

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS J. BRENNAN, JR.

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Francis Brennan, Jr. on September 26, 2003, in Cranbury, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and

Jared Kosch: Jared Kosch. Mr. Brennan, we would like to thank you for sitting down with us for the interview. We will start with your parents. Could you give me a little background information on them?

Francis Brennan: Certainly. My father was born in New York, in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, and I'm not sure about the date. My mother was born in Dover, New Jersey, or Mine Hill, perhaps. Her name was O'Grady.

JK: Had your father seen any military service?

FB: No, he was not in the military. I think he was about sixty-three when he died in 1955, so, he was a little bit old for that. I know he did work, in the later part of the war, in this ER Squibb Company when they first began developing penicillin, which was a real boon, as far as the wounded were concerned and so on.

SI: What was his occupation?

FB: He had a number; one was a machinist in the Mack Manufacturing Plant. He then went into the real estate business, went to work for the Federal Government in the Homeowner's Loan Corporation, which was one of the New Deal corporations, and then, went into private real estate.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside of the house?

FB: Yes, my mother, for about fifty-five years, was a church organist in New Brunswick, St. Peter's in New Brunswick.

SI: Going back a bit, is there any immigration history that you know of in your family?

FB: I wish I did. We have the usual rumors about my mother's side of the family coming over in the potato famine, 1840s, 1850s, perhaps. My father's background, very cloudy, vague; so, I don't know much about that.

SI: You were born in New Brunswick.

FB: Born in New Brunswick.

SI: Was your father working for Mack then?

FB: No, he worked for Mack before he was married, after he got out of college, as a matter-of-fact, and moved to the New Brunswick area and worked for Mack at that point.

SI: Which degree did your father graduate from college with? What were his studies?

FB: Just liberal arts studies. It was a college called Cathedral College, in New York City.

SI: Was it kind of rare for someone to go to college in his day?

FB: I think it was, particularly among the maybe second generation Irish immigrants who were doing other things. I guess he should have been a cop. [laughter]

SI: Do you think that because of your father going to college that you were encouraged to go to college?

FB: Yes, they always did, yes, and I attended St. Peter's High School in New Brunswick and they encouraged, too. It was pretty much of an academic high school at that time.

JK: Do you have brothers and sisters?

FB: One sister.

JK: Was she also encouraged to go to college?

FB: Yes. She became a teacher. She went to what was Newark State Teacher's College at the time and she taught for many years, now retired.

SI: Which section of New Brunswick did you grow up in?

FB: I grew up on Livingston Avenue, three hundred sixty-three Livingston, between, of all things, Rutgers Street and Ellen Street, and it was primarily a residential area at that time.

SI: Was this primarily an Irish Catholic ward?

FB: No, no, it wasn't. It was really mixed. Our next-door neighbor was German, two neighbors down was Italian, broken English, a funny, humorous, wonderful neighborhood.

SI: Can you give us an idea of how those cultures mixed in the neighborhood?

FB: There wasn't really a bias in the neighborhood toward one or the other. We had a Schiller, who was a Rutgers graduate in the Marine Corps. We had a Resh, who was Hungarian. We had a Cumpher, who was probably German; the end of the block was Cicerele. The old man used to sit out on the steps and say, "Hey, it's a little a Frank." That's me, and my father in the real estate business sold to all types of minorities in those days. When a black family, the Haskins family, for example, a police sergeant, moved into our area, he sold them the house. Nobody thought a thing of it. I wouldn't say it was completely colorblind, but it was certainly more ... colorblind than it became later.

SI: Were there many working-class people in the neighborhood, working for J&J?

FB: It wasn't J&J, but it was a blue-collar neighborhood, no question about that. The Sixth Ward was the Irish ward. That was up near the college, St. Peter's Hospital and the college; that was the Irish ward. There were some Hungarian areas in the periphery, people that worked for J&J, the Second Ward, I guess near Sacred Heart Church, and that was a great mix, but ours was much more mixed than that, if anything more Italian, and, in New Brunswick, in those days, the ethnic groups seemed to have their own churches. The Italians were more in the Saint Mary's Church, and that's generally the area I lived in. [The church is] still there, German churches down in the (Burnett?) Street area, Nelson Street area.

SI: I live a few houses down from St. Peter's High School.

FB: Oh, yes, which direction, toward Rutgers?

SI: Right by the Corner Tavern. When you look at the names of the buildings and bars and streets, it goes from Irish names to all of a sudden, when you hit Division Street, it really was "division" street, the Hungarian section begins.

FB: Absolutely, and they mainly worked for J&J. Those houses, many of them were built around the same time for J&J workers, even the doctors up there. A couple of doors from St. Peter's block there, there was a doctor that was Hungarian, and who tended to the Hungarian population.

JK: Do you remember the Hungarian population in New Brunswick building up at that time? It was pretty substantial at that point. Do you remember an influx at any time? Was it a continual growth of that area of New Brunswick?

FB: I'm not aware that there was a build-up at that time. I think by, I was born in 1929, ... in July, and the Great Depression started in October and I don't think it was coincidental. I didn't cause it, I don't think. I'm not sure, [laughter] but the population, as I recall it, in the Saint Ladislau's Church area, was all Hungarian at that time and normal population development, but I don't remember any immigration or anything of that sort. The J&J workers, by that time, Hungarian for the most part, had been there for a while, I don't know how long.

JK: Did you attend public school in New Brunswick?

FB: St. Peter's all the way, except for kindergarten. I went to Livingston School.

JK: Was the population mixed as much in the classroom as it was on your street?

FB: Yes. St. Peter's School, at that time was a parish school, the elementary school. The high school was anything but a parish school. It took in students in the area from Rahway, Metuchen, maybe the other way, Dunellen, Somerville, South Brunswick, even the Cranbury area. That was the geographic scope of St. Peter's High School at the time and we had a real mixture. The grammar school, the elementary school, wasn't as mixed. It took in just the parish people for the most part and a lot of them, most of them, are Irish, I guess, from the Sixth Ward, except for guys like me who came from two miles away.

SI: What kind of role did the Church play in your life when you were a child?

FB: Oh, it was one of the things, going to Catholic elementary school. It was one of the main things in your life, in my life at any rate, various organizations in the school, the altar boy type of thing for years and probably one of the principal things, you know.

JK: Was college something that was talked about in your household as a continuation of your schooling?

FB: No, it wasn't. The difference, I think, between today and then, from my perspective, is that, today, young parents talk about what college the kids are going to almost before they're born. In my family, that wasn't the case. It wasn't assumed that either my sister or I would go to college, but that was kind of an evolving, devolving thing, as we went into high school. I became interested in writing and decided that the best way to get training for a profession like that was to go to Rutgers and the Journalism School there was excellent at the time. Besides, I didn't have the money to go any place else.

JK: The Depression affected where you were going to go.

FB: Yes, in our family, it did.

SI: Do you have any other memories of how the Depression affected either your family or New Brunswick?

FB: We joke about the fact that, at the time, we didn't have much money, but we didn't know we were poor and, in terms of today's standards, things were Spartan, at least, but we always had food, we had clothing, but the luxuries today, the automobiles and things of that sort, that's not a luxury today, but the automobiles, in those days, were. I got an automobile, I think, when I ... finally was graduated from college. Otherwise, I was using the family [car]. Got a bike when I was in high school, but we did very well, fairly well, and made ends meet.

JK: Did your father maintain steady employment during the Depression?

FB: During the Depression, and the thing that I left out about him, I should have put in before, after working at Mack, he began a hardware store in Highland Park, on Raritan Avenue in Highland Park, and, during the early part of the Depression, when I was too young to remember, I know from what they had told me, most of his money was in a bank in New Brunswick, I think it was the Citizen's Bank, and they folded. They closed their doors, as many banks did in that time. So, all of his funds were there. He lost every penny he had and lost the business. He didn't go bankrupt. He paid off all his debts, I know that, but that was one of those bumps in the road and one of the impacts of the Depression.

SI: Do you remember anything like hobos coming through the town, any outward signs of unemployment?

FB: Not that I remember, no, no.

JK: You were fairly young, though, at the time.

FB: I was, yes, that's right. You know, I was born in '29. By '39, I was ten years old and it wasn't until later that I really knew, because my mother and others told me about my father's problems and that's the impact there.

JK: Did your parents have any political affiliation at the time?

FB: No, no.

JK: They were not strongly opinionated either way.

FB: They didn't broadcast it if they did. They didn't run for public office or anything of that sort.

JK: Did they vote?

FB: Oh, yes, voted, absolutely, but didn't advertise which way, pretty much let us, my sister and I, decide for ourselves.

JK: Were your parents for FDR and the New Deal policies?

FB: Yes, they were for the New Deal. I'm not sure, as Roosevelt went into running for a third term, that they were a hundred percent behind it, maybe two is enough, but they were certainly supportive of the New Deal, because, as I recall, they felt that that was helping us get out of the Depression. Then, as the war began, many others, and I guess they too, felt that maybe the war had a lot to do with getting us ... out of the Depression as well.

SI: Were you able to see the effects of the New Deal in New Brunswick, for example, a project being built by the WPA?

FB: Oh, yes. I think Rutgers Stadium was one thing. That isn't New Brunswick, but it had a great impact. The municipal stadium in New Brunswick, I know, was built by the New Deal. I think the post office, not the one that exists now, or maybe not, was built by the New Deal. As I recall, it was on George Street at that time. So, there were public buildings put up with the WPA in particular.

SI: In your years prior to coming to Rutgers, did you have to work to help support the family?

FB: No. I always had a part-time job from the time I was young. I worked as a soda jerk for a while, I worked for the Chamber of Commerce in New Brunswick for a while, trotting around, doing junky work, cutting grass. Those are the main things.

JK: What year did you enter high school?

FB: Got into high school in '44, got out in '47.

JK: Pearl Harbor, 1941, do you have a good recollection of that day and what were you doing?

FB: Playing horseshoes with my father out in the backyard when it came through, yes.

JK: Can you remember how you felt when you heard the news?

FB: I was in elementary school and, no, I don't remember exactly how I felt. ... I knew it was a major thing. I think it interrupted our horseshoe game, but, no, I don't remember.

JK: Do you remember any commotion, people getting worked up about the attack?

FB: No. I had neighbors and friends, older friends, who enlisted in the military immediately, almost immediately. One was a Rutgers graduate, went right into the Marine Corps. I had relatives who went in the Coast Guard and the Navy. As a young guy in grammar school, I wouldn't say I was remote from it, but there was a certain insulation. The impact that we felt, that I felt, were the blackouts, for example, and the rationing, the gasoline rationing and other food rationing, ... and the air raid drills, when you'd better put all the lights out, and there'd be air raid wardens coming around here, not a Gestapo type thing, but they would make you put all your lights out.

JK: I know you were young during this period, but did you have any notion of the war going on in Europe prior to Pearl Harbor?

FB: No, I didn't. I wasn't really that attentive to international stuff at that time.

JK: It wasn't presented at all in the classroom in any way.

FB: Not that I remember, no. In the '30s you mean, with Hitler's invasion and all that? No, I don't remember.

SI: Since you were in such a mixed ethnic neighborhood, with Germans and Italians and probably some Jews, did they ever discuss it? Did your friends ever say, "This is what's going on."

FB: No, no. All those days, I was very active in the Boy Scouts and the closest we got to it was paper drives and scrap metal drives and things of that sort with the Boy Scout troops.

SI: Can you describe what it was like for you, as a child, being in the Civil Defense drills, the blackouts? Were you involved, perhaps as a messenger boy?

FB: No, no. I had no ... active role. The air raid wardens were the main thing that I'd see, with their armbands and helmets and things of that sort. How old was I in '41? I was ... eleven, twelve years old.

SI: Do you remember taking the possibility of an air raid seriously?

FB: Oh, yes, that we would take seriously, although, and the rumors flew; always, there were always rumors about the Germans submarines off New Jersey, I guess. The recent research indicates there were plenty of them, and things of that sort, but, as I say, there was a remoteness. I know, the good friend, the Marine, John Schiller his name was, Rutgers graduate, journalism guy, a very talented guy, joined the Marines and was involved in most of the big action in the South Pacific and his mother, who was a character, I'll never forget her coming to our house and reading some of his letters and saying, at that point, she insisted, there was a book out at the time called *Guadalcanal Diary* and she came over and he was in Guadalcanal. She said, "You've got to read it, *Guadalcanal Dairy*." I said, "Ah, poor Mrs. Schiller didn't know daily from diary, but that's okay." ... Those were the closest that we got, if you knew people in the service, very few that I knew that were actually in the Army or the Marine Corps, in the invasion of Normandy, the D-Day, or the South Pacific campaigns. I knew very few of them.

SI: Was it a constant source of stress for your friends and neighbors, worrying about their family members who were in the service?

FB: I think the families that were involved were worried and concerned and going through the parochial school, there was always the prayers for the servicemen and so on.

SI: What can you tell us about rationing? How did that affect your family? What do you remember?

FB: Mostly, the gasoline would limit where you were going. My father, I think, at that time, was in real estate or worked for the government, Homeowners Loan, and the rationing would limit the trips. Butter rationing and other things like that had some impact, that I recall. I don't think it was a great impact. As I recall, as a youngster, it wasn't.

JK: When you were a child, did you ever think that the Second World War would have such an impact on the Twentieth Century? Was World War II that big of a deal in the mind of a thirteen or fourteen-year-old?

FB: I didn't feel it that way, no. I didn't have that perspective. The perspective I have now, and I tell John Chambers [Professor of History at Rutgers University] from time to time, the chronological perspective, I said, "John, when I was studying at Rutgers even, in the History Department, we're studying the Spanish-American War, that was only fifty years before. Now, fifty years after Korea, I don't have that same kind of perspective. The Spanish-American War was about as far removed from immediate consciousness in those days, even as a student, a college student. What the hell, Teddy Roosevelt and the Spanish ... in Cuba? Or even World War I, that was even closer, that was remote, but, in looking over this Korean thing, that isn't as remote anymore." That same fifty-year perspective is a little different as you get nearer seventy-five. Hopefully, you guys will get there some day.

SI: We spoke about your academic interests in high school. What were your extracurricular activities?

FB: High school was mostly track, athletic activities. School newspaper was the big thing for me and it gave me a chance to write and that's where I developed, with a struggle, say, as a sophomore, junior, senior. I did a great deal of writing for the school paper. Then, I decided, I thought that journalism would be a good career. So, that's when I dove in.

SI: Did you have any particular interest within journalism, such as international news, local news or sports?

FB: No, I just wanted to get a foot in the door. [laughter]

SI: Do you remember where you were and how you reacted to Franklin Roosevelt's death?

FB: No, I don't recall how I reacted. I know Kennedy's death had a great impact on me, but FDR's could have, but I just don't recall.

SI: Do you remember anything about any celebrations pertaining to either V-E Day or V-J Day?

FB: The local celebrations, ... what I've read about since, stir up some memories, elation, parades, dancing in the streets, the whole bit, but, other than that, it's pretty vague. That was '45. Maybe I should have been a little more aware, I don't know, but I wasn't. I don't recall being in here.

SI: What was the relationship between New Brunswick and Rutgers at the time? How much of an impact did Rutgers have on the city?

FB: I think a major impact. Rutgers was a small college as I grew up. I didn't have much connection with it, ... nor did I attend more than a few football games in what was a new stadium in Piscataway, and I think Rutgers made a great effort in outreach to the New Brunswick community. They had football, I don't know about the basketball team, but football, for example. They had an area set aside for the students, youngsters who could go to the ballgames for free. And that drew a lot of us, can't beat the price, you know. In those days, the teams weren't bad. [laughter] So, it was a good reason to go and it was a beautiful stadium, at the time, a new stadium.

SI: During World War II, what effect did Camp Kilmer, which was right across the river, have on New Brunswick?

FB: That was probably the greatest impact, because the soldiers who would be assigned to Kilmer, and usually it was the spot where you can count on going overseas, they would go on leave in New Brunswick and it was a good source of income for New Brunswick businessmen and great visibility, as far as Army uniforms.

SI: Was there any kind of safety concerns, with all those men on leave?

FB: No. I didn't sense any, no.

SI: Nobody was putting the word out, "Don't cross those guys."

FB: No, no. As I recall, it was a pretty welcoming town, at that point, for the servicemen.

JK: Did many of your friends from in New Brunswick eventually attend Rutgers?

FB: No, I think a small number did. A good number of them went, as they do now, out of the area, many out of New Jersey, and I think financial consideration was one thing and the reputation of the college was another. Rutgers was an inexpensive place to go and I could live at home. That was another item. I applied elsewhere, but this was the best shot at that point.

SI: Did your parents pay for your tuition or did you have a scholarship?

FB: I pried some money loose from the Dean at that time, but tuition in those days was so reasonable and, living at home, there was no room or board expense. So, I did work, but not to support my tuition or anything of that sort. They supplied most of the funds, but it was in the hundreds of dollars in those days, not in the thousands.

SI: Where did you work while you were in college?

FB: Well, as I said, the Chamber of Commerce, I was pretty steady, from time to time. I had a good connection there. I learned how to make soda and sundaes and BLTs pretty well downtown, and then, the last couple of years of college, the Journalism Department asked if I would be willing to work for the *Home News*, which was in New Brunswick at the time, and so, I thought that was a good foot in the door and I worked for the *Home News*, part-time, during junior, senior year. As a matter-of-fact, after I got out of the Army, coming back, the *Home News* was very supportive and offered me a part-time position then, to ... keep body and soul together while I was in graduate school. That newspaper work [was] very valuable.

SI: What kind of stories did you cover there?

FB: I was the assistant night editor, which was kind of a lackey job, but it was copy reading, proofreading, and then, really, the low rung on the ladder in those days was taking PTA meetings over the phone and that's deadly stuff, the obituary work, deadly, too, in many respects, but that was the type. ... After a while, they'd send me out in the field and I could do some stuff, council committee meetings and borough council meetings and that stuff, nothing of great impact.

JK: Were you in ROTC?

FB: Yes.

JK: For all four years?

FB: All four years. You were required the first two years, and then, had a choice the last two.

JK: Was there any specific reason why you decided to go that route?

FB: Well, I was required the first two years and, after that, the Advanced ROTC, I think there were a couple of reasons. One was the financial; you did get paid, as little as it was, and some of my friends were involved and we thought it might be a profession worth considering. We weren't sure. So, there was a chance, after the commissioning, at the end of the senior year, to go regular Army, which I didn't do, and there were professional advantages perhaps, but it was no great love for the military or anything of that sort.

JK: Was there a general feeling among the ROTC members that, "The biggest war ever had just occurred and there is probably not going to be anything as big in the near future?"

FB: Yes. You put it well. I think that was the case until the end of my junior year. After the first year of Advanced ROTC, at the end of the junior year, we usually went to summer camp and I think they probably do the same and I remember vividly being at Fort Meade, Maryland, summer camp that involved ROTC guys from all over the eastern coast and, at that point, of course, the Korean Conflict began while we were there and, at that point, we were fully aware of what happened in World War II, that guys were called right out of their junior and sophomore years in college. We were kind of sweating that one out. We didn't know how big this thing really was going to be, but there was a little apprehension at that point.

JK: I am sure, just because of the situation, everybody was caught off guard. Nobody was expecting anything.

FB: We were, we were. I'm not sure we should have been overseas, but the prospective officers were down at Fort Meade.

SI: Just to talk a little bit more about Rutgers, we get two perspectives on Rutgers, one from the people who lived there and another from the people who commuted. The people who commuted sort of missed out on a lot of the Rutgers social world. Since you lived close, were you able to catch some of that?

FB: We caught some of it, although there was always the division between the commuters and the boarders and there was also the division, I guess it still exists, between the Greeks and the not Greeks and most of us who commuted weren't Greek. Very seldom did I ever go inside of a fraternity house in those days. My future brother-in-law was the president in one of the fraternities that was perennially on social probation, so, that was a good party place, but I did get there, but very little connection between the Greeks and non-Greeks, as I saw it, and there was some division between the commuters and the boarders.

SI: Did you get a sense that, if you were not in a fraternity, then, you were missing out on a part of the social world?

FB: I didn't feel that way. Yes, I didn't feel that way. There were so many other things going on, getting involved in.

SI: Were you involved in any clubs or athletics?

FB: Yes, a lot of intramural stuff. I think I was in the Glee Club for a couple of weeks, until I got a job at the *Home News*, and I thought that the *Home News* job would probably be better than the Glee Club, in terms of finances and future. Military connections, there was the Scabbard and Blade Society. I don't know if it exists today or not, but it was something that took the Advanced students and brought them together. Newman Club, at that point, was big for the Catholic students, a social thing, and it was very large, active, social.

SI: Did you go to any concerts?

FB: Always, yes. I loved them.

SI: Are there any names that you particularly enjoyed seeing, big names?

FB: Well, at that point, during many years, Professor Walters, Soup Walters, was the director of the choir and he brought in a number of major orchestras, Rochester and others, Eric Lansdorf, and Rutgers had an alliance for years, and so, I enjoyed those concerts. I think, more than once, the box hit, *St. Matthew's Passion*, was a big production in the old gym, with the Rochester Symphony and the Rutgers and there were NJC folks at that point. So, yes, I remember vividly things of that sort. I think Rutgers, in those days, being smaller, for some reason, had a greater impact, as far as the students are concerned.

SI: In your class, there is a mix of veterans and kids coming out of high school. How did that play out in the classroom situations or social situations?

FB: I don't recall it being that much of a difference. We knew who the veterans were. Some of my classmates in the School of Journalism were veterans. Well, they got a job the same time as I did at the *Home News*, Reggie Kavanaugh. He was an Air Force veteran and they were all good friends. I didn't perceive it as being veteran/non-veteran. It was a conglomerate and it was a lot of collegiality at that point.

SI: Did you get to go over to NJC often and socialize on that side of town?

FB: Sure, yes, and it was a safe walk in those days. Sure, we dated the girls at NJC. For the most part, they weren't taking classes downtown, Rutgers College. They were pretty much separate, except in the School of Journalism, and there were a few, very few, in the School of Journalism, but we would go over and they had their dances and we had our dates and favorites among the girls who were there, yes.

SI: Did you go to any of the dances at Rutgers, such as the Military Ball?

FB: Oh, yes. I think as a junior or a senior, I chaired the music committee of the Military Ball. We would get some good, in those days, real good bands, Charlie Spivak and people of that caliber. They were great affairs, yes.

SI: Who were your favorite professors at Rutgers?

FB: In journalism, I didn't have any. The ones that got me the jobs, I liked very much. Dr. Merwin was the chair of the department and he was excellent and corresponded with me while I was in the service, very much attended to the students. Ken Jennings had been there for years and years and he worked at the *Home News* during the summers and he was a powerful figure, but, in journalism, those were the ones. Out of journalism, I became very friendly with some of the English Department, Dr. Donald McGinn. I think I might have mentioned this one, Dr. McGinn, who was the Shakespeare guy in those days, and he, too, while I was in the service, wrote. ... It was quite a close connection in those days between the professors and the students. I hope it still exists, I don't know.

SI: It is difficult when you have a class of five hundred kids.

FB: Sure was, yes.

SI: Did you see how Rutgers was growing and expanding at that time?

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FB: I started in '47 and we had good influence, the veterans, at the time. Housing was always a problem. In those days, those who boarded couldn't get rooms on campus and were over at Camp Kilmer. They put them over there.

SI: Did you notice any other way in which the veterans' presence changed Rutgers or was felt in some area?

FB: ... It's hard to tell, because I was there only when veterans were there. They were very serious. Some of them already had families and there was a seriousness of purpose. They were hard partiers, hard ... socially, but there was also a sober attitude that I think the veterans brought to Rutgers at the time. The administration, at the time, the deans and so on, tried to maintain that small college, more or less, informal atmosphere. Walking on College Avenue from class to class, and you'd see one of the deans at the time or one of the professors, there was always, "How are you?" and they may know you by name and I'm sure, with the numbers now, that it's not too likely.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add about Rutgers?

FB: No. After I got finished with Rutgers, in terms of graduate work and things of that sort, it wasn't that I was married, I was working and there wasn't much of a connection until the last years, when Ray Bodnar got hold of me and said, "It's about time you got to work for our Class

of '51," and I said, "Okay, Ray," but there were many years in-between that all I did was read about it there or might go to a few things on campus, but I lost touch almost completely.

SI: Some of the alumni that we have talked to feel as though Rutgers dropped them. Do you feel that Rutgers lost touch with you?

FB: I didn't feel that too much. When Bodnar finally hooked into me, I felt that I hadn't really done too much, as far as being an active alumnus. I didn't feel that it was a Rutgers responsibility. I felt it was mine. So, I did get active, because Ray put a guilt trip on me, I guess, one thing, as he could do. No, I don't feel that way.

SI: Can you tell us about the process of getting your commission? Was it a special ceremony?

FB: Not that I remember. I know the day we got our degree is the day we were commissioned, and so, that was it and there was apprehension at the time. You know, okay, "Now, that we have the commission, what are they going to do to us?" Because we knew that orders to active duty were coming quick. They didn't ... dilly-dally. They came pretty quickly.

SI: Did you figure you were going to go to Korea, in terms of you did not go out looking for a job?

FB: Oh, I didn't, no, look for a job at all. I knew what was coming. I think, my recollection was, in about a month, the orders did come in, but the indications were that they were going to come.

SI: How did your parents feel about this? Did they express anything to you?

FB: I'm sure, right from the start, they were apprehensive, but they didn't show it and were always supportive, even overseas, very supportive.

SI: Since you were in the ROTC program for about a year while the Korean War was going on, was there anything that kind of filtered in from the battlefield, where they started saying, "This is what is working, this is not working?"

FB: The instructors that we had, for the most part, were World War II guys, lieutenant colonels, some captains, and, in the Advanced ROTC, I think they were fairly disconnected with what was going on overseas, as I found out, you know. We knew we were getting our butts handed to us, after the Yalu River massacres, and the connection between the instructors and that action over there was very limited, if at all, and, certainly, they didn't transmit much to the classroom. We were getting a pretty standard curriculum, in terms of strategy, mostly tactics, and that was it; as far as lessons learned over there, no.

SI: Did you ever consider switching to the Signal Corps or the Air Force ROTC?

FB: No, I didn't for some reason. I was probably too dumb to get in. Some of those names that you had in the Signal Corps were some of the really great students in those days. ... I wasn't

interested in the air at that point and, again, you're pretty well stuck in the same rut, the infantry rut, so, "okay, we'll get an infantry commission and become an infantry officer." It probably wasn't the smartest move, but the Signal Corps guys got shot at, too.

SI: Were you aware of how dangerous it was to be a second lieutenant in the infantry?

FB: Oh, we knew. Yes, we knew. We were reading stuff like Marshall's, SLA Marshall's, stuff and they were making us aware of a lot of theory. The guys who went to the Infantry School with me from Rutgers, there were quite a few from that class, I don't think we had, for some reason, any motivation to get out of the infantry.

SI: How do you think the public and Rutgers students who were not in the ROTC, before the war, perceived the Korean War? Was it something that was on people's minds?

FB: I don't think it was on the average guy's mind too much. As prospective officers, infantry officers, I think it was on our minds and I think I said before, we were pretty fully aware that we were getting our butts kicked, but, as the news filtered back to the United States, I'm not sure we were fully aware that the Chinese were about to enter, or the impact on the units that got clobbered up at the Yalu River, badly. I don't think that got back too well.

JK: What was the feeling within the ROTC about not fighting a defined enemy, as we had in World War II? How did you perceive that war?

FB: There was always the lingering thought that, first of all, it wasn't a war, it wasn't a declared war. Truman kept calling it a conflict. "Let's call it a conflict," and that's why I got a big charge over the Korean War Service Medal. It's a little ironical; they thought it was a war. It's all in the matter of definition, I guess, but the perception of the students, I think, was that, "This was going to be a serious thing if we went that way," and, once you are commissioned, there are three ways you could go. You could go over there or over to Europe, and some of my classmates did, or stay in the United States and go to more schools and become regular Army, which some of them did. So, most of them who became regular Army didn't go overseas in that direction, in the Far East direction.

JK: Did a feeling of anti-Communism come into play at all in the early period of the Korean War for you, as a member of the ROTC? Were the Russians or Chinese on your mind at that time?

FB: The Russians always were and certainly the Chinese. ... Korea was, before this started, the name of a place. We didn't know where the hell it was. In 1950, when we heard there was an invasion of Korea by the North Koreans of the south, we had no idea where it was. ... Grab an atlas, look at the map, and, "oh," but, as far as the politics of it, in those days, 1950, '51, the Communist threat was a real thing to us and anybody who stayed in World War II would know what happened toward the end and the whole business of dividing Europe and the Russian influence, the Chinese influence, they were real things. They weren't ogres or specters, I don't think.

JK: During your training, were there any briefings on the history of the region and what had been going on for the last couple of years?

FB: No, no, nothing. I learned it fast when I got there, but, no, there wasn't. The training at Fort Benning was well done, tough. The training that the guys got at Fort Dix afterward, and these were guys that were drafted, some of them out of college, these were guys my age, they were given squat, as far as background of what it's all about. Most of them were more homesick and lost than the officers, than we were.

SI: Most of the other Korean War veterans I have talked to took a two-week course, and then, they sent them right over. It seems like you got at least a year's worth of training and other assignments.

FB: That's right. That's exactly right.

SI: Was that standard?

FB: Yes, it was more than that; yes, the enlisted men could have been sent over pretty much after basic training. That could have happened, but that was, I forget how long, but it would be in the months, and then, popped over. As I kind of pull this together, to get my own thoughts together, but, my God, they gave me an awful lot of schooling and the Fort Benning schooling after commission, and then, overseas. I got a lot of schooling, more than I wanted, in the Far East Chemical School, CBR, Chemical-Biological-Radiological Warfare, in Japan, before they sent me over to Korea. ... That was tougher than most physics courses I took at Rutgers. The questioning came there, "Chemical, biological, radiological warfare, those guys got it, do we have it and what kind of protection do we have if they ever use it?" and the answer was, "We don't," and, if we're over there, "Where's the nearest protective stuff?" The best they could say was, "Maybe we have some in Japan," protective stuff.

SI: In the chemical school, were you being taught entirely by Army personnel?

FB: Oh, yes, but these were real pros at chemical, they call it CBR School, in Gifu, Japan. It was taught by, I'm sure, college professor types in physics and chemistry, a lot more theory than you'd ever want to know.

SI: Did that kind of put a bug in your head that, maybe, "When I am out in the field, this is a real threat?"

FB: Oh, sure it did, yes. ... There weren't answers to the questions. These were classes that were composed mostly of second lieutenants right out of college, who were, for the most part, not dummies and they were asking, "Hey, you're giving us this course for two or three weeks, making us take college level tests. What is this all about? Who's got this stuff?" and then, "Well, maybe they have it and you have to be [careful]."

SI: Was the training at Fort Benning as intense in the classroom as it was in the field?

FB: Yes. It was tough always and exams, the whole bit, it was very much like a college situation, as far as the classroom in concerned, and the field was tough as well.

SI: Would you be washed out if you did not perform?

FB: No. ... They assumed that the types of people that were there were self-motivated, for the most part, and there wasn't a fear of flunking an exam. It was just kind of peer pressure. "How can you be so dumb as to not get a passing grade?" in whatever it was. These classes were, interestingly, made up of new officers from all over, as well as foreign officers, and, recently, ... people seem surprised to know that we're training officers from other armies. That's been going on since 1951 or even before. We had Filipino officers there, fairly high level officers, and fellows that were fairly high up in the Filipino police, military police, and so, it was a mixed bag. It was a big class and very intensive, very well done.

SI: Did you have a drill instructor to put you through the paces?

FB: No, it wasn't like that. It was more informal than that, but there were classes inside, in the field, and know the maneuvers and all of the other things that you'd expect in a basic training type thing.

SI: That December, when you reported as platoon leader, was that your first command?

FB: Yes. That's right.

SI: What was that like, to now be the leader and to have men under you?

FB: Since they were, most of them, my age or just a little younger, it was kind of a unique feeling. In the basic training unit in Fort Dix, most of the enlisted men did not want to be there at all, and, all in all, many of them had problems. Sometimes, I thought I was a social worker, because they would have problems and we learned pretty early, I think, that if somebody has a problem, that's the important thing to them and you'd better deal with it. So, we dealt with those kinds of ... problems.

SI: Were they family problems?

FB: Family, family, for the most part, yes.

SI: Was men not fitting in a type of problem?

FB: Very few, yes, very few. Most of them want to get through this basic training and go on to whatever they were going to get on to.

SI: Did you have a sergeant?

FB: Yes. There was non-commissioned officer help.

SI: Was he older than you?

FB: Oh, yes.

SI: Was he in the regular Army?

FB: Yes, most of them were, yes.

SI: A lot of men who were second lieutenants tell us that they learned more from their first sergeants that they did in school.

FB: Without a doubt, without a doubt. I had some good ones and I had bad ones. I had some that couldn't stop drinking and I had some that were just super in all ways. So, that's true.

SI: What did they teach you that you could not learn in school?

FB: As far as being platoon leader in the basic training, I think some of the very practical things, in terms of dealing with groups of men platoon size, maybe forty at a time. Sometimes, a young officer would go to the extreme, in terms of discipline, in terms of expectations, and so on, knowing that, and I think you learn, after a while, that you have got to ease up, don't get too ... overwrought about problems. Guys, you know that they are not all perfect. Some of them were going to go over-the-hill and you have to deal with them.

SI: The military had been desegregated since 1948. Knowing that, several of the men that I talked to have said they never saw an African-American soldier. How integrated was the Army, in your experience?

FB: ... The officers were fairly integrated. I had some good friends who had just come back from Korea that I met there, airborne, who I became very friendly with. At the infantry school, [we] were fairly well integrated. I learned a lot there, in terms of dealing with African-Americans. I remember, vividly, in Fort Benning, I decided to go to a football game in Columbus, Georgia, with an African-American friend of mine, and the shock of my life, there I was, ... twenty-one, twenty-two years old, we couldn't get in the same gate. There was the black gate, the colored gate, and the white gate and I said to him, "Okay, we're not going." "Oh, yes, he says, "we got to expect this. I've been dealing with it all my life." Couldn't get in the same gate in the football stadium. ... The integration, as far as officers are concerned, was great and we dealt with it. As far as enlisted men, I thought it was fairly well done.

SI: Your next move, after Fort Dix, was to Camp Drum.

FB: Yes, that was a temporary duty. Somebody didn't like me. They sent me up there for a winter maneuver, umpire group, testing cold weather operations. They found out, I think, by January or February of '52 that we weren't doing too well in cold weather in Korea and the equipment we had didn't function in cold weather. I don't know why it took them so long to figure that out, since we'd been involved in Europe, but we were testing all kinds of equipment, clothing, radios, but we were the umpire group. That was the easy one. ... It was basically an

airborne maneuver and they were teaching us all how to ski and how to deal with the cold weather and so on and, of course, as luck would have it, that winter in New York, northern New York, there was practically no snow. So, that was real tough to do this and I remember, vividly, they trucked in snow, just to make the thing work, because they had airborne units dropping out of the sky, had to learn, supposedly, how to ski.

SI: That was just a winter maneuver, just a couple of months.

FB: Yes, it wasn't even that.

JK: You returned to Fort Dix.

FB: Went back to Fort Dix and went on special duty with the G-3 section. That's the operations section and I got involved with training, mostly physical education training, for large groups, two hundred, three hundred, and got involved with court-martial work. How? Don't even ask how I got involved with that stuff, and special duties like that.

JK: What did the court-martial work entail?

FB: Court-martial work? These were mostly enlisted men who got themselves in some kind of trouble, either going over-the-hill or drinking on duty or some offense and they were court-martialed and they needed either a prosecution or defense guys and where do they get them in the Army but right off the streets. So, you get the court-martial manual, you bone up the night before and you do the best you can for the poor guy. The theory of the Army, that I learned in that particular assignment, was that you're guilty until you're proved innocent, for the most part. Sometimes, that's true in the Army. They're not going to lean or bend over backwards at how many times you get caught drunk on duty and, finally, you get flopped in front of a court-martial and end up in the stockade for a while. ... I'm not sure justice was served completely in all of those cases, but they brought us in and did it.

SI: Was there any sort of indoctrination during training?

FB: Oh, yes.

SI: What kind of indoctrination was there during the Korean War? For example, the Marine Corps, in World War II, would aim to rip down a person, and then, build them back up.

FB: No, we didn't have that, not that I recall, nothing like that. You're trying to make soldiers out of them, trying to communicate some skills, particularly in terms of weapons, firing time on the firing range, disassemble and assemble various weapons, basic military conduct, things of that sort, didn't amount to the Marine Corps type, "Tear them down, and then, build them up in nine weeks," or whatever it was, three months.

SI: What was your next assignment, after Fort Dix?

FB: After Fort Dix, I was assigned to the Far East Command, which meant you were going to the peninsula. In May of '52, I went to Fort Lawton, Washington, and then, we're supposed to go by ship, and then, they surprised me and told me one morning, "Pack up, you're going to fly." So, they trained me from Seattle to Vancouver and flew me over. As I looked at the plane in my collection here, I can't believe that it was such a ... first class flight. Yes, they really did a nice job for us, got us over quick.

JK: You stopped in Tokyo along the way for the training that you talked about.

FB: ... We flew into Tokyo, and then, stopped at, it was Gifu, Japan, where they had the school set up, CBR School, and spent some weeks there.

JK: What was it like to be in Japan at the time, as an American Army officer?

FB: They were very friendly at the time. The first thing that I remember about Japan, flying into to Tokyo and being transported out of Tokyo, was, ... I vividly recall it was a Sunday afternoon and the streets had lines of kids with baseball bats and gloves and they were heading off. It was the great game in those days and that was '52, seven years after. At that time, you know, you saw the impact of the war. I know ... we went, by train, through Hiroshima and it was flat. I mean, it was flat, even in those days, a couple of buildings up and that's it. ... It was a flattened large city. That made an impact on me, as far as Japan is concerned, but the Japanese people were extremely friendly. I don't know what they thought, but, ... outwardly, they were extremely friendly and we got a taste of their culture, cormorant fishing and things of that sort, that they are well known for.

JK: Did you get any inclination of General MacArthur and his presence in the country?

FB: ... At that point, I became acquainted with a number of officers who had been called back from World War II. They were put in the Reserve after 1945. Some of them had been assigned to Korea, post-war thing, and then, now that Korea started, they were called back into the service and they knew they were going again and these were captains, majors, and they communicated their feelings about MacArthur and some of his eccentricities and so on and they were mostly negative. It was the nickname, never in his face of course, "Dugout Doug." ... For the most part, the officers, the older officers then, communicated that, "Here's a real showboat. ... He's the boss, but he's a real showboat."

JK: By the time you got to Japan, had MacArthur been relieved of duty already?

FB: ... Yes, right.

JK: What was the general feeling about MacArthur, a huge war hero from World War II, stepping down?

FB: Yes, he would step down, yes. I think it was mixed feeling[s]. A number of the officers felt, "If we're going over there and getting our butts kicked like that, we just can't sit on our haunches. We've got to take aggressive action." Now, I'm not sure that would have been the

right thing to do. ... MacArthur wanted to bomb north of the Yalu and do things of that sort. I don't know what that would have done. Later, I found in the Seventh Division, that unit had been up at the Yalu River. When I took over duties in the G-3 section there, I found records; they kept the records in a big trunk, two years old, the photos and records of that time, and you found out that, well before the Chinese came across the Yalu, there were very good indications that they were there and that their intentions were to come to south. So, who's to say ... whether General MacArthur had the right idea? Whether he knew that, whether he was going to try to preempt it, I don't know. ... It struck me as being unusual to find that the units that were up there had good intelligence that the Chinese were there and they weren't there just ... to enjoy the winter. They were there and came across.

SI: Did you ever talk to anybody who was with the unit then?

FB: No. They were all either pretty well dead or back to the States, because that was 1950, wasn't it? ... It was a massacre, but, no, I haven't. Going through the Seventh Division records, that was something that shocked me. I had no idea that there was that, the intelligence was that clear beforehand. ... It shouldn't have been that much of a surprise.

SI: History gives us the impression that the Chinese attack was a surprise. It is kind of a contradiction.

FB: I know. Yes, it does.

SI: How do you think that that version of history got out and what do you think about that?

FB: I think it got out through the political channels and whether it was Truman, Truman's Administration, trying to take the position that we had no indication, we were right, what MacArthur knew, I have no idea. All I knew was, the reports that were sent from the Seventh Division to Eighth Army and to Washington indicated that the Chinese were there in presence and in numbers. As the guy who uncovered this stuff, I was shocked. I didn't have any idea that that would be the case or was the case.

JK: Was there a general suspicion that the Russians were ultimately behind the things that were happening?

FB: There was always that suspicion. ... They were flying Russian planes, first of all. They were using Russian tanks and I was not aware, at the time, that there was the Russian presence to the extent that I later found out there was. At that point, we didn't have any idea that there was that much Russian influence.

SI: Can you tell us about the process of getting assigned to a unit on-the-line?

FB: Yes. As far as the process is concerned, you get these very impersonal orders that come through, signed by some adjutant, saying, "You're assigned to the Company I of the 32nd Infantry Regiment, Seventh Infantry Division," and so, you head there.

SI: How did you get up to the line?

FB: Truck, two-and-a-half ton, nothing too great. So, you reported to the division headquarters, and then, they got right down to the company and the platoon, "Here's your platoon, Buster."

JK: How did the South Koreans react at first sight, or maybe your first sight of them, because they had already seen Americans for a while?

FB: A number of the South Koreans had been absorbed into American military units, one way or the other, and I had some in my platoon. ... They were about as friendly and as helpful as you can imagine. Some of them were from Seoul and, when I was first assigned, it was on-line, but it was near Seoul and they would have a chance to go back home. ... They'd bring you something, *Kimchee* and go hang. *Kimchee*, you don't want to know what that is. *Gohang* is rice and this was their delicacy. The *kimchee* was a fermented delicacy and I guess they still serve it. It's made up of, like, cabbage and cucumber and all kinds of herbs and things and they'd stick it in the ground to let it ferment. Well, it comes like a salad almost and they ferment it. You can smell that out at sea. I mean, that stuff is really strong, ... but they were friendly like that. They would bring you delicacies from home. Most of the Koreans that I met, the South Koreans, were very, very, receptive, friendly.

SI: Was there a language barrier?

FB: Most of them could speak English pretty well by that time. They picked it up very quick. The fellow that I had assigned to me initially was a graduate of Tokyo University, because the Japanese had occupied Korea, and the bright ones, they sent over for education, over to Japan. So, they came back and some of them, such as this guy, were pretty sharp, pretty smart.

SI: Did you have any apprehensions about going into combat or how you would perform?

FB: Sure, plenty. It was one of those things where you think, at least, "Here's the inevitable; you're going there," and the rifle platoon leader, in those days, was living on-line. We were on-line; we were living in a hooch. I have pictures, if you ever want to see them, of a sandbag hooch, three guys in a hooch, platoon leader, assistant platoon leader, who's a sergeant, and his assistant, radio, that's it. ... The first thing you could see out of the hooch, over the top of the hill, would be barbed wire, on a minefield, and paths through the minefield, and that's the way it looked. ... There wasn't much time to worry about it, I mean, waiting for your first assignment, your first patrol. The mission, in those days, was to recon and get a prisoner. That was the main mission, and so, when you were sent out, that's what you were going to do. You're going to recon the area in front of your platoon and, if possible, bring back a prisoner, alive, dead, didn't make any difference, but alive is better. So, that was where we were at that time.

SI: What do you remember about your first combat experience?

FB: It was a patrol, about maybe eight or ten guys, radio operator and a dog. In those days, there were scout dogs and very, very, sensitive, particularly to the smell of the enemy. So, I was real happy I have a dog and not as happy to have the radio operator, because I always kept the

radio operator well away from me, because, if the Chinese were shooting, they were shooting at a radio antenna. So nothing against him, but I didn't want to be in the same vicinity. ... We spent my birthday, I remember, in July of '52 it was, out on patrol.

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

SI: Please, continue.

FB: Yes, we were on patrol with the dog and, actually, it was uneventful. We proceeded up what we thought was an occupied hill in front of our main line and there had been folks there, but we found it empty, thank goodness for that. Other times, we were out to pick up what had been ... described to us as enemy who were wounded or killed and that was a little more adventuresome, but I remember, in one instance, coming upon a dead, either Korean or Chinese, I can't remember, and we were always told, "Be very careful, because it's a booby trap, possibly." So, the lieutenant comes up, and that's me, and turns the guy over and leans back to see if anything is going to pop, nothing pops, and then, go through his pockets and, you know, there's the personal stuff. It really has an impact, picking out his, you know, kind of a wallet type thing, the cigarettes and all that stuff, and they want it back at headquarters, to figure out what unit is there. That's the best they can do, since you can't question the guy. So, you see if he's got any ID on him. So, we're into things like that. There were other patrols where we had to; the Koreans and Chinese were into ambush type things and, not far in front of our positions, you'd find or you could see a wallet and something else and something else. It looked like GI stuff, so, naturally, you'd go out to get it and, if you were lucky, there was nobody waiting for you and, if you weren't, there'd be somebody waiting, some other guy. It would be an ambush. We were assisted, always, by our artillery division, just out on beck-and-call. Of less assistance was the Air Force, sorry to say, whatever we'd see; on the other hand, Navy planes, they were super. They were excellent as far as support, excellent. The Air Force was not as accurate. In fact, some mornings, I would wake up and look on the other side abatement and find bomb craters and I don't know how they missed, but they were dropping bombs on our side, rather than the enemy side. So, the Air Force, I have a little less respect for them, but, then, the Navy guys, the Marines, they were super, in terms of response.

JK: On the reconnaissance missions, where you go out and look for soldiers, did you come across more Korean soldiers or more Chinese soldiers?

FB: Both, yes, yes, both.

SI: How soon before going into combat did you meet with your men and establish a bond and establish your authority?

FB: A couple of days. ... They handed you a carbine, the officers had carbines, the men had M-1 rifles in those days, and you were on your own. You had a company commander, who you were in communication with, but the one that I had initially ... had a few problems. So, you're pretty much on your own.

SI: Do you have a sense that they accepted you as a leader?

FB: Yes, oh, yes.

SI: Was it right away or was it after some event?

FB: I didn't sense any problems there. I'm not even sure I met the platoon leader that I replaced. I can't recall that, but ... I was treated very, very, well by the enlisted men, people I went on patrol with and things of that sort.

SI: Was the man you replaced a casualty or just rotated home?

FB: No, he was rotated home.

JK: Did you have other things that you were responsible for, besides reconnaissance duty?

FB: No, not as a platoon leader, no. In fact, some of these things, we would go out on a patrol, be assigned by a battalion S-2 intelligence officer and go out, come back, say, "Well, we found this, now, who do I tell?" ... and there were some breakdowns there. ... The area that we were at the time, just a central area in Korea, little north of the 38th Parallel, was a particularly volatile area and I recall the one thing that really upset me, not much did in those days, but they decided that it would be great if they would pull up a tank into our line, and so, they did, a flamethrower tank, and they thought that was a great idea and all it did, as you might guess, is draw fire, a lot of fire, and the irony of it all, I'd later ... [be] teaching and the head of the chemistry department in South Brunswick was a chemical officer and we were talking about things of this sort and he said, "Oh, you were in the 32nd Infantry?" He said, "I was in the Chemical Corps and we got this great tank and we supplied it with a flamethrower capability," and I said, "You son-of-a-gun, it was you!" ... It did turn out, ironically, to be his project for the Eighth Army, the flamethrower tank up there, but, as I say, it drew fire. I'm not sure it did anything else.

SI: Did you have any concerns about becoming a prisoner of war? Were you instructed on what to do in that case?

FB: We got little instruction on what to do as a POW; your name, rank and serial number, date of birth, that's all you tell them, but, as far as any other detailed instructions, no.

SI: You were not encouraged to escape.

FB: Nope, not in those days, no. I think the training is much more sophisticated now that I read about it, but, no.

SI: Had you heard anything about how American POWs were being treated?

FB: Our prisoners, no. Their prisoners, they were having revolts down in Southern Korea, I forget the prison, but they had a major revolution in the prison, but, no, not ours.

SI: How many casualties did your unit suffer?

FB: While I was platoon leader, on-line? There may have been a minor wound type thing, no one killed in action.

SI: Was it just a quiet time?

FB: Yes, it was relatively quiet. It was kind of stabilizing at that point.

SI: Was it a stressful situation? Was it difficult to maintain morale?

FB: No, I didn't find it that way. The guys that were there were really looking forward to going home, keeping their ... body and soul together, and there were two hot meals a day. The chaplains were around, believe it or not. The first days I was on-line with that group, there was service right up on-line, drew a lot of people, by the way.

SI: Did you have medics with your unit?

FB: There were medics available, but I didn't have any with the platoon.

SI: They would not go out on patrol with you.

FB: No. I didn't have any.

SI: How many prisoners of war did you take?

FB: In our unit? Just a couple.

SI: Were you part of the group that took them?

FB: No, not the platoon. The company might have.

SI: You were warned about booby traps on dead bodies. How frequently did you or your unit run into booby traps or that kind of harassment?

FB: I didn't find any. There were always the possibilities, but I didn't find any.

SI: Mines, whatever?

FB: Oh, the mines were out there, but they're mostly our mines.

JK: You were on-line for approximately a month.

FB: Not long, ... that's all.

JK: You were transferred. Could you talk about the reason you were transferred?

FB: I wish I knew. It's hard to figure out; transferred to the G-3 section and worked for both the G-3, it was a major, and the Chief of Staff for the division, who was a colonel, ... went into these activities that I kind of sketched in the back there. I never knew. It might have been the writing. It wasn't in history, because I had nothing in my record [that] indicated that I knew anything about history, so, it wasn't that. ... So, I've never been able to figure it out and I didn't want to ask too many questions when I was there, but they pulled me back and I told John this story. When I was on the way out of the 32nd Infantry, I had to be interviewed by the executive officer, who it ended up, he was from Westfield, New Jersey, and he tried to talk me out of it. He said, "Why would you ever want to go from a rifle platoon leader back to a division G-3 section?" and I said, "I think it's a little safer, Colonel. I'm not sure," you know, but he says, "Well, you know, here's where the real men are." I remember this vividly. It was like it was yesterday. He said, "I can't change your mind?" "No." John didn't believe it. ... [I said], "Sorry, I'm on my way."

JK: You could have said no to the transfer.

FB: I could have had the unit; say no he was ready to say, you know, "We would prefer and he would prefer to stay here. Could we reconsider it?" If he wanted to swing some weight, he wouldn't have been able to swing it, you know, at that level, to whoever at division headquarters wanted me there, would have the word. There's no question about that.

SI: Was this guy a regular Army colonel?

FB: No, I'm pretty sure he's Reserve.

SI: Did you see any conflicts or differences of opinion between Reservists and regular Army guys?

FB: Yes, there were. ... Some of the officers who were on the division staff, a good number of them were West Pointers. ... There was an undercurrent of difficulty between the Reservists and the West Pointers, the non-West Pointers and the West Pointers. Division commanders were West Pointers, but the lesser, were not the G-3, not the G-2s, but the G-3s and sometimes the Chief of Staff. When I ran into the Chief of Staff, he was a superb Reservist, former English professor, unlikely, but assistant division commanders and so on, they were mostly West Pointers and there was an undercurrent, but I don't think it really amounted to anything that would cause problems in operations, because, normally, the West Pointers had the rank. You did what you were told.

SI: I have spoken to a number of Reservists who were classified as Inactive Reservists and they were sent right over, while the Active Reserve did other things. Were any of the Reservists you ran into bitter about the situation?

FB: Oh, yes. Some of the fellows at division headquarters, they shouldn't have been too bitter, because it was a fairly safe place to be, relatively speaking, but they had that in Korea, World War II, assigned to Korea afterward, inactive, and they were called to active duty. They were bitter. Some were captains and majors and there was an attitude there, yes.

JK: Where was the new headquarters that you were at? Was it far back from the line?

FB: Yes, it was fairly far back.

JK: Do you remember where, exactly?

FB: You know, I could look it up. Kapyong sounds right to me, Kapyong. ... This was the other book that I didn't. ...

SI: *The Bayonet: the History of the Seventh Infantry Division?*

FB: Yes. This was a production by the commanding general. He wanted it, anyhow. I thought I had a map of Korea in this, but I don't. ... Yes, around Kapyong, although we were up here later, the division was up in this area, [Mr. Brennan is referring to a map of Korea] which is the Triangle Hill area. That was one of the big battles. ... The guy who put this together, this is a division, you know, in conflict, but he needed to have this book and he was the commanding general.

JK: General Wayne C. Smith.

FB: That's him, yes. He's a West Pointer (1921-1925).

JK: Was there a change in lifestyle that occurred because of your reassignment from on-line to the G-3?

FB: Yes, dramatic. Yes, it was dramatic. Of course, the general staff had their own office areas, well guarded for the most part. If the division was on-line, there was always the possible problem of infiltrators and somebody trying to get to the big guns, but they would have trailers and would operate out of trailers. We were out of camouflaged tents or sandbag areas in back of the line.

SI: Many men have told us there is the right way, the wrong way and the Army way. Did you see that in your experience?

FB: Yes. It depended on who I was working for. When the commanding general was a Wayne C. Smith, there were military actions taken and things done that, in my mind, as a lieutenant, were used to maybe enhance his career. The operation called Triangle Hill was one of them and there was always a question in my mind, "What the hell did we ever need that hill for?" and the other areas and all the casualties that it ... took to get it, and then, the irony of it all, after we got it and the Republic of Korea division relieved us, they lost it. ... I had the good fortune to be in on a lot of the briefings and a lot of the planning for operations like that Triangle Hill thing and it was the general's wish that this happened. If that's the Army way, you know, it didn't have to happen, I don't think, but that's with the wisdom of hindsight again and, at the time, I thought, "Ah, ah," but he was a tough cookie. He was mini-managing the operation and a vivid quote from one of the briefings, where the division engineer was telling him what they were going to

do on this operation, and he said, "I want a tramway to go up there." "Tramway?" the engineer said to him, "General, I'll look into the possibility." That was the wrong to say to this guy. He said, "Look, hell, you'll do it, Colonel." So, it wasn't a committee operation; it came from the top. There's some letters, even in this, from commanding general of IX Corps, who was he at that time? Collins or somebody, to the General, saying, "What a wonderful job you did, General, on this Triangle Hill thing," and da-da-da-da.

JK: What was your role at these briefings?

FB: I sat and listened, for the most part, thought my thoughts that was basically it. I was, you know, a first lieutenant then.

JK: Were there many first lieutenants that were in on things of that nature?

FB: Yes. A friend of mine from Fort Benning, Warren Sims, was in the G-2 section, intelligence section, from Dalton, Georgia, and he was involved, for the most part. He was involved in the orientations that we gave to all the new officers and he became a very good friend.

JK: Can you go into your official duties at the G-3?

FB: You know, sometimes, you wondered, but, yes, the big thing was the division command reports that were monthly reports sent to Eighth Army and directly to Washington and those were reports that either the General or the commanding general or the Chief of Staff signed off on. Smith looked at them pretty carefully and very seldom did I ever sit down with him, but I would get a note back saying, "This one has to be made a little more exciting, a little bit more," whereas his successor, General Trudeau, I would go to his office trailer at night, he would say, "Frank, let's go over the report," and never say it had to be jazzed up or what. "Where did you get this? Is this exactly right?" and so on. "I want it to be perfect." ... This guy was like a college professor that might be going over a paper, you know, and just as calm, another West Pointer, but in contrast. Later, he became, I think, CEO of Gulf Oil, when he got out. He was that type and became the G-2 of the Army at one point, Arthur Trudeau. ... That was that general, and then, there was the other general that gave another perspective.

SI: One of the things I have found in conducting these oral histories is, you have somebody, like a clerk, they will fill out their version of a report and an officer would come along and say, "This probably did not happen this way. Let's change it around," so that it would sound a little different or a little better.

FB: Sure, yes. With General Smith, absolutely, but General Smith was General Smith. He did a good deal of entertaining, even, you know, if the unit was in Reserve, the USO girls, and he was looking for something else, I think. General Trudeau was another. He's just a straight, honest, type person.

SI: Was your experience with General Smith a deviation from the way the other generals acted?

FB: An aberration, I hope not. I hope he was an aberration, but I don't think so. ... I don't know. I don't know. You know, he was the only one of that type that I dealt with. This [medal] was put out at his order, and I had some part in it, but it was the history of the division in Korea. He did something that, I later found out, not many people knew about, this thing you see here.

SI: The crest?

FB: Yes, it's a badge. It's almost like the Combat Infantryman's Badge, but this he had made up in Japan, a medal issued to the people in the unit. That was his. Now, I understand that you weren't supposed to do things of that sort, but he did.

SI: Did you notice the effects of the one-year rotation system on your unit?

FB: Oh, yes, definitely, at all levels, yes, absolutely. I think people would become more conservative in the last six months.

SI: Did it affect how the unit operated, with new people coming in all the time?

FB: Sure. For example, the job that I had, which was a job made up of miscellaneous duties of all types, I mean, God, when I was ready to go home, I was called in by either the Chief of Staff or the Assistant Division Commander, somebody, and said, "You know, we're not sure we can release you." I said, "What do you mean you can't release me? I'm through," and he said, "Well, we're having a problem. See if you can find a replacement for yourself." I'm thinking, "what's going on here?" So, I know why, I looked over some letters that I had sent home at the time, which kind of reconfirmed this, and I finally found somebody, a Rutgers guy, and I was finally released, but that was the attitude at the time, "Find your replacement."

SI: Did it hurt the unit's effectiveness?

FB: Oh, yes, it had to.

SI: For the record, you were also the subject of an article by Professor John Chambers on your experiences with SLA Marshall. What did you see when you would go out to these different battle sites? How soon after the battle was it and what were you able to obtain?

FB: Before Marshall visited, we were doing the division command reports, where we would incorporate after-action reports, even though; General Marshall was a good friend of General Trudeau's. That's how General Marshall got to the scene, but I didn't know that at that time. John told me, fifty years later, but we used to do after-action reports and incorporate them and what I would do was to find out where the action took place and get there soon after. ... We'd get to the point of the action, get permission from the commanding officer and sit down with whoever was involved and do a report. One in particular that I brought back with me and I found in my files is one that happened in September of '52, where the action involved a classmate of mine at Fort Benning, Lieutenant Stan Kurdziel, and, as a result of what he did, and it happened to be on Triangle Hill, a month before the big Triangle Hill battle, once General Smith heard about it, I'll just read the last sentence of the report, "A patrol leader and a sergeant and corporal

and accompaniment in this assault were awarded the Silver Star. The remaining four members of the patrol got the Bronze Star by the division commander the following morning and the three involved in the assault were given immediate promotions to the next higher rank.” So, Smith did stuff like that, once he read this guy went up Triangle Hill, pulled some enemy out, brought them back alive and got shot at by everybody in sight and, fortunately, nobody on our side was wounded at all, but that’s the type of thing we were doing. That was before Triangle Hill. In Triangle Hill, unfortunately, the same lieutenant friend of mine got both legs shot up and died.

SI: In terms of recognition for action with awards and promotions, do you think it was over inflated, not enough or just right?

FB: I think they followed pretty much the regulations. There were some put in; one colonel on Triangle Hill, Lieutenant Colonel William H. Isbell, Jr., was put in for the Medal of Honor. The General really wanted him to have it, but he never got it. ... It was a certain level that, Bronze Star, Silver Star, the generals pretty much called it; beyond that, decorations, there was more screening and a little more conservative attitude, I think, but it’s hard to say whether they were given out too freely or not. I don’t know. This one wasn’t, the one that I just talked about.

SI: It sounds like Smith was very concerned about getting medals out to people.

FB: In that case he was. I think, in the back of his mind was an operation that he knew was going to happen on that hill and this really helped in terms of determining what was up there. So, this lieutenant and his patrol, this was kind of a vicarious role for me, because I could sit down with a guy that I had known from Fort Benning and say, “Hey, Stan, exactly what did happen and where?” and I knew I was going to get the straight scoop. “I probably treated this prisoner a little bit too tough, but you won’t put that down, will you?” “No, Stan, I won’t put that down.”

SI: What about some of the international units that you worked with listed here? What were your duties in those cases?

FB: International ones, Turkish Brigade, yes. The Turkish Brigade, that was, I think, either the corps or division were trying to find out what these guys were really doing. There was a whole brigade of them over there, including their band, and they were reputed to be a very tough outfit, and so, I was sent down to determine what was going on, their training and everything, taken in hand by one of their high officers, who happened to be a graduate of Ohio State, and he says, “Stick with me, Buster, and we’ll steer you away from the food and everything else,” you know. “We’ll show you what’s going on.” So, I had kind of a positive experience, short experience there. Liaison with the First Korean Division, the ROK Division, the Republic of Korea Division, was an experience-and-a-half. I found out then, and I don’t think we knew, they have two sets of staff. ... In those days, they had a daytime staff and a nighttime staff and all the same, you know, a G-3, G-2, G-1, and, when they made plans to do something, they all had to agree. It was consensus and it took a hell of a long time for them to come to a decision. So, they were going to replace us, at one point, in the Triangle Hill area and we wanted to find out what their decision making was and where they were coming from, ... how tough they really were. They’re kind of tough. The Ethiopians, they were assigned to us and that was Haile Selassie’s

personal guard that got assigned to us and these boys were great. We issued them all GI uniforms and weapons and everything else, to bring them up-to-date, but they were an outstanding unit relatively small, but a battalion of really tough guys. The only problem we had there, I got in a little trouble; we were in reserve and one of the General's movie star friends was told that she could go and visit the Ethiopian Battalion and, of course, they were really happy to see her and she met everybody and shook hands and everything else and it wasn't hours later before the Ethiopian got hold of me and said, "Was that woman Italian?" I said, "Yes, she's Italian," destroyed all the pictures, because they were still smarting from the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, believe that or not, but they got rid of every piece of evidence. "If this ever gets back, we're in trouble." So, there were those sensitivities you had to be careful of, but, otherwise, they were outstanding.

JK: What about the Colombian Infantry Battalion?

FB: Yes, they were pretty active and there for more than, I think, the year and I didn't have much to do with them, you know. There was always the language problem and, with the Ethiopians, there was no language barrier. They knew English as well as I did. The Colombians, there was a language problem and some difficulty in coordination. I'm not sure I did any good there, but I made those visits kind of quick.

SI: When you were in Korea, were you ever sent back for leave or R&R?

FB: R&R in Japan for a couple of weeks, yes.

SI: What was that like?

FB: It was to Tokyo. I went with my friend, Lieutenant Sims, from the G-2 section, and, since then, I've visited Japan and visited the same spots, really, with my wife, a lot of theater, beautiful symphony orchestras Japan had at the time, didn't get out of Tokyo.

SI: From what I have read, it seemed like they tried to corral all the GIs into one section of Tokyo. Is that true?

FB: Not at that time, no. When I went on R&R there, we went exactly where we wanted to go. Neither one of us were the nightclub guys, so, we didn't get out and do that scene, but some did, I guess.

SI: Before we leave your military experience, can you tell us what your most vivid memory is of your time in the service or your time in combat?

FB: To be very candid, once I left the service, and I'm not talking about the reserves now because I stayed in the Reserves, for one reason or other, until '58, once I got out in '53 and got into graduate school, I probably blocked out most of all of this stuff. I had albums that my parents put together and my sister, photos that I had sent, this stuff I ditched, until John got hold me on this Marshall thing, and so, that kind of triggered it. I kind of had to deal with myself on the thing. "Okay, we'll go back over this stuff and pull some of it out and try to recall what

happened,” but, for the fifty years in-between, I’ll be very honest with you, I tried to eliminate as much as I could, probably an involuntary thing, I don’t know. So, it’s John’s fault and I’m glad he did and, in the meantime, the letters that I had sent, my sister has a pack of them like that, that I may try to put together some day. She said I shouldn’t look at them, but I’ll look at them and see what’s going on. The only other thing that registered vividly in my mind, then and even now, I recall, is the news coverage by the press services. ... As a journalist then, I was really shocked at the lackadaisical attitude by many of the media guys. They took what they were fed and regurgitated it. Some of the news articles somehow got kept that were written in anything but a news style. They were written as if they were given by a PR guy from the military and most of the time, the AP, UP in those days, the INS, were out at the officer’s club or out doing their own thing, which, with a couple of exceptions, that I recall vividly.

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

FB: [He would say], “Can I talk to you a minute? I hear such-and-such is going on. ... Would you mind if I took a jeep and went up and looked first hand?” He was one of the few that would ever take that initiative and not take what he was fed by the PR guys. That’s my reflection back on media coverage.

JK: What do you think about the embedded journalists in Iraq?

FB: I think they might get too embedded. I’m not sure how the objectivity is affected. I’m quite sure how it’s affected; you can’t help it. You’re living with these guys, and so on, and so forth, I don’t know, but I know AP, UP and INS guys that were covering, in those days, were lazy. I’ll be very honest with you, they were lazy and they weren’t digging, whereas there were exceptions, like Reuters. That’s a vivid recollection.

SI: You listed two Bronze Stars on your pre-interview survey. Can you tell us a little bit about each one?

FB: Yes, nothing spectacular. It was just meritorious service while serving in the G-3 position. One of them, I think, might have been related to some military action that I went and covered for the General and so on. That was it. They were nothing spectacular.

SI: After you came back from Korea, why did you choose to stay in the Reserves?

FB: I had some friends who talked me into it, I think would be the best way to say it. It was nothing that I had; there was no love in my heart for the military at any point, really. ... So, it wasn’t because I wanted to maintain that or get a promotion or ... something else with it. It was probably just peer pressure, and so, when I started to teach and a few company and field grade officers said, “Why don’t you continue?” So, I did.

JK: How were the benefits for Reservists?

FB: I don’t think they were great. ... In the '50s, we weren’t getting paid very much. I know from letters that I had written home, when I was overseas, even with combat pay and so on, I’d

send home a check for two hundred-and-fifty bucks for a month or something like that. So, I'm not sure that we were getting that great money, but the other benefits might have been something.

JK: My stepfather is a Vietnam veteran and he says that one of the best things that came out of the war was the insurance. I was just wondering how the benefits were for you.

FB: I wasn't worried about insurance in those days, PX, maybe. You could go and buy; I was a smoker in those days. ...

SI: Did you have any trouble readjusting to civilian life? Was it a difficult or easy transition?

FB: No, fortunately, after I got out, I was in graduate school within weeks and that adjusted me.

SI: Had you applied while you were in the service?

FB: Yes. I applied and got all that stuff from my family overseas, transcripts, the whole bit, and I think, before I was discharged, I was probably accepted to graduate school at Rutgers.

JK: Was history something that was starting to be on your mind because of your experience in Korea?

FB: Yes, I think that was part of it.

JK: Where did you get that orientation towards history?

FB: I think once I found out that what the journalists were writing wasn't completely true, that's part of it. It was probably a pretty sterile look at that profession, saying, ... "Maybe I could make a difference if I went in that direction, rather than the journalist direction," and then, somehow, I got conned into going into history completely. I had good people at Rutgers. I had Prof. Dick McCormick, who I should have followed his advice and he kept saying, "State and local history is what you guys should be doing. Don't get into this international stuff. It's too competitive, go into state and local," which was his thing and, of course, I didn't, except, into our retirement, my wife and I got to write the local stuff a little bit, but I guess that was a reason that I did. Maybe it was because I became disenchanted with the journalist side of things. I thought, "Maybe I can make an honest living doing history."

SI: Did you have a particular focus when you were in the Master's program?

FB: Yes, diplomatic history. I went on further. I did some work at Fordham and I was into Stuart and Tudor England, Latin American, diplomatic history of the United States with Latin America. Those were the areas of concentration. As I say, I had good people at Rutgers, very good people, good advisers. All of them are gone now, and Ray Bodnar and I went back to Master's programs at about the same time, he in political science, and we kid each other all the time about why we went in those directions, political science being a backward look at history, and he says, "History is a backward look at political science," so, ... it's a tie, but we still

disagree. We're at the opposite ends of the political spectrum, so, I don't think Rutgers or the military did anything to color our politics.

SI: Were there a lot of Korean War veterans in Master's programs or other programs returning to Rutgers?

FB: No, no. There were very few. '53-'54 is when I went and got the degree. I think I possibly was the only other in history.

SI: Did you use any other GI Bill benefits?

FB: No. I ran out. No, I really didn't.

SI: What was your first job after leaving Rutgers?

FB: While I was in graduate school, the *Home News* got me back and, as I say, they were extremely good. Their people wrote when I was overseas, sent me stuff and I decided, I was talked to by a few public school administrators, and [they] said, "There's a shortage of teachers. You can probably get a job in the blink of an eye." So, I tried that and I taught for three years in Dunellen, helped to start Piscataway High School, taught there three years, then, went to South Brunswick and spent thirty-three years there. In the meantime, I went to Ocean County College and spent about ten years on their part-time faculty, history faculty. Twenty years, though, at Rutgers, Graduate School of Education; they found out that I wasn't good enough for Graduate School of Education. I'm just kidding. ...

SI: What did you like most about teaching?

FB: Probably the illusion that I was doing some good for some individuals. Students like (?) Quinlan absolutely make it all worthwhile. The interesting thing about her, I knew she had talent when she was in school, this was in the '60s, and I gave her some assignments, just her, that I thought were really challenging. They were done, in those days, so well, I kept them. When she was working for the *Times*, I sent her one in particular. It blew her mind. I haven't bothered her since, but my wife has been in contact from time to time. Last week, when she was over at Barnes and Noble, we went over and it was a great reunion. That's the kind of thing and other students, from time to time, you see have gone and maybe I boosted them a little. They say so, but they may be kowtowing to an old guy.

SI: How did your profession change over time, in your experience?

FB: Teaching? Yes, it's changed. Maybe that's one of the reasons why I went to administration and I went on and got another degree at Rider in business and became a business administrator, in public schools. I didn't give up the history completely. We're still hacking away. The marriage has survived a few combined efforts there.

SI: How did you meet your wife?

FB: I was her department head in Piscataway and I saved her future students from her teaching by marrying her. She wouldn't buy it. She went on and taught for a while over there and that's how I met her. I was the head of the English and the History Departments over there, when it first started, and she was an English teacher.

SI: Is there anything that we skipped over?

FB: No, you guys do a great job. You really do.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add?

FB: No, no.

JK: I just want to say thank you, Mr. Brennan.

SI: Thank you very much.

FB: Oh, it's been my pleasure.

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

Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 11/5/04  
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/21/05  
Reviewed by Frank J. Brennan, Jr. 6/6/05