

Interview with
BERNARD “BEN” NOEL STOUT

August 1, 2018

**UTAH DIXIE’S VETERANS STORIES
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**UTAH TECH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ST. GEORGE, UTAH**

#2018-006

Utah Tech University provides access to its collections as an unaltered, authentic historical record to aid in the research and understanding of history, while acknowledging their impact on various peoples and groups. Some collection materials are reflective of past cultures and prejudices, including images or words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful. The University does not support, condone or endorse these harmful ideas, behaviors or attitudes, and they do not reflect the official opinion of the University. Rather, the University embraces a culture that prioritizes diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated in the University's Mission, Core Themes and Values.

Final editing was completed in 2018.
For permission to use any part of this transcript contact:

Special Collections and Archives
Utah Tech University Library
Holland Centennial Commons 330
Utah Tech University
St. George, UT 84770
(435) 634-2087
specialcollections@utahtech.edu

This program has received funding from the Utah Humanities Council. The Utah Humanities Council promotes history and heritage, books and reading, and public discussion of issues important to our communities.

INDEX

A/DACG [Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group]	15
Air Corps	13, 15, 17
Air Force	12, 13
Alaskan campaign	16
Aleutian Islands	15 - 18
American Can Company	26
Army	9, 11, 13, 15 - 17, 20, 21, 23 - 25, 29, 30
Army General School	23
Artillery	14, 15, 19, 20, 24 - 27
Atomic bomb	21
Attu [a battle]	15 - 17
Autocar [6 wheel fueling car]	13
Bakersfield, CA	13
Battle of the Bulge, Belgium	20
Bay Area, CA	20
Belgium	20
Bering Straits	17
Bulldozers	17
Burg gun [PPSh-41 a Soviet submachine gun.]	26
Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Little Rock, AR	11
Camp San Luis Obispo, CA	12
Camp Stoneman, CA	20, 21
Camp Van Dorn, Centerville, MS	18
Camp White, OR	14
Chinese	24 - 28
D-4 caterpillar tractor	26
<i>Daily Tribune</i> [a newspaper]	9
D-Day	16, 20
Deming, NM	13, 14
Depression, The Great	8
Dutch ship	21
Eniwetok [Marshall Island]	22
Europe	16, 20
First lieutenant	23
Ford Motor Company	11
Fort Bragg, NC	20, 23
Fort McClellan, AL	19, 20

Fort Ord, CA	12
Fort Riley, KS	23
Fort Sill, OK	14
Forward observer duty	24
Fremont, NB	7 - 9, 11, 20
G Company	25
General Motors Corporation	12
Germany	20
Grease gun	26
Hawaii	21, 22
High school	7 - 10, 30
Hiroshima, Japan	21
Howitzer	14
Inchon Harbor	24
Japan	20, 21, 22
Japanese	11, 15 - 17, 21
Kiska [an island]	15, 16
Korea	24, 25
Korean [Conflict]	23, 29
Landing Ship Tank [LST]	15
Leyte	21
Little Rock, AR	11
MacArthur, General Douglas	24, 25
Manilla	21, 22
Marshall Islands	22
Medford, OR	14
Minter Field, CA	13
Monterey, CA	12
National Guard	9, 10, 30
Officer Candidate School [OCS]	14
105th Field Artillery Battalion	15
110th Quartermaster Regiment	10
Overland-Willys Jeep	11
Pacific Ocean	17
Panmunjom	24
Pearl Harbor, HI	10 - 12

Philippines	21 - 23
Pittsburgh, PA	20
Preflight training	12
Pusan	24
Quartermaster	10, 11
Quonset	16, 17
Refueling group	13
Ridgway, General Matthew	25
Roosevelt, President Franklin Delano	10
ROTC	23, 27
Salmon	18
San Francisco, CA	13, 21
Santa Ana, CA	12, 13
Second Lieutenant	14
Sergeant	12 - 14, 23, 30
Sherman tank	27
Shiloh, TN	12
64th Artillery Battalion	24
Smoking	29, 30
Soviet submachine gun	26
Sports	8
Stout, Bernard "Ben" Noel	5
Stout, Helen (Roberts) [wife]	24, 30
Stout, John [son]	24, 31
Stout, Julie [2 nd wife]	30
Stout, Patrick [son]	31
Stout, Sandra [daughter]	22, 31
Supplies and transportation	10
Suwon, Korea	25
Taijung	24
Teaching	23, 24
38th parallel	25
35th Infantry Regiment	24
35th Temporary Division	10
Track	8, 15
Treaty [with Japan]	21
Truck company	10, 11
Truman, President Harry S.	25
25th Infantry Division	24
University of Alabama, AL	9
USO [United Service Organization]	17

Van der Muis, Lieutenant	27
V-J [Victory over Japan]	22
Yalu River	24, 25

BERNARD “BEN” NOEL STOUT

Bernard “Ben” Noel Stout was interviewed by Randall J. Bunn on August 1, 2018 in St. George, Washington County, Utah. He related his military experiences. Also participating: Brady Fronk.

RB: I would like to start with a few pre-war experiences. When were you born?

BS: I was born April 21, 1919.

RB: Where were you [born]?

BS: In Fremont, Nebraska.

RB: Fremont is not a very big town.

BS: In today’s world it is probably about 30,000 people.

RB: What did your father do for a living?

BS: My father was an electrician.

RB: What was his name?

BS: Wilbur Benjamin Stout.

RB: What was your mother’s name?

BS: My mother’s name was Mary Ethel Stout.

RB: Was she a homemaker?

BS: Yes, she was strictly at home.

RB: How many [children] did your parents have?

BS: My parents had six children.

RB: Where were you in the mix?

BS: I was the fourth.

RB: You grew up in Fremont, Nebraska. Did you graduate from high school?

BS: I did.

RB: When was that?

BS: [In] 1936.

RB: What was the name of the high school?

BS: Fremont High School.

RB: What memories do you have from growing up in Fremont?

BS: Mostly we were very poor because it was [The Great] Depression time. So I remember that. I remember my oldest brother and my sister and my next older brother both quit high when they were in about the eighth, ninth, tenth grade area to get jobs to help support the family. My memory of high school was I enjoyed high school and I was smart. I excelled in mathematics and [subjects] like that. [I] was very poor in things like European history.

RB: [Laughter] Did you do any sports?

BS: No. I was too small. There was a thing that happened when I was in the fifth grade. I was a small [boy] to begin with, but when I was in the fifth grade I excelled in achievement tests that were given to all the [youngsters] in the city of Fremont. I came out number one. So they offered to my parents [that], “your boy, Bernard, doesn’t have to go to the sixth grade. He can skip that.”

RB: [Laughter] So you skipped a grade?

BS: Yes. It was not a good idea in retrospect.

RB: Because the other [youngsters] were bigger?

BS: I was already a little [fellow], pretty small in stature. I am skipping a grade and going to school now with [youngsters] one or two years older. They were much taller.

RB: Did they pick on you?

BS: Oh, no. I got along just fine. I wanted to go out for some sports, but I was too small. The high school coach said, “You only weigh about 110 pounds. Some of these boys out here weigh 210 pounds.”

RB: [Laughter]

BS: He said it was not a good idea. I didn't have any trouble agreeing with him. Where I really was disappointed was I could run fast. I was like a squirrel. I wanted to go out for track. I might have made it except for one interesting thing. They had shoes like Adidas build, spike shoes for running, and they handed them out to some of the [boys] coming out for track, but when they got to me they said we are out of shoes. I said, "Hell with it."

RB: [Laughter]

BS: I think that is what I said. If it's not to be, it's not to be. I was not athletically involved except in the gymnasium classes. I was pretty good at tumbling and swinging on swings. In fact, I set the record when I was in my high school senior class. We had a set of rings hanging from the ceiling of the gymnasium. You would swing from ring to the next ring to the next ring. Anyway, I set the record in the high school for time. I did it faster than anybody.

RB: [Laughter]

BS: The big [boys] all laughed about it because they were up there like big apes swinging, taking time. Anyway, I had a good time in high school. I had a lot of fun.

RB: Good memories.

BS: Yes. I enjoyed academics like mathematics and science. I took all of the science: chemistry, biology and physics. The math I could get [and the] highest I could go was just algebra and geometry. Later on, after I got out of the [United States] Army, I went one quarter to the University of Alabama and I took come college algebra.

RB: You said you graduated in 1936. You told me you were in the [Nebraska] National Guard. When did you join the National Guard?

BS: Right after I finished high school.

RB: What did you do?

BS: First of all I got a job working for the *Fremont Daily Tribune* which was a good newspaper.

RB: What did you do?

BS: I was a flunky.

RB: Whatever they asked you to do? [Laughter]

BS: Everything. I eventually ended up running proofs around to help the advertising business. Later on, we opened the stationery department because it was a printing company. I worked in the stationery department as a clerk and [was] still running errands for everybody. I got a little bit of help in the advertising department because they liked for me to take the proof of an ad and run it [by] the advertiser, let him check it out, make corrections or redo the whole thing. So I learned a little bit about newspaper advertising. That job lasted until a year before Pearl Harbor [December 7, 1941]. In December 1940 my National Guard outfit was mobilized as part of the [President Franklin Delano] Roosevelt administration mobilizing National Guard divisions from all over the country.

RB: Did you join the National Guard right out of high school?

BS: I would say about 1937.

RB: Were you involved and did regular drills?

BS: I learned how to march and how to fire a rifle.

RB: Did you have a specific job that you trained for in the National Guard?

BS: No. I just became a member of a squad. My company was a quartermaster company. We were part of a quartermaster regiment.

RB: Is that supplies?

BS: Supplies and transportation. My particular company was a truck company, so I was a trucker.

RB: In December 1940 they mobilized your unit. What was the name of your unit?

BS: Company B, 110th Quartermaster Regiment.

RB: They mobilized you, so you were essentially not just reporting monthly or one weekend a month.

BS: My National Guard time, before we were mobilized, was just once a week a drill night. That was all it amounted to. We were just common soldiers. When they mobilized us then, of course, that meant they were going to mobilize the entire division. A division was comprised of National Guard troops from Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. It was called the 35th Temporary Division. They sent us immediately to Arkansas for one year. I think I told you somebody invented a song, *Goodbye Dear I'll Be Back in a Year*. As it turned out, that year turned out to be five years.

RB: Who would have known in 1940 that it was going to last that long and all that was going to go on?

BS: I was in Arkansas when Pearl Harbor happened.

RB: Where in Arkansas?

BS: Camp Joseph T. Robinson, just outside of Little Rock.

RB: Tell about that experience when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. How did you experience that?

BS: All I knew was [that] I was in the [United States] Army already, so I knew it was just a matter of time that I would be going somewhere. We all just had the same feeling of shock, I suppose, that everybody had.

RB: It was a Sunday morning.

BS: Yes.

RB: How did you hear about it?

BS: We had a building called a day room where we had a pool table. [Laughter]. We all met in there and the company commander had a meeting and gave us the official news. That was all there was to it. We were all kind of nonplused. We knew that this meant that we would be in a war and we would not be going back home for quite awhile.

RB: One year was not going to be one year. I suppose you [had been] getting ready to go home.

BS: We had a few [fellows] who were actually released because they had that one year in. One of my friends went back to Fremont. Two days later he got a notification to go back to Arkansas.

RB: [Laughter] Oh, well!

BS: So he thought he was out and he wasn't. For all of the rest of us we just figured we were in for the duration.

RB: When you were there in Arkansas for that year — what did they have you doing?

BS: Mostly, being in a truck company and a quartermaster regiment, our job was mainly hauling personnel and supplies.

RB: Did you have to maintain the trucks?

- BS: Oh yes. We were the recipients of some of the first Jeeps, the little old four-by-four vehicle, the original Overland-Willys Jeep. The Willys-Overland Motor Company invented the Jeep. Then, of course, the Army contracted [with] [companies] like the Ford Motor Company, to build millions of them. We were among the first people to get Jeeps. They became part of our [unit]. Most of the vehicles we were responsible for were the army six-by-six, a GMC [General Motors Corporation] two-and-one-half-ton six-by-six truck. It was good for hauling either supplies or personnel. We moved a lot [of] personnel. For example, we took a whole regiment of people one time over into Shiloh, Tennessee, or somewhere like that, to do some kind of a training exercise. We had to transport them. I was a sergeant in those days. My job was to be in charge of a section of men and about half-a-dozen trucks and maintenance included. We practiced what you call first lesson on maintenance.
- RB: What did that mean?
- BS: That means you prevent things from happening to your vehicle. [Laughter] You put oil in and you keep the tires up, things like that.
- RB: Planned maintenance. After Pearl Harbor occurred, did they make changes in where you were going to go? Or what you were going to do? What happened next?
- BS: Almost immediately after Pearl Harbor the whole division [received] orders to go to California. We went by troop train to Fort Ord [Salinas, California]. Have you ever been to Fort Ord?
- RB: The Monterey area.
- BS: Fort Ord doesn't exist anymore.
- RB: Yes. A lot of troops went to the west coast for basic training.
- BS: My whole outfit went to Fort Ord, initially, but we didn't stay there. They sent us up to Camp San Luis Obispo [California]. It is a nice place. [Laughter]
- RB: [Laughter] Yes, it is.
- BS: We [were] there for a little while and that is when I cut out from my outfit and decided I wanted to be in the [United States] Air Force — aviation cadet. I signed up for it and passed all the physical and mental exams. They sent me home to Nebraska on leave. I was there for awhile.
- RB: That would have been sometime in the early or mid-part of 1942?

BS: Early 1942. I went home in the summer of 1942 and sat there for quite awhile. I went back to take preflight training at a place called Santa Ana, California. I [was] washed out. I [was] washed out because I fainted while they were doing the physical exam.

RB: Tell about the day that you fainted.

BS: I was ashamed of it. It is nothing to be ashamed of if you faint, but I did.

RB: Do you know why you fainted?

BS: I was sick. I [was] a little [sick] before I got to San Francisco [California] and then down to Santa Ana. I was not feeling well, but I covered it up. I did not want anybody to know I was sick because I figured they would not take me back. I really was not feeling well. When they were taking the physical exam [I thought]: why in the hell am I doing this. I already did. But here they were going to do it again. Typical Army Air Force — we are going to do it whether it makes sense or not. I remember the nurse was taking blood out of men ordinary blood sample. I had done it a hundred times. Anyway, I was admiring this cute nurse thinking: gee, she is really cute. The next thing I know they were picking me up off the floor. I had fainted. They washed me out. There were no questions after that. Anybody in the aviation cadet program who lost consciousness for any reason [was] washed out. That was the end of my aviation career.

RB: Were you disappointed?

BS: I didn't know what to do. They took all of us who were washed out, and there was quite a bunch, and they put us in an unassigned pool. This is what they do with people when they don't know what to do with them, stick them in an unassigned pool. They sent us up to Minter Field at Bakersfield [California]. I was just sitting there doing nothing. Finally, the orders came down and they were sending us to various places. They sent me to Deming, New Mexico, to a basic flight training school. It is where they trained cadets in basics. They started out our training called introduction. The next step was basic and then advanced training and then they become pilot, bombardiers or navigators.

RB: So even though you washed out of the cadet program you still were sent on with the possibility of becoming a pilot?

BS: No, they were done with me. They sent me to Deming. I was a sergeant and I became in charge of the refueling group. We refueled airplanes. I learned how to drive a cab over engine six-wheel gasoline truck [laughter] made by Autocar, if you have ever heard of that.

RB: No, I have to admit I haven't heard of them.

BS: I worked there. It was a terrible job. I hated it because most of the men that were there with me were not very bright. I hate to use that phrase, but they were not. You see the Air Corps did the same thing the [United States] Army did. They dragged the bottom of the barrel to get people into the service. A lot of these people at Deming could turn a crank on a screw and a wheel on a nut, but that was the extent of their ability. They had no interest in anything. All they wanted to do was read comic books.

RB: [Laughter]

BS: My brain was a little higher than that. Anyway, I was bored to death and I was actually considering going AWOL [Absent Without Leave], deliberately going AWOL, to get attention on myself. I said, "For hell's sake, put me in the infantry or something and let me win the war." I wanted to win the war. All of a sudden my first sergeant shows up one day and he said, "We have an opportunity for a [fellow] to go to Officer Candidate School in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, artillery, field artillery." He said, "Are you interested?" I said, "I am!" I never knew what a howitzer was. I knew what a canon was. The biggest gun I [had] ever seen was a rifle. So I went to artillery school.

BF: Did you ever discipline these men who were in the refueling unit, since you were a noncommissioned officer? Or were a few of them higher than you, to not be able to be disciplined since they had no discipline themselves?

BS: No. I just thought: I am in the worst possible place I can be. Deming, New Mexico by itself is an awful place. It is nothing but desert and sand.

RB: Did you agree to take that assignment to try to become an officer?

BS: Yes. I went to OCS at Fort Sill.

RB: Do you remember about what time frame that would have been?

BS: It had to be late 1942 [when] I went to Fort Sill. I went to Officer Candidate School, did the course okay and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant. Then I was immediately sent out to the West Coast.

RB: Whereabouts?

BS: My first assignment was near Medford, Oregon at Camp White. While I was there the division that I was assigned to [received] a request. They wanted one officer, a second lieutenant artillery, to go to a northern cold climate. They wanted volunteers. There were about twenty of us in the artillery and we all volunteered. [Laughter]

RB: They only needed one.

BS: They only needed one. So we were interviewed and they picked me. I don't know whether they picked me to get rid of me or because I was good.

RB: [Laughter] Probably because you were good. You were a smart guy.

BS: A lot of times when somebody picks you to go somewhere it is because he was a no good son-of-a-gun and they wanted to get rid of him. So I [was] picked and I went to the Aleutian Islands. I was assigned to A/DACG [Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group], part of a composite force of Army, Navy [and] Air Corps getting ready to attack the island of Kiska. Just a month or two before that the Army had won a battle called Attu. They had a vicious battle against the Japanese on Attu. Kiska was a little bit farther east on the Aleutian chain and was occupied by the Japanese. Our job was to build a task force and we were going to take that island of Kiska. That is what we were doing. The Japanese [were] smart. They evacuated it. When we got to Kiska, we are 40,000 men strong to take down Kiska. There was nobody to fight. The Japanese left under [the] cover of dark.

RB: How did you get to Kiska? Did you fly in or by ship?

BS: My artillery outfit was loaded on the LST. Do you know what an LST is?

RB: No.

BS: Landing Ship Tank. It was a big ship, big enough to hold our [artillery] pieces and track vehicles. My outfit was a truck drawn 105 artillery battalion [105th Field Artillery Battalion].

BF: Were you on the LST for the entirety of the trip or did you have to transfer from liberty transport?

BS: No, we stayed right on that LST. The LST could drop the front-end down and could serve as a landing craft, so to speak. As it turned out, since the Japanese departed, they ran out. There was no war. We didn't even have to get off the ship so we turned around and went back to A/DACG.

RB: What infantry division were you in?

BS: At that time I was not in any division. We were a separate artillery battalion which is like being utility infielder on a baseball team. Sitting on the bench — when you are needed [you go].

RB: [Like], "we'll call you when we need you."

BS: I had had enough of that, anyway.

RB: Would that have been the summer of 1943?

BS: Yes. I went up there in the summer of 1943. We came back to the states in the spring of 1944, because I remember we [came] back to the states just a month or two before D-Day in Europe. I missed that too. I was good at missing everything. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Your timing was really off!

BF: [Laughter] That was not your fault. That was the Army's.

BS: Like I say, I'm here. The Army sends me and I go where they tell me to go.

RB: I am reading here about this. It says, "The Japanese aware of the loss of Attu and the impending arrival of the larger allied force had successfully removed their troops on July 28, [1943] under the cover of severe fog." So they sneaked out of town!

BS: Yes. That was a change of pace for the Japanese. They were noted for not ever giving up and yet they abandoned this island. They abandoned the whole Alaskan campaign which was a diversionary project, anyway, by the Japs. I mean they were fooling around with the Aleutians and Alaska proper, making a pass at us, trying to divert more of our resources so that they could be more successful.

RB: Was that the strategy?

BS: Yes.

RB: It says here, "There were allied casualties during the invasion of about 200 from friendly fire, booby traps, set out by the Japanese to inflict damage on the allied forces or weather-related disease." Did you see any of that?

BS: That didn't happen on Kiska. That happened on Attu. So there was nothing going on. I was disappointed.

RB: When you discovered that the Japanese were gone, did they send you back to the lower forty-eight states?

BS: Yes, but not immediately. I spent the whole winter on Attu in snow up to here. I am not kidding.

RB: Where did you stay?

BS: We had Quonset huts. We were billeted in Quonset huts buried under the snow, totally buried.

RB: What was that like? Pretty cold? [Laughter]

BS: It was not excessively cold, by the way. The Japanese current comes around and keeps the Aleutians from getting — the weather was ferocious. You have probably been places where the weather is ferocious.

RB: Probably not that bad, but I have been in some snowy places.

BS: There is the Bering Straits up there. There is the Aleutian Islands and there is the Pacific Ocean and the winds — you can imagine. We had wind sometimes way over 100 miles an hour. You didn't dare go out of your hut! No kidding.

RB: So you made it through the winter?

BS: We made it through the winter. All we did was eat and dig snow. We had D-8 bulldozers to keep the road open because my unit was the highest one on the Island of Attu. There was a mountain range there. We were the highest one. We could look down from our position, down toward the beach area, and see the [Seabees] and the Air Corps [fellows] having a good time and we are buried in snow twenty feet deep!

RB: [Laughter] Doesn't sound like much fun to me.

BS: It was not. Things got better. They finally established things like a movie theater in a super big Quonset hut. I learned to ski with all that snow. The problem was we couldn't pick our own skis. The skis we had were all cross country type skis. Have you ever skied?

BF: Yes.

BS: You know what a good ski is then. These cross country skis were only about this wide and about eight feet long. I learned how to ski on them. We had a lot of fun skiing. Life was pretty dull really. There was not much going on. We had movies every night. The USO [United Service Organization] Troops paid visits.

RB: How was the food?

BS: The food was excellent. One of the reasons was that since we had trucks we were called upon by the base people to send our trucks down to help them move food and other supplies from the ship to dock. We had some pretty smart [fellows]. They would take a truck, back it up to a ship that is unloading food, beef steaks and [items] like that and instead of delivering them to the base they would deliver them to my outfit. We had the best food in the world!

RB: That is great! [Laughter]

BF: You were just liberating supplies for the Army! [Laughter]

BS: We just diverted it! The other thing that we had that was good, was there were salmon streams coming down the mountain. Our [fellows] would go out and fish for salmon. I remember being waked up in the middle of the night sometimes, a [fellow] would rap on the door of the place where I was billeted and say, "Hey, Lieutenant, come over to the mess hall. We are having a fish fry." And it was! There would be fresh salmon.

RB: If you spent the winter there, was it dark most of the time?

BS: No, look at the latitude. You look at your map and you look at those Aleutian Islands, you will notice they are coming down.

RB: They are not as north as —.

BS: We did not have what you call arctic weather in the Aleutians. We had cold weather, but not arctic.

BF: It is reminiscent of Vancouver, Canada.

RB: When did you get out of Alaska?

BS: We came back to the states. The ship brought the battalion back, just a simple battalion, not a member of any division. They sent us back to the states in the late spring of 1944.

RB: So you were there from the winter of 1943 to the winter or spring of 1944.

BS: We were there in the winter of 1943 and came back in the spring of 1944.

RB: Were you there over a year?

BS: I guess so. I never quite figured it out, haven't tried! They brought us back and this is an interesting thing. Here we had been spending a whole year in a cold climate. Do you know where they sent us? Camp Van Dorn [Centerville] Mississippi. [Laughter]

RB: Oh, no! [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

BS: It was May or something. The change in climate was awful. It really was. It was hard for some [fellows] to bear it. There we were in Mississippi. We sat in Mississippi for just a little while, since we were still being used, like I say, like a utility infielder. My battalion was a separate battalion. It had no affiliation with any division or corps or anything like that. So they [used us where they could]

find a place for us. They finally broke up my battalion. We had three firing batteries. They finally broke us up and my battery, just my battery alone, was sent to Fort McClellan in Alabama. Our mission there was to fire overhead artillery training fire for the recruits who were taking basic training. That was an easy assignment. Every day we would go out there, set our guns up in the same place and fire the same thing. It was a canned exercise.

BF: Live rounds?

BS: It was live ammo. The infantry people were training basic infantry basic training. The [infantry fellows] are seeing artillery fire for the first time. We [had] them out there on assault lines, then somebody blows a whistle. All of a sudden mortars, [artillery] machine guns are shooting over these basic recruits. [Laughter] It was called indoctrination.

RB: I guess. It would scare the heck out of them! [Laughter]

BS: It was called armed stock indoctrination. So I did that. I was the executive officer of the battery. Our job was to load up, shoot the same ammo, same direction and do the same thing, bang, bang, bang, bang. The exercise itself was we would fire about three or four volleys and then we would be done.

BF: Did you have any accidents since you were using live ammo?

BS: Yes. I remember very well. Another day instead of being back with the battery, I was up with the infantry crews, the front line when they got ready to jump off. Our job [on the telephone] was to be sure nobody jumped off too soon. Play it safe. All the firing started. Everybody jumped up with their rifles. That day was a smoky day with wind blowing toward us. The artillery fire and the mortar fire were landing on this hillside. The smoke was blowing toward us and we couldn't see a damn thing. So I finally yelled, "Cease fire," because I couldn't tell what was happening. I said there are fragments landing here. There were shell fragments landing in the leaves right where we were. I went up toward the target area and on the way up there I passed some of the trainees and there was one of them down. He was dead. A shell fragment hit him right here [pointing to his neck] and killed him.

RB: That was awful.

BS: That was sad. What must be sad and maybe you have had to [do this] is to write letters.

RB: To the family, their spouse or their parents. That is awful and it wasn't like it happened during a battle. It was [during] training. That is really sad.

BS: It means that somebody has to sit down and compose a letter to mom and dad and say your son died in an accident in training. That is the only one that [was] killed. Others bent their legs out of shape, broke and sprained ankles and other [problems] like that.

RB: While you are doing this in Fort McClellan, was D-Day happening?

BS: Yes.

RB: So you missed out on D-Day?

BS: Yes, we did. I was chasing girls! I think I told you that.

RB: You did.

BS: My outfit was coming back from an overseas assignment. Everybody was entitled to leave. We [came] back to Camp Van Doren, Mississippi and immediately everybody [received] a couple of weeks leave. I went back to Fremont, Nebraska and was sparking my girlfriend when D-Day was happening. Did I feel conscience? No. I was doing like I said. "Go where the Army tells you to go."

The funny part of that was after D-Day [was] going good they shifted us around a bit. They sent us over to Fort Bragg, North Carolina and reunited the whole artillery battalion. We all [were] together again as a battalion. They had us on orders to go to the Battle of the Bulge [Belgium]. You know what orders are. They say you are going to go. Okay. Everything is packed up in boxes. Every ship number was stamped on everything. They canceled that. "There is a delay." They canceled us. Two weeks later we [received] new orders. We are going to go to the Battle of the Bulge. We clear then it was canceled. Three times we were on orders to go to Europe, to Germany during the Battle of the Bulge and three times they canceled the order. So we never did [go]. So what did we do? When was the Battle of the Bulge?

BF: Christmas 1944 to January 1945.

BS: Anyway, since things were under control in Europe they said well, okay, the next place we have to go — there is still a war going on in the Pacific. So you [fellows] are going to beat the Japs.

RB: Get your bags ready! [Laughter]

BS: Well, whatever! [Laughter] Anyway, we shipped out in July [1945] to Camp Stoneman which is near Pittsburgh, California, [in] the Bay Area. That was a staging area. We were just being staged to go to Japan because they were preparing that massive attack on Japan proper. We were going to be part of that.

My outfit was sitting right there in Camp Stoneman when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima [Japan]. We thought: well, that is the end of that. But some brigadier general was walking through the camp one day and he stopped one of our cannoneers. He said, “What outfit are you from?” The [young fellow] told him. The general said, “How long have you been here?” [He] said, “Three weeks.” The general [was] irate. [He] turned red all over. We were instructed the next morning, the very next day, to board ship. So we did. My whole battalion boarded a ship in San Francisco Bay, and a few days later we shipped out. We were headed out across the great Pacific [Ocean].

While we were out away from the states the second bomb was dropped. We were barely out of sight of land, the second atomic bomb was dropped and the war was over. What did we do? We kept going. It was a wonderful thing. We were on a rebuilt Dutch ship run by a Dutch crew and the shaft, the big main shaft —.

BF: Drive shaft.

BS: The drive shaft acts as a propeller and it had a bearing problem and we limped. We were not only going the wrong way, we were going two knots. It took us two weeks to get to Hawaii. Think of the morale problem. We were going the wrong way. We were on a Dutch ship. The food was terrible. The crew was all Japanese [fellows]. The captain was a Dutchman. He couldn’t speak English. I was billeted along with the other lieutenants in one of the lower holds on the ship. You have seen tiers of bunks lined up down in the deep hold right over the propeller. More fun! It took us sixty days —

RB: Two months?

BS: — two months, to go from San Francisco to Manilla [The Philippines].

BS: We went by Leyte on the way to Manilla. We finally got to Manilla and they said now what do we do? We made camp. We camped out, you might say, for a couple or three months while the Army, in all its majesty, was trying to figure out what to do with us!

RB: [Laughter]

BF: Was this after the Treaty [with Japan] was signed in September [1945]

BS: Oh, yes, everything is done. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

BF: Did you remember what you felt on V-J [Victory over Japan] Day? Or [when you] heard the news that the war was over?

BS: No, we couldn't. We were outside Manilla before I could get a newspaper or hear anything on the radio. We knew the war was over. Somehow or other we [received] word that the war was over.

BF: Was there elation, joy [or] sorrow that the war was finally over?

BS: There was no elation shown [by] anybody. Our whole morale was in the pits. We are still going the wrong way. The war is over and nobody gives a damn about us. I mean, that is how we felt. Like I say, the food was terrible [and] the ship was terrible. Except it got better. After we left Hawaii we went to an island called Eniwetok, one of the Marshall Islands. Somebody took pity on us because they sent a Navy ship to pick us up off of this old Dutch freighter. It was like going from night into day! All of a sudden we could drink fresh water, real water. We could eat food that was good food. It was wonderful! That ship could make fifteen knots, that [was] fast!

BF: I guess it was a cruiser of some sort or a liberty transport.

BS: I can't remember now what type ship it was. I know it was [the] Navy and that is all. They had room for us. I don't think it was a cargo ship. I think it was actually a military ship, a fighting ship. They [put] us on there and they [took] us over to Manilla.

BF: [Did] they ship you without your equipment?

BS: Oh yes. Our equipment, Lord knows whatever happened to it. I have not the slightest idea.

BF: [Laughter] I can imagine!

RB: You were in the Philippines for about three months?

BS: Yes.

RB: And then what happened?

BS: I came back to the states in December [1945]. In the meantime, my first child was born while I was out on the ocean somewhere.

RB: That child was —.

BS: Sandra, my daughter.

RB: She was conceived when you were back on leave?

BS: No, she was conceived when I was back at Fort Bragg. The baby was born in December and I was on my way back from the Philippines. Nobody cared about anything. They sent us to a place near Jackson, Mississippi for separation [discharge]. At that point I was almost there, but all I wanted was out. Believe me, I got out. I became a civilian.

RB: That was the end of your World War II experience?

BS: Yes. In a way it was a mistake because I stayed out about a year and a half as a civilian and I reenlisted in the Army. I went back into the Army in 1949, I think.

RB: As an enlisted man?

BS: I couldn't go back as an officer. They told me I could come back in as a tech [technical] sergeant. That is a five-striper. I said, "Okay, I will take that." Because the job they offered me if I came back in the Army was a job training the reserve units. I would be on what is called civilian component type duty like ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] people. You are part of the Army, but you are training somebody. I did that for awhile until I got bored with it. I applied for a reinstatement as a commissioned officer and they accepted me. So I went back in as a first lieutenant —

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

BS: — and they sent me to Kansas. What is the name of that Fort out there?

RB: Fort Leavenworth?

BS: No, not Fort Leavenworth, Fort Riley [between Junction City and Manhattan, Kansas]. They sent me to Fort Riley. I worked there as an instructor and trainer for an officer candidate group training candidates to be officers. That was a six month tour. I enjoyed that. That was a good job.

While I was there we finished their six month training. They gave me a job as an instructor for the Army General School. The Army General School was at Fort Riley. Their headquarters was there at Fort Riley. It was a prestigious assignment. I said, "I'm lucky as hell. I [have] something good for a change." So I took a job teaching. I remember one of the first classes I taught was a graduating class [of] cadets from West Point [United States Military Academy, New York]. We were teaching them basic stuff, map reading and things like that. In fact, that was one of the [subjects] I taught was map reading because I knew how to read maps and interpret maps. I was doing that and enjoying it when the Korean [Conflict] broke out.

RB: Tell about that. What happened?

BS: I was home on a Sunday. My colonel who was in charge of my teaching group found me and said, "I have orders for you to go to the Far East." What a shock! My son was just newly born. That was my oldest boy [John]. He was three weeks old. I said here we go again. I did that. I sent my wife [Helen (Roberts) Stout] and my two [children] down to Alabama to live with her folks and I was off to Korea. I was in Korea for a little over a year, about fourteen months, I think.

RB: Was that the first time you saw combat?

BS: It was. When I went there I joined the 25th Infantry Division, the 64th Artillery Battalion. I was told as soon as I got there, "Glad to have you. We need you." The battalion commander said, "Every lieutenant in the battalion has to do some forward observer duty." Do you know what that means?

RB: No, what does that mean?

BS: A forward observer in a live artillery battalion goes up with the infantry. He is with the front line infantry, *the* front line, because he is there to observe artillery fire on the enemy. That is really what I did. I did that for about three or four months. I was the 35th Infantry Regiment is [the group] that I was supporting. They were mostly boys from places like Kansas and Nebraska. They were a good bunch of fighters. We [arrived] there just in time for the break-out from the Pusan perimeter. Everybody was in the Pusan perimeter when I got there. [Inaudible] Then General [Douglas] MacArthur did his wonderful deed of the big attack at the Inchon Harbor and it was successful. It took the pressure off of the North Koreans [who] were pushing us in the Pusan. We broke out and went north and the North Korean Army fled. They were decimated and they just ran. They dissolved.

BF: You were up with the 60th Corps in the right hand side of the country?

BS: We were on the west side and we went up through places like Taijung. We went all the way up to kick all the North Koreans out of South Korea and sat there near Panmunjom and Taijung while the big wheels made up their silly minds to go up to the Yalu [River]. A big, bad mistake! It was not only a mistake, but just terrible judgment because we did what we went to Korea to do, which was to repel the aggressor. We not only repelled him, but we threw them out.

RB: So why was it a mistake?

BS: Like your neighbor comes over and attacks you. Then he goes over the fence and you go over the fence after him. That is what happened in Korea. So what happened? We went up there, fooled around and the Chinese came into the act, two or three hundred thousand Chinese. That was the figure. Of course, they were all inflated. I mean, every GI [troop or Government Issue] said, "Hey, there's a hundred thousand Chinese after me." But there were a lot of Chinese. The

Chinese beat the 8th Army hands down and sent us into an inglorious retreat, clear down as far south as Suwon, south of Seoul, several miles south of Seoul. We beat it all the way back there, set up defense signs and got reorganized. About that time President [Harry S.] Truman got smart enough to get rid of MacArthur. He was smart. MacArthur was acting like a saint and an emperor. He was making remarks that would be construed as US foreign policy. Truman said I can't stand that so you are out. Did you know about that?

BF: Yes. They were very famous for hating each other.

RB: Yes.

BS: General [Matthew] Ridgway took over the 8th Army in Korea. He got it on the ball. He did a wonderful job. He said, "Don't show me your defense plans. Show me your attack plans." We got that outfit organized and beat the snot out of the Chinese and could have gone farther when they finally decided on a truce line there about on the 38th parallel. They kept fighting back and forth. About that time I [received] my orders to come back to the States.

RB: When was that?

BS: Let me think. I was in Korea all of 1951. I came back, I think, November of 1952.

BF: Did you specifically fight some of the Chinese that did come over the Yalu?

BS: My outfit was overrun. They were a basic infantry rifle platoon. They were on the front line and when the Chinese came in, they ran right through us. They had infiltrated that. They came in the night and went right through us and went behind us. I was the artillery forward observer with the G Company of the 35th Infantry. We were firing artillery on these [men] as they were attacking us. This was at nighttime. The first attack they did was daytime. It was a surprise attack. I have bad stories to tell about that because the outfit I was with just broke and ran. They panicked. Officers and enlisted sergeants panicked. They left their weapons, they left their vehicles [and] they ran. I was with them.

BF: It was a complete rout.

BS: The [fellow] who was my driver was shot. We were being fired upon by surprise from the positions we had occupied during that night.

RB: Was your driver killed?

BS: No, I thought he was killed. The bullet hit him right here in the left temple. He and I were behind a big rock and bullets were flying everywhere. My jeep was destroyed. It was sitting there with bullets going through it. I couldn't use my radio because it had been shot full of bullets. The radio was dead. We got behind

this big rock and were wondering what do we do now? I turned to look at him, he fell down and he had a bullet hole right there, left temple. I tried to do what I could to find out if he was going to be able to move. I decided he was dead. Bad mistake, one of the few mistakes I have made in my life. He was my driver and radio man and he weighed about two hundred pounds. I tried to lift him. I could not. I could not lift him. Even if I could I wouldn't know what to do. We would have been fired at. My job as an artillery man was to shoot artillery. I thought: if I could get to the company commander with his radio I could get some artillery fire on these [men]. I am heading up the hill trying to find the company commander. I never could find him. He was gone. All of them just panicked. It is a sad story to have to say that, but they did. They panicked. I got back and [was] on a road all by myself and found a [fellow] driving a D-4 caterpillar tractor down the road. I hooked a ride with him and got far enough back to join my own battalion which had gone back a line or two and reset up.

I got back and joined them. They resupplied me with a jeep and a couple of [fellows] to help me, radio operators and drivers. They said, "Well okay, we will try to get organized pretty soon because the infantry is trying to reorganize." And they did. Now the good part of the story is the same outfit that panicked and ran, held their defensive position that night. They set up a defense line and we were supporting them with artillery and all kinds of fire. We were attacked during the night by Chinese and North Koreans, I presume. They all had what is called burp guns. Do you know what a burp gun is?

BF: PPSH-41. [A Soviet submachine gun.]

BS: [Laughter] It is a submachine gun. By the way, I had a gun that I carried that nobody would have anything to do with except me. I was supposed to be carrying a carbine M1 or M2. But the carbine is this long and a pain in the butt. Anyway, there is a little submachine gun. We called it a grease gun. Do you know what it is?

BF: [It is a] M3 grease gun. It looked like a rivet gun. [An American .45 caliber submachine gun.]

BS: This little gun was built by the American Can Company. It fired .45 caliber ammunition, the same ammo they used in a pistol. It had magazines that held thirty rounds. I had ninety rounds. I had one this way [pointing up] and two this way [pointing down] taped together. I carried that thing. I used it. I fired all ninety rounds. Never a misfire. That gun was a jewel. They cut us off. They went through us. They went down somewhere along the main supply route, the MSR. They set up on hills to ambush us. It was six o'clock in the morning when this was happening. We were trying to get out of there on foot and some vehicles. I had my jeep and my driver. I said, "We are supposed to get out of here and follow that tank." There was a Sherman tank that was going to lead us out there and

about five or ten vehicles. My jeep also had a passenger in it. There was a wounded soldier sitting in my jeep.

I got in the jeep and we started down the road. We came to a place where all of a sudden we were getting fire [on] both sides. We could see a lot of fire. We had to stop. The [fellow] in the tank and the people in that tank were busy as hell. They were shooting cannon and machine gun right and left. We came up there and we had to come to a stop. I didn't want to stop. I got out of the jeep and I was standing over on the left side of it. My driver yelled at me and said, "Hey, we are going to move." I couldn't get around there fast enough so I just bellied down across [the jeep]. I had my gun handy and this wounded soldier was sitting there. I had this gun right in front of him and I fired all ninety rounds in little bursts, [of the] machine gun [as far as] I could see. I gave my driver my pistol. It was worthless in this particular [situation]. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

BS: But he was driving the jeep going bang, bang, bang, bang. It was kind of funny. He used up all the rounds of my ammo. I fired everything I had and we got through there. We got through. I think it was mostly because that tank [fellow], whoever the people were in that tank, did a wonderful job. I don't think we hit anybody. [We] were shooting in the dark. But that tank was really doing a great job and he got us out of there. Several miles down the way we came to a quiet spot, we stopped and got ourselves reorganized. So I finally was able to join my own outfit.

RB: When you were experiencing that, was your adrenalin just running? How do you think and act in those situations?

BS: I wasn't scared. I had a job to do. They had to cut me off from firing. Right in the middle of the night we were firing high angle fire on the Chinese who were over on the other side of the hill. This was happening up until about three or four o'clock in the morning. There was a lot of action there. We were shooting a lot. The infantry [fellows] were doing a pretty good job. We are actually doing the thing you read about in war books, firing at our own position. We were doing that. I finally gave the command to drop five zero and repeat fire. What I heard back was from an operator on the radio. He said, "Sorry. We are moving," which meant the artillery had picked up and they had to move.

So we were out of support. I told the lieutenant [who] was in charge of that platoon of infantry, "I can't give you any support." He said, "Do you think we have had it?" That was the attitude. You asked me about attitude. That lieutenant's name was Van der Muis. He was an ROTC graduate from some college. This was his first military experience. I got a kick out of him because

when I said we can't do anymore shooting for you, he said, "Do you think we have had it?" [Laughter] Because the Chinese were pushing up that hill. I said, "I don't know whether we have had it or not. But I have had it because I am going to go find my jeep, my driver and we are going to find out where we need to go." I can remember that very well. But I was not scared. I was just duty-bound — is the word.

RB: Were there times that you felt that you might just die right then? Did you ever think about that?

BS: That was number one [thought] all the time.

RB: What is that feeling like? You said you weren't scared.

BS: I am just fatalistic. Fatalistic is the word.

RB: What do you mean?

BS: What is. Whatever happens.

RB: So you just accept it.

BS: Worrying about it won't fix it. I did not try to solve the situation that I couldn't solve. I could just do what I could do.

RB: Going through that kind of experience, has it shaped your life at all? Do you ever think back about that and wonder how come I survived and someone else didn't?

BS: That is a good question because I have to divert myself here. Now-a-days you hear the phrase, honor the dead. I have often thought: why not honor the living.

RB: True.

BS: Because I have been in combat and I have seen what happens, not years, but a short time. One [fellow] escapes unscathed. So did I — I am right there. A [fellow] gets killed next to me, or I thought he was. My company commander of the company I was supporting did get shot right through the middle. The bullet went right through from one side out the other side. I am with these [fellows] but I didn't get hit. I escaped unscathed. I came out of it free and easy. Am I not to be honored? I am still alive. I told my [children] this many times over the years, "Sorry I didn't die so you could honor me."

RB: I understand.

BS: A dead [fellow] is no more honorable than a live [fellows]. If they are fighting the same battle they are all heroes. That is a diversion on my part.

RB: I understand. It is important. That is why I asked you.

BS: You asked about my attitude.

RB: You were in combat, surviving combat and knowing that many did not and yet here you are.

BS: You deal with what is, not what it should be or what it could be — what it is. I always honored that as a [youngster]. Fantasy is nice, but you can't live on it.

RB: That is true. I am going to bring this to a close right now. We have been talking for over an hour and a half. Next year you are going to turn 100 years old. What is your thought about the secret of living this long? How have you lived to be almost 100 now?

BS: I was afraid you would ask me that. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] What is your secret?

BF: [Laughter]

BS: I don't think anybody has any secret.

RB: I understand. I just throw that out to you. What have you done in your life that has caused you, you think, to live a long life?

BS: I think it is the things I have not done.

RB: Like what?

BS: Like smoking. I never smoked.

RB: You never smoked even in World War II and in the Korean [Conflict] when they would pass out cigarettes with your food?

BS: Can you imagine what is the most common question I ever [received] while I was in the Army?

RB: What?

BS: Why don't you smoke?

RB: I can imagine. And what did you say?

BS: I said, "Why do you smoke?"

RB: It never appealed to you?

BS: Absolutely not. I can remember when I was ten years old, just a [youngster]. The National Guard [fellows] would come down and parade on the school grounds. The first sergeant would say, "Okay, company halt. Fall out. Take a break. Smoke if you have them." Almost everybody did. Practically all of them. They would light up a cigarette. They would take a ten minute break. The first sergeant would say, "Put them out. Fall in." They would put their cigarettes out in the grass. I was ten years old. I was with my buddy. I said, "Let's try those cigarettes." We tried them and I can remember coughing. I thought anything that makes you cough can't be good for you.

RB: [Laughter] What is the point of this?

BS: I went through school, high school, the Army and never smoked. My first wife [Helen] smoked. My second wife [Julie] smoked.

RB: And you never picked it up?

BS: Never. I never picked on them either. I was good about that. If they ever asked me what I thought about smoking, I said I think smoking is stupid.

RB: That is honest.

BS: But I didn't tell my wife she was stupid.

RB: That wouldn't go over well.

BS: We did discuss it. My second wife, by the way who died here last year, quit smoking when she was about forty [years old] because she realized it was not wise. She died of lung cancer. When somebody asks, "How come you grew to be 100 years old?" — I don't think you can ever answer that. But there are things that you don't do that have a definite bearing on it. When I was young I learned how to drink beer, wine, whiskey, gin and whatnot. Whatnot was when I was in Arkansas!

RB: [Laughter] Whatever!

BS: Corn squeezing! [Laughter] Anyway, I learned to drink things. I learned to like to drink. But I never was a boozier. I would have to confess that I know what it is like to be drunk when I drank too much. But I realized that was stupid behavior. I got over that and I quit doing it. I finally swore up. Right now, in this cabinet you will find a bottle of wine that has some wine in it and there is a bottle of Jack Daniel's whiskey that hasn't been touched in a year. It has not even been opened.

RB: Your mind is incredibly sharp.

BS: Not bad, [but] it is failing.

RB: Okay. Yet you can remember things that happened to you seventy years ago with a lot of detail. I can tell.

BS: Yes. It's funny how that happens. Some days you will remember something that happened when you were a [youngster], but you can't remember something that happened last year. It happens to all of us.

RB: I just pose that question to you. I understand that nobody knows the answer of why you survived and somebody else didn't or why you are in such remarkably good health.

BS: I didn't abuse my body, but I did put it to the test.

RB: Looking back you have three [children] You had two wives.

BS: My [children, Sandra, John and Patrick] are successful. None of them ever messed with drugs. They are all independent, self-supporting, good citizens.

RB: When you think back of how you raised your [children] and how they turned out, is that one of the accomplishments of your life?

BS: You bet! I say if there is any one thing that I could say I was satisfied and proud of was that I raised a good family.

RB: Are there any other thoughts or comments that come to mind that you would like to share before we close?

BS: I don't propose to be a philosopher. I do sometimes think I have a superior understanding of something, but I think that is true of all of us. There are people in this world [who] don't have any education, they don't know anything, they have never experienced anything. So I feel for them. When I say I feel superior, I think I probably should say just plain lucky, but not all luck. I don't have any respect at all for people [who] live wasteful lives, people that live on drugs, for example, or people who are so greedy. By the way, if I have any single philosophy it is that all the troubles in this world are caused by human greed.

RB: Yes, I think you are right.

BS: All of it. Almost everybody including some of the members of your family and my family are guilty of being greedy, self-serving. Trying to be unselfish requires hard work sometimes.

RB: I appreciate your time, Mr. Stout. We are going to close this now.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]