

PREFACE

This volume is a transcript of an oral history recorded with Gordon Belnap on 26 July 2019 in South Ogden, Utah. This interview is part of an ongoing project to document the experiences of Church members who were soldiers during the Korean War. The interviewer was Matthew K. Heiss, an employee in the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Belnap discusses his background and early life, serving a Swedish-speaking mission in Finland from 1949 to 1952, serving in the Korean War as a U.S. Army Signal Corps photographer from 1952 to 1954, his Church experiences in Korea, helping Korean orphans, his involvement in Ogden City's "All Faces West" pageant, his postwar career as a banker, and how he designed and set up software for the Perpetual Education Fund. He also expresses a message to his future descendants.

This interview was transcribed by Sheila Johnson. Carol Oertli, a Church-service missionary serving in the Church History Department, then listened to the interview while reading through the corresponding transcripts, both to correct typing errors and to do some minor copyediting. She also created a table of contents and preface. Belnap has not reviewed this transcript.

The transcript has been edited to remove false starts and words that might have been transcribed incorrectly. Therefore, the transcript differs slightly from the audio recording. Readers with questions about the transcript should also consult the audio recording.

As historical documents, copies of both the interview recording and the final typescript of this oral history will be preserved in the Archives of the Church History Department. As in the case of all other oral histories on file in the Archives, neither the Church nor the Church History Department assumes any responsibility for statements of fact or opinion found in this volume. Oral history is only one form of historical documentation and should be used in conjunction with other relevant records and documents. Statements found in interviews should be evaluated and used in accordance with the rules that govern the use of other historical materials, both primary and secondary.

Matthew K. Heiss
Church History Department
October 16, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	Page 1
Early life and education	
Serving a Swedish-speaking mission in Finland, 1949–1952	
Serving in Korea as a U.S. Army Signal Corps photographer, 1952-1954	Page 8
Leaving for training immediately after marriage	
Arriving in Korea and traveling to the front lines	
Photographing awards ceremonies and interrogations	
Church experiences in Korea	Page 9
Finding other Church members and holding services in combat areas	
Meeting nonmembers who stood up for him	
Photographing Korean converts and soldiers in Seoul	
Serving as a Sunday School president in Seoul	
Helping Korean orphans	
Experiences as a Signal Corps photographer	Page 20
Serving on the front lines	
Providing reference photos for the artillery	
Involvement in Ogden City’s “All Faces West” pageant	Page 23
Belnap’s message to the future	Page 24
Reviewing and describing some of his photos	Page 26
Postwar activities	Page 39
Career in banking	
Designing financial software and renting it to the Church	
Appendix	Page 44

CHURCH HISTORY DEPARTMENT
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

INTERVIEWEE: Gordon Belnap

INTERVIEWER: Matthew K. Heiss

LOCATION: South Ogden, Utah

DATE: 26 July 2019

MH: Today is the 26th of July, 2019. My name is Matthew Heiss, and I work as a historian for the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I'm in South Ogden, Utah, recording an interview with Gordon Belnap, about his experiences in the Korean War.¹ And just to kind of give some context, Gordon, I've known your son here for many years; and he's always said, "You know, my dad has all these great stories. He has a lot to share." And finally, we're getting together. So, I'm grateful to Brent for the help that he's given me in hooking up with you. Before we start talking about your experiences in Korea, I'd just like to get to know you a little bit. Why don't you tell me where you were born and raised, and just tell me about where you grew up?

GB: I was born here in Ogden, Utah. I grew up on the Twenty-first Street. My father was bishop at the time I was born. Educated here in Ogden, attended Weber College for a few quarters, but I graduated from the University of Utah. I've lived outside the state in California and came back into Utah.

MH: All right. What did you study at the university?

GB: I was in business administration.

MH: Okay, all right. So, before we started this interview, I understand that you were called to serve a mission in Finland, but that you were one of the few Swedish-speaking missionaries in Finland. Tell me a little bit about, first of all, your decision to serve a mission. Was that something you'd always wanted to do?

¹ Also present were Samantha Ryan, an intern working in the Church History Department, and Norbert K. Ounleu, the Africa West Area Church History Adviser, who was in Utah for training.

GB: I think so. I think you grow up that way. My brother, at the time, was on a mission in the Virginia area. So, I was called on a mission. Of course, I was interviewed by LeGrand Richards.

MH: Wow, yes.

GB: He came up to Ogden and interviewed me, and he said, "Where would you like to serve?" At that time, they were sending a lot of elders to South America and Mexico. I said, "I can't learn a foreign language. I took Spanish for two years and got a straight D-minus. But send me further than Denver." [laughter] So, I get my mission call to Finland. At that time, it was one of the furthest missions away. And a tough language. But I was fortunate I didn't learn Finnish. I learned Swedish instead.

MH: Tell me why there was a Swedish-speaking component? Is there a part of Finland that is Swedish-speaking, or did you actually work in Sweden?

GB: Oh no, no, we were in Finland. Finland was controlled by Sweden for some two hundred years. Swedish was the king's language, that was the business language, that was the prominent language. And the Swedes lived on the coast of Finland, in an area called Larsmo, down to Kristinestad, and down to Ekenäs in the bottom. So, they actually have the two languages. When you would go into a city, you would see on the street sign, if it was Finnish, that would be the top. The Swedish, it would be on top of the name.

So, they had the two languages. But in the mission field there was only twelve of us that learned Swedish. The rest of the mission areas were Finnish. The mission was opened in 1946, by President [Ezra Taft] Benson. That was on the little island of Larsmo, which is just off the coast from Jakobstad. And Elder [Dale G.] Renlund's grandmother was in our branch there. It was a farming community. It was probably thirty, forty Saints there, and children. And it was dedicated just a half-mile down from the little church. Actually, a little house we had as a church. No plumbing, no water, no nothing. Out in the country. So, just the twelve of us spoke Swedish.

MH: And you would have learned Swedish in the field, right? You didn't go to a Language Training Mission, did you?

GB: Well, I was called in June, attended one week in Salt Lake City.

MH: At the mission home?

GB: At what they called, quote, “mission home,” which wasn’t much. And that was it. But then they sent me back home, because they couldn’t get passage on the ship until August.

MH: Oh, my gosh. What did you do between—

GB: Tried to find employment there, and just tried to stay busy between June and August, until I shipped out by train to New York, and then took a ship on over to Gothenburg, Sweden. Went across Sweden to Stockholm, then from Stockholm over to Åbo in Swedish, Turku in Finnish. And so, the twelve of us, we just had one area, the Larsmo area, where the Church is mostly predominant more in Larsmo than anywhere. It’s just about a four-hour bus ride along the coast there. I opened a little city down in Ekenäs, Finland.

MH: Talk about that.

GB: We opened that, my companion and I went down. It was very interesting. Of course, we were, what, about three hundred miles from the rest of the elders. And so we opened the city, we tracted. And lo and behold, we got a baptism, a mother and a daughter. What’s interesting is, when I got out of the Army, and came home in ’54—for some reason, I don’t know why, I wrote a letter to the mother. What I said, I don’t know. I don’t even recall it.

But about ten years ago, I got a letter in the mailbox, living here in South Ogden, and it was addressed to me, “U.S.A.” Open it, the mother had died, and the daughter, who was a member of the Church, found this envelope—my letter—and wrote and told me. What is interesting, my address was blocked out, because I’d moved about three or four times, but it still got to me. There’s no return address on the envelope. Since then, I’ve been writing to her three or four times a year. And there’s never been another member down there. She’s the only member in that area.

MH: What’s her name?

GB: Saga Ren Weeklund. I started writing to her. I write to her in English, and she writes back in Swedish.

MH: And you still have your language?

GB: Oh, I can understand.

MH: Beautiful.

GB: So, she's never had any other contact with the Church. This group of missionaries, we've held mission reunions now for some fifty-two years, until a few years ago. In that group, there's some converts that moved from Finland to here, and they've met with us. They called a couple back to Finland to work. They worked in the mission office. I asked them, "Look up Saga Ren." So, they couldn't find her. The records over there, they totally couldn't find them. They searched, and searched, and finally found them in some old papers that she had been baptized, she and her mother. So, she visited with them, and so we've been writing back and forth now to her.

MH: That's a beautiful story. Tell me a little bit about your mission president, Henry A. Matis?²

GB: Wonderful man. Very, very wonderful. He was there in 1947. I arrived in 1949. There were just very few elders who had been called to Finland. New mission. It was really, like he used to tell us, "We're just planting seeds. You probably won't get much harvest, but somebody's got to plant the seeds." So, that's what we did. But we had a good time. Actually, it was rather interesting, there in Larsmo. I got the idea—I was just the junior companion, barely got there—I said, "Why don't we put on a church of the air broadcast?" "Well, no one's ever thought of it." And I said, "Well, let's try it. We'll go down to the radio station and see."

So, we went from Larsmo by bus into Jakobstad. Larsmo is actually an island. And we talked to the radio station, and they go, "Sure, we'll give you time." So my father got some phonograph records. We took Richard L. Evans talks, translated it, had one of the members give it, and we put on a broadcast. Lo and behold, do you know what happened? We got a check in the mail. [*Heiss laughs*] "What's going on here?" It's a government-controlled radio. They pay us to go on the air. So, I sent the check down to the Church office.

Got a phone call, "What are you dumb guys up there doing, making money?" So, we went down to Vaasa, a bigger city, and did the same thing. Lo and behold, we get a call from Henry Matis, "What are you guys doing?" "Well, we're broadcasting." We never got permission, we just went ahead and did it. We were heard over in Sweden. The Swedish mission president called the Finnish mission president, "What are you guys doing over there?" But then, after that broadcast, because it went all over, the Lutheran Church put a stop to it. But we made money.

² Henry A. Matis was called as the first president of the Finland Helsinki Mission in 1947 and served for seven years in that capacity. [<https://www.deseret.com/1999/9/8/19464775/obituary-henry-a-matis>, accessed 09-26-2019.]

MH: And, you probably made history. That's probably the first time our church went out over the Finnish radio airwaves. First broadcast.

GB: Probably only one ever did.

MH: Yes.

GB: It was interesting, because they didn't control the timing very well. So, you didn't know when you were going to come on the air, you didn't know how long you were going to be, whether it was 10:05, or 9:37, or something else. But, free of charge, they paid us. People heard it. The Korean War had started then, so the missionaries—there was only seven of us.

MH: At the end of your mission?

GB: At the end of my mission. I was district leader then, and I didn't have a companion.

MH: Wow, what did you do?

GB: I traveled alone. So we just had Larsmo, Jakobstad, and Vaasa; and that was it. I'd go between those. And we had Ekenäs, clear down in the bottom, and I'd take the train down to Ekenäs; and you had to go through the Russian zone, Porkkala. They controlled that, so you'd go through that zone. And I went down alone, and I'd tack up signs all through the city, and I held public meetings above the fire station, all alone.

MH: Wow. In Porkkala?

GB: No, Porkkala is Russian-controlled. The naval base.

MH: Right.

GB: Ekenäs was on the other side of it.

MH: That's where you held the meeting.

GB: Yes, you had to go between Helsinki and Turku here. You go through the Russian zone, and Ekenäs was down below it. So, I rented the hall over the fire station, held a public meeting, and this Sister Saga Weeklund, a member of the Church, I asked her to give a ten-minute talk.

We had about thirty people come, and it was interesting. I sang a solo to start the meeting, gave the prayer, sang another solo, [laughter] Saga Ren spoke for about five minutes. I preached for about half hour, forty-five minutes, sang the closing song, and gave the closing prayer. An experience that a lot of missionaries never had. So, I traveled alone for about six, seven, eight, nine months, without a companion.

MH: Wow. Now, I know that when we got the papers of Henry A. Matis in the Church Archives, there was a lot of information and programs and photographs about the Olympic Games that were held. Did you have anything to do with the '52 Olympics when you were serving as a missionary?

GB: I came home before the Olympics started. But the interesting thing is the missionaries trained with the Finnish Olympic basketball team in Veremeki Sports Center. And Swedish-speaking, I was invited to go with them to the training center. So, we trained with the Finnish Olympic team. They brought in an elder from England, on a mission there, who was a pro basketball player, to coach. Arnold Isaacson, in Finland. He's a Finnish missionary. We'd gone through the mission home together. He actually coached the team, the Finnish team.³ But there were elders that participated in the 1952 Olympics, running and swimming.

MH: Yes, yes. Well, you came home from your mission in 1952, and then you got married. And then I read a little thing that your son had me read. You were talking to your dad, and your dad gave you a choice. "Do you want to go to school, or do you want to go into the military?" Am I remembering correctly what I read?

GB: Yes.

MH: Tell me that story.

GB: I had a two-year deferment to go on the mission. Of course, from the day I was called to the mission to the day I got home was thirty-four months, because of the delay in getting there. But the draft board here in Ogden said, "Okay, you can stay out there, the deferment, until you come home. Just report when you get home." Well, my father was

³ "Missionaries assigned to Finland also worked with the national team. One of the elders, E. Arnold Isaacson won a sportsmanship trophy for his play on the missionary team and spent two months in 1951 coaching the Finnish National Team. In a game against the missionaries, he coached and played with the Finns during the second half. The missionaries won by one point. . . . When he returned home, another missionary, Robert Peterson, coached the Finnish team as it prepared for the 1952 Olympic Games in that country. The Finnish government awarded Henry Matis a Silver Cross in 1951 for his work with sports, especially basketball. Jussi Lappi Seppla, a member of Parliament who presented Matis with the award, 'remarked on the spiritual growth of the Finnish players as well as the growth of their physical skills.'" "Preaching Through Playing," Jessie L. Embry and John H. Brambaugh, *Journal of Mormon History* Vol. 35, No. 4 (Fall 2009).

county treasurer at the time, and happened to know the head of the draft board. So, we met in his home on about Kiesel Avenue about Twenty-third Street, in the evening, sitting there.

And the head of the draft board—I don't know his name—said, "Well, what do you want to do? Do you want school deferment, or go into the Army?" Dad knew very well I'd take the deferment. I said, "I want to be drafted." Because in Finland, on May Day, which is Russia's big day, we were warned by the police to stay inside, and don't go out on that day, because they had big parades there in Vaasa. When the Russians came out, they had a big thing. And one time when we were tracting in Vaasa, this lady said, "Oh, you're Mormons?" "Yes." "Oh, I just read an article about you people."

She went and got the Soviet *Pravda* newspaper. She brought it, and she interpreted it, and I looked at it—and there was my name in the newspaper. They had me down as I was a spy, I was a colonel in the United States Army, over there. And what was interesting—I just finished a book that talked about these Russian cells here in America. They had my name, educated and born in Ogden, gone to Ogden High School, I'd taken ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]—they knew all about me. And I got thinking, there's Russians in Ogden. I wish I'd kept the paper. She kept it. But they had me. I was the only one of the missionaries that had any ROTC.

MH: Oh, my gosh.

GB: But we picked up with that. So, May Day we stayed pretty well away from them.

MH: So, how did this experience in Finland influence you to make the decision to sign up for the Army, as opposed to getting a deferment and go back to school?

GB: Well, I'm patriotic. I'm hard-nosed. A guy crosses the line, smack him.

MH: [*laughs*] Okay, okay.

GB: I was willing to defend my country. And I'd seen enough of the Russians. We'd go through the Russian zone, through Porkkala. The train would pull up to the Russian area. They'd take the locomotive off, and put on a Russian locomotive—which incidentally was made in the U.S.A. They'd put steel plates over the windows. Russian soldiers with machine guns got on each end of the train, and we'd go through the area. You went through there on your own. And I got a little fed up with them. So, I just thought, "I'm American, I'll stand up for America."

MH: And do battle against the communists, who were taking over Korea, who'd invaded. So, you got married, but then also signed up for the draft. So, you were going to leave your wife behind here, while you went off to serve. Talk about that.

GB: I got home from the mission, I think, in February or March. We got married in July. I joined the Army at the same time, and I left. I was in the Army. I got married [to Joy McArthur] and went.

MH: Wow.

GB: I'd known her before I went on a mission.

MH: That says something about your wife, too. She really took a leap of faith, because what if you'd gone over there and gotten killed?

GB: She'd have been a widow.

MH: A young widow. A very young widow, yes.

GB: I boarded the train in Fort Douglas to California. I didn't have a dime in my pocket. I had to borrow five dollars from my wife. *[laughter]*

MH: So, you know, one of the things I saw as I was doing a little bit of research, is there were some special dog tags that were made up, that had a picture of the Salt Lake Temple on them, that said you were a member of the Church. Did you have those dog tags?

GB: Yes. I don't anymore.

MH: But, that's what you had, right?

GB: Yes, they had special ones that had "LDS" on it, the temple on it. And they gave them out. I don't know, they stopped. And I had a lot of things, but everything's got thrown away here recently.

MH: All right. Tell me about your training, and what you were trained to do when you got over to Korea?

GB: I got drafted and joined the Army.

MH: In 1952?

GB: Nineteen fifty-two. I went to California.

MH: Yes, by Monterey?

GB: By Monterey. But then, being 1A, I was sure I was going to get into the infantry, but lo and behold, they sent me down to signal school in San Luis Obispo, California. So I went through basic training there. And then being in the Signal Corps, you had some training. And they had an opening for a photographer, and I'd taken some photography classes, and done some developing of film when I was at Weber College. Fred Raybe taught it. And so, I said, "Hey, I want to change over from what I asked to do, to photography." I got accepted.

So, I went through photography school in San Luis Obispo. I was then shipped over to Korea. We didn't know where we were going until we got to Japan, then we shipped into Korea. We got our orders where we were going. I was assigned to the 45th Infantry Division. The Oklahoma National Guard is attached to that division in the Signal Corps. The division was located in the central part of Korea, north of Chuncheon. Actually, the front lines didn't go on a straight line. It went on an angle. Actually, we were up in what would be today known as North Korea. I was stationed there with the 45th Infantry Division, and the 45th Signal Company.

MH: Okay, so what does a photographer attached to an infantry group do? I mean, are you sent out on recon [reconnaissance] missions to take pictures after a battle? Or to prepare for a battle?

GB: We were doing several things. Did you ever see the show "M*A*S*H?"

MH: Yes.

GB: That was just over the hill from us. That's an actual hospital. I think President [Russell M.] Nelson actually was over in that area. But we'd send a photographer over there every day, because they were giving medals out. Taking pictures of those people there. My first assignment was to take the interrogator, drive him down to another little city. They had some prisoners there, and they wanted to interrogate them. So, I'd drive him down and take pictures of the prisoners.

And I'd been there two weeks in Korea, tried to find the Church, and no one knew anything about it. Even the other chaplains of other churches had never heard of us. So, it was ironic, after I'd taken the picture, as they were interrogating the prisoners, I was talking to the driver that took us down there. The Church came up, and he said, "Oh, I

know where you Mormons meet. They meet in the artillery area.” That’s that picture. We met there.⁴

MH: Yes. This one right here?

GB: No, that’s in Seoul, Korea.

MH: That’s in Seoul, okay.

GB: The first one there, that one there on the side there.

MH: This one? Okay.

GB: And those men there on the side there are soldiers just coming off the front lines. They’re coming back.

MH: Wow. So, what was it like to finally find the Church in Korea?

GB: Well, it wasn’t there. No church was there. We had our own church.

MH: Just for the servicemen?

GB: For the servicemen. Before I left overseas, Val Winkel’s father in Alameda, California, set me apart as a group leader. And so, you know, you didn’t have a group. But we just got together after I found them in the area there. We’d meet together. There was probably a dozen.

MH: Okay. Just by word of mouth, these soldiers would find out?

GB: Just wherever you’d find them. How else would you find each other?

MH: Maybe a bulletin board? Did you ever put anything up on a bulletin board?

GB: Who would see it? No one’s going to look at it.

MH: Okay.

⁴ The photographs are included later in this transcript.

GB: Everything was in commotion. They were still fighting, but it was a stalemate. But they were still fighting, people getting killed. And it was 24/7, you worked all the time. So you're not going to look at a bulletin board.

MH: Yes, okay.

GB: But those who were dedicated to the gospel would try to find it. Of course, those that wanted to stay hidden can stay hidden. And so, what you found is those soldiers that came were the dedicated group of LDS people. And so, consequently, there was sometimes you'd have a few soldiers there; sometimes not. Sometimes they'd be there one day, next week they didn't show up because he got killed. And so, you didn't know who would ever come. We had to scrounge for the bread. What do you do for sacrament trays? You'd use cups, just tin can cups, you know. Whatever you could get ahold of. And no one would take charge.

MH: Well now, you were the group leader. What did that mean? I mean, what kind of instructions did they give you?

GB: Zero. You had no instructions at all. It was just a title. They said I was group leader, but it didn't mean anything. I didn't have a group.

MH: Well, it meant that you had the Melchizedek Priesthood.

GB: I had the Melchizedek Priesthood.

MH: And you knew how to conduct a meeting. As a missionary, you'd conducted meetings.

GB: On and off, some of them. I had others, too. We did find some LDS chaplains once in a while would come by. We did not have an LDS chaplain in the 45th Division, but that picture I showed you, half a dozen chaplains, they came there. They would control meetings when they were there, because they had the authority to do that. But we'd get together and hold our little meetings.

MH: So, tell us about what those little meetings were like. You told me when you were doing that meeting on your mission, you sang the song, you gave the prayer, you preached the sermon, you gave the closing prayer. What it like in those meetings with just a small group of soldiers?

GB: Well, somebody had to conduct. And there was always somebody there to conduct.

MH: Was that you?

GB: No, not always. Once in a while. But there were others. It was more done by rank. The Church in the military, it still went by rank. And I was just a lowly private first class at the time. And so, we had others—sergeants—we had a couple lieutenants, and that. So, the highest rank conducted. Then someone would pick a song. We didn't have songbooks, so we'd pick the songs we knew. We'd sing the verses we knew, and that was it.

MH: Did you have a piano? Or did you just sing it a cappella?

GB: We didn't have a piano. Nobody had a piano. We just started singing. Whoever had the best voice would probably lead out, or whoever knew the song would lead out. But then, whoever was conducting would call on someone to pray. There was no schedule to follow for the meetings, there's no lessons or anything else. It was just get together. Sometimes it would be testimony meetings, sometimes it would be stories, sometimes someone would tell an incident that happened. Sometimes someone would say, "Let's talk about this topic," and start a discussion.

It used to irritate the people in the Photo Division—there were only a dozen of us there—because when I'd go to church, LDS church, it would be two or three hours. They'd go to the Catholic masses, and it would be twenty minutes. They used to get a little angry, because, "How come Belnap gets to get three hours to go to church and we get twenty minutes?" I used to tell the other fellows, "Well, if you want three hours, come go to church with me." [laughter]

MH: So, during those three hours, would you have something like a Sunday School? Or a priesthood meeting? Or was it really just depending on what the conducting officer wanted to do? Or the presiding officer? A three-hour testimony meeting?

GB: Well, number one, the meetings were probably forty-five minutes to an hour-and-a-half, we'd get together. But there was no Sunday School, no priesthood. You didn't even know what the other person's priesthood level was. Very seldom did you ever know if they were an elder, or a deacon, or a high priest. I was a little older than some of the soldiers, then, because I'd served a mission, then got in the Army, where some went out of high school in the Army. Some served a mission, some hadn't. So, there was no prescribed meeting of any type. You'd have maybe a half a dozen one Sunday, maybe next Sunday a dozen, the next Sunday maybe three. You never knew who would be there. And there's no topic. Who assigned it?

MH: Would you always have the sacrament? Was that always a part?

GB: We always had the sacrament. If there were two of us, or three or four or six or ten, we'd try to go to the Mess Hall and bribe the cook to get some bread.

MH: A piece of bread, yes. And I guess as group leader, one of the things that meant was that you were authorized to do the sacrament, right?

GB: Well, anybody holding the Melchizedek Priesthood can do the sacrament. If you're alone, who do you ask for authorization?

MH: Well, I don't know.

GB: You see? So, there we are up there. There's no group. No one's been called to this position. The lieutenant, or whoever is in charge, somebody's got to do it. We hold the priesthood. Why can't we do it?

MH: Were there ever instances where young LDS soldiers came to church and said, "You know, here is where I found God. I was not active in the Church at home, but 'there's no such thing as an atheist in a foxhole' kind of thing. Would they ever come to church, and would there be the fellowshiping and reactivation? Or was it just kind of a meeting?

GB: Well, it was both. Because, number one, the members that were there had to search the Church out. They wanted it. And so, they were people who were dedicated, good-old-always-come-to-church when they were home, youth. Then there was a couple that came a time or two who had been very inactive in the Church. But when you're on the front lines, you've got bullets flying around you, sometimes it changes your mind a little. You had some of them come. Then you'd have some of the fellows who'd gone on R&R [rest and recreation] to Japan, and hadn't really stood up to LDS standards, and they were coming back quite repentant. So, you had quite a mixture. It was a very good time, because it wasn't boring. It was never boring.

MH: So, what did it mean to you to have that much church while you were in a war situation?

GB: Well, something to hold to. Because, even then, people still looked up to you, especially when we got back in Seoul, Korea, later on. It was interesting, how they'd kind of look out for you. It was up on [*unintelligible*] still the war was going on before the truce was signed. If they had inspections, or something—I wore my garments all the time in the service. Some of the LDS fellows didn't. At that time, it was a one-piece garment, and it

was kind of hard, showering and everything, with one-piece garments, but I still did it. But it was interesting how they stood up for you.

Let's go back to an experience I had down in basic training in California. There was myself, and two of in the company, LDS—myself and Stan Camik. He was from Idaho. Married, real nice guy, and being our names were “Belnap” and “Camik,” we were always at the front. We went to get our shots to go overseas, and we were there at San Luis Obispo. The buildings are just wooden buildings, four feet off the ground, steps going up. So, Stan Camik and I were right on top of the steps. There was the company spread out behind us. We got up there, and the nurse came out, or somebody came out, and said “Okay, strip down to your waist.”

So, there we are, standing on top of everybody. Stripped down, then had our garments. Catcalls started coming out. “Where's the ladies' underwear? What you guys doing?” you know. A fellow that I didn't respect at all, kind of obnoxious—his name put him at the end of the line. He'd played football for UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles]. Next thing I knew, there were catcalls and everything. He tapped me on the shoulder, he was up there with me, and he told these guys, “Shut up, you blank-blank-blank-blank people.” He chewed them out. He said, “I played football against Brigham Young [University]. What they're wearing is a religious garment, so shut your mouths up. I'll beat anybody. . .” he cussed them out and turned around and apologized to me.

So you find people will stand up for you when you stand up for your religion. You don't have to back down. Somebody will be behind you, even in Seoul, Korea. They needed a bouncer at the non-commissioned officers [club]. They said, “Belnap, come over just for a couple of weeks while we get a bouncer.” So I went over and helped them. I was just at the door to let people in. I asked somebody to bring me a Coke or a soft drink. I went to take a drink, and somebody grabbed my hand, took the drink away from me, and tasted it. “Okay, it's okay.” He said, “I wanted to make sure nobody spiked it on you.” So, when you live your religion, don't be afraid.

MH: People respect your standards.

GB: Well, they'll stand up for you. You don't have to run from it. Have the guts to stand up.

MH: How long were you in the central part of Korea, before you went down to Seoul?

GB: It was only about six months.

MH: Up where the fighting was?

GB: Yes.

MH: Now, in some of the pictures, you were out where the bullets were flying, and the shells were dropping. I mean, you were in battle, right?

GB: Well, it's not what you see in the movies. Because the war had kind of come to a stalemate. They weren't advancing. The Chinese were here, we were here, you were not very far apart. Where we stayed was only five miles behind the lines. That's Salt Lake to Murray. And if you go on the front lines, you were just half a block from the other side. You could see them over there. In fact, we waved at them once in a while. But they'd send out patrols, they'd have firefights. Yes, people getting killed, but it wasn't intensive like you see in the movies, and how the war was to begin with. It was winding down. So, it was different.

MH: So, you were six months up there. Then did you spend the last half of your military service down in Seoul?

GB: Well, I wasn't in Korea very long. But they signed the truce, and I was sent TDY—temporary duty—to Seoul, Korea as a photographer, because there was, I think, three or four that were going to get permission to go to North Korea and photograph what was happening up there, or what happened. So I was just sent down temporarily. I left all my clothing, and everything else up in Chuncheon, up there. So I went to Seoul. I was there six weeks, just waiting to get permission to get into North Korea. They never would let us in. I don't know if they were afraid of photographers going in.

But it was interesting—the Americans had a line that went through North Korea into China. They had a photographer that I knew, who came up to our division. He got supplies from us, and was heading off for a six-month, all the way, would come out over into China. He wanted me to go with him, and I didn't want to go. But then, I was sent there to Seoul. During that time, the 45th Infantry Division was recalled from Korea, so I had to go back up and get my belongings and come back to Seoul, and they transferred me to the Eighth Army in Seoul. So I spent the last few months there in Seoul.

MH: Okay, all right. Before we started this interview, you showed us some of these pictures, and you told a very interesting story. Let me find the photograph.⁵

GB: Those members?

MH: The Korean members.

⁵ The photographs are included later in this transcript.

GB: It's back. You just went past it.

MH: Did I pass it?

GB: It's that little teeny...

MH: It's like the insert here. There it is. Yes, so we're going to get a picture of this, but why don't you tell me what this is, and tell me a little bit about these Koreans that are down there in the front row?

GB: It's just a meeting we held there in Seoul, Korea.

MH: And what kind of building? Are you just in a military—

GB: We're inside a big Quonset hut. It was for the Eighth Army there, so it was a big building, a good-sized one. All churches used it as a chapel for all denominations. This was kind of like a conference. You had the chaplain that kind of put it together.

MH: And these are the chaplains right here, right?

GB: No, those were up in our area, in the front lines. That other group of chaplains—you said you knew that colonel—they're the ones, that group there, they're the ones in the Seoul area. So, being a photographer, and LDS, of course I went and took pictures. In the front row, the Korean woman, I understand she was baptized, the first person baptized in Korea. Now, if that's true, I don't know. I couldn't prove it. But then, Lieutenant [Cal] Beck, who was over the photo division, Eighth Army, was the group leader for the Seoul area. And I heard from him that she was there. And then there's that Korean authority in the Church...

MH: Yes, I'm still trying to remember his name.

GB: I believe Lieutenant Beck said he baptized that person. So, before missionaries ever got there, the LDS servicemen were being missionaries.

MH: And he's supposed to be in this photo, too?

GB: He's one of those people sitting there. It's a small group of Koreans, right there. Just one or two.

MH: And he became a General Authority Seventy, is that right? He's the one?

GB: Well, as my memory serves me, he did. And for some reason, he was let out. I don't know. I don't know the story.

MH: We'll try to follow up on that. But that's a pretty important thing.

GB: I don't know if that's true or not. Lieutenant Beck was over the group. He called me to be Sunday School president. So, I was the first Sunday School president in the Church over there, I think. You read other things about missionaries, you see in the *Church News*, the missionaries' first baptism here, the first here. Wait a minute, we were there ten years before you.

MH: So, you were talking about when you were up in the battle area, that it was really not very well organized. It was like, people would show up, and whoever has rank is going to conduct, and you didn't know who was going to be there. But it sounds like once you got down to Seoul, it was much better organized. Was that true?

GB: Well, you got back to Seoul, a little further towards the truce at that time. But then Seoul was kind of the center part for the Army headquarters. So you didn't have the fighting soldiers. You didn't have the nurses, the hospitals, the people on the front lines up there. You didn't have artillery shells going off. You didn't have the people getting hurt. You had a lot of administrative people, and management people. Supplies, all the supplies come in. So, there's a stable group there in the Seoul area.

MH: And then they could organize.

GB: They organized. That's why we had a Sunday School. I was president of the Sunday School. We had two classes that would be equivalent to a Gospel Doctrine, and . . .

MH: Like an investigators' class?

GB: Investigator-like.

MH: Yes, okay.

GB: Basic principles.

MH: And did you also have a priesthood meeting?

GB: No.

MH: Just Sunday School and sacrament meeting?

GB: That's all we had.

MH: Okay, what about during the week when you were down in Seoul? Did you have anything like MIA [Mutual Improvement Association]?

GB: We did. We had that basketball tournament. We had a basketball team there in Seoul. We had that little choir group there in Seoul. But it was still fragmented because you had people in different sections of the Army; supply, some in management, some in here. They were stationed all over. Just like this, Hill Field, Second Street. . . So, it was hard to get them together. And it wasn't easy to get people sometimes released from their duties.

MH: But still, it looks like you had a pretty good crowd.

GB: We did.

MH: You know it looks there's at least a hundred, two-hundred-and-fifty people there.

GB: This was in Seoul, yes. They had a good group.

MH: You know what? We didn't talk about the orphanage. You've got two pictures here of these Korean orphans here, and you were telling us before we started that the Church had something to do with these orphans.

GB: Well, they tried to get some supplies to them. You'll notice there—this isn't nice, but most of them are white, or children of Army people.

MH: Mixed, yes.

GB: Mixed races there. These orphans are kind of given away because of the mixture.

MH: Rejected by society...

GB: By the Koreans, because they were. . .

MH: And by their moms. Oh, interesting, interesting.

GB: It was a group that was very touching to be with.

MH: Yes, for sure.

GB: Because Cal Beck, who was the group leader there, he took an interest in these kids, and tried to get some supplies to them. And we scrounged stuff from different divisions, or different area to give to them, food and other stuff. But they weren't. . . [*brief interruption*] I don't know what we were talking about.

MH: We were talking about the orphans, trying to scrounge together supplies for them.

GB: They were rejected by their people. And the soldiers that were the fathers of these kids had probably gone home. There was blacks and white and everything in that group. So, what do they do with them?

MH: Just put them in an orphanage here, right?

GB: Well, whatever best they could. Cal Beck, he was sympathetic. And being the group leader, I went out with him, and we scrounged some food and tried to get something for them. Or help them out the best we could. It wasn't anything the Church officially—I don't know if the Church even knew they had people over there.

MH: But just Christians, and just trying to help, right?

GB: Just being good old LDS people. Because I don't know if any records were kept of anything over there. I know there was no ordinations ever made that I know of.

MH: Anybody get baptized?

GB: Well, those two people did. I never saw it. I never heard anything about it, other than just hearsay after. But you never kept any minutes of anything. Nothing was ever kept. So, it's just been hidden. I don't think the Church even knew we were over there, hardly.

MH: Yes, yes. Before you left, were you given a soldier's kit with a small little copy of the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, and that kind of thing? Did they have that?

GB: Not that I recall. I didn't have a copy. If they did, I didn't get one.

MH: Okay. So, were you in Korea for a whole year?

GB: Not quite, no.

MH: You were talking about points. Once you got to eighteen points, you could go home. Is that...

GB: Well, the Army at that time—you were drafted, you know. A two-year draft. But if you got eighteen points, you could come home. Well, they gave you a point if you were stationed in the United States. If you were in Japan, you got a couple more points. If you were in Seoul, Korea you got three points. If you were up on the front lines, you got four points.

MH: So, when you were taking these photos, you were getting four points, right?

GB: I was on the front lines. So, okay, fine, okay. I'll stick my neck out. It's worth four points. *[laughter]*

MH: Get to go home early.

GB: So, I did. But the role of the photographer was very interesting, in that even though your rank didn't really mean anything, because you carried a pass signed by the general over the Far Eastern Command out of Japan, to go anywhere. So being non-commissioned officers, we always used the officers' club, because they couldn't kick us out, because we were photographers. We wore a band, U.S. Photographer. We had a pass, so we could go around. Because everyone else is standing at attention to salute the flag, we didn't.

MH: Because you're taking the pictures.

GB: We're taking the pictures. And so, we could go anyplace, do things. It was fun. But what we did an awful lot there in the front lines there—you noticed in those pictures it's all mountains out there. It's awfully hard to sit there, and say, "Okay, there's enemy over on this mountain here, or there's a convoy. Where is that?" So, the artillery guy wouldn't know, "How would I tell where to shoot out there?"

So, what we found out, what we did, we'd take a picture. Go up there in the front lines, get a picture, a panoramic of that, and make a copy for him and a copy for artillery. So, they'd say, "Okay, this hill here," so they'd know where it was. It was coordinations, and it was hard. So, we'd send the photographer up there to do . . . They'd have to get ready to shoot. So, you'd be on the front lines, just where they could shoot from a rifle shot—

MH: Hit you with a rifle, yes.

GB: Okay, so you'd get up there. You had to take six shots, "Boom, boom, boom," to get a panoramic view. So, it was ready to go. They'd say, "Fire!" and all the front lines would start shooting. So, of course the Chinese would duck. So, when they ducked, you'd jump up, take the pictures, then get down, because they woke up to start fighting back.

MH: Oh, my gosh.

GB: They didn't like us coming up on them, taking pictures, because they knew we always drew fire.

MH: In fact, I think you were showing us a picture of you on the front line.

GB: There's a couple of them there.

MH: Right here. And right after that, the bullets started flying, and you ducked down.

GB: That was out in no man's land. We had a truce. We went out there. They didn't want us going out, but we went out there anyway. And some shots started behind us, so we just took off. I wasn't going to stick around.

MH: So again, were in Korea for a whole year, or did you come home?

GB: No, I got out early. I was very fortunate. I only spent—I'm not sure right now—three-quarters of a year, or so, because I had enough points to get out. So, why not?

MH: Yes, why not? Let me ask two more questions about Korea. Elder Harold B. Lee traveled over to Korea once. In fact, do I have a date on that? Nineteen fifty-four, so it was after—you got home before then, right?

GB: Well...

MH: When did you get home?

GB: It was around July.

MH: Of what year?

GB: Fifty-four.

MH: Fifty-four.

GB: It would have to have been after.

MH: Okay. But you weren't there when Harold B. Lee was there?

GB: Oh, no. It would have been after, shortly after. They started the truce in late '53, it was signed.

MH: Yes, actually I have it as 27 July 1953 is when they signed the truce.

GB: But the fighting still went on for quite a while after that, sporadically. It wasn't, you know, everyone stopped. You sent out patrols, you sent out everything else. So, things calmed down after that.

MH: So, while you were over in Korea, your wife had a little baby who died.

GB: Yes.

MH: A little baby boy named Alan?

GB: Alan, yes.

MH: How did you hear about that?

GB: A week later, I got a wire.

MH: Was there any possibility of phoning your wife to talk to her about that?

GB: No.

MH: Wow, how did you deal with that?

GB: Like any other death. Being LDS, death doesn't stir me up like it does some people. Because I think, "Why not go on? You've graduated. Go on with the course." That's the way I look at death, "Let's get on with it." It's like getting out of school. This to me is a school. Why not go ahead? Why not graduate? It doesn't bother me. A lot of people get upset about it, but I don't. I just say, "Hey, it's not all bad."

MH: Was the baby stillborn, or were there complications?

GB: Lived a day.

MH: Lived a day, okay.

GB: He's buried here in South Ogden in Lindquist Mortuary Park.

MH: Okay, wow, wow. So now, let me shift gears. Your son told us you were involved with one of the Church pageants here in Ogden. What was the name of the pageant?

GB: "All Faces West."⁶

MH: "All Faces West," yes. So, is it about the pioneers coming across the plains?

GB: Roland Parry wrote the musical score to "All Faces West." Junius Tribe [chairman of the Ogden Pioneer Days celebration] had that for some eight, nine, ten years. And the rodeo in Ogden was at that time very strong and powerful. Drew a lot of crowds, much more so than Salt Lake. But they had the rodeo on Sunday. So, they said, "Wait a minute," so the Church and the rodeo committee got together and said, "Look, we'll put on a pageant on Sunday. So, you skip it. We'll put on a pageant, if that would work out."

MH: So, you changed places. The rodeo could then be on Saturday, and the Church could then do the pageant?

GB: Well, Friday, Saturday, Monday; whatever it was. The Church would take it there. My father was very heavily involved in that, "All Faces West." Well, after ten years, I got appointed chairman; producer of it, for the tenth, eleventh—for two years. And they used to put it on in the stadium. I moved that, "No, let's skip that. Let's move it down and start our own place."

They had a park, the city did, down Wall Avenue and about Seventh Street. They had a hill there. So, I went to the city and says, "Give us that hill. We'll make a stage out of it." So we did. We staged it, and we had live animals. But then we held it two nights, Saturday and Sunday. So, we competed with the rodeo a little. Then we had all the wards, they came and brought chairs. But we had three or four thousand people there.

MH: Who would come and watch the production?

GB: That's when "All Faces West" was being played at the Ogden Stadium. They just temporarily put up a stage very fast, because they had the rodeo stopped Saturday, then they put up the stage for the production Sunday, then down for Monday. And my father,

⁶ Roland and Helen Parry wrote the musical drama "All Faces West" in 1951. It was produced from 1951 to 1968 in Ogden.

as I say, was very involved. President [David O.] McKay came to the production. He would sit in a box seat.

My dad knew President McKay very, very well. He and his brother, Ernie McKay, played basketball together. My dad took me down and introduced me to President McKay. He and his wife were sitting there. An impressive gentleman. I was on the ground, he was in the box; shook my hand. He says, "I've met you before." I'd never met him before. But, he came that year to the production. So, I only held the production for two years.

MH: Two years, okay.

GB: Moving it caused some problems, because we changed the score from narration to actual talking. And some of the people didn't like that.

MH: Wow, and that's back before you had wireless microphones, so people just really had to shout and project, right?

GB: Well, we still had some microphones around, somewhat. But Igor Gorin was the star singer. They brought him in from New York. I'd visited with Gorin back in New York. And signed him up with ASCAP⁷ and everything, over permission. So, we had that production. It only lasted, I think, a year or two after that, then it stopped.

MH: Yes, interesting. So listen, I've got one more question that I'd like to talk about, and then we've got to get back on the road, so we can get Norbert into the Salt Lake Temple, because his son is going through for the first time today, this afternoon. You know, this interview has focused on your experiences in Korea, but it also gives us an opportunity for you to just kind of leave a message to the future, to your family in the future. What would you like to say to them? That's kind of a big question, and it's coming as a little bit of a shock and a surprise; so if you want to take a minute and just kind of think about it. But what message would you like to give to the future?

GB: What I'd like to have my children remember is the gospel. Remember to be Christians, be Mormons, stand up for what the Church stands for. Don't be afraid to live the gospel. Don't be afraid to wear those garments. Don't be afraid to say you're a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Don't back down. Stand up, be part of the community. Take a voice. If you stand up for no liquor, fight against it. Don't say, "Well,

⁷ The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) is an American non-profit performance-rights organization that protects its members' musical copyrights by monitoring public performances of their music, whether via a broadcast or live performance, and compensating them accordingly. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Society_of_Composers,_Authors_and_Publishers, accessed 09-26-2019.]

that's fine." Defend your standards. Defend what you stand for. Don't let the minority rule you. You rule—the majority.

I think so many times, we as a Church back off. We're afraid we're going to ruffle feathers. Personally, I don't care. Because, if I'm stepping on your toes, like the old song Tennessee Ernie Ford used to sing, "If I'm stepping on your toes, your shoes are in the wrong place." And so, I think we're afraid to say what—I've had people say, "Well, all of the liquor laws . . ." I flatly tell them, "You don't like it? Move out of state. Go where you can have your drinks. I don't want it, so I'm going to stand up for what I don't want. If you want it, you go where you go. Don't try to change me, because I was here before you were here. So, if you don't like it, move." I'd rather see the Church take a stand. Doesn't bother me to ruffle feathers.

MH: All right. Anything else?

GB: I don't know if that what you wanted.

MH: It was perfect. So, here's what I'd like to do. And I don't know that we need to get this on video, but what I'd love to do is keep the audio recording going, and just have you tell us a little bit about some of these photos; and then with your permission, can I just take a picture of these pictures?

GB: You may. Nobody has the negative.

MH: I know, these are, like, priceless.

GB: You'll never see them anywhere else.

MH: Yes, that's right.

GB: I don't think they realize that we had a basketball team.

MH: No. So, who's this good-looking guy here?



GB: Oh, that's some guy they called "me." [*laughter*] Okay, let's start with that one. I wouldn't even care if you take that with you. I don't care. Nobody's interested in it.

MH: Well, you know what? One of your kids might be interested in it. And what I'd like to do—I'm still getting a lot of glare. Let's turn off this light. Yes, that's real good. That's good. Samantha, if you want to take the camera down and get it packed up.

GB: That's a newspaper, Army newspaper, talking about what the Signal Corps is preserving for posterity. What does a photographer do? And there's pictures of me down in there.

MH: On this one?

GB: That's me there. Then these here, I'm the photographer, under the captions. I'm the photographer.

MH: You know, one of these days, it would be really nice to preserve this whole thing, because this is very unique. Let's get this one, too, that you were talking about.

GB: That was just around the corner in the mountains, where the Army stayed. Do you remember the show M*A*S*H?



MH: I do.

GB: As I said, that was just over the hill. The nurses would come right by us every night. They'd send a photographer every night over there to the headquarters. They had some wild parties over there.

MH: Wild parties. And here's the corpses. What I want to do, is I want to get that one, where you're standing in no man's land.

So, this is the one where you are there in no man's land, and the bullets start flying, and you take off.



GB: Somebody was shooting. I don't know what they were shooting at, or who, but we didn't stick around to find out.

MH: Yes, for sure.

GB: Let me tell you an interesting story. There was a bunker there that the Americans had built, and I went in said, "I'm going to look inside this bunker out there." I opened the door, nothing in there. When we got back, we were talking to somebody. They said, "You couldn't have done that." I says, "Why not?" He said, "We booby-trapped that." I'd gone in and opened the door, and it didn't go off.

MH: Oh, my gosh. You could have lost your life in friendly fire.

GB: I could have, but I think somebody was protecting us.

MH: So these pictures of Seoul are pretty cool. That's real historic.



GB: It sure doesn't look like that nowadays.

MH: No. I spent a night in Seoul once. It's all built up. All high-rise apartments, and stores, and signs. Now, I want to get these. These are the orphans, and this is the building where you met, when you were out in the center of Korea? And these are some LDS soldiers coming in for the meeting?



GB: Right, yes.

MH: Okay. So, that's the meetinghouse, and here's the orphans, and here's the soldiers.



GB: One of those soldiers is from Huntsville.

MH: And then this one, is this down in Seoul, or is that that building?



GB: No, that's that building there.

MH: That's that building. And these are all members of the Church there?

GB: We held kind of a—everybody tried to get together.

MH: “Group picture after conference at Inje,” I-N-J-E.

GB: Incheon.

MH: Incheon, okay. That's pretty cool.

GB: The LDS chaplains kind of would get together at conference, or try to.



MH: And here's the LDS chaplains, right here.

GB: Right.

MH: And let's see what it says on the back here. It says, “My pride. A group shot of LDS chaplains. I'm proud of this one. Note the patch on Green.” That's the 80th Army patch. So that is pretty cool.

GB: See, you'll never see those pictures anywhere, because nobody was there to take them.

MH: I know, I know. All right. This is the historic one. This is the long picture of a lot of servicemen, and couple of the Korean—and this is the one that quite possibly had the first Korean baptized.



GB: As I understand it. But who would know, other than the person that baptized them? And I thought Lieutenant Beck baptized them.



MH: And Lieutenant Beck was, like the group leader there in Seoul?

GB: Well, he was over the Photo Division there in Seoul, and he was the group leader in Seoul.

MH: And then this is just a group shot of an LDS—

GB: I think it was probably another conference where we'd get together.

MH: Down in Seoul?



GB: Yes.

MH: It's a lot of soldiers.

GB: That had a radio announcer that was LDS. I don't know if you've ever heard of her?

MH: Who was that? What was her name?

GB: I can't think of it right now.

MH: You had a little quartet going here? And the one I really want to get is the basketball team. Did you play on the basketball team?



GB: No, I coached them.

MH: You coached them? And would other Army groups have their own teams? And you'd have competitions?

GB: You'd have some. There in Seoul, you'd have not only Army, you had military, Air Force, and everybody else, you know.

MH: So, this group right here. Are these also LDS chaplains?



GB: They're LDS chaplains in the Seoul area.

MH: In Seoul, okay. That's an important one.

GB: I was the only photographer that was LDS at any of these things.

MH: So, you were the only one taking pictures.

GB: Yes, there wasn't anybody else. And the cameras were very available then, in those days.

MH: Now, are you in this picture?

GB: No.

MH: You're taking the picture?

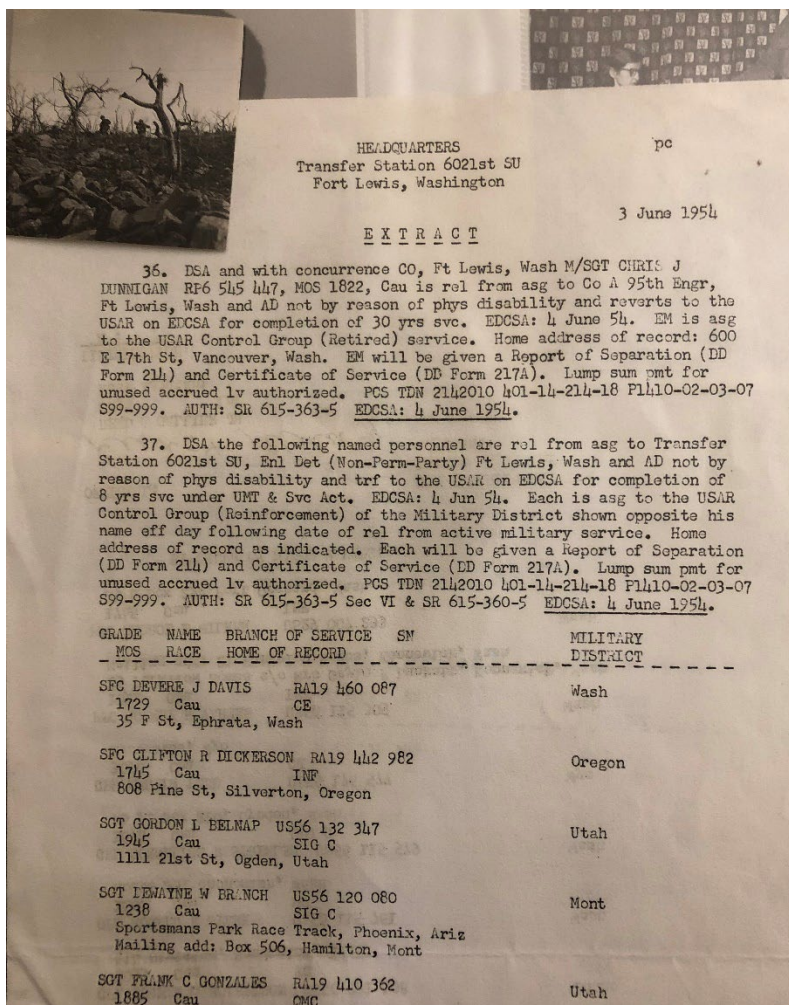
GB: Yes, I took it. Somebody has to take it.

MH: I get it, I get it. [laughter] Slow, but accurate. That is an awesome photo. You know, one of these days, when you're done with these photos, it would really be nice to put them in the Church Archives where they would be preserved.

GB: That's just horseplay there.

MH: Yes, okay.

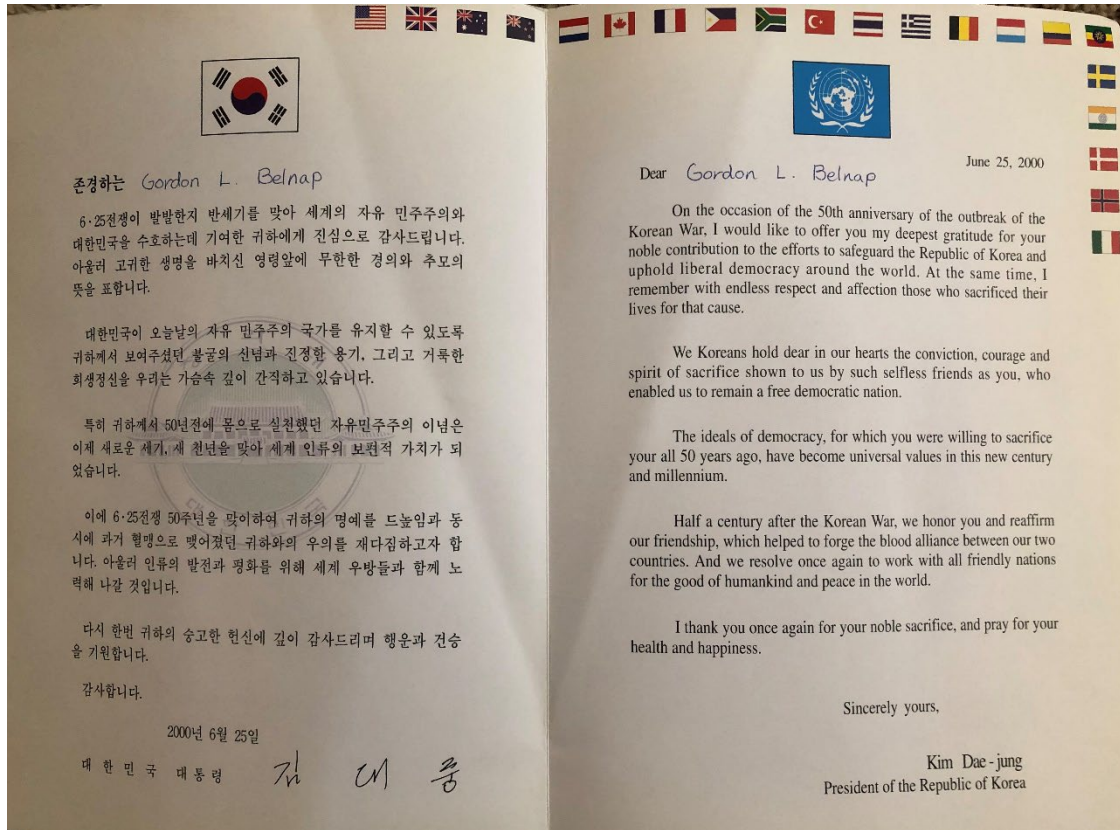
GB: That's my shipping-home orders.



MH: This right here? There you are. So, you ended up as a sergeant?

GB: Yes. Started as a private.

MH: Cool. Wow. All right. That was awesome. What's this letter of appreciation?



GB: They sent that out a few years ago. They sent everyone that served in the Korean War—notice the date on it.

MH: Yes, 2000. So, that's nineteen years ago.

GB: And they sent us a medal to go with it.

MH: Can I take a picture of that?

GB: I don't care. I don't know who sent it. Somebody sent it.

MH: The President of the Republic of Korea sent it.

GB: I was hoping I'd get into North Korea, but we never did. Nobody got permission to go up there.

MH: The pictures turned out pretty good, considering it's just a little telephone camera.

GB: I ended up being about five years, before I ever got out of anything, between the mission and the army. It's a stretch.

MH: That's a lot.

GB: Then came home and went to the University of Utah.

MH: And tell me again, you studied business?

GB: I took business management.

MH: And then what did you do for a career?

GB: Exactly what I didn't want to do. *[laughs]*

MH: What's that?

GB: I interviewed with U.S. Steel, and I wanted to go with some big company. And I'll tell you a story. This has to be divine intervention. I got up to go to the university. My wife was working. She worked at the naval base, secretary at the naval base in Clearfield. The phone rang, I picked it up, and it was head of the Placement Bureau at the University of Utah. Now, why would the head of the University of Utah Placement Bureau call me? He said, "You haven't interviewed with anybody at the bank. Bank of America is here for interviews. I think you should go."

I said, "I'm not interested, because I'm going to go this other way." On the phone he says, "I think you should go. Just go for the experience." Now, why would he call me? Enrollment of, what, ten thousand or whatever students? Why did he call? But he did, personally. So, I took the interview, and I can't think—my memory goes bad now. The son of one of the [General] Authorities was the person interviewing. So, I talked to him about it, and was I interested? Not really. I took one banking class, and that was all I took at the University of Utah. But I ended up being hired by Bank of America San Francisco.

MH: Wow. Did you move out to the Bay Area?

GB: I moved to the Bay Area.

MH: Where did you live?

GB: We lived in Walnut Creek and San Leandro.

MH: I grew up in Fremont, just south of San Leandro. In fact, I knew the Winkel family. He was my first stake president.

GB: Val Winkel's father?

MH: France Winkel. They owned Beaver Lumber.

GB: Yes, Beaver Lumber. Before we shipped out, Val and I were very good friends, and I'd ride with him to Alameda. He had a girlfriend, so I'd sit and visit with his parents. They were in Alameda. So, I lived in Walnut Creek, worked in Danville, then went over to San Leandro. Worked in the bank in San Leandro and Oakland. Then the Commercial Security Bank here offered me to come back. My dad wanted me to come back, so he, being county treasurer, kind of paved the way. So I moved here.

MH: But you spent your career in the banking industry.

GB: Incidentally, San Leandro, do you know who was there when I was there? Elder [David A.] Bednar. He's from San Leandro.

MH: Oh my gosh. Wow, I didn't know that.

GB: Yes, he's from San Leandro. So, I came back here, joined Commercial Security Bank. I was with them for eighteen years, vice president over the real estate department. And I financed several places. I did the Stateline Casino. I financed casinos. Do you realize that casinos are not owned by the people? They're licensed to individuals. No corporation owns the casinos, any of them. They're owned by individuals. Then I financed two casinos in Reno, [Nevada]. I had to get clearance from the Nevada State Gaming before I could finance them. So, I got a license. I could be a licensed casino owner.

MH: [*laughs*] In Nevada, right?

GB: In Nevada. And I was interviewed by someone who grew up in Ogden. He was my brother's friend. So, I was with the bank for eighteen years. You've heard a little about Perpetual Education Fund, maybe.

MH: Yes, a lot.

GB: Whose software do they use? Mine.

MH: Wow. So, did you commission that a software be developed that would track—tell us about that.

GB: Okay. I was over the real estate department. So, the Church had a lot of real estate. Seminary teachers, Institute teachers, a lot of houses. Well, my software could make real estate loans, service loans, the whole works. So, the Church rented my software. The Church doesn't rent software, you know that.

MH: Yes, they develop their own.

GB: They rented mine. It was fifteen years on my software. I got a phone call one day. I can't think—I'm sorry, my memory. I'm starting to lose it. I got a phone call, and anyway he gave me a Mormon cricket. I got one that they give out. You've probably seen them. Mormon cricket, those little green—

MH: So, was it Elder [John K.] Carmack, or Elder [Richard] Cook who called you?

GB: No, this was just in the Finance Department. Because they're using my software. They rented the software, they paid me a monthly fee, every month. And we'd send software down to them. I get a phone call, pick it up, and he said, "You know what? We've got a new program coming out. President [Gordon B.] Hinckley said it's called the Perpetual Education Fund."⁸ He told us that we have software in-house. We don't have to develop anything. Where is it?"

He said, "We have looked all over. We've checked every department. We've checked BYU, we've checked everybody. Nobody has the software," he says. "I don't know where President Hinckley is saying we have it in-house," but he said, "the last part, we've checked everything but you. With the software we've been using, yours, would it ever adapt to handling what we've got?" I said, "Well, what is it you're going to do?" He explained it to me, and I said, "Do you know what? It will do exactly what you want to do." So they said "Come on down." I went down there. My wife, I wasn't married to her. I'd been divorced. Met with the people down there, and they said, "What is it you got?" Met with—

⁸ The Church established the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF) to assist young Church members in paying for school so they can improve their employment and [become more self-reliant.] Applicants can receive two- to four-year loans to pay for school tuition, books, and fees. Most people receive loans for courses at technical schools. [<https://www.ldsjobs.org/ers/ct/articles/perpetual-education-fund?lang=eng>, accessed 09-26-2019.]

MH: Carmack?

GB: Probably Carmack. One of them, anyway. They explained it to me, and I said, "That's simple. What's the difference between a real estate loan, and a loan to a person, loan funding? You people have got the wrong idea here." And so, they explained it. I said, "Oh, we can do that. That's simple." "Well, President Hinckley said we have something in-house, but we can't find it. Do you have it?"

MH: It sounds like you did.

GB: So, I set up the program for them, designed it. My wife keyed in the first Perpetual Education loan. So, I set up the Perpetual Education software for the Church.

MH: Oh, my gosh. That is excellent.

GB: And what was fun, had two of the Seventies on that committee. I could tell them that they were wrong. *[laughter]* They were sitting there in a meeting, and they started saying, "This, this, this," I said, "No, that's not right." They said, "Well, what do you mean it's not right? We think it is." I said, "Well, I think you're wrong." *[laughter]*

MH: Was that Elder Cook and Elder Carmack? Do you remember them?

GB: Carmack, I think, was there. I'm not sure.

MH: Elder Carmack was the first one to be in charge of PEF [Perpetual Education Fund]. . .

GB: Then he had to be there.

MH: . . . and then Elder Richard Cook had been the CFO [Chief Financial Officer] at Ford, back in Detroit.

GB: He wasn't there. It was somebody else. But anyway, I set up and helped design the whole thing for them. They used my software, and we got them started. Then, they started switching over a few years later to BYU. And they are a bunch of stupid programmers. *[laughter]* I mean, I've seen they are. They are. Their brains, they got left somewhere else. I had to really almost educate a bunch of kids. But no, we had the whole thing set up. I designed it so you could even take the dollar value. It would convert back and forth, and we handled those loans, the service. And they ran on it until they got the thing converted over.

MH: Yes, wow. That's cool. That's excellent. So listen, I've got to watch the clock. I've got to get your signature on this agreement that says that you're okay that the Church can keep this interview. Are you okay with that?

GB: I don't want it. What does it mean to me?

MH: It means a lot to us.

GB: It means nothing to me, because it's in my head. [*laughs*] It was fun setting up that Perpetual Education Fund. I learned quite a bit about the Church. It's very departmentalized. No cooperation between anybody.

MH: There is some of that.

GB: We had to first meet with the Finance Department. Then you'd meet with another department. Then you'd work with the technical department. But we said, "Well, why can't you just hook to this once?" They wouldn't do it. So we did the same thing four times. Four times.

MH: Yes. Sign right where the "x" is, if I can get an autograph?

Appendix

“All Faces West” Newspaper Clippings

Sugar House Bulletin July 12, 1956



When Igor Gorin visited the Sons of Utah Pioneers Museum during the week he especially was interested in the portrait of Brigham Young, done especially for the museum by the artist Alvin Gittins. The noted singer will play the role of Brigham Young in the coming production of "All Faces West" in Ogden Stadium this week end.

11th Annual 'All Faces' Will Be Given in July

"All Faces West," the musical pageant of the story of Brigham Young and the Mormon pioneers coming to Utah, will be presented for the 11th consecutive year on July 21, 22 and 23.

The performances will be given at the 4th Street Park, it was announced Saturday by Gordon Belnap, new president of Ogden Pioneer Days, Inc., the sponsoring organization.

The place and dates were announced following the election of new officers. Serving this year with Mr. Belnap are: G. Stanley Brewer and Joseph F. Breeze, vice presidents; Boyd Coombs, secretary; and Linn Baker, treasurer.

Written by Roland Parry, the pageant will again feature Igor Gorin, famed haritone, in the lead role of Brigham Young. Mr. Gorin has starred in the role since "All Faces West" was inaugurated.

Mr. Belnap said the stage directing assignment has been given to Leonard Rowley of Weber College.

Frederick Davis of Los Angeles, director of the Mormon choir of Southern California, will handle the musical direction for the fifth year running. Overall supervision of the production will be under Mr. Parry.

"The city of Ogden has endorsed the production and given us permission to use the 4th Street Park. We are hopeful that the site can be developed sufficiently for use in future years for outdoor cultural, religious and civic events," Mr. Belnap said.

A portion of the park is raised terrain and equipment will be used to develop the terrain into a three-tier stage in a natural setting. The stage will cover the entire expanse of the hill in the park and extend about 85 feet.

Seating will be provided to accommodate between 5,000 and 6,000 people. Patrons will be able to park at the site, Mr. Belnap said.

In past years "All Faces West" has been performed at Ogden Sta-

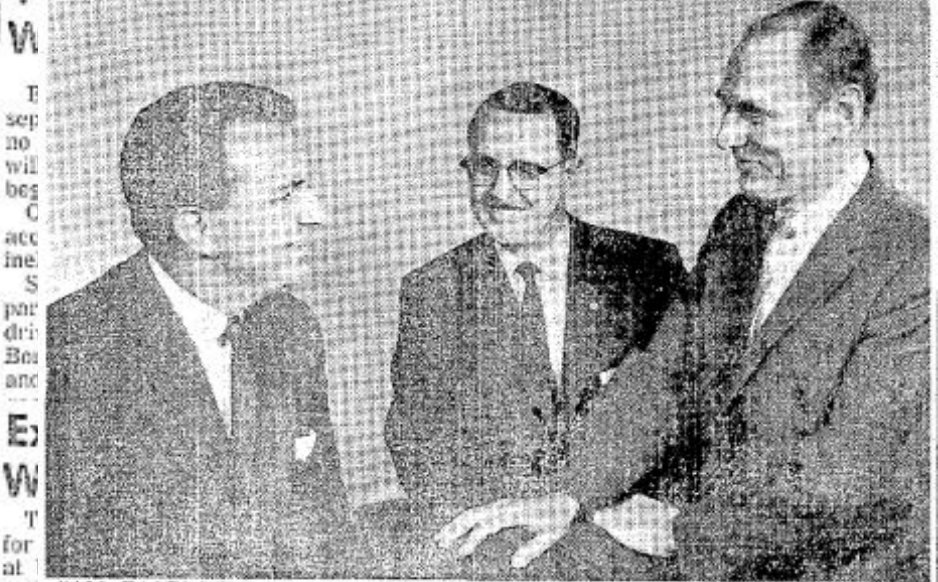
dium prior to the nightly rodeos. This year the pageant will be run in conjunction with rodeo performances.

"Moving the production to the 4th Street Park will provide a new natural setting and we feel the pageant this year will be the best in the 11 years of its existence," Mr. Belnap said.

Serving as directors in the organization this year are Earl E. Jones, Arthur Wooley, T. O. Smith, George Frost, LeRoy B. Young, Ted Schmidt, Howard Ogden, Rulon Stanfield, and A. L. Smith.

Other committee members are Mr. Parry, William P. Miller, Arch Webb, Louis Gladwell, David Sawyer, Albert Covico, Ken Kearney, Robert Moyes, Leon Millet, Joseph Deamer, Daniel D'Hulst, Raymond Wright and Stewart Radmall.

4 Officers



"ALL FACES WEST" officers, Gordon Belnap, president; Boyd Coombs, secretary; and Linn Baker, treasurer, (left to right) discuss preliminary plans for the annual performance in July. Two other officers of the board of directors, G. Stanley Brewer and Joseph F. Breeze, vice presidents, were absent when photo was taken.

denes who are living in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Workers Building Stage In Park for 'All Faces'

Construction of the three-tier natural stage for the July 21, 22 and 23 production of "All Faces West" at the Fourth Street Park is proceeding rapidly.

Bankers, accountants, an attorney and others in overalls have been wielding shovels to get the earth and stone stages ready for the 11th annual production of the play.

The first tier will be about 90 feet long, some 17 feet deep; the second about 75 feet long, 12 feet deep and the third, and topmost, will be about 45 feet by 12 feet.

The stages will be about four feet above each other with the faces finished in natural stone, which some day will be covered with a native grass for strength and added color.

Present plans call for free parking areas to the east and west of the stage capable of holding 3,000 cars.

Viewers will be seated in chairs

on the green park area below and to the north of the stage. All action on stage will be to the south and above the audience so that all seats will afford a good view of the play.

Gordon Belnap, chairman of the pageant committee, said he wished the concept held by many people that All Faces West is a "piece of Mormon pageantry" would be dispelled.

He said to consider it more an American saga would be a better view. There is no doctrine of the church in the story, he said. He compared it to historical plays on the arrival of the Pilgrims to the American shore.

Mr. Belnap said the pageant of the Mormon pioneer's trek into Utah has had more than 100,000 paid admissions in its first decade.

Present plans call for free seating in a covered pavillion to the east of the park for shut-ins.

New Stage Takes Shape For Pageant

Igor Gorin, nationally famous baritone, who will sing the lead role of Brigham Young in "All Faces West" here in July, is looking forward to his 10th successive appearance in the famed pageant.

Gordon Belnap, new chairman of the annual Pioneer Days event, said today he talked with Mr. Gorin in New York City recently and outlined to the singer the changes planned this year.

Mr. Gorin was enthusiastic in his response to what we are planning," the chairman said.

The baritone has been appearing in concerts along the East Coast this past winter, Mr. Belnap said.

TRIBUTE PAID

Mr. Belnap paid a tribute to Junius Tribe, who resigned the position of chairman of the committee this year.

"Mr. Tribe has built up a most magnificent production in the last 10 years. It is now nationally famous and adds to the cultural prestige of Ogden City. We are most indebted to him and his staff."

"All Faces West" received a lot of free publicity in Miami recently, the chairman said. "The Miami News published a half million brochures on one of Mr. Gorin's concerts and it told of his leading role in the famous Mormon pageant given in Ogden each year."

Mr. Belnap said director T. Leonard Rowley has designed an entirely new permanent stage that will be available for public events at the Fourth Street Park.

85-FOOT STAGE

Base of the stage will be 85 feet wide, 25 feet deep. After a three-foot rise the second stage will be 65 feet wide, 17 feet deep. Another rise leads to the next stage, 15 feet in diameter.

Above that will be the horizon with a road down which covered wagons and horsemen will move in a realistic manner.

The stage levels will be black-topped and work is to start on this project within the next week, the chairman said.

"The committee wants to complete this as a community project that can always be used for any city endeavor. Also any profit realized from 'All Faces West' will be turned over to the city parks department.

Six thousand folding chairs will be placed in the park for the spectators, he said. "We expect a very large crowd the last night of the pageant, July 23, which is a Sunday."

'All Faces' Chairman Looks Ahead

Plans to publicize and better stage this year's production of "All Faces West" appear to be more widespread, a good deal of the credit ought to go to the pageant's chairman, Gordon Belnap.

Mr. Belnap, 31, an assistant vice-president in the real estate department of the Commercial Security Bank, has been directing over-all activities for this year's performance with far-sighted vigor, seeing not what this year represents, but what the future holds for the play.

Last year he was in charge of ticket sales, this year he heads the production, having been voted into the office by the board of directors in March.

His first move, to make the production "live," entailed three changes—of stage, performance dates and story twist.

DIALOGUE ON STAGE

This last, through use of dialogue on stage, eliminates the long scene changes of past performances.

His future plans call for advertising "All Faces West" nationwide.

"All Faces West" is the only major non-scenic tourist attraction Ogden has," he said. "It's the only story produced in the U.S. depicting the history of Utah."

Enthusiasm is catching and Mr. Belnap's is contagious. He would like more people to consider the story as a piece of Americana. To be sure, it is closely interwoven with the Mormon's westward march, but so too is the history of this state, he argues logically.

10,000 to 20,000

"With this in mind I'd like to make 'All Faces West' a major attraction for Ogden which will draw between 10,000 and 20,000 tourists from across the nation. People would schedule their vacations to include the pageant."

"That alone would bring about a quarter million dollars into Ogden."

Next year's plans are already being formulated. Utilizing the state travel office magazine, travel bureaus and the World Fair at Seattle, he hopes to publicize Ogden's epic musical.

Notices on the play and its cast will be mailed to more than 400 major newspapers across the nation.

He also commented on the com-



GORDON BELNAP
Looks Ahead

munity backing of the play, which seems to be a little stronger this year on the lower levels of volunteer actors and other participants. He is adamant in his belief future success depends on Ogden's active participation in the play from all religions and spheres.

"The people of Ogden could help make 'All Faces West' a national story by encouraging friends and relatives to schedule vacations so as to allow them to be in Utah during the pageant," he said.

Weed Control Tour Planned Wednesday

Persons interested in weed control may attend a control tour Wednesday beginning at 9:30 a.m.

The tour will begin at the north end of the Huntsville City Park. Chemical treatment of ditch bank weeds and weed plots will be seen.

In the afternoon, the tour will begin at 1:30 at the Wilson Church, and areas where ditch bank weeds have been controlled by burning and chemicals will be observed. Also on display will be the burning of alfalfa stubble and control of quack grass.

Extension agronomist Louis A. Jensen will be on hand to answer questions.

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