

Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Michael Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Melvyn Stein, Class of '58

April 4, 2011, Springs Valley, CA

Disk 1

We've got to introduce ourselves. This is all legal stuff.

Oh dear.

All right, so if you could, state your name, your address.

Melvin Stein, address, 3740 Calavo, Spring Valley, 91977.

And your birth date for me please?

September 12, 1941.

And you're doing this interview free and uncoerced.

That is correct. And as an attorney, I know exactly what you need to do.

Oh thank you! That's very good. It's not that I have questions. I have an outline of things. There it is; I knew I had it. Your student handbook.

Goes back. I haven't seen one of these in years.

And if you hear me coughing, I have a small case of bronchitis and I'm sorry for that. Okay, let's begin. What brought you to Brown Military Academy? Or wait, from what point did you start Brown? (Track 2)

I started at Brown Military Academy in September 1949. I was in the third grade, and my mother and grandmother felt that that would be a good place for me to be I think for two primary reasons. One, because both of them were working fulltime and there was no father in residence and two, because I think they felt that they were both very strong and dominant women and that might not be a good place for a young man to try and learn how to be a young man.

So the decision by your grandmother and grandmother...

My mother and grandmother. And my mother did not have the necessary funds. But my grandmother did and they both felt that that would be best for me. My mother, and as a said my grandmother both working fulltime. There was basically no way that they could give me the appropriate attention as a child, having nothing to do with being a incorrigible or un-incorrigible child. It was more a practical move and one which I think was in the long run an excellent, very excellent choice by them.

Was your father...?

They were divorced.

Okay. So were you a day-student or were you a boarding student?

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Fulltime from September 1949 through June, I think it may have been the first part of June, 1958, fulltime student including summers except one.

Did you get weekend leaves or something?

Absolutely. My parents lived in San Diego. I say my parents-my mother and grandmother-lived in San Diego and almost every weekend I would come home, but home was an apartment house and it developed over a period of time that having gone in in the third grade, actually having only completed second grade in school in the area, I didn't develop many friends because there was no opportunity to do that. And so the friends that did develop were in the school, Brown Military Academy. So coming home was for a weekend to spend time with my mother and grandmother. Other than that, there was no childhood companions there to associate with.

I was reading in the handbook, The Bugle News, did you get up at 6:00 in the morning, every morning?

Absolutely. No question about it. Now, there was a difference between the upper school and the lower school.

Upper school meaning what grade level?

Upper school was 9 through 12 and during some years included junior college, two years. The lower school was the first grade through eighth grade and in I believe 1950, they decided to do away with the school for those in the first through the fourth grade so they would start in the fourth or fifth grade, I can't remember. I think they would start in the fifth grade, so as a result, I attended one year in the third grade and the next year, I skipped the fourth grade and began the fifth grade. So I graduated at Brown Military Academy at age 15.

Wow. That's impressive. That wasn't an easy school to graduate from. I mean, from what I understand is that the academics were...

...Very strong academics. Excellent backgrounds; I can get to that at another point that would be most convenient to you, but having graduated at 15, I was very young going immediately to college, which I did, but I remained in the San Diego area, spent four years at a school called California Western University.

Which used to be Point Loma, right?

Which is now Point Loma Nazarene, you are correct and then I spent another three years there, post-graduate study, in their law school and was the last student in the law school-and student as far as the class was concerned-in that law school and they moved to another location on I think it was 3rd and Cedar at downtown San Diego.

Now it's called Jefferson Law School?

No, it's called California Western University School of Law.

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Back to the upper-lower schools, why did they stop or suddenly in 1950 say we're not going to do...

I have no idea. It might have been because they didn't have that many applicants or students available to go in grades 1-4 and for parents to pay that kind of money that was required. In those days, I don't know the exact amount and I don't recall because I was in the third grade.

In the lower schools, who was your battalion head?

Alright. We knew that there was a battalion commander and that battalion commander essentially was either the junior college or the senior in high school who was the battalion commander and you may have the opportunity to lead some of those people at the bi-annual convention, but as far as lower school was concerned, other than in parades, we were pretty much separate. And we had our own company commander for the sixth, seventh and eighth grade, maybe it was the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade. No, the younger kids were in Barracks-we called them barracks-those were the big four buildings that you see in the photographs.

Ok, is it on here?

Yes, there they are.

Ok, we have a aerial view of Brown Military Academy and I see the multi-leveled rooms here. Is this them?

Yes, and as you're looking at the photograph, the building to the right, the barracks to your right-by the way, in between those was a swimming pool-but the barracks to the right was D, the barracks next left was C, the next left was B and the next left was A. A and B was upper school; C and D was lower school. D were the younger ones. I think probably fifth grade and below and then you moved up into C. C had their own platoon commanders and company commander, very closely supervised by lower school commandant, who was generally a retired military officer who was in charge of the lower school per se.

Were the classrooms in the dorm rooms-in these building also, or where were the classrooms at?

Alright, good question. There were classrooms to the rear of Barracks-C.

These right here, along the backside?

Nope, Barracks-C, underneath, like a basement and first floor combination and then we had what were known as the shacks. Those little buildings behind A and B were the shacks and those were classrooms for the upper school. Lower school classrooms essentially were, as indicated, behind Barracks-C as the lower level.

So behind the shacks, was this the parade ground?

No. This was an athletic field, essentially never developed. All it had was an oval and there would be, it was like a mile around, no half a mile, no, four times around was a mile. The athletic field was down,

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near the lower left-hand corner. And you will see a field here, and then like a little building, funny-looking little building by the street. That funny-looking little building was eventually taken down, but it was known as the band shell and that's where the band would practice.

That's where my father. Yeah, he played football and baseball and he also did the band.

He played football and baseball right here. This became the tennis court area. See that little square?

This is the gymnasium right here.

That is correct and below, in the basement of the gymnasium was a rifle range and we would fire 22s there as part of the firing team.

But not in the lower grades you didn't.

Oh no. Only upper school could do that.

Ok. So basically when you guys came to assemble prior to going to class, right...?

Now are we talking upper school or lower school?

Lower school. Did you assemble before class and then they...?

Well, first thing you did was like the upper school, you assembled at, you didn't do the calisthenics like the upper school did, but you assembled roughly at 7, in front, in uniform. All cadets wore uniforms and you had several different types of uniforms and depending on whether there was a special event or whether there was another activity where you would wear a different outfit, because we had different outfits, and a 7:00 was breakfast. We would march to the mess hall, which was one of the buildings in the photograph. You would have your breakfast and I believe it was about 9:00 when school would start. Then you'd get out about 11:45, 12:00 or about 10 minutes to 12, you'd form up again out front, you'd march to lunch, you'd have your lunch, you'd march back, go back to class, you'd be in 'til about 2:30, you'd have a little PE after that; at 5:00, 4:30-5:00, you were in your showers. By 5:30 you were forming up to eat, you ate before upper school again at the mess hall. And then you had about, oh about an hour after dinner to study and I think about 9:00 or so you were in bed.

Lights out. Did you have a floor- or an officer that would make sure that...?

Each floor was a platoon just like upper school and so and I'm speaking now of C-Barracks and each floor had a lieutenant and generally you were dealing with two or three, in lower school I think three platoons, I'm not sure-three floors-I don't recall-and there would have been three lieutenants and one captain over the three floors or the whole building, closely supervised by the lower school commandant and also each floor had a floor monitor from the high school who lived on that floor.

Kind of like a modern-day resident attendant person. As I'm listening to you, I'm wondering, were you guys treated well from the upper-classmen? Did they respect you as being...?

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We had very little contact with the upper school because we were busy during our days and they were certainly busy during theirs and we always would think it would be wonderful if we could just emulate what the upper school was doing because they were really military as far as we were concerned. But there was not a whole lot of interaction between the lower school and the upper school other than we would be finishing lunch or so and they would be coming in. Otherwise, it wasn't like we would play together or have sports together or anything like that. That did not occur, except of course, when we had our parades at the campus, generally one Sunday a month. Then we would participate with the upper school and we would be part of the parade.

So you had your marching drills also then?

Oh yes. And we had to learn how to face left, face right, do those military things: rear march, left flank, right flank. We learned that in C-Company. D-Company didn't do much of anything, except walk in straight lines.

They really were much younger, right?

That's correct. They couldn't keep in step very well.

As you transferred from lower school to upper school, with myself, you went through 8...

In the lower school.

Yeah, 7 through 9th grade in the public school is extremely traumatic, I mean it is really traumatic.

We didn't experience trauma.

You didn't, but let me ask you this, when you went up there for school and the new people came in to attend the high school, you had all this training before, more than they, you knew what was expected of you.

Absolutely.

So what did you notice there? Did they adapt quickly or...?

Well, let's put it this way, not a large number of people or students would go from the 8th grade to the 9th grade. I was one that did and I believe I was a company commander or platoon commander-I can't remember which-in the lower school and I do recall (and this gets to why, somewhat, I think so highly of the school and why it was so beneficial) and that is that when I was in the 8th grade, my mother would be coming to the parades, in other words, she was well-known in military academy by the administrators. Because at sometimes, she was very concerned how the children were treated. And on one occasion, I know that she complained to a person called Luis Bitterman; he was called Major Bitterman by the cadet corps. He was basically the administrator at the school and she said the boys were not being given enough time to eat.

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I was coming to that, when I talked to my father, he said that eating in the mess hall was very regulated. He talked about a time where a guy reached across the table for a roll and his hand was nailed to the table with a fork.

You're talking upper school.

I'm talking upper school and I know that's not going to happen with the lower school, but it gave me the idea that there was some sort of regimented, regulations of eating...

Well this was a military school. It was an honor school. You have to understand that the whole program and how it operated, everything was military. You started (and I'll get to the upper school here); lower school was not as military oriented, but in the lower school, you still sat in your chair; you had your prayer first and then you sat down and then they passed the bowls around. The military method of sitting on ends of chairs and of putting your arm out to pass certain things, that was all in the upper school, not in the lower school. However, I was speaking about my mother, who would keep an eye on things and she saw that we didn't have enough time to eat and so she complained to Major Bitterman, who then put the word out, they shall have more time to eat, period. Because they wanted us in and out of there before upper school came in. Well, after a while, we ended up still in our eating area, which was adjacent to upper school when they started to eat, because we were allowed more time.

How much time were you allowed?

Probably 45 minutes.

For the upper schools half-an-hour?

No. It was about 45 minutes to an hour, but it was different in the upper school, because in the upper school you have trays. You're not ready to get into the upper school...

No, not yet. So we'll come to that, all right. So everything was set up for you guys in the lower schools.

Yes, and then there was the D-Barracks people; they had their own dining room. And I'll never forget, they told you, you eat everything on your plate and you didn't the choice of what you wanted on your plate when I was in D-Company, it was 3rd, 5th grade and they said, you will eat your beets, and I said, no I won't and they say, yes you will and I said, no I won't and they said, yes you will or you won't leave here. Well, I'd been through that with my mother many years ago and she found at I didn't do those things, but I was at military school, so I said, ok. I ate it and then threw up all over them. They never asked me to eat those beets again.

Good for you. That's great.

There was a picture on the wall, a mural on the wall of the small kids dining room and it showed a king and a queen and the words on the mural were something to the effect, "The world is so full of a number of things; we should all be as happy as kings." I remembered that as a child.

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You don't remember who the picture was.

No, it was just of, it was not of real people. It was just a king and a queen, a colorful mural.

Amazing, I love the school and I never went to it.

Oh, it has wonderful tradition; very proud of what I was able to accomplish and what our student body was able to accomplish, particularly in the last year of the school.

As you moved up in grade, was there, like in public school they always have the promotions...

We had an 8th grade graduation, which didn't amount too much, but the parents would come and there was no such thing as cap and gown. I do remember and my mother told me as well that-I reemphasize it-even though I was the company commander of C-Company in lower school, the commandant said, I'm sorry, your son (in this case, me) is not a leader and I don't think he ever will be. He's introverted, he is afraid to come up with his ideas and if he had any ideas, he gives them to someone else and that is the year I graduated from Junior High into the 9th grade and they had me down as company clerk, which is basically checking the records of whose there at night, on sort of the staff and not giving any orders to anybody and out of the way of the corporal and I'll never forget, my mother said, this is not for you. She was a very strong woman. She said, what you need is public speaking. I've spoken to the person in charge of public speaking at Brown Military Academy and that was a man by the name of Collins-and we had two Collins' there. One was band I think and the other was public speaking coach-and I've made arrangements for you to go into public speaking. And that made all the difference in the world. And she then told the commandant, I want you to give him a chance, not as the corporal, but as a sergeant in charge of a squad. He's been there-squad consisting roughly 9 to 12-he's been here for many years; he knows what goes on here. I want you to give him that opportunity. If he can't make it on his own, perfect, that's his problem, but with public speaking, I think she said, you will do you well. And things changed almost immediately.

Did they make you a sergeant?

Yes.

Wow. What an incredible mother you had.

It was, yes, I was very fortunate from that respect.

Wow, so as you moved into the 9th grade, you're now an upper-classman. What kind of a transition was that?

Well, I looked forward to it, because I liked the military aspect of things. Now, I moved in as a sergeant in A-Company and as a sergeant, you were in charge of other people, roughly in the 9th and 10th and could even be the 11th grade, generally not the seniors, because they were at least a higher rank and you had to learn how to deal with them and to get them to do things and this was part of the great

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development for me. Not only was I now in charge of these people and technically, if my squad didn't do well on the inspections or whatever it may have been, then I was responsible and that's where I learned responsibility. And that's where I learned beginnings of leadership, at the same time as taking public speaking.

So you're probably, what, 12 or 13 years old at this time?

Well I graduated at 15, so I was in the 9th grade, I guess you're about right.

Wow, were you tall for your age?

I don't know; I don't recall. About average.

I'm trying to understand, I'm trying to grab hold of this 13-year-old boy, boy, talking to these young adolescents, these pre-teens, these teenagers and taking orders from you.

That's right and they would give me a hard time until they realized that you knew what you were doing and that you knew what you were talking about and that you were advising them for their best interest. There was also a great deal of peer pressure that would go on. If your squad didn't do well, then your company commander-not company commander-platoon commander would not be very happy and you would be the last ones to eat in your platoon, you would be the last ones to be released to go pass in your platoon, you might be held over, so that you couldn't go on pass until 2:00 in the afternoon. Well all of these were pressures that were put upon all of the student there at different levels, depending on where you were.

One thing that my father never spoke of, and I'm getting the idea that there was much, was there much hazing going on?

Depends when. In his years, there probably was more than we had. When you say hazing, nobody was beating up on anybody...

No, just me do things...

But there were some that got pushed up against the wall, but there wasn't any like I'm going to beat the C-R-A-P out of you or something.

No, in the code of conduct, they really did not allow that and if that did happen, you could, I understand you could be expelled.

That's correct and if your other peer members in your squad would gang up on you to try to do that, well they wouldn't, because they knew that they would be disciplined. See one of the things in a school that size-it's not as large as some other schools might be-the commandant generally got word of everything. I mean, now we've got high schools of thousands. We were just several hundred. Maybe 300 or less, something like that. But things really developed after that first year in high school, but it was an interesting experience to be a sergeant and to learn how they did things. At that time, we also

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had what was known as the plebe system. The plebe system came from the US military academy: West Point. First of all, you understand our uniforms were West Point, so that was the big thing; we wore West Point uniforms. Well, first thing I remember was the dress uniform, with all the buttons down the front, brass, round buttons.

Short round jacket.

Short jacket and the tail.

White pants.

White pants, that is correct.

The belt that was brass.

Cross point, that's correct. Well, when you were, when I was in the 9th grade, and this continued on all the way through high school, we were not permitted to permit the lacquer to remain on those buttons. The lacquer; they were brass buttons, the round brass buttons. You had to take the lacquer off of them and then you shine them with the Blitz-cloth.

Oh, is that like the brass-er stuff where you...

It was in a cloth; it's called a Blitz cloth and you would buy that at the tailor shop or at the PX on campus, so there was a metal thing that when you closed it, it closed all the buttons at the proper distance between the buttons and you spent hours taking off the lacquer on your coat buttons, plus your belt buckle. No lacquer; you had to shine those. Now that was part of the plebe system. There was also a major part of the plebe system, which was based on seniority.

Did you have to go through the plebe system as a 9th grader?

Yes. Your first year you were a plebe; I don't care what grade you were, as long as you were in high school. Plebe-new student. New student for one year. Now the plebe system said that all who were not plebes, in other words, those who had been here a year or more, would be properly respected, as well as seniors would be properly respected. As a plebe, you ran everywhere you went, unless you were in formation and marching to the mess hall or wherever. And you would stop and salute the two key monuments, which were called senior monuments. And then you stop, salute, turn left and continue running and if you were a plebe and seen not running, that mean that you were subject to push-ups or other types of punishment which could be, who knows. You're confined to your room for an hour or something like that.

And the thing is, what kind of shoes did you wear, doing all this running?

Your regular black shoes, which had better well be spit-shined. And we learned how to spit-shine real well and after you had accumulated a lot of polish on your shoes, you had to burn it off, so we learned how to apply alcohol and burn off the tip of the shoe. And they would also double-checked to see that

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the sides of the shoes were also highly shined, not just the tip. But in the plebe system, we also had to memorize certain things. Now the plebe system, for example, would say-the one who is not the plebe-would say thin out. Alright, you'd put your hands in this position, which would be palms-up, your arms at a 45 degree angle, your chin in, more wrinkles, the better in the chin and say for example-the upper-classman would say-how's a cow? Sir, she walks, she talks, she's full of chalk. The lacteal fluid extracted from the female of the bovine species is highly prolific to the nth degree, sir. Same as West Point. Walking down the hall: if you were walking down the hall and one who is not a plebe came by, you'd better hit your back up against that wall and make room. "How's your cranium?" Sir, my cranium consisting of Vermont marble, thick case, hardened steel-see I can't remember it all right now, but anyway, it was very long and complicated-forms an impenetrable barrier to all that seeks to impress itself upon the ashen tissues of my brain. Hence the folgain and every vecent phrases, just now reiterated for my comprehension, have failed to penetrate or permeate my somniferous forces. In other words, sir, I am very, very dumb and do not understand.

I was reading here, there was a gate that you guys walked through, the plebes walked through and you had to tell exactly the number of graduates.

That we did not do when I was there.

Oh, you did not, ok.

Certain things became modified; we did not do that. We always had-I'm in the high school-we always had inspected on Sat.-let's talk about the schedule. Every morning, 5:45, up, revelry. We had bugles up until the last year, a bugler who would call revelry.

Did he stand at the flag?

Yes, he did.

Center flag, center of the quad, right?

And sometimes you didn't like that quadrangle, because if you were having punishment for something, or had enough demerits, you'd get to walk around that all day Saturday with your rifle and that was not pleasant because we all wanted to go on pass, but getting back to the schedule. At 6 or 6:15, we were in pants and t-shirts in front of our barracks and all of upper-school commenced athletics together: jumping-jacks, deep knee bends, things of that nature. Finish, 6:30, back in your room. 7:00, you're dressed, shirt, tie, Eisenhower jacket, ready to proceed to breakfast. School would start roughly at 8:30 after breakfast and I'll have to tell you about the milk strike. But anyway, then we'd go to school in those shacks. Now, there was no such thing as playing hooky from school because each day, certain individuals were chosen to do guard duty. Now guard duty wasn't guarding the perimeter of the campus. Guard duty came out of the front office of the commandant and there were kept the records. And the guard in each period of school, roughly each hour, would go to the various classrooms, because you'd switch classrooms, depending on the subject matter and take, and the professor would give the

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roll-there were no female professors-and give who was missing. Well unless they were excused in the infirmary, or excused by the commandant, we would know, they weren't attending class. Where were they? We'd check their room. If they were not in their room, where were they? By lunchtime, you knew where they were or had been, because at lunchtime, every time breakfast, lunch and dinner was always a roll-call and you had to report the each platoon and each company then reported orally, out loud to the battalion commander, all present and accounted for or something to that nature. If there was somebody missing, then we would report that. We wouldn't announce the name: one unexcused and commandant would have somebody over there right away. Where is that person? We don't put up with that monkey-business. Alright, so we would go to class, all male teachers, very difficult grading system. I graduate second in my class by one one-hundredth of a point behind valedictorian. I had like a 3.35. There was no such thing as straight A's all the time. You couldn't do it; it was just difficult. Most of the professors were retired admirals or generals or colonels or something like that, from the military and you were expected to-you never got out of line in the classroom or they would call the guard and then you'd get demerits or all kinds of things that you didn't want. So then, roughly at a quarter to 12, you were released because at 12:00, you were on the quadrangle, lined up for lunch. You marched- whenever you went to eat, you marched-so we marched to the mess hall. After lunch, school started up again about 1:15-1:30. We were out of school similar to the lower-school situation, about 2:45 to 3:00 at which we had compulsory physical education. Now you could be football, basketball, some kind of sport, tennis, whatever it was, but you had to participate in that P.E., generally finished at 5 or quarter of. By 6:00, you were lined up again for dinner. Now, 7:00 to 7:15, I can't get the exact time, but roughly that time, was study hall. That meant you were in your room, studying from 7:15 to roughly 9:00. And this was high school. Now there is where you have the background for being a self-starter after you graduated from high school. I mean, you had to sit there and study. We had a man in the center of the hall; that was his job, to walk up and down that hall and make sure that everyone was at their desk and not sleeping at their desk, studying.

Could you go with another classmate and study together?

No.

You had to stay in your room?

That's correct. There was no joint anything. You studied at your desk and if you needed to go to the bathroom, you would stand at your doorway and put your right arm out and they would come see what you wanted. If you need to go to the restroom, fine; you go to the restroom, they expected you back in a couple of minutes. That's how it worked. Roughly taps at 9:30 to a quarter to 10, something like that- 9:30, something. Now, we had the monitors up and down the hall again. None of this leaving-of course, all lights had to be out; taps is taps-then they would walk up and down and make sure you were in your bed. So it was very regimented, but that study hall taught me how to study; I had to study. And they gave you homework that you had to turn in and if you didn't turn it in, you had the colonel or general telling you that you should have turned it in and they're going to report you to the commandant if don't turn it in the next time. And if you're reported to the commandant, that meant that the demerits; that

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meant no pass. That meant a lot of things. Now, we would also-well I mentioned the milk strike a moment-about in the 10th grade year, the administration decided that you would no longer have milk in the pewter pitchers that we had; you would have it in these little containers.

Those cardboard carton containers?

In a small cardboard carton, like you would have cream now, something like that in a small cardboard carton, and they didn't want that. They said we don't get enough for our cereal and then to drink; we don't like that. Well, you're gonna have to live with it. That's what the owner says we're serving at Brown Military. Well, several of the higher echelon officers, some from the staff of the battalion and some lieutenants decided that wasn't right and they told the school administration, we aren't going to accept that; they said yes you are; they said no, we're not going to go to class and they didn't. For two days that went on, 'til the administration said, alright gentlemen, we're going to give you back your milk and all those officers who have participated are now privates.

So there's consequences.

You bet there was. And for the last two years, 1957 and 1958, there was never any strike again. No one wanted to lose their rank or ranking that they had achieved. One of the things that I learned that has a great significance in later life is having started to achieve something in the 9th and 10th grade, I knew what I wanted to do; I wanted to be an officer and battalion commander someday and I wanted to achieve if I was qualified and I knew how to achieve that and throughout life, I found that I have always wanted to be an achiever, someone who could be a leader and try to move up in whatever it was that I wanted to move up into.

That brings me to a good question: how did you advance in rank?

Well, I started out as the corporal clerk, then, given the opportunity, I became the sergeant. Then the next year I came back as lieutenant of that same platoon. The captain, something happened-I don't know what it was-of the whole company, A-Company. Something happened and he was no longer there and they needed a replacement and the commander or the platoon commander of A-Company, oh not A, the commander of the first platoon said, no he didn't want to move up. I said, well I will. So, by the time I was 14, I was a captain. But remember that the kids, well let's put it this way. Before then, several years before then, maybe 2 or 3, the battalion commander was always junior college, but by 1958, I think, there were no more, I don't think there were any junior college. 1957, there may have been a couple, but that was about it. But by 1957, I'd gone from the platoon leader-remember, each platoon is a floor-that's how it was set up, you were in charge of a floor. A captain was in charge of generally two platoons, two to three floors. In A-Company, the top floor was the band and they had their own separate platoon, so I move from, in 1957, from starting out as a lieutenant, then I moved to captain. And then there were only two captains that came back the following year and I was given the first opportunity to be the battalion commander, which I was fortunate enough to achieve and go from there.

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But there had to be some requirements; they just didn't appoint you.

You had to show your leadership.

You also had to have grades and stuff...

Absolutely. And conduct, scholastically and obviously if I graduated second in the class, I was doing pretty well moving up. My platoon received an honor rating as the outstanding platoon when I was the commander of all of upper-school. My company was an outstanding company, so that led to being raised or at least considered for the next position up. Each position that I took, I was successful at. I knew enough about the school and how it ran, how to run it, how to get the people to do what I wanted them to do. As 1957, I still, I had two platoon leaders in junior college, which was unusual, but here I was, 14-years-old, actually 15 (was I 15-years-old or 14?) and I was telling kids 18-19 what to do; very difficult that year, because they were kind of reluctant to take orders from me and I would give them a little leeway, but at the same time, they knew that if they didn't do what I told them, I would say, I'm not going to put up with them, I'm just going to the commandant, and then he would have a little talk with them if they wanted to keep their position, they would do what I asked them to do. Now one of the important things to understand is that as a student you wanted to be an officer; that was a big thing. Officers wore swords. Officer had red sashes. Officer's shakos, or the parade helmet if you will, officer's had feathers, everybody else just had a pom-pom; it was just a straight little thing. Officers had privileges. Officers got to have their choice of rooms. Officers got to put blankets on their table, their study table. Officers got to eat, if they wanted to, first, but in my company, I instructed them to eat after their men. This was sign they gave, were giving respect to their men. But I remember things when I was in the 9th or 10th grade when I came to the mess hall. We had the silver trays and you would go through and you were served whatever you-if you didn't want the beets, you didn't have to take them-but you went through and you got your meat. But if you wanted seconds, you had to eat fast to get there before they took the food away; you could go back and get seconds, but if they ran out of meat, which they usually did, you said, alright, give me two pieces of bread and put the gravy on top. That was because we didn't care that much for vegetables. Also, up to today, I do not want and do not eat casserole because...

Or beets?

Or beets. But casseroles were combinations of vegetables what were generally leftover or macaroni and cheese, what I call institutional food. So I didn't want to do that. We did get, in the school advent, you could get steak, once a week. That was on Saturday night when generally, very few people were there.

How was the PX in terms of food too?

You could get snacks, basic snacks, but I don't recall hamburgers or hot dogs.

Ok, so it was just like a candy bar and some chips, something to drink.

Yes, soft drinks, yes.

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As I read this stuff and talk the men, there seems to be a suite accord among you guys.

Absolutely, it's a bond like the military. Each squad got to know each other. Why? You slept, ate, went to school with each other and there was nowhere else to go at night during the week. Answer: where would you go on the weekend? A couple of guys in your squad would go down to the movies at the Roxie, which is a theater at Pacific Beach and you'd walk down to the Roxie. However sometimes, in some years, they required us to wear our uniforms on pass, which meant we would run into the PB boys, Pacific Beach Boys, and they'd kind of give us a hard time and threaten us and we're gonna get you and all that sort of thing when we're in uniform. Well, I remember-I must have been in the 9th grade- and the PB Boys got very serious. They said, we're going to attack you; we're coming to your school. We're going to come in our cars and go through your back alley-there was a back alley behind the barracks, between the barracks and the shacks and we decided we were going to bring boulders up on top of the roofs and if they came through, the boulders would come down on them and that's what happened.

Really?

Yes. They showed up and boy, they high-tailed it out of there. They saw the boulders coming down. I don't know if we ever hit them with the bould-but they saw them coming down; they did not foresee to do that again. Now I guess it was in the 10th or 11th grade, we had a commandant who was like called the night commandant; he'd be there at night. His name was Del Grande and he had a 1952 M.G., small little sports car. We decided it would be very funny to put his sports car on the roof.

Now there's somebody that I talked to that you were with that did that and they always say, oh I wasn't a part of that. What I'm finding as I talk to you, oh yes you did. How'd you get it up there?

We carried it up the steps.

You tilt it sideways?

Yes, we got it up the steps and we had to get it down the same way.

What did he do when he saw it?

Well, he couldn't find it. Somebody finally told him where it was.

He must have been ballistic.

Yes, he didn't know how we got it up there, but we did. Now, one of the things that we talked about bonding, you eat, sleep, you'd have Saturday morning inspection. Every Saturday morning.

Was that before you were allowed a weekend pass?

Yes. Now that made a difference. The battalion ran the inspection. Sometime he'd refer to company commanders to do it, but that wouldn't go anywhere below that level, who would have to personally go

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through every room for that inspection. Now you had to be able to take a quarter and bounce it on the bed; it had to be tight. It had to have square corners like they do in the hospital. All your shoes had be lined up, shined, underneath the bed. And as this progressed during the years, we finally got to what was known as white glove inspections. That's when you take a white glove on top of the doorframe, to see if there was any dust up there. You would go-one of my tricks is I would lift up the shoe and see if there was any dirt underneath it, on the sole of the shoe. Now remember, all in your closet, everything was buttoned and zippered. In the first few months, you learned that because it thrown on the floor if it wasn't, left sleeve out, always. And space in between the hangers, pretty much evenly set; that was what was expected and so these were the inspections conducted every morning and the winning platoon, the winning squad or floor, get their allowance first. Now, why was that significant? Not only did you get your allowance, you'd line up and go through a line; it's like payday. That meant you were the first ones able to go on pass, because you checked out through the commandant's office and nobody checked out 'til they had their money. The worst one was the last one to get their allowance, the worst company and the worst platoon, so you wanted that to be good. Also, of course, you had to wax your halls and so we would, the night before, Friday night, put Johnson's wax on the floors and then we would pull somebody in a blanket up and down the hall. That was good fun.

Bounce them off the wall?

Yeah, whatever it was. So we would do that, but by I think probably 1958, we didn't do that anymore, but prior to that time we did. But getting ready for those inspections was you know, people helped each other and people would come up with suggestions, it'd be, hey last time he did this, the company commander looked for this; let's not let this happen to us and we all wanted to be the best. Everybody wanted to be the best. And that did create a bonding and extre dacor.

Did it carry on afterwards?

After when?

After you graduated from Brown?

Uh, you have that special bonding, you've been through all of this. I don't know if you have that street accord, but you certainly have that bonding that everyone essentially went through it. A-cadets didn't count, so you understand that. A-cadets never became officers. One of the big things, was once a year, you had a federal inspection.

That's for the accreditation, wasn't it?

That's correct. And we had our MST: Military Science and Tactic instructors teach us how to pitch a tent militarily, how to do this, how to do that. We would do demonstrations and they would watch us at calisthenics and they would watch us, what we did all day and then we would learn whether or not, toward the end of the year, whether or not we'd made it. But getting ready for that inspection, that was

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the hardest inspection to ever get ready for and immediately after it was over, half the cadet corps went down, I should say 20% went down to Pacific Beach and got drunk.

Some of the guys talked about, when I was at the alumni meeting, they'd mention that they'd sometimes take-I don't know if it was in your years, but it was in the 40s-they'd take field trips to Quana.

We didn't. No. We didn't do that. However, I remember in I guess about the 10th grade, we decided we were going to hike to Torry Pikes and in those days there a cross up Mount Soladet. And you went up Mount Soladet and back down the back side all the way to Torry Pikes and no path; we ended up cutting a path and that was an interesting thing. Let me show you, in 1958..[looks through papers]...that is from Western Union; it was a Western Union telegram to-and this is that telegram-to the president of Brown Military Academy, San Diego, California, from Agident General, Department of the Army, Washington D.C. ROTC unit at your institution selected as military school honor ROTC unit, 1958. Secretary of the army extends congratulations. Agident General, Department of the Army, Washington D.C.

You know, my research, in my research, I found the Brown Military Academy, of all the academies, kept the highest accreditation with the military.

It did.

Even though they're called Brown Military Academy, they were actually an institution, which was the highest it could be. There's a military school, military academy, the military institution.

Well, we always...

So technically it was Brown Military Institution, but because of the historical nature of the name, they stayed with BMA.

And I will tell you that each year that I was there, certainly in high school, I can't tell you when I was in the lower school, but for many years even prior to when I went into high school, we had two appointments to each academy. All you had to do was pass the exam. You did not need a recommendation from any congressman or anything of that nature. If you passed the exam, they felt that you had a sufficient background to be accepted and they asked me if I wanted-this battalion commander-he said, you deserve it, would you like an appointment to any of the academies? And I said, no. And they said, how come? And I said, because I know I'll never make it. The academies require that you have 20/20 vision and I had glasses and I don't have 20/20 vision, so I'm going to ask you to go ahead and give that appointment to someone who would be, have more of a chance to enter than I would.

It was funny, my father was given the same; he was never an officer and there're stories as to why, but he was offered a full ride at West Point. He also was offered free ride to play baseball at university; he turned them both down. I have no idea why. I mean, if he hadn't, I wouldn't be here. But I find that significant in the quality of Brown Military Academy.

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You had established a self-discipline; you had to, to survive and if you didn't, you weren't there too long because of the great peer pressure. I remember Colonel Hathaway; he was the commandant for the four years that I was in high school. For example, if you were caught smoking-smoking was not allowed.

How about a pipe?

No.

40s you could.

Well, by then you couldn't. You'd feign with a pipe, but you never could smoke one and you didn't want to be seen with one, because Colonel Hathaway had a punishment for that. He would learn that you were smoking, generally behind the shacks; that's where we would smoke. You certainly wouldn't do it in the barracks. He'd find out about it, and say, come into my office. You'd come into his office. I knew by then I was...it was 1957. He said, I want you to smoke this cigar. He'd put you in the closet to smoke the cigar. That was an experience; I never wanted it to happen again. I never smoked. As a matter of fact, when I was a kid, I tried, but I never could do it and then I took the pipe off campus to try and do that, and could never keep it lit, so I said, forget it; it isn't worth the whole effort. Now one of the things that we had of significance was called a letterman's club.

My father belonged to it. So I actually still have his sweater.

Well we had a purple and white jacket, purple with the white sleeves.

You still have it?

No. I wish I did.

So do I.

And you put your letter on it, a B. And I still have it, I still have the B.

What was your sport?

Shot-put and swimming. So that worked out for me. But the letterman's club had the hazing initiation. And I'll never forget, one of the big things-of course, the commandant, no one was supposed to know and I don't think they did-we dug a big pit in that back field area, which was just where they had the, where you would just run around it four times. For one week, we poured the trash in there. What I mean, trash, old food, everything, garbage. Then they put water on it. You had to jump it. But that was it, and then we had certain other things, like they made you duck walk one time around that back field, after you'd jumped in it. I mean, those were the kind of things high school would do and my initiation into the letterman's club-we had several of us trying to get in-first to try and get into Hollywood, which is a theater downtown, which was burlesque.

And you're not of age.

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Well none of us were. Some could pass. I couldn't pass; they wouldn't let me in. So the next trip, next thing you knew is you put soap in the Horton Plaza fountain. Well we did that and we made the letterman's club.

Good for you. I wish you had that jacket, I really do. I mean, I have my father's letterman sweater. I have promised Brown Military Academy, I'm sending them his dress uniform, his thenard uniforms, there's another uniform he has too and they're getting that. I'm keeping the sweater until I'm done. Then they can go; they don't have any of this, they don't have anything.

...From the letterman's club.

...From the academy at all. They have a few annuals; they have a few news clippings.

Do they have flags? We had some company flags.

But the university doesn't have them.

They were given to army/navy academy, by the way, it was founded by the same person that founded- well you've got to understand the history.

I do.

Colonel Davis, Colonel Davis; after Brown bought Brown Military Academy, Colonel Davis created a military school in Carlsbath...

Still there.

...Called Army Navy in Stastillair.

One of the things I might do after I'm done with Brown is go up to the San Diego Army and Navy and ask if I can do the same thing with them and it's a rich history; there really is a rich history here that I don't think very many people know about, but the thing I want to do with Brown University is Brown-BMA-I want a perpetuity of BMA at this university that started it.

Well understand that Dr. Brown was a very religious man.

I know he was.

And he would come to our school and although they called our school non-denominational, we had chapel on Thursdays and we had Sunday worship.

You also had people who were Jewish, you had people that were Catholic, you had...

Well, I'm Jewish and I can say...

...I even met a guy that was a Morman and I can say, I'm thinking, why would you go there?

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It didn't really-we had a chaplain who was Christian and I can sing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" with the best of them, "Up From the Grave He Arose" and all of that, but that didn't bother me. But I remember Moody Institute, when I was in D-Company. On Saturday night, I was-you know-young; you couldn't go on pass. They wouldn't let you off the campus at that age, in D-Company and so we would go to the movie at the auditorium and many times, it was accompanied by the Moody Institute Science pictures and it would be-it would show, for example, the opening of flowers in time sequence and all these nature studies and bees and all these-I thought it was very interesting! But after you saw it for the fifth time, it was no longer interesting.

You were there at the end, when it moved to Glendora. What was the attitude of the cadets realizing that this was the last year for Brown in San Diego?

My goal, as well as I believe the administration, was to keep the school functioning, because everybody knew this was it; the school's not going to be here-closing down. Major Bitterland told me later, who was as I point out the administrator of the school, that they were very concerned what would happen in the last several months; would the whole school fall apart? Would the discipline fall apart? It did not. And I impressed as my job as the battalion commander to try and create a spirit among those who were there that they were honored to be the last students at the great institution.

But some of them actually had to go up to Glendora, did they not?

Yes they did and they knew they were going, but we never lost the morale; we never lost the aspredacore. At any time, even on the last day, when we took the flag down for the last time...

Where is that flag?

Heaven only knows. I don't know. I do know who the first battalion commander was at Glendora. And the reason I did was they came and asked me my opinion, who can we appoint as the battalion commander; we don't know any of these young men, cause they'd been a girl's school.

Yeah, that used to be quite a contention-I was at the alumni meeting-between San Diego and Glendora, that they were the girl's school.

At one time

But I mean they really make a point of needling these guys, you went to the girl's school.

Well, sure. That's typical kind of stuff and his name was Guskos, G-U-S-K-O-S.

I have not come across his name whatsoever.

He was the first-I think he's now like in New Mexico or something-he was their first battalion commander. He was a lieutenant at Brown Military Academy and he was a lieutenant in his junior year. Now several of the fellows that I graduated with, that graduated with me, just looking through my book, looking at them, one of them, Ed Shepherd, he stayed in San Diego, became Deputy D.A. and retired

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there as a Deputy D.A. in San Diego. I would venture to say that most of the students who had been there for three or more years graduated and went on successfully. We did accept students who came in and had problems and were court-ordered there. I will tell you that if they didn't fit, if they didn't fit-remember the peer pressure? Within two years, they were out of there or they'd run away.

Yeah, you know what's funny, when my father was going there, they didn't have that problem, that they were court-ordered or whatever. They only know of one guy, in all the years that they were there-I'm talking in the early 50s-that didn't make it.

We probably had, over a period of four years, probably about five.

So it's a small attrition rate, compared to today's schools.

Yeah, well I think because of that pressure and the military, you couldn't get away with anything.

It was structure, right? Very structured

Very structured and when I went to college, no problem studying; studying came easy to me and I would do it all and get it done way ahead of time, because I was self-motivated, which was created by Brown Military, that study hall every night did it and as far as achieving, I feel that I did my fair share of achieving when I went out after graduating at ??, I was on student body at Cal Western. I did other things at Cal Western and when I got out into the public, I wanted to be active, because I'd been active in high school. End result, Kawana's Club, Optimist Club, joined the Masons, joined the Elks.

You joined the-how could you-you joined the Masons?

Yes.

You're Jewish.

Yes.

How did you get into the Masons being Jewish?

It was not a problem at all. As a matter of fact, I was the grand master of Masons in the state of California two years ago.

I've got to be honest, I'm impressed.

It's sufficient to say that the grand master in California is just that; he's like the president in California. There is no national president of masons, so I was the grand master of masons in California with 65,000 masons.

I'm impressed, I'm just impressed that you got in; I really am.

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And I was Jewish; no, we have some lodges that, when I joined, shortly after college, matter of fact, I was still at law school. I joined immediately at age 21; that's when you can join at that time. There was a lodge here in San Diego that was primarily Jewish. They said, join that one; I said, no. I want to join one not because of my religion, but because of which lodge is the best and I joined San Diego lodge #35, which then had about thousand members, knew one person in that lodge. Seven years later, I was the master of that lodge, the youngest master in its history-age 30-1972. But I think what learned at Brown Military Academy was the strive, spend the time to get where you want to go and I'll never forget the influence back again from my mother, who said, you know, if you can't be a big fish in a big pond, be a big fish in a little pond, and so that's why I always sought to achieve and that public speaking helped me to do just that.

Your profession now is...?

...An attorney for 45 years.

And going to Brown Military Academy, this is a question I'm asking everybody, do you feel, and I'm hearing you say this, that the school developed young men with leadership quality, that, I'll be honest with you, I don't see it today. You're dealing with family law, you're dealing with all kinds of issues. The leadership that was given to you, the leadership training, I should say at a military institution, how beneficial is that to life, do you think?

Obviously it was beneficial as far as I'm concerned, because I was able to do a lot with it. I did become the president of my optimist club. I was the board of directors at the kawanas club, the largest club in California here in San Diego. I was on the Junior Chamber of Commerce, I ran for school board-a lot of things that I was able to do because I was able to get up and speak in front of people, which is part of what you're taught in a military school, and to motivate people and I was placed in a position as I mentioned earlier of motivating 18 and 19-year-olds to get them to do what I wanted them to do and to learn how to get along with people, and also because of the peer pressure and because of, maybe it's just me, my background, other than the military school, but I think it was military school, but I believe in setting an example for others and having a high moral standard. Integrity is one of the greatest things that a man can have and to me, I will never sacrifice that integrity for any reason; I just don't...But Brown Military Academy gave me the leadership ability. It gave me a strong set of morals. It gave me a strong ability to deal with others. In family law, I find myself dealing with others all the time and giving them advise as I would give members of Brown Military Academy and those that served with me, advise as well as to what they should or shouldn't do or what would be best, in the best interest of the school and the best interest of the platoon or the best interest of the company and it also sought me to strive and that to be on top, if you can. And I also learned something else: unless you're on top or near the top, half the population of what you're trying to influence isn't going to listen to you, but when you get up to a directorship of something, they start listening. Otherwise, you're just one of them; you're just one of the whole group. That's why wherever I've been, whatever I've done in life, I've sought to rise near where there were those in control and I maybe be in that control. But politically, I found out that wasn't

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for me, the politics. I found out, just from the school board level and found out you had to sell yourself out too many times to politics for you to maintain a high moral integrity. At least that's the way I saw it.

Let's see, is there anything I can think of, else? I've got a great story here. I thank you, seriously, it is a great story. I tell you, if I come across something, can I come back to you?

Always feel free to give me a call.

That's great. I really appreciate it. All right, thank you.