A Veterans Oral History

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Bernard Gill
Narrator

Linda Jenson
Interviewer

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BG: Bernard Gill, Hillsboro, North Dakota.

LJ: Where were you born?

BG: In the dining room on a farmhouse west of Rockford, Illinois. And Rockford, Illinois is the official birthplace because that's the county seat.

LJ: Who were your parents and what did they do?

BG: My father's mother was born in County Tipperary and that's always appealed to me greatly. His father came from Dublin, but the name Gill is an English name, just even more that it's an Irish name. I think possibly a Richard Hackett Gill came out of an Anglo-Irish background. My mother's maiden name was Campbell, camp-bell, and her folks came over in the 1700s, New England people to northern Illinois.

My father would have been a marvelous museum curator. But, he did this and he did that. And during the Depression, he didn't do much. We did not exactly have any excess money during those years. But they were fine folks. I enjoyed them part of the time.

LJ: How big of a town was Rockford?

BG: In those Twenty's and Thirty's, it was about 80,000. After the Second World War, it got up close to 100,000. The city itself has settled back down to about 90,000. But the greater metropolitan area, I guess they call it now, would be if you count all the little towns that have kind of coalesced there.

LJ: Where did you go to high school?

BG: In the old Rockford Senior High School, a marvelous place, composed of a – new building that was built in the 1920's. There were older buildings and

one of those in the basement was affectionately known as "rat alley." The very southern-most building, was the old Rockford Watch Company building. The Elgin Watch Company bought that. I had classes in - I don't remember - in zoology anyhow in the old Rockford Watch Factory. You could sit there in the classroom and look down on the big planks in the floor and see the marks where the big oh say 8 x 10 marks and the bolt holes where the machines had been fastened.

But what may be more interesting, we were the next to the last class to graduate from the Central High School. It had been split up into three separate east, west, and down south that had the name of a beloved Italian priest. And they gave that public school, the priest's name and I can't recall that. There were 798 in my graduating class. I got a little scholarship to Beloit College, then had 420. And it seemed like an awful small operation to me after that enormous old high school.

LJ: When did you graduate from high school?

BG: Thirty-nine.

LJ: Then you went right onto college?

BG: Yes. I went right up to Beloit that fall. But then money ran out and I dropped out and worked in a factory for a while. Then I went down to the University of Illinois where I got my degree.

Well, this is World War II. I remember the front porch I was sitting on and the fellows were sitting around there on December 7th, Pearl Harbor Day. We kind of figured that might change our lives a little bit. And it must have been after that that I got into that U. S. Naval Reserve V7 program which allowed people to continue, and not always finish, but at least continue for a while with their college work before they were called up. The some of the others in my midshipmen school had graduated with me in 1943, but others had been sophomores and juniors. And by 1943, they needed people. They were called up and they did not finish before they were called into service. And, it's rather fun to be able to say, "Oh, I attended Columbia University in New York City." But of course it was the Naval Training School. The Naval Reserve took over several of the dormitories and so forth and so on. And I think it should be pointed out that I was not a 90-day wonder. I was a 120-day wonder because we were in that long.

LJ: What was your military training like at Columbia?

BG: There was some parade ground, fooling around, marching up and down, and in and around; and we'd gather on some big street between the old library and a space and then the new library. I don't remember the names of those

streets or avenues or anything else. But we'd gather there, and we'd left face and forward march, and we'd walk around, and I think that was to keep us occupied.

Ninety-five percent of it was class work, paperwork, bookwork. And we'd studied we were to learn such thing as Naval terminology so that we wouldn't call a line a rope and weaponry and plane recognition. Plane recognition – we spent a lot of time on recognizing, especially enemy, but recognizing both ally and enemy airplanes, and interestingly enough considerably less time recognizing other naval vessels. But I think weaponry and recognition of airplanes covers a lot of it. You know, it's between 55 and 60 years ago, one is allowed to forget a little bit, I think.

LJ: Absolutely. Any special memories during that time of training?

BG: Oh sure. There was a very dear girl who I met at a church on Sunday after the noon mess.

I just recently discovered that the western geological formation called "mesas", the m-e-s-a? I guess that's just Spanish for table. And our Naval and Army mess and mess halls comes out of the Spanish word for table.

Anyhow after noon mess, and until I think we were allowed to stay out until 6 o'clock Sunday evening, that whole afternoon we're free to go anyplace we wanted to. And somehow, I had Joan – Joan Dark was her middle name – Joan – she was just a sweet young lady. I wondered what she did, she said, "I'm a block head." "Block head?" "Well yeah in a bank. I work in a bank and there's a block. They divide the cashiers up into a block and I'm the head of that block. I'm a block head." But she was just a real nice girl. And that's a pleasant memory.

One afternoon I went up to the Riverside Cathedral and climbed up through the carillon while it was playing. Gigantic bells, 6-8 feet across. Tiny little bells, no bigger than a water glass. That was an experience climbing up through that while it was playing an afternoon carol. Got up to the top and I looked off to the south; and yeah, I could recognize the Empire State Building, but I wasn't quite sure which one is the Chrysler Building. There was another man there. I asked him, "Do you happen to know which one of those buildings is the Chrysler Building?" "No. I'm not from around here." "Oh, I'm from Illinois. Where are you from." "Brooklyn."

Oh, a friend of mine from the university, he was working on his doctorate down there. [*undecipherable*] or more simply said now it's Y C Chow. He was a Chinese student and he looked me up. He saw to it that I saw 'the crazy nephew' he thought he was Theodore Roosevelt. The ladies were burying people in the basement. What is the name of that drama? And

another nephew had a sweetheart; and he just couldn't imagine getting married and related to that kind of a bunch? And then it turned out that he wasn't really, he'd been adopted or something. He wasn't really related. And Boris Karloff played the part of – well if I can't remember the name of the drama I'd better quit talking. But he got me to a couple of well-known plays going on in New York, there during those 1940's. Well, it would have been 1943.

We marched over to Riverside Cathedral every morning at for 9 or 10 o'clock for services. As far as I know it's still under construction. Some enormous inter-faith Riverside Church. And this other one is something-something cathedral and it was huge. And it was under construction. They'd bring in European stone artists for the carving and so forth and so on. And within the last decade or two, something that I read indicated to me, it's still under construction.

Well you know those great monasteries that were built when they got through the year 1000 and what do you know, the world didn't come to an end. And so that 11th century was just a great period of expansion and enthusiasm and cathedral building. Those great cathedrals took decades and decades and decades to build. Well, they're doing this the same way. It's handwork.

LJ: How long were you in New York for your training?

BG: Just the 120 days. Somewhere along in August, I was finally called up. You know you graduate back in May or early June and you're under orders. You're going to get called up. When? Should I get a job? Should I? What should I do? So you sit and wait. In the service, you learn to wait a lot. And finally it was August, so September, October, November, December, it would be about the end of December or the first of January; and I was there from the end of August until the change of the year and into 1944.

LJ: Where did they send you?

BG: Down to Virginia Beach, out near Norfolk, Virginia. It was an amphibious ATB –amphibious training base. And we were to learn how to operate these LST's. Here within the last year or so an old LST-325 which had been loaned to the Greeks and the Greeks had been using it and they gave it up.

They found 18 or 20 or so of the old crew members. And they brought that ship back across the ocean and into one of the gulf port harbors where it's a floating museum for the old LST's – landing ship's tank. And of course winter on the Atlantic Coast was an excellent time for training under difficult circumstances because there were storms and great surf, and we'd go out there and it would be 10 below, and the surf 10 feet high, and we'd practice

how to get troops up onto the beach. And my main memory there was being immense, just terribly ill. I had a cold. Goodness. I had a fever which got up to 104 once or twice but it never got above 104. And their sick bay was so crowded, you had to have a temperature above 104 to be admitted.

And then a bunch of us were transferred to, and this troubles me, I cannot remember – I cannot remember where we were sent – someplace up the Chesapeake Bay to another kind of training base. It was 10:30, 11 o'clock at night and I was struggling my way toward building 7, I think it was building 7, and by George, and the lights were on in the building – infirm. I'm going to go over there and get my regular dispensation of aspirin. And I went in and, "Hi, I would like to have some aspirin." "Well, sit down." And he stuck a thermometer in my mouth and after a while read it, went back to his desk and started working paperwork. I said, "Man, I'm tired. I'd like to get to my barracks and get to bed." "Oh," he said, "you're not going anyplace, you're in the hospital." And there I was for three or four weeks. I missed my regular group and I was transferred to another group after all that time.

LJ: What was wrong?

BG: Oh, just a terrible cold and it had gone into my ears. That's a remarkable experience, also. I just had awful earache. And I went into a doctor's office and he looked and he said, "Oh-oh, we're going to have to relieve or puncture or something that eardrum before it bursts." And I oh well thought, they gave some anesthetics and we'll probably go to another room. And no, he just said we'll have to puncture that and he picked up something and zing. And I still remember that red-hot poker that went right up from my tailbone out through the top of my head, right up my spine, and then black. It was just the greatest pain I've ever felt. Just a little eardrum. And somehow or another that created an enormous pain. That was a rather sharp memory.

LJ: How long were you blacked out?

BG: I don't remember. Oh, I was back among the land of the living in just a few minutes, you know. It wasn't as if I were out for hours or anything like that. I just fainted. It was a protective reaction of the body.

But in the next bunk – we didn't have a private room. It was a ward and a whole bunch of us there. And there was a fellow there who had been in the Navy a lot longer than I but he was a younger fellow. And he thought that he'd found out the way to spend his time in the service. He was an excellent actor and could put on being ill. And except for a few days now and then, he'd spent his entire naval career in hospitals. But anyhow I wasn't that good of an actor I guess.

I was transferred to another LST and we went across the Atlantic through the Gibraltar Straits. And we could no longer see that great rock that's in the insurance advertisement than you could see a black cat in the coal bin. Somebody explained you have to be on the land side and inside the harbor and look out and then you get that view of the great rock.

We went along the Coast of North Africa at Tunis and I've been to Bizerte. We went by Salerno and Sicily. We put into port somewhere in Sicily. But basically, we were based in Naples and it is a beautiful bay.

The bay at Naples and the Isle of Capri, and Mount Vesuvius off to - I can't say it is south, but it's southerly. It's a beautiful bay, that bay at Naples. You could see the Isle of Capri from there. I got over to Vesuvius and that old buried town from about 70 AD when Vesuvius erupted. Well, everybody else knows the name of that town. They are still digging it up and out of ashes and so forth and so on. And Naples was a war-torn city. It was – well for one thing it smelled. Their sewage system had been bombed and they were just getting themselves back together.

We made some deliveries over to Sardinia, and I can't remember the name of the town; but the main thing there was Anzio. I was at Anzio. And we would take supplies up there; and then bring the real fighters back to Naples for R&R. They'd get a little rest and recreation. The LST's were great big unmanageable bathtubs. They remind me of nothing so much as a bathtub - a rather 300 and some feet long. But they were, they were just big hollow tubs. And unlike the destroyers which had been designed decades before and then modern equipment kept adding crew and adding crew and adding crew, and they were terribly overcrowded. The LST's were designed right then during World War II. And they were big enough. They had a huge refrigerator where we had fresh vegetables and oh my.

LJ: How many people on an LST?

BG: Regular crew, around 100, sometimes up to about a 120. There were about a dozen officers and 90 or so crew members. And we had bunkrooms. The officers had little bunkrooms. Oh not as big as this little room we're in here now; but you know we had our own bunks. And one of us on each side. But above them were two more bunks that could be let down and when we were carrying troops back from Anzio, or much later out in the Pacific, why the officers would bunk with the officers of the ship. But wherever we were there was lots of room. And these men who had been spending their time in foxholes in the rain, had a dry bunk to sleep in. And they got freshly cooked food.

And they just thought it was incredible, that three or four days it took us to get them from Anzio down to Naples. They thought, you guys really have it

made aboard this LST. And for two or three days afterward, you didn't hear the usual gripping about the lousy food we got around here. You get that in the service. That's the enlisted men's privilege and quite a few officers, too. But after the Anzio folks had been aboard, there quieted down for a couple of days.

LJ: Counted their blessings?

BG: We didn't see that awful invasion up north across the channel, the invasion of Northern France on D-Day, how lucky can you be? I wasn't in on that. There was the invasion of Southern France and we didn't know. We thought we were facing enemy troops and so forth and so on. And later on we found out or heard that the closest Germans were about 250 miles north, beating their way up north to fight that off up there. As far as I know there wasn't any opposition in that invasion of Southern France. How lucky can you be? You know, that's great. I don't mind a bit.

The only time I was ever under active bombardment or anything else was there in Anzio. And you see the fact that you found out later that the bombers were after those bigger ships over there, when you were standing there and the magnesium flares were right up over you and the bombers were coming overhead, there was just a little touch of apprehension.

But they were after the big ships. And I wonder about the thinking of the German pilots because every single bomb went between the freighters and the bigger ships. There wasn't a single ship hit. I've wondered about that. If the Germans were thinking, this is so stupid. I don't know. I have thought about that. Oh maybe they were poor shots. I don't know.

LJ: How lucky for us.

BG: Yeah, lucky for us.

LJ: Can you tell us about some of the people you met during the time in the service - crewmembers on the LST?

BG: I was in touch with the bunkmate, Arthur Herbert Noble. And he married Mildred Kindly. And he had a chuckle when he said, "We were thought of as a noble and kindly pair." He's probably the biggest person I've ever been closely associated with. He was about 6'7 or 6'8; and I said, "Well, I thought 6'4 was the max for naval." You just weren't allowed into the Navy after if you were taller than 6'4. And he said, "Well I've wanted to be in the Navy rather than in the Army; and I scrunched down as far as I could and I got down to about 6'5½ and they said well that's okay." And they let him in. I've never thought anybody was a big person since I was around Arthur Herbert Noble. Knobby, of course.

He was a fine fellow. He had been in the textile business up in New England and very soon after the Second World War, he was part of that great transfer of the textile industries to the southeast. And during the next decade or so, I think South Carolina, possibly Georgia, I think South Carolina. But cheaper labor down there, so of course, the textile factories moved down there, and I kept in touch with him. I don't think I kept in touch with any of the other people I met during the service.

I still have some books of a fellow and he has some of mine. We traded over in the Mediterranean. I figure if ever I run into him why we can trade back again. But no famous people. No. I have a snapshot of Winston Churchill in a boat. He was going through before we went into this invasion of southern France. By golly, here came Winston Churchill in a speedboat, steaming or buzzing past. If you have a magnifying glass, you can see his hand up in the air and with a good imagination, you can see his famous V-signal. But it's just a little tiny snapshot and in the snapshot, the boat's about an inch and a half long. Anyhow, Winston Churchill went by, and we got a picture of him. Then we went back to New York for a refitting.

LJ: Did you just sit off and wait?

BG: Well, things were pretty much over there in the Mediterranean and we went back to New York. We were up in dry dock. We were being completely refitted. They'd invented better davits. That's those hoists for the small invasion boats to hoist up onto the board to be secured and down into the ocean. We got new davits. Lots of refitting went on, all kinds of welding and cutting and renewing.

I foolishly left my wallet on a shelf about two feet from the porthole. And that was gone. A few days later, one of the men found it in one of the tanks way down in the bottom. It had been tossed out and everything was in there. My cards and everything. The money was gone. How lucky? You know, I'm lucky. He could have thrown it in the ocean other than down into that compartment.

It was while we were in New York that my dad suffered an industrial accident. He had a leg crushed off while he was working. It was on a Monday and that's part of my attitude toward drinking. This guy had been on a toot all weekend and he drove right through the barriers, right across the tracks where my dad and his partner had the chain across the railroad track holding a hoist. They were lowering a very heavy piece of equipment into place. And this binged-out nut drove his little locomotive across there, cut the chain. My dad was pretty spry and he jumped up in the air. It would have crushed him about waist high. But he jumped and just one leg got

crushed. I got permission to go home for two or three days just to visit my dad.

Went back to New York. We took off for Guantánamo Bay that had been there in Cuba. And they're still arguing about that. The Cubans would like their Guantánamo Bay back and the Americans said, "We've had it for a hundred years now, ever since the Spanish American War. We ought to be able to keep it, shouldn't we?"

If you want one little taste of eternity, go across the Pacific Ocean in an LST whose flank speed, in other words the absolutely fastest it can go, is about 11 knots, which is a little over a 11 miles-an-hour and whose cruising speed is about 7 or 7 ½ knots. Let's call it 8 miles-an-hour. Eight miles-an-hour across the Pacific, one gets an impression of eternity.

LJ: A beautiful thing.

BG: It was a beautiful thing. Oh, we stopped at the Hawaiian Islands. That's just a short jaunt from San Diego to Oahu. I got to be on Oahu, the Honolulu Island. And naturally what I did was I found a bus that went up to the University of Hawaii campus for about 10 minutes between buses. And then back down had to get aboard ship again, and then west. There are a number of other little islands in between, but eventually we got out to the Philippines.

One very interesting thing. The skipper, Steven Grady, a little guy. He was I think, if anything, he was shorter than I was. But he was a tough captain, I tell you. But we were all alone. It wasn't in a big group. There were 10 x 10 of us. There were a hundred of us that went across the Atlantic over to the Mediterranean. We were alone, all by ourselves. One crazy old LST going across the Pacific. It was a beautiful day. The Pacific Ocean you know as named Pacific because it's so peaceful in contrast to the stormy Atlantic. And we were just a glass-topped ocean. And Captain Grady stopped the ship. "Let's go swimming out in the middle of the Pacific." Ha, ha, I didn't. I was too chicken. But a lot of the guys and Grady the captain did. There are great front doors that open and then the great ramp is lowered. That was lowered until the far end of it was just dipping into the water. They'd dive off that and swim around, climb back up on. I kind of wished that I'd gone swimming out a thousand miles from no place, out there in the middle of the Pacific. I thought that so great of him to do that whimsical, goofy thing.

But anyhow we got out to the Philippines. We had a few other odds and ends of jobs; but basically we were preparing for the invasion of Japan.

President Truman, still every now and then comes under criticism for dropping the atomic bomb on Japan. What a terrible cost in lives. Well, I'm

sitting here talking into this microphone today because President Truman dropped that bomb. And yes it was horrible, horrible, killing the residents of those two cities. It was horrible. But far fewer Japanese lives were lost than would have been lost had we invaded and bombed many more cities than just those two. The lost of Japanese lives would have been huge; and of course, the Allies would have lost unaccountable lives.

We were training to invade, and it turned into the occupation of Japan. But we went the exact same route that we had been practicing, looking at the maps, and well we will go so-and-so degrees this and turn so-and-so in the route here. We went up through these tall, tall rock formations. They were tiny mountains or big rock hills or knobs. They weren't flat on top like the mesas but they were just very sharp promontory, out croppings. And you looked up there and you could see the gun emplacements. And in many instances you could even see the cannon up there in them, pointing right down. Talk about shooting fish in a barrel. We were supposed to go along there and get troops up onto the beach at Yoko – not Yoko, Wakayama. We were supposed to get into Wakayama. Carry troops in there for the invasion. And we wouldn't have made it because there would have been the heaviest of bombardments. All those cannons would have been left. And just a couple of them would have finish an LST you know? Poke a hole and down she goes. But anyhow we went into Wakayama and occupied.

And the very first fellows ashore would come back, "Look what I got for my mom or my wife or my sweetheart for a package of cigarettes." And he'd have a beautiful kimono. By that afternoon, for a carton of cigarettes, you might get the belt off of a kimono. Hey, you know they catch on real quick.

But Wakayama and then back and forth and back and forth a lot. And we went down to Ponape. P-o-n-a-p-e is the way we spelled it then. I don't know how it's spelled now - the Island of Ponape. And that had been a Japanese possession for decades, maybe since the 1800's. But the people living there were third and fourth generations down from the people who had settled a little tiny island out in the middle of nowhere. Well that was a Japanese possession and they've lost the war.

They'll have to give it up. Why? I didn't know. But that's what we had to do. We went down there and got a load of the Japanese who lived on that island and took them back up to Japan. And the only thing that I remember from that is the little kids wanted one of the crewmembers to answer over and over and over again, "Where are you from in America?" And he would say, "Ohio." And they'd laugh and laugh and laugh because in Japanese "ohio" means something like "good afternoon" or something like that. "Where do you live?" "Good afternoon." They just thought that was the funniest thing. "Where do you come from in America, Ohio."

We got them back up there. I can't remember any other assignments that we had. Oh, before I got released out of Yokohama and go back to the Philippines, the LST had gone from – name forgotten – over to Taclobam in the Philippines. I took a group of three small boats in for something or other. We were delayed and the captain couldn't wait. He took the LST back to whatever our main base was then. And I said, "Well fellows, we're just going to have to run these little boats all the way back there." The little boats traveled about as fast as the LST, but I said, "Be sure your tanks are full and be sure there's lots of water aboard, because we can get along without food but we'll need water." I remember it was hot. I had a notebook in my pocket and I fashioned an umbrella for my nose and some of the other fellows did, too. But most of them had been out and they'd been getting sunned and tanned and they weren't going to be affected by that long exposure to the sun. And a little bit after dark, we got back.

I wish I could remember the name, but it was further down at the southern end of the big island. But that was quite something, all that. I suppose it was maybe a hundred miles across open water. And it was interesting managing to get them there. We had compasses aboard there, but we had no navigational instruments or anything. We made it. We got there. No problem we just headed west.

LJ: You got by the rule of thumb approach.

BG: Yeah and then up in Japan, things were winding down. There wasn't a heck of a lot left to do. And naturally I applied for separation.

LJ: You could apply for separation?

BG: Not when things were a little heavier. But then yes, it became possible as we'd be out of the service pretty soon and if there are any special circumstances. Well I pleaded my dad's accident as a special circumstance. And I was relieved. And in contrast with the eternal voyage westward, we voyaged eastward on a little tiny aircraft carrier. And man, I swear to goodness, that thing went 25 knots or something like that. It just flew through the water compared to the LST. Back to San Diego and I learned how long that West Coast is.

Somebody was heading for Seattle. He was going to get separated up in Seattle and I was going to get separated at the Navy pier in Chicago. And I said, "Boy, you're lucky. You're right here on the West Coast. I've got to go all the way to Chicago." "Look on the map." "What do you mean?" "Oh, Seattle's further away from San Diego than Chicago." "Is it?" "Well just look at the map." And I looked at the map and what do you know? There's a long distance between San Diego and Seattle. I don't know that I'd say an easier trip because to get to Chicago you go across the Rockies and so forth

and so on. And there was all that beautiful Rocky Mountain scenery, but we went through it at night. And by the time daytime came, what were we going through but the great southern plains, almost as flat as the Red River Valley. But we got to Chicago and I got back to Rockford and I rejoined the world.

LJ: What did you do?

BG: Wondered what in the heck to do for a living? I taught for a year and learned that not really my cup of tea. Then I worked in a factory again and I went back there and lived with my folks. And of course paid room and board, but I can remember the bedroom I had. I can remember thinking 'what am I going to do now?' And I thought of the little one-hour course in Beloit College where I'd gone. And 'library,' people work in libraries.

I wrote to the University of Illinois Library School and, why yes and in fact they were just this coming school year instituting a new program whereby the first graduate degree will be a master's degree instead of the old fashioned graduate bachelor's degree. And how lucky can you be?

I had to take a big summer session load of prerequisites. Then just a year of study and I had my master's degree. My wife already had University of Minnesota undergraduate bachelors; a Northwestern University graduate bachelor of music; and the old BSLS, bachelor of science, library science, from the University of Illinois. She already had three bachelors and by golly if she didn't pick up another bachelors. And we've been together ever since.

Our first job was in Milwaukee in the Public Library. She came up for a visit. I came up a week or so later and joined her. Her dad said, "Well say, you know they got a new library down at the ..." What did he call – down at the farm school? His name for what was then NDAC and is now NDSU. He may have called it the farm school or the ag school or something like that. I forget what he called it. But he said, "They've got a new library building down there. Maybe you should go on and look at that." I went to look at it. Wandered around with the librarian, his first name was Dean Stallings. He was very proud of this new building and wondered what my plans were. I said, "We're working in a public library right now, but I eventually want to work in a college library." "Well, I don't think they found a replacement for old lady, my predecessor here – Hawkins, Hopkins, Haskins?" That's not the right name. I don't have it now. Oh, let's just say it's Hawkins. But it wasn't. That's not right. "I don't think they found a replacement for old lady, Hawkins yet." You might want to go over and talk to them. So I went over and talked to them and the rest is history, I guess. I saw President Snaar. Isn't that a wonderful name, Otto Walton Snaar. Can you imagine what he went through as a little kid with not only the name 'Otto' but 'Snaar.' You know Snaar Hall. He was all right but I've been fascinated by that name. And so that I got to be at Moorhead State.

LJ: How many years were you librarian then?

BG: Oh, just for 30 years, 1950 to 1980. I retired in 1980 and we fixed up my wife's home out on the farm and that's where we're living now, out on the timber claim farm, which is commonly called tree claims now. But actually in the act from the 1870's the word "timber" was used. So it sounds a little bit fancier than tree claim, timber claim.

LJ: Bernard, do you have any final thoughts about what you went through during the time with the military?

BG: Except for the fact that I just am so very happy to be here. I couldn't have been luckier because I'm able to say "Well sure, I'm a veteran of foreign wars. I'm an overseas veteran. I'm – yeah, I was in the war." But how lucky can you be as I mentioned.

Anzio was the only time we were under bombardment. No trouble. The invasion became the occupation. Couldn't be luckier. But the two thoughts we're increasingly coming to the view that war is failure. If you can't arrive at peaceful solutions, you've failed, so you have to go to war. War is failure.

I wonder it's been a long time now, there have been small skirmishes like the North Dakota National Guard was sent over to Iraq, that stuff over there when Saddam was messing things up. People have been in but there's no great big, you know, BIG war since. I think since Vietnam. I don't remember any major goings on.

And I wonder if we, just as a culture, we need to find some other means of giving young people the feeling that they're undergoing some kind of tension and pressure so that they feel this feeling of, "Boy I've been through that. I've paid some dues. I'm acceptable." What do kids do now days? There may not be any big deal for them.

We do not have apparently the old, we call them savages. If you killed a lion or a bear or something, there's a term for that. Anthropologists have a term for that, 'right of passage' or something, I forget what it is, but you killed your bear and you were a man. You proved yourself. We have nothing like that.

We've got cigarettes and dope and stuff like that to serve as "Why look at me now. I'm tough and I'm big and I'm grown up. I can snort." I guess I don't know what you snort? You smoke marijuana or you snort cocaine or you get drunk and die over.

Wasn't it right here at NDSU where a student, I think a young student, died of alcohol poisoning. But all too it often happens in the fall when a freshman comes to campus and what do we have - is it to prove, I am now a man or I am now a woman? We miss something like that. And fellows that got through the war and home safe or missing an arm or a leg or so, they didn't figure they had to prove anything. But war isn't the right way to do it. No,

LJ: Benny, how would you like to be remembered?

BG: Oh, well as an administrator, a facilitator. Someone who wasn't the brightest person on the staff. You hire people that know more than you do and are smarter than you are because otherwise, why hire them. The administrator makes it possible for them to do things. I think that would be an honorable memory to have been somebody to have made things possible.

I suppose pride and ego and all that. I try to be nice to people. I asked the clerk in the sheriff's office, if there was any way of getting a copy of 'A hundred and one things to say to children' and she made a copy of it. I think the first word was 'wow' and it went onto 'you made my day.' It's just all kinds of things like that. It's nicer to build people up than to step on their toes.

LJ: Anything else you'd like to add?

BG: Well, as I've characterized it, how lucky can I be? There were fellows who really went through a lot more and tougher times than I did. And I just recognize how lucky I was. A pretty lucky person.

LJ: Well thank you very much for all you've done.

BG: Fine.