RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID BLANCH

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. David Blanch on August 14, 2014, in Annapolis, Maryland, with Shaun Illingworth. Thank you very much for meeting me here.

David Blanch: You're welcome.

SI: We are on the grounds of the US Naval Academy. To begin, can you tell me where and when you were born?

DB: I was born in New York City, Queens, on September 16, 1937.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your family history?

DB: Yes, my dad's parents had come from Poland. He was born right after they came and they settled in Canada. My dad had a fourth grade education and, frankly, I was the first one--his parents had eight kids, a good Catholic family--I was the first one that went to college, graduated from college, of the grandchildren. As I said, my dad had a fourth grade education, married my mom. She was from Buffalo, New York, and they were living in Queens, New York, at the time, but, right after I was born, I only lived there three months, they moved to Teaneck, New Jersey. Then, from there, they went to Bound Brook, and then, to New Brunswick, and then, basically, I was raised from third grade through college--not through college, but freshman year in college--in Metuchen, New Jersey. I graduated from Metuchen High School [in] 1955. So, that's a little bit about my history.

SI: Tell me a little bit about your mother's side of the family. Did they immigrate to the country as well?

DB: That's totally different. I'm sort of proud of this. My mom's side, where a lot of people came in, came with William Penn in Pennsylvania. In fact, I've got a grandfather, five greats back, that signed the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. There's only four or five people that did it and George Clymer from Pennsylvania was one of them. So, he's on my mom's side, as I said, five greats back, and various WASP-type peoples got in the family--I'm mainly German and English--and then, my mom married a Polish person and I think there was some issues in the family when she married a Roman Catholic whose first language was Polish. [Editor's Note: George Clymer (1739-1813), a representative of Pennsylvania, is one of five individuals to sign the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.] I'm sort of proud of my dad because his first language is Polish, but he lived in America and he would never utter a Polish word in our household. I sort of wish he had, because I might have some skills, but he felt that you live in America, you speak English to be successful. I agree with the philosophy, I just wish he had expressed--even if he cursed at me [laughter]--I might have some phonetic skills in the language, but my mom was, again, born in Buffalo, New York. Her mom died in the flu epidemic in 1919, when she was six years old. [Editor's Note: Between twenty and forty million people perished in the influenza (also known as "Spanish Flu") pandemic that swept the globe from 1918 to 1919, following the end of World War I, including an estimated 675,000 in the United States.] She was born in 1913 and she was raised very well by an aunt and her father was--she didn't live with her father, but he was nearby. So, both my parents had good family backgrounds and upbringing as far as that goes. My mom's a high school graduate from Buffalo

and my dad, as I said, most he had was fourth grade, but he wrote exceptionally well and spoke well. He was an intelligent person and I had a lot of respect for him. I was the oldest of six children and that's basically that. My dad worked for Johnson & Johnson when we lived in Metuchen. He worked right on Route 1 there. It was textile tape. They made tape at the time. The factory's still there. I'm not sure what it is today.

SI: Your father's family came to Canada first.

DB: Yes. Theoretically, they settled in Buffalo or Niagara Falls.

SI: Okay.

DB: But, my dad was the second child and they had moved to Canada, right on the other side. I would go to the farm, which, interesting today--it was quite a few acres--today, it's a big casino, didn't do me any good. [laughter] I would go up as a kid and I could hear the falls and I could walk to the falls and things like that. It was that close, but it was farmland. An interesting thing about my grandfather, I'm a diabetic, but I take care of myself, so, I have no issues. My grandfather, obviously, was a diabetic, because I can remember--it was during the war, probably 1944, a six, seven-year-old kid--we would work in the farm, picking crops, which I dislike to this day, but, then, we would get a horse and buggy and we'd ride down [to] Niagara Falls, Ontario, selling the product, but my grandfather was blind, due to diabetes, I think. I would [say], "Hey, Grandpa, stop. Somebody wants to buy some oranges," not oranges, obviously, but melons or whatever he was selling. He lived to ninety-five years old, but they didn't know he was a diabetic, which is standard at that time.

SI: Yes.

DB: He was born in--I've been to his village, both my grandparents--he was born in 1869, in a small, little village in southern Poland. Go off of the track a little bit--you can edit it out if you wish--but I went to that village a number of years ago. I had some Polish friends that spoke English and we went to the church. Within five minutes, the Catholic priest broke out the original baptismal records of my grandfather, we didn't know this, September 28, 1869. We knew the year he was born, but not the date, and his mother's maiden name and his brothers and sisters, and then, we asked the priest if there's anybody by my last name in this village. My name has been changed very slightly. He said, "There's an old man down the street." So, we went knocking on doors and we find this ninety-year-old man who happens to be my grandfather's brother's son. I've got a ninety-year-old aunt in Canada and they're cousins, first cousins. They didn't know they existed. Yes, it was just a fabulously neat experience. There were some family traits that you could see in the features of the people and things like that, but it was a fabulous experience.

SI: Growing up, you said there was no language spoken, but were there any Polish traditions kept up in your household?

DB: No. I wish there had been, because I like Polish food today, but it must be in my genes. I got no Polish foods whatsoever. My mom--six kids, so, she was a stay-at-home mom--she did

all the cooking. Since she was a WASP, we had no [ethnic food], other than, I still dislike it, but, on Fridays, we're a good Catholic family, my mom was not, but we had fish every Friday. I'm not a big fish eater now, but, no, I had no Polish traditions. That's why, I go to Poland now, I thrive on the food, love it. No, we didn't have any traditions. I would go up and see my grandparents, but it was during the war, shortly after, and Niagara Falls was an eight, ten-hour drive. So, we got there maybe once a year at the most. I would stay with my grandparents or we'd stay with my grandparents, but we would stay with my mom's side of the family in Buffalo, New York, that was very WASP-y, and then, my dad's side in Ontario, or Niagara Falls, which was very Polish. So, I had a little. His sisters would speak Polish to me, but it meant nothing to me, a week of exposure.

SI: Were you able to communicate with them?

DB: No, they spoke English.

SI: They spoke English.

DB: My grandparents spoke English and they spoke it to me. It was primitive English, it wasn't good English at all, but I could understand them and that was the extent of it. My father was not proud of his Polish traditions. In this country, throughout the world, Poles were looked down upon after the war, until relatively recently. He never really acknowledged his Polish heritage at all.

SI: What was the name originally?

DB: It was spelt B-L-A-C-H. There was an "N" added to the name when they got to Canada and there was a line through the "L," which changes the phonetics totally. I can't pronounce it, okay, but that was the original name. [laughter] That's the name; in fact, my grandparents' tombstone in Canada has that. The tradition, whether it's true or not, my grandfather had a job and there was somebody by the same last name, so, he decided to add an "N," so [that] he got his pay straight. Whether that's true or not, you never know, yes, and I don't even know if they came through Ellis Island or not. They could very well have. Interesting, I asked my aunt, who was sharp--she's ninety-one, ninety-three, as a matter-of-fact--why Grandpa came to the New World. It was in the section of Poland that was controlled by Austria-Hungary and he was nineteen years old. He was about to get drafted into the Austrian-Hungarian Army and he went to Canada, the United States and Canada, but I maintain he was the first draft dodger that went to Canada. [laughter] Thank God he did. That I know is a true story. My grandmother's side--they didn't know one another in Poland, they were from a similar area, but sixty, eighty miles apart--they met over here, but her mother died at her birth. Her father remarried and, apparently, she didn't get along with her new mom. Her father took her to Niagara Falls, as a sixteen-year-old, and dropped her off with a Polish family, went back to Poland. That's just hard to fathom, for me. [Editor's Note: The dual monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire existed from 1867 to 1918 and included land that makes up modern-day Poland.] I know she worked as a chambermaid until she met my grandfather, but things were difficult. I can remember my dad saying on the farm that they would be running out of food in April and they were down to potato skin soup. They had a couple cows. Obviously, they had milk and things like that, but things are so

different than what I and my kids are used to, but that's basically my family tree and history; so, go ahead.

SI: How did your mother and your father get together?

DB: I'm not sure. I'm not sure that they ever really mentioned [it], because they were totally different religions and at that time …

SI: The lines were pretty strict.

DB: Yes, and how they met, my dad, they were married in 1936 and he was born in 1904, so, he was thirty-two. My mom was born in 1913, so, she was twenty-three, twenty-four when they got married. So, they weren't kids. At that time, most people got married very young, but I don't remember--we'll never find out--how they met. I just don't know. I just don't know where they met. It'd be an interesting question, but I don't know.

SI: You were born in Queens, and then, you quickly moved to Tenafly.

DB: No.

SI: Teaneck?

DB: Teaneck.

SI: Sorry. Do you have any memories of your home in Teaneck?

DB: No. My younger sister, her claim to fame, she was born in Hackensack General Hospital and she was born the same day as Ricky Nelson.

SI: Okay.

DB: Whose father was a Rutgers alum. So, her claim to fame is that she slept with Ricky Nelson [laughter]--in the same hospital, Hackensack General Hospital, I believe it was. I think she was born in 1940, but I'm not sure of that. [Editor's Note: Singer and actor Ricky Nelson starred in the 1950s sitcom *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* with his father, Ozzie Nelson, RC '27, and family.]

SI: From Teaneck, your family moved to Bound Brook.

DB: That's correct.

SI: Okay.

DB: I have very vague memories of that. It seems to me it was along the Raritan Canal, but I'm not sure. Then, we moved to outside of New Brunswick, off Franklin Boulevard. The name of the road was Rodney Avenue and I went to first and second grade at Pine Grove Manor

Elementary School there. This was towards the end of the war and I just recently found my report card from first grade and I took that to--I went to Pine Grove Manor School, still there, and saw the principal. Apparently, in first grade, I had extremely poor handwriting and I still do to this day. The teacher wrote the whole alphabet in cursive and wanted me to practice it at home, but the whole report card was written by hand. I was a bright kid, but I had horrible penmanship, which, to this day, I still do, just small finger coordination or whatnot, or lack of.

SI: What was that area like back then? Was it more rural?

DB: Homes were probably built in the late '30s. We lived on Rodney Avenue, which is still in existence. We lived in a single-family home. I can remember, the coal man would come and deliver coal down a chute, into the basement, and my dad would have to stoke the furnace at night, just keep it going all night long. I can remember, one night at Rodney Avenue, during the war, we would have air raid drills. I can remember, the house was dark. You darkened your house totally and I can remember being upstairs in the bedroom with my mom and we heard a plane flying over. She said, "This may be the real thing." Obviously, it wasn't, [laughter] but I remember that. I remember, I was listening to the radio when President Roosevelt died and I told my mom. I can remember her running across the street and telling the neighbors. [Editor's Note: President Franklin Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945.] I can remember the atomic bombs being dropped and I asked my mom, we heard the word atomic bomb, but I said, "What is it?" I can remember her comment. She didn't know, but they had some good friends, [one of] who was a chemical engineer, and she said, his name was Jimmy (Chestnut?), "He would understand what it was," but I was a six, seven-year-old kid, so, it meant nothing to me. I remember, very vividly, V-E Day, being very happy, walking down the street and banging on drums and things like that, as well as V-J Day. Interesting thing, and you may want to cut this out later on …

SI: I can turn it off, if you want.

DB: No, you can put it on.

SI: All right.

DB: Because I'm not ashamed of it. My dad, Polish, was not prejudiced in any way, shape or form. His favorite expression was, "We all put our pants on the same way," but my mom was anti-Semitic. I can remember, on the front lawn of the house, on a summer day, telling me how bad Jewish people were, the same thing everybody's heard, how they control everything and all that, etc. I think this is probably before we knew about how bad the Holocaust was. I can remember, to this day, asking my mom, "Okay, Jewish people are no good. What do they look like?" I can remember her telling me that they have hook noses and olive skin. So, I can remember going around, looking, I mean, a seven-year-old kid, looking up to see if you fit that stereotype, but it was just interesting, the prejudice. As I said, my dad had none of it, but my mom certainly did, and how they developed, I have no idea. What nurtured them, I just don't know, but, to me, it's--and the Holocaust has always troubled me. I'm a historian, a good student, a very good student, of World War II history and I've been to most of the concentration camps, including Auschwitz two or three times, and just the traumatic effect that it has had on me, just,

it was… I mean, first time I went, I had my son, just graduated from college, it was dead of winter and some of the buildings at Auschwitz are substantial. Others are Quonset hut types. In the substantial buildings, they had impressive exhibits and it was freezing. We were there the 1st of January. The building was freezing and I was cold, but I kept thinking, "All I do is get in my car and turn my heater on. How these poor souls, fifty years prior, and the conditions," it just blew my mind. To this day, I have very good friends--in fact, I e-mailed them today--German friends, and we talk about it quite frequently. Germans, the ones I know, are very remorseful. They bring it up. They live in Berlin, some of them do, and they've taken me to brand-new Jewish museums. They've taken me to the Holocaust museum--not that I've asked to go, but they knew my interest and they've taken me. They feel very guilty and, yet, my friends had nothing to do with it, but it's just something that's [ingrained], but I've been to quite a few. I'm also a student of Polish history quite a bit and I know about the Warsaw Uprising, in August of 1944 or September [April-May 1943]. In fact, the seventieth anniversary, the Polish Embassy has a commemoration of it, September 3rd, which I'm going to attend this year. There are some good speakers on it and things like that. I've read a lot about it. I thrive on that type of history today.

SI: Do you recall hearing about the camps in 1945, when the news first broke?

DB: No, no, nothing at all. I don't remember. Even in college, I don't remember hearing or reading too much about it. Certainly, Auschwitz and the bad ones were in Poland, were behind the Iron Curtain, and there wasn't a lot about it that came out, no, definitely not.

SI: You did not see newsreels at the movies.

DB: No, not in '44, '45, and I may have in [books], because there's famous pictures of [General Dwight D.] Eisenhower going to various places. I was a little bit aware of the Anne Frank diaries, but I don't think they were even published until the mid '50s. [Editor's Note: *The Diary of Anne Frank* was published in 1947 in the Netherlands by her father, Otto Frank, and in the United States in 1952.] I'm not sure I'm right, but, no, we knew we hated the Germans and the Japanese, but it wasn't for that reason, not at all. It was just not, and I've done an awful lot of reading on it since and I'm pretty knowledgeable in it, but I was not aware of that at all, not at all.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit more about the neighborhood on Rodney, what the economic and ethnic makeup was like?

DB: Yes, I would say it was all Caucasian. I don't remember [exactly]. I'm confident. In fact, Pine Grove Manor School, I don't remember ever seeing an African-[American] student or youngster there. I would say, since it was single-family homes--I've been by my home at college reunions--I would say my dad had a very good, responsible job with Johnson & Johnson, so, I'm going to tell you he was maybe a little bit above middle-class. Not upper middle-class, that's too high, and I would say I don't remember too many of the neighbors. They were all definitely Caucasians. It seems to me there may have been an Italian or two, but I don't remember. There was probably thirty, forty homes, all single-family homes. If I remember right, probably three or four bedrooms in the house, a basement, and I'm not even sure how many bathrooms. I'm not sure if we had two bathrooms. I sort of think not, but I don't know that.

SI: Your father had this job at Johnson & Johnson for a long time.

DB: Right.

SI: Do you know what he did beforehand?

DB: Yes, I do know. He worked for Kimberly-Clark, which was a paper manufacturer, I believe. I believe the offices were in Niagara Falls. Then, I believe he was transferred down to the Queens [office]. He obviously had some sort of a management position, junior management. How he got with Johnson & Johnson, I don't know. I don't know. I know he had met General Johnson [Robert Wood Johnson II], who was the head of J&J at the time, because he referred to meeting him a couple times, but what transpired, I have no idea. I just don't know.

SI: He was not working on the line. He was a manager.

DB: He was a foreman. I think that was it, a foreman, and it was in production. I remember going during the war, where they were given an award, because it was all defense. Maybe they were making industrial tapes and things like that, but it was all defense. He was getting--his company, not he--was given an award for production or exceeding goals or something to that effect. I remember going to that ceremony. It was outside during the summer. That's all I remember about it, but he was proud of it. He was very proud of it, but, no, he was a foreman on a production line of some sort.

SI: Do you remember the rationing program affecting your family?

DB: Yes, to a degree. I still have--in fact, I'd give it to Rutgers--I have a rationing coupon from my mom. I can remember, we were never hurt for food. I mean, oh, I can remember very vividly collecting tin cans and rubber and things like that and giving it to the war effort. When we would go to Canada, my father would save up on gas coupons, because we drove, and then, apparently, Canada didn't have the same rationing. So, when he got to Canada, he could fill the car up to drive back. I remember sugar being rationed. Shoes, I think, were rationed and it is interesting. My dad had a big victory garden on the College of Agriculture Campus, opposite the dairy barn there. They gave him--not him only, but anybody who wanted to--probably an acre of land and we would go there and we would grow vegetables. So, I'm not sure it was an acre, but it was a nice sized piece of property that Rutgers University gave anybody who wanted to farm it, I guess, but my dad did. We would grow vegetables and products like that. There's no animals at all, but, when we lived on Rodney Avenue in New Jersey, we definitely had chickens that we got the eggs and we slaughtered them, my dad did. I can still remember it. It was horrible. [laughter] We were never hurting as far as lack of food or nutrition or anything else like that. So, we did okay. I believe my parents played the game right. I don't think they were involved in the black market. I don't know that, but I don't think they were. They were pretty honest as far as that goes.

SI: Before you left New Brunswick, did you have any other interactions with Rutgers? Did you ever go to football games?

DB: No, because I left New Brunswick--we moved to Edison Township, Metuchen, basically, but it wasn't Metuchen legally--I was going into third grade. So, I had no dealings with Rutgers at all. I had my tonsils taken out at Saint Peter's Hospital when I was in first grade. My mom psyched me up and said I'd get ice cream and, at that time, you stayed in the hospital for two or three days. That was not a big deal, but, no, I don't remember Rutgers at all. The only time I had any dealings with Rutgers, I went to Metuchen High School and we would have track meets at the Rutgers Stadium. I ran track in high school, but Rutgers, frankly, wasn't my first choice. I was the oldest of six kids and finances kicked in on that. So, I went to Rutgers for financial reasons mainly. It was an interesting thing in my case. At Metuchen High School, I took an aptitude test and they were not very sophisticated at all and the only thing it showed is I had a high liking for the outdoors. So, the guidance counselor recommended I go to the Ag [Agriculture] School. So, you do what you're told. I went to the Ag School and I get there and I really didn't care for it. I don't care for animals and plants don't turn me on. So, I found ag economics, after my freshman year, and I majored in agricultural economics. I think I got a super education, super education. I think another thing that I value at Rutgers is that, as an ag student, in my freshman year, we had to take all the sciences--the chemistries, biology, genetics, physics, geology--and I really think that gave me a good, solid basis, not that I've ever used them, but in thinking and things like that. A little off the subject, but, after college, and you'll probably get to this later on, I went to OCS, Naval Officer Candidate School. It was very challenging, very challenging. A lot of guys flunked out and the people that had the science background, we did much better than people with the liberal arts background, because there's a progression of thinking. The navigation courses, the operation courses in the Navy, it's one sequence after another and I think I got that. I did well at OCS, but I think the education at Rutgers, just the thought process, helped me genuinely.

SI: How well do you think your education in Metuchen, particularly the high school, prepared you for college?

DB: I'm not sure that well. At that time, everybody at Rutgers had to take a Davis test. Are you familiar with it?

SI: I have heard the term.

DB: Okay, it was an English test--don't quote me, but probably sixty percent of us failed it, of all New Jersey students. So, it wasn't [just] Metuchen. We had to take a remedial course before we could go on and take any English courses. So, they did it, I think Rutgers did it, in spite, because the class was Saturday morning at eight o'clock. I was commuting at the time. I didn't live [on campus]. I lived at home until my sophomore year. So, I had to be there on Saturday morning at eight o'clock to take the Davis test. I had a good instructor, Young was his last name. I doubt if he was a doctor, but a good instructor, had a good sense of humor. I passed it the first time--some people had to take it two, three times before they passed it--and then, we're on our way. I guess that the math helped me in high school, because I never struggled at Rutgers academically. I didn't do too well on my SATs and I was told that I wouldn't make it at Rutgers. So, that scared me and I make the dean's list the first semester, but, after that, I got cocky and didn't do that well. [laughter] I did well, but not that well--do you know what I'm saying?

SI: Can you tell me more about the community in Metuchen and Edison where you grew up?

DB: Yes, it was Edison, went to Oak Tree Elementary School, just north of Metuchen, not that far from Metuchen Country Club. It was about a mile there and we were probably upper middle-class then, because we had a large home with two acres of land, three bathrooms, I remember that. There were six of us, six kids, and we were living quite well. We had a lot of apple trees. That whole area was upper middle-class. Again, I remember no minorities at all, none, but, by the same token, my parents never gave me anything. I started working at twelve, delivering newspapers, and I had a very long route. I can remember, getting into ethnics, going into an Italian community, which I didn't like, I didn't care for. I mean, I don't know why, but it had an Italian odor to it and I didn't like that, but everybody treated me well. There was no difficulties or anything like that, but I had to ride my bicycle probably ten miles every day after school to deliver them, because I had a rural route. I'd get paid two-and-a-half cents a paper. So, I made big bucks. Fifty papers, I'd be making a dollar a day. Then, I did caddy at Metuchen Country Club for a while, I worked at A&P, but the whole community I lived in, it was definitely upper middle-class. There was a development that was being built, right after the war, behind us, Stephenville, which is still there--it was like a Levittown, but it's apparently a very nice area today, although I haven't gone through it--but we sort of looked down our nose upon it as being a Levittown. Again, in my high school, we had some minorities and there was no real issue with them at all. I would say they lived in their own community, but this was grammar school, not high school. They lived in there, but we totally integrated schools and we all got along quite well. In fact, I go to some high school reunions and some of the same kids I went to elementary school, black kids, we were best of buddies. I had reunions. A little off story, we had a playground in sixth grade, it was huge, no restrictions at all, and the boys would play tag. I wasn't the fastest guy in the world, so, I was an easy it. So, this one black, young kid tagged me and I was upset. So, I had wind and endurance. I chased him for twenty minutes all over the place, and then, he collapsed in front of everybody else and I tagged him. So, I was no longer an easy it. [laughter] See what I'm saying? I still see this guy. In high school, I think we stopped hanging out, but we go to high school reunions. There was no stupidity as far as racial stupidity goes, at all. In the same way, in Metuchen High School, there was under ten percent African-American and there was no--they would stay with themselves. We would [also], not overtly, but there were no animosities, there were no difficulties with them in any way, shape or form, either way. I mean, we got along well. So, there was nothing at that time; before people realized, I don't know. There were no problems.

SI: Did you play any other sports besides track?

DB: No, I just ran track. I ran cross-country in high school, and then, I ran--I wasn't very good--I ran the mile and the mile relay in high school, but that was the only sports I participated in in high school.

SI: You said your guidance counselor basically directed you towards Rutgers.

DB: Not towards Rutgers, I think …

SI: The College of Agriculture?

DB: The Ag School, he did. I think the decision had been made that I was going to go to Rutgers for finances. I got accepted. If I didn't get accepted, I got accepted to West Virginia University. I had no intentions [of going there], but it was a backup. It was always expected of me, "You'd go to college." My parents would say, not in these words, "I couldn't go to college, but you damn well better." That wasn't their words, but it was expected of me to do that. I was the oldest of six kids, so, my parents couldn't keep an eye on me as far as doing homework and things like that, but it was just their expectations they had, that I did my homework. I certainly wasn't a troublemaker in any way, shape or form. I had good friends and things like that.

SI: With your brothers and sisters, what was the age range?

DB: We're born--a good Catholic family--we were born every two years. I was the oldest and my youngest sister is about twelve, fourteen years younger that I am, so, it worked. Funny, in my family, you always knew what the sex was going to be, because when my mom was pregnant, it was always boy, girl, boy, girl, all the way down. So, when the last two or three were born, I knew what they were going to be. I mean, that's before they had any of this testing.

SI: Did your siblings wind up going to college as well?

DB: My one brother. None of the girls were college educated. One of them's pretty smart, but she never got a degree. My one brother, next down from me, didn't go to college. I was in the Navy and he had just graduated from high school. He was doing stupid boy things and I talked him into going into the Navy. He got into their nuclear power program and he stayed in the Navy, got his master's degree in the Navy. Then, when he got out, he was eventually in charge of a nuclear power plant, a civilian power plant, up in Connecticut. So, he's got a college degree and my other brother got it when he was fifty years old, but the girls do not have college educations. That time, I'm not saying right or wrong, it wasn't expected of the girls to go to school. Boys, I think, probably in 1945, '46, five percent of the male population was college educated. "Trust and verify" that statistic, but one of the things I feel very opinionated about is the GI Bill after World War II [Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944]. After that was completed, probably twenty percent of American men had a college education. I'm not sure of that statistic either, but interesting, my freshman year, obviously eighty percent of our class was right out of high school to college, where we did have a lot of GI Bill. I started in '55, so, these guys had probably been more in the Korean War. We really admired them. They struggled more than we did, because they didn't have the continuity of the education, the math and things like that. We looked up upon them very greatly, I think, because they valued the education, their work ethic and they were the maturity that a lot of eighteen-year-old kids need. So, I'm a very big believer. I think the GI Bill made America what it is, because those guys got an education and they were able to contribute, which I think is very good.

SI: I know the World War II GI Bill veterans were a very visible block on the campus. Were the Korean War era veterans as visible? Did they have their own housing area?

DB: Yes, the married ones lived up on the Heights now, which is the Busch Campus, I believe. They lived in Quonset huts, basically. The only buildings up there, at that time, was the stadium,

golf course and a building, and then, the streptomycin building was there [the Waksman Institute of Microbiology]. Then, all our chem labs were up there--maybe for safety purposes, I don't know [laughter]--but they were all up there. So, we had to go up there for our chemistry labs. They lived in Quonset type [huts] or small, almost like trailers, that they lived in. They were probably setup immediately after the war. I would say the single ones lived with us in the dorms and things like that, but the married ones, they had married housing for them up there. How many there were? I don't know, but they lived up there, but it wasn't the great numbers that were right after World War II. It was quite a bit smaller. In fact, the one's down in Peru now and I still exchange e-mails with him occasionally. He was one of the top of our class, because he worked at it. He valued it. We didn't as much.

SI: Was there any transition going from high school to college?

DB: No, I don't think I had any great transitional problems; maybe the fact I lived at home, I had the stability of a home life. I had my own room, so, I could study and things like that. So, no, I didn't have any great issues. They told me I wasn't going to succeed, so, I studied hard to prove them all wrong. No, I had no issues with transition, not at all, no.

SI: Did you get involved in any social activities at first?

DB: Not really, no. I didn't join a fraternity. I pledged, but I didn't want to get involved with the stupidity. So, I didn't get involved. What had happened to me, that is, my dad, when I was a sophomore, lost his job with Johnson & Johnson. So, the whole family moved up to Vermont and they opened a small motel and they were hurting. I wasn't going to go to Vermont, so, I stayed and I lived on campus for the last three years. At those river dorms is where I lived, but, no, my family, basically, they told me, and I think it did me a lot of good, they had five other kids to raise, "You want to go college, you're going to do it yourself," and I put myself through school totally. One of the things that I'm still known for, I had, in my junior and senior year, a sandwiches, cake, milk and ice cream concession, where I would sell sandwiches, cake, milk and ice cream in all the dorms and I was making a lot of money. Somebody tried to compete with me and I went to the dean and I said, "You can't let him bother these students from studying." So, he gave me exclusive rights, with the stipulation that I gave him a financial report at the end of the year. I still have nightmares, jokingly. I didn't do it until I got my diploma and I still have nightmares about being pulled out of that line and [being asked], "Where's your financial report?" didn't happen, but I gave it to him after.

SI: Which dean was that?

DB: I'm going to tell you it was [Larry] Pitt or [Howard] Crosby, but I'm not sure. I still remember sitting opposite him in the desk and he's shaking his head, saying, "You made more money than I did last year." I did. I was making big bucks. I was making, in 1959, three hundred, four hundred dollars a week there. [laughter] What they did the following year is, they broke it up and they gave it to five or six different people, but I had the whole thing in my senior year. I had an arrangement where I bought my sandwiches from the Commons. They made them for me, and then, I had a concession, or an agreement, with a dairy where they would put an icebox on campus where they put the [goods]. We had an orange drink, milk and ice cream,

where they would deliver that every day. Then, we'd go from there. So, it worked out very well. It worked out very well. I was extremely poor until my senior year, and then, things worked out very well for me.

SI: When you say you were making three or four hundred dollars a week, is that in revenue?

DB: That was clear. That's what I was putting in the bank.

SI: Wow.

DB: No, that's not gross, that's net. Times have changed and the IRS--I called it a work scholarship. [laughter] So, things were different then. So, it was never an issue as far as the IRS goes, but I was making big money. Rutgers football games, they would only get ten thousand people, but, at my senior year, I was responsible for a number of those concession stands. They gave me a bonus, a hundred dollars, but, I mean, they gave me a bonus for that. Then, I would clean on Saturday, with a bunch of people, just as an employee, though, just clean the stadium afterwards, but I worked pretty hard; I mean, still did my studies. So, I'm not going to tell you [I did not do much else] until my senior year, when I had some money, but I didn't have much of a social life; probably illegal now, but I had a hotplate in my room and I was making my soup and SpaghettiOs and whatnot. Actually, I was sending money home to my parents in Vermont in my senior year and I left with quite a bit of money in the bank. It did me wonders, it did me wonders, the fact that I had to do it on my own. Nobody took care of me. It gave me that independence and the skills. In fact, I think it's one of the reasons why I've been successful in life, is that I've had to work for everything I've gotten. Nobody's ever given me a damn thing.

SI: Tell me a little bit more about your classes and professors. You found your way into the agricultural economics course. Do any of them stand out in your mind?

DB: Not really. I do remember my freshman biology. It was a big lecture. Nelson was his name. Nelson Hall is named after him now.

SI: Thurlow Nelson?

DB: It may have been.

SI: Okay.

DB: He was a lecturer. I can remember him talking about evolution. In a lecture, he made a statement that, "I believe in evolution," I do, too, but he said, "A lot of religions don't and it's up to you." He didn't push it, which I thought was a respectable thing.

SI: Sure.

DB: I had a lot of respect for that. I liked chemistry so much as a freshman--I just liked the math of it--that I was considering changing to a chem major. I actually took qualitative analysis in my sophomore year, but, between my freshman and sophomore year, I worked in a chem lab

and I hated it. So, that discouraged [me], no longer did I care to be a chem major, but I've always had an interest in histories and economics. George Luke was head of the Ag Economics Department. I got relatively close to him, took a lot of courses, but I will say that most of my economic courses were downtown, very few were ag related courses. I don't remember any great professors that I was extremely fond of or took me under their wing or anything else like that. No, I got along with them all, but I never had any fond memories of any particular professor. I thought the faculty was good. Some of the courses, as I said, I still use a lot of the sciences to a degree, in my head, and I thought a statistics course I took was very valuable today, just analyzing things. I just think college is a combination of dealing with people, learning, maturing and developing skills, social skills, people skills and things like that, but it's not like I was an engineer where I would've used those skills that I had, nor did I use any economics skills I had. I knew how to analyze things pretty well, but I think I learned that a lot on my own, too. I have no real particular professor that nurtured me at all, no.

SI: What about any administrators or deans?

DB: No, Crosby and Pitt, I didn't know. Dr. Mason Gross, I'm not sure what his title is, but he wasn't President at the time, but he was second-in-command.

SI: He was provost. [Editor's Note: Mason Gross was Provost of Rutgers University from 1949 to 1958. In 1959, he became President of Rutgers until he retired in 1971.]

DB: I think that may have been his title, but I would go if he was speaking. He could be speaking about anything, I would go and listen to him, because he was such a dramatic and dynamic speaker, just held your interest totally. He was a type that you walk opposite him on campus and he would greet you. I mean, he didn't know your name, obviously, but he would just, "Hello, how are you doing?" He was just the epitome of a charming person, an outstanding speaker. Usually, speakers bore me, but he was just really a good speaker. So, I have very fond memories of him. The President was Jones, Dr. Jones. I just remember him speaking. I have no interrelationship or any relationship with him at all. So, I really didn't know him, but Mason Gross, I have very fond memories of him, very fond memories of him, yes. [Editor's Note: Dr. Lewis Webster Jones served as President of Rutgers University from 1951 to 1958.]

SI: During the 1950s, a lot was happening in the world, the Cold War was developing. Do you remember any of that affecting the Rutgers Campus?

DB: Yes. The thing that I remember very vividly, and I am a political person and a historic person, is the Hungarian Revolution. The Hungarian Revolution, I was pretty attuned to what was going on there and thousands of those refugees came to New Brunswick. They settled at Camp Kilmer, which is where I believe the Livingston Campus is today, but I'm not sure. [Editor's Note: The Hungarian Revolution began on October 23, 1956, and was crushed by the Soviet Union by November 10th. Thirty-five thousand refugees were brought to the United States and were temporarily housed at Camp Kilmer.] They were all over the place, but nothing negative at all. They kept them in the [camp] until they could resettle them. They didn't mix with us at all. I don't remember ever communicating or talking with them or anything else like that. I remember very vividly, the Hungarian Revolution was October of '56 and England and

France invaded the Suez Canal in October of '56. America was very opposed to England and France taking over the Suez Canal. [Editor's Note: Beginning on October 29, 1956, Israel, aided by Great Britain and France, invaded Egypt with the goal of eliminating Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and returning the Suez Canal to Western control. The Americans, Soviets and the United Nations pressured the invading forces to abandon their campaign in early November 1956.] A lot of people are saying that Eisenhower had to give split attention and he didn't give his [best], but there's a lot of talk today, and I don't know, that our Voice of America said, "You rise up in Hungary, we'll support you." We never did and I think we have a guilt complex, but I'm not sure we should. I don't know what it would have brought upon us, but it was a tragedy, what happened, and I've been to Budapest. I know that history quite well. I know some people there. It was just a tragedy. My heart's always gone out to the Hungarian people, maybe because of that, but world events, I do remember the Eisenhower election against Stevenson in 1956. I was very pro-Eisenhower at the time and I think you got that from your parents. They were Republicans, but I don't remember any great racial things. I don't remember them until the '60s. We did have very few African-Americans on campus, very few, but there was no issues. I mean, I never even heard of marijuana. I never even heard of it until I was in the Navy. Then, it wasn't a problem. It wasn't an issue then. So, there was no drugs. There was alcohol, obviously. It was ninety-nine percent beer. I don't think people drank any hard stuff, I don't think. I certainly didn't, I don't think, but beer, we consumed our beer. As far as world events go, I would be attuned to things that went on, but in '56 was the Revolution. See, the Korean War was over in '53 and Vietnam didn't get stupid until '61, '62, so, the world had relative peace. I remember the U-2 incident with Gary Powers. I think that was in '59, may have been '60. [Editor's Note: In May 1960, the Soviet Union shot down a CIA U-2 spy plane over their territory piloted by Gary Powers.]

SI: I think it was early 1960.

DB: It could've been. Eisenhower was still President though, I can tell you that. The election was in November of '60. So, it could've been early '60. I just don't know, but I remember that. The Berlin Wall didn't go up until '61. I was very much in favor of--in fact, I wrote a speech, I took speech--I was very much in favor of the Marshall Plan. One of my speech subjects was write a speech for the Secretary of State to read on the Marshall Plan. [laughter] So, I was quite attuned to what was going on, but I don't remember being overly troubled with any particular issue, other than the Hungarian Revolution, because there was nothing earth-shaking going on that changed the world. There was the Israeli Wars; the War of '57, was it? [Editor's Note: Mr. Blanch may be referring to the 1967 war.] I wasn't aware of the Jewish situation at that time or I didn't have any great concerns about it. So, no, that's about all I remember.

SI: You had to take at least two years of ROTC.

DB: I hated it. Yes, I had to take two years. You actually had a choice of Army or Air Force and I took the Air Force and I just despised it. I wouldn't say I was anti-military, but I had no love for the military, none at all. I had no intentions of staying in or going in. We had our drills once a week and all sorts of the chickenshit and stupidity that I hated. So, as soon as my two years was up, I had no desire to go on, and then, what happened with me, and everybody else that didn't, is that when we're about to graduate, we were losing our student deferment. So, I

knew I was going to get drafted. So, I got accepted--I applied for and got accepted--to Navy and Coast Guard OCS. I can remember, going back to earlier, delivering papers, I can remember the spot, I was delivering a paper, reading the headlines of the paper, it was during the Korean War and the "Frozen Chosen." Now, I made a vow, right then and there, that I would never go into the Army or the Marines. I was not going to freeze and the Air Force didn't excite me, so, I got accepted to both Navy and Coast Guard OCS. Coast Guard only had two schools a year and the Navy had them every month. I wanted to get the damn thing over with. So, school started the 1st of September and it was four months. I was commissioned. Because of holidays and things like that, they gave us a long time, I was commissioned the end of February, early March. I really loved the Navy, I mean, not that I wanted to stay. The Navy, for me, I was asked to stay and, if you kept your nose clean, you could rise up certain ranks, but I told them, an officer had asked me to stay, I said, "I've got to prove myself in the real world. I've got to do it on my own." I like to think I've been relatively successful, I mean.

SI: Tell me about the process of finding out about the program and if anybody at Rutgers helped guide you towards the OCS program.

DB: I can't tell you. I don't remember how I found out about it. I don't believe anybody at Rutgers did [tell me], but I don't remember talking to a recruiter, either. I may have found out about it, but I'm not saying I'm right. I may have found out from fellow students, the people that were applying, because we were all in the same ball of wax, basically, but I may have just picked it up from other classmates that they were applying to OCS and that, "You ought to do so." I know I had to go to Brooklyn, I believe, for some testing, for a physical and some interviews. How I got involved, I don't know. Then, they first rejected me because of my height, but they said they'd get a waiver and they did. I think the maximum was six-four and I was six-five, but it was never an issue, but they got that waiver for me. No, I don't remember how I got [in], except I made a vow that I wasn't going in the Army or the Marines, to myself. The Air Force didn't excite me, but why, I don't know. I just don't know.

SI: Tell me a little bit about the training. Where did you report first? What was the transition from civilian to military life like?

DB: That was difficult. It was up in Newport, Rhode Island. We lived in huge barracks, probably a hundred students to a barracks, triple decks. The first couple weekends, because I was used to every weekend being free and chasing girls, that first weekend, I'm down on the deck on my hands and knees, scraping the floor--it was damn depressing. It was not a fun time. "What the hell am I doing here?" but, after a week or two, I adjusted. There was some stupid marching and things like that, but, being a civilian, you play the game--do you know what I'm saying? You adjust. I adjusted quite well, without any serious problems, I guess, but we had a curfew, or not curfew, lights were out. We were able to go out on weekends, but lights had to be out at ten o'clock I'm going to tell you. So, we had to do all our studying in there and it was not the best studying conditions, although everybody did study. I don't remember having a desk, I think sitting in my bunk studying. I mean, it was not [ideal]. The classes were good. They were all Navy instructors, junior officers. Some of them you disliked, some of them you really liked. I mean, that's human nature, but some of the courses were extremely challenging, extremely challenging. Then, after OCS, I was a supply officer, so, I went down to Navy Supply School,

was not part of the University of Georgia, but it was next to the University of Georgia. That was probably the biggest cultural shock I ever had, in '59, no, early '60, going down to the University of Georgia and some of the issues, because I was a Northern boy. Do you know what I'm saying? It was all-white. We would chase girls there. They were relatively opinionated on issues, which conflicted with my issues. There was probably four hundred students at this Navy school and we had an officers' club. We would invite the University of Georgia girls to come. It was a big thing for them, going out with a naval officer to an officers' club. The University of Georgia said to the Navy that, "If you allow black officers into the officers' club, we will put it off limits and will not let our girls go there." Navy stood firm, the University of Georgia capitulated, but it was just, to me, a shock to see that. Then, it was an over religious [environment], Southern religious peoples. I had some adjusting problems with all over, "Jesus Saves," and all the parks, "Whites Only," and things like that. That just was not [my background] and Athens, Georgia, where the university [was], was real--I'm not sure what the adjective is, hillbilly is the best--it was not a cosmopolitan place. An interesting story, a bunch of us Northern guys--you may not know, but everybody in the '50s and '60s was saving green stamps. So, you're aware of it?

SI: Yes, the S&H stamps. [Editor's Note: Sperry and Hutchinson sold green stamps to retailers as part of an incentive program. Retailers would then give stamps to customers after shopping at their business. The stamps could then be redeemed through the S&H catalog for products and rewards.]

DB: Yes, exactly. So, we would go [write] on this, "Jesus Saves," one night, "Saves Green Stamps." [laughter] We would go to Atlanta on weekends, because we had a lot of freedom and liberty, because we were ensigns in the Navy then. So, we had a lot of freedom to do what we wanted to do and we [had a] fairly comfortable life. So, we would go there and there was some cosmopolitan--not the right word--girls' schools, that we would visit the girls there that were not like the University of Georgia girls. So, we would go there quite [often] and Atlanta was a neat city; maybe some problems standing up when they played Dixie, but, other than that, Atlanta was a neat city. So, we would go there quite a bit.

SI: How long was the course?

DB: Six months.

SI: You were there for quite a while.

DB: Yes, I was there from March to August, then, got out in August, and then, reported aboard ship.

SI: What did the training there consist of?

DB: It was mainly supply. I was a supply officer, so, it was strictly disbursing officer, how you pay people. It was also commissary officer, preparing food. We didn't actually prepare foods, but how you did things like that. Then, a lot of it was parts. We were responsible for all supply parts on the ship, spare parts, so, how you order them, how you get them, how you determine

them, what your inventories are. It was all courses on that level. It was all academics, all academics. Now, we had some pistol training, but it was no big deal. So, it was all academics, six months, wasn't a lot of pressure on you. At OCS, you had to do well to get your commission, but, now, you had your commission, so, there was no great incentive to do well. I mean, it was adequate, but that was the point of it.

SI: At either OCS or down in Georgia, did you find that most of the men that were with you were coming into the service for the same reason?

DB: Oh, no question, oh, no question, yes, that we were all [the same]. At OCS, the Navy would take a few what we called "Mustangs," people who'd been in the service for six, eight years that they wanted to go [to OCS], but that was five percent, if that. So, we were all identical. We were all college kids, a lot of Ivy League schools. I think it was more prestigious schools, I hate to say that, than there were--you wouldn't find people from state teachers' schools, I don't want to sound snobbish, but with exceptions, obviously. They were mainly from the Michigans, the Princetons, the Yales, things like that. Interesting story at OCS, I can swim as well as anybody can. I'm not a good swimmer, but I can swim. So, we had a swimming meet and I volunteered to swim the breaststroke for my company. I lined up and two of the guys swam in the Olympics the year before. I can still remember, I'm half way down and these guys are down and back. I could hear them cheering on the two guys as to who's going to win. [laughter] I'm halfway down and all the other guys, except the one that was with me, had all swam in college. So, two of us were [finishing] ten minutes later, and people weren't cheering for us. [laughter] I cheated, broke into a crawl and beat him, but, I mean, it was neat and something you don't forget. Those guys were good and I didn't even know how to make a turn, but, down in Georgia, I didn't care for the South. I just really did not care for it. It's changed an awful lot, but this was 1960 and it was a different world. It wasn't my world, and so, that was difficult for me--not difficult, I just didn't accept it--but, again, a lot of guys were from the North, so, we had our own camaraderie, too.

SI: I would imagine there were some African-American officers in that school.

DB: Not many, two or three maybe, two or three out of four hundred maybe, very small, but that's why the officers' club [became an issue]. They would go there, rightly so. No, the Navy, at that time, was not [widely integrated]. Most of your African-Americans, and even in the enlisted rank, with exceptions, were stewards--there were a lot of Filipino stewards, also--but, no, there were not many officers. I don't remember, I could be wrong, in OCS, [there being] any black candidates, but I could be wrong. I just don't remember. It was pretty big. It was probably fifteen hundred, two thousand students at OCS, I'm guessing. It probably is pretty close to right, but I don't remember any. There could've been, but they were down in supply officers' school.

SI: Tell me about your first ship assignment.

DB: First ship, when I was down there, I got orders to the AKA *Arneb* [(AKA-56)], attack cargo ship. It would carry heavy equipment and put them in boats and land the boats up on a beach in an amphibious landing. Actually, I picked that ship up right here at the Naval Academy. It was

anchored off to take midshipmen around and my orders were to pick it up on such-and-such a day it was down here. So, I had no problem. What was an interesting thing on that though is that I go aboard, and then, a couple junior officers, we went over to the officers' club, which is right here. They call it officers' and faculty club now, but I went over there. I hadn't met the Captain. The Captain's a four striper, a pretty senior guy, and [I am] one of the junior officers. He's sitting at the bar. One of the junior officers introduced me to him and I will never forget the most embarrassing time of my life--he had a drink and I went to shake his hand and knocked the drink over him, first impression. He was real good about it, I mean, real good about it. [laughter] There was no problems. Smooth as I was, the only thing I can think of is, "Thank God, Captain, you wear a wash-and-wear suit." [laughter] There were no problems. I mean, it was just embarrassing as hell, but, every time I come on the Academy, I think of that incident there. We went to pick up a ship up here, and then, it was stationed out of Norfolk and its operational orders were to go down to Antarctica. So, we basically left here and went to Norfolk, and then, we picked up a lot of supplies up in Newport or Jamestown, outside of Newport. Then, we picked up a lot of stuff at Deal, the ammunition depot.

SI: Earle? [Naval Weapons Station Earle on the New Jersey coast].

DB: Earle, yes.

SI: It is near Deal.

DB: Okay, there, and then, we went down to Antarctica. The ammunition we picked up was not ammunition *per se*. We picked up the JATO bottles.

SI: Oh.

DB: You know what they are, okay.

SI: Jet-assisted takeoff.

DB: Jet-assisted takeoff and they're dangerous, but, I mean, they're not [that dangerous]. We picked them up there and brought them because a lot of planes landed down there and they needed those bottles to take off again. So, we brought them down to them, down there, but went there, to Earle, and then, we went through the Panama Canal. What was interesting to me, today, is that everything was celestial navigation. We didn't have GPS, unheard of, and we would go through forty-five minutes' worth of mathematics to get your fix. You'd shoot the stars, your time had to be exact, and then, go through forty-five minutes' worth of mathematics and, if you were within ten miles of where you really were, you were doing good. You were doing good. Nineteen days later, we got to Christchurch, New Zealand. We went across the Equator, which was a brutal ceremony, became a "shellback" [a sailor who has crossed the Equator] from a "polliwog." The problem with the ship I was on is that every year it went down, so, two-thirds of the crew were shellbacks. It was quite brutal, not a fun day. [laughter]

SI: They did the whole ceremony.

DB: Oh, they did the whole [thing]. Oh, you crawled through garbage and they did everything to you. I mean, the ship had a mast that you'd climb up, use a ladder, and they had me climbing up the mast with a broom, sweeping the horizon for Davy Jones, [laughter] but a lot of it was very humiliating, very. Everybody was subject, officers as well as enlisted men, there was no [distinction]. It was gruesome, it was gruesome. Then, what they did was, a little off color, but they would shave your head, just take clippers and cut it, but they didn't cut the whole head. Most guys then just shaved their whole head to make it all grow back evenly, but I heard that when you got to New Zealand, they would tell all the girls there that the guys with shaved heads had venereal disease. [laughter] So, I didn't, so [that] I wasn't as obvious, but it was a neat experience. One of the things that happened is that our ship--it was a World War II ship--when we crossed the Equator, we lost our reefers [refrigerated containers] for our ship's food, the frozen food, things like that. So, when we got to New Zealand, we had to buy food from [the] New Zealand economy, which you're not allowed to do, but, obviously, we had no choice. In New Zealand, at the time, the only meat was lamb. You can't cook lamb, for three months, for three hundred people, that's decent. I was commissary officer, but, I mean, people had to face the facts--you just can't cook lamb every day. One thing that compensated it for us, I was able to buy ice cream and ice cream in New Zealand was very rich and different flavors and things like that. So, we had ice cream every day, too, but New Zealand was a beautiful place, a beautiful place, nice people, everybody spoke English. A sailor never spent a night aboard ship unless he had duty. People were so hospitable. They had a very fond remembrance of the Navy in World War II. The Navy--it's a little exaggerated on their part, but we welcomed it--they felt the Navy saved them from the Japanese in the Battle of Coral Sea. [Editor's Note: The Battle of Coral Sea, a naval battle near the Solomon Islands, occurred from May 7 to May 8, 1942.] That's not totally right, but there's some truth to that. So, they just loved us. We just ate meals with them, stayed with them, but, again, we were only there short periods of time. We went, stayed five, six days, went down to the ice, spent a couple months down there, came back, spend another [period in Antarctica], and then, went to various New Zealand ports, and then, went over to Australia and Tahiti on the way back, but [I was] very fond of the New Zealand people, still am, just lovely people. The fact is that there's no language issue, and so, when you come right down to it, the American sailor is a typical American. He's as American as you can get and he gets along well when there's no language issues. Do you know what I'm saying? They were just assimilated with the average Kiwi. I mean, it was really lovely, where, later on, I went on another ship over to the Mediterranean and there was serious language issues and they would get drunk and do all the horrible things because they couldn't communicate with people. They'd go to a bar and that was it. Over in New Zealand, it was really a lovely experience, but, then, we went down to the ice.

SI: You would be down there for a few months.

DB: We were down there a couple months. We didn't winter them over. Our mission was to bring supplies down to Antarctica and the Navy had, I think, three bases down there, one at the South Pole itself, which we didn't go to, one in Cape Hallett, which is now closed, the smaller one, and another one in McMurdo Sound, which was huge. It was the scientific base. It was not military, it was strictly science. The Navy was the only people who could bring supplies to them, so, that's what we did. I can remember, I'm a twenty two-year-old kid and we had a horrible storm off the coast, just horrible, and we were icing up, because ice would form. If you

get--we weren't close to this--but, if you get too much ice, the ship just goes down. We were never near that, but I remember going up on the bridge and the Captain's sitting up there in his chair and he saw my look of concern. The Old Man--he must've been forty-five years old, but, boy, was he old for a twenty two-year-old--he says, "Dave, the wind is shifting. In three hours, this storm will be over with." Damn if he wasn't right--he was just an old salt that knew all of this. He and I got along well, but it was just an experience. Then, a couple things happened to us down there. We were at McMurdo and we had icebreakers with us. Coast Guard and Navy had them then, too, and they would break into the ice, and then, we would tie up to the ice. We'd offload our supplies, and then, they would take them two miles away by caterpillar tractor to the main base, McMurdo. A storm came up, we had our engines secured and everything else, broke all the ice and we had these pieces of equipment floating on these different ice floats. We saved some of it, but we didn't save a lot of it. During that, it was beautiful country, at the foot of McMurdo, a cape, there was an active volcano, Erebus, steam was coming out of it, and then, off to another distance was an extinct volcano, Mount Discovery. The sun never set, but it would dip on the horizon. It lit up this one volcano, the inactive one. The red sun on the white snow was a majestic picture. Then, there was all sorts of ice floats, because this is just after the storm broke the thing, floating around, so, it was big, huge ice floats. They were table ice, not icebergs; they're like this, six, eight feet out of the water. I ran off photocopies of the picture I took. I maintain, I can't prove this, that I was one of the first five hundred people in the world to ever set foot on that continent. We went to Scott's hut. Scott was the second person to get to the South Pole, never made it back. He died sixty-eight miles away from his hut, but his hut was still intact. So, it was two miles away. We walked to it from the main base. We walked to it. It's just ready for him to be there, sixty years later or whatever it is, the chocolates were there, the bunk beds were there. There was a stove in there and everything else. It was just neat to see. Then, what upsets me to a degree, our ship brought a nuclear reactor down there for power. What they'd been doing is that they were burning oil, for their winter. This nuclear reactor, we brought, not the core, but we brought all the preliminary things for it and the guy that was in charge of the original construction was a lieutenant JG, twenty-five years old, sharp guy. He was a SeaBee [US Navy construction battalion] type. They were really exceptionally sharp guys, but he was in charge of the original construction of that. Today, you'd have about thirty-five hundred PhDs with engineering degrees, but the thing that upsets me to this day is that the world didn't approve of nuclear energy down there. So, it went live, and then, they made us take it out. So, they're burning oil down there today, which is stupid. It's with the CO2 effects and the nitrogen oxides and all that bit. Then, Cape Hallett, we pulled into a sound and it was all chopped up ice. It was a very small base. We had our boats, our landing boats, that we put our supplies in and they would go up onto the beach and deliver the supplies to the base, but there were chunks of ice this big and it ruined all the propellers of these boats and they couldn't get supplies up. There was a lot of discussion about closing the base, because we couldn't supply them, but we had a Coast Guard icebreaker with us that had helicopters. So, we helicoptered it all off our ship to the base, so [that] they were able to keep that base going for that wintertime. We were there in the summer, to keep it going for the wintertime, but it was interesting, just a neat experience for a twenty two-year-old kid, I mean, just to be able to do that. It was fabulous.

SI: What was your daily routine like on the ship?

DB: You had the office work. You would have to prep. You'd have your routines. You had to prepare. The chiefs would prepare the menus, but you had to approve it. You had to look into your stores, make sure you had enough of this and that. I'm not going to tell you we were overly busy. We would have a number of emergency drills, just routine drills, but we had a lot of spare time and we drank our coffee and played cards. We would have movies aboard and things like that, but it wasn't an unpleasant life. The storms were bad. They were really bad. I had no issue with seasickness. It was just a routine. It was good camaraderie, a good bunch of guys. You had your junior officers; there's probably ten or twelve of them with me, the years of age of me. We all got along real well. So, there was not a routine that I think of being unpleasant. It was just a daily routine, but we had work to do, there's no question, the reports. I had a division with I think twenty or thirty men working for me and you had to work with them and things like that, but nothing earth-shaking that was peculiar.

SI: How many men and officers were on the ship?

DB: I'm going to tell you probably about 250 and about thirty officers. I could check that, but I think I'm right, yes. I'm pretty close to being right. It was a four striper captain, was the commanding officer, and the commander was the executive officer. Then, you had your department heads, and then, you had your junior officers, like I was at that time.

SI: After your assignment in Antarctica was over, you came back with the ship to the States.

DB: Yes, we went back to New Zealand and it was all play then. I don't mean it that way, but all play. We stopped at Christchurch for about a week. Then, we went up to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, for about a week. Then, we went over to Sydney, Australia, for about a week, and then, Auckland, New Zealand, for about a week, and then, Tahiti for about a week. We had our routines, but it was a fabulous experience. You could meet nice young ladies who spoke English in all those places. Food was good, everybody was hospitable and just had a really fabulous time. Tahiti was a peculiar experience. It was French owned; I think it may still be, I don't know that. French do not take care of their colonies. It was quite depressing. The beauty is breathtaking. The beauty is just unbelievable. I mean, you have a sea, a hundred yards, straight mountains, a waterfall coming down, unbelievable water, but, every kid, I'm not exaggerating by much, had elephantitis. Their legs would be infected. All the young women had venereal disease. So, it was not [ideal], I mean. On top of that, the water is beautiful--and I've since verified this--you had to go in the water with heavy sandals, because there's a stonefish. It's a clam and it's fatal if you step on it and it's extremely painful, I understand. So, that sort of takes the fun out of the water.

SI: Yes.

DB: What we did, which I thought was an awful lot of fun, was we got the Captain's gig. Captain had his own boat. The Captain, in his wisdom, the day before we got into Tahiti, the night before, played the [1958] movie *South Pacific*. That was all filmed in Tahiti. We're all singing *Bali Ha'i*. All those things are still going through your head and I get in there that morning and I see "Bali Ha'i," the island. If you remember the movie, only the officers could go over to "Bali Ha'i," where the women were. So, we got the Captain's gig and we went over there.

There weren't any women, but it was beautiful. Aoba was the name of that island, I believe, just unbelievably beautiful, but it was depressing, because of the conditions. It was interesting. We had some time there. I met a young civilian guy, just graduated from Yale, was traveling the world. I was sitting with him in a pub, lunch, noon, and he calls this young lady over, very attractive eighteen-year-old girl. We chatted with her for a while. As she left, he said--they were making the movie *Mutiny on the Bounty* there, with Marlon Brando--he says, "That's the woman who gave Marlon Brando venereal disease," my claim to fame. [laughter] The girls were just beautiful until they got to be twenty-four, and then, they just bloated up. They were just beautiful girls, but you kept your distance. That whole thing was just a fabulous experience for a twenty-two-year-old kid. It was just a great thing for me. Then, after that, we went through the Canal, and then, back, and then, I was transferred on another ship that went over to the Mediterranean.

SI: What ship was that?

DB: That was the USS *Rushmore* [(LSD-14)]. It's an LSD [Landing Ship Dock]. It's an amphibious ship, too. It's a ship--they still have them, much more sophisticated--it was a World War II ship also that would ballast down, you would float big boats out that would then go up on the beach. These big boats could handle tanks and stuff like that. So, it was not the men on the smaller boats. These were bigger boats that would float out to carry tanks and big howitzers and guns like that, stuff like that. So, we went on that. Then, I went over to the Mediterranean, spent four or five months there, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, North Africa, Malta, but with a squadron of ships, because we were there for a purpose. Russia was a concern. We had an amphibious force of a battalion of Marines that all our ships carried. There was about eight or nine ships in the squadron. We probably had three thousand Marines onboard all together, all ships, and we had liberty in all those cities, leading cities and things like that, which was good. It was in peacetime. We had no serious issues. We never encountered any Russians or anything like that.

SI: This would be early 1962.

DB: This was--yes, I went over in January of '62.

SI: Okay.

DB: And got back in July of '62, right. So, yes, that's correct.

SI: How long were you on the attack cargo ship?

DB: About a year.

SI: Okay.

DB: Then, I spent the last two years, give or take a month or two, on the other, the *Rushmore,* the other ship I was on, the last one I was on.

SI: Were the men and officer compliments about the same?

DB: No, it was considerably smaller.

SI: Okay.

DB: Yes, I would say we had probably fifteen, twenty officers on that and a crew of 150, but we had Marines, so, we would take Marines, which were probably another hundred. We also carried what's now the SEAL teams, but they were the frogmen or the UDT teams. [Editor's Note: The Navy SEALs, officially formed in 1962 by President John F. Kennedy, evolved from the US Navy's Underwater Demolitions Teams.] We had those aboard. That was only, I'm going to tell you twelve of them, maybe. There wasn't that many of them, but they were neat guys to be with. So, we had them and we practiced landings in various places, the coast of Libya--today, [laughter] it was peaceful then--but we had landings there. We practiced landings in Greece, I remember, on some of the islands there. As I said, we went to Naples, got up to Rome, Vesuvius, Athens, Greece, Cannes, France, Barcelona, Alicante. So, it was a good trip for somebody of that age. Again, the language was an issue. Malta was English, but it was pretty badly destroyed in the war and was still not recovered. What was neat for me in Malta, in the Malta Harbor, we met a British ship. Americans do not drink aboard ship, but we were invited over to the British ship, the officers were. I go aboard and they give me two gin and tonics. I guess it's a novelty to drink aboard ship. So, I got feeling pretty bad. So, I get back to my ship and we were going to leave the next day. I was in bad shape, but we were only there two days and I'm pigheaded enough that, "I'm in Malta, I want to see Malta." So, I remember crawling out of bed, eleven o'clock at night, and going into the town with the worst hangover in the world, but I had to see Malta. I still remember parts of it, but I'm the type of person that I go somewhere, I want to see more than a bar. I had done a lot of reading on Malta before, so, I knew quite a bit about it, its history and what it had been through in World War II. I just remember that horrible hangover, is the thing I remember more than anything else.

SI: Did your ship, or the squadron in general, conduct joint exercises with NATO forces?

DB: No. We had a basketball team and we would play the different Armed Services in port. We were pretty good, and we had some of their officers aboard, mainly for tours and things like that, but we never did any joint exercises with anybody. I was with the amphibious navy, but the other navy was there--the aircraft carriers were there at times and destroyers and cruisers and things like that. We usually didn't travel together. No, we never did any joint exercises. I can remember being briefed, "If we run into a Russian ship and they try to intimidate us, don't be intimidated. Just, if you have the right of way, you hold it. If a collision results, that's the way it is." We weren't to be intimidated. We never had that encounter, that was never an issue, but I remember those briefings.

SI: This was a very tense time, with the Berlin Wall going up.

DB: Yes, there was animosity. I'll get to it later on--the Cuban Missile Crisis was right after that. [Editor's Note: In October 1962, the United States demanded that the Soviet Union remove its nuclear missiles from Cuba. The United States placed a naval blockade around the island nation, creating a tense standoff between the superpowers that many feared would lead to nuclear

war. The crisis was averted when the Soviet Union agreed to remove their nuclear missiles from Cuba in exchange for the United States removing its nuclear missiles from Turkey.] So, yes, there were some peculiar issues, there's no question about that, but we never had any firsthand dealings with them at all. What I would also do is, when we were in port, we would have port and starboard liberty. Half the ship has to stay aboard and the other half can go on the beach for liberty at night, but I would volunteer for shore patrol, which was considered duty. So, I'd be the senior shore patrol officer for all the ships. There were quite a few of them. We were there in Greece, Athens, Greece, and I was the senior shore patrol officer and I had a number of big Marines with me. We had a truck following me and the bars were pretty horrendous. They were really horrendous and you'd go into a bar--I'm a big guy and I'd take a big Marine with me--and we would go quiet. The owner would come up. Everything was peaceful and quiet and all that bit. So, that's fine, but, then, I got a report--I'll never forget this--they think a sailor's dead in the john. So, I went in there. We were told not to drink ouzo, which is their [liquor]. Apparently, there's a bootleg ouzo and there's a commercial. Bootleg is the stuff that's bad and that's what they sell at the bars. This guy was gross. He wasn't dead. We dragged him out by his feet, because we didn't want to touch him, threw him in the back of that truck. I guess he got back, but, see, then, the crew, all the sailors, had to be aboard at midnight. The officers could stay out late. So, then, I would party with the rest of the other officers. So, it was good, very enjoyable. As I said, I have fond memories of the Navy, totally. We spent four or five months over in the Mediterranean. We were there not the best time of the year. It was maybe winter. We were cold. So, it wasn't like you get around here, but it was not nice. One of my other famous stories was that the ship went back to Naples. We went to Naples and I go up, a bunch of us went up, to Rome. We were there New Year's Eve in Rome. A bunch of guys, we're looking for young ladies, just go in and I'm sitting at a bar like this, talking to a young lady and I said something. The guy behind me makes a comment, anti-American--he was an American, I'll tell you who he was in a minute--but he stands up and turns out to be John Barrymore, Jr. We almost had a fight. We both had enough sense not to go that far. Before that, this I want to tell you, I was with this one other fellow and we were looking for young ladies; struck midnight and we go into this bar. This guy says to me, "There's Elizabeth Taylor over there." I said, "Wait a minute, I look for pretty girls and she would've caught my eye." He says, "Oh, yes, it is. There's Richard Burton and there's Eddie Fisher." They were still together at the time. So, it definitely was. So, we both had a lot to a drink. It was a discreet bar, it was not crowded. He says, "Go up and give her a kiss." New Year's Eve, the bells are ringing and he tried to get me to go, but he had more to drink than I did. So, he went over and he got close to her, but Eddie Fisher kicked him in the shins and drove him away. So, it could've been done very discreetly, I mean, but it was not rowdy. We were in civilian clothes and all that, but it was a neat, neat thing to see and do. I've got all those fond memories of my time in the Navy. I feel sorry, to a degree, that guys nowadays--I had no choice in the matter, as you know--but they miss out on that. I think there's a valuable experience that I had in the Navy.

SI: You really got to see a lot more places than the average person we interview.

DB: No question.

SI: Yes.

DB: No question, but, then, after I came back, this is one of the things I want to tell you about, the ship had into go to dry dock. We were in Hoboken, New Jersey. We were there four or five months. We had two months to go and Kennedy gives his famous speech about the Cuban Missile Crisis. So, we were told to get out of there in forty-eight hours and left in a horrible storm out of New York Harbor. Well, you know where Hoboken is. We picked up our Marines off Camp Lejeune, [North Carolina]. I was the crypto officer then, which meant I broke all the friendly messages, orders. Do you know what I'm saying? nothing--I didn't break Russian orders. I broke a message, two o'clock in the morning, from the Pentagon, I assume the Chief of Naval Operations. I took it to the Captain. It was top secret. I wasn't supposed to read it, but, obviously, you do, and said we were going to land on Cuba, not that morning, but the following morning, thirty-six hours, or whatever the math was, away; show him, and then, that morning, daylight, I'm not exactly sure, as far as I could see was Navy ships. The thing that still amazes me, I knew every ship on the East Coast by name. Messages are addressed by ships' names and half these ships I'd never heard of. They closed down the Panama Canal and brought the amphibious fleet from the Pacific, from California, around through the Canal. So, as far as I could see were these Navy ships. It was impressive. We were getting briefs during the day, that Cuba had so many MiG fighters and so many this and so many of that. My ship was the closest, on the amphibious landing, the closest to the beach that doesn't go up on the beach. We had the UDT, the frogmen, aboard and everything else. It wasn't the most comforting feeling in the world, but you could sense in the afternoon--I wasn't doing crypto in the afternoon--it was dying down somewhat. It was called off about six o'clock at night, but we were twelve hours away from invading. You can check your history books on this--this is a fact, this is not me talking--Khrushchev gave technical control of nuclear weapons to Castro. Castro said, if we had landed, "They are going to go to Miami." That was their range. Kennedy said, "If they go to Miami, they're going to Moscow." We were twelve hours away from a nuclear war. That's a scary thing. That's a damn scary thing.

SI: Did you have that sense at the time or was that something you found out later?

DB: No, I found this later on, oh, yes. I had some concerns about some [things], but we had aircraft carriers and everything else. I had some concerns about some MiG fighters coming over and strafing us, but, no, nothing like that. Interesting little side story, I've got a lot of friends in Germany. Almost fifteen years ago, I'm over there in East Germany. I'm invited to a picnic, a farmhouse near Weimar, and the guy's my age. They told me before I went, "The house was built in 1460," and I said, "That's impossible. That's before Christopher Columbus discovered America," but I got there and it was built [then], but the guy was my age. We just hit it off just super well. He spoke very primitive English, I don't speak any *Deutsch*, but my friends all speak English. [I said], "So, what did you do in your life?" [He said], "I was an engineering officer in East German freighters." "What did you do during the Cuban Missile Crisis?" "I was bringing missiles to Cuba." We just got along so well. We laughed. I said, "What was it like?" and he said, "American planes fly over me all the time." We just became excellent friends, and then, broke up about midnight, I had to go back to my other friend's house. He takes me up--this was '93, '94--takes me up, gives me a piece of concrete this big. "*Was ist das*?" "The Berlin Wall, for you," and I was flattered, but I said, "Too big." So, he gives me a piece about this big. Then, I said to him, more tactfully, "It looks like a piece of concrete--write something for me." So, in *Deutsch*, he writes, "Official Document: I, (Wilhelm Koenig?), chopped this from the Berlin

Wall, November 1989, and give it to *Herr* David Blanch." It's just neat. I've got it. I've got it mounted with his original German script with it and a translation of it and photographs that anybody can get of the Wall. To me, that was history. Do you know what I'm saying? That was just fabulous. So, I've got it mounted in one of my rooms on the wall there. It's just a neat thing to see. It's just a little side story, though, of that, but interesting thing--I'm distorting things here--when we left Hoboken, New Jersey, I said it was a very rough storm. I don't get seasick, but it takes me a while to get my sea legs. So, I'm up there in this crypto shack and it's about the size of this booth, no circulation, and I didn't feel well. So, I needed some fresh air. So, I did something to the machine, which is common sense, to get some fresh air and I jammed the machine. Nobody on the ship could fix it. So, we had to pull into Norfolk and get it fixed. Nobody was ever critical of me; I'm still amazed. I did a common sense thing. So, we were delayed a day. I maintain, I maintain now, that if we had been there a day early, the landing would have taken place a day earlier and it wouldn't have been called off. So, therefore, I saved the world from nuclear destruction. [laughter] Now, that's farfetched, I don't dispute that. I don't dispute that at all, but that's what I tell people. They want to build a monument for me in Pasadena, jokingly. As I said, then, we went back after the thing died down. We stayed down there a couple weeks, came back to the shipyard, and then, I got discharged in March of '63, yes, because the Missile Crisis was October of '62, right. We were all involuntarily extended during this thing. I had a good shipmate on another ship, Vietnam wasn't ugly and [he] was transferred to Saigon. He was sending letters and things like that, that, "Saigon's the Paris of the Orient, beautiful young ladies," and all that bit. The Navy said that, "If you'd voluntarily agree to extend, we'll send you anywhere you want to go." I was considering, not seriously, going to Saigon, but they rescinded the whole thing. I got out on time. I wasn't really considering, but the thought went through my head, is that, "Oh, I'll sign up for another two years and I'd go to Saigon." It got ugly shortly after. When I was there, '62, there's no issues at all, but that's my Navy life.

SI: Can you tell me a little more about what the mood was like on the ship during that time you were off Cuba?

DB: It was very professional, very businesslike. I'm not going to tell you anybody was panic-shaken, scared. Most of us were too young to be scared. Do you know what I'm saying? I may have had more concern when I saw that briefing, or heard that briefing, about some MiGs that could get through. They had X number, they told us a number, but, no, nobody was [affected]. The Marines aboard, though, these are Marines. They're young men. They were cleaning their rifles, sharpening their bayonets and yelling, "Kill, kill, kill." I won't forget that, but I would say the Marines are a different breed of people. Everybody was very professional, went about their job. There was no panic or concern. There was concern, obviously, but nothing that we even talked about. You did what you had to do. We were not [affected], no, other than those Marines. I could still remember them on the floor down there, cleaning their rifles and sharpening their bayonets and yelling, but that's them. No, we weren't concerned.

SI: Before you were discharged, did you have any additional obligation?

DB: Yes.

SI: Did you have to stay in the Active Reserve?

DB: Yes, I had to stay on active duty. I was in the Reserves, Navy Reserves, out of Bayonne for a period of time. Then, I got married. Then, I went up to Rochester, New York, with Sears-Roebuck. I was in the Reserves then, but the Navy was playing with you at the time. One week, you're a pay billet, next month, you're a non-paid billet. I was married and I think I had a child. They couldn't force you to stay if they weren't paying you. So, I left the Reserves. Vietnam was really getting ugly then. So, I just spent, I guess, two summers, I went for two weeks' active duty down in Norfolk. I love the Navy. It was just, when you're married, you've got other commitments. You have a job. The job is your number one priority. You can't have two big [commitments] as well as a family. So, I had no desire to stay and I was able to leave without a problem. So, I resigned. I had probably two years in the Reserves. I think I had a two or three-year obligation, but, even after I resigned, I still may have had an inactive obligation for another year or so, I don't know, but it wasn't concerning.

SI: Okay. What were your plans for what you were going to do after you got out of the Navy?

DB: I had no idea, no idea. I knew--you wouldn't know him--John Kirkwood, who was [Rutgers University's] Director of Personnel Placement. Actually, when I was at Rutgers, I had an interview with the CIA, because that type of thing's always intrigued me, when I was still a student. Basically, they said, "Go into the service, do some type of work," which I did very roughly, "and then, come back and talk to us," which is fair. Frankly, when I got out, I had no desire to work for the government. So, I didn't pursue it, but, when I was in Hoboken after the Cuban Missile Crisis, I went back to Rutgers and saw John Kirkwood. He set me up with a couple interviews and I had an interview with Sears-Roebuck and they hired me. I worked for Sears-Roebuck for sixteen, seventeen years after the Navy. So, [I] started out back in New Jersey, in Newark, and then, went to Long Island, where I met my wife, then, up to Rochester, then, to Buffalo, then, down to Annapolis. Then, I left Sears.

SI: Were you in management?

DB: Yes, I was management. I was a management trainee and I was an operations and store manager, a store in DC and here in Annapolis before I left. Retailing, you're never bored, but it's not a field that's a lot of fun. I mean, you're a fireman--you're always putting out fires, problems and things like that--but the hours were obscene. I think what got me is, they started opening on Sunday. I may not have worked on Sunday, but I was still worried about it. Then, they were open every night, not that I worked every night, but I was working sixty, seventy hours a week. So, it got to you after a while. Oh, I left a long time ago, 1976, I think I left. So, it's been a while.

SI: Where did you go after you left?

DB: I basically went with a couple small companies, consulting companies, not for very long, five, seven years. Then, I basically went out on my own, investing in real estate. I never really sold it, investing in it, managing in it, and did well on it. I'm still involved in some real estate. I don't buy anymore, but I still have some properties of my own that I manage. I know finances.

I've invested in some other things quite successfully, partnerships and things like that, small ones, where I know the principal partners well and things like that. So, they've been very profitable for me and I travel. I don't know if I told you, I just got back from Italy and Montenegro and Croatia, just got back a month ago. The whole family went; twenty of us went. We started out in Rome. I had my good Russian friends, he and his wife and two little girls, and my whole family, started out in Rome, then, went over to Montenegro and spent about ten days there, neat country, and then, came back. I had a nice time. It was interesting. I don't know if you know the geography at all, but Montenegro and Croatia are on the border and we were just south of Croatia. I had some friends in Dubrovnik in Croatia. So, I went across the border and the border guards of Croatia--not *Gestapo*, they were just not pleasant at all. They make you wait for ten minutes for no reason, while they're chatting. So, I don't take that laying down. So, I call the Croatian Embassy when I got back [laughter] and the guy was super good. He said, "Seventeen percent of our gross national product is due to tourism and we need to give you a bottle of water and greet you pleasantly and give you a free map when you go across. Tell me, I want to know the dates and times and descriptions," which I did. He says, "I'm going to cover this with the Director of Tourism." He wasn't giving me garbage and he did. He sent me an e-mail saying the same thing, and then, he sends me a nice book on Croatia and a little souvenir type thing of the country, which I think was damn smart of him, damn smart of him, because, and I said, "First impressions are lasting impressions. It's important. Since your economy is so based on that, you've got to."

SI: Yes.

DB: He totally agreed; I didn't have any convincing to do, I mean, but he's a diplomat, too. He knows. Have you ever been over that way?

SI: No. I have friends who are from Slovakia, Serbia and Macedonia.

DB: Serbia?

SI: Yes.

DB: Have you ever been to Serbia?

SI: No.

DB: How well do you know your Serbian friends?

SI: Fairly well; it has been a few years.

DB: Are they Serbs? They're real Serbs?

SI: Yes.

DB: They're Orthodox?

SI: Yes.

DB: Okay. I know a lot of people in Serbia fairly well. I also know my European history quite well. The thing that amazes me is that I go to Poland, Germany, any of those countries now, Russia, there's no hatreds like there was in the '30s. In the '30s, you hated your next-door neighbor. I mean, you just [hated them], but, in Serbia, the hatreds are still there. It's mellowed. I picked it up last time. I'm still in touch with some Serbian friends, but the hatreds are just so intense. The thing that I raise hell with them is that, "You're all the same people. Only thing different is somebody said something different when they baptized you than they did me." Yugoslavia stands for "The Land of Southern Slavs." They're Slavic peoples and they're identical. When I was in Montenegro, I met a couple of sharp college kids. They were working in the tourist business, but they were doing nothing, I was chatting with them. I said, "One of the things we don't understand in America is, you guys are all the same and you hate one another." Then, the guy said to me, perfect rebuttal, "We don't understand it, either," [laughter] but it has mellowed considerably. There's no question. I was there during the height of the war in Serbia and just the intensity was just horrible. I just couldn't understand it. I'd give them a hard time and I'd get nowhere.

SI: Did you have any trouble traveling around at that time?

DB: I do stupid things, no, but I did. Actually, it was about a month or two before it got real ugly, before we got involved, but I do crazy things. I took my wife, my daughter, who's twenty-four, and two of her girlfriends, twenty-four, flew to Budapest, rented a car and drove into Belgrade, which I have friends at, stayed there. Then, with my friends, with all of them, we went, drove all the way through down to Athens, Greece, and rented a sailboat and sailed the Greek Isles, bare boated it, for about a week, ten days. I felt extremely uncomfortable in Serbia and Macedonia. I just didn't feel comfortable--never had any issues, do you know what I'm saying?--where it just was not [comfortable], only a couple things. Belgrade, they say it's improved, it's the dingiest capital in Europe. They had a road in Serbia, a toll road, a hundred miles. It was something like a hundred marks, but they wouldn't even take their own currency to pay. Then, I get to Macedonia. My friends told me there was a speed trap. I was probably going a kilometer over and I got stopped and that was ugly. They wanted cash. I love Europe, but I haven't got the greatest tastes for Macedonia and Serbia. I was impressed with Montenegro. I thought it was a beautiful country, not wealthy, but no poverty. I enjoyed it generally. I hope to go--I think I will--this January, with organizing a ski trip with some Russians and Germans and me. So, it could be neat. We've done it before. They know one another, so, they get along well. They get along well, which is nice.

SI: Did you build these relationships with these folks overseas through your business?

DB: No, I have an ability to pick up people. How I did some of it, it started out when my kids were in high school. I had exchange students and we always went back and visited their families. Then, after that, they're out of high school, I invited teachers over, went back and visited their families. Then, I got involved in a real good program, right after--what was it?--late '90s, early 2000s, where the State Department funded Russian small business people to come to America. They came for three weeks and they supplied interpreters and things like that. It was

my job to find home hosts for them and, every day, they had to be working in the field. They were owners of small businesses. So, I hosted three of those delegations for twenty-one, twenty-four days. So, that was neat. Then, I got invited back to Russia with this group, but I went by myself, basically. They didn't arrange interpreters. So, I traveled all over European Russia interviewing the graduates of this program. So, I traveled basically on my own with interpreters and just a fabulous experience, but my German friends, I've nurtured them through the schoolteachers that I had, German schoolteachers. That was a while ago, but we've kept it up. My Russian friends, the first time, people invited me to their house, but they stayed at my house, one of them did, he invited me to visit him in Russia, small, little village north of Moscow. He didn't speak English, but, since I was in charge of the program, I had the interpreter living with me. So, we got along well, but, when I was visiting him, he knew we couldn't talk. So, he gets this nineteen-year-old farm boy, spoke nice English, poor as you could get, three cows, no running water, as an interpreter. This kid and I became--well, we've just vacationed with him--very good friends. I go home, talking to him on the phone, he had a way of making money. So, I sent him some money, not a lot. Today, he literally is the richest thirty-four-year-old in Russia today. He's got a villa in Spain, beautiful homes north of Moscow, beautiful homes. We're just the best of friends, just excellent friends. My Polish friends, a young lady, I was taking my Russian friend--he came here to visit me ten, fifteen, twelve years ago--taking him on the train to Kennedy Airport. We were on the subway. There's a young lady sitting opposite me, didn't look American. So, I talk to strange people. So, she's from Poland and we got to talking for half an hour. I gave her my card and she said, "If you ever come to Poland, I'll show you around." So, she sends me an e-mail saying the same thing. So, I don't pass that opportunity up. So, I go. I managed to meet my Russian friend in Warsaw. So, that was my excuse to go. She and her girlfriend spent five days with me showing me around. I put them up in a hotel, cost me forty dollars a night, and they were graduate students. We've become the best of friends. She got her master's degree in marketing at the college in Poznan. She, at that time--this is probably '04, '05, most Polish kids were going to England or whatever--I said, "No, you stay here in Poland. It's about to explode economically." I could sense it, I could sense it. So, she got a job with an international marketing firm, 150 people. It's a British firm in Warsaw. She does all sorts of market research and focus groups and stuff like that. So, I go see her every year and I stay with them. My wife, daughter and I went to her wedding. She just had a baby last December. I'll probably go and visit her, but I've got friends in Spain, I've got friends in Serbia, Germany, Switzerland, and I can stay with them. That's the nice part and it's nice to--you could be a good tour guide, but it's not like having a native show you around. They show you what's going on and things like that. It's just fabulous. So, I consider myself lucky. So, I'm going skiing with Russians and Germans, possibly an American or two, on January 11th through the 22nd, I think it is. Then, I may go, if my Polish friend--she just had a baby, so, I don't think she'll go skiing with us--but I may go over there and visit them for four or five days. I've got a lot of other friends in Warsaw and just kick around. I enjoy that. I can just intrigue myself. They work, so, I just walk the streets and I can pick up people that speak English. I have no qualms about going up to somebody, "Do you speak English?" They say you don't do this in all the tour books--I do it all the time. You get a young person, you're the best schoolteacher, English teacher, they're going to get and they know it. So, they will want to talk with you. "I want to go such-and-such." "Well, I'm going that way." So, they'll walk with you. So, I picked up a lot of people that way and I still e-mail with them and it's mainly Poland, Russia, Germany, and then, I've got some

good friends in Spain and Serbia. To me, I just enjoy that. I have to go two or three times a year. I can't sit still.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add to the record?

DB: No, I don't think so. You've got a lot of editing to do here.

SI: Do you want to say anything about your kids?

DB: I've got three children. They're all in their forties now--proud of them. My daughter's in Colorado. I will say one thing about young people, if they've got three skills in this life, they can make it. They have to have a work ethic, they have to have people skills and they don't need to be educated, but they need to be smart. If you've got those, you've got this world made. My kids have got it, so, they're all doing exceptionally well. They've got college degrees, but they've worked themselves up, and so, I'm proud of them. So, that's basically it.

SI: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

DB: Okay.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Jesse Braddell 9/8/2014
Reviewed by Mohammad Athar 4/10/2015
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/22/2015
Reviewed by David Blanch 6/30/2015