

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAYMOND BODNAR

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Raymond Bodnar on March 18, 1996, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler. I would like to begin by asking you about your parents. Your father was from Hungary. When and why did he come to the United States?

Raymond Bodnar: An excellent question, because, last May, my wife and I and my two older sisters went to Eastern Europe to do some family tracing. My father came over two years after my grandfather had immigrated, which was always a big mystery to us, how did they get to America from the old Austro-Hungarian Empire? My grandfather came over for two years by himself, and then, sent money for my grandmother, and my uncle, and my father to come over.

... They were not very literate. I don't think my father went to school in Hungary, so, ... there was not too much of an effort on their part to keep written documents. My father had a lot of these dates in his mind. He wasn't even sure if he was born in 1900 or 1899, but, he was about, he felt, seven or eight when they immigrated to the United States, and the family gathered right here in New Brunswick for a while, and then, moved to Carteret, in Middlesex County, where my grandfather worked as a blacksmith in one of the industries. My father didn't even remember the name of the village from where he came and had no desire to go back at all to visit, because, he said, "Well, our family came here to make a good life. Why should I go back?" He used to joke to my older brother, he said, "For all I know, my family might have been horse thieves," because they were on the (*pusta?*) or the plain.

KP: Did your father speak Hungarian?

RB: Very little, and we were not taught the language, because we were to be Americanized.

KP: For your father, this was it.

RB: This was it. My mother came by herself from Poland, again, part of the old Austria-Hungarian Empire, and she came because of bad economic times. She came only because her Godparents, a married couple, were coming to America, probably for the same reason that my father did, to come and fill in the industrial factories of America. ... So, that's the only way that my mother was given permission to come, because, she said, "I'm going to come for two or three years, and then, go back to Poland," which never happened. There were not many written documents, there's a gap here in the family history, and I have to rely on my older sister, who is seventy-three and she doesn't remember everything. I know my mother worked as a domestic. ... Oh, I remember her telling us, [she was] working for wealthy people in Summit, and they had a black chauffeur, and that must have been in the '20s, and then, somehow, she met my father in Newark, and [the] two immigrants got married and moved to Carteret.

KP: It sounds like your mother was closer to her Polish roots, that she did not initially expect to settle in America permanently. Did she also become Americanized, so to speak?

RB: Yes, she did, but, she maintained a lot of the ties by writing to her relatives. My father didn't. My uncle did, my older uncle, ... and it's interesting, because, after World War II, well, not after, the first impression I had of World War II was, in 1939, when the Germans invaded Poland, and I was only ten years old, but, I could see that my mother was very worried, and, as you know from history, with the exception of some tough infantry fighting before Warsaw, the Germans dealt the Poles a very savage blow. If you read some of the German accounts, you will discern from that, I think, that they had a rough time getting from Warsaw against traditional infantry units and that they suffered casualties.

... I remember that she was hanging out wash, and I was a little kid, and I could see [that] she always had this worried look on her face, because of her family there, and her writing back and forth, communicating, was very precious to her. I got involved in school, and then, the next traumatic experience was the attack on Pearl Harbor, and my older brother in high school. I could see the worried look on my mother's face.

KP: World War II was an anxious time for your mother.

RB: Yes. ... I'm going to come ahead and sort this out in my mind, so that it's not confusing to you, but, she wrote [to them] and she always used to tell us about her family. One of her older brothers was a professional Army officer in the Polish Army. A couple of them were fortunate enough to go to University in Krakow and she had pictures that she used to show us, because they would write from the Krakow area of Poland and send her pictures of her brothers who were at university and the pictures of my uncle in this cavalry [unit]. ... In six weeks, Poland was under the German thumb, and then, my brother was getting older, and I think she was worried about my brother, Steve, going into the service. ... So, there was a communication break there.

KP: She did not hear from her family in Poland until after the war?

RB: Yes.

KP: Did she have any contact through the Red Cross?

RB: That's difficult. I think that all contact was broken off, and she didn't have the ability, from a communications standpoint, to follow up. I don't think that my two older sisters, who were involved in their own lives, did the same thing. So, it's a tough question, but, somehow, some way, she did communicate with someone in Poland who tried to find out some of these questions and to establish contact, but, it really was my older brother, Steve, who's an amputee, World War II veteran, when he was living in Beaumont, Texas, ... met this Polish family, or somehow met them, and, through their help, knew where to write. He made contact with my mother's only living brother and my brother went to visit them. So, the World War II experience, for me, was through my mother, initially, and hearing that my Uncle John, an officer, might have been killed, because he just disappeared. They don't know what happened to him.

KP: You never figured that out?

RB: Never figured it out, and my uncle, who will now be my uncle in Krakow, who fought against the Germans and was a prisoner of war for a while, the one that my brother initially contacted, or my only living uncle, is the one my brother went to visit and he has a great memory. He was an academic and taught at a university in Krakow. ... They couldn't find anything about what happened to John. ... The contact with World War II was the beginning of the mobilization of America.

We were shocked. I was only twelve years old when the attack came, and we had, I remember, in eighth grade I guess it was, ... a special assembly, oh, right before Christmas, and, during those days, ... it would be great, once a week, if you saw some kind of educational film. We used to have guest speakers come, and I don't know who arranged this, but, I'll never forget sitting in the auditorium, and a husband and wife team who were in the entertainment business in Hawaii, and they were there when the attack on Pearl Harbor came. They were talking about the attack on Pearl Harbor, and, apparently, they went down the day after or the next day, and they saw American bodies in the water. The teachers, the tears were coming down their eyes, and it was the first time I got frightened, as a twelve or thirteen-year-old person, "If they have the ability to do this, will the Germans be coming at us?"

The other period in which I was frightened was right before the war, when the German-American *Bund* had this big rally in Madison Square Garden, and they had some protesters, and they beat up these protestors. I remember my mother and father talking about that incident at the dinner table one night and I got frightened. I said, "Gee, if these Germans are very sympathetic here in the United States, we're in danger." I went to school. There was food on the table. So, we weren't in any great physical danger.

Another recollection of World War II, I had never seen soldiers and since we were in a very heavy industrial strip, from Newark to Perth Amboy to New Brunswick, soldiers dug emplacements, with search lights, by these factories, right across the road from our house, and they were living in tents, and my father would invite them over for Sunday dinner. I looked at these big, gawky, strange people from places like Iowa and Ohio, which I thought was on the other side of the planet.

KP: How often would your father invite these people over?

RB: Almost every Sunday.

KP: You would have a complete meal with them.

RB: Yes, we would have at least one or two in for Sunday dinner, which was a ritual. We had Sunday dinner about one o'clock, and, after that, did whatever we wanted to, but, that unit only stayed there for a short while, and then, they were gone, which was probably a manifestation of the first six months of panic and not knowing how to react, as a peaceful country.

KP: Yes. You mentioned that you consider yourself a "Depression baby." How did the Depression affect your family in general? Your father worked for Standard Oil.

RB: Yes. He never was out of work.

KP: Were his hours ever reduced?

RB: Not that I can recall.

KP: Your father had fairly steady work.

RB: He had fairly steady work, and I never remembered not having food in the house, and we even took a vacation trip when we were, I would say, perhaps, seven or eight, which was in the mid-'30s, to Canada, and went up through the old Route 9, which took you up towards Ogdensburg, New York, and on into Canada. My father had worked in Canada for a year or so, and he wanted to take my mother and us, to show [us] Montreal.

The other part of the Depression that I remember was men coming to the door and asking for something, which astounded me. I was, what, maybe seven or eight and I remember my father saying, "Don't let them in the house, but, make them a sandwich and give them something to drink," and now that I think back, after reading American economic history and my own experience, these were men looking for work. I remember, one night, my father came home, and this man had come to the door, late in the afternoon, and my father would be home by quarter to five, and he came home just about as this fellow's ready to leave, and my mother had given him a sandwich and a glass of milk. My father said, "What are you doing?" and the fellow said, "I'm a welder from Ohio," and my father was a welder in Standard Oil. "Come on in the kitchen and sit down," and he gave him directions about how to get to Bayonne, because that's where the shipbuilding was beginning to pick up. "I'll give you a pair of working gloves." This man was talking about Ohio, and I figured, "My God, that's so far away." We never had any deprivations at all.

KP: I get the sense that, as a kid, the world was a pretty small place for you. Except for this very exotic trip to Canada, you had not really traveled very much.

RB: No.

KP: Your parents were both Democrats.

RB: Oh, yes, New Deal Democrats.

KP: Were they pro-Franklin Roosevelt?

RB: Oh, God. We just finished the tapes of the book my wife picked for Christmas, No Ordinary Time.

KP: Okay.

RB: I've listened to the book twice now, so, we're thinking of donating it to the Bridgewater Library, if they'll take it, because it's excellent. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, ... [when we] heard that he died, some people said, "What's going to happen to us?" I was in high school. I came home, my mother was crying. I said, "Mom, what's going to happen to us now?" like it was the end of the world. ...

KP: Were your parents active in the church? Your father was Protestant.

RB: Yes.

KP: Also, your mother was Roman Catholic.

RB: Yes.

KP: It sounds like September, 1939, was a real watershed in your childhood. How aware were you of what was going on in the world before the invasion of Poland?

RB: That's a tough question. [I was] not too much aware. I just don't recall. Isn't that interesting? I'd have to think about that.

KP: However, it sounds like the invasion of Poland impacted your family a great deal.

RB: Yes.

KP: How did your parents feel about intervention? Since they were New Deal Democrats, were they in favor of initiatives like Lend-Lease and the destroyers for bases deal?

RB: Yes.

KP: It sounds like they were probably very aware of these events.

RB: Yes, they were. They felt that if England went, we would be next. The Germans would be powerful enough, even though they didn't have a big Navy, to threaten us, or be able to invade Greenland, and, maybe, exercise air activity against us. ... We heard that kind of discussion.

KP: You mentioned the *Bund*. Did you know any German-Americans in the Carteret area who were in the *Bund*?

RB: No. I was born in a very ethnic town, and, when I went to high school, it was an education for me, because we had blacks, we had WASPs, we had Jews, we had Protestants. I remember, from being on the football team and the track team, that it never bothered me to be concerned about that.

The people that had Germanic backgrounds were just kids in high school. We knew about the *Bund* only through the media, although, there were some encampments in North Jersey. There were a couple of meeting areas either in western Passaic or western Morris.

KP: Dover had a big one.

RB: That's right.

KP: You mentioned that your school in Carteret was ethnically divided. Do you have any distinct memories about the divisions you noticed between the different groups of people?

RB: Well, perhaps ethnically divided is a strong term. It was, perhaps, more of an ethnic identification, in the sense that, for example, my wife went to parochial school, and then, went to public high school, and we just knew that you came from that school. ... It probably was more of an economic difference.

KP: However, there was clearly a better off group.

RB: Yes. There were people whose parents worked in offices and others did physical labor. It was an education in the sense that you learned how to have a thick skin. So, if somebody called you, in jest, a black or a hunky, they didn't mean it in a derogatory sense. They just sort of identified you.

KP: You were accustomed to ethnic banter.

RB: Absolutely, and we had a considerable black population, but, that never [presented a problem.] ...

KP: Was there any tension between black and white students, since there was a substantial black student body?

RB: Well, it wasn't a substantial student body. I think a lot of the parents of the black children perhaps never went to school or ... immigrated from the South, probably, maybe during the Depression or before, so that we didn't have many blacks in our class. ... No, there wasn't this tension, but, let me relate an incident. When I graduated from high school in 1947, our class was small, but, we had about three or four black young women, and Pauline Crews said to me, "Would you come to my graduation party?" We were circulating around and I said to friends, ... "Pauline Crews invited us to her party," which is in the black section of town, and they looked at me, and I said, "Well, let's go." So, we went down, and, when we walked in, they looked, and they saw these white people, there was just a split second of like I'm looking at you, and they welcomed us, and we had a great time. I'll never forget, I just sort of felt, "Well, they invited us, well, why don't we go?" because you went to other students' [parties] and you spent a whole night out, practically, visiting graduation parties. No, I wouldn't say that it was ethnically divided. To me, it was an education of being different and realizing that the world is a large place and we're all human beings.

KP: How important was education for you and your siblings? Did your parents have visions of all their children going off to college?

RB: My mother was more sympathetic and more supportive. My two sisters wanted to come to, then, NJC. My father was a one hundred percent male chauvinist, "No." I think my mother deferred to my father. My older sister always wanted to be a teacher ... and my mother tried to get my father to say, "We'll just have to sacrifice and have her go." He felt, "No, you went out, you worked, you met somebody, and you got married and had kids." So, that was put on hold.

Another discussion of college was related to athletics, because my sister and my brother talked about some of the kids from Carteret that went to school with them. One went to the University of Pennsylvania, turned out to be an all-American football guard. Several of them went to Temple. Several of them went to the University of Georgia. You had to be a pretty outstanding athlete to get into schools like this.

KP: Generationally, it sounds like your sisters missed out.

RB: Oh, yes.

KP: In another year, one of them probably would have ended up as a school teacher.

RB: I think they probably would have, somehow, some way, managed to get a scholarship, or a loan, or something, and to go to school, but, they didn't. ...

KP: You mentioned that your brother was in high school when Pearl Harbor ...

RB: Was attacked, yes.

KP: When did he go off to war?

RB: ... Well, it's interesting, because I remember the Sunday that we [found out]. My mother and father always used to go to the movies on Sunday afternoon, to Elizabeth, and I don't know where I was, but, I came home, and my brother was waiting for me to come home, and, when my mother and father weren't around, we used to play a little football in the living room, which would rattle my mother's dishes in the dining room. So, when they were out, we used to have a little one-on-one football. So, I came in, and he mentioned to me that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, and I started to talk to him about it, and he said, "Oh, well, don't worry about that, that's not important. Let's play football," which we did, and that was '41.

As you know from your reading and your research, the war became tougher and tougher, and then, he wanted to go into the Marines [in] the worst way, and he must have been seventeen, because my mother and father wouldn't sign for him to go, and then, I think my father relented, and he went to apply for the Marines, and that was the first time they found out that he needed eye glasses, because

his eyesight was off a bit, and the Marines were, oh, very particular, I suppose. ... I remember, my dad, and, also, then, my brother, bought a .22 caliber rifle, and we used to go out shooting into the western part of Carteret, which is now where the four lanes or twelve lanes of the New Jersey Turnpike is. It used to be semi-swampy land, and he used to go out, and, now that I think back, this was the beginning of his interest and realization that he was going to go into the service, that it wasn't going to be over as easily as we thought. The Japs were killing us and making all these great strides in the Pacific.

KP: It sounds like you, even as a kid, were questioning what you were reading and comparing it with what was happening in 1942.

RB: Yes. As a matter-of-fact, now that I think back, I say, "If we're going to knock them off, why aren't we mobilizing?" and my brother [was] learning how to fire weapons, and so, he thought of the Army, and ... [I do not remember] whether my mother signed or what, but, he went into the Army, and, maybe [in] late '43, they sent him to what was called the ASTP, or the Army Specialized Training Program, and he was at Carnegie Institute of Technology, and then, they found out that you need a hell of a lot of infantry to fight a land war, and they wiped out the ASTP.
...

KP: Oh, yes.

RB: Voices of D-Day? Drews is his last name and many of those oral histories [read], "Well, I was in the ASTP at Rutgers, or Cornell, and then, I ended up in the infantry." So, that's what happened to my brother, and they sent him to Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, and then, he was sent overseas with the 95th Infantry Division, and they were part of Patton's Third Army, were driving on the city of Metz when he was hit, I guess near the Moselle River, and [he] was hit by machine gun fire, and the Germans had them pinned in on three sides, so, it was difficult to get the wounded back, and, eventually, gangrene set in and that's why they had to amputate his right leg, above the knee, but, ... before that, he kept writing, and he came home many times with, again, people from these various parts of the United States, because they were down in, I forget where he was. He was at Fort Dix for a while, and then, Fort Benning, and then, came up, and we still have pictures of some of those people, and I was a young kid in high school, and I thought, "Oh, my God," you know, I'm thinking this is glamorous, meeting these people from Iowa, and Illinois, and so on, and then, he went over and was wounded, and a different period in my life began.

KP: It sounds like your brother was very bright.

RB: Oh, yes.

KP: Especially since he was in the ASTP. If the war had not come along, do you think he would have gone to college, some way or another?

RB: Well, that gets back to our discussion about family values, and family vision, and family, maybe, divisions. My mother always felt that he could go to Princeton, and we heard it talked

about, and then, my father didn't say anything. ... Many people didn't go to college in the '30s, unless you were an outstanding scholar, or you were a good athlete, or you had some special attribute that got you into that particular school, but, I think my brother would have been able to do that, yes. Maybe not necessarily Princeton, but, he would have wanted to go to college.

KP: When did you realize that you wanted to go to college? Was your brother influential in that decision?

RB: I think my brother and the whole GI Bill was instrumental in that, and, as I got to my senior year, I was sort of not studying hard and things like that, and I felt that you just sort of go out to work, and there was a friend of mine that was on the football team with me that started talking about coming to Rutgers, and I said, "Well, gee, I don't know. You know, my grades are not that well." So, I went to see the guidance counselor and some of my teachers and life can take some funny turns. There was a school, Colgate, and they had war memorial scholarships, and I applied, and it was difficult to get in. Well, our oldest daughter is a graduate of Colgate, [laughter] Class of '75. In the summer of '47, my friend and I came down to Rutgers, and already, the GI Bill was in force there, and we were admitted. ... I was originally interested in athletics, and then, decided, in my freshman year, that I was interested in government, and switched my major to political science. ... So, I graduated in '51 with a political science degree. So, in response to your broad question, yes, it was the influence of my brother, who had to come back, and the influence of my friend helped me to make a decision. ...

KP: You switched majors from phys ed and athletics to political science.

RB: Yes, right, although, I never lost my interest in ...

KP: ... Sports?

RB: Yes. I'm a big Rutgers supporter. ...

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KP: The two classes that this project initially focused on were the Classes of 1942 and 1949. I have been interviewing members of the Class of 1949 who, for the most part, were here on the GI Bill. What was it like to go to a school full of veterans?

RB: It was very, very dramatic, impressive, different. I was a commuter, because my folks couldn't afford [to pay for housing], and the friend of mine that talked about coming here was also a commuter. ... We were a rather small minority in this Class of 1951 and the classes were all serious. We used to go to the library on Saturdays and Sundays. We had Saturday classes. ... There was no doubt in my mind that that rubbed off on me and most of my classmates, that here were these people that were taking advantage of the GI Bill. Some of them were married already, but, they were focused. They wanted to be an engineer, or a lawyer, or they wanted to be a teacher,

or they wanted to be an artist, and it was just a very serious time, and I think that really, when I look back at that, I ... enjoyed it, even though it was a sacrifice. I was able to go out for the track team, because I could practice, and get back home, and I almost came here for my senior year, because one of the fraternities, since I was on the track team, was interested in me, and I talked to my mom and dad, but, they had four kids. That was one of the reasons, incidentally, [that] I took advanced ROTC, because we had to, [and, also,] one of the reasons being ... to help them out a little bit, because, ... after this great victory of our defeating the Axis powers, ... "Hey, we're never going to see this again."

KP: You never really gave it any thought.

RB: Never gave [it] any thought.

KP: You never thought that you might be traipsing around in Korea.

RB: No, absolutely not, and although I'm a life-long Democrat, I think that was one of the first mistakes that Truman made was this executive privilege, and it might have been a reflection of the arrogance of American power at that time, and maybe we'll get over into that in a few minutes, but, I felt, "Well, what the hell? I don't have to take the commission." They gave me, whatever it was, thirty dollars a month to help out, and you went to summer camp, and that was it, but, lo and behold, you know what happened in 1950.

KP: You must have been really shocked in June of 1950 when the Korean War broke out.

RB: Yes, I was. I was very shocked, but, then, I guess I might have been arrogant, too. I said, "Oh, it's going to be over. Nothing's going to happen," and then, it went on, and on, and on, and I felt, "Well, my God, it's going to be [me next]." Some of the people that I knew in my ROTC class were over there, including a couple that had been in World War II, including some of the big men on campus that were basketball players, and football players, and so on, and they were in the Far East. So, yeah, it was quite a shock.

It was absolutely quite a shock and I thought, well, even by the time we were called up to active duty, the negotiations were going on to settle this, and it didn't happen. You were asking about how it was here at Rutgers, and I told you it was serious. It was very intensive and it was a good experience for us, although we had people that were having a good time here. There was an active fraternity life, and I remember meeting a fellow in ROTC summer camp who was a year behind me, and I said, "Well, why are you going to college?" He said, "I'm going to college to have a hell of a good time," which shocked me, and I said, "Why?" "Well, my family owns a string of funeral homes, and my father just wants me to come to college to have a degree to run the business, but, I'm not really interested in studying," and that shocked me. As I told you before, being in classes with all these people that perhaps didn't come from that kind of a background, and I doubt whether his father had a college education, but, obviously, he had gone to funeral director school, or whatever you do to learn how to run the business, and how to handle death, and bodies, and things like that, and so, it was that.

... When my brother went to Lafayette, we used to go up with my mom and dad to visit him, and he was married and struggling, and Lafayette was still a small, prestigious school. They know their mission, like Colgate. They know their mission and they're not going to change it. ... So, we used to go up, and it was very impressive, and he was telling us one time, when they first got there as freshmen, they had to go to Sunday chapel. So, here are these World War II veterans and they went. They came from rather hierarchical backgrounds and they go to Sunday chapel. Steve, my brother, said, "We're walking down one Sunday, about ... three Sundays into the semester, and this one fellow stops and says, 'Goddamn it, Bodnar, I landed in the second wave on Omaha,' and the other fellow says, 'Yes, I was in the Navy,' and another fellow says, 'Yes, I was with the Marines,' someplace. 'What the hell are we going to chapel for? We don't need this.'" My brother ended up as a delegation [member] and they went to see the Dean and said, "Look, you know what we've been through," and he [the Dean] said, "Okay, fellahs, we'll amend the rules for you guys." So, that was the difference.

KP: My students read a semester's worth of the *Targum* for class and their findings support what you are saying. They are very impressed by how socially active the Rutgers campus was before and after the war. They also noticed that, while the GI Bill classes maintained certain traditions, the returning veterans did not tolerate certain things, such as hazing. The dinks were not going to fly with them.

RB: No, the dinks were out. We had the freshman and sophomore field days and that kind of event. I remember Mason Gross being out there, but, that began to fall by the wayside, and it's difficult as a commuter, but, knowing many of the fraternity people, I don't think many of the GI people were very active in the fraternities. As a matter-of-fact, I don't know if anybody in your interviews mentioned the great piss-in on the *Targum* Building?

KP: I have not heard that.

RB: ... It's related to the fraternities, and I like to rub it in a little bit when some of the alumni of my age will talk about how the students have changed, and I will say to them, "Remember the great piss-in on *Targum*?" "Oh, yeah, yeah." "You were a fraternity person, weren't you?" "Oh, yeah." "Were you there?" "Oh, no, no. I wouldn't do anything like that," and I could just tell that I hit something that they remembered. It was related to a series of editorials which *Targum* had, and they came out pretty strongly that, hey, a lot of these fraternities are only for Jewish kids, only for Episcopalians, and the fraternity system was in an uproar. I'd hear my fraternity friends yelling, and I don't know whether it was in the public press, but, I know it was either on a Friday night or a Saturday night, and I guess some of these guys had a few beers, and they were talking [about] the 'goddamn *Targum*,' and somebody says, "Let's go piss on the *Targum* Building." So, apparently, from a series of fraternities, they ran down like at two or three in the morning and ring the old *Targum* Building, which is one of these old, yellow-frame houses up there, next to the big fraternity houses, and they pissed on it, but, whenever you see somebody, "Oh, no, I didn't do that." So, it will be interesting, because, when you mention[ed the Class of] '49, I'm sure there was something about that.

KP: What year did these editorials appear?

RB: That's a good question.

KP: I wonder if my students missed that year.

RB: Okay. I graduated in '51. It probably either was the spring semester of '50 or the spring semester of '51.

KP: Okay, we have not gotten that far. Did the *Targum* report on this at all?

RB: That I'm not sure of.

KP: Okay.

RB: [Have you interviewed any] media majors?

KP: Yes, I have interviewed a few. I have interviewed Nathan Shoehalter.

RB: Oh, Nathan.

KP: I interviewed him several months ago.

RB: He would know.

KP: Yes. This will give me some good material for my class.

RB: I see the difference. Walking down here, the multi-culturalism is nice to see.

KP: My students are often struck by the world the fraternities created. It was a very active social world, which I think has changed quite a bit. It seems to me that there was a real fraternity/non-fraternity division.

RB: Oh, yes. I think that's an accurate statement, because, if you were a commuter, or if you just lived in a dorm, you could still attend these events, like the Senior Ball, different [dances], the Military Ball, or the Soph Hop, and so on, and there were regulations, I guess, that the Dean of Men [set] at that time, and policy procedures which they had in place about how many tickets you could allot for non-campus groups, and so on, but, the dormitory life was kind of active, too, and I think I missed a lot. My daughter, who's the graduate of Colgate, always jokes, "Hey, Dad, you never left your sophomore year in college," because I'm a big Rutgers fan and I feel that we are, to a certain extent, so under appreciated in this state. There was an active dormitory life, but, you're right, I think your perception is accurate, that you didn't have the parties, you didn't have some of the discussions, and [there was] the old boy fraternity network. I think a lot of students in the

fraternities felt that this was an entree to the business world, or, if you were interested in becoming a doctor or a lawyer, you'd have a contact, say, down in Atlantic City, if you went to medical school and decided to work down in the Atlantic City area, but, the other people didn't have that, and then, of course, the presence of the GIs, they were sort of amorphous. [As] I think back, some of them took an active part, but, I think that wasn't important to them. They wanted that degree and they wanted to get on with their life as a professional.

KP: Yes. Some of them have very little to say about campus life, except for the academic aspects, but, others, like Bert Manhoff, had more to say.

RB: Oh, Bert, yeah, serves on a couple committees.

KP: Yes.

RB: He has what one of our committee members describes [as] a "Rutgers soul." They'll be there through thick and thin.

KP: Were you ever intimidated by the veterans or in awe of them? I get the impression that you were a little bit in awe and a little bit intimidated. What did you learn about their experiences? Did they ever tell you anything? Did you have any sense of what they had been through?

RB: Yes, in several instances, but, I'd have to try to tie that together with what happened in our household. ... I came home from high school and we knew that my brother was in France. As a matter-of-fact, June the 6th is my birthday, and on June 6, 1944, when my mother woke me, she said, "The Allies have invaded France." Well, we knew that Steve was still in the United States at that time, or maybe on orders to go overseas, and so, I went to school and everything was abuzz. ... We heard from him, that he was in England and in the 95th Division, and then, when I came home for Thanksgiving break, and we lived in this duplex house, my mother opens the door, and she's crying, and I said, "Mom, what happened to Steve?" ... She's walking through the hall and I'm saying, "Mom, what happened? What happened?" She goes into the kitchen, she's still not talking, and I knew that something had happened. The worst we could hear is [that] he was killed. So, she showed me this telegram. Well, before she received the telegram, she had a letter. The mail used to be delivered, like, at two o'clock in the afternoon, and here she was, all alone, and my brother wrote to her, and I'll never forget that letter, he said, "Dear Mom and Dad, you'll have heard [by] now that I lost my leg." Well, ... like about an hour later, the telegram comes, delivered from the War Department. So, then, she showed me the letter and I said, "Oh." I remember, I was crying with her. I said, "Look, Mom, he's okay," and then, she was worried about how she's going to tell my father when he came home. So, she finally calmed down, and, when my father came home, we waited for him in the kitchen, because, normally, she'd be there cooking supper, and he was pretty strong. He felt that, "Oh, well, what can you do?" and it set in later.

I was in high school, and I had that first initial shock, and then, right before Christmas, ... my brother came in near [the] Boston area. My mother and father, ... they just got on a train, somehow, I guess my sisters helped them, and we stayed home, and they went up there, in the dead of winter,

to visit my brother. So, a few days later, they came back, and my father had this package wrapped in brown paper, and we were getting ready to eat dinner, and, of course, my sisters and everybody were, "What happened? How does Steve look?" and all this, and he said, "Well, I'm going to show you something that Steve gave us." My sister said, "What is it?" My brother had given them this plastic cast which they used to protect your stump as you were being transported around. So, that was sort of the second realization of what weapons can do.

... Then, my brother came back to Atlantic City, New Jersey. I remember going down there to visit my brother, who was in the Thomas M. England General Hospital, which is now Resorts International. We had to go to Elizabeth, take the train to Philadelphia, change in Philadelphia to go down to Atlantic City. So, I was what in 1944? I was fifteen, going on sixteen, when I first went down in the winter and saw my brother. Hey, I'd never been in a hotel in my life. It was all painted white and busy, and I went up to this floor where the amputees were, and I just could not believe their outlook, their cheerfulness, and yet, sitting there, some of them, with no arms and legs, some with two off, and my brother [sitting there], and he was happy to see me, and how I'd grown and all that, and so, I was subjected to ... these physical impairments.

... We used to go down like almost every other Sunday, and he would come home, and then, they shipped him down to Walter Reed, to fit him with his limb, and he came home, and went to college. We talked to some of the people there, and some of them were more talkative than the others. ... You know, now that you read about post traumatic syndrome, for example, in looking at Bob Dole, he was an infantry officer, and, every once in a while, my wife says I'm obsessed with this, but, he's got that look in his eye, that he's kept a lot of this inside of him for many years. It may or may not be a problem, but, I think it exhibits itself, once in a while, in the way he behaves. ... There were some of them like that, that kept all of this to themselves, and others who would talk. ... I remember one fellow who had his arm off, and I guess they took cover behind a building or a tank, and he said, "I felt this," and I was standing with my father, fascinated, he said, "I felt this twinge," and he said, "I looked," and he said, "I saw this arm on the ground, like, moving," and he said, "I looked and it was my arm." He made it. I guess the medics came up and took care of him.

KP: However, for a sixteen-year-old, that is pretty impressive.

RB: Yes. I mean, I said this is what happened, because before that, you would see the recruiters and they were all spit and polish. There was a fellow from our hometown who was a medic, and my brother said, ... to my mother and father, ... "Why don't you go up to this next floor." His leg was off above the knee, and he had a lot of problems, and they were taking more off, and we didn't know the fellow, but, we went up, my mother and father and I, ... and he was down. I mean, this guy was really down, and he kept telling my mother and father that, "Well, things are bad and if they take another inch off my limb, they might as well kill me," and I'll never forget what my mother said. I forget his name, but, he eventually became the tax collector of Carteret, after going to college, and his whole life changed. I remember him walking with that decided gait, and my mother said, and his name will come back to me, Joe Florentino, ... "Joe, don't talk like that."

... One Sunday, and I'll never forget this, we were walking to visit my brother and they had this area where you pulled in with the car. It was a pretty fancy drive, and my mother was ahead of me, and my dad was alongside of her, and I was just sort of looking, I was right behind her, and, all of a sudden, she stopped and my father said, "Helen, what's the matter?" and coming out of the hotel were these soldiers, and they had "Italy" [patches], and they had their hands on each other's shoulders, left shoulders, and I looked at my mother, and the tears were in her eyes, and she said, "Steve, they're blind." They were blind Italian prisoners of war, and they had a Red Cross woman, and I'll never forget that scene, never forget that, and we went in to see Steve. Now, it gets back to asking or talking about people. Yes, but, after going through that, I was reluctant.

KP: Really? You did not want to ask?

RB: I didn't want to ask them that. ... Although, in ROTC, and this was a mix-up right away, when they came back, ... some of these veterans thought they had to take ROTC, and I remember this fellow, and he was a chain smoker. He was older, and he was in formation, and he used to smoke one cigarette after another, and then, one day, he said to me, ... "I don't need this. I landed in the first wave on Omaha," and he said, "My squad leader stood up and his head was blown off," and I used to see him, and he used to walk around, and smoke, and talk to himself, this guy, and then, he didn't take ROTC, but, after that and other experiences which I related, I was a little reluctant. However, in some discussions, this would come out, and it related somewhat to our discussion about an ethnic-type town, and here were these fellows around Bishop House, I remember, I was taking history courses, political science courses, and they were talking about the Germans and the Japs and taking different viewpoints about what happened in the '30s, and this one fellow, who was in the ROTC, got very angry one day, and ... we had a discussion group, and it was as close as I am to you, across the desk, and he said, "Don't tell me about the goddamn Germans. I come from a German family. They were sending me notices in the '30s to come back to Germany, so they could get me in the goddamn German Army. My mother and father would not hear anything that was not in German in our house. Everything that the Germans did was wonderful, I got inducted." He got captured in the Battle of the Bulge.

So, he says to this fellow, who might have been of Germanic background, and maybe said something that struck him and all, but, it just came out, "I can tell you about those goddamn Germans. When they found out I could speak German, I was their interpreter," and he said, "I was with a German doctor who talked to the American prisoners," but, he said, "When they went in to the Russians," he said, "I saw them slap the Russian prisoners around. Fuck those Germans." That's how he said [it], "So, don't tell me." It was a very dramatic explanation of his almost hatred of his ancestry, because ... he said, "I saw officers whip them with their riding crops and everything, just treating them like they were [animals], even though they were wounded," he says, "except this doctor knew that I was upset about that. I told them that." He just shrugged his shoulders, but, he said, "I got treated a little better, because I could speak German, when the doctor wanted to say, 'How are you feeling? How is your leg?'" but, I never asked other people about that, because I knew what they had been through, and everybody wasn't in [combat]. You know, they all made their contribution, but, all of them weren't like this fellow that was in the infantry and one fellow in history class was the same way.

He was a tall fellow, very talkative, I mean, very quiet, and, one day, he was asking us about ROTC, and I said to him, "You were in World War II," and he said, "Yes. I was in the Battle of the Bulge," and he said, "I was in," whatever it was, 106th Division, that was supposed to be bloodied. I just asked him that one question, and it opened up his recollection, and he said, "Ray, this was beautiful, this beautiful forest, trees, foxholes, and they said, 'We'll go out in patrol actions.' We're eating breakfast and, all of a sudden, the tops of the trees are exploding. We dug down and these Germans came across. Our communications were broken and the sergeant says, 'Hey,' and we put up our hands. [The Germans were] taking prisoners." [laughter] So, it's a long explanation of it, but, I felt reluctant, I felt held back, because some of them might have suppressed a lot of that and didn't want to talk about it.

KP: I have been surprised by the emotions that come out in these interviews. I do not think that they ever really grappled with these issues. It has been very hard for them, even after fifty years.

RB: Well, there is a friend of mine that I met, he's younger than me, but, one of his friends is in the Washington press corps, and we were talking, ... oh, this was two years ago, and I said, "You know, my brother," I said, "the infantry fighting in Italy was very, very tough." My brother lived in Texas and it was a while before General Mark Clark went to Texas, because of the 36th Texas National Guard outfit that took heavy casualties. It was sort of the thing to do, make a little extra money, and when they went overseas and they ran into the Germans, particularly the Germans up in the hills, they took a lot of heavy casualties, and they blamed Mark Clark for sending them across this river.

... It was in Italy that a lot of the fighting was tough, and this friend of mine, and we were talking about Dole, said, "Well, my friend who covers the Washington scene, they interviewed him and he said, 'Dole, sort of not off the record, but, we'll say, his attitude, 'Well, gee, I'm this Kansas boy from a small town. I went in, why did this happen to me?'" and after the experiences I related, about talking with my brother and these other people, he said, "You know, that's not a good sign." I mean, not that it won't happen, but, it's something that, when I've seen the casualties, when I came back myself to that hospital in Japan, some of these guys, then, had this faraway look in their eyes, and so, just a couple weeks ago, at dinner, I said, "You know what I've noticed?" and, oh, the other part of it was this, that Dole very consciously never uses his right hand. When my brother puts his limb on, he can never forget that he was in the war, but, Dole, and I've read it in papers like the *Times*, that he was very self-conscious, and I used to say to my wife, "You know, that's an odd reaction. I mean, that was a war that we had to fight." Even though I was involved, and I was opposed, and took an active anti-interventionist stance in the Vietnam War, I said, "That was a war that [we did not have to fight.]"

Okay, he may not be able to move it, but, I know disabled people, I know a fellow that had three fingers sliced off by those goddamn power mowers. When I see him at Rutgers basketball games, he always gives me his hand and I shake it. It doesn't bother me, but, I said, "Dole doesn't have to wear it on his sleeve, but, he will always go like this." Two weeks or three weeks ago, he's got his Purple Heart on his lapel and I got very upset. I said to Alice, "I don't know, but, I think this is the

first time that I'm aware of ever seeing him do this, based on what he said." You figure, if he kept his arm hidden, he might not say, "Hey, I got the Purple Heart," but, then he became a presidential candidate. There was a picture, I think that he never wants released, when he was undergoing therapy and you could see the way his arm was deformed. This may not help him, I don't know. This is a digression, but, you're younger than I am, and you're an historian, and you're interested. I didn't fight in the Civil War, but, I read about the Civil War and I can relate, but, I think a lot of people in today's fast communication age will say, "You know, Bob, that was a long time ago."

KP: I have heard that line before.

RB: I read a lot, as you do, about World War II, and that's sort of a mixed emotion I have, but, almost a physical courage on both sides, and the trauma that they went through was something that was in the Civil War. Well, it relates to asking these people about this, but, I didn't, because of my experience with my brother, [which] pushed that too much. It, just on occasion, came out with someone and that's how we got on the discussion of your impression of a lot of people. ... Nate Shoehalter, I never realized that he was a medic.

KP: Nathan Shoehalter had very traumatic memories.

RB: When his family was small and our family was growing up, we'd go into the outdoor swim club, and when I used to see him get undressed, he had these scars on his back, and I knew he had been in World War II. One day, we were dressing and I said to him, "Nate, I'm going to ask you a question, you don't have to answer it," but, we had talked, and I think he knew what I was going to ask him. "You were wounded in World War II, weren't you?" and he said, "Yes." I said, "Because I looked at your scars." "I was a medic and I got hit by mortar fire." Then, he wrote this very touching piece to his classmates, I believe. Did he give you a copy of that?

KP: No.

RB: You ought to get a copy of that, because he did it because of what you just related. There was a certain period in his life where he felt he had to get this out, and I think it appeared in one of the alumni magazines, and he might have sent it only to certain classmates. Bert Manhoff might have a copy, some of those people, but, I mean, that's how it came out, and he didn't give me that much detail, but, in my undergraduate experience here, I didn't ask those many questions. I only was in a situation where a person might have looked at a tree, they might have looked at a building, and a memory came back, and they were discussing something before class, and they said, "Hey, this is what happened to me."

KP: How did you become a political science major? Was there an influential professor? You mentioned that Professor Bennett Rich was your favorite professor.

RB: Well, in the summer after my freshman year, I started reading some books about government and I think that was the turning point. I said, "You know, this is sort of a fascinating field," and then, I met Bennett Rich, and Edwin McNall Burns, and Ardath Burks, who's still around campus.

... Ardath Burks had been in the naval intelligence, and Henry Winkler, if you remember that name, Henry Winkler and Ardath were classmates at the University of Cincinnati, I believe, and I think they were part of that overall team that broke the Japanese naval code. Maybe they didn't have a major role, but, they were doing something at the lower level with the Japanese intelligence reports. ... So, I think that swung me over, although I became more interested in state and local [politics], in which I eventually [specialized.] I never finished my Ph.D. I took graduate work here, and then, I worked for a while, and came back, and started in research and continuing ed, and they put me on a faculty line, and thank God I stayed on it, because, now, you wouldn't be put on a faculty line without a Ph.D.

KP: Even if you had a Ph.D., you might not be put on the faculty line.

RB: That's right. As a matter-of-fact, this Friday, I'm helping a person who's been turned down for promotion twice, and he is going before the Faculty Appeals Board.

KP: We spoke earlier about how you believed in America's omnipotence and that you felt that there would never be another war. What about the Cold War? How immediate or distant did the Cold War seem? It sounds like Korea was just as much out of the blue for you as Pearl Harbor probably was for your brother.

RB: Well, of course, I was in college at the time, and I began to develop a different perspective, because of my readings and my discussions, and being a great admirer of FDR, I said, "This fellow, Harry Truman, is okay, but, he's really screwing up," and after later reading about Winston Churchill, and even finishing the book by Gilbert, the old imperialism, the old colonialist attitude of Churchill exhibited, manifested itself, right at the end of the war, and I said, "Well, this is stupid. This is absolutely stupid, because they have the weapons that can destroy us," and it's a different economic system, and so, I was just rather shocked that America took this stance, that this Iron Curtain had come down, and, again, in Gilbert's book, some of these interviews by the Slavs today, right, ... listening to the news, they're killing each other, or not killing each other, but, the Serbs, who were supposed to move out of this area, [are] burning houses, and I said, "My God, is this significant? What did we learn?" So, I felt, reading Gilbert's book, that my view back then, maybe naive, was, "Hey, the Russians took a hell of a toll, and they're in these countries, so, they're taking the view from a position of strength, and who are we to say, 'Hey, you should get out of these areas.'" So, I sort of opposed this, because I felt, "Well, we ought to be able to talk with them, and negotiate, and reason with them." ...

KP: It sounds like you were a Wallace Democrat.

RB: Yes, probably.

KP: Do you remember the 1948 presidential race at all? It sounds like you were not too thrilled about Truman.

RB: No, I wasn't too thrilled about Truman, because I felt that it just doesn't sound right, that the Russians really were our Allies, and, all of a sudden, they're our enemies. I didn't know. I didn't take an active part, because, actually, ... my first vote was for Adlai Stevenson.

KP: In 1952?

RB: In '52.

KP: Okay, you could not vote in 1948.

RB: I couldn't vote in '48, but, ... I was working in the summer in a factory, and I went to a union meeting at which they had some Wallace representatives. ... Whoa, what a hell of a meeting it was, because there were the old line Democrats, and, "The Russians were no good," and these fellows were talking about, "Well, we have to trust the Russians." I mean, after all, a nation that could stop this onslaught with artillery, and tanks, and so on, is not a nation to be trifled with, and so, it was an interesting time. ... Then, things began to happen in '49 and '50, and I think I was sort of caught up in that arrogance, that ... we had achieved this great victory, that, "Who were these bandits?" ... I had a sergeant in the First Calvary, and we were back, in the northern island of Japan, Hokkaido, and they just had that tremendous snow slide that fell on the mountain and the tunnel, beautiful, beautiful snowfall, if you like snow. ... He said to me, "I'll tell you what happened." He said, "We got this call on a Sunday," and he said, "We were in Japan and these troops were having a great time. The women were plentiful, the booze, food. Everything was over." This was the attitude, I think, in the Armed Forces, to a great extent. "Everything was over," and he said, "We get this call, Sunday night," he said, "half of these guys are drunk, and the order came, and then, we have to go to this place called Korea, right on the tail of World War II," and he said, "What do we have to go there for?" "Well, there's some guerillas, some bandits, causing trouble over there." Can you imagine? and he said, "I didn't start getting worried until they started loading up the machine guns and the ammunition." ...

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Raymond Bodnar on March 18, 1996, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler. You described how shocked the troops were in Japan, since these were occupation troops who had gotten ...

RB: Soft duty.

KP: Soft duty, to say the least.

RB: My use of the term ... "American arrogance," "American superiority," because we did do an almost economic miracle, and, as a matter-of-fact, on this tape, on No Ordinary Time, they talk about how the automobile companies made tanks and so forth, and we were all over the world. With the exception of our brief discussion about the Cold War, we were pretty much in control. ...

The occupation troops in Japan were having one great time, good food, and the role, it always strikes me, is somewhat in relation to local government. Our local government, public safety people, are on the line every day. If you're not in the war, what do you do with ... an infantry division? You go out on maneuvers, but, now, and, of course, I agree with this, they're peacekeepers. They have to be peacekeepers, now. So, when these troops, many of whom had fought in the Pacific, were sent to Japan, their attitude was, "Hey, I'm going to have a great time here, because nothing else is going to happen to us," until this invasion on June 25, 1950. ... Many of the World War II people initially were sent to the Far East, but, then, I think the War Department said, if you had previous combat experience, they wouldn't send you to the Far East, or, if they did, you weren't going to go to Korea. So, all the ROTC officers got called up. They were the ones that got sent to Korea.

KP: You mentioned that you joined the ROTC with the notion that you could make some extra money.

RB: Right.

KP: Were you planning to take the commission?

RB: No.

KP: Did you have any regrets? You could have avoided this. You only had to take mandatory ROTC for two years. Did you think, "I really screwed up?"

RB: You mean looking back, in retrospect?

KP: Yes, at the time.

RB: Well, no. At the time, again, the first two years were mandatory, and [at] that time, ... when I signed up for the advanced [ROTC], it was the attitude that I just expressed, "The Armed Forces were in different parts of the world, but, I don't have to take the commission, or, if I want to keep it, I'll stay in Reserves, and go on weekends, and go to camp." I thought I would just do it to help out my parents. I had some pocket money to spend on social life. ... My brother occasionally reminds me, he says, "Well, after your experience in Korea, you're opposed to this, so, why did you take the money?" and we used to get into these wild discussions. "Well, I felt Mom and Dad needed a little help." I look back and figure I, maybe, should have taken that invitation to the fraternity, but, it would be an added financial burden to them.

KP: Yes, but, once Korea broke out, you walked into a war.

RB: Oh, yes, in the actual sense, but, even then, I felt that ...

KP: The war was going to be over.

RB: It would be over by the time we got there, because I didn't get there until Fall of 1952, and the front, the line, had stabilized, and we were just watching each other, each day, each night. I was sent out on a patrol, and I got hit by friendly fire, and so, I was only on the line for about seven days, and then, they sent me back. I was with the Seventh Infantry Division and they sent me back. I spent a month in a hospital in Japan. ... They gave me a physical, and they felt my leg wasn't up to going back to my original outfit, so, they sent me back to First Cav[alry], which had been pretty much shot up in that first few months of war, and a lot of people were down on the First Cav, but, they were occupation troops, and they went over, and they just didn't know what was going to hit them, and, in some respects, they did very well, but, in other respects, they just were overwhelmed. So, they sent me back to the First Cav, and then, we were in the northern island of Japan, Hokkaido, and then, we went back and did some rear area duty for about two months. So, I went back in the ... Winter of 1953 and ... our troops were riding guard on the trains, the supplies that were going up to the main line of resistance.

KP: In many ways, your wound really changed your Korean experience. You might have just stayed on the line.

RB: Yes, because, at that time, I think it was analogous to the last few months of the First World War, where the Germans didn't send out a patrol, the English and the Americans wouldn't, but, some general would say, "Well, we think we need this extra hundred yards of ground," so, they might mount an attack, which was fruitless, or they would send out a patrol. ... Now, again, thinking back in retrospect, we knew where the hell they were, and they knew where we were, and so, by the time I got acclimated, ... I knew that by using binoculars, [I could find them], and I loved the weather. I'll never forget, the weather over there at that time was just absolutely beautiful. So, one afternoon, about two o'clock, it was quiet. I didn't get much sleep, because we were always concerned that they might attack at night. I had a runner who's a corporal, and he ran around a little bit, and one afternoon, on this beautiful, fall afternoon, I was sitting, had my binoculars, up on a hill, watching, I guess the Chinese, at that time. They didn't move much, but, I could pick them out with binoculars, and I'm sure they were looking at me. So, I heard this single rifle shot, broke the silence of this quiet, fall day, and this corporal said to me, "Hey, Lieutenant, you better get back in the bunker." I said, "Why?" "You better get back in the bunker." "Okay." So, I went back, but, I stood outside the bunker, and a rifle shot came back in return from the Chinese, and it was the Colombian Battalion that was attached to our Seventh Infantry Division, from South America, and they fired a few more rifle shots, the Chinese fired a few more rifle shots, then, all of a sudden, there was machine gun fire, mortars, and it was all over in about five to ten minutes. The corporal figured I was crazy and [there was] all the smoke. I said, "What was that?" He said, "Oh, it's those crazy Colombians. They get bored." So, he said, "About once a week, they fire at the Chinese and they fire back," but, that's how you could get killed.

... You know, all of this watching each other was broken by both sides sending out patrols, and if you were lucky, you didn't run into anybody. If you were unlucky, you got engaged in a fire [fight]. All of this time, I think all this time, negotiations were underway, and that all was sort of a psychological pushing back and forth of the negotiation teams. You know, they might have

captured a hill which the Chinese wouldn't want to lose or vice versa. Then, negotiations would go on and people were sent home.

I was a patient, and I thought back to what I had seen in the hospital where my brother was. One night, a couple nights after I got back from Korea, ... I went into the bathroom, and I saw this ... big, black fellow, and he was sitting on the john. We had separate toilet stalls, but, the door was open, and he was sitting there, and I looked at him. He had this surgical pad under him, and he said, "Hi, how are you?" "How are you?" and he laughed. He said, "Oh, that's my intestine," and he shook [it]. He had a little bit of fat. He was in infantry and hit by machine gun fire, and the round tore up his intestines, and went out, and he was in the process of being surgically repaired, and he said, "I've got to keep this moist." I thought back to what I had seen. "Oh," he said, "it's not bad. After they sew me up, the only problem I'll have, after I eat dinner or something, I'll go to the bathroom faster, because they're taking so much of it out." ... Then, I saw kids with their hands off, and I tried to talk to them, and they were so lost, some of them, and, one time, I went down to get a little bit of ice cream. This kid had his hand off, right hand, and I started talking to him, because he had his head down, and I started talking to him about my brother, and I said, "You know, it's rough, but, you'll get a limb," but, boy, he just put his head back down, unbelievable.

My wife often asks me, why do I read so much about World War II? "Because," I said, "in relation to Serbia, the old Yugoslavia, they're still doing the same things that we did, but, based on religion, or economics, or what, whereas I read this because it was a threat to us, and this peaceful nation responded based on the heroism and the courage of millions of young men and women that did this, and they went back to life and forgot about it." Right now, my brother has never forgotten this. He looks upon this, and after reading a lot of the books, maybe, I don't know, I won't ask you this until I finish my comments, I couldn't understand why my brother would go back, and as I began to read some of these more individual memoirs of people like you, historians who get people to talk about it, it was like an adventure to them. At the time, they said that ... even though they were in danger, this was a period of adventure. Now, as I said, some of them went back, resumed their lives, and probably put a lot of this into their psyche. Others go back to the reunions, go back and see where they fought. Have you read Gavin's book about prisoners of the Japanese?

KP: No, but, I have heard about that.

RB: My daughter gave me a book called The Railway Man, a British Army officer that was working on the railroad, the infamous railroad, and I said to my wife, "What these people went through has provided us with the security that we have today, because if the Germans and the Japanese would have invaded us, we would have been a different nation." So, it's heartbreaking, sometimes, to realize what people did in that period of time, and I'm sure you've heard this from these people that experienced this. ... My brother goes back and he belongs to the National Rifle Association. He's become a big conservative, and I couldn't understand it until, as I said before, I read some of these individual interviews, and some of them were very candid. They were scared and they came back, but, others, they built this comradeship, that, "You and I had to depend on each other, to protect each other," and they never forgot that, and so, now, I've begun to understand

why. I may not agree with it, but, [I understand] why they do it. It's a period of [their] life they'll never really [forget]. ...

KP: However, you are a veteran yourself. You were actually wounded, admittedly by friendly fire, but, still, you were in harm's way. It sounds like it was a little distant for you.

RB: Yes.

KP: It was not as immediate.

RB: ... I don't like to ... use the word, "war." I call them "incursions," or "interventions in civil wars."

KP: Yes.

RB: They're really Vietnams and civil wars and I remind our historian majors, "Look, I've read constitutional cases. What about the British and the French, who wanted to intervene in the American Civil War?" "Oh, that's right." "Yes, well, think about it this way, unilaterally." Now, I am in support of the United States being part of the United Nations Army, because I think there's some places in the world, like the Mid-east, where you have to keep these people apart and try to tell them that, "Hey, eventually, it's going to take a long while, but, you reproduce the same way, you eat, you use the same digestive organs. We're human beings. Let me just relate a story about this.

A few summers ago, out at the swim club, there was this fellow in his forties and my two sons were high school swimmers then. This fellow's built, he was in his forties, but, built with a big chest, the long arms. When we went to the change room, I said, "Aren't you a (Kantner?)?" and he said, "Yes." His father was a famous diver and swimmer at Rutgers, and he went to West Point, and was a varsity swimmer. So, we started talking, and then, I told him where I was. He asked me about myself and so on. "So, where did you stay in the Army?" He said, "Vietnam. I work for the Department of Defense, down at Fort Benning, Georgia." "Oh, well, what do you do?" "I'm in the Infantry Advocacy Program," and I said, "What's that?" He said, "Well, we look upon our role now," and he didn't use the word, but, "We're going to be part of the UN Army and it's not going to be like the Persian Gulf. We need people in infantry units," and he says, "This is what we are doing. We are encouraging our people who come down to Fort Benning and [who are in the] ROTC all over the country to go into the infantry, because they're going to go to places like Bosnia," he said, "and not be fighting, but, be part of an international force," and I said, "Gee, that's very encouraging," and this is when Bill Clinton says, "We're there for peace."

KP: Have you ever joined a veteran's organization?

RB: I only joined the Disabled American Veterans, because I figured that since they examined me and gave me some compensation for my leg, that that goddamn Reagan might take it away. So, I figured, "You son of a bitch, I might as well belong to an organization," but, I'm not active. I

became a life member, because I figured there are many more people that need the help through an organization like that than me. So, I felt that my contribution would help them.

KP: Before you arrived in Korea, you originally looked at ROTC as something that was ...

RB: Extracurricular.

KP: Yes, almost as a job.

RB: Yes.

KP: How well did the ROTC prepare you as an officer? Did you listen more attentively after we got into Korea? A lot of World War II veterans have said that, after Pearl Harbor, they listened more attentively in ROTC.

RB: Yes. Probably, before that, it was a lark, right?

KP: Yes.

RB: It was like, "Well, I have to take this," or, "What elective am I going to take?" So, perhaps some of them took advanced ROTC. ...

... Yes, the attitude changed. We did a little more physical training. We went to summer camp. We ran every place. We had people that had been in World War II who came back and were instructors. ... Did it prepare me? I think, probably, only in the sense that I had to be a leader, a commander of a small unit, and people had to depend on me, ... and I think that prepared me well. I felt that I could have the mental and physical endurance to do this, which I think I did, and I think the platoon that I had responded to that, in Korea and when we were doing rear-area duty. ... I had a little problem in the sense that I felt sympathy for some of the enlisted men. They did a lot of the tough work, and the officers tended to feel that they're grunts, and I used to say to them, "Well, they're human beings. If we don't get them to support us, they're not going to support you, if you're in another situation where you need them." That was a big contrast to World War II, as you know from reading some of these oral interviews and being involved yourself, that some of [the] divisions from World War II went over as a unit, and they had been training together, those that survived, I think, fall into the two categories that we were talking about. They either forgot about it or they still remember, and they remember the comradeship that they had when they had to depend on each other, and they took different experiences from that. You probably have read a bit about the American Civil War. When we were on our way down to the Rutgers-West Virginia game, Alice and I stopped in Gettysburg, and I could never figure out why these Confederates came across that open plain. [Do] you know Jim Reed?

KP: Yes.

RB: Jim Reed and I have talked about this, and he mentioned a couple of books, one entitled The Vacant Chair, and part of that explanation is that they were in units and they depended [on each other]. They camped together, they ate together, they came from the same town, and they had this feeling of comradeship and protectionism that they needed, and I think that carried over to World War II. I don't know about World War I, but, I think it prepared us to be small unit commanders.

KP: After you graduated from Rutgers, how soon did you report for duty?

RB: I graduated in, what? June of '51, and they called us up to active duty. I reported in the Fall of '51, less than six months.

KP: Did they give you any refresher training or any advanced infantry training?

RB: Well, we had to go to company officers' school at Fort Benning, which was from October '51 through March of '52, and then, I came up to Fort Dix, and I almost missed going, because they had a mix-up in orders. They were going to send me to Germany and that was based on the policy that, if you had no prior military service, you would go to the Far East. If you had military experience before, you would go right to the Caribbean, and to the Panama Canal Zone, or Europe, Germany, and so on, and so, we got these orders to go to Germany, and I didn't say anything. Then, I was home on leave, and they called me, and they said, "Oops, sorry, the Pentagon made a mistake. Your orders are changed." As a matter-of-fact, I had the gall to go down to the Pentagon to find out about this, because we got married. We weren't planning to get married at that time. So, here, we had just come back from our honeymoon, and I was still at Fort Dix, and while this had happened, I had the orders to go to the Far East. So, we went down to the Pentagon, and they sent me to a small section, and I'm sitting out there, this green second lieutenant, and sitting next to this captain from Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and very prim, very proper, and a graduate of West Point, and we started talking. He said, "Why are you here?" and we were sitting outside this office, and the people were busy. I said, "Well, a mistake in my orders." "Well, I don't blame you." "Why are you here?" "Well, all my classmates are majors, and I don't have my majority yet, so, I'm going to find out."

KP: This captain was telling you that he did not have his majority.

RB: Yes. So, we're sitting there, and this officer comes in, with a trench coat open and this bag, and he throws this bag down, and this captain and I look, and he says to this enlisted man, "I'm Colonel So-[and]-So," and we hadn't met anybody. No, they just took our names, and this officer who's running this office comes out, and they hug each other, and, "Where have you been?" This captain and I wanted to, "How the hell? What's this system?" and the fellow had just come back from I don't know where. He says to his buddy, who's running this office, "Here's the kind of assignment I want," and this captain and I are looking at each other, and I said to myself, "Shit, forget it." Well, I got called in, and the fellow was very polite, after he was finished with his classmate, or whatever it was, and I never knew what happened to that poor captain, because I just left. This officer said, "I can't do anything for you." He had to go, and I walked out, and that poor

captain was still sitting there. He probably figured, "I don't have a connection like that, to ask why didn't I get my majority."

KP: You had known your wife for a long time before you were married.

RB: We were [in the same] high school.

KP: High school?

RB: The class behind me, yes.

KP: Did your being called up for Korea hasten your marriage plans?

RB: ... We always wanted to get married in the fall, we liked the fall, and I felt that, well, the thing would be over, and I would probably go to graduate school. When I got this telegram changing my orders, I called her and I said, "Well, you want to get married now?" and it caused a little bit of upset in our families, but, we did. Yes, it did. I mean, not that we didn't make the decision to be married [already].

KP: Had you thought of waiting out the war?

RB: No. I felt that you had to take a chance, that maybe by the time, ... don't forget, hanging over my head, and other persons in my situation, was the negotiations, because the papers reported [that], "It looks like there might be a breakthrough." So, even though you were on your way there ...

KP: You were hoping that ...

RB: You were hoping that that breakthrough would occur, and that you would get over there, and you would maybe just cool your heels for a year or so, ... but, no, I never gave any thought that I wouldn't come back. My father raised that question. He said, "You get married," and he was very plain, "And what happens if you get killed? What will happen to her?" "Well, I understand, Dad, but, that's not going to happen," right. It's like when you drive on [Route] 287, you have to remind yourself, there but for the grace of God [go I], if you don't keep your goddamn eyes on that road. Nothing's going to happen to you, but, boy, it can happen to you, but, that's a little different situation, but, you figure nothing's going to have your number, but, it does, once in a while.

KP: How effective was your infantry refresher, the command school at Fort Benning?

RB: Oh, that was very good, actually. We had primarily ROTC officers, quite a few West Point graduates and National Guard officers. We had officers from Illinois and Ohio whose ... units were federalized to build up the reserves in the United States. Many of those were World War II veterans, and I felt sorry for them. One officer from Illinois told me about this big farm that they had, and he left his wife and little baby at home, and I felt so sorry for him, but, it was just

fascinating, how hard they worked and how productive the land was, depending on the elements. I said, "Gee, that must be a rough life." "Yes, you get up before it's light and go to bed after it's dark, but," he said, "I love the land. I love the animals," and I don't know what ever happened to him, but, I never saw him again.

KP: It sounds like the experience of meeting people from different parts of the country in the service during the war was a very positive experience, because it keeps coming up.

RB: It does.

KP: When did you join your unit? Did you join your unit in Korea or did you go over with your unit?

RB: No.

KP: You were a replacement.

RB: A replacement officer. ... The City of Taegu, which is now like 3,000,000 people, I'll tell you about talking to some Korean students, here, in a minute, but, we were in the City of Taegu, and I just had this long list of names, and the system went into place. I was asleep. It was probably about like two o'clock in the morning. They woke us up and they said, "We're going to go up," and we were supposed to rest. How you move replacements [is], you rest at division headquarters, you rest at regimental headquarters, and you rest at the town. Well, one of the lines said, "No," because what had happened was, the regiment that I was going to, was ordered to make an attack on this hill and they sustained a lot of casualties.

So, we had to move right up to replace these companies that had been hit hard, and the only place I stopped was at division headquarters, and that was about twenty miles behind the line, and I went in to eat. They said, "Well, you go in, and have dinner, and then, we're going to move you up by truck. You're not going to rest here." I walk in this Quonset hut, and here are white tablecloths, white napkins, and I sit down and started eating, and who comes in but a classmate of mine from Rutgers ROTC. He's on our reunion committee, Frank Brennan, from New Brunswick. He saw orders and he came and had dinner with me. He was division historian, and so, we move right up to replace the unit, just for the sake of about twelve hours. I might have been assigned to that company that had been in the attack in the morning. See, the company that had been in the attack in the morning, their company commander and executive officer were two casualties. One was killed in action, one was seriously wounded. So, they pulled that company off. A captain, a West Point graduate, and myself were to replace them, and that company that had been in the attack in the morning was being moved over to a quiet sector. The company that was in the quiet sector was going to be sent, maybe, in the attack in the next couple of days or so, but, I don't think it came off, because they realized it wasn't ... fruitful.

So, we move right up, at night, and it was a little tricky to do, but, we climbed up this hill, and we were moving up, and I'll never forget, when we were moving up, the infantrymen that were going

down were touching your hand as you went by. Each man would touch your hand, I guess as a little reassurance, to say, "Good luck. You're going here, you're going there." I'll never forget that. Didn't see your faces, but, they would touch your hand, because we were going up and they were finally down.

KP: No, no, you are anticipating questions. You did not meet your unit ...

RB: No, I got up there. We were driving up and it was very, very dusty. There was this first lieutenant who had been wounded, shot in the hand. He sat next to me, and I knew there was something wrong with him, because all he kept talking about was, he couldn't wait to get back up to the line, and everybody else was looking at him, sort of, "I can't wait to get back?" So, he stopped and I didn't know what to say to him, because I don't know whether he was grandstanding, or whether he was anxious, or whether there was something wrong with him, emotionally. It was getting dark, and you see the sun going down, it's getting black, it's getting black, and he jumps up, and he startled me.

"There, you can see the artillery fire," and I look up and I'll never forget this. You couldn't hear it, but, you could see the constant flashing. "Oh, I can't wait to get back." I don't know what ever happened to him. He didn't come with us. We got into other trucks, and, by this time, you could hear the artillery. Well, you get a little nervous, and I get into this truck, and this big, Southern kid is driving. Captain Daily and these ninety replacements were in other trucks. So, we're driving up, and they don't have any lights on, and he slows down, and I hear this water. "What is that?" "That's the river. We're on a pontoon bridge." I put my foot out and he says, "Oh, don't worry, Lieutenant. I've been over this so many times." There is no guardrail, and here we're going across this heavy-running, very rapid stream. I look up, and we're coming to this area where we're supposed to report, and tents had lights.

They were expecting us, and I look up, and there is [a] hill higher than us, and ... everything was hitting that hill, artillery, machine gun fire, anti-aircraft half-tracks firing, and all I could see were these strikes, flashes, and all of this smoke, and I'll never forget, I said, "I wouldn't want to be on the receiving end of that." But, as we know, the Chinese were dug into these bunkers, just as in World War II, but, it was impressive, in a very dramatic sort of way. "Oh, my God, these poor kids are going up there the next morning." I think the attack was called off, but, ... we replaced this company, and they were getting ready to attack that hill that they were "softening up," as the old expression goes. So, it wasn't until, like, dawn the next day that I saw some of these kids, and the platoon leader was a young farm boy from I don't know where, Indiana or Ohio, and his eyes were glazed over. I asked him, ... "Are you all right?" "Well, yeah, I'm glad you're here, because we really got hit pretty bad." Later, when I was in the hospital in Japan, I had a visitor, and it was this corporal, and I don't know how he found out [I was there]. "What are you doing here?" "I was cleaning my rifle and it went off," and I looked at him and I knew he had shot himself in the foot. I didn't ask him that, but, I knew.

KP: However, you could just tell.

RB: I could, because I could see [it], when he talked to me. He had gone through a lot, but, he was not [broken]. I mean, he was a blond, blue-eyed kid and I guess he wanted to get out.

KP: How long had your unit been in Korea?

RB: The Seventh Infantry Division?

KP: Yes. How long had the guys in your unit been in? How many were old timers? How many of them were recent?

RB: Most of them were recent. Captain Daily, who came up with me, was in combat for a while in World War II. The second night we were there, the outposts radioed back in ... and said there were movements out there. Captain Daily came over to me, we were the only two officers in the company, and said, "I'm going to go down to the wire." "Well, I'll go with you." He said, "Oh, no, no, no, you stay here. In case anything happens to me, you'll be in command of the company." So, he went down there, [armed] only with a pistol, and he walked down a few hundred yards, and I guess he reassured these kids. They must have heard something. They asked me what to do? I said, "Well, if you hear something out there, you'd better fire at it," which they didn't do. So, Daily came back and said, "Oh, no, you're just a little nervous." He reassured them. He was very good. He was very calm, and depended on me a lot, and I depended on him.

KP: It sounds like you were fairly scared.

RB: Oh, sure.

KP: Yes. It sounds like the artillery really affected you.

RB: Well, when it thunders, sometimes, the flashes reminds me of it. I don't like to go see fireworks.

KP: Really, because of that?

RB: Well, the colors, really, from the ammunition are spectacular. A friend who was in the Air Force and took the 82nd Airborne over said, "Ray, we pushed some of these guys out. The fire coming up was like fireworks, but, it was fireworks that could kill you."

KP: A pilot I once interviewed said that he was told, "When you go on your first mission, you will be entranced by the flack. You will just stare at it for a minute or two," and he said that he did not believe them, and then, sure enough, he saw this flack and he had to be shaken back into reality. What were the backgrounds of the men in your company?

RB: They were mostly draftees. I remember a fellow from Paterson, New Jersey, some from Florida, most of them very scared, especially the replacements. I had to go around each night and assure them that things were okay and that they had to depend on their weapons. A few times, we

had to call, because they would call and they'd say, "Well, we hear something out there." So, I would call back, give orders, and they would send up flares. You'd have to strain, because it would kill your night vision. Believe me, I can really see much more light, not like a dog or a cat. If you get accustomed to the dark, you can see. You can't discern people moving, unless they really make a lot of noise. So, we would call for flares, and it would light up the whole valley, and then, you had to learn how to look fast, to distinguish, like, a tree stump, or barbed wire, or things like that, and we would get a little jittery. The Chinese wouldn't send up flares. They would just be content to be quiet and vice versa. It must have been like nights [in] World War II.

KP: One of the things that sticks out in my mind about the Korean War, from an earlier stage of the war, were the Chinese bugle charges and the human wave assaults. Did you have any fear of those or were you aware that the lines had stabilized at this point?

RB: I was aware that the lines really [had] stabilized. ... Your standard equipment was a carbine. You were not allowed to have a pistol, but, many officers had their own personal pistols. Some of our units were overrun, and a lot of that was blamed on the South Koreans, who were pitifully unprepared. I've talked to officers who were there, and they were dug in for the night, they're outnumbered, and they would get calls, "We're getting fire from this friendly hill." Well, the Koreans had pulled out, the North Koreans had come in, and, here, they thought they had their lines intact, but, they were surrounded.

KP: You were not worried?

RB: I wasn't worried there would be mass attacks, no, and the Chinese had stopped that, because of the tremendous losses they incurred. ...

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

KP: Had you led any other patrols before?

RB: No.

KP: This was your first?

RB: Yes, first patrol, first and last. [laughter]

KP: How far out were you? What happened that led to the friendly fire incident?

RB: We went down the hill after dark. There was a road between our hill and the unit to our right, which I think was the combination of Americans in the Seventh and the Colombian detachment. This road was zeroed in by our guns, because that's where any attack would come through. Our mission was to go out to the edge of this road, and fan out, and see if we could capture any prisoners. ... I had a map and the map had the mortar concentrations. I had a radio operator and sixteen men. We were moving out, and my night vision was pretty good, but, when we got into the

valley, the radio operator said, "I can't raise the company commander's [radio.]" This is supposed to be a powerful radio, and so, I knew I had a problem, in case we ran into anybody. ... First, we couldn't radio back. Secondly, if we could radio back, we didn't know whether we were in the middle of our mortar fire patterns. I said, "Well, don't worry about it, keep trying," and he kept trying, and then, all of a sudden, in our rear, we had two explosions of hand grenades. So, apparently, the Chinese had seen us and threw some grenades at whatever they saw, maybe they didn't discern us, and I thought we were relatively quiet. I ordered the men to spread out, and get their weapons ready, and that's all that happened. Now that I think back, what probably happened was, eight Chinese, or two Chinese, threw something and got the hell out, figuring that they'd get back.

KP: It sounds like you had a lot of raw men who were very, very nervous.

RB: Right, but, there was this ... black corporal who was very cool and calm. He had been there for a while and I said, "Well, you stay on this side." I had them spread out and I said, "You stay on the right side," and I was in the center. Another corporal was very jittery. He had been a paratrooper and had been around a bit. So, when we went down, I said, "Let's just keep your weapons ready." Of course, I was talking in a whisper. "Just keep your weapons ready. We're going to wait to see what happens," but, this jittery fellow came back to me and said, "I hear them, because I can smell them. They're out there." "Well, where do you think they are?" I could make out this little rise and there was like a series of little bushes. "You stay here." I moved up behind the riflemen that were lying down and I mentioned to them to stay quiet. I took a hand grenade and I threw it out past this area and arched it up. I figured, "If somebody was there and they got hit, they would yell out." We'd scare them. So, he got up, he was to my left, and I moved over, and he says, "No, they're there." "Don't throw your hand grenade, because there's a bush." I couldn't get the sentence out, but, he threw the hand grenade, and he threw it too short, and it hit the bush and exploded. I pushed him down as I was just trying to get out the sentence, saying, "Don't throw at the bush, it's too short." I pushed him down, and I got down like this, and I saw the flash, and my radio operator got hit, and I felt this fluid running down. For a moment I thought I'd peed in my pants. I was frightened, I peed in my pants. Then, I realized it was blood running down. This little corporal got hit in the leg a bit, the radio operator got hit in the back and in the buttocks. I could move my leg, and I said, "Okay, well, try to be quiet." Well, we made a lot of noise, but, obviously, they had pulled back.

We moved back, and, by that time, for some reason, the radio operator, well, the corporal, or somebody else, took the radio, and they got through, and they radioed back, and I figured we'd never make it, because you're making too much noise. I felt that, "Well, maybe there wasn't a patrol out there, but, if there was anyone out there, they might have gone back, and they would have said, 'Hey, put some mortar fire down in this valley. There's a patrol out there,'" but, we got back. They had a medical jeep waiting and they put us on. Our radio operator was in pain, but, I felt pretty good, and they took us back. We got back, and the chaplain comes out to [the] battalion aid station, and he didn't ask any questions, he just says, like a priest, ... "My son," and he put the sign of the cross on my head. "Well, I'm okay, but, this other fellow [needs you.]" So, he went over, and started talking, and put the sign of the cross on him, and he came back. "How do you feel?" "You

know, you never asked me whether I was a Christian or not," and he laughed. "Well, I'm on duty tonight and I'm a Catholic priest. I don't ask questions. If the rabbi was on tonight, he'd give you the Jewish last rites." [laughter] I'll never forget that. [What] if you were an orthodox Jew or Muslim and you say, "Well, look, I don't want that?" Well, they put us in this Quonset hut, the surgeon came out, ripped open my fatigues, and said, "No, you'll be okay until tomorrow. Then, they'll send you back. You'll have to be operated on."

KP: You must have had your brother flashing in your mind. He had spent some time on an amputee's ward. With blood running out of your foot, the thought must have at least flashed in your mind, "Is family history going to repeat itself?"

RB: Well, that's a tough question.

KP: Had you just had so many other things happen that it did not occur to you?

RB: Yes. I was thinking of my wife, and my parents, and what was going to happen, but, I didn't think of that, because I could move my leg. It was beginning to get stiff, and then, the surgeon said, ... "You'll be okay." I don't know if they immobilized the leg or not, they might have, but, they put me in this ward with all the aides, and it was dark, but, I could hear these fellows breathing when they were sleeping. This medic came in and he said to me, "Are you hungry?" "No, not really." "I bet you're thirsty?" "Yes," and he brought me this whole can of ice cold grapefruit juice, which was one of the most delicious drinks I've ever had, and I fell asleep.

KP: Did you have any contact with the Korean civilians?

RB: No, just when we did the rear area duty. Of course, they couldn't speak English. We had to watch them. When we were doing this rear area duty, ... there were huge marshalling yards where we were sending up ammunition, food. We had to watch them constantly, because they would break into the boxcars to steal food. ... I mean, I've seen people hungry, begging for food.

KP: Did you feel like you had gotten a "million dollar wound?"

RB: Yes, lucky, very lucky, because, if it would have hit me in the neck or the face, I would have been much more seriously injured and it reflects how people act under stress. Some get very [courageous], like this little, black corporal. He kept the whole unit together with me, and this other fellow was very panicky, and the other people, I think, responded to my presence and the corporal's presence, and they might have been scared, but, they were calm enough to follow orders. Whereas this other fellow just upset the whole apple cart by ... throwing his grenade that I knew was going to hit that damn tree, or bush, or whatever it was. What I had wanted to do was, since I knew it was a little rise, I felt it was quiet, we'd move up to the rise, which would give us a little protection in the flat part of this valley. Anyway, it was a million dollar wound.

KP: Was your unit in the rear-area a company-sized unit?

RB: ... Yes. We were billeted with a military police company, and most of our troops were spread out, one regiment went over for two months, then, the regiment would come back, and another one

would go over. The main mission was to guard the railway lines, so that the regiment was spread out between Seoul, Taegu, and I think Taejon, and that was our primary duty. ... I had to go down and check the guards every day in the rail yard, and I was with this military police captain who was a former vice lieutenant in Portland, Oregon, and he used to tell me how they used to slap prostitutes around. He was a real sadist. There were two officers who were ... Armed Forces Radio announcers. We used to eat together in this little hut in the City of Taegu and had some interesting times, because the one fellow was on the radio station in Honolulu, Hawaii, before the war. He was there just before the attack. They were there as disk jockeys. One thing you didn't mention, or didn't ask about, and I don't want to forget about it, was our experience in World War II in high school.

KP: Yes, I am glad you mentioned it. You mentioned the assembly.

RB: The assembly, and then, of course, the rationing and everything came on and everybody had someone in the war. My father was working a lot of overtime, because they were producing the petroleum. We had blackouts. My aunt, who was a Public Health nurse, had a white helmet and a gas mask. ... I was fourteen then. I thought that was the greatest, and we had air raid wardens, ... and you couldn't drive that much. You had to use the buses and the trains. ... We listened to the news, to what was going on, and we had students that were older than us, that were seventeen, that had their parents' permission and left high school. ... Then, some of them came back to finish high school, towards the latter end of the war. Plus, we had to run the obstacle course. I don't know if any of your interviewees told you that. They had regular obstacle courses where you ran over V-shaped platforms and through sand.

KP: Getting you ready.

RB: Getting you ready for being drafted or called up.

KP: Were you ever a Boy Scout?

RB: No. I always wanted to be a Boy Scout, but, they were decimated, because of the call-ups. So, that was one of my frustrations. I remember this, the gold stars go up in windows, and my mother would cry, because we knew people that were killed, and then, of course, my sisters, who were older than I, knew people who were shot down over France or Germany.

KP: Did your sisters date any GIs at the time?

RB: Yes. My oldest sister was going with a fellow who went into the Marines and my father was very opposed to that, which I think changed her life a little bit.

KP: Was he opposed because he was a Marine or because he was going overseas?

RB: He didn't mention. I think he didn't measure up to whatever he envisioned a son-in-law being.

KP: Really?

RB: He never ... articulated it. I don't know what it was. ... He worked in an all-male group. He worked hard, physically, ... although, at that time, the refineries were very specialized. If they were out in the field to weld a part, they would wait for a carpenter to come out and shore up whatever it is. Now, of course, that's all changed, but, I don't think he was under any physical problem. I think his two daughters, he wanted somebody special for them. No, wait, the only thing that he talked about, it comes to mind, you had asked a question about awareness of what was going on in the world, and that was before [Pearl Harbor]. I guess I must have been, maybe, eleven, eleven-and-a-half, and that was in that period where Britain and France, well, France had been occupied, and my father was talking about the fellows in high school. Now, it becomes clear and he was down on them, because he would say, "Well, they couldn't make it in the Army, like the French and the Germans," and my sisters got very upset. ... Now that I think back, it probably was sort of a semi-class reaction. ... He didn't go to high school, and these fellows were in high school, but, they weren't up to going into the military. We had some bad fights around the dinner table, and I could never understand that, and so, maybe my father, when they dated these fellows, he felt, "Well, they're not good enough," for my sisters, and, yet, the opposite really turned out. Most of them responded well, including his own son. So, it might have been sort of an economic distinction that he was concerned about.

KP: It sounds like your father almost resented the fact that he did not get to go to high school, that he had to go to work.

RB: Now that I think back and these little flashes of memory light up, it could have been that, although, at the time, I didn't realize it.

KP: Yes.

RB: I always looked at [the fact that] he was a hard worker. Most people at that time worked in the stores and factories. We didn't meet very many people who were CEOs of companies.

KP: Yes. It sounds like the white collar workers were very distinct.

RB: Or, they owned small, local businesses, like the grocery store, the liquor store. ... Well, [through] the one grocery store, that's when I first heard of Rutgers. The grocery store that we used to go to, their son began to learn the business, and people used to say, "Oh, he's a Rutgers graduate." That was in the late '30s and that was a mark of distinction. So, outside of that, and the sadness of the kids in high school whose brothers were killed, or they came back to school. Life had to go on, but, there was a difference. It was a very sad time, very sad time.

KP: Well, it is striking. For a lot of people on the home front, the war was ...

RB: That was it.

KP: Yes. You have a much sadder take on it than a lot of other people on the home front. A lot of them really remember it as the best years of their lives, in a way.

RB: Well, it gets back to economics that both of us have studied. Would the New Deal have pulled us out if there was no war?

KP: Yes.

RB: ... I think people said that and I've heard that. It wasn't a sense of ... being malicious, but, wages were good, everyone was at work, and if you didn't have a person involved, it was a good time.

KP: However, your family had one.

RB: No, we had a different perspective. We knew other people who had casualties, and when we went down to the hospital, I saw a person that was even in *Life Magazine*. ... He was a ...

KP: Quadriplegic?

RB: ... He had four amputations. Two of his arms were gone and two of his legs were gone. ... He's sitting in a wheelchair and people were interviewing him. He was from Philadelphia, a national[ly known] person. He used to go and help sell bonds and everything. One of his arms was shorter, but, the other one was off above the [shoulder]. ... He was from Philadelphia, had an Anglo name, but, I didn't go over to see him, but, I remember him.

KP: You had a real notion of what war could do.

RB: Oh, yes.

KP: A lot of people really do not feel that unless they have actually been in combat.

RB: No, they have no understanding, no understanding.

KP: Did you know how dangerous it was to be a second lieutenant? How aware were you, from your brother or from your reading, of how dangerous it was to be a second lieutenant in World War II?

RB: In the infantry?

KP: Yes. Did you have any of that awareness in Korea?

RB: No, not really. I knew it was ... dangerous, but, you had to depend on the people that were under your command, and, hopefully, that they would respond to your leadership, your personality, your character. It was different than World War II in the period when I knew I would be there, or

at least it seemed that I would definitely be there, not that it wouldn't be dangerous, but, it wasn't this mobile, up and down [war], as they had in France, and, eventually, when they got into Germany. The first few months of that Korean experience was like that. It was like that and [in] much more difficult terrain, much more difficult terrain.

KP: You mentioned that your first vote was for Stevenson in 1952. What did you think of Ike's famous line, "I will go to Korea?"

RB: Didn't like it, didn't like it at all. I never particularly liked Eisenhower. There was something about him that [bothered me.]

KP: How much black marketing did you have in Carteret? Was there any?

RB: If you got meat, this butcher shop was black market, or, if there was gas, it was black market. There was a man in Carteret that always had gas, and he started a business, his name was Leon Hess, and it was always, "Oh, he made his money in World War II," but, he's a multi-millionaire now. I guess he's close to ninety. ... He still owns the Jets, but, he used to talk to my father in the gas station. He didn't run the gas station, but, he always brought the gas in. So, your question about black market, just a rumor.

KP: You did not know of anything.

RB: No, nothing.

KP: It sounds like it was a vague ...

RB: Like a vague, "Well, this person got meat because they know somebody in Newark," where the meat comes off the trains from the slaughterhouses. No, definitely not.

KP: Where were you when you learned about the armistice in Korea?

RB: I was on my way home.

KP: You were already being shipped back.

RB: We were supposed to be in for two years, but, they started cutting back, sending officers back. So, I think the armistice was in, what, July of '53?

KP: Yes.

RB: ... I got home right before July 4th of '53, because my two years would have been up in October, and I got home just about July 2nd or July 3rd. We were lucky. Our particular class of officers was, as I said, [in] for two-year periods, and then, Congress changed it for many of us to come back early, lucky again.

KP: Yes. Had the war changed any of your plans?

RB: Well, yes, it did, because I had given some thought to graduate school, and I came back, and I talked to Bennett Rich, my old professor, up in Winants Hall, and he said, it must have been in August, ... "Well, I think they have a research assistantship open," and I went back to see one of my professors, and they knew what had happened, and he said, "Okay." So, for 900 dollars a year, I came back and I worked with Edwin McNall Burns. He was writing a book on the future of America. So, from there, I finished my Masters, wasn't so sure about the Ph.D., and was taking some coursework, and the kids came along.

KP: It almost sounds like, if Korea had not come along, you might have ...

RB: Done something different.

KP: What would you have done?

RB: Well, probably, maybe, went on to graduate school. One professor wanted me to go on up to Syracuse. They were just starting ... the Maxwell School. I don't think they called it that at that time, but, he had taught at Syracuse, and [do] you know what field he thought I should have taken? Health administration. Not about medicine, but, about running an organization. I have to go to the Rutgers Club.

KP: Yes, maybe we should stop.

RB: No, that's okay. Well, if you think of anything else ...

KP: Yes, I know.

RB: I think we've covered a lot.

KP: No, we have covered a good amount of material.

RB: When I looked at my watch before, I said, "Oh, we've got another hour or so." ...

KP: No.

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

Reviewed by Bojan Stefanovic 5/12/00
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/28/00
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/1/00
Reviewed by Raymond Bodnar 9/00