

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIE ANDERSON BORBELY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

and

VICTORIA RAAB

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 19, 2009

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Marie Anderson Borbely: This begins an interview with Marie Anderson Borbely on October 19, 2009, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Victoria Raab: ... Victoria Raab.

SI: Mrs. Borbely, thank you very much for having us here today.

MB: You're welcome.

SI: To begin, can you tell us when and where you were born?

MB: I was born in 1923, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, at 51 Stone Street, which is about three blocks from where I'm living now. [laughter] I was born at home. In those days, most people were born at home, and it wasn't until my younger brother was born that he was actually born in a hospital. ... I almost remember; I must have been about three, actually. I kind of remember going to that hospital. It was St. Peter's Hospital. It was a wooden building on the corner of Hardenberg and Somerset Street, that is now the elementary school, or has been the elementary school, of St. Peter's, and, gradually, it was moved to the big hospital that we have nearby. My mother was Mary Barr. Her father and mother were born in New Brunswick. My mother was born in New Brunswick, my father was born in New Brunswick. His mother and father were Swedish. ... She came from near Stockholm. I don't know exactly where my grandfather came from, except that my aunt said it was ... the northern part of Sweden. ... They were married in New Brunswick, at St. John's Episcopal Church on George Street, the old "Hall-Mills" church that we know about now, and they were married in 1888. [Editor's Note: The Hall-Mills murder case developed in September 1922 when the remains of Reverend Edward W. Hall, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, and Mrs. Eleanor Mills, a member of the church choir, who were believed to be having an affair, were discovered on a "lover's lane" just outside of New Brunswick in Franklin Township. The ensuing investigation and trail became a media sensation.] She was a cook at Woodlawn. The Neilson Family only hired Swedish help at that time and she was nineteen. ... They had my father and my Aunt Matilda and my Uncle Charlie and a young boy, Fred, who had died at the age of eleven. My mother's family, there was quite a large family. She had, let's see, two, three sisters, two brothers and they were all born in the City of New Brunswick. So, we go back quite a long time in this city.

SI: Your father's parents were the ones who came from ...

MB: Sweden.

SI: What about your mother's parents?

MB: My mother's parents, ... actually, I've been meaning to call Christ Church, because there is a headstone there for someone named Henry Barr. I've been going to do this for about ten years, [laughter] because my grandfather was Henry Barr, but I know that he was buried in St. Peter's Cemetery. So, this could be, actually, his father, and so, I want to give them a call and find out, but they originally were (LaBarr?) and they were Huguenots. One of my friends turned out to be

a distant relative and she did quite a genealogy on it and they left the Continent and settled in Northern Ireland. ... Well, it seems as though, through generations, a Catholic married a Protestant and, in those days, if the male were Catholic, he could not inherit anything. So, in the family, the women remained Catholic, but the males became Protestant, and it just so happened that my father, my grandfather, was Protestant and ... her great-grandmother was Catholic. So, this is how they found out that we were relatives of some kind. ... They eventually came to this area and, as I said, my grandfather was actually born here in New Brunswick. So, it is a long story, long history.

SI: Did you grow up knowing your grandparents?

MB: I knew my grandmother, and my grandfather on my father's side, John Anderson, died the year I was born, 1923. My other grandfather, my Grandfather Barr, actually lived with us for awhile. So, I remember him as a young person. ... We were living at [the house] on Stone Street then, when he was living with us, and ... his wife, my grandmother, died when she was fifty-one, so, I, of course, never knew her, ... but my Swedish grandmother, I was very fond of. ... We lived in the same house. The 51 Stone Street [home] was two apartments. My grandfather had built it in 1910, he, my Swedish grandfather, John Anderson. He was a tailor and he worked for a tailor shop in New Brunswick run by a man named (Vaulker?), and you will see the name (Vaulker?) around. I think there's some side streets that are named (Vaulker?). ... My grandmother, of course, when she married, was no longer a cook and they had rented a house on Stone Street. ... My Aunt Matilda was born there and she died, oh, I guess it's about fifteen years ago now, and had never lived on any other street her entire life. She died at the age of one hundred and nine months and she moved from 29 Stone Street to the house my grandfather built at 51 [Stone Street]. In 1910, the two-story house, with a completely finished upstairs, a third floor, and a huge basement, cost 3,500 dollars to build, [laughter] and so, then, my mother and father had been living on Richardson Street and they were persuaded to move in with the relatives. ... My mother actually had been married before. My mother was about eight, seven or eight, years older than my father. She had been married to a man named Charlie Francis and she had two children. ... She'd lost her husband and the two children, sometime, I guess, well, my brother was born in 1917, so, it must have been right over the turn of the century [that] she had the two children. ... Her husband died of tuberculosis and her two children, one died of spinal meningitis and the baby was a little girl and she died of starvation. My mother was nursing and didn't realize that the child was not gaining any weight and, in those days, you did not go to the doctor. You went before the baby was born. You didn't go, you know, months and months before, and then, you went, maybe, for a checkup after. ... Her mother-in-law told her one day, she said, "I think that the baby is not gaining any weight," and my mother didn't realize that and she actually lost the child. She was grieving at that time for the eighteen-month-old boy that she had lost, and so, the child died. She then met my father. My mother was a practicing Catholic, my father was a Presbyterian and he taught Sunday school. Eventually, during his life, he became an elder, or whatever, of the Presbyterian Church. My mother, well, her father was the Protestant, so, when she married a Protestant, it was not an unusual thing for her, but he became a Catholic. ... She told the story that when ... her youngest sister, my Aunt Betty, was making her First Communion, my grandfather had asked for a new suit and they thought it was just because he wanted to look well, you know, at the church. ... It turned out that he had been going

for instructions, without telling anyone in the family, and made his First Communion the same time that my aunt [did], which is quite an interesting story. Now, my husband was a Protestant and Jim became Catholic, as he probably told you, on Guam, I think it was, yes. ... It's been very interesting, because all through our history, it was a Catholic marrying a Protestant. My father remained a Protestant and was a wonderful man. He owned Thatcher-Anderson Printing Company, which did all of Rutgers printing until it became a State University. ... Then, it had to go out for bids and his bid was often higher, I'm sure. It was a very high quality business, ... but they had to take the lowest bids, but he still did quite a bit of the [Rutgers printing]. He used to do the Rutgers Football programs and any of the stuff that was ...

SI: The yearbooks?

MB: Yes. Well, he used to work mostly with *Targum*. I don't think he did the yearbooks.

SI: Okay.

MB: No, I don't think he did. ... One book he did do was called *The Chronicles of Colonel Henry*, and that was written by Ed McMahon, and I forget the other person, and I have a few copies of that, still, but, of course, as time went on, he didn't do as much of the printing. [Editor's Note: *The Chronicles of Colonel Henry* was written by Ernest Edward McMahon and Earl Schenck Miers and published by Thatcher-Anderson Company in 1935.] He did a lot of local printing and he also was able to set up for the newspapers, if they had an extra edition and stuff like that. ... I used to get a kick out of visiting the printing office.

SI: Where was the printing office?

MB: ... Actually, it was on Albany Street, behind, ... it would have been near City Alley, I think they called it. It would have been; of course, it's changed so much down there, with J&J [Johnson and Johnson's corporate headquarters]. J&J is actually ... in the area where it had been, and it was right downtown, though. It was in walking distance, and the guys from *Targum* used to be there all night long, when the *Targum* would be coming out. ... During the war, ... he printed the *Kilmer Eagle* for Camp Kilmer ... and I think that was a daily that they did. At the time, *Targum* was not, I don't believe, a daily. [Editor's Note: The *Targum* began printing five days a week in 1956. Founded in 1869, it had been printed weekly since 1891 and began printing four times a week in 1954.]

SI: Was it twice a week?

MB: ... I can't remember. ... He got along very well with the guys and I know, when my father died, there was a beautiful editorial in *Targum* about his death. So, you know, it's been an interesting time.

SI: Do you know how he got involved in printing?

MB: Yes. He worked for a company called (Hidingsfeld?), which was a printing company, and then, he decided to go into business ... on his own and he was able to start. I guess he bought one of the branches of [the business]. (Hidingsfeld?) was a bigger printing company and he went into business with a man named Mr. Thatcher. ... That's where Thatcher-Anderson came from, but, in a very short time, he bought out Thatcher and it became his own, but the name was kind of a nice [name]. I guess they liked the way the name sounded and they kept it. ... I do remember that when my father had married my mother, my mother owned a lot on Easton Avenue, right across from the park, and they were going to eventually build a home [there]. This was a temporary thing, that we were supposed to be living ... in the same house with my grandmother and my aunt. ... So, they were going to build and the Depression came. ... My father bought the business in '27 and the Depression, you know, came in '29 and they had to sell the [lot]. I think they sold the lot in order to help them buy the business, but I remember, as a kid, my dad saying, before he'd tuck us in at night, "We're going to build a house up on Easton Avenue," and, of course, it never came to be, because the Depression came and, by this time, the children are getting older. My brother, Jack, was the Class of '38 at Rutgers, my sister went to Douglass, which was, of course, NJC [New Jersey College for Women], for a year. My brother, Bill, became a priest and he went to St. Francis College in Pennsylvania, and then, became a priest. ... So, by this time, you're in the apartment for so long that my mother stayed there until she died, actually. My children used to love it, though, because ... the children did go to parochial school, ... but, for kindergarten and first grade, they often went to Lincoln School, which is three houses from the house that ... my mother was living in, and they loved going there for lunch. They got into all the soaps, because my mother watched them during their lunch period. [laughter] ... She would set the children up in the living room in front of the TV, so [that] they could watch with her while they had their lunch, but they loved that. ... Then, we transferred them to St. Peter's, which was still within walking distance.

VR: Was your mother a homemaker at the time?

MB: Yes, yes. In those days, you married and you stayed home, yes, and she really did not [go far in school]. I think she only went to third grade. Again, you know, in those days, you just didn't continue on to school. ... Down the street here, on Courtland Street, where those condominiums are, was a button factory. ... My mother worked there and, again, [with] her mother dying when she was only fifty-one, I'm sure it was important for the family to support each other as much as they could.

SI: Since there was a family business, did your mother ever help out in the print shop or in working with the books?

MG: Oh, no, no. My father did all of that, no. ... When I was at NJC, I used to pick up a few dollars by reading the, you know, what would you call it? the proof, doing some proofreading. ... My brother, Jack, my oldest brother, went into the business, and so did my brother-in-law, my sister Betty's husband. She married a man named (Don Donahue?), who was a Fordham graduate, and she had met him through a friend up at Lake Hopatcong, [New Jersey]. ... So, Don also went into the business. The business, finally, with the offset printing coming along and

everything, and I think, perhaps, not enough foresight, ... after my father died, the business did dwindle to a certain extent and, ... finally, it did go bankrupt.

SI: Growing up at 51 Stone Street, what was that neighborhood like? What was the street like?

MB: Oh, it was wonderful. It was an old neighborhood. My best friends were an Italian family down the street. We used to play house. I had little furniture and we'd lug it from one house to the other. ... We would practice a play in the summer, and there were boys across the street and we would put on a play. ... They had a wonderful neighbor. She was a teacher and she had adopted a young woman, ... Eleanor, their name was Mitchell, and they would let us use their backyard, under the grapevine, to have our end of summer party, after we put on a show. I mean, this is when we were still little, [laughter] but, you know, it was a great time. We used to play on the street, you know, all the old games, giant steps and hide-and-seek, and there just isn't that around anymore, I don't think. ... You live on a cul-de-sac today or you live in a neighborhood where there are no children and, even here on Guilden Street, it was known that you could come over and play these games at night. ... We've [recently] been to a wake where a young man would say, "Oh, I remember being on Guilden Street when the kids were playing." ... We, of course, had a basketball net in the backyard, and you just don't find that so much anymore. You really don't. Of course, this neighborhood is nothing but students. I think we're the last [family] in this block. We thought there was one fellow up the street, and I think he may still be living in the house, but he rents to students, but we're the only family, you know, and we're surrounded by them. This is our sixth or seventh [American] flag. The students steal it all the time. [laughter]

SI: That is horrible.

MB: So, now, what we do [is], we just decided to do this, we bring it in at night and put it out in the morning. ... My son, Rob, was here the other day and he said, "Now, do you play *Taps* when you take it down or when you put it up?" but, yes, we are surrounded by students, and so is Stone Street, where, you know, there are no families there anymore. Yes, there's one, across the street. I think her name is (Brisotti?). I think she still lives there, but, otherwise, it's all students.

SI: When you were growing up, was Rutgers, and NJC, a much more distant place?

MB: Oh, yes. You know, NJC, I don't care for what's happened to NJC, if you don't mind my saying, Douglass. [Editor's Note: In 2006, Rutgers University combined most of its New Brunswick/Piscataway undergraduate colleges, including Douglass College, into the School of Arts and Sciences. The University created the Douglass Residential College as a means of fostering women's education and leadership development.] I was definitely against the things that were going on, but, yes, because it was Rutgers College. It was not Rutgers University, it was Rutgers College; it didn't become a university ... until much, much later. [Editor's Note: Rutgers College became Rutgers University in 1924 and was later designated the State University of New Jersey by legislative acts in 1945 and 1956.] So, yes, it was a small school. You did not have students living in neighborhoods. No, they lived in dorms. There were enough dorms for all of them. I can't tell you what the enrollment would have been, but you can certainly look that up, I'm sure. ... You know, it is a gigantic university now, but, in those days,

no. ... Actually, I used to go to the football games with my dad when I was in ... grammar school and the stadium was on College Avenue, across from the gym, where I think you have an eating house now.

SI: Yes, Neilson Field? [Editor's Note: Neilson Field on College Avenue served as the home of the Rutgers Football Team from 1892 to 1938, when Rutgers Stadium opened in Piscataway.]

MB: Yes, that was the stadium. You'd walk over to the game. I guess that's where [performing artist and activist] Paul Robeson, [Rutgers College Class of 1919], had played. I wasn't around then. I'm not that old, [laughter] but, yes, it was [that] your neighborhoods were neighborhoods, with families, with children and, you know, my dad used to take the bus downtown to work, or else walk. In fact, even when I went over to NJC, there were times I would walk home. ... Of course, the busses ran every ten or fifteen minutes. People didn't have cars. I think, when Jim graduated from New Brunswick High, I think there were two students who had a car. You go past the parking lot now, the parking lot is loaded with cars. So, yes, it was definitely [different]. This was called the Sixth Ward, [which] was called the "Bloody Sixth Ward," because it was all Irish and, evidently, they used to have fights. [laughter] ... When my grandparents moved, they had lived in Highland Park before they moved to Stone Street, my Swedish grandparents, somebody asked them, "Why in heaven's name are you moving to the Sixth Ward? They're all Irish." ... You had a Fifth Ward that were all Hungarian, and you had, [on] the other side of town, were mostly Italian, ... where St. Mary's Church is, and, by St. John's Episcopal Church, they were all German, but they all got along, you know, but you were definitely [separate]. There was an ethnic Protestant church [and an ethnic] Catholic church. There were quite a few churches, and there still are quite a few churches in New Brunswick, but they're struggling, because so many people have moved out of town.

SI: Stone Street was more of a melting pot. You said one of your neighbors was Italian.

MB: Oh, yes, there were the Italians, yes, the (Santangelos?), yes. There were two families. Two brothers had married two sisters. They had come from Sicily, I think, and they had the same name, the children. There'd be an "Upstairs Jane" and a "Downstairs Jane" and I learned to call them, in Italian, (Jane vitla?) and (Jane rosso?). One was the "Big Jane" and the other was the "Little Jane," and the "Little Frances" and the "Big Frances," but, yes, there was that. ... So, yes, it wasn't just strictly Irish, because we Swedes were there now, and so were the Italians. ... That house is still on the corner of Sicard and Stone Street and it is occupied by students.

VR: Did you have any family traditions, maybe something Swedish, growing up, when you were a child?

MB: Well, as time went on and we had our family, my Aunt Matilda, ... she married when she was fifty and she married a man named (Smithers?), and her husband, Ralph, was a very sweet man and he was crazy about our kids. ... They started a tradition of having a *smorgasbord* on Christmas Eve. So, we would all go there and it was really lots of fun. We did that for years, and then, as Aunt Til got older, then, somebody else would take it over, ... but, now, of course, our children are so spread around. We only have one in New Jersey, Robert, and he lives in

Long Valley. We had a son in England, Bill, and, as a matter-of-fact, he's here in the States right now. We're going to have lunch with him on Wednesday. His daughter bought a condominium in Long Branch, and so, Bill came over to help her make the move and help her paint and things like that. ... We have two in North Carolina, we have one in Connecticut, we have two in California, we have one in Ohio, [and] we have the son who's a director at the University of Michigan, ... but Rob is the one who's forty-five minutes away, up in Long Valley.

SI: How important was the church and going to church for your family?

MH: Very, it was very important, yes. ... All of us went to the parochial school. ... I must say that my aunt and my grandmother always attended any of the things that were important to us in the Catholic Church. If we made a Confirmation or anything, they would come, and, if we had any performances at the school, they would always attend that, and I would go with my aunt to Sunday school when she taught. We had a very ecumenical relationship, and I think this has made my brother, who is now retired from St. Benedict's in Holmdel, a very well-liked and very good pastor.

SI: I went there. He was Father Anderson.

MB: Do you know Bill Anderson?

SI: Yes.

MB: Yes, that's my brother.

SI: Wow, that is great. [laughter]

MB: That's my brother, yes, and he is retired now from St. Benedict's. He was there thirty-five years, but, while he was there, you know, he received the B'nai B'rith Award, one year. Do you recall him at all?

SI: Yes, I went there for eight years. I remember him very well.

MB: Oh, okay. ... He just had a very serious operation. He had bone cancer and they removed a big section of the bone, and he just called me last week and said he's cancer-free. ...

SI: That is great.

MB: ... He's been offering Mass at St. Mary's in Colts Neck since he retired, but he hasn't been able to get back to Mass, yet. ... Isn't this a small world?

SI: Yes, small world. [laughter]

MB: We say that all the time.

VR: You mentioned that your family had to sell the lot during the Great Depression. What other sorts of things did you experience during the Great Depression, maybe in school or things that affected your family?

MB: Well, we were very fortunate. Because my grandfather had built the house, the house was free of any mortgage. ... My father was struggling with a brand-new business that he had just opened right at the time of, you know, such a serious problem, so that we were never hungry. ... I do remember, we were talking about this at bridge the other day, I remember people coming to our back door and my mother making sandwiches for them. ... My dad would say, "Well, what they do is, they mark out the houses where they know you can get something to eat," and they would come. ... One of my friends, my dear friend, Betty (Stewart?), said she remembers the same thing in Highland Park, where she was living with her mother. ... So, we were very fortunate. My aunt was a schoolteacher, and so, she continued. My grandmother, of course, never worked once she married, but my aunt commuted to Rahway. She was a schoolteacher in Rahway, and she had gone to what they called Trenton Normal School, which became Rider [University], I guess, eventually.

SI: I think it became The College of New Jersey.

MB: Yes, I think, eventually. ... There was a point where she could increase her retirement ... by paying back something or other, and my dad loaned her the money, and so, she had an excellent retirement. ... What she did after [graduating], normal school was just two years, and she first started out teaching in a one-room school and taking a train. She had, like, a room someplace, I forget where it was, Jamesburg or somewhere. ... Then, on a weekend, she would come home. ... Then, she went to Rutgers for the extra two years, in order to increase her income and, also, to be able to continue as a teacher. She was an excellent teacher. She taught math; I don't know what ever happened. I never got any of that math. I never did very well in that. [laughter] ... She did an excellent job. So, we were, as I said, never really hurting. My mother always was able to have someone do some of her laundry, a woman across the street would do the ironing, she almost always had someone to help clean the house, but people went through a terrible time. Now, for instance, the aunt I mentioned before, making her First Communion, her husband had [been let go]; I forget who he worked for. He was out of work for seven years, until he was hired by Carrier, ... which is, of course, still a thriving company, Carrier, but he was then transferred to Syracuse, so that they moved away. ... We were, as I said, really very fortunate, very fortunate, but the neighbors, you know, everybody suffered.

SI: Were there people who would just abandon their homes and move out one night?

MB: No, not that I can recall. No, that, I don't recall, at least certainly not in our neighborhood. I knew everybody was [hurting], you know, it was tough. I especially knew the Italians down the street did okay. ... Both of the men had a wrecking business. You know, they would recover the iron and things like that, and their business became quite good. They did very well, and I used to love to invite myself for dinner there, because the cooks were just terrific and I love Italian food, to this day. I'm sure it goes back to that.

SI: In your family's experience, you said it was very ecumenical, but, in the larger community, did you see any conflicts between ethnic groups or religious groups, anything like that?

MB: No, I don't recall anything like that, really, no. People were respected for whatever religion they were. ... [I am] trying to recall, in our neighborhood, there was, I think the Mitchells were Catholic, but I'm not sure, but it was not something that you really worried about. I think my own family background [led to that], and I think this is why my brother became such a good priest, because he was aware of the ecumenism that is necessary for people to get along well together, and so that it made him a better person as a priest, I think. He's always belonged to any ecumenical group. He still meets, occasionally, with the rabbi and the ministers in his area. He was very active in that. I think he still meets with them, but I'm not positive.

SI: In terms of your daily life, growing up, did you have to do a lot of chores? Going back to the Depression, did you have to keep a big garden to help put food on the table, things like that?

MB: No. We didn't, not that I can recall. We used to have a plum tree in the backyard. ... I remember, the Italian family down the street, the grandmother had come over from Italy and was living with them and they had a fig tree in their backyard, which was very unusual. ... They would wrap it in the wintertime, to preserve it, and, to this day, I love figs. [laughter] ... There's someone on the board with me, I'm on the Friends of the Library Board, and he has a fig tree and, just recently, he brought a whole bunch of figs to the reading, for people to distribute among themselves, which is great.

SI: Were your parents very involved in community groups?

MB: No; PTA [Parents-Teachers Association], you know, my mother. My dad was a committeeman, in the Republican Party, and so, he was involved, to that extent, in politics, but he never ran for any office. He just, you know, would work at the election time for whomever the Republican candidate happened to be at the time.

SI: Okay, he was on the Republican Committee, not the City Committee.

MB: Yes, he was a Republican committeeman, yes.

SI: Tell us a little bit about your education and what you remember about going to elementary school and junior high school.

MB: All right. Well, I went to St. Peter's Elementary School, and then, to St. Peter's High School. ... Of course, in those days, we had nuns. You don't have the nuns anymore, to any extent. ... You know, I liked the elementary school and the nuns, some of them were tough, you know. I remember having my knuckles cracked on occasion, [laughter] and then, I graduated from St. Peter's High School. ... The year I graduated from St. Peter's was the first year that NJC had college boards, and I took the college boards with a group of guys, I think from Princeton, and some from all around, who were going to Rutgers. Rutgers had added college boards by then. ... I was sixteen when I graduated from St. Peter's, and so, I had a meeting

afterwards and, whatever my score had been, they said to me that I should lose a year somewhere and I would be admitted, without taking boards again, the following September. So, all I could think of was they felt, [at] sixteen, I was too young. I may have shown some signs of immaturity, whatever. So, that year, I said, "Well, what should I take?" [They said], "Anything you want." So, they didn't say, "You're weak in this," or, "You're weak in that," they just said, "Anything you want." ... I decided I had had twelve years of parochial school, wearing a uniform, and, now, it was time that maybe I should try a public school. So, I went up to New Brunswick High, and I had always had a problem with French. I took French in high school. I can still see, I think it was Sister Anne Marie, she said, "I'm passing you, Marie, but don't take French again." [laughter] So, I get over to New Brunswick High and I figure, "Well, I had French, I might as well take French." ... The teacher, Miss (Poor?), passed me and she said, "But, promise me you won't take French." [laughter] So, I took French, and then, I took calculus and trig and I had loads of fun. I was the only girl in the class, and we would be out on Livingston Avenue, surveying, [laughter] and it was great. I took that, and then, I had never been able to take a science, biology. ... St. Peter's didn't have a lab in those days, and so, I took that and, I remember, one of the boys sitting near me was willing to cut something open for me, [laughter] that I didn't have to do it. So, I did exactly what they said; they didn't even want my grades, which was very [strange], I thought was crazy, but I was admitted the following [year]. ... I graduated in '40, and so, I was in the Class of '45 at Douglass, and, sure enough, I took French [laughter] and Madame (Daupheme?) said, "I'm passing you, but don't take French. [laughter] Don't ever take French again." So, anyway, ... as I said, I left [in my junior year of college], and, in those days, they had the bride's course. Yes, we were expected [to take it]. I mean, that was the thing that was expected of you. So, I was in the midst of the bride's course when I left, the second half of my [junior year]. [laughter] I did a pretty good job on pies, I thought, [laughter] ... but, anyway, that was my experience. ... Of course, that's when I met Jim, ... when I took [the year at New Brunswick High School]. I had met him that summer. A friend, a fellow I had dated, took me to a party and the party was at Jim's house. ... Then, when I ended up in New Brunswick High, I'm up there and he sees me outside of class and he said, "What are you doing here?" and we were friends for quite a long time, and then, we started to date, later into the year, I guess around March or so.

SI: What was your family's attitude towards education in general, and particularly towards women getting an education?

MB: Oh, my father was very [supportive], I would say even my grandparents; the fact that my aunt had been sent to normal school and my dad went to business school was an indication that they felt that education was important. ... My father, ... well, he had certainly sent Jack to Rutgers and my sister, Betty, started, she just went a year, to NJC. ... Then, I was next and there was no question but that I was going to go on to college. I mean, that was understood, and my brother who became a priest, also. So, they were definitely interested in educating. ... I know Dad had a friend who said, "Well, why are you sending Marie to college? She'll probably just end up being married." Well, my dad felt that women should be educated, and I felt that a mother should definitely be educated, because you pass that on to your children and, you know, you're not just supposed to be a housewife. ... Actually, in spite of the fact that [I had many children], ... by the time I had my tenth child, Jim was in the insurance business, ... he was

concerned that, if anything happened to him, "What would happen to me with the children?" ... So, he spoke to the management of the insurance company and said, "Would the business be passed to me if anything happened to him?" ... They said, "Yes, if I had my license." So, I went to University College [within Rutgers University], and I can still remember Jim ... cooking the dinner while I'm in the office, studying. I went for a year, I think it was once or twice a week, I can't remember, and took the insurance courses. ... Then, I had to go to Newark to apply, to take the exam, and I took the broker's exam and passed. So, I did get my broker's license for insurance and I did a lot in the office. I mean, I tried to keep the office neat [laughter] and, also, I did a lot of the answering of the phone and that sort of thing, because, when he first went into the insurance business, ... this was after the war, he was working for a furniture store downtown. So, I would talk to whoever would call, and then, ... he would call them back. ... You know, I would say I didn't get too much into giving quotes and things, but I could certainly answer your questions. ... So, I did that and I've always taken care of the books, ... the checks and the income. I've always done that, and, you know, all my children, it's been good, because my children are not intimidated by the fact that they may have a wife who does the finances or who works. So, it's worked well.

VR: You mentioned that you had to take a bride's course. Were there any other female prerequisite courses that you had to take when you were in NJC?

MB: Well, of course, there were the basic courses that you had to take. You had to take history and you had to take English, and then, it was very difficult. I think you have it much easier today. You had to take something from a certain group, sciences, and you had to pass that. ... I can remember, I was desperate to take [a general science course]. Because I was an English and history major, I was not scientific and I had to pick something. ... Somehow, I ended up in physics. Well, we were in physics class. My partner in the lab was a home ec [economics] major, I'm an English major; we are being taught by a guy who comes down from MIT once or twice a week to teach classes. The two of us, we would be in the lab, late, it would be dark, we're still trying to get the projectile of what's going to happen if this goes here and that goes there, and we would be in hysterics. We didn't know what the heck we were doing. [laughter] So, I flunked physics, naturally, but it was really hard. There was not a general science course at the time that you could take that would be accepted for your science. ... The math, you were with math majors. It was really very difficult. I did fine in English and in history. I had Emily Hickman; you [know] Hickman Hall. She was just fantastic. I took the history of Japan and China. ... She had to teach freshman history and she hated it, because she knew everybody in that class was only there because it was a requirement. When you had her, I didn't have her for that, I had a different woman for that and I did fine, but, when you had her for one that you selected, you might be invited to breakfast, you know. There may be twelve in your class. ... It was exciting to do it that way, but I always felt that it was a really tough thing. I've always managed to have high enough grades that I could move on to the next level, but I still was struggling ... for what I was ever going to take in the science department, but, by that time, I had, like, a 3.3 average. Now, that's exactly the reverse of what you have now, because a "1" was the highest, okay. So, a 3.3 was like a "C," okay, but the reason it was that low was always because I had flunked either the science or the math. ... If there had only been a general course,

and I was definitely going to be [moving on]; you know, I was a junior, there was no question, I was going to struggle and make it to my senior year, but I left. [laughter]

SI: In your high school years and your first years at NJC, obviously, a lot was happening overseas, with the war breaking out and things happening before that.

MB: Yes.

SI: Were you aware of that? Did you follow the news?

MB: Oh, very much so, because, well, for one thing, my father was always very interested in what was going on in the world. ... Of course, when the war was declared, I can still remember, I was at home, it was a Sunday morning and the radio was on, and you suddenly realized that we're being attacked. ... December the 4th [7th] and, yes, we were definitely, definitely, aware of what was going on and, of course, Jim being at Duke, they were certainly aware. ... Then, you ended up with the V-12 Programs and all that sort of thing. So, yes, we were definitely aware. [Editor's Note: The V-12 Navy College Training Program was initiated by the US Navy in 1943 and instituted at universities across the nation to increase the number of college-educated officers called to duty during World War II.]

SI: Were most people that you spoke with for America getting more involved?

MB: ... Oh, absolutely. It was a different war, it was a different time. America had been attacked, and ... what was going on in Europe was horrible. I don't think that we knew ... how horrible it really was, but we knew that we had a maniac over there who was trying to take over the entire Continent, and then, going after the British. ... So, we were very aware, and, of course, once Jim went into the service, and then, we were married before he was going to be going overseas or anything, I can still remember the papers, you know, the newspapers, the attacks on the Marines. ... He was in the V-12 Program, so, he continued at Duke, because they had sent him ... back to Duke, but, then, eventually, he went into [Officer Candidate School], you know, became an officer. I remember being very upset one time, because, by this time, we had been married for a year-and-a-half and I had a little baby, ... Jim. ... Jim is our eldest son. He's a Jesuit [priest]. ... Jim, my husband, ... I had spent as much time as I could with him in the States, while he was here, so, I was down at Camp Lejeune, [North Carolina], and he was shipped out from Camp Lejeune. ... He gets to California and he tells me he's thinking of joining the Raiders or something, and I almost had a stroke. This was a group of Marines that went in before anybody else and canvassed the place and setup whatever, and, by this time, I'm expecting my second child. I said, "You can't do this," [laughter] and he didn't, which I was very happy for. ... At that time, too, the Marines were losing second lieutenants like flies, and so, they were, you know, shipping them back out to the Pacific like crazy. ... Fortunately, or, well, you know, the bomb was dropped and he was then on Okinawa, getting ready for the invasion of Japan, and ended up in China for three months. ... I remember, at that time, the wives were being allowed ... to be sent to Germany, or different areas where the husbands were, and I was all set to go to China. ... My father thought I was mad, mad, [laughter] and they finally would not allow [it]. That was the one place they would not. The conditions in China were so bad,

after the Japanese occupation of China, for quite some time. ... The poverty and living conditions were not healthy enough for American wives to be moved there.

SI: Let us go back to when you first entered NJC; you were a commuter student.

MB: Yes, I was a "Bee;" do they still have the Bees?

SI: No, please, tell us about that.

MB: Well, the Bees, it was called the "Beehive." ... It was the building on; it would face Bishop [Street], okay. ... I think it was, like, [that] there were other classes upstairs, but the lower part of the building was where all the Bees, the commuters, could gather, and, actually, that's where I kind of learned how to play bridge. ... My brother-in-law had taught me honeymoon bridge. ... Of course, you had so much time between classes, sometimes, and there'd be a group of girls playing bridge and somebody [would say], "Oh, I have to go [to] my next class," and they'd hand you their hand and you'd be [in the game]. So, this is how I really got into playing bridge, but the Beehive was the definite spot where Bees could hang out, because they didn't have their dorm rooms or the common room that you would have in a dorm. ... You got to know one another, you became friends. It was not a sorority, but I guess it was sort of like something that would develop into a sorority kind of thing, and you made friends with [women from all over]. The commuters were from Trenton, from Metuchen. On the train, I had a few friends that I would even, on my way home, walk down with them and wait with them at the train station, and then, just walk up to my own home. So, it was a nice atmosphere. It really was a very good atmosphere. There would be a bulletin board. If there were things going on that you might be interested in, somebody would tack it up. One of the girls became engaged and tacked up a sign about her engagement. [laughter] The engagement finally was broken and she tacked up a sign saying, "Out of the pack of lemons I picked, I'm going to make a lemonade," or something, [laughter] you know, which it was good. ... There was a faculty advisor ... whom you could go to. ... I think she actually had an office in the Beehive. So, you never heard of the Bees?

VR: No.

MB: Yes, isn't that interesting?

VR: We do have a commuter lounge.

MB: Well, that's what they call it now, but we called it, ... it was, the Beehive. It was commonly known as the Beehive and we were all Bees. [laughter]

SI: Were there other women from New Brunswick, or even your neighborhood, who went at that time?

MB: Well, I did commute, or did go often with, there was a professor at Rutgers, she was head of the Psychology Department, Dr. Anna Star, and she had a niece living with her, (Mary

O'Hara?). ... They lived right where the ROTC Building was, and I guess it's still there, is it, the brown [building]?

SI: Right next to the library?

MB: Yes, a brown building, and so, she was from Illinois, but, for some reason, she was from the Chicago area, ... she was spending this year with her; it must have been her aunt. ... So, we became friends. ... Then, there was, also on College Avenue, in one of the nice brick houses that are still there, it would have been between Senior and maybe Richardson, right across from the library, it was a big, brick house, was Harriet Stowe. Her father [The Reverend Dr. Alfred Stowe] was the pastor of Christ Church, the dean of Christ Church. ... She was in my [class]. She was a graduate of New Brunswick High, in Jim's class, and she also went to Douglass that year, to NJC. So, those are the only two that I can think of, right off the bat. I think there were some from Highland [Park], I know there were some from Highland Park, Flora Campbell and Peggy (Lowe?), Peggy (Moore?). Yes, there were several. So, yes, there were a lot of Bees. [laughter]

SI: Since you lived closer, were you able to get more involved in things going on on campus?

MB: Well, I always went to the football games and things like that. ... Occasionally, well, maybe [I was] invited to a dance at one of the fraternities. ... Of course, I did use, I was more apt to use, the library, which then was in the Zimmerli, where the Zimmerli is, for my papers and things than to go all the way across town, and it was probably a bigger library, at the time, than the one over at NJC. [Editor's Note: The Voorhees Library served as the main library at Rutgers University from the mid-1900s until 1956, when the Archibald S. Alexander Library opened. The site is now utilized by the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Museum, the Art History Department and the Art Library.] ... I do remember one girl in my class who was taking, she was from Milltown, ... journalism and she had to take her classes, ... almost all her classes, over at Rutgers, but, mostly, we were on our own. We rarely had [classes with Rutgers men], except for that physics class; [laughter] you ended up with a lot of Rutgers of students in that.

VR: You were not involved in any clubs or organizations.

MB: Well, I did take, my freshman year, ... drama, and what was her name? Jane ...

SI: Jane Inge.

MB: ... Jane Inge was the [director]; you've heard of Jane Inge?

SI: Yes, she has come up.

MB: Yes. Jane Inge was the director, the head of the Drama Department, and I was in a few plays with Peggy (Moore?). ... I was going with Jim and he had had Bell's Palsy [temporary facial paralysis] while he was at Duke and I had gone down to [see him]. Actually, I was down there for a dance when he contracted the Bell's Palsy. ... So, I started to miss some of the

rehearsals and I realized that, "You know, I'm going to just drop out." So, after my freshman year, I dropped out of the Drama Department. ... I can't think of any other clubs and things that I belonged to. I know my mailbox was over there in the main building. Do you still have those?

VR: Yes.

MB: Yes, and, no, I think, you know, I was busy commuting back and forth, too, which, you know, you don't have the time then and you don't get involved, probably, as much as the girls who [were] living on the campus. I think that does make a difference.

SI: Which plays were you in?

MB: Oh, I can't remember. [laughter] No, they were just little [things]. You know, I honestly can't remember, yes.

VR: What were some Douglass traditions, some NJC traditions, that you remember?

MB: Well, see, I remember the [ceremony], you know, when they graduate, but I didn't, so, I was not part of that ceremony that they had at graduation time. Yet, I know, as a freshman, I think you were supposed to wear a certain beanie or something. ... Whatever that was, I did, you know, I did all that, but, ... as I said, you're not really quite as involved as you would be if you lived on campus.

SI: You mentioned that Pearl Harbor was a shock, but did it have an immediate impact on the NJC campus? Was there a change right away?

MB: Well, I remember knitting. I ... occasionally went out with, he was just really just a friend, Frank (Miller?), and I can remember, we were going out to supper someplace, but I was knitting a scarf. The girls, you could get the wool and you did the knitting. Yes, I did some of that. So, yes, we were aware of what we [were facing]. After all, you're on a campus where ... intelligent professors are concerned, and some of the students [were from abroad], a couple of them, and one in particular, I remember, came from Honduras, I think it was. So, you know, you're concerned about what's going on in the world, absolutely.

SI: Emily Hickman was an internationalist, very interested in the rest of the world.

MB: Oh, sure, oh, definitely.

SI: Did she bring that up often in your classes?

MB: I just can't remember. I do remember her. She had been a representative to the United Nations, Emily Hickman had, and she had also represented this country after a disastrous earthquake, I think it was, in Japan. She was a very active woman. She was dynamic. She was a very tiny woman, but a very dynamic woman and she's a great history teacher, yes, really great.

SI: Did things like rationing start affecting the campus?

MB: Well, I remember, we used to do things like save aluminum foil. Anything that was wrapped, you'd make a big ball. Yes, you had to have tickets for a certain amount of meat you could get during the week. ... Actually, when I lived in Camp Lejeune with Jim, for about, it was only about six weeks or so, ... you could get anything. You could get anything at the commissary there [that] you could not at home. You were only allowed a certain amount of sugar, you're only allowed a certain amount of different things [at home]. You had a stamp book that you used.

SI: Did you have to turn that in to the cafeteria at NJC?

MB: Oh, no, no, at NJC, no, I don't recall that. This would have been at home, that if you were buying your groceries and things for the family that ... you were only allotted a certain amount.

SI: Did you have any on campus jobs when you were at NJC?

MB: Just reading the stuff for my dad; no, because, actually, just commuting back and forth was [time-consuming], you know. ... No, there was nothing that I did on campus at all or a job.

SI: How did the war change New Brunswick? One big change, obviously, was Camp Kilmer across the river.

MB: Oh, fantastic, yes.

SI: How did they impact the area?

MB: Oh, it did, they did impact the area. You would go downtown on a Thursday, I think Thursday night was shopping night, and you'd almost have to walk in the gutter. Here, it would be absolutely loaded with soldiers, soldiers, and this was while it was beginning [to build up]. I think it was beginning. I'm trying to remember. It was beginning when you were still in high school, the buildup. ... You know, I don't want to be confused about that, but I remember being downtown with Jim and another friend and, really, there were soldiers around then. So, there had to be some kind of a buildup early on, as I recall, yes.

SI: Either in your home or at NJC, were any of the women warned not to interact too much with the GIs?

MB: Well, no, because, ... actually, as time went on, there were dances where the girls would go to [them], at the USO, and dance with the soldiers. Oh, yes, they certainly were not trying to isolate the soldiers. ... I'm sure they felt a certain commitment to these boys, who are just kids, on their way overseas, because this was an embarkation point, here at Camp Kilmer.

SI: Would your family ever have GIs over for a meal or anything like that?

MB: No, because, by then, well, there were some boys that I had known from Jim's class in New Brunswick High who would stop by, when they were home. Somebody that I had met years ago saw the sign in New Brunswick and got off the train and came to say hello, you know. There was always a very friendly atmosphere toward any of the soldiers, nothing like what happened with Vietnam. These boys were respected and looked up to, because ... most of them would have been volunteers, you know. ... It was just such a different attitude that was [expressed]. ... The kids from Vietnam got such a bad deal. I mean, it wasn't their idea and they were treated so poorly when they came home, very, very poorly. It was a very, very unpopular war, just like the one we're having now. You know, I feel sorry for Obama. How do you make a decision, whether you should send more or leave the ones over there to fight for themselves? It's just very difficult. [Editor's Note: Mrs. Borbely is referring to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.] ... You know, [regarding] the GI Bill and everything, look around and see the people who became very prominent in politics and history and what the GI Bill did for them, and the kids from Vietnam got nothing, nothing. ... Now, am I mistaken or is there some kind of help today?

SI: There is a new GI Bill. I do not know if it is as comprehensive as the World War II one, but I think it is much better than the Vietnam War era veterans' benefits package. [Editor's Note: The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, passed into law in June 2008, amended the GI Bill to provide increased education benefits to service personnel who have served since September 11, 2001.]

MB: Yes. Oh, it should be.

SI: Your family was Republican, but how did you feel about Franklin Roosevelt, before, after or during the war?

MB: Well, my father didn't care for him and, of course, at that time, I was at home, living at home, but I have since, for a long time, voted nothing but Democrat. Actually, Jim and I, at one time, were Republican committeeman and committeewoman in this area, and then, along came Richard Nixon and I could not vote for Richard Nixon again. I may have voted for him the first time [in the 1960 Presidential Election], I'm not even sure, but I have been a staunch Democrat ever since. ... My father was a Republican, I'm sure, and [he rejected] the idea that you're going to give this and you're going to give that, ... you know, which is exactly what we need to do right now, if you ask me. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Mrs. Borbely is referring to the recession and financial crisis facing the United States since 2007.] We need the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] and we need the ...

SI: WPA [Works Progress Administration]?

MB: The NYA, the National Youth Organization [Administration], we need all of that stuff right now. I wish Obama would be firmer in some of those things, but, no, I grew up [Republican], I guess. [laughter]

SI: Could you see the impact of those New Deal programs in this area in the 1930s?

MB: Oh, yes. Actually, ... my brother graduated in '36. ... Some of his friends, he was going on to college, but most of his high school friends were not, and it was, you know, the Depression. ... One of them, who lived right here, next to the driveway for the funeral home on Guilden Street, joined the CCC. ... He was killed ... while he was in the CCC, fighting fires in California or Colorado; I can't remember where. ... Of course, Jim was affected, because he was paid for cleaning out the lockers after football practice. That was the National Youth Association and ... he got six dollars a month, which he took me to New York on. I'm sure he told you. [laughter] ... Oh, yes, you could see the results of it, and then, they were very important programs, very important programs, the more I look back on them and compare things with what's going on today. We need that kind of stuff; think of the things that came out of the WPA, the artists and the poets and, you know, just so many wonderful things, actually.

VR: What different responsibilities did you have throughout the war that women did not normally have before the onset of the war, during college or during your high school years?

MB: As a young wife? Well, you didn't have a home of your own. You moved in with your parents. You lived with your parents until the war was over, until your husband, hopefully, came home, and that was always difficult. You had a baby and that disturbs other people. ... My father, who used to come home every day for a very big meal in the middle of the day, which was very common in those days, stopped coming home, because I'd be busy with the baby and it would be more confusing, you know. You're giving him a bath and you're in a small apartment, really. ... So, the parents of the young brides really ended up with a household doubled, because, as soon as the soldiers went away, [they moved back home]. I know my sister had her husband; she didn't have any children. She adopted, finally, adopted a girl, but she lived over here on Hartwell Street and her husband went into the Navy. ... She would come over then for meals and things, where she would normally have just been in her own apartment. So, it was quite an impact on the families, quite an impact, and then, of course, heaven forbid if you lost someone. Then, you ended up with, you know, maybe your daughter being a mother and the family having to support her and that sort of thing. It must have been a terrible, terrible time.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit more about when you got married and why you made that decision, why you wanted to get married before he went overseas?

MB: Yes, before Jim went over. Well, we had become very, very attached, very attached. ... So, we decided we would rather be married and he would go over as a married person, and it worked out. You know, it worked out very well. My parents just loved the children. ... In fact, my father was so upset that we were going to leave, even when Jim came back. ... Then, now, we had to find a house. We found the little house next-door, for five thousand dollars. ... The funniest thing about that, we had, between us, in war bonds and insurance, ... a thousand dollars to put down. Now, that's twenty percent. [laughter] We couldn't get a mortgage for the other four thousand dollars without my father and Jim's stepfather signing a note. ... Then, I think of what had happened recently, how they were giving these mortgages to people who should have been told, "No, you're not going to be able to pay the [mortgage], you know, with the interest and everything." [Editor's Note: Mrs. Borbely is referring to the subprime mortgage crisis that contributed significantly to the nation's economic turmoil.] ... It was amazing. I mean, that's

how rigid it was to become a homeowner then and how careful you had to be, but, anyway, my father was really upset when we finally were about to move out. By this time, we have three children [laughter] and he hated to see us go. He was thrilled, I think, that it was so close, because he used to come over to see the kids at night and we did have help like that, because I had an aunt around the corner. So, with a large family, it was good that we were in our own hometown, with aunts and uncles and grandmothers and grandfathers around us to lend a hand, but we were never sorry that we started our family. I was twenty when my son was born. My last son, ... my last child, was born when I was thirty-seven, and we were able to do traveling. We visited almost every country in ... Western Europe, from Scandinavia to Spain. ... I think it's got to be hard to be having your children so much later, ... because, well, when you're young, you kind of go with the flow, I think. [laughter] ... You know, when I hear of people having children when they're forty and forty-five, I think, you know, "You're going to be old when those children are around the time when you really should be able to be enjoying it, and your own retirement." It's almost like their retirement comes first, and then, the family comes when you're much older, [laughter] and I think that's got to be kind of tough.

SI: Did rationing impact you any harder because you had to raise a young family? Were you able to get what you needed?

MB: Well, no, because, actually, the war was over when my second son, ... my second child, was born. As a matter-of-fact, I was ... at the beach with my mother-in-law and father-in-law. They had rented a place down at Point Pleasant and I had another Marine's wife come and visit me from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. ... We were on the beach and I was expecting my second son when ... the bomb was dropped. So, by the time Jim came home, Tom was just an infant and Jimmy was; I think there's fourteen months between them, fourteen or sixteen months between them. So, we really were not [affected]. By then, once the war was over, there was not really any problem getting food or anything like that.

SI: One thing I hear is, since children grow out of clothes so frequently and clothing was rationed, that could be a problem.

MB: No. Well, with ours, if you had clothes for the one, you just passed it down to the next one, [laughter] because we had, first, it was two boys, and then, two girls, and then, twin boys, and then, a girl, and then, three more boys. We made the clothes go around pretty well. [laughter] We wore them out.

SI: Tell us a little bit about the period after you were married and your husband was stationed at all these different bases. What was it like following your husband around to Camp Lejeune and other places?

MB: Oh, well, that was an interesting time, at Camp Lejeune, because Jacksonville, North Carolina, I don't know if you've ever been there, but Jacksonville, now, is huge. ... When the war started, now, ... there was a base there, but it was not a huge Marine base, and so, when Jim was sent there, I went down. ... Let's see, when it was Jacksonville, ... yes, he was already an officer. I had gone down for when he got his bars, ... to Quantico, [Virginia]. He got his bars

and there was a big get-together there for the Marines who were being made officers. ... From there, he was then sent to Camp Lejeune, and this was in preparation, the last step before, [for going] overseas, and so, I went down with my little boy, who was nine months old, and Jacksonville had one paved cross-street. It now is gigantic, absolutely gigantic. Now, the question is, you want to get a room for us to be able to stay [in], ... because he, of course, until that point, was staying on the base and, now, we want to stay together. Well, I canvassed the town and nobody wanted to rent me a room because of the little boy. So, outside of town, there was a general store and the general store, the family, their name was (Peel?). It's funny how you can remember, and her name was (Effie, Effie Peel?), I forget what his name was. ... They lived in an apartment behind the general store and they had a trailer. Now, nothing like any trailer you think of today; it was a trailer, all ... up on cement blocks, and it had a separation, so [that] the back of it had, like, a Coleman stove and the refrigerator, or icebox, was an old Coca-Cola box that had been used. ... They raised pigs, hogs, way in the back part. They were the only people who would rent to me. Now, at the time, because of what was happening with the war, they were in the process of building a little building with three apartments in it. Now, if somebody got shipped out, you had a good chance of you being the next one to be able to get into this little apartment. So, we rent this, and I actually entertained in it. I actually had another Marine [couple over], who happened to be with me in Point Pleasant, the wife, for dinner, believe it or not. [laughter] ... So, there was no bathroom. So, you had to go to the general store's bathroom to go to the bathroom. ... One of the things that happened, of course, neither of us had ever known anything about bedbugs. So, here I am, with this nine-month-old baby, and I don't get bitten by bedbugs. They don't like me. They love my husband. He ends up with welts on his face, like this, and where are these bedbugs coming from? ... Neither of us had ever seen bedbugs before. Well, we finally find out that they're coming from the fake wood back of the bed we're sleeping in. So, I'm determined; I'm going to get rid of these bedbugs. Well, I take all the clothing off the bed, the sheets and everything, I wash them and I hang them on the line. ... I have to run in and out because the lizards are running up and down the tree and I'm scared to death of the lizards. Then, one day, I hear a shot and I asked people who were nearby, "What was that?" Well, somebody shot the head off a water moccasin. [laughter] This is the neighborhood that I'm living in, coming from New Brunswick, New Jersey. So, anyway, finally, I did get rid of the bedbugs and Jim got shipped out. [laughter] ... While we were there, the owner of the place, Mr. (Peel?), I cannot remember his name and I don't know why, eventually, he developed ... his property into a huge trailer [dealership] ... where you could buy the trailers and all this sort of thing. He became very popular, and many, many years later, we actually looked him up. He had died and his wife was not available at the time that we stopped. ... One day, he called me, and Jim was at the base, and said, "Come over, I want you to hear the radio. Franklin Roosevelt has just died," and so, then, of course, nobody knew what [to think], "What's going to happen now? You know, is that haberdasher going to end up as the President of the United States?" and, of course, Harry Truman ended up being a great President, but nobody had very much confidence in him at the time. ... We were close enough to hear the shooting and everything. We were near the rifle range [at the Marine Corps base], where we were, because we were really outside this little town. ... I remember becoming friends with a sergeant's wife who lived in this building that he was constructing. ... I met him and he was furious, because the Marines had now been desegregated. ... He was from Ohio and the only reason he joined the Marines was because he would not work with any black soldiers and he was furious that the

Marines now were going to be desegregated. [Editor's Note: President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, issued in June 1941, barred employment discrimination in defense work and compelled the US Marine Corps to begin recruiting African-Americans, though the order did not prohibit segregation within the Corps. African-American Marines trained at Montford Point near Jacksonville, North Carolina.] ... Of course, I was not used to this kind of prejudice, because, at New Brunswick High School, you know, Jim played football with the black boys and it was an experience for me to see what kind of hatred some people can have.

SI: Were you shocked when you saw all the signs of segregation in that area, like the different restrooms?

MB: Oh, terrible, oh, terrible. I went down once; this was before Jim was in the service. I went down my freshman year, I think, for a dance and I took the bus. ... I got to the bus station in Raleigh and Jim was supposed to pick me up and he wasn't there. A young black boy was sweeping out the ... bus station and I went up to him and I said, "When is the next bus due from Durham?" and he never answered me, and, when Jim came, Jim ... almost came in at that moment, ... I said to Jim, "That boy was so rude. I asked him a question," and Jim said, "If he was seen talking to you, he could be beaten up." You know, just [shocking], again, and, when I was looking for a room in Jacksonville, I ended up in an area that was sort of; well, ... when you only have two paved streets, it was a neighborhood. ... There was an elderly black man walking along there and I asked him, you know, "Is there any place where I could find a room?" and he barely spoke to me. They were scared to death, and then, another incident, when I went down with little Jim, I'm sitting in the train station and I see these people looking at me as they're going by. I'm sitting in the "black only" section. It just never occurred to me to look to see where I'm going to be sitting. It was definitely such prejudice, and I'm afraid, to a certain extent, in some areas, you still have the same thing.

SI: Did you encounter any discrimination in being from the North? Did anybody say anything to you?

MB: I think Jim probably had more of that than [I], you know. ... With him, they roomed the guys together who were from the same area. His roommate was from Long Branch, [New Jersey]. ... No, I didn't really. ... Actually, when I went down, there was a house off-campus that I could stay [in] and she was a lovely Southern woman and there was no sign of any prejudice from her, that I was from the North. In fact, I ended up actually corresponding with her and sending little gifts. So, no, there was no problem. It's very interesting, too, because the street she lived on, our daughter, Julia, ended up buying a house on, lives on now, yes, Watts Street.

SI: How was traveling during the war?

MB: It was horrendous, it was horrendous. After we had been married and I decided to go down, ... it was during Christmas break, and so, I was going to go back. Jim had been home for Christmas and I was going to go back down. ... Believe it or not, we ended up sleeping on the floor of the train. It was packed with servicemen, you know, every which way you could look,

just really, really [packed]. Well, of course, mass transportation was the only way you could go, except for a bus, and, of course, that would take much longer.

SI: Do you have other questions?

VR: When you heard about the bomb being dropped on Japan, what was your reaction and what was the general reaction?

MB: Well, of course, in hindsight, I just think, you know, what a terrible thing, now, but, of course, that meant the end of the war, and I don't think, at that time, anybody [knew], at least I didn't know, how much damage that was going to do to people, how many years and years later people would still be suffering and how many it had killed. It should never happen again, that's for sure, but you have all these people [with nuclear weapons]. Maybe if everybody has it, then, they'll all be afraid to use it, because everybody's got it then, because I don't see how you can stop some people from getting it. I just don't know.

SI: You were back in New Brunswick.

MB: Oh, yes.

SI: You were then at the beach.

MB: Oh, yes, he was on Okinawa then and I was in New Brunswick.

SI: Was there any kind of celebration downtown on V-J Day?

MB: Well, there probably was, but I don't recall, you know, being part of it. I was just at home and just thrilled to death. Oh, no, when the bomb was dropped was when I was at Point Pleasant with my friend, yes, and, you know, it was then we knew. [We were] just elated that the war is going to be over. ... Of course, as I said, then, it's after that that you realize how much damage has been done, but, you know, they say that the Japanese [would not have surrendered]. Of course, we were dreading the invasion. ... This girl I told you [about], who had been with me down at Point Pleasant, with my son, Jim, and my mother-in-law, father-in-law; ... I forget what I was going to say. [laughter]

SI: You were telling us a story about the wife of the other Marine.

MB: Yes. ... I've completely forgotten.

SI: We can come back to it.

MB: Yes, okay.

SI: That was the only time that you went to accompany your husband. All the other times, you were at home in New Brunswick.

MB: Oh, yes, yes, just at Camp Lejeune, yes, because, then, from there, he was shipped overseas and he was on Okinawa when the bomb was dropped, and I was at the beach.

SI: Were you able to maintain correspondence with him?

MB: Oh, yes, you know, and I can't remember, I think that mail was delivered maybe two or three times a day then and I would get a packet of maybe five [letters]. We wrote to each other every day, and I would get a packet of letters, sometimes all at once, and the mailman knew I would be waiting, you know. I can still remember the name of the mailman, Eddie (Ennis?). ... Oh, yes, we had a good correspondence going all the time. They were pretty good, I'm sure, about trying to get the mail out and getting it in to the service people, especially.

VR: What did you know of the Japanese internment camps? Did you know about them? How did it affect you?

MB: The Japanese internment camps, you mean when they would capture the soldiers, or are you talking about the one in the United States?

VR: In the United States.

MB: I thought it was terrible, terrible, and I don't think we were as aware of it. That was one terrible mistake that Roosevelt made, terrible mistake. ... I used to visit, on a farm out in East Brunswick, very dear friends and it was a family of several girls. ... Jim used to come out and date me there and the girls would have their dates coming, and one boy who used to come all the time, ... his name was Perry (Maki?). He was Japanese, of Japanese descent, a great tennis player, and the prejudices, you know, it was terrible, just awful, and I think that was an awful mistake.

SI: Was that before World War II?

MB: The boy?

SI: Yes.

MB: Oh, yes. ... He went to St. Peter's High School also and dated one of the girls out in East Brunswick and would come out and play tennis, ... because they had a tennis court on the farm. ... You know, to think that somebody you know is going to be treated like [that]; I think he ended up in the service. I don't think he [was affected then]; he was never affected, but you knew, because he was Japanese, it's just the way [it would be for him], and then, I just thought, "How terrible that they put these people [through that] and what they did to their property, what they lost, just horrendous."

SI: When you were talking about prejudice, you meant in general, not that people here or at St. Peter's were prejudiced against him.

MB: ... No, no. I mean, this is what was going to happen to him because he simply [was Japanese-American]. Oh, no, he had loads of friends, yes, no.

VR: Was there much child care offered to women during the war, so that they could go to work?

MB: Well, I would say only families, that I can think of, probably. You know, the grandmothers would take over. I don't think there was [outside child care]; child care the way you know it today, certainly, was nonexistent. It was more your family would take care of [the children].

SI: When you were at NJC, after the war had broken out, had any of the women discussed going into the military themselves?

MB: Yes. As a matter-of-fact, one of the girls, and her name was (Betty Thomas?), went into the WAVES. Yes, I remember that.

SI: How was that seen? Was it seen as something you should do or something that women should not do?

MB: Well, you know, if this is what she wanted to do, great, you know, yes. ... Of course, some of them, many of them, besides myself, were dating fellows who were in the service, oh, yes. I remember the girl from Honduras was going with a naval officer.

SI: Was there any kind of volunteer activity that you were involved in?

MB: Well, just, you know, you'd do the knitting and that kind of stuff. ... Everybody was knitting scarves and things for the servicemen, because the winter months were on us and you did whatever you could. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

VR: What was life like after the war ended? What were the changes that you saw in America, or even in your immediate family?

MB: Well, I think one thing was, most of the boys were going to go on to college. A lot of them were able to do that and, with us, we were now looking for a house. We were able to find one, finally, that was nearby, next-door. ... As I said, it was only five thousand dollars. Recently, we had our two porches done and each of them was four thousand easy. ... Well, Jim did not go on to school because, by then, we had a couple of children. ... Rutgers, he thought about going to Rutgers, but Rutgers would not accept several of the courses that he had taken at Duke. Duke was a Methodist school and you had to take religion and he had credits for that, and I always felt that Duke should have given him a diploma. He went for three-and-a-half years to Duke, and then, went on to become an officer, took all those courses. ... A lot of the colleges did award degrees to the fellows who had been ... in the service, and especially, I think, when you went on

to become an officer. It meant you had to pass all those different tests, too. ... Of course, everybody was looking for housing and everyone was looking for jobs, and it wasn't easy to find them, took awhile. ... Then, somebody had suggested he go into the insurance business and that turned out to be very good suggestion for him. Now, I had an aunt who lived around the corner. She used to come over and help me with the children, especially if I went to the hospital to have another child, and my mother and father were nearby and Jim's parents were nearby. ... Then, I was able to become involved [in the community]. By this time, I was now playing bridge. I was a sub quite often. A group of the girls from Douglass who [lived nearby] had formed a bridge group and, gradually, I became a member and I would entertain them. ... I kept doing that all the time, and I still do. I play bridge once a week, with ... two-table bridge once a week. In fact, I'll be entertaining in another two weeks. We go to different people's homes, and I was able then to also get involved in other things. I was on the first parish council. I was on the first board of the Catholic Center at Rutgers, with John McDonald, [who] was very active at Rutgers, and he asked me to serve on the board of the Catholic Center, with Dr. Starr, the woman I had mentioned. ... Eventually, I was on the board at Parker Home, the advisory board, which is no longer in existence, and I've been on the Friends of the New Brunswick Public Library Board since 1973. ... Jim and I serve coffee there on the first Wednesday of the month. We have a program; come sometime, it's terrific. ... In December, we'll have the Mason Gross group entertain. ... I've been able to keep active and, also, as I said, I went and got my broker's license. ... In-between, I've raised ten children [laughter] and it's been a very interesting life. It has.

SI: That is great.

VR: What do you feel that World War II as a whole contributed to your life?

MB: ... World War II? ... I just don't know how to put that.

SI: How did the impact of the war continue to affect you years later?

MB: As far as wars are concerned? How I feel about war itself, do you mean?

VR: You can talk about that.

MB: Well, it was a different kind of war. People were very patriotic, and, in that respect, I think that there was a very camaraderie feeling about everybody and anybody who served ... during the war. It probably made us stronger, especially, it certainly made women stronger, because they were doing so much that men had done and they were able to assert themselves. ... You know, of course, I had a husband who encouraged me to become involved and, if it took me away from the kitchen a little bit, that was fine. ... He certainly pushed me into get ... my license in insurance and I enjoyed being able to do the things that I did. I never felt that I was strapped to the kitchen. Actually, at one time, I was on a panel at Douglass about women who did go to work and women who stayed at home and I was sort of in the category who stayed at home, but I was also able to say I stayed at home, but at home, I was doing the office books, the work ... at home. ... I certainly felt that my education and my attitude, also, my father's attitude,

that women should go ahead and be what they can be and do what they could be, ... I certainly think I contributed to my children in many, many ways because of that.

SI: You also stayed active in alumna affairs.

MB: Well, actually, for years, I was with other friends on the reunion committee for the high school, for many years. I stopped doing that, I think, after our fiftieth. ... In-between, yes, I was active with reunions at Douglass. I was the local one and I was able, for several years, to find a place ... for the reunion and that sort of thing, ... but, of course, recently, I've had colon cancer. I'm fine; that's eight years ago. Jim has had bypass surgery, so that I have not been as active. I actually was asked, about two years ago, "Would I assume the presidency of my class?" and I said no. It was right after he had just had heart surgery and I felt that ... I definitely didn't want to get that involved, but I have gone over to reunions. I did not go last year. I'm thinking seriously about going this year, especially [since] it'll be the sixty-fifth, and I'll see if I can't get some of my close friends who are also graduates to join me. One of them has just lost her husband and she lives in East Brunswick, but, yes, I've always been interested in what's going on at Douglass. I contribute to the annual Douglass Fund and get my bulletin. I get my one from Rutgers, also. So, yes, I've always been interested in what goes on.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to discuss or put on the record?

MB: No, not necessarily. [laughter] I think we covered quite a bit.

SI: Yes, we kind of jumped around a little. Many of your insights are very helpful, the different things you experienced and your attitudes towards different issues. If there is nothing else, thank you very much. Do you have any other questions?

VR: Many books and historians now say that World War II was the event that began changing America as a country. Would you agree with that statement?

MB: I would say ... it probably is true. ... In fact, we just had somebody sing at the library this past month and it was, "How you gonna keep 'em back on the farm now that they've seen Paris?" [*How Ya' Gonna Keep 'Em Down On The Farm? (After They've Seen Patee)* (1918) by Joe Young, Sam M. Lewis and Walter Donaldson] and, certainly, it opened the world, I think, to young men who never would have [traveled]. Jim would never have been on Okinawa. I think it made us realize that we are part of a much bigger world and I think that, from that aspect, I would say it certainly did change the basic feelings about the country, and the world. Yes, I think that would be very true.

SI: Thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

MB: You're welcome.

SI: It has been a real pleasure.

MB: Thank you. [laughter]

SI: All right. This concludes our interview with Marie Borbely; thank you again.

MB: You're welcome.

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

Reviewed by Jovelle Tamayo 10/26/10
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/22/10
Reviewed by Marie A. Borbely 11/28/10