

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH STUART T. BRANDOW

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Stuart T. Brandow on March 30, 2006, in Woodbridge, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Michael Kuzniak: ... Michael Kuzniak ... [Editor's Note: Michael Kuzniak is a Marine Corps veteran and Mr. Brandow makes reference to this fact during the interview through statements such as, "You will know what I am talking about."]

Peter Bronzino: ... Peter Bronzino.

SI: Mr. Brandow, thank you very much for having us here today.

Stuart Brandow: It's my pleasure and an honor.

SI: The honor is ours.

SB: Thank you.

SI: Thank you also for showing us all of the great material you have collected over the years. To begin, could you tell us where and when you were born?

SB: I was born in a little town called Leeds, New York. ... It is a small town and I was born on May 27, 1924, but most of my time, I was actually brought up in a town called Catskill, New York. ... In our day, as you know, it was back in the bad times, we moved a lot. I was here, there and all [over], and that's why I couldn't fill out all the dates, and so [on], for you. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow is referring to the pre-interview survey participants are asked to fill out prior to an interview.]

PB: Could you start by telling us about your father, where he was born and raised?

SB: Well, I know he was born up in Leeds, also. ... Excuse me, this is a toughie. My father was a good man, but he was an alcoholic, ... God rest his soul, and I know it's a history. We were poor, very poor, and he would rather drink than feed us. I loved the guy, but, as far as particulars, I can't give you [those]. I think you have that in your records, but my mother and father, they broke up. My mother had him put in the Army. He had six children and they put him in. ... Now, if you want to do this on your own, because I probably couldn't do it, but he died of cirrhosis of the liver and a lot of this stuff; my brother got killed. [Editor's Note: PFC Theodore A. Brandow served in Army during the Korean War and was killed-in-action on July 20, 1950.] He got ten thousand dollars; my mother got five, he got five. Now, if they'd put it together, they would have had a beautiful home, in those days. His went down the drain, and it's not good for my brother. That hurts. I had a good family. It's not easy to talk about it. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SB: Minor details, like, my mom was born in New York City.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SB: Yes, my father, he was a mechanic and truck driver and, as I say, he was born in Leeds, New York, and my mom, she was from New York City. She was a telephone operator and it happened that she went up to Catskill for a vacation. Now, I can't tell you what happened, because I wasn't there at the time, but they got together and they got married and I was the first child and, after that, ... I had a sister, another sister, a brother, another brother and another sister. There were three girls and two boys, besides myself. There were six in our family and we were a close-knit family. ... I started off in a little town, Leeds, again, and I went to a school, it was a three-grade school, three rooms, I should say, and each room had more than one class in each room. In other words, if I was in the seventh grade, I knew what the eighth grade was doing, which helps, and I graduated, in 1939, from this Leeds school. ... In the meantime, I went to other schools in Catskill, because we moved, and I went to a couple of schools, Grandview School in Catskill and the Irving School in Catskill, and I actually came back and graduated from the Leeds school, Leeds Consolidated, and I graduated with a class of six people. I was second in the class, [laughter] and I even had a cousin in there. ... So, we had one-third of the class, and I'll tell you, it was a great experience and I'll never forget the principal. I've been back a few times to see him. He's gone, by the way, God bless his soul, but he was a good man, tough, but, when we did something wrong; it's not like today. If we did something wrong, we got the rulers ... right across the knuckles and, again, in our time, when we were children, we didn't worry about the policemen. If we got in trouble with the police, we worried more about what we were going to get when we got home, and I don't believe, with what goes on today; I'm a tough grandfather. I am a tough grandfather, because that's the way I was brought up, and I don't think it hurt me one bit to get my rump a little swat, once in a while. ... Today, this country is, ... forgive me, guys, they're catering too much to the children. We've got too many people saying things about everything. If you hit your child, you've got a problem. If you have a good thing going, you have people walking on the street, [protesting]. You have abortion people going off. There's too much; they're taking away too much from the people's rights, and I think it's hurting the country. I know, I get a little political in a lot of things. I'm against a lot of things, but, back into my time, we had a great time. We did little things, kick the ball, throw the ball over the roof, (rollie rollie?), (hollie hollie?) over, and all this. We had names for things and, again, we always said, "We didn't have to lock our doors, because there was nothing to steal." Really.

PB: What was growing up during the Great Depression like?

SB: Everybody was a friend. Everybody was with you. We didn't have too many enemies in our day and [the] camaraderie was just like in the service. I mean, you'd have problems, but, [when] you walked the streets, you didn't have to worry about the policemen, the cops. Everybody knew each other. It's hard to say; I don't begrudge my life. I really don't. I had knocks, but I think it made me a better person. I don't drink, ... [but] I do have a drink once in a while, ... I'm not a social drinker, but I've made a lot of beautiful friends, a lot of friends.

PB: You went to high school in Catskill.

SB: Yes. I graduated from Catskill High School in 1943, in June, and I'm going to interject something here. When I was in grade school, I happened to get pneumonia, I had appendicitis, I had tonsillitis and I had [my] adenoids pulled out. My appendix poisoned my system, but I have

to thank [it for] this, I really do: I stayed back in the fourth grade. By me staying back in the fourth grade, it helped me in the future. It kept me off Normandy. That's one of the things that kept me off Normandy, but the school was great. I was in the play. I was the headman in the play and I almost got kicked out of the play, because I couldn't remember my lines, because I worked part-time. ... We worked for twenty cents an hour, twenty cents an hour, unloading trucks. I worked in the Grand Union and I liked the job; Mr. Smith, I still remember his name. I've shined shoes, I've sold newspapers, I've sold magazines. I sold Cloverine Salve. I don't know if people know about Cloverine Salve, but, when you knock on the door, if they bought a Cloverine Salve, they got a nice [gift], beautiful pictures, different pictures and everything, and I sold it. I like ... being a salesperson. I've been a salesperson most of my life. As you know, I've worked for vacuum cleaner ... people, but that's another story.

PB: Were you aware of what was going on in Europe during your high school years? Did you talk about that in class?

SB: Well, we didn't know that until; well, I graduated in '39. ... That's when it started, really, and then, '41 came along, but I wasn't worried about it at the time, because I wasn't old enough to go in, but most of our people were very, very patriotic. They were, and, as you know, they grew vegetables, instead of going to buy things, and gas rationing and all the meats and all this. It was a different [time], really. When you grow up in this kind of a thing, you appreciate what you have today.

SI: You were in a play. Were you involved in any other extracurricular activities?

SB: No. I wasn't athletic and I've never learned how to swim. That's why I didn't go in the Navy, [laughter] but, anyway, like I said, I worked most of my time, all the time, most all the time, and I don't begrudge that. Again, I think it makes [for] a better person.

MK: When high school was over, you went to college.

SB: No, no. I graduated from high school in June '43, and then, [at] that time is when I wanted ... to join the service, but, in the meantime, they drafted me. I do have an ASN number [assigned serial number] and that means that you weren't drafted, really. I went into the service in July, [the 22th] ...

PB: 22nd.

SB: Yes, and I went in there and I went to Albany, New York, and then, they sent me down to Fort Dix, I believe it was, and, from there, you get all your shots and everything, and I wasn't there too long. Well, I have to tell you this. You know, when you're leaving your home, we were with many, many [men], ... nobody can't say that a grown man don't cry. You can hear these guys in the bunks, yes, and ... [they cut your hair], right down to the bone, [laughter] and it's a lot of fun, but you never know what to expect. ... The next thing I know, I was in Fort McClellan, Alabama. I think we had thirteen weeks [of] training and it was tough, it was tough.

MK: You mentioned that you wanted to go into the service after high school.

SB: I did want to go.

MK: What made you choose the Army?

SB: No, I wanted to be an Air Corps man. I really did, but I had no choice, as the government takes you as they want, but I did my time. I got to be a number one [machine] gunner. I was a sharpshooter, as a water-cooled, thirty-caliber machine gun [man], and I was good with the rifle. ... I do remember one story. I came out, one day, too fast, out of the bunk to formation; I forgot my cartridge belt. Well, that's a no-no and this, I don't know if it was a corporal or a sergeant, but they pulled me out of ranks, and you know how much an M-1 weighs; they made me put that over my head and ... run the company street, up and down. ... I have to say, I didn't stop. I did it. You've got to prove something when you're there. If you don't, they'll take advantage of you, but I made it good. I learned a lesson. ... Fort McClellan, ... it's not one of the better camps, but, while I was there, I decided, "I'm going to take a test for the Air Cadets." I took the test and I only had a business course in school. You know, when you take these tests, it's tough. I flunked the first time. I really did, but I did it again and I made it. In fact, my cousin was in the same camp as I was. He took the test, also. He got in. There were three of us that went, together, into the service. One of the fellows made the Air Corps and ... that young man didn't make it. ... His wife actually saw what happened. They had two planes ... [collide in the air]. He died in it, but, sometimes, you do things for the best [and hope for the best], but we did it. I went to Miami Beach, Florida, and what a difference; what a life that was. I was there only a few months. In December, ... that's when I went to Norwich University in Vermont. It was a beautiful place. Northfield was the name of the town, right outside of Montpelier, which is the capital, and we had more shots there. In fact, when I got there, one of the coaches up there was our coach in Catskill High School [when I attended]. It was really a coincidence, but, then, after a couple of months; well, not too long. I think I had about a half-hour in a Piper Cub and I have to say, I'm going to be up straight, I don't think I would have made the Air Cadets. I probably would have got into the ground crew or [served as a] gunner or something like that. It was tough, and you guys know what college life is. ... When you go to a special school like that and you've got a short time, we've always said that if you dropped your pencil, you lost three week's work, and I wasn't qualified, really, ... because I didn't have algebra ... or biology. I had business arithmetic and I knew what I was [doing]. ... I was ready to go into the ground crew, but the government beat me to it. The Battle of the Bulge came and what happened [was], all the colleges, every college ASTP, [Army Specialized Training Program], they all were taken out of the colleges. ... What happened was, all of us fellows ended up in Camp Pickett, Virginia, [April 1, '44]. Now, Camp Pickett, Virginia, is, like, a white [camp], ... everything, the buildings are all white. It was like a virgin camp, really, [laughter] but you couldn't drop a cigarette or anything. ... We took in more training there and that was the 78th Division and most of these guys came [from Camp Butler, North Carolina] ... All the cadre came up, and we were considered one of the elite infantry [units], because they had all the college people, and I think most of the cadre were tough on us, because they thought we were hotshots, you know what I'm saying? but we proved something to those guys. We all got together and, finally, they decided, instead of sending us over as reserves, they made it ... a combined infantry division and we shipped out together. Well, then, we shipped from Camp Pickett to Camp Kilmer, and that was in October ... of '44. ... We did have a few days off [on pass to visit New York City] ... We left out of New York in

October and it took us about ten days [to cross the Atlantic]. We went on troopships and it was a long trip, because we had to zigzag, because of the submarines. We were fortunate, really fortunate. I know I made a mistake on my other tape, [an earlier television interview]. I said we landed at Southampton; we didn't land at Southampton, we landed at Plymouth [England]. ... After you're on this blue sea all this time, ... you pull into this port and it's a nice rolling hill, right down to the water, and it was beautiful green. It's funny, ... it really was, and then, from there, we went to a place called Bournemouth, and then, we had some more training ... [before going into combat].

PB: Where did you receive your machine gun training?

SB: ... Oh, in Fort McClellan [Alabama], yes. ... When we were there [at Bournemouth], we had more training, and I'll tell you, they had mosquitoes. They were like dive-bombers. ... You know how the ponchos are; they actually went through those ponchos, but it was a nice town and we weren't there too long. ... They had another little place, ... I think they called it (Little Church?), and that's where we went to for our religion and ... [food]. It was a real dinky town, but Bournemouth was a beautiful place. ... Today, it's even much, much better. They've got, like, a carnival atmosphere and all. I've been back there since. You could actually see the White Cliffs of Dover from Bournemouth. Well, after that, we had more, as I said, training. Then, we went to Southampton [to leave for Le Harve, France, over the English Channel].

MK: During your ten-day journey to England, were you ever scared?

SB: About what?

MK: Because of the German submarines. Were there any U-boat scares?

SB: I don't know. I have said a few times, I don't think you'd call it scared. You might be apprehensive, but you don't have time to be scared, really. It's a funny feeling. You've got to have faith, really. If it's going to be your time, it's going to be your time, and that's the way you have to look at it. Some guys probably can't handle it, other guys can. We're all built different, but I don't think we ever gave it a thought, really.

MK: When you were on the ship, did you guys go over what you were going to be doing, various missions?

SB: Well, we'd have athletics and all of that, to keep in shape and all of this, but we didn't like to go down to get the food, in the galley. You know that, too; oh, the odor, it was, oh ...

MK: Did you go over any missions that you would be performing when you landed in Europe?

SB: No, no. We went ... as a unit, a whole division, and we landed at ... [Plymouth]; I mean, after we had the Bournemouth [training], when we went over into battle, we went out of Southampton as a group. We went over the English Channel and that English Channel was just like an ocean. It's tough, and I'm going to have to say this: we went over on an English ship and it happened to be Thanksgiving. I believe I mentioned that, and, as I said, we went on the British

[ship]. We got their mutton and they got our turkey, and it's not the same, [laughter] but it was a tough trip over. ... We landed in Le Havre, France, and it was raining. It was muddy, raining, and, as I say, it was Thanksgiving. They fed us and, by the time we got fed, it was a little dark, and you're going to know what I'm talking about, ... you got a mess kit and they put everything in your mess kit. ... You think you're eating mashed potatoes and you take a mouthful of chocolate pudding. You know, it's one of those things, and it is a surprise, because I know a fellow, one time, he opened up a can of Coke and it was water in it, and, you know, ... [laughter] you get upset. ... When we went from Le Havre, that's when we started to know what's going to happen. We went into battle December, I think it was December the 13th, ... and it snowed. It really did snow and it was cold. It really was cold and, as I say, I had a water-cooled machine gun and the first time that I opened fire [with] the gun, ... it only shot off one cartridge, [because it froze] and that's a heck of a feeling. We learned a lesson. Officers didn't even realize this. We always trained in the South. We never put antifreeze in the water.

MK: Did the Army prepare you well, as far as giving you cold weather gear?

SB: No, no. We had a field jacket, no galoshes, and I don't remember ever getting galoshes. We did have overcoats, but, most of the time, ... again, you get rid of your heavy stuff, because you want to move fast, yes. ... I was the number one man, I carried the tripod, and the tripod is ... heavy. ... The number two, he carries the barrel. So, what happens is, the number one sets the tripod down, number one puts the gun on it, and then, ... the ammo bearers bring up the [ammunition]. I think there were eight of us. ... I was a good machine gunner, I have to say that. I almost won a trip. ... Back in camp, I'm going backward now, they had a contest and you had to pick two off, two right, two left, and so forth, but I got every target except the last one. I got excited and I froze. I didn't make it. [laughter] ... I'll tell you, I still have my target that I hit, and, okay, back into Le Havre, then, back into ...

SI: What went through your mind as you were heading towards the front?

SB: You know, it's something you can't explain, really. It's a job you've got to do, just like a fireman or a policeman. You've got to do it and you've got to make the best of it. It's no fun. It is no fun. ... You're just hoping that you come out okay, and we did. We lost ... [many comrades], ... but that's part of war.

SI: Was this before, after or during the Bulge?

SB: [During]?

SI: When did you go into battle?

SB: We went right into the Battle of the Bulge, [December 13th]. ... Actually, we were more or less there; from what I understand is, Bastogne was surrounded and we were trying to keep them from getting annihilated, ... which helped. We did help them. We went into Aachen. Aachen, you couldn't see a tall building. The whole thing was completely wiped out. I've been back there since and it looks like New York City. They really rebuilt, thanks to our country. They had the, what was the name of the plan?

SI: Marshall.

SB: Marshall Plan. I knew of it, but I couldn't think of it.

PB: The 78th Division is called the "Lightning Division."

SB: Yes.

PB: Can you explain why it is called that? Who came up with the name?

SB: There is a story about that. I can't remember. I do have it some place. It's written, why they have that, but they also say, "Lightning does strike twice," because they were also in World War I and they hit most of the same places that we hit in World War II. There is a story. If I can find it, I'll let you know, but we do strike fast and, for a green outfit, we have a good record.

SI: Before going into battle, how much time had you and your squad had to get to know each other? Had you been together for a while?

SB: ... Yes; well, for a while, from Camp Pickett up until ... [this] time. In fact, I had another guy, ... [who] was a machine gunner, also, and we were, ... more or less, in our foxholes together. We got to be such good friends. I still talk to him and see him. He lives in Paducah, Kentucky. In fact, he gave my first name [as] his son's second name, and his friend, also, was with us. ... My friend's name ... is Don Vander Boegh and we had another one called [Forrest Spencer]; oh, boy. ... Well, anyway, these two guys got to be such good friends that he married Don's sister. ...

SI: How would you describe the situation when you were put into the line? Was it chaotic? Were the Allies gaining control?

SB: No, no. ... It's, "You go as you're trained and you've got to follow orders." Sometimes, it's hard. Sometimes, it's hard, but you're together and ... you've probably interviewed people that know where they've been, what trip they took, what they did; we didn't have time for this. ... The towns we went through, we just went and we'd hope for the best.

MK: As a private, I know that you get stuck doing a lot of cruddy duties, like digging foxholes. Do you remember doing things like that?

SB: Well, I'm going to go back into when I first went into the service. My name begins with a "B." Every time you moved, they start with the "Bs," the "As," and so forth, guard duty, kitchen duty, all the details, and I didn't think that was fair. I thought they should have kept records of this. If you went [elsewhere] again, they start with the next group or start at the other end. It's not really [fair]. It's a downer and that didn't set well with me. I didn't mind doing my duty, but ... I thought it was very unfair.

MK: When you were over there, do you remember digging foxholes, stuff like that?

SB: ... Not too many. I'll tell you why, because we were always on the move. I know you've probably seen *Band of Brothers*, [the HBO miniseries based on historian Stephen Ambrose's book] that was a different [situation]. That was almost like us, but, when we went into ... the Hurtgen Forest, we didn't do like they did; we didn't dig in. We moved through and, today, we were told [that] we shouldn't have never done what we did. They made a mistake. We shouldn't have never went into that, because of the bursts in the trees. You didn't only get the shells, you got the splinters. We lost a lot of guys in there. You couldn't bring your tanks in. You had no protection. You couldn't move, because the trees were almost together. We were told, later, that we should have went on the outside. People do make mistakes, as you know. [The] History Channel tells us this. The snow was another thing. You couldn't move too fast in this [snow]. It was cold. ... You don't realize what the human body has to take. Korea was the same way, Vietnam was a different type [of climate], but the body can really take a lot. I'm lucky. I played it smart. I always carried clean socks with me. As soon as I got a chance, I changed mine, because a lot of guys did get [frostbite], lost their toes. Frostbite was a big thing. Maybe some guys wanted it. I don't know this, but it was miserable, miserable cold, and I think you fellows know, we were told that was the coldest winter they had in a hundred years, when we were there.

PB: I read that the 78th captured the; I do not know how to pronounce this name.

SB: Schwammenauel Dam, yes, see. [laughter]

PB: Can you talk about that?

SB: No. I'll tell you the truth; I wasn't with them [at] that time. No, I had a mark on ... my shinbone and it got, like, ulcerated and they sent me back. ...

PB: How did that happen?

SB: It did come out all right. ... I don't know if I hit it or what, but they sent me back to the aid station and I have to say, I would have liked; no, don't let me put it that way. I felt bad that I couldn't be with them, but I was glad after I heard what happened. I'm probably fortunate, again. I wasn't with them when the war ended, in Wuppertal.

PB: You were not there when they took the town.

SB: Something was wrong, whatever happened, but, again, your life is made almost like a computer. If it's supposed to be, it's going to be. I have no regrets. I'm kind of glad, but that Schwammenauel Dam could have been [disastrous]. It would have been disastrous if we hadn't captured it. ... Schwammenauel was before ... [the Remagen Bridge]

MK: Are you talking about the bridgehead across the Ahr?

SB: ... Across the Remagen, and that was the highlight of [the campaign]. Schwammenauel Dam was a big [dam]. It was. I've been back there, again, and that was a large dam and, ... if they had blown that, they didn't care about their own people or anything, ... the whole bottom territory would have swamped them, but they did good. They did good. ...

SI: You were talking about the Remagen Bridge. Were you there?

SB: I was there, yes. It was with Patton and they heard about this bridge and this is one time we didn't have to walk. They put us on trucks. They wanted to make sure that we got there before anything happened to the bridge, and that's the bridge, right there in the corner, [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow points to a picture of the bridge on his wall] and it was intact. Actually, it's a railroad bridge and they had ties and we unloaded and we went in during the night, and, like I said, we carried our material. We worried about falling through the ties. ... What they did [was], they covered [it with], like, planks and so forth, and it's nothing like the movie, if you've seen the movie, I don't know, but we were lucky, again, that bridge saved a lot of lives. ... We claim it saved about six months of the war, us getting over there. There's a big railroad going through and that's the tunnel over there. I've been in the tunnel. ... At the end, now, they've got it blocked off, it's a dead-end and, when we got over there, we moved and we got up on top of the mountain and we were there a few days. [It] took them ten days before that bridge went in and, [at] the time that that did go in, they lost a lot of engineers. They were working on it. They drowned and so forth, but, while we were up on the mountain, ... [the Germans attacked with] the V-2s, artillery, Stukas, that's what I was trying to think of, Stuka dive-bombers. We even saw a Messerschmitt, ... they even had the jet jobs then, and ... that bridge stayed up. They even had a detail of ... frogmen that got captured, but that ten days really [mattered], because, by that time, they'd put the pontoon bridge up, ... down below, and that way, they got the supplies over. We thought we were going to [be stranded]. We had no supplies, only what we had with us. Again, Hitler made a boo-boo. ... We had a feeling of, ... actually, the Germans, now, we don't know if they didn't push the plunger, if they used bad TNT or the officers didn't give the orders. Some of them might have wanted us to get over there. We don't know this, but Hitler killed five of his officers in that tunnel, because they didn't get the bridge down.

SI: When you crossed the bridge, was it being attacked from the air?

SB: Everything, everything, that type of thing, because that was the main [thrust]. ... If that bridge [had not been captured], it would have been tough. No, they tried their darndest.

SI: What was it like to go over the bridge when you knew the Germans were trying their best to knock it down?

SB: Again, again, you just went. I guess you have to hold your breath.

SI: Afterwards, you were in position on the mountain.

SB: Way up above, way up above. Today, they've got a cross up on that mountain.

SI: Can you describe your activities in that area?

SB: Oh, we were set-up, just set-up, waiting, see what happened, and then, after the bridge fell, we moved into other places. ...

SI: Were there any counterattacks at that point?

SB: All the time. There's a little sheet of paper, a newspaper clipping. ... A lot of things happened before that. We had Schmidt and Kesternich and they were really ... toughies. You'd take them; they'd take it back. You take it, and then, you go house-to-house. We went across the field; it was a canal. I still remember the canal. ... It was a real open field, a real long one, and we had tanks behind us. ... The infantry, I don't know if Mike wants to verify this, but we didn't like the tanks with us, because, what happens, as soon as that motor started, is that the artillery comes in, and they had fantastic weapons, the eighty-eight-[millimeter gun]. They had a silent mortar. You didn't even know it was coming. All of a sudden, you [would hear], "Swish," and they did, they had wonderful weapons, and the eighty-eight, ... when we first saw tanks, it went right through our tanks, just like it was butter. We came out with the Sherman and the bigger one. Then, we put a ninety-five-[millimeter gun] on it and we improved. I know, I'm going back and forth on this, but Kesternich, it was really something. It was a real [tough battle]. I've been back there. We actually have a monument there, with the Germans and the Americans, and we have friends, German friends, now. I don't know if I told you, but I just came back from Europe last September, a year ago, and I stayed with a German at his home, that we actually fought against in Kesternich, and that's in Wuppertal, yes. ... He always told me, when I got there, "Stu, the key is always under the mat," which meant ... he didn't have to be there.

PB: How did you wind up becoming friends with him?

SB: ... Through reunions. He joined our reunions. When we went over there, we all got together, drank beer together, sang together. ... He has a family over in Long Island, actually, and we [have] all been together. I've been to a few [reunions]. I haven't been to reunions lately.

MK: When the actual fighting was going on, what were your feelings towards the Germans?

SB: ... You have three different groups. You had the paratroopers, the SS and the regular soldiers. The SS, they were mean. They just had no feelings, the same way with the paratroopers. The regular soldier was just like you and I. ... They probably wanted to be home with their kids or with their family, just like us, and you had to respect the regular soldier. I can honestly say, honestly say, that I cannot actually say that I killed a German, because most of my shots were about three hundred yards away. I do know, though, at one time, we were in this little town, in Frankenau, no, I'm sorry, Lammersdorf, and we were sent in. ... Actually, we took stuff out of the homes. We made, like, a home in this dugout for our machine gun, which I was set up in, and we were there, again. ... In fact, again, we stayed in a barn. Well, one night, when I was in the barn, mortars came in and ... they hit while we were in there. A couple of our guys got it, but this one time, I saw these, those fellows wore white snowsuits. ... We wised up, too. We started, later on, using them, and I happened to see them and I opened up and I did see guys jump. I don't know if I hit them or not. I feel good about this. A lot of guys [say], "Well, I killed a hundred [Germans];" don't listen to them, bologna. We do have a fellow, he's not with us anymore, he was a machine gunner, also, he got the Silver Star, but he opened up. He earned his Silver Star. ... He had guys lying in front of him. Now, what I'm going to tell you about this, again, don't think I'm bragging, I do have a couple of awards, that you know. One award I got for, on a hill, we were under mortar attack and mortars hit here and hit there and one of the guys

got hit. ... I helped him out and brought him back. I was put in for the Bronze Star, but, for some unknown reason, I got a Meritorious Service Award. Another time, we were in the woods and B Company was pinned down and, see, D Company is more or less ... support, back-up, and they were really ... tied down. I don't know what made me do it; I volunteered. Now, we're in German territory. We have Americans there, we have Germans there. I don't know the reasons, [but] I went back to get help. I could have got shot by my own men, I could have got shot by the Germans, but I was told that my mission made it. ... They accomplished this mission. ... Again, I was put in for a Bronze Star. I got a Meritorious Service Award. Somebody had it in for me, for some reason. ... I have the sheet, signed by everybody, but I finally got the Bronze Star. You know what we got the Bronze Star for? You might know, Shaun.

SI: Was it that combat infantrymen [Combat Infantryman's Badge recipients] get it ...

SB: Automatic. You're on there, man. You're all right. [laughter]

SI: I have done a few interviews with others who earned it that way.

SB: No, but that's a fact. I hesitated in a way, but I figured, "I earned it and I'm going to get it." I can always tell them I got it for the other stuff, [laughter] but I'll tell you, it's crazy. It really is crazy.

PB: It seems as though many soldiers developed a mutual respect for the Germans. Even though you were not in the Pacific, what were your feelings on the Japanese?

SB: I will have to say this; I'm fortunate [that] I was in Europe. I don't envy those fellows in the Pacific. They really had [a tough time]. First of all, I don't like snakes. There's no snakes in Germany, but they had malaria, they had foot rot, from the water, the heat. ... You know, we talk about how miserable they were and how miserable these people were. Again, you had good Japanese [and bad Japanese]. In fact, we had them in our country, which I was against. They should have never done what they did to the Japanese. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow is referring to the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.] If they did it to the Japanese, they should have done it to the Germans and the Italians. I'm serious, I'm serious. As you boys, Shaun probably knows, what was the most distinguished infantry division in the war? the Japanese.

SI: Yes, the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team].

SB: The most decorated guys in the service, and ... that's why the Japanese got money. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow is referring to reparations made to Japanese-American internees in the late 1980s and early 1990s.] We felt, they [the government] felt, ashamed for what they did to these people. They were good American citizens. The ones in Hawaii might have been different, because there were spies there, and, again, as you probably know, after the war, if you want to get ahead of this, after we won the war, we were in occupation. ... When we went into occupation, you'd be surprised how the Germans treated us, near Naumburg. Naumburg, I'll never forget Naumburg.

PB: To go back, how were you received by the people in Kesternich?

SB: In where?

PB: Kesternich.

SB: In Kesternich, when we went back, after the war?

PB: No, when you took over the town. How were you received?

SB: We didn't take it. ... We kept going.

PB: You captured it, but I was not sure if you stayed there.

SB: ... Yes, we captured it. Well, they put the sheets in the windows. They just surrendered. That's all. They didn't want any more war. ... See, [the] American people do not know what war is about. They know about terrorists, they know about bombs, but they don't know what war is about. If you had a group or a division come into your town and wipe you out, your home is no longer there, you're living in a sewer or wherever, you're eating garbage out of the cans, eating dogs. That's a fact. Our people don't know, and that's why they're so different. They don't have the patriotism anymore. They've lost the patriotism; most people, not all, like Mike. ... No, I'm serious now, I'm serious. The ones that have their children, relatives, in the service, they're patriotic, but you have these everyday people, they ... don't even know there's a war on over there [in Iraq], which is not a war, to my [definition]. It's a war, but, again, there's too many ...

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

SB: Like I started to say, people are against everything we do in this country. You can't do anything. You can't wipe your nose. If you kill a fish, seriously, ... if you kill a chicken, ... they're going to start complaining about killing chickens. Abortion; we have one [an abortion clinic?] up here on the street. I don't believe in abortion. I do if [it is] incest or rape, but, otherwise, it should be the woman's choice, my opinion. Religion, it's out. It has nothing to do [with it]. That's my opinion. It's the same way [with] anything we do. The war over there [in Iraq], people aren't behind it. [In] our time, they were behind it and the guys over there, their morale goes, because you're not with them. [In] Vietnam, those guys were treated real bad, real bad. It shouldn't have never happened to them, and another thing, like what's happening in Iraq now, in our time, they're talking about us hitting, ... or the people hitting, their churches and their museums and all this, and the children and the families. What happened when the B-25s and B-24s went over in Germany, dropped bombs? They didn't care where it hit. It's part of war. ... We always said, "Do it to them before they do it to you," the same way with the bomb in Japan. As a veteran, VFW, American Legion, we've always said, "If they didn't drop it on us, we wouldn't have dropped it on them," and, if we hadn't dropped those bombs in Japan, I probably wouldn't be here. ... Like I started to say, when we went into Naumburg for occupation, we made really good friends. I've been back there three times. That's like a second home. These people, the mayor invites you in, they treat you to lunch, they take you out. I've been to a few places. In fact, my wife and I and a group, they had English, the French, the Americans, the

Germans invited us over. They paid [for] everything but the air flight. We had food. They took us around to different places, no charge, free lodging, and we saw many, many different things. ... Really, I've made some real good friends. ... Wolfhagen was the name of that town, and they had a man over there that he was more like, not a *burgomeister*, he was even higher, like maybe a governor, say, and they really did [a splendid job]. I have books there that [I accumulated] through each one of those towns that we went to, and I've got autographs; I can't read them. I know, I've got it up here, and, now, I'm going to get into serious things, again, here. Sometimes I don't get through the story; when I was in Nuremburg, we went to a town called Frankenau. ... In Frankenau, we happened to be there at a bad time. What had happened was, we heard shots and we found out that the Germans escaped from the MPs. ... Just unfortunately, there was a young boy, about eight years old, he just happened to be sitting in a tree and he got hit with one of these bullets. I've told this story many times. I have to tell it, because it means a lot to me. When he got hit, ... they took him to his home and I went around and I collected some money for them and I gave it to the mom. ... The mother gave me a picture of this young boy and I kept his picture for many, many years and I made a promise that I would get to see this young man's gravesite. Well, one day, I did, and I have a young man from Naumburg, real nice guy, he spoke English, I still keep in touch with him, now even, on e-mail, and he took me into the, they call it the *burgomeister*, ... which is the mayor. I walked in and the fellow that was with me, he translated for me, and the secretary was there and there was the mayor; the *Burgomeister* was inside. He wouldn't come out. This is a fact, and I found out why. There's a Frankenau rug ..., over there, on the wall, right behind the tapes. ... They had their, I think it was a couple of hundred years old celebration and he thought I was Jewish. ... I found that out. He didn't come out, but, then, they found out later that I wasn't, but, anyway, this young lady heard the story and she got in touch with the grandmother and the grandmother ... verified what happened. This young lady thought I was the young guy that killed the young boy, but that was a misunderstanding. ... Actually, they took me directly to the gravesite and it was still there. I took a picture. I have pictures of it and everything and he had no relatives there. He had one, I think an aunt, but I think she was senile or something. I never got to meet any of his parents or anything. I think his mom and dad were already passed away and I really, really am proud to say that I kept my promise, but I've been back again. ... I've been to a home where his friend, that was actually his friend, when he was [alive]; oh, excuse me.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SB: ... I saw this young man, [his] friend. I've been into their home. I've drank champagne with them. I've been in touch with them. I've [been] back to the secretary's home, twice. I've been in their home, ate at their home. They took me to a restaurant. They've got a son now, beautiful young boy. He's a typical German, blonde hair and blue eyes, and I just wrote to him, just around Christmastime. ... Really, it's a good feeling and, when I was there this time, the *Burgomeister* came over to visit. I finally met the *Burgomeister*. She has brothers that are in the German Army. ... One of them is actually in Iraq and one of them, she just told me that her brother was working and fell through a roof. He got seriously hurt, but [she] thinks he'll be all right, but what goes around comes around. ... Now, the other story is, it's on the wall, [a newspaper account of this story], when I was in Berlin, in December '45, I was on the street and we were having a Christmas party. It just happened to be [that] this younger woman came over and she had a little eight-year-old girl with her. I thought the woman was her mother and, just

out of the blue, I said to the woman, she understood, in a way, ... what I was getting at, if I could take this young kid to our Christmas party. ... As an American, she let me have that young girl, to take her to the Christmas party, and they had a beautiful meal. ... They had the menu; I gave her a menu. Well, before this young girl left, she gave me a picture. Her name was Brigitte, and on the back of the picture was, "I wish, I wish, I wish that we see each other again someday," and about fifty years later; ... I've been back to Berlin. I was really sorry that I never gave it a thought. I could have actually went to see her in person, and I finally got in touch with this young lady in Frankenau. Her brother works in Berlin and they gave me the name and address of the newspaper and I wrote a letter to the people and, all of a sudden, one day, I get a phone call. The phone call was from California. In California, it was her sister. That was the same lady that was bringing this young girl down the street. She married a *Luftwaffe* pilot and she said, "No, the woman is still living. She's very sick. She's got problems," I believe, and everything, and I've talked to her son; no, not her son. I talked to her son's wife. I've got correspondence from her husband and I've also got correspondence from the wife, sorry, the sister, and the husband. ... Since then, for what[ever] reason, they just broke off. I found out reasons, but I found out later, three days after that, I got in touch with this young girl. She remembered me. I didn't get to talk to her; she died just before I could talk to her. She still had the menu of that Christmas party, but, since that time, this fellow in California, he lost his wife, also. They just didn't want to keep in touch for some reason. The son never got in touch with me again. I got a Christmas card from the husband. Now, I don't know if the son got upset because I wrote the letter to the newspaper and it got into the newspaper. You know, when they were sons, you don't know if they were the *Jugend*, Hitler *Jugend*, and he might have had a bad feeling about me, but you'd think, after all these years and something like this had happened, he would do it in his mom's memory. That's his choice. I did what I wanted to do. That's my story.

MK: Since you were constantly on the move, how did you get supplies and food?

SB: ... We didn't get too many hot meals, no, not too many. Once in a while, if things were slow, they might come up. We had, you know, the K rations, the C rations, and so forth, the D bar. You know what a D bar is? We made chocolate milk out of it. You couldn't chew it. I mean, it was hard, but the C rations weren't bad. K ration wasn't that great. C ration wasn't too bad, with the eggs and bacon, but ... I don't like powdered milk. I don't like powdered eggs. I won't eat hash, you know, things like that, but ... we survived, let us put it that way. The food, you had to do it. Again, when you got it, you got it. We never had too much of the German stuff. You had, maybe, eggs once in a while. We confiscated a few [things], but I never took stuff from the Germans, personally from them, but I do have ... a couple of souvenirs that I confiscated.

MK: You were saying that many soldiers walking through the town would go into houses and take food and other things.

SB: No, I can't say that. We did hit a bank once, German money. ... Oh, we had stacks of it. You know what we did with it? We gave it to the German civilians. [laughter] I don't know whatever happened to them, but it was funny, but it wasn't ... worth much anymore.

SI: Being in the frontlines, how did you feel about the people in the rear? Did you feel that they were supporting you properly?

SB: Again, they were doing their jobs. We had bombers hit us, our own people. We had short rounds, we had misfires, part of war. You don't like it. What are you going to do about it? ... You're in the wrong place at the wrong time, like when they went out [broke out] in Normandy. Planes got off course, the paratroopers got way off [from] where they're supposed to hit; it's one of those things.

MK: At the end of every mission, you lost some friends, or men that you knew, at least. Was there a way that many soldiers coped with the loss of their friends?

SB: Well, I don't know if you'd say we coped with it. I still remember them. We had one case that I'll never forget, and it was a tragedy, it really was. It was during peacetime. It was when we were in occupation. ... We were in a little town called Reidi, R-E-I-D-I, and I've been back there, and we were at this place. It was a big home and we trained there, outside. ... That was outside of Naumburg and the fellow came off of guard duty. ... This one time, the fellow's name was (Green?), and he was cleaning his rifle. For some reason, the weapon went off. He got killed. Another time, we cannot understand, ... this young fellow, his name was Caulk, C-A-U-L-K, nicest guy, went ... all through the combat and everything; he should have known better. He had a .45. He went like this, [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow imitates putting a gun to his head] took the clip out, you never do it, even with an empty gun, pulled the trigger. He put one in the chamber, nicest guy you'd ever want to know. His name is not in our book. His name is never mentioned, because he looked like he committed suicide, but I don't know how they told his family. [He was] just like you, young fellows.

MK: He was just ...

SB: Just messing around, messing around, and he should know. He'd been [in combat]. He was in a couple of years. You never, ... no matter if it's empty or not, you never do this, anyway, never. ... When you fool with guns, you never ... point it toward a guy. I had a close call once. I had a [Walther] P38 and a Luger. The P38, I wasn't familiar with it and I didn't realize it, I pulled the trigger and it didn't go off, and I went like this, [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow imitates pointing a gun at someone] pulled the trigger, and it went off, just ... missed a friend. I got rid of it right away. ... The Luger was hit and, in fact, I found it in the house. It was hit by shrapnel. I found it when the Germans were ... in the house. I brought that home. I've sold it since. I probably got too little for it, but it wouldn't fire, because the whole back was [missing]. You couldn't open it. I don't have any weapons. I sold both of them.

PB: What were your duties during the occupation? What were you supposed to do?

SB: Well, you had guard duty, you had training. It was just like being in a camp in peacetime. ... We treated the people really nice, and one thing about it, even today; did you serve overseas?

MK: No, just in Japan and Okinawa.

SB: Well, you were in Japan, ... meaning you were overseas. Now, I think you found it this way; no matter how people hate some people, the children do not hate the American soldier. They don't hate the American soldier, no matter where they are, Afghanistan, Iraq, Italy, Japan, China. There's something about it. It might be because they think you've got chewing gum or chocolate, but I think it's just the way we treat the kids, really. We pick them up. I have a picture of a young, beautiful, little blond-haired girl in Naumburg. I have a picture of that and I wanted to see if I could find her. I couldn't find her. I played cards in her home with her mom, no hanky-panky, and her husband [was] in the German Army. I went back to see if I could ... [find] this couple. I couldn't do it, and I feel really bad, but that was the most, prettiest little girl. ... All the kids, they always liked an American soldier.

MK: When you were in Germany, did your unit come across any concentration camps?

SB: Yes, yes. We freed one during the war. ...

PB: Do you remember the name of the one you freed?

SB: Hangelar. It was not only the Jewish people. I mean, they never forget, ... I mean, it's hard to forget, and the people that don't think it happened, they don't know what they're talking about. It happened. There was French, there was Dutch, there was Polish, there were all kinds of people in these concentration camps. What they did to them, mostly, I think, is, they worked most of these other people to death, but the Jewish people, they annihilated. They just got rid of them. It doesn't make sense, but it did happen. I've been back to Dachau. ... I didn't go down to where the ovens were. I was in a museum. I have pictures of the museum. What I actually did is, they had a film and I had a video camera and I had my video camera on, taking the pictures of the tape. I have it, and I tell you, you see some atrocities. ... They can't tell me that the German people in the area didn't know what was going on. I think Eisenhower did the right thing when he brought these people in. He showed them what their own people were doing, just stacks and stacks of [bodies], but it's going on in Iraq now. They're finding them, with their heads off, their own people.

SI: What do you remember about the day that the camp was liberated? Was it your division that liberated the camp or your unit?

SB: It was just part of it. It was a group of us. We opened the gates, and imagine how they felt, especially the bad [ones], the Dachau [type camps]. ... This camp wasn't as bad as Dachau, like the ones in Poland and all of this. The odor must have been bad, the smoke.

MK: How were the relationships between the enlisted men and the officers in your unit?

SB: Not that bad. ... You did your job.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MK: Did basic training prepare you well, physically?

SB: I would say so. I was 150 pounds when I was there. I think so. It's a toughie and, you know, ... [they give you] the tetanus shot, and then, you go out onto the rifle range. [laughter] The rifle range, it's a toughie. It's "Maggie's Drawers" [missing the target] and all of this. I was a pretty good shot. ... I have to say this, and I'm going to give you credit, I don't think there's a tougher training than the Marines. I have to say this; I really do. ... We had the infiltration course and we had the rope climb and everything, but, [from] what I've seen on TV, you guys have got it. ... I know you're both Navy and infantry and I really ... think a lot of you guys. I'm glad I was with what I was in. I still wish I was [an airman], but, if I'd have went in the Air Corps and got to be a gunner, I probably wouldn't have made it. You have to thank somebody and I do. I thank Him a lot. ... Training, you've got to have training and you've got to have discipline. ... My personal feeling is, what's going on in this country, right now, illegal or legal, you come into this country, you go into the service and serve at least one year, at least, to learn what this country's all about. They want five dollars, ten dollars an hour, or two dollars an hour, put them in the service, get their room and board and get their [pay] so much a month, and then, if you serve, you automatically get to be a citizen. I don't believe in what they're doing, this amnesty and all this stuff, five years. ... In Perth Amboy, they want to give these guys driver's licenses, illegal immigrants, driver licenses, and, here, us Americans have to bring in six pieces of proof, [so] that we can get ours. Does that make sense? Not to me it doesn't. I'm not against immigrants. We all are ... immigrants, but we came in the right way, through Ellis Island, not over the fence, under the fence or whatever. ... Politically, big business is the reason why we're getting illegal immigrants, because they're paying low wages, and that's my feeling.

MK: You mentioned earlier that General Patton was in charge of your division.

SB: Well, he was the head of our [army]. He was our general. He was the Third Army [commander]. ...

MK: Did you ever get to meet him or see him?

SB: No, I never got to meet him at all. I got to meet my general.

MK: General [Edwin P.] Parker?

SB: Parker, yes. I met him when he was retired and I met him during the service. He was a good general. You know, when you have an officer, it's just like when you work for a company, you've got good bosses, you've got bad bosses, but I think ... a whole lot more of a boss if he treats you fair. He can give me heck anytime, but don't take me out in front of all these people and give me hell; take me in the office, talk to me. It's a two-way street, on anything you do. You've probably had a couple of guys you didn't like, really. Which rank did you think the least of? ...

MK: Which rank did I think the least of?

SB: Seriously, anyone.

MK: I would probably say the second or first lieutenant, the lieutenant who just got out of college and they think they know more than you. You have been in for five years, they just got in about three months ago, and they think they know more than you do because they have a bar on their shoulder.

SB: Well, see, like, again, now, when I was in, it was under wartime, the one that sticks out in my mind is the captain.

MK: Those are the hardnosed guys.

SB: Okay. Now, that "railroad track," [a captain's insignia, two-parallel bars mounted on smaller bars, resembling a railroad track], I don't know where they get all their power from. ... Today, I think one hundred percent, now, more of my officers in Camp Kilmer. I go to Kilmer [Reserve Center, formerly Camp Kilmer]. I can walk in anytime I want to. ... I mean, I have to call in first, but I've made friends with two-star generals. I'd be ... just walking in the hall, "Hey, Stu, come on in." I mean, it's a different story, but I respect them more. I've gotten to know [soldiers] from a private up to a two-star general. In fact, I might be going, ... on April the 8th, down to Fort Dix. Our two-star general in Camp Kilmer, right now, I don't know if you know his name, it's General (Irk?), he's retiring. I'm invited. I've been to two commanding officers' dinners at Fort Monmouth, and I'm proud of this. I'm a private. ... They invited me for nothing, twice. The first time I went, I'll tell you, I never had a better feeling in my life. ... [At] one of them, I should say one of them, I'm sitting at the head table, not at the head table, but at the side table. The head tables were mostly for the visiting [dignitaries]. I'm sitting there with this group and ... they introduced the different people that's there and they came to my name. Here I am, a private amongst all these whatever. I stood up, I felt ten feet tall. Everybody in that room stood. That's what it's all about. I don't care about what happened in the past; that made my day.

SI: Where were you when you found out that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

SB: Oh, boy, oh, boy, 1941. [laughter] ...

PB: You were still in high school.

SB: Yes. I was in the second year of high school. I don't remember how I felt or where I was, like, if I was in the auditorium or whatever. I don't really remember my feelings. I'm being honest. I probably did have real bad feelings, but, as I say, I'm a kid.

MK: Did religion play a role in your life, growing up or in the Army?

SB: Did I do what?

PB: Did religion play a significant role in your life, growing up or in the Army?

SB: It always has. I mean, we all need religion, I don't care what, if it's a true religion. I do my praying. I go to church every Sunday that I can go, and I pray for my wife, praying for my friends, pray for the country and the troops. Without religion, you are nothing. If you don't have

a belief, whatever you believe in, as long as ... it's for a good thing; you can believe in things, which is happening today, I don't believe in that. ... I'm against; no, I'm not going to say that, but, anyway, I'm Protestant. I almost married a Catholic one time, but that's another story.

PB: Do you want to say anything else about being in Germany for the occupation?

SB: To me, for Germany? I have a high respect for Germany. I'm part German. I am part German. ... I've been where Hitler got arrested, in Baden-Baden, and I'm going to say this, before the war, I thought Hitler was doing a good bit for his people. He did a lot for his good people, but, when he goes to this [war], that's a no-no. He had a lot of power for a corporal. ... For what he gains, he's got to have something, ground troops or whatever, but, when he went out overhead, hit Poland, that was a no-no. He didn't need this. He had a beautiful country, a powerful country. ... In my estimation, if he had ... minded his own business, I personally think he would have been [in charge of] the most powerful country in this world, I really do, the army he had, the material he had. He had the people the wrong way, though. It wasn't a democracy and, if you don't have a democracy, you have nothing, but, again, I'm going to say this, if we don't stop fooling around, we will not have a democracy. I'm not a traitor, I'm not against my country, but it's too much BS going on and not enough things done, like that meeting, yesterday, that we went to. They want to take ten billion dollars, ten million dollars? ten billion, away from the veterans. Now, what example is that setting for these young boys over there [in Iraq] that [are] in harm's way? Us guys, I almost said this yesterday, that money is only going to hurt us for a couple of more years. After two or three years, those boys who got two years to worry about over there; morale must be going down the drain. I don't know if they told these boys this. The VA, [Veterans Administration], they don't want to give us anymore. They want to keep taking away. You have to have, ... supposedly, one hundred percent [disability] to get anything anymore. I went there a couple of times. I don't go back no more.

MK: Did you have a chance to work with or fight alongside any other Allied troops?

SB: Yes. We had the British with us. Let me tell you something; I am one hundred percent [convinced], regarding the ... Afro-American troops, I'm going to mention the Tuskegee Airmen, I think they were one of the best fighting groups that we've had. It's a shame that a white person has to treat these people [poorly]. We have white people ... much worse than they and, [if] you have a good black person, you've got a good friend. It's a shame that these American bomber groups and all had to find out how good they were, to ask for them to be their escort. They didn't lose one bomber, not one. They requested these guys to go with them. I've met a couple of them. In fact, we have one that's on the commission for our World War II monument. He's a Tuskegee man. The other group that we had, we had a group, a platoon, that joined the 78th with us, we honored them in Belgium, about a couple of months ago. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow is referring to the all-African-American platoons integrated into the 78th Division in the spring of 1945.] They were good fighters, every one of them, with a BAR, [Browning automatic rifle]. They wanted the BAR. I have nothing against those guys, nothing. ... I'll sleep in their barracks anytime. We had a black family down the street; I've been to their home. In fact, one of the fellows that was in my eighth grade, that I graduated [with], his name was (Charlie Jones?). I've been to his home. I've never seen him since. One of the nicest guys, (Charlie Brooks?), [in] our days, we were friends, really. We've had bad ones. I had one black guy, just before I went in the

service, I was with my dad; ... I can put it on. I don't care about this one. My father, as I said, he was a drinker. We went to a black bar. My dad gave me a beautiful sweater, nice, beautiful sweater, and I had my license. I could drive, when I was sixteen years old, at that time, with a driver. Well, my father got pretty gone. We come out. For some unknown reason, I'm only a sixteen-year-old kid, this guy was ready to go in the service the next day, that's what he did to me. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow imitates throwing someone on the ground.] ... We found out, we think, why. He wanted to go to jail, instead of the service, and that's a fact. It's funny how you remember things.

MK: Is there anything about the British or the French troops that sticks out in your mind?

SB: You're getting into something that's a little ticklish now. I have to say, also, now, about Montgomery, I'm just glad Patton had the guts to do what he did. He beat Montgomery over. It might have been a different situation [if he had not]. Montgomery wasn't liked very much and, again, I'm going to say right out, my feelings, I'm not a French person. I've been to France. I won't spend the money there. I believe that ... they are lovers, they're not fighters. I had to say that, and there's things going around, like Target; Target is supposed to be a French outfit. From what I hear, they wouldn't allow [the] Salvation Army to collect money in front of their place. I understand that they will not give anything to the troops. They will not rehire the people that go out [for active duty service]. ... I don't know if it's a fact. I heard something the other day, e-mail, I didn't hear, I received an e-mail, about Starbucks. The troops in Afghanistan and Iraq asked them to send them some coffee. They refused. I won't buy Starbucks. In fact, I told a couple yesterday, when we stopped at a shop at one of the service stations, "I won't buy Starbucks." I can't understand these people. There are these guys, giving their lives, they can write it off, for coffee, but, yet, a lot of people give a lot of things, phone cards. [The] VFW, they give phone cards and all this. They have different things like [that]. Do you belong ... to any outfits?

MK: No, not right now.

SB: American Legion, no, nothing?

MK: No.

SB: Well, that's your problem. [laughter] Okay, what else?

SI: Do you remember where you were when V-E Day was declared?

SB: It was [in] May, I know that.

SI: Do you remember how you felt or what you were doing?

SB: Glad it was over. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SB: When I was going over, I had no problem with the sea or the boat, the ship; I shouldn't [say] boat, it's a ship. I took it ... [in] stride, but, coming back, it was a different trip. We were on a troopship again and the water was really rough. ... I was fine until the guy next to me, he upchucked, and you want to know what dying is, that's when you want to die. [laughter] ... Anyway, that was a toughie. ... Boy, there's nothing like seasickness. Have you ever been seasick?

MK: No.

SB: Well, you're lucky.

MK: I can handle that. It does not bother me.

SB: Okay. Well, I thought I could, too. I can go out on a ship, on a boat and all, but, that time, no. ... What bothers me on the little boat [is] the carbon monoxide. [laughter] ...

MK: It is like that in the AmTracs [amphibious tractors] they use now to get the troops onto the shore from the ships. It is all diesel fuel going inside that little hold. It is hard to take.

SB: ... I had it in the chow line. [laughter]

SI: Would you mind if we asked you a few more questions about your combat operations?

SB: If I can remember, if I can remember. Like I say, ... I don't pinpoint the places.

SI: Okay, just general feelings.

SB: Okay.

SI: Can you talk about your first few days and weeks in combat, what it was like, how you got used to getting shelled, things like that?

SB: Well, I'm going to talk for Mike this time. You never get used to it. I'm being honest. ... You just hope that the one that's coming in doesn't have your name on it. You're hoping, again, you're hoping and praying, and I don't think there's a man on the line that's not praying, in their own way. You cannot understand. When you're going across the field or walking over the mountain or anything and somebody's firing a grease gun, .45 or whatever, or the M-1s or whatever they were firing at you, .81 mortars, the guy next to you can get it and you don't. You can't understand. You see these coming on Normandy. You see guys had fallen. How they can go like this and go by you, I can't understand this, except through your faith.

MK: Did many men lose control of their emotions? Could they just not handle it?

SB: I don't remember anybody. I mean, you have guys, Section 8s, but, some of the time, that happened even at home. Oh, yes, some guys would shoot themselves in the foot. That's stupid. [laughter] You get a dishonorable discharge and you [could] take your chances out there and be a

hero. That's another word I don't like. People, when they see medals and all; I don't believe [that] because you have a medal, you're a hero. There's a hero, the ones that aren't with us. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow points to a portrait of his brother, PFC Theodore A. Brandow, US Army, killed-in-action on July 20, 1950, during the Korean War]. Anybody that's not with us is a hero. There's guys that earned their medal; they got paid ...

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

SB: You're not going to believe this story.

SI: This continues an interview with Stuart T. Brandow in Woodbridge, New Jersey, on March 30, 2006. Please, continue.

SB: Many years ago, maybe five or six years ago, I was on a tour ... in Belgium, and we were a whole group. They have many, many reenactors over there. They have people over there that wear our uniforms, German uniforms, Polish, British, and they actually go out and reenact the Battle of the Bulge. Well, this time, we had a parade and we stopped at this wonderful place and I'm standing there, talking. This young boy came over. He was about fifteen, ... sixteen years old, ... just about your size. He walks over to me. He said, "Sir, would you mind if I speak to you?" "Why? Go ahead. No problem, that's no problem with me." We talked and talked, and he spoke English, and he left. ... I was inside. We were having coffee and tea and whatever. The next thing I know, this young fellow came over again. He said, "Would you mind if I bring my mom and dad over to talk to you?" "Fine," and they were really nice, really nice, people. They could understand a little English; the mom wasn't too much [into speaking English]. We got to be great, great friends. I've been back to their home, lived in their home, three days at a time, went out with him and everything. Well, this one day, I was in their kitchen. This young fellow comes over to his mother. He says to his mom, "You know, I wish this fellow was my brother." I'm a ... grandfather, and I looked; his mom was really surprised. Next thing out of his ... mouth was, "Mom," his father was there, too, "you know, when I get married, I'd like to have him as my best man." Boy, what a feeling, what a feeling. A year ago in September, I was invited over to his wedding. I was one of his best men. He's Catholic. I was his best man at the mayor's office, *burgomeister's*. They had a nice ceremony there, and then, we went to the Catholic church. He says, "Stu, you wouldn't have wanted to be the best man at this church. You won't understand it," but I stood it out. He had another young fellow as his best man, too, and what a wonderful young man. His name is Stisn Steegen and his mom and dad, great. This last September, they had a little baby girl and they named it Elise, and he told me that Elise, in their language, means Elizabeth; my wife's name is Elizabeth. He said, "You know, Stu, if it had been a boy, he would have had your middle name, Thomas." That young man has dog tags ... around his neck with my name, my serial number. He has a jacket with my name and serial number on the back of it. He has a jeep with my wife's name on it. He has a weapons carrier with my name on it. He has my, "78th, Company D, 310th," on his bumper. I'm a proud American soldier.

SI: You should be. Do you want to take a break?

SB: Yes.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SB: We're just talking about a German, that I used to fight against, that I know and [have] come to be good friends with and, again, I've been to his home. I'm going to tell you, there's not only bad people in America, there's bad people in Germany, too. He gave me an e-mail this past week and he says, "Stu, we have bad news from Wuppertal." I thought it was one of his family. He told me about a statue, a big statue, about six-foot tall, in the cemetery, with ... their grandparents and so forth. Someone stole this statue. I guess it was made out of bronze. They didn't only steal his, they stole other people's, but they did find the people. It was [in] a junkyard. The bad thing about this story is, they'll never use this statue again. They cut it up for junk, plus, all the other ones. Now, how can someone do this, desecrate anybody's grave? It meant so much. In here, America, [hoodlums will] topple over gravestones, no matter whose. They stole my father-in-law's urns, twice, and the other ones around them, to melt down. You know, how low can you get? My home has been robbed by my next-door-neighbor, a young kid, eighteen years old. We knew him since he was a baby, adopted baby. We thought the world of him. One thing I can say about him, if I can say anything good about him, he didn't get into my home [easily?]. We were at my mother-in-law's wake. They know you're going to be gone two or three hours. He had a German friend. He told him, notified him, that we were gone. They tried to break into this window. ... Finally, what he did, they had a lot of guts, [he] took my lights out, put them in the yard, broke into my house. I have to say, he didn't rampage too much, but he did do a little bit upstairs, in my bedroom. He stole an afghan, like this, [that] my mother-in-law made, put the stuff in a pillowcase, and stuff that you can't replace. You don't get anything from the insurance companies, nothing. Money don't mean a thing. It's little things, like a ring. They got my wedding band, my original wedding ring. They got a watch, ... which was given to me in 1943, given to me by my mom, who worked hard. Just a little while before that, there was nothing on the back of this watch, I had it engraved, "From Mom to Stu." ... I was going to give it to one of my grandchildren. They'll never get it. They stole other things. ... Material, sometimes, is nothing, but what these people did, it was [over] something that was stupid, drugs. They took it to New York; you couldn't even find it here. I knew who did it. I knew, I knew. I went next-door. I knocked on his door, "Sammy, did you see anything that happened next-door, my house?" I knew he was lying. He couldn't look me in the face. His mom passed away a little while later. His mom was great; his father, I can't say too much about. That's why he's the way he is. It's not because the young man was an adopted boy. They also had an adopted daughter, a beautiful girl, nice girl. His mom died. We went to ... her wake. I didn't want to shake his hand, but what am I going to do? He's one of these guys. [Editor's note: Mr. Brandow imitates the man looking away as he shakes hands.] I don't trust anybody that don't look me in the eye when they shake my hand, but you know what? they're stupid. They got caught. They are stupid. They got caught in Carteret on a snowy day. They robbed a house, left tracks.

PB: Did they get in trouble for what they did to your house?

SB: Well, we went to court for them. We went to court, too. We got up and talked to it. People like this, [it] doesn't bother them. ... He got four years. He served all four, because, this way, he's covered. ... He did his debt, but I'll tell you one thing, and I hope he hears this, I would have respected that young man if he came and knocked on my door when he came home and

apologized, never did. He won't look at me and I won't look at him. He's married, been married a couple of times. He's had a couple kids. He's married now. He's got a nice young lady. His kids are nice. He used to live upstairs, as a married man. They moved away. He comes back. I have no respect, ... nothing, for him. I don't think his wife knows why I'm not too friendly with him. I was tempted to tell her a couple of times, but, you know, it's funny, what happens in a lifetime.

PB: Can you talk about what happened to you after your discharge?

SB: Woop-dee-doo. [laughter] Why not? I'll tell you one thing; I wasn't deaf or blind then, but I was when I went to get to my discharge papers. I'm not sorry that I served, not one bit, no. In fact, I'm more proud today than I was when I got out, because I didn't have the feeling that I have now, because you get to think about what you've done, what you've accomplished, the friends you've made. If it hadn't been for the service, I never would have went to Europe and I never would have had the friends that I have over there, and I call these people friends. I have to say this; I live here in Woodbridge, I have more friends in Europe than I do here in my home town, on Catskill, ... and they are friends. I mean, I have people here, ... but they're nowhere near [as close], ... not because they invite you to their home, they feed you, give you free lodging and all of this; it's the feeling. When you go into their home, their children come in the house, their grandkids come in their house, you know what they do, first thing? They hug and kiss their parents and their grandparents. There's not too many that do that in this country. My grandsons do, because I brought them up that way. They come in, they'd better. They know what's what. ... I think very highly of my grandsons. I've got two wonderful grandsons [Dominick and Kevin], smart, talented, good. One's a musician and only in the second year of high school. He plays the saxophone, the clarinet, the [key]board. He's in the band, he's in the quartet and he's in the jazz group, and my other ... grandson, he used to play the violin when he was in school. He shouldn't have...[given] it up. [Dominick is going to NJIT in Newark to become and mechanical engineer, and will graduate in July 2009.]

MK: You fired many weapons and were around numerous arms being fired. How are your ears? Were you wearing any type of ear protection?

...

SB: No, no, never, never.

MK: Your ears must have been ringing constantly.

SB: But, again, if you wear these, then, in your ears, then, how do you hear your friends when they holler or something? Did you guys?

MK: We wore a little earplug.

SB: Yes, yes. I don't even remember, serious, ... even on the rifle range, if we used earplugs. Now, they have the ear ... covers. I don't remember. ... Like I said, I fired the .45, I ... shot the carbine, the M-1, and the thirty-caliber, but I don't ever remember wearing earplugs.

SI: You told us a story about the first time you fired your gun [in combat], that it had frozen up and only one bullet came out. Were there other situations like that, where your equipment malfunctioned?

SB: Like I said, that was mine, and, if the other ones had it, I don't know. I don't know. Like, a guy with an eighty-one or an eighty-millimeter mortar, I don't know if they had misfires or not, I don't know, or, if the guys [further] back, artillery, I don't know. They had duds, that's for sure. I don't remember. Like, a carbine or an M-1, I'll tell you one thing; that was a beautiful weapon, but the ones they got today, that's all power. ... You had a good [rifle]. M-1s are accurate, was really accurate. I didn't like the .45. I carried a .45, ... but I thought the Luger was a much better weapon than ours. I actually shot one, one time, and you know these things on a telephone pole, those glass [fixtures], they used to have glass ones on it, the old types? Well, I just went on. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow snaps his fingers to indicate that he shot it] ... I sold all of mine. No, I can't remember things like that.

SI: Are there any close calls that you remember?

SB: Yes, there's a few. [laughter] Yes, we had a couple of mortars [attacks]. That's when my buddy got hit in the head. ... We had an officer; oh, yes, there's one thing. That's when I got to be a squad leader. My squad leader, we were going through a town, and you've heard of *Schu* mines? [Editor's Note: An antipersonnel mine housed in a wooden box, which made it difficult to detect.] Well, he ... stepped on a *Schu* mine and that's when I replaced him. He was taken out of combat. *Schu* mines are bad. That's really bad. It not only hit you, sometimes, in the foot, it hits you in the groin. That's what the idea was; even if they just wound you, they don't care if they kill you, as long as you're out of action. ... In the Marines, did you ever hear any stories about them killing a medic?

MK: Who was that, the Marines killing a medic?

SB: No.

MK: The Japanese killing a medic?

SB: No, in your time, [the 1990s-2000s], of stories from other Marines, the past Marines.

MK: No. I have heard about heroic medics that helped other Marines.

SB: Yes, one of the top people in the service, no weapons, a lot of guts.

MK: And they are targets.

SB: Yes, and we were told [that] they'd been shot not a little while ago. See, when you're fighting the wrong people, they don't care. That's the bad thing over there, [in Iraq]; they don't care who you are over there, now, but I respected them. When I was in [the Army], I always thought I should have been a medic, because no matter when somebody got hurt or anything,

[Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow snaps his fingers] I'd try to be right there. It's a funny, funny thing, ... people getting hurt; I've seen Germans, I've seen Americans. When you're going down the road and you see only a half a body, and especially being an American, he got hit directly with a mortar. I don't know which is worse, to get it that way or [to] lose your arms or your legs or what. Sometimes, I guess you're better off when you get it period, but the way they're doing things today, I just saw equipment yesterday, what they got today; prosthetics, is that how you pronounce it? Guys were doing push-ups, running and everything. I guess it pays to live. It's this, when you lose these, [eyes], and these, [ears], these, [eyes], are the worst. I think if I lost my eyes, I wouldn't want to live. ... You've lost your everything when you can't see what's about you, your kids. I'll tell you a story. ... After Vietnam, my nephew was a Vietnam vet, that's another story, but he got wounded and, when he got wounded, he was in an ambulance and they had an accident, and so, he was wounded twice. So, he went to ... Valley Forge. We happened to visit him and, if you ever want to see something, you want to hear stories; I'll finish my stories first. We happened to go to see him and we happened to see one young fellow, he was in bed, he had one arm, legs are gone, other arm's gone, and this young fellow did not see his girlfriend and his family, as yet. When he was laying there, he said something, and how this happened was, a little, old lady did it to him. They were going up to sand piles and she pulled the plug. This young fellow says, "You know, if I had to do it again, I would." I don't know if I could say that after[wards]. I don't think I could say that, but, again, coming back to ... my nephew, he was in Vietnam. He's been back to Vietnam a couple of times. Well, this last year, he went to Vietnam, he married a Vietnam woman; what a wedding. I wish him the [best of] luck. His wife is still there; he's here. They've got to wait on visas and all this. I don't know if this has anything to do with my story, but it's something to add, a little extra. ... His mom, I guess she has to accept it, his ma, his brothers and sister, but it's his life. She [his new wife] has a daughter. Her first husband was another (NG?) The little girl seems to think the world of ... [her new father], but you don't know if it's this or citizenship or what, but this remains to be seen.

MK: At any point during your missions, were you asked to do anything that you thought was, maybe, pointless or that you did not feel organized or prepared enough for?

SB: I don't get you.

PB: Did you ever feel that the organizers of a mission were carrying it out the wrong way?

SB: We had no choice, Mike; you know that. You follow the orders. You did what you had to do. ... When you're talking about missions, now, you're talking about Vietnam and Korea, your time, these times over here, [in Iraq]. We didn't [have] missions. We had groups. We went as a group, a company. We didn't go as individuals. Now, I don't envy the riflemen. I praise them, because those young guys, they had to go out, ... see what was outside, go on ahead, point man, and all that stuff. I was lucky. I didn't have to do that. We followed those guys. They were out [in front]. We were always under the same fire. If it missed them, we got it, but they were the point people and ... they were spread out. We were spread out, but, again, you just hope that your, as you say, mission was successful. That's all it is. Sometimes, you lost a lot of guys; sometimes, they lost a lot of fellows. ... The war today, ... now, it's all totally different, totally different. ... Again, I'm glad I was with my group, [the] 78th, in World War II, and not World War I, because, in World War I, it was a trench war, [mustard gas, lice], ours was a foxhole

[war] ... I don't remember anybody over there; we ... never complained about that stuff, like the lice or something. I did go back, one time, had a R&R [rest and relaxation] on that one. That's another story. ... Another thing I'm glad that we didn't have to do, I don't think I could handle it, a bayonet attack. You know what they are. I trained for it, but I didn't have to use it, because I was a heavy weapons [man], but you never know. They come at you, your weapons, what are you going to do; you have to pick up ... somebody else's rifle? That is tough, face-to-face, stick somebody in the belly, pull the trigger. You knew about that; it's easier to get it out, right, sometimes? ... It's good to have him [Mike] here, because he relates to what I'm talking about.

MK: In training, during bayonet drills or gas mask drills, were you worried about that?

SB: You know, I'll tell you how much we were worried about it; we didn't carry ours. [laughter] If they had it, [poison gas], we were dead, because, like I said, how much material can you carry? That's another story. These guys, you saw them unload from these crafts in Normandy, how many men drowned, never even got to the beach? Now, I don't know if they'd get court-martialed or not. I couldn't swim. I would have died anyway, but I think I would have got rid of my equipment, picked it up on the beach, because there's a lot over there. ... Another thing I can't understand, they have these real thin floatation [aids], life preservers. They knew what they were getting into; ... why couldn't they use these? You're only a number, and we call it "cannon fodder," yes. ... I hope I'm answering the questions. ...

MK: Yes, you are.

SI: Is there anything else that you would like to say about life in the field, to describe your living conditions?

SB: I really don't know how we kept warm. I really don't. I don't know how we kept warm. We were lucky if we got into a cellar once in a while. When you lived in the field, you had to just ...

MK: Did you keep your hands in your armpits a lot?

SB: Yes, if you had a chance. See, I didn't have that [chance]. ... When I carried my tripod, we walked and we walked, and I still remember this, we walked so long that my shoulder blades bled. ... I had to have a guy help me take it off, because, otherwise, you usually grab it and swing it around. It's really something how you remember just certain things. ... I mentioned something before about R&R. I happened to go back to a town in Belgium, and you go by truck and you get into clean clothes and you get a shower, and I remember an ice cream parlor there. ... I think I've seen it since, I've been back to that same town, and, boy, did I eat ice cream. [laughter] I'm still an ice cream person, but, you know, by the time you get back to the front, you're dirty again. ... You know, I've been lucky. I've been back, R&R; I've been to Nice, in the Riviera, and this is the truth. When I was there; in fact, my friend was there at the same time, we have a picture at the same place, [it] was a Red Cross building. ... When I was there, I'm a little country boy from the Catskill Mountains, I'm standing at a light, waiting for the light to come off, cross. This young lady comes up to me and she says to me, "Do you have the time?" I'm a

little country boy; I looked at my watch, "Nine o'clock." That's not what she wanted, [laughter] but it's funny how things are. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

MK: How often would you get fresh clothing or get to have your clothes cleaned?

SB: You wash it and let the sun do the job.

MK: Basically, the clean pair of socks that you had ...

SB: I carried a couple.

MK: Did you take two or three pairs with you when you left?

SB: Yes. Well, they'd come from home. The care packages help a little.

MK: You would carry underwear and socks. You washed and dried them out yourself.

SB: Underwear is one thing. You don't have to wear underwear. ... Do they still have the same color in the service, the brown.

MK: The brown and green.

SB: You know why that is? It doesn't show the stains. [laughter] That's a fact. Is this on?

SI: Yes.

SB: Oh, no, no. [laughter]

MK: What about bathing, showering? How often would you get a chance to clean yourself?

SB: Once in a while, very seldom.

MK: Shaving was not ...

SB: Shave? We used cold water, with your helmet, ... yes. I remember, one time, though, it was during the combat; ... of course, you know, you used quinine tablets, then. Do you still use them?

MK: No.

SB: No?

MK: I think certain people do. I did not.

SB: No? They don't mention it.

MK: No. They still have them.

SB: Oh, okay, but we often thought, what made us feel bad is, we'd fill our canteens out of the stream, right, right out of the stream, put a quinine tablet in it, but, then, you'd walk up a couple of miles and, there, you'd see the dead soldiers laying in the stream. It's scary, it's scary. You know, you don't think of things like that. ... No, as far as food and stuff like that, it's really hard to explain your feelings or what you did then. You know, this is sixty years ago.

MK: That is why I ask these questions. Many students and readers do not have a good understanding of the little things.

SB: Right. I don't, either.

MK: That is why I want to ask you, because those little things are very important.

SB: Yes, that's right. ... I went to a couple of schools. I've talked to students, intermediate, fifth graders, mostly, and I'll tell you, it's the same all over. You have students that are interested, students that want to go to sleep. Some are just being there because they're getting out of class. I had the opportunity to speak to a high school in ... Wolfhagen, Germany, high school kids, and, you know, when we sat down, ... you'd never know [they were German]. When these kids came in, it was the baggy pants, the long hair, you know, and they spoke English. You could visualize you were back home, and the kids were very good, cooperative. One question they always ask you, "How many Germans did you kill?" ... You know, I don't know why, it's just automatically, I never gave it a thought, I said, it just came out like, "I never killed an American," just like that, and he asked me about the Germans. ... They thought it was funny, you know, and I didn't mean it to come out that way; it's just [came out] automatically. The kids are good, though. They were interested and, of course, we could have said, too, "How many Americans did you guys..." even the kids, because they were [using] the younger kids then, but those kids, not that time, their grandparents and all, but they still have Nazis. There's strong German [Nazism] over there. They've got some, still, here in America, but I found them [the students] very, very good. We had a parade. I have good friends, again [in Belgium]. They have a museum. They're called "M&M," (Matilda and Marcel?), and you couldn't ask for nicer people in this world. They are Belgian. ... (Marcel?) and she put this museum together on their own. The Germans used to live at his father's home. He had to go to the German school, learn German and everything, and he found a lot of material and he started off just a little bit. Then, he got some American stuff, and then, he bought stuff and people donated [material] to him. These people take [in] these people from all over. If you're not American, you pay for the tour. He's got [a facility] three stories high. I've got film of it. That's another thing; I mean, you know, you fellows don't realize what I have to show you guys, really. I have tapes, reunions, my trips. I've got these; it tells the whole story, ... right from the time I went to Remagen, but, anyway, these people take these people in for nothing. They don't charge them anything. If you want to give, you give. They just made an American veteran the honorary citizen of Belgium. He gave so much, and so much of his time. He was always there. He just passed away, and they made a tribute to him. I don't know if you ever heard of the Henri-Chappelle Cemetery [in Belgium]. That's where I go most of the time.

Most of our 78th is in the Henri-Chappelle Cemetery. It's a beautiful, beautiful cemetery. Cemeteries are cemeteries, ... and these people are fantastic to the vets. No matter who you are, they'll take you in. They go out of their way. They make different programs on their own. They put the money into this. They're coming over this May, I think. They've been to my home. They are really with this one outfit. I can't remember which group it is now, but ... they're in Lancaster, PA, and they are really, really in with them, and there's another one they go to; it's in Virginia. ... I've taken them down to Drumthwacket, [the New Jersey Governor's residence, in Princeton], to visit and, of course, they've taken me all over. They [say], "Don't worry about anything." ... They pick us up at the airport, and that's a long way from Brussels, to Henri-Chappelle, get up in the morning, four o'clock in the morning, to pick you up. You don't have to spend a penny, but you always try, some way or another. ... They have beautiful material. Sometimes, I'll have to show the film, but I know you guys are always busy. ... I'll tell you, [if] you got the time; I'm retired, so, it makes no difference. [laughter] I may have a little trouble getting out. ... So, that's it; another one?

SI: As Mike mentioned earlier, there are many little things that are not commonly known today, such as holding your spare socks next to your body.

SB: Yes, keep them warm.

SI: Are there any other little things that helped you to survive?

SB: Well, ... one thing, ... it wouldn't help me survive, I didn't smoke. ... They had the little three-pack cigarettes, Chesterfields, Lucky Strike, Raleigh, and all these old-time [brands], Tops, Camels. I used to keep them. I was the guy that used to feed these guys the cigarettes, no charge, but I didn't realize I was killing them, according [to what we know] today, the lung cancer.

SI: Nobody knew that then.

SB: Right, but it was a gesture. That's all. I didn't smoke in the service. ... I didn't smoke. I didn't drink in the service. I didn't smoke. ... One little tidbit, when I was a little guy, a little kid, I gave up smoking that day. I went behind the barn and I started out with a cigar. That taught me. ... [laughter] I'm glad it happened, yes, and I didn't start drinking; I'm not blaming marriage, now, but ... I didn't drink anything until after I got married, and you know why. You know why, why I never drank before. I still don't drink much, because of the family. You see what it does.

MK: Can you tell us how you met your wife and how you ended up marrying her?

SB: That's interesting. Yes, I met my wife on a blind date. We got engaged on April Fool's Day. [laughter] I used to work; well, you said something about this, what I did after I came out of the service. Like I say, I didn't do anything for about a year. I didn't know, really, what I wanted to do, and this friend of mine, he worked for the Western Union people and he recommended me. ... I went to New York and I got hired with the Western Union. I worked in Kingston, New York, I worked in Stamford, Connecticut, I worked at Camp Kilmer, I worked in New Brunswick, I worked in Westfield. ... When I worked at Camp Kilmer, that was really

interesting. Being in the service, I never realized how much work it is for a Western Union person. As soon as they come off the ship, they come in there. The whole line's, "Dear Mom and Dad, send me some money." Well, when they send the money, they had to go through the same thing all over again [to pick up the money]. ... I got to be manager there and they were the cheap outfit, they really were, and what they had me doing [was], I was covering an office here, at Camp Kilmer, and then, I had to go to Westfield to cover that one, too. Well, this is going to get into a story. The fellow I had working with me, he had a girlfriend and his girlfriend worked with my wife in South Plainfield, Cornell Duralier. ... Well, they mentioned my name and it was in the wintertime, too. ... What we did is, I dropped them off first, and this is the first night my wife went out [with me], ... when she was my girlfriend, and I had one of these fedora hats on and everything, and a topcoat and all. I think she was a little worried, but, anyway, she got home okay. ... She's Slovak. She's Slovakian. Her mom and dad both passed away. We lived in Fords and we got engaged on, like I said, April Fool's Day. I was married when I was twenty-five years old.

MK: Did she think that you were joking when you asked her on April Fool's Day?

SB: No, but I'd wish; no, I'm only kidding you. [laughter] I told her that yesterday, when we were out, but I said, "You know, we never got married." That was another thing I mentioned to her. I said, "If I had a chance to go to jail for twenty years or get married, today, I would have been a free man." [laughter] I've been married fifty-seven years.

SI: Congratulations.

SB: Yes, and it'll be fifty-eight in January, but it's been a good life. ... You have your ups and downs, no matter what. Nothing goes smooth. ... What was the other thing? Oh, yes, the young man that worked for me at the Western Union, I always told him, we had a jeep driver, [who] delivers and everything, I said, "Don't ever let anybody hang out in the office." The jeep driver wasn't bad, but, "When anybody comes over here to make friends with you, out." He got conked. He got hit in the head with a bedpost, almost killed him. I got called in at three o'clock in the morning, and he made it, but he's no longer with us. His wife is gone, I mean, unfortunate, really. Another situation, in Camp Kilmer, this is another time that I got a little upset with officers, also. Somebody came in, one of the GIs, and they wanted to cash something, and I got a little suspicious of it and I reported it to the military police. ... They came up and investigated and everything and the head man of the MPs told me to bring it down. "No, I'm not bringing it down. You want it, you come up here," and I said, "I want a signature for it." They had me thrown off the post. You know, when you're doing your job; I caught a guy that was stealing, but, then, they transferred me, as a regular, up in Westfield, New Jersey. I was with them quite a while, but, like I say, it was a thankless job. I've had a few jobs. I worked for Exxon. I haven't had too much luck with jobs. I worked for Fedders. That's another story. I went in there, [was hired] just like that, didn't know a thing about the business. I set up my own way of doing things. I was supposed to be just the recorder guy, keep track of all the material, metal and all. Well, one of the guys quit. Well, they gave me his job and my job. I had to set up [a system, so] that if they came over there and wanted a spool of metal or a big load of refrigerator material, I had it in my book, exactly where it was, pinpointed. Well, I worked for them about five years. They keep promising and, one day, they had a strike. Well, I was non-union, so, I'd come to

work every day, had to worry about nails in the road and everything else, and we worked on the line. We never did it before. We did their business for them and we were scabs, actually, what they called it, but I had to work. So, we did the jobs and the guys settled their strike. After the strike, one day, I came home; it was summertime. I was sitting out in the backyard. The phone rang. My wife comes out; she'd hung up already. They wouldn't even call me in, said, "You don't go to work anymore. They fired [you]. They laid you off." After what we did, they didn't even give me a two-week notice or nothing, and I know why they do this, ... I'm not a racist, now, because of the people that worked there. A lot of [them] were Puerto Rican and they thought I'd go in there and cause damage or take my records. If I took my records, they would've been up the creek; never had the courtesy. I worked for Exxon [for] seven years, and those people were stupid. We had an independent union, happy. They all had a nice deal, really, a great deal. I'd just bought a house, a new car, had a baby, and they brought in the national union and they voted for it and they told them, when they did that, they were going to lay off [employees]. I got laid off.

SI: You mentioned that you were in sales. Is that what you were doing at that time or did that come later?

SB: No. I was working in an office there, at the time, but they did call me back, because I had rights, because I was a union person, but what they do [is], they're smart, they give you the worst job. They asked me to come back [as a telephone operator on the midnight shift]. ...

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

MK: After the war, you were discharged from Fort Dix. Did you take days, weeks, months, off to relax?

SB: I took the year off. I got 52/20. You know, that's twenty dollars [a week] for fifty-two weeks.

PB: Did you benefit from the GI Bill at all?

SB: I tried. ... Like I said, I was going to ... try to go to school, but I don't know. After you're away for three [years], and you probably know this from a lot of your students down there, that if you take time off, out of school, you lose it. Once you get out of school, you just don't want to take [classes]. Another thing is, being in the service, you don't want to take orders. ... You know what I'm saying now. A lot of guys, they benefited by it. A lot of them got to be professors, they've got engineer's jobs, but, like I said, ... for what I was in, as far as [the] business course, I could do this without it. ... I got to be a manager. As long as you got it and you can use your head, there's no problem. I had a nice job in Exxon, really, good pay, but, when I was in the Boy Scouts, I was a forklift driver. I mean, ... I was also a milkman. ... I liked the job, but it was a toughie, [get up at] four o'clock in the morning, and you had to work in the snow and everything. ... I don't think you were born then. They had a big blizzard, in '48. [laughter]

MK: That is a little before our time.

SB: But, anyway, no, but, you know, the customers complained if you were late. ... What happened there was, it was the Woodbrook Farms, I don't know if you've heard of them, in Metuchen. Well, they merged, and I'll tell you, when I first started that job, I didn't sleep too good, because what they had [was], they had the customers and they had the route listed on the back, how to take this street and that street. I used to lay in bed, visualizing how to go. Finally, you got the thing down pat. [It] cost me one hundred dollars to join the union, ... the Teamsters, and I only worked there a little while. When they merged, they put in the warehouse, loading crates from the milk company to go on to the trailers. Well, one day, I dropped a whole load. They were heavy. ... I wasn't built for that stuff, so, I quit. I didn't want that, but the only thing that saved me was my customers. I got my one hundred dollars back, it was Christmastime, tips.

MK: Do you remember coming home after your discharge? Do you remember if any Americans thanked you?

SB: ... That's the same way, you brought this up, ... about why [the] World War II monument was built last. We've always said, "We were so glad to get home, we didn't do what these guys did. They made a lot of noise. They wanted all this and all that." For one thing, in those days, we didn't have the money to do it. Another thing, we were so busy making a living, we didn't have no time for this rabble-rousing and all. Another thing is, we just didn't care at the time, but, after a while, when we saw all this other [activity], "Why not us? We're the leaders, actually. Everybody says we're the 'Greatest Generation' and all that bologna," and, you know, I guess we were, in a way. We tried to set a good example and everything, but we finally got ours and, like I said, ... each one of those stars is one thousand guys, and so many [have died since]. [Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow is referring to the four hundred gold stars on the National World War II Memorial, each one representing one thousand casualties.] Even in the last couple of months, eleven hundred World War II veterans are dying a day. That's the last figure that I heard. ... There's not too many left. I don't know what the figure is, they did have it at one time, how many actually are living, yet. I don't think there's any World War I vets anymore. I'm not too sure. I think the last one died, here in Menlo Park.

PB: I think the last veteran was on the History Channel.

SB: Did you find [some]? Are there any left?

PB: They had an interview with one of the last guys.

SB: Is he still living?

PB: I do not think so.

SB: ... Yes, they would be up in the hundreds, yes.

PB: 113, about.

SB: Well, I know they had two in Menlo Park, and I think they're both gone, but it's a shame. We are trying [to build a memorial], we hope. I don't know if I mentioned this or not, but, in our

commission for the World War II [memorial] in Trenton, I think there's twelve commissioners, we've already lost two, and who's next? ...

MK: You mentioned on your survey that you retired as a custodian. How did you get into that?

SB: Yes. ... When I first got hired, I'll tell you, I was fortunate, getting that job, I really was, because I was up in age. ... Sometimes, it pays to have friends, especially political. You've got to be somewhere. I only knew a principal and a fellow that I go to church with, and he happened to be a boss, and they didn't even start me off as a regular. My job, ... when I went in there, it was an inventory control analyst, and they started me off; did you ever hear of Ceta., the Ceta Program?

MK: Yes, I have heard of it.

SB: That's what they started me off at, to find out if I was qualified. What makes me a little angry about that is, that time did not count towards my pension. I worked there about seven years. I got commendations from principals, a lot of good words. Then, all of a sudden, one of our council people did not get elected or something, and the word they called it is RIF, [reduction-in-force], educational departments, that's RIF, right? Well, they RIF-ed [laid off] me and I was really upset, because this guy wanted my job. Well, anyway, what happened was, I could have went to court, because I had vested rights. What really made me angry was, I think it's sixty days, he got me down to almost the last day before they offered me this custodian job.

MK: That was in Woodbridge.

SB: Woodbridge High School, yes.

MK: What year did you retire?

SB: '91. ... They can say what they want about custodians. The teachers, they really think a lot of the custodians. If it wasn't for custodians, they wouldn't have a job.

MK: My best friend's father was a custodian at Colonia High School.

SB: Oh, yes. What's his name?

MK: Joe (Nalawaka?).

SB: Yes, sure. ... What's he to you?

MK: My best friend's father.

SB: Okay. You mention my name. He knows me. He still there?

MK: Yes, he is still there.

SB: Son of a gun. He worked for a Jewish fellow. ...

MK: Yes.

SB: And I liked him; he liked me. ... I started at school ... [number] eleven, taking inventory, and, when I say inventory, that's everything in the school, everything, books, chairs, tables, and you had to find out what the names were. ... At night, I'd have to make an IBM report, take it all down, and I had a good system. I had a card system, and then, I put it in alphabetical and numerical order, and then, I had to take it down to the computer people and they ran it off, and then, they gave it to them. They had to make every model, every serial number on the computers, typewriters, and it was a toughie. It was a toughie, but, when this guy wanted the job, well, they tried to give it to him. He didn't get it. He wasn't qualified. Well, by that time, I got the custodian job, and then, they got another fellow from Fords, and I think I know why they gave him that job, too, but he was a nice guy. ... He told me, he said, "Stu, you made my job easier." I think he had a problem, medical problem, and I think they did it for health reasons, but I took my job serious. I really did. A couple of times, I found a couple of notes on the desk and I took them serious. I would take them down to the guidance office, about committing suicide and stuff like that. I don't know if I did any good, but I wasn't going to take any chances. ... I worked every place in the Woodbridge High School, every spot, but I used to get [criticism]. Some of the custodians didn't like me, because I did too much work. Some of the guys said, "What are you looking for, a medal this year, week, or, you know, a trophy?" I said, "I'm doing it for the kids," same way with the bathrooms. I couldn't stand a bad bathroom. I enjoyed my job, really. I worked the night shift, three to eleven. It wasn't bad, but it's given me my pension. It's not a hundred thousand dollars. ... That's another point I have to bring up, because of my service. When I retired, ... I had eighteen-and-a-half years. So, I bought a year-and-a-half of my three years [of] service time. That gave me twenty years. Twenty years gave me half pay. So, the service, again, helped me in a way, and being out, what? fifteen years; some of these guys retire and they die the next year. (Nalawaka?); isn't that something? That's a small world, man. I liked him. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about your involvement with veterans' groups? When did that start? What have you done?

SB: Took me a long, long time to belong to the VFW, a long time. ... Like I said, I worked. I had no time for it. I had a family, and then, I did join. I've been with [the] VFW quite a while. I was a chaplain at one time. I could be an officer, but I didn't want it. ... The chaplain was a tough job. The tough part was when you had to go to a wake or to the funeral, ... but I really took an interest in it. We used to go to the hospitals, see one of our members. We gave one of these [a crafted wooden box] to the wife [widow], with a Bible in it. They used to give money and I said, I made a suggestion, "Money's here, gone tomorrow." I got this one because it was a reject. I just got the box. I put my own Bible in it, but it's a nice box. ... They put their name in it for her. We present it at the wake and we give a nice, little thank you. The commander does that. ... We got a commander in, and I usually speak my mind, that's the way I am, and we had this one guy, he just went in there to be a big shot, truck driver. ... I needed ... some of these

three-by-five cards for my records and I got them through the dollar store. I got three packages for a buck and I brought them down there. I paid for them. So, I went in and I said, "I need some cards." So, he gave it to me and I knew the treasurer and he must have mentioned it to the commander. He goes over to me, "See, you know I'm the commander here, don't you?" I said, "I think so." He says, "Well, anytime you want something, you come to me." "Is that true? Okay, is that the way you want it? Here's your job." I quit right there and then, right there and then. I said, "I'm a volunteer and I got these things, and I have to ask you for something that's for my job? I don't need you, pal," and it took a long time, [but] he finally came to me. ... He used to come to me. I wouldn't even salute him. He lost my respect. Then, he got out. The guy that hired me as a chaplain, he didn't hire me, he picked me, he was a real nice guy. I was there a couple of years. ... Really, I took pride in it. I really liked it, because it was meaningful. It was worthwhile. I've been asked if I wanted to do the chair; no more, no, no, I don't need it. I got to be an American Legion man, very interesting. ... You want to put this on tape?

SI: We have been recording.

SB: Oh, you are? Okay, no problem; well, anyway, this one here is ...

SI: We can always edit it.

SB: That's all right. Like you say, you edit it. I never joined the American Legion. I figured, "One's enough." ... We had a monument, I don't think you'll see it, but I think you should see it, down here by the firehouse, across the street from the school administration building. It was dedicated on Mother's Day, back in the '40s, and it got deteriorated. The wall was still there, the names were on it, but it was just [deteriorated]. What they did [was], they took the names, the casings, off ... and everything. So, the American Legion, here in Woodbridge, decided they were going to make this a project and they wanted to raise money and what I was doing, at the time; ... there's a sign in front of the municipal building dedicated to Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and so forth. ... It's a beauty. It's like an old type, it's red, with all these emblems on it, and, when they uncovered it, I said to one of the council people, I said, "You know, that would make a beautiful pin," and the woman next to me, she said, "Right, let's look into it." Jack McGreevey, he got into it. He designed it, more or less, and the council lady brought it up. The township put their money into it and, in fact, what happened now is, just two weeks ago, Sunday, the lady that made this pin for us in the business, the design people, she just passed away. She's sixty-two, I think. She had cancer in her head, nice woman. Her husband was, at one time, the VFW state commander, but what I did is, I raised money, ... helped raise money, for this, and I made quite a bit of money. ... What the American Legion did for me is, at the presentation, when they dedicated the new monument, the commander called me up to the platform, ... it's up on the TV, he presented me with a trophy, a beautiful trophy, and he also [presented me with], it's right there on the wall, a certificate of life membership to the American Legion.

MK: Did you think about going back in the service when the Korean War started?

SB: No way, no way. If I wanted to do that, I would have stayed in the service when I got out and I would have had twenty-five years in. No, I had no desire. To me, Korea, that was not a patriotic war, and I'm sorry my brother had to go.

MK: What made your brother join the Army?

SB: ... He got drafted. I think he got drafted, yes, yes. The thing I can't understand is, like I told you before, he was a cook, stationed in Japan. We got a letter from him, and I still have it. ... I think he had a Japanese girlfriend, I really do, because I think he was saving money. He had a girlfriend up in his hometown and what he was doing then, he was sending the money to her; that didn't last. I found that out later, too, but he wrote in the letter that things were really getting hot over there and I think he had a premonition. Like I said, I got the letter. He wrote it and he wasn't a good scholar, but he was a good, young man, a good kid. I didn't get to know him too good, because, when I was going in the service, he was younger, and, when I came home, I didn't stay home, and then, he went in. ...

MK: What was the age difference between you and him?

SB: ... [I was born May 27th, 1924 and he was born June 24th, 1931].

MK: Quite a bit.

SB: Yes. See, my sister is a little younger than me, and then, my other sister is a little younger, and then, my other sister is a little [younger], and then, him, and then, my brother Bobby. ... My brother Bobby's actually ten years younger than I am, so, it's in-between them. So, it's about a couple years in-between each one, but, no, I had no desire, nothing at all. I didn't even take any of my material home when I left the service. ... I think I kept my topcoat and my Eisenhower jacket, but you really have to be dedicated to go into the service. I know everybody loves their country, but I'm glad my son didn't have to go to Vietnam. He was the next one to go, the next call, and what I'm going to say is, I feel this way and I don't blame those young men to go to Canada. Today, I mean, they got away with it, they got amnesty and everything, but it would have been my son's choice if he wanted to go into the service. I think I would have sent him. You know, it's not easy to give up somebody, and see that one up there, behind you, that picture? Yes, the young man in that picture was found after fifty years in China, in the mountains. He was an Air Force man. I never knew the man, (Bartholomew?), and it just happened to be that [the] photographer took that picture. ... I know the two VFW guys back there. ... I saw it and I liked the picture. A friend of mine, he bought that picture for me, with the frame. You know, they don't give those pictures out. You have to buy them. I think they're around fifty dollars, but it came out perfect.

SI: To describe the photograph for the tape, Mr. Brandow and two other VFW members are saluting the flag at the funeral service.

SB: ... I have the clippings of the story and all.

PB: Where is that?

SB: Right here in Woodbridge, yes.

SI: What is your most vivid memory of the war? What stands out in your memory the most?

SB: Oh, there are so many, so many.

SI: You can discuss a couple of the most vivid moments.

SB: I'm going to have to say the bridge, [Remagen]. I think that's [it], although, one thing that does come to mind a lot, like I said before about the tanks, ... we didn't want the tanks [near us]. We were going across this field, open field, and this is the first time that we heard that this happened. It was against the Geneva Convention. The Germans were shooting the anti-aircraft weapons at us. You know, there's no such thing as rules in war, none, but going off [over] that bridge, it's just [a matter of] hoping you got on the other side. ... The things that really bring back memories, ... I'm fortunate, because I've been back, ... when you're standing on top of the hill, you see it all over again. ... A lot of guys don't talk about a lot of stuff and I've always said, "The ones that talk the most about fine details did the least," and that's my way of thinking. I mean, I can do [that], say everything, do this, do that; ... I just don't. ... When you go back to the Henri-Chappelle Cemetery, my first time there, I broke down. I did. I broke down and there were two Army officers there. I think they were part of it and they said, "Don't worry about it. You're not the only one." When you see these crosses, no matter which way you look at them, they're lined up, no matter where you stand, and you walk in this beautiful place and you look down; too many memories, too many, too much. ... This Stisn I was telling you about before, ... my good friend, these Belgians, I don't know if you know this or not, I don't know if I mentioned it or not, but these Belgians, they actually adopt graves. This is their gravesite. They get a certificate. They go there on every military [holiday], Memorial Day and so forth. They put our flag, their flag and a bouquet [on the grave], and I've got a very good friend, he has five or six graves. ... His name is (Jackie?) Comhair, C-O-M-H-A-I-R, and I mention guys' names because they've done a lot. ... This fellow made a monument in the woods over there, in his home. He found a bomber's motor in the ground and these people, they actually took these people in, to hide them from the Germans, and he's got a monument. I've got the picture. They made a monument to these bombers. ... Everything was statues over there, dedicated to their own and to ours, and some of them are really beautiful, really beautiful, and I've been to a German cemetery. I've been to [the] Normandy cemetery. I've been to the one in Holland. ... I was impressed with the German one. I've also been to a Russian one, the Russian one that's in Berlin. The Russian one was very, very blah. You walk in, there's great, big statues, there's trees on both sides; you don't see a grave. The graves are behind the trees. It's all opened up. The German one, they had a nice monument and they had a background and they had, like, a mummy representing these people. The gravesites, they had more than one in the grave. I saw ages, that I can remember, from fifteen to fifty and, again, they're cold looking, nothing like the American cemetery. Our cemeteries over there, the one I know about, it's in Belgium, they are taken care of by the Belgians, but we are the ones that paid them. I know the director there. I know the secretary there. I've got e-mails from them. ... One time, I have to mention this, my birthday is May 27th and I just happened to go over on that week, my birthday week, and that week happened to be Memorial Day. They held their yearly ceremony on my birthday and I taped ... the whole thing and I thanked everybody for coming for my birthday; no, I'm only kidding. [laughter] ... Anyway, the flowers, oh, the flowers that are donated, given; one of the fellows from Belgium brought one representing the 78th Division. It's outstanding, the way these people are. I've been

back to Belgium. ... I didn't mention this; I have been back to Holland, on R&R, also, Maastricht, and I'm sorry I didn't get the address and the name of the people then. You know, I'll start talking, things keep coming to me, and you go back to these places and you realize how lucky [it is that] you can see these places. ... I told you [that] I had all the ice cream and everything in Belgium; I happened to be at some kind of a function and this young lady came over to me and I got to stay at their home. There were five, four girls and one boy, in this family, and I stayed at their home. She was an English teacher, and I'll tell you, what a family. I've been back to that same home. I've been back to their sister's house. I've stayed at their home, the one that I met the first time. She lives in (Little City?), Nevada? She married a GI and I tried to be friendly with her, but I don't know why she doesn't want to correspond. So, I just dropped it, but this one sister, ... they were both school teachers and she just lost her husband, real nice people. ... See, what they do in Belgium [is], every child you have, you get paid, for having children, and some of them have a lot and they all are beautiful kids, beautiful kids, and, [by] telling you this story, I have to tell you another story. Back in Germany, I used to travel between Naumburg and a little town called Netze, N-E-T-Z-E, and I just happened to meet this young German girl. It was against the rules. ... You weren't supposed to get with the German people. I got pretty friendly with her. Like I say, I was engaged at the time. I really got friendly with her, but she took me to her home. I used to go there on a Sunday. ... I slept there, alone, I have to make that a point, but, anyway, ... her folks let me, stayed up with her all the time, no problem. ... What I used to do is, I used to bring her stuff from the PX, you know, like toothpaste, a toothbrush, stuff like that. One day, I had a Sunday dinner there and it was great. ... All of a sudden, they put [out] this nice, big piece of [what] looked like a chocolate cake. Well, I got fooled. I bit into it and what it was, it was *bloodwurst*. I had to get rid of it. "Sorry, I can't wait," but, you know, that doesn't end the story, though. I found out, later in life, from the people that I know, I've made friends with other people in Netze, in fact, her girlfriend is still living and her girlfriend introduced me to another family, which I know very well. ... Through them, I found out, in fact, this young girl was supposed to be going with a captain at the time and I found out that ... he was married and I think he got divorced and he married this girl and brought her home. Well, I heard that they didn't make it, either, and I think she got married again. I think they had a son or something. Well, then, I found out that she went back to Netze to visit; while she was there, she died. You know, I have pictures. I still have pictures of them. I don't give up that easy. I keep my memories. I got it here, but I can still picture her. She was a beautiful girl, pretty girl, but I never, never got really involved with the women over there. I went out. Don't take me wrong, I went out. ... Some of these guys are bad. One guy, I could have killed him, but he raped a young girl.

SI: Do you want this on the tape?

SB: No, you can take it off. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

PB: How did you become a commissioner for the World War II monument in Trenton?

SB: That is a good, good question, and I'm proud of it. I'm not ashamed of how I got it. It's because of contacts. It's because I knew Mr. Jack McGreevey and I knew Governor [James]

McGreevy and I'd been a volunteer in their campaigns. I've been volunteering. I'm a volunteer and, if you don't volunteer when you get older, you're going to die young, I mean, old, young, I should say. Volunteering keeps you young. Being that he was the Governor, he had the right to pick whoever he wanted as a commissioner. The reason why I'm really proud it is because, as I told you before, I'm a New York person. I am also a New York veteran. They didn't have to do this for me. I guess, because of what I've done for the community, I knew him when he was the mayor and he knew what I've done in my past, and I really thank him. I thank them both. Jack McGreevey has taught me and showed me a lot. He introduced me to people I never would have met. I know the General, [Major General Glenn K. Rieth]. He's the head commander of the National Guard of New Jersey. That's where we hold our commission meetings, in (MAVA?), down at ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Lawrenceville?

SB: Yes, and if you ever ... want to see a nice ... museum, go to Lawrenceville. They have a Civil War [section] there and the other ones there.

SI: Is that where the 78th Division is headquartered now?

SB: ... No. The 78th is in Camp Kilmer, yes, and I don't know [for] how much longer. They're planning on closing it. They might go to Fort Dix, I don't know, but he's introduced me to Governor [Jon] Corzine. I've met him before he was a governor. ... Yesterday, I met [Congressman] Rush Holt. ... In fact, I've got [a photograph] over there, Richard Codey, I met him personally. ... One day, at the meeting, ... Codey was standing there and I said to him, "Mr. Codey, or Governor Codey, would you mind if I have a picture taken with you?" "No," ... and just then, ... Corzine came around. I said to the Governor, "Governor, would you mind if ... Senator Corzine would come in to it?" You know what he said to me? "Maybe you'd better ask him if he wants to be in the picture with me." [laughter] It was nice, you know, to be in ... [with] two people that are [high office holders], ... same way with that picture up there, that [Eleanor] Roosevelt picture, man. ... She was up there [Catskill, New York] to dedicate a little site that we had, where the cabin was. She was a very nice woman, [to] go up that far just to see us little, old country boys. I met Governor [William J.] Clinton, I mean, President Clinton. I've shook hands with him. I've met; ... who was the one that ran against him?

MK: Bush?

PB: Dole?

SI: Gore?

SB: No, Joe, the Jewish fellow.

SI: Joe Lieberman.

SB: Yes, I met him, yes. I've met a lot of big shots down in Trenton.

PB: What is your involvement within the monument commission?

SB: ... Well, we go to meetings, and I'm not only a commissioner, I'm also with the QRB. That's the Quality [Review] Board, Control, and we have the meeting before they go into the commissioners and we try to make decisions, what would be the best, and then, we bring it up to the commissioners, and we've had the sculptors there. We've already picked the soldier. I don't know if I told you what's going to be involved in this. ... I've got a picture of it. They have a lone soldier, that's ... what you guys call a "grunt," that's what (Jack Dawes?) used, and he said, "That's supposed to be our main feature," but it didn't turn out that way. It's supposed to be the grunt, then, they have the rifle and the helmet to dedicate to the ones we've lost. In the front, a great big dome; on it, it's Lady Victory. ... [Under] the Lady Victory's feet is one of the Nazi flag and the Japanese flag. ... [It] is almost going to duplicate the [National] World War II Monument; one side is going to be [the] European [Theater] and the other side is going to be the Pacific [Theater]. They're going to have, like, an amphitheater. They're going to have water, lights, push buttons for explaining what's going in the kiosk. We have, I think it's three Medal of Honor recipients; we already got them lined up. They'll be on, just like the one in ... Atlantic City. Korean Monument ... whenever it gets done, it's going to be a beauty. ... Again, we hope it's early 2007, and I have to mention, we do need money. We do need money, donations. [laughter] In fact, when I saw Representative Rush Holt yesterday, ... oh, by the way, I do carry these with me, [donation sheets], and I don't think he knew about it, but whenever I see somebody, if I go to a doctor, a lawyer, I give them one of these. ... I've been getting small amounts, but every small amount adds up.

MK: Do you have more copies of these sheets?

SB: ... Oh, I can get you more. No, what you can do is make copies of that. Yes, you can have it.

MK: You should make copies of it and hand them around.

SB: You can do it, whatever you want to do. ... You can have that one. ... As you notice, my name is on the bottom. I do it that way, too. These guys, you know, down there in (Morrisville?) know what I'm doing. I've got it on TV, I've got in the *Sentinel*, I got it in the *Home News*. ... I tried to get in the (Atom?). I don't know if they're going to put it in or not, but I hit the man on the street. In fact, I've got a check in my pocket. I got twenty-five dollars the other day. I've gotten as high [as] a hundred bucks. ... That's the same way with Rush ... [Holt] yesterday. I gave him one and he looked at it and he started handing [it back]. I said, "No, that's yours." He said, "Yes?" and then, I found out, ... Jack told me, he was looking at it out in the hall. In fact, when I send him the pictures that I took yesterday; ... I just put them on my computer. I'm sending the pictures up that I took of him, well, [that] they took of him and I together and that whole group. ... In those pictures, I'm going to send him a nice thank you and tell him to send that to his constituents. [laughter] We're hoping that Governor Corzine would come across, really. I don't know why he can't give an individual [donation]. He gives it to all these other people. [laughter]

SI: Was the picture with Mrs. Roosevelt [hanging on the wall] taken before or after the war?

SB: Before. That was '43. Well, actually, it was during the war. ... In '43, that's when I was graduating, that year. That was during the war, yes. I sent the picture, and President Roosevelt, she explained, I have a letter explaining that he was very busy, ... which I can understand, but she gave me a nice letter. I have it in my memoirs, ... same way with [Hillary] Clinton. I'd never expect to get a picture back from Clinton. I don't think she'll ever be President, though. No, I don't think so. I mean, she's a Democrat and all, but ...

MK: She is an intelligent lady.

SB: Yes, but I think she ...

MK: I think she says the wrong things at the wrong time.

SB: Yes, yes, and that's coming out. It's coming out in e-mails ... too.

MK: She is definitely very intelligent.

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

SB: No, but I would like to thank you young men for coming.

SI: Thank you.

SB: No, I really am. I have to say, it's been a privilege, really. I know it's a privilege for you, but it's also a privilege for me, to meet such nice, young guys, really, and I wish you the best, and especially you, Mike. [laughter] ...

MK: I am going to make copies of this form and, I promise you, I will be dispersing them.

SB: ... If you want. I'll tell you what, now, you can mention [this], I am a pretty honest guy, if they want to send it to me directly, instead of going to them, it's perfectly okay. My name and number's on there, on the bottom. ... Incidentally, oh, yes, I do have something to add. As far as the Menlo Park Soldiers Home, ... like I said, I don't like to do this, but, when I first started these pins, it was for them. They were building an amphitheater down there and they wanted to add lights or whatever. ... I've sold a lot of pins, in the thousands of dollars, and there's an awful lot of people [that] has that pin on their hat. What we did the first time, though, ... I wasn't particularly happy about it, but it was a political thing, it was a time of campaigning for the mayor and it was a Woodbridge thing. ... My council lady, Brenda Velasco, she recommended that they give the pins to the veterans' organizations without charge, but I think the guys would have been willing to give money, but we never asked them for money. I've raised about seven thousand dollars for the fund, or more, even.

[Editor's Note: Mr. Brandow would like to mention his wife Elizabeth, his son Roland Stuart, his daughter Barbara Jean, his daughter-in-law Diane, and his son-in-law Bogdar (Vito) Demiariuk.]

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Reviewed by Peter Bronzino 4/28/06

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/21/07

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/28/07

Reviewed by Stuart T. Brandow 8/07