

Narrator: Barney Stellar
Date of Interview: July 12, 1988
Place of Interview: Narrator's home, located at
6022 South Park, Morton Grove
Interviewer: Yvonne Ryden
Recorded For: Morton Grove Historical Society
Transcribed For: Morton Grove Public Library
Tape Running Time: 1 hour, 51 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Barney Stellar was born on Georgiana Avenue in Morton Grove. His father was a horticulturist who emigrated to this country and found employment with the famous Poehlmann Brothers Greenhouses on Lincoln Avenue. Barney can remember the many flowers grown there and the hobos Poehlmans would often employ.

In this interview, Barney recalls his childhood in Morton Grove with the four-room schoolhouse, the old stores and watching planes take off at the airport in town. He later worked for Baumhardt Brothers Garage, Philippi's Chocolate Shop, and N.W. Foster and Son until his enlistment in the army at the outbreak of World War II.

The rest of the interview (page 28) deals with Barney Stellar's war years and service experience.

BS: Bernard Stellar

Q: Questions asked by interviewer, Yvonne Ryden.

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: Okay, let's start. Tell me about yourself. Start with your name, your birth date, your family.

BS: Well, my name is Bernard Stellar, but I was called Barney from a kid on up to this day. People didn't even know I have a first name of Bernard. I was born October 6, 1916, on Georgiana Avenue. My father's name was Stanley. My mother's name was Anna. My oldest sister is Helen. My oldest brother is Paul, and I have a twin sister, Bernice.

Q: So you were Bernice and Bernard. Technically.

BS: Yes. B and B. I'm the youngest of the family. My twin sister is twenty minutes older than I am.

Q: Now, you were born in Morton Grove because your parents were living here. What was your father doing?

BS: Pa worked at that time at the world-famous Poehlmann Brothers Greenhouse. He worked at Plant A which was on Lincoln Avenue, and Plant B was on what is now Harrer Park on Dempster Street. He grew the mums for Poehlmann Brothers.

Q: Barney, tell me about your father and your mother and where they were born.

BS: My dad was born in White Russia, and my mother was from Poland. He came over here, I forget what year now, and he was a pretty educated young boy. He was a horticulturist. And like I say, he worked at Poehlmann Brothers, which was the world's largest greenhouse under one roof, with all the knowledge he had. They grew some beautiful flowers over there. I forgot even how many hundreds of people they had employed there. When we were kids, we used to go in there on a Sunday and walk up this row and look at that. During the summertime, Morton Grove being famous with all its hoboes, would empty the benches with wheelbarrow and shovel taking out all the old dirt piling it back there. Even when we were kids here, we remember they had an old steam shovel. In this spot on South Park here, I remember them coming with the horse and buggies and the shovel taking all the top soil off of Morton Grove in this whole area. Taking it over to Poehlmann Brothers. And as the hoboes emptied the benches, all this new soil was replaced. They in turn would start with their production of raising flowers again.

Q: I heard Poehlmann Brothers was famous for roses. Did they grow something else?

BS: Almost everything. Big flowers and tall stalks. They had special rooms for them. Morton Grove was also known at that time as "manureville." Swift and Armour with their world famous slaughterhouse in Chicago, all the stuff was brought in here to Morton Grove on the siding across from the Morton House which is now back of Baxters. And people used to drive through here coming back and forth from the trains. Even the caddies mentioned it to us when they came to the Glenview Club. They stopped at all these little towns here and naturally they would always smell the aroma, so it was called "manureville."

Q: It truly smelled that much?

BS: That's right. Flat beds weren't even covered or anything and there they were, car after car, up to the old depot.

Q: But it grew beautiful flowers.

BS: Beautiful flowers. Finest in the world. It was known the world over. Even their long-stemmed roses were known the world over. And the mums and all that. Us kids used to go through there on Sunday and look and marvel. And you wonder, where's all that going? And then in 1929 in the Depression, everything went bad. They even lost the property, the whole bit. They tore it down. All the glass roofs were taken down piece by piece and recut to be used for different greenhouses throughout the country. The same with the piping, the brass fittings, the faucets, and all that. Everything was all sold. From the world's greatest to memories like that.

Q: That's too bad.

BS: Yes. And then the hoboes always used to do all the work there. They were back where Harper is now. That used to be all woods there and they lived in there.

Q: On Lehigh?

BS: No, right on Austin Avenue. And across from that used to be our Morton Grove

dump. They would pick up all the stuff -- tin, metal, wood. They'd make their little huts and they lived in there.

Q: Now, are you talking about north or south of Lincoln?

BS: South of Lincoln Avenue.

Q: Where the park is now?

BS: Across the street from it.

Q: On the west side of Austin was the dump?

BS: The dump was on the east side, but the woods were on the west side. They used to go to Otto Frank's and buy that liquid canned heat. They would put that in their coffee and stuff, and they'd get high on that. As kids we used to go there, try to swim, and you'd smell all that garbage rotting. Sometimes they were all drunk -- they're staring at you.

Q: Now was Austin Avenue kind of a rutted road -- surely it wasn't paved.

BS: No, it was just a pebble road at that time. Adolph Sibilski had that twenty acre farm at Austin and Oakton because I remember that Bell and Gossett bought that property.

Q: And Bell and Gossett is north is north of Oakton on Austin on the west side. I don't know if it is still called Bell and Gossett.

BS: It's ITT Bell and Gossett.

Q: You mentioned the hoboes. Did Morton Grove have more hoboes than any place else?

BS: Well, I imagine so, because we were just confined here and I don't remember Glenview having anything in hoboes or Niles. Being no industry, here we had the world-famous greenhouses and . . .

Q: There were things here when they could occasionally get work. You told me before we started that Morton Grove had more horses than it had people. Were you kidding me?

BS: No. I think at that time the population was 1776 -- I never forgot that being a popular number like that. Yes, 1776 we had in population.

Q: Well, were the stables basically for workhorses or were those for people who had riding horses?

BS: No, those were all riding horses plus what the farmers had here for their farm. I forget how many hundreds and hundreds those three stables had plus the farmers. In old Morton Grove, the hoboes used to go over to Otto Frank's, the hardware store, where True Value is now. That used to be the famous Otto Frank's.

Q: Is that True Value the store on Lincoln Avenue in downtown Morton Grove?

BS: Yes, right across from Baxter's office there.

Q: It was independently owned?

BS: Yes, Otto Frank had it.

Q: Now I thought that store was owned by a man named Jack Koller.

BS: That was before him.

Q: Oh, Jack Koller first, and then Otto Frank, and now it's a True Value. But it's always been a hardware store?

BS: That's right. At one time there was a bowling alley downstairs of it, too.

Q: Is that all that they sold there?

BS: No, they had general merchandise there, too -- shoes, women's dresses, and all kinds of odds and ends, home appliances.

Q: In other words, it was just like a regular little country store. Was Morton Grove like a little country town?

BS: That's all it was. Across from Bringer Inn, that used to be our National Tea.
It's an antique shop now.

Q: And there was a grocery store there when I moved to Morton Grove.

BS: Yes, it used to be the old National. And then next to Otto Frank, east of him
one store, that used to be our A & P store.

Q: No, really? I hadn't heard about that.

BS: That's right. And then one time the end building, too, was a restaurant, I
forgot for how many different, different times.

Q: Somebody gave me an interview and said that before where the National Tea was, it
had been a tavern. Am I in the right block?

BS: I don't remember it being a tavern. Just that Frank Frees had the Bringer Inn.
That's the only tavern there. But I remember before the War, one building east
of the National Tea, Frank Feigel used to have a built-in tavern there.

Q: I would imagine that taverns were a good business, because of all the workers
that worked at Poehlmann Brothers.

BS: At Poehlmann's, yes. You had the tavern there and then Frank Frees had the
Bringer Inn, plus all the other roadhouses we had here in town.

Q: Yes, but people that worked at Poehlmann's wouldn't go to those roadhouses. People came from outside of Morton Grove to go to those roadhouses, right?

BS: Yes. There was a wooden building in back of the Bringer Inn which was Peschke's Blacksmith Shop. As kids, we always used to go there watching them shod the horses and watch with the harness. It was very interesting.

Q: You had lots to do as a child in Morton Grove.

BS: It's all we had to do. We had our chores at home.

Q: Tell about going to school.

BS: Well, from Georgiana where we lived we only were better than half a block to our public school which was on School and Capulina here. And in those days it was only a four-room school. In back of that they had a white hut. The first graders were in there. Where the present Village Hall is, that was our school right there. In fact, from the school to where this home is on 6022 South Park, we used to play tag and pom-pom-pull-away, football and whatnot. Even at nights the same kids . . . run sheepy run, we had pom-pom-pull-away here, hide the stick under the moonlight, and folks knew where we were.

Q: Now, we're talking about this home right here on South Park. So this was like a playground or was it a vacant lot?

BS: It was a vacant lot, but being that close to the school, a lot of the smaller kids they had to play their type of pastime. Us bigger boys came here because it was more room. Even at night we met here and played games from South Park here to Capulina. It was all open.

Q: Yes. You said you home was on Georgiana. Where was it . . . did Georgiana go through to Dempster Street?

BS: No, at that time our house and Fink's house which met right at the corner of Crain Street and then north from Crain to Austin, to Georgiana there, it was all woods.

Q: North to Dempster would have been all woods?

BS: All woods from back of Fink's house to Dempster Street was all solid woods. And at that time they had the world's famous Lincoln Tavern in the woods. The entrance was from Dempster Street. Under the archway you went and parked the cars and wealthy people would go there.

Q: Sounds pretty.

BS: Oh, a beautiful building. And as kids, we used to stand in front there. We heard all the famous bands -- Wayne King, oh gee, I forget them all, but they were all there. We all remember seeing them singing and dancing, entertainment, and all the famous food they had. That lasted until before the war, which is known now as Smith Drive with all the homes built in there.

Q: Yes. That's a pretty little cul de sac now. Now your house was on Georgiana.
And you told me that you were born at home.

BS: Yes.

Q: Were all of you born at home? You were the youngest.

BS: We were all born at home in those days.

Q: Did a doctor come?

BS: Yes. I think it was old Doc Drostenfels. In fact, he even gave me a vaccination
years later. He charged Ma fifty cents for that. That's right.

Q: Oh. [laughs] So you lived on Georgiana and you were real close to the little
four-room school. Was it four rooms as long as you went there?

BS: No. Was that in the early thirties when they added on the second floor? You can
go down there and see the frame and the structure of the original building to
this day.

Q: In the City Hall?

BS: In the bottom part of it facing School Street. We used to sneak down there.
When the girls used to play basketball there at night, you'd walk towards School

Street and there was the shower room to the left and the wall paneling was still the old wooden paneling.

Q: Interesting.

BS: Yes. At that time, it was a coal furnace. And Mr. Ahrens used to be our custodian. We used to call him Grandpa Ahrens.

Q: Was he nice to the kids?

BS: Yes, he was a very, very quiet man but very polite. And in those days if they said yes, they meant it, and if they said no, it was no.

Q: We've been talking about how this area has changed since you grew up. You were telling me that next to the little four-room school there had been a kind of hut where the first graders went when the school got overcrowded. You want to tell us about some of the other buildings around?

BS: Well they had that white Quonset hut there.

Q: Now, where was that?

BS: That was right in back of the original four-room school. Mr. Weiss lived right on the corner there in that two-story home. When they expanded this school to modern day with a second floor, they then moved that Quonset hut, and he used that as a two-car garage.

Q: And that would have been right on South Park and School Street?

BS: Yes, which is the parking lot today. Mr. Smith built a home right next door to it.

Q: Now that was that neat little two-bedroom bungalow. It was a lovely little house.

BS: Two bedroom bungalow. Great building. They tore that down and added a parking lot now.

Q: Yes. That house looked fairly new when it was torn down.

BS: Yes, they were all saying, too, why didn't they move it across the street on that lot there.

Q: Are there any other memories of your childhood before we go on?

BS: Well, we used to go down to Hobo Island when we were kids, tried to swim.

Q: Other people have talked about that. Where was Hobo Island?

BS: You know where Vegetable Growers Supply is? And you know where The Studio is?

Q: Yes.

BS: You've got that little road that comes across with the railroad tracks right here. And on your right-hand side, west of that, down on the lower part of the river. The hoboes used to sleep there. That's why it's named Hobo Island.

Q: Was it literally an island though?

BS: No, it was just the way the turn of the river was and the branch of it.

Q: Well, it's between the turn of the river and the way Lincoln Avenue turns. Lincoln Avenue was there then, wasn't it?

BS: At that time it was called Lincoln, yes. The railroad track is here and here's Dempster and right down in here the way the river went it was just a turn in the river and it was pretty high up, so we used to ski down there on homemade sleds. A lot of times we went skiing down there and you'd fall in the river. You'd come home soaking wet. One time we walked from the railroad tracks to Georgiana Avenue. That was all frozen. A solid mass of ice. Prior to that, around that bend up to the bridge on Dempster Street, we used to do a lot of skating there. In those days it was called ankle skating, because we had the old clamp skates. We went from there all the way down past Dempster Street way down to Harrison where the old Blind Pig used to be.

Q: You were going north to Harrison. That's the same as Old Orchard Road now.

BS: That's right. Right in the corner there used to be the old famous restaurant, the Blind Pig.

Q: Was that the name of it?

BS: That was the name of it, the Blind Pig.

Q: Because I know that speakeasys were called blind pigs in Prohibition days.

BS: Yes, they had hotdogs and hamburgers in there. Right across from there was forest preserve.

Q: Where Hobo Island was, is that now the forest preserve?

BS: It was then, too. It always has been. See Morton Grove to this day is still three quarters forest preserve.

Q: You look at any map of Morton Grove and you see forest preserves right up the middle.

BS: Yes, all the school kids used to go skating there and skiing, fires at night.

Q: Well, on the west side of the railroad tracks Lochner's had a farm, or had acreage. Somewhere on the south side of Dempster and west of the railroad tracks, I thought Lochner's had property.

BS: Well part of that extends to this day to the forest preserve. So I think they had it from the forest preserve line and back which would be north. But I

remember them as a kid. They started with a flower stand or what was a hotdog stand, too.

Q: Yes, on the north side of Dempster. Mr. Richard Lochner told me it's about where the Dairy Queen is now. They had to move the house east, and they've moved it to where it is now which is east of the greenhouses. They did not have greenhouses, though, like Poehlmann Brothers did.

BS: No. And prior to talking about that little forest preserve strip there, too, it used to be one of our little local, private airports in there. And I think it was . . . who had that now? Had a couple of planes in there and they used to take off.

Q: Was there more than one airport in Morton Grove?

BS: Yes. That was the second one. But the main one was right across from Dempster and School where Fred Sonne used to have the airport there with the old planes. We used to go watch that. I remember from Georgiana there was just a short walk across the woods to Dempster Street. We were barefooted a lot of times. We'd go over there on a weekend when they had the planes flying and parachute jumps. They even had one plane with a motorcycle motor in it. That thing would take off, make a lot of noise and it'd go so many hundred feet up and couldn't gain any speed and down it would come bouncing again. Bob Orel and myself, we used to go there to watch those planes. We were young kids and Sonne was quite busy because Dempster Street was only two lanes in those days and the planes would be flying. We were eager to watch them and all of a sudden we'd be jumping because

we're stepping on hot cigarette butts. We'd come home and we'd get a scolding on top of it.

Q: It sounds like there was a lot to do in Morton Grove when you were a child. Let's go back, though, and talk about your schooling. You finished eighth grade at Morton Grove School. At that time were there two grades in a room or did each grade have its own classroom?

BS: The old school there had four grades, but then they did rebuild and they had added on the second story with four grades on the bottom and four grades on the second level.

Q: Was that done while you were still going to school?

BS: Yes. That was completed, too, from the old hut there. From there they added on to the second floor which was four grades on the bottom and four grades on top.

Q: When you graduated was there a room like a gym or an auditorium?

BS: Yes, we had a gym down there with a stage, and they had the commencement exercise program right down in the gym.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

BS: N.T.H.S. Niles Township High School in the town of Niles Center, Illinois.

Q: I see. Now you're telling me there was a high school there.

BS: There was a grade school which is still there, but we had the upper level for a high school. There were only three grades there -- freshman, sophomore, and junior.

Q: Oh, three years of high school.

BS: That's right.

Q: You had a whole floor of Lincoln Grade School, because now it's called Lincoln Junior High. Then it was from kindergarten up to eighth grade.

BS: Yes. Then we had the upper floors for the high school. We used their gym for practice and the back of the grounds for baseball and football.

Q: What year would that have been?

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

BS: 1934, '35, and 1936. And then you'd have to go to Maine Township or some other school to complete the fourth year. I think Evanston was included, too.

Q: Yes, I interviewed somebody that had gone to Evanston. But you did have your first three years in the top of Lincoln School.

BS: Yes.

Q: Do you remember any of your teachers?

BS: Yes. We had Dobblestein there, was it? And the principal was Cotanche. And Harold Olsen, too. I think he lived in Morton for a while.

Q: Yes. Did you have either of the Reynolds sisters?

BS: Yes. Was there a Grace or something like that?

Q: No, one was Lucille and Marjorie.

BS: Lucille and Marjorie, yes. They were nice people. We had our class reunions there and it's so good to see the kids again, too, just like going back.

Q: Who were some of the people in your high school class?

BS: Jim Orphan, Jack Moody. And what's his name from the bank, the president. The rest of the basketball players -- Melvin Ahrens, Butch Lange, Jimmy Husen. We always used to go on the bus from Morton Grove to Niles Center.

Q: How did the bus run? That was a public bus.

BS: No, it was owned by Maierhofer. At that time, we had the old Ford and a small Chevy painted orange and they used to call that the pumpkin shell. We used to

play football back there and baseball. A lot of times we couldn't get in at the high school, so we had to walk over to Cleveland School and use their gym.

Q: I see. That was quite a hike.

BS: It was a hike, yes. We had to walk back and then change clothes over there. We walked from the high school back to Morton Grove about six-thirty in the evening.

Q: Too bad they never considered that hike as part of your credit for phys ed.
[laughs]

BS: Yes. And never had a swimming pool in those days either so that was out. In fact, to this day I can't swim.

Q: After you finished high school in '36, what did you do after that?

BS: After that I worked at Baumhardt Brothers Garage, which is Lin-Mar Motors now. Used to wash the new cars there, put on seat covers, wax them. A lot of times, too, I had to bicycle from Lincoln and Theobald to Georgiana there. In those days we thought a lot of money was two bits an hour. Yes, ten hours a day, six days a week. A lot of times on Sundays I had to go over there, take a rag and get a little dust off the new cars in the showroom there on the old '36, '37 Plymouths.

Q: So that was not just a service garage but was a car sales shop, too?

BS: That's right. It was Baumhardt's Dodge and Plymouth Agency and trucks. Yes.
Jake Baumhardt, George Baumhardt.

Q: Did that building which now is all pretty much enclosed have a show room with a
show window in the front?

BS: Yes. That faced Theobald and Lincoln, as you make the turn. Of course, in those
days the road was right in back of the garage. Now it comes down this way and
turns east.

Q: yes. When I interviewed Agnes Theobald we were having trouble trying to tell how
Theobald Road went. It didn't make that jog, did it? It went straight . . .

BS: Just a little jog like that. Because in back of the entrance door of the garage,
Mr. Baumhardt's folks lived in that little bitty home that they had on that
little acreage there. George and Jake were the sons. Then Jake lived on School
and Lincoln, and George lived on Mason Avenue here.

Q: When you said Baumhardt Brothers, they both owned this Dodge Plymouth Agency?

BS: Yes, Jake and George. Jake is still living. Yes, he's in, I think, Hines V.A.
Hospital. He's ninety-something years old.

Q: Interesting. So you worked actually in a new car showroom. It wasn't just a
garage.

BS: No, it wasn't a garage. It was a Plymouth and Dodge truck agency. People came from all over buying those cars which were under a thousand dollars. I remember the old '34, '35, and '36 Plymouths. They were always under a thousand bucks -- eight hundred, nine hundred something.

Q: Tell me more about what you did after you graduated from high school. Had you had a job at Baumhardt Brothers Plymouth-Dodge Dealership? What else did you do?

BS: Well, I left there because I was only making two bits an hour. Then I went over to Philippi's Chocolate Shop, which is a pizza joint there now on Fernald.

Q: Oh, were Pequod's is?

BS: Yes. Prior to that it used to be Philippi's Chocolate Shop. And we handled Chappell's Ice Cream, a brand of Sealtest. I got a dollar a day there.

Q: How long a day did you work?

BS: Oh, my goodness, nine, ten o'clock at night. Get there early in the morning, fill up the showcase. We had a hundred and one different types of penny candies.

Q: Literally a hundred and one?

BS: A hundred and one different penny candies were four sections high in the showcase, and that wide. Then we had the ice cream there. I had to make the sundaes and sodas, and people would come in there and say, "Hey, Barn, I want a

pack of cigarettes.” So they said, “Give me a pack of Luckys.” I handed them a pack of Luckys. I had to walk away from there back to the soda fountain side, and I made him an ice cream cone for a nickel, one dip a nickel, and cigarettes were fourteen cents.

Q: You were telling me how hard it was to work in the chocolate shop.

BS: Yes, I got there early in the morning, stacked the Tribune papers up, cleaned, mopped, and refilled the candy case, which was a hundred and one different types of penny candies, plus your nickel candy bars, big candy bars in those days. Then I had to go on the soda fountain side and wash all the soda glasses, cleaned the counters.

Q: I’ve often wondered, do you get tired of eating candy when you work in a candy store?

BS: You get tired of looking and smelling it. Same with the ice cream -- the sodas, the sundaes, the banana splits with all the syrup, and the nuts, marshmallow. Mr. Roth couldn’t pronounce marshmallow, so it was a “mushmallon.” When I was overseas, I thought, “Boy, if I could only go in there and get a scoop of ice cream.”

Q: Tell me about the man that owned the store. Did he make any part of it himself? You said it was Sealtest ice cream, and of course, penny candy.

BS: Well in those days when I worked there the truck driver used to come there from the Chappell's ice cream truck and he'd packed all that ice cream with rock salt and ice cubs, chopped ice, you know. They'd pack it in there. And then for the weekend, he had to do it better, because it had to last two days, Saturday and Sunday.

Q: Did the ice cream truck come ever day otherwise?

BS: Every day. Came there every day. Had all the famous brands of ice cream. And then Mrs. Philippi died. Prior to that she married Mr. Roth. He came from Germany and he couldn't speak very fluent English in those days. By that time, the war was breaking out and Charlie Schurite, the candy man, said he had to go back to Germany because he wasn't an American citizen. When Poehlmann's was there, guys used to come in for cigars. They used to come in for their Bull Durham tobacco and roll their own cigarettes. Red Man chewing tobacco and we probably handled all those cigars -- White Owls, King Edwards, and all the packages of cigarettes plus the newspapers and books. That caught up with me, too. We had a printing outfit in Morton Grove here, Foster famous film factory. N.W. Foster & Son. They made x-rays for your teeth.

Q: When dentists took x-rays, they developed them?

BS: They made the x-rays, the film, the background of the aluminum foil, the plates and all they were mounted in. We ran the printing press there, and the women were in the darkroom making all those films in the dark because it couldn't be exposed to light. You talk about hot and sweat.

Q: Where was this?

BS: That was on Ferris Avenue right alongside Gutman's famous restaurant, which was on the corner of Dempster and Ferris Avenue. It was one building south of there. That was Foster's factory right there. Now it's a parking lot.

Q: How long do you think that business was there?

BS: Oh, my goodness, he must have been there twenty-something years. She was living yet and Hume was living. He got in service after I was in service, too.

Q: Is that where you were working when you went into the service?

BS: Yes, because I got fifteen dollars a week.

Q: Oh, I see, you've been working your way up in life.

BS: Boy, from a quarter an hour to fifteen dollars a week. And then Pearl Harbor came and that was the end of working in our small town. I started a new life.

Q: When did you first meet Irene, your wife?

BS: We were born and raised together in Morton Grove and went to grade school and high school together.

Q: Were you engaged or going seriously together when you went into the service?

BS: No, prior to that we used to go to the theater and to Oscars for a hamburger with different people we know. When 1941 came, everything was at a standstill, and I was drafted.

Q: Did the two of you have an agreement, though, before you went away to war?

BS: Yes, we were going steady. But making peanuts like that, you couldn't talk far ahead because I didn't even own a car. I had to use my brother's old '29 Packard once in a while or went out with Mel Ahrens who had his own car. But in '41, who had anything?

Q: So when Pearl Harbor came, did you enlist or were you drafted?

BS: I got caught in the first draft, April of '41. And that went fast.

Q: That's the first draft. That's before Pearl Harbor really.

BS: Nine months. Three more months and I would have been a civilian. Until Pearl Harbor came. Then we left Morton Grove here, went down to the armory, and had our tests there.

Q: To the armory? On Broadway?

BS: A hundred and thirty-second. Yes.

Q: The one at Broadway near Thorndale or whatever it is there.

BS: Yes, I think it was the Madison Armory. From there that night, eleven o'clock we got up to Camp Grant and got our shots and some of our famous clothing that they had. We had the old blue denims and that came from the C.C.C.s, the triple Cs. Civilian Conservation Corps. We had our old blue denims from that and an old cap.

Q: You hadn't been in the C.C.C., though, had you?

BS: No, I remember it very well. We even had a big C.C. camp here in Skokie on Harms Road back a little west of the Blind Pig there.

Q: Oh, and the Blind Pig was at the corner where Harrison -- or Old Orchard Road as we call it now -- ended at Harms Road.

BS: I think there were three, four, or five big wooden barracks in there. That's where the C.C.s were, and they did so much work along the whole lake front and off of Cicero Avenue.

Q: Now before you went into the service and while you were working, you mentioned that you coached the SMYLS.

BS: They were all young girls. Irene, she used to do the catching. Eleanor Winanby was a beautiful pitcher, and Florence, a sister-in-law now, third base, and Marion Haupt and her sister and . . . the Weber girl.

Q: The initials SMYLS, stood for Saint Martha's Young Lady Society. So it really was a Saint Martha's team.

BS: Yes, strictly St. Martha's.

Q: And who did you play? Was it a league?

BS: A Catholic league.

Q: The C.Y.O maybe?

BS: The C.Y.O., that's right. We used to play right here on our famous school ground.

Q: Were there other girl's baseball teams around here? Was there a girl's team in Niles Center?

BS: Yes.

Q: So did most of the Catholic churches have a girl's baseball team?

BS: Yes, in those days that was very famous. They even had some beautiful basketball teams. Really, really produced. In those days we had the old basketball rules yet -- no ten seconds like they have now, get the ball half court in ten seconds. In those days it was full court. When they threw a basketball it was underhand.

Q: Did you coach that a little bit, too?

BS: Yes, we had it back in the old gym here. I forget what they charged at night. They only had so many hours and they had to be out. Lights were out. Because

things were tough and somebody had to pay for it. It was good experience. They were very, very athletically inclined, them girls, unbelievable. Compared to nowadays, you look at some of them and I don't even think they know what a first base line is.

Q: [laughs] I think you might be right on that. Now, you were in the first draft and you mentioned that you weren't even issued regular uniforms. You were given the blue jeans, the denims that had been left over from the C.C.C.

BS: That's right.

Q: Go on with your experience in the service.

BS: From the Army I went to Camp Grant and there we got our shots, our clothing issued, and our I.Q. tests.

Q: Now Camp Grant, is that the one in Rockford?

BS: That's right. We left early in the morning from the Park Ridge draft board. Draft board number four to the armory, and at eleven o'clock at night we got to Camp Grant. The next morning we were issued the clothes, our shots, I.Q. tests, and it took about two-and-a-half, three days to get all that done. Then one day the lieutenant came in the door and he said, "When you see an officer, you come to attention." And somebody hollered, "We're new, sir." So he says, "Okay, since you all got your issue now and your shots and your I.Q. tests," -- there happened to be three barracks of us draftees. So he says, "This barracks the

first barracks and this half of the second barracks artillery, Fort Sill, Oklahoma.” Then he turned around, he said, “This half of the barracks and the third barracks infantry, Camp Forest, Tennessee.” So Stellar was on the infantry side. On the train we go, the old coal locomotives yet. I forget how many days it took us to get to Camp Forest, Tennessee. We got down there, the barracks weren’t completed yet, so we in turn had to take all the lumber off of the premises, wash all the windows, take the stickers off of it, make wooden sidewalks around the barracks, and then we had to sleep in pup tents at night. We had running water.

Q: You had running water . . . in the stream?

BS: No it was a portable sink that they had there. So you washed and shaved there. And latrines, we had to have our regular ones for that outside yet, too. And then after it was just completed, so many went in that one, and a couple of days later the second barracks was completed, and a few days later the third barracks was completed. Then we had three in A company, two hundred some people. We had our issue there and we started forming companies and battalions. We started to have roll call in the mornings, and had close order drill and extended order drill.

Q: Were you all draftees at that point, or were there any regular Army men mixed in?

BS: Some of the sergeants were National Guard. But all the rest of us were what they call rookies or draftees. They point a finger at us and they say, “Hey, you know, I’m sergeant from National Guard.”

Q: Did you finally learn something about infantry?

BS: A lot. Of course, the guns were new. I mean they weren't brand new, but to us they were new. They were World War I issue. And same with the old light cannons. The old wooden wheel jobs. Those were the French designed . . .

Q: And you learned to be a soldier with that kind of equipment, right?

BS: Yes, we had close order drill and extended order, bayonet practice. In those days we had the old brown shoes up to here.

Q: Up to your ankle, a little above your ankle?

BS: That's all we had in those days. Leather soles and the very heavy O.D. uniforms. And then weeks went by. It took eight weeks before we could even get a pass, and at that time we only got twenty-one bucks a month. By that time they took out the insurance and the laundry, you had a fist full of silver, and we couldn't get a pass because we didn't have our basic training in. It would take eight weeks.

Q: Oh, I see. You couldn't leave the camp for the first eight weeks.

BS: We didn't have any K.P. or guard duty or anything until we had our eight weeks of basic training in.

Q: You didn't have to do K.P. or guard duty?

BS: No. Everything at that time was strictly by the book. But then as the weeks went by, we got our eight weeks in and had guard detail.

Q: When you finished your eight weeks were you then called privates?

BS: We were still privates. I was a private until I went overseas yet. See, in the meantime, after our eight weeks were completed, then we went on four month maneuvers. From Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, down to Camp Texarkana, Texas. That was our maneuvers, the Red Army for a couple of weeks. We had a red band on and a couple of weeks later, you had the blue band, you were the Blue Army. We had the old tree rifles from World War I, and we had three rounds of blanks. So, this troop was coming and everybody was new, what's going on? Instead of having big cannons mounted there, they had tree branches and that was supposed to be ___ tank gun or so and so . . .

Q: It was a mock war. Now that was four months that you were on maneuvers.

BS: Yes.

Q: Then what happened?

BS: Well, after that we came back. Then we got the M-1 rifle issued which was a beautiful, beautiful piece. Then we went back to the rifle range and this time most all of us qualified.

Q: Now you were staying at Camp Forest?

BS: Camp Forest, Tennessee. But we had those four states of maneuvers. Then we came back, nothing else to do so we started another basic training.

Q: This was all before Pearl Harbor, so there was no urgency. We weren't really in war.

BS: No. as I say, we came back from maneuvers, and said, "What'll we do?" We started basic training again. Then one Sunday I was writing to Irene. We had to pick our holidays, either Christmas week or Christmas weekend and New Years. Well, me being on this side of the barracks again, I had Christmas weekend and New Years. So in the meantime my buddy had a little portable radio going on, and all we got at that time was WSN, Nashville, Tennessee, hillbilly music. So we're all writing there, then somebody got up and hollered, "Shh, shh, be quiet." So everybody looked and what the hell's going on? A couple of minutes later, "Attention, attention," he said, "pay notice." So we turned the radio up higher . . . Pearl Harbor's been attacked. So we in turn took the paper and letters and tore them up and discarded them

Q: You realized you weren't going to get home for any holiday.

BS: That's right. Three more months we would have been civilians. That night they even picked us up and we stood guard at different positions at the post in case we'd be attacked, you know.

Q: [laughs] In Tennessee.

BS: In Tennessee. Some had the little air strip there, some had the water towers and different buildings and . . .

Q: And that started immediately on that night.

BS: On that night. A couple of days later, we boarded a train. We were the Thirty-third Division, made up the National Guard full strength of us draftees. So, Pearl Harbor came, we boarded the train, we got to Lebanon, or Hershey, Pennsylvania, and we departed there. We took our mug shots, our fingerprints and passes. So, we spend about a day, day and a half doing that and then from Pennsylvania we went across New York. We boarded our ships. There were five ships in our convoy back then.

Q: They were troop ships.

BS: Yes, converted troop ships.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

Q: Now you were aboard ship. You had boarded one of the troop ships in New York.

BS: Yes, U.S.A.T. Christobal. And ours happened to be the smallest ship at that time which we didn't know until we were on high seas. We left the East Coast New York and we traveled around the whole East Coast down through the Keys of Florida,

through Panama Canal, and then we headed for Singapore and Batan and Corregidor. They surrendered.

Q: Why didn't they put you on a train and take you to California?

BS: Take too long, I guess, and too much commotion. All those thousands of people, troops. The ships were right there on the East Coast. Five ships for the whole division.

Q: How long were you at sea?

BS: Well, we were going, like I say, from the Keys to Panama. We headed for Batan and Corregidor, and they surrendered. So we turned around from there and landed in Melbourne, Australia thirty-nine days after we left New York in our winter O.D.s. it had been January here.

Q: January there is warm.

BS: That's right. So there we were in our O.D.s. As we left Tennessee we were the thirty-third division. We lost that and we got aboard the troop ships. We were Task Force six eight one four. We went all the way around and landed in Melbourne, Australia. We spent about a week there and stayed in private homes because Australia didn't have any military bases or camps to supply all the thousands of Yanks. We stayed with some people, Mr. and Mrs. McClain, in Melbourne there. And then they heard that the Japs were going to make an

invasion, so a week later we boarded the ships. We went from Australia to New Caledonia, which was another seven days.

Q: It wasn't the same ship you had been on.

BS: The same ship. We were all in harbor in Melbourne. And then we went from there to New Caledonia. We lost our title Task Force, too, Six Eight One Four. So some of the big boys got together and says we're new, we lost the thirty-third, we lost Task Force, what should we call ourselves? So some G.I. thought, gee, Americans in New Caledonia, and he broke the word down Americal Division, which it was until the end of the Vietnam war. When we got to New Caledonia, we had to start jungle combat. There was no book written on jungle combat.

Q: You weren't still in those hot uniforms, I hope.

BS: No, once we got to New Caledonia we unloaded the ships and we picked up our "B" bags below deck. Then we got our summer O.D.s. We went on different maneuvers, crossing streams, and you want to know which G.I. could swim, which couldn't. Well, Stellar put his hands up. Even in those days when we swam in the river here, I couldn't swim so they tell you how to float, you know, how to hold your head and hold you balance and down I went.

Q: You sank?

BS: Sure, I could feel the water in my ears and then it started getting in my nose and I couldn't see daylight, so I just held my breath and down I went. And the

Navy boys come up and picked me up. He says, "I cant understand it," he says, "you're not afraid of water but you still can't float. I said, "I love the water, I still can't do it."

Q: Was there fighting on New Caledonia?

BS: New Caledonia, no. That was a French island. Free French and Vechi French. There were hard feelings amongst themselves, the poor natives and the Yanks.

Q: What were you doing on New Caledonia? How did you fill your days?

BS: We had all this jungle combat.

Q: Were you literally fighting?

BS: No. Practicing jungle combat, different maneuvers.

Q: So basically they were training you again now for jungle war.

BS: For jungle warfare, yes. They had us walk here, walk there, advance on your hands and knees with the rifles and bayonet. Then practicing and a lot of walking to build yourself up. In December we boarded ship again, we headed for Guadalcanal. We hit Guadalcanal, we got off the troop ship, got on they Higgins boats down to the shore which we landed on Red Beach. From all the fighting, the beautiful black coral sands that they called the Red Beach on account of the blood. Then from there we went to Bloody Ridge which was some bad fighting.

there, too. The Marines cleaned all that area out. The Army came in with them and then from there we went to Mount Austin. Prior to that Henderson Field was always looked at by the Japs from the ships, the planes, because that was very vital for us and for them. At one time the Japs took off from one side of the strip, and the Yanks landed on the other side of the strip. We kept inching our way through Mount Austin and all the shelling going on not only to us but on Henderson Field trying to keep the people, the troops out of there so they could take advantage of it. The higher we got up on Mount Austin -- I think one time we gained about thirty-three inches one night in combat.

Q: Inches.

BS: Inches. Thirty-three inches. And then with all the shooting and combat going on, digging our slit trenches, the foxholes, you know. So and so got shot, this guy got wounded. Somebody come down with malaria. And we kept advancing higher on Mount Austin pushing the Japs back. Then December 26, about four o'clock in the afternoon, there was a little distraction going on with the planes, so all you do is put your head under the helmet to protect coral from hitting you. And all I felt was something like that. Like I say, after it was over I swung behind my B.A.R (Browning Automatic Rifle) and I thought, what the heck is that? I was the B.A.R. Corporal. I put my hand back there and . . . blood. I got shot in my right hip here, sitting behind the gun like that.

Q: And you thought you only got pinked on the arm. Is that it? You didn't think you'd been hit badly.

BS: No, I felt something. So then after that striking was going on, I wanted to get behind a gun and . . . holy mackerel. My Sergeant Adams saw me there and he grabbed me under the arms and pulled me back. It was four o'clock in the afternoon.

Q: Now this is 1942.

BS: December 26, 1942, yes. So you can see where we spent Christmas. That's where that famous song came from, "Dreaming Of A White Christmas."

Q: [laughs] Is that really where it came from?

BS: That's right. We weren't thinking of a white Christmas then.

Q: Well, what did they do now that you've been injured?

BS: We got on an ambulance, meat wagon. There were three of us. One guy was hit by a hand grenade and the other guy, he lost his marbles.

Q: Oh, you mean he actually had battle fatigue?

BS: Yes, his eyes would stare like that. So then they got us to this side of Henderson Field, and they had a dugout. There were coconut trees over it and dirt over it and Coleman lanterns for light. All they do is give you a shot and put you to sleep. Next morning you come to and they see what's what, and took us topside to get some fresh air, sunlight. We had half a glass of Carnation milk

and water for breakfast. Three days later a DC-3 plane came in and took about eight of us wounded out through Henderson Field to New Hebrides. There we took x-rays. And me, they just kept changing the bandages, and I had to lay on my stomach, took x-rays, and then a few days later a hospital ship came, the U.S.S. Solace. I forget how many hundreds they put aboard the Solace, and then from New Hebrides another week to get to New Zealand. Our Army hospitals weren't completed, so we were in a Navy hospital, what they call Mob Four and Mob Six, mobile units.

Q: And they actually were on land or they were hospital ships?

BS: In New Zealand. No, this was on land.

Q: The New Zealanders allowed us to put Navy hospitals there?

BS: At that time? Sure, sure. If it wasn't for the Yanks, Aussies and New Zealanders, too. We were protecting their homeland. I was operated on by a Navy surgeon and they told me they were going to put a harness on me, a head harness.

Q: Why?

BS: They put the head harness on me and they had a pulley there. They had all the water and the plaster of paris to make a cast after I was operated on.

Q: So you were in a body cast?

BS: Yes. They put that head harness on me and they lifted me up so my toes were just like that, so the body was like this.

Q: So you were on your toes. Your body was really stretched.

BS: Yes. He had all that mixture and they start putting on the cast. Back in here they had a trap door where they could lift up and change the bandages every day. Three days later I come down with my first attack of malaria.

Q: Oh, no.

BS: I had to grab that cast like this so I could breathe. Then just that fast from boiling, you're freezing. And every hair on your body is full of pimples. Just that fast you stop again and you're burning up. The mouth and lips are like that -- you can't swallow. So then I forget how many days that lasts. And in the meantime they keep changing the dressings. Then that lieutenant in the Navy there yells and calls us, "Sonny," he says, "don't leave anybody else operate on you." He says, "the wrong move could even kill you; if not, you'd be paralyzed." He said, "I'm going to put that in your record." So a few days later, I come down with malaria again.

Q: For malaria, did they give you quinine? Was that the only treatment they had?

BS: Well, on Guadalcanal we had Adabrin for three days, the substitute. All we had supplied was for three days. Japan had all the islands of the quinine trees. From there I come down with malaria again. I had a wheelchair, then I had some

crutches to learn to walk and to move. About April I got aboard ship and they took another seven days from New Zealand to Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco, California. So we got three and changed the dressings, and they wanted to see where they could send me. The closest one around here would be . . . Michigan.

Q: Was that the nearest?

BS: Yes, Percy Jones in Battle Creek, Michigan. That was the closest . . .

Q: To locate you for convalescing near your family.

BS: Yes, for that time. They wanted to reoperate. I told them I would not do it. It's a directorate from the Navy commander. He told me if anybody touched you, I will not sign anything. So I come down with malaria there how many times. Then from there, I came back on furlough.

Q: So you're back here. Were you still on crutches at that point?

BS: No, I had a cast on. Then I had a brace. We got married in June. I came down with malaria again. Only close place around here was Fort Sheridan, so they brought a meat wagon from Fort Sheridan and put me on there and brought me to Fort Sheridan.

Q: How many times did you get malaria?

BS: Twenty-two times in seven years. It took seven years to get it out of the system.

Q: I think that's terrible.

BS: That's right, that's malaria. Then you wonder why some of them died from that, huh? From the heat and the fever and so often.

Q: You had malaria twenty-two times, and each time would it last three or four days or would it be a week, two weeks?

BS: Usually about a week to ten days because you're so weak on top of it, and all that time you take your quinine and your different dosage. It just takes everything out of the system, yet alone from the heat and the severe chills. Seven-year period.

Q: So you were in the hospital and then you mentioned that Irene was in the hospital.

BS: Yes, after we got married I forget how many weeks it was, she came down with emergency appendix operation.

Q: Oh. Where did that take place?

BS: St. Francis Hospital.

Q: After your thirty-day furlough was over, did you go back into the service?

BS: Yes, I was still in the service. I went back to Percy Jones. I went from there to, I think, some place in Missouri. And then from Missouri I went down to Temple, Texas, the big hospital there. Then we left Missouri to Mexia, Texas. That was a P.O.W. camp there, German P.O.W.'s from Africa.

Q: It was a prisoner of war camp for German prisoners.

BS: Yes, German prisoners. When I walked in there they could see that I had battle stars and ribbons, and they knew they was Pacific and not Germans. I got to talk to an interpreter and he says, "We know, we see that, you know." He says, "You comrade, you comrade." He says, "You fight, you fight Japanese. No good, no good," he said. So the captain told me, he says, "Stellar, I want you to be in charge of A Company kitchen." And I said, "What the heck do I know about a kitchen?" A Company P.O.W. kitchen. So, when the supplies came in, the food, it was written in German and English -- potatoes, *kartofel*. Scratch it off, you know, and flour so they could make their bread and canned goods and this and that, meat, *fleish*, you know. Then I had to tell them that these windows had to be washed inside and outside, and all the utensils of the kitchen. Everything was outlined hanging on the wall. I had to check all that out. The fly traps they had to be rebaited. So I had to check that out. And meantime I was smoking cigars. They'd come alongside and say, "Boy, that's a prima, that's prima. I told them, "No, that's not prima, that was, I forget what brand that was. So, I told the Hans, "Do you care for one?" He says, "Yes." I said, "But you don't smoke it in here, you take it in your barracks." I said, "I don't want to be caught supplying my cigars." Whatever I said they always done. And instead of going back to the barracks at noon, the chief cook, he says, "Are you hungry?" I

said, "Yes." He said, "Come here." So he takes me in the cooler, see all that meat hanging there, all the German-prepared good, their homemade bread, and all the rest of the goodies that they had. They had their own butcher, their own bakers. So whenever they want a nice soup, they'd take the bones, they'd crack them, take a spoon, get all the marrow out, put it in cups and make beautiful soup. So I had soup there and I had pieces of steak if they were there plus the potatoes. And I ate and go back to the barracks for a half hour and laid down and come back. Then evening would come, I'd go back to the barracks and in the meantime, one of the cooks would say, "We don't have a lemon squeezer." So I asked the captain, I says, "Is it all right if I buy the boys an orange squeezer?" "Yes," he says, "there's nothing wrong with that." So I bought them an orange squeezer. Then a couple days later, they knew that I was going up to town again and we brought a phonograph back from Africa and no needles. So I looked at them, and I took one, and I told the captain, "can I buy them some phonograph needles?" He says, "That's what the new law, it's okay." So I bought them two packs. I think I paid a dime a pack for them at the dime store in town. So I got to know the guys real good.

Q: Did you speak any German?

BS: *Nicht veil.*

Q: What's that?

BS: Not too much.

Q: Had you spoken German at home?

BS: No, no. Just what I picked up over there and listened to. And same in New Caledonia what you pick up the French. And the same with Mr. Berge, she spoke a little English and a little English and French and you pick it up and at that time you could remember it all. It was a nice, nice language.

Q: How long were you at this camp in Texas? This prisoner of war camp?

BS: I forget how many months I was there. Then they shipped me to Temple, Texas, a big Army hospital.

Q: You weren't shipped there for treatment, were you?

BS: Yes, that's what I was coming to.

Q: That's where you had been before, hadn't you?

BS: No, from Mexia, Texas, to Temple. And I see the first sergeant there, he was twenty-something years in service. He called me in one day. He says, "Come in the office." And he closed the door and he opened up the desk and he says, "Here's some papers. Read them," he says. "I want to try it out on you." He said, "I want to be the first to see if this works, and here's my name and address and if it works, send it to me. I want to give you a civilian disability discharge, a C.D.D." He said, "I want to know if it works." So I had a little barracks bag there, I had an extra pair of pants, this and that. He got a big

land rover and we drove from there all the way to the hospital. They had to go through the blood tests, do this and the x-rays. In the meantime, Irene came down there to spend a week or ten days there in Temple. She stayed at a motel there where she got frightened with scorpions there so they had to put her in another room. Then I went back and got different tests. I think it was four, five, or six of us, a couple of women. Then we finally got the discharge. I went from the hospital to the train station. They had M.P.s with me, and they had the discharge. [Pause] . . . then we got aboard the train and they told us the soldiers go first and the civilians follow. So I went aboard the train and picked out a seat, and then a couple of minutes later Irene came through and we sat down. It was from California to St. Louis, then St. Louis to Union Station in Chicago. I forget how many days that took on the old troop train like that. And then he told me, "You wear your suit, you wear your tie, and you act as a G.I. until you're home. And congratulations."

Q: So you were out of the service.

BS: Yes, end of August of '44. We lived with Irene's folks. In the meantime I was going to get a job at . . . Bell Telephone was it? And that was way out of the way, too. I didn't have no car. So I started at Bell and Gossett.

Q: Down on Austin Avenue north of Oakton.

BS: Yes. I got eighty-five cents an hour.

Q: Was that considered good pay then?

BS: Well, I guess it was better than twenty-one bucks a month. When I was overseas I got thirty dollars. I forgot how long we stayed with her folks there. Then we bought this lot here from Artie Loutsch, and he says, "Why don't you buy the other two, Barney, then you'd have them all the way down to the alley?" I said, "Art, I'm lucky to get one." They wanted eighteen hundred dollars for it.

Q: When you say you bought it from him, did he own it? Or was he the real estate agent?

BS: He was the real estate agent.

Q: Who owned it, do you know?

BS: I don't. School property. Then I wanted to get a F.H.A. and a G.I. loan from Skokie Bank, and I put down twenty-five hundred for that. We had this house built. He wanted to just put red brick in front. I said, "No, we wanted red brick all ways around the house." He said, "That'd be seven hundred dollars more." And I told him we'd like a fireplace but I wanted it flush with the wall. I don't want anything hanging out. He said, "That's be five hundred dollars more." So the way you see it, all plaster, three bedrooms, bath and a half, fourteen thousand four hundred dollars. And the monthly payments were \$84.50. So, in turn, I went back to Baumhardt Brothers washing and waxing cars at night to help pay for the other part of the mortgage.

Q: So you worked nights at Baumhardt Brothers garage, days at Bell and Gossett.

BS: Yes.

Q: And Irene at this point was keeping house or was she working?

BS: No, she worked prior to that because Lynn was born and we moved here and our son was on his way. So, I worked days, I worked nights and she took care of the house and the kids. I had to pay the mortgage, which took us twenty-five years to pay off, too. But we weren't alone. It's just the idea how tight things were.

Q: Yes. Tell me again about the children now. You have two.

BS: Yes, Lynn was born first in 1945 and Mike, our son, he was born in '48. Lynn is married to Bill Carrie and they have two daughters and a son. Our son is married. He's got two daughters. So we have five grandchildren.

Q: How nice. Let's go back to work. How long did you moonlight at Baumhardt Brothers?

TAPE TWO, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

BS: Oh, that would've been what, four, five or six years. And Irene, she worked part time, too. Then I got kind of interested in doing plastic and ceramic tiling, so I did that for a while.

Q: But you all this time were working at Bell and Gossett?

BS: Going on thirty-six years before I retired in 1979.

Q: And what did you do at Bell and Gossett?

BS: I worked in the Motor Department making electric motors. Like on the lamp there. We made all the wiring in there, the A Phase and B Phase. My job was to tie the running wires, the A, B, black, white and red, the starting wires that the motor would start. So I retired after making how many millions of them. When I first started, we made them by hand. We made thirty-five a day, but with all the laminations and putting in them wooden pegs, you didn't have any fingernails left, no cuticles, nothing. Then they started to come out with the machines that made the A Phase and B Phase. I had to just tie them up there and take a little torch and fuse the copper wire together onto the starting wire. When I left I think I was making seven hundred and sixty four a day for my rate.

Q: Wow. That's a lot.

BS: Year after year I was wondering where are they going, who gets them? Here I'm retired, it'll be ten years in October, and they're still producing them.

Q: Well, where do they go?

BS: To the whole world. We even made them for overseas. All your electric motors for your pumps. Bell and Gossett famous pumps.

Q: I know when I came a few days ago, Irene told me about some lovely trips you had including one where you went back to the South Pacific. Do you want to tell about that?

BS: Yes, this took place in 1974. I had a buddy of mine from Kankakee. He had that famous restaurant, Yesteryear, and he had a travel agency. We have reunions every two years and it's so nice to see the boys. So this time Marv says, "We're going to have a little trip. We're going back to the Pacific." He said, "How would you like to go?" So Irene and I we said, "Yes, that would be pretty good." So I don't know how many he had at that time -- the whole list, I guess, from the reunion. But at that time that first gas shortage came up, remember? And things were just great. So in the meantime, Irene and I we went and we met a couple of other guys, Jim and Clarise, and Marv he was there. We flew from O'Hare to Hawaii, then from Hawaii to New Hebrides, to the Fijis, and then from Fiji back to Guadalcanal and when we were there in '42 with all that fighting and combat going on, always back in the head here was kind of hurting.

Q: Reliving it really.

BS: So as we approached Henderson Field I told Irene, "Get the camera out, take the picture of the jungles." We come off of the blue Pacific, the coral formation, we landed in Henderson Field, looked out the window. I could look way out in the distance there, got off the plane to look around. My goodness, I could even see Mount Austin in the distance where I got shot. So then we found out that they're burning all the trees down to make things civilized. So at that time we were there, it was only us and the Japs and a handful of natives. When we were there

in '74, there were thirty something thousand people in evidence -- school, churches, shops, and roads.

Q: It wasn't like going back to the good old bad days, was it?

BS: No, it was a new life seeing the roads that show, the stores and everything with all the memories of bloody beach there. Irene even took a stick and wrote in the Red Beach, and she took a picture of that. I was on some of the landing craft that are just rotting and rusting away. You have to step here and step there so you don't fall through, and they took pictures of that. Then we went back to Tambia Village. How beautiful that was with the thatched burries with the grass roofs and the beautiful flooring with all the beautiful native patterns. To see all this, it just brought back beautiful, beautiful memories. Then Irene and Clarise they were on a beach there, and this area had no swimming because of the sharks. You go back to Tambia Village, and the women are swimming in bathing suits on the beach. No sharks on that side or whales on that part of the island there. But it was just so beautiful, and you see all these people and souvenirs, and memories, and the shops and stores. It was just beautiful. Then hitting Hawaii again, that was still beautiful. And the same with Fiji, beautiful, quiet, and part of our Americal Division and the Marines were reactivated from there, too. As we got wounded on the Canal, these replacements came from Fiji. In fact, I even met some replacements at our reunion. I looked at the guy and I didn't recognize him. He wasn't of our original boys who were drafted. They were younger, too. He said, "No, I'm replacement, I'm replacement." But he was in A Company, too, from where I was. Maybe he replaced me, I don't know. So it was so nice to see all that. And same with the scenery. So we're up in the gift

shop. I was standing on the wall looking, I was smoking a cigar, and a guy came up to me in civilian clothes, dressed real nice. And he said, "Say, that's an exceptionally good-smelling cigar, chap." I said, "Gee, you know this is my last one. I'll be glad to offer you one." Then he said, "Where do you live?" And I learned in service that you never say Morton Grove, Illinois. So we always tell them we're three suburbs out of Chicago, Illinois. Oh, then they know. Even the people in Australia when we were there, they knew about Dillinger and all the gangsters. How many times were you shot at, you know? There were sixteen in our group there, and they had a nice bus for us and this guy driver in New Zealand drove down the road and he's pointing. He says, "You see up there in the hills?" And we looked up and see sheep. They looked like rocks and stones. Driving a little further, "Look to your right," he says, "do you see them there? Look at them," he said. "Look at them."

Q: What was he looking at?

BS: The sheep, the sheep. He says, "Look." And he looks at you with big eyes and points. "We supply the whole world with lamb and mutton. We have seventy to ninety million sheep here." On this beautiful island. And then, too, with all the sheep and with all the stuff that they do, it's all full of butane gas. Everything rises up in the atmosphere this way, comes across this part of the island. They have scientists from all over the world how to eliminate that with the seventy million sheep plus the cattle and all the droppings that there were. And then we went to Australia, and that was just pretty and beautiful, too.

Q: Now this is all on the same trip.

BS: All the same trip -- three islands. Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand, Australia and then back to Hawaii again, too. It's just beautiful. Seeing the people and the little town where we were at, like I say, in Ballarat at that time by Mrs. McClaine. Now it's eighty-two, eighty-three thousand people. You look, your mouth falls open, you can't believe it. Seeing that beautiful coastline there, and famous harbor bridge that they had and we looked out on the shoreline and see that famous opera house. We attended that at night, too, and had dinner in there, and took a cruise on the Captain Cook Bay in a ship.

Q: Now this trip you took after you retired, right?

BS: We just took this one last April or May.

Q: You have really enjoyed retirement, haven't you?

BS: Oh, my goodness, we've been to Australia and New Zealand, and we've been to Hawaii what, five times in the meantime already? We spent a winter in Texas, a winter in Florida.

Q: So you've really loved it, having you, bring retired?

BS: We've really loved it. It should happen to everybody to enjoy. This October will be ten years. Ten happy years of it, huh?

Q: We didn't talk about doctors and the medical experiences starting with the time you were born. I forgot which doctor you had when you were born.

BS: Drostenfels.

Q: He probably delivered you and your twin sister. Did your mother know she was going to have twins?

BS: That I couldn't say. I don't think they knew it in those days.

Q: You mentioned the fact that you were late starting school because of an injury.

BS: Yes, bring young kids and playing on the roof of the chicken house there. I don't know, it was probably what, six, seven feet high only. I jumped off of that, and I got a double hernia. I missed school for a year on that, too. What did they have in those days for treatment or anything but just wearing that little brace?

Q: That's all they did. There was no surgery?

BS: No. Wore that thing for a whole year like that. And staying home and looking around the woods. Of course, when we did mow the lawn, Pa would ask my brother. We had ten, twelve foot area here in the back yard and that was it. Those lots were thirty, thirty-three foot in those days.

Q: So you've had a lot of medical experiences in your life, and you've been to a lot of different doctors.

BS: Yes, I was talking to a guy at the V.F.W. the other day about malaria, and he said, "I heard a story you told about it." I said, "Yes, I got wounded December 26th, and three days later I come down with malaria. And we didn't have the quinine for that, and we had a new doctor there, a captain, I forget his name and he said, 'I want to ask you some questions.'" I said, "Okay." He says, "Do you know when you were bitten, was it daytime or nighttime?" I says, "I don't know, Doc. We did all the fighting mostly at night." I says, "Everything's biting, sucking and chewing on you." He says, "Did you happen to know if it was anopheles mosquito? Did it bite you on the ninety degree angle?" I says, "I don't know." "Well," he says, "we like to find out that stuff." I said, "I don't know when I was bitten. In New Caledonia you couldn't even breathe there, they're in your nose, in your ears, in your mouth." I says, "I couldn't tell you." So then he asked other boys different questions, too. I told him, "Look, I'm no doctor. I don't know how many centuries this malaria's been going around. I don't think even the modern generation will have a cure for malaria. To me, what you have to do is get rid of the anopheles mosquito, the ones that carry it." And off he walked. Then, like I say, with the other operations -- with the kidney operation, and what was it, three, four blood clots there.

Q: Boy, you are really lucky. It's been a good life, though, hasn't it?

BS: Yes, where'd it go?

Q: Thank you very much for all you've said.

BS: I appreciate it. [TAPE TWO, SIDE B ENDS]