

PRESERVING OUR HISTORY: ROTARY CLUB OF GREENSBORO

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Bynum Hunter

INTERVIEWER: Kathelene Smith

DATE: April 27, 2009

KS: Hi. My name is Kathelene Smith, and it's April 27, 2009. I'm at the home of Mr. Bynum Hunter, and we are here for the Preserving our History: Rotary Club of Greensboro oral history project. Good morning, Mr. Hunter, how are you?

BH: I'm fine. Thank you.

KS: Well, great. Thank you for having me into your home.

BH: Well, I'm glad that you are here.

KS: Please tell me when and where you were born.

BH: Well, I was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, on June 13, 1925.

KS: And tell me about your home life and your family growing up.

BH: Well, I was born at 900 Carolina Street, which is on the corner of Hendrix and Carolina right next to Fisher Park. Everybody got born at home in those days. And one sort of little side light, one of my neighbors who lived down the street was a guy named Dick Douglas, Robert Dick Douglas, who's still living. He was fourteen at the time, and he came up the street and saw me the day I was born.

KS: Really?

BH: Yes.

KS: And y'all still know each other?

BH: Oh, yes. So, he tells me this. I don't have any recollection.

KS: That's great. So, what did your parents do?

BH: Well, my father was an executive with what became Cone Mills. It was five separate mills at the time. And my mother was born and raised in Greensboro –

and she went to Greensboro College, and she was a school teacher, and subsequently a mother and a housewife. I had two older brothers.

KS: You had two older brothers. You were the baby of the family?

BH: That's what they said.

KS: Well, what things did you enjoy doing in Greensboro growing up?

BH: Playing football in Fisher Park with – we had a lot of kids about my age who lived right around there – really was an amazing number of kids. We played football mostly in the fall and even into the winter, and we played baseball in the summer. I enjoyed the sports we did. We sort of picked up our own game and ran our own show.

KS: Now, at that time, I guess everybody was still going to downtown Greensboro to shop and to eat.

BH: Well, I don't like shopping, and I may have gone down there, but only to see parades and when I had to go to the doctor or something like that.

KS: Did they have the Christmas Parade then?

BH: Oh, yes.

KS: Because I've heard about that. Most people have commented on remembering the Christmas Parade being a big deal.

BH: Oh, yeah, I've gone to parades, yeah. And they used to ride – Elm Street was a block behind us, and they used to come all the way down there.

KS: So, where did you go to high school?

BH: I went off to prep school.

KS: Did you go to prep school?

BH: Yes.

KS: Where did you go?

BH: Woodbury Forest.

KS: Did you?

BH: Yes.

KS: I know several people that went to Woodbury. That's a wonderful school.

BH: But I attended – the first two grades I went to Simpson Street School – and only two grades there. And, then, I went to Aycock third through the sixth grades. Then I went to Central Virginia High School. And then, I went off to Woodbury. I didn't go to Greensboro Senior High School. My dad sent me to prep school.

KS: And what were your favorite subjects in school?

BH: Well, I liked math and I liked physics – I thought that was interesting. I liked history.

KS: Any other memories of Woodbury?

BH: Oh, yes, I got lots of memories.

KS: What were your favorite things to do at school?

BH: Well, I liked athletics a lot, and I played on the football team – and I was second string. I always played wingback. We ran a single wing. And I ran on the track team. I was captain of the track team my last year. I was on the football team. I was the smallest guy on the team. And we were undefeated my last two years. Not that I had anything to do with that. But I enjoyed it. I really did. And I went in the Navy. Before I left Woodbury I was sworn in the Navy.

KS: Before you left?

BH: Yes, but they let me stay. Two weeks after I got out of Woodbury I was on active duty. But they sent me to Chapel Hill – and the Navy V-12 program.

KS: Now, tell me a little bit about that.

BH: Well, that was a program – see, the war was on us. It was 1943. I went into what was called the Navy V-5 program initially which was – I wanted to be a Naval aviator. And I went up to Washington and took all these tests when I was still in prep school. And I was sworn in in Washington – before I left prep school I was sworn in but not – wouldn't be called until July 1.

KS: Is that when you were eighteen?

BH: I was seventeen when I was sworn in.

KS: They swore you in at seventeen?

BH: Yes.

KS: Wow.

BH: But my birthday was June 13, and this was back in April – when I was sworn in before June 13. Then I went on active duty July 1, but they sent me to the Navy V-12 in Chapel Hill.

KS: Was that an officer's training camp, too, or how did that work?

BH: It was supposed to be, ultimately. They had quite a number of guys there. The whole school became military.

KS: Really.

BH: They had a pre-flight school at Chapel Hill, too.

KS: Did it count as college and also military?

BH: We took college courses. We took the same courses that they took at the Naval Academy. There was – actually what it was, it used the same books, same courses, everything they did at the Naval Academy. You were supposed to go so many months and whatnot, and you got commissioned. And they sent you out to a ship or whatever.

KS: Did you go overseas?

BH: Yes, but actually, the war ended before I got out of there. It ended just as I left to go to – I was sent to the *USS Iowa* battleship in the Pacific.

KS: So, you did go into the – you did go even though the war was over?

BH: Yeah, the war ended just as I got there. They heard I was coming – between me and the A-bomb! [Laughs]

KS: So, what were you involved in on the *Iowa*? What was it like post-war?

BH: I was – you've got to understand. There were four *Iowa* class battleships. They are very big battleships. They are the biggest we had. And I was an ensign on there. And that's pretty dad gum low on a battleship. And we had the fifth fleet flag on there, which it means it was a commandant for the whole Pacific fleet. Admiral Forrest Sherman was on board. We had more brass than you could shake a stick at on that ship.

KS: What were you doing?

BH: We weren't doing much of anything except floating around the Pacific. By this time I was headed for Japan. The war had ended when I went out to the Pacific. The war had ended, and I was in Japan. And I got left – I got on another ship and went to Hawaii and was there. And I must say the Hawaiian Islands were run by the University of North Carolina.

KS: Really?

BH: Unbelievable. There was so many guys that I'd known at Chapel Hill in key positions. For example, in one of the most key positions was a friend of mine from Greensboro who ran the motor pool. Well, I was probably the lowest ensign in the US Navy. And I had a Jeep, and admirals couldn't get on. And I got left there for a little over a month. And, then, there were so many Carolina guys that I'd known it was unbelievable. And a good friend of mine from Greensboro named Mooney Davis ran the crash boats at Kaneohe Bay. And Otis Holland ran the motor pool. He was from Greensboro. And all these guys from Chapel Hill were there.

KS: Have you been back since?

BH: Yes, several times.

KS: I bet it's changed quite a bit.

BH: Oh, of course. Yes.

KS: A bunch of young Carolina boys in Hawaii – I bet y'all had some fun.

BH: They could not believe the number of guys from Chapel Hill that were there. And they all had key positions like motor pool. And Mooney ran the crash boats at Kaneohe. That's where I first tried to water ski. Actually, we were aquaplaning, not water skiing. We were aquaplaning.

KS: Amazing.

BH: And these guys knew all the Red Cross girls.

KS: So, you were there about a little over a month, you said?

BH: Yes. And I finally got on the *Iowa*. And we were off in Southern California mostly off the coast there. The *Iowa* had returned, since I didn't get to make it when it was in Japan.

KS: So, what did y'all do then? Did y'all stay in California for awhile?

BH: Oh, I was on the *Iowa* for about six months just floating around the Pacific in Southern California. Well, we did. We went up to Seattle, Washington. Actually, I got off the *Iowa* in Seattle.

KS: And you were still in the Navy, though?

BH: Oh, yes, yes. Went to Norfolk to get out of the Navy. Ran into all these guys from Chapel Hill up in Norfolk when I got there.

KS: They're everywhere!

BH: In Virginia Beach, and I didn't come home for another week. Hadn't been home in quite awhile. My mother was getting upset.

KS: I could imagine. So then, you got out of the Navy, and did you go back to school?

BH: I went to law school. I got out on the G.I. bill. So, I went to Chapel Hill to law school, and stayed there three years. And, then, I was – Mr. Junior Smith, whom I had known all of my life, not real well, but his son and I roomed together. And he called me one day and asked me to come talk to him. So, I did. He offered me a job.

KS: And you were there the whole time, where you spent your career?

BH: Yes, yes.

KS: That's great! Let's see – tell me, were you married early on in Greensboro? Did you marry right away?

BH: No, no, no. I didn't get married for quite awhile.

KS: So, tell me about your spouse and your children.

BH: Well, I had three spouses. I'm trying to think when I first got married, what year it was. But I waited quite awhile before I got married. Anyway, I think it was in the '50s, best I can recall.

KS: And do you have children?

BH: Three children.

KS: Three children?

BH: Yes.

KS: Great.

BH: Two by my first wife. And then, my second – we didn't have any. She had children by a previous marriage. And then, Bonnie and I were married in – can't remember the year.

KS: So, what made you choose a law career?

BH: Well, I needed something to do, and I had all this G.I. Bill. So, I decided to go to law school. And in fact, everybody in there was a veteran.

KS: Really?

BH: Yes. And I was about the youngest guy in law school. All these guys were older than I was.

KS: So, what kind of law did you go into?

BH: Well, I didn't plan to go into any particular kind of law. I just started practicing law, and I did mostly civil litigation. I liked trying lawsuits. I didn't like criminal work much. But I tried a lot of civil cases.

KS: Have you seen the law change much since you've been –

BH: Oh, yes, you see a lot of changes. Obviously, the personnel. When we first started practicing law we just went to court and tried the case. You didn't worry about all this detailed preparation. Whereas, gradually we got into more and more paperwork and more and more preparation. Now today before you try a lawsuit, there's so much preparation that it's beyond belief. There is so much paperwork you have to do all that.

KS: I was a paralegal for awhile in New Orleans when I lived down there.

BH: You know –

KS: I helped y'all with that. [Laughs]

BH: Yes.

KS: So, I imagine there was a big difference between smaller local firms that now are kind of "super firms."

BH: Yes, there were twenty-six lawyers in Greensboro when I first started practicing law, and I don't know how many there are now, probably 2,600. But – and before you ever try a case these days you've got so much paperwork it's beyond belief. We never worried about paperwork. We went over and tried the case, bam!

KS: For better or for worse.

BH: Yes. It was a lot more fun then.

KS: Really – people say that.

BH: I was trying cases right and left all the time. I was in court all the time. You can't do that anymore. You've got so many more lawyers now. My God, they're all over the place.

KS: Any kind of significant things in your law career that you would like to talk about?

BH: Well, I was – Junius Scales, who was born and raised in Greensboro, became a Communist. And his case – he was tried belonging to an organization which advocated the overthrow of the government of the United States by force and violence, which is what was known as the Smith Act. And I was working as, primarily, as mostly running errands and everything. And one of my senior partners, McNeill Smith was associated with Telford Taylor, who was defending Junius. And Telford had been the chief prosecutor at the Nuremburg War Crimes trial.

KS: Wow!

BH: After Justice Jackson. And Telford and McNeill and Rip Bernhard, another local lawyer, and I were doing the small work one night. And Scales had been tried once before. He was defended by a Communist lawyer, and he was convicted and sentenced to six years. Scales was born and raised in Greensboro. His grandfather had been governor of North Carolina.

KS: Really?

BH: Yes. And Scales was a very empathetic guy, nice guy. He was no bomb thrower or anything like that. He was very empathetic. And he thought Communism was the way to go. He was really – I'd say he was misguided. But there were some bad people in the Communist Party. But he wasn't one of them. And I think the theory behind the government prosecuting him – well, I should back up. He was the chief – he became the head of the Communist Party in this area in North Carolina. And I think the theory of the government was that you had so many veterans in North Carolina that it would be easier to try him here. They were right about that. You got so many – there were so many, many veterans in North Carolina, a higher percentage than about anywhere, so I was told. I don't know that as a fact, but that's what I was told.

KS: Were there other Communists tried about the same time also?

BH: Yes, there were some others.

KS: He was just a high profile because of who his people were?

BH: Well, that partly. But because he became head of the Communist Party. He was certainly no bomb thrower. He was about as peace loving a guy as you ever saw. But he was very empathetic. He had grown up during the Great Depression. And he'd seen soup lines and all that kind of thing. And I think that's what swayed him to going into the Communist Party. And I got to know him pretty well. He was a very nice guy, really was. But he was not anybody that advocated force and violence. He was just the opposite.

KS: Was he convicted on appeal?

BH: He was convicted. And his appeal was upheld. It went to the Supreme Court twice. See, he had been tried once before. And went to the Supreme Court. And they sent it back for a new trial. That's when he got new lawyers, and that's when Telford Taylor and McNeill Smith got into the case. Telford Taylor, who was his primary lawyer, as I said, Telford had been the chief prosecutor at Nuremberg War Crimes trials after Justice Jackson. He retained McNeill and Rip Bernhard and I were quite young lawyers. And we ran errands, so to speak, and went through tons of paper, most of which meant absolutely nothing. I must say some of it was just absolutely absurd.

KS: Really?

BH: All this was quote, "subversive." It wasn't any more subversive than that book right there – I'm pointing to a book.

KS: It was just the time?

BH: I think it was. And, as I say, one reason I know, not just I know, so did everybody else, that they wanted to try it in North Carolina, you had such a high percentage of veterans, and they were not sympathetic to a Communist. Nor was I. None of us were.

KS: So, they've got a patriotic jury pool?

BH: Yes. Yes. And I can understand why they were doing it. But Scales was anything but a bomb thrower. As I said, his grandfather had been governor of North Carolina. He had come from a very well-to-do family which fell upon hard times during the Great Depression. He was a very empathetic guy. And he thought Communism was the way to go. But he was not anybody that advocated overthrowing anything by force and violence.

KS: That was probably an exciting case for you to work on early on, though?

- BH: Yes, I ran a lot of errands. The government would testify about all these documents that they gave. Well, all the libraries at Duke [University], Carolina [the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill], Wake Forest [University], Davidson [College], all of them had the same documents right there. It was really – some of it was ridiculous in my opinion.
- KS: Now, was Communism something that you thought the people of Greensboro were worried about at that time, or was it –
- BH: Everybody was worried about Communism. I had just gotten back from the Korean War. I'd been over in the Yellow Sea on the west coast of Korea shooting rockets into North Korea. And I wasn't any – I didn't like Communism at all. I thought it was terrible.
- KS: We've just – at UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro], we have just heard that people were concerned on the campus.
- BH: Sure. Well, good Lord, when I went to Chapel Hill there were Communists all over the place. I mean a fairly good number of Communists. We had a Communist in our law class. We used to kid him, we said, "Show us your card." You know, we all got along fine. But, yes, there were some bad guys. But most of them were not – most of them, at least in this country that I encountered – were not any grave threats by any kind of quote, "force and violence."
- KS: Well, after that exciting trial, did anything else catch your fancy as well after that? Because that was an exciting one to start out with.
- BH: Well, as I say, my function was mainly running errands and going through documents, most of which was a waste of time. Oh well, I had a lot of cases that I enjoyed. But they were more on the technical side: products liability, even got involved in a couple of patent cases, which was very convoluted but interesting. I got involved in a lot of different cases. I didn't do much criminal work, very little.
- KS: Now, tell me about being involved in the community of Greensboro. Were you active in the community?
- BH: Well, I voted all the time.
- KS: Well, I know you – were you involved in politics?
- BH: I never got actively involved in politics. Although I'm a registered Democrat, I – in national politics my tendency was to support the Republicans. They made more sense to me. As I say, I'm rather conservative. But in local elections I vote all over the place. I just vote for whoever I think is the best candidate.

KS: Were you involved in any specific organizations as far as I know some people were involved in the Boy Scouts, or that kind of thing.

BH: Well, I was a Boy Scout. I was not very active, but I was a Boy Scout for several years.

KS: Well, you were probably so busy with the law firm you probably didn't have a whole lot of time to do –

BH: I wasn't involved in Boy Scouts when I was in law school. That was much younger in Boy Scouts.

KS: I just didn't know if you were involved in it as an adult?

BH: No, I really wasn't. I really wasn't. I think one of my more interesting clients – I was the first lawyer for the Atlantic Coast Conference. I had to represent them for a number of years, and that was a lot of fun. For me it was. And on the other hand I tried a lot of lawsuits, mostly civil litigation. As I say, I did not care for the criminal end of the thing.

KS: Well, how have you seen Greensboro change?

BH: Well, obviously, it's grown. As I say, I was born and raised here. I've seen it grow substantially. But I think it's a very nice town.

KS: Now, you've lived in Greensboro during occurrences such as the sit-ins, and the Nazi-Klan Shootout.

BH: Yes, and the Great Depression.

KS: What were all those like?

BH: I think the thing that impressed me most when I was a little boy was when the Depression came along. And I can remember people coming to our door begging almost every night. We didn't have air conditioning. We left everything open. And we had a regular retinue of people who would come. And my dad would feed them all.

KS: That's great.

BH: You know, it was – we saw a lot of people. That really impressed me. You saw a lot of people that just were on the streets. And I mean on the streets. I lived right off Fisher Park. They would sleep down at Fisher Park. Not a large number of them. But they would be five or six every night sleeping down there. And that sort of stays with you.

KS: Yes, it does.

BH: Well, I got to know some of these guys. They'd come to the house all the time. Yes, it was an interesting time. We had a lot of kids in our neighborhood about my age. So, we had a good time.

KS: Now do you recall, were you living here during the sit-ins and some of the times of racial tension also?

BH: Yes. Yes. Yes, it was – the sit-ins got more play than about anything it seems to me.

KS: I know at UNCG we talk about it because we have girls that went down there. And it was kind of, you know, in a little dangerous situation. And they had their little coats on. So, it's something that we talk about at UNCG.

BH: I never considered it dangerous. I never saw anything that was dangerous. I heard them, you know, marching in the streets occasionally.

KS: Well, the girls were actually put in danger by, not the people who were sitting in, but the people – they went in to support them. But some of the people surrounding them weren't too thrilled about that. It sounds like it was an interesting time.

BH: Well, it was. I'd been in Woolworth's so many times, you know, I knew exactly where they were and all that. I didn't think it was all that big a deal at the time. And I'm quite surprised that it is has merged into such a cause to celebrate, whatever you call it. Because I didn't think it was all that big a deal. I mean I didn't blame those black guys for wanting to get served. I mean, why shouldn't they serve them?

KS: Right. It seems unbelievable now.

BH: It does. It does. What's amazed me is all the publicity and hullabaloo about it that's emerged over the years. Because at the time I didn't think it was all that big a deal.

KS: Now, I know that your wife has been an ambassador. When she went to Finland, did you go also?

BH: I did.

KS: I bet that was fascinating.

BH: Yes. I had been to Finland once in the Navy – before I was over there. And, anyway, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I had a great time.

KS: How wonderful! What a great experience!

BH: Yes, it was fun.

KS: And she worked with the Red Cross heavily.

BH: Yes, but when she went to Finland, I went all over the place. My two daughters by a previous marriage both lived in Europe at the time. And one lived in London. The other one lived in Switzerland. So, I enjoyed visiting them. And while I was over in Finland, I went to twenty-six different countries.

KS: Really?

BH: Yes, including China.

KS: Oh, great!

BH: We became good friends with the Chinese ambassador, believe it or not. Heck of a nice guy. And –

KS: Now, did your wife have time to travel, too, or were you kind of on your own with your children?

BH: When he went back to China, he invited us to come visit him, and we did. And Bynum, Jr., and Bonnie and I and her mother went too. We went to China. They treated us royally in Beijing.

KS: Wow! Now, how old was your son, then?

BH: Well, he was working over there.

KS: So, he was older?

BH: Yes, he was – I can't remember.

KS: All your children were in Europe?

BH: Yes.

KS: That is great.

BH: Yes. My daughter in Switzerland worked for the Olympics for many years. I go skiing in Switzerland every year.

KS: That's wonderful. Does your daughter still live in Europe?

BH: No, well, one of them does. One lives in London. But the other has moved back. She lives down in Southern Pines now.

KS: So, besides China, your experience in China, what were some of your other memories of being in Finland?

BH: Oh, good Lord, we went all over Europe. We visited other embassies in various countries, at least – I traveled a lot.

KS: Did you have any favorites?

BH: Well, I enjoyed most everything I must say. I really did. I had a good time. And, you know, I'd sort of semi-retired from the practice of law. But I had a great time in Finland. One thing, practically everybody in Finland speaks English, and it's probably the best-educated country on earth – and I really had a good time there. Thoroughly enjoyed it. I joined the Rotary Club. I was a Rotarian here, and I joined a Rotary Club over there – the English-speaking Rotary Club. They had more Rotary Clubs in Helsinki than any place I've ever heard of. But I belonged to the English-speaking one. And I must say, we had the best programs I ever heard. We'd have some guy from all over the world, from different places in the world, talking every week. And it was very interesting.

KS: So, tell me about when you joined the Rotary Club. You joined it here first?

BH: Yes. My dad had been a charter member of the local Greensboro Rotary Club. So, when I came along many, many years ago, I got invited sort of as a legacy so to speak.

KS: So, what year was that?

BH: Oh, Lord, that was – I can't even remember. But it was a long time ago.

KS: So, you were in the Rotary Club here, and –

BH: Greensboro Rotary. We've got so many Rotary Clubs. They're all over the place. The Greensboro Rotary Club is the oldest one. But there are many, many Rotary Clubs in Greensboro.

KS: What a great idea to affiliate in Finland.

BH: Oh, yes. Well, these guys – when I got over there – see, everybody, as I said, everybody in Finland practically speaks English. And some of these guys in the embassy were aware that I was a Rotarian. They said, "You ought to join this English-speaking one," and I did. We really had a good time, a lot of fun.

KS: Was it sad to have to come back?

BH: Well, you want to know the truth? It was in many ways, yes.

KS: I bet so.

BH: Yes, I just had a heck of a good time.

KS: That's wonderful. So, y'all came back to Greensboro. Did you go back up in Washington a lot during that time?

BH: Well, we have a house in Washington.

KS: Do you?

BH: Yes. Actually, it's in Georgetown.

KS: Georgetown is lovely.

BH: So, John Kerry lives one house over. I've never laid eyes on him. We share the same driveway.

KS: Really, and you've never seen him?

BH: I never have seen him. But I don't go up there all that much. But I go up there a fair amount.

KS: I bet you have been to some wonderful events in Washington. What are some of your favorite things that you've done in D.C.?

BH: Well, Kennedy Center events. Bonnie is on the board of the Kennedy Center now, so she goes gets invited to a lot of little events. And, occasionally, I get taken along.

KS: What have been some of your favorite ones? Who have you met?

BH: Oh, gosh, I don't know. I don't exactly know who a lot of these people are, although I know they are well-known and famous. I don't pay much attention to who they are.

KS: But the parties are wonderful?

BH: Yes, I've enjoyed some of those parties a lot.

KS: I really fell in love with Washington, D.C., when I moved up here. It's just a wonderful city.

BH: When I was in the Navy I was stationed in Washington. I had to go to gunnery school up there. Gunnery officer's ordinance school up there outside -- it was in Anacostia. But that was many years ago. And back when I was in prep school I ran in track meets in Washington. Then when I was a small boy I can remember my first trip to Washington. I was about nine years old. Main thing I remember was the amusement park and riding the roller coaster.

KS: Was there an amusement park in Washington, D.C.?

BH: Outside Washington.

KS: Is it still there?

BH: Yes, I've got a picture of me and my son. I went back over there when we were up there several years ago. I've got a picture of him -- he and I riding the roller coaster.

KS: Is it like Busch Gardens? Was it Busch Gardens?

BH: What is the name of it? I ought to know it.

KS: In Williamsburg, Busch Gardens?

BH: No, it's just outside Washington in Maryland. Oh, God, I can't think of the name of it.

KS: So, your family they did travel up to Washington when you were young, I guess to see the sights?

BH: Oh, yes, my folks took me to Washington when I was a little boy.

KS: To Williamsburg, I guess.

BH: That's when I rode the roller coaster.

KS: Did you go to Williamsburg?

BH: Yes. Well, you see, I was in the Navy for a long time. I went all over the world. So, that was a lot of fun, too.

KS: Any favorite places that you went?

BH: Well, I always -- I've always liked London. I was a big Churchill fan. I used to listen to him as a little boy on the radio back during the war, back before we got in the war actually. And I used to listen to him broadcast. That was very

interesting. Anyway, when I go to London, I've probably gone to Churchill's war rooms where he lived during the Blitz and everything.

KS: Those are wonderful. I tell you what I've been impressed by, too, is their wonderful Imperial War Museum – that's stunning.

BH: It is. Yes, I enjoyed going to those museums.

KS: Me, too. Have you been to the one outside – I know there is one outside – the airfield.

BH: I've been to that air museum. I've sent contributions, not big, you know, just whatnot. I've been to Churchill's war museum – Churchill's place where he stayed underground.

KS: The bunker.

BH: The blitz. I've been there six times.

KS: Really? It's wonderful. And I had – I remember that they said that they built it under, I think what is it, the treasury because it was steel-enforced at the time? And it was the most secure place.

BH: Right.

KS: I'm so glad that was preserved.

BH: There's so much to see and read in there. It's very interesting. It really is. They've got so many museums over there. I tell you, every time I go in those places I see something I never saw before. There's just so much. I don't think you could ever –

KS: It is. It's overwhelming really the amount of things that they have. Now, have you been to the war museum down in New Orleans?

BH: I have. I'm a member of that. I get publications from them periodically.

KS: I don't know if you know the head of our university's archive, Betty Carter, has started a whole collection for women veterans. And we have all kinds of uniforms and artifacts.

BH: Yes, I know about that.

KS: And, so, I guess we kind of feel like we keep up with World War II. But she was actually asked – she was a guest of the Imperial War Museum at some point,

because we leant them some things. She was a guest over there, so. She loves to talk about that. We always talk about that, too.

BH: I probably got something on it in one of those books somewhere.

KS: It's really interesting. And I think someone told me they had a tank museum.

BH: They do. I have not been to the tank museum, but I know about it.

KS: Well, that's great. So, London is kind of a favorite. Now, when y'all were in Finland, did you visit the English Embassy in London? Was that one of the places –

BH: In London? Yes, we went over and visited that. I had been there before to some function.

KS: Really?

BH: Yes. It was fun knowing all the ambassadors in Finland. I really enjoyed getting to know them. As I told you, the Chinese ambassador invited us to Beijing, and that was fun. It really was. They treated us really royally. His name was Lu Xinhua. He later became the governor of Hong Kong.

KS: Do you keep in touch with anybody that you knew back then?

BH: Yes, occasionally we'll get in touch with the – well, I don't know if I mentioned this, but the Chinese military attaché was son of one of the top generals in the Chinese Army. I took him – I took this guy out to play tennis. He's never played tennis before. [Laughs]

KS: How was that?

BH: Well, it was funny. I must say we laughed a lot. He was a nice guy, I must say.

KS: If you go skiing in Switzerland, you still enjoy traveling?

BH: Oh, yes.

KS: You still go to Europe pretty often?

BH: Yes, I like to go see things.

KS: Do you ski here, too?

BH: Yes, I go skiing in Colorado. I've skied all over the United States. I've skied all over the world if you want to know the truth.

KS: So, you like skiing and tennis, those are your favorites?

BH: Well, I'm not a very good tennis player, but I do play a lot of tennis. I play about three times a week.

KS: What other things do you like to do? Any kind of hobbies?

BH: Well, let's see. I can't – I don't know. I don't really have many hobbies.

KS: I used to not ask that, but I've started when people would want to talk about their hobbies.

BH: When I was a small boy I collected stamps.

KS: Do you still?

BH: I don't collect them anymore, but I've still got my stamp collection.

KS: Well, it's nice that you're able to play, you know, still have fun with playing tennis and traveling.

BH: I like golf, too, but I'm terrible at golf. I used to play a lot.

KS: Tell me about your involvement with the Rotary Club of Greensboro.

BH: Well, my dad was one of the charter members many, many years ago. I tell you one of the funniest things I ever remembered in my life was when I was about six years old. My father – my mother and father, we went to a Rotary Club dinner at Old Sedgefield Country Club. And some of the members were sipping a little bootleg liquor since this was back during prohibition. And they called upon one of Greensboro's distinguished citizens to say grace. And he'd had a few pops. So, he stood up. He said, "Now I lay me down to sleep." And I went under the table. I got so tickled. I've never forgotten that. That's my main and most outstanding memory of Rotary Club.

KS: That's a hard one to forget. Since Greensboro is coming into celebrating its 200th Birthday, what do you see in Greensboro's future?

BH: Well, that's a difficult question. I assume that we will continue to grow and I hope in a logical – quite, frankly, the city government in Greensboro has been a zoo, in my opinion. And when I was growing up we had the best city government around here you can imagine. I mean we had – the mayors were very reputable people. I knew a number of them. They were highly respected in the community. And I hate to say it, but integration screwed it up. I'm all for integration. I'm not exactly sure how – exactly what happened, but it sure changed things. I think our city

government tanked. We had the best city – we really did. From what I’ve heard and read, we really had an outstanding city government back when I was a little boy growing up. And it’s been all right. I’m not complaining.

KS: Some of the issues facing Greensboro. We discussed our population growth, economic growth, leadership, race relations, water shortage. Any ideas on how those can be solved?

BH: Yes. Well, I think people – one thing you’ve got to learn to get along with everybody. That’s hardly profound.

KS: Downtown certainly has been revitalized.

BH: In fact, it used to be a lot more active than it is now. Used to have a trolley that ran down the middle of Elm Street all the way down to Cornwallis.

KS: I hate that they took up those trolleys. That’s such a shame.

BH: That was fun riding the trolley. Yes, I remember that well. We used to run a drink stand right up there on Elm Street when I was about eight or nine years old.

KS: Really? How did you do?

BH: We did pretty well. We did darn well. It was back during the Great Depression.

KS: Now, that’s gutsy to run a drink stand during the Great Depression.

BH: Well, we didn’t let that bother us much.

KS: Did you go to the beach when you were growing up?

BH: Sure, yes. We would go to Wrightsville Beach, Virginia Beach. Used to go to Wrightsville more than anything.

KS: Are you a fisherman?

BH: I used to do some fishing. I tell you every time I think of fishing I was out of – this was back when I was 15 or 16, the war had just started. Not us. We were not in it. And I was fishing on a jetty down at Wrightsville Beach with some other kids. And as I say the war had started between Germany and Britain and whatnot. And the Germans had sunk a ship somewhere off the coast. And we were out there fishing and here comes a body floating, and we hauled him out of the water.

KS: You did! How old were you?

BH: Oh, about eight or nine or something.

KS: How traumatic!

BH: Well, he was dead.

KS: Well, that's worse.

BH: We hauled him out and put him on the beach. And went and got a lifeguard.

KS: And he was from that boat?

BH: He was from the ship that had been sunk. I've never forgotten that.

KS: I bet not. That's stunning. Well, so, did y'all – were y'all notified to watch the coast?

BH: Well, you couldn't show – they were very strict on having any lights shining towards the ocean because it can silhouette ships from looking towards shore. So, you had to keep all your lights off at the beach on ocean front. And all of them off. And there were people patrolling – soldiers patrolling the beach, the whole damn length, all night, making sure that no lights were shining out to sea.

KS: You didn't know if there were, I guess, submarines off the coast.

BH: Oh, there were. Hell, yes. Hell, they got a German submarine up in the museum in Washington that was captured off the coast of North Carolina. Not Washington – Chicago. I've been on the thing.

KS: Because it's amazing. Because I know my daddy grew up about that time in New Orleans. And he said they used to watch the Pontchartrain for German subs. And they were there, too. They were all over the coast.

BH: They sure were.

KS: Now, someone told me the other day, and I hadn't realized this, that we had all kinds of camps for the war prisoners in North Carolina.

BH: We did.

KS: Were there any in Greensboro that you know of?

BH: No.

KS: Somebody told me there was one in Winston, which I didn't realize.

BH: Well, if it was, I didn't know about it. Of course, we had the camp out here. I mean, the Overseas Replacement Depot here in Greensboro.

KS: Oh, that's right.

BH: Which was a big military base.

KS: So, I've seen pictures of that. Did y'all have dances there, too?

BH: Well, I was – well, I went in the Navy when I was 17. And, as I say, I went through V-12 ?

KS: And, then, you were brought over?

BH: Yes. Anyway, a lot of soldiers in Greensboro.

KS: Do you have any kind of contact with your unit or your veterans?

BH: Most of them are gone. I did for quite awhile, yes. I still know two or three of them. But it's – well, I got recalled during the Korean War for two years and I used to keep up with all those guys. And I was on the SS Iowa in World War II, and I knew a lot of guys. I mean all – most of them are no longer around.

KS: So, you were sent to Korea?

BH: Yes, I was off the West Coast. I probably pushed the button that shot more rockets into North Korea than anybody.

KS: Really?

BH: Damn right. Yes, I was the navigator and the executive officer. I took that ship across the Pacific, used nothing but celestial navigation. It was really interesting. I used nothing but celestial navigation. But no, later I went across the Pacific using nothing but celestial navigation. 'Cause nothing else worked, literally. When I was in they had some called Larand. And if it ever worked, I never saw it.

KS: That's amazing. So, you were recalled into service, but you served two years, or did you serve longer than that, or were you just in Korea for two years?

BH: No, I served two years.

KS: Two years was your time.

BH: They told you, "We're recalling you for two years."

KS: I bet your experience – well, you were so young in World War II.

BH: Well, I was seventeen when I went in. I was sworn in when I was seventeen.

KS: So, you were in Korea, how old were you in Korea?

BH: I was about twenty-two. Let's see. No, I was about twenty-four.

KS: That's still really young.

BH: Yes. I was the second in command on that ship. We could outshoot any conventional ship on earth. These ships were designed for an invasion of Japan. But they never were used. The war ended before they – before we tried to invade Japan.

KS: Now, did y'all go back there when you were in Europe, when y'all were in Finland, did you go, was Korea one of the places that y'all went?

BH: Well, I didn't go back there. I didn't – I haven't put my foot on some grounds in Korea during the Korean War, but I've never been back. I've never been back. I probably shot more damn rockets in there than anybody. That's North Korea. Up above the 38th Parallel.

KS: Well, is there anything else that you want to talk about that we have missed? I feel like there is. I don't know what –

BH: Well, I'll tell you a story. I may have told you. I can't remember. I repeat myself sometimes. One of my friends, it was Carsons, was captured by the Germans.

KS: No, you didn't tell me that.

BH: Well, he – we all grew up together. Him and Johnny Carson, they were twins. And I did the dumbest thing. They kept brothers together. And you know what happens. Those guys on that ship.

KS: The Sullivans, yes.

BH: Well, Johnny and him went in on D-Day. And excuse me. I get a little – Johnny got the hell shot out of him [inaudible – emotional] crippled for life. Anyway.

KS: Horrible.

BH: Edward got captured by the Germans. This is funny. And he wrote me a letter from the German POW camp, which I got just after the war ended. He said, "If I can get out of this mess, I'll be willing to live in High Point and go to Duke." See, growing up we didn't like High Point. We didn't like Duke.

KS: That was a real threat. [Laughs]

BH: Exactly.

KS: Did he? Did he come back and go to Duke?

BH: Hell, no. He went to Carolina.

KS: He was under duress when he said that, huh?

BH: Yes.

KS: That is funny. I tell you, I've noticed up here you're either a Carolina fan or a Duke fan.

BH: Well, we were pretty vicious back when we were growing up. We decidedly took sides.

KS: Well, I saw a bumper sticker the other day that said that, "God must be a Tar Heel, because he made the sky –

BH: Carolina blue!

KS: Carolina blue!

BH: But you lived in New Orleans?

KS: I was born and raised in Texas, then I moved over to New Orleans and lived there quite a long – but that's where all my family is from. My daddy's people are from. But my son has been here since he was two, and he's a Carolina boy. I mean he, you know, he'll – I think he'll be here forever.

BH: Well, I told you I went to prep school with all these guys from New Orleans. I had more fun down there than you could shake a stick at. I played – I marched in some parade.

KS: The Mardi Gras?

BH: It was during Mardi Gras and everything. What the hell – I went to Recess Club. And I tell you, this was a breakfast, and everybody got drunk. And then we all walked out in the street, marched down the street. I mean all these grown – most of them pretty old guys walking down the street.

KS: Well, they have to tie them to those floats, because if not – they used to have people thinking and falling off the floats. And, so, now if you look you can see that they kind of seatbelt them in so they won't completely fall over. It's just wild.

BH: I used to know more people in New Orleans than I did in Greensboro. I went to prep school with all these guys. It was amazing the number of guys I'd gone to school with that had lived in New Orleans. A lot of fun down there. Well, the Benjamins, you know, lived here and there. Used to – I went down there one time, and Mr. Benjamin might have been – you might as well bring a couple of friends.

KS: He probably didn't at all, did he?

BH: No, he didn't. So, I brought them. And, then, one of them didn't get in until – he called Mr. Benjamin about 3 o'clock. "Mr. Benjamin, I'm going to let you know I'm not going to get in on time." Woke him up at 3 o'clock in the morning.

KS: I tell you, it is a fun place. My dad is up here now, but he misses it. It's one of those places that he misses. Not sure you want to go back and live there, you know? Hate to say that. But it's a different – talking about a different place. It's a different place now.

BH: Yes. I think I knew more people in New Orleans than I did in Greensboro for awhile.

KS: Really? And you weren't tempted to go down there and live?

BH: Well, I knew I had gone to prep school with all these guys and, then, known them in the Navy. Some of them. So, I used to go down there a fair amount. Used to go to the Bowl game.

KS: Oh, right, the Sugar Bowl.

BH: Sugar Bowl all the time.

KS: That's fun. Well, yes, I'm going to ask you this, because you never know. It's a small world. I had an uncle, a great uncle in New Orleans who was in the war and in the Navy. And he was in Seattle, Washington, Oso Gregory. You don't know – you didn't know him, did you?

BH: I don't think so.

KS: He had such an unusual name I thought maybe it came up. Because you just never know. People will know people –

BH: That's right.

KS: – don't even – can't imagine it.

BH: You are so right. Yes.

KS: But we still have a lot of his mementos from the Navy in World War II.

BH: Well, Teso Robinson, at Pearl Harbor – I tell you, I ran into more guys that I knew at Pearl Harbor. It was unbelievable the number of guys that had gone to Carolina or gone to prep school. It was just unbelievable. You kept running into them. But the key thing was Otis Holland from Greensboro ran the motor pool. And everybody that went to Carolina had a Jeep, admirals couldn't get on it.

KS: It's who you know, huh? Who you know.

BH: You're darn right.

KS: That's right.

BH: Oh, Mooney Davis, he ran the crash boats in Kaneohe, he knew every Red Cross girl there.

KS: That's who you need to know, the guy that knows the girls.

BH: Exactly.

KS: That is something. That really is. Well, now, is there anything else you would like to talk about?

BH: Oh, no, just shooting the bull.

KS: You're so fun. Well, I appreciate it. Thank you so much for letting me come today, appreciate it.

[Recorder turned off]

[End of interview]