

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BRIGID BROWN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Brigid Brown on October 21, 1998 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and Jessica Guglich. And I guess I'd like to begin by asking you about your parents. Particularly your father, but also his grandfather. There's a long military tradition there.

Brigid Brown: Yes, there is. Yes.

KP: Could you talk a little bit about your father and grandfather and what you know.

BB: OK, my father joined the Royal Air Force, [actually] the Royal Flying Corps in 1917 which then became the Royal Air Force [later] ... He joined as the lowest form of life in the Air Force. which is I think AC2, Aircraftmen #2. He then got promoted and what Professor Harmon was just saying about being commissioned during the war, that's what happened to my father. He got a war commission which was temporary and then it became permanent and he became a pilot officer, then a flying officer, flight lieutenant and then he eventually retired as a squadron leader. Interestingly enough, his brother, who was eighteen months younger than he is, did exactly the same in the army, starting off in the Royal ... Army Pay Corps. He then got a commission and he ended up fortunately as a major so there was no competition between the two because a major and a squadron leader were equivalent ranks. So that was my father and his brother. My grandfather, I'm not quite sure when he joined the Royal Marines, but it was some time in the 1890's. He joined as a band person. He played the French Horn in the Royal Marine Band which was stationed at Deal. His father, my great-grandfather, had left Ireland under a cloud and we're still trying to find out why he left Ireland in a hurry. There's various stories that had a fight with somebody over the hedge, and there's some violence involved, but we haven't quite found out what happened. But my great-grandfather left Ireland, County Mayo, and he went and joined the Royal Marines. So that when my grandfather was born, he was born in Royal Marine situation and so it was natural that he too would go into the Royal Marines. This is my father's father. My father and his brothers all joined the Royal Marine Cadets, which was when they were about ten or eleven years old. I think you can see in that picture that they were all young boys. And this is the medal that I showed you that my father got when he was in the Royal Marine Cadets. This was just before he joined the Royal Flying Corps. I really don't know why he joined the Air Force and not the Royal Marines. I think because he wanted to fly. And, as it happened, he was just about to go for the pilot course later on. He developed pleurisy and was taken to the hospital that night. He was never the same physically after that which was just as well because he would've been in the Battle of Britain. Because he was of the age: he was born in 1900. So he would, so he probably would've been a pilot or involved in 1939. Well he would've been a little old in '39 but he probably would've been a pilot. If he had been a pilot in 1935 or so, he would have been somewhat experienced pilot by that time. So it's quite likely he would have seen air action during the Second World War had it not happened for this unfortunate medical thing but ... So that's my great-grandfather and my grandfather on my father's side and my father. My father's brother was also in the army. Now my mother's father, my mother's father also left Ireland, county Mayo, absolutely no connection whatsoever with the other grandfather. He went to Glasgow and I haven't yet found out why, how he got into the Royal Marines but he was trained as a teacher ... he had the most magnificent Copperplate handwriting. And he had [kept] all his teaching books that he used [to show me]. When I was growing up, I remember him showing me the books that had little platitudes that you have to

copy in the Copperplate writing. He thought my writing was terrible, so he tried to get me to write. But anyway, he taught school and he was at Plymouth which is another Royal Marine base in England. It still is, so is Portsmouth, [and] there's one more I think. He was transferred to Deal which is where he began teaching in the school. He taught my father, ... my father's older brother and I believe one of my father's younger brothers too. My mother met my father in school; my mother was five and my father was ten. They met then but that was a long time before they got married, after they met again many years later ... . My mother's father was transferred up to the dockyard, being a Royal Marine [he] was transferred up to the dockyard in Scotland. So we're talking in the 1920's. My father, when he was in the Royal Air Force, I've forgotten to bring them with me but I have some pictures, he went to India in about 1919 or so which we've been trying to track. I've shown them to Sandra ; we were trying to figure out where it was in India ... But he went there in 1919 and then in 1927 [with]the Royal Naval Air Service [to China.] The Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps seemed to be tied in together, or they allocated people from the Flying Corps, because he was on one of the very first aircraft carriers which was actually a converted ship. It wasn't like a regular aircraft carrier at the time,. They had a goodwill tour to the far east which lasted a year and a half in 1927 and 1928. I've got the itinerary of that ... I've got a magnificent photograph of the Bund in Shanghai in either 1927 or 1928. We're not quite sure when but that was when he was on this ship converted to an aircraft carrier. These are panoramic photographs, [which] I didn't know they had in the twenties. I thought they were World War II ... when they used to go in and do reconnaissance photography, to find out what they bombed. But this is a great big picture, it's about from there to there. I've brought it in a couple of times.

KP: It's several feet long.

BB: Yes, yes it is. What they were doing actually [I don't know). It has four or five ships and I've been trying to identify them. In fact I've written to the navy archives in Washington and they haven't replied to me [yet]. I did speak to one guy sometime and he said, "How many funnels does it have?" And I said, "Well it has two." He says, "I don't know of any American ships that were there. I said, "This has got the American flag on it so I know its an American ship." But I'm trying to actually find out when it was taken. I've got very a very precise time period. But what happened was there was some trouble up the river. I talked to Professor Gasster about it one time and he said it could be Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Tse Tung had fallen out at that particular time and this was a show of force from the Japanese, the British, the French and the Americans to show support for one or the other whichever it was. I'm sorry I'm going on about that. But I have those photographs. That's my father's background.

... My father went back to England [and] married my mother. I was born in the Royal Air Force hospital in Cranwell [which is where the Air Force Academy is] which is the equivalent of Colorado Springs ... He was still only a flight Sergeant at that point. ... He was sent to Aden in 1938 and my mother and I followed [in] late 1938 and stayed there until 1941. I went to school there.

KP: And he would be promoted in World war II

BB: He was promoted in World War II because that's what they were doing with a lot of people. They were giving them field commissions, and then they made them permanent.

KP: If it hadn't been for World War II, he probably would've been a long-term career enlisted men.

BB: Oh he was a definitely ...

KP: Senior enlisted.

BB: He would've probably been enlisted NCO. Higher, you know one of those ... They say the Army marches on its sergeants, I think is the expression. That's what he would've been.

KP: I don't mean ... .

BB: No ... he wasn't because he hadn't been to college. He left school at 14. He was self-educated like his brother was and they would never have had the opportunity to be commissioned officers, certainly in the British [military] which is far more snobbish than the American I think.

KP: Because it sounds like his commission was very fairly crucial to his postwar career.

BB: Yes, it was.

KP: Because he ended up with a career in the Air Ministry.

BB: Yes he did. He ... had the opportunity in 1948, which is when he had 31 years [of service]. His job was civilianized in the Ministry of Defense ... From about 1943-1948 he was transferred down [to London] He was stationed, when we first came back from India, ... in Pocklington, which was where the bomber command that went out bombing Peenemunde [left from] and places like that. So then he was transferred down to London to the Ministry of Aircraft Production then it became the Ministry of Defense ... His job was civilianized [and] because he had been in it for so long, he was given the opportunity to bid on it ... He did bid on it ,and he came out as a squadron leader. He went into work doing the same job that he had been doing for the previous five years with the retired rank of squadron leader. And that's what happened But my mother had a reduced Air Force [Officer's] pension until she died a couple of months ago so she had that. But you're right, he probably would not have had the opportunity to become a commissioned officer if it hadn't been for World War II. Neither would his brother because they had the same education.

KP: I'm curious though, both sides of your family left Ireland and came to England. One side, there's some secret there that you haven't been able to figure out. Any sense of why England as supposed to America or Canada or ...

BB: I don't know why, I really don't know why ... Patrick Murphy, that would be my great-grandfather, why he went to England and not America. Because it was after the famine, way

after the famine and Grandpa Devitt went to Glasgow first. Because that was where you went to from where he lived in Belmullet. I don't know if you're familiar with the map of Ireland, but it was very hard to get out of Belmullet. Which is as far west as you can go in County Mayo ... It was ... very difficult to get anywhere except by going by ship and the ships mostly went to Glasgow. If you were going to America, you'd go from Cork which was quite a long way away. I suspect he went to Glasgow, [because] I think some family were there already and that's what happened. As far as my grandfather, I never ever heard of Grandpa Devitt ... ever thinking about going to America. My mother said they never spoke to their parents about where they came from or whatever. It was just something you didn't ask about ... I met my mother's first cousins who happen to live in upstate New York. We finally got together just a couple of months ago and she said the same thing. She's 77. That was my grandfather's niece, direct cousin. She said we never asked our parents. It was something you never talked about. And her brother was there sitting at the same table and he said, "You know I never thought about it before. You just didn't ask questions. You were here and that's what you did."

KP: And why?

BB: And why? Nope. Because I asked their brother who still lives in the same house that my grandfather moved from in Belmullet and I said to him, "Do you happen to know where your father came from?" He said, "No ... The landlord said you live here and you lived here. And that was it." And so I looked at him, and he's 78 I think, and I looked at him and said, "You don't know anything about it?" and he said, "No, I don't." But I can see why anybody would leave because if you've ever been to County Mayo there is nothing [much around that particular area] ... If you don't have the farm, it's just very difficult to make ends meet. The one that has the farm now is doing very nicely ... but, he has the farm. He was one of thirteen and although traditionally the oldest would get the farm, he happens to be [one of] the youngest ... But I don't know why they didn't come to the States. I'm the first one to come to the ... well no, the other cousins came to the States. None of the Murphys, as far as we know, ... except our generation, have come to the States.

KP: I'm very struck also because your family appears to have become such a career military family and also are Roman Catholics and Roman Catholics are [in the] minority in England.

BB: Oh yeah, still.

KP: Yeah, no . . . I'm wondering in terms of the experiences your father had in a sense quote on quote how much of a hindrance was that to his career?

BB: Oh I believe it was. It was particularly with Freemasonry ... Of course, Catholics couldn't become Freemasons and I often heard my father say about this ... "Oh he was a Mason. No wonder he got on." You know, that kind of [remark]. Oh yes, oh yes definitely ... And one thing though ... I remember being taught when I was very young, and I think it's still true in Britain, you never talk about politics, sex or religion in polite company. So that you could live next door to somebody for years and not know what religion they were. If you happened to go to the same mass they did, you'd run across them. But you never talked to your neighbor as to which church they went to or if they did. I remember one of the first things I noticed when I came to this

country, it was before Vatican II and people abstained from meat on Friday, and I'd come to this office in New York. You know sort of big cosmopolitan [city], and somebody says, "We're going to lunch", or something and somebody's saying, "Oh I can't have that, it's Friday." I thought. "What are we talking about in polite society?", you know. Nobody ever said in public ... You didn't have it. You just politely had fish or whatever you'd have, or you just never talked about it. But everybody was talking about it openly and I thought my father would just freak out if he heard this. So, yes it did have a hindrance to [his career] I'm sure. And ... their close friends would tend probably to be Catholics as well, until they were posted overseas.

KP: You were very young. You were born in 1935. What are the earliest memories you have, because most of your memories ... my distinct memories start about age four and five ... and so the war begins for England in September of '39. Do you have any memories?

BB: Yes I can remember, this was very interesting actually. They said there was a war on and so I said, "What does that mean?" You know three or four old. So my father said, I can remember it as clear as today, "That means you won't be getting anymore *buckshee* from Sammy. Now Sammy was the Chinese merchant who had the regular store in downtown Aden. Whenever I used to go in, Sammy would always give me something, a sweet or a something or maybe a little ornament or something else. And it was rather interesting that my father should think of it that way in terms of how a three and a half - four year old could understand what was going on. So he said no more *buckshee*, which you know is freebees. I don't know whether it is Arabic or Indian or whatever it is but no more *buckshee* from Sammy. So I can remember him saying that and of course I thought, "Well that's what it meant." And then ... that was it because Aden wasn't bombed at all. And then I know there were planes going off and doing various things so that's about what the war meant to me until, until 1940 which got hairy.

KP: It sounds like your earliest conscious memories of life that you can remember are Aden?

BB: Yes.

KP: Yeah, ... you were born in England but you don't ...

BB: I don't really remember anything in England before that, no.

KP: ... That's your first introduction to when your father explains it. When did you have any inkling of what war meant as a young child?

BB: Oh, OK. Well, my mother and I were evacuated with 24 hours' notice. We were allowed one suitcase.

KP: So that was the next ...

BB: That was the next thing. We were put on a ship and we didn't know where we were going, That I remember, just women and children. this was about 1940, I think it was mid 1940 I think, to the best of my recollection. You can pinpoint it from the actual world events. We were put on the ship, my father was left behind. It was, oh I know when it was. It was not long after

Christmas because I never ever had another tricycle. I was given a tricycle for Christmas and a dolls' house and I never ever in my life got another tricycle. I did get a two wheel bicycle, but I never got another tricycle . I never had another dolls' house. And I remember there was this painting of the Laughing Cavalier on the wall. Of course we had to leave everything behind. It was the Frans Hals "Laughing Cavalier." I remember that as clearly as daylight. And I was absolutely thrilled to bits to see the original in the Wallace Collection [in London] about five years ago. It was quite fun. But that I can remember. And going on the ship and I remember we were sent to a place ... We arrived in Bombay and we stayed overnight in Bombay. Eventually, when they were on the ship a couple of days, my mother told me this so I don't remember it, but she said that they said we weren't going to England, we were going to India which was much nearer and much safer for all that ... . The U-boats were pretty prolific at that particular point. So we went to Bombay and then they said we were going to a place called Pachmarhi which is in the central provinces, which was quite a long train ride from Bombay. And it turned out to have been the chemical warfare center, I don't know whether it was the British army or the Indian ... It wasn't Indian army then, whatever it was. And they just cleared everybody out of this place. It was just a clearing in the jungle with barracks type accommodation. That I remember. And I remember going into the room there were no mattresses or anything but what was happening was there was a man in the room stuffing straw in palliasses, would've been. Yes, stuffing straw into these things. There was no electricity and ... so I remember this and my mother's sort of face going, "What! We're supposed to live like this?"

KP: Because I get the sense life was pretty comfortable in Aden.

BB: Oh life was very comfortable in Aden, very comfortable.

KP: Did you have any family servants?

BB: In Aden I don't remember, but certainly we did in India. We had ... I don't remember for Pachmarhi but I remember a little bit later on when we did. We had ... an *ayah* for me, we'd have a gardener, we'd have a bearer, and a cook. Quite luxurious living really, but I remember that. ... Then I remember another thing, it was when I went to school. They had a school in Pachmarhi where they had proper teachers ... There were Italian prisoners coming in, now I don't quite know where they'd been getting the Italian prisoners from, this I never got clarified, but what happened was the Italian prisoners were sent from Aden to India ... Because their wives [were there] the men would take it in turns to accompany the prisoners so they could go and see their wives [and children] who were India at that point ... otherwise they wouldn't had the opportunity. So they used to take lots. This is, I've learned over the years, so that the men would take turns in accompanying the prisoners from Aden to India. And my father got his turn eventually and we saw my father after several months. I don't know if I put down here anywhere but you know I'm an only child.

KP: I think, yeah.

BB: You should have that somewhere, yes.

KP: I'm curious, how long were you in this, in Pachmarhi?

BB: About eighteen months.

KP: Rather spartan.

BB: Oh yes.

KP: How long were you there?

BB: I'd say it was about eighteen months and then my father went back to Aden and then he came back and he was posted to India and then we went from Pachmarhi to Allahabad.

KP: So how spartan for the whole eighteen months?

BB: Oh it was pretty spartan.

KP: It didn't get much better?

BB: Oh no. I don't think we ever got electricity. I think it was paraffin lamps. There was no ... I don't know if they had refrigerators. They probably would have coolers. I don't know where they'd get the ice from. I don't remember that. I know it was ... you always had to wear your topee You were in big trouble if you didn't 'cause the sun was horrendous. And I do remember you had to be very careful of snakes because my mother was terrified of snakes. And she was ... they used to have various things going on for the ... there were still some army bases who'd been there along time, other than where we were living. And they would have sort of whist drives and things and my mother would go to them. So she would go out sometimes and ... she had a very good friend next door who had a son the same age as I was so they would take turns in babysitting for each other. And I remember her coming back one night and she was absolutely terrified because she'd seen some snakes moving around and they just told us to avoid them. She says, "I'm not going out anymore with those darn snakes." But, it was ... I remember the monkeys jumping from trees to tree ... As I said we were in a clearing in the jungle and there was some ravines not very far away. And you just were warned, you know you, don't go beyond this certain point. And I was about 5 or 6 at this point so I was old enough to know better.

KP: When did you have some sense of what the war was about? Like who Britain was fighting or was it more difficult to have a sense.

BB: I had no idea what it was. There was a war and there were bad guys and good guys. I didn't really know who was what. I knew the Italians at [one] point were bad guys because they were prisoners, but I mean, I really had no sense of what was happening because I was still a child.

KP: When you were at Pachmarhi, did you have any access to newsreels or to ... ?

BB: No we'd have ...

KP: What about radio?

BB: No radio.

KP: No radio?

BB: No radio.

KP: So you're . .

BB: Oh no.

KP: In a sense you're ...

BB: I was in a cocoon, in a way.

KP: Yeah, because if you had been in that point in England you would've been exposed to radio and possible to newsreels in a movie theater.

BB: We didn't ... in Pachmarhi. When we got to Allahabad we did go to the pictures, because I remember seeing Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. So there must've been newsreels. I'd would say Pathe or Cinematone or Gaumont British News or whatever they were. I remember, those [might not be the] real names of them [but] I know Pathe was there. Was Pathe here?

C.R Harmon: yes.

BB And Gaumont British News?

CRH: I don't know.

KP: That was probably ...

BB: They're British. But I remember there were newsreels but again I was pretty young and it didn't really mean to much to me. My father was with us at this point you see.

KP: And what year did your father join you?

BB Early 1941. I would say. Yes and then we went to Allahabad as I said, where we lived at the club and then we went to ... Peshawar. Of course India wasn't divided at this point. We went to Peshawar. Now my father was a flight engineer, so he was involved in refurbishing the planes as they were going over the hump bombing Japan. And so he was seconded to the Indian Air Force. I don't quite know why he was in Peshawar because that's a heck of along way from the border. But perhaps they were with the rebels in Afgan or whatever the people were at those days. I don't know what it was.

KP: What ... your father was an engineer, how much did you know? When did you have a sense, I mean now you know a great deal of what happened ... but as a young child how much did you know of what your father was doing?

BB: I had no idea. Not at all, really don't. I just know that he was in the Air Force and that you know, you didn't, you didn't do certain things and he would have to salute people if he'd go down the street and stuff. I remember that. But there wasn't too much of that because I was in school. Dad was there, mom was there and various friends ... There was something going on but we couldn't go back to England. But I didn't really know what it was.

KP: But you had never, England was ...

BB: From my point of view England was ...

KP: Yeah, Yeah.

BB: What's England? Yeah.

KP: Yeah, you had ... your memories were Aden, if anything, of your original home.

BB: Yes.

KP: Your father was promoted in Aden.

BB: Yes, he was a pilot officer.

KP: So in a sense you have no memory of him as a sergeant and as an enlisted [man]?

BB: No, not really except for photographs, that's all.

KP: Except for photographs.

BB: Except for photographs, yes. And I remember my mother didn't tell me for a while because she thought I'd go around boasting ... She's told me that since. But she didn't tell me for a while that he was now an officer.

KP: Really.

BB: Yeah she thought I might've gone around [saying] "My dad's an officer and yours isn't." Which is what kids would do. Yeah, yes. But some of the others did become officers too [but] not all of them. In fact, I should've brought it with me. I had, I found it a couple of days ago when I was looking for these things, my father's history, record of service ... It shows, I think it was 1941 he became a pilot officer, and then he was a flying officer. By this time in 1941 he was a flight lieutenant.

KP: What, I guess it's partly related to World War II, but you were ... it's also just related to general Indian history, British history, you were in the last days of the Raj?

BB: Oh, the Raj, yes.

KP: I mean ... What are your recollections?

BB: Well, I've just read ,and in fact I showed this to Sandra and she said I've got to read that sometime. I've just read a book ... [on the last days of the Raj] ... my mother must've picked it up in a jumble sale cause I found it in her things in July and I read it. And it was absolutely amazing some of the stuff in it. Of course most of it ... it was an oral history actually ... they had done this at the University of London. A lot of the stuff in it I thought, "Yes, yes I remember that, I remember that." If you had asked me what I remembered [before I read it] I couldn't have told you. But having just seen this in the book, I remembered a lot of this. . . The caste system was unbelievable ... .My mother had a couple of friends who were Indian and she was very, very close with them and very, very good friends with them. But they were of the sort of higher caste in the Indian [system] ... As I said, we had a bearer, [and a sweeper] ... I know the sweeper was not allowed in the house. ... The bearer would sometimes watch me if the Ayah was out. And I was reading in this book of how this happened. They kept themselves in the house very much separated, but they would substitute for each other sometimes. And I was aware of the fact that there was a very distinct class system.

KP: Even at your young age?

BB: Even at my young age. You would just, you didn't speak to the bearer, the sweeper this way. You did speak to the Ayah very respectfully or you didn't speak to whatever, and you wouldn't ... I was fortunate my parents were pretty strict with me. But I heard some of the kids ... you wouldn't order them around, which a lot of people did. It was very bad. Some of the British who thought they got themselves a little bit promoted because they were now officers and officers' wives they could do a little bit of, "Oh fetch me this and fetch me that." Which I subsequently found ... twenty years later in Nigeria because I was in Nigeria during just about independence too. So [there was] the same kind of empire attitude when somebody got a little bit promoted in Shell ... Somebody would drop, drop something and they would call the servant in to pick it up. I mean that was ridiculous. So that kind of thing was really bad. But I didn't, wasn't aware of it so much when I was a child. But I was aware there was a very distinct class of things. And I remember, I don't remember the words, I believe if I was hypnotized back to being about seven I probably would. But apparently one day I heard, I remember this because I got into big trouble ... . The bearer and the Ayah got into some big fight and they were swearing at each other unbelievably in I suppose it would be Urdu, right? And being a child you pick up these things very easily. And the Ayah wouldn't do something ... or one of them wouldn't do something that I asked them to do a couple of days later and I came out with all these things. Oh it must've been the bearer because, that's right. The bearer put his shoes on and he said, "I'm leaving missy baba. Missy baba said bad things, bad things." He knew damn well that I didn't know what I was saying but he thought he would teach me a lesson. And the Ayah goes running to my mother and says, "Oh Missy Baba said ... " this, that and the other and my mother said, "What did you do?" And I remember getting really reamed out. But I can't remember anything I said and I thought to myself how wonderful it would've been if I could remember all these things. I would go out and [when] somebody annoyed me go swearing at them in Urdu. The chances [are] of course these days they'd understand what I'm saying. But it would've sounded

so good to somebody else. But I was aware of this class distinction ... and the fact that the British were, you know ...

KP: You were on the top of the hierarchy.

BB: Oh Yes, yes. Of course, ... [my dad was an] officer. My mother was an officer's wife. But she was always very conscious of the fact that you couldn't be the officer's wife because they had very bad reputation of being snobs. Absolute snobs.

KP: So you in a sense, learned that very early.

BB: I learned that very early.

KP: That she was glad that her husband had been promoted but she did not want the snobbishness.

BB: Yes

KP: 'Cause it sounds like she felt that snobbishness ...

BB: She had because her father, her father had been an non commissioned officer and she knew all about it. And she could see how wives when they got a little bit above themselves could be awful and my mother was not that kind of person at all. And I didn't realize it until, you know, we are talking about it now, how really good lesson they taught me because I could've been . . I was bad enough anyway.

KP: One of the images that American GI's have that served in India during World War II is they were very struck by the poverty of India.

BB: Oh yes, yes.

KP: Do you have any recollections?

BB: The smells I think, going around Bombay, going around the bazaars. That's really all I can say and, you know, people sort of sitting there squatting down. People with one legs and begging and things like that. That I can remember,. but not too clearly because I'm not sure how far images of television and film affect that. But I do remember the smells. The smells [are] something that will stick with you forever ...

KP: That's something you can't get from television.

BB: No you can't get from {TV}.

KP: Is there anything else of India in terms of the foods or in terms of your classmates.

BB: Well I went to the army school in Pachmarhi. I went to the Presentation Convent in Peshawar ... to another private convent school in Allahabad I remember I was the only British [child] in the convent in Allahabad. There were a lot of Anglo-Indian children there whose parents ... somebody was English and somebody was Indian. But I was the only absolute English and I do remember coming back talking, you probably know chi-chi. It's a very sing-song way of talking which a lot of people who are of dual nationality particularly up until about the fifties would talk. If you hear [some] Indian or Pakistani people talk ... when they speak English, they have a very sing-song kind of talking. And that goes back, this book told me actually why. It's because a lot of the missionaries, not the Catholic ones, but the Protestant ones were Welsh and the Welsh tend to speak [in a] very sing-song [manner] ... I remember coming back from school and I was talking chi-chi because I'd heard it around me all day. My mother says, "You stop that chi-chi right away. Talk properly." And I do remember that ... I didn't realize I was doing it.

KP: So you in a sense, at a very young age had contact. You weren't just simply in Pachmarhi because of these unique circumstances, you were going to convent school. You weren't just, it wasn't a Little England recreated.

BB: No.

KP: You, in fact ... actually some of your earliest classmates were ... ?

BB: ere Indians, and yeah definitely. I don't remember any of them. I don't remember that, but I do remember the fact that I was the only English girl in the school at that time because my parents wanted me to have a Catholic education ... . Again, I went to the Air Force school, the Army school in Karachi ... and that's when we came back [from] during '43. I don't know whether that's down there. In 1943, now that was very tricky. 1943 we went back without a convoy.

KP You wrote that down.

BB: Yes, that was hairy.

KP: Yeah, because you in fact picked up survivors.

BB: Yes we picked up survivors that had been torpedoed in Freetown. And there again I was aware of the war then.

KP: Well, because you, in many ways the war was very distant when you were ... ?

BB: Yes it was.

KP: I mean Aden you know you had to leave but you never witnessed any of the bombings.

BB: No

KP: You just knew you had to leave.

BB: The first bit of violence I ever saw was nothing related to the war. It was when a train had been derailed in New Delhi because the dacoits. They were ... the rebels. I don't know who they were fighting at this time; it was an internal Indian problem ... .The train had been derailed before us and that's why our train was delayed.

KP: How aware were you when you were in India as a young child? I mean it was the last, ultimately the last of the Raj?

BB: The last of the Raj, yes.

KP: How aware were you, were you aware at all of the Indian nationalism.

BB: No absolutely not as a child and I don't think my parents talked about it too much either, because they were probably around the service all time and the war was on and I don't think that they would ... [They were] very conscious [of the war], that was a priority ... get rid of the war.

KP: What about the Japanese because being in India tin many ways the Japanese were the greater threat.

BB: Yeah, definitely, definitely.

KP: Did you have any awareness of who the Japanese were?

BB: No, they were just some people who, they were the bad guys, the planes were bombing them and then my father was involved in servicing the planes that were going to bomb them. I do remember though the first Americans I ever met were people from probably Boeing. I don't know exactly ho they would be. They were American aircraft company representatives who came ... I remember them coming to the house in Karachi. I don't remember what they were, it could've been Boeing or a couple of the others that are now out of business. I should've asked my mother actually but she, the last couple of years she hasn't been able to say [much about] these things. But I do remember those are the first Americans I'd ever met.

KP: Jess?

Jessica Guglich: Well, the questions I had. One of them was, this is going back aways. When you [were] evacuated [from] Aden, you said you were allowed one suitcase.

BB: Yes.

JG: What I really want to know is do you remember what you took?

BB: Yes, my teddy bear.

JG: Your teddy bear.

BB: Oh yes.

JG: Did you take anything else. Is that the only thing you remember?

BB: Probably clothes, that's about it ... I don't know what my mother ... my mother would take her violin that's for sure. I took my teddy bear and my clothes, that's about all I can remember that I would take. As I said, the big things had to be left behind. The tricycle was there, the dolls' house was there. I don't know about any games or anything else. They probably were all left behind. . . Mini-bricks, no I didn't have those. Yes, you know how that is. That's a childhood thing. That I do remember. Mini-bricks were the precursor of Lego, OK.? Mini-bricks were made of rubber which you couldn't get during the Second World War because of the [situation in the] far east you see. But some of the kids had these tiny, tiny, Mini-bricks. And I don't know whether Lego got the patent from them to do it. or whether they went out of business. But [Lego is] ... just the same as the small oblong, you know, Mini-bricks. And I never got those and by the time they came back into the store, I was much too old to have them. So I never got my Mini-bricks. But I don't remember what toys I would take. Probably a couple of dolls, I don't remember but I know my teddy bear because I've still got my teddy bear. He's now 63 years old. The ship? Do you have anything there about the ship?

JG: When you took the, you mean when you were on the ship to ... ?

BB: From Aden to India. The ship from Aden to India I do remember I got lost. My mother ... mother thought I had fallen overboard. I do remember her being in a panic and ... my wandering off somewhere because I got told off for it. But my mother told me afterwards she thought I'd fallen overboard. And {the captain} he said, "We're very sorry if she's fallen overboard. We can't stop the ship to pick her up. [It's] too bad." But what had happened was I had curiosity had killed the cat. I had gone right up to the top and was right next to one of the funnels and somebody found me. But my mother must've been upset about that.

KP: It sounds like you were in trouble that day.

BB: I was in big trouble. But I ... . that was the one voyage and then the Mauretania which was the Cunard ship which I tried to come over to this country in, but they didn't have enough passengers so they put me on the QE1. But that was alright. The Mauretania ... was decked out as a troop ship at that time ... In 1943 we picked up prisoners, picking [them] up in Freetown. But before that ... I remember we had ... to wear our lifejackets the whole time and ... . the husbands would be put on a charge if the wife or children didn't wear the lifejackets. Apparently I went up to the ... this I remember doing and my mother told me the story afterwards, but I do remember doing it ... the general in charge of ... of all the military personnel on board wasn't wearing his life jacket one day. And I went up [to him] and said, "You don't have your lifejacket on." He says, "Yeah," and my father saying, "Shh." You know he wanted to kill me right there and then because he's a general or a brigadier or something. I don't know what he was. And he says you know what, "Never mind, never mind Murphy. Your daughter's quite right. I should have it on." ... Everybody sort of knew everybody by name at this time, {He said to me}, "You're absolutely right Brigid." He produced some chocolate for me the next day which was very rare to

show that he wasn't really mad with me. But I think he felt a bit embarrassed. My father and mother were ready to kill me at this point but I was right. That's the sort of thing a kid would do.

KP: Oh it's a classic too. Although from your parents 'perspective ...

BB: I mean he wasn't, I think he was a flight lieutenant at that point. But you still don't tell a brigadier ... what are you doing? But ... we had school on ship. And ... there were lots of kids on board so you had to keep them occupied ... We used to spend our a lot of our time looking out, watching for submarines because we were not in convoy.

KP: So you would actually . . ?

BB: Oh yes, we'd stand there looking for the thing in the water. I mean heaven forbid you ever saw one. Of course it could've been British but ... because the ships were being torpedoed all the time ... don't forget we're going from India around by Cape Town up by Freetown because you couldn't go through Aden and Suez because the Mediterranean was occupied. And it took about six weeks because you had to zig-zag cause we weren't in convoy.

KP: And it sounds like you really came to understand what war really was?

BB: Yes, by that time I did ... The voyage did [it]. Yes, because when we picked up the people who had ... It used to be called gentian violet, it's purple stuff. You'd have people who'd been in the water and some of them had sharks' [bites] and [were covered in this stuff] It was pretty horrible stuff. And then when they picked up Polish survivors too from another ship . . I don't know if it was from Freetown when they picked up the Italians as well as the Polish. But they had all been torpedoed. So you picked up the survivors. Actually I remember that one because we had mass on board because we picked up a Polish priest. So ... they'd had sort of prayer services but they hadn't had a mass on board. Of course it was in Latin so it didn't make any difference you see, not in those days. If it was in the vernacular [as it is] these days, forget it. But it was ... a Latin mass for everybody. So whatever you were, Italian or British or Irish or whatever ...

KP GI's I've interviewed who've been on ships, it's a very, I mean you've already given us some stories about memories aboard ship, but its a very searing memory. Life aboard ship.

BB: Oh yes.

KP: Particularly the second time around cause you're much older. What else do you remember about. Like the food, for example, aboard ship.

BB: I don't remember too much of the details aboard ship. I know about being seasick. ... which I wasn't because my mother had . . Somebody had given her hints from the first voyage when they went [to India] to go as high as you [can] ... Oh, that's why I went high. Go as high as you can in the ship and stay outside. Which is the best advice you can ever give anybody on a ship That I remember doing. We used to go out on deck and stay out as much as we could. As far as the day to day living, I don't remember. I know we had classes during the day. There was an

outbreak of German measles which I got. ... My father had said that if I could tell the time by the time we got to Cape Town, he'd buy me a watch. And I was panicky watching for the spots in case I got measles before we got to Cape Town. But I got my watch, got to Cape Town and got measles the next day. Oh this is another thing, I don't know if I had it down there. I'd never been in a lift, an elevator before. And we had been warned when we got to Cape Town because [in] Cape Town a lot of people ... , the Afrikaans could pass for Germans. Or Germans could pass as Afrikaans. So we were told ... you do not say where you're going, you do not say what ship you're on, you do not say anything. And of course blabbermouth me ... they were really scared stiff of what I was gonna say. ... So I remember going in the lift of this department store in Cape Town, and I wanted to ride up and down and my mother and father wanted to do something. I was about seven and a half at this point. So they let me go in the elevator and the man was asking me ... Oh, you know, "Where are you going? Where ... " ... just general chat. I don't think ... I'm sure he wasn't a German spy or anything. But then I remember saying "I'm not allowed to say" ... and being scared. But that was ... I was definitely aware that there was a war, and there were bad people around and you couldn't say things.

KP: And they were pretty close. I mean they could be in this department store.

BB: Yes,. yes

KP: This sounds like your first department store.

BB: Probably well, yes I would say it was probably the first department store. There was Sammy's, just a regular sort of a Chinese place that had everything. They had vases and all those kinds of things.

KP: First full service store.

BB: Well, yes but not full service as you think. Because don't forget I was in Nigeria twenty years later and if you call that a department store, you've not ... But it was pretty big.

KP: It had an elevator, so yeah.

BB: I don't remember where it was, it was April '43.

KP: You had, you arrived safely. Were there any close calls? Did you actually ever spot a submarine?

BB: I don't think so. No. We didn't, we just ...

KP: No general quarters where they thought they saw?

BB: Well they would have ... dummy runs definitely.

KP: So you had a lot of ?

BB: A lot of lifeboat drills, oh yes, absolutely. They were almost daily.

KP: Do you remember what they?. I mean so you would go through life boat drills?

BB: Oh yes that's for sure. And you had to put ... you dropped what you were doing [to] ... make sure you had your lifejacket on. Oh yes. That I remember.

KP: And how scared were you particularly when you'd have these drills where ... ?

BB: Well ...

KP: And you had seen, I mean it wasn't a theoretical?

BB: Oh no, no because I had seen people [who'd been] torpedoed. I probably was scared but I had my parents there and I suppose if a child ... A child isn't really scared if they've got both parents with them ... I think they can be reassuring. Even though it was sort of ... , they probably were scared witless. But they managed to, to survive. I don't remember being unduly scared at this point.

KP: But you passed, you also wrote that you passed fairly close to the coast and there were German shells.

BB: Oh that's when we got to Deal.

KP: Yeah.

BB: The German shells. That's when we got to Deal Is that?

KP: Yes, yeah.

BB: OK. We'd gone to Liverpool. Liverpool had been ... , that was where we arrived. Liverpool was extremely badly bombed by this time. It had been, it was pretty devastated. So then we immediately went down from Liverpool to Deal which is on the Southeast coast, which is about 22-23 miles from the French coast and they would shell. That's where the shelling came.

KP: That's where the shelling came.

BB: That's where the shelling came from. They weren't bombed but they were shelled. And you could, you could hear the shelling going on. they would occasionally shell across the channel. Most of the time it was an aircraft and stuff. That was pretty scary to hear the shelling. Especially when you come back from India where you didn't hear anything.

KP I also have the sense that Liverpool probably was a shock to see.

BB: Yes it was, yes it was.

KP: Because you had really not seen . . . ?

BB: We had not seen anything. Here it was just, you know, devastated and then it was fairly soon after we were in Deal, my mother went to Plymouth. Which is where her home was, where ... her parents, her father and her stepmother were living. And my mother just got in the middle of Plymouth and she just cried because she couldn't find her way around the streets because it was totally devastated. She said she just couldn't see anything and I remember her being terribly upset. This was probably [during] the next two or three months after we got back. ...

-----Start of Side B -Tape 2-----

BB: {The main blitz had] ended by this time because that was about 1940-41. This was all after that. But you were ... aware of the fact with the noise going on. And also ... there was some shell damage from the various houses around where my grandparents lived. My grandfather was ... quite a scrounger. He knew where ... all the most beautiful roses I've ever seen in my life. I remember picking them with my grandfather from the bombed out houses because nobody was there, but the gardens were still going. Magnificent gardens. I remember the cherries, I've never had cherries in my life since. Because he knew where all the cherry ... trees were around the place. And my cousin, who is just a couple years older than I am, just this past summer described my grandfather as being a member of the East Kent Mafia. Because he knew where every bottle of whiskey was, up until I would say the day he died. When the shortages were during the war, my grandfather could find anything, absolutely anything. He had retired from the Royal Marines in 1919 at the age of something like forty. He used to play the French horn in the Royal Marine band. He was a very good musician but he decided to retire, we don't quite know why. But he never seemed to be short of money, never had very much, but he never was short of money.

KP: He could afford that bottle of whiskey.

BB: He could afford that bottle of whiskey. And he used to go around with it under his coat ... and he would find it for anybody. I mean he ... we were laughing about this just this summer. We just don't know where he got everything. But he was a wheeler-dealer. Michael's description of him as being the East Kent Mafia was, was pretty good. But yes, the devastation was pretty bad in Deal and then in Liverpool and Plymouth. Then we went up to York you see because that's where my father was posted to Pocklington. So my mother and I, we all lived in Wilberfoss for awhile. And then we actually lived in the York proper, which we used to hear the enemy planes going back because they would go back across the northern route. And sometimes ... now I remember being in a shelter. We used to have to go to the air raid shelter in the middle of the night. The air raid [siren] would go and you'd go in the shelter and you'd stay there three or four hours until the All Clear. And sometimes they would let off their machine guns, empty their machine guns because they had let ... dropped all their bombs. Just for the hell of it so you would hear that. Do then I was definitely, I was ... nine or ten at this point. So that was when I was really aware of the war. But I didn't have any relatives that were really, ... in trouble in the war. Any killed or injured or anything like that, and the Battle of Britain had happened before we got back. ... My father was in London with the Ministry of Aircraft Production. He was

transferred to London. My mother and I stayed in York because there was no accommodation in the London area. It was very short. So we had to stay there after the war for another three years until they could find somewhere to live ... . From 1944-1945 when they started with the V-1's and the V-2s we would occasionally ... go down to London. He would come up ... once a month. We would go down the alternate month. And of course you never knew when the buzz bombs were coming. And I remember hearing them, and if you heard them you were alright, but if you didn't hear them then you were in trouble. Because you know they would go after the whine and then they stopped. And then would come down wherever they were. That I remember ... hearing those in London. That's really scary.

KP Did you, were you ever close to one of these?

BB: No, no.

KP: So you never actually saw ... ?

BB: I never actually saw results of a bomb right then and there. I saw it the next day, but never right immediately, no. I was fortunate that way I never did. And I never saw ... you know, anything really blowing up in anyway ... but I was well aware of it. And I remember when ... we happened to be down in Deal. We'd go and visit my grandparents quite often, and I remember going to Deal and seeing all the ducks. You know what a duck is? It's an amphibious landing craft.

CRH: Oh I know what it is. I thought you said where and I though ... I don't know where it is.

BB: You'd let the back down. They were American weren't they?

CHR: Yes, of course yes.

KP: Yes.

BB: You'd let the back down ... I remember seeing loads and loads of them around in Deal just about the time of the invasion.

KP: But not knowing what they were [for].

BB: Not knowing what they were for. And I remember having Chiclets, the very first time I had gum. Yes an American gave me gum. And my mother said, "I don't like you having gum." It wasn't quite the thing to have. I said, "What? Good stuff." ... I remember that was the first time I had that ... I don't know what they were doing there or why they were so far over as Deal because the invasion came I think from Devon mostly.

KP: Yeah, I had a feeling they were part of that phantom army.

BB: Yeah ... probably for Calais, yes. But I remember seeing these amphibious [craft] because my grandfather would take me around and we would see all these things. He would know everything that was going on. He was a character and a half.

KP: What distinct [memories do you have] besides the destruction and the actual being in the battle, in a sense in the battle zone even if you were a civilian, of the rationing.

BB: Oh yes.

KP: English rationing?

BB: It was unbelievable

KP: I mean GI's have commented that they'd sometimes be invited to homes and they didn't realize how bad rationing was. They'd eat a week's worth of butter. And so they knew ...

BB: Oh yes, that was ... Right, yes, I'd forgotten about that. Rationing was bad and rationing went on till about 1951 I think. I think it was as late as that.

CRH: Bread went off in '48 I remember.

BB: Is that when it was? Yeah, bread was rationed and eggs. You used to preserve eggs, If you happened to get hold of them. There was this horrible glass stuff. Do you know what I'm talking about? It was some kind of preservative. My mother ... would go visit the Irish ones that I was talking about before ... Some of the same family of the thirteen ... were working on a farm outside of York. And so ... we would go out and visit they would give us eggs. And my mother would put them down in this bucket with this glass kind of stuff and you preserved the eggs so you did have sort of fresh eggs. Because otherwise you only got one or two a week ... and sweets, it was terrible. And when my aunt got married in 1947, she didn't have enough coupons for a wedding dress so all the family chipped in together and [she] had all her coupons so she had got enough material to make her wedding dress. And that's '47, that's two years after the war. And I remember going to school. There was a shop across the way from the bus stop that would sell broken biscuits. Because if you had broken biscuits, you didn't need coupons for the biscuits you see. But if you wanted a can of cookies, if you wanted to buy the cookies you had to produce the coupons, but you could get a penny worth of broken biscuits which they didn't have to ask coupons for. So that's what we used to get on the way home from school. That I remember and I must've been ten or eleven at this point. But yeah, the rationing was bad.

KP: Did you have any rationing in Aden?

BB: No

KP: Or India, so in a sense ... ?

BB: No this was a whole new world to us. Of course the first thing we had to get was the ration book. When we stayed with my grandparents, we had to hand over the ration book to the

grandparents so they could go buy the things. It was very, very strict and very tough for a very long time. But you learn to live with it, but ... if you kept bees though . .One of my friends, her father had bees, he was allowed to have extra sugar because they produce the honey ... There was more proportionally more honey produced from the amount of sugar so he was allowed to have the sugar. And if you were [did] physical labor, you were allowed to have extra rations like that. We knew that, but ... none of our people were involved in that [kind of occupation]. But it was very funny, you weren't allowed to kill a pig either. If you had pigs they all had to be killed in a certain way and you had to report them because all the bacon and the ham, whatever, this that and the other, ... went down the system. Well, on this farm where the cousins lived ... now that was another reason why the Irish went to work ... You probably know about this. The Irish went to work in England during the Second World War because Ireland was neutral, [and] all the men had gone off to war. And [though many] women were land girls, there weren't enough ... physical labor to be farmers. So a lot of people from Ireland would go for six months at a time, work during the season and go back to Ireland. But the cousins decided they liked it so much that they were on this farm. And I remember one of them getting married and they had this pig and ... I had never seen so much food in my life. They had butter and they had ... I mean it was just, "Rationing, what's that?"

KP: I've heard of [the situation on ] farms. It could be very different . .

BB: Yes, on farms it was different. And they had a German prisoner ... I just found this out just very recently actually, they had a German prisoner called Charlie who was an absolutely lovely young man who really didn't want to be in the German army at all, but he was in, [and] he got captured. But he was very fortunate, so he was with the Irish. I mean it doesn't matter, it was fine. So they took him ... They put civilian clothes on him ... He wasn't supposed to leave the farm. They took him down into York with them one night and they got a few beers into him and he started to talk in German. So they decided they better get him out of there pretty quickly. So this is what the cousins told me just very recently. But he's been back to see them, after the war he went back.

KP: Really? That must've ... ?

BB: Yes, yes. I remember him being a very lovely young man. What was I about nine or ten at the time, he probably was about eighteen or nineteen. The same age as the cousins.

KP: Sounds like he was glad to be out of the war.

BB: He was glad to be out of the war I mean he wasn't really rationed because he got all the food from the farm. And he had his good buddies you know. And they were all his age and they weren't British so he didn't have to feel guilty because they were Irish. But, yes rationing, rationing was pretty awful. And the shoes. Now can you imagine with kids outgrowing shoes? It was horrendous. ... They did have more coupons for childrens' shoes because of that problem. But you'd ... pass them down like crazy.

KP: Like, for example, in England how many dresses would you get as a child?

BB: Well, I had school uniforms so that took care of an awful lot of things. I don't remember having more than two or three. Well you grow out of them so quickly anyway. And my aunt was a dressmaker so she used to make them for me which was, which made things go a little bit further.

KP: And shoes. You mention shoes. How many pairs of shoes did you have?

BB: Maybe a couple. That's about it, yeah.

KP: And you could only get broken biscuits.

BB: Well, you could get the other ones I mean.

KP: For ration books.

BB: For ration books. But I mean that's what we would do coming home from school like kids from here would go home for a snack somewhere. Buy pretzels or a bag of chips or something. We would go and buy the broken biscuits.

KP: And chocolate was ... ?

BB: Oh chocolate was just unbelievable, yes.

KP: I've been told the two items you could get, although one of the items wouldn't matter as much to a young child, was tea. There was plenty of tea.

BB: Tea was rationed, ... . but I think it was a good sized ration.

KP: Yeah, then American GI's would comment on that.

BB: Couldn't get coffee. You got the most horrible thing called Camp coffee which is in a bottle which they still sell. My husband had it once. My husband's American, I mean he's from Brooklyn, how American can you get right? So he had this [and] he said, "What is this awful stuff?" I said, "That's what we had during the war." ... Did you ever have Camp coffee? It comes in a square [bottle].

CRH: No, I learned to dig British tea. I've never heard this, I find this fascinating.

BB: It's a squarish, oblong kind of bottle which goes up like that. It's sort of a liquid essence ... It's the most horrible stuff, it really is. It's called Camp coffee. Anybody else that was in Britain, ask them about that. But tea, tea there was a reasonable amount of, and flour, I don't remember. No flour wasn't too plentiful. However they used to make cakes. But people would preserve a lot of food. A lot of canning. Not so much tomatoes, but apples and pears and any fresh fruit you could get. And ... I don't remember seeing bananas for a very long time.

KP: I've also been told oranges were ... .?

BB: Oh, no you didn't get oranges.

KP: The most rarest of commodities.

BB: Where would they come from? You couldn't get them from Spain. You couldn't get them from Israel, you couldn't get them from South America and you couldn't grow them in England. You didn't see them at all.

CRH: Let me remind her of something. When you were, when you were about thirteen or twelve, there was a fruit ship loaded with fresh fruit in the summer of 1948 in London. When the dockers went on strike and that food rotted ...

BB: Oh, I remember hearing about this.

CRH: I was in London that year.

BB: I don't remember it exactly. I remember hearing about that. Yes, yes. That was a sin if ever there was one.

CRH: It was devastating as far as ... for the dockers.

BB: Yes, yes. Still they got the revenge on the dockers. Have you seen London lately?

CRH: Oh yes.

BB: Docklands. They got the revenge on the dockers for that one.

CRH: Gentrified now. Anyway I do remember that food rotting. ...

BB: I had forgotten about that.

KP: Yeah, because I once saw a documentary about British children who came to America for the war and this one person was recollecting ... . He had lived with his family in the Midwest and he could have oranges, it was a fairly well off family, whenever he wanted and he came back to England after the war and his father at Christmas given him an orange.

BB: Oh right.

KP: For his present and he, you know, it was such a culture shock having been in America during the war where oranges you could have all the time.

BB: Right, right.

KP: What about, I've been also told that beer was rather plentiful. You were not of drinking age but ...

BB: No, but beer was always around, yes, because the hops are grown in Kent So they could grow those quite easily. It doesn't depend on anything to be imported.

KP: And Americans are struck by the pub culture in Britain.

BB: Oh yes, it's still true today.

KP: But I'd love to hear a native talk about your introduction to pub culture.

BB: Probably not until I got to college because you could go into a bar fairly young but you couldn't drink. Neither of my parents were drinkers. Not that they didn't drink they were [not] abstainers, but they weren't into the drink thing. So, I wasn't into going into a pub when I was quite young. The first time I remember going into a pub was probably when I was in college because hey, it was the thing to do. But I wasn't really, I didn't turn out to be a drinker myself. I mean I'd have a few. I've been known to nurse a few in New York before I got married. Because I was in my late twenties when I came to [the States]. Before I got married I was in New York for four or five years as a single item, so I remember the pubs in New York. But the pubs in England, yes, and it's still very much a pub culture even today. Very nice.

KP: No, when I was in England a few years ago I remember, was struck by how nice the pubs were.

BB: It's definitely, its not a drinking thing it's a social amenity at which people drink.

KP: That's what the American GI's were so impressed at.

BB: Yes it is. Its sort of a private kind of club but not a discriminatory club, if you could put it that way. It definitely is very good. I don't remember being in pubs. You would ... I think the first few times I would go into a pub was certainly with my parents, would be to have lunch and you would ... maybe you'd have a beer with it. But neither of my parents did drink particularly. My father might have enjoyed a beer here and there. It does tend to get a little bit cooler now, the beer. I remember in 1977 ... it was quite hot that particular summer and my husband wanted a cold beer and we were near Saint Paul's. He said, "Oh, let's go get a cold beer. So he says, "This beer is cold? And the man said, "This is room temperature, sir." "Room temperature," he says [to me], "I'm not having beer in England again. I want a cold beer." But he sort of got used to it a bit. But the draft beer really has to be served at room temperature, which is slightly chilled but nowhere near like the cold stuff.

KP: Yeah Americans we chill the glasses.

BB: You chill the glass and everything else. But, they do have ice in drinks these days which has changed over the past twenty years. Thirty years actually.

CRH: Do you still think about this? It seems to me that when you were a young woman first eligible to go to pubs, many of them you would not enter alone.

BB: No, you still wouldn't.

CRH: Still now?

BB: No you still wouldn't go into the ... public bar, you'd go into the saloon bar.

CRH: Ah, so ok.

BB: And my mother always ... old as I am, she would not like the idea of my going into a pub. It was not done. No, nice girls didn't go into pubs. In fact so much so ... When my mother came to visit us [she came] quite often ... She came with my father a couple of times and when my father died, she'd come every year. I wanted her to get in touch with the Irish relatives and she didn't want to because they owned bars. And it never really dawned on me why she was so reluctant, and they had they owned bars. In Jackson Heights. So she never saw her first cousins. I've been in touch with them fairly recently and we were talking about this and I said you know I just realized why my mother ... They were laughing because they were familiar with the same concepts [from] their parents and they were brought up the same way. Women didn't go into bars. Certainly a women alone wouldn't go into a bar. But that was true in Manhattan I think in the sixties, in the early sixties.

CRH: It certainly was true in my mother's day and it was true when I was a young man.

BB: Yeah, and certainly I think in Manhattan in the sixties. You wouldn't go into a, a woman wouldn't go into a bar by herself because she would be tainted, it would be assumed that she was being one of those sort, whether you were or not. So beer yes, ok. Drinks, ok.

KP: One, you mention getting some Chiclets from an American. What other contact did you have with Americans during the war itself because ...

BB: Not very much because we lived in York and there weren't too many up there. If we'd been to Norfolk, which is where most of the people who were in the American Air Force during the Second World War [were], I would say the majority of them were in Norfolk. ... Mildenhall and a couple of others are still American bases there today. . . they were in May anyway. But, those were the only Americans. In fact, there was a girl, yes, there was an American girl in our class who had been, she had been in Singapore when she was a child. And ... they were captured and ... had been in a Japanese internment camp. And that was the first American of my own age that I had met. And she was going back to ... she lived in El Paso. And she was in England for a while on her way. She had the funniest accent. El Paso, Texas. But anyway that was the first American girl I had met and she was quite a novelty in our class because she was, you know, not only having been in an internment camp in Japan but ...

KP: But from El Paso.

BB: From El Paso and she had really been around. I don't quite know what, I don't remember why she was out in Singapore. I don't think her parents were service. They might've been business people who were interned. I think she was related to one of the nuns, that's why she came to our school.

KP: So you went in England, you were going to convents, Catholic?

BB: Yes.

KP: During the war what did you do for fun? When you were in England. Do you remember any games you played? Actually I'd be curious of the games you played also in Aden.

BB: Rounders. Well Aden I don't remember. I don't.

KP: Yeah the games changed or ...

BB: No it'd be English games I think, and I remember the English games. We probably played rounders, sort of baseball. Wasn't old enough to play tennis and didn't have tennis racquets. You'd play . . . you wouldn't play the American games like Ring-a-Leveo You'd play leap frog ... You would play "Ring a Ring a Rosy." ... It's not "Ring Around the Rosy", it's got a different name. "Ring a Ring a Rosy" it's called in England. And you'd play "London Bridge is falling down." I'm trying to remember now what games did we play in school? Well, in school we'd play netball and rounders, which is basketball and baseball. Yeah, baseball. And then when you got to be a little bit older, you'd play field hockey and tennis. But wouldn't play . . . and actually [it was] later on I played squash. Women don't play squash in this country, very much. It's [sort of] racquet ball.

KP: No, no yeah.

BB: Women play squash in England. Great game if you're not very athletic. Great game. I mean if you're not very proficient at games. Squash is marvelous. I'm really surprised that women don't play it in this country. It's good, I mean if you're not particularly good ... . I could never get the ball over the net in tennis. I mean ... hopeless. But I could enjoy playing squash. You moved around a bit and you could get the ball against the wall at some point. You might not beat your opponent, but at least you could get it on the wall.

KP: I have that feeling about racquet ball because I also have that problem, but in racquet ball occasionally you could actually hit the thing back.

BB: Yes, ... but squash is the same kind of thing and I really enjoyed that. But that was later, after college.

KP: What else did you do? Did you go to movies with your friends?

BB: Not during the war. I'd go with my mother. I remember seeing Sister Kenny with my mother in 1944 ... and ... the first Danny Kaye movie which was the first one with Dinah Shore

Danny Kaye's first movie? I remember seeing that [and we thought] "Wow! He's good, we'll hear of him." I can't remember what it was called, Dinah Shore was in it. But ... occasionally my mother [and I] would go if it was a suitable one. I remember seeing the film with the Warsaw Concerto in it, Dangerous Moonlight. That was a marvelous movie. Anton Walbrook was in it and the Warsaw Concerto was composed for that particular movie. Remember going to that. But of course you see a lot of the time you wouldn't go at night because you were so worried about their being an air raid. We were in York now, we weren't in London.

KP: So the air raid is a real presence?

BB: The air raid is a presence, definitely. Even in '43-'44. You'd go to an afternoon matinee because it was safer then. But, you know, you would think twice about, at least we did, we thought twice about going to the movies at night because you didn't know what was going to happen.

KP: When you were living in York, you were not on a base and you had been sort of very much a part of the military culture.

BB: Yes.

KP: In India and in Aden. Whereas in York you're living amongst civilians.

BB: Yes.

KP: Did that change life at all?

BB: Well, they thought ... you know for one thing I talked funny. Because I didn't have a Yorkshire accent. And, "Why don't go back where you came from? You know, "You talk funny, you're not like us." And of course I went to the convent ... [Where] we were living ... the people around ... went to the local school ... And they thought I was being snobby because I went to the convent. It wasn't that at all, it was just that ... the Catholic school happened to be the convent. And of course I hadn't been there during the [earlier part of the] war. So, "Where were you during the war?" kind of thing? Well, India to them was just a place, a red place on the map, you know. "What were you doing there? You don't know what it's like during the war." I do remember the kids being rather cruel about that.

KP: Because you hadn't . . . ?

BB: Because I hadn't been there and ...

KP: It was not like peace had broken out

BB: No, no ... I hadn't been there.

KP: But it sounds like they had really, ... the war for them ...

BB: The war for them meant an awful lot more. They'd been through rationing for all those years. ... In 1944 they'd been on rationing for five years. They'd grown up, they'd not known anything else. Most of them.

KP: And they'd also ... It sound like they'd seen more of the war.

BB: They'd seen more of the war too. Definitely. They'd heard it on their radios. They'd heard, they'd probably seen, had families who were bombed out in London perhaps. It had touched them more personally than it had ever touched me.

KP: And they made it clear to you.

BB: And they made it clear to me that they had.

KP: When did you, did you have a sense before the end of the war, a better sense of what the war was all about?

BB: Oh yes.

KP: Say just before the war ended in May of '45, how much more was your sense of the war looking back on it?

BB: I remember that things were happening. Especially after D-day. And then we would listen to the radio and ... I can remember, "This is the news and this is Alvar Lidell reading it." They used to identify the commentators and you used to get to know their voices because it was supposed to be a security thing so that you could recognize [them] and know it wasn't a false report. Because Lord Haw Haw was doing his thing too. You know William Joyce.

KP: Because I think the BBC is still formal about it.

BB: Yes, but they don't give the names of the announcers. This is the six o'clock news this is Alvar Lidell reading it ... or somebody else. His is the only name that comes to mind. But they would identify the announcer. And then you would hear so and so ... British planes bombed so and so. So many of our bombers failed to return. We shot down [so many] enemy aircraft. That I was aware of on the radio. And then you were aware of the fact that something was happening and it looked as if it was coming to an end, finally, because the newspapers would say this and people would talk about it and people would be much happier, especially after D-Day. I do remember hearing the D-Day announcement. I was at a birthday party and the six o'clock news came on and said, "British and American troops combined forces have landed in Normandy " ... The party sort of stopped and the kids ... sort of heard that, "Oh, yes, good. Let's get on with the party," kind of thing. I remember the grown ups went and were all saying ... "Oh this looks as if it might come to an end soon." So there was a sense that it was finally going to end. And then of course the bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I never know if its Hiroshima or Hiroshima. Which way did you? ...

CRH: My Japanese friends I grew up with would always say Hiroshima.

BB: Hiroshima. I think I remember Nagasaki ...

CRH: You sort of swallow that.

BB: Yes, remember hearing that. I didn't realize the full implication of all the political things on that. Just it was a horrible, horrible thing to happen. And devastating for the people.

KP: It sounds like bombing meant something to you.

BB: Yes.

KP: Whereas for American I think a lot of civilians who haven't been in the military and never been in the in a war situation have no clue what bombing really

BB: No.

KP: I even think the atomic bomb.

BB: No. ... I don't think I ever heard bombs falling. I heard the air raids, I knew we used to have to be in the shelters. Then the All Clear would go. And I do remember the planes going off and hearing noises and there was machine gunning. Not very often, but occasionally because they didn't want to have their [aircraft] still loaded up when they went over ... . Because York is not very far from the coast ... They would go the northern route over, probably to Holland I think.

CRH: Did you hear the buzz bombs?

BB: I heard a few buzz bombs, yes. Which was good because as long as you heard the buzz bombs you were alright. Because we used to say, "Oh good we heard them." That I remember.

KP: Do you remember the celebrations at VE Day?

BB: Oh, yes we had street parties and dressed up. I've got a couple of photographs of me dressed up as a gypsy. The VE and VJ parties. Everybody, all the neighbors, well people were pretty friendly anyway because it had been such a ... You got to know each other on the street anyway, and the kids would all play together. But all the moms and of course no dads they were all off in the war, or very few dads. I don't remember any dads being around. My father would come occasionally and of course that was another thing, "Your father isn't in the war." Because he was down in London in the Ministry. He would come back and he would wear a uniform though sometimes.

KP: Because in fact I've been told there's a tradition in the military, though I think this probably changed a little during the war, that off duty you don't wear your uniform.

BB: No

KP: Whereas Americans often they're glued to their uniforms.

BB: No. I don't ... My father wouldn't always wear his uniform. He would if he was traveling up, because he was more likely to get a seat [on the train]. But when he was around with us, he wouldn't. I don't know whether he had to wear his uniform. Yes he did, I think he had to wear it during the war. That's right. He would wear his uniform. Yes, so if the kids hadn't seen him in the uniform they wouldn't have known. They ... just knew my dad was in London. "Why isn't he fighting? My dad's fighting in Africa" or somewhere else whatever. But, that was fun then because we would walk down the street with my father and instead of my father having to salute somebody else, everybody would be saluting him. So he always had to walk on the other side of my mother wherever he was so that he had his right hand free. Its a tricky thing, you know, if you think about it. I could walk down the street holding my father's hand but I couldn't walk holding his right hand because he had to salute, regardless of the service [whether] it was army or navy and they were a lower rank, if they were NCOs or anything they had to salute him. And I think the Americans had to salute too.

CHR: We certainly did.

BB: Yes

CHR: And we were glad too.

BB: Yes, you had to salute. And it would be the same for British too. {They} would have to salute an American officer. Yeah, I hadn't thought about that. Yes, I'm right, I'm glad you're here to confirm that. I thought that was right because there would have been more Americans in London where we used to go and visit and he'd be, sort of he'd forget about it and an American GI would be saluting him, and hey.

CHR: Our problem was to identify all the ranks. And with the English it wasn't too bad, but if you recall It's very difficult to identify the French ranks. Because they all have chevrons and ...

BB: I don't know about the French. All I know is my father's uniform, the uniform was different so it was easy enough to tell the British. Gosh I hadn't thought about all this for years.

KP: Well, I'm curious also because in many ways Americans who have studied the second World War comment it was not as extreme I think as in England that all the men are gone. This is really a women's war. In fact your family situation is unique so ... your father's presence is a little bit more.

BB: Yes that's why the kids would say, you know, "What's your father doing up here?" And another [thing] was, you see, there was an airfield not very far from where we were living in York and my father used to have to come and inspect that airfield because he was Ministry of Aircraft Production and also he would have to come up and have visits with various aircraft companies ... I can't think of the names of the British ones, there's Bristol ... They've all gone now, but there were a lot of British aircraft companies that were in the north so he would get an

excuse to come up. Because his family lived nearby, he was able to come up and hold his meetings with them. Do it on a Thursday and so he'd have the weekend free. So that's why he was able to do that. In fact ... the first time I went to the University of York, which is part of the Rutgers program exchange, we have a program with the University of York. I went into Heslington Hall and I said, "Wait a minute, I've been here. My father used to come here during the war. It was the a branch of the Ministry of Defence. ... "I've heard of this place before, but it wasn't what it is now" ... .

JG: I'd actually like to know what you did. I know that you came here in '83 I believe it was.

BB: '62, Oh , wait a minute now, as a student.

JG: At Rutgers, yeah, I hope I'm not bringing you off the topic..

BB: No, no, no. Student in '83 and employee in '80, to this country in '62.

JG: Because I was talking to Sandra she told me that you were in charge of the Study Abroad Program I believe. Because I tried to look up information about you, it was kind of difficult so I wanted to know a little bit about what you did while you were at Rutgers.

BB: Oh, ok I joined Rutgers in 1980. I was a part-time secretary in the Religion Department. My kids were 8 and 9 years old, so I didn't want to leave them at home ... I was home at two, so I'd be home when they got home. Then I realized that braces were coming along, and college tuition ... , [so] I better get a full time job. So I eventually got a job in the Study Abroad Office. I wasn't in charge of it. Thank you, Sandra, I really was, but never mind, don't tell the boss! I was the Assistant Director of Student Services eventually. So I joined Study Abroad in '83 ... I went to King's College London but failed Latin. I don't know if you're aware of the British system, if you don't pass all your exams at one time forget it, you have to resit. Well, as it happened, I already had a job lined up so I didn't need to get my degree at that time. I had done all the work. I'd passed History and French, but I failed Latin. So, Elsa Vineberg, Dean Vineberg said to me ... "It costs you nothing ... Why don't you get your degree if you want to?" I said, "You know, I've always thought about doing it," and I said, "I've even tried to get my transcripts from England, but they don't issue transcripts. It's very hard to get these things." She said, "Well, let me see what I can do for you." So anyway, ... I got 54 credits coming in and so I registered at University College and I started as an undergraduate of University College in 1983. I got my degree in 1989 at the age of 54, before my daughter got her degree in 1991 from Rutgers, I was determined I was gonna get it before she did. And that's what I did. And I was in Study Abroad all the time so I was not only working full-time with Study Abroad, I also was still chauffeuring because they couldn't drive. You know the usual things that one does as parents. And it was fun ... I can never to this day read and listen the radio. The kids used to work with the television on, the radio on. I said, " I can't do this." So I used to have to go down to the basement to study because my husband would have the radio on with his opera or his jazz or something, and the kids would have their music in each of their rooms. And it was dreadful. I don't know how I did it actually, but it was a challenge but I did it. So that's my connection with Rutgers.

KP: Going back to the sort of the end of the war. Did you think, particularly after what I've been told were stupendous victory celebrations ... .

BB: Oh yes, yes.

KP: Very spontaneous and really ...

BB: Oh yes, yes.

KP: That it would be so bleak for so long afterwards? In the peace, with rationing.

BB: I don't think people, I really don't think that ... "When is this gonna end? "When is it gonna be the end of the rationing?" And it went on and on and on. As you said, '48 for bread. I think it was '51 when the final ... [it finally ended]. You got larger allowances.

KP: But it was still ... .

BB: But it was still austerity and, you didn't expect it to be that way for as long as it was.

KP: Because I've been told, I've read accounts that Princess Elizabeth's wedding was one of the few sort of ... what was in many ways a very bleak [period] with rationing and apparently, I got some sense, there was a some letup during her wedding ...

BB: Yeah, that was the first big splendid thing, which was when, '47 I think it was? Yes, that was ... quite unique and I remember queuing up for ages to go and see her wedding presents. . . I remember doing that, [it] was quite fun.

KP: I was struck that your parents were Conservatives, politically.

BB: I think Winnie ... was the man and when Atlee got voted in, they thought that was the end of the country.

KP: Really, they thought Labor was the road to ruin.

BB: Actually my father was really a Liberal. He would've been really happy to know that Paddy Ashdown's group is still doing so well.

KP: Really?

BB: Oh yes, he would be happy. He always voted Liberal. He ... wasn't fully in favor of all the Conservative things, and he really couldn't be Labor. He just ... Labor was absolutely out. His big thing all his life was proportional representation, which is still the main part of the ... the Liberal Party, manifesto.

KP: So he was content to vote Conservative, [but] his heart was with the Liberals.

BB: His heart was really with the Liberals. Yes, absolutely.

KP: He would be very pleased they did very well this last election.

BB: Yes ...

KP: I guess, it's partly a war question, but his career continues in post-war. It's Winston Churchill. It sounds like, I mean from an American perspective, he seems to loom very large. I'm curious as a young girl growing up in Britain, what ...

BB: Winnie, Winnie was he was the God. Everybody, you know, spoke [of him in] reverential terms, ... He was "Our Winnie. Without Winnie, we wouldn't have done it," and all that kind of stuff.

KP: So that is a really ...

BB: Oh yes ... Definitely was ... Of the people that I even talk to now, I can't think of anybody who would be derogatory about Winnie during the war. Perhaps in the fifties ... , I don't know when he died. Oh yes, he really ... And the royal family too, the King and Queen ... .[Look at] the Queen Mum now, I mean she's idolized by the people. She's, what, nearly 98. She and the King were always around at different things and they would show up. It was a tremendous rallying point and really [a] morale booster for the people ... The Princesses and the King and Queen stayed in London during most of the time and, you know, "They were there with us going through it," kind of thing.

KP: So that really made a difference?

BB: Yes, I think it did. Yes, definitely.

KP: You knew that the King, for example, the King was in London.

BB: Yes the King was in London and the Princesses were in London too. The Queen and the Princesses ... yeah.

KP: When did you think ... Did your parents expect that you would go to college. Was that a plan?

BB: It was a sort of a given. ... I can never remember a time when I didn't plan to go to college.

KP: Really? Even as a young child?

BB: Yes, I was gonna be a doctor from about the age of 9 or 10, which meant college ... Which is really rather funny because my mother left school at fourteen, my father left school at fourteen ... My father used to read a tremendous amount ... It wasn't sort of a [long-term] planned thing that I would go to college. They always meant me to have the best education they could afford and the

convent school tended to be ... the private schools so I would get a better education. Not just from the religious aspect, but I would get a better education, which I did. And you know about the eleven plus right. The eleven plus was this very discriminatory exam that happened in Britain. I think they did away with it ... . Do you remember when they did away with it? Well, they did away with it way after my time, but any rate . .

KP: I know you were tracked very early.

BB: Not anymore, but in my day you were. Now my grandparents, the one that was, that played the French horn in the Royal Marine Band. He ... had six grandchildren ... Jean and Roy went to [the University of] Edinburgh [and] Roy has his Ph.D. Marcus went to Birmingham, Michael went to Reading. I went to King's London ... So that education was something that was from their parents. I don't know whether they got this from my grandparents or not. My grandfather, I don't know what his education was. He had been in the Royal Marines since he was maybe twelve or thirteen. But they must have had something about education in their family because all his sons [and daughter] , that is my father and the father of all these others and their mother, all had this idea about education. It wasn't something you deliberately aimed for, it was just a given, that you would do it. We, all except one ... have all been to university, pretty good British universities and some of them have got [advanced] degrees, one has a doctorate ... But they've done very well academically. And all our parents left school early ... . Certainly still in Britain it's not as frequent that people go to university as it is here. It was even less [so] in my day.

KP: Because in some ways if you were an American, if this was an American [family and] your parents had come from Ireland to here they would have this kind of [pattern].

BB: I probably wouldn't have gone to college at that time.

KP: Your family pattern overall is very similar to an American, at least the people I've interviewed for the Oral History project, often the parents wouldn't have a lot of education but their children went to Rutgers and their sons and daughters often get doctorates and MD degrees.

BB: But I don't remember it being a conscious thing. I think it was just a given that you'd get the best education and then you would do the best that you could with it ... You probably would go to college but it wasn't ... if you didn't go to college you would be damned.

KP: Well I'm struck because in your family it's almost this classic American ... But you're a British family.

BB: Yes.

KP: This classic mobility. Here you have, going back to your grandfather, basically Irish immigrants.

BB: Oh, absolutely.

KP: In England by your generation you have all been remarkably successful.

BB: We all went to college but, yeah, definitely.

KP: And not just because of your unique circumstances of coming to America, the family that's in England.

BB: Yeah they all did too.

KP: Did you have, and I get the sense ... you might think that this is somewhat exceptional?

BB: Well ...

KP: In an English context

BB: ... When I think about it, five out of the six of the grandchildren of people who left school at that early age, I don't know whether that's unusual or not. Because I have a lot of friends who didn't go to college who make more money than I will ever see in my whole life. From the money point of view, going to college isn't necessarily the same thing ... I have a lot of friends who didn't go to college, a lot of my contemporaries didn't, but they've done very well for themselves.

KP: Well no, I mean, England even today does not send as many people to University as Americans. They almost have the notion that everyone's supposed to spend two years at community college whether ...

BB: No, many of my friends didn't, they just finished [school] at fifteen, sixteen and they've done very well. And their kids have done very well too ... Even their children haven't gone to college. But I was thinking where that is a little bit unique that five out of the six did. And I don't remember anybody hitting me over the head with it and saying you've got to go to college. You won't do this you won't go to college. It was just a sort of a natural segue that you would.

KP: You mentioned you wanted to be a doctor, at a very early age. What happened to your plans?

BB: Yeah. Well I got to the Sixth Form and discovered that I couldn't draw which was an actual hindrance for taking Botany which you had to pass.

KP: So interesting how careers ...

BB: And also we had a French teacher teaching us chemistry and we'd talk about Avogadro's Hypothesis. What the hell is that in English? You know, I discovered that I was not really scientifically bent. I was much better off writing in English; I was pretty good at French. So they decided, after having one year in the Sixth Form, which was quite disastrous actually because that's when you're tracked. You do two years in Sixth Form to do your A levels after you've done your O levels. After one year, they decided that I was really not scientific, and that I

would have to switch to Arts. So that I had to take my exam after one year rather than after two and of course I failed. But I was still quite young so I was alright. But I had to have coaching. So that's why I went ... I left school ... had some coaching and I went to college the following year. So I started college at 19 rather than 18.

KP: You mention the college before.

BB: University of London, King's College.

KP: Kings College at the University of London.

BB: Of which University College is another component.

KP: And, you were there from 1954-1957?

BB: Yes, ... it's a three year program in Britain.

KP: What are your memories of college?, because you mention pubs.

BB: Oh yeah well, alright. I've just been ... OK, we had our fortieth reunion this past May, which was incredible, absolutely incredible. And there were .people there I hadn't seen since, some of them I hadn't seen since 1957, which was really rather fun and we just sort of took off where we came from. What do I remember about college? Well I remember going to classes in big lecture halls and then they would have seminars which break down to [ a few] ... people. They don't have this system [here generally]. It's not like a ... what do you call it a recitation, it's not quite the same. You have to actually participate in it [fully].

KP: I make my students do this.

JG: He makes us ...

KP: I make them talk too.

BB: You have to participate. What would happen is they'd say, "Here's a topic. Here's a list of books. I suggest you refer to this one particularly. We'll see you next week, we'll discuss." Somebody would actually have to write the paper and read it and everybody criticizes it and does that kind of stuff. That's the way it works. I remember that, you know, pretty well ...

-----Start of Side A - Tape 2-----

This continues an interview with Brigid Brown on October 21, 1998 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ with Kurt Piehler and Jessica Guglich an occasionally joined by C.R. Harmon a visitor from Seattle University.

KP: And you were saying, you were talking a little bit about the seminar and then ...

BB: Oh yes, well that was certainly true in the History seminar and then you would have a lecture in French in the big room and then you would break down into a smaller area for discussing a particular set book. I don't remember what it would be at a particular time, maybe one of the Voltaire books and you'd discuss it. Sometimes it'd be discussed, mostly it would be discussed in English but then they'd go into the other language when they were going into nitty-gritty stuff. But that was the academic part of it which was pretty good. You were much more on your own, far more so than the American system. I think of it as green stamps, the American system, you have to get so many green stamps before you get your degree. And you're fortunate if a course relates to the next course that you're doing but, quite often it doesn't. And has no relevance whatsoever with what you did last semester. Which is one thing about the British system with much narrower fields, there's a continuity of thought between perhaps the French novel that you are studying will correspond with the French History that you're doing at the particular time because you have to do it as part of the set, the series. It's a much more logical kind of thing.

KP: It's much more, I've been instructed it's much more specialized.

BB: Oh, yes.

KP: Where here you start specializing when you get to graduate school.

BB: Yes.

KP: There it's really undergraduate.

BB: But I must admit, going to England for an education ... My daughter went for study abroad 1989-90. She went to University of Exeter as part of the exchange program ... When she went to Exeter she had to do the English system. It was the makings of her because she went on to graduate school. And graduate school ... here was not that much different from the work that she had done as an undergraduate at [Exeter] university at the undergraduate level. So it's marvelous training for anybody who wants to go on to graduate school, the British system. It's much more ... I don't know if there are any American schools that do it that way.

KP: No I'll let Jess tell you a little bit how the course is structured but there's elements that I've tried to, but I haven't consciously modeled after England.

BB: Oh, that's fantastic for any of your students that go on to graduate work because they'll find that it's just, "Hey we did this, this is the kind of thing we used to do. This is the way we used to work."

KP: ... I'm sure, because I run many of my courses ... this course because it's a small seminar style, so ... I'll let Jess describe how this course works. You mentioned it was a lot of fun, a lot of goofing off.

BB: Hell of a lot of fun. A lot of goofing off, yes.

KP: You mention that you often were doing things at the last minute.

BB: Oh, yes, yes. Well, you see I was always in every Cabaret that we started ... . Each faculty used to have, there'd be the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Engineering whatever. I would appear at the Freshers' Cabaret and I would appear at the cabaret when they had at midterm ... There was a lot of us that used to do this ... . I was just looking at the [old] newspaper clippings. I appeared at ... somebody's cabaret, Science I think it was, and they were saying, "Well she's not Science." "I'm a guest artiste." You see so ... They had this even in the newspaper. And then there was a Freshers' cabaret and you were supposed to be a first year student and I appeared in that. Somebody said, "She's not a Fresher", and again, "She's a guest artiste." So we had all these things ... I got a rude disillusioning when I got the list of executive board, I was a hanger on. So after all these years I discovered that I really wasn't on the executive board of the Union of Students ... .But I was the Entertainment Secretary which meant I ran all the Saturday night hops. The big dance was done by the Social Secretary or the reverse I'm not sure. so I spent a lot of time when I should've [been studying] as one of my friends always said, "We used to see her book-bag in the library, but we never saw her."

KP: So there was a lot of sacrifice?

BB: Oh yes, oh yes it was fun, it was fun. And I think if I had spent a lot more time doing what I did when I got to University College and spent a lot more time at it, I probably would've gotten my degree the first time around, but I had a good time. It was a good learning experience.

KP: I'm curious, and this I think is more to serve students as a point of contrast particularly when they compare your interview hopefully someday on the internet versus some of the American Rutgers College traditions. I just want to go through some of the traditions so you can sort of counter because many of them I know don't apply to England. One of them is American's have fraternities which were quite strong at Rutgers College.

BB: Oh, I know about that.

KP: And sororities. Was there any? I assume nothing comparable.

BB: No, nothing comparable. The nearest thing would be ... certainly at Kings. The engineers, who were all male, had a very strong close-knit society and they would do a lot of things together, socialize together, drink together. Parties together all the time. That would be sort of like a unofficial kind of fraternity because they were all studying the same kind of courses and they tended to be a very close-knit body.

KP: I mean, I've gotten the sense, though I don't know this and you can, is that the college you are in particularly at Oxford and Cambridge can be a very clubby affair.

BB: Yes, that's very much so. Yes.

KP: My sense of the University of London it's a much more democratic system.

BB: Yes it is because they would tend, people would go by departments. Like the English Department would be very close-knit. The undergraduates there would sit around and do things together. But it wasn't really, there's no kind of comparable sorority or fraternity kind of thing in England as far as I know. It certainly wasn't in my day and I don't think there is today.

KP: What about chapel? Because up through the forties and I guess even into the fifties there was mandatory chapel for college students. Did you have anything like that?

BB: You're talking about Oxford and Cambridge I think more. Aren't you?

KP: I'm just wondering if University of London had chapel?

BB: Ok, ... you. Oh, this is very funny. This past summer I went into the chapel at Kings College London. King's College had a very big theological faculty and there was a university chaplain, a very nice man called Churchill ... . His widow was actually at the reunion and we chatted to her a little bit ... . Mr. Churchill used to go in and talk to people and he would say ... And my maiden name being Murphy, he would automatically think I was Irish and he'd say to me, "Are you a Roman?" And I'd say, "Yes I am," and he'd pass on to the next one. Which was ... fine, he got far more people to spend his time on ... .They would have religious services but it was not mandatory at all.

KP: Wasn't mandatory.

BB: But I didn't remember going into the chapel, I just didn't remember it ... .My cousin's wife actually was at King's the same time as I was. We went into the chapel this past time and I said, "You know Alex I don't remember being here." She said, "You weren't." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Don't you remember it was pre-Vatican II? You wouldn't go into a Non-Catholic church for a service." ... It was just this summer I realized I had never been into the chapel. I had looked in the door but I had never walked down and checked around and looked at it, and I went to King's for three years. Alex was there with me and we were both laughing and said, "Can you believe this?" My husband was absolutely appalled. He said, "I can't believe this ... .They would always have religious services there [such as]the Christmas Concert, but it was not mandatory, no.

KP: And it seems like partly because you were a Catholic that ...

BB: I would never get involved with it.

KP: You would never get involved.

BB: No, we weren't really supposed to.

KP: Yeah, no. It's interesting because at Rutgers College chapel was mandatory whether you were ...

BB: It was up until '73?

KP: I think it was mandatory up until, I'm not sure when it ended [being] officially mandatory but I have this sense ... I've even talked to people in the sixties. It was not officially mandatory, but you were expected to go.

BB: Probably until it was coed, which was what, '73?

KP: Yeah, I think it waned in the sixties.

BB: Yeah, yeah the sixties. Everything waned right?

KP: But it was a very distinct memory for people in the thirties and forties.

BB: Well, because it was a religious-based university.

KP: Yeah, yes.

BB: They were a part of the Theological Seminary or ... but that may be true in Oxford and Cambridge I really don't [know]. But certainly London was a different body altogether.

KP: I'm curious, where did you live?

BB: Unfortunately I had to live at home because I didn't get a grant. I lived thirteen miles away so I didn't really qualify for a student allowance. I got my tuition paid my second year of college. I got my tuition paid because everybody who gets ... I think it's still true until this past year they're changing it, if you got into a British university, your local education authority automatically paid your tuition because it was, I think it was, what, 1 in 5 or 1 in 10 [who went to university]. It was much less proportionately than it is in this country. So if you were accepted, they would then figure out you were deserving [of the tuition] because you got a place ... So my tuition was paid but not any kind of living allowance. My parents would've had to pay that. And because I lived so near it really wasn't justifiable for the expense. I would've loved to have lived in a dorm, I really would. It would've changed my life I think if I had lived in a dorm but . .

KP: Really in which ways would you think?

BB: I didn't really live on my own till I went to Nigeria when I was 26. So I hadn't really lived away from home and that's quite old. I was 26, 25 I think. it was quite old. Whereas if I had lived in college ... I did miss out tremendously. And I used to have to dash and catch the 11:40 train from Charing Cross?) I remember many a time running down there trying to catch the train to get home. Because I lived so near, and the fact that I was an only child, there was no other excuse to get the equivalent of financial aid. I did get a small allowance towards my transportation, my monthly commutation ticket. I think if I had really insisted my parents might have done it, but they couldn't see the sense of doing it because I live so near. It was a lot of expense. Although my education hadn't cost them anything from the time I was 11 there was still everything else they had to pay for so that was it. But, yeah that would've changed my life

because I would've probably grown up an awful lot more, a lot earlier by having to live away from home.

KP: You mention you did not do well in French, did that . .

BB: No, Latin.

KP: I'm sorry, Latin, and so you didn't have a diploma though you did have the education.

BB: Yes.

KP: The education it seems . .

BB: Yes

KP: Because you did get a job.

BB: Well, what happened was Shell Oil had recruited for two or three years, mine was the last but one year. They recruited twelve women from all the British Universities, Oxford, Cambridge, everywhere. They would recruit them to go into their executive training program to be the equivalent of administrative assistants today. That was the way that a woman got into a big corporation, if you weren't a lawyer or an accountant or something specific like that. You wouldn't just go into a big corporation, you would have to start off in the secretarial kind of way. So Shell would take these twelve women with a view to them being top level secretaries.

KP: Which is ... I mean, I understand this role but Jess and I think my women students wouldn't

BB: Yes. You don't, ... but you see you have the tools. You have your computer skills. In my day you didn't have any skills. You could probably write very well, you probably had a good brain on you, but what use is that to a corporation [traditionally]? You don't have the shorthand, the typing, the office skills, whatever. So what Shell did was they sent us to City of London College for typing and shorthand in the morning. In the afternoon they would take us around Shell and show us how the departments worked so you had an idea what the corporation was like. You had your tools, they knew you had the brain. And they were hoping that you ... you would be with them. And they used to bring Elizabeth Arden in to how you should dress, how you should make up, this that and the other. What you should do, what you shouldn't. I mean it was really ... We were paid a salary too. It's quite amazing.

KP: I'll let Jess ask some questions because I think this ... She should have some natural questions about getting job in the 1950's and ...

JG: Well, I don't know I was just so lost!! I was just listening to you. But so you went in and they sent you to school for typing.

BB: Right.

JG: And then what did you do after that? When you got out?

BB: Ok, when you got out of that they ... sometimes, they put you in the typing pool [or you] sent you out to various departments. In my case, I was sent to the Audio-Visual Department right away ... . Shell in those days was worldwide. It still is, but not in the sense that it was thirty odd years ago. What they would do is ... if they had a film strip, or a film or posters, they would all have to go to be cleared through the central office, the advertising office in London [part of which] was Audio-Visual Services. They used to have filmstrips that would be translated into all different languages and be sent to [countries such as] Venezuela. They would be in Italian, French, German, Spanish whatever to all the various companies and various Asiatic languages as well. So that the department would be responsible for making all these films. I went to that specific department. Several of the other people were sent to work for departmental chairs. They were lucky. It just depended upon what their interests were. I was interested in audiovisual ... . I worked for four men at one point and worked for them ... for a year and a half actually. It was rather fun because the thing I was doing, this is where the brain comes into it you see, one of the things I had to do was compare the ... I was typing up the script for this particular transcript. It was ... [written] in various languages. Well, I spoke French so I could tell if there was an inconsistency in the French ... I was sufficiently proficient that I was able to [notice discrepancies] ... Several people translated it ... when two people translate something there's always a very slight discrepancy. Now Spanish I didn't speak, but I could tell there was a word appearing that was slightly wrong. And the guy doing the Spanish ... I got the shock of my life when I was sent over to see the man coordinating the project, it was Montgomery's son. I walked into his office, and, I mean, I knew it was [going to be] him before I got there, but he was the image of his father. Very nice man. He'd worked in South America and spoke Spanish fluently so he was the one I had to go to and ask which word should it be with this that and the other ... . That's the kind of thing I would do. Some of the people worked for marketing department, some people worked for ... all different things. Now, what happened was ... you know, when you served your time in that [position] if there was a vacancy in another department [you could be promoted) So I got moved to work for the Chairman of a department ... which would be the equivalent today of an administrative assistant. It was just that was the way you got into it. And then ...

KP: Just before you ... were you at all resentful of this track., it sounds so tracked now when we look back on it.

BB: Not really, it was the way things were.

KP: You just accepted it.

BB: You just accepted it then. That was the way. I mean, we weren't into the feminist movement at the time. My daughters, who are a little bit older than you, say, " I can't believe this is what you did." And I said, "This is the way life was." I mean you didn't get into industry, ... industry that's not the word, into the business world really unless you had ... . [such as] an accounting degree or you had a law degree ... .

KP: Otherwise, because the men had a very different program.

BB: The men had a very different program. Besides there was another thing too. I wanted to go overseas and Shell was one of the companies that had so many opportunities overseas.

KP: So there was also another reason why ...

BB: There was another reason why I joined Shell and I just applied to this job. I thought hey, I'll get trained, I need some skills, they'll pay me for it. Besides which I might get sent overseas ... . There was Venezuela in those days ... in fact some people went to the Bahamas, one friend went to Cairo, some went to Singapore. . . Shell had places all over but during the time that I joined them, I was there from '57-'62, their world shrank because the local communities were able to ... , they spoke both languages. ... In Nigeria, for example, it was called Nigerianization. The political situation was that they wanted more indigenous people to work for the company so the first ones to go would be the clerical staff because they were less skilled ... .In Indonesia ... the Indonesians were taking over the jobs so that those Dutch people had to go back to Holland. In Venezuela the people there were bi-lingual, Spanish and English speaking, so they would employ locals there. So again all those people were going back to London or to Holland, to the central offices. So that's what happened. And, of course, those people had to be either let go or displace [people] in the London or The Hague offices ... . But I decided ... I wasn't gonna be working in London so I thought I'll go to the States, I haven't been that way yet. So I'll go there for a couple of years. Thirty-four years ago.

KP: Before that you went to Nigeria.

BB: Yes, with Shell.

KP: With Shell, and you mention you were ... this was the first time you lived away from home and you really picked another country to live away from home.

BB: Yes, it really was different. I mean I went down ... one of my friends was going to Borneo and she'd been with Shell about the same time as I had and I said, "How did you get to go to Borneo?" She said, "You can't just say I want to go, you have to go and keep reminding them that you want to go." So I knocked on their door one day and said, "You do remember that I want to go overseas.". And they said, "Well, we don't really have anything much at the moment. We do have Nigeria, would you be interested?" And I said, "Sure." So I went home and said, "How about my going to Nigeria for two years?" and my parents thought it was fine. What had happened was I had said to my mother about six months before that I thought I'd get an apartment in London and she didn't like that at all. In her day, women didn't leave home unless they were unhappy or getting married. And she was very, very upset about that and I couldn't understand it, so I didn't live away from home, but I go back and say, "Can I go to Nigeria for two years?". That was different ... it was an opportunity.

KP: But it's ...

BB: It was a hell of a long way. Yeah, but in years [since] I can see now how it was not a problem because it was not leaving home for the sake of leaving home. It was leaving home

with a purpose. So if I had gone to live in London as a student I could've just stayed away , I would never had got to Nigeria, that's for sure. I was there just before Independence, during Independence and after.

KP: What are your memories? I mean see the process see all three stages.

BB: Well, we were really scared because the Belgian Congo had happened in the spring and the summer of 1960. And Nigeria was October 1960, but we were worried about what was going to happen but it was a very good transition. In Nigeria we didn't get involved too much outside the Shell complex. We would go down to Port Harcourt which was ... that was in the news lately because they've just blown up one something in Warri ... . But we would go down there for shopping ... to the club to swim and ... for the movies but we really didn't get involved with the local people. Some of us did because we would get involved with the local missionaries, but there again they were in their own separate little world too. It wasn't like getting in touch with the Nigerians themselves. We did have a few Nigerians on staff in 1960,. Of course, at the time I left there were many more and of course now its completely ... . But, it was different, and ... again it was a third world country which is what I had been used to when I was child.

KP: So this is in many ways a coming home.

BB: It was sort of, to some extent. We had a cook, small boy, gardener. It was nice. Didn't do anything. But, that was interesting and that was Shell. Shell had magnificent facilities for its staff.. They had a squash court and tennis courts and an Olympic size swimming pool.

{technical difficulties }

BB: They had, when I was there, two places: one was Owerri, one was at Port Harcourt. When I was with Shell it was still a back to basics. They had an Exploration Department as well as a Production Department. So they were still doing Seismic tests, you know, putting the things in the ground to find out what the terrain was like before they would go in and actually drill. So they had seismologists, they had paleontologists on staff. Then the marketing was done out of Shell in Lagos. Then they did eventually build a refinery in Port Harcourt but that was after my time. They were just beginning it at my time. And they weren't up to ... their goal was 100,000 barrels a day at that point, they're way beyond that now.

KP: Yeah

BB: In fact, just yesterday I had ... they have a reunion every 18 months. I've been to three of them but I didn't go to the last one because our daughter was getting married about that time so I thought there would've been one [about] this time. And I just got an e-mail yesterday from a friend of mine who said, "Oh whoops, you asked about it. It's on Friday it's a bit late," So they're having their reunion on Friday. "Well," I said, "tell everybody I said 'hello'."

KP: Where do they have the reunion?.

BB: They have the reunion in London.

KP Where, the Shell Center?

BB: Shell Center, yes, yes. A lot of these people ... , we were all in Nigeria . . together in our, what, twenties and thirties ... Some of them ... a lot of them are retired and a lot of them did go on to be general managers and very top, top people in Shell.

KP: What about the women? Did any of the women go into the regular man's ranks?

BB: I don't know of any women in my day who went on to management jobs. I know one of the girls that I met in Nigeria, a woman. She worked for the Chairman of Shell. But she didn't ... she was sort of the top secretary, the top administrative, but she was not ... I don't know of any woman who became a general manager overseas. For one thing I think it would've been rather difficult in the culture , for Indonesia or for some of the other [countries]. They were not into the feminist motion yet, some of these third world countries. But I don't know of any women who made it up to the top, certainly not in my year.

KP: You and your group.

BB: In my group certainly from Nigeria, certainly from my group that I went to college with either. Except one who got a First, one of the few Firsts in History at the University of London my year who now runs the Parliamentary Institute in London ... she's got pretty high. But she was an academic, so she stayed an academic. so that was another way that women went in, if you went into academia.

KP: Yeah, but that was even hard.

BB: But that was even hard then, yes. And she didn't have a Ph.D. actually, I discovered that. She doesn't have a Ph.D., no, she has an M.A.

KP: Though it sounds crucial, it used to be not as crucial in the British system.

BB: Right, it has now. I don't know ... I just suddenly realized that she doesn't have a doctorate, which in this country would be unheard of. She never would've made it up as far as she had without a doctorate.

KP: As a woman it would been ...

BB: Yeah, yeah.

KP: What about, why'd you leave Nigeria?

BB: Well, it was a two year contract.

KP So it was a two year ... ?.

BB: And as I said people were going from all different parts of the world to this one new building which had been just been built on the South Bank. It was quite unique. And I had a bit of a problem with one of the people in personnel during my first year. Which sort of had a black mark against me, although I'd redeemed myself and ... it was alright [by then] . There was not going to be a place for me in London. Because they had to ... seniority ... some of the people had been overseas ten years. So they had to be placed in London and they said ... they didn't think there was going to be a place for me, they weren't sure. But they didn't think it was likely, so I should start making alternative arrangements. So when my contract was up, I came back to England and started on my visa for the States which took several months. Worked, part-time at secretarial work , which was really rather good because I then worked for The Singer Company. One of the Singer Company Vice Presidents from New York happened to be over working where I was working and he said, "Oh, don't sign anything when you get to New York. We may have a job for you." So I then went to work for a Vice President of the Singer Company when I arrived here.

KP: Why the appeal of the United States?

BB: Well because I hadn't been here you see. I had been to India and I had been to Aden but I hadn't been the other way. So I figured I'd go to the East Coast for a couple of years and then I'd go to the West Coast and then I would go to Hong Kong and maybe New Zealand and go back to England.

KP: So you really wanted to see the world?

BB: Yes.

KP: Not just actually work and to ...

BB: Right I was going to work for a short time and then, and then well two or three years, and then go on to the West Coast. Because I didn't know if I was gonna get married or not, I mean I was then 27.

KP: Did you think ... . I mean because my sense of in the men and women I've interviewed particularly from the thirties and forties, is there was a real sense that the war changes things. Women get married pretty early. I've interviewed countless people who got married ... right out of college or a year out of college.

BB: That is the fifties and sixties.

KP: More the thirties and forties.

BB: Yes, but it changed.

KP: I haven't interviewed that many people from the fifties and sixties.

BB: It changed a lot in the fifties and sixties but it still ... When I went to my ninth married home in 1962, I said, "Too hell with this. I'm not mucking around this. If I'm not gonna get married I might as well do some traveling." So I did. Because I had been out of England for a couple of years ... and most of my contemporaries were married at that point. So I thought, Why don't I do something different?" So I did, but then I got here and found a lot of people who were in my age group who weren't married either, and that was in '62.

KP: And you lived where when you first came to the states?

BB: Forest Hills in Queens.

KP: And it sounds like you enjoyed New York a great deal.

BB: Oh I did, I did. I had a great time in New York. It could be very lonely but I was fortunate there was a group ... I had a friend that I had known in England and then got in touch with her just before I came here. She lived in Forest Hills and she and her husband met me off the boat. She said, "Where are you living?" And I said, "Well, I've got a place in a New York hotel for a while." It was all arranged through the people who did my visa and she said, Well, I'll see if I can find an apartment for you in Forest Hills because of the group of young people that I know that you'll enjoy." So she found an apartment for me within a couple of weeks and I moved to Forest Hills. Around the church there was an over 21 club. Well, they were way over 21 ... a lot of them were over thirty at that point. But they were all single and it was great. So I had a whole nucleus of friends. We used to do a lot of things together, go out to Long Island and go to various places ... People were pairing off here and there, but at least it was a new group of friends that I could do things with, male and female so that was good. We used to go to New York City and we used to go to ... Friday night was an interesting night! Sometimes it was Wednesday night, but not too often. It was fun. And then I started to look into getting a degree and I went to NYU and the most they would give me for my ... if I [had gotten] straight A's, the most they would give me was 28 credits, even including my A levels. But what Rutgers did was they gave me my 28 and they gave me my A levels as well which is the equivalent of first year of college. So I got that.

KP: But you had the thought that maybe you should finish?

BB: Yes I did, I always had that thought that I cheated myself. That I should really have gotten my degree. But I got discouraged when I found out ... and I couldn't go to Hunter or any of those because I hadn't not declared to become a citizen. You had to ... be a citizen or had filed intent to become one and I didn't sign because I didn't expect to be here that long.

KP: And those were free then.

BB: They were free,

KP: So they were much more strict. Now you can go without it but you had to pay tuition.

BB: Yeah, well it would've been free, which is what I wanted. But you had to file intent.

KP: I'm curious back at looking at your first memories, and this will probably clarify life in England, although life in England was very different probably because of the war so it was even more exaggerated, what did you find striking that was similar to life in England and being an expatriot abroad? What was different about America? Your initial impressions?

BB: Oh, the hustle and bustle. Because you can't really ... New York is an entity all to itself.

KP: Yeah, New York is also ...

BB: Yes, yes.

KP: I'm going to Knoxville next January for good for a job and I think how different life would be.

BB: Oh yes, I mean the pace is unbelievable. That was the first thing that struck me ... Everything is just rush, rush, rush ... . People ... There are a lot of sincere people too, but there's a lot of superficial people, not as genuine I don't think. Midwest I would think they are, but not certainly not New York so much.

KP: You picked that up?

BB: Oh yes, pretty quickly. Yeah

KP: As a cultural ...

BB: Oh, absolutely.

KP: Not just the crowd you were with?

BB: Oh, no, no, no. A cultural thing, people would say oh, you know, "Come over and see us sometime, " and of course if you showed up on there doorstep they'd be absolutely [surprised] . That kind of thing. It's much more superficial I think. In England people wouldn't say it to you.

KP: Well, I've gotten the sense, my wife has lived in Boston for a number of years and which I visit, I get the sense that if you are invited by someone in Britain to their house they really mean it.

BB: Yes, they expect you.

KP: And if you're a friend, you're really a friend.

BB: Yes

KP: Where Americans I think, particularly in the new York area, can be very superficial.

BB: That's the first thing that struck me. And the other thing was, sounds stupid. Revolving doors.

KP: Really?

BB: Never seen so many revolving doors. I'd seen them occasionally in the department stores in London and places, but revolving doors. Every place had a revolving door and I ... my kids think I'm crazy when I say that and I said, "No, it was a big thing." I was working in Rockefeller Plaza and everywhere around were all these revolving doors, revolving doors ... And another thing, you're gonna laugh hysterically, you won't, but you might laugh. You know, those automatic doors that you think nothing of when the doors all open automatically. I remember going to the Science Museum when I was a kid and that was one of the novelties, the new inventions of the future.

KP: The automatic ...

BB: Do you know what I'm talking about?

CRH: Sure you walk up to the door ...

BB: You walk up to the door and ...

CRH: You're not sure ...

BB That was a novelty in the Science Museum. sort of life in the future. Ann every time I go through one of these I think to myself, boy am I getting old. You know , I mean really is ... you just don't think about it these days but ... .

KP: I can relate more because I remember, they had the automatic doors in the supermarket when I was growing up so I was used to that. But it was something of a novelty to see them go into other buildings that you wouldn't ... you know. I just remember I thought how novel it was that the Senate Office building where I was a Congressional intern was starting to have these automatic doors. It just seems so ... like supermarkets made sense because they had carts, but it seemed very novel so I can partly relate and now it has become much more common. Its not just a phenomenon in supermarkets.

BB: ... Because England was a little bit behind the states because I remember ... I don't know where you grew up, but can you remember the milk being delivered by milk carts?

CRH: Yes.

BB: With the horse? And the women used to rush out and get what the horses dumped for their roses.

CRH: I know that was done and I know we gardened roses but I don't recall that we did it.

BB: Well, that was used to happen. I can remember this when this was after the war, before they had the motorized milk carts, the horse would deliver and if the horse happened to perform in front of your house it was a competition between the neighbors to run and get that for the roses.

KP: I have to ask that. People have talked about milk deliveries by horse in the thirties.

BB: Yeah, no this was definitely forties early fifties. And my husband remembers this happening. in Brooklyn.

KP: In Brooklyn.

BB: Yes horse delivery. He doesn't remember about the manure for the roses but he remembers the horses. There was something else and it was just yesterday and I said to him do you remember that and he said I've heard of it but I don't remember ever seeing it. And I can't think what it was.

CRH: Do you remember your first washing machine?

BB: Oh you mean with a handle?

CRH: Anything.

BB: My mother when she left her house two years ago, had the handle [one]. I mean that was an antique if ever it was, but it was so great especially when we used to go visit with the children. 'Cause it wasn't worth putting the washing machine on for two or three things from a small child. My mother would have a hand ringer in the garage, which is marvelous because you'd wring out most of the [water] ... and then put it on the line, if you put it through the hand ringer you'd get it much dryer. Is that what you're talking about?

CRH: Yes, but I was also thinking about the first electric gas, electric or gas washing machine and it went like this <makes movement with hands> and everybody washed everything they had in the house.

BB: Yes, how about it?

CRH: That would've come in England after the war.

BB: Yes, after the war. We didn't have a refrigerator until way after the war. It was probably about 1949 or '50.

CRH: Something else you'll probably remember is that bicycles were common but private cars weren't.

BB: Oh no, or telephones. You had to share a telephone.

CHR: That I didn't know

BB: We had to share a telephone after the war, oh yeah, after the war. That was such a limited thing [so] you had to share a line. We didn't . . . We had the phone in 1951 I think., we had a shared line,. '51 or '52. We got our own line in '53.

KP: I'm struck ...

BB: That sounds really ... it is amazing. As a result of the war.

KP: I'm curious were you struck at all by the car culture of America because my sense of ... I mean, did your father ever own a car?

BB: Not in my lifetime, he owned it before I was born but then they didn't anymore. No I got used to it in Nigeria you see , because everybody ... you had to have a car in Nigeria. I couldn't even drive when I went to Nigeria. The first thing I had to do was buy a car before I could even drive.

KP: That's where you learned how to drive?

BB: Yes.

KP: And the idea that you had to ... .

BB: You had to, you had to. And so when I came to the States of course I had to redo my license because my license wasn't any good and I had lived here for ... I hadn't driven for three or four years ... and I failed the test the first time. I couldn't believe it, I couldn't get the damn thing parked right. So I had to get a license. The car culture was ... I mean. England now its horrendous with cars, horrendous,

KP: How did you meet your husband? You said he's Brooklynite.

BB: Ok there is ... the group that I belonged to in Forest Hills ... I sing . . . Cabaret ... and I had a trained voice. One of the people there used to belong to this group called the Village Light Opera group in Manhattan, and she was trying to get me to go down and said, "Oh you sing well, you should come down," Yeah, yeah, Louise. I'll come down . So eventually I went and joined the Village Light Opera group in Manhattan which does Gilbert & Sullivan which is British. They do at least one a year. They used to do two a year now they do one a year and they do things like light opera or anything you can imagine, and that's where my husband had joined there. He sang and he joined for the social amenities as much as anything else and that's where I met him ... Again, we used to go out in a group and things like that and that's when I met him a few years ago.

KP: You had a New York romance. You were both living in New York. How did you end up in this part of New Jersey?

BB: Oh well, when we got married we ... . found an apartment in Staten Island and lived [there] ... . We decided that really it was ridiculous having an apartment, we should buy a house. He didn't want to go to Long Island which was where most Brooklyn people went. He said, "That's where they all go , we'll go to New Jersey. " So we looked in, oh, I don't know where it was we looked. We were gonna buy a house in Staten Island but the builder ... was hedging, hedging, hedging, and he didn't build the house and he wanted \$5,000 more so we told him what he could do with it. He sold it the next day for the \$5,000, but we got our money back. So we decided we would look in New Jersey. We looked in Sayreville and a couple of other places and we found our house in East Brunswick. It was absolutely nothing to ... which had a good school system because we had one child at the point who was just a baby but at least you had to think long term. Nothing to do with Rutgers. In fact my father live way, way in England told me about Rutgers the first time .

KP: Really?

BB: He had seen the precision drill team on television. Now what else could you expect from a military man? He was so impressed. he said, "It's a something called Rutgers drill team," you know the silent drill team? Its fantastic, it really is. And he had seen it and he mentioned it. It was the first time I ever heard of Rutgers. I said I think that's the University that's down the road from us.

KP: And you'd mentioned earlier that in many ways your coming to Rutgers was the available job.

BB: My first ... [job] ... I had worked for the New Jersey Hospital Association part-time, which was down in Princeton. And gas ... had gotten pretty expensive by that point and they wouldn't give me a raise down there. My boss had promised me one, but the ultimate boss said, "No we can't give her a raise blah, blah, part-time." I said, "This is ridiculous my coming down here for four and a half hours, gas is going up. I'll see if I can find a job locally." The children were getting older and, you know, I figured I would like to have been at home. My mother-in-law used to babysat if I wasn't at home [when they were] in grade school. So I went to Personnel and they said there's was a job going in the Religion Department but ... because of the system at Rutgers, we have to advertise it internally first and if somebody wants the job, then forget it you're out of it, but If they don't next week, then we can interview you. So I did, I went to work for Religion. Which was where I got back into [really] using my mind again, which was incredible after so many years.

Do you know Jim Johnson and Henry Bowden and Hiroshi Obayashi.

KP: Unfortunately not. Jim Johnson sounds familiar.

BB: He's an ethics professor. He writes on peace and war.

KP: I think yes.

BB: Ok, when you get Jim ... , Henry ... and Hiroshi together discussing the merits of a comma before or after![a word] . Well this was ... I mean it was incredible. Very esoteric conversation,

but I sort of thought, I haven't heard talk like this for years. It was just that kind of a thing. They would discuss things, just in the middle of talking over a cup of coffee or something and I said I've got to do something. Which is why I really enjoyed it. Which is why it was a challenge to get my degree.

KP: So you came back to Rutgers [to] this part-time job. When did you start again?

BB: In 1980.

KP: 1980. How long were you with the Religion Department?

BB: About two and a half years.

KP: And then you went to ...

BB: Study Abroad, until last October.

KP: You actually had quite a long run with Study Abroad.

BB: Oh yes, fourteen and a half, nearly fifteen years.

KP: And the program has grown quite a bit. I started here as a graduate student in 1983 and . .

BB: There was just Mexico, France, Germany and Italy. And it's now ... during my time it was going to Spain, England, Israel, I can't think of where else and a few summer programs but it's now into India, Poland and they're starting one in ... . Seth [Gopin] has just come back from Australia.

KP: It sounds like you had significant responsibilities.

BB: Yes, I did.

KP: Both officially and unofficially.

BB: Yes I did, I did. I did all the nitty-gritty day to day stuff.

KP: Did you get to travel at all?

BB: I did one time after I had been there five years. Seth said, "I think it's time you saw where everything is", so I did. I went ... my daughter always complains it was her first long break from college when she was a freshman. So I went during December and January, after Christmas and I went to ... Israel and then ... to Germany to see the University of Constance. Then, I'm not sure if I got them in the right order, then I went to Florence [and] a couple of days in Rome. To see the programs because ... you really need to see these things so you can tell the students what it's like in ... the context. It really is. Then I went to Paris for a couple of days and then ... to Tours which is where Rutgers has another program. And then I went on to England for a few days to

see my mother . So that was the time. And then I also got to go to Mexico to see the program down there a few years later. And then England, ... I go to England at least once a year, mostly twice, so I had met some of the people who were involved in it, who had been trying to get Rutgers to run a program for a long time. So that Robert Jeffers, did you know Robert Jeffers? ...

KP: No.

BB: Ok ... , he was in FAS [Faculty of Arts and Sciences] and was the dean responsible for Study Abroad in FAS at that time. He went around to all the sites and they ... set up the programs ... Then when I would go on vacation, [since] I happened to have friends in most of the places, I would go around and would make myself known to the people because administratively ... after all the policy was done, I would be the one ...

KP: You actually would have to implement and work out the nitty-gritty details.

BB: Housing and all that kinds of stuff. ... I did that. And I would travel around. It was fun anyway. And I got to know a lot of the people pretty well.

KP: What did you enjoy most about the job and what were the headaches?

BB: Well, what I enjoyed most about the job was dealing with the students and dealing with the faculty people and ... the administrative people around the university. It was marvelous. And dealing with, frustrating, but dealing with embassies, getting visas and stuff.

KP: Really? That's the hard part of the job.

BB: Unbelievable. Although it worked out quite well eventually in the end because I got to know most of the people in the embassies.

KP: Rutgers is not the easiest of bureaucracies to work through?

BB: Oh gosh, oh no. So I mean I used to ... by the time I had been there a few years I would just call up and say who I was and I'd get put through to the person that I needed to speak to.

KP: But until you know how to do that ...

BB: Until you know how to do that, it's incredible. it's incredibly difficult. Really is. So it's ... What I enjoyed about the job? I enjoyed dealing with students and of course it was good for me dealing with the parents because not only was I familiar with these countries, because I had been there ... particularly with the England program. I knew everything about, well not everything! but I knew about the culture so I could relate to the parents because in most cases at that time I was probably about the same age as the parents. Now I'm older but ...

KP: And you had daughters.

BB: And I had daughters who were that age and so I was able to relate on both levels. When my daughter went overseas, I was able to relate as a parent and then act crazy. The worst moment? Getting a call at 7:30 in the morning from my daughter she said, "I'm calling from, Corfu Do we, does Rutgers have health insurance for teeth?" She said that her friend, Barbara, had broken three teeth.

-----Start of Side B - Tape 2-----

BB: My daughter was calling on her behalf because not only did she know where I was, but was also calling in my official capacity.. So ... I said, "Alright now what you're gonna do is go to the American Express office and see if you can find a dentist that speaks English ... I said also, "This sounds very silly but you're in Greece. Go to the kitchen and get a clove and put it in Barbara's tooth. Because if she's got toothache, it's the best thing to do. "And", I said, "the main thing to worry about is infection." So she said, "We're leaving tomorrow we're going to Rome. We should be able to find an American dentist." I said, "Do you realize what tomorrow is? It's good Friday. Going to Rome on Good Friday to find a dentist?" So any rate ... we got off the phone and I had to call Barbara's mother ... I said, "She ... seems to be alright. She's not in pain.". This is all done before I even left the house to go to work ... . And Barbara's mother called her dentist and the dentist said. "Whatever you do don't let a Greek doctor do anything. If you're going anywhere, go to a German doctor if you can. Get to Germany. Don't go to Italy and have it done." So . . they were very good, they went to the American Embassy and the American embassy sent them to a German dentist in Rome. . . He saved Barbara's teeth actually. And so they spent Good Friday in the dentist's office in Rome Yeah, yes. That was probably the worst moment I've had.

KP: You didn't have similar crisis for other students, or you could be more detached about them.

BB: I could be more detached about it, but Seth had them. Most of the time Seth would get them. Somebody fell and broke their back in Mexico and he had to go down there and they got the best treatment they could get. When the [student] went back to Columbian [Presbyterian Hospital] the person in Columbian said, "There's nothing, we would have done anything differently". So if anyone [hesitates] ... about Mexican doctors, don't worry about it because they gave excellent treatment. He had somebody who, I wasn't there at the time, somebody who was in France and was crossing a railroad track for some reason or another and got hit by the fender of a train or something, so that was a bit traumatic. But the kid's alright. We had few appendixes and things like that. That's mainly when the director gets involved.

KP: So you, in a sense, that's something you just would pass on.

BB: Yes, and if he was not there I would have done it. But the fun thing was, oh, that was fun, when they had the Mexican earthquake. [The city] was out of communication. The State Department was supposed to track everybody. The State Department was absolutely useless. I couldn't believe how bad they were. What happened was ... Seth was very imaginative. He got a hold of someone who was a ham operator in Piscataway. And they were in touch with people [in Mexico City] and he had to go out of town for a day or two, so I was on the line taking the phone calls from this, that and the other and finally the ham operator got through to somebody in Mexico so that we knew that all the kids were alright. So I had to keep calling all the parents to

reassure them that we were doing the best we could. The State Department finally got in touch about three days later. And we said, "Don't worry, we know about them. They're alright. They're all safe." But that was hairy, that was hairy.

KP: You mention Embassies were very difficult to work with, I guess were there any Embassies in any countries particularly difficult to sort of get students into and out of.

BB: The Spanish are pretty bad with their requirements for visas. The Italians were pretty bad, but eventually we got them organized. What happened was I went down to the Philadelphia Consulate and made friends with one of the people there and she was very good and so that we were on a first name basis for the next two or three years. She gets transferred to San Francisco which was fine because we still had the contact in Philadelphia, but now we had one in San Francisco well. Then I got talking to people in Chicago and the Chicago one was very good. The New York one was never very good. But it's not as bad now as it used to be. But I don't know what it is with the Indian Consulate now and South Africa wasn't too helpful [some time ago].

KP: I'm curious, you had the experience since you were the one who actually had to implement the policies that people decided. You worked with a number of different universities in different countries. Could you maybe just talk a little bit about that process in terms of ... And also we are sending students abroad partly so they are exposed to a different way of doing things, different cultures.

BB: Well, I wouldn't be involved in the policy or setting them up at all. I would just implement them. So I would know all the people to talk to and I had to speak to somebody about housing. Rutgers has directors in most of these countries so that really the director on the spot takes care of the nitty-gritty details. The main thing to do is to give advice to the director, as to who to go to, what to do in x, my, and z. And also, sometimes, particularly in England, I knew who to call for various things. Why the grades weren't in, ... or somebody's housing or this, that and the other. So, as I said, I didn't do the policy for that, but I would have suggestions as to what should be asked. But by that time everything was all straight. There was a set of questions you would ask in a new location which I wouldn't have anything to do with.

KP: Were there any, you could name names or you can defer, but were there any particular ... I mean the intermeshing of two different academic cultures, even in America, can be a quite difficult thing. Now adding a layer a different culture.

BB: There were occasionally difficulties with the Director that was sent from Rutgers with the people on the spot. They would rub the faculty of that other university completely up the wrong way which meant the cooperation that year was nil. So you had to mend fences the following year with the next director. That has happened.

KP: So that seems to be more of the problem. It's not the general, it's the actual person who gets to be the ambassador from Rutgers.

BB: Yes, which sometimes ... there have been a few mistakes in those but it wasn't ...

KP: You can remain nameless on that.

BB: Yeah, but that wasn't known before they were sent. And they had rubbed up the local faculty completely the wrong way.

KP: Without naming names, what would be some of the [areas] , in general terms, that would rub

BB: Well, they would go in insisting and demanding things for their particular Rutgers students rather than saying, "Do you think it would be possible for you to do something." It's the attitude of the individual person who goes in. Particularly if it was a woman going into a culture that is male oriented, which happens quite often in Europe. Which would rub A up the wall because it was a male oriented society and there's this pushy American broad coming in and demanding all this stuff. Whereas, you know, if it had been a less demanding woman [things] might have got a little better. Or if it had been a male, it would've been a little bit better. But sometimes you get this pushy, pushy American faculty person going in telling the faculty person in this particular country what they should do.

KP: I've also observed as being a part of the Rutgers Faculty Culture, but I'm sort of in a middle stage so I can sort of look at it because I'm not fully part of it, but to get anything done at Rutgers at least as a faculty member it doesn't reward the meek, you have to really push.

BB: Oh that's for sure, absolutely.

KP: Even if it's in the university's obvious self interest they often won't get it.

BB: I could name a few people I know that do that, but that's true.

KP: One of them has even been a director abroad.

BB: I wonder if it is the one that I'm thinking of ?

KP: Yeah right. I just been amazed at what ...

BB: The problem is its not just a question of bringing your Rutgers experience overseas. You have to work with the culture of the people involved.

KP: Well, no, exactly, but I think ... I've realized it's different at other American universities, for example, I get a sense at the University of Tennessee it's a much different academic culture. They don't reward pushiness.

BB: Oh, is it. It must be a Rutgers' phenomenon.

KP: Yeah, and I think its found at other schools

BB: Yes but Rutgers is one of those that has it.

KP: Yeah, it's a very ... Because I think you'd appreciate ... I mean here you know sometimes faculty departments can be really conflictual and really competing factions, whereas the department I'm going to in Tennessee is very consensual. I saw my friends at the University of North Carolina, they were afraid to have elections for department chair because someone would have to be a loser. Here ...

BB: Cutthroat. Oh yes.

KP: Here we don't have elections in the History Department anymore mainly because no one wants the job. Its almost ... but I remember bitter contests when I was a graduate student. So I just, I'm curious about your observations about the culture,

BB: They're briefed before they go as to how it is, but sometimes they don't listen.

CRH: May I say something? My wife was an overseas study abroad advisor for many years and she set up a program. And I was in administration for six years and I don't know how it is here, but at Seattle University the faculty always thought they always knew everything there was to know about administration but they rarely knew anything. They rarely would really study the regs of the University. The deans were constantly passing all sorts of regulations and stipulations which they then never read again and never followed.

BB: Oh yes.

CRH: And you must've run into that.

BB: Yes, there's a particular anomaly at Rutgers that in order to graduate from Rutgers University you need so many credits that have to be taken ... Thirty of your last forty-two credits must be taken in New Brunswick. That's the Rutgers College directory. [For] Douglass College, thirty of your last forty-two must be taken at Rutgers University. Now Study Abroad at Rutgers University counts as Rutgers University, except for Rutgers College.

KP: Yeah that's a classic Rutgers, that's a classic Rutgers.

BB: So if you go to Study Abroad with Douglass, you can graduate as a senior, if you don't mind missing the ceremony in May because you come back in June or July. But a Rutgers College person going overseas has to have ninety-three credits by the September that they go. Go for the one semester in the fall [take 12 credits] and then come back in the spring and take 15 credits. Is that 15? yeah I think that's right. 12 and 18 makes, makes it right ... So a Rutgers College senior can't go overseas ... they don't waive it. They'll let them away with 27 and not thirty. But they have to do the last [few] in New Brunswick ... unless they changed the wording in the new catalogue because I've been out over a year. But, that was true up until October of '97 and it caused [many problems] And the kids going [abroad] saying, "We didn't know this." and they blamed Study Abroad for not telling them ... It was always said verbally at the orientation. It was always said [in literature] ... forever, it's always said, "Consult your departmental advisor on

your senior requirements," which they conveniently didn't read. So they blamed us when they got back and found out over at the Dean's office. "You've got to take these extra credits." "We didn't know." So what they did was a few years ago, we had a form that said, "I have read and understood these things" and so it goes in their file. They'll chase them up and say, "You haven't returned form x, y, z". If it doesn't go in their file, they can say. "It was given to you but you never signed it," So the students can't come back and say ... . But that was a big problem. But that's again a Rutgers thing. "The Rutgers screw," I think they said. Any rate. Anything else now?

KP: Well, I guess ... You mentioned earlier that you maintain both passports.

BB: Oh yes.

KP: So you still feel real ties to Britain.

BB: Yes I feel equally comfortable in both countries. I didn't become a citizen till 1974 because you'd have to live six months [in one place] and I was just about to become a citizen when we left Staten Island. And then we moved to New Jersey so I had to reestablish residency by which time I had two small children and the least thing in my mind was worrying about going down and getting fingerprinted and doing all this, that and the other. And then they used to come to our door and ask me to sign petitions and I said. "I'm sorry I can't sign them I'm not a citizen." "Well, then can you sign?" "I don't want to sign for you because it will be invalidated if they check it out because I'm not a citizen." "Why don't you become a ... ?" "I pay taxes in both countries and can't vote in either." Which is true, I did. They [often] didn't sort of get the significance of that Taxation without Representation!! . It was a bit too subtle for the people coming around!! . So eventually I became a citizen and never turned in my British passport because I crossed my fingers when I said ... you know when you cross your fingers, it doesn't count!. So I had to swear allegiance to this, that and the other. And I figured, "Well I'm gonna keep my British anyway" because you never relinquish your British citizenship unless you stand up and swear and say, "I renounce the British." So unless you do, that you can always renew your passport. Now it's turned out according to American law ... if the country that you have the other passport in doesn't mind you having an American [passport] you can have the American [one too] . Because until a few years ago you couldn't have two passports. The Americans didn't like it. Now the Americans don't mind if you have two providing the other country says its ok. ... Somebody asked me [just recently] . Who's the career person? ... at Rutgers?

KP: I don't know.

BB: ... Richard White. He asked me about ... His wife's German you see and he asked me about it because his kids could probably have German passports . And I said, "I don't know what the German rules are, but if you check with the German Consulate and they say its ok, then you're alright."

KP: I know its possible I've actually thought of this because of my stepfather. You can get Irish citizenship through the grandparents.

BB: Through the grandparents. But they're changing that. You have to check on that. That was true.

KP: Yeah I probably missed the ...

BB: Now my children are both British as well. ... Ok they changed the law in 1984. you could not become British through the mother [until then] . Discrimination. It could only be through the father. So, since one of my daughters is an art historian and also is into art administration, it is quite likely she might want to work in Europe. If she went to an EU country ... if you're a citizen of France, you could work in any EU country. If you're a citizen of Britain, you can work in any EU country. So I did this ... I was talking to somebody in study abroad actually and her daughter was doing something and I said how did she get British [citizenship]? "You can do it provided she does it before she's 18." My daughter was almost 18 so I went up to British Consulate, run, run, run. They said, "Well, \$100 please," and I said, "Fine I'll come back next year for my other daughter." She said, "What do you mean? ... It's \$100 whether its six kids or one." So I said, "Ok, I'll be back tomorrow." So I went back and did it for my younger daughter. The younger one probably will never do that, but for the elder one ... she might want to go and work in Europe for a while. ... So she has the two passports. [However,} when she went into Britain she did use the wrong one ... she got [her American one] stamped "For student use only" and I said, "You should've gone in on your British because that wouldn't have had any stamping. If she had wanted a job she could've got one ... So that's the only reason I did it. But that had to be before [age] 18. For some of the other countries, it depends on their [rules] . Ireland I don't think has an age limit . I don't know what [the rules are]. Italy is quite easy. Britain it had to be ... you had to own property I think somewhere in England. I don't know [the regulations] ... . You see it's very good for our Study Abroad kids because they'd come back from being overseas and want to get back and work there. And I [used to say], ... "Alright [but] you realize you have to get a work permit unless you have an EU passport." "What do you mean?" "Do you have anybody ... Where [did your family] come from? To the Irish I said , "You [might be able to] get this through the Consulate." I said "I don't know about Germany, check with the German Consulate ... That's how I got involved with this because so many of them have such a wonderful experience they want to get back and work.

KP: Switching back to World War II, but in sort of the memory of the war, are there any movies about your childhood years, about Britain or India or Aden that you can relate to some of your experiences?

BB: There was one by somebody Borman. That, it was a little boy in a school cap going watching the crashed airplane in the yard.

KP: I know which movie you're talking about.

BB: Yeah

KP: But I can't.

BB: That was one that really I related to quite a bit because I was sort of that age and watching the planes coming down. Everybody standing. There were bombed out buildings.

KP: It came out in the 1980's.

BB: Yes

KP: About a boy growing up.

BB: Yes

KP: That there was experiences depicted that you ...

BB: Yes, I could relate to that. And oh, there was a lot of the ...

CRH: How about "Mrs. Miniver" and saving the people? You're too young for that one.

BB: Yeah I'm a little bit ... I've seen it, I've seen it. That's with Greer Garson isn't it?

KP: "Mrs. Miniver" is.

BB: Yes, I've seen that and some of the ...

CRH: "In Which We Serve" too. You're too young for that, but you must've seen it

BB: I saw "The Way Ahead" last week. ... I watched that in reruns . . "The Way Ahead" that's called something else. It was on AMC not very long ago. Some of these war ones ... I'm talking about when they're kids though, experiencing ... I can't remember one where they go the air raid shelters and things.

CRH: There were two or three battle of Britain films and I know Tyrone Power went over there to save the country all by himself.

BB: Oh him and Errol Flynn. "Operation Burma."

CRH: Is that when they were flying?

BB: "The Way to the Stars." That was wonderful. Did you see that?

CRH: I can't recall. I just remember

BB: It was about the Royal Airforce Camp.

CRH: Losing power going over, or flying actually, what you did unless you were in the Marines, but the flyer in this ... In the American Eagle squadron ... Robert Taylor flew an American Eagle squadron.

BB: Oh, "Twelve O'clock High."

CRH: "Twelve O'clock High."

BB: With Gregory Peck, that was very good. Because I remember ... don't forget when I was on the airforce stations in India ... we'd see the bombers coming in and out. We'd see the planes all the time and certainly in Aden. We lived right on the base and so we'd see the planes coming in ...

CRH: When was the first time you ever flew in a plane yourself?

BB: Oh when I went to Spain when I was ... I was working for Shell, I finished the training and I went to Spain on holiday. It was the first plane I'd ever been on.

KP: That was the first time?

BB: Yes I'd never been in a plane. No never been in a plane.

KP: What did your ... ? You didn't know very much growing up about the war. Particularly when your father, you knew in the general sense, but what ... Did your father ever really tell you what life was like for him in the service?

BB: No, not really because ... he was ... my mother had that before I was born. Because they were married five years before I was born, so she had a lot more service life. Picking up, moving here and moving into married quarters and moving, moving around. For me ... he was there except for that few months when we were in Pachmari and he wasn't. Most of the time my father was with us. And then when we were in York he [would] come up and he was around so we never talked about what life was like in the barracks or basic training or any of that stuff. I never talked about that.

KP: He had a very remarkable career. I mean he was an enlisted man and then an officer.

BB: He did very well

KP: It's not like he didn't tell you much about the struggles or.

BB: No he didn't he was very modest man and so was his brother too. They did the same things and it was rather funny because his commission would come in and then we'd hear that Uncle Pat got his commission too. But my uncle, all right my mother's brother, which is the other side of the family, did almost the same thing. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps as a career person before the Second World War. And he made his way up to Major as well. But he was a hygiene officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He I know did have struggles and I sort of vaguely remember him talking about it. My father never did no, no.

KP: When did your father leave the Air Ministry?

BB: In 1948 he ... oh no 1966 ... just before his 66th birthday.

KP: So he had a very long career?

BB: He had a long career, yes.

KP: He saw the evolution ...

BB: Oh yes.

KP: I mean by the time he left there was jets and there was nuclear deterrence. I mean he'd seen the whole ...

BB: Oh yes, he'd seen the whole thing because he was in from 1917. 1917 he joined up as a boy at Halton and then he left the Air Force in '48. He stayed in the Ministry until '66. Just before ... yeah 1966 he retired. He died ten years later.

KP: Did he ever join any veterans groups?

BB: Oh the Royal Air Force Benevolent Society ... yes. He joined that. Which was very good actually, they used to take care of ... . My mother wanted a fence a couple of years ago. Someone said, "Why don't you contact the RAF Benevolent Society and she said, "Oh, I will." And boy they gave her quite a large contribution towards the fence that she needed. My father had been gone nearly twenty years but they still ...

KP: They still ...

BB: Yes, they still took care of them.

KP: I'm curious of your observations since you're familiar with both societies very well. I mean Britain and mostly the United States. Do you have any sense that the war means different things for the two societies.

BB: Oh yes, definitely, I talk to my husband about this all the time. I mean he has some idea what the blackout is but no idea to the extent that we have. He has some idea of rationing but no idea to the extent that we have. I think ... he's the same age as I am. I think younger than [us] anybody in their forties or fifties ... in America, has no concept of what the war was like. But I think forties and fifties in Britain would still be hearing their parents talk about it. So I think the younger Americans have no idea what the war, the Second World War was like.

KP: Because it sounds like it's, even though you were very young , it's a very distinct memory.

BB: Oh yes. I think my children have some inkling of what it was like because they heard me on about it, but their contemporaries certainly wouldn't know anything about it in Britain or in America anyway.

KP: You think both this current generation even in Britain ...

BB: They know ... . I don't think. Well those in Britain, there may be a generation gap ... those in their twenties in Britain. No they probably don't know much about it either because their parents would be in their forties or fifties, so they wouldn't know. They wouldn't remember it.

KP: One of the things that struck me that I'd be curious of your observation ... I've often been struck at how tough the British were in World War II. This is a society that ...

BB: Yeah, they were.

KP: I mean it's a tough place to grow up in Europe in general in this era, but Britain, you know, I guess it could be identified cause of the language and the culture. I get the sense that it's very reserved.

BB: But I think a lot of that went by the board during the war and then after the war it went back again.

KP: Really you think the war ...

BB: Oh yes the war did get a lot of people. It did get rid of a lot of snobbery. Tremendous amount yes.

KP: Really?

BB: Not all of it, but a tremendous amount of it, yes

KP: That sort of got rid ...

BB: Which was good, a good thing. Tremendous amount of it. Yes, because people had to muck in together. I mean, [they]didn't know how to ... [it didn't matter] what you were ... . If you were [unmarried] ... my aunt was one, she was an unmarried woman. She had to give up ... . She either went into the service or she had to work in a munitions factory alongside [men]. They had to keep some men on who were trained, but she had to go in. She'd been a seamstress, a very excellent seamstress. And she had to give it all up and go work in a munitions factory which she continued to do after the war and stayed there till she retired. I mean she, she was pretty rough and ready and she wouldn't let anybody tell her what to do so she had to come out of her shell a tremendous amount. So it was a change for her. I think for a lot of people that she worked with it was the same thing.

KP: Its a question I should've asked earlier, but did your mother, when she was at any of the bases, do any volunteer work?

BB: Yeah, yeah. I remember her knitting balaclava helmets for the war ... . Do you know what a balaclava helmet is? How do we describe a balaclava helmet? It was a knitted thing

CRH: It was a little knit cap.

BB: And it had a hole for the face ... which you would knit on four needles and where would they go? Where it was cold.

CRH: I think the sailors really liked them because it kept them really warm.

BB: Is that what it was? I know they used to have these knitting groups where they would knit the balaclava helmets or they would ... particularly in India they would ...

CRH: You looked like terrorists when you were wearing them.

BB: They would fold bandages and things like that. She would do things like that, or she would run jumble sales for (you know mini garage sales) for money ... And so she would get involved in that. She would also play in, she was a very fine violinist, she would play in concerts for things. Benefit concerts or entertain the troops and entertain people and stuff. So she would do that. She never worked ... Well, she retired about the same time as she got married. She was ... a violinist in the cinema. She had been a trained violinist. She'd played in orchestras and went to very fine schools but that was what ... She moved back down to Plymouth and I've got the letter offering her the job as the cinema violinist, you know, for the silent movies. <hums tune>

KP: Oh how interesting.

BB: And about the time the movies came she got married so ...

KP: Hence why she would take, of all the things to take to India, her violin.

BB: Would be the violin, yes. And she played it up until she was in her late eighties ...

KP: Oh, so she never gave it up.

BB: She never gave it up, no. She played in an orchestra in a little town, till about 1990.. Let's see. She had it in 1992-93 which is only five years ago and she died in '93. So she was way up in her eighties.

KP: And I guess, I guess a concluding question is how have you enjoyed retiring from Rutgers and do you miss ... ?

BB: Well, that's an interesting question. I thought it was going to be a rather horrendous thing because the job is extremely demanding. It was just getting to me a little bit and I wasn't as patient with the students as I would like to have been. And I thought this is ridiculous, I can't do this. My husband had retired three years before. So the day I retired, by sheer coincidence my husband had a triple bypass. So my whole new career ... for the next three months was taking care of him. By which time the nostalgia for missing the daily routine of the office had gone because it was mainly helping him put his socks on, walk to the corner and put his shoes on.

That kind of stuff. So that was an interesting transition and then I got involved in the house and things. Then all of a sudden my aunt died and I had to go England in a hurry and then came back and started doing some gardening and then I started researching the family history ... which I've done quite a bit of. So I really didn't have that much time. It's only recently that I've been thinking I should really be doing something else but I should probably take a course. I just saw Sam actually, Sam Baily, so he's teaching an intro survey course of Latin America next semester so that's what I want to do. I know nothing of Latin America whatsoever. I don't know ... . I think it's compulsory at Rutgers for a history major ... You're a history major right? You've done your seminar, or you're doing your seminar. Is this your seminar, your senior seminar?

JG: Not really. This is just ...

BB: Well you have to take a non-western course, so I did a Chinese History [course] you see with Gasster and another one I think I did. But what ... I've never done Latin American history so I've always been threatening Sam I was gonna audit his class. I just saw him just now which was great. I know him from directing our Spanish program., plus his being a good friend of ... do you know Dick Hicxon? He's a good friend of Sam's and Lloyd's.

KP: Which ...

BB: Journalism. He's been in England the last two years. He's a character and a half. I'd love to be around when those three get together, it must be a riot. Yes. So retirement. Yes, so that was fun. And I've been doing, as my cousin was kidding me, "Well you know, I am an historian at heart," I've been doing the family research and finding a few things out.

KP: You have a fascinating family to research.

BB: Oh yes, do you know the hardest one is my mother-in-law who was born in Brooklyn. I can't find a record of her birth which apparently is not surprising because if you were born in a private house and the midwife didn't report your birth or a nurse didn't report your birth then it wouldn't be in the records. It's up to the person who delivers to report the record. So if the baby, if my mother-in-law, was not born in a hospital, which I doubted ... but she has as a baptismal certificate. Which they used as proof of age. But I can't find her in the records which is really funny because you'd have thought that would've been the easiest. So that's what I've been doing since I retired, which is good historical research.

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask particularly your experiences during the war?

BB: I think I told you about India, about the ship, the bombing, the rationing, people. I think . .

KP: Did your family ever use a community kitchen? Just thinking of the war.

BB: No we weren't there during the bombing you see. We got back after that. That was the forties I think. The Battle of Britain.

KP: The early part.

BB: The early part yes.

KP: You didn't have any.

BB: We didn't have anything like that. No. I wish I'd brought my World War I thing ... it's bugging me, it looks like this but it's half the size.

KP: I guess a closing thing is, do you remember Armistice Day commemorations at all?

BB: Yes, yes absolutely. The 11th of November. Dead silence, dead silence., you'd have to keep, keep dead silence in our house anyway while it was on. And you know they've gone back to doing that. I was in England three or four years ago and the Post Office closed at eleven. It was the first time in many, many years. It closed at eleven o'clock.. The doors closed and I was waiting to go in. I thought, oh my goodness I'd forgotten. They reinstated it. The two minute silence. And two minutes. Eleven o'clock everything in that street stopped. The buses stopped, everything stopped. It was just about three years ago. And eleven o'clock. Two minutes after eleven everything opened up again. "Can we help you?" But I remember as a child that's what used to happen but then for years it hasn't happened. And then ... I think . . don't they ... Do they still have Armistice Day? I think they have it on the Sunday now nearest, but this was a weekday, on the 11th of November. It must have been, excuse me I'm trying to remember. Where was my husband? Was he there? Don't know where he was. It was about three or four years ago. So, I think we've ...

KP: Yeah. Well thank you very much.

BB: Not at all.

KP: We really appreciate it. Sandra was urging us to interview you because she had visions you might be going back to England or back somewhere.

BB: Well, I go back and forth, but I'm glad this helps. This book I was talking about, about India was part of an oral history.

KP: Yeah.

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