of [drill]. ... I forget, but I was a cadet something, but, I was never, you know. I did it, primarily, as part of my working. ... Then, of course, we went to summer camp. I think I mentioned that. I think it was down, somewhere in Virginia, I forget the ...

KP: You did not go up to New York for summer camp?

TB: No.

KP: You went to Virginia?
TB: And, we were based, primarily, at a regular Army camp down there. And then, for a week or two, we camped out. I think it was Camp A.P. Hill, H-I-L-L, down there. And, there were ROTC students from the northeast. And, it was interesting, because we were only down there, I think, about a month, six weeks at the longest, but, when I did go in the Army, in 1951, I kept running into, at Fort Dix, down at Fort Benning, I don’t think over in Japan, lieutenants who had been in the ROTC from these other colleges. And, they were glad to see a familiar face, and I was glad. It was like old home week. It was terrific.

KP: When you signed up for advanced ROTC, did you expect that you would have to serve in the Army, or did you think you would get a reserve commission?

TB: I got a reserve commission. I didn’t think that there’d be the Korean War right away. ... It started ... within thirty days after I graduated.

KP: So, you, initially, did, in fact, get a reserve commission and expected ...

TB: Infantry. Second lieutenant, infantry, which was, you know, a very sensitive area.
[laughter] Bang-bang.

KP: One of the things we were very curious about was politics on the campus. One of the things we noticed was that Communism becomes more of an issue as the late 1940s progress. Do you have any memories of that?

TB: Not particularly, really, in Communism, but, I really haven’t thought of it, recently. Of course, that was a looming issue. ... They had been our allies. One of the things I do remember, maybe tying in ... with that, I took some economic courses, and I didn’t really appreciate it, at the time, but, ... since, maybe, this is on the other side, the economics and structures, ... of course, the study at Rutgers tended to be a very liberal. ...

KP: Yeah, you noticed that they were more liberal than most other colleges.

TB: But, I really didn’t appreciate it, at the time, because I didn’t really didn’t have anything to compare with that. The thing I remember is that, ... talking a lot about the Depression and how, except for the war, the United States has never really recovered, and the question of whether capitalism really can work.

KP: So, it sounds like that was a looming issue in economics.

TB: That ties in with the Communism-type thing, I think, but I don’t think I remember anything, maybe, I’ve forgotten it.

KP: What was the attitude towards Paul Robeson, because we have interviewed people from the late 30s and 40s, and they had certain memories of him actually coming back to campus. What about in your period? Do you remember?
TB: I’m not sure that Robeson even came up in those [days]. Since then, of course, I’ve become aware of it, but, at that point, ... I was never into that, what should we say, I guess I was more conservative, ... and I was never really into that ideological-type thing.

KP: Were you active in any political sense, at the time? It sounds like you followed a lot of events.

TB: I followed it, but I don’t think I was really active in it, because I thought of myself as transitory, and I didn’t think I’d be going back to Vineland. So, I really had never been active down here. Even today, ... Rutgers College students are not active in local political groups. I’m trying to think whether there was a Republican Club, or a Democratic Club.

KP: Yeah, you were not active in one or the other.

TB: I wasn’t, and I’m not even sure there were ones. I think this may have been where the veterans came in, because the veterans didn’t have time for that sort of thing, and so, ... as a result, there wasn’t the activities, perhaps, that I see now, occasionally, when I read the Targum, or see things ... on the bulletin boards around campus.

KP: One of the things that struck me about the post-war period was that there were several black students in your class. In thumbing through the yearbook, it was not uncommon to see several black faces, which was, compared to a lot of other colleges, still very lily-white, especially, William Hatchet, who was president of your class. Could you maybe talk a little bit about him, because that, to me, was very remarkable, that he was, in fact, given how few black students had traditionally gotten into Rutgers, elected class president?

TB: Well, let me go back a little bit, even to my elementary school. At one point, I guess, there had been seven. I said six, generally, in my class, and the seventh person was a black boy who was the son of a superintendent of a state school for the mentally retarded. ... And, it was back in the days when they had separate but equal, you know, schools for the retarded. There were black retarded in one school, and this guy was the son of the superintendent of the black school for the retarded, and ... so, I had some experience with that. ... I think he was only with our class for, maybe, a year, for, maybe, the forth grade or fifth grade, and he was different. He was from a professional family, so, he seemed to fit in. ... He would go off to ... his family, I guess, or whatever. So, we really never got close to him. So, anyway, I had a little experience that way.

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

KP: Not in Vineland?

TB: No. And then, as far as Bucky, he was ... a star football player, and ... he was a relatively intelligent person, and you could see his record since then.

KP: Oh, I looked at that. He really was a big man on campus
TB: And, also, since he graduated, he was in responsible positions, ... and football was a big thing. ... I think he was just out of high school, he hadn’t been in the service. He was also active in the ROTC, the senior ROTC, the last two years, that a lot of the veterans really weren’t interested in class presidency, or school activities, or whatever.

KP: So, there were more openings.

TB: So, I think that contributed to it. ...

KP: Also, I know that in ‘48 or ‘49, I forget his name, but, he has also passed away, one of the officers in the Student Council was black. I think he might have been a vet, but, I’m not sure. And, to me, it is striking, compared to a lot of other schools.

TB: At that time, I don’t think there were any civil rights programs. ... Bucky, ... I see him, he comes back to reunions, generally. I get activities from him. I wrote him up as class correspondent. I write him up when I get news from people. Of course, our classes continued to, we had a young man who died, a couple of years ago, who was our class president for several years. I think, there, again, it was also that other people weren’t ... that interested. It was a combination of things, and he was doing a good job, ... and then, recently, one of our, another black fellow, Leon Allison, died, and he had been co-chairman of our reunion for the year 2000. I don’t think, as far as I’m concerned, ... any of this was with the idea of diversity or affirmative action. It just so happened they were in the right place.

KP: But, it also seemed like there was an acceptance, that this was not unusual. I have gotten the sense that they were just fellow Rutgers students.

TB: I think so. ... On the other hand, there were certain blacks and certain whites, football athletic people who, you know, maybe were good athletes, but they really weren’t too bright, and they weren’t too personable, and, somebody like Bucky combined all those three assets together.

KP: Yeah, it sounds like he was a good scholar, in the classroom, and, also, popular, and, also, a good athlete.

TB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KP: You had gotten your reserve commission. Had you applied to Harvard Law School before being called up?

TB: ... People now start even earlier, ... in the middle of the year, or before Christmas, ... in the fall, start to fill out applications, and I was interested in Harvard because of my uncle. ... I don’t think I was ever up there, prior to being accepted and going up there as a student. I don’t think I’d ever been up to Boston, even. But, I remember writing to, and being accepted at, Rutgers Law School, filling out an application to be accepted at University of Pennsylvania Law School, getting the application for Columbia Law School and deciding it was too complicated. [laughter]
I still enjoy telling my friends, one of the lawyers in my offices graduated from Columbia Law School, about that. ... I think, at that time, there were a handful of us who graduated Rutgers and went to Harvard Law School at the same time. So, I would run into them, occasionally. ... Although, there was one fellow, Tom Addy, who was my roommate for two years at the Harvard Law School, and there was another fellow who was a year ahead of me in college, I think, Irwin Kimmelman, former judge. You might have heard of him, a lawyer, and, presently, a judge in the appellate division of the superior court, and we were roommates [adjoining rooms] the first year, also former attorney general. So, it worked out. It was sort of natural that way, and, ... of course, I chose Harvard because it had the best reputation, at the time. ... I was prepared to go to these other law schools ... if I didn’t [get in]. I remember, that was a big experience, taking the Law School Aptitude Test. I don’t think it was given in South Jersey, so, I took it in Newark, I guess, at the Rutgers Law School. I forget, now, where it was given. It might not have been at Rutgers Law School there. ... Staying overnight, my uncle had his office in Newark, and he recommended a small hotel that I stayed at the first night, and then, went to take this, and I had been up to see him, and been around Newark, a little bit, but, it was, still, somewhat, intimidating, and staying overnight in a strange place like this. ... Of course, after being at Rutgers, it sort of opened me to the world, but, taking that, and, I guess my grades were good enough, they told us, later, at the time, I had heard, not officially, that they graded people by the records of prior students from that particular college, and, I guess, they’d had a good success from Rutgers students in the past, in finishing law school. So, I think, there were, as I say, a handful of us who went up there at the time.

KP: I have actually interviewed, I don’t know if you know him, Judge Crane, from the Class of ‘42. He went to Harvard Law from Rutgers.

TB: No.

KP: That would make a lot of sense. I think he did very well at Harvard.

TB: So, that was my experience on that.

KP: How much of a shock was Korea? You graduated, you were expecting to go to Harvard Law School in the fall, and then, the Korean War breaks out, and you had decided to stay in the ROTC.

TB: I did join a reserve unit. I went to meetings in Atlantic City, which was during the summer.

KP: That summer of 1950.

TB: And then, I started at the Harvard Law School.

KP: So, you actually started Harvard?

TB: Right, ... and it was rather disconcerting. I can remember, for example, ... getting a telegram under the door one night ... in my dormitory room.
KP: And, it said?

TB: You know, “We’d like your services.” [laughter] Except, they didn’t say, “You are ordered to.”

KP: And, how much time did you have?

TB: I had sufficient time, so, in some ways, I almost finished the year.

KP: You almost finished your first year?

TB: But, in such a way, it was disconcerting, because I really didn’t apply myself, so that, after being away in the Army for two years, I started over again. And, at that time, when you were called in like that, the law school administration was very understanding, and the tradition was, there were only a few of us, ... you would go over to the dean, and the dean would chat with you a few minutes, and wish you well, and assure you, I choke up a little when I think about it, that when you come back, you will have a place at the Harvard Law School. ... It was a real patriotic, very high feeling that way. ... It was hard to really concentrate. Most of the people there, I guess, had, ... I don’t know whether they had student exemptions, or whatever, at that time, but, being in a reserve outfit was different, I mean, particularly, second lieutenant, infantry. I mean, they were being killed, and wounded, and disabled. ...

KP: How did you enjoy Harvard? How did you enjoy the first year, admittedly, when it was clear you were going to be called up soon?

TB: Well, the first semester, so to speak, ... I really enjoyed it. It was an intellectual challenge. I didn’t understand everything, of course. You know the old saying about any law school, the first year they ... scare you to death, you know, whether you’re gonna graduate, and they throw all kinds of material at you, intellectual challenges, which leaves your head spinning. ... It’s a different type of procedure. ... But, I seemed to have survived, and they had a practice exam in the middle of the year, and I seemed to do pretty well in it, quite well. And, I met other people from other ... universities. They used to tell us, ... “Don’t be intimidated because you’ll see a lot of people who have their Phi Beta Kappa keys on their chain, displaying them prominently.” [laughter]

KP: So, people would wear their keys when they were in Harvard?

TB: Yeah. Oh, yeah, and, somehow, it didn’t seem to bother me. ... So, anyway, ... I can remember, particularly, some people from some of the New York City schools, some of the Ivy League schools. Rutgers was not considered, it probably is now, an Ivy League school. It’s educational status has grown tremendously. Of course, the difference was, ... I had gone to Vineland High School and I had gone to Rutgers. I didn’t have any prep-school. So, it was different.
KP: You felt that there was a sort of network of prep-school people, Ivy League people.

TB: Yeah. ... Now, it was different when I came back to law school.

KP: How was it different?

TB: Well, I think, for one thing, just briefly, what my war activities were, I started at Fort Dix, New Jersey, training trainees coming in, and, one class, we had a number of the class, the trainee class, had just graduated from Harvard College, and the word got out that I had been at the Harvard Law School. They couldn’t be nicer. ... They volunteered, [laughter] because most of the noncoms, the sergeants, were very gruff, and they didn’t respect them, because they weren’t as bright, ... but, here was a guy who had been at Harvard Law School. And so, these trainees had just graduated from Harvard College. Boy, that was terrific.

KP: You were like one of the old gang.

TB: Yeah, it was back to the old ...

KP: You may have been there only a year ...

TB: Yeah, less than a year, ... and then, of course, I got some responsibility and, I guess, more confidence, and then, we went down to Fort Benning. ... I remember, one weekend, ... three or four of us went down to Florida. First time I had been to Florida, went down one coast, and then, I got, on weekends, either myself, or with somebody, often times myself, I had a car, and I would take trips around, seeing the countryside. So, I saw much of the South there, and I would often, since it was comfortable, ... cheap, I would stay at Officer’s Clubs at the various bases, either an Army base, or an Air Force base, or, in one case, I remember, New Year’s Eve I spent down at the Kappa Sigma fraternity house at the University of Florida in, I forget where it is. It’s not in Jacksonville. It’s just south of Jacksonville. So, I got more into that, and then, I decided, when I was given orders to go to Far Eastern Command, Yokohama, Japan, which means I could go to Korea, and the war was still hot, and I decided to drive out there, so I could see the countryside. Now, the one thing you asked before, I realized that I should keep in shape, so, I used to go out jogging. Much as I had jogged, this was now after I had graduated from college, as I did when I was in high school, the back roads, so to speak, to keep in shape. Of course, there were stories that, originally, when the war started, some of the units were not in shape, and they suffered as a result. There were injuries and deaths because they weren’t in shape, and that sort of thing. So, I got to see the country. ... Did I go into Los Angeles? I’m not sure, but, I spent some times, on weekends when I had passes, because my base, I was based temporarily near San Francisco. So, I gradually acquired a ... less provincial-type thing, and got away, and, I guess, acquired more confidence and such. And then, of course, in Japan, again, we were around Tokyo for a week, and then, up in this very provincial, in a way, it was sort of going, it was much colder, ... back to Vineland. I felt comfortable, and then, to top it off, when I came back, I was discharged in February, from Camp Kilmer, by the way. So, starting at Fort Dix, coming back to Camp Kilmer, ... and one of the things, I still had a girlfriend when I was at Fort Dix. So, on weekends, I would either come over to see her, or I’d go down to my cousins, who were in Loch Arbor, or
down to Vineland. It was ... an axis. ... Coming back to Camp Kilmer, then, I forget how I got from Camp Kilmer to New Brunswick, and then, the train back to Vineland, I guess. ... People, now, who see me, I have an apartment in New York, I have my office in New York, think of me as a New Yorker. Now, some of my competitors, who are in New Jersey, purposely do that, [laughter] because it reduces the competition, “Oh, he’s a New Yorker.” ...

KP: I have to admit, when you came to one or two of the alumni meetings, and your address said New York, I just found it odd. I did not know that you had a house in Vineland, that you had these Jersey ties. I thought you may have just been putting the ties on when you came to Rutgers.

TB: I also wear it when I go to ... conventions. I often go to municipal official’s conventions in Atlantic City, and other places, and ... the First National State Bank of Newark, now Fidelity Union, now First Union, put these ties out. ... They no longer do that. They had them for a number of years, so, it’s a real scarce item. Not too many people have them. And, people outside New Jersey don’t recognize this as the New Jersey shape. It’s only New Jersey people, ... it’s the funniest damn thing. After my Army discharge, I remember looking through one of the paper, like the New York Times ... in February. They’d have these travel supplements in the spring, and late winter, write for us, and so forth, and I’ve never been to Europe, and, having been through Japan, and we traveled a little bit in Japan, but, not very much on our own. Language, I mean, forget it, as far as getting around, and they don’t have the English signs. I said, “You know, let me try Europe.” I was really confident, I ... really wanted to try something new. I had the time, I had saved some money, so, I wrote for a lot of these brochures, and ... I took the boat over. When I went over, I didn’t have a ticket back. It was before the planes. I had an idea where I was going to go. I didn’t have reservations at places. It wasn’t a group tour. I was on my own. I had a little bag. We didn’t have ... backpacks at the time, that wasn’t common, and a wash and wear-type thing, which I got used to in the Army, moving around like that. ... I spent six weeks traveling, like the grand tour, and, most of the time, I stayed at, for example, in London, ... the student house from the University of London. I would eat at the cafeteria of the University of London. I met people. I met some people, it was the year of the coronation, so, there were a number of people from the British Commonwealth in London. ... I met a couple, whether it was a couple of men or women, anyway, who had just come back from taking the same tour that I was gonna take. ... The one thing I did have, somehow, I got it, I think, ... from New York, by writing, was a Crooks Continental Time Table of the railroad schedules around Europe. ... Anyway, to make a long story short, I would go from place to place, and ... seeing the world, so to speak, Europe, and Japan, and, of course, we stopped in Hawaii, Wake Island. We had lunch on the way over, a special lunch at Hickam Air Force Base there, you know, right on the tarmac, which had been damaged in the Pearl Harbor. We saw some of that. ... So, I had a lot more confidence, I was more mature, and so, when I went back to law school, I felt [more confidant. ... Of course, in a way, I was the veteran coming back, and, as I look back on it now, I can see how veterans here, when I was in college, would feel different from ...

KP: It sounds like military service matured you even faster that you might have.

TB: I think so, yes. And, of course, ... I had the GI Bill.
KP: I was going to ask you about that. [laughter] There was a GI Bill for Korean War veterans, it was not as good as the World War II veteran one, but it was still not a bad package.

TB: Right. And, I worked during the summers, generally in Vineland. Actually, ... the last two summers, between law school, I worked ... in Jersey City. And, that’s interesting, because, a law firm down Exchange Place, and I looked up an old girlfriend I dated at Douglass. She lived in Jersey City. So, she was available, so, we dated, and, I didn’t know New York too much, so, she would take me over. We’d go to New York to places, and so forth, which I seldom visited when I was in New Brunswick. So, all in all, ... it was a very maturing, I guess, sort of a textbook-type thing. ... I probably wouldn’t have done any of this, not as early, definitely. ... Most of the time when I was in Europe, traveling around, I would stay either at these student houses or at youth hostels. So, it was very reasonable and I would be with people my own age. Often times, my age group was such that they had studied English in school, so, they could speak English. I had some very positive responses, a couple in, I forget which ... city in Germany, and they had some relative in Hoboken, and I was from New Jersey. Coming from New Jersey, you know, “Oh, Hoboken.” ... I stayed in their home and they couldn’t have treated me nicer, very reasonable. They charged me whatever the standard rate was. And then, when I got back to the law school, of course, I had that maturing experience, and we had a eight member, what we called, a moot court club, and, exactly how we all got together, but, there was this other friend, who was two years a roommate, from Rutgers, Tom Addy. I think he comes from Highland Park. He ... stayed in Highland Park, works in Perth Amboy, and then, there were two fellows from Dartmouth College, or maybe three, two fellows from Princeton, ... and a fellow who had gone to Harvard College, and I’ve kept in touch, pretty much, with all of them, ... since that time. Some of them have gone on to more lofty positions, make a lot more money than I have. Of course, they had very prominent families that helped a great deal. [laughter]

KP: My wife and I were just discussing that, because she works in the Bronx Zoo, in the fundraising department, and family connections and ties really help.

TB: I had to pretty much do it on my own. Do you live in New York?

KP: No, we live in Metuchen.

TB: Oh, okay, but she commutes?

KP: She commutes up to the zoo.

TB: One of the things I can remember, my friend from Dartmouth, of course, the Dartmouth guys are up in the country there. They all ski, or whatever, ... and, somehow, we got to talking about it, joking about it, and, I guess, being slim, and in good shape from the military, and, of course, I took skiing in the military, they couldn’t quite understand that. “Skiing, that’s part of your duty?” “Yeah, we got to do that.” And, there’s a particular type, they call it the ski exercise, whereby you sort of slouch down against the wall and you have to keep your ... legs at an angle, so it’s a perfect right angle. ... Most people can’t do that, and, somehow, because of
these activities, I could do it, and I could stay there. ... Some of his friends from Dartmouth would come over, and, he said, “Come on, let’s have a contest, who can do the ski exercise the longest,” and, generally, I would, if not always, I would do it better. ... It was sort of a source of amazement, this guy from Rutgers. [laughter] So, I felt more into it, and some of them stayed up in the Boston area, and, of course, my being able to make it in New York, to some degree, has ... set me apart, so to speak.

KP: New York is not an easy place to make it as an attorney.

TB: I mean, I haven’t done ... as well as some of the guys, and I’m towards the end, probably, of my career. More toward the end than the beginning, let’s put it that way.

KP: Going back to Korea, you were in this reserve unit, and, in the summer, you would have meetings. What did you do at the meetings?

TB: ... It was primarily, if not exclusively, for officers. And, it was held in one of the reserve unit meeting rooms, on the boardwalk in Atlantic City. So, it was a nice location. ... We’d talk about various ... topics, military topics. It was really sort of a general unit, to hold us together. I didn’t get paid for it. It was an unpaid-type of thing.

KP: And then, you went to Harvard. When did you leave to report to Fort Dix?

TB: ... I don’t recall it exactly.

KP: Did you ask if you could officially finish out your first year?

TB: Sort of, yeah. But, as I say, ... they suggested, and I went along with it. I repeat.

KP: You probably did not remember a lot when you came back.

TB: Right, yeah. Although, it was interesting. The first year, you took a one semester course in criminal law, and, when I was in Japan, I was with the First Cavalry Division, you’ll notice. I had a hernia operation, so, I was on light duty. So, I was assigned as a defense counsel in special court-martial. ... I guess, somehow, I had mentioned, or whatever, I had had this one semester of criminal law, so, that I could apply these things, and I heard, sort of second hand, indirectly, that I was doing a pretty good job. In fact, they were unhappy about it, because I was getting some of these guys who were goofing off, and should be court-martialed in a special [court-martial], ... which is not a general [court-martial], ... off, because I was finding little, technical things. [laughter]

KP: What kind of cases did you have? Do you remember any of them?

TB: They were relatively minor.

KP: You did not do anything serious, then.
TB: No. The only thing I did, on a serious level, ... they were generally AWOL, or, ... I forget exactly now what exactly they were. ... Because of this, I was asked to be a, ... I forget the exact title, but, anyway, you are an investigating officer for a possible general court-martial. And, you were, in effect, the prosecutor and you would investigate to see if their charges were enough. And, I came back, based on my one semester of law, and reading the military law, because ... I had some feel for that sort of thing, after just the one year. I remember talking to the colonel in charge of the regiment, or whatever, and I said, “I don’t think there’s enough evidence,” and he was very unhappy. ... I was never appointed an investigating officer again.

KP: What was the case?

TB: I forget.

TB: I mean, this was a goof-off that they wanted ...

KP: To get out.

TB: Yeah. And, I didn’t think there was enough evidence, and I really, honestly, presented my case. [laughter] ... Then, I went back to my unit, sometime after that, when my light duty was off, after I had had the hernia operation.

DD: Korea was really the first war in which the Army started to desegregate. Do you have any stories about any black soldiers or officers?

TB: I remember there was one black officer, lieutenant, over in Japan, with the First Cavalry Division, and he didn’t seem to fit in with us. The general feeling, I think, though, was he sort of had a chip on his shoulder. ... His personality was not [inviting], that was really the only the experience that I can remember.

KP: You had no experience in terms of the court-martials, or in terms of other blacks serving under you, as sergeants or enlisted personnel?

TB: It’s funny you mention that. There was one sergeant, who had been in Korea, in combat, at Fort Dix, who was under my command. I had three of four. The main thing I instructed, I was primarily an instructor there, was the rocket launcher, or bazooka. And, he was one of the sergeants ... under my command who would work with me ... inside, in teaching, and out there. Again, the relationship was not too good, because the feeling was, among other people, because I wasn’t the only one, ... through association with the other sergeants, that he had felt that he had been in the combat and, therefore, he could really take it easy, and he didn’t seem to be willing to [do his duty]. The feeling, the other sergeants, the other people, the commanders above me, felt that he wasn’t really ... doing his job.

KP: Had the other sergeants been in combat?
TB: Some of them, yes. Generally, I think, at that time, but, not always.

DD: Did you feel that you had been missing something by not going into combat, or were you happy that you did not have anything to do with it?

TB: I think, at the time, I was very happy. When we got to Yokohama ... on this assignment, in the spring, it was towards the end of the Korean War, and the fighting had pretty well ceased. ... They had enough people in the pipeline there. So, I was assigned up to the First Cavalry Division in the northern most [part of Japan], on Hokkaido, and that’s where I stayed for nine months. ... At that time, I was very happy, because ... you hear stories. ... There was one fellow who left the unit, and I heard later, he ... performed some heroic deed, got a Silver Star, or something, but, also, was alive, but had been injured rather badly. Periodically, ... every month or two, whatever, the First Cavalry Division would get a levy that they needed so many second lieutenants, so many first lieutenants, I had made first lieutenant over there, ... so many captains, and so forth. ... Of course, they had their choice of which lieutenants, captains, ... they would send out, and, of course, they picked the guys who weren’t fitting in. So, I learned to [follow] the party line, and learned to fit in. I didn’t find it that hard, but, ... since I heard these stories, and, occasionally, the fighting would flare up and somebody would get killed or injured. So, I learned the party line. ...

KP: A lot of the World War II veterans were not aware, at the time, of how dangerous being a second lieutenant in the infantry was. Your chances of making it through the war are pretty low, unless you got promoted out. It sounds like you knew that once you were called up.

TB: Yeah, yeah.

KP: How long were you at Fort Dix?

TB: ... I think I was there about four or five months. And, it was just starting to get cold in New Jersey when I got orders to report to Fort Benning, Georgia, which was nice, because I was going south for the winter. [laughter] That’s sort of gallows humor, because I know that I was on my way over to Korea. Some of the guys I know, one of my partners, ... was in about the same time, ROTC, went to Europe. Now, whether it was because of my German name they didn’t assign me to Europe, or whatever it was, you know, they, generally, assigned you to the opposite theater. ... And, as I said, because I had this friend still in New Brunswick, and then, my cousin was over in Ocean Grove, and it was summertime ... in Vineland, I spent weekends [off base]. I could get away from the base. Now, it was hard, the first week was terrible, as I look back, I try to forget it, and I’ve forgotten most of it, because I joined a training unit. I think they had fourteen week training cycles, and I joined them in the twelfth week. And, they start off gradually, and, by the twelfth week, thirteenth, or fourteenth week, they’re taking these ten mile hikes, and living out in the bivouacs, ... and here I come in the twelfth week. I get a new pair of boots, my feet are blistered. My mother and grandmother used to feel so sorry for me, because I’d come home ... with blisters. ...

KP: And, you were an officer.
TB: ... I was commanding this. There are a lot of little stories. There was one time, there were generally two of us. In one case, there was a captain and two lieutenants. The captain got orders to report to FECOM, and so, he was relieved right away, and the two lieutenants, we two lieutenants took the boys out, and then, we divided up. ... He went out and took them on this, whatever, I forget what it was, a training mission, and I stayed back with the cooks, and the supply people, and started getting things ready. And, I can remember, at one point during the day, it was around midday, and, ... I think it was, the commanding general of Fort Dix came ... for a routine inspection, and, of course, as senior officer, reported to him, saluted, and so forth. ... What we were doing, it was not lunch, it was, really, dinner, and we had agreed, and the troops were happy, they would go out, and they’d spend a day, and then, they’d come back a little early, and it was really dinner they were making. ... They came and looked at it, and everything seemed SOP, and they thought it was terrific, and they checked out a couple of the tents, ... and the things. Well, whether they knew it or not, it happened to be the first sergeant’s tent and another senior noncom’s tent, and they were made up perfectly. It wasn’t some of the ... enlisted people. [laughter] So, they were very happy, and I’m sure we got a good report, you know. You never hear directly about it. And, there were a lot of little things like this. There was another time when we were out on the firing line, and I was up in the control tower, ... all that kind of stuff, and ... there were various firing ranges, this was a bazooka firing range. ... We had fired, and we had the noncoms. There was a noncom with each [soldier], because the bazooka is very dangerous. You get in back of it and you get blown up, badly injured. And, one of the sergeants said to me, “Lieutenant, have you ever fired one of these?” And, I, sheepishly, said, “No, sergeant.” ... “Would you like to?” I said, “Sure, why not?” [laughter] So, he helped me, he was my loader, and I fired a bazooka for the first [time], after having given this instruction. ... KP: So, you gave instructions without ever having fired one.

TB: Right. I just took it right out of the manual.

KP: And told people and assumed that it would work the way you told people it would work.

TB: Seemed to, yeah. [laughter] One of the famous things, because I felt that we should use ... English, ... there was a particular position you got into, and, generally, ... “You sit on your ass,” and so forth, and I amended that to say, “You sit on your buttocks.” I made it ... English. Another time, again, in the reporting, we’re waiting for the troops to come in, we’re out there, and there’re, I think, three or four of the noncoms waiting. ... We’re sort of stooped down, just sort of idly chatting, and one of the, I don’t know who it was, commanding officers of Fort Dix, plus, Henry Cabot Lodge, who was a US Senator, plus, a colonel in the Army Reserve, pulled up. ... I reported to them, and they commented, ... “Well, lieutenant, I see you’re giving your noncoms instructions, and lessons,” and we were just BSing. We happened to be in a circle. ...

KP: But, it looked like you were ...

TB: ... Really in command. [laughter] ... But, one of the things I did, I was asked to clear out, and this ties in with the war thing, make a new training area inside, not a firing range, but, a
training area for bazookas. And, we got people, a couple of bulldozers, ... not prisoners of war, but ... people who had been sentenced to hard labor, from the stockade at Fort Dix, to do some of the digging, and so forth. ... They were, of course, with guards, as I said ... with the Italian prisoners. There were guards with cocked rifles standing around, ready to shoot if any of them tried to get away. So, it was quite an experience. But, again, I would go to these places, the club was okay, but, it was only when I got to Fort Benning, the infantry school, then, I found what a real, old line Army club, and Officer’s Club and camp, can be.

KP: Because, Fort Benning had some elaborate facilities for officers.

TB: Absolutely. We didn’t stay in the elaborate facilities, or dorms, but we could use the ...

KP: ... the Officer’s Club, I heard was very ...

TB: Yeah, elegant. ... It was funny, one of the guys from our committee, ... maybe ... you were there, ... when I described it, and one of the guys came up after me, and I forget his name, Bart Klion?

KP: Bart Klion.

TB: He said, “You know, it was real interesting hearing, because you were doing the same thing, a couple of years later, that I did.” Dix, Benning, you know.

KP: Yeah, Bart was in after the war.

TB: ... There were a lot of little vignettes. I could go on, you know, but I don’t think it’s relative.

KP: I’m curious, you went through Infantry School at Benning. How was that?

TB: Well, it was sort of fun, in a way, because, ... what we went through was the same thing we had trained, and put through the trainees, at Fort Dix. We had these long walks, as I call it. [laughter]

KP: So, you basically went through what you had at Fort Dix?

TB: We were training people at Fort Dix. We were the students at Fort Benning. And, we went through an obstacle course, where you had to keep down, and there was barbed wire, and then, there were explosions. They’d let off an explosion, and we’d go over on our hands and knees, with our rifles held in our [arms], anyway. And, they wouldn’t put it off, they were sort of waiting, and ... we were all together. We had been at various places, and these were even some of the people, I had mentioned, who I had met when I was at Rutgers, at the summer camp, ROTC. And, we would get over, and it was about time, and, you know, keeping our hands down, we’d sort of yell over at the commander, “Okay, time to put that explosion.” [laughter] And, the instructors were used to people just coming in green ... out of ROTC, or whatever. ... So, ...
was sort of going through the same thing, and improving our [skills]. You know, we knew what the ropes were, and so, we felt like veterans, at the time. And then, of course, on the weekends, I would, often, go away, either with somebody, or the first time, to go to Florida. First, we went just to Jacksonville, and then, I think, Christmas vacation, I took a week and went down one coast and up the other.

KP: How confident were you that the training you had received, particularly at Benning, would have made you an effective infantry officer in combat? Did you gain a certain confidence from the your training?

TB: I think so. But, I’m not sure, because it wasn’t really ... until after I’d gotten to Japan that I was, first as a platoon leader, and, at the very end, I was an acting company commander, that I really had to ... command troops.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Thomas Bach, on March 19, 1998, at Rutgers University, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ... 

DD: Dennis Duarte

KP: You had been talking about how it was only rarely in Japan that you could command a platoon, and then, later, a company. Could you maybe talk a little about being a platoon leader, and, particularly, your relationship with your sergeant?

TB: It was interesting ... because I was, generally, considerably younger than they. On the other hand, perhaps, I had more education, perhaps a little more maturity, whatever, even then. And, ... like setting up the bazooka training, giving that at Fort Dix, I could read the book. The Army has all kinds of field manuals about things. I could read the book and put it into practice. ... I’m sure they were watching me, and seeing how this new lieutenant, who had not been in combat, and a number of the noncoms had been in combat, the sergeants, and, I tried to treat them fairly. I tried not to bully ... as many military people do. I’m not that kind of a person. So, I think I got good ... cooperation from people.

KP: It sounds like you realized, very early on, the importance of sergeants, particularly the ones who had seen combat.

TB: Yeah. I don’t know whether I particularly deferred to them, because I think I treated ... all of them the same. Naturally, they knew, in some things, a lot more than I did, like the sergeant who came up to me, and said “Lieutenant, have you ever fired them?” and said, “No.” ... “Would you like to?” “Yes.” [laughter] ...

KP: I have also been told that some sergeants have been very good about this. They would always come up and say “Sir, I recommend that you do this,” or “Sir, it might be a good idea ...” Did you have that kind of relationship that you can remember?
TB: I think so, but, I’m not sure. ... Generally, maybe it’s just my own ego, ... one time, I remember, for example, a couple of the sergeants were setting up a PA system. This is Fort Dix, and they were fumbling around, ... checking things, and they couldn’t figure out ... what’s going. ... I, as a lieutenant, come over ... and said, “Did anybody turn the switch on?” [laughter] And, I reached for the switch, I turned it on, and it worked perfectly. But, all in all, I think I had a very good relationship, because, at the very end, the last day I was leaving, two of the sergeants came up to me, after hours, and said, “Lieutenant, we’d like to have you come over and have a drink with us.”

KP: If they did not like you, they would not have said that.

TB: Yeah. ... I was fair with people, and I tried, and I was bright, and I could catch on things, and I think I was able to work in.

KP: What was it like to be in a Japan that had recently just been defeated and was still being occupied?

TB: Well, the one thing I remember is, on the trip home, I was troop commander for a train, a Japanese railway train, coming down from Hokkaido to Tokyo, to go home. ... At one point, one of the American troops developed what seemed, the medics on the train were not doctors, to indicate was appendicitis. And so, as commander of the train, I instructed the Japanese conductor, who was in charge of the train, that we must stop at the next station, and they should call ahead, and have an ambulance waiting, because this man must have an immediate operation. And, I can remember the train commander waving his hands and saying, “But, it will disrupt our train schedule,” and so forth. And, I remember saying to the conductor, ... “Conductor, this is an order.” And, we did stop. I don’t know ... how the railway system was disrupted. We stopped, waited for the ambulance there, ... I forget exactly what it was. But, that was ... the only real time that I can have a feel for a potentially ... disruptive situation.

KP: What about your men and the Japanese civilians, particularly the women? What kind of interactions did they have?

TB: Well, ... looking at the problem, most of the Japanese women were probably casual friends, acquaintances, prostitutes, and the big problem, which was often described as a morale problem on the American troops, was contacting some sort of venereal disease. There ... was a non-commissioned officer, enlisted club. There were movies. We had first run movies, a nice movie house in Japan. We had a USO library, a beautiful library. I used it often times myself. But, many of the troops were not into those sorts of activities. A natural urge to have sex, you know, signs, they were encouraging. The Japanese, they would have, what we call, a house of prostitution, come drink cold beer with our warm women, you know, ... that sort of thing.

KP: You had come from a fairly sheltered background growing up. This must have been very different from Vineland.
TB: At one point, I was first class pay officer, which meant that I would pay the troops in cash. You have to pay in cash, and the guy would report, ... the pay officer didn’t have to return, ... but he’s responsible. ... One of the prerequisites for that was that we have a good supply of condoms, on the table, when they pick up their pay, and we would encourage them to take some condoms with them. And, I can remember going over to, and we had some funds for that, the PX, or wherever we went to, I think it was the supply store, and buying a gross of condoms. I used to tell that story a lot, “Gee, I remember, I used to buy a gross of condoms. It would last a month.” [laughter] Well, that was for the company, of course.

KP: Did you ever have to give a VD talk to the troops, or was that someone else’s job?

TB: I don’t think I ever gave a VD talk, but I sat in ... on lectures on that.

KP: Did anyone ever report to you saying that they wanted to marry a Japanese civilian?

TB: I don’t remember any. Later on, ... I didn’t have a Japanese girlfriend, but, later on, when I was at law school, and after that, I met ... one particular student, she was Chinese. The woman who grew up in Manila, and I think I was more attuned to dating her, and seeing her, because I had been exposed to an ... Oriental person, because there were very few, if any, in Vineland, and very few Chinese restaurants. You didn’t see them around here. So, in that sense, I never married one, and I met one in New York, whom I dated after that. ... To that extent, it widened my experience, so to speak.

DD: You also said that you trained in amphibious landings. Can you talk a little bit about that?

TB: Okay. We would have these small landing crafts, which were run by one Navy person, and a group of us would get in. I’m using civilian terms, of course.

DD: Were these the Higgins Boats?

TB: I forget. [laughter] I don’t think we had Higgins. Landing Craft Infantry, LCI, I think they called it, I’m not sure, I forget it. I knew, at the time, I’m sure, but I forget it. ... First, we trained theoretically. ... We went to classes. ... I don’t think I was one of the trainers, but I would bring my company, and we had a theater. We used a theater during the day, ... that was primarily the thing, we got these lectures on these various things. Then, we actually had a real operation. The, whatever it was, I forget what sort of a unit, but it was more than just the company. It might have been the battalion. I don’t think it was the regiment, went up to a beach area. We went out to the beach, and these boats had come in, there was a mother ship, so to speak, out. ... You could see it from the shore. It wasn’t very far out, and we got onto them, ... a bunch of troops. ... We went out there, and we had to get up onto the ship, and what they did, I don’t think they do it anymore like this, but, just like in the old war movies, they had these rope nets over the side of the ship.

KP: So, you climbed down the net?

TB: First, we had to climb up.
KP: Oh, that is worse.

TB: We had to climb up with our rifle, our steel helmet, and a pack on our back. That’s one of the reasons why I never wear packs now, because I had to carry a pack ... in the Army, backpack. ... I can remember climbing up, and then, pausing, and looking down, ... and it was quite a ways up. I mean, it’s not just a few feet. It’s not going on to a pleasure boat here in Brielle, or somewhere along the Jersey Shore. You make a big splash with all this heavy equipment on, and boots, and all that. And then, we got up there and we had lunch, I think, or something, and we all marveled, because they made sure they showed us their ice cream machine on the boat. [laughter] We’re in the infantry, here we are [in awe]. ... And then, of course, we had to come down on the net, and that wasn’t so bad. We were getting away from this. [laughter] ... And then, we made this simulated landing, as if we were landing on some foreign shore. There’s no overhead artillery. We had other exercises where there was overhead artillery, ... but, that was the experience, and, I think, that’s where I got my hernia, climbing up and down with that heavy equipment and not being careful. ...

KP: How long were you in the hospital for your hernia?

TB: At least a week, may have been two weeks. I’m not sure.

KP: How long did you have limited service?

TB: It was several months.

KP: How good was the medical care since you got to experience it?

TB: Well, I had to get a repair on it, maybe, twenty years afterwards. ... Since it was free, service connected, I went to the VA, and I went to the VA Hospital on 23rd Street in Manhattan, ... but, they didn’t think it was that unusual, that I come back for a repair, and they didn’t seem to have any problem doing the repair.

KP: How long did you stay in the hospital the second time?

TB: I must have been there, on and off, and it was a funny experience. I don’t know whether you’ve heard about people in VA hospitals. I must have been there two or three weeks. It was incredible, because, I don’t know whether they had extra beds and they needed the patients, [laughter] but I got the most complete physical examination of my life there, because we got almost everything you could imagine. You mention you’ve got a pain in this, ... they’d put the dye in your system and they take [samples]. ... Almost every night, or every other night, it seemed, I, and a number of other people, were taking laxatives. We’d be in the bathroom several times during the night, because they had to get cleaned out for a test. ... However, I was practicing law at the time. It was such that, if you had to go out to do something, meet a client, or whatever, you could get a pass to go out, I think for the day, or maybe even overnight, as long as you didn’t have any examination the next day scheduled. And, the doctor would sign it. ...
Actually, the food, I thought, ... the cafeteria, was pretty good. We didn’t have to dress. We went down there. The only people who dressed, and sort of made them stand out, were the mental patients. We went down in our robes, and then, when you had one of these operations, you got a late pass for lunch, or whatever. So, you’d go down, have whatever’s left. It was no charge, or what have you. ... Over all, I think I had a good experience. I started out ... with a four person room, maybe two person room. Then, I think, even before I had the operation, but, definitely after the operation, I was put into ... a small ward. I think there were, maybe, eight of us, ... together. And, we sort of got to know each other, because ... we were all veterans, and we talked about, other people had their hernia operations, we’d talk about that. Other people had hemorrhoid operations. You know, we’d compare notes on that, and so forth. My girlfriend would bring me mail from the office, papers, or whatever. I tried to, unless somebody specifically asked me, I didn’t tell them I’d been an officer. I didn’t tell them I was a lawyer, because, again, I guess, my modesty originated in my grandmother, ... but, somehow, I think it got around. ... And, there was one particular person who was really impressed by that. ... I haven’t seen him since. ... All in all, there was a library there, which wasn’t too bad. All in all, it was a pretty good experience. So, I wouldn’t hesitate. Of course, now, I’m in a managed care thing. ...

KP: I am just surprised, because my stepfather had a hernia operation, and he was out of the hospital for two days, or three days, and it is just in and out. But, other people have told me about hernia operations in wartime being very complicated.

TB: Yeah. It seemed to be. ... Of course, when I was in the general hospital, ... we were up near Sapporo, near where the winter Olympics were. They had a separate officer’s ward, or whatever you want to call it. It was very small. I think, most of the time, ... I was the only officer. There were four beds there. So, it was a real military, hierarchical-type operation, and I ... may have gotten better service, ... I don’t know. ... In the VA, we were all together.

KP: Had you thought of staying in the military at all?

TB: No.

KP: You were eager to get out.

TB: I used to kid [to] ... people, since I’d been in the reserves, and then, called in, I said, ... “I’m just in for the Christmas rush.” [laughter] And, of course, these ... regular Army, I [had to be] very careful, particularly, when I was in Japan. I wanted to fit in. I didn’t want to throw out these little ... jokes, and the next levy comes along, “Hey, let’s send Lt. Bach down.” [laughter] I really didn’t ... like the [military]. It was not much of an intellectual challenge. ... At one point, for example, a little vignette, and stop me if it goes off the ground, ... my platoon or whatever, was chosen to represent the enemy, in a field operation, by another regiment. ... And, again, I guess, looking back, I was chosen because, you know, I’m, maybe, pretty innovative, and it seemed to fit in, and responsible, and so forth. So, I had a few sergeants with me, and we gave instructions, and a few troops under that. I don’t think there were more than a dozen of us, all together, and we had one or two jeeps, and we had been out during the day, and we were to, sort
of, intercept, and one of the things we were to do, we were to blockade a particular road, and the instructions, I remember personally telling ... a couple of the troops in charge, I said “Whoever comes through there, you challenge them, stop them.” And, I said, “Even if it’s a general, a colonel or a general,” and they were a little [hesitant]. You know, you don’t do that. So, sure enough, I wasn’t there at that roadblock, but, ... somebody came out. I forget, it was a high-ranking officer, and they stopped him, and they followed the exact procedure. ... I got a report back that this high-ranking officer thought it was terrific, because we did exactly what you were supposed, right out of the field manual. ...

KP: You were following what the manual said.

TB: And then, in that same operation, we got instructions, ... they now have these walkie-talkies, they were very poor at the time. I’m amazed when I see people with walkie-talkies. ... Our supers in the ... office building have them. Our supers in my apartment building have them, and they work. We never had that. Anyway, we were to send one of our people down a particular road, to be captured, and this was to be practice for this other regimental team, in capturing and questioning a prisoner of war. So, I said, “This would be pretty cool,” as the kids say today. [laughter] So, I said, “I’ll volunteer.” [laughter] And, the other guys, ... the troops and sergeants, “Lieutenant, you want to?” ... I didn’t say cool, I said, “Yeah, it sounds like fun.” ... I took off my bars, and took out all identification, and such, so I couldn’t be identified. ... I go sauntering down, and whistling, and so forth. ... I put up my hands, and they patted me down, bring me in, ... and I’m in there, and they’re started to question me. ... I said, ... “Our commander is a big bull on the VD thing, ... harassing the troops on the VD,” and this was a problem with their unit, too. ... They sort of look at me, sort of snickering. [laughter] In other words, I throwing the party line, which ... was the same problem they’re having. ... It was only later that one of the lieutenants said, ... [after] I identified myself, “You know, I thought you looked familiar.” They had seen me at the club, or something. [laughter] ... Another thing, at one point, after we had gone through that, you know, I just got the idea, I said “Let me try to escape.” I don’t think we were told, ... “I said, where’s the latrine? I gotta pee.” ... I didn’t want to act like a lieutenant. There I was, ... on my ass, not on my buttocks. [laughter] ...

KP: You were a prisoner?

TB: Yeah, ... so, anyway, they pointed where it was. Nobody went right with me, and I forget whether I used the latrine. I don’t think I had to, but, then, either on the way, or before I went, I said, “Let me see what happens. I’m gonna try. ... I won’t come back, I’ll escape.” And so, I did, and I forget where I hid. ... I could hear these guys, “Where’d that prisoner go!” [laughter] And then, I came back, and identified myself, and so forth, but there were little incidents. ... Now, on the other hand, there were terrible things. At times, when I was at summer camp, I got poison ivy. I had poison ivy another time. Somehow, in Japan, I’d become immune to it. Maybe there wasn’t poison ivy over there, I don’t know, and, another time, we’re climbing up a hill, and I’m holding on to ... these little trees, and I’d look at them carefully, “Hey, that’s a little bamboo bush.” I’d never seen bamboo before.
KP: Could you talk a little bit about your work as an attorney, because you went into municipal finance, and you mentioned that you started very early at it. At Harvard Law School, what type of law did you initially think that you would practice?

TB: I wanted to go into something with regard to finance. ... I’d studied the stock market and took an investment course here. In my last year at the law school, I took a course over at the Harvard Business School, which is equivalent to about 25% of my credits for the third year, and it was an investment-type course. And, at that point, now, they have joint degrees. You stay for an extra year, four years instead of three, and you get a degree from the law school and the business school. There, it was a special deal, people weren’t doing it. I took the initiative. I was interested in that sort of thing. So, I had to go to the dean, whoever, whatever, one of the deans, and get special permission. They found that ... it was equivalent to a law school course. You know how different colleges are.

KP: That part I know. [laughter]

TB: So, anyway, I took the course. ... Incidentally, again, a little vignette, humorous vignette, it was way before the computers. This was in 1955, ‘56. ... I think every business school student, not myself, had a slide rule.

KP: I have seen them.

TB: Of course, when I was in ... Japan, I was much intrigued by ... watching some of the Japanese use the abacus. And, now, I think to myself, “Gee, if I’d used the abacus, and these guys are bringing the slide rule in, and I would bring my little abacus,” I think that’s what you call it, isn’t it?

KP: Or, abacus, I believe.

TB: Abacus. Okay, and I’d do it on that, that would have created [a stir]. [laughter] But, I don’t think, really, I was that confident. Somehow, as the years go by, I’ve gotten more mature, more confident. I can talk about things like that. So, anyway, my thought was to go into something with finance. ... I didn’t even think of municipal finance. And, with a Wall Street law firm, I didn’t even really think of going with an investment banking firm, or something like that. ... It was a combination, I guess, at Christmas time, the law school had notices of openings, ... [from] other firms that had hired Harvard Law School graduates in the past. So, I went down, even when I was in law school, I didn’t go into New York much. So, ... I made appointments ahead of time, and interviewed at several firms. ... Before that, I forget, I guess, also, at Christmas time, I had responded to an opening at a bank in Chicago, ... it was the Northern Trust Company. It still is. And, I spent a day interviewing out there. I stayed at my sister’s that night, I went into Chicago, and spent almost a day there. ... I would have been working in the trust department, and they made me the offer. They had my transcript and everything, and I’d all but accepted, and I got this call from this firm, ... it was called Hawkins, Delafield, and Wood, to come down and interview with them. And, they made me an offer, and I decided that I could always go with the bank. Generally, you start with a law firm. You don’t go from a bank, or a corporation, to a law
firm. It’s generally the other way around. ... So, I, regretfully, [sent] ... a nice letter to them, and started, got the invitation, and I can remember some of the interviews, some of the funny things. I remember, at one point, with this, who became my boss, a partner, and, somehow, [he] was running late. He had been busy, or I was delayed coming down from Harvard. ... As it turned out afterwards, it was very unusual, because he wasn’t as tolerant of young lawyers, particularly who they hadn’t hired yet. ... I was looking at my watch, because I was meeting this girl I had know from Jersey City, who went to Douglass, and ... she was, then, a social worker down at 23rd Street, with one of the court systems, family court of the state of New York, and I was gonna meet her out on the street, at a certain time. ... At one point, we were talking, and I said, “Mr. So-and-so, could I use your phone just a minute? I was going to meet a friend at so-and-so o’clock. We had arranged to meet on the street, and I can get her at the office now, but she’ll be gone,” ... I didn’t know. I did it very nicely, ... but, other people, I tell them that I’m doing this to this guy, and ... they laugh. [laughter] ... So, the guy hands me over the phone, very nicely. He reciprocated in a nice way, and I’d already talked to some of the other partners, and I called her, and I said, “I can’t talk, just for a minute, I’m still interviewing. Could we make our meeting a half hour later, or an hour,” or whatever it is? ... She understood, agreed, and so forth, and I gave back the phone, and that’s it. [laughter] So, anyway, they had an opening, in municipal finance, and they liked the idea. Of course, they had several graduates from the Harvard Law School. It had a good reputation. My immediate boss had gone to Columbia Law School, and I had gone to Rutgers, in New Jersey, born and raised in Vineland. It was particularly in the New Jersey area, they did a lot of work in New Jersey. They were looking for a New Jersey boy, and I fitted in very nicely.

KP: So, your New Jersey tie was very helpful.

TB: Yes.

KP: Along with the other factors.

TB: Right.

KP: And, you have had a remarkably successful career in municipal finance. The New York Times, in fact ...

TB: Oh, you checked out (Lexus?). ... 

KP: No, I did not check (Lexus?). Rutgers, at one point, was very good in keeping people’s clippings.

TB: Oh, really?

KP: And, they had a piece about you.

TB: Is this the Chamber of Commerce trip?

TB: Oh, okay.

KP: I know that Governor Wilson appointed you to a special board. So, those are some of the signs that you have had a fairly successful career.

TB: Yeah. I mean, some of my class have made a lot more money than I have, ... and have been in higher positions, but, yes, I guess. ...

KP: Did you have any involvement with the New York City fiscal crisis, when the city came close to default?

TB: Well, did you have any. I had a small part.

KP: It was a remarkable set of events. There were a lot of things that had to be done, legally, in terms of just the arrangements.

TB: I sort of advised, informally. I was never paid for any of the work that I did with these people, friends that I’ve known, had known, on things to do, what to do. At one point, ... I don’t think it’s even mentioned, ... in Who’s Who in American Law. ... Anyway, ... I had worked as a ... part-time consultant with the New York City Finance Department. I think this was before that time, no, after that time. I’m not sure. ... And, one of the things, we have a trade paper called the Bond Buyer, which covers these things quite carefully, and I’m very careful to read these things, and I’d been a member, and a former chairman, it’s mentioned in Who’s Who, of something called the Municipal Analysts Group, and we have speakers, and they followed it very carefully. Through that, I’ve gotten to know, and have friends, some of whom retired now, of course, ... at my age, who [are employed] in just about in every law firm, or brokerage house, or investment banking firm. ... And so, I’ve been able to contact [them] in writing that, and [I’ve been] active in what we call a public securities section [of the] ... bond market. In other words, I’ve gotten, and this has probably increased my confidence, to be sort of a joiner, ... to know people. One of my ex-partners said, “Tom knows everybody in there,” in the public finance area, because I make it a point to go ... and be in organizations, be active.

KP: I know you are active in the Alumni Association.

TB: Yeah.

KP: This would be more of a Jersey thing, the financing of the Meadowlands developments, the stadium. I read that Nelson Rockefeller was not too happy to have those built.

TB: Yeah, because it brought ...

KP: Well, yeah, there were good reasons why he did not want them. I mean, he took a personal interest in trying to dry up the bond market.
TB: That I’m not familiar with.

KP: That is why I am asking, because he might have just made a few phone calls and said, “This was not a good idea,” and just left it at that.

TB: I’d have to talk to people, and I’m not sure that the people who would know are still around. They’re either dead, or retired, and not in the New York City area. So, I’m not sure. ... Too bad I can’t call my friend Rocky. [laughter]

KP: I see. When was this picture with the Rockefellers taken?

TB: I forget, but, he headed a fundraising organization called the Governor’s Club, and I had been very active in the New York City Young Republican Club, and the statewide Young Republican Club, and people under a certain age, I guess, forty. So, this was thirty years ago, could join it at a reduced amount, and I did, and I was there, and they had a photographer. That fellow standing next to me would introduce us. He had the list of people, and he would introduce us, and, “Governor, this is Tom Bach.” And, this was my girlfriend, at the time, and she was very happy, because this was held in the Rockefeller estate, Pacantico Hills, and this was the house that recently was, over the last couple of years, turned into a open house. ... And, I was under forty for two or three years. I got into this because of a friend who I’d met through the Young Republicans, and in such, I got to know people around New York State. Now, of course, they’re fading away. I’ve tried to keep up with some of these, and with the analysts. I keep up with the younger analysts coming in. The other area that I’ve kept up, and I’ve gotten into it more now is, ... investing, because the technology and the communications markets move so much faster. ...

KP: When you started in this field, investing in general, it was a much slower pace.

TB: I have one of these little, ... it’s a portable quotation monitor. It’s actually a FM radio receiver, and, down at the station, up on the platform, I get pretty good reception, maybe on the second floor, maybe on the third floor. I pull out the aerial and I can get current quotations on this sort of thing. So, I can follow things along a little better. ... You can see how nice and light it is. It comes in a nice container. I can keep it in my pocket. I keep my card there, in case it’s lost or anything. ...

KP: I should probably end this interview for today, but this will be more than enough for Dennis to start transcribing.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/4/99
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/11/99
Reviewed by Thomas Bach 8/16/99