

Interview with Keith Benedict and Jean Benedict

Interviewer: Jennifer Greene

March 8, 2014

KB = Keith, JB = Jean

KB: ...I graduated in (19)'41.

Q: And you didn't. How long was it between your graduation and when you joined the Marines?

(Talking to JB)

JB: It was five years.

Q: Okay, so a little more of a gap than Keith.

KB: Well, actually I was going to go in with my buddies, but I had a double hernia. Then I thought, "I might as well wait until they draft me."

Q: [laughter]

KB: So, I did.

Q: So, you were drafted? You didn't volunteer?

KB: No. But at the time they drafted me – At the time they drafted me I was making parts for Curtiss Airplanes. The boss wanted me to get a deferment and I wasn't taking it.

Q: Where was that? Was that in –

KB: Michigan.

Q: Michigan. Were you in Detroit? Or, where were you?

KB: No, actually it was in Jackson, Michigan.

Q: That is where the plant was?

KB: Yeah. It was a little plant. We only had about twelve or fourteen workers, machinists.

Q: What did you do there?

KB: I ran automatic [inaudible] machines.

Q: Automatic what?

KB: [inaudible] machines.

JB: Talk so she can hear you!

Q: Shure machines?

JB: Screw machines!

Q: Screw machines.

KB: Yeah, automatic screw machines.

Q: Oh, okay. So...

KB: I set them up, run them, you know.

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Q: So, what was the plant producing?

KB: We were producing parts for Curtiss aircrafts.

Q: Okay.

KB: Small parts.

Q: Small parts. Alright. So, I don't know what a screw machine is. Can you tell me what that is?

KB: Well...

JB: Scoot up here so she can hear you!

KB: I'm going to say... It was a precursor to tape machines and a new automatic – it's an automatic machine.

Q: I mean – so obviously it's like an assembly line kind of work.

KB: Let me tell you how it works.

Q: Ok.

KB: You put a bar sock in the back. These machines, most of them have either four or six spindles. What they do, in the machine you have a bunch of tooling. The [inaudible] comes in there and does things to these bar socks. It backs off and then indexes over to the next one, see. That way when it gets, we'll say to the number six spindle, it gets cut off and it completed it.

Q: So, it's kind of a process of molding a piece? Or cutting?

KB: No, it's cutting.

JB: What does it cut?

KB: Seals or whatever you put in there.

JB: What kind of piece? What's the piece that it cuts? Does it cut screws?

Q: You were manufacturing round seals?

KB: Yeah it was round –

Q: Like gaskets?

KB: They cut a hex-seal or a round-seal, or whatever the –

Q: Now when you say 'seal' are we talking about something like a gasket?

KB: Bar sock.

JB: NO! What did it actually manufacture?

KB: It manufactured small parts for airplanes!

JB: What kind of parts?!

KB: Oh hell. I'd have to –

JB: Well it wasn't screws!

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Q: [laughter].

KB: All kinds of parts, Honey.

JB: Well that's what we're trying to find out!

KB: Little studs that had different threads on both ends –

JB: That's what we're trying to find out!

KB: - that would hold a bolt onto a flange in a C-Plane –

JB: Put your socks on!

KB: - small parts that they made engines out of.

Q: That is what I'm trying to get a handle on, what kind of parts. I mean, are we talking screws, and nuts, and bolts, or...

KB: I made screws, and nuts, and –

JB: Alright, that's what we are looking for.

KB: - all sorts of other stuff. It wasn't just screws and nuts.

Q: Right, right. But still very small parts.

KB: Yeah that type of thing. Yeah.

JB: Hey do you want that top light on?

Q: No, I'm fine.

JB: Can you see?

Q: Yeah.

KB: We made engine parts for Curtiss Red Aircraft and parts to hold the planes together, of course we had a lot of C-planes, see. We made parts that would hold the wings on to airplane.

Q: And this was a small factory? How many people worked there? I know I'm asking you to go way back.

KB: There wasn't about ten or twelve people who worked there. Maybe fifteen.

Q: Oh, okay, so it was a pretty small little operation.

KB: I operated four machines at the same time. See, I made... Well, one of the things I made was armor piercing bullets. Part of it was Curtiss Red Aircraft and part of it was a different company. I ran one machine and we made armor piercing bullets.

Q: Do you remember the name of the company you worked for?

KB: Well, I worked for Oak Screw.

Q: Oak Screw?

KB: Oak Screw Company and I worked for another one -

Q: You're saying 'oak' like O – A – K, like oak tree?

KB: Yeah that was its name.

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Q: No, I'm just curious in case someone wants to go back and look up these companies. So Oak Screw is one.

KB: Well, when I got out of the service and I came down here for a job, I went up to Serval (?), and they had a screw machine department and they wanted to hire me.

Q: Oh, alright. Let's stay in Jackson for a minute.

KB: Alright.

Q: So, you worked there for what, a couple of years, and was that kind of your first job outside of high school?

KB: What I did was, I went in there as an apprentice...

Q: Was it a formal apprenticeship program like we think of today? Today it seems like apprenticeships don't really run the way they used to.

KB: No. See, what it was, was Charlie.

Q: [laughter]

KB: He was an old timer.

Q: Do you remember how much you were paid?

KB: Good Lord, I don't know. I don't know how much I got paid when I got out of the service.

Q: [laughter]

KB: I made \$0.75 an hour out at [inaudible].

Q: At Serval?

JB: No.

KB: Oh, I didn't work for Serval. I turned them down.

Q: Oh.

KB: I don't know, I suppose I was making somewhere between \$.50 and \$0.60 an hour I'd say.

Q: Were you still living at home, were you still living with your parents?

KB: Yeah, I was living at home.

Q: Did you stay with –

KB: Well, I was living at home part of the time. I lived at home and the place I worked was 25 miles away. So, I couldn't drive back and forth each day, we didn't have the gasoline or anything like that. Once a week I went up there and I stayed in a ladies' house in a one-bedroom.

Q: Was it a boarding house or a woman who rented a room out?

KB: Yeah, it was a boarding house, but I think I was the only tenant. I was a young guy...

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Q: It's not uncommon.

KB: I think it was \$5 a week or something.

Q: Were there any meals provided for you?

KB: Oh no.

Q: No? I know often boarding houses would provide breakfast.

KB: No, this wasn't like a formal boarding house.

Q: Right. This was just a woman who rented rooms out.

KB: She was a nice person.

Q: Yeah, \$5 a week.

KB: That was a lot of money considering I wasn't making much.

Q: I was going to say, that actually sounds like a lot to me.

KB: See, I wasn't making but about \$20 a week. You know?

Q: So, you worked there, did you go from Oak Screw into the military?

KB: I worked there until I got my draft notice and the guy who owned the shop wanted me to get a deferment. He told me he'd get me one since I was making aircraft parts and I said, "No, I don't want any."

JB: Honey, we can't hear you.

KB: She can hear me.

Q: [laughter]

JB: I can't. You mumble.

KB: So, I went to Kalamazoo... that is where... you know?

Q: Induction ceremony?

KB: When I went up to Kalamazoo, I went up to the guy who was the head honcho for the military and I asked him if I could go into the Marine Corps and he said, "Yeah we're hunting some. The only thing is, if you do, you can't go back to see your parents. You gotta go out and train tomorrow."

Q: And you still did it? The marines is what you went into right?

KB: Yeah. So, the next day I was on a train and I went to Chicago and then I went to San Diego boot camp. I never did get to back home until the war was over.

Q: And how long were you in the Marines?

KB: [pause]

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Q: What was your enlistment period? Was it four years or were you in there longer?

KB: It wasn't four years. It was about three and a half, I guess.

JB: Well, if you went in February of (19)'43, you came home in November of '45.

KB: Twenty... I don't know, thirty months or something.

JB: Thirty-three months we figured.

Q: I wonder if were they shorter in enlistments because we were at war?

JB: No, the war was over.

Q: The war was over, yeah that's right.

KB: The war was over, that's why I went home.

Q: Now, you went in in '43? Yeah...and got out in '45?

KB: I graduated in '41.

JB: See the war was over by then in August of '45. Cause you were home; you left around the 1st of November and I was still over there.

Q: So, you did your boot camp in San Diego?

JB: Camp Elliot in San Diego.

Q: Did they call the exercise field "The Grind" back then? I have several friends who did their Navy boot at San Diego, and they talk about the exercise field and it was like a gravel field where they did their calisthenics and they called it "The Grind."

KB: We did a lot of close quarter drilling and they sent me to Elliot. I don't know how long I was in San Diego for boot camp. I don't think I was there -

Q: It probably was like six or eight weeks.

JB: I think it was six weeks.

KB: I don't think I was in there over...I don't remember how long. Then I went onto Camp Elliot.

Q: Where is Camp Elliot?

JB: That is San Diego. You went onto Camp Matthews.

KB: I went to Camp Elliot.

JB: Yes. Camp Elliot. San Diego.

Q: Camp Elliot is the one at San Diego, right?

KB: Yeah, but the boot camp was at a Marine Corps base -

JB: In San Diego! Then he went to Camp Elliot right there out of San Diego.

KB: The boot camp was on a base in San Diego and we lived in town. We did all sorts of drills until you dropped on your butt.

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Q: Where did you go after Camp Elliot?

KB: Well, after Camp Elliot... Well, before Camp Elliot I took some tests and so on and so forth, and I took quite a bit of training.

Q: Right. What was going to be your job, if you will?

KB: Well my job, when I took the training, it said I'd make a good radar and radioman. The only reason they did, and I got to tell you this, I don't know nothing about radio or anything, but they gave me a test and it was a Morse code test. You know, dot this dot that.

Q: Right.

KB: And they gave me a big long test and I was supposed to tell them what the letters were. I had studied up on it and I graduated as the highest of anybody in the platoon. I don't know how. Most of them must have guessed at it.

Q: You must have had a knack for the memory bit.

KB: Anyway, they said that I was going to be assigned – this was about three or four days before the platoon was supposed to break up – and they said you're going to be assigned to additional training and you're going to go back to Northwest University for something like eight or nine months for radar and radio training. So, the day before my platoon broke up, I got sick. I knew something bad was wrong with me because I was running a high fever and everything. I was off close quarter drilling with everybody, and the drill instructor came up and told me to stand still. So, I did. The medic told me to open up my tongue and there was a mass of red. He said, "You report to the sick bay cause you got the measles."

Q: [laughter]

KB: So, I went to the sick bay and I had the measles. I had them bad.

Q: Getting that late in life is...

KB: And so, I was in with the measles for about two weeks. By the time I got out they filled my place.

Q: So, you didn't get to go for additional training.

KB: They sent me to Elliot then I did mortar training. A mortar troop consists of a gunner, and I think there is about five men in it...maybe seven. There is a gunner and he carries a little bag for ranges and tells the others what to do for the angle and elevation and so forth. Then there is the guy with an .81mm mortar. There is three guys, one of them carries the base and two of them carry the tube. The tube screws together.

Q: Right, so it's like two pieces.

KB: Two pieces. So, you got one person who carries each one of them and one person carries the base. The rest of them on the crew carry ammunition. The gunner carries a little pad that is a little firing data, that's all here carries. I didn't want to carry no base and I didn't want to carry no tube and I didn't want to carry no ammunition, so I worked hard to make sure I was the guy who carried the little pad.

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Q: Sounds smart to me!

KB: So, I did. I took that training. I was the guy who ran the crew. We fired and did a lot of different other stuff. Then I got to do quite a bit of forward observing, because you get up and then you call back for ranges and such.

Q: Right, right. You got to kind of be out in advance so you can tell them where they needed to...

KB: Aim the targets. So, I did that.

Q: Now this training was at Camp Elliot.

KB: Yeah.

Q: Alright.

KB: Also, during that period of time, in the Marine Corps you spent time on the rifle range. Every Marine spends time on the rifle range and does his rifle thing – at least that's how it used to be, I don't know how it is now. But that was at Camp Matthews.

Q: Where is Camp Matthews?

KB: I don't know. It's over close to Elliot.

Q: But it's in California though?

KB: Oh yeah, it's right over there in that area.

Q: I'm not familiar where forts are!

JB: It's in the San Diego area.

Q: Ok, they all are then.

KB: I don't know if there is any anymore and I don't think there is any Camp Elliot anymore.

JB: We heard that place was so old.

Q: I know where Fort Knox is, that's about it [laughter].

KB: Anyway, everybody that was in the Marine Corps that was in their boot camp training went through weaponry. So, we went over we did that.

Q: What was your first assignment?

KB: Well, I didn't make expert marksmen, but I did make sharp shooter. They go by a score you know?

Q: Right.

KB: I did real good except off-hand. I wasn't steady enough off-hand. We did firing at 200 yards, 300 yards, 500 yards. We got to 500 yards and you did it in a prone position and it's a twenty-inch bull's-eye. That's awfully little at 500 yards.

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Q: Yeah it is.

KB: Best I can remember is we fired eight rounds and I hit seven of them in the bull's-eye and I got a four. If I had gotten that other one in the bull's-eye, I would've been a sharpshooter or expert, or whatever. I didn't make it.

Q: Right. But you were close!

KB: Yeah, I was close. Then they shipped me out on that. Of course, I thought I'd be going into a combat outfit as a mortar-man or something like that.

Q: Right, well that's what you were trained for.

KB: So, at that time the reason that they shipped me out of Kalamazoo so quick is, he said that they needed people to replace the casualties and such that the Marines lost on Guadalcanal. That's why they were in a rush to get...anyway. They shipped me out and sent me to New Zealand. On the way, at that time, they kind of thought the Japs were going to take Australia and all that stuff.

Q: Let me pause you right there and ask you, how did you get to New Zealand? Was it by ship?

KB: Boat.

Q: It was by ship?

KB: Oh yeah.

Q: I mean, I don't know. You might have flown part of the way.

KB: I don't remember how long I was on that boat.

Q: That must have been a long boat trip.

KB: Yeah, it was. I don't remember whether... I'm going to say it was like three weeks at most. We left and went to New Caledonia. Then they took everybody out. They wanted somebody to go into the Raiders. They lined us up out into the field and everybody was arm to arm with a walkway in between. We didn't have no clothes on except our shorts. The two officers walked out and asked if you wanted to be in the Raiders. I volunteered. I was stupid. I volunteered [laughter].

Q: Wait a minute, did this happen on the ship? Or was this before?

KB: No, this was in New Caledonia.

Q: Oh, New Caledonia, okay.

KB: The closest thing to where that was at was the village of St. Louis. I never saw the village of St. Louis, but it was outside of that, which is a little Navy thing. Anyway, so I went over to this Raider camp and about the only thing I remember of that was FDR's [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] son was the head officer over there.

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Q: FDR's son was like the commander or... Would it have been a base?

KB: Well anyway, he was head of that Raider camp. I was in that that afternoon and night and next day, him or somebody else come over and him or someone else came over and said, "You're going to have to go back there with the guys you came with because your record didn't come off the ship and we can't find your records." So, they sent me back. Whether they just used that for an excuse, I don't know.

Q: Who knows? It could be either way. I mean, they're always losing stuff anyway. So, they sent you back because they claimed they couldn't find your records...

KB: Yeah.

Q: Did you go back to join your platoon? Am I using the right terminology there?

KB: So, I went back aboard ship with the rest of my guys. When I finally got to New Zealand, two of the guys in my platoon were wounded. They were in the hospital and they had made a raid on some type of Jap submarine and wiped them out. The Japs had a radio on some island – I don't know what it was – but they made a raid on there and killed everyone on the island. Big Bill Adam Briscoe got wounded and was in the hospital already. So, I missed out on that, that was good. Anyway, in between New Caledonia they stopped at Tonga Taboo, which is in the friendly islands they call them, we stopped in the harbor and stayed about a day or day and a half. Boy, it was a beautiful place. You sat there and looked at that island it looked like a picture. I think it belonged to the British because there were some houses that you could see that had the red tile roofs, and there were palm trees. It hadn't been touched by the war. Then we left there and went to Norfolk Island for about a day. Never got off the ship. Then we went onto New Zealand.

Q: Right. What kind of a ship was it? Do you remember? Was it like a...I don't know my ships, but was it like a battleship?

KB: It was called the Bloom Fontaine.

Q: Blue Fontaine?

KB: Yeah.

JB: Bloom. Bloom.

Q: Bloom?

KB: Bloom Fontaine. It was a Dutch ship and it had a flat bowel up front under there and I understand it was an icebreaker they have for the North seas. They shipped it out to the Pacific to haul troops in.

JB: The flat front would be the icebreaker.

KB: And it was the hardest riding thing you've ever seen [laughter].

JB: Going through ice you can imagine!

Q: Yeah!

KB: Anyway, we finally got to New Zealand.

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Q: Let me ask you, I'm guessing you've obviously never been on a ship like that before until you got on it in California, did you get seasick?

KB: Never did get seasick.

Q: Did you ever have any problems adjusting to that?

KB: A lot of people.

JB: A whole lot of girls did, but I never did.

KB: The only ship I'd ever been on of any size was when I went to Niagara Falls on my senior trip.

JB: Now Honey, this had to be in 1944.

KB: I guess. I don't know. I can't remember.

Q: So where were you in New Zealand?

KB: Ticochamiki. [Transcriptionist's note: The name of this base is pronounced differently each time and through my research have not been able to locate the proper name and spelling of this particular base]

Q: One more time, what was the name?

JB: Tycochamiki.

KB: We were at Tycochamiki Bay.

Q: Alright.

JB: Was it Hi or Ty? Did it begin with an 'H' instead of a 'T'?

KB: Hicochamiki! I don't know.

Q: We will be able to look that up, so.

KB: And so, I was there. It was an artillery outfit. They didn't know what to do with me once I got there, so they put me in the motor pool. I didn't know nothing about driving trucks or anything else; I never had driven a truck.

Q: So that is what you did? Your assignment was in the motor pool?

KB: Yeah. I drove a Jeep and that was about it for a while.

Q: So, what were you doing? Were you carting people around; were you hauling supplies back and forth?

KB: No. They put me in the machine gun section that was to guard the artillery. I don't think it was even a formal military thing, but we had one. In other words, I think it was strictly because of the officer who was in charge, second or third battalion 10th Marines and I think he decided with my group that we needed a machine gun section. I understand the military table of the Marine Corps did not allow any machine guns within an artillery outfit. But they had some because when the Army moved in to Guadalcanal and the fighting was over there, they had some .50 caliber machine guns that they didn't guard too good, and I understand guys in my crew stole them. That is what I heard [laughter]. I believe it.

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Q: So, you were assigned to a group that was basically guarding artillery equipment?

KB: Yeah... Yeah. But any kind... I didn't do a lot of truck driving. There wasn't a lot of truck driving to do.

Q: I wouldn't think so it's New Zealand.

KB: I did that because my group, Third Battalion 10th Marines, we only had probably about 150 men, maybe not even that much.

Q: Oh alright. Did you guys have a nickname that you called yourselves as a group?

KB: No.

Q: No, not really?

KB: So, I was in that for a while and they decided that while I was there, they... See, I was a raw recruit. So, they came along and said, "We got to have somebody in the mess thing." We all had known somebody with experience in butchering.

Q: With what?

KB: Butchering. Butchering animals.

Q: Oh, butchering.

KB: So, I thought well that's got to be easier than scrubbing potatoes and all that stuff, so I volunteered.

Q: I think it would rather peel potatoes [laughter].

KB: I went to the butcher shop. There was a butcher shop with one other man. He was a sergeant at the time.

Q: What was your rank at the time?

KB: The lowest private there is. The butcher shop – the best I can remember – had three knives, in this butcher shop. They had a cleaver and two knives. They had one knife that was real sharp that I was only allowed to use unless we had cold meats. Cold cuts. That knife was only supposed to be used for cold cuts. Everything else was supposed to be cut with a cleaver.

Q: A cleaver, huh? Are you literally butchering, like chickens?

KB: No. We had chickens that were put in cold storage for World War I

Q: [laughter].

KB: I'm serious! I had never seen anything like it. You open the box up and they're frozen; those chickens are just as blue...they weren't any yellow anymore they froze so long.

Q: Right, right. Well, that is a long time to be frozen.

KB: We got a lot of mutton. They had a lot of cattle and a lot of sheep. We had a lot of mutton.

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Q: Had you ever had mutton before?

KB: Oh yeah. I had when I was growing up because -

Q: Did you?

KB: Oh yeah.

Q: I don't like mutton.

KB: I've had a lot of mutton.

Q: So how long were you in the butcher shop?

KB: Oh, I don't know, it wasn't a long period of time.

Q: And what did you do after that?

KB: Then they... I don't know how long it was, but then they moved everybody else. The word was, they moved everybody but a few of us and I just happened to be one of, I don't know ten or twelve different guys.

JB: Moved them where?

KB: Huh?

JB: Moved them where?!

KB: Do what?

JB: When you moved out, you moved. Where?

KB: I didn't move out then. The rest of them did.

Q: The rest of them did and a few of you stayed.

KB: We got word back that they joined the rest of the division, see.

Q: Okay.

KB: We got word back, rumors, they didn't publicize that they were going to Tarawa, and that is where they went. After they moved out, maybe two or three weeks later we moved out. We got aboard ship and that's where we thought we were going. But that thing only lasted like a week or five days or something. We sailed around someplace - I don't know where we went - it was just ocean. Finally, we ended up in Hilo.

Q: Milo?

KB: Hilo.

Q: Hilo, oh Hilo.

KB: Hilo, Hawaii. That thing was over with, see. I was in this little camp in Hilo, me and the rest of the 10 or 12 people, for a couple three weeks, but not very long. We left there and went up to the middle of the island and we helped build a camp. We were there for not too long and the rest of the division, second division, came and they came up to that camp. We were getting it ready for them. We were up there.

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Q: And this was on the island Hawaii, right? That's what they call the mainland?

KB: Yeah, Hawaii.

JB: The big island.

Q: The big island.

KB: We were right in the middle of it on the Parker Ranch.

Q: Parker Ranch?

KB: Yeah.

JB: Tell her about -

KB: It's one of the biggest cattle ranches in the world and it's on Hawaii. I don't know whether you knew that.

Q: No. You don't think of cattle and islands. Those are two things you don't put together often [laughter].

KB: Yeah, it's one of the biggest cattle ranches in the world.

Q: And that's where you guys had your camp?

KB: Yeah. They had Parker leased enough land from the government for a dollar a year. They had a camp up there on that ranch. They ended up having the Second Marine Division and the Fifth Marine Division, which is about 50,000 men up there. And he didn't know we were there. We had an airfield. The ranch is enormous. I think there is seven towns on it. Two volcanoes. It's enormous. One of the biggest...

Q: It seems odd that it wasn't down on the waterfront. I mean, Marines. Navy. Boats. These are things you think of when you think of Hawaii: Pearl Harbor, and the ships...

KB: It's nothing like Pearl Harbor.

Q: Yeah.

KB: In fact, it was an old-time ranch that had people on it..."cowboys" is what I'd say, but they were native Hawaiians. Their family lived on the ranch and they lived on the ranch all their lives. They were supported by the ranch and the ranch furnished everything for them and their family and their family's family lived on that ranch. You know what I'm saying?

Q: Right, right.

KB: And then...

Q: And then 50,000 American GI's moved in! [laughter]

KB: 50,000 American GI's on there, I don't think...

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Q: So, when you were up there for that camp, it was a Marine camp obviously, but did you have much interaction with other, you know, like Navy, or Army, or...

KB: No. No. Nobody else up there but Marines.

Q: Just Marines, huh.

KB: Yep.

Q: And what was your job when you were up there?

KB: I don't remember. I didn't do much [laughter]. I lived a normal military life.

Q: So, you weren't butchering animals anymore like before?

KB: Oh no, I only did that for a couple weeks.

Q: So, I mean...

KB: I can tell you a little story: Down on the camp they had a field that a white fence around it. It was probably two or three acres. The grass was about this high and it was pretty and even. One day here came a plane on the airfield and they got out of this plane and they had the prettiest Black Angus bull you've ever seen. He was a great big bull. They escorted this bull over to this field because that was his field, see. Now this was during the war, but they were taking care of him. That bull came from the King's Ranch in Texas and there is no telling what that bull was worth. It was probably \$40,000 or \$50,000. But boy, this big boy would take care of him and he'd come in on a military transport.

Q: VIP treatment for the bull [laughter].

KB: You bet. They put him in that field and that was his field. He was king.

JB: He had all the women.

Q: That's what they brought him in for I'm sure.

KB: No kidding.

Q: So, what else did you do while you were there?

KB: I don't remember much.

Q: Were you there very long? You couldn't have been there for very long.

KB: No, I wasn't there too long.

Q: Where did you end up after that?

KB: Well they said I had enough points that I could go home and get a furlough. They sent me from there to Oahu and then I met Momma and the rest of it is history.

Q: Well that's what I want to hear about. How did you meet Jean? I kind of want both of yours take on how that went down.

KB: Well one day this guy said, "How would you like to meet a nice young lady?" -

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KB = Keith, JB = Jean

Q: Wait, wait, time out. So, you had gone to Oahu on furlough

JB: Pearl Harbor.

KB: No, I wasn't on furlough. I was over on Oahu waiting for them to send me back home and give me furlough.

Q: Ok, alright.

KB: But they never did. That's what they were supposed to do. The rumor was it was called an entrenchment camp. The rumor was I was going to go home and get a furlough then I was going to go back over there, and my division was going to be one of them that invaded Japan. That's what we heard. Whether it had any truth to it, I don't know.

Q: Right.

KB: Well, anyway while we were there, Truman Okayed dropping the bomb and the war was over.

JB: August 16, 1945, yeah.

KB: In that camp, when I went over to the entrenchment center, they had other military people coming in there who had enough points to come back to the States and get a furlough. Everybody I had seen had outranked me. It was all either Staff Sergeants or Major Sergeants, it was all high-ranking NCOs.

Q: And you were still a private?

KB: Yes. No, well I was a Corporal then.

Q: Corporal, okay.

KB: They were taking these guys out on work details and giving them something to do. I didn't want to go out on some work detail, I was always doing work. This guy was First Sergeant and he said, "Can anybody type?" I said, "Oh yeah, I can." So, I ended up being company clerk. Well, I never was a good typist, but I didn't want to go out on no work details. So, I ended up being the company clerk. The guy who was the First Sergeant who was head off that, he was a drunk. I only saw him one day. I moved into the company office, which was nothing but a double tent, and I slept in the back. I didn't see him because he was drunk all the time. His name was Sutter by the way. Anyway, he put me in there and he told me what to do – make a morning report and all that.

Q: Company clerk is a pretty busy job isn't it?

KB: Huh?

Q: Company clerk is a pretty busy job.

KB: I never was that busy. It was just never that big of an outfit.

Q: Right, okay.

KB: While I was there this guy said, "How would you like to meet this nice young lady?" And I said I would. Listen, I've always been a pretty shy guy.

JB: So, he says [laughter].

KB: You can laugh at me, but that's the truth.

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JB: I know Honey, I believe you.

KB: So, what was that guy's name?

JB: Darryl but I can't remember his last name.

KB: Darryl somebody.

JB: I've got pictures of him, Ivan, and all of us.

KB: She was in the camp over across the field on the one side and I was back here. I went over there with him one night and I met her. When I met her, I was stricken right away. I really was. I think the next Sunday I came over, too didn't I?

JB: Oh yeah. You asked if you could come back and see me again and I said, "Sure." And you came back every night from then on.

KB: Then I found out if you went through the main gate and walked to get her camp, it was three or four miles. You had to go all the way through the main gate and then go past the Naval Hospital and turn and then you went over someplace, and you finally got to her camp. If you went straight back to where the fence was, there was a hole in the fence. You walk through that fence and there is a ditch. You cross that ditch and there is a field and there is a tent where the camp was. I could get to where she was in about five minutes.

JB: You and all the rest of the guys.

KB: Yeah! So, everybody found this out -

Q: That's why the hole was in the fence [laughter].

KB: Yeah. I got to tell you about this. I'm going over to see her, so I'm headed back there and I'm hardly looking where I'm going. I get back over by the fence and I get through it, and there is a little... Like I said, there is a little ditch full of water and somebody put a couple of 2x12's across it to make a bridge. I'm just about ready to go across that bridge and I look up and there is an Officer of the Day on the other side. He has this thing that says OD.

Q: Right. Officer of the Day. Yep.

KB: And I thought, "Oh man, I'm in a pack of trouble." He seen me come through this fence and there I am. What am I going to do? I couldn't think of anything. So, I just stood there dumbfounded because I knew I was in a pack of trouble. So, he came across these planks headed for that hole and he came over pretty close to me, so I gave him a snappy salute, he saluted me back, and went through the fence.

Q: [laughter].

JB: All the guys did!

KB: Anyway, the next night I went over there, and I got there late but I went over to see her, and they had a new fence in there. The next night I went back over there, and they cut another hole in it.

Q: [laughter]

JB: They knew it was useless! The guys were going to get there eventually!

KB: But boy, I thought, "I'm dead, I'm dead."

JB: This time they left the hole in the fence.

KB: Then we dated, and I fell in love with her. It's been that way ever since.

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Q: It sounds that way. It sounds like it was pretty much love at first sight.

JB: Yeah.

KB: You know, we never did anything, I wouldn't call it indecent, we never did anything at all. Did we Honey?

JB: Why no.

KB: We did what our parents would have wanted us to do, nothing. You know what I mean?

Q: I do. I do know what you mean.

JB: Well, the only time we had Liberty Pass was weekends anyhow. When all the guys would in, we were sitting in the area and you couldn't do anything.

KB: We went on a weekend and they had a thing that belonged to a Hawaiian princess that was given to the military. It was a nice, beautiful home –

JB: Oh yes!

KB: - with a big porch.

JB: I'll tell you all about that.

KB: We went up there and did that, and then we'd go over to that other place that was close to it that had a hotel there, remember?

JB: Yeah!

KB: We would eat our meals there.

JB: We had dinner there. I made us, each one of us, a photo album. If you ever have time and you would like to see it.

Q: I would and next time I come I would really like to look through that.

KB: Anyway, we'd go over and eat dinner and sometimes we'd stay at princess whatever her name was

JB: Princess Lilo Ka'iulani, her home.

KB: And sometimes we'd go over there, and I'd cook.

Q: Was that home turned into like a hotel kind of a thing.

KB: Well, it was just a beautiful home with a kitchen -

JB: I'll tell you all about it later.

KB: a nice rounded area to sit in the middle of a green field. It was nice wasn't it?

JB: Yes, I've got pictures of it and I will tell you about it.

KB: I'd come over and see her Sunday and we would go to church.

JB: We could get Liberty Pass and go into town and we visited a nice –

KB: Wasn't that a nice church?

JB: Yes. Non-denominational church. We went there a number of times.

KB: That was our recreation. I mean, we didn't go crazy like they do now.

JB: Oh no, there was no point.

Q: Well, I'm going to shift years now and get your story on what you did from when you graduated high school to what was your first job? What did you when you graduated from high school?

JB: Well, I was secretary at Mechanic Arts school.

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Q: That's right, that's right. You did tell me that. And you did that until you went into the military?

JB: Until I went into the military, yes.

Q: Ok. And where did you do your basic training? Did you do basic training?

JB: Camp [inaudible] in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

Q: Oh, alright. What was that like? What did it consist of? I think we all have a pretty good idea of what things were like for men in boot camp, but what was it like for women?

JB: See, women were not in combat in World War II. We did drilling; we had classes that we went to, and uh...

Q: What kind of classes? What kinds of things were they trying to teach? I mean, obviously you aren't going to go out and do maneuvers, but I understand you had to learn how to march because everyone in a uniform has to know how to march.

JB: I honestly can't even remember. But we learned about aircrafts and about the war, that's all I can say. We had drilling and we had a D.I., drill instructor, and every Thursday or Friday night they had a GI Party where you cleaned up because you had cabin inspection of your bunk the next day. And every Saturday we were out parading like that. That was six weeks of...

Q: Were you training for any specific jobs? What kind of options could you have had as a woman in the military at that time?

JB: Well, one of our gals went to Cooks and Bakers School and I had no school to attend, I really don't know what all they had. But I was always very good in typing in high school, so I just ended up being a clerk typist after I was transferred to Camp Elliot.

Q: I would've thought the women were used a lot for clerical support -

JB: Yes, that's what it was.

Q: - of course we know about the nurses.

JB: Yes nurses, more so then. Of course, our own barracks cooks and stuff like that. That's what it was since we were not in combat. I did not know how to drive so I could not be in the motor pool.

KB: Baby, maybe like in the PX something.

Q: Like a store clerk?

JB: I don't remember if I served in the PX or not.

KB: I don't know either.

JB: Once when I was in boot camp, we took our platoon over to the PX and that's where I bought that salt and peppershaker that silver one that says, "Marine Corps," for my mom and dad because their anniversary was November 27th. I bought that at the PX when I was in boot camp and we got it packaged up and sent home to them. But that's what it was then.

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Q: How long were you there?

JB: Well, boot camp was six weeks.

Q: Six weeks, okay.

JB: Then they asked where we wanted to be transferred to. Of course, I always said one of the reasons I joined and wanted to join the Marines is because I had never been west of St. Louis in my life...as far as traveling. So, I asked for Camp Elliot. The only reason I did that was that a boy from church was at Camp Elliot in the band. Bill...what is his name? I can't think of his last name now.

Q: And he was stationed out there?

JB: At Camp Elliot, yes. He was in the band. What was his name?

KB: Bill, Bill, Bill... Does his last name start with an 'H'?

JB: No.

KB: Hess?

JB: Bill Hess!

KB: Bill Hess.

JB: He was a year or two younger than me. He was in Sunday school and all and so that's why I asked for Camp Elliot. There were a whole bunch of us, I don't know how many, but we rode the train all the way from North Carolina to Camp Elliot in California. It took us almost a whole week. We were on a troop train with soldiers and all. But we got to Camp Elliot and I was one of...was there two or three of us clerk typists...in the Sergeant Major's office of the Fleet Marine Force. Which was the brain of the whole fleet in the whole Pacific. Wouldn't you say, Honey?

KB: FMF Pack -

JB: FMF. Fleet Marine Force.

KB: - was a fleet Marine force in the Pacific.

JB: Yeah. We got out there the week before Christmas. Then in the spring of (19)'44 they transferred the whole Fleet Marine Force office to Camp Pendleton in Oceanside. That was...I don't remember exactly when but that was in the spring of '44. That is where I was. By the end of '44, they said the women marines could sign to go to Hawaii if we wanted to, but we had to sign for two years. Well, of course me, I'm right there. I was in the third group that went over in March of '45 to Pearl Harbor. Of course, peace was declared in August and that was the end of that.

Q: Right, right. Why did you choose the Marines?

JB: Well, I had kind of a boyfriend in East St. Louis who was in the Marines and he was killed in July of '43 in the Raiders. I don't remember...had you ever heard of Van Goona Bay?

KB: I've heard of it, but I don't have any idea of where it's at.

JB: Well in some way, that is in my mind that his mother, or someone, wrote me...well my aunt had written me, and I got her letter the day before his mother wrote that he had been killed, that he was in the Raiders in an attack at Van Goona Bay and he was killed. So that's why...

Q: So that's why you chose the Marines.

JB: Yeah.

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Q: I mean, that's the most hard core of all the branches of the military. That is what surprises me that both of you kind of went with the hardest group of everybody.

KB: Yeah.

JB: You usually think of that way, yes.

Q: The Marines are known for being fought or on the beach, right? These are the guys that go in first.

KB: Of course, my two friends in my graduating class they went in too, see. Ronald came back right but Richard got killed right away.

Q: Yeah. Your life expectancy wasn't much in the Marine Corps. So, you had to sign up for two more years in order to go to Hawaii.

JB: Yes. We had to sign up for two years.

Q: Do you remember what your initial enlistment was? Was it two years?

JB: As long as the war. When we got over to Hawaii, like maybe a few months after we were there, we heard that if we wanted to go to Guam, we could sign up for two years and go there. Of course, peace was declared in August then, but I was going to sign for it. I was going to sign for it and go as far as I could. I was also in the Sergeant Major's office over there, fleet marine force. The one Sergeant Major I had in California was really great. He was a good guy. The other one, I didn't care too much for him. But then I was transferred to another little office; it was just two of us. I can't remember what Captain C did. But anyway, it was all at Pearl Harbor.

Q: What was your memories of taking a ship from California to Hawaii?

JB: [laughter]

Q: I mean, I'm guessing again that you would have never been on a ship that size before in your life?

JB: Now let me tell you what they told us. They said the women Marines would go to Pearl Harbor. At that time the Mattson Cruise Liner in California had turned over their ships for troop ships. We would go on a Mattson Cruise Liner and we would wear our green uniforms the whole trip and that was it. Okay, that's what we knew. Well a group went over in January and a group went over in February, and so far, as I know they wore their dress greens the whole time. Well here I come along with the third group in March. We are in San Francisco in our greens, of course by then when we went everything you took with you, you had to put in your sea bag. My trunk was shipped back home; I've got it upstairs. Well, they told us when we got on board at San Francisco, now you cannot go topside until you go under the Golden Gate Bridge. I thought that's kind of stupid, I don't know what this is all about. We get inside the ship and it takes off in the afternoon, I think. We go topside and everybody is waving and then they started taking us to our rooms. Well, well walked down this hall and I'm thinking that this doesn't look like a cruise liner. We get to an entrance way – you know what I mean Daddy where you had to step over?

KB: Yep.

JB: Ok a cruise a ship doesn't have this. Pretty soon we start getting to steps and we had to step down and I thought what is this, because we kept going down, and down, and down. We got all the way to the

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bottom hold and we walked in and here was double cot barracks. Come to find out, our group was on the USS General Scott. It was an Army two-stacker and we wore dungarees the whole trip. There were a thousand Army men on board. It was the most wonderful experience, really! There were about one hundred of us enlisted and several women officers, but during the day they were on the other side of the ship. But most of our gals got seasick, I'd say probably 90/100 got seasick and I did not fortunately. What happened was, we wore dungarees the whole trip and of course you lived out of your sea bag. Well, we came topside and the guys were all over the ship, and we would walk through them, say 'hi,' and we went down and went up another little ladder and then we were up above them. During the whole day we could not associate with them, but we could be up above and talk over the railing to them. It was a five-and-a-half-day trip to Pearl Harbor like that. Oh boy, did we have good chow.

Q: Good food huh?

JB: They always used to say, "The Navy had beans for breakfast on Friday," we did, and they were delicious.

KB: They do.

JB: They were delicious! Boy we had good food the whole way. Now how the others came over after us, I never did find out. But, that's how we went over. We had Marine guards on the ship. One day it poured down rain all day and we had to stay below. One day – we had two or three guns on each side of the ship, one day they fired their guns and I thought that ship was going to fall apart. My Lord, I could just see that thing [laughter]. Oh my. But that was an experience, really.

Q: I could imagine.

JB: It really was! I'm so glad I got to experience that. That was in March of '45. Of course, then when I came home in December of '45, I wore dungarees again. But this time we could have lights on at night. Before we couldn't after chow.

Q: Right, lights out.

JB: But we came home on a hospital ship and I don't remember whether it was The Hope or The Rescue hospital ship, but we came home to San Francisco. We got to San Francisco...let's see...I think we got there around the middle of December and we were there for a week. Then we boarded a train to go all the way to Arlington, VA. It took us a week on the train, and I think we got there either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day in Arlington, VA. I was there until the fourth of January and that is when I left and came back to Evansville on the fifth.

Q: You're talking about when you came home from Hawaii. You finished your enlistment and came home.

JB: Oh yes. The war was over so. I could've stayed in but at that time Keith and I were engaged.

Q: Right.

JB: I don't know. Maybe if I hadn't had been, I might have stayed in. I honestly don't know.

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Q: Did you like it?

JB: I enjoyed it being a Marine typist. But of course, I don't think they needed as many after peace was declared as they did during the war see for the Fleet Marine Force offices.

KB: What did you come back on?

JB: What Honey?

KB: What did you come back on?

JB: A hospital ship.

KB: Oh.

JB: It was either The Hope or The Rescue, I don't remember which one.

KB: I came back on the battleship Maryland.

JB: But it was a hospital ship that we came home on.

Q: So, tell me a little more about what life was like in Pearl Harbor. Were you able to get out and around -

JB: Oh yes!

Q: - or were you kind of stuck on base?

JB: Well no you had to go to work, which you took the bus. You were off at 5:00 and then you had chow. After I met Keith, the guys came over and you didn't hardly get a Liberty Pass during the week because they had to be gone by 10:00. They didn't get there until after chow, and that was like 7:00, 6:30, wasn't it?

KB: Yeah, something like that. I never had a Liberty Pass until I got to Hilo.

JB: See, the fellows came over and we had just a big outdoor community and everyone just sat around and talked. That's what you'd do. Now weekends, I'd get a Liberty Pass for Saturday maybe, or I never did stay overnight in Honolulu. Or if some of us girls would go in on Saturday, we'd go shopping and snoop around to different places that we knew we could go see. Or we'd go on Sunday, like after I met Keith, and go to church, have dinner and spend the afternoon back at the base, but we always had to be back, and the guys had to be gone by 10:00.

Q: So, tell me about your memories of how you met Keith.

JB: Well this friend was dating another girl typist in the office and he told me one time, he said, "I have a friend I'd like to bring over to see you." I said, "Fine." So, he brought Keith over and we sat around in our area - it was all outdoors with a community building you could sit in, but it was all outside. Guys could get a beer, or I don't remember what. Of course, we just talked, played cards, and sat around. Then by 10:00 we had to be gone. We had a Marine guard on the gate to our compound. He asked if he could come back the next night and I said, "sure that would be fine." Then he asked if he could come by again and from then on, he just kept coming over every night.

KB: Story of my life.

Q: What were your early impressions of Keith? I mean, he kind of indicated it was love at first sight when he met you, what did you think of him when you first met him?

JB: I'm going to be honest about it -

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Q: I want you to!

JB: I told him after about the third night he came over I was hoping he would keep coming over every night! Really.

Q: [laughter]

JB: But Daddy, remember the week you got sunburnt and I didn't see you for a week?

KB: Oh god.

JB: Remember that? And you were in just misery?

KB: We went up to the beach, we were out with another couple, and anyway we went to the beach and we bought a thing of beer. We went to the beach and we didn't any a cooler or ice -

Q: Was that with Harry and Ros we were with?

KB: Yeah. He had some transportation that he got from somewhere, he got a Jeep. We got on the beach and we didn't have any way to cool it, so I dug a hole in the sand. It's cooler down there. I put that case of beer and covered it up with the sand. I guess it's still there, we never did find it.

Q: [laughter]. You buried the beer and forgot where you put it!

JB: We went back to get a drink and it wasn't there!

KB: She'd be laying down and I wanted to kiss her, and I'd put my hands over there to protect her from the sun, and boy I got a sunburn.

JB: He was in the dispensary for a week with a sunburn!

KB: No, I was in my tent.

JB: In your tent, huh?

KB: Anyway, I got a hell of a sunburn. I lived in my under-drawers for about a week in the tent.

JB: Daryl had come over -

KB: One other guy plastered me with, I forget what it was, but he plastered me with this...

Q: The white lotion, yeah. How did you find out...?

JB: I think it was Daryl that came over and told me that you were sunburnt.

Q: ...because you would've been wondering, where is Keith?

KB: I sent word over to her.

JB: I know you did. I forget who it was who told me. Somebody told me anyhow about his sunburn.

KB: I sent word that said, "don't sit under the apple tree with anybody other than me."

Q: [laughter] It was a long week for you.

KB: I didn't tell you this, but I came back on the battleship Maryland.

Q: Yeah, I know we hadn't quite got to the end of your war because I kind of want to get your meeting story today.

JB: Well that's what it was. I don't remember the exact day that we met but I got there in March. I'd say maybe in May or something like that Daryl came over, I really don't remember.

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KB: We never did... She is going to tell you a true story and I'm going to tell you a lie, but I want you to act like my version is right. She is going to tell you that I never proposed to her.

JB: He didn't.

KB: And I didn't because we just understood, we didn't have to talk, we just understood that we were going to get married.

JB: More or less.

KB: We did! No kidding. We understood that this is it. I don't ever remember telling you that and I don't ever remember you telling me that.

Q: So, you guys dated that time you were in Hawaii?

JB: Yes.

KB: Well we just knew it.

JB: After we met.

Q: But you weren't married in Hawaii, were you?

JB: Oh no, no, no, no, no.

KB: I had never asked her or anything. I called or sent a thing back to my mother if she asked if she'd buy Jean an engagement ring. So, it happens that my mother and sister-in-law bought that engagement ring and I never had to ask or anything.

JB: They bought that in Hillsdale, Michigan and mailed it to me because they thought he'd be on his way home.

KB: You have to realize how the times were.

Q: So, he went home before you?

JB: Oh yes. He went home the first of November.

Q: When did you go home?

JB: In December.

KB: You got to realize that nobody had any money then. So, when my mother and my sister-in-law bought that engagement ring, I think she paid about \$85 for it.

JB: I saw a letter from your mother, after she moved in with us, to you that said \$82.50 for this in Hillsdale, Michigan.

KB: The thing about it was, I was only making \$52 a month. That was a month and a half's pay.

Q: Yeah, that is a big investment. So, you didn't get the ring until you got back?

JB: No, I got the ring in September after peace was declared. He was over one night and before he left, he said, "Now, I wrote home to my mother to buy you an engagement ring." I said, "Oh..." He said, "Now yes, you know I got enough points to go home. Now I'm having it mailed to you. If I'm still here, don't you open it." So, we go on up and sit with our friends. Here on October 27th, I get this package from a jewelry store in Hillsdale, Michigan. Well he was still here so far as I knew, so this time I did not go down this time to the fence, the fellows had to stand across the dirt road in front of our compound. They had to stand on the dirt road and the gals went down and we got them because the Marine guard wouldn't

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let them in. Well, this time I sent someone else down to go get Keith while I was up in our little community room at the time. So, we had the ring, and I said, "This came today." So, he opened it up and he showed it to me, and I went "Ohhhh," and then he said, "Here," and shoved me the ring in the box and said, "let's go get a beer."

Q: [laughter]

JB: That was my proposal.

Q: That was your proposal?!

JB: I kid you not. He was so shook up.

KB: I always tell her that's a lie. What I always tell her is, I still have that white rock compounded in my knees like this.

JB: [laughter] Yeah!

Q: Yeah, I can see you on your knees, arm stretched, I don't think so!

JB: That was October 27, and a week later he was on his way home.

KB: I was gone.

Q: And you headed back in December.

JB: December.

Q: How did you guys...he went home to Michigan and you went home to Evansville.

JB: Yes.

KB: Yes.

Q: What happened? You obviously both ended up here.

KB: Did I come down to see you first or did you come down to see me?

JB: I came up in March.

KB: I don't remember.

JB: I got my job back as secretary at Mechanic Arts and in March I took a week off and went to Michigan to visit him and his folks.

KB: I went back to work, and the guy wouldn't put me back to work. Because, like I said, I was a little thing and he wouldn't put me back to work like he was supposed to, because his nephew – it was a small place with only ten or twelve people – and if he put me back to work, he'd have to lay his nephew off.

Q: Right. So, you went to visit him, but were you employed somewhere else? Were you kind of looking for something to do?

KB: No, I'll tell you what I did. It happened to be trapping season in Michigan and I trapped for a month. I had a trap when I was a kid and I'd trap muskrats.

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March 8, 2014

KB = Keith, JB = Jean

Q: Did you always want to come back to Evansville? I'm trying to figure out... The normal pattern for you is to go and move to where he was instead of him moving here.

JB: That's what we thought it would be. But when he did not get his job back, I thought, "I'm at Mechanic Arts school, I can get him an interview anywhere here in Evansville – or the men that I work with will" – so I asked him if he would be willing to move to Evansville. Well we planned the wedding in July of '46 because as a high school secretary we only worked eleven months and I always had July off. So that is why we planned it for July here in Evansville. So, he said yes, he would come to Evansville then. Here in Evansville at my church, his dad was a Methodist minister and he married us, in our church here in Evansville. His mother and dad, brother and sister-in-law came to the wedding and his best buddy in high school came from Michigan to be best man.

KB: I'll tell you what: I moved down here because number one, they got me my job back because he would've broken the law if he wouldn't have. The lady at the draft bureau called him and asked if he was going to put this veteran back to work. He said no and she said, "Well I'll have a federal marshal out there and lock you up this afternoon."

JB: See that was the law for veterans back then.

Q: See I thought that law didn't come around until much later.

KB: Oh no. So, I went back up there you know, but at that time I didn't want to work for the SOB anyway.

JB: Right, yeah. So, when she asked if you wanted to come to Evansville, you didn't really have a problem with that?

KB: Oh no. I didn't really have anything up there to keep me.

JB: Except your folks and they understood.

Q: And you know we did have a slight depression after World War II, I mean Truman tried to stem it off as much as he could.

JB: He didn't have a job when we married, but then the industrial coordinator sent him for interviews at Servel and a month after we married, he went to work working at Bursarus.

KB: He got me an interview at Servel and Bursarus. Servel would've hired me to run their automatic screw machine.

Q: So why did you go with Busarus - ?

KB: I'll tell you why. They had the biggest lathe that I've ever seen. It was brand new. The employment manager told me that this is going to be my machine.

Q: And you wanted to work the big lathe.

KB: I and I had to run to that big machine if I had the chance because I never had seen a lathe that big.

Q: Right, right, that makes sense.

KB: We got a letter from Busarus and one from Servel and both of them said to come out and go to work.

Interview with Keith Benedict and Jean Benedict

Interviewer: Jennifer Greene

March 8, 2014

KB = Keith, JB = Jean

Q: Was the pay about the same at both of them?

KB: Oh, I don't know.

Q: That wasn't your motivator was it?

KB: That wasn't my primary cause for -

Q: So, after you guys got married, I mean it took about a month before he was employed full time. Where did you guys live?

JB: With my folks.

KB: Yeah.

JB: We lived with my folks until May of 1951 until we built this house.

Q: Oh okay, alright.

JB: My daughter was born she was fifteen months old when we moved into this house and we lived with my folks all that time right across the street.

Q: Right, see I knew your folks house was right across the street.

JB: I was an only child, see.

KB: See what happened is, when I got out of the Marine Corps, I didn't have nothing. I didn't have a car, I didn't have a job, I didn't have any clothes, I was just pure white trash. That's all. You know what, her mom and dad just took me in. They decided that I was going to be all right for their daughter.

Q: Yeah well, they were right.

JB: Daddy even let us have the car for a two-week honeymoon.

KB: I mean they could tell I wasn't a hippie or anything.

Q: Where did you go on your honeymoon?

JB: Back up to Michigan.

Q: Back up to Michigan.

KB: Her dad loaned me his car.

Q: Yeah that's what she just said.

KB: Oh yeah.

JB: Yeah. Everything worked out fine. We had our daughter while we were living there.

KB: The first thing we did was buy this lot right here, it was empty.

JB: Well you bought a car and all, too.

KB: Huh?

JB: You bought a car right as soon as you could afford it.

KB: Yeah. It took me three years to buy this lot. \$25 a month and they wanted \$350 for the lot.

Interview with Keith Benedict and Jean Benedict

Interviewer: Jennifer Greene

March 8, 2014

KB = Keith, JB = Jean

Q: Yeah.

JB: And I worked until I was four or five months pregnant with Judy and then I quit.

Q: Then you quit.

KB: We paid for this and put a little money in the bank and built this house and have been in it ever since.

Q: That is fabulous.

KB: I could've bought the one next door, of course I could've bought the lot next door at the time, but we didn't have the money.

JB: The lot on the corner. I'm glad we bought this one because I didn't want to be on the corner.

Q: We are going to stop there for today. I want to pick up on the family life once you guys move in here once I come back next weekend.

JB: Did you know that our Keith was sixty years old yesterday?

Q: Was it his birthday yesterday? No, I did not! Of course, I barely remember my own kid's birthdays! I'll have to call him and wish him a happy birthday.