



Julie Bentz Oral History Interview, June 14, 2013

Title

“Growing up in Oregon and attending OSU”

Date

June 14, 2013

Location

CH2M Hill Alumni Center, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Bentz describes her experiences in ROTC, the nuclear engineering program, and OSU in general. She begins by describing her motivations for coming to Corvallis, joining ROTC, the nuclear engineering program, and the military. She then goes on to express the difficulty of coming to a large college after high school and how ROTC helped her to adjust. From there she relates the ways in which, with the help of mentors, she chose radiation health as her academic focus. Her experience as a female ROTC member is also discussed. Other topics of discussion include her social experiences, living at Snell Hall and the Newman Center, and memorable events such as football games and visits to OSU by Linus Pauling and Bob Hope. She finishes the interview by recounting some of her experiences in the nuclear engineering program - including first indications of the Chernobyl disaster - and being a member of the Oregon National Guard, an OSU alumnus, and an Oregonian.

This interview was conducted in connection with Bentz' June 2013 visit to Corvallis, during which time she delivered the Commencement Address at OSU's graduation exercises.

Interviewee

Julie Bentz

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/bentz/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, if we could start by having you introduce yourself, could you give us your name and today's date, and our location?

Julie Bentz: So, I'm Major General Julie Bentz. Today's date is June 14th, 2013, and we're at the CH2M Hill Alumni Center, here at University of Oregon [laughs]—Oregon State University. [Laughs]

CP: Yes. Let's get that one right.

JB: [Laugh continues]

CP: Okay, so our conversation today will talk mostly about your time at OSU.

JB: Mm-hm.

CP: I'd like to start by asking you if you could tell us about your earliest interest in the military, and how that evolved, prior to coming to OSU?

JB: Sure. So, first off, my dad was in the military, but the person who really influenced me was my brother, Randy. He's a year older than I was, and he was looking at the military from a very early age, and he really wanted to go to West Point. And so he applied for West Point, and for an ROTC scholarship, and got both, and chose West Point. And so because he was only a year above me, I got to experience the Plebe, West Point, right? So the freshman experience at West Point. And I thought, hm, you know, ROTC sounds kind of interesting. Let me look into that. And of course, Oregon State had a great ROTC program, and that's how I decided to go, and also apply for some scholarships. And I got both an Army scholarship and an Air Force scholarship, and when I had to make the decision which one to be, you know, I thought, well, my dad's Army; my brother's Army. I think I'll keep it in the family. That's how I ended up in the Army.

CP: How did you decide on OSU?

JB: So, honestly, my parents were very interested. You know, all of my siblings went out of state for college. And my parents really wanted to have a home school that they could go, and be part of all the activities, and go to the sports games, and kind of claim a—a home school as their own. So, you know, I was interested in engineering. I was interested in ROTC. And it just seemed to me that, you know, what we had here at Oregon State was everything that I really wanted, and so anyway, that's kind of how I ended up at this school.

CP: And what was the transition like for you, going from a rural environment to a pretty big school?

JB: Horrible! Oh, my gosh! My freshman year was—what a challenge, you know! I went from being kind of a big fish in a really tiny little pond, to kind of being an average fish in a really big pond. And the adjustment my freshman year was pretty—pretty hard. And you know, I always was very embarrassed about that, thinking, you know, here I was such a—I thought I was pretty smart, coming out of high school, and you know, I found out maybe I wasn't so smart. And it was neat, as I got older, to realize a lot of people have those experiences, where that freshman year is just a really, really hard transition period. And so, yeah.

CP: Was there anything that helped you get through that transition period? Or was it just a matter of time?

JB: I think the best assistance for me during that year was the ROTC program. The Beaver Battalion was incredibly active! Every weekend we were doing drills, and orienteering, and repelling. I mean, we just had a blast with all of the activities we did. And they—they were very inclusive from freshman all the way up to senior, so that—that probably was the thing that helped me the most, of just saying, "Oh, okay. There's a life here to be lived as a college student," and so, yeah.

CP: Did you have a sense of what you wanted to try to do in college, when you came to college?

JB: Oh, heavens, no. You know, considering that I'm the fifth in my family, and all four of them were in college when I hit my freshman year, you'd think I'd have a lot better understanding of what college is supposed to be. But it was still a shock. And so, you know, I was learning as I was going, yeah.

CP: So how did that evolve over the course of the time that you were here, in terms of your idea of what you wanted to try to do as a college student?

JB: So, you know, I think I never did kind of turn off the idea of just, you know, living the day that I was in, and trying to figure out what the faculty was trying to teach me. The ROTC was one that, you know, they showed us, kind of, "Okay, this year you're in this situation for your rank structure, and where you fit in the Cadet Corps." And I was very fortunate; as a senior, they selected me for one term [5:00] as the battalion commander of the ROTC battalion. So yeah, that was about, I guess, as high as you can go in the college. I realized, with really good assistance from some mentors in my education, that the part of nuclear engineering that—you know, my academic side that really interested me was where radiation and biology kind of meet. And so, at that point, health physics, what we term it was, was located in the General Sciences program. And so I was able to move over into that field of study. And I think at that point, that's when I really hit my stride, and really saw the vision of, you know, how to get through college, and come out the other end very successful, and ready for, you know, taking on the brave new world as a second lieutenant. Yeah.

CP: So your first few years, first couple years, then, you were sort of setting the foundation, in terms of your area of study, and then at some point you made the switch over to the more specialized?

JB: Correct.

CP: You mentioned there was a mentor that was involved, or two?

JB: Correct, yeah.

CP: Who were those folks?

JB: My biggest mentor was most definitely Doctor Art Johnson. He was our head health physicist. He came here to Oregon State University, I think, from Hanford, and just a really—a phenomenal faculty, understanding of, you know, the role of health physics, and a nuclear engineering program, as well as at a nuclear reactor—really helped articulate that very well to me, in a way that I could understand. Steve Binney was another one of my faculty instructors. He was core reactor program, also really good mentor, really helped me understand, kind of, where my strengths were, were my weaknesses were. So he was a very—a good mentor for me, through college.

Now, you may not know this, but my sophomore year I actually did an exchange out to University of Hawaii in Manoa, and so I took a year out there, to do just basically, you know, your core course work. My sister had graduated from college, and got a job out there as a nurse, and she said, "Hey, come on out, and live with me for a year." And so I did that, but knew that I needed to come back to OSU and finish out my program. So when I came back my junior year, you know, there were some courses that I had fallen behind in, but I was determined to get this done in four years. So my junior year was a pretty slavish kind of year. I'm sure you've experienced that yourself, where I was taking anywhere between twenty-one and twenty-seven credit hours per term, and just kind of keeping my head right above the water.

But I wanted to be—you know, I wanted to be done, and I wanted to hit that four years as my—as my graduation mark. So, we were able to do it. And at the end, it was kind of interesting, because I ended up with so many credit hours that when I was having this discussion with my mom and dad: do I get a Bachelor of Science, or do I get a Bachelor of Arts? And from my parents' generation, the Bachelor of Arts was so much more esteemed, right? It meant you were much more well-rounded. You had your courses of humanities and social sciences, and your maths. I mean, and so they were adamant—bachelor of arts. Well, all the folks in my program, "Julie, nuclear engineering? Bachelor of Science. That just seems kind of strange to the community if you come out."

So it turns out, my senior year I was one credit shy of being able to double major. And so my last term, I thought, hm. What kind of program can I take that's one credit hour? And so I thought, I know—band! It's one credit hour, right? And so I went over to the band instructor, knocked on his door, and said, "I would be interested in this program." This came off; sorry. And he looked at me, and he goes, "Oh! What do you play?" I said, "Well, you know, I don't play anything, but

I could probably play percussion." You know, how hard is it to beat a drum? [Laughs] So he goes, "All right, so here's the deal: if you show up for the performance, it's an A. If you don't show up for the performance, it's an F." And I said, "Okay. I get that one."

And so we showed up every week, practicing, and I learned just [10:00] how challenging percussion can be, right? If you study any music, right, you get this measure, and it's a blank measure that says: 168. So you have to count off 168 measures, and then you come in, and it's ba-bum, bum. You know, so there were a couple of us, and we'd try and take turns counting. And we'd lose track after about twenty, right? [Laughs] And we're like, "Okay, just watch the conductor, and see if we can figure it out." So needless to say, when it came time for the—for the recital, for the big performance, he actually brought in a couple ringers who actually could read music, and he gave us each our kind of one-star music that we could do.

So I ended up with the triangle on one of these songs, and again, totally lost my place on where I was at. So I just figured, well, it's only a little triangle. So I ended up just going ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling [laughs] all the way through the music! So the good news is, is that if you show up for the performance, it's an A. So I ended up with my additional credit hour, and got to get both the Bachelor of Arts and a bachelor of science! [Laughs]

CP: And that was the end of your percussion career?.

JB: [Laughs] My family got me a little triangle. I still have it in my kitchen! [Laughs]

CP: Can you tell us a little bit more about your ROTC experience?

JB: Sure. So, you know, ROTC has a responsibility of taking people who know nothing about the military, and giving them, you know, basic instruction on kind of the military science, and then really work on leadership skills. And I never understood how different that was for a type of training until I got into the military, and realized, you know, we don't really train people in leadership skills until they're kind of mid-management—you know, you're seeing some potential. And a lot of people don't get that leadership training until their mid-thirties, late-thirties. So here, you know, it's one of the beautiful things about ROTC, and any of our academies, is that they really take that very seriously, to inculcate their junior officers in leadership skills and values.

CP: What was the climate like for you as a woman in ROTC?

JB: It was great! It really was. We had a really large class of women cadets. In fact, when I graduated—I was just looking at my photos not too long ago, because I was promoted just last week. And I was promoted on the exact same day that I was commissioned, twenty-seven years ago. And so it had me bringing out my photos, and looking at it. And we had, in a class of about twenty-four, I think there were eight or nine women—I mean, a third! Even today, that's a big number.

CP: How about the leadership within ROTC? Were there any females at that point?

JB: Yes. We had a major who was African American, and came out of the Deep South, and just a—just a real firecracker of a leader, just a really great woman to emulate, and so she was one. And I think that was it; I think we had one on—on cadre, mm-hm.

CP: What aspects of the ROTC training did you enjoy the most?

JB: Oh, I loved drill and ceremony. That was a lot of fun. We'd go out onto McAlexander Field House, and you know, get our—our rifles out. And they'd have us marching, and doing drill and ceremony, and I loved that! I really enjoyed that. It's interesting, you know, to think back, that was the one and only time I've ever done drill and ceremony. But you know, just learning all of the crack formations, and all the commands. And we were really good; we were winning all the awards in those years for drill and ceremony. And our sergeants, who are non-commissioned officers who kind of trained us in that, were stellar! And, yeah, that was a great learning experience as well, mm-hm.

CP: OSU has a very rich history in terms of its military background.

JB: Mm-hm.

CP: Once upon a time, it was known as the West Point of the West. Is that something that was—that was part of your curriculum, [15:00] learning about the history of OSU, and its military tradition?

JB: No. I don't recall it, anyway. I do recall we had, in my general science courses, history of science. So I remember having a lot of history courses, but it was on the science side, not on the military. And it's not that we probably weren't given that; it's just that I'm not remembering it at the moment, so yeah.

CP: So were you familiar with people like Ulysses Grant McAlexander at the time?

JB: No. I learned a little bit about him today. They had a great write-up in the commissioning ceremony today, and two pages on just the history of the Army ROTC here at Corvallis College. Yeah, yeah. So.

CP: Yeah, a couple of prominent World War II flying aces, as well.

JB: Right, right, mm-hm.

CP: Rex Barber, and Marion Carl.

JB: Yeah.

CP: What was your social experience like at OSU?

JB: So, my freshman year, I was probably most engaged with the ROTC community. When I came back as a junior, I got a lot more involved with the Newman Center, and kind of the Catholic student body. We formed a really great community there, just over on Monroe. Right across—is it Gilbert Hall that's right there, right across from Monroe Street? So, that was kind of my social circles, then, for my junior and senior year, which was great. I still stay in contact with a lot of those people today, yeah.

CP: You mentioned, before we started interviewing, a story about Snell Hall.

JB: [Laughs] Yeah. So, Snell Hall used to be the quiet dorm. It was the dorm for all the engineers. And as a freshman that announced that I was going to be a nuclear engineer, I was allowed to stay there in those dorms. And what was great is, you know, we took pretty seriously study. You know, there was lights out, or quiet dorm rules for most of the evening. And it was fun that on the finals week, people would come out of their rooms and say, "We're done studying. We've been studying all term. It's time for us to go have some fun." And so we'd go out onto the campus on finals week, and just have a blast! You know, get the Frisbees out, play on the quad, and no one was around. They were all, you know, buried in their dorm room, studying for finals. And it was kind of neat. That's when you realized, boy, get all the work done up front, and you can have a, you know, a good, fun time when everybody else is stressed out. So, yeah, that was a great—that was a great year.

CP: And you said that that was the last year that Snell Hall was a dorm?

JB: That's correct, yeah, my freshman year.

CP: You referenced this already, but I'm interested in knowing a little bit more about the importance of your faith in your college years.

JB: Yeah. So, I guess, you know, I started off with saying my freshman year was a real challenge. And I think some of the equilibrium came back when I, you know, kind of realized that there was a faith component to this whole study aspect. And getting it right emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually, is really where we capture our balance. I think that was something I learned here at university, yeah.

CP: Were there any events that you recall as being particularly impactful during your OSU days, either local, or even beyond that?

JB: Hm. Impactful?

CP: Or memorable.

JB: Yeah, memorable. Well, yes. I enjoyed the games. There were football games. So, ten years after I left, after I graduated from OSU, I went back for grad school. And I was in one of the Midwestern universities, and I think what was surprising for me is back when I was an undergrad, you were always, "Oh, come out to the game! Come watch the games." And so it was really easy to grab friends, and go over and, you know, watch a football game, or watch a basketball game. And you know, you just walked in with your student ID, and that was great. [20:00]

And so in the Midwest, you know, it was much harder to get into any of these games. And I was always surprised, because I'm like, "Well, wouldn't you want your student body to be there, really encouraging the fans?" So that was a really good, you know, undergraduate experience for me. The military had a couple really wonderful military balls, and you know, dining-ins, that we would do, and those were incredibly memorable for me. I'll probably remember more as we—as we go along.

Oh, Linus Pauling came! Oh, I'll never forget that. They brought him in, and filled up the Gill Coliseum. I forget where he was giving his talk. And you know, that was—that was pretty memorable. I think he was talking about nuclear winter, of all things, you know, so it got all my classmates out to come and listen to him, so yeah, that was pretty interesting. And Bob Hope came, if I'm not mistaken. He came out for one student body event. So yeah, they brought in some amazing people. I'm sure they still do, so.

CP: Yeah. Well, we are here the day before graduation. I wonder if you can recollect on the day of your graduation.

JB: So, my mother was very adamant that she wanted to attend everyone's graduation. So you know, here I was number five; she'd made it to all the other four. And I have to say, you know, I knew that my graduation was going to be very different from the other four, because you know, three graduated out of a real small Catholic college, and my brother was West Point, you know, and so it's just a different experience. And I knew that this one was going to be really large, and long, and it wasn't something that I was particularly enthusiastic about going to. And my mom was adamant I would get the gown, I would go, because she wanted to come and be part of it.

So we had the ceremony over in Gill Coliseum, and it was packed! I mean, there was about, how many of us? Three thousand, that were getting degrees conferred. And everyone was just stuffed into that coliseum. And it was June, and it was hot! And after it was all over, I remember looking around for mom and dad, and finally, you know, I just—we didn't connect. So I'm like, "I'll just go back over to my apartment, and wait for them there." And so I got back there, and they had already got the barbecue going! The party was going! I'm like, "Did you come to the graduation?" And they were like, "Yeah! No, no, we were there! We were there!" So anyway, that's my memory of the graduation day.

For me, what was really incredible is that the day before, just as today, the day before graduation was our commissioning ceremony, and that's when I—you know, mom and dad pinned on my second lieutenant bars. And what was really neat is that my dad had his second lieutenant bars that he pinned me with, and that was—that was really, really special. In fact, just a year and a half ago, my niece graduated and was commissioned, and I flew out to her commissioning with dad's bars, second lieutenant bars. And to be able to pass on that to the next generation, which was neat. Yeah.

CP: Yeah, that's a nice story. How do you feel like OSU prepared you for your future after college?

JB: They did a marvelous job! The thing I use today, in a daily way, is, you know, this critical thinking that OSU gave—taught me how to do, and how to use, and just in my current job, where you're taking all this information that's coming in, and in a, you know, incomplete, preliminary fashion, you're having to do quick turn around times, and bring people with a lot of different opinions and ideas to a single, kind of, consensus decision. You know, that's where your critical thinking skills just kind of have to—have to pop in. And what I've discovered is the more you use it, the better honed that becomes. And I really put that down to OSU, for helping me just understand what critical thinking is, how to apply it, and that's probably my greatest gift that OSU gave me. [25:00]

CP: We talked a bit about your area of study while you were here, but you took an awful lot of classes.

JB: [Laughs]

CP: Were there other areas of study, or classes, that made an impact on you, outside of your major?

JB: Sure! I wanted to switch majors, and I wanted to be a German major. And my dad, wise man that he was, he said, "You know, it's okay if you want to change degrees." My dad never—you know, he loved the fact I was going to be military. He did not like the fact I was going to be a nuclear engineer. He was from old school, where women were supposed to be teachers and nurses. And I was very fortunate; my mother was a teacher. My sister had gotten a nursing degree. So I told him, "Ah, family has already used those two careers us. I've got to find something else to do." So he was okay with me changing my major, but he said, you know, "Don't go into German. That's—for many reasons, but stay in the sciences. Stay somewhere in there." And I was thinking, well, if I have to stay in the sciences, I'll stay in nuclear engineering. And that turned out to be a very good decision, yeah.

CP: So what grabbed you about nuclear engineering, while you were here?

JB: Well, I got into nuclear engineering because, again, going back to my brother, who I followed into the military—he was majoring in engineering, civil engineering. So my brother is very reflective, and you know, he'll think about something for—and do the research, and he'll come out, and he'll say, "This is the way I'm going." And you know, growing up, I always figured, well, Randy figured it out. It must be right, therefore that's what I'll do. And so he was a civil engineer. So I'm thinking, well, I don't really want to build roads. So what other kind of engineering programs are there? And so I sat down with my mom, and I said, "I don't want to be an electrical engineer, because I don't want to fix electrical fuse boxes all my life. Mechanical engineer? No, I don't want to be stuck in a garage, fixing cars all my life."

And I just went through all the engineering programs with these wrong understanding of what they were all about! And I get to the nuclear engineering, and I said, "Mom, what's that? That one I don't know." And she goes, "Julie, you know: protons, electrons, neutrons." And I'm like, "Nope. Nope, don't know what that's about. I tell you what. I'll go in, and I'll take nuclear engineering, and figure out what it's all about, and you know, see if I like it or not." So that's how I actually ended up in nuclear; it's all because my brother was a civil engineer, and I decided to—to go into the one engineering program that I was clueless on what it was, and had to figure it out. [Laughs]

CP: And so the reactor was here on campus, at that point?

JB: It was, yeah. Yeah.

CP: Were you able to engage with that?

JB: Absolutely! Absolutely. That was a blast! You know, just having a reactor on campus! I don't think folks outside of the nuclear world realize what a blessing, what a gift that is, to a campus. When I was going through, there were sixty-two reactors that were affiliated with universities. When I came back ten years later, there's twenty-nine. We're losing more and more of our reactors, that are attached as research reactors to a university. And those universities that have decided to hang on to them, and just continue to teach their students, it's a definite strategic capability that we need to just really push through, for our future, and stay committed to, yeah.

CP: Were you able to engage in any research projects when you were an undergraduate?

JB: Research projects, hm. Yes, as well as some work-study, as well. We were required, you know, kind of our junior and senior years, to do a lot of stuff there, in the reactor. So as a health physicist, I was doing a lot of the sampling for, you know, the clean rooms, and just kind of the whole understanding of: in an accident, here's how we decontaminate; you know, doing the inspections of people. I was always involved in any of the exercises where we were concerned about a radiation accident.

So of course, in April of my senior year, our alarms go off at the reactor, and we, you know, can't figure out what's going on. Well, a couple days unfold, and we realize we had the early warning of Chernobyl, because it took a while for the Soviet Union to actually say, "Yes, we've had an accident, and this is how we're dealing with it." So we actually—our alarms went off at least twice, that I recall, as the—as the fallout from the reactor did [30:00] kind of the jet stream across the globe. And so the first pass that came—and it was a pretty significant alarm, and I think the second time it still alarmed our systems. And who knew that—so that was April.

I graduated in June, went through my officer basic course in San Antonio, Texas, and in September I showed up for my first assignment at Landstuhl, Germany, at the radiological health—at the medical laboratory where we did radiological safety. And our job was to insure the safety of the people who were, you know, down range at Chernobyl, or who—that the food was safe, the milk, the water, that people were being—that they were eating and drinking. So we did a lot of environmental samples up and down Europe, while I was there, as part of the response to the Chernobyl disaster, yeah.

CP: Were you able to flow into that work, based on your undergraduate education, pretty well?

JB: Absolutely. Absolutely, yeah. And in fact, we were doing a lot of the stuff here at Oregon State, that when I, you know, finally got over to Europe, you know, they had the same equipment; they were doing the same kind of analysis. And so yeah, that was pretty cool, how that had a very seamless transition into that world, yeah.

CP: I'm really interested about the story about the alarms going off. That must have been a very unusual time in the department. I mean, people were speculating what was going on?

JB: So, the first time, right—the first time you're always looking at: is it coming from inside, or outside? It was pretty quick to discover, no, it's not from anything inside. So something was happening, and you know, maybe it was an alarm failure. There was a lot of things. Of course, you do a quick call up and down the coast board. You know, is it Hanford? Is it—you know, University of Washington had a reactor. And those were just very quick calls. I mean, the emergency response, even in those days, were pretty impressive. Then in fact, looking back from a historical perspective, you know, in '79, we had Three Mile Island. So in '79, TMI; '82, I start school, and '84 now I'm in my junior year—'84, '85, '86.

And what I'm noticing is that they had these rules and regulations courses that we were taking. And now, being over in D.C., what I'm seeing there is that, you know, after TMI, all of the federal regulatory guidance—you know, how we respond to a nuclear reactor incident or accident? They were building it. And so, like, I was living in the middle of history, where what I learned in '84 changed in '85, because they were getting better data, and changed again in '86. So you know, they had this requirement that we take the rules and regs each term. So now, add on top of that, from all of the lessons we learned from Three Mile Island, and put Chernobyl on top of it. And now all of a sudden, they're like, "Okay. You guys have learned all about the radiation safety standards. You've learned about, you know, how we're going to deal with a reactor incident. So, let's—we can actually put that into real time use."

What was interesting is that then with Fukushima, which I worked as well, it was interesting to pull out of the Reagan Library what was the after-action report of Chernobyl, and out of the Carter Library, what was the after-action of Three Mile Island. And having that as kind of a guide, you know, kind of write our own after-action report of Fukushima, mm.

CP: So when you—after your experience with Chernobyl, were you able to kind of talk to your old professors about, you know, your experience, and maybe share with them the connection between your education and your real world experience about that?

JB: Right. In fact, so Brian Dodd was another faculty member we had here, and after—and I was in contact with him after Chernobyl. But he then left from OSU, and went to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. And he had a three-year assignment there. And it was interesting; we actually crossed paths once or twice in my military career, which was pretty neat, yeah. [35:00]

CP: What was your experience of Corvallis, as a student?

JB: I loved Corvallis! Oh, my gosh! So, I don't know if you can still do it, but there's a sidewalk, right, that goes from Corvallis down to Philomath. The sidewalk, right? Right?

CP: Yeah.

JB: And so we would rent roller skates, or roller blades, and we would go, and roller skate back and forth to Philomath. Yeah, that was a lot of fun. We also had these incredible rope—we called them rope bridge exercises, where we would go out to the park that's just south of Corvallis, and you know, put up ropes, and rope bridges, rope whatever, and we would just practice, you know, moving across terrain on ropes, under ropes, by ropes. So that was kind of fun. We also had these

obstacle courses that we had around the area, that you know, we would go as part of the ROTC stuff, and that was always a lot of fun.

It was great, the training they gave us, because we went over to our—kind of the boot camp, leadership boot camp, between our junior and senior year, and you know, we had these obstacle courses that were pretty phenomenal. I mean, they were really heady kind of stuff. And I remember going up this one where you climb a rope ladder three or four stories up, into the trees, into the canopies, and then you have to cross over this log that's at that awkward size, that you—there's a feeling of, oh, my God, I'm going to die, kind of, to get over it. And then you crawl down some planks. Again, you're really high up—you know, no safety net—and you come down, and then you come across a lattice that's about two floors up. And then there's a rope that you shimmy down two floors. So anyway, great! We did that all the time. It was a lot of fun!

I got up and over, but my ranger buddy was right behind me, and got stuck right where that—that rope, that bridging was, that you always felt like, oh, my God, I'm going to die. And she couldn't get over it. And I had shimmied down, and realized that she was stuck. And so I sat there for probably about an hour and a half, and just coaxed her into: "Okay, here's what you've got to do. Here's what it's feeling like. Just take your time; take a breath." And it was interesting, because, you know, everybody said, "If you wanted to, you can come back down the rope ladder. You don't have to go over it." But she—it took her a while, but she got the nerve up to get across and over.

And you know, I think to myself, why was that so easy for me? And a lot of it was just how Corvallis had set us up for success in being, you know, forced to take some of these challenges a bit earlier, yeah. Corvallis was wonderful. I loved going down to the main street. I don't know if they still have that little theater, you know, that little tiny theater, I think?

CP: The Majestic Theater?

JB: Majestic, the Majestic Theater, yeah. And went down, and you know, that was—that was a hang-out. Moe's? I think it's now The Beanery, or something, but Moe's was there. And you know, we would always hang out at Moe's. And you know, I went down King Street to Saint Mary's, which is the Catholic church down there, and that's kind of where we did our Sunday services. Yeah, I mean, Corvallis was lovely; it really was. And to go from Corvallis up to Albany, there was that outdoor drive-in theater. I don't know if that's still around or not. No? Took that down? And what's interesting is we would go out to the coast regularly, but I don't think once, in my years here as an undergrad—I don't think once I went to Eugene! [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs] True Beaver.

JB: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

CP: Well, the university has changed quite a lot since the time you were here.

JB: It has.

CP: Can you comment on the change that you're observing since you've been back, and the future direction of the university?

JB: Right. I mean, you know, just the infrastructure you guys have put in here is pretty impressive. Reser Stadium? That wasn't around. That's amazing! Your Alumni Center here, CH2M Hill Alumni Center—beautiful! You're just set up a lot more for, you know, kind of a long term approach. And it just seems it's a lot more, you know, welcoming to community, to, you know, Beavers, and Beaver fans. I think that's really neat. Yeah, there seems to be some effort, as well, [40:00] on some of the buildings, at least I remember that were kind of falling into disrepair, to see them looking pretty nice. So, yeah, it's been—that's been kind of neat, kind of as a, you know, walk through, and seeing the difference on the campus. It's beautiful.

CP: Yeah. And the last question I have for you is: what has it meant to you to be an Oregon State grad, and to be an Oregonian?

JB: So, it is kind of interesting. I'm an Oregon Guardsman, which, you know, we're part of the total force of the Army. When people ask me, you know, what branch Army? And I said, "I'm Oregon National Guard." And it's always kind of funny, because it's not U.S. Army. It's not Army National Guard; it's Oregon National Guard. And one of the things my dad always said is, you know, "In the military at least, especially in the Guard, if you can come from your home state institution, it really makes a difference."

And it's interesting; in the Oregon Guard, you know, we've divided into kind of, I'll call it, two and a half groups. You've got the Beavers; you've got the Ducks. And then you've kind of got those other schools out there. And there's a camaraderie that you get from that, that's special. It's close-knit. It's fun. There's some competition in there. It's just, you know, there is something beautiful about belonging to your state, having an identity with your state. And everywhere I go, when they find out I'm from Oregon, those people who've visited here just say, "Oh, that's where I want to end up. I want to live in Oregon. I want to retire to Oregon. There's no more beautiful place than Oregon." And those who've never been there before said, you know, would ask, "Hah? Tell me more about Oregon." So anyway, it's a wonderful state to be from, and it's a wonderful state to return to. And so yeah, I'm very, very proud of my Oregon roots.

CP: Yeah. Well, we're glad to have you as one of us, too.

JB: Thank you. [Laughs] Thank you so much. What a lot of fun!

[42:06]