

Interviewer: Dewey Browder is an emeritus professor at Austin Peay State University and a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army and a veteran of Vietnam and a lifer in since as he spent 20 odd years in the Army.

Browder: Thirty three.

Interviewer: Thirty three

Browder: Ten enlisted and twenty three commissioned.

Interviewer: Okay and you are originally from a small town in Missouri is that correct?

Browder: That's correct. Do you want to hear the name of it?

Interviewer: Sure

Browder: Tightwad

Interviewer: It's what?

Browder: Tightwad Missouri

Interviewer: That's a very interesting name. Isn't there a larger town that's near there?

Browder: Clinton about 7,000 and Windsor about 4,000. I went to high school in Windsor but my mailing address was Clinton and I played baseball in Tightwad.

Interviewer: Is this closer to Joplin or Springfield?

Browder: It's about half way between Springfield and Kansas City.

Interviewer: Okay

Browder: The western side.

Interviewer: How about Independence how far is it from there?

Browder: Well Independence is sort of a suburb of Kansas City so probably about 60 miles from Independence.

Interviewer: When you graduated from high school was it your objective to enlist in the Army?

Browder: No, my objective was to play baseball. And I had a tryout with a team called the Kansas City Athletics they subsequently moved to Oakland. But I had a tryout with them when I was 16 before I graduated and they invited me to come back and I came back and I came back right after I graduated. And a scout predicted that I was going to be the next Billy Martin but I needed to gain some weight and grow some. He said join the Army, eat everything you can get your hands on and come back and see me in three years. By the time I got ready to go back there was a fellow named Tony LaRussa.

Interviewer: I've heard that name. So things didn't turn out quite that way.

Browder: Things didn't.

Interviewer: Was it an option for you, did you consider going to college and getting you know on a baseball scholarship or something of that nature?

Browder: Actually I didn't. I had a scholarship I had two scholarships. I had one at the University Of Missouri School Of Engineers at Rolla and a scholarship to Central Missouri State Teachers College in Warrensburg. But really I wanted to play baseball and when the scout told me that he thought I had a lot of promise, to gain some weight and come back I decided to take him up on that. I got in the Army and I found out what wonderful educational opportunities the Army had. That was seductive I must say the possibility of then going to college and having the Army pay for everything.

Interviewer: And would you describe your family as a military family in the sense that most of the males in your family line served in one fashion or another in say Korean, World War II, or possibly World War I?

Browder: Well all of my older brothers had served in the Army or the Air Force or the Navy. My dad did not. My dad tried to serve in the Navy but he was color blind, he was rejected by the Navy.

Interviewer: I guess what I'm asking is I know you were subject to the draft so at some point you would have been inducted but was there a degree of interest in the military, a degree of patriotism?

Browder: Oh sure

Interviewer: A degree of a sense of obligation?

Browder: That's exactly right. All my brothers had served and I knew that my time would come and I would serve and I would gladly serve. I had no hesitancy about it whatsoever.

Interviewer number two: Dr. Browder real quick, what year was this that you know when you finished high school and

Browder: Nineteen fifty nine. Eisenhower was President.

Interviewer: Where did you go for where did you go for basic training?

Browder: Fort Leonard Wood Missouri which was just a few miles south of the farm where I lived when I joined the Army.

Interviewer: And was basic training six weeks long, eight weeks long?

Browder: I recall it was eight weeks. It was a long time ago but I think it was eight weeks.

Interviewer: And did you have AIT or some other advanced training?

Browder: After the basic training which everybody went through, then I went to photography school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. I learned to be a photograph laboratory technician and still photographer, a little bit of motion picture photography.

Interviewer: I didn't realize there was a photography school.

Browder: Oh it was an excellent school really, Army Signal Corp School.

Interviewer: And does Fort Monmouth still offer anything?

Browder: I think Fort Monmouth has been closed.

Interviewer: Yes, that was my impression too.

Browder: The school I think has been moved to Fort Jackson but I'm not sure.

Interviewer: And this was your interest in photography or your talent in photography where did this show up? Did you what's it called the competence test that everyone takes ASVAB there we go. Did it show up on that?

Browder: It did, we had a principle test called the GT test and that was part and parcel of the whole group of tests that you took. That was kind of the standard that they looked at for picking which school you could go to and it's kind of equated to an IQ with 100 being sort of right in the middle of that test.

Interviewer: But it strikes me, it takes a real visual kind of talent to be a successful photographer.

Browder: My brother, two of my brothers actually, Walter both older Walter and Bob were artistically inclined and we had spent quite a bit of time you know learning how to draw portraits and landscapes. I wasn't quite as good as they were but I had an eye for the picture anyway the format.

Interviewer: And what would you say was the nature of the training? Was it well done, did you learn a lot?

Browder: It was excellent, it was excellent. We spent a lot of time on the basic camera we worked with, which was the old fashioned speed graphic, the 4 x 5 speed graphic. And then 35 millimeter, 2 1/4 by 2 1/4 twin lens reflex cameras. We did some work on large process cameras that are mounted on rails that were permanently fixed primarily for copying.

Interviewer: But the stills was that 35 millimeter?

Browder: Yes and the 2 1/4 by 2 1/4 Rolliflex, the twin lens reflex.

Interviewer: Perhaps you can explain something to me. I know from a source that you were involved in early experiments in laser technology. How did that evolve from your photography work?

Browder: Well actually I was stationed with the Army Air Defense Command in Colorado Springs, Colorado. And the National Bureau of Standards was experimenting with this new thing called laser. And the Army Air Defense Command was interested in possibly using it for missile defense systems to be able to knock down incoming missiles.

Interviewer: This is Reagan's infamous star wars

Browder: This was long before star wars, I have a story about that.

Interviewer: But it's the idea, the same idea.

Browder: Right but the National Bureau of Standards had tried to take a photo of the laser light once at a distance of about 12 miles and they were unsuccessful. And then they contacted the Army and asked if the Army was interested in it and actually I was quite flattered because they told the Army, send us your best photographer, and I happened to be right there so that was convenient. They conducted the experiments on top of Pikes Peak and the top of a butte at Boulder Colorado a distance of about 100 miles apart. And so I went up on the top of Pikes Peak with a couple of physicists and others went on top of a butte at Boulder and they did the lasing. He was getting the laser to work and I did the photography

on my end. When the beam got to me it was about 20 feet wide it really was a coherent beam of light even at that time.

Interviewer: And what year was this?

Browder: It was in 1963.

Interviewer: Okay so when you left Monmouth New Jersey where did you go after that?

Browder: Very briefly to Fort Belvoir Virginia and then, I hardly unpacked my bags, and I was on orders to Germany. And so I immediately went to Germany, it was soon, I literally hardly had time to unpack my bags. And there was a call for a photographer to go to the 66<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence, Counter Intelligence. And so I was sent to work with those boys.

Interviewer: And where were you located in Germany?

Browder: In Stuttgart.

Interviewer: In Stuttgart and of course I assume that you met Helga there.

Browder: I did.

Interviewer: And I assume that's where you developed your interest in the country and its people and the language and so on and so forth. Were you impressed right away when you got there?

Browder: Absolutely, I loved it. I just couldn't I mean there is no way for me to explain the similarity between American and Germany for me and yet at the same time all the differences. It was just a charming place.

Interviewer number two: The looming of the Fulda Gap like how big of that was on your mind? I know that's like

Browder: Well the Fulda Gap wasn't on my mind it wasn't even close the Fulda Gap. At one point and time later I became familiar with the Fulda Gap. But we were very concerned with the Soviet presence in East Germany. As a matter of fact I was with the 66<sup>th</sup> MI Group when the Berlin Wall went up, and I stood guard with a Browning automatic rifle in Stuttgart. We really thought the Soviets were coming.

Interviewer: So this August of 1961?

Browder: August 13, 1961 it was when the Germans woke up to the fence being put up.

Interviewer: Boy had a fast life from small town Missouri to the Berlin Wall in 1961, that's incredible. What kind of photography were you doing for this MI Group?

Browder: Well I did a lot of lab work because we had an agents, covert people who took lots of pictures and they usually used little 8 millimeter Minolta Cameras. And they would come back after they had been on missions for you know

Interviewer: The little cameras that worked

Browder: The little tiny ones right, about the size of a cigarette package or smaller. And they took lots and lots of pictures and they brought those in and I processed those. Then I did some other, did a lot of

copy work a lot of documents, and I did some support stuff. I was a uniform support person, I was not a spy. I recently talked to students and made the point there that I was not a spy but I did do support work for the agents.

Interviewer: And this is in other words, part of what you were doing is substituting for a photocopy machine?

Browder: Right, it was before a Xerox machine.

Interviewer: How long you remain in Stuttgart as \_\_\_\_\_?

Browder: Now quite three years, it was a three year enlistment so.

Interviewer: And had you decided at that point that you wanted to make a career of the Army?

Browder: I was starting to think about it because I was in a position where I really couldn't do much in the way of baseball, because baseball was still on my mind. I did try out for the 7<sup>th</sup> Army team. This friend in 62 and I went to the basic training and I made the cut so to speak for basic training, but then I was due to get out of the Army and I decided not to extend. And so I went ahead and got out of the Army rather than playing baseball that season.

Interviewer: You got out and you returned?

Browder: I got out and I came back to the United States and I went to work for the Grolier Society selling encyclopedias.

Interviewer: Oh I remember the name Grolier's. And I bet that wasn't very much fun was it?

Browder: It wasn't, I had to go sit in jail for selling encyclopedias without a license in Vinita Oklahoma, Will Rogers hometown. And the company had to post bond for me, there were five of us and none of us had a license. And the company posted a \$9.00 bond for the five of us. Of course we jumped bond, nobody ever went back.

Interviewer: How long did you do this?

Browder: I did that for about four weeks and then I just decided that I really, I started looking at options for education and I decided to go back to the army. That's when I went to Colorado.

Interviewer: You know it's funny. Door-to-door sales virtually doesn't exist anymore does it?

Interviewer number two: Not unless it's religion. That's not necessarily true but for the most part it's pretty much died off.

Interviewer: The last time I saw anyone who was a door to door salesman they were selling children's books. And they landed in my neighborhood and at the time there was no children in the neighborhood, not one.

Browder: Well I was taught to look for signs of a family. You know look for bicycles, tricycles, slides, toys. And so I stopped at this one house, it had an abundance of toys out front, and there was nobody there and I left and went around the corner and there was a woman in the backyard burning leaves. And so I went over and talked to her and she was real interested in the books and then a policeman pulled up

and said the neighbors had complained about her burning leaves. And said she needed to have a burning permit, and she said "I don't have one" so he gave her a ticket. He said what are you going here? And I said I'm selling encyclopedias and he said, where's your permit? I said, I don't have one. So he gave me a ticket and then he took me down to the police station and I spilled my guts, I told him where all the guys were at. There were five of us and they went out and picked up the other guys the other four and that's when they had to pay the bond they called it. The company headquarters posted our bond for \$9.00.

Interviewer: Grolier's was a competitor for encyclopedia Britannica.

Browder: Yeah and American Peoples.

Interviewer: So you went to, were you in Colorado Springs?

Browder: Yes

Interviewer: Camp Carson?

Browder: No, Ent Air Force Base. It's no longer there, they converted it into the Olympic Training Center. So the Olympic training building today is where Ent Air Force Base. We were the North American Defense Command. I was in the Army Air Defense Command and they built the new headquarters inside of Cheyenne Mountain. They hollowed out Cheyenne Mountain so it would be a nuclear proof site and we moved headquarters in there. And those buildings are all on huge springs, they've got enormous hydraulic doors that close and they are air tight. And I sort of documented the building of that in the four years that I was there. Every few weeks I'd go out and take a new set of photos at the various different stages of the building process inside the mountain. When they got it built, they closed down the Air Force base. The Air Force Academy was built then.

Interviewer: Right

Browder: And Peterson Field another air base.

Interviewer: Do you think the elaborate cold war stuff is still there?

Browder: Sure

Interviewer: Although not used anymore.

Browder: You can track Santa Clause on Christmas Eve.

Interviewer: Well what it reminds me of is there is apparently someplace in West Virginia that was developed for

Browder: That's for the government.

Interviewer: Exactly for the government and if there was an atomic war and they attacked Washington D.C. the expectation was that they would leave the city and go to this protective sight.

Browder: This is a hardened sight for the military for the North American Air Defense Command.

Tape ended