

**Harrison Barnes Jr.
Narrator**

**Wayne Clark
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on April 5, 2011
American Legion
Margaretville, New York**

WC: It is the fifth of April, 2011. We are in Margaretville NY at the American legion post. My name is Wayne Clark I'm at the New York state military museum in Saratoga Springs NY. Sir for the record would you please state you full name date and place of birth please?

HB: My name is Harrison Barnes Jr. Date of birth fourth of March, 1928 in Kingston, New York.

WC: Did you attend school in Kingston?

HB: No I attended grade school in Arkville for 6 years and then went to Margaretville central school where I graduated in 1946.

WC: You didn't go onto college? You went into the service?

HB: Yes I went right into the service. Graduated in June went in to the service in October.

WC: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

HB: No I enlisted, 18 month enlistee.

WC: Why did you pick the army?

HB: Because it was just the thing to do at the time. [Laughing]

WC: Did you have any family members that had served at all in the army?

HB: Well my father was in the World War One and my grandfather was in the Civil War.

WC: So you carried on the tradition?

HB: I guess something like that.

WC: Where did you go for your basic training?

HB: I enlisted in Oneonta first then we went to Albany for the physical. From Albany I think we went to Fort Dix for a few days until they shipped us to Camp Lee or Fort Lee Virginia.

WC: And you had your basic training there?

HB: I had basic training there.

WC: Was that your first time away from home?

HB: Yes, first time away from home. Some days got a little long.

WC: Well let me just go back a little bit, you were in high school during the war, World War two. What was that like for you? Did you experience any kind of shortages or rationing? Any of that?

HB: No not really. My dad had a little store so maybe that might of helped during the time but, no I don't remember any difficulties during that.

WC: Did you participate in any of the groups of high school students that were aerial observers? They'd watch for airplanes, airplane spotters.

HB: Yeah we did that, I had that. Called spotters. Had a little arm band you wore, rode your bicycle around. [laughing]

WC: So you were at Fort Lee Virginia and what was your training like?

HB: Just regular typical basic training...

WC: Was there anyone there that you knew from back home at all?

HB: No there wasn't. I didn't know anybody there. Of course when you got through you knew just about everybody in your platoon.

WC: Did you have any additional training after basic?

HB: After basic training we were shipped to Fort Bray North Carolina I think they called it a holding company, casual holding company until they found out what they wanted to do with us I guess. [Laughing] Then they sent us overseas landed at Bremerhaven I think it was.

WC: Did you go over by ship?

HB: Yes we went over by ship. As I say it took us, I think it was 13 days, 10 by ship and 3 by rail on a ship, a little sea sick for 3 days. [laughing]

WC: You landed in Germany?

HB: Yes I think we landed in Bremerhaven. From there we went to Freisen Germany.

WC: Now that was only a year after the war, was there still a lot of devastation?

HB: Oh yeah, yeah, things were still all blown up, everything. It wasn't a pretty sight really.

WC: How were you treated by the German people at that point?

HB: I was treated alright. I had no problems; I can't remember having any problems.

WC: What were your quarters like? Were they old German army barracks?

HB: Yes we were in... I forget the first name; I think they called it a casern, which I think is the German name for barracks. Then there in Freisen I was set into what they called then the 2nd constabulary band.

WC: So you were military policemen?

HB: No, no we were just in the band.

WC: So you were a musician?

HB: Yes.

WC: What instrument did you play?

HB: Tenor saxophone.

WC: Did you do that in high school?

HB: Yes. Then still in Freisen we went to, well it was the 2nd constabulary band then they called it 5th constabulary band. Then they transferred us to Munich and called it the 30th army band.

WC: Basically your job was to entertain the troops?

HB: Yes. Play at parades and swarting events, once in a while a concert but not very many concerts.

WC: Did you play backup for any U.S. shows or anything like that?

HB: Yeah, they had fancy parades that we played a lot in what they called combing plots in Munich and English gardens which was in Munich too. We were just outside of Munich. And then about every week we played at a different post or barracks.

WC: So you were doing a lot of traveling?

HB: Yes, the ol' army truck, they call him six bys or something. They didn't throw us in bus they threw us in trucks. [laughing]

WC: Did you get much time off in between gigs?

HB: Yes we had some time off but we did a lot of practicing. Practice playing, practice marching. We had to try to be as good as the Germans thought they were. [laughing]

WC: What about extra duties? Did you have to pull guard duty or kp or any of that?

HB: No we had no extra duties.

WC: Just playing in the band?

HB: Yes. We were attached to the 508th MPs in Munich for food and quarters.

WC: What rank were you?

HB: I just made PFC as far as I went.

WC: How was the money back then? Did it go very far on the German economy?

HB: Well, I forget what we got paid. Maybe 75, 80 dollars something like that. But I sent 50 of it home every month.

WC: Were things expensive on the German market? I mean obviously you could exist on your \$25 dollars a month.

HB: No I don't remember things being expensive. You might of run out of money playing cards maybe but not food. [Laughing]

WC: Did you stay in Germany for your entire enlistment?

HB: Yes, I stayed in Munich Germany until my enlistment was up.

WC: Did you enjoy the German beer?

HB: Yes, very much! [Laughing] There was one little bar room we used occasionally every once in a while. They'd see the army guys come in and they'd take us in the back room. They said they had better beer back there, I don't know if they did or not, but it was kinda fun anyway.

WC: Did you travel to Paris or anywhere outside of Germany?

HB: I went on two vacations while I was there; one was down to Garmisch in Germany. Even did a little skiing down there on the Zugspitze I think was the name of the mountain. Then we went for a few days' vacation in Switzerland. The biggest thing I remember about Switzerland was the guy making Swiss cheese. They had great big things of it. I don't know how much they weighed. Probably three foot across diameter, maybe six inches thick. The guys that handled it looked like they were wrestlers or something, quite a build.

WC: Did you have a vehicle at all while you were over there?

HB: No I didn't have a vehicle. But if you wanted to go somewhere once you went through the gate there was always some German there waiting to take you somewhere for a pack of cigarettes or something like that.

WC: What about communicating with the civilian population? Did you find that a lot of them spoke English?

HB: Yes they did, a lot of them did speak English, and I had no problem communicating with them. I was surprised they did speak that much English really. Of course some of it you didn't understand but you kind of figured out what it was.

WC: How many guys were in your band?

HB: In the band we had about 25.

WC: Were there any celebrity musicians at all?

HB: No, we had one trumpet player that was a real good musician but he couldn't parade so they kicked him out. [laughing]

WC: So you had to keep in step and play your instrument?

HB: Yeah play and keep in step. It was a fun thing to do.

WC: One of the other fellows that we just interviewed said that the GI's always showed up late for parades, did you find that to be true?

HB: No, not necessarily.

WC: So the German people, did they have a lot of parades? Or was it mostly American troops you paraded for?

HB: It was all American troops that we paraded for, of course different posts all over. The one I remember mostly was playing at the Dakar concentration camp.

WC: What was that like?

HB: They let us go through the camp. You can see where people were gassed and the ovens to burn up the bodies. At that time they had pictures all over the place that the GI's found. Pictures of bodies piled up, it was quite an exciting day.

WC: I had been there about thirteen years ago and they turned it into a museum but there was one building where they put the prisoners' barracks I guess. When you were there, there must have been quite a few buildings still there.

HB: There may have been I really don't recall. I do have some pictures of it. I should have looked at them before I came.

WC: That's alright. When did you end up being discharged?

HB: In February of 1948.

WC: So you were in two years?

HB: A little less than two years.

WC: Did they try and get you to reenlist at all?

HB: Yeah they tried, I didn't do it but maybe I should of, as you look back. [laughing]

WC: Did you really enjoy your time in Germany?

HB: I enjoyed it yes I did.

WC: Any particular reason why you didn't reenlist?

HB: No not really.

WC: You just wanted to get back to civilian life?

HB: I guess I didn't... I was lucky I missed all the wars. I guess that was a good reason not to reenlist.

WC: Did you get called up for Korea at all?

HB: No I didn't. I forget what I was classified, maybe four. No I didn't get called up.

WC: When you were discharged did you make use of the GI bill at all?

HB: No I didn't, and that's the main reason I enlisted, really. To be eligible for the GI bill you had to be in by October tenth of 1946, and I went in October third. I think that's why I really went in, for the GI bill, but I never used it.

WC: You didn't use it to buy a home or anything?

HB: No.

WC: Did you stay in contact with anyone you were in service with?

HB: I stayed in contact quite a few years with a fella in Oklahoma that played baritone. I think he was from Maine originally then moved to Oklahoma. We went out to visit him, had a good time.

WC: Did you end up getting married eventually?

HB: Yeah I got married in 1950. Been happily married ever since.

WC: What type of work did you do?

HB: When I first got out of the service I worked on pinball machines, juke box mechanic for about 20 years. Then I had opportunity to go in as post master in Arkville. I was there for about 24 years. Then I retired.

WC: What year did you retire?

HB: I retired in 1990. So I've been out quite a few years.

WC: I see you have a legion hat were you-?

HB: No this is a VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] hat. This was a post they had in Fleischmann's New York at the time. When I got out of the service I couldn't get in the legion because the dates were at the end of the war. I went in after the war. Then about early 1970's they changed the dates to allow anyone that was in World War Two up to December of 1946 to get into the legion. That's when I joined. But when I first got out, if you get into VFW, Fleischmann's had just formed the post, I joined that. I was in that for about 50 years. I think it's located in Shandaken New York now. I'm not a member anymore.

WC: How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?

HB: Well I'm still playing the saxophone. We get together every once in a while a few of us. The notes are getting a little smaller. But we had a good time. [Laughing]

WC: I don't think I've ever interviewed anyone who was a musician in service. That's definitely different.

HB: We had a warrant officer, the leader, he was a great guy. I don't know how he did it but if anybody had an argument come up he would open up a bible and read that passage and somehow or other he would coordinate that with the argument you were having. A great guy though.

WC: Alright well thank you so much for your interview.

HB: Thank you 19:00