Justus Rathbone Belfield, Narrator

New York State Military Museum
Interviewer Wayne Clark

Interviewed July 13, 2012 at the Van Allen Senior Apartments in Glenmont, NY

INT: Sir, for the record would you state your full name and date and place of birth, please.

JB: Justus Rathbone Belfield, date of birth June 27, 1916, I was born in Utica, NY.

INT: Did you attend school in Utica?

JB: Yes, I did.

INT: Did you graduate from high school?

JB: No, I have a GED which I got in the military.

INT: Looking at your paperwork, you went into the military March 15, 1943.

JB: That's when I was called up. I enlisted in 1942 but I was held in abeyance until '43, until they formed the division that I was going to go into. In the meantime, they changed it from the 17th Armored Division to the 22d Armored Division. So when I was called up on March 15, 1943, I was in the 22d Armored Division.

INT: Did you attend basic training with them?

JB: At first I was doing basic training with them but I ended up being a teacher. [laughs]

INT: What did you teach?

JB: Small arms.

INT: You were in the National Guard also, correct?

JB: The National Guard was the Cavalry. That was back in 1936 I enlisted [in the Guard].

INT: What unit were you with?

JB: Troop A in Utica, NY. They built us a beautiful, big, brand new armory out there. We had 78 horses. We had horses in that troop that were on the border chasing Pancho Villa back into Mexico. [Mexican Punitive Expedition 1916] They were that old. I rode one when I first got there. The reason why they kept them was that they knew every signal. In the Cavalry there's no voice signals, it's all done with your arm and a whistle. The first horse I rode was called Gringo, "G", back in the old days when A Troop was G Troop on

the border. Gringo knew every single signal. All I had to do was sit in the saddle and hold the reins. He did everything.

INT: Were you the only soldier that rode him?

JB: Oh goodness, no. Every recruit rode one of the G horses, we had several left, I think five of them. I rode three of them: Gringo, Garwood, and Groller. Gringo and Groller were good horses, I don't know too much about Garwood.

INT: So these horses were over 20 years old.

JB: Over 20? They were 30 years old. When we turned Gringo out to pasture, they had a big write-up in the newspaper about him. He was 33 years old and still going.

INT: Was that the first time you had ridden a horse?

JB: To that extent, yes. I'd been on a horse's back before but to maneuver and to do all that kind of thing. Being in the Cavalry was my object.

INT: What did you think of the Cavalry? Did you enjoy it?

JB: I loved it. I'd reenter tomorrow. [laughs]

INT: How long were you with them?

JB: Five years, from 1936 to late 1940.

INT: Why did you leave the Cavalry? Did they disband the unit?

JB: They took the horses away and made us into a mechanized unit. I didn't want nothing to do with it. They gave us 37mm guns, we were supposed to be an anti-tank unit. They might as well have given us a peashooter and some spit balls. They wouldn't have done a thing. Big old German Tiger tank come along and you shoot a 37 at it, they'd think a fly hit it. [laughs]

INT: What rank were you when you left the Guard unit, the Cavalry?

JB: To be anything other than a private in the Cavalry, you had to be there about seven years. Then, if you were lucky, you got to be a PFC (private first class) and then you had to do another five years and you were in line for corporal. You had to wait until a corporal retired or whatever, but you'd be in line for it. That's how it was back in those days.

INT: Did you attend any sort of basic training during that period?

JB: Oh sure. You had to learn all the basic rudiments and what they called the IDR, Infantry Drill Regulations. I've got the book in my library.

INT: Did you go away some place for that training?

JB: No.

INT: You were taught there at the armory.

JB: Yes.

INT: When you eventually joined the Regular Army, did your Guard training help you?

JB: It made me what I was. I enlisted in World War Two and I was appointed a corporal right off.

INT: Because of your experience.

JB: That's right. I didn't get the job of being teacher right off. I was showing the men, under cover you know. They didn't know anything. Those poor guys came in cold. I knew most of the stuff, I didn't have to go through a regular basic training.

INT: Where were you stationed in the States?

JB: I entered at Fort Niagara and was there for two weeks. Then I went to Camp Perry, Ohio, near Sandusky on Lake Erie for probably three months. Then we moved to Camp Campbell, Kentucky, which is actually in Tennessee, right on the corner of Kentucky. The main entrance is in Kentucky, near Paducah. There we were under General Steven Henry in the 20th Armored Division. We were only there for probably six weeks and the 20th was going to move out so they moved us out ahead to Fort Knox. When we got to Fort Knox, there was no idea of the 22d Armored Division being formed there, so they broke us up into separate companies. My company was assigned to be teachers in the ARTC, Armored Reserve [breaks off]. I can't remember what it stood for. I was a teacher there in small arms because I was probably the only one in our company that knew all the different weapons. I had to go out on the range with them and show them how to handle the weapons on the range.

INT: What kind of weapons were they? The 03 Springfields [M1903] from World War One?

JB: No. When I went in the Cavalry we had the old Enfields.

INT: Model 1917 Enfield.

JB: Yes, how do you know?

INT: I have an interest in guns.

JB: Okay, we had the Enfields, then we got the 03, then we went to the M1 Garand. When we got the Garand, it was a new game for them all. They didn't understand that kind of weapon.

INT: Because it was semi-automatic.

JB: Semi-automatic and gas operated. The kids were all excited when they got out there and I had to tell them to cool it. It was quite an experience. They were young kids compared to me. I was 24 or 25. I was grandpa. [laughs] They gave me their attention no end, they were very good. I enjoyed the kids that I taught.

INT: You were still a corporal?

JB: I was still a corporal. We were there for quite a while in our new company and I was chosen to go as cadre to form a new company in what's now Fort Gordon, down in Georgia. I was at Fort Gordon, it was Camp Gordon then, for over a year. We formed a company there and I formed a section of my own. I handpicked the people that I had and, after I had schooled them enough so they could be on their own, we went out to different places as IG (Inspector General) inspectors. The whole of Gordon, there were two different divisions there: the 71st Infantry Division and the 10th Armored Division. We did the 71st ID first, checked all their units. We had to rate every weapon in the division. They passed, they went good-bye, we won't see you again for a while.

INT: How many guys were on your team?

JB: Nine.

INT: You were in charge of all nine of them?

JB: I forgot to tell you. I got down to Gordon and I was told I had to go to Atlanta where they were bluing weapons, and they needed three people to go there and check. So three of us got the job. We got over there and oh my gosh, I couldn't believe it. They were doing it all wrong. I asked for the officer in charge and they said Major So-and-So. I don't know his name and I don't want to know. He came out and I said, "You're doing this all wrong, Major." He says "What are we doing wrong?" "Well first off, you're not breaking down the weapons properly—to do this job, you've got take them all apart, you can't just take the wood off them and dunk them." That's what they were doing, just taking the wood off and dunking them, a gas-operated weapon. They were carburizing all the springs. The process carburized the springs, take the spring and pull it down and it would stay down. So I told him. He said, "Well, who are you?" I told him who I was and he said, "How do you know about bluing?" I said, "I worked for Savage Arms for several years before I came into the service. I've been acquainted with almost every operation, I was an inspector on weapons." He says, "You mind your business and I'll mind mine" and he turned around and walked back to his office. So I made out my report and we went back. We were there for I think four days and three days were wasted after seeing that. They were going on, doing M1 rifles. They weren't plugging the barrel, they were bluing the inside of the barrel, they were carburizing all the springs. The rear site had the spring cover; all you had to do was hit the rifle and the sides would fall off. The cover had no spring. I thought if he wants to do it his way, that's his problem. It'll catch up with him for sure. Little did I think that it would be me. So I go on and they say the 10th Armored is going to go over to Europe and we've got to get all the weapons checked

quick. My men were trained by me so what I did, they did. It wasn't ten minutes and one of my men came up to me and said, "Sergeant"—I was a Sergeant First Class by the way.

INT: You moved up quick.

JB: I did. I went from a corporal to a sergeant and my next step was sergeant first class. I didn't do bad. He came up to me and said, "All these weapons are no good." I asked what was wrong with them and he showed it to me and said "I know, I know all about them." We checked every single weapon and put a red tag on every bunch. Went from the first supply room to the second supply room, same thing. We got through three supply rooms and we were on our fourth one. I had a lieutenant with me—no matter where you go, you have to have one of them with you—he came running over to me and said, "Sergeant, come with me quick." I went over to the door and there was a two-star general standing there. He says, "Who's in charge of this operation?" I said "I am, sir." He said, "What are you finding?" I said "Every one of your weapons won't work, even your machine guns won't work. They've all been blued and they were not taken down properly. Every one of them is junk. The inside of the barrel is blued, I don't know about the firing pin but it's probably blued." He asked for my name and I told him. He asked for my unit and I said 923d Ordnance." He said, "I'm going to make out a report and if you're wrong, you're in trouble." I said, "Sir, I'm not wrong but you're in trouble—you don't have any weapons." [laughs] I went back to my company, we didn't have anything else to do, he didn't want us to go any further. He said he wanted his ordnance unit check it out. Sure enough, they were all bad. They had all been sent to Atlanta for re-bluing. I don't know what happened to him. First thing you know, they fall out the company, big sheet of paper, and the captain reads it off. "To whom it may concern. The small arms unit of this company is hereby commended for their actions in the 10th Armored Division by," and the general's name. So we got a commendation. I've got a couple of them. I didn't hear anything more about it, nothing. We didn't have to do anymore because there wasn't anymore. I got a notice to go home, my wife had a baby, my son.

INT: You were married then.

JB: I got married in 1942. I went home on leave and they sent me a telegram telling me not to report back to Gordon, report to Fort Benning. I said "Fort Benning? That's for paratroopers." I got there, took the train and the bus over, I had all my belongings in two big bags over my shoulder and I don't know where I'm going. Hadn't the slightest idea. I was walking down the street and a car pulls up alongside me, "Where you going?" I said "923d Ordnance." The guy said, "Throw your stuff in the backseat, I'll take you over there." [laughs] It was one of my buddies. He had an army car and he took me way out in the woods. We were out in no-man's-land where they took the paratroopers for their initial jump. You could see them jump, they were just high enough for the parachutes to open coming down. They didn't get hurt or anything. I used to go out there and sit and watch them jump. From there, I got orders to go to Europe. They took us back to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

INT: How big a unit was that that went overseas? The 923d?

JB: Yes, probably 125—130 men. I've got a picture in there I'll show you. We went up to Camp Kilmer and they made us ready to go over to Europe. We got ready, went down to New York, got onboard a ship—the USAT Borinquen (United States Army Transport). We didn't know when we got on it but when we got about half way across the ocean, the captain got on the loudspeaker and said, "Notice to all people: We want you to know that the USAT Borinquen is the last wooden transport ship afloat. It has been hit twice by torpedoes, but the torpedoes went right straight through it. They've got two plates on the front where it hit. If we get hit by a torpedo, don't worry. We're the safest people in the convoy, 150-ship convoy. We're the safest people in the convoy. Just grab a piece of the ship as it goes by." [laughs]

INT: At least he had a sense of humor.

JB: We got two submarine scares going over and they sunk both submarines. The corvettes and the destroyers went up through the convoy, they were out in front of us. We could watch them dropping depth charges, all that kind of stuff. Next thing you see is great big oil slick. Good-bye submarine. We got it, we got it twice. One of them was about three days out of England. They let us get that far and they were going to knock us off, the German submarine. We got them both, we got into Southampton-Portsmouth Harbor, it's all one big harbor and they had a submarine net across the front of it like a gate that they opened and closed with tugboats. They opened it and let us through but the English Navy was all around there to ensure there were no submarines around. We got in there and we stayed there overnight. The next morning we got up and there's a line of British Navy across the Channel over towards France. They were there for us to go along side of, to keep the ships in line and to keep the submarines away. We got almost into Le Havre Harbor and we saw four men in a raft. They had a white flag and they were waving. Our captain said to us, "Don't pull out of line, stay in line." He said it loud enough so the ships in front and back of us could hear it. The ship in front of us had four sailors on it. He pulled out to get the guys off the raft and got just about alongside of them and ka-whoom, the whole tail end of the ship, the rudder and the whole thing started sinking almost immediately. They got two British tugboats and a big rope about that big around [holds arms in a circle]. They slung it under the ship and lifted it up and took it in and beached it.

INT: So those guys in the life raft were German?

JB: Yes, they sure were. That was our first introduction to German sympathizers.

INT: And they blew themselves up?

JB: I don't know. Last I saw of them, good-bye. We went on into Le Havre and we were the first ones off the ship. This was December 1944, the Battle of the Bulge was going on. We got there just in time to get in on the tail end of the Battle of the Bulge. We got

off the boat and got in there and we waited and we waited and we waited to be picked up. It's winter! We're standing there with a duffel bag waiting to be moved.

INT: Did you have any winter gear at all?

JB: We had winter gear but even so, standing there like that you become an icicle very shortly. We waited and we waited and we waited. What's the story? "You're supposed to go on the train and those trucks over there are for the next unit." Well, about four hours we waited there. They finally decided that the next unit hadn't come off the ship yet and they weren't ready to leave, so they gave us the trucks. We took the trucks and we went to Saint-Valery, France, just up the coast a little bit. We went up there, snow about two feet deep and they had pup tents put on top of the snow for us guys to get in. I opened up the front of the pup tent that me and my buddy, Joe, were supposed to go into and there was two feet of snow inside the tent. I said, "Don't worry, Joe, I know how to work this one. Find a shovel." We had those little entrenching tools and I dug a hole two feet deep and big enough for Joe and I to get into. I said, "Joe, give me your blanket" and I put it on the bottom and I took mine and put it on the top. Each one of us had a blanket and I said "We'll be okay." He said he didn't believe it, that we would freeze to death. We were snug as a bug in a rug. That was good training I had learned a long time ago. We got up in the morning and everybody was grumbling that they couldn't sleep. Joe and I got up fresh as a daisy but during the night, I had just got into bed when all of a sudden, sirens all over the place. I looked out of my tent and there was a whole line of ambulances. Right next door to where we were was a hospital unit and all these ambulances were bringing in men to the hospital unit.

INT: From the Bulge?

JB: No, we hadn't even been there a day yet. We had just gotten off the trucks. I saw a major standing there and I asked him what the problem was. He said there had been a train accident last night. I asked what was the train accident and he said that the engineer was a German collaborator and he took the train and he came into the station—in France and in Belgium the trains go into the station at the end of the tracks—and he opened it up wide open and jumped off. All the soldiers that were in the front end of the train, something happened to them. A lot of them were killed. That is what we were getting in the ambulances and the major was saying, "That one goes there, that one goes there, that one goes there," separating them according to their injuries. I told my men to give them a hand, there weren't enough people to haul all these stretchers. So we did. My captain came over and asked what we were doing. I told him we were helping with the stretchers, that there had been a train wreck. My captain said, and I won't use the language he did, "Get yourself back over where you belong." I said, "I belong here right now. They need help." He said, "Get back where you belong." The major came over and asked what was the matter, and I told him. He said, "Captain, you get over where you belong. These men are going to be here helping me, my orders. You want to do anything about it?" [laughs] So we stayed and helped them for a long time. Come to find out, this unit that took the brunt of the thing on the train were in the place where we would have been had we got on

the train. When our captain found that out, it was all a different story. Him and his big mouth, I didn't like him. He and I became not friends anymore, after that night. It was a joke—the next day we're all set up ready for our noonday meal and they had the kitchen on a truck and they had, I forget what it was, probably stew, but they had made it. There wasn't any canned stuff. All of a sudden ka-swish, up goes the kitchen in smoke, fire. [laughs] All of the canvas that was over the top of the truck came down on the food and they couldn't serve it. We ended up with C-rations. I laughed until I didn't know what to do. You know, you get paid back for what you do. That knucklehead got paid back, his kitchen went up in smoke.

Anyhow, we got on a train, forty and eight cars, forty men or eight horses. We got in the cars but they forgot to clean up after the horses that were there before. Our men had to clean out the car before they could even get in the fool thing. We got in eventually but it still smelled pretty bad. Next thing you know, our train started to roll and I wondered where we were going. I opened the door and stuck my head out and I can see the Eiffel Tower. The Eiffel Tower is not in Belgium, it's in Paris. I told my men, "We're going to Paris! That's wrong, we're supposed to be going the other way." I got the captain's attention and he saw it too. He pulled that wire that's in there and stopped the train. The engineer came back and my captain told him that we were supposed to be going towards Belgium. "No, no you go Paris." Come to find out, he was another collaborator and he was making out like he didn't know. They took the engine off one end and put it on the other end and took us back to Belgium. We get into Belgium, into a little town called Alsemberg. Who ever heard of Alsemberg, Belgium? We got off there and they took us by truck into Brussels. We got some nice quarters, I'll show you pictures of them. I was in charge of one house, my buddy Joe and I had charge of one house. Anyway, it was some chemical company's athletic field and we had a soccer field in between and tennis courts, and they had a big field house at the opposite end. I had a beautiful villa. Imagine going to war and ending up in something like this. My men were all happy. We got in there and had to clean it all out, of course, it was all dirty and that's where I lived for quite a while. We were at Depot 686 at that time, right in Brussels. That was a good deal. They moved us up into Lieges, I was in Lieges, near the Battle of the Bulge. I was there probably two or three days and they put me up closer to Avranches. Avranches is right next to where the Battle of the Bulge was. The first thing I found was apple orchards. Oh boy, did we make short work of that. The owner came out and asked what we were doing in French. By this time, I could speak French pretty fluently. I told him we were picking up the apples that were on the ground that would be no good anyway and we're eating them, but we're not picking any off the trees. He said, "Okay, I just didn't want you to take any off the tree." I said that my men were smarter than that. I told him all this in French. [laughs] He said to take as many as we want, just not off the trees. So we were all set there. Where we went that day, I don't remember, but we went back to Lieges eventually and I was in charge of 150 Italian prisoners. They were cleaning up the battlefields, putting all the clean-up into forty and eight cars and sending it back to the railhead in Lieges because Fabrique Nationale—that was their big arms company—and

we had to sort it out. They threw everything in those cars, bazookas, ammunition, I was scared to open the door, something might fall out and goodbye Jay.

INT: The Italian prisoners were handling all this ordnance?

JB: Yes. They took the Italians away from me and sent them home and I got 150 Germans. Those Italians were the laziest birds you ever did see comparatively. I turned them loose and a lieutenant colonel said, "What are you doing with all these Germans sitting around here?" I said, "Don't worry, they're working their heads off. Every day I send out two or three cars." He said, "I'm going to have to cut you down to 100." Well, the 100 Germans would do the work of 150 Italians and nobody was sitting around.

INT: They were well fed and taken care of?

JB: Oh sure. They had all the sauerkraut they could eat. [laughs] Then he came down and asked if I had any SS [schutzstaffel] men in there. "I have to have four because I have 100 or more, I have to have four SS men to keep them in line." He said, "What do you mean, keep them in line?" "They're afraid they'll get with the Americans and go to America. I get that every day, they all want to go to America." He said he was going to take 25 more away from me so I didn't have to have the SS men. I ended up with 75 Germans doing the work of 150 Italians. They did all the work so I said I have to do something for these guys, I'll give them some good incentive to work. They had Walter who could speak English. Walter went back to them and said that Sergeant Belfield said that any six men he picks at the end of the week, he's going to pick the six hardest workers. So that weekend I got six of them and they followed me over to a café and we all went in. I set them down, I sat down and ordered seven beers. The waiter said, "One beer maybe but not seven." I asked why not and he said because they're Germans. I said, "They were the enemy but the war's over now." He said, "I can't serve them." I said, "You can't?" I said—I can speak German too by the way—I turned to them and I said, "Take this place apart." I told him what I had just said and he said, "No, no, I'll give you seven beers." [laughs] I said, "No more trouble, the war's over." He gave us seven beers and I paid for them and from that time on, as long as I was there, there was no trouble with my seven beers every weekend. About four or five weeks after that, I came home.

INT: Where were you when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt? Do you remember hearing about it?

JB: Oh, sure. I was so happy that Harry Truman got in. I liked Harry Truman as VP. When he got to be president, I was happy.

INT: When you heard that the war had ended in Europe, was there much celebration?

JB: I was on leave that day, I had a one-day pass. I was in Brussels.

INT: Was there any talk about going to the Pacific to fight the Japanese?

JB: No. I was in a booze joint, I had just had a beer. A girl came running down this little slope and she said, “La guerre est fini,” waving her arms, the war is over. She saw me and said, “Vive les Americains!” She came up and gave me a big hug. [laughs] I went back up to the barracks and everybody was so happy the war was over. It took us about a week to arrange it in our heads that the war is over, I’m going home. I didn’t go home right away. That’s when I got into cleaning the battlefield and all that stuff.

INT: When did you end up going home?

JB: January 1946. I came right to Fort Dix, NJ.

INT: Were you involved in any occupation duty in Germany?

JB: No. We were strictly ordnance people. That would be infantry troops and stuff like that, or military police, not us. No, we came back and I got in another company, the 900th Ordnance. This was when I went to France, I was transferred to the 900th Ordnance Company. We were the 923d and I got in the 900th. I came home with the 900th Ordnance.

INT: Did the whole group come back together?

JB: My group did. I don’t know about the other one.

[Tape change]

Justus Rathbone Belfield

New York State Military Museum
Interviewer Wayne Clark

Interviewed July 13, 2012 at the Van Allen Senior Apartments in Glenmont, NY

INT: So you came back home with the 900th Ordnance Company. Were you discharged with them?

JB: Yes, I came home on the [T-AP-188] *Aiken Victory*. It was made special for the Navy during the war. I forget who was making them but they were slam banged together. We came in by Le Havre and we went out by Le Havre and we had to cross the Channel to get out into the ocean. The day we hit the Channel was probably one of the roughest days that they had in the Channel. Well, this old *Aiken Victory*, which was an all-steel boat, we got out there and [puts fingertips together and raises and lowers elbows while making a screeching sound]. I watched the rivets to see if they would pop. [holds hands in prayer] Dear God, please keep those rivets in there. Do you remember those ships that were breaking in half?

INT: I heard about them.

JB: This was one of them. All I could see was me sitting around in a life jacket, waiting for somebody to come and pick me up. When we got out of the Channel, out onto the open sea, it was just as smooth as glass all the way across. We went to Europe in the Gulf Stream and we came back in the Gulf Stream. It was cold out there. The last thing I saw when we left American was the Statue of Liberty and I cried like a baby. I wondered if I'd ever see it again. And coming back in it's the first thing you see. That was a happy day.

INT: Did your wife know you were coming back then?

JB: No. *I* didn't know.

JB's wife: There was a telephone strike and a telegraph strike when he hit New York and he couldn't even let me know he was coming. I didn't know he was coming until he came to the back door.

JB: I had all my gear. In the meantime I had picked up another load, too. I was loaded to the hilt.

INT: Did you come home before you were discharged from the service?

JB: No, I was discharged. I had a lot of Christmas gifts and other kinds of stuff to bring home for my wife, my mother.

INT: Was your father living at that point?

JB: My father died when I was three and a half years old. I don't even remember my father. On the way home I stopped and had a few brews. I hit the ice going home, fell and broke a beautiful set of glasses from Dresden, smashed every one of them. That was the end of my gifts. [laughs]

INT: I guess it was a good enough gift, getting you home safe, right? So your wife was totally surprised when you came to the door.

INT: Big surprise.

JB's wife: It was a happy surprise.

INT: So how old was your son at that point?

JB's wife: He was about 16 months old.

INT: [After discharge] did you make use of the GI Bill or the 52-20 Club?

JB: Right off the bat I joined the 52-20 Club. In fact I still have my papers. I took about four weeks, that's all. I went to work as fast as I could. I worked at Savage Arms before I went in and Savage Arms took me right back in.

INT: Where were they located?

JB: Utica. Do you know anything about Utica?

INT: Not a lot. Are they still located in Utica? I thought I saw them over in Massachusetts.

JB: They're in Chicopee Falls, MA.

INT: So you went back to work for Savage Arms.

JB: Yes, but not for very long. They folded and went back to Chicopee.

INT: Did you have a choice to go with them to Chicopee?

JB: No, I had no connection to Chicopee so they didn't have to take me. They did have to take me at Utica. That was the end of that. I went to work at the Western Auto store.

JB's wife: And then you went back in the service.

INT: Tell us about that.

JB: I was in the Reserve.

INT: I see you became a warrant officer.

JB: I was in the Reserve and they called for people to come up for one year to help with the Berlin Airlift. So I said okay, I'll go in for one year for the Berlin Airlift. When I reported for duty they sent me to the Utica Recruiting Office to report in. I reported in and they said, "You ain't going anywhere. You ain't going to the Berlin Airlift. You're staying right here. You can do more good recruiting than you could on the Berlin Airlift." So I got on recruiting. They made me a Public Information NCO (non-commissioned officer). We had a radio program, gave out information to the newspaper, spoke at all kinds of men's clubs, the Rotary, the Lions. We went to high schools and gave talks and we did pretty good. Our information got around and it worked. I reenlisted at the end of my one year. I was living at home, I was a sergeant first class. I wasn't making peanuts by that time, I was doing pretty good. Don't forget, I had two years in to raise the rate. They called them "knocks" and I had a couple knocks. They told me I would go on recruiting duty if I reenlisted but I got orders to go to Fort Lewis in Seattle, Washington. Everybody knew what would happen if I went there—I'd be shipped to the Pacific somewhere. At the time Korea was hot and I probably would have gone right out of there to Korea. I went to my captain and told him that I had been promised recruiting duty. He told me he couldn't do anything about it. I had a first lieutenant friend that I met in Utica; I told him about it. He said, "Don't worry, Jay, I'll take care of it." You wouldn't believe how fast I got taken off those orders to go to Fort Lewis. I was transferred to Syracuse. I asked how he did that and he said, "When I speak, they hear me." He was a sergeant on D-Day and landed on D-Day with all his men. He lost a couple two or three but he told his men, "Stay with me and what I do, you do." He got almost all his men through. Of course, he got hit, too. He got a Purple Heart. He got the Silver Star, and I forget how many Bronze Stars, all on the beach on D-Day before he got off the beach. He was my buddy from that time on, he was in Syracuse. We went fishing together, we did all kinds of things together. [laughs] He died on May 28, two years back. He lived in Texas. He was a real old West Virginia hillbilly.

INT: I see you were discharged December 15, 1952. You decided you'd had enough?

JB: [Motions over his shoulder and whispers.] She decided.

INT: You were going to tell me how you made warrant officer.

JB: I was in the Reserve and I was a master sergeant already. The First Sergeant and two other sergeants, who were his buddies, didn't like me because I was a Johnny-come-lately into their unit. I was the most eligible person in the company for warrant officer. It was an ordnance company, so I knew where I was going and what I was doing. I knew the captain, too; he was an old friend of mine. So I told him I'd give the warrant officer thing a shot and he said okay. He gave me the papers and I filled them out and be darned if they didn't make me a warrant officer. The three sergeants got together and trumped up a charge against me and they were going to courts-martial me for doing something I never ever did. First thing you know I'm in trouble so I wrote to the Pentagon and told them they could take the warrant officer and shove it. I didn't need it that bad; I'd go back to master sergeant where I belong and I did.

I've got my uniform and I can still wear it.

INT: So you ended up getting out in 1952. What did you do then? Was that after you left Savage?

JB: Yes, remember I said I worked for Western Auto? Then I worked for Bendix and then I worked for General Electric making the Sidewinder missile. I was an inspector on the Sidewinder missile. There were four men and me.

INT: That must have been interesting work.

JB: Very interesting. It was all precision work, one thousandth of an inch, ten thousandths of an inch.

INT: Did you retire from them?

JB: No, we moved to New Jersey and I went to work for RCA down there. That's when I had it made. I worked at RCA for a long time, about three years. I loved it there. Do you know the name of the man who was in charge of RCA? [No] He was a brigadier general in the Army. It was just a title given him for RCA. He came down one day and was going through the plant with about six other guys. It was the first time I ever saw him and he asked if I was new. I said, "Yes, General, I am." He asked how I knew he was a general and I said I just knew. He asked if I was in the service and I said I was and told him [about my background]. I was in the Korean War, too. He came over and shook hands and said, "Nice to meet you, hope you stay, hope you like your job." I told him I loved it and he went away. Next time he came back, he came over to me and said "Hello, Jay. Do you like your job?" I told him I loved it. Each time he came through after that he came over and said hello and passed the time of day. The guy that owned the place!

INT: What year did you retire?

JB: I retired at age 63. I didn't stay at RCA because I had to go 30 miles one way to work. [Tells of getting a speeding ticket.] I got a job about 10 miles up the road from where I lived. A little less money but I didn't use as much gas and they treated me good, too. I enjoyed it. We were in New Jersey eight years and we moved back up here to West Winfield. We lived on the main drag there and then we moved up on a farm. I had a beautiful garden. My kids loved it there; they sold all my produce from baskets at the side of the road. People would come up from town because my daughter didn't know how much prices were and they'd take what they wanted and give her half a buck. She was happy, she was in pig heaven. [laughs]

INT: Did you join any veterans' organizations?

JB: I belonged to the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) and the [American] Legion both. I belonged to the VFW while I was still in the service and I had an association with the Legion from the time I was 12 years old. I was in a junior drum and bugle corps and I became a member of the American Legion junior drum and bugle corps; I played the

bugle. I didn't join the Legion when I came back from overseas because I figured the VFW's the place to go. I joined the VFW. [Tells of tearing up his VFW card after getting into a fight with a drunk at the bar and the bartender siding with the drunk. He subsequently joined the American Legion.]

INT: Did you ever attend any reunions with your old units?

JB: No, but I went to two national conventions with the Legion, one in Miami and one in New York. I was in both parades. I was in the senior [drum and bugle] corps by then, this was after the war. [Tells of getting rained on while in the Miami parade.] In New York we marched up 5th Avenue.

INT: Have you been in touch with any of the guys you served with? You mentioned a fellow who passed away a few years ago.

JB: That's my best buddy in the Army. I have his picture.

INT: I think we've got everything we need. Anything else you'd like to add?

JB: All I can say is, if I had my way, I would have stayed for the 20. I had 16 and my wife said, "You're drinking too much. Get out." So I got out. I was an alcoholic by that time.

I didn't tell you that I was a recruiter when I was in Syracuse. My first year on recruiting, I got over 100 men. They made me a "star" recruiter. Then they said they were having problems in the office and asked if I thought I could handle it. I said I could handle anything. They had about 15 filing cabinets and they were stacked that high [holds hands about 18 inches apart] with forms. I didn't know why at first but they were the different draft boards, each pile was a draft board. They were that far behind getting the paperwork back to the draft boards. I had four stenographers working for me and I said we could get it done in about two weeks if they'd give the girls a little overtime. In two weeks we had every paper cleared. Those girls worked like crazy for me. [Tells how the system he developed was eventually adopted nation-wide.]

INT: Thank you for your interview.

JB: You're welcome.