Bruce R. Powers
Veteran

Wayne Clarke
Kathleen Vogel Matthews
Interviewer

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WC: Today is June 26, 2008, we are at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. We are interviewing Mr. Bruce Powers. The interviewers are Wayne Clarke and Kathleen Vogel Matthews. Mr. Powers, for the record, could you please state your full name and your date and place of birth.
BRP: My name is Bruce Raymond Powers. P-O-W-E-R-S. I was born December 10, 1927. Which makes me eighty and six months.

WC: Did you attend school in the area?
BRP: Not really. I came from Brooklyn. The history of my education is really private schools. I initially started at St. Michael's Academy in the Bronx. I spent about seven years there. Then I attended St. Ann's Academy on Lexington Ave in New York City. After that there were movements from one or two schools to Staten Island and then to Albany. But this was all related to my family. It was The Depression time and work was hard to come by. So I followed the family wherever they went. I would say having moved around so much was a bit of a difficulty for me. Because a lot of things, let's say in math, required intense concentration. LIke when I was with the nuns, I studied Latin and then had to break it off and didn't quite understand what I had done. Luckily, I came across mentors who helped me in the early years.

I think it is important to understand that when I entered the Navy, I had only attended regular education. But it was a good education. Because before that, at that time, I had been with the Jesuits. The high school in Los Angeles where my mother moved in the early 1940s. The best thing I can say about the Jesuits is they were very good at assessing what I knew, very good at making sure I learned what I had to know and I spent many hours after class getting up to speed. I remember things called Con [contemplation]

prayers. New Jersey had a seminar. I can't remember his name now. He was a strong handsome man who had gone to the Jesuits late in life. He had been a boxer. [Father Stuart]. That was the turning point for me, when I learned how to box. And I learned how to do it well. I was not a champion of the school, but I was able to enter some of the early competitions in the high school. Now why is that important? Because when I got into the Navy, I had to defend myself. I met some Depression kids. The way we settled things was a punch in the jaw. So I knew how to protect myself. I won't say that I was very aggressive, but what I learned most importantly was to hold my ground and not panic. And when you handle explosives, that is very, very important. We had some serious injuries on the UDT [Underwater Demolition Team] by people who panicked. Or just forgot what they should have been doing because they couldn't concentrate. They couldn't focus at the critical time.

But getting back to early school in this seminary, they also taught me how to swim competitively. So there in a nutshell was the foundation of going into the military. I didn't realize it at the time, but I had exactly the prerequisites for an aggressive combat team. I shouldn't leave out the Marines of course. They added the finishing touches. Can I describe that for a moment?

WC: Sure
BRP: One of the exercises we had during the training. In fact it was before we got into the UDT Teams, per se. When we were members of the Naval Combat Demolition Units, which I explained before, when we were talking initially. Really, a way to determine if people could handle explosives, because if they couldn't do that, there was no point in allowing them to continue. They were numbered separately. NCDU [Naval Combat Demolition Unit] Unit 1 through 13 and they were administered separately. But the UDT people always kept an eye on the people.

I should add this. We had petty officers, not many, but several petty officers who were powder monkeys. They had worked on The Grand Coulee and the Hoover Dam. You've seen pictures of them, I'm sure. They came down on ropes on the side of the canyon, drilled a hole, stuck in a half stick of dynamite, and swung away while it exploded. We had several of those people. They were forty, fifty years old, but they were total experts. They were constantly coming around and making sure that we didn't blow our fingers off. They were very, very careful about showing us how to use a charge machine, how to string our wires, how to check wires before the explosion, and how to avoid the wires when they were not properly connected. Those people were more important than the officers, and they were the people who really ran NCDU. Now, when they said that you

had enough experience, then you got into a UDT team. You'll notice in my biography I mentioned one very important thing. Most of the UDT officers were engineers, and they kept very close touch with the people who were running the NCDU units. One of the things they were most interested in was how people reacted to disorganized situations. Because it was absolutely critical that they were able to take orders on a split-second basis. You were not admitted into the teams until that was so. What fillip did this create? People in UDT 4, some of whom had been at D-Day on Utah and Omaha Beach, were moved close into our units to observe. And to work with the NCDU people so that they had advanced knowledge of people that they wanted to place in certain key positions. Now that's how I inherited the job of being the boat cartographer. Briefly, we'll describe an operation in training. We used LCVPs. I don't know if you're familiar with LCVP.

WC: No, do you want to explain that?
BRP: Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel. It's a small landing craft, maybe thirty to forty feet long. It's very small. It could move up to ten to twelve knots. It had open gunnels and one person who steered it. Fortunately, we had a lot of help from the Coast Guard to get people who could do that kind of thing and handle small boats. The important thing about using LCVPs was they transported about twenty people at a very fast rate. You had to learn how to dive out of the boat while the boat was moving because if it was in a combat area, and stopped to pick up people or to drop them off, it was a great target. One of the tactics that the Japanese ultimately developed was, they put people almost sacrificially on the dune line on the beachhead with the knee mortars and tried to mortar swimmers in the water out near the reefs. And their advantage was that they had zeroed in most of these positions beforehand, so they didn't have to fumble and try to find out their distances. It made it even more important to be able to go in with a small boat, move quickly, drop swimmers, and pick them up.

Now, I mentioned cartographer. I didn't do it all the time. Many times the job was passed to an ensign in the boat because he was the one with the radio to contact the command ship. But just picture a piece of kraft paper on a board. It already had preset lines on it plus a legend for various obstacles described. The swimmers dropped into the boat for reconnaissance, and they described a straight-line reconnaissance that they themselves had made. So if you had ten people in the water, there were ten lines of reconnaissance. You went straight in, you had a fixed point on the beach. You looked at the gradient, you looked at the coral formations, whatever else was down there, plus obstacles. So he had ten lines to deal with, and he interviewed each one, each swimmer, and they told him what they saw. That was usually predawn. And then, thanks to Admiral Turner, within a couple of hours, when the sun was up, he usually returned with explosive packs to blow

up the obstacles that might be along those lines of reconnaissance. The object of saying all this is that everything had to be done at high speed. There had to be no questions as to what you were doing second to second. Nobody stood in the boat and said, what am I to do next? Everybody had a particular job to do. Everybody was drilled thoroughly. There was one provision of the UDT, I think, that contributed to its demise early after the war. It had the right, gotten by Commander [Rear Admiral, Draper Lawrence] Kauffman at the, what we called the Blue Water Admiral level. To be able to vote out any enlisted man or officer who couldn't perform. It was just a matter of self-protection. You were carrying sometimes eight hundred pounds of explosives on a boat. If that went up, you can imagine the damage. So everyone had to know how to handle the explosives. Everyone had to be convinced that you could do it. And everyone had to be convinced you weren't going to panic in the water regardless of what happened.

Now to get back to this point about the UDT and its demise. After the war, it didn't take the traditional Navy long to decide that they really didn't want the UDT. So they cut it down from twenty one trained teams on both coasts to two teams at Coronado, one team at Fort Pierce. And that's how it was until 1952. After smarting at the defeats in Cuba, President Kennedy decided to reinstate the UDTs as SEALs. Now, can I express an opinion about that? Sure. A question that I'm going to pose could easily be interpreted as being an old-fashioned or a fuddy-duddy way of looking at things, but the thing that I discovered most in training in a combat situation was that if you focused on doing one thing and one thing well, the chances of you getting through it were very good. But if you had to do many things, then there's a chance that misinterpretation could creep in very easily. Delays that could be fatal. I was looking at the tail end of a film last night on the SEALs. It was a laughable piece of work, of course, very inaccurate, but it illustrated what I think is the case, even though it did it unintentionally. When you have a group of people who are sea, air, land, and are trained to be frogmen, which we were, and trained to be parachutists, scouts and raiders as their background experience, you load a lot on their shoulders. You open new chances for people to mistake their routines and what they're doing. And confusion can set in very easily under attack. So I personally do not agree with the unit development, initially, of the sea, air, land. I understood why President Kennedy wanted that. In effect, he wanted to ensure that he didn't have to rely on the Green Berets or the Rangers or anyone else for particular jobs. He wanted to keep the unit small and under presidential control. Okay, I appreciated that, but from a combat standpoint, it had a number of serious flaws. I'm well aware of the fact that a lot of SEALs will very much object to what I'm saying, but I'm talking from a standpoint of having seen training in action and people not doing the right thing for a number of reasons. Largely because A) they were not trained properly, or B) they panicked when

they shouldn't. Now, I use the term panic. I do it respectfully. I'm not talking about cowardice. I'm not talking about sudden blanks. I'm talking about people who literally lose their ability to act because they were frozen to the spot. Now, if you had a swimming buddy with you who went along the reconnaissance line and helped you to check what was on the bottom and you called numbers and descriptions to him and he wrote on his plastic slate, if he panicked, what happens? Then you had another person to worry about and you were not doing your job.

Oh, Fort Pierce was known in 1943 when it was first established as an amphibious training base. It was first designated as a training spot for Seabees, and secondly small boat handling. That was the original intention. But after a while, the commander of the base became in effect a tenant manager for various people. The Army Corps of Engineers had a little base there, the Coast Guard had a base. The Scouts and Raiders who were down the Maya Beach about five miles [away], had a small administrative combat training unit. There were people who simply transported and made sure that the ammunition bunkers and the explosive bunkers were taken care of. I used to tell my wife that one of the things we did on Sunday morning. But we made sure we went to Mass and prayed before we went over to North Island, which was across the inlet, to the ammunition and explosive bunkers and took the dynamite blocks, half-pounders, and turned them very gently. And there were, I would say, at least a couple hundred blocks in there. So we very carefully turned the block. Because glycerin tended to migrate and it made one side of the block more volatile than the other. So if you dropped it, you had your own fireworks right in front of you. So you constantly turned the blocks and made sure the glycerin didn't migrate. Now you never heard that in the Navy bulletins, but that was all we had to work with at that point in time.

By late 1944 and I would say the early part of 1945, there was not only a shortage of materials for training, as you can imagine, but we were using dynamite blocks and stuff from World War I for training purposes. It got a little dicey every once in a while. Am I going to say that it was really dangerous? No, not if you knew what you were doing. Did we have cowboys? Yes. Fortunately, the only cowboy I can remember was an Army engineer. We were unloading plastic explosives for a barge at St. Lucie's Inlet [Florida] one day. He knew that most of the people doing the unloading were new recruits, people who were just given these kinds of jobs because they hadn't been integrated into units yet. He was standing to the rear of the barge and yelled at people to unload various crates of plastic explosives. That was technical, C2, not C4, not the Semtex that you have today, but the early form of malleable explosives. That was the kind that you could handle to shape charges. Well, I can't remember what the man's name was, but I knew he was an

Army engineer. He whipped out his .45 and shot into one of the bags. Well, of course, everybody went over the side. He thought it was hilarious. What he wanted to demonstrate is that you can't set off plastic explosives by shooting into it. But in my view, it was the most unmilitary thing I ever saw.

KVM: What happened to him?
BRP: Transferred very quickly. But most of the Army engineers we worked with were pretty sober types, and I could say the same thing for the Seabees. Very competent. I can remember some of the Seabees being very paternal, very worried about us and our ability to learn what we had to do with explosives in a short period of time. Could I have one of the interview sheets? I want to be sure that I keep this interview on track. Thank you.

WC: Would you tell us a little bit about your Frogman training with the scuba? Did they call it scuba back then?
BRP: No, we didn't use scuba. We made some short-lived experiments with the kind of breathing machine that the submarine used, you know, to come up from a sunken sub. It was very popular in the 1930s because everybody was concerned about…there were several running stories about submarines which had sunk off the Atlantic coast. A commander invented a portable mask to enable people to come up on the rope. The problem we found with those was that there was a heavy buildup of nitrogen in the ascent or at certain depths. I would say below forty, which made them practically unusable. After a few experiences with…I'm not talking about the Momsen Lung. I'm talking about a portable mask and tank that had been experimentally developed by the Navy. We abandoned the use of scuba. Actually, scuba was better developed by the French and the Italians. The French, in my view, during the late part of the war had done an extremely good E-mount [unclear]. 23.45 How did they do it? They studied the one-man submarine, or what they used to call the…I'm reaching for the term. I guess I'll have to describe it. The Italians developed a manned torpedo. The person who was steering this torpedo had a mask and a tank on so he could keep below the surface as he was heading toward literally a suicide mission. The Italians attempted several of these and were quite successful. The French picked up on it. They managed to get a hold of the tank and then refined it. But they worked primarily in England. We didn't hear about it for quite some time. To answer your question, did we use anything approaching scuba? No. It was constantly learning to dive and hold your breath. At one time, I could dive and stay underwater for a minute and a half. We always went for depth. For example, most people would try to stay under forty five seconds at forty five feet. Some were better than others. But it depended on your physique. I had a big barrel chest.

Incidentally, Miss Matthews, [addresses second interviewer] I do have a picture of that, but I was too modest to give it to you at this point. Most people did pretty well, but there was something that I think should be mentioned. I was with a lot of very tough, wiry Depression kids. A lot from New York City, some from Chicago. They didn't have an ounce of fat on them. They didn't eat much during the Depression. A lot of them were street fighters. And they had to be in those days. When they came into training, they really wanted to go down to forty five feet and stay two minutes, but they didn't have the lung capacity. We had to take that into account. There were certain areas of reconnaissance which we wouldn't assign certain people because we knew they couldn't last. But we also picked out people who could do long-distance reconnaissance. Or carry a haversack. Haversack, what's that? It contained four blocks of C2, and you wired it with Primacord. Primacord was an explosive cord. Instead of worrying about putting a copper fuse in, copper fuse being about that long [gestures about six inches] with explosives in the head and a place for sticking a bare wire in the back. That was very hard to do under certain circumstances. You sometimes took a sack when you were doing heavy explosives.

For example, at Guam, at Agat Bay, directly after the invasion, the UDT-4, I think, set off twenty four thousand pounds of plastic explosives. Can you imagine? Can you just imagine the reverberation? Well, what would they do if they were blowing a channel so that larger ships like the LSTs could get in? But getting back to this question of lung capacity. Even though some of them were banty roosters, they really wanted to get in there. We knew that we were putting them in danger if we required them to swim more than five hundred yards, especially if they had to do half of that underwater. Very often they were assigned lesser reconnaissance. That doesn't mean it was lesser in the sense of importance, but we carefully managed who did what. Did I answer your question?

Now, you really gave me an omnibus question, that is about the training. First of all, there was physical buildup. There were at least three to four weeks where we all lived in tent cities, of course, near the beach. And there were three to four weeks of very heavy calisthenics, which largely tested what this particular kid had to develop. Did he have to develop his quads? Did he have to develop his chest area? Was he weak in the sockets? Why? Because there were two basic swim techniques in the UDT at that time, we're talking 1943 to 1945. The two basic swim techniques were breaststroke for observation, you got your head out of the water, sidestroke for distance. Never Australian crawl. Why do you think that was so?

WC: It would create too much noise or disturbance in the water?

BRP: It made you a target. It can be seen easily. Not only that, it wore you out quickly. And the question was, were you looking for distance or were you looking for a quick spurt? Most of the time, no quick spurts. If you were coming in for observation, that was very important. You spent most of your time breaststroking carefully, slowly, watching to see, watching the dune line, watching the beach to see if any sentries were there, anybody who might observe you. If you were going for distance and just getting out to the boat, you used a side stroke. You got fins on. Interesting question: what were the fins like? Big, heavy rubber, unflexible, generally, but I mean somewhat. Nothing like what they have today. Just trapezoids and very thick. But even though they were hard on your ankles and your skin, if you got them going, they really propelled you, depending on how good your leg muscles wear.

WC: Now, did you wear a rubber suit too, or no?
BRP: Rubber suits were primarily invented after 1952 for Cold War swimming. A lot of the frogmen in Korea wore rubber suits, principally against cold, because cold was the real enemy of a swimmer. It can sap his strength easily. His energy levels. But getting back to the training, as you asked, after determining at three or four weeks what this person might need, he was assigned an instructor who would try to develop him in terms of his muscles that he needed for side stroke and observation swimming. People flunked out right at that point. Many of them just didn't have the stamina. Then the next question was stamina. Woke up one morning, four o'clock in the morning, you didn't even have breakfast, they took you out to the beach, threw a log at you. Six people were lined up, they got a log and they went down the beach for a mile, passing the log from one group to another. I can't estimate how much a log weighed, but at least over one hundred pounds. So you did that for a week. Then after that, they determined whether your chest muscles were strong enough. Why the log? Because you have to carry your boat. If you can't haul a boat easily with six other people, there's no point having you get into the activity. The next broad training step, I mean, there were a lot of small ones in between, was ocean swimming. You started with four hundred forty yards. Now, we're talking about open ocean swimming. They took you out, I'm trying to remember, at least seven hundred yards so that you were really in the open ocean. You were beyond the coastal current. Then you had to swim four hundred forty yards the first week. A mile the second week, two miles the third week. If you couldn't keep up with that pace, then you washed out.

In the meantime, you were getting explosive training. They were very carefully evaluating your ability to handle certain kinds of explosives. The ones that I found most difficult were Bangalore torpedos. The British developed the Bangalore torpedo by stuffing black powder into sugar cane, and then tying it together. They needed Gurkhas to

tie it together. They put a primitive fuse in back and then shoved it under barbed wire or wherever they wanted to go and in the jungle and set it off. We had better pieces of equipment than that. We had metal tubes which were prefilled with highly volatile black powder that you locked together. [gestures twisting together] The fuse was a little more sophisticated. It was a dangerous piece of equipment to handle. If there was a spark in the line, you were really in trouble. Which of course accounts for the fact that you never attached the leads to your [unclear] 34.42 machine, which was a generator of electricity, until the last moment. But still, I was always a little afraid of them. I much preferred to work with the plastic explosives and develop techniques with shape charges.

Then there came a point where they checked you physically, checked you in terms of your ability to handle explosives, and then they tested you on an infiltration-exfiltration. I'm being sketchy about this. I'm not describing all the things we did because that would take too long. But I'm taking the major areas. In the meantime, you were learning to paddle your boat. You had a big rubber boat; it was very heavy. You had six people including the ensign, who was the boat captain. You went out two or three miles. You ran parallel to the coast. We did this up near Indian River in Florida, which is about seventy miles above Fort Pierce. It was a heavy jungle up there. You went out about two or three miles, and waited for a signal from shore. A shield of light, one, two, three, pause. Count. one, two, three. Long shot. one, two, three. And then a code number that identified that it was genuine. At least, that was what they told us. We headed for the light. If you got out a degree or more you lost the light because it was shaded.

You pulled your rubber boat up on shore. You disguised it with palm leaves or sand or whatever you could, and headed inland to a rendezvous point. You had to follow a certain angle from the beach toward a light in the jungle, which was also shaded. Well if you got off your path or the area that you were supposed to follow to this rendezvous point, usually there arose in the jungle a large punishing figure called a Marine with a rubber truncheon. And he laid it on you. Then you had a decision. Run forward into the jungle or run back to the beach. Everyone who was caught got misdemeanor points. In other words, you lost some privilege. Now, it sounds brutal, but it wasn't because the stakes were too high. If you were doing infiltration in enemy territory, you had to know exactly what you were doing and when you were doing it. Because capture was bad for you, but it was worse for your companions. Because they easily roll up quickly where you came from and what you were trying to do. So you had to be very careful about the procedure. Everyone had to know it. Everyone had to memorize it. People woke up at night in the tents and recited their instructions. Because the consequences were brutal and necessary. I was eighteen. I didn't like it at all, but as years went by, I realized that most of these

guys were saving my life. It was very hard. I'm sure every World War II veteran has said this. It is very hard for people even today to understand how brutal our enemies were. On the History Channel, you constantly see the detention camps that the Nazis ran. You constantly see starving refugees. And only the tip. As I learned many years later in the CIA, it's information that's important. And our enemies were very, very good at getting information. This dust-up over Guantanamo Bay and torture just amuses me because that was what you had to expect. Your enemy was twice as brutal. I think that many World War II people, if they were in that situation, would acknowledge that. Certainly John McCain would.

KVM: When you were eighteen, nineteen, the people in training with you had to have a physical ability to swim, hold their breath that long. They had to have good eyesight to be able to swim and see the beaches, and evaluate. They had to have a psychological fortitude. Plus, they had to learn the explosives handling as well and all that routine. How many started with you and how many washed out?

BRP: I would say in my group coming into base for the first time, from that point on, there were seventy who came aboard and about twenty were left. Then they were tested in Hell Week, which was the very end when all the UDT team people participated in and created obstacles and problems for the graduates, as it were. There were three teams that were involved in our situation: UDT-4, which was the older team, the newly commissioned or to-be-commissioned Teams 30 and 31. They all participated in this huge marathon test over a week. If you passed that, then you were eligible to be integrated into a team. Now, as I indicated on my questionnaire and on the segment which was made for Veterans Flight. [?] 41.20 At the end of my training, I fully expected to be commissioned with Team E-30 or 31, but the war ended in August. I went there in early December. The war had ended, we knew nothing about the atomic bomb. In fact, I don't remember anyone even mentioning it. Even in concept. We were told that since fighting was still going on in the Pacific, that some of us would end up there either in a team or special assignments. It was left that way. Then we all got on a troop train and were transported to Oceanside, California and expected to go to Maui for further training and cold water training. That was when the idea of sun covering was first introduced because the Maui training station expected that we'd be going to Japan, which was codenamed at that point Olympia. When we got to Oceanside, we had a meeting in the communications building. They said, look to your left, look to your right. Those guys won't be there six months from now, because we expect two casualties for every three people. They were expecting the Japanese to fight fiercely, and they didn't really know what sort of beach protections they had or how much time they had in Honshu and

elsewhere where Japanese expected us to go in terms of obstacles, in terms of barriers. We were really stunned by the idea that we might have to occupy Japan forcibly, but we had no idea how it would be done in terms of the teams. There was some talk about examining the one-man or two-man submarines that they had developed, but I don't remember anything further. However, I soon received my orders. I was transported to Shumaker Naval Station, which was the receiving station. I was told there that I would be given a special assignment.

KVM: Was that in Hawaii?
BRP: No, no. That's in California.

KVM: You didn't go to Maui?
BRP: I didn't go to Maui, no. I'll sort of run through it sequentially. At that point, it was all very mysterious, but I used to visit the personnel shack every day to get my orders. They said, we got something else for you. We want you to go up to San Francisco, to Mare Island, and work with a team of destroyer escort people who are remaking this particular model of a destroyer escort and they want somebody who is competent at fuses. So I got up there and apparently they were interested in me checking out the fuses on the depth charges. I made it very plain to the executive officer that this was an area that I didn't know. He wanted to argue with me. He said, some of your people down in Florida were at the old Mines School [U.S. Naval Mine Disposal School] in Washington and knew how to do this. It took me at least a week to convince them that I was not the right man to be their new depth charge fuse manager. They sent me back. It was temporary duty anyway. They sent me back to Shumaker and then I got my orders, which was to proceed by ship to Hawaii. In Hawaii, I went to the [unclear] 45.46 Receiving Station in Oahu. Then I was flown from there. No, I thought I was going to fly. That's right. They didn't give me the billet. They instead transferred me to the [HMS] Grafton Troop Ship [H89].

WC: Now, you were by yourself?
BRP: I was by myself, but I was with a bunch of Marines and there were some Army people on this. They were all being shipped out to the Pacific, various stations. The Grafton finally arrived in Guam. I went to the receiving station and tried to find out what the story was, carried my envelope all the time, which I was not supposed to look into. I didn't because they could tell I read my orders and they told me I couldn't read my orders. Finally, at the receiving station after Thanksgiving, they said that I was eligible to go to the Hill. What Hill? Apparently, there was a small area beyond Agana, which was the principal village—at which there had been established the Naval Land and Claims

Commission. A really interesting place. It consisted of people who were civil engineers as well as construction engineers. One architect, a very mysterious guy. I think he spent most of his time in the officer's club. There were people there who were strict mapmakers and very good ones. Some of them had been flown out from Washington. The first day I went into the office, I was surprised that they were unstrapping and unrolling 1860 maps from the early British surveys of the island. These were marine surveys. If you were a British ship and you were in the area, it gave you an idea of what was on Guam and where the available ports were. We're not talking about the Spanish grant maps, which detailed the topography of Guam. So I asked the head mapmaker at that point, why are you consulting 1860 maps? He said, that's the only available thing that we have. I said, what about the Navy stuff? It didn't exist. I said, but it was a coaling station for years. Why didn't it? Apparently the money had never been appropriated to make a suitable map of Guam. So the order came down from the governor of the island, who was a Marine general, a very interesting guy. His orders were very brief, but in effect he said we must have more accurate maps for Guam, Saipan, and Iwo Jima. We need combat maps and we need civil maps. That is, what had been there before, what we have to respect in terms of treaty, things of that nature.

I have a little story to tell about the general in just a moment. The concept of armed survey teams was developed. That is, people who went out with chain gangs, we're talking about survey teams, and literally corrected the maps. Went across the island at one angle, let's say from Agat through Barrigada on the other shore. Or north to Merizo in the south. We found old cairns with markers from the Spanish era. I might add, we very often found they were off two or three degrees, but they had to be absolutely accurate. Why? Well, from a combat standpoint, if you were laying in artillery or mortar fire, accuracy really meant a lot.

What were we running into? We were running into armed stragglers, Japanese who had not surrendered who were desperate for food and ammunition. Naturally, we had some Marines with us for protection. The people who really helped were the fourteen or fifteen year-old native boys who went out in front and warned us when things weren't quite right. How did we pay these boys? Food for the families. It couldn't be a government transaction, but it was a way of helping ourselves. So imagine this situation. You were deep into Merizo, a heavy hilly country. Incidentally, Magellan landed at Merizo in the 15th century. Isn't that interesting?

You were moving south and it got a little bit more hilly just before you got down to the beach. There were very narrow defiles. Sometimes you saw a cave up in the sides of the

defiles. Often that was where they were hiding. Very often you got some nasty surprises. I remember vividly one night, we were sitting in the mess and said, this doesn't make sense. Why do we risk being part of that by these people? How do we know what's in the caves? They might have loads of grenades. Why are we bypassing some of these things? So Ed Harris, the commander of the whole unit, came inside with us. He had a bottle of beer. I want to tell you that this beer was very important. It was not Iron City beer. It wasn't four degrees. It was thirteen percent. He picked it up in Australia. He handed around the beer and said, don't get any ideas, this is only a one-time thing until I can find another way of getting into the reefer.

Who was Ed Harris? Well, he was reputed to be one of the smartest land claims attorneys in northern Ohio. He was about fifty two, very heavy. Incidentally, I do have some pictures of the group. Very bright, extremely bright, not only legally but technically in terms of topography and maps. He had a deep concern for his own men. I never met an officer who was so concerned about the welfare of his men. We're not just talking about where you sleep, what you eat. We're talking about what was happening to you out in the field and how you got around certain things. Fortunately, with him between us and "Dinah Hill," as we used to call the governor's place, it turned out to be a lot easier and a lot safer. When he was sitting there that evening he said, I know what you're doing and I know the problem and I can't get the Marines to change their mind, but I'll tell you what I am going to do. I'm going to authorize you to blow the caves up. He turned to me and said, that's why you're here, Powers. I said, you got better people with a brain. You got better demolitions. I mean, this is land stuff, I'm water stuff. He said, don't give me an argument. I wouldn't have recruited you. I wouldn't have gotten your name off the list if I didn't think you had this kind of background. You worked for Bangalore before, right? I said, yes, we went to Bangalore. He said, we have some good British stuff here. It's pretty reliable. So in effect, what happened was, if we saw a cave that was too high, it could be a vantage point for the Japanese straggler. I shoved in a Bangalore. Remember, we're talking about shale and sand and slate, so it was very easy to crack. We're not talking about granite or any really hard stuff. I shoved it into the cave and blew the cave entrance shut. It worked every time. How many Japanese? We don't know. I don't like to think about it. I would like to think that they could have had a break. The ones that did get a break were the ones who stumbled through our lines, as we were going through the jungle. Emaciated, dehydrated, obviously on their last legs, and they expected to be shot as soon as we saw them. But we didn't do that. We tied them up and got one or two of the Marines to escort them back because there was no point in being what they expected us to be. I know that it paid off because when I was visiting the Japanese POW camps that we maintained on the coast, they always liked to see us and they recognized us. They never

thanked us, of course, but we could tell by the way the Japanese sergeants reacted, that they respected us.

I know what you're going to ask, why the Japanese sergeant? We always put them in charge. No point trying to give the prisoners instructions, particularly in a language they didn't quite understand. We deputized the sergeant major, held him responsible, and boy, you got absolute loyalty and response. I don't know what the motive was with the Japanese sergeants, but at least it put them in charge and it gave them access to food and drink that they wouldn't ordinarily get. But we used the Japanese sergeants and other specialists among the Japanese to run the camps. [picks up his questionnaire]Now, that comes to the last question. [reads] Did you perform any unusual services or duties? Can I read it to you?

WC: Sure.
BRP: [reads] From the Land and Claims Office in Agana, 1945, I monitored the great green toad mash, which occurred daily. Twice a day at dawn and at sunset, thousands of toads migrated to the seawater's edge. [interjects] This was on both coasts, but the main road was on the east coast.[reads] The toads migrated to the seawater's edge, specifically to tide pools and freshwater catches in dry coral formations. [interjects] Now they used to wallow in the tide pools, but they used to drink from the non-seawater higher up. [reads] The coral formations across coastal roads running north and south on Guam. Unfortunately, military convoys from Agat to Andersen Field [interjects] the big…you're familiar with the B-29 fields, [reads] ran 24/7 with food, water, equipment, bombs, and spare parts. Many trucks slid off the roads at high speed regularly, often in collision with the toads, [interjects] because [the trucks] were sliding so fast. [reads] The Japanese POWs who brought water out twice a day couldn't keep up with the splashed toads of the wrecked vehicles. [interjects] That didn't appear in the United Press.

WC: That's very interesting.
BRP: Yeah, but it was a real hazard after a while. Scraping that stuff up, especially at high noon. Can you imagine the smell? Anyway, I'm giving the impression that I thought the Japanese were really friends of ours and we really understood them. No way. They were looking for every opportunity to escape. They looked for every opportunity to sabotage and create problems. The ones that were uncaptured were raiding the food reefers as often as they could. They tried to pick up our weapons and ammunition. It was not unusual to walk to the head and get shot at from the jungle. And, of course, the Marines charged in and tried to find somebody. Of course, they were long gone.

WC: They actually knew the war was over? But they refused to—
BRP: It was so funny because I think the best thing I can say about them is that some heard the war was over but refused to accept it. Others just didn't get the word. They thought they had to fight to the end for the emperor.

WC: Okay. I'm going to stop you right here. We have to change tapes.
BRP: …then they were with the U.S. people because they had brutalized the population and it was payback time for a lot of natives. We had a great deal of trouble hanging tough with the natives about revenge killings because we wanted the intelligence. Some of the Japanese, a very small percentage, were obviously people who should never have been in the military in the first place. The Japanese were drafting people toward the end. Some very inappropriate people like Shinto monks. And I remember in one instance the general separated some of them into separate quarters because the Shinto monks wanted to go back and establish a monastery right there. But anyway, are we ready?

WC: Oh yes, we're rolling.
BRP: Okay, to answer your question, Miss Matthews, about the attitude of the stragglers. They weren't all ravening attackers. What I was able to determine from the Japanese prisoners is that there was a small group of officers and enlisted people, sergeants and elsewhere, who were driving the others on. In other words, you can't surrender. You will embarrass the Emperor. We have to show the people back home that we can survive, that we really eventually can outlast the Americans. They're going to go home, but we're going to still be here. It was very real to some of these Japanese, very real. They were not only asked to be very loyal in a general sense to the Emperor, but to the Samurai ideal. To many Japanese, I was told by my son who is a gunnery mate first class in Japan and has been there for seven years off and on, that there are certain things that the Japanese male psyche reveres. One of them is the Samurai ideal. It is the independent warrior who can outthink his opponent. I mean, not that he has a special sword, but that he can outthink his opponent, and that is his real ability. The Japanese, when I talked to them, broadly thought that the Americans were a bunch of doofeses who really didn't know anything about the military. Why? Because they kept getting this Western newsreel stuff demonstrating hip-hop or some crazy western event that just reinforced their opinion that the westerners were not serious about life. If there was anything that a Japanese male was serious about, it was life itself. I was eighteen, going on nineteen. How probing could I be? At this point now, I would know how to ask a lot of questions. But I was just glad that we could use the Japanese prisoner, generally speaking, if we handled them correctly, for the dirt work that had to be done. There weren't that many sailors, airmen or engineers on the island, even after the war. Everyone was trying to get home for one

thing. Do I have enough points to get home? I'm glad you're here because I'm trying to get out of here. What about stragglers? Let the Marines worry about that.

Now, getting back to the question of the UDC. How are we generally to think of them? I think that the first thing that has to be considered is the willingness of World War II veterans in their Helsian Days when they were young, to do anything they were asked to do. I don't remember anyone, either sailor or Marine or a soldier, who ever refused a tough assignment. Now, that's my experience. It may not be the experience of a lot of people, but generally I was given the impression that there was a lot of grumbling, a lot of quick thinking, but never disloyalty. That's the wrong word. Never mutiny.

I'll give you a good example. When we invaded Saipan, I wasn't there, but I heard about it from people who were there on Guam. The Army people who were in the center of the invasion movement were flanked by the 2nd Marines. Now, the flanking action by the Marines was determined, I might add, by an Army general to protect the center so he could literally move across the island, flood with people and cut it in half. But it was very necessary for the flanking people to protect the front line from assault on the side, which was a favorite Japanese tactic. Unfortunately, after the third day, the Army people fell behind, exposing the flanks where they could be attacked from both sides. Now, I did not hear the Marine general at that point or hear of him saying, I've got to pull my men back. Which would have been very serious at that point because the Japanese would have interpreted that as vulnerability. The Marines hung in there, and they lost a lot of people just maintaining the flanks. That's what I'm talking about. I don't think you would find that in today's Army. I'm not trying to denigrate today's Army or Marines. I'm merely saying that I thoroughly believe in what [Carl von] Clausewitz said, that you have to blood an army every generation to keep them sharp and ready to fight intelligently. You can't have amateurs. And I'm afraid the neglect of the services after World War II and after Korea was such that we have a lot of untrained people in the field. It's not their fault, not their fault at all, but they've been let down by the people who should have known better in the Department of Defense. There are many of those people out there without sufficient training and submission weaponry. One thing I will say about officers and men on the islands is that they always supported each other regardless of what they had. They never, never, as far as I can tell, except in one instance in Peleliu, and I don't think that was deliberate. I can't remember any story coming back about a Marine or a soldier deliberately giving up or abandoning a position or unnecessarily drawing fire. They always survived because they helped each other. They were fighting for each other. No god terms, no abstracts, no freedom, country, God. It was just, can I keep myself and Joe and Sam alive tonight. That was always the basis. I realize I'm looking at it sixty years

later, I kind of idealize it a little bit. Did I meet some people that I didn't think had it? Sure. When the chips were down, generally speaking, I never heard about people not doing what they were supposed to do. And I think that that's a quality that is very important. Am I saying we've lost it? No, of course not. But we haven't deliberately preserved it and brought it forward. We haven't kept the field officers that we should have.

For example, in Vietnam, a lot of casualties happened because there weren't trained field officers. There weren't people from World War II or Korea who should have gone in there and helped the troops understand tactics. We had a lot of green field people. Why were they there in the first place? Not only because they were assigned, but they were trying to get their next promotion. What's another example? Marines at Chosun Reservoir. They were placed in a position where they had to defend a lower position with the Chinese higher than they were, and there was no reason to hold the Chosun Reservoir. They could have retreated easily. But they not only had to fight the cold and the lack of supplies, but a lack of orders. Nothing coming down from headquarters except for, hold the line. That, to me, was sheer stupidity. It's an unnecessary sacrifice of people.

We discussed this in the agency when I was with the CIA for a while. I remember this rapid discussion by Major Max Foster [?], who was working with us on aerial pickups. He had been in World War II as well as Korea. He came back to us halfway through the Korean situation. I remember the analogy he made. I was flabbergasted. Picture this guy. He was big, six foot four, for a pilot. He had rusty red hair. He was built like Arnold Schwarzenegger. He leaned forward and he said, do you know how much a chink is worth? I said, no. He said, a Chinese foot soldier. I said, I have no idea. He said he's worth about sixty dollars because that's how much money they put into his training. Do you know how much an American Marine is worth? At least a half a million in terms of his education and everything else. Why were we sacrificing people who are worth a half a million to a sixty dollar chink. Now, that's a rather caustic way of putting things, but there's a certain amount of raw truth in that. Why did we sacrifice these Marines, these highly valuable soldiers, to Chinese bugle assaults where they were overwhelmed by thousands of Chinese who had no great military training. They simply swamped them at Chosun. That's the kind of bad direction that every World War II veteran would recognize and be absolutely floored by. I'm sorry, I'm getting a little bit off.

WC: Let me ask you, it says here you were discharged on July 8th, 1946. So when did you leave Guam? Just prior to that?

BRP: I would say three weeks before. I flew to Johnson Island. At Johnson Island, we transferred to another transport. We flew to Hawaii, back to [unclear] 1.14.46 Receiving Station. Then I took a troop ship from there to San Francisco.

WC: Now, did you want to get out or you didn't have any choice, or were they just discharging everybody?
BRP: Well, I have to thank Commander Harris for that. He sat me down one day and said, you know, I'm promoting you to carpenter's mate third, what are you planning to do in the future? I said, I really don't know. He said, you'd make a good lawyer. I said, well, something to think about. He said, you have a good voice. You know those guys that come on between the acts in the girlie shows? They have beautiful voices. Don't need much education for that. Of course he was pulling my leg. I said, I really don't know. He said, go to college. You got enough points to go to college. I'm going to get you out of here, but you got to promise me you're going to go to college. If you don't promise me that, I'm going to let you stay here until the very end. I said, yeah, yeah, I'll go college. I thank Commander Harris for that.

KVM: Did you stay in touch with him? Did you ever contact him again?
BRP: No, he died unfortunately soon after the war. But I mean, I tried when I was a newspaper person to find out about him. I found out what his reputation had been locally. But the war was kind of hard on Commander Harris. Principally because he had all those people to worry about and all those varied activities. My personal feeling is that he was too personally involved as a commanding officer. That doesn't necessarily mean that people disrespected him for that. They didn't. He always maintained his dignity and he wasn't that close to anyone. He was close to everyone in the broadest sense of the word. He was always worried about patrols. He was always worried about people getting hurt. He used to say at the dinner table, I got some very highly educated people here, I want to keep them alive. Some of those civil engineers were pretty smart people. He recruited them himself. We did get military maps that were useful.

There's a little story that I want to tell about a representative from the Vatican. He came to the island, two months after I got there. He was a Capuchin monk, but he was a bishop, and he set up his small church in Agat, which was very much welcomed by a lot of Catholic servicemen. He came to me one night, because I had been to Mass regularly, and said, do you think you can get me a general map of the island? I said, no, sir, I can't. And he said, well, that doesn't surprise me. Then he told me that he had been to see the General, and the General wouldn't allow him into his office. So I went to see Commander Harris and said, what's the problem here? He said, you gotta keep this under your hat, but

generally speaking, the General is not anti-Catholic. [unclear] 1.18.40, who was the Marine general in charge. He said he was operating under orders from Washington not to give information to the Vatican because they are a foreign power and they are not entitled to classified information. The bishop wanted to find out where the Spanish lands were which had been ceded to the church and where there were archival records so that they could establish areas to establish churches or whatever they wanted to do. And I understood this. But the Marine Corps and the general did not want to give up an ounce of land because they didn't know at that point where they were going to set down the military installations like the radar. Installations like the RAND stations, long-distance communication. They frankly didn't think anybody who didn't have a need to know should know that. If a Spanish grant piece of land intersected with one of the military installations that they wanted to hang on to, well, you didn't want to tell them that. Here I was a good Catholic worried about what I was supposed to do. Commander Harris looked at me and said, I know what's going through your mind. Forget it. He said, They will find a way. We don't have to worry about it. Just follow orders. That was an interesting piece of information that you never saw in the wire services or the press. It's perfectly understandable on both sides. But I don't want to give the impression that the Attorney General was nasty to this man. He wasn't. He simply felt that if he allowed him in for a conversation, then something had to transpire from the conversation, either a yes or no, and he was very careful about his public relations. He simply put out the word, I can't see you, period.

KVM: As a matter of record, he didn't have a meeting with anyone from the Vatican, right?
BRP: No. As an eighteen, nineteen year-old kid, I couldn't understand a lot of the ins and outs of this. But at least I knew how to follow orders.

WC: You went on to college. What did you get your degree in?
BRP: I didn't follow Commander Harris's injunction right away. When I got back, I had to get a job. You remember, right after the war, there was a bit of a recession, a lot of people on the street. The GI Bill had been enacted, but it wasn't that popular with a lot of people because they didn't understand it. I know I didn't. I didn't know how much would be paid or what the circumstances were, but it sounded excellent. So I went to work for the National Broadcasting Company in the guest relations department, took people through the tours and demonstrated sound effects. It was a lot of fun.

KVM: In New York or California?

BRP: New York, the Rockefeller Center. A lot of veterans were also doing the same thing. We used to wear the Rupture Duck just to indicate that we weren't entirely…we had to wear this uniform, which implied bravery and all the rest. Most of us were a little embarrassed by the whole thing. [laughs] Anyway, I got involved in the first NBC announcing class that NBC was trying to run at that point for at least two years to train people to work not only at the central stations but also affiliates. There was a great deal going on concerning the possibility of the network being split between ABC and NBC. But when I went there initially, they had a huge establishment and they needed not only people in guest relations and public relations, but they needed announcers. So at that point, I received about six months of training from some of the best elocutionists in New York, as you can probably tell.

But my best training came from Norman Brokenshire, who was an old-time announcer who spent a lot of time with me. He was also instrumental in getting a job at WNLC in New London, Connecticut. As my daughter will say, I had a lot of funny experiences there. For example, did any of you ever hear about Columbia Records? They were big platters, half-hour shows, and they were meant to be played as half-hour shows with their own built-in commercials. I started a record, because I had to engineer my own board. Then I ran two floors down and went to the bathroom and got up there by the time the record was through. Then finish…they had a script that they provided, and resumed the program. Usually I did the Columbia Records program twice a day so I could get downstairs. That was in the old Mohican Hotel in New London. While I was there, the echoes of what Harris said to me came back. I found out more about the GI Bill, and I began going to the local branch of the University of Connecticut, the Trumbull branch. I started part-time and decided to quit my job and go full-time. I did very well there. One of the most valuable courses I had was basic math. I reviewed my math training and found there was a lot that I needed to know despite the fact that I had learned how to compute maps. That course and several others convinced me that I could do it. So I transferred to Brown University and graduated from there in 1951. While I was there, I went to the administration one night and was recruited by the CIA. Why were they interested in me? Because I had been a demolitionist. They had some interesting little occupations in Southeast Asia that they thought that they could recruit me for. Well, enough time has passed, I think, that I can talk about the generalities. I can't talk to you about the people involved or the places. But basically, they were interested in training native peoples in Southeast Asia to defend themselves against renegade Chinese armies. Do I see a lifted eyebrow here? Do you know where these renegades were?

WC: Laos? Cambodia?

BRP: Yeah, the Golden Triangle more or less, but north. Basically, in geopolitical terms, after the war, the communists were successful gradually, but then after a while they really began to roll up the Chinese Army. They were successful, very successful. This was before the Long March, before Mao, that much had come. In fact, I would say that most of China was pretty well under communist control before the Long March. Which in my opinion wasn't that instrumental in driving Chiang Kai-shek out. In any event, some of the organized armies that belonged to Chiang Kai-shek drifted south along that border and suddenly discovered nirvana, heroin. And still provides, forget Afghanistan, it still provides eighty percent of the really hot heroin market, which I'm ashamed to say is largely taken up by U.S. customers.

But anyway, they wanted me to go in and work with Kachin tribesmen and other people who I can't mention, who harassed the Chinese and kept them out of those areas as much as possible? How did you harass? How was the native harassing? They blew up bridges, created constant obstacles to transportation. Why is that important? Because they had limited transport. They had limited amounts of gas. The more you wrecked their vehicles, the more you prevented them from using the vehicles. The more impotent they became in terms of holding the territory. So, I listened to all this, not at Brown. They didn't tell me anything there. I had to go down to the agency, be recruited, and then eventually, after training, was told what they had in mind. Basically, they wanted me to train them in certain kinds of demolition techniques. I knew somebody in personnel very well, and I went over there. I met him in the cafeteria one day, and he said, don't talk about it here. Let's go to my office. He said, what they're interested in is Boy Scouts with the veterans. What they want you to do is really organize the natives as well. The last guy who did it got one hundred thousand dollars from the Swiss Bank, but he was dead within three months. So he said, do you have anybody you want to leave one hundred thousand dollars to? I decided that I was going to go back and ask for another assignment.

I wound up in the Technical Services Section, which turned out to be an extremely interesting thing for me because it was right down my alley. Devising very important technical devices to aid agents. I went to Europe for several years doing that kind of thing, technically supporting people who needed certain kinds of instruments to do whatever they had to do. You see, there was a connection between original technical training right down to what I did in Europe. Why didn't I stay? I went out as a GS-7, I was a GS-12 after I was in Europe. I could have been a GS-14 when I came back. Why didn't I stay? Because it was very difficult constantly living under a pseudonym. It was very difficult lying to all your relatives and friends. It was very difficult living in a situation where you walked in the door every night and you gotta check everything out to

be sure that there wasn't something in there you didn't want. I decided that I wasn't gonna spend thirty years doing that.

I went back to NBC, who were very happy to have me. They gave me a job in the TV sales and services department, which basically was a part of the affiliate system. That is, I called up WGR and said, do you want to take this program for thirteen or twenty six weeks. Here are the commercial slots that you can use locally. And I did that for a while. Did the agency want me back? Yes, they made an effort to have me come back, and put me in a different situation. But I was a young man at that point, I wanted someone in my life. Besides, I had met a very, very nice girl. She was nicer than some of the girls that I was meeting in advertising. Why do I say that? Because almost as every young man did, I went for the models because they were interested in knowing advertising people and the possibility of assignments. But almost invariably, after we had gone to twenty one, let's say, she sat there looking past me at the mirror. [gestures fixing his hair, not paying attention to the conversation] [She responded] oh yes, yes, and what else did you do? I felt as if I was supernumerary. Now, I admit there was a male ego involved, but on the other hand, these girls, at that point in time, were so obsessed with their looks. It was an enormous problem for them. I mean, now you can be a model and have a defect, but in those days, it was quite unfair standards that they had to adhere to. Did I enjoy meeting a lot of these women? Of course I did. A lot of them were homespun Midwest girls who had come to New York and, as I used to say, fallen under the influence. But on the other hand, it wasn't really that serious. Because for the day they were making a great deal of money. A great deal of money! I met some models who were easily making fifty to sixty thousand dollars a year, which in 1958 was a lot of money. And in one instance, her daddy was managing her affairs. Now, is there another question you have about the UDT?

WC: No, she just had to check. I think we're going to have to wrap it up pretty soon.
BRP: We've been wandering all over the place, right?

WC: In closing, let me just pose this to you. How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life? Obviously, it has quite a bit. Do you think you would have gone on to college if it hadn't been for the GI Bill?
BRP: No, I certainly would not have. The service, in my case, respectfully to use a term, was my bar mitzvah. It taught me how to be a man, and it taught me how to make judgments. That's probably the most important thing. Taught me how to evaluate people. And it taught me to be aggressive in life. That is, not to sit there and expect things to come to me. If I wanted something, I had to go out and get it. That's what it taught me.

I'm not suggesting that it was dog-eat-dog. It certainly wasn't. But it was the triumph of the competent. I'm glad I went into the service. As one of my sergeants, who was a Marine sergeant, said, it would be a great camping trip if we weren't for all that shooting. Did I answer the question?

WC: Yes. Thank you very much.
BRP: You're welcome.