Kenneth Bailey
Narrator

June Hunter
Ken Hunter
New Scotland Historical Association
Interviewers

Interviewed on May 9, 2006

[No formal introduction] KB: We landed with all our parachutes. This is awful. Everybody with a parachute that didn't land on the ground was hung up in a tree and everything, they shot them down up there, they were hung and still they had no way to take them down when we came through. It was real bad for the first thing we could see, you know. As soon as we got off and out of Utah Beach, then that's when we started to go toward Saint Lo and Sainte Mere-Eglise and all those places we were in combat. [coughs] Then we went up to Cherbourg and this is all Normandy hedgerows. Every time you parked in a hedgerow, you had to get your vehicles as close as you could to the hedgerows and you had to put a camouflage net over it so they [the enemy] couldn't see you. Then we had a funny thing every night. "Bed Check Charlie" would come along with a little pipe that we be the color of our plane. And nobody shot at him and, of course, he didn't shoot because he was just reconnaissance. So that was quite an experience until we got up to Cherbourg.

KH: Now what kind of resistance as you were advancing did you experience from the Germans?

KB: At the beginning it was really, really hard. Their planes and things were faster and better than ours and a lot of their vehicles were better, their tanks and all. But we caught up with them and we were more superior than they were. And something I never knew, when a cow gets hit it turns over on its back and its legs go up in the air which I didn't know before, seeing all that. My radio operator would get a couple eggs from some farmer's chickens and we would have real fresh eggs once in a while. So that was good.

JH: Did you cook them somehow?

KB: Yes. We had a crew of five, including the officer, a lieutenant colonel. And we had what you would call – it would be like a Bunsen burner or a little Coleman stove, a round container. And they used regular gas like what you would use for a vehicle. And so we could cook on that and then, one night, he [radio operator] got potatoes out of a farm and dug them up and we had fried potatoes so that was pretty good too. So most of the time we

had either K-rations or later on we had what they called, "ten-in-ones". And that came in a little box with all canned food, made by Crackerjacks at Beach Towel. And we were better off because there was only five of us so they couldn't split a box up so we got ten-in-ones instead of five. That was pretty good. It was all in little tin containers you opened up with a pair of pliers and before you opened it up you put it in hot water and heated it. And with the bunion, instead of making soup out of the powder, I used to use that for my seasoning onto whatever we had, so that worked out well.

KH: Were there occasions when you had a good hot meal, did they have an opportunity from time to time to set up a kitchen?

KB: Yes. The kitchen came up to us – I'd say, maybe every other day we'd be alright at that. Towards the end of the war, we were going too fast and they couldn't keep up with us and we didn't have anything but gas and water delivered to us. So, for three weeks, we had just venison – our mess sergeant went out and shot deer. We had black bread, some kind of black flower that the Germans had, and made black bread out of that and venison. And for three weeks, we lived off that and coffee. So that was real good too because we were going so fast, you know, going across Germany and France.

KH: What about holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas? Did they pause? Were there any loathes on the battlefield? Were the Germans –

KB: No. In Christmas of '44, it was very bad. That was during the Battle of the Bulge and all that. Snow and everything else. We got K-rations for Christmas that day. So that was about all there.

KH: What about supplies? Were you always able to have supplies to you? Or were you worried that you wouldn't have supplies?

KB: No. We didn't get any food. We just got our gas and water. And we were really supplied with that. We never ran out of gas and we never ran out of water – which the Germans did. And they had to finally hook up horses to try to tow our vehicles. You can't tow a truck or a tank without a horse. They had maybe four, five, six horses hooked onto a vehicle and they'd come down straight and they'd lay them alongside the road. It was a hard thing to see.

KH: Did you have occasions to meet with people? How was the feeling when they were liberated from the Germans?

KB: The French were wonderful and the Germans were better yet. They really appreciated us being there. They were always out there to help you and try to do the best they could without being jeopardized by the Germans themselves and Nazis. And, I don't know. I'm trying to think what else.

KH: Tell us about that mortar attack, the counterattack.

KB: The Mortagne counterattack? We were set up with myself, my crew, the lieutenant colonel who I was on LA-ZON with two infantry battalions. And LA-ZON is where you're – well you know what LA-ZON is. So we're out there and the enemy came all around us and we're the only ones with a vehicle. [coughs] Excuse me. And the infantry, of course, delayed our walk or whatever, but we can't with our vehicle because it will break down our car. So, finally, were already to the wood, a ditch where we were going to go in with the infantry, so I'd seen a creek bed – a dry creek bed, there was no water into it. So getting down into it was easy. So we went along the river bed, the creek bed there, and they were shooting over the top, because we're down lower, but now we can't get out so we had to cut trees down and make like a little path, a road, up so we could get the vehicle up out of there after we got away from there. So I got back and I got a report to the colonel, Colonel Toley at that time, and so I went in and they said, 'The colonel's waiting to see you.' And so I went to report to him and he said, 'I'm glad to see you're back.' And I said, 'Colonel, we almost left the armored car there.' And he said, 'Well if you had,' and he always took his two fingers when he's talking to you. [points with his index and ring finger] 'If you had, I would've sent you right back after it.' That showed how important how more important the vehicle was than we were [laughs]. So then right after Christmas of '44, he [the colonel] made General and I forget what else he said to us but it doesn't matter. So they bring up a new colonel and he was the provost marshal of Patton's Third Army. So Lieutenant Colonel Dawn and Widerow said, 'Would you like to drive for him?' And I said, 'Well, I don't know.' And he said, 'Well, I think you should drive for him.' I said, 'Well I'll drive for him if I can come back to you and drive the armored car for you.' He said, 'Yes, you can.' So I went, they gave me the Jeep, fixed it all up for me. So then I drove to the colonel, he was commanding officer, and I drove him to the end of the war.

KH: Were there occasions when you might have seen real high-ranking officers there?

KB: Yes.

KH: Any chance that Eisenhower may have come through?

KB: He went by when we were in Aachen, Germany. We took Aachen twice. We were pushed out of Aachen and then we retook it again. The second time we were in Aachen,

which is a little city or town, whatever you want to call it in Germany, and he [Eisenhower] rode by and waved to us a little, so that was really good. Built up your moral support, you know. And of course Colonel Collins, or General Collins, we'd see him all the time. And he was Seventh Corps, so he was very, very much like all the other officers. He was down and much like a regular guy. They weren't superior to you. They talked to their men the same as they did to their officers. Most of them were all West Point officers.

KH: Were there opportunities when there were loathes in the fighting that you had a chance to get some time off?

KB: When were in Hurtgen Forest, that was more or less Battle of the Bulge – just before the Battle of the Bulge, if I remember right. Anyway, that was a little slowdown so we dug holes in the ground, about 2-3 feet, and then we put wood logs up on top, half down on the ground and half up above, you know. And we also brought in a generator so we had an electric light bulb in there, and that would last about two weeks before the thing started going again, you know. But that was a very bad part of the winter.

JH: Now were you able to get mail or send mail out?

KB: Yes. We had mail call at least once a week, sometimes twice a week. But sometimes it was three or four weeks behind before we actually got it, you know. Or packages. The faster you went more towards the end of the war, the slower the mail was because we were so ahead of them on the mail.

KH: While you're talking about mail, when you sent mail out yourself, did it have to be censored?

KB: All censored. One captain, he had to censor all of it, and that was his job. So after a while, as far as my wife would say, 'I didn't get half the letter because it was half cut out.' Because had to sit there with a razor blade and cut out all these names or words or whatever it was, so after a while he said, 'You're not going to write about that anymore.' So I won't write her a letter.

JH: Did you sometimes make up stories to keep the people at home from worrying as much?

KB: No, I don't think I did. You didn't have time to do that. You had a lot of v-mail which is very quick but of course, on this side, you didn't want to get a v-mail because it wasn't very much but it was easier for you to write. Because a v-mail was just a piece of paper that

folded over and mailed, but you couldn't get too much time to do it, you know. But that worked out.

JH: And did you ever see any of the entertainers such as Bob Hope?

KB: Yes. That was in the Desert in California. We had what they called a "Desert Bowl", which was more or less like a Sand Bowl and Bob Hope came there and two or three others, who I can't think who they were, and then we went to Hollywood. We were quite a long ways from Hollywood, but we were about sixty miles from San Bernardino in the Desert, so we had to go by convoy with trucks to San Bernardino and then we get the electric train and go into Hollywood, California. And I was lucky because I ride motorcycles and so we got to escort the convoy, so twenty-five percent of guys could go every week, and that would take up the whole month. So three weeks I would ride motorcycles with the convoy to take them to San Bernardino, but I would stay in the Air Force Base and they'd go on an electric train and we'd escort back to the Desert again. So that worked out good. And then one time when I was in Hollywood, Betty Grable came and Shirley Temple and I won a Ward Bond from Jan Clayton. She was the star of musical "Carousel". So that was right, so I sent that home to Florence and she had that for a long while and, as a matter of fact, she's got the letters someplace she put away that they gave to her.

KH: Now we always hear about the military being so strict with inspections and cleanliness. What was it like when you were actually engaged in battle?

KB: Nothing like that. The First Lieutenant Colonel, who I drove for first, he was just like a regular guy. And then the commanding officer was the same way. You had to be neat and you had to be clean whenever like that, no scrubbiness, you had to wash and shave all the time and everything, and keep your hair clean. But not like we were when we were Fort Meade in South Dakota or when we were out in the Desert. Well, the Desert wasn't that bad either or in Texas it wasn't bad. But not like that. It was more or less – you didn't have time because we worked long, busy hours. I think the time passed faster that way too, you know.

JH: So did you feel that you were safer being a driver for these people than many of the other soldiers?

KB: Well, yes I did in a way. But then also, the colonel never had an escort. I was the only one with him. And we go back to Seventh Corps Headquarters or some other outfit and it was our responsibility because he was the commanding officer and you were responsible for him. And most of this was at night and night driving, it's all black out and you had a

little bit of a square light on the front, which you couldn't see nothing, like it wasn't even a square light, it was a flashlight. So you had to watch out for landmines and everything else besides snipers. My Jeep was hooked up, we had everything fixed onto it with a bar up in front and sometimes they would put a cable across to get your head or neck off, you know. And we had that so it would cut it first and then we had a big German car seat in there for him [the colonel] and a big bar up in front because he was also cavalry, he was in horse cavalry before that, and so he always wore his boots and bridges and he had his riding whip with him. And he would stand up and hold onto that bar and he'd whip you like you would when you were on horseback. So that was like –

JH: Like he was the lookout watching for landmines?

KB: Yes. And the armored car was a lot harder to drive because the motor's in the rear but one nice thing about it was the motor inside the radiator, with the air coming out of it, the hot air was coming back out to the rear because we'd both be in the rear. So everybody came to my car, because it ran all the time for the radio operator, and so they come up there to wash and shave all the time because they had the nice heat, at least down to your waist. From there on it was real cold, you know [laughs]. But that was good.

JH [laughing]: So you had to have the car running the whole time, heat it all up for them.

KB: Well the armored car never shut off because, you see, we didn't have radios like they have today. The radios in those days you had to cut the back of the Jeep out to get it. You had to take the tire out the back, put it on a side, because the radio stuck out the back and they were about 2 feet by 3 feet, and it was a great, big clumsy thing, whereas today it would be about 4 or 5 inches. So there's a lot of difference.

KH: Did you have an opportunity to hear news on how things were going, especially back at home?

KB: No.

KH: Or the "Stars and Stripes", from time to time?

KB: The "Stars and Stripes" we got. Before, you didn't get very much. When we were in combat, you didn't get very much at all. The "Stars and Stripes" never heard of radio, you didn't know what was going on unless somebody told you. I was more fortunate because the colonel would tell me what a lot of things were like. So that was –

JH: That made you tell the other people what was going on.

KB: I would tell everybody what was going on, yes. I still keep in contact with my radio operator. He lives in Whittier, California. We get Christmas cards from him and everything. So he's doing pretty good. He lost his wife too like I did, so we got a couple things in common.

JH: Have you seen him since you were –

KB: I haven't seen him since we were discharged. Discharged in Fort Dix, New Jersey. When we came home after the war – that's what I wanted to tell you too. The worst thing that I can remember after the war, which was 61 years ago yesterday, going to the cemeteries and seeing all those crosses. We had to go to the colonel because he gave citations or made speeches. And all these cemeteries with all these white crosses, I'll never forget them.

JH: Is that in Europe?

KB: This is in France. They were all in France. And, over in England, I've got to tell you that too, we were in this little town in Singleton and across the way from us was a big, it wasn't a castle, but a big house that they took for headquarters and the guards out front, remember I was on guard duty at that time, and this woman who lived across the way in this glass-roof house, she would bring in tea and crumpets every morning, which was nice. And then another thing in Belgium, we got in Liege, Belgium, and that was the first ice cream we got. And then we're a little further up through Belgium and a woman comes and she gives us Belgian waffles then I thought that was going to be great. Then she gave us hot milk with it, and that was terrible [laughs]. If you've ever had hot milk all kenneled, oh dear! It wouldn't pass through us or anything back then.

JH: And you wanted to be polite.

KB: You wanted to be polite and try not to – the waffles were great but you ate the waffles first and then drank the hot milk, it should've been the opposite way [laughs]. So you didn't get to do that.

JH: Did you eat the waffles plain or did she have some syrup and all?

KB: No, they were plain because she had to come out – I don't even think they had syrup available for them.

JH: Or jelly. Well, they're good with chocolate, though.

KB: And another thing I wanted to tell you about England while we were there: in England, and I think that's why they inspire me so much, the English people. Because they lived in blackout from 1939, because you got to remember they started two years before us. So all I can remember is blackout and the buzz bombs and the bombing. And every night you didn't know if it was going to be a buzz bomb coming on you or a bomb, you know. I don't know if you know what a buzz bomb is, but they didn't have any computers to run a buzz bomb. So they put so much fuel into it and that's when it landed, when it ran out of fuel and it had a little gasoline engine that sounded like a wash machine engine and when that ran out of fuel you know it was coming down when it stopped making any noise up there. That was quite an experience.

KH: While you were in England, were there occasions when you were involved in bombings coming in, bombing runs from the Germans. What was that like?

KB: All the time. Every night, the buzz bombs you never knew when they were going to go off, land, or where they were going to go. And we were lucky because we were right down on the English Channel, so they usually went on further into London, Lancaster and all those places, you know, where they knew they were going to do more damage. They went over our head, but the buzz bombs you never knew when they were going to land. They might even land out in the water because they didn't have enough fuel into them, they didn't know how much to mix into them, you know. Or how much they were going to fly.

JH: It must've caused a tremendous amount of anxiety.

KB: Yes. And a lot of damage. Like I say, the people that lived there went through an awful lot and they'd give you anything and helped you all the time. They were very nice to us. We lived in a nissen hut when we were in England for six months waiting for the invasion. We had a stove there, a potbelly stove on each end of the nissen hut. And a bobby would come maybe once or twice a day on his bicycle because bobbies don't use guns, they don't carry guns.

KH: And for the information of people who are not familiar, a "bobby" is the policeman.

KB: The policeman. They wear tall hats.

JH: In England.

KB: Yes. And would ride a bicycle with little tires on it and they would come see if you were alright, if you needed anything. It was really –

JH: Very cordial.

KB: Very cordial people.

JH: How did you find the people in Belgium?

KB: Belgium was very, very friendly. We got to Brussels and rode around the statue in Brussels, that big circle there.

JH: The big marketplace?

KB: The big marketplace. A couple times in Paris. Paris was very nice. And Plauen, Germany, Wiesbaden. We entered the war in the Hartz Mountains, a little ways from Leipzig, and we happened to meet the Russians. And the Russians were just the opposite. The Russians were – well we should've went on through but we didn't, but anyway that's another story. The Russians wouldn't let our outfit be with them. No Americans could stay with the Russians when they took over our territory. So all our outfit went back except for myself, the colonel, two or three other officers and drivers, and then we gave all our information to them and then they took over. We had to go on back into France. And then our colonel, Colonel Donald, made General at the end of June and so then we were set to be – I had enough points, you had to go by points to be discharged. And I had, I think it was 105 but I'm not sure about that now. But anyway I enough that I wasn't going to go into the Pacific. I was going to be going home and be discharged. We got there on La Havre. Yes, La Havre. And we were in what we called, "cigarette camps" – named after cigarettes, kind of all 'lucky strike' and what have you. And we waited and we waited. And along Sherman and New York were on strike, so they wouldn't send any ships for us. So we had to wait and wait and that's why it was way into the end of October before we got home. So we came home on a liberty ship, and on a liberty ship you could see the rivets. When you stand there, everything will move back towards the rivets, you know. But it was a lot better than the Highland sheep we went over with and we had three square meals a day. And a lot of people got us sick on that because it was a small ship. And when you stood on the stairs to come down, sometimes the stairs would be the opposite way and tip right over, you know. And a lot of us got sick on that. But that only took us, I think it was fourteen days, coming home was on the eleventh day, so I think we went straight than crisscross.

JH: And I imagine the feeling was much happier.

KB: Oh yes. You knew where you were going. And then we went to Fort Dix and got discharged and then they gave us enough money to get home on train from there to Albany

and then I got a taxi from Albany up to the house. And I came about, I guess it was about two o'clock in the morning. My wife and, I had a son at that time, they were living with my mother and father in Delmar. I got up on the front steps, the front door opened and there was Florence, my wife. I'll never forget it.

KH: Can you remember where you were when it was announced the war was over in Europe?

KB: Yes. Just before we got to Leipzig, we were a few miles out of Leipzig and that was the end. It was May 8 and I can't tell you if it was morning, noon, or night. And I can also tell you when the war started, Pearl Harbor Day, my wife and I weren't even engaged then. We were right around Cooperstown where she came from and about eleven o'clock that morning FDR announced that the Japanese had bombed us. A lot of other things are hazy now. I'm getting older [laughs].

JH: Do you remember when you heard that news, how it affected you all?

KB: Yes. We didn't know what it was going to do or what was going to happen to you. Of course, you were young then, you know. I was 21 when I entered the service and I was 23 when I got out. You didn't know what was going to happen. First of all, I did something foolish. I didn't know that you couldn't get cars or convertibles or anything so I wrote a letter to my wife and I said, 'I made it through the war and I guess I'm coming home and I'd like to have a convertible.' [coughs] Excuse me [coughs again]. So she had a convertible waiting for me when I got home. That was something.

JH: What color was it?

KB: It was gray. White wheels, black top. So that was quite a homecoming.

JH: Was it brand new one or a used?

KB: Oh no. There were no brand new ones. No, before I went into service we had to put the new cars away. The new cars were all put in storage for what you could get. And Florence and I, we would drive and then the owner of Orange Motors, Frank, he would have Florence drive his car and we would pick up the other car and take them to this garage and parked them. And while we were gone in service as a lawyer or a doctor or whoever really needed a new car, he would be allotted one of those cars and they'd get that. The first ones were '46s. When I got home, those ones were '46s. And when they came in, I went back to Orange Motors, in fact, after the war, and Mr. Tuey called me, they notified him ahead of time that I was being discharged, so he bugged me until I came in to see him. And I said,

'Yes, I'll come back.' I was welcomed back January 1 and he made me come back December 1 of '45, so I only had a month home before I went back. So anyway, the '46 cars came in and they had no bumpers to them. So we had to put in 2X6s and paint them silver on the front and back and we'd call up the people who bought them and say, 'Your rear bumper's in.' or 'Your front bumper's in.' So then they would come and we'd pull down the rear bumper or front bumper.

JH: Now, going back, when you came home, were there people to greet you when your ship came in, like communities or anything?

KB: No. Nobody.

JH: Did that kind of let you down? Because some people have a lot of family –

KB: It's nothing like it is today. Nothing. You got off the ship, there was nobody there, and we went to Fort Dix and then you left Fort Dix, and I can't tell you how I got there. Either a train – I can't remember right now. I guess a train was close by. And you got there and that's all, I mean, you got a taxi like you would today and tell him where I wanted to go and that was it. But there were never no parades or anything else that we had.

JH: You mentioned one person, your radioman who you keep in contact with, have you met any other people? At the reunions or anything?

KB: Yes. I have Johnny – another fella out in Fort Washington, Long Island. Not now. He's in Kinston, North Carolina – that's where he lives now, but he was in Fort Washington. And during the war, while Johnny and I were overseas, Florence, my wife, and my sister Helen went down to see his family down to Fort Washington and took them all over and they lived a little ways from where Perry Como, the singer, lived. So they took them there to see his house and all and then they came up to see Florence and my sister Helen. So that was nice. And then after the war, Johnny and his family came up to see us and we went to see them. Not in Long Island. That was out in North Carolina. So that was good too. And that's the only two that I really kept in contact with. But we had what they call a 'Fourth Cavalry Spur' which is a newspaper, printed four times a year, and one of the daughters of one of thousands in service, she prints it. She lives in Gillette, Wyoming, and she does a very nice job onto it.

KH: Now the big mystery on here that people wonder – pay. Did they hold all your pay until you got discharged?

KB: No, the way they did it, so much went to your family, like to Florence. And when our son was born, so much more went to her. And then I kept, I think it was twenty dollars that I kept. And they gave me twenty dollars whenever it could catch up with us. We didn't get it every month. Sometimes for two months. You didn't need money anyway. So, you would get that and the rest of it would all be sent home, and she [Florence] would get a check for the rest of it. And I got to tell you something about her: she worked all the way through after Kenny was born. My mother took care of my son while Florence worked, and she [Florence] saved all the money that I sent home so that when I got discharged we could start building our first house in Delmar. And I thought that was something, so we had a down payment, more or less, to start building.

JH: So how old was your son before you saw him?

KB: He was – I only had one furlough, and he was about two or three months, I think. But that was the only time I had seen him. So, a warm welcome.

JH: Yes, that must have been difficult to leave him.

KB: So I missed when he was more or less growing up, and then he passed away when he was only twenty-three.

JH: So, do you feel that you missed out on a lot with that? With your child?

KB: Well, at the time, when I first went in I thought, You missed out on all this stuff. And now I wouldn't trade it for the world. It's the best experience I could have. As long as I made it through and I was safe and I got home.

JH: And how do you feel that experience influenced your life?

KB: It made me stronger, it made me appreciate more, it made me know to do the things now instead of waiting. Don't say, "Well, I'll go do it next week" or "I'll do it next year". Do it now, because you never know.

JH: And did you become a part of any of these military organizations or anything?

KB: American Legion. I applied to American Legion for quite a few years now. And my wife, she was an American Legion auxiliary and we had a lot of good parties there. And towards the end, of course, we haven't been able to go to anything, but it's good to stay in it. And I get the American Legion book, she [Florence] got the auxiliary book, a magazine it is. And you keep up with a lot of things, military, that's going on. My granddaughter, she

was in the Air Force for twelve years, and now she's in the Army Reserve. And she gets all the books and she brings them to me so I can reminisce, you know.

KH: Going back to recalled C-rations and K-rations, with the way that you received your food, could you describe C-rations, what were K-rations, and did you have opportunities to get that great new development from World War Two spam?

KB: Yes, we had spam. I still eat spam, I like spam [laughs]. We had spam every week with fries, baked and everything else. But we were very lucky. We had very good cooks all the way through basic training and even out in the Desert we had it good. The Desert was very hard because we had no refrigerators and there was no way to have a refrigerator in those days. So, they dug a hole in the ground, they took railroad ties and they built it up, sorted it up and that, and they put a roof over it with railroad ties, then they bring in ice. For all the while I was in the Desert, I never ate at the mess hall for lunch. You had to – oh, I forgot to tell you that: we had three hours for lunch, from eleven to two, because you couldn't stand at 120 to 125 degrees. It was too hot. You couldn't do anything. But as soon as the PX truck would come from NDL, they would come out with the ice and the ice cream. Well, nothing would last so we were the first ones there and that's what we would have. Every day, I'd have a pint of ice cream for my lunch. Because, if you waited, it'd be melted and you couldn't eat it anyway, so that was my lunch out in the Desert. And we'd have big lister bags. In the center we had rows of tents and we took stones and we'd make a sidewalk, a walkway. Then we had the lister bag in the middle and that has little connecters where four or five guys could get to work at the same time. And the lister bag evaporates and makes it cool, the sun beating on it would make it cool. So, the water wasn't too bad. But the worst thing in the Desert was getting a shower. They load you in a truck and we'd go to the Chuska Mountains, which was to the back of us. And dust is flying all over. So you'd take your shower up there where the shower's all set up [coughs]. Then you get in a truck [coughs again] and by the time you get home, you're just as dirty as you went. So you might as well have just not went [laughs]. So that was funny.

KH: What were the C-rations? What were inside the C-rations and K-rations?

KB: Well, the K-rations were in a box, a Crackerjack box sealed with wax. And it's got almost the same as a C-ration. A C-ration's got a little bit more variety and a little bit more quantity to it. And there would be four cigarettes, a little bit of toilet paper, a little bit of a chocolate bar – and then you'd have three of them: there was breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And for breakfast, that was powdered eggs, and then like I said before, you put it into the hot water to heat it and then you'd peal it back and the bread – it wasn't bread, it was some kind of a cracker. I didn't smoke so I'd trade my four cigarettes for somebody's chocolate bar. The chocolate wasn't real chocolate. It's probably real chocolate, but not

like today. It wouldn't melt or anything. It was hard. When we got by – oh, and that's another thing: Coca-Cola came in a bottle, you know how a Coca-Cola shape is. You got that ration. Every two weeks you'd get a bottle of Coke. That was overseas, in combat. Every once in a while we'd get a bottle of Coke sent to us. It'd be a lot better if it had cans but they didn't have cans then, so they had to wash the glass bottle. So that was good.

JH: Now we know you received some awards you haven't mentioned.

KB: I don't mention those things.

JH: Well, that's an honor.

KH: Well, you shouldn't be ashamed about these. You received quite a few decorations there in Ardennes, Central Europe, Normandy, the Rhineland, the Battle of Saint Lo, the Battle of the Bulge, Cherbourg, the Hurtgen Forest, the Harz Mountains, Liege, Luxembourg, Brussels, and in Paris. And during all that time, besides the Bronze Star, you received the American Service Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Service Medals with five Battle Stars. And on top of that, the Good Conduct Medal.

KB: Yes. The most important was the Bronze Star. I never thought I'd get anything like that. That made me real, real, real good.

KH: What was it like when you left from Fort Dix to come home on the train? Were people friendly?

KB: They were friendly but, I don't know, they didn't congratulate you. Now I have people on Memorial Day who would come – one woman that's with my wife, she lives with the Babrida's in Saint Peter's. She'd come up to the house on Memorial Day just to thank me. You didn't get any of that before.

JH: Have you ever marched in our local village parade?

KB: I've been in the parade on Memorial Day a couple times.

KH: It's a unique parade we have here because just about everybody in town participates in it and you see them coming and going [laughs] and then coming back again.

KB: Yes. I have a lot of good memories. A lot of bad times but a lot of good times too. That why you have to look at it.

JH: Then when the war ended, and you came home, you say you then went back to work soon after within a month or so and then you went back to Orange Motors?

KB: I was discharged on October 30th and I think it was November 1st or 2nd, I forget which. It might have been the 1st. So I'm home about a week and Mr. Tuey calls up on a phone and says, "You are home." I says, "Yes." He says, "I got a notice from the government saying you were going to be home." [coughs] So he says, "When are you coming back?" I says, "Mr. Tuey, I just got back." And then he said, "Well, I want you." He said, "At least come have dinner with me." So I said, "Well, I'll do that." So I went in, met him, had lunch with him, and I said, "I'll be back right after the 1st of the year." The 2nd. Then he said, "No, no," he says, "I need you now." He says, "You got to come in December 1st." So he talked me into it so I went in December 1st. So, I was home a month and then I went back to work. Been there ever since.

JH: Right. How old is Orange Motors now, do you know?

KB: Ninety years. October 13th of this year it will be ninety years old.

JH: It's been there many years. They sell mainly Ford cars, don't they?

KB: Ford, yes. They sell Ford cars. And now Mazda, which is half-Ford anyway. I ended up for forty-six years there. I started off as a mechanic and then I went Assistant Service Manager and I made Service Manager, and then my oldest boy passed away, and I stayed another year as Service Manager and I said, "You're under too much stress. We're going to put you out in the sales." Here's another complete different career, you know. I said, "Alright." And I didn't want to leave the Service Department, but I did. I went out in Sales. I was there about two and a half to three years and they made me Sales Manager. I says, "Talk about stress, here I am right back into it again." So I was Sales Manager, then I said, "I would like two different careers, being in Service Department and being in Sales." And then when I finally ended, I was part-time as no more nights, that was it. No more nights and no more Saturdays and I finished up as a salesman at no more nights and no more Saturdays. So that made it a little bit easier. After that, I was sixty years old. I retired when I was sixty-five.

JH: And did you find being in the Service working with vehicles that that somewhat helped you to do a better job at the –

KB: Well, I didn't do any of that. All you did is, in Service, all I did was maintenance work. I didn't do what all the others were doing, before or after. But they gave you a better lookout on life. Better work habits, I would say. You don't go in and punch a time clock at

eight o'clock. You go in before and you don't go home by five. You go home *after* five. Something like that. I guess that was a better thing.

JH: Okay, well we thank you very much for sharing your experiences with us.

KB: Thank you both.