

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA WATERS KRAMER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

MARCH 23, 1998

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Barbara Waters Kramer on March 23, 1998 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and . . .

Donovan Bezer: Donovan Bezer

KP: I guess I'd like to begin by asking a little bit about your family. You'd said on your pre-interview survey that you came from a long line of New Englanders. Could you talk a little bit about your family heritage?

Barbara Waters Kramer: Well, my grandmother was born in Rhode Island, no, she was born in Arista County, Maine. My mother was born in Newport, Rhode Island. My grandfather was a self-taught architect, and he worked at the Naval War College in Newport. He rode his bicycle to work. He built a house there, and it still stands today. I took my mother to see it about ten years ago, my son saw it last year, and it's still there. They moved to East Orange, the doctor said it would be better, a better climate for my mother. I was born there, too. My grandfather built a beautiful house there, and it was one of the first to have electricity in East Orange. When I was five years old, (I have one brother a year older) when I was five years old, we moved to Cranford, New Jersey, and I grew up there. Very happy life, ice skating on the river, the Rahway River, and canoeing in the summer and being very active in the Girl Scouts. I graduated from high school, I was so happy to be able to go to Douglass, no, to NJC. I was just sixteen when I graduated. I had a wonderful four years at NJC. Made many super friends. The only thing I wanted to do was major in journalism. So I came to Rutgers College and majored in journalism.

KP: Well, I guess, going back a bit. You had said were very active in Girl Scouts. But it makes some sense because your mother was involved with the Girl Scouts.

BWK: Yes.

KP: Was she involved in a paid position?

BWK: Yes. She was director of Cranford Girl Scouts for fifty dollars a month. And I was an Eagle Girl Scout. They don't have Eagle Girl Scouts anymore. And my thrill was to go to Girl Scout camp. It was ten dollars a week. That was a lot of money in those days. I went to the Girl Scout camp in Bear Mountain. It was wonderful.

KP: How old were you when you would go camping with the Girl Scouts?

BWK: Oh, I guess I was thirteen, fourteen, fifteen.

KP: How many years were you active with the Girl Scouts? It sounds like it was over several years.

BWK: Six or seven years, I guess.

KP: What did you have to do for an Eagle Award?

BWK: It was twenty-five merit badges.

KP: And did you have to do anything else? Any community service?

BWK: No, they didn't have community service in those days.

KP: You didn't have to do any community service? I know for the Eagle Award ...

BWK: No, You didn't.

KP: ... You had to do a project.

BWK: Yes. We have a grandson, who is about to become an Eagle Scout. He's sixteen.

KP: Do you know how your parents met?

BWK: Yes. My father went to work early, 'cause his father died suddenly. And instead of going to college, he gave his mother the insurance money. And he went to work for Citibank, in New York. My mother worked there too; that's how they met. And he worked at Citibank all his life, 'till he dropped dead in the subway, at age sixty-three.

KP: Really? Just one day, he . . .

BWK: He loved it.

KP: And it sounds like he had an interesting job.

BWK: Credit Department. He never knew about credit cards. That was before his time. He would have really been amazed.

DB: Was that a difficult experience, your father's death? You seem to remember it to the day.

BWK: Well, yes, because my husband was ready to go back overseas. So I was alone with the children.

KP: How long was your mother a Girl Scout director?

BWK: Oh, five or six years, I guess.

KP: At what age was she a director? Was this before she had children?

BWK: Oh, no, no, no. It was when I was in college.

KP: She went back and worked?

BWK: Cranford was a wonderful town, with the Rahway River going through. And the Girl Scout house was very old, it was right on the river and across from the canoe club. We'd get the canoes and go canoeing on the river.

KP: I had a good friend from college who grew up in Cranford and I've been to Cranford a few times. It's still a very charming community. And I can imagine how it was when there were still farms around it. But I can imagine that Cranford, since a lot of the downtown probably looked very much like it did back in the 40's, I can imagine it must have been a bit more charming with some farmland.

BWK: Well, there wasn't that much farmland.

KP: Not in Cranford but further out.

BWK: Yes.

KP: Because, I think, Clark probably had a lot of it. You were active in the Girl Scouts. Were you active in anything else growing up?

BWK: Well, I was very active in high school.

KP: What activities were you involved with?

BWK: Yearbook and different clubs.

KP: Were you involved in any sororities in high school? Did your high school have any?

BWK: No, no.

KP: Your high school didn't have any sororities?

BWK: No. No.

KP: You mentioned an interest in journalism. Was this interest in journalism a long-standing one? Did you . . .

BWK: Oh, Yes. Well, I never wanted dolls. All I wanted was a typewriter. So I just grew up wanting to go to journalism school.

KP: Really? From a very early age?

BWK: Yes.

KP: Did you read regularly the paper growing up?

BWK: I guess I did. Yes.

KP: So even when you were six and seven, you wanted to have a typewriter?

BWK: I can remember when we got our first radio and first refrigerator. Oh, that was a thrill to have the radio.

KP: What programs would you listen to growing up? Do you remember any?

BWK: Lowell Thomas, and *The Make-Believe Ballroom*.

DB: Were there any particular journalists that you admired back then?

BWK: Lowell Thomas. He was “it” in those days.

KP: Well, I still remember listening, it was more my father actually, when Lowell Thomas was on WOR, even in the 70's, listening to Lowell Thomas . . .

BWK: Yes. Quarter of seven he came on. Every night. He was wonderful.

KP: Whenever I ask people about radio, I often ask if they remember the *War of the Worlds* broadcast, with Orson Welles.

BWK: Oh, yes. Everybody does, yes.

KP: No, because I've been told that there were some people who didn't take the news as well as others. Some people really did think, even at Rutgers, that it was a true story.

BWK: Yes, well, it was scary.

DB: You mentioned that you were one of a generation of New Englanders, and that your family decided to move down here for the climate. Was there any illness in the family?

BWK: Well, it was [because] my mother had bronchitis, I guess. And they said it would be, I don't know why East Orange would have been any better than Rhode Island. Newport, Rhode Island. It's so beautiful there.

KP: I've recently been there. Were you up there quite a bit when you were growing up?

BWK: Oh, no, I took my mother, I wanted her to return when she was eighty-eight. And we went to the church where she went with her grandmother. She used to go there every summer. Well, yes, I did go there when I was a little girl. 'Cause they have a picture of me on the beach at Newport, just like all the rich people.

KP: But you didn't go up there regularly growing up?

BWK: Well, yes, I guess, when I was a little girl. In the summer.

KP: But not afterwards?

BWK: No, no.

KP: What led you to go to NJC? Had you thought of going to other schools?

BWK: No, 'cause it was the depths of the Depression, and I was given a scholarship. Two hundred dollars, that was for tuition. No, I never considered any other.

KP: So, if hadn't of been for the scholarship, you wouldn't have . . .

BWK: No, no.

DB: It was an academic scholarship?

BWK: Yes. I came down and took some sort of an exam. In English, I think.

KP: Your father would eventually finish college, but . . .

BWK: Oh Yes.

KP: . . . You mentioned earlier that he . . .

BWK: He went to night school.

KP: He went to night school?

BWK: NYU, yes.

KP: So your father was a very hard working man?

BWK: Yes, he was very smart, very hard working.

KP: How did your family survive? How did your family cope with the Depression? Did your father have steady work?

BWK: Always at the bank. I think they decreased his salary at one point.

KP: But he never lost his job?

BWK: No, no.

KP: Your interest in journalism is interesting because the journalism school and the journalism program was the one program, at that time, at Rutgers/NJC, that was co-educational.

BWK: Yes.

KP: And I'm curious, I've interviewed some people like Tom Kindre and Richard Kleiner and several other people from your era. What was it like to be in the journalism program? Because you had, in many ways, a unique education compared to your colleagues at NJC who were not journalism majors. And the same thing for Rutgers College men. They often didn't go to school with women, unless they were in journalism.

BWK: Yes. Well, there was no harassment at all. They just accepted us.

KP: You didn't feel out of place or resented?

BWK: No, not at all. No. It was wonderful

KP: Do you remember any of your professors? Do any stick out?

BWK: Yes, there was one we called "Mumbling Moe." I don't remember his name.

KP: Did he mumble a lot during during his lectures?

BWK: [Yes].

KP: You mentioned that Dr. Riley in the sociology department was your favorite professor. What sticks out about his . . .

BWK: Oh, he was charismatic. All the girls were in love with him. He was wonderful. We sat there entranced. He was handsome and loquacious, and, well, I guess he was the youngest professor there.

DB: And I take it you had to have a summer job while you were going . . .

BWK: Oh, you couldn't, you couldn't really get summer jobs. I did eventually, at ATT Long Lones. My uncle worked at AT&T, and he was able to get me summer jobs, two years. But before that, there were no summer jobs. It was very difficult. Very difficult.

KP: We've gone back and read both the *Targum* and the *Campus News* and the *Caellian*. Students have to take a semester and read about it, in preparing for an interview, in a general sense. And one of the things we've noticed in both the *Targum* and the *Caellian* was the social world at Rutgers and NJC at the time. Could you talk a little bit about the social world, because it was fairly significant for you in the end. That is, in part, how you met your husband. I think of the social events, the dances and the hops, and the . . .

BWK: Yes, well, it was, they were very, very important. First all, there was the freshman reception. All the freshman from NJC went to meet the freshman at Rutgers, and they had a dance. At one point, they had a, what do you call it when you go from one partner to the other? I can't even remember. And we met some nice fellows. Victoria Dubrowski Schmidt met her husband there, at the Freshman Reception.

KP: You knew her at the time?

BWK: No, I didn't know her. No.

KP: You didn't know her at the time?

BWK: No. And, let's see. A senior, someone made a date for me with a senior, and he crashed the freshman reception to dance with me. It was very romantic. His name was Scotty. Let's see, well, there weren't many places to go. (Thoddies?) was the best place, 'cause they had the most wonderful fudge cake I ever ate. It was fifteen cents. It was absolutely superb. Well, people didn't, no one at Douglass drank. Oh, I know, the best thing was, we couldn't go out during the week, we had to be in at seven o'clock. Friday, we stayed out 'till eleven, Saturday 'till twelve, I guess, and we would send to the campus spa for Cokes. And they would deliver them, ten cent Cokes. And you could have a flavor, like, I always had vanilla. That was the most exciting thing.

KP: Because you were under curfew?

BWK: Yes, seven o'clock when you're a freshman.

KP: How did people feel about curfew? Was it just . . .

BWK: Well, you could go to the library.

LP: How many people tried . . .

BWK: Well, well, it wasn't bad, really.

KP: Did people try to cheat on the curfew?

BWK: No, well, you had to sign in and sign out when you went anywhere, on the weekend. You had to have written permission from your mother to go to a fraternity overnight.

KP: We've heard descriptions of overnights from the men. Could you maybe talk about the fraternity parties, because it sounds like you went to some fraternity parties.

BWK : Well, at the Phi Gamm house, it was just one big room, with double-decker beds for the women. The men all went to the dormitory, so. There was never any trouble. Of course, I don't know.

KP: Well, there were also chaperons. I think Bert Manhoff has talked about it, that when he was older, he was chaperoning fraternity parties. And I've heard stories about some of the chaperons and their experiences. Because one chaperon, I've been told, winked a little bit at drinking.

BWK: Oh.

KP: Luther Martin, apparently. He apparently winked at that. You mentioned there was no drinking at Douglass. I take it there was some at Rutgers?

BWK: Well, I guess so. I never paid any attention to that, 'cause I didn't drink anything. Oh, I'll tell you something funny. (Ellie Mallard?) was one of the journalism students, and he made the date for me with Vince. And so, he took me on our first date, he took me to a bar. And he said, "What would you like to drink?" And I said, "I don't care." So he said to the waiter, "Do you have any 'I don't care's'?" And eventually, we got married, anyway, (Ellie Mallard?) was shot down over Alaska

KP: Did he die?

BWK: Yes, his plane went down. It was very sad.

KP: What else do you remember about him?

BWK: Oh, he was easy going, happy. His picture is on the cover of the magazine that came out last year.

KP: Oh, the *Rugters Magazine*.

BWK: Yes. He was happy as can be.

KP: Could you point him out?

BWK: Yes, he was a Phi Gamm. See, he's there. In that . . .

KP: Oh.

BWK: It's inside.

KP: Oh, okay.

BWK: He was the happiest guy.

KP: Do you know . . .

BWK: Here. Yes. There he is.

KP: Do you know where he was from and what was he studying?

BWK: Well, he was in my journalism class.

KP: Journalism. And he wanted to be a journalist?

BWK: Yes. December 6th, '44, his plane went down. He actually didn't graduate when he should have, in '42. I think he graduated in '43. But all the Phi Gamms were great.

KP: So it sounds like you have a lot of fond memories of going over to those parties.

BWK: Yes, Yes, Yes.

DB: Did any of the women drink at NJC?

BWK: No.

DB: There was something in the paper, maybe it was satirical, but there was something in the *Campus News*, at the end of the year, when the women were leaving the paper to the next generation, there was some mention of them ordering stuff, ordering food and drinks from the spa, not alcohol, but also they discussed, talking something, over a beer. Unless that was, like I say, satirical and they were making fun of what the male newspaper editors . . .

BWK: Oh, no. No one ever had a beer. No, no.

DB: At the *Caellian*, after the paper was . . .

BWK: Oh, well, maybe they did. Those girls were a little sporty.

KP: Would the *Caellian* attract the sporty women?

BWK: Well, they sort of took over the paper. I sold advertisements for it, but . . .

KP: You didn't write for the . . .

BWK: Oh, no, they ruled.

KP: Well, because we've learned that there was some struggle between the dean and the editors of the *Campus News* and then the *Caellian*. In fact, the *Campus News* was shut down by the dean at one point. Do you remember any of that?

BWK: No, I don't remember it. But I can believe those girls would do it. Do something. Yes.

DB: Were they the same kind of girls that wrote for the *Campus News* that eventually went on to write for the *Caellian*? Or were they...

BWK: Yes, I think so.

DB: The *Caellian* girls were just as sporty as the ...

BWK: Yes, oh, Yes.

KP: You mentioned that there wasn't any drinking, but would many women smoke at Douglass? Was that ...

BWK: Well, they had to go to the basement if they smoked. And since I didn't smoke, I never ...

KP: You don't even know who's smoking?

BWK: I know some did.

KP: Yes.

BWK: But not many. Who could afford it?

DB: And not in the newspaper offices, I take it?

BWK: Well, I don't know, they might have. I couldn't say.

KP: Adeline Bloom talked about class dresses.

BWK: Oh, yes. That was nice. When you're a junior, you had a freshman sister, you were a junior sister, and you had a class dress.

KP: I know Douglass still has certain ceremonies, where the ceremonies at Rutgers . . .

BWK: Oh, yes. Sacred Path.

KP: The Sacred Path still exists, and existed in your day. We've read accounts about it. What other ceremonies existed during the year?

BWK: Oh, at Christmas, we sang around the pine tree. Oh, yes, and there was a ceremony in the chapel, where they chose those with the highest averages, and they carried, one carried a pine tree, a log, down. And the others were dressed in little costumes.

KP: Is there anything else in the year that sticks out, in terms of things you would do? I guess, one of the things is chapel. You had to go to chapel regularly. What do you remember about chapel?

BWK: It was the most beautiful chapel in the world. It still is.

KP: And did you like going?

BWK: Yes.

KP: Because we've read in the *Caellian* that there were some problems, I think it was in the years that you were there, there was some problem with people talking during chapel. And that, in fact, it led to a series of articles, that this was a problem, and meetings were even held to discuss the problem. Do you remember anything?

BWK: No, because when we came to journalism, we couldn't go to chapel.

KP: Really? So when you were in journalism classes ...

BWK: Yes, my senior, junior and senior years, couldn't go to chapel.

DB: When you were a freshman ...

BWK: It was on Tuesday.

DB: Sorry. In 1938, when you were a freshman ...

BWK: Yes, then I went. One of my biggest thrills was meeting Margaret Mead's train when she spoke at NJC. I had to dash into Woolworth's to buy her a comb for her messy hair.

DB: ... Three students were suspended,

BWK: Oh.

DB: And then the *Campus News* took up for them and fought with the administration over them.

BWK: Oh, gee, I didn't remember. I'm sorry.

KP: Oh, no. That's okay. I mean, it's been a while.

BWK: I guess it didn't affect me.

DB: But you weren't one of the ones who were against ...

BWK: Oh, I would never ...

DB: ... You were all for mandatory chapel?

BWK: Oh, yes, yes.

DB: There's a lot of mention about how, even the women that didn't feel that chapel should be

mandatory, really did agree that it was a beautiful chapel.

BWK: It was a wonderful experience.

KP: I'd be curious, because people at Rutgers have talked about the inter-class competition, and hazing, and freshman having to wear the dinks, and . . .

BWK: Oh, gosh.

KP: . . . And fraternity initiation. Douglass didn't have sororities, but what about, was there any of that type? I've been told that freshman were not allowed to walk on the Sacred Path. But was there any sort of hazing of freshman like there was at Rutgers, here at Douglass?

BWK: Not really. It was all in fun.

KP: But did freshman have to wear anything, did they have to dress a particular way?

BWK: You mean other than what we had to wear on our heads?

KP: Yes. Did you have to wear dinks as a freshman?

BWK: No. We had to take half an oatmeal box, and cover it with green fabric, and then have ribbons and tie it under our chin. And we had to wear green ribbons on our socks. And we had a sign with our name on it. It rained every day when we wore those. And the green ran on our socks. And then we had the hurricane of 1938. It was awful. No, we didn't, and then we had to sing, yes, for the upper class men, we had to sing "Oh, I'm a hayseed. My hair is seaweed." We had to sing that song.

KP: And then that was pretty much it?

BWK: Yes.

DB: Do you remember anything about the, what did they call it? The faculty show? Where the professors mimic the behavior of students?

BWK: Gee, I don't really remember that one, no.

DB: Or Sharecroppers Week? In 1941, Douglass students donated books to alleviate illiteracy among sharecroppers?

BWK: No, I don't really remember that.

DB: It was interesting to me while I was researching . . .

BWK: That would be, I remember when Wendell Wilkie came to speak. And everyone went there

to hear him. It was outside. We thought he was wonderful.

KP: You're not the first person to mention that. A lot of people have said that . . .

BWK: We were mesmerized.

KP: . . . He left quite an impression on people. And that he was very charismatic.

BWK: Oh, and we raised a lot of money for Russia.

KP: This was in 1941?

BWK: I guess it was '40, '41, Yes. And we, we knitted sweaters, and, I guess, other things, for Russia, I guess.

KP: So you specifically remember aid to Russia.

BWK: Yes.

KP: It's interesting because, given what happened afterwards, particularly, your husband's future role, did you find it odd, at the time, that you were making things for Russia?

BWK: Oh, no, no. We were very happy to collect money. No.

KP: When you were in college, what did you think would happen? You met your husband at Rutgers, but what did you think would happen after graduation? Did you hope to work as a journalist? Was that your goal?

BWK: Well, actually, it was advertising. I wanted to go into an advertising agency.

KP: And have a career? Did you . . .

BWK: Yes. Oh, yes.

KP: At the time, you envisioned having a career?

BWK: Yes.

KP: I'm curious, because now, it's sort of expected, I wouldn't say it's required, but a lot of women expect that they're to have both a career and raise a family at the same time, which is not an easy . . .

BWK: No.

KP: . . . Thing to do. But at the time, did you think that was possible?

BWK: No.

KP: You thought that you might work in advertising and then, when you had a family, you'd be forced to leave, is that . . .

BWK: Well, I didn't even think about having a family.

KP: Oh, at first, it was really just in advertising?

BWK: [Yes].

KP: What was so appealing about advertising? At the time, I mean . . .

BWK: I just thought it would be a wonderful career.

KP: Well, we've looked at the both the *Targum* and at the *Caellian* and *Campus News* and we often find very little discussion about the war, the coming of war in 1939. There is an occasional article, but as I often joke with my students, if you had to write the history of World War II and the coming of the war from the *Targum* and the *Caellian*, or the *Campus News*, you'd be hard pressed to find anything. We found a lot on the football season and a lot on dances and a lot about chapel and other things. What did you think at the time? This is before Pearl Harbor, what did you think about Europe and events that were occurring in Asia?

BWK: Well, of course, without TV, you didn't get that very good news. We really didn't discuss it.

KP: Really? You never . . .

BWK: No, no. We didn't discuss it.

DB: It was after Pearl Harbor, there was some discussion that some students thought that it might . . .

BWK: Oh, Yes. Well, then after Pearl Harbor we did, Yes.

DB: . . . That some students might have thought that it was Orson Welles with *The War of the Worlds*. Do you know anybody that . . .

BWK: No.

DB: How did people around you react to Pearl Harbor? In your dorms, or . . .

BWK: Well, not too many were engaged to servicemen. So there wasn't that big a reaction at first. But then it got more serious.

DB: When people that they were engaged to were being drafted or . . .

BWK: Yes, were going overseas. Yes.

DB: And your brother served. Was he drafted, or did he enlist?

BWK: No, I guess he enlisted.

DB: Was that emotional for you, or were you . . .

BWK: No, no. I was happy for him. He was in the Air Force.

KP: Before talking about the war, one question. Your parents were Republicans in the 1930's . . .

BWK: Oh, yes.

KP: But in many ways, it was a period for the Democratic party.

BWK: Oh, were they ever.

KP: What did they think of Franklin Roosevelt?

BWK: Oh, I hate to say. Very bad.

KP: So they were very staunch Republicans?

BWK: Oh, absolutely. Yes, I was born a Republican.

KP: Did your parents have choice words about the man in the White House?

BWK: Well, actually it was my father's sister who had the most choice words.

KP: Really?

BWK: Yes. She really hated him. Terrible.

KP: You say you were born a Republican, and stayed a Republican, what did you and your classmates think of the Roosevelts? Franklin Roosevelt? And what was going on politically? Did you . . .

BWK: We didn't, they didn't talk about it.

KP: Yes, you never really . . .

BWK: No. They didn't talk about it. No.

KP: What did your classmates think of Eleanor Roosevelt?

BWK: Well, I guess everybody admired her. I was very fortunate. She came to Eastern Aircraft, and she went into the kitchen to taste the soup. I was down there.

KP: What did she think of the soup?

BWK: I don't remember that.

KP: Did that visit really impress you?

BWK: Yes, that was very impressive.

DB: Did your dad talk politics a lot around the house?

BWK: No, no.

DB: What was it about the New Deal that he was most opposed to? Or did he even say?

BWK: I don't think he said. Or maybe I was too young to really notice what he said about him.

KP: I meant to ask this earlier, what about going to the movies? Both growing up but also at college? Because I have a feeling that a lot of dates took place at the State Theater, and the other theaters that existed at the time.

BWK: Well, the most exciting thing was [when] *Gone With The Wind* came to the Livingston Theater. And we had reserved seats. That was the big thrill, I'll never forget.

KP: And do you remember who you went with?

BWK: My roommate.

KP: So it wasn't a big date?

BWK: No.

KP: But it was very memorable.

BWK: Oh, yes, yes. Never forget.

KP: Is there any other movies that you remember? It's hard to compete with *Gone With The Wind*.

BWK: I think *The Wizard of Oz*, that was great.

DB: Did people around Douglass go see the movies a lot? I know there were three theaters.

BWK: No, people didn't have that much money.

KP: So was it tough for you and all the women at Douglass to get part-time jobs?

BWK: Oh, Yes.

KP: Did any of you . . .

BWK No, I applied at Douglass. But, if your father earned over three thousand dollars, you couldn't get a job.

KP: So, you could never work at Douglass?

BWK: No.

KP: And you never tried to get a job in New Brunswick?

BWK: No.

DB: Did you go back home for the summers?

BWK: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Gee, there was only one road. Route 1. You had to go on Route 1.

KP: What would you do in the summers? Because you mentioned you were working one year in ATT Long Lines.

BWK: Yes, well, two years, I worked.

KP: Two years. So for two summers you were able to find work?

BWK: Because my uncle had gotten it for me.

KP: The other summers that you couldn't find work, what would you do to pass the time?

BWK: I can't remember. I guess, I read.

KP: Pearl Harbor, it really changed things, both at Rutgers, obviously, but even at NJC.

BWK: Yes.

KP: Could you maybe talk about how life changed at NJC after the war started, after Pearl Harbor?

BWK: Well, it didn't really change that much. No, I couldn't say we were affected, really affected by it.

KP: Well, one of the things we've read is that there were blackout restrictions and the practice of blackouts. Do you remember any . . .

BWK: No, I don't remember. No.

KP: What about civil defense? Do you remember any civil defense training?

BWK: No. No.

KP: You did mention, though, that there was a lot of interest in relief and in raising money for . . .

BWK: Yes.

KP: What about any other efforts to aid the war? Any bond drives, or . . .

BWK: We went to Fort Dix to dance with soldiers.

KP: I have a feeling your marriage is one of them, but did the war change a lot of boyfriend-girlfriend relations? That it all the sudden took up a larger and more immediate meaning. Is that an accurate . . .

BWK: Yes. Though life went on. We still had dances. Still had football games.

DB: How did you meet your husband?

BWK: Well, (Ellie Mallard?), who was in the magazine, arranged a date for us. He decided that [since] Vince never dated anybody, because he was, well, he was so busy playing football. And, he decided football season was over and he needed a date. So he recruited me.

KP: So you and your husband were fixed up?

BWK: Yes.

KP: You didn't know him before the date?

BWK: No.

KP: Do you remember what year that you two met?

BWK: Oh, yes. It was 1940. December of 1940.

KP: So you'd been in NJC for a while?

BWK: [Yes].

DB: Did you start dating immediately?

BWK: Well, you didn't, say, have a date every weekend, you know? You'd wait a while, and then you'd go out. There weren't that many places to go if you didn't drink. Men liked to go to the Corner Tavern. But there's no point in taking me there, so Vince took me to Howard Johnson's and bought me a soda and a hamburger.

KP: It's interesting, because you had gone to the Fudrucker's today. And that's the site on Route 1 . . .

BWK: Yes.

KP: . . . Of the old Howard Johnson's.

BWK: So, we were trying to decide. Did they put up a new building? Did they tear down the old one? It was very romantic.

DB: You and he were dating then, for at least the year you were here?

BWK: Yes. No, I was a junior, and he was a senior. And then, right after he graduated, he went into the Marine Corps. So he's in the Marine Corps [on] Pearl Harbor day. He was, actually, he was home, in Paterson, when it happened. Who could forget?

DB: Do you remember where you were and everything?

BWK: Yes, we were in the car, somewhere in Paterson, I remember. Had the radio on. So he had to dash right back to Quantico.

KP: Do you think you would have gotten married at the same time you did if there hadn't been a war on?

BWK: Yes, yes.

KP: You were still planning on . . .

BWK: Yes, 'cause he had a job. He'd been interviewed for a job in with, Mobile, I think it was. Mobile. And he was going to take that.

KP: And then the war . . .

BWK: Yes, the war changed things.

KP: So in many ways, your husband might have had a very different life and career if . . .

BWK: Very different.

KP: . . . If it hadn't been for Pearl Harbor.

BWK: That's right.

KP: And having him being in the service at the time.

BWK: Yes, it changed our life.

DB: It was probably in your husband's interview, but when were you married?

BWK: In, let's see, 1942. In Parris Island. Oh, he wouldn't remember.

KP: Why, it's sort of an obvious question, but why Parris Island? I mean, there must be stories behind . . .

BWK: Well, it was his assignment. He was getting ready to go overseas. And he'd been assigned to barrage balloons. Whoever heard of them? And he was down there, training to go. And he went right after I graduated. We were married down there. And then he left for Guadalcanal.

KP: It sounds like you didn't have a very long honeymoon?

BWK: No, no.

KP: Or you didn't set up much of a house together.

BWK: No, 'cause it was only a week.

KP: So, a week, and then he left for Guadalcanal?

BWK: [Yes].

KP: And then you, because you graduated, you got married, and then . . .

BWK: That was a perfect time to graduate from journalism school, because, the men were going off. And the women were getting the jobs.

KP: So you would have a choice of jobs? It sounds like, or . . .

BWK: No.

KP: Or there were jobs to be had?

BWK: Well, Yes, Yes. But that's the only one I interviewed for.

KP: And so you came back to New Jersey. Where did you live?

BWK: In Cranford.

KP: With you parents?

BWK: Yes.

DB: I was gonna ask you about that. How did you get to work every day? Did you have a car?

BWK: Well, no, no. You had five gallons of gas a month. They had carpooling and I rode in with two engineers from Cranford. And then somebody else brought me home. Everyone did that.

DB: There was a program at Douglass where you could graduate early if you went to work for a defense contractor.

BWK: No, that wasn't in effect. But you couldn't be pregnant at Douglass. That was one thing. You got kicked out if you were pregnant.

KP: Even if you were married?

BWK: Yes. Well, you were asked to leave. The funny thing was, there was a girl at our table, she wasn't a friend of ours, everyone else was from the same dormitory, and this girl at our table grew fatter, and fatter, and fatter. And, we kept on saying, "Hmm. She eats enough for two." Well, lo and behold, she went home at Christmas. Oh, no, she came back after Christmas, and she was in the infirmary. And they said "She's going to have a baby." And she did. Princeton guy was the father.

KP: And she wasn't married?

BWK: No, no, she wasn't married. That was shocking. In those days. You didn't do that.

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

BWK: Yes.

KP: What jobs did you consider? And how did you get the job, at Eastern Aircraft?

BWK: Oh. Well, I guess, they had notified the journalism department, they needed someone and sent us all a letter. And, I went into New York for my interview. And that was all there was to it. I

don't think they had any choice.

KP: And what was the average job advertised as? You had mentioned being interested in advertising.

BWK: Well, just public relations.

KP: Public relations?

BWK: Yes.

KP: And how did they describe your duties, before you took the job. Do you remember what you actually did at Eastern Aircraft?

BWK: Oh, publishing a newspaper. And interviewing people in the plant. And, actually, I did a radio script and had it produced. And just anything they wanted.

LP: And the newspaper you developed, how often would it come out? Was it a company newsletter?

BWK: Yes. Monthly.

KP: What would you put in the newspaper? What stories would you put in the . . .

BWK: Oh, we would interview people. I had to interview the pilots of the test planes. And they had an airport right there. And anything of interest to the people who worked there.

DB: Was this a new experience for you or did it relate to anything you had done at NJC?

BWK: No, it was new. New experience. I'd go with the photographer and he would take the pictures, and I'd write up a story.

KP: Who were some of the interesting people? It sounds like the pilots were very interesting . . .

BWK: Yes.

KP: . . . But also the workers had come from some really interesting . . .

BWK: Yes. Well, the women, you know, they were working for the first time.

KP: And what was that like for them? What were their concerns and their problems and what did they enjoy?

BWK: Well, they all seemed to be very enthusiastic.

KP: How many of these women were single, unmarried women and how many were the “Rosie the Riveter”? How many of the women at Eastern were married or had children?

BWK: Yes, I'd say maybe the majority were married women. I know one of my neighbors, who'd never worked before, went in. The women did really good.

KP: Because you were interviewing people and running this newsletter, it sounds like you got to see a lot of different parts of the plant.

BWK: Oh, Yes. We used to walk around the plant.

KP: And how big was the plant? Both in size but also in terms of the number of people who worked there?

BWK: Oh, well, I don't know about the people. I think they had three shifts.

KP: Three shifts, and was it several hundred or several thousands of people?

BWK: Oh, thousands of people.

KP: So it was . . .

BWK: And also, a plant in Trenton and one in Tarrytown.

KP: And how many test pilots did they have?

BWK: Oh, gee, one I interviewed was killed. Three or four.

KP: And on average, how many planes could your plant produce?

BWK: Oh, I don't remember that.

KP: Yes.

BWK: That was a secret kept from the Japanese.

DB: You had said, before the interview started, that George Bush . . .

BWK: He was flying an Avenger when his plane went down.

DB: Which was made by your company?

BWK: Yes. Actually, the Wildcat was produced in Linden. I guess Tarrytown did the Avenger.

KP: What was your average workday like? What would be a typical day when you were working

at Eastern Aircraft?

BWK: Well . . .

KP: I guess, what time would you arrive and when would you leave? Did you work a standard eight hour day?

BWK: Oh, yes. Yes. At first we worked half a day on Saturday, but then they cut that out. Yes, I got all of thirty-five dollars a week. That was a lot.

DB: You were able to rent your own apartment with that?

BWK: Oh, no. I lived home.

DB: Okay . . .

KP: And who would you report to?

BWK: Mr. (Bird?) was the boss and [we] reported to him.

KP: And was he director of public relations?

BWK: Yes.

KP: I'm curious if you have any copies of your old newsletters?

BWK: No, I was thinking, oh, I don't know. I'd have to look in the attic.

KP: Because if you had them, we'd love to have them . . .

BWK: Yes, I wish I had saved them.

KP: . . . as part of the archives. Because those would be just wonderful to have. Your old newsletters and newspapers.

BWK: Yes, I'll look.

KP: You mentioned doing a radio script.

BWK: Yes.

KP: For what station and what did the radio script talk about?

BWK: Well, about, in fact, I had my aunt do one of them. I guess, all the things that one did to help the war effort.

LP: And where did it air? Did it air on the local radio station or ...

BWK: No. There weren't many local radio stations. Must have been on one of the regular ones.

KP: A New York station?

BWK: Yes.

KP: And was this advertisement? Did this radio program to encourage people to work at Eastern Aircraft?

BWK: No, no.

KP: Or it was just a general ...

BWK: Yes, yes.

KP: So how could people help the war effort? What were you encouraging them to do, do you remember?

BWK: Plant victory gardens, cut out extravagances. I volunteer as a nurse's aide at Rahway hospital. I remember writing a whole long script.

KP: About the different things people could ...

BWK: Yes.

KP: ... Could do. You mentioned the visit of Eleanor Roosevelt to the plant. Who arranged that? Did you have any part in her day?

BWK: I guess it was probably from the main office in New York. General Motors office.

KP: But I take it you probably wrote a story for the newspaper.

BWK: Yes. Oh, yes.

KP: Did you get a chance to talk with Mrs. Roosevelt at all?

BWK: Not really, no.

KP: Did you ever have any other distinguished visitors come back to the plant at all, beside Eleanor Roosevelt? Any war heroes? Any pilots from the European theater?

BWK: June Havoc sold war bonds, a few war heroes came.

KP: Did the Linden factory have any sort of day-care facilities?

BWK: No. No, [it was] Mrs. Roosevelt who started day care. And, no, there was no day care.

KP: Did you know of any women, at the time, who had children and had real problem finding care for their children?

BWK: No, no one had. I didn't know them.

DB: Did you have a lot of things to spend the money you were earning there on? I mean, you had been in school for four years . . .

BWK: Yes, I bought a sewing machine.

DB: But the pay wasn't very high?

BWK: Oh, for that day it was. That was a lot of money.

KP: So you were able to put money aside? Is that . . .

BWK: Oh, Yes. Oh, Yes, you put your money in the bank, or bought war bonds.

DB: You said that you lived at home, but on the survey, it also said next to it "apartment," so I guess that was with . . .

BWK: Oh, no.

DB: Okay.

BWK: No, I never lived in an apartment.

KP: While you were working at the Linden plant, your husband was in Guadalcanal. Did you know he was bound for Guadalcanal when he left?

BWK: No. Nobody ever heard of Guadalcanal.

KP: When did you in fact know that he was in Guadalcanal? When did he . . .

BWK: Well, I finally got a letter.

KP: But I would assume it was censored, unless the actual (?). When did you fully know what had happened to your husband during World War II? At what points during the war or afterwards? How much did he tell you?

BWK: Oh, well, he would tell other people and then I'd hear it.

KP: So he would tell friends who were heading back to the States, and then . . .

BWK: Well, it didn't all come out at once. But it was very interesting, because, he was in a jeep. And it was a blackout, and he went over an embankment and the jeep, he was thrown out of the jeep, and it landed on his head, I think. So they thought, this was it. But they took him back, and [there] was very good doctor, and he took care of him and arranged to have him flown out to New Zealand. But it took a long time to get a plane. And whenever there was an air raid, the doctor put a mattress over him. He'd be all right, 'cause he had a concussion. He went to New Zealand, and he had jaundice, and dengue fever, and all that. And finally he got to California, and they took very good care of him there. He had lost, like, forty-five pounds because they didn't have anything to eat, to speak of. And then, they started being invited to movie stars homes. He went to one party and had his picture taken with Olivia De Havilland. Now, he couldn't be that sick!

KP: Did you go out and see him when he was with . . .

BWK: Oh, no. You didn't travel in those days.

KP: So even though he . . .

BWK: There was no way to get there. No. People didn't fly all over, they didn't take trains.

KP: So once your husband left Guadalcanal, it sounds like you didn't see him until, when did you see him again?

BWK: Let's see. He had the accident. Middle of June of '43.

KP: And did you see him because he came back East?

BWK: Yes, he was stationed at Brooklyn Navy Yard. His jaw had been broken, too. So they had him get a lot of work done there. And he was home for a while.

KP: And when your husband was at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, did he stay at the Navy Yard, or did . . .

BWK: No, in Paterson. We stayed in Paterson, where his father lived.

KP: So you moved in with his family? Did you keep your job at the factory?

BWK: No, No. But, let's see. He was in Camp Lejune, but there was no place to live so I couldn't go there. And then they had him go back, go to China to work with guerillas, training the guerillas. And I went back to work at Eastern Aircraft.

KP: In the same job.

BWK: In the same job.

KP: So, in a sense, they were flexible in letting you work for a time after graduation? I mean, your husband came back, you . . .

BWK: [Yes].

KP: . . . It was almost like you took a leave of absence and then they hired you back.

BWK: Yes.

KP: So the first time you worked at Eastern Aircraft, how long was it? How many months?

BWK: Oh.

KP: 1942 to 1943?

BWK: A year? I guess a little over a year.

KP: And then your husband was back for how long in Brooklyn to get his jaw repaired?

BWK: I don't know. Eight months. Six or eight months.

KP: I'm curious, when your husband was back in 1943, your husband's talked a great deal about the war both to us, but also to others. He shared a lot of stories. But at that time, and it's hard to think back, and it's hard because he's talked a lot afterwards about the war, but how much did he tell you about what had gone on? At Guadalcanal?

BWK: Well, he told me quite a bit when he came back.

KP: He did? He didn't try to keep things from you?

BWK: Oh, no, that wasn't the worst war he was in.

KP: Which was the worst war?

BWK: Let's see, he did Vietnam, Korea, the Korean War. That's when he, they dropped him into the ocean. Did he tell you that?

KP: He told me about . . .

BWK: And he swam in behind enemy lines and blew up trains.

KP: Yes, he told me that, yes.

BWK: That was the worst one. And he didn't tell me about that.

KP: That he didn't tell you about?

BWK: No, no.

KP: But he did tell you a lot of what had happened to him in Guadalcanal?

BWK: Yes. Yes, he did.

KP: I ask because some people didn't tell their wives anything.

BWK: Oh, yes, he talked. Oh, he talks.

KP: Oh, I mean, we were delighted he talked, because some people, we really have to push them to tell us anything, but, no, he . . .

BWK: Oh, Yes, it was fascinating because they didn't have any food, like, he told about the flour in sealed tins. And they'd open it up and it'd have all these little worms in it. He said to the cook, "Well, what are you gonna do?" "Oh, it's protein." He's starving, he'd cook it and serve it. All those interesting little things. He had a great rapport with the men. He was very good with Marines.

KP: When your husband was overseas, you were reading about the war effort.

BWK: Yes.

KP: How did your husband's stories compare with what you were reading in the newspapers and seeing on the newsreels?

BWK: It was always different.

KP: What was so different, I mean, because now we know how bad Guadalcanal was, but if you were to watch newsreels or read the paper, things didn't seem that desperate.

BWK: No, no. I guess he told you, they told the Marine general that he could surrender. Did he tell you that one?

KP: No, no. Or if he did, to be honest, I don't remember.

BWK: Yes. That he could surrender. But a Marine wouldn't do that. That didn't come out 'till later.

KP: So you realized that it was a lot tougher than the newsreels were making it out, and the

newspapers . . .

BWK: Yes, they didn't have all those good reporters over there.

KP: Well, I mean, there was also a real reluctance to report bad news, I've read. And it seems like your husband would give you an account that was somewhat different. How did it feel, particularly after your husband came back, after all these terrible things had happened to him. I mean, he almost got killed. What was it like to have to send him back again?

BWK: Well, it didn't make me happy. But, it was his life. That's what he wanted to do.

KP: He had to go, because he was under orders, but would you have preferred if he had just stayed, that he had been able to stay at home? And not have to go at the time . . .

BWK: To the first war?

KP: Well, after what had happened to him in Guadalcanal and all, would you have preferred if he just stayed at home in New Jersey?

BWK: Well, yes. Yes.

KP: Because it must have been hard. I mean, the first time you didn't really know what would happen. But the second time, after all these things had happened to him, I would image it would have been hard to send someone off.

BWK: Yes.

KP: How often would your husband write? How often would you write when he was overseas?

BWK: Oh, he'd write nice letters. Very good.

KP: And how often would you write?

BWK: Oh, many, many letters.

KP: Did you save any of your letters from back then?

NK: Yes, I have. Yes.

KP: Wow.

DB: What would you talk about in the letters?

BWK: He loved me.

KP: Well, we would definitely love to have them, if not the originals, here at Rutgers, we would definitely love to have at least copies, for the Archives. Beause that's . . .

BWK: Letters?

KP: In fact, someone just gave us his Coast Guard letters, that we're delighted to put into the Archives. He was at the D-Day landing. We would love to have, if not the originals, because we understand people sometimes don't want to part with the originals, but definitely copies of the originals.

BWK: Well, I was wondering what you'd do with them.

KP: Well, it would be a nice supplement to both your husband's and your interviews. Did you ever send your husband packages of food or any . . .

BWK: Not to Guadalcanal. I'd sent him real good sheath knife. He said it came in very handy in Guadalcanal. I forget what I sent, what else, but when he was in Korea, I would send him his favorite poppy seed rolls, and I'd send them air mail. And he'd open the box, and a rat would have gotten in and eaten all the rolls. So that wasn't too good.

KP: How long did you remain at Eastern Aircraft? The second time?

BWK: Oh, until the war was over.

KP: So did you work at all after the war ended in September of 1945?

BWK: No, not then.

KP: What happened to the plant after the war ended?

BWK: It went back to producing Oldsmobiles.

KP: Did you have a choice, you stayed until the war ended, but did you have a choice? Could you have stayed on?

BWK: Oh, no. Oh, no.

KP: You were really hired for the duration?

BWK: Absolutely. Yes.

KP: And did a man replace you?

BWK: Then all the public relations was done in New York after that.

KP: Really? So the public relations office at the plant was unique?

BWK: Yes.

KP: Was it unique for the war?

BWK: Yes, yes. I used to go down to Trenton, to the publishing plant and proofread the glass plates the newspaper was printed on.

KP: Would you have preferred to stay on after the war? Would you have liked to stay with GM?

BWK: No. No.

DB: Since you were married, you wanted to raise a family?

BWK: Yes, yes.

KP: The second time your husband came home, when he did, finally, come home, what do you remember about how you . . .

BWK: From the Korean War?

KP: No, no, from World War II.

BWK: Oh, World War II? Oh, he had come home and he said, "Here's my ruptured duck. But I decided to stay in the Marine Corps, if that's okay."

KP: So he was giving you some choice.

BWK: Sort of.

KP: How did you feel about him staying in the Marine Corps? I mean, it's not like . . .

BWK: I didn't care, as long as he stayed.

KP: You didn't mind that he had . . .

BWK: No, no.

KP: After your husband came back, where would you live as a married couple?

BWK: Boy, that was the hard part, 'cause he was stationed in, oh, first, first Camp Lejune. They had housing there. Then, after nine months there, we were sent to Washington. No, to Quantico. And there's no place, the housing did not exist. We went all up and down Route 1 trying to find a place to live. And finally, we rented some motels rooms from, with another couple that had a little

child. And it was crummy. We couldn't kill the cockroaches. There was no way to kill the cockroaches. But we lived.

KP: How long were you there, at this motel? When your husband was stationed in Quantico? How many weeks, months, or years did you put up with this?

BWK: It was a lot of months. Nine months or something like that.

KP: Oh, that's a long time.

BWK: Yes. It was right on Route 1. But there was, there were no, there were no houses. No apartments. Nothing.

KP: Now, was it because all the available housing on the base was filled with . . .

BWK: Oh, yes. Yes.

KP: It's interesting. My second cousin was married to a retired Marine and I remember going to visit them in Quantico when I was very young, and they, in fact, had comfortable quarters . . .

BWK: Oh, yes, we did eventually. I mean, maybe like, six years later.

KP: Oh, fifteen years later you would . . .

BWK: Yes.

KP: Your husband made a career of the Marine Corps.

BWK: [Yes].

KP: Could you maybe talk a little bit about what it was like? You mentioned having to move a lot.

BWK: Yes, every year.

KP: Every year.

BWK: I think, or mostly, every year.

KP: What was that like from your perspective?

BWK Well, you didn't accumulate any junk. It was interesting.

KP: What was your favorite area or base when your husband was based in a particular location? Obviously it doesn't sound like Quantico was too much fun, but was there any you particularly enjoyed?

BWK: Camp Lejune was very nice. Yes, very nice. Berlin.

KP: When were you in Berlin?

BWK: We went in '51. That was very interesting.

KP: So you saw a Berlin that was still . . .

BWK: Oh, yes. Yes.

KP: What do you remember about, I mean, Berlin is so different today?

BWK: Yes. Oh, it was wonderful. On weekends, we would go out to the German people would take a sandwich and walk out into the green woods on weekends. They were so happy. You'd go to a nightclub, and they'd have balloons and they'd go walking through the nightclub. And they'd sing, and link arms. We went to a faching party, which was held in a huge hall. That's like, Lent, before Lent. And the people were all dancing to Glenn Miller, and big band music.

KP: Big band.

BWK: Yes. And they had a wonderful time. They were really happy.

KP: But I've also read that there were still a lot of bombed out buildings.

BWK: Oh, yes, there were. We would go and look at them.

KP: Berlin was an occupied city, very much then, and had much more of a feel of an occupied city. And there was no Berlin Wall, and there were the five war zones.

BWK: Yes.

KP: What do you remember about being in a city that, that in many ways, was jointly occupied? And the Russians are only in another zone, that you can go into.

BWK: Yes, well, actually, I went over to East Germany in an Army bus. And it was very depressing. They took us to this enormous cemetery. That the Russians had made the Germans dig and build for their dead people. And, they didn't have much of anything over there then.

KP: Are there any other memorable postings that you remember, from your perspective, because Berlin sounds really very interesting.

BWK: Well, you couldn't forget Taiwan.

KP: When were you in Taiwan?

BWK: '56 to '58.

KP: Oh, that's an interesting time to be in Taiwan.

BWK: Yes, it was, a very . . .

KP: I mean, for a lot of reasons but, particularly, the incidents at Quemoy and Matsu.

BWK: Yes, they were bombing.

KP: What about, what else do you remember from some of the day-to-day aspects of being in Taiwan?

BWK: Well, sometimes you couldn't get very much, you know? Well, we would order our food from the ship that came in periodically. We ordered milk from the ship. And it came in big cans.

KP: Why would you order milk from the ship as opposed to . . .

BWK: Well, it was the only place we could get milk. And we ordered, well, like lettuce, things like that. 'Cause you weren't allowed to eat, it wasn't safe to eat lettuce from the market. Well, this one person had ordered all her lettuce and she wasn't home when it came. And her house girls put it in the deep freeze. But everybody had a cook and a couple of housemaids.

KP: And it sounds like he did some missions you didn't ask him about at the time. Were you . . .

BWK: He worked with the people from East Berlin. He could speak some German, because his mother and father were Dutch and he had learned Dutch from his grandmother, actually.

KP: And it seems like it came in very handy.

BL: Yes.

KP: When he was posted at West Berlin, you mentioned though, it sounds like it was a very different culture than living in Taiwan, that things were done very differently. What else do you remember? I mean, Taiwan is now such a economic superpower.

BWK: Yes.

KP: But at the time in Taiwan was, it wasn't too long after Chiang Kai-shek had fled there with his forces.

BWK: Yes. Well, when the Marines were training Chinese Marines, and the generals used to give us dinners all the time. Fifteen-course dinners. We couldn't drink anything but boiled water. And so, you couldn't have, like an ice drink anywhere, you know, with ice cubes in them, unless we

made them ourselves. And, it was hot. There was no air conditioning. We had overhead fans in our house.

KP: But no air conditioning in your house?

BWK: Nobody, no. No one had it. Anywhere. So it was fascinating to meet many charming Chinese people. Their wives.

DB: You had two children then, or was . . .

BWK: We had four then.

KP: What was it like to raise a family when you're moving around a great deal?

BWK: Oh, well, they're all fine. They adjusted beautifully.

KP: Really? You didn't have any . . .

BWK: No. We didn't have the problems you read about in the newspapers.

KP: Well, I know it varies from family to family.

BWK: Yes, he wouldn't dare, a Marine child, you know?

KP: Of my own family, an uncle of mine was a career Army sergeant. One daughter was fine, but another daughter was somewhat rebellious, as a result of moving around quite a bit. Though they both turned out fine. But there was that rebellious streak. But your children didn't ever say, "Boy, I wish we could stay in the same school rather than have to move from school to school."

BWK: No.

DB: Was there a health issue? I mean, you couldn't have a drink with ice cubes, but were you afraid for your children's health at all, living in Taiwan? That they were going to catch a . . .

BWK: No, no. No, we were just afraid we might get bitten by a cobra. I had some friends who lived in town, and the women killed cobras in their backyard. And Vince ran over one in our compound, but I never saw one. They were there everywhere, snakes.

KP: I've been told by people who were in the military and also by people who were in the foreign service, in fact, someone in your husband's class, Bob Owen, described how when he got his first diplomatic posting, his wife was called in by the ambassador and told certain things like, at a party, that she was supposed to stand and not sit. She was supposed to let the senior people sit along with their wives. You didn't have to figure out, you were told what the rules were. And I've been told there were certain, wives of the career service people, had certain expectations of them. In terms of parties and entertaining and protocol. Do you remember any of that? Sort of expectations for

entertaining? You mentioned having to go to various dinners that generals in Taiwan put on. But what else, both on bases here in the United States but also . . .

BWK: No, well, we would always have [to] entertain them in our home. The Chinese always, almost always, did it in a restaurant. Or they would have the meal catered, if it were in their home.

KP: And was it expected that you would be entertained, say when you got to a new base? Were you expected to make a social call?

BWK: Oh, yes. You arranged with the aide and you made a special social call.

KP: Both you and your husband?

BWK: Yes.

KP: Were there any organizations for the wives that you would join?

BWK: Oh, yes. Yes, they had a wives club.

KP: And what would a typical wives club on a typical base do?

BWK: Mostly eat. The lunch bunch.

KP: And would you ever do any, sort of, raise money for an orphanage, or raise money for playground equipment on a base? You mentioned that some of it was just very social.

BWK: Yes. I remember some places, we did do charity work.

KP: Any particular projects that you remember?

BWK: Not really, no.

KP: You mentioned that you were even more worried during Korea about your husband. When did you learn how ...

BWK: Well, I didn't learn the whole story until he returned home. So, I wasn't worried.

KP: But afterwards, he told you what he had done, did he tell you immediately?

BWK: No, I heard him tell other people.

KP: He didn't tell you this?

BWK: No, he never told me.

KP: Because some of the things your husband did, he's very lucky to have been alive.

BWK: Yes.

KP: I mean, he strikes me as a very good officer and Marine, but even so, that . . .

BWK: Yes. You're right.

KP: It sounds like, in retrospect, he had had some close calls.

BWK: Oh, very. Very.

KP: Were you pleased that your husband finally retired?

BWK: Yes.

KP: Because he had left a fairly dangerous . . .

BWK: Because we bought a house. Yes. Yes.

KP: It sounds like you were pleased to not have to keep moving and . . .

BWK: Yes.

KP: Were you surprised that your husband and you, indirectly, ended up back at Rutgers. Is that . . .

BWK: Well, yes. Yes. We never anticipated that.

KP: I'd be curious. What did you think would happen when your husband retired? What type of life did you think you would have? Did you ever talk about, "Well, when I finally retire, this is what we'll do." Did your husband, before you came to Rutgers, did you ever have those discussions?

BWK: No. No, because I was surprised he retired. I thought he'd stay in forever. But then politics were not so good. Not so good.

KP: So you think that, if things had been different politically, your husband probably would have stayed in longer . . .

BWK: Yes. If he had gotten a good assignment. But they were sending him back to headquarters, back in Washington. That's a dead end.

KP: And it sounds like you didn't want to go back to Washington, either.

BWK: Well, we were living outside of Washington when he was overseas. But . . .

KP: Was Washington the area you would return to when he was overseas?

BWK: Yes, because he had to take a course in, French. And so, that's why we were staying there. We had bought a house there. Then he went to, no, he had, before he went to Saigon he went to Dien Bien Phu. And he had to learn French for that, I guess. I know, one year he went around the world twice.

KP: Which is a lot of traveling.

BWK: Yes.

KP: I guess one of the questions I ask a lot, and I think I asked your husband before, you did a lot of traveling as a result of your husband's military service. When you were growing up, how much traveling did you do?

BWK: Oh, no traveling.

KP: You mentioned some trips to Newport.

BWK: No traveling, except to Newport.

KP: How far west did you get before ...

BWK: Pennsylvania.

KP: And so it sounds like ...

BWK: I had never been to Washington before he went to Quantico.

KP: So, in other words, when you got married, this was the first time you had ever been to the South?

BWK: Oh, yes. Oh, I was surprised.

KP: And what had surprised you?

BWK: When I looked at the little cabins and saw the people. These little cabins out in the fields. I wasn't aware of segregation. Because in Cranford, there was a black family. And their daughter went to school, and her name was Barbara, same as mine. And, also, I remember sitting in Cranford High School, no, eighth grade. This tall, black, basketball player sat behind me. They didn't have segregation then. Although, I'm sure they didn't go into restaurants.

KP: Yes. But it seemed like something you just thought was part of normal, everyday ...

BWK: Yes. And there was one black boy in our class. He always dressed in a suit. And he was very, very nice. Everybody liked him. But there was just one.

KP: Yes. So it sounds like you were surprised at how segregated the South was.

BWK: Yes, I was.

KP: What about no air conditioning? Well, there was very little, mainly in theaters in the early '40s. How did you like the climate? The first time, you weren't there very long, but still, it must have been . . .

BWK: Yes. Well, I remember Parris Island. That was hot.

KP: Your husband was a very prominent figure because he was director of Alumni Affairs. You were a Douglass alumnus, but you ended up going, in a sense, to even more Rutgers functions that you probably ever dreamed you would be going.

BWK: Oh, yes.

KP: From your perspective, how did you like your husband's job as director of Alumni Affairs?

BWK: Oh, well, it was very, very interesting. I enjoyed it.

KP: Were there any events that you enjoyed going to?

BWK: Yes, I loved it when we had to go to Hawaii for a football game. And we had to go to the Rose Bowl, for a basketball game. And then we went to New Orleans.

KP: So you enjoyed the traveling?

BWK: Yes, yes. And then we took a group to New Zealand and Australia and Japan and Romania. I loved it all.

KP: Jim Reed, who was the Dean of Rutgers College several years ago, and he is now a teaching professor, said, "You know, when I was dean during the semester, I hardly ate at home, at all, during the week. My wife hardly ever saw me during the week." Did you find that was the case with your husband?

BWK: Oh, well, I became a librarian in Basking Ridge. So I was busy for fifteen years before he retired.

KP: So you took that job after the kids had gone to college?

BWK: Oh, yes. The best experience we had was taking the Rutgers drill team to England. And I went over for three weeks. We had a wonderful time. Superb.

KP: And you liked being active with the Rutgers/Douglass community.

BWK: Oh, yes, yes.

KP: Did you remain active at Douglass, now that you were back, did you become more involved? You mentioned being president of your class.

BWK: One year I chaired the whole reunion. And I was on the committee for the twenty-fifth.

DB: First of all, you must be very proud of your children. Two of them went to Rutgers and they all have advanced degrees. That's really incredible. But is there any way you could speak about your daughter Carolynn? How did she die?

BWK: Oh, it was a drunken driver.

DB: What year was that?

BWK: Let's see, '65, I guess.

DB: Okay, so before there was a big . . .

KP: Was that in the United States?

BWK: Yes, it was down at the Shore.

KP: Oh, really? It was very tragic. Your husband had a very distinguished military career in the Marine Corps, but none of your children have . . .

BWK: No, they had no desire to be in the service.

KP: Because your lives were so closely connected to the Marine Corps, how did you and your husband feel about that?

BWK: Well, he would have been proud if any of them had gone in, but . . .

KP: But you could also understand . . .

BWK: I understood, anyway.

KP: I don't necessarily want you to speak for your husband, but you've also sent your first son to Rutgers?

BWK: Oh, no. He went to Grove City College. He is now a lawyer, graduated from Seton Hall.

KP: Oh, okay. In Pennsylvania?

BWK: Yes.

KP: But two of your other sons . . .

BWK: Yes, one got his MBA.

KP: One got his MBA and the other one went to Rutgers?

BWK: Well, Yes, they both got their MBAs there, and one went to Rutgers. He majored in Chemical Engineering.

KP: So you maintained a strong family tie. You've been active with Douglass. What do you hope will be the future of Douglass? Your husband had just come in and you know, I mean, Douglass, in some ways, is now a unique . . .

BWK: Oh, Yes, well, he's provoked because it's not co-ed, you know? Because they made Rutgers go co-ed. They didn't make Douglass go co-ed. That makes him mad.

KP: How did you feel about Rutgers going co-ed at the time? Did you think . . .

BWK: Yes, I thought it was better to have it the way it was.

KP: Really? You would have preferred to have the two schools separate?

BWK: Yes, I don't think it's fair to give up room for women, when then men could be going.

DB: Is that something that you would like to see changed in the future? That Douglass go co-ed as well?

BWK: No, no, no. I like it the way it was. In the olden days.

KP: What are the things, I'd be curious, you worked as a librarian. Had you had any training? Did you go back for any . . .

BWK: I took a course in reference work at Kean College.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Barbara Kramer, on March 23, 1998 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with,

DB: Donovan Bezer.

KP: At Basking Ridge, you were a librarian. Did you work in a particular department? Did you work as a reference librarian? Children's librarian?

BWK: Well, actually, I did everything.

KP: So you would do reference, you would do cataloging, and . . .

BWK: No, no, not cataloging. We had a wonderful woman cataloging. She worked until she was ninety-two. It was most enjoyable. I love to help people.

KP: And when did you leave? Do you remember what year you started at the library?

BL: Yes, 1972.

KP: And when did you finally retire?

BWK: We both retired in June of 1987.

KP: So that's quite a second career.

BWK: Yes. I loved every minute of it.

KP: And you also ran for office. You served as a committee person.

BWK: Yes.

KP: How did that come about?

BWK: Oh, nobody else would.

KP: Did you become active at all with the county committee or the town committee?

BWK: No, just . . .

KP: They needed another . . .

BWK: With the town committee, Yes. Oh, but the biggest thing is I belong to AAUW.

KP: So how long have you been a member of the AAUW?

BWK: Well, I had started in say, 1968.

KP: And you remained active to . . .

BWK: Well, I wasn't active all the time. I worked. But now, I'm very active.

KP: And which . . .

BWK: Somerset Hills.

KP: Somerset Hills. Are you an officer with them? With the AAUW?

BWK: Well, I do, right now I do public relations for them.

KP: Does your particular branch have any special activities? Are there any, this is a chance partly to plug . . .

BWK: Yes. Yes. The big thing is, I worked on, I've been chairman of the used book sale. Every Labor Day weekend. Except this year it has to be pushed back a week because Labor Day's very early. But that's the big thing.

KP: And where do you hold your book sales?

BWK: In Liberty Corner School. And people come from all over.

KP: Because I know a chapter in Madison, New Jersey that used to have their book sale in the Drew University student center. So I've been to AAUW book sales. Does your branch support a scholarship or . . .

BWK: Oh, yes. We contribute two hundred dollars to the Mary L. Bunting Program at Douglass. It goes to women who are returning to college, to get their degree when they're older. And we also put it into an AAUW fund. We built it up to \$35,000. And that goes for scholarships. And now, this year, we're also doing scholarships for Raritan Valley Junior College. Local libraries receive a thousand or five hundred dollars depending on size.

KP: How many scholarships have you been able to . . .

BWK: Oh, I don't know. Occasionally, we have talked to the recipients. They have come to our meetings and that's very rewarding.

KP: Well, I often bring students to the alumni board that funds the project. Because, while it's a research project, it ultimately students like Donovan and others who are the beneficiaries.

BWK: Yes.

KP: And I think the people who've started the project very much enjoy that. So I can imagine . . .

BWK: Yes. We work so hard on this book sale all summer. It's a labor of love.

KP: I'd be curious, you got to know, particularly socially, a lot of different deans of Rutgers and, now of Douglass and university presidents. Do memories of any particular Rutgers or Douglass figures stand out?

BWK: Yes. I imagine people mention President Clothier.

KP: President Clothier. Yes.

BWK: Yes. President Clothier.

KP: What do you remember of President Clothier?

BWK: I remember he was handsome and charming.

KP: Some have said that he almost looked like he could have filled in for central casting as a college president. Your husband was director of Alumni Affairs during Mason Gross' tenure as president. What did you remember about Mason Gross, as someone who was . . .

BWK: Blustery. My husband wasn't enchanted by him.

KP: What about President Bloustein?

BWK: Oh. Don't mention him. Mrs. Bloustein was very nice.

KP: And I'd be curious about the deans of Douglass. The deans, both when you were a student but also the deans that you would have contact with because of alumni . . .

BWK: Dean Boddie. No, not Dean Boddie. No, no, the one before her. Corwin.

KP: Dean Corwin?

BWK: Yes. She always wore gray stockings. That depressed me terribly.

KP: You're the second person who's told me about how she wore very dour clothing.

BWK: Yes, our senior year, we were invited to lunch at her home. And I remember, soup was served in a lovely bowl with a lid on it. And I never had soup with a lid on the bowl. It was very impressive. And after lunch she asked me to pass the cigarettes.

KP: Was it very startling that she asked you to do that?

BWK: Yes, well, just going to lunch, we were petrified.

KP: Any of the more current deans that you remember?

BWK: Yes, I loved the one who just retired.

KP: Dean Hartman?

BWK: Yes, I thought she was marvelous. Really.

DB: When you were committee-woman in Basking Ridge, did you have a campaign or were you just...

BWK: No, we had a big picnic every year. That was our campaign.

KP: I actually did an adult education course at the Basking Ridge library last fall. And it's a really wonderful community. How did you end up deciding to pick a house and settling in Basking Ridge?

BWK: Well, someone told Vince, "If you're looking to buy a house, don't buy it any further up than Basking Ridge." So we came here and they were building these wonderful houses and we just fell in love with it. 'Course, Vince thought we were moving up to the country. You should see it now.

KP: Well, it sounded like he wanted to live in the country.

BWK: Yes.

KP: And Basking Ridge still has something of a rural character.

BWK: But unfortunately, we also have like ten thousand deer living [there], and they eat everything. And groundhogs. Oh, those groundhogs.

KP: You worked in Basking Ridge, in the library, and you've been very active in the AAUW, but also, you were a committee person. Is there anything else you were involved in Basking Ridge?

BWK: Well, Yes, I used to volunteer for everything. Not anymore.

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask you about the war, because while we've asked a lot of questions, there might be some things that are obvious that we haven't asked you about, either in terms impressions of the war, and what it was like to be on the home front?

BWK: Well, 'course they talked about rationing, everything like that.

KP: You had mentioned that driving was not an option because, it sounds like you had a C card.

BWK: Oh, we had five gallons of gas.

KP: Did rationing affect you in any other way? That you could remember?

BWK: Well, of course, everybody cut back on eating. I remember, there was a restaurant that served beef. Everybody was so excited. And then later they said it was horsemeat.

KP: Have you ever gone to of your husband's or does your husband go to any reunions? Have you ever gone to any reunions?

BWK: Yes, he came to our fiftieth and our fifty-fifth.

KP: But also, his military reunions.

BWK: Oh, yes. We have those every year.

KP: And you attend regularly . . .

BWK: Oh, yes. They're wonderful.

KP: Over the years, do you stay in touch with anyone from any of the places you had been posted at? Any wives, or other couples?

BWK: Oh, yes. Trouble is, they're dying now. Very sad. We've been traveling lots.

KP: So you continue to travel . . .

BWK: Oh, yes.

KP: I get the impression from interviewing you and your husband, that he enjoyed all these different places that . . .

BWK: Oh, Yes. We're running out of places. I mean, we've been back to China, did he tell you about that?

KP: I think he did.

BWK: We went back with the former Flying Tigers. We'd go to an airport and we'd land, and the Chinese would come out with these big red banners, "Welcome Home Flying Tigers." And they were wonderful to us. We'd go in the hotel, and they'd line up and clap hands and we'd have these banquets, and we were just given the red carpet everywhere.

KP: Were you surprised at the reception, how positive it was?

BWK: Yes. I thought they would have forgotten. Yes. It was so long ago. Let's see, we love South Africa. That was wonderful. And our godson took us on a safari in Kenya.

KP: Boy, you really have traveled.

BWK: And we went up the Nile, let's see. We went up the Nile, we went to Antarctica. We loved that.

KP: There aren't too many parts of the world you haven't traveled. If you've been to Antarctica, how did you make it to Antarctica? When did you go?

BWK: Well, it was, like, four years ago.

KP: Oh, it's been very recent.

BWK: In January. They were having all sorts of ice storms up here, and it was like fifty-four degrees down there. It was wonderful. It was superb, because there were all these albatross birds flying, and I didn't think after reading the, the "Mariner"? Where all the albatross birds were flying? I didn't think I'd ever see one. That was my biggest thrill.

KP: That just sounds

BWK: "Ancient Mariner."

KP: My wife works at the Bronx Zoo and they had a special safari for members, and my wife's big disappointment was that we were unable to go for the last few years.

BWK: Oh.

KP: It was the same time as the reunion weekend, and also, at that point, we couldn't afford it. Now we can afford it, but they're not doing the safari. But we want to go on a . . .

BWK: Or to Kenya?

KP: To Kenya, we want to eventually go on a safari.

BWK: Yes, but the best was when we were in South Africa. We went to Kruger Park. That's really the best, to go there.

DB: No, I'm all set.

KP: Unless you have something else we forgot to ask you, or you'd like to say about . . .

BWK: Let me see.

KP: You can take a minute to think. Your husband has been very patient to wait.

BWK: Oh, well. Just think of all the years I waited, like when he went to Korea, was it? Well, he

came home, he said, well, he had to go for two years. And I'd just had a baby. Well, the baby was almost a year old. And, off he went.

KP: So often you would raise your children alone, your husband wasn't . . .

BWK: Oh, Yes. He went off to Saigon and left me in Annandale.

KP: What was it like to take care of children without your husband being there? It sounds like it got a little hairy at times. Did you ever have someone helping you? Would your mother come down to help you?

BWK: Well, my mother would visit me, Yes.

KP: Did other spouses help you, would you help each other?

BWK: No, because usually I wasn't near anyone else.

KP: So you must have felt very isolated at times?

BWK: Yes, well. I was used to it. And let's see, what else? Now, we have grandchildren, we're very fortunate that they all live nearby except one.

KP: How many grandchildren do you have?

BWK: Six boys and three girls.

KP: Well that, thank you very much. We really appreciate this and you can explain to your husband why it's taken so long.

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

Reviewed by John Neimair	01/00
Edited by Dennis Duarte	07/07/00
Edited by Sandra Stewart Holyoak	07/10/00
Edited by Bojan Stefanovic	02/28/01