

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN E. BAYLOR

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview with Dr. John E. Baylor on November 1, 1999, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Dr. Baylor, I would like to thank you for taking part in this project. To begin, when and where were you born?

John Baylor: I was born in 1922 on a dairy farm, or a general dairy farm, in northwestern ... New Jersey, in Warren County, and our farm was a dairy farm, a fairly good dairy farm at the time, but, general, because all farms, at that time, were general farms. I grew up there, through the Depression, and came to dear old Rutgers in 1940.

SH: What was your father's name? Where was he born? What was his ethnic and/or cultural background?

JB: Yes. My father was Benjamin M. Baylor. His family came from England. He was born and raised in Stewartsville, New Jersey. His father passed away very early in his life, so, Dad started working when he was a young teenager. His education was rather limited, except through the "school of hard knocks," and that was, I think, characteristic of many of the people of that era, but, he was a great father and a great man.

SH: What year was he born?

JB: He was born in 1895.

SH: Could you tell me a little bit about your mother?

JB: Mother was from Pennsylvania. Actually, Dad migrated to Pennsylvania and met Mother, married her. She was [of] a German background. Her name was Kleinsmith, if that rings a bell, kind of Pennsylvania Dutch-ish, and she was born in 1899. They migrated back to the farm in New Jersey, where they started to raise a family.

SH: Did your father have any siblings? Were they also involved in farming?

JB: Dad had a number of siblings, but, ... none in agriculture, a number in mining, and in steel work, and in related [fields], but, not in agriculture, *per se*.

SH: He was the only child to stay on the farm.

JB: Yes.

SH: Did your mother also come from an agrarian background?

JB: Hers was also an agrarian background, a large family, and most had a rural background, but, again, many of ... her brothers and sisters were in professions, other than agriculture, but, it certainly was a rural background.

SH: Did her family immigrate from Germany?

JB: Her father immigrated from Germany.

SH: When did he emigrate to the United States?

JB: Somewhere in the mid-1800s.

SH: Do you know why he came to the United States?

JB: Oh, I think it was for the reason that many people came at the time, for economic reasons and for a little more religious freedom. No, ... actually, my mother's father passed away ... in the '20s, so, I didn't get to know him very well, and her mother passed away in the early '30s. I got to know her quite well, really, because she was a great old lady, but, ... at that time, I was more interested in other things. [laughter]

SH: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

JB: I had one brother, older than I was. He ... was not in the service, but, ... during the Depression days and shortly thereafter, he was in a CCC camp.

SH: Was your father ever in the service?

JB: My father was in World War I. ... Actually, he served overseas for about a year, went through the thick of it, through ... Paris or through that entire ... area, and served in the artillery, and had some rather hard stories to tell from his experiences. It left quite an impression on him.

SH: Did he speak openly about his wartime experiences?

JB: I think he's like many of us; he answered questions, was not particularly open, but, by the same token, he did not hide it, as was ... the case of many people who went through some very serious problems during the war.

SH: What was your family's religious background?

JB: My family were Protestants, ... a very religious family, Methodist by denomination. I grew up in a little Methodist church in the community of Belvidere, New Jersey, and was very proud of ... our relationship with the church at that time, and have been ever since.

SH: As a young boy, I am sure that many of your activities revolved around the dairy farm. What other activities were you involved in?

JB: ... Yes, Dad gave me the privilege ... of participating in some extracurricular activities, as long as I took care of the regular chores first. For example, ... while in high school, I did participate in basketball. I participated in soccer. We didn't have football in our little two-by-four high school. We lived three miles out in the country, and I had to take care of all the chores at home, and then, if I had time to walk three miles to participate in a sporting activity, I was perfectly free to do so. I might say that on our dairy farm, as I indicated, it was a general farm,

we had a fairly sizable poultry flock, which I had to take care of, we grew potatoes, we had a peach orchard. As all ... dairy farms at that time [were], we were self-sufficient and, of course, it took all of us to get that job done.

SH: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

JB: Well, it was there. [laughter] ... As a young man, ten to twelve years old, I started working, ... and I was proud to earn as much as ten cents an hour, and, when I could earn ten cents an hour at home, I did, and, when I had free time to work for ten cents an hour on adjacent farms, making hay, or helping in the small grain harvest, or picking potatoes, or whatever the chore [was], but, generally speaking, it was the dollar-a-day type of thing. ... By today's standards, of course, we did not have much money, but, we didn't know we were poor. In our society, during that period, there was always good food on the table. Mother and Dad worked awfully hard, ... so that we never went hungry. We just didn't have spending money.

SH: What recreational activities did you enjoy?

JB: Recreation was something that ... was not a part of our society at that particular time, other than, at the end of the day's work, if we could walk a mile to the Delaware River and take a brief swim, or maybe an occasional hour or so fishing in one of the local brooks, but, no, ... we did not participate in too much extracurricular activity. Ours was a life of work. ... Again, it was not unpleasant work.

SH: Did you farm with a team of horses?

JB: We were farming with horses and mules. ... Dad was a horseman, a horse-and-mule man. ... When I started out, we were using the reaper, and then, the binder, of course, the one-row cultivator, one-bottom plow, but, as things evolved and as mechanization became more prominent, the tractor came into the picture; the hired man used the tractor and Dad used the team. [laughter] ... That was a part of his philosophy. He loved his horses and I loved them, too.

SH: Was your farm electrified at this point?

JB: Our farm was electrified in the late '30s and, also, we finally got on the party line, the phone lines, in the late '30s. So, we really moved up in the world about that time. [laughter]

SH: Since I grew up on a Wyoming ranch with a father who always said, "Work is fun," I can understand your lack of recreation. However, I am intrigued by the fact that you played soccer. I did not realize that soccer was played in the rural areas of the country.

JB: ... Yes. That was a sport played in rural high schools, simply because there weren't enough kids to play football, ... nor was there enough money. I might say that in my graduating class from high school, there were twelve boys, twelve boys and twenty-four girls. Well, twelve boys don't make a football team, [laughter] but, we did have soccer, and we played local schools, and ... it was also fun.

SH: What was your favorite academic subject?

JB: Remember, I came up through the Depression. We didn't have money. I knew I couldn't go to college. I mean, that was absolutely out of the picture. I thought the best I could possibly do was go to a business school, ... and there was a business school about seventeen miles from our home in Easton, Pennsylvania, so, I took a commercial course in high school, except for the fact that I took math and a few other academic courses, extracurricular, which actually allowed me to enter Rutgers when I did, in 1940, but, ... my main background was a commercial course, business, and I still use that experience that I gained in the '30s, relative to a good academic background in business.

SH: You mentioned that you had no hope of going to college, yet, when you graduated in 1940, you entered Rutgers. What changed for you?

JB: That happened ... about 1939. ... I had a real good math teacher from a little college in Pennsylvania called Moravian. I had an excellent PAD teacher from a little college in Pennsylvania called Bucknell. These teachers really thought I ought to go to their colleges.

SH: What is PAD?

JB: "Problems in American Democracy," and so, they took me to their schools for interviews. At the same time, in 1939, at our little school, a Rutgers grad by the name of Harry Schnieber, [Rutgers College Class of 1936], joined the faculty to organize a Vocational Ag Department. We had not had Vo Ag at Belvidere High at that time. However, during my senior year, while he was organizing the department, Schnieber offered evening classes, so, I persuaded my father to join me for some evening agricultural courses. In the process, I got well acquainted with Mr. Schnieber and he said, "John, you should go to college." My reply was, "I can't go to college. I have no money." His reply was, "You know, there are State Scholarships." At that time, we had no counseling in school, so, Mr. Schnieber said, "John, let me take you to Rutgers." So, he took me to Rutgers for an interview and showed me how to apply for a State Scholarship, which I got. I ended up in a cooperative living group in the College of Agriculture and had a great experience.

SH: How much support did your family give to this new idea?

JB: Lots of love and all of the moral support they could give. An occasional chocolate cake and cookies would arrive and laundry shipped home for washing. I had almost no money. I did borrow fifty dollars, which got me through, and that was the only money I really borrowed. At Rutgers, at that time, we were permitted to work on the college farm or in one of the departments. The fellows in our cooperative living group worked in the college for our room. We also qualified for NYA support (National Youth Administration). We were allowed to work in the college for an additional ten dollars per month, which took care of two meals a day at Phelps House, plus, one quart of milk per day and ice box privileges for lunch, if we were at the house at noon.

SH: What was your brother doing at this time?

JB: He never went to college. He was in the CCC camp at that time. ...

SH: Did his CCC work take him around the country or was he stationed locally?

JB: No. He was ... in New Jersey, at various camps.

SH: What did he think of your going to college?

JB: ... He was not interested in college. In fact, he did not finish high school ... and he married very young. ... He thought it was fine, but, he wasn't interested.

SH: Did you come down to see Rutgers in the spring of your senior year?

JB: Probably the winter, because ... I remember, specifically, going thirty miles to a little town called Hackettstown, New Jersey, on a very bitter cold Saturday morning to take the exam for the State Scholarship. ... That was my exam, and it was a frigid Saturday morning, and [there was] no heat in the high school where we took the exam, and I said, "No way can I possibly pass this cussed thing," and, lo and behold, the others did worse. [laughter]

SH: Since you took the exam in Hackettstown, were these all Sussex and Warren County students?

JB: Well, I can't be sure at this time, frankly. It was certainly more than Warren County. ... At that time, and I assume the same is true today, the scholarships were on a county basis. There were ... two scholarships per county, or something like that. ... I think that was about the case.

SH: Did you live in the cooperative housing for all your years at Rutgers?

JB: Yes. Actually, again, at that time, before the war, the Director of Resident Instruction in the College of Agriculture was a man by the name of Frank G. Helyar, and Prof Helyar is still remembered on campus, because, after his death, all of ... "his boys" put money together toward the building of the Helyar House on the Ag Campus, but, at that time, I lived in an old farmhouse, Phelps House. There were fifteen of us, ... self-governing, all selected by Prof as young men who had "potential but no money." [laughter] Others lived in various other facilities on campus, some in the Poultry Building or other buildings, ... wherever there was a room and Prof could put someone [in it], but, I was fortunate enough to be in a cooperative living group with fifteen fellows in a self-governing situation.

SH: Where did you dine?

JB: We dined there. ... Everything was self-governing. ... One of the seniors would be house chairman, ... two of the fellows would be cooks, and the rest of us would be dishwashers and house cleaners, until we moved up the scale, and, as I say, we had our ten dollars a month from NYA, provided us ... two meals a day at the house, plus, a quart of milk a day, plus, the option,

if we were in the house at noon, to raid the ice box. [laughter] So, we had ... some real nice privileges.

SH: Were all of your classes over on the Ag Campus?

JB: It varied. Some of our classes were on the Ag campus, others, across town. ... In that case, we usually hitchhiked across town. Most of our labs, in the early days, were on the Ag Campus. ... Of course, this was before the war, and then, as the war was approaching, things changed. For example, ... prior to our class, physics was a very important course, but, [it was] taught in Ag Engineering, on the Ag Campus, but, as the war approached, that was closed, and we were required or forced ... to come across campus to take physics on this side, physics and botany. Since I had no language in high school, I had language as an extracurricular course also and [I was] really not well-prepared for college. Not well-prepared for college, but, hard work, and diligence, and faith got me through. [laughter]

SH: What kind of chores did you have to do for the cooperative living group?

JB: Oh, I, again, was very fortunate. I think this is kind of an interesting story in human relations, but, in the fall of my freshman year, I got a phone call from Prof Helyar. He said, "John, ... could you come to see me? I have something to discuss with you. It could mean absolutely nothing to you, but, it could determine your entire future." I said, "Prof, if it means that much to you, I'll be there." So, I sat down with Prof, he said, "Well, ... Dr. Howard B. Sprague," who was head of the Farm Crops Department, "is looking for a good freshman to train under a senior in Farm Crops, to head up their soil testing program," and he said, "I've recommended you. Are you interested?" I said, "I'm interested." [laughter] So, actually, I had done other chores. ... Our people did all kinds of things, night watching, hauling manure, you name it and we did it, but, fortunately, ... early in my freshman year, actually, I went into the Farm Crops Department to train in ... the soil testing program and remained there until, of course, I went into the service, and then, during the service, the program was abandoned, but, ... that took all the time I had, plus, more.

SH: Did you have to travel off campus to test the soil?

JB: No, no, it was in the department, in the Farm Crops Department, on the Ag Campus.

SH: Was there any friction or tension between the Ag students and the regular Rutgers College students?

JB: ... Yes, there was a little friction, and I think there was as much friction with the professors as there was with the students, because, for example, when we had to come across campus, over here, to take physics, ... I specifically remember physics, we were the first class to have to take physics over here on this campus, and the head of ... the Physics Department and our professors in physics knew we didn't want to be here, we knew we didn't want to be here, so, ... we were treated as outcasts, a little bit, but, ... that was no problem. ... We got along okay.

SH: Did you participate in any of the social activities on campus?

JB: Again, living in a cooperative living group, with very little funds, we had very few social activities. We were allowed to have two social events at the house a year, chaperoned, and, of course, the big advantage we had, we had three girls' campuses right adjacent to us, ... while [on] the other side of campus, they had a long way to go. So, Gibbons, and Douglass, and Jameson campuses, ... when we needed dates, they provided the atmosphere for us.

SH: Was there any other interaction with those campuses, NJC, which is now Douglass College?

JB: NJC, it was NJC at that time. No, not really, other than, ... of course, in some of the houses on the women's campus, the girls came from rural families or ... from families that did not have a lot of resources, so, their economic status was similar to ours, and so, we just had fun going down to the Spa and having a Coke. [laughter] That might consist of the date we had.

SH: Were you involved in any student government activities?

JB: ... Not in the University. ... My main activities were on the Ag Campus. I was heavily involved in ... our agricultural fraternity, Alpha Zeta. I was fortunate enough ... to get into AZ. ... It was based on your outside activities, as well as your academic activities, and I got into Alpha Zeta and was very active in moving through the chairs in AZ, and, of course, after the service, I helped to reorganize the AZ chapter on campus, but, ... otherwise, I didn't get involved in government activities on campus, and, I might say, athletic-wise, I got to see a football [game], occasionally, ... by being an usher, because that's the only way we could afford it. [laughter] Also, that was the only way we could afford to see a movie, by ushering. ... By being in a cooperative living group, as we were, we had pretty good contacts, so, when people needed somebody to baby-sit, they knew where to call. [laughter]

SH: Did you move up through the government of your cooperative living house?

JB: Oh, I moved up until I went into the service, which was fairly early in my career, but, then, when I came back from the service, I did not go back into Phelps House. I was asked to reorganize the other cooperative [living house]. We had two on campus, the Phelps House and one called the Towers, which was about the same size. I was asked to reorganize the Towers living group, and I completed ... my undergraduate career there.

SH: How aware were you of the events unfolding in Europe in the late 1930s and early 1940s?

JB: Well, ... we were very aware of what was going on in the world. In fact, I was studying for a Bio-Chem exam ... when Pearl Harbor was announced, and two of my buddies dropped their books, and that was the end of their learning process until after the war. They decided that they weren't gonna do anymore studying. ... We were very knowledgeable of what was going on in Europe at the time, and many of my classmates had enlisted early. I enlisted, of course, in ROTC at Rutgers. We were pretty much aware. So, we were very knowledgeable, I think, of what was happening in Europe.

SH: What did your parents think of FDR's policies? Did your family ever discuss the Lend-Lease program?

JB: ... Not to any great extent. I would say that, from a political standpoint, many of Roosevelt's policies were not popular at the time, but, by the same token, he was highly respected, I think, in the early '40s, and I know, in my case, even though I did not agree with some of his policies, I happened to be at Mountain Home, Idaho, Mountain Home Army Air Base, overseas training, when he passed away, and I know I cried, because he was a major influence of that period.

SH: You said that your classmates dropped their books when they learned about Pearl Harbor. Did they run right out and enlist or did they just feel that their numbers were going to be called?

JB: I think it was a combination. They just decided they were gonna have fun. ... They knew they were going to go into the service, and, in fact, I had a couple of my classmates, whom I thought a great deal of, that I became very disappointed in, because ... they just discontinued their academic career until after they got out of the service. I can say with pride that these two young men came back to Rutgers after the war, having almost flunked out, if not having flunked out, and both established themselves very well.

SH: Do you recall having to attend mandatory chapel services?

JB: Well, I think one of the pleasant experiences I had at Rutgers was Kirkpatrick Chapel and mandatory chapel did not bother me a bit. In fact, I've come back for my fiftieth class reunion, my fifty-fifth class reunion, and I've always looked forward to going to Kirkpatrick Chapel for an event. ... I think, in our pre-war period, it was an accepted requirement and ... no one really criticized it.

SH: As an incoming freshman, what kind of hazing did you endure?

JB: Oh, the usual. I arrived here on my birthday, actually, September 16, 1940, to an empty, dirty, old farmhouse [laughter] ... for basic training here. ... Sure, hazing was a part our experience. We had to wear the beanie cap and all this sort of thing, ... and [it was] the same way even in our cooperative living group, you know. The freshmen ... had to do some of the menial chores, that was accepted, so, we had no problem.

SH: When you entered Rutgers, ROTC was mandatory for the first two years.

JB: The first two years of ROTC was mandatory, the basic ROTC. I did not get involved in Advanced ROTC. However, I might say that ... I was commissioned in service, got credit for Advanced ROTC, of course, ... which shortened my college experience considerably after I got back, because I received credit for many courses that, otherwise, I wouldn't have gotten, and it enabled me to graduate without courses that I wish I had taken. [laughter]

SH: Pearl Harbor was attacked during your sophomore year. How soon after the attack did you enlist?

JB: ... I enlisted and continued for several months. In fact, in my sophomore year, again, we were ... given considerable privileges by our professors. I completed ... all of my first term of my sophomore year by writing term papers. That was the understanding that our profs had. They said, "If you write a good term paper, you'll get credit for the course, ... regardless of when you go into the service," and I went in the service ... before the end of the term, but, I had completed all my term papers, got credit for all the courses. ... I'd say that was par for the course for those who really ... took their work seriously.

SH: Where and when did you report in for duty?

JB: ... Well, that was an interesting experience for me, because I reported to Newark. ... I had enlisted in the US Army Air Force, reported to Newark, and expected to go, as had all my predecessors, ... to Atlantic City for basic training. We got on the train at Newark and, my goodness, there were sleepers. ... We couldn't quite understand why we would have sleepers to go to Atlantic City.

SH: Were there any other Rutgers men with you on the train?

JB: Oh, yes.

SH: Do you remember their names?

JB: No, but, there were other Rutgers men who went at the same time, but, we ended up going to Keesler Field, Mississippi. [laughter] So, that's where I had my basic training, at Keesler Field, Mississippi.

SH: Did you take advantage of the sleepers?

JB: Oh, yes. That's why they were there. [laughter] ... We didn't have any idea of where we were going until we got to Mobile, Alabama. At Mobile, Alabama, they herded us off the train to go to one of those Southern sloppy breakfasts. We realized we were in Mobile, Alabama, and that we were headed South. [laughter]

SH: I assume that this was your first big trip out of the New Jersey area. What stories do you have of your experiences in the South?

JB: Well, I could ... tell you one of my experiences, going from winter up here to Keesler Field, Mississippi, ... they put us through rigorous training in basic, the first thing I did was pass out from the heat. ... It was a little change in environment, but, we had a good experience.

SH: Was this in January of 1942?

JB: January or February, I'm not sure. That's a long time ago, [laughter] but, I was ... at Keesler Field, still, at Easter, ... because I remember going out for a sunrise service, which was

kind of a memorable experience at that time. It was a sunrise service on Easter Sunday at Keesler Field on the edge of the base.

SH: Did you ever travel around the area?

JB: No, never got off the base. ...

SH: Where were you sent from Keesler Field?

JB: Oh, then, I came back to Pennsylvania. Actually, I came back, they shipped the aviation students back to Dickerson College in Carlyle, Pennsylvania, for Aviation Student Training, and we were there and took reading, writing and arithmetic. [laughter]

SH: Was this training part of the ASTP program?

JB: No, this was just part of the ... Aviation Cadet Student Training, or pre-cadet training, and, from there, I went ... to Ellington Field, Texas, for my cadet training.

SH: When you were stationed at Carlyle, were you able to visit Belvidere?

JB: No, I didn't get a chance to come back to Belvidere, but, Belvidere had a chance to come see me. [laughter]

SH: What stories can you tell me about being stationed in Texas?

JB: Well, Ellington Field was ... quite an experience. Ellington Field is on the outskirts of Houston, and, at that time, Houston was ... still a major city, or was a major city, and we did get off base there, occasionally, and I became involved with the largest Methodist church in Houston. So, it was the largest Methodist church in the largest state, ... but, again, it was a military setting. ... It was quite an experience.

SH: Did you get to travel around Texas?

JB: Not at that time. ...

SH: What did you have to do to get liberty passes?

JB: Well, you had to get passes. [laughter] ... I don't recall the exact procedure, other than the fact that we could get, occasionally, weekend passes, and, frequently, say, one-day passes ... to go into town for church, if we wished, or something like that.

SH: What was the focus of your training at Ellington Field?

JB: ... At that time, it was ... cadet training, basic cadet training. It had nothing to do with being in the Air Force, ... but, it was academic training, military training, disciplinary training,

but, it was ... cadet training, so that all of us were aviation cadets, at the time, and ... it was a good basic training.

SH: Were you commissioned as an officer when you left Ellington Field?

JB: No, no, no. ... From Ellington Field, I went ... through gunnery training, ... in Arizona. I got my gunnery wings at Kingman, Arizona, and then, proceeded to bombardier training ... at Carlsbad, New Mexico. It was there that I got my commission, and, of course, my wings. That was quite an experience, too.

SH: Before we discuss your training as a bombardier, did you ever consider applying for pilot training?

JB: We all had dreams to be a pilot, sure, but, ... from Ellington Field, we went to Nashville, Tennessee, actually, ... for placement exams. ... They had very rigorous exams to determine what you were best qualified for. Some were immediately eliminated from pilot training; [for] others, ... pilot training was their best area ... for training. In my case, I qualified for all three; pilot training, navigation and bombardier, but, they considered me best qualified for bombardier training, and bombardiers were needed. I accepted that decision.

SH: What stories can you tell me about gunnery training in Arizona?

JB: I had several experiences in Kingman, Arizona, that were memorable. Relative to training itself, it was intense, including assembling and disassembling a .50-caliber machine-gun, blindfolded, as well as firing from all positions on B-17s. Two experiences stand out in my mind. On one occasion, my squadron was scheduled to go out, by bus, for night gunnery training. However, at the last minute, we were pulled and another squadron replaced us on the bus we were scheduled to take. That bus was hit by a fast moving train on the way to the gunnery range, killing all aboard. So, that's one I missed. On another occasion, on a high altitude (20,000 feet) B-17 training mission, I was assigned the ball-turret position in the belly of the plane. The turret was small and the gunner was limited to an electric heated suit with power and communications from above. In my case, while in the firing position, I lost both electricity and intercom communications, leaving me stuck in the down position with outside temperatures below zero degrees Fahrenheit. By the time they hand cranked the turret and me back into the plane, I was nearly frozen, with a good case of pneumonia putting me in the hospital. But, again, part of the experience in the military, but, I'm here to talk about it.

SH: Did your illness delay your training at all?

JB: [It] didn't delay my training, but, it sure made me feel bad for awhile. [laughter]

SH: Were any ceremonies held in Texas and/or Arizona when you received your wings? If so, did your family attend the ceremonies?

JB: No, no, my family didn't come, ... and there was no ceremony when we received our gunnery wings, but, when I was commissioned, of course, there was a ceremony, and there was a leave after that, so, ... I got home after that, for a week or so, before I went to overseas training.

SH: Where did you go through your bombardier training?

JB: Well, that was in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

SH: Is that where you were commissioned?

JB: That's where I got my commission. Well, we had some experiences there, too. ... Our training was in AT-11 twin-engine planes. We had both navigation, visual navigation, ... and bombardier training. When it was too rough, as it frequently was in that area of the country, ... to bomb, we did navigation missions, and, usually, it was too rough to do those, too, but, we did them anyway. We had a couple of experiences, one in particular, where we were flying over Lubbock, Texas, in a vicious hail storm, sandstorm, that completely destroyed ... the Plexiglas nose of our plane, perforated the wings, dented the side, and forced us down into a nasty sandstorm at Lubbock. ... We were considered lucky to get down, but, our training was in AT-11s, and it was good training. We had good pilots. I had a pilot who used to tell me, "Cadet Baylor," I occasionally got sick, when I was in the waist of the plane, doing navigation, not when I was in the nose, doing bombing, and he said, "Cadet Baylor, it's all in your mind," and I said, "I'm sorry, sir, it's in my stomach." So, it was both. [laughter]

SH: During your training, what did you believe that the Army Air Force had in store for you?

JB: Well, ... of course, at that time, ... since I'd had my gunnery training in ... B-17s, I expected to complete my bombardier training in B-17s and go to Europe, but, it didn't work out that way. I ended up in B-24s and went to the Pacific. [laughter]

SH: When did you learn that you were not going to Europe?

JB: Well, again, ... after we completed ... our training at Carlsbad, and we got a leave, and, ... I think, I went to Lincoln, Nebraska, for placement. At Lincoln, Nebraska, I was assigned to a crew and was told that we were going to Mountain Home, Idaho, for overseas training in B-24s.

SH: Were you disappointed that you were not going to Europe?

JB: Well, I can't say I was disappointed. I really ... hadn't thought about going to the Pacific and, as it turned out, ... a number of my friends who did go to Europe didn't come back. ... Actually, our mortality rate in overseas training was as high as it was overseas. ...

SH: Why?

JB: Well, in those days, the B-24s that we flew for overseas training were ... obsolete planes that were not suitable for combat and we had frequent problems. I lost several real good friends at Mountain Home in crashes of various types, take offs, landings, mid-air, plowed into the

mountains on navigation missions. I, myself, had a real bad experience there. ... The bombardier was also the gunnery officer, so, I was responsible for all the gunners, in our crew. We had a ten-man crew, pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, navigator, and six enlisted men, and we had to check out equipment for gunnery missions, and, frequently, we had mismatched equipment. On one occasion, I had a .50 caliber machine gun that was issued to us that, presumably, ... had the right bracket for the bracket in the plane. It was not, and the gun didn't function properly, and I had to feed it for my gunner, who was firing. The game came out of the bracket, into the plane, and put me in the hospital for quite awhile, looking like a mummy, from shrapnel, but, I didn't get a Purple Heart, [laughter] but, that was, again, part of the experience. ... The overseas training was a challenge, because we were ... using planes that ... were not always in the best condition.

SH: You were assigned to a crew when you left Lincoln, Nebraska. Did you remain with that crew for the remainder of your training?

JB: ... I went through training with that crew. A bombardier is no better than his pilot. I had an excellent pilot, an excellent co-pilot, I had an excellent bombing score, and so, when we finished our training period, they took the top ten crews, there were fifty in a group, ... held the bombardiers, in my case, I was held as an instructor at Mountain Home, and my crew went into photo reconnaissance. I might say that that crew went down on an overloaded take-off in Africa, ... just one of the experiences. My second crew, which I took through to train the navigator, ended up going to England and they went down. So, we lost some people.

SH: Were they all casualties?

JB: They were casualties.

SH: When you were stationed in the Southwest, did you ever have an opportunity to interact with the local population?

JB: [I] didn't have a chance at the time, because, again, we didn't have much ... of an opportunity to go off base. It was pretty intensive training, and, as a matter-of-fact, even at Mountain Home, when I was in overseas training, we got ... occasional opportunities to go off base. When we did, we usually went into the Boise, ... because that was "the oasis in the desert," [laughter] compared to being ... at the Mountain Home base, which was "on the desert," but, we didn't ... do much traveling outside of the military area.

SH: In the Southwest, did you get a chance to meet some of the "creepy crawlers of the desert?"

JB: Not that I recall. I think the most serious creeping crawler I had was that train that I didn't run into. [laughter]

SH: Oh, I was referring to the locale's infamous snake population.

JB: No. We had no problem.

SH: Besides obsolete equipment, what other challenges did you face in your training at Mountain Home, Idaho?

JB: Well, I would say that, at Mountain Home, because of the location and the fact that we were pretty well-isolated, probably ...

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

SH: We were discussing the difficulties you faced while training at Mountain Home.

JB: Yes, I had said [that] Mountain Home Army Air Base was well-isolated, "on the desert," along the Snake River, and that we did not have an opportunity to get off base too often. ... In fact, it was, for me, a period when, I now know, that I hurt some people, because I wrote a few letters home, and to other friends, about how ... discouraging it was to be there, and I was feeling sorry for myself, I guess, and, you know, it was one of the low times in my military life.

SH: Were you frustrated by being kept back?

JB: Well, yes, because, ... you know, even when I got overseas, ... I didn't have an opportunity to do what I was trained to do, and, certainly, I was frustrated. At the time, I felt ... really frustrated that I had gone through very intensive training, as had all my buddies and friends, and I wasn't having an opportunity to use that in battle. People tell me that I was pretty fortunate [that] I didn't have to, [laughter] and, inasmuch as I am here, visiting with you today, [it] indicates that I was pretty fortunate. [laughter] So, I suppose that I should feel good about that, but, sure, at that time, everyone in the Air Force, and I'm sure in every other branch of the service, had gone through intensive training, and we felt cheated when we didn't have a chance to put that training to work in the field.

SH: How long were you an instructor at Mountain Home?

JB: Well, I took ... three crews through, so, I was there several months.

SH: Which year did you finish at Mountain Home?

JB: I actually went overseas in early 1945, then, with my crew ... sometime in early '45 and went to the Philippines.

SH: You mentioned that you were at Mountain Home when Franklin Roosevelt passed away. How much information were you given about the progress of the war in Europe and in Asia?

JB: We were well-informed. I think that ... all of us in the military were kept pretty well-posted on what was happening, insofar as information was made available at that time. I mean, certainly, we were as well-informed as the civilian population. Communications were not what they are today, ... and I think that was probably pretty good that they weren't, [laughter] but, we knew what was going on.

SH: Were there any recreational activities available to the men stationed at Mountain Home?

JB: The main recreational activity we had was pulling the one-armed bandit. [laughter] We had slot machines at Mountain Home Army Air Base, and that's where I got acquainted with them, and it didn't cost much, either, [laughter] but, no, really, there weren't many other recreational activities available. I did have an opportunity to go, as I say, into Boise on occasional weekends. We had another air base in Boise, the Boise Army Air Base, but, I went into Boise and met ... people who became friends. I had an opportunity to get acquainted with a young dairy family on a weekend pass. They invited me to their dairy operation, their ranch, ... which was a small dairy farm, and that made life much more pleasant in Idaho, because I found friends.

SH: Were you aware of how your family farm was faring, in terms of the effects of rationing? Do you know if your parents took part in any homefront activities?

JB: Well, we had a dairy operation. Mother and Dad both worked on the dairy farm, but, Mother did some military work, locally. Rationing, of course, was a factor, and, when I did get home on leave, it became quite apparent, gas rationing and rationing for sugar and other products, but, it was never an issue with Mother and Dad, because, first of all, ... they were both loyal Americans, and they knew it had to be done, and they provided.

SH: Did your brother ever consider enlisting?

JB: No. His health was such that I don't know that he would have been accepted, but, he never did enlist.

SH: Was the crew that you went overseas with a crew that you had trained at Mountain Home?

JB: The last crew that I trained with.

SH: Can you tell me about that experience?

JB: Well, yes. Again, ... as I said, at that time, we were pretty frustrated, because we had not put all of our training to work, that we expected, again, to do what ... all the previous crews had done. This was approaching the end of the war, by this time. I spent most of ... my active time in Mountain Home. ...

SH: Were you stationed at Mountain Home on V-E Day?

JB: I can't recall when V-E Day was, at this point, [laughter] but, I remember V-J Day, [laughter] because I was sitting in the Philippines, but, ... the war in Europe was beginning to slow down, and, as I said, all of our ... prior crews had flown overseas to their base, and then, proceeded to become actually involved in military action, but, again, in my case, or in our case, we went to the West Coast for processing and, actually, were told that we were not ... going to take a plane to the Philippines. We actually ended up ... going by Merchant Marine.

SH: Where were you processed?

JB: [We] were processed at ... Pittsburgh, California, which was, ... I think, just north of San Francisco. We went out of San Francisco.

SH: Do you know why they would send you over by ship rather than plane?

JB: Yes. ... At that time, ... even in Japan, I think the situation was such that they had more crews, active crews, actively bombing, in fact, at that time, they were beginning to bomb Japan itself, southern Japan, and that the war was slowing down, and they just didn't need us. Then, what happened when I got to the Philippines, again, I had a bad experience, because, ... for the last week or ten days before we arrived, they put us on a lot of medication to prepare us for the conditions in the Philippines, one of which was Atabrine, and I had an Atabrine reaction and ended up deathly sick, so, again, they had to pull my crew and reassign us. The other crews that went over with us did go to the 13th Air Force. My crew was pulled until I was able to go with them. They reassigned us to the Fifth Air Force, 90th Bomb Group.

SH: Can you tell me a little bit about your voyage to the Philippines onboard a commercial Merchant Marine vessel?

JB: ... Okay. At that time, we went from San Francisco to Manila, via Hawaii, ... on a Merchant Marine vessel. Of course, Merchant Marines were civilians who really didn't care very much for the military and didn't treat us very well. They particularly didn't treat our enlisted men well. As officers, we had better facilities ... on the ship, not good facilities, but, better. We had a little better food than our enlisted men. Our enlisted men were down in the hold of the ship and ... were not treated well, but, even we were not treated well by the Merchant Marines at that time. ... They were making the money, and we were doing the fighting, and they liked to be as unpleasant to us as they could at times. We were on [the] ship [for] thirty days.

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship?

JB: We called it the "*Careless*" *Carrillo*. It was the [SS] *Carlos Carrillo*. We got out in the Pacific, ... in a convoy, we zigged when we should have zagged, got hit amidships by another of the ships in the convoy, and were damaged. The convoy had to go on, so, they left us sitting with one little destroyer circling around us in enemy waters. ...

SH: There were only two ships sitting there.

JB: No, just us. ... We were sitting there with a little destroyer circling us to protect us.

SH: The other ship was not damaged as badly.

JB: No, the other wasn't ... as damaged, because the other one hit us amidships. ... [We] actually crippled in, several days later, into Manila, and, again, that little destroyer either kept the submarines away or there weren't any, but, ... it was enemy water.

SH: How long was the voyage?

JB: Thirty days. So, that was my ... great experience.

SH: Where were the members of your crew from?

JB: Well, all over the country. My pilot was from Hood River, Oregon, my co-pilot was from Virginia, my gunner, my good enlisted gunner, ... gunnery enlisted officer, was from New Jersey, really. He was from South Jersey, Moorestown, and the rest were scattered around, ... but, they were a good crew. ... When we were reassigned to the Fifth Air Force, with the 90th Bomb Group of the Fifth Air Force, they shipped us, flew us down, to Mindoro Island in the southern Philippines. The other crews had gone down to the 13th Air Force and we, at that time, ... were sitting on Mindoro; ... our crews that preceded us were flying, empty, up to Okinawa and Ie Shima, taking on a bomb load, hitting southern Japan. I always thought it was unfortunate that I didn't do that, too, but, for reasons unknown to me, I never flew a mission.

SH: When were you given the Atabrine?

JB: Oh, about ten days before we arrived in the Philippines, [laughter] because [of] yellow fever and ... the other problems that were associated with the diseases there that they were trying to protect us against. The only problem was that I got a severe reaction that put me in the hospital, which was an interesting experience, also, because, when we arrived in the Philippines, they had a point of embarkation and a port of debarkation. The point of embarkation was filled, the point of debarkation was not, so, we ended up in the port of debarkation, and that's when I got deathly sick and went into the hospital, and the physician, in all his brilliance, didn't look at me, but, he looked at my record, saw where I was, and was going to ship me home with battle fatigue, [laughter] until he was made aware of the fact that we really were supposed to have been in the port of embarkation. [laughter]

SH: Your whole crew was held there while you recuperated.

JB: They held the whole crew until I was fit to fly with them.

SH: Were you thankful for that?

JB: Yes, I was.

SH: What were your initial impressions of the Philippines?

JB: Well, I'd prefer not to say my first experience when I arrived in the Philippines, but, just to put it frankly, ... we went ashore and there was a young teenager, I assume he was a teenager, twelve to fourteen, who was selling his sister's services, ... which none of us took advantage of, [laughter] but, they were available, and that was ... the way things were in the Philippines. Well, I'd say, again, ... I wasn't on the main island that long. As I say, I was in the hospital; when I got out, ... they shipped us or we flew down to Mindoro, and we were living on pretty limited rations in Mindoro, the US Army Air Force, but, we were based adjacent to a Naval group, who had good food, and we had a big hole in the fence, and, as long as we took off our wings and our

bars, we were allowed to sneak through the fence and go over to eat with them, occasionally, ... and I might say that the one thing we did get, ... all we wanted, was beer. I was not a beer drinker, but, I found out that drinking warm beer was much better than drinking highly chlorinated water, warm water, from a canvas bag. [laughter]

SH: A very tough decision. What else can you tell me about your time in the Philippines?

JB: Well, again, we didn't have an opportunity to get off base. ... We went for briefings on a regular basis, even though, as I said, my particular crew did not get to fly a mission, but, we attended all of the briefings, we were on alert all the time. We were in a relatively confined area. ... I got to see much more of the Philippines on later trips. [laughter]

SH: Were you always stationed at Mindoro?

JB: Well, I was on Mindoro until ... our crew ... flew up to, as I indicated, ... the 90th Bomb Group was based on Mindoro, the crews that were flying missions, at that time, ... were flying up to Okinawa or Ie Shima, which was an adjacent island, to take on their bomb load and hitting Japan. It was ... uneconomical and unnecessary to take on a bomb load on Mindoro. After V-J Day, ... after the atomic bombs were dropped, V-J Day, we were transferred, actually, to Ie Shima. We flew up to Ie Shima, and then, over to Okinawa. ... In Okinawa, again, ... I was considered "excess baggage," which I was, a bombardier, at that time, "excess baggage," and they wanted to ship me home, had my orders cut to come home, until somebody complained about the fact that there were a lot of other people over there who had been overseas a hell of a lot longer, [laughter] that they should go home first, which I agreed with, so, they re-cut my orders. ... I stayed there on Okinawa and went through the most severe typhoon that Okinawa ... had ever experienced, one that destroyed a good part of the American Navy that was in the harbor there, and then, eventually, went to occupied Japan.

SH: Can you tell me about the typhoon?

JB: Well, ... for about forty-eight hours, we were standing wherever we could stand, in any protected areas that we could find, with Quonset huts flying all over the place, cutting trees, cutting people, ... and, of course, in the harbor, at that time, the American vessels, American warships, there were a good many in the harbor. ... Today, of course, they probably would have moved out, as they normally do, but, at that time, they were in the harbor, and they had a tremendous amount of damage, but, ... I can't recall the exact time ... of that typhoon, but, ... when I mention it to people who were in the area at that period of time, they remember the severity of that typhoon. ... We actually stood up any place we could find to protect ourselves, ... mainly from flying sheet metal and other things, ... because it was a very damaging [typhoon], and we were, of course, in temporary quarters at the time. It was another experience.

SH: What was a typical day on Mindoro like for you? What did you do?

JB: Very little, going to briefings, exercising as we saw fit, but, no organized [exercise]; well, I think, probably, there was some organized calisthenics and things of this nature, but, mainly, we were just biding our time.

SH: You were there when the atomic bombs were dropped. How did you and your crew react to the news?

JB: "Let's have a beer." [laughter] A warm beer, that is. [laughter]

SH: Were there any other reactions?

JB: Yes, I think, of course, ... for all of us in the service, we were glad the war was coming to an end. ... It was a little more important to others, perhaps, but, certainly, ... none of us had ... any particular desire to ... get too further involved on Japan proper.

SH: You mentioned that, when you were shipped overseas, you already could sense that the war was winding down. Were you aware of any plans for invading the Japanese home islands?

JB: Well, they were already hitting southern Japan; I mean, ... the war wasn't over, but, at that time, it was obvious that the US military forces were showing their strength.

SH: What were your opinions of figures such as President Truman and General MacArthur? What did your comrades think of those men?

JB: Well, again, I think, initially, Truman, of course, as I indicated, ... my thoughts of Truman as a vice-president were not very high, and, when Roosevelt passed away, I cried, but, as it turned out, Truman was at the right place at the right time and did a great job as President. As far as MacArthur was concerned, I think the reaction of everyone that I talked to was the same as the reaction of other people around the world, they either liked him or didn't like him. He was a great general, he had some personality traits that were not very popular, but, he got the job done. [laughter]

SH: When did you first encounter seasoned combat veterans? Were you still in the United States?

JB: Yes, I think we ran into these veterans, probably, well, certainly at overseas training, because some of our personnel, ... the base commander, for example, had flown X number of missions. A lot of the other personnel were seasoned pilots with overseas experience. So, we had ... interaction with ... veterans of that type all the way through, and the same in the Philippines, and, of course, when we moved on up to Okinawa and Ie Shima.

SH: What was your opinion of your commanding officers?

JB: Varied. I had good experiences and I had one very undesirable experience. One of the problems during the war was, of course, many people were given rank who were not qualified, pushed in the service. I had a commanding officer at Mountain Home who had not had good military training, but, he was commissioned, became a leaf colonel. He was over the crews that were in overseas training. He disliked flying officers very much, he made life as miserable as he could for us, and he thought he was pretty hot stuff. ... The base commander, however, was a

flying colonel who had served overseas, but, unfortunately, the Commandant of Crews, as this character was called, did not treat ... us flying personnel very well. He had no appreciation for either the military or for the Air Force, but, that, again, was one of the things that happened ... during the war.

SH: Were you stationed on Okinawa as part of the occupation forces?

JB: No. I was only on Okinawa waiting to be reassigned, and then, I went up to Yokohama, Japan, was reassigned from Yokohama to Chitose Army Air Base, up on Hokkaido, Japan, and that's where I spent my Japanese occupation time. Hokkaido is the northern most island and it's the southern most island in the Aleutian Chain, and the concern for the US military, at that time, was, of course, the Russians coming down the Aleutian Chain, and Chitose was in the northern part of Hokkaido, and I had the privilege of being there, ... I was reassigned, as a base utility and engineer supply officer. ... I happened to be assigned there during the winter. When I arrived in Chitose, it was snowing. When I left, it was snowing. I never saw the ground. We had a hundred-plus inches of snow. ... We had to keep the base supplied with fuel and we had to keep the runways open. ... The only way it could be done was with Japanese people, Japanese people with Japanese equipment.

SH: How did you communicate with the Japanese?

JB: By having *Nisei*, American-born Japanese, mainly from Hawaii. We had two *Nisei*. I and another officer were in charge of supplying the base with fuel and keeping the runways open. ... For supplying the base with fuel, we had a hundred-odd Japanese laborers who had to pick all of this frozen coal ... off of their small, narrow-gauge railroad cars, and they were pretty well half-starved to do it, and we had two *Nisei*, ... Japanese-Americans who spoke Japanese, that interpreted for us, ... for the Japanese operators of the snow blowers and the base equipment.

SH: Were these *Nisei* brought over from the interment camps in the United States?

JB: ... No. They were American *Nisei* from Hawaii. ... They were Japanese-Americans from, mainly, Hawaii.

SH: They had never been interned.

JB: No.

SH: Were there any internment camps near your airbase at Mountain Home?

JB: No, no, I'm not aware of any.

SH: What was it like to work with the Japanese on Hokkaido? How did they act towards Americans?

JB: Oh, really, we got along great. Japanese laborers lived in their homes.

SH: How did you feed them?

JB: Oh, well, ... they were on rations. ... We, as Americans there, did our best to see that they were as well-taken care of [as possible]. There was ... no feeling of resentment on our part. ... They were in the same position we were in.

SH: Were they native to the island?

JB: Oh, yes. Well, I'd say, probably, yes. Yes, I think they were not part of the Japanese military. They were civilians who were trying to make a living, and, as I said, food was scarce for them, so, we managed to provide rations for them, so that they were reasonably well-fed, but, not well-fed. The period of time I was there was winter; as I said, we had an excessive amount of snow and [it was] excessively cold, so, ... it was not a pleasant time for them, and, in some cases, not a particularly pleasant time for us, although we still had comfortable quarters.

SH: Did they live in a barracks?

JB: No. Well, ... I think they lived in their own little village.

SH: Did you interact with any other Japanese people?

JB: ... No, very, very little.

SH: Before you were sent to Hokkaido, how much of Okinawa were you able to see?

JB: ... Didn't see much of Okinawa either, ... except for a nasty typhoon, [laughter] saw a couple of planes crash, but, ... no, again, we didn't have an opportunity to get out into the countryside of Okinawa. At that time, there were still, of course, hundreds of Japanese holed up in the caves on Okinawa, ... and there continued to be for some time after that.

SH: How did the American Armed Forces try to eradicate them?

JB: Well, I guess, in many cases, they didn't eradicate ... [them]. Eventually, the Japanese came out of the caves, didn't know the war had ended.

SH: I was just curious as to how diligently the military was pursuing those forces. Did they bomb them?

JB: No. ... I think there were so many caves, so many opportunities for them to hide, and they were hiding at that time, ... but, this was away from the military bases.

SH: From there, you were assigned to Japan.

JB: ... I was assigned to Yokohama, went up to the Yokohama base, where I was assigned to Chitose.

SH: How long were you stationed in Yokohama?

JB: Just long enough to be reassigned, [laughter] but, my position, my responsibilities, took me down to the main island, because, as I said, our job was base utilities and engineer supply, so, I had to fly back and forth, from Chitose to the main island, on numerous occasions for supplies. So, I did get a chance to get into Tokyo, and see some of the destruction, and, also, see ... some of the nicer things of Tokyo that still survived.

SH: Were you amazed by the devastation?

JB: In areas, yes. I didn't see the destruction that many saw, because I wasn't in those areas, but, there was ample destruction.

SH: Were you ever able to explore Japan while on leave?

JB: Not to any extent, only when I would fly down to Tokyo for supplies; I usually had a few hours here and there, but, no real leave time.

SH: You had no R&R while you were in Japan.

JB: No.

SH: Were there any incidents on Hokkaido that stand out in your memory, other than the one hundred inches of snow?

JB: [laughter] Not particularly, other than the fact that I attempted to do some skiing there, which was unsuccessful, and going out and trying to do some skiing in numerous feet of snow, on Japanese skis, and falling through the snow, and whatnot. I also had the experience, as did many of my associates, of occasionally finding a poor peasant Japanese frozen by the path someplace, because the conditions were not very pleasant for them, either. So, I had memories. I, fortunately, had an opportunity to go back to Hokkaido several years later and relive some of my experiences on a more pleasant note. [laughter]

SH: Maybe Hokkaido in the summertime? [laughter]

JB: Hokkaido in the summertime, yes.

SH: Were you considered regular Army at this point?

JB: No, no, no.

SH: You were still in aviation.

JB: Yes, but, I had been reassigned, but, I was an officer with the US Army Air Force. Actually, the Chitose Air Base was an important Japanese base. Because of the severe climate, and, also, because of its importance, history tells us it had excellent underground facilities for maintaining

aircraft and other facilities. So, it was, in reality, a two-level air base. We never saw any below ground facilities.

SH: Were you sent to any of the other Aleutians?

JB: No. I never got beyond Chitose.

SH: How were you sent from Chitose back home?

JB: Oh, from Chitose, I went back to the mainland of Japan, ... and I'm not sure where I boarded ship, but, I came home from Japan on a Naval transport to beautiful, delightful Seattle. [laughter]

SH: How would you compare your trip to Seattle, on a Navy transport, to your voyage to Manila on a Merchant Marine vessel?

JB: Much shorter and much more pleasant, except for very rough north Pacific seas.

SH: Did you have an officer's club at Chitose? You mentioned that it was a Naval air station.

JB: Yes, ... actually, they made provisions to make it as pleasant as possible for the Americans who were based there. We had ... an officer's club in which we had little Japanese girls who served as waitresses. ... They had ... black label beer and green label beer. ... Green label beer was horrible, black label beer was not so bad. [laughter] It was cold, ... just set it out the door for a little bit, that took care of that. [laughter]

SH: Were your supplies good? You mentioned that they were limited.

JB: Adequate. ...

SH: How was your fuel delivered?

JB: The fuel to the base came from Japanese coal fields, by train, on these little, narrow-gauge railroad [cars], and we had train loads coming in almost daily, and, of course, by the time it came in, it was frozen solid, and that's what these hundred Japanese, or one hundred-plus, ... laborers had to do, was pick ... every bit of that off. They had to pick it off completely. I mean, there were no devices for unloading those coal cars, but, it ... all came from local coal fields.

SH: Did you ever see a USO show while you were in the service?

JB: Not really; yes, to the extent that, I think, in the Philippines, [there were] one or two occasions when we had a USO [show], but, not the Bob Hope types. [laughter] I can't recall ... any experiences either stateside or overseas when we were ... overloaded with entertainment. [laughter]

SH: Did you keep in contact at all with anyone here at Rutgers?

JB: Not really. Frankly, it was a period of three-and-a-half years plus on the move, ... I should say, yes, I did maintain contact with two or three [people], Professor Helyar, for example. We certainly maintained contact with Prof and some of the other profs on campus, but, ... our attention was diverted elsewhere. ... However, overseas, I did run into co-workers or the students of co-workers of other universities, which made life pleasant.

SH: Did you run into any other Rutgers men?

JB: Can't recall, but, I probably did. I honestly must confess, I can't recall.

SH: Can you tell me a little bit more about when you arrived in sunny Seattle?

JB: Beautiful Seattle; we arrived during the night.

SH: Maybe sunny is not the right word.

JB: [laughter] Well, it looked pretty sunny to me because, ... not only that, when we arrived, they fed us, [laughter] and, oh, they greeted us, great. ... The servicemen and women coming back to Seattle, at that time, got the royal treatment by the people of Seattle, Washington. They would be unloaded, went ashore, day or night, didn't make any difference what the hour might be, there was always a big meal waiting, and we were treated that way. We were treated royally by the local people and I can't recall how long I was there, but, I wasn't there very long.

SH: What ship did you come back on?

JB: It was a Naval [transport], I have no idea, but, it was a Naval transport.

SH: How did you travel back to the East Coast?

JB: Then, I had the pleasure of coming back cross-country, ... the northern route, by train, and I saw some country that I had never seen before, and some country I would like to see again, because that's the only area of the country that I haven't traveled extensively in the US. I think you told me you knew a little bit about Wyoming and Montana, and Wyoming and Montana are two of states that I've been in, but, I know less about them than probably any other states in the country.

SH: Where were you discharged?

JB: Oh, Fort Dix, came back to Fort Dix, was discharged at Fort Dix, went home for a week, saw my folks, decided that I had to get on with my life, and came right back to Rutgers in June of '46, started working on the college farm to earn some money to go ... back to school in September.

SH: How had Rutgers changed while you were in the service?

JB: Well, when I came back in '46, not much difference, a lot of the things had been on hold, particularly as far as students were concerned, as I indicated, that all of the cooperative living groups on the Ag Campus had been shut down during the service, and, when I came back, the first thing that Prof [Helyar] said [was], "John, we'll reorganize the Towers Cooperative Living Group." At that time, ... one of the faculty members had actually moved over to the Phelps House, which was a disappointment to us, ... because that was our favorite facility. ...

SH: Were you aware of the GI Bill? I assume that there were already some students at Rutgers taking advantage of the GI Bill.

JB: Yes, and here's one that took advantage of it, too, [laughter] just as soon as I could, because the GI Bill made it possible for me to complete my BS and my Masters, prior to joining the staff at Rutgers, and, of course, it did the same for a lot of other veterans. It was very, very important to us.

SH: How had the college expanded?

JB: The college had not expanded too much during that period of time. As I said, many of the things were pretty much on hold. ...

SH: You were coming in on the ground floor in 1946.

JB: ... The growth all followed.

SH: You got to see that.

JB: Yes, and I saw it as an ... undergraduate, graduate and as a faculty member.

SH: When was your official graduation?

JB: When I returned to Rutgers University in 1946, I had not too many years of college behind me, in terms of years, but, with Advanced ROTC credits received for being commissioned in service, I completed my BS in one semester and started graduate work for my Masters degree the second semester of 1947, finished my MS degree and joined the staff in the Department of Farm Crops.

SH: When you were on the staff, were you working towards an advanced degree?

JB: No. Actually, what happened, ... in 1955, I took a leave of absence to finish my Ph.D. at Penn State.

SH: What were you working on?

JB: I was, ... at Rutgers, in farm crops. ... At Rutgers, my interest was in farm crops, ... as "on staff" and teaching, and, also, in extension, I was the farm crops specialist, and that included

everything, weed control, pathology, insect control, as well as working on all ... the crops, other than turf crops.

SH: You have mentioned that Prof. Helyar was a major influence on you. Were there any other professors who were important to your studies?

JB: ... Well, they were all very important, yes. At that time, before World War II and immediately after World War II, Rutgers had outstanding academicians in the College of Agriculture. Before the war, of course, I started out under H.B. Sprague. He was head of the Department of Farm Crops. He also went in the service, and I ended up with Dr. Sprague at Penn State University after[wards], in 1955, but, the head of every department [was fantastic], ... Firman E. Bear in Soils, a great, great soil scientist. Dr. Waksman, I think a few people at Rutgers remember Dr. Waksman, [who was] just housed above me, in the building I was in. The dean at that time was a great [man], Bill Martin, Dean Bill Martin, from Maine. Dr. Jack Barlett in Dairy, one of the founders of the Joint Committee in Grassland Farming that I was very much a part of, and Carl Bender and Prof Thompson in Poultry, you name them, Bill Skelly in Animal Science, these people were all student-oriented, much different than in many other colleges or many other institutions, but, the College of Agriculture, at that period of time, and during the war, before the war, during the war and after the war, ... they were outstanding human beings, people that I am proud to have been associated with.

SH: Did all of your roommates in the cooperative living group return to Rutgers after the war?

JB: No. Many went their own way. Phelps House was never reopened for students. I was asked to reorganize the Towers. Several returning veterans were accepted into the Towers, as were several underclassmen who had not been in the service. But, all of us who were involved in the cooperative living movement on the Ag campus before and during the early part of the war, all who respected Professor Frank G. Helyar so much, later put our resources together to help found the Helyar House, a major cooperative living group on the Ag Campus at the present time, and one we're all proud of.

SH: You were very fortunate that there were no casualties among the Phelps House group.

JB: There were casualties, but, we did not have major casualties among my immediate classmates, but, I lost friends throughout the service. As a matter-of-fact, going back to my Mountain Home Base days, as I think I may have indicated, ... our casualty rate at Mountain Home in overseas training was, percentage-wise, about as bad as it was overseas, but, ... I lost two or three very, very close friends. In fact, one of my closest friends was killed in ... a take off crash. I had the privilege of being the military escort to bring his body home to Iowa, with his very, very pregnant wife, which was kind of a challenging experience, but, another experience in the military.

SH: Did you have anyone waiting for you back at Rutgers, or should I say, NJC?

JB: No, no, but, I found one. [laughter] No, ... again, after I finished my Masters and I was on staff, it was very convenient to go to NJC for lunch, and ... I met a young lady who became my wife. At this point, we're about ready to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary.

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

SH: This continues an interview with Dr. John E. Baylor on November 1, 1999, at Rutgers University. Since we were just discussing how you met your wife, could you tell me a little bit about her?

JB: Oh, yes. Well, her name is Henrietta. Henrietta Hauck was her maiden name. She was born and raised in Dunellen, New Jersey. She was a commuter to NJC, and that's how I met her, by going over to the area where they had lunch, and I was able to have lunch, and I got to meet her, and it seemed to work out pretty well.

SH: What was she studying at NJC?

JB: She was studying secondary education, which she never was very happy about, ... and biology. So, that was her academic background at dear, old NJC, at the time.

SH: When did she graduate?

JB: Oh, my, maybe you shouldn't have asked. She would have graduated [in] 1949.

SH: Before we move on to your post-war career, I have just a few more questions related to your time in the service. Did you ever join any of the veterans' associations? Did you receive any decorations or awards while you were in the military? Did you join the Reserves?

JB: Well, as far as awards are concerned, I received the usual minimal number of awards given to those who served overseas, but, of course, I had ... no battle ribbons or anything of that nature. ... At that time, when I did come home, they had ... an inactive Reserve. I did not join the active Reserves, but, I did join the inactive Reserves, remember, I was a bombardier, bombardiers were pretty obsolete at the time. At some point later on, I had an opportunity, courtesy of Uncle Sam, to either get active or get out, and it was my decision, at that time, that that was no decision, [laughter] so that I left the inactive Reserves. ... Of course, I am a Legionnaire. ... That's the only service organization that I am a member of, although, I have been a very strong supporter, over the years, of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and, of course, have supported the veterans' hospitals. My Dad was a veteran, and he was a Legionnaire, and I was ... part of that with him while he was alive.

SH: When the Korean War began, were you worried that you might be called up?

JB: No, no, actually, because, by that time, I had resigned from the inactive Reserves. I might say that, by that time, I had acquired a co-worker in the ... Farm Crops Extension here at Rutgers, and he was recalled for the Korean War, so, I went through that with him, and, actually,

again, had to assume the entire responsibility for the department's extension program ... until he returned, but, no, I was not involved with the Korean Conflict.

SH: How much teaching did you do at Rutgers when you returned?

JB: I only taught for one year, because, ... when I joined the staff, I joined on a half-time teaching and half-time extension [basis], and taught for one year, along with my extension program, and then, ... the farm crops specialist, who was my very close associate, took a federal position at the USDA, and I replaced him as the senior crops specialist ... at Rutgers.

SH: When did you marry Mrs. Baylor?

JB: 1950.

SH: Where did you live before moving on to Penn State?

JB: Well, we lived ... on the circle. ... Every time I come by it, I say, "Some time, I'm going to," ... Raritan Gardens, ... "I'm gonna go in and find 90 Chester Circle at Raritan Gardens," because that's where we set up housekeeping.

SH: Why did you leave Rutgers?

JB: Well, actually, ... I was interested in continuing my education, not necessarily for a Ph.D., but, to continue my technical training, and ... my interest was in Agronomy, ... specifically in forage crops production and in seed production. I had wanted to take a sabbatical or a leave of absence to go to Oregon State on seed production, and, at that time, my wife indicated that it was rather foolish to take six months or a year and come back with nothing, when you could stay a little longer and come back with a Ph.D. I couldn't argue with her. I had been accepted at Oregon State for a Ph.D., but, we had a misfortune in our family, and ... I went to my old friend, Dr. H. B. Sprague at Penn State, and he said, "John, if you want to come to Penn State to finish that Ph.D., I've got a graduate assistantship waiting for you." So, I went to Penn State and stayed. [laughter]

SH: When did you start having your family?

JB: Well, after we got to Penn State; actually, before, but, ... we went up there in '55 and ... our first daughter arrived in January of '56. So, we have two daughters and two granddaughters and the family is complete.

SH: Do they all live around Penn State?

JB: No. We have one daughter and granddaughter who live in Austin, Texas, and one daughter who lives next door, in State College, who does my secretarial work for me.

SH: Which programs were you involved in at Penn State?

JB: I've been very, very fortunate in my field of interest. ... My field of interest ... has been forage crops. Now, people misunderstand that; they think of 4-H. Forage crops, that's pasture, silage and hay. I worked very closely with the livestock industry and related industries. Penn State is a grassland state. We talked a little bit about this on one other occasion. The opportunities, of course, in that area are much greater in a state such as Pennsylvania than in states such as New Jersey, although ... one of the great experiences, with my co-workers at Rutgers, was working with the county staff, in the rural counties of New Jersey. But, at PSU, I was given the privilege of developing my program into a national program, and then, into an international program, so that my work took me throughout the State of Pennsylvania, which I call "my playground," but, I worked extensively, ... with co-workers, in many other states. My program took me to New Zealand and Australia, took me to South America, took me to the Philippines and India, and, on a number of occasions, to Europe, so that, from that standpoint, I was very fortunate. ... Also, we held the second International Grassland Congress held in the US, in Kentucky in 1981, and I had the privilege of being the chairman of the governing board for that International Grassland Congress, so, I was very heavily involved in the international grassland movement. So, in that respect, I ... was very privileged, and then, I was able to continue my interest after retirement from Penn State in the seed and grassland areas.

SH: You mentioned, before the interview began, one of your more recent programs where you worked with some Rutgers men.

JB: Oh, yes. ... My second position after retirement from Penn State is one with the seed industry, as the executive director of a Regional Seed Trade Association, and I recently involved one of my classmates, who ... is internationally known in the whole area of bio-genetics, to be a speaker for our convention, ... a gentleman by the name of Dr. John Pino, and a man who has made many contributions to Rutgers and, of course, ... in the international arena.

SH: You mentioned also that you had a radio program.

JB: Well, as a professional, ... of course, in my profession, as an extension specialist, education and communications were a very important part of my program, and I had the privilege, not only of doing a lot of radio, but, a lot of TV as well, but, in my radio program at Penn State, I had the privilege of having a continuous weekly radio program over many, many years that covered about 105 or 110 radio stations from Pennsylvania to Western Ohio, and I was able to even continue that ... program when I was overseas, because I was able to take my little recorder with me, and interview scientists from around the world, and ship tapes back, and use them on our Penn State Radio Network.

SH: When you were at Rutgers, either as a student or a faculty member, did you have any interaction with the University administration, Dr. Clothier, Dean Metzger, etc.?

JB: ... As was the case with many of us, I had relatively few interactions with the University administration, but, with the College of Agriculture administration, ... I respected them highly. We had some outstanding people. The dean, ... on down to the department heads, as I think I indicated earlier, were very student-oriented, good researchers, and, of course, at that time, ...

Rutgers University College of Agriculture ... had an outstanding reputation in the field of agriculture.

SH: It sounds as if you perpetuated their focus on education in your endeavors at Penn State.

JB: Well, education is very important. [laughter] ... Yes, I enjoy working with students. As a matter-of-fact, that was one of the things in extension, for over thirty years, I missed was interaction with undergraduate students, although I had an excellent interaction with production agriculture, not only in Pennsylvania ... and in New Jersey, but, throughout the country. So, yes, my love is education. I had the opportunity to take research and translate it into ... information that could be used by producers. The dairy farmer has been a very important part of my life, as have other livestock farmers.

SH: What are your thoughts on the GI Bill, as both a beneficiary and an educator?

JB: Well, ... the GI Bill, of course, has been extremely important to many, many individuals who otherwise would not have been able to pursue their education, so that, as I indicated, ... when I came back from the service and came back to Rutgers to finish my undergraduate and graduate work, [the] GI Bill was very important to me. I never used it completely, because it wasn't necessary, but, it certainly enabled ... a good many outstanding people to complete their education, which otherwise would not have happened.

SH: As an educator, did you see the fruits of the GI Bill?

JB: Not directly, but, indirectly, yes.

SH: Before we conclude the interview, what were your most vivid memories of Rutgers and World War II?

JB: Oh, there's no one memory that's most vivid. I think that I can recall very distinctly my arrival at Rutgers, in September of 1940, to an empty, ... old farmhouse, that was [the] cooperative living group, having absolutely no one there to greet me, but, I survived that. [laughter] ... I had many good memories of Rutgers and ... the academic atmosphere here. I did not participate, for various reasons, in many of the activities others did. Financial restrictions prevented that, but, we had many excellent relationships. As far as the military was concerned, again, I would have mixed reactions. I had some good experiences, and I had some experiences that weren't so good, but, I don't regret any of them, as long as I'm here to talk to you. [laughter]

SH: Before we conclude the interview, is there anything else that you would like to add to the record?

JB: Well, no, not specifically, other than to say that, ... in the last ten years, I've enjoyed coming back to Rutgers more than the intervening years. ... I came back for my twenty-fifth reunion, I came back for my fiftieth reunion, I came back for my fifty-fifth reunion, and I think the fiftieth and fifty-fifth ... were the high points, ... and it's been a good experience. ... It's a

nice campus. Of course, the College of Agriculture has changed so dramatically that I hardly recognized it, but, it's been a good experience.

SH: The one thing that we did not mention are the histories that you have been compiling.

JB: Yes. You might have gathered that I'm somewhat of a history buff. I believe it's very important to record the past in order to look to the future. Actually, I'm writing my third history. (PS: I have completed my fourth and final history. J.E.B.)

SH: Please, tell me about all three.

JB: I indicated, or I may have indicated, that, back in 1944, two staff members in the College of Agriculture here were very much involved in the formation of what was then called the Joint Committee in Grassland Farming. [The] Joint Committee in Grassland Farming was an endeavor to bring industry, producers and academia together to solve some of the pressing problems in the field of agriculture, particularly the field of grassland agriculture, that had not been addressed. Back in the '30s, one of the excellent scientists at the College of Agriculture, Professor Carl Bender, ... worked on grass silage as a crop silage. Grass silage was a tremendous improvement in the preservation of hay crops at that time, but, there were so many limiting factors that made it very difficult for farmers to adopt the principle, and Dr. Jack Barlett and Carl Bender, along with Dr. Firman E. Bear, were very instrumental in working with industry in the formation of the Joint Committee on Grassland Farming. By 1994, the Joint Committee on Grassland Farming had gone through two name changes, becoming the American Forage and Grassland Council, which I had been very heavily involved [in] for over forty years. In 1994, AFGC celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. ... I was the link, so, I wrote the fifty-year history of it. The Atlantic Seedmen Association celebrated its fortieth anniversary, so, I wrote the history of it. We're about to celebrate our fiftieth now; I'll finish that off. I am currently writing the forty-year history of the Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council, which is the first state forage council formed in the US, and which I formed in 1960. ... Then, one of these days after [that], I'm gonna retire. [laughter]

SH: What are your other passions, besides education and the councils?

JB: Well, I still ... enjoy gardening, outdoor life. ... I have two wonderful grandchildren, two wonderful daughters, a wonderful wife. I enjoy travel. We don't do as much as I hope we [would] do. If I live another fifteen or twenty years, we might do some.

SH: You mentioned, also, that you returned to the Philippines and Hokkaido, this time as a professional.

JB: Well, actually, yes. ... As I indicated, I've been very much involved in the international sector of grassland agriculture. I was on the Continuing Committee of the International Grassland Congress. We had an International Grassland Congress in Japan, that I went back to, and then, traveled throughout Japan. I also had an opportunity, while on staff at Penn State, to travel to the Philippines and Thailand, India, Greece, Europe, so, I've been pretty well-privileged, professionally, to work with outstanding people throughout the world.

SH: Should we be worried about agricultural production at this time?

JB: Well, ... we still have a tremendous capacity to produce. The agriculture economy is not very good, and I think we have a right to be concerned about some of the lack of leadership in agriculture, in terms of production agriculture, in terms of the price structure. Of course, we've done an outstanding job of working, ... through AID programs and other programs, with international agriculture, so that we are getting much more competition in agriculture from other countries, ... but, I think we have some concerns, economically, to keep a viable [agriculture], particularly a viable livestock agriculture, in this country.

SH: Is grassland preservation a part of that effort?

JB: Yes.

SH: Thank you for sitting down with me. Have a good day.

JB: I've enjoyed it.

SH: Thank you.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/30/02
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 8/1/02
Reviewed by John E. Baylor 3/03