

John Betzold Oral History Interview

February 6, 2014

Interviewed by Jerrod Howe

Howe: Today is February 6th, 2014, my name is Jerrod Howe. We're here at the Pritzker Military Museum and Library with Commander John Betzold.

Betzold: Good morning.

Howe: Thank you, Sir. And you, I keep coming back to this, but how was the train ride?

Betzold: Train ride this morning? Crowded. More so than other rides over the past year, so it's a direct reflection of the cold weather. Not many people were standing outside waiting for the train, they were all clustered into the little buildings which usually don't get used, at least in Fox River Grove. But once you got aboard it was fine, pick your seat. I get used to getting aboard, going up on the top. So I get those individual seats by the window. Those were not available this morning.

Howe: Yeah, I would imagine that every space is being used.

Betzold: The bus just looked like a sausage factory, [I was] just pressing into people, [the driver was saying] come on, you can move back, she kept saying... a lot of people using public transportation today.

Howe: It makes the most sense, they haven't cleared the streets yet. Public service.... It'll pick up after a day or two.

Betzold: So the train ride in was just fine and that's my preferred way to come downtown. We can go to Fox River Grove, always ample parking over there, get on the train, come down, [and] do our thing, speaking in terms of my wife and myself. Go to see our doctors that we have down here and then get back on the train and go home.

Howe: Other than those personal visits do you have other reasons to come downtown?

Betzold: We come down on occasion- last occasion was for the shopping season- they have the parade that goes off on Friday night after Thanksgiving, I believe, or Saturday, Saturday after Thanksgiving. And we came down, got a hotel room, stayed overnight and went to the parade, the fireworks and had our- one of the families from Denver was in town so they joined in. We'll come down for that, we'll come down to...we try to belong to one museum per year and we do that because we have the grandchildren who, when they come to Chicago, we incorporate that museum in part of showing them what's available

and what we want them to see in Chicago. So we've been members of each museum. This year we are with the Science and Industry again, down south. They enjoy it, we enjoy it, and it's a nice way to spend a day with the families.

Howe: It's good for the holiday season, too, yeah. We're gonna barrel right in here, I'm going to talk solely about you and your experience. So when and where were you born?

Betzold: I was born in St. Cloud, Minnesota; it's a medium-sized city in Minnesota right in the center of the state. I was born on April 1st, 1942, so we can get that out of the way. And surprised my mother, no doubt about that and have had a great experience by having a birthday on April 1st.

Howe: Every year?

Betzold: Every year. You can always find somebody that says, *"Oh, you weren't born on April 1st,"* I said, *"For a dollar, you can find out,"* and so they lose their dollar and then they remember that my birthday is on the first of April. But anyway, in central Minnesota, 1942, my wife's-excuse me, my mother's family, was from St. Cloud so I grew up with great-grandmothers and grandmothers and uncles and aunts and cousins. It stayed intact until about the '60s when the uncles started moving away and getting out of the northern climate and going to Florida. The family started to break apart at that point, so personally, I stayed in St. Cloud until I was through college and [had] a graduate degree and once I left, I really haven't been back.

Howe: Okay, and do you think that part of that has been because, as you said, the family has gone their separate ways?

Betzold: Yes, there's a- out of 17 or 18 cousins, probably five are up there at this point in time, if that many. So there's no big pull. Now, I was also the first child, first grandchild within the mother's family and the father's family, so being that particular child there were certain expectations that were unsaid but said as we were growing up, and I'm sure we'll touch on some of those as we continue our conversation but early remembrances of where we lived etcetera. We lived within a block of the grandparents and the great grandmother. She lived until age 96 and Grandma Lou was just a small person full of energy; couldn't keep up with her. Whereas the great-grandfather was-I remember him as sitting in a rocking chair by a window so he could watch the traffic go by and as he rocked, he had this ability to chew tobacco and hit the spittoon every time as he was rocking back and forth. I found that absolutely fascinating as a child. So that's my remembrance. And obviously he was going through dementia, which I doubt that they even knew about dementia back at that point in time. But he passed away, but Grandma Lou stayed around for quite a while.

Howe: And you had siblings?

Betzold: One brother. That's the Betzold family, the two of us. My brother now is- has a home in Eau Claire, but this time of year he spends down in Phoenix area, calling me once a week to tell me how nice it is down in Phoenix and how he doesn't miss the snow and that's fine. That's fine, I still like it up here. So that's where we're gonna stay. I don't have a real pull to go somewhere else. We have 5 children, my wife and I, and three families are in Indianapolis, one family in Boulder, and one family in Colorado Springs.

Howe: Wow. That's certainly spread out.

Betzold: Right, and ten grandkids. So we've got, you know, our kids went on to expand their families, so we enjoy the grandkids whenever we have the opportunity.

Howe: Congratulations.

Betzold: Thank you.

Howe: Yeah. [You] mentioned your mom from St. Cloud. So where was your father's family from?

Betzold: Chicago. Lived over on Avers Avenue, is my early remembrance. North Avenue and Avers Avenue. And I still can remember coming to Chicago when I was in the six-to-nine year range. They would actually put us on a train and let us come to Chicago and have the grandparents pick us up. Not something you do nowadays, put a kid on a plane or a train unaccompanied, for that amount of time and space. But that's the difference between living in those days and today. Being concerned about...We, the family here was my grandmother, kind of remember my grandfather but not really because he passed away. I've never gone through the genealogy but- and I need to do that over at Newberg. Because with the family right from Chicago and the facilities based here in Chicago with Newberry, I think I should be getting a pretty good run at uncovering some of our history but instead I'm doing an oral history for Pritzker's at this point in time, maybe at some point I'll get around to that. It's kind of like one of the comments I made in the write-up was, bucket list and believe me, I got too much on my bucket list that's never gonna get done.

Howe: I'm glad we can check this one off.

Betzold: We can check this one off, that's right.

Howe: Good. So talking about your experience growing up, you said there was a lot of extended family in your life, any of those from a military background?

Betzold: During the Second World War, there were three uncles that were in the service. Two in the army and one in the coast guard and they served- two served in- one in Africa, one in Europe and then my third uncle in the coast guard served in Tampa Bay. And so, I would talk to him over the years about the Navy-the coast guard-and would make some

comments about the coast guard of course, having been in the Navy. And he said , during the Second World War, my government asked me to protect this country and they sent me to Tampa Bay. Now my question to you is: did anybody invade Tampa Bay? The answer: no. I did my job. [Laughs]

Howe: Definitely a good way of looking at it.

Betzold: So there was a give and take, but during that period the one daughter lived with my grandparents and they lived one block from where we were, and my great-grandmother was across the alley from my grandparents. So yes, there was extended family there. And one which- all the way through, until the family started to break up and move around, it was always a very close family. I can remember almost religiously, everybody got together on Saturday evening and played cards at my grandparents' place. This was uncles, aunts, kids were there, all this type of thing. That's how we grew up.

Howe: What kind of things do you remember you doing? Who you played with, or any extracurricular activities you enjoyed?

Betzold: This is coming forward or at that particular...?

Howe: At that particular time.

Betzold: At that time? Not a lot of memories. I can remember my grandmother had an ironing device that was a roller and she could take that and put the clean clothes on steel shelves, and my cousin and I decided one day that we needed something at the top and proceeded to knock the whole thing over, to her chagrin. That had to be when I was maybe two, two-and-a-half, so that's a pretty early memory of that, even. But it just showed that we were kids and we played and there was nothing specific. I do harken back to one of the exhibits that I put together that had the picture of myself in a Navy uniform for kids sitting on this toy, and I've often wondered if you believe in these coincidences that x number of years later, I end up in the Navy. I don't think so, but it makes a good story.

Howe: That's a good segway into our next question. So what do you think influenced you towards that decision?

Betzold: You grew up with the understanding that you would go to high school, complete it. You would go to college, complete that. You'd go into the military, you'd come out of the military, you'd get a job where you stayed for the rest of your life. You'd get married, you'd have two and a half kids and you'd have a house with a white picket fence. Other than that, nothing was planned, but with those expectations early on. I said, I know I'm going into the service, which service am I, do I think about [it] and intend to approach? [I] went to the University of Minnesota for my first year at college. Not a good experience, too big a place for a small town Midwest boy. So I came back to the home

town and the state college. While I was at the University of Minnesota that year, I was involved with the Air Force ROTC. When I came back and went to the state college, St. Cloud State College, I was talking with the Marine Corps recruiters about their platoon officer, 'course, which led to a commission and how I got into the Navy was one of my friends from high school. Going to [a] college [in] the home town that has a high school so there's a lot of people going to school at [the] college level that I recognized from high school and he came into the library and found me.

This was in...He had dropped out after the fall quarter, he came in, found me and said let's go have a cup of coffee. So we go over to the student union and he starts telling me about this Navy reserve program that he's found and he's wandering at this point in time and he's going to join the Navy because it's accelerated boot camp and then you go on active duty for six months somewhere in the first year, year-and-a-half, and then you come back and spend the rest of the time that you have in the six year commitment at the reserve center. Gotta come down and talk to these people. Okay, fine. I go down and talk to these people, think about it for a couple weeks, go down, raise my right hand and I joined the Navy, Navy Reserve. E-1, recruit, that's what. Well, this individual goes off to boot camp and the first four letters or so, each week was this is great, wonderful experience, gonna stay in the Navy, I don't know why I didn't do this sooner. About the fifth week and the sixth week, mark your calendar, I'll be home in one month. I'm sleep walking and doing a few other things that we'll save the audience from hearing about and did. No doubt about it, he was home in 30 days with a general discharge and got out of the service and 26 years later, I got out of the service.

Howe: So this was your friend that had recruited you? He got out before ever having had a chance to serve?

Betzold: That's right.

Howe: Wow.

Betzold: We never got into why. That's for him to figure out, but I still see him and he lives up in northern Wisconsin. We have friends up there that we go each summer and spend a couple of weeks and he's in the next town so we've reconnected and he ended up going on for his Master's Degree [in] teaching and has done quite well for himself. Always was an outdoors person but he never stuck with the Navy. So I just find the correlation there between getting the fraternity rush and committing and then having him decide to drop off and my staying in. One of the greatest things, there are a number of things in the oral history that you look back and you say, wow that was just kind of lucky, to fall into that, because there are certain decisions that were made, like joining the Navy at that point, that you don't really take into context and say that was destined to be, it's just, it was there, the decision was made and we move forward at that time.

Howe: So it's interesting that you frame that...I do want to go back and ask about the fact you said you were looking at other services: the Air Force, the Marine Corps, the Navy. What attracted you to either of those services?

Betzold: Well, being a naive young man, as sophomore in college and going and talking to the Navy and saying specifically to the officers that were at this naval reserve electronics division, I'm interested in being in the Navy, I'm willing to enlist but, upon graduation I want to go to OCS and become an officer and their response was: no problem. Now we're at another one of these decision points that you wonder how these things occur and how naive you can be. There was no way that they could make that kind of guarantee, and they did and I bought into it. Well, along comes a continued association in the reserves, and there was a program for reservists called reserve officer corps, ROC, and the reserve officer corps program was the equivalent of OCS, except it was done in two summer sessions of eight weeks each summer, so here I was enlisted, I applied for and didn't hear anything back in terms of acceptance for this program, and actually went in and signed up for summer school sessions, and about a week after doing that, school had already started, but a week after that, here comes the packet that says you get seven days to get out to Newport, Rhode Island. Now in retrospect, thinking about it means that they had a class of x number of people, the slots had been filled and John hadn't been selected, but all of the sudden, somebody drops out and John slides into the spot. Now I have no idea if that's correct, it's just supposition but it plays into that idea that somebody was guiding something and helping me make these decisions.

Howe: Certainly. You alluded to something I wanna clarify. When you enlisted, you didn't initially enlist with the expectation of becoming an officer, you had that expectation, however, there was nothing in writing.

Betzold: Nothing official, absolutely not.

Howe: Guaranteeing that you would go that route.

Betzold: It was just, you know, the Lt. Commander at the electronics division saying, no problem, we can get you in those officer programs. Well, I don't think so, but I bought into it because it fit into what my expectation was of going forward. Sure, I can be here and I can join and it's beneficial because my paid entry base day- which is the first day that you get paid in the Navy. Er-excuse me, in the service, allowed me to accumulate almost four years of enlisted time or time in the service so that when I went in, I went in at almost double the pay of an ensign with no active military commitment up until that point in time.

Howe: This is a good place for us to stop for a quick second. I do want to go back to that later because that's a point of clarification we discussed over the phone.

Howe: We are back. You were getting in to...

Betzold: Expectations of and participation in a reserve program with no safety net. Just a: yes we can do it, am I accepting that person's knowledge here, Lt. Commander, two-and-a-half stripes, I mean, they must know what's going on.

Howe: And you were also, when we spoke on the phone, you were discussing your time as an enlisted member. So talk a little bit about that because not a whole lot of officers have time as an enlisted man.

Betzold: Right, because I made that part of my discussion, i.e. officer program, when I enlisted, I knew that there was an end, in my mind, an end to being enlisted and a beginning as an officer in the Navy. So as you move through the initial three ranks in the Navy of Seaman apprentice, Seaman recruit and Seamen, you have spent time in service and you're progressing in terms of what your reserve training was at that time. They were attempting in this very small electronics division in central Minnesota to create radiomen for the fleet. I had absolutely no electronic background, I had no, you know, background that would lead someone to believe that I could actually do that particular thing, but that was what they were teaching so therefore that's what you were going to be. It became kind of a misnomer that they really didn't feel I could make E-4 and be a petty officer with a radioman rating, but they could make me an officer.

Now that's a subtlety, I understand, but it's kind of- how we kept things going among ourselves as enlisted people back and going through that training. It ended up that I got into the ROC program. I then went the two summer sessions, made it through that part of it and upon being graduated from St. Cloud State, I was commissioned on the same day, December 18th of '65, I believe that's correct. Commissioned at that point in time and issued orders. My initial act of duty was spent at a gunnery school in Dam Neck Virginia. They were providing me with the knowledge so that I could be a gun mount captain and sit in a gun turret and see that everything was operating correctly. And once I completed that school, I was sent to the USS Randolph, the CVS 15, (which means it's an anti-submarine carrier) and picked up the ship in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. So that began the active duty period of time. Active duty ran from the beginning of 1965 until December 28th of '67. I got a couple of months early out so that I could go to graduate school and we'll get to that in a few minutes.

Howe: Certainly. If we can for a moment, I'd like to go back...

Betzold: And talk about the officers, or the- yeah, officers and being enlisted, etcetera.

Howe: Well, your training. You said in the ROC, the...I can't remember the...ROTC, yeah?

Betzold: Reserve Officer Corps, ROC.

Howe: Reserve Officer Corps. That that was an 8 week program, two...over two years?

Betzold: Two years, eight weeks each summer. The equivalent of OCS, 16 weeks upon graduation.

Howe: And you did basic training as an enlisted person before that.

Betzold: Yes.

Howe: How did the two differ?

Betzold: Well, significantly. As I often tell my army friends and my marine corps friends, by decree of congress, they made me an officer. They don't do that with the other services. There's something in the Navy setup, never went back and clarified, I just accepted the fact that, by declaration of congress, you are an officer in the Navy. So Naval officers are held as other officers in their services, are held in very high regard. So the difference between enlisted and being an officer is day-and-night.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: The Navy may not appreciate the following comment, but, it's a caste system. There are very well defined boundaries within the service, Navy. There are officers, there are warrant officers, there are chief petty officers, and then there are the others enlisted. The Navy is more steeped in tradition and separation than some of the other services. I'll give you, for instance, while aboard the Randolph, I had a division of people I was responsible for 120 raider men basically aboard the ship and I had the administrative and the responsibility for these people. I had a senior chief and I had a chief that made up part of this 120. Just before I got out, I invited these two individuals to dinner and it was one of the hardest decisions they made, even though we had done extremely well in working together, and that's why I wanted to do that. It was really hard for them to come over to an officer's house and have dinner.

Howe: Why do you think that was a difficult decision?

Betzold: Because engrained in the Navy is the separation of enlisted and officers. You work together, but you don't socialize together.

Howe: Okay, and there was an understanding both ways...?

Betzold: Both ways.

Howe: So they felt...?

Betzold: They felt that it was not in their place to do something like that.

Howe: Wow, okay.

Betzold: Now later, in the reserve career, when I was with the Seabees, that's almost an integration of, in and of itself because it's a mingling of officers and enlisted. Part of that

is also being a reservist versus being on active duty, so the reserve component breeds the getting to know each other on a working level as well as personal level. "Nuances of the service," is the best way to put it right now.

Howe: Understood.

Betzold: You brought up a term called mustang, and a mustang is an officer with prior enlisted duty. According to what I was told, unless I had four years of duty as an enlisted person, I did not qualify for recognition of that service time, even though it counted for pay purposes. I never pursued it, I just accepted it. So even though I had that time and normally the other services, I believe if you had enlisted time you were recognized as having that enlisted time once you moved to an officer. It was not that way in the naval reserve at that time.

Howe: Do you feel that...what are your feelings about that, because that's an experience that you had. Do you feel that you should be recognized on some level?

Betzold: Yes I do. Truthfully. Whether I knew it or didn't know it is not the question, it's the recognition of having been...having joined the service as enlisted, saying goodbye when I was given honorable discharged and commission represent a specific period of time and as long as progressing as an enlisted, accomplishing what they wanted to accomplish in terms of being a radioman or whatever it may be, it was time spent. And...did it make any difference over the long pull? No. But it's one of those little unwritten things that occurs, that you just- I'm sure you've probably run a few of those things in terms of a military career that defy a reasonable expectation.

Howe: You've gone to a good length to describe that there is a separation. You've experienced sides of that, having been enlisted, your early years, your first couple of years as an enlisted personnel. Would you say, in comparison, what was the level of difficulty, how did that differ? Do you think it was a harder lifestyle, serving as an enlisted?

Betzold: During that time, the commitment was show up on Monday night for your Navy reserve drill, seven o'clock to 10 o'clock. Nothing to do in preparation other than show up, nothing to do when you leave except show up the next time. So, there was not a great deal of time spent outside of, actually, the actual drill period. There was little differentiation being a member of a small electronics division. It was just, here's what your responsibilities are, we are open on Monday nights in order to do that and you signed a contract and you will fulfill it, and then along comes the reserve officer corps program and we go down that street.

Howe: So the times that you weren't showing up Monday nights, what else did you do?

Betzold: Maybe a correspondence course. Maybe. I don't even remember if I was doing correspondence courses at that point. The only active duty for training was the boot

camp equivalent for reservists which was two years of harassment, or excuse me, two weeks, only seemed like two years. It was two weeks of harassment at boot camp in Great Lakes. So, what did we take out of that experience? Not much good. It was a pretty difficult time. Here I was, all of a sudden, away. No safety net, just my own devices to take care of me. Wondering why I made this decision and then it was over. So, the ten orders of the sentry, which were to be memorized...

There's nothing quite like having a laundry detail in the middle of the night, standing in a room filled with things that are hung up on lines, waiting for somebody to come through and ask you what the fourth order is of the sentry and then not having anybody come and do that but you had to, that was your post was to guard that room and if somebody came by and asked you, you told them that you had that responsibility and you responded if they asked you a question.

Howe: Describe for me, what is a laundry detail? This is in boot camp so this is...?

Betzold: It was in boot camp, it was things that had gone through the wash that, everything is identified with your number.

Howe: We'll take a quick break

Howe: This is not a typical military exercise, this is a training exercise? Laundry detail?

Betzold: Absolutely. This is [the] harassment of boot camp. They send you to boot camp, it's not supposed to be pleasant, therefore they're gonna make sure it isn't pleasant and they accomplish what they want to accomplish. Recall that boot camp is somewhere, right now I know it's specifically seven weeks and back in my era, probably was eight to 10 weeks and along comes these reservists and they have two week periods, 13 days in order to try to teach us everything that they have during all this other time. So it was condensed, it was very straight forward and they were in your face. So, you get through it. It's just...how bad can this be? It's one of those, like I learned a long time ago. If you have 30 days before something's gonna happen but you don't really wanna keep track of it, make 30 paper clips, put them out there and start taking them off the bottom and pretty quick you'll be to...here's the day I'm supposed to leave the service, well, by golly, it worked that way. That's the thing, in terms of the boot camp, it wasn't gonna last forever and you get through it.

Howe: You do what you need to do.

Betzold: One of the things I do remember is, and I think it's indicative of [the] fellows that were in the Second World War. I said my dad was from Chicago. When I got out of boot camp, I got on the train and I came downtown Chicago and my uncle picked me up. Now this was my dad's sister's husband. He worked for Schwinn Bikes in Chicago and he picked

me up because I had that opportunity as long as I was this close by to be with a grandmother, be with them and then go home.

Howe: And this was while you were in training?

Betzold: This is after the two weeks. They didn't let us off the base then, boot camp was boot camp and that's where you existed for two weeks. So on the way home we didn't go directly home, we had to go to the corner bar, because Uncle Bob had his buddies and we walked in, it was like Cheers. Hey Bob! You know, that type of thing and his buttons were busted because he was taking his nephew to meet his friends and his nephew was going to be an officer in the Navy and that to him just made his day.

Howe: He was full of pride.

Betzold: Very much so. Grandmother didn't think much of it, but... [Laughs]

Howe: Your uncle, what service was he?

Betzold: He was army.

Howe: Okay. Alright.

Betzold: So it was just... the family supported the decisions that I was making, and again, I was making those decisions because of the expectations that were set when you're very young and move forward.

Howe: And you were fulfilling those expectations.

Betzold: Especially being the first grandchild or the first child. That carries a...do you have brothers and sisters?

Howe: My brother and I both went to the Naval Academy...

Betzold: Oh excellent.

Howe: And the Naval Academy sells US NA, US Naval Academy, dad hats so my dad had embroidered next to it x2, times 2. You say about pride and swelling with pride... that was his way of showing it.

Betzold: Had he been in the service?

Howe: He'd served in the army, yeah. What else do you remember from boot camp? You mentioned that some of their training opportunities seemed a little creative?

Betzold: The remembrance is that they had the responsibility to teach you about the Navy, teach you about being respectful of the officers. Being responsible to carry out the duties to the best of your responsibility and that the days were long and that's... there's not a

whole bunch of memories beyond that. I think of that one in the laundry because [of] how ridiculous is it to sit and watch clothes dry? The discipline of that particular thing. Teaching you, you will do what you're told. All kinds of ways to do it but...

Howe: No matter how ridiculous it might seem, okay. So this brings me back to the earlier question about your training, it was Rhode Island was where you did your officer candidate training?

Betzold: That's correct, in Newport, Rhode Island.

Howe: Okay. Newport.

Betzold: That's the Ensign Factory, as we call it.

Howe: And those were two years, that was eight weeks each? So...

Betzold: And those went by, again, you did the physical fitness part, but gone was the harassment of standing there looking at laundry. It was, you're gonna be an officer and here's what it means to be an officer and here are your responsibilities and we're gonna tell you about the Navy, we're gonna teach you about leadership and we're gonna do the best we can at telling you in two eight week sessions all of the things you're gonna need when you go on active duty and have responsibility for people.

So it was a different type of environment. Not as much harassment, if you will. Still there to some extent, but not, it was recognition that you had fulfilled your college degree or working towards and they had done the background and decided that you were sufficiently qualified to be an officer. So this was the training session that led to the active duty. Now, all of my active duty was aboard a ship, the USS Randolph, the carrier. Within that experience were a number of different things that I did. I was initially sent there and went into the gunnery department as a weapons officer with that 30 days of training. Aboard the ship, they had started, or were thinking of starting a rotation with new Ensigns of, I think, about a year-and-a-quarter. You'd go to various departments for three months and then at the end of that time, you'd look back and say, here's the one that I'd like to be in and they try to put you in that. Big waste of time because you just about get three months and understand what's going on and you move on to the next one, move on to the next one. Takes a year-and-a-quarter, year-and-a-half before you get assigned to a permanent place within the command structure of the carrier. I was able to, I guess, get the operations officer to go out and discuss with the executive officer my assignment immediately to the operations department and within the operations department was combat information center; absolutely the heartbeat of the ship because we were responsible for operations. Yes we had airplanes and they had missions, etcetera, but we knew that we were out there and our responsibility, primary responsibility, was the detection, identification of submarines.

Howe: Certainly. So you talked about the training process. Were you able to avoid the hopping around of different departments?

Betzold: Yes, yes I was.

Howe: Okay, and as a result you spent your entire tour on the Randolph as...

Betzold: In the operations department.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Various positions within, including the division officer responsibility, also administrative assistant to the operations officer. So that would again lend an understanding of why we were there and what we were doing. If you worked in the engineering department, god bless 'em, they were down in the bowels of the ship, and I went down there twice because I was cold two times, and I'd get warmed up. I came back up and said I'll never go back down there. So you could see the reason that we were there and what we were trying to accomplish and whether we were accomplishing it or not and how we were working with various NATO forces and bringing all that information together into a tactical picture. We always had a flag aboard the carrier, flag officer.

Howe: And what is a flag officer?

Betzold: An admiral.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Either a rear admiral or... it would always a rear admiral which is the first step towards four stars, full admiral. So we always had the admiral and his staff aboard and we had...they did not have a CIC, they relied on the ship's company combat information center. So, they were down there watching what was going on at the same time.

Howe: They were present in that space?

Betzold: Mhm.

Howe: Wow, okay. We kind of jumped ahead a little bit. That's okay. That draws some perspective for your active experience. You talked about your training in Rhode Island and you mentioned something that I wanted to draw a correlation between your enlisted training and your officer training. You talked about respect. As an enlisted person, you were trained to respect officers.

Betzold: Absolutely. They were God's representative on Earth. Even if it was only one stripe, it was still, you're an officer in the Navy.

Howe: Right, so when you wore that stripe or when you were being trained and had the expectation that you were going to wear that stripe, what did they teach you about that responsibility?

Betzold: That the Navy has a tradition. It's a long line of traditions that you as an individual will be accepted for your leadership if you, in fact, take care of your people, make sure they get fed, make sure they get paid, make sure they get a place to sleep and they'll follow you anywhere. But don't respect your people and you will never fulfill yourself or accomplish what the Navy has intended for you to be, which is a leader of people.

So I harken back and say that my time, my initial, well, all my active duty time was my growing up experience. The Navy put me in positions that you would not expect at age 22. You lead people, you have responsibility for people, you have a job to do, you have people that you have to get them to do this particular thing and all of that was, that goes under leadership, but it also talks with regard to what the Navy's expectations are. So, having experienced that, played a large role in what happened beyond that, in terms of staying in reserves, in terms of the civilian career that I had.

Howe: Certainly. So, you know that's- you're talking about a rather tall order. When did you first set eyes on that goal, when did you first feel like you had a calling to this level of responsibility?

Betzold: Well, I mean I thought about that, but I would say when I raised my hand and went in to begin with. It was always my goal to be an officer in the Navy.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Once I decided on the Navy, then it was always... if it had been the Marine Corps, if it had been the Army, it would've always been with the expectation that I'd be an officer in one of the service corps.

Howe: You knew that early on you wanted that responsibility?

Betzold: Yes, yes.

Howe: Okay. Signing on at 19 years old, how did you feel about that?

Betzold: Didn't even think about it. Just, remember, go to high school, go to college, you know, go in the service. All of these things were being accomplished according to an unspoken timeline. Now, did I understand all of the things that I was getting into at that point? No, not at all. A good for instance, had been aboard, completed two years, had another year to go on active duty and I went up to Washington to see what is referred to as a detailer: that's a person that assigns you to your next positions and I went up and I said, "Look, I will give you another year of my time if you take me off the ship and put me in some type of instructor duty. Be it foster, combat information center, ROTC, wherever it

happens to be that the skills that I've accomplished can be used in a teaching situation to wit." He said, "Well I'm looking at the record, it looks very good, the only thing I can say is, well, give me a couple weeks to work on this, but the needs of the service always dictate these things, but, looks good."

So, went back to Norfolk, and of course, the ship had just, was just going to go in the shipyards and they couldn't send it over to Newport News, which is across the bay, and they had to pick up the whole ship company and move us up to Boston because the Kennedys and their influence, Boston needed work, ergo, disrupt 500 people in order to take care of the economy up in the Boston area. So we're up there and the spy officer and myself decide that this is nonsense we just came back from five months away and this is gonna go on for... they couldn't tell us. We'll move our families up there, so we did. Lock stock and barrel, we took off, we had a duplex had two families living there. Did that over a weekend, went in on Monday morning and the first thing that somebody said is you've got your drop card. A drop card is your next assignment. You're going to Vietnam. I go, come on. You know, we're constantly on each other about "you're going to do this and you're going to do that and you get your drop card." Flew down to the after quarters, down to the- where we had the mail and picked this card out and there it was. *Due to the needs of the service, you have been assigned to beach jumper unit number one, San Diego, California*, report by. I go...what?

Howe: Where we left off, we were talking about getting your drop card and you were on the USS Randolph.

Betzold: On the USS Randolph, and got this drop card and it said, beach jumper unit number one, San Diego. My first question was, "What the hell is a beach jumper unit?" I said, "Look, I respect beaches, I promise I will never jump on them again, but why would I want to do something that I don't even know what it is," so I spent literally all day Monday going to various people aboard ship saying, "What is this? Have you ever heard of it? Why would I want to go do something like this?" And I'll always remember, the commanding officer said, "You just need to go home and have a conversation with your wife and explain to her what the needs of the service are and why it's necessary that you do this," and I said, "Wife, hell! Somebody better explain it to me first!" So it took until Wednesday to find out what a beach jumper unit was. Rivering boats, brown shoe Navy, brown water Navy. One of the things that I did aboard ship was electronic warfare officer. A class five position, but basically everything that has a motor, has an electronic signature. If you have the right equipment, you can pick up that signature and you can tell what the equipment is that is making the noise.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Aboard ship we had a small space dedicated to this, and we were looking for missile sites, and when you're cruising around Cuba there's always somebody lighting off,

something that you can trace and then you have to identify and you build your skill level. So I had this responsibility for a number of months. Somehow that got into the record as having this ability. A beach jumper unit was a small ten shack on the back end of a rivering boat that had the equipment that could identify signals and the assignment was, if someone on shore would let you up, i.e. send a signal out to determine, not determine if they were gonna fire, but determine that you're their target. You had to be fast enough to say, on the back of it, put your gun around and fire in this particular direction.

Howe: Right, they needed you to respond to a potential threat.

Betzold: Right, because they did not know where it was coming from, they just knew it was out there because we're telling them, here's the direction, you know? 3-1-0, start firing. Not the kind of longevity you're looking for in life, in my opinion. So on Friday of that week, another J-G (we were Junior Lieutenants, Junior Grades at that point) came up and said, "Can I have your orders," he said, "We both have basically the same background aboard this ship. Difference being is, I'm single and I hate it, and you're married and rather than going there, you'll stay aboard ship" and I said, "Let's find out." So we go to the operations officer whose last position happened to be detailer in Washington. On Monday, got another drop card that said, cancel your orders. Bob Campbell didn't say that in my other, but Bob Campbell was the other J-G. And he ended up going with the orders. Now, I've never gone to the Vietnam Memorial, because I don't want to know if the name's there or not. According to my wife, it's not there. But we got letters from him saying, I've gone to jump school, survival school, language school and this is a blast and I love it. I never knew what happened to this day, still don't know what happened to him. But obviously, I stayed aboard that wonderful gray ship. I loved every minute of it. [Laughs]

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: So that gets backed to your point that, you know, when you get a set of orders, usually it's sacrosanct, and nobody raises a question.

Howe: Right.

Betzold: And I didn't raise the question, but when somebody else expressed a desire to take those orders, I said okay, sounds like a reasonable alternative to me.

Howe: Well, and it's not very often that those things are interchangeable. So...

Betzold: That's right. You had another junior officer, had the same assignment, he had the OI division after I had had it, etcetera, and you know, electronic warfare officer, he had been in charge of that. Although that seemed to be a key point and even though it was

not a lot of training, you had the supervision responsibility, ergo, you can now transfer those to those little rivereens and go...

Howe: Right, you know enough.

Betzold: And do what you have to do in Vietnam.

Howe: So you stayed aboard the Randolph.

Betzold: Yes.

Howe: Were you ever qualified a surface warfare officer?

Betzold: No, we did not have that designation back then, so it was not a matter of whether I could or could not, it wasn't there. That's something that [a] surface warfare officer came in as recognition of what part of the service that you were a specialist in. Air corps, the pilots had theirs, the navigators had theirs, the... what other things were out there at that time? Any way there was enough...

Howe: Submarines?

Betzold: Submarines, there- that's another one, especially, but nothing for the surface, and that's where it came about.

Howe: Okay, and while you were in active duty, did that designation ever come about, or was it not until after you'd transferred to the reserves.

Betzold: Oh, it was after I transferred to the reserves, and because, at that time, as a reservist, you pretty well had your pick of where you wanted to go on your two weeks of active duty. But there was no emphasis on going somewhere so that you would qualify as a surface warfare officer, and for the last ten years, as we'll get into, I spent in the Seabees and for belonging to that part, the Navy, there was no need to think about being a surface warfare officer.

Howe: Okay, what happens- before we move on, I'd like to just ask, what else do you remember from being onboard the Randolph? Any other particular circumstances you recall?

Betzold: I think first of all, a carrier is a city in itself, so anything and everything that you need is there or accessible. It's run, whether you're aboard a rivering boat, destroyer, carrier, there are responsibilities, and once you get aboard a carrier they become more finite. You get a smaller job for what you're responsible etcetera because you're aboard and part of, you know, five, six thousand people.

Howe: There are enough people to do all the jobs that need getting done.

Betzold: Yes, yes. So times aboard, nothing specific comes to mind right now. I mean it was aboard ship, and you're in the Navy and the ships work well at sea, they're not meant to be tied up, therefore, you know, let's leave port and get on with it.

Howe: Where do you recall being deployed to?

Betzold: Our deployments were- or the time spent was always in the Mediterranean, Caribbean or northern Europe. Deployments were based on one of two criteria, actual, anti-submarine warfare, going out, finding some marines and doing our thing, or goodwill tours. When you went to the Mediterranean it was anti-submarine warfare, one summer we went on a northern European cruise that so many ports of call were scheduled that it was difficult to get anything done except get ready to go ashore again. It was a great tour, I mean, a great opportunity to see a whole bunch of countries that I never even thought that I'd get over to see and again, you were treated as, you know, a large, defense contractor in Germany. We pulled into Hamburg and the next day we were all invited, all the ships company, officers' compliment, invited over for lunch.

Howe: Really?

Betzold: Mhm. So those types of things occurred on the goodwill tours.

Howe: Okay, the purpose of a goodwill tour...?

Betzold: Show the flag, show a carrier.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Nothing more impressive than to look in the harbor and see this aircraft carrier, because remember our allies did not have, at that point in time, except the British, carriers. So this was- you always had a great deal of respect for the Navy when we pull in with one of our major ships and had the opportunity for people to come aboard and do a tour of the ship.

Howe: Did you personally conduct some of those tours?

Betzold: Sure, everybody's involved and you had duty every third day or something like that. The other two days you'd go ashore if you wanted to but basically that third day, if there were tours to be conducted or whatever it happened to be, you'd be assigned those duties.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: And we used to do- talking about tours-when we were state side and going out for just a few days for whatever reason, they would put civilians aboard. Be, Naval Reserve Association, Naval War College, Naval Historical Society. People would be designated and they would come aboard and as civilians, and they would get carte blanche, you

know, they could go wherever they wanted whenever they wanted and when they came through common information center, if I happened to be the watch officer there or whatever it may be, you'd take them through that tour and answer all the questions that they had.

Howe: Was- I mean, that's kind of an intrusion to your normal schedule.

Betzold: True.

Howe: How did you, your shipmates...?

Betzold: Well, for the most part, it was just, we were out to sea to test the system, so there wasn't any anti-submarine activity going on at that point in time, so it was just an explanation of, here's a grade-r repeater and that shows them the contact and what happens with that contact, how do you get that information from that up to the captain up to the admiral, whatever it may be, how does CIC work and what are the functions and...

Howe: Did you ever feel encumbered by that process?

Betzold: The only time I felt encumbered probably in my whole time in the Navy was, they sent me to anti-submarine air controller school, and after a month I came and had a certification as an air controller. Air controllers obviously take the planes off, bring the planes aboard and keep track of the planes that are out there, see that everybody's doing their duty or their exercise, whatever they're responsible for, keep in contact.

So, one night I, after dinner, I went up and I said to one of the enlisted folks, do you mind if I sit on the scope and I'll take this next flight and have responsibility for it and you can go do whatever you wanna do. Well, you know, they get proficiency pay so he's gonna get paid if somebody else is sitting their doing his time at the scope, whatever it may be. He said, sure. So he takes the flight, when you have, aboard the plane, you have combat, when the planes either take off or land, they're under control of another part of the ship, the airdale part. Once they get up in the air, they switch over to combat information center.

So he took and took the planes coming off and he's bringing 'em back aboard and then I sat down and I started, one of the things you should do is, radio communication says, Sierra November 1, just taking off so you put a one out there on your scope and you keep track of the numbers of all the planes that are going off. Now it comes time to check in and see where everybody is, so I'm going through this whole list and I get down to number 10 and number 10 is not answering and you go, okay, let's try another frequency, let's try another frequency. Let's, we got an early warning aircraft out there. Let's go out to that aircraft and tell him because he's now 30, 50 miles away from the ship and his line of communication is much further out 100, 150 miles. He goes and

starts trying to get ahold of this aircraft. He can't get ahold of it. At that point in time, I turn around to the watch officer because, remember, I'm just sitting on the scope, I'm just proving that I can do this air control stuff again. Turned around to the CIC officer, I said, we cannot find this airplane. In fact, we went up to the captain went up to the admiral. They called off the exercise that we were being part of and went into the search and rescue evolution. About half an hour later, and of course at that point in time, the admiral is involved and the admiral's aide is involved and da da da, you know, stuff flows downhill and here's the guy on the scope saying, whoa, wait, hey, I just agreed to do this because I have these qualifications that I like to keep kind of up to date.

Howe: Meanwhile the person whose job it is...

Betzold: And immediately- I hate- he's gone, you know, he's not, he knows that this is no good and he doesn't want any part of it and his answer would be, *"Well the officer said he wanted to do that so who am I, fourth third class, gonna tell an officer he can't sit on the scope?"* "You know, he's been to school. So, told the watch officer, and about a half an hour later, after all this stuff, we're in search and rescue, across the bottom of the scope comes this blip. Blip, blip, blip, blip, blip, blip. Called up, there's number 10. How ya doin'? Everything okay? Ready to come aboard. He came aboard and I don't think his wheels did any more than touch, stop, and he was in the admiral's quarters.

Howe: I would assume, yeah.

Betzold: Because, what they did. Turned off their radio and went on a joy ride for an hour and a half. So, that was the last time I went air controlling. I decided, these radar men get proficient pay, therefore be proficient, and I'm gonna stay out of this because I wasn't getting any proficiency pay and I screwed it up somehow. Didn't, but you were the one sitting on the scope, ergo...

Howe: Yeah...when somebody else decides to go take a joy ride.

Betzold: When somebody else goes and decides to do something like that...another one of those sea stories.

Betzold: Now that's interesting.

Howe: This?

Betzold: Yes. That was like, don't even think about it, if you're an officer, when I was in.

Howe: I didn't get this when I was an officer. I got...that one when I was an officer, but...

Betzold: Signifying?

Howe: Uh...

Betzold: If you tell me you gotta kill me, I know.

Howe: It was an acronym. Needless to say, the decision process was. I don't think I'll be going back there again. I don't have any regrets, although, I still do wanna go back, so... It's not as bad as I thought it was.

Betzold: The closest I ever came was, the last time, coming back from the Med, and we stopped some place and went into a bar later that evening and a number of fellows from the division were there and they were pooling their money to see if they could talk me into getting a tattoo.

Howe: Did they have one in mind?

Betzold: They never went that far. I told them that there was not enough money that they could pool together to get me to put a tattoo on.

Howe: So they were going to pay you?

Betzold: Oh they were going to pay to have it done, yeah, if I agreed to it they were all set to find a tattoo artist and put something on my body. I said no, I don't think we're going that route.

Howe: Fair enough.

Betzold: And that was just one of those deals between the caste system. Officer, don't do that, being here with this particular group and they want something done and just didn't feel right so [I] didn't do it.

Howe: Did...were there ever situations where you wanted to transgress?

Betzold: No.

Howe: Because of camaraderie?

Betzold: No, not at all.

Howe: Did you ever feel a strong kinship that you felt maybe that caste system got in the way?

Betzold: Yes. I'll give you a "for instance". [A] Warrant Officer is between an officer and the enlisted Senior Chiefs. And they are highly regarded technicians within a very- almost like a system aboard ship and they knew everything about that system, etcetera, and that's why they are a Warrant Officer with a specific designation. In CIC, there was something going on and I remember reaching out and touching a first class Petty Officer, just, you know, a joke, a pat, whatever it may have been. This warrant made it his

business to take me aside and say, that's verboten. You cannot touch an enlisted person because they cannot touch you, and I said, yes sir. Always stuck with me.

Howe: Wow! Even a touch?

Betzold: Even a touch.

Howe: And I'm assuming...

Betzold: More so a touch because they- it's the unwritten rules that you're not going to touch an officer.

Howe: I'm assuming this was a friendly, congratulatory...

Betzold: It was some; yeah it was [to] tell a story in CIC or whatever it may have been. It wasn't, you know, walking up and just taking a slap on the shoulder or something. It was in relationship to a story told, whatever it may have been. I have no idea at this particular point but I know that- as a way to get a point across it was made to be. That certainly supported this whole idea of divisional classes within the Navy.

Howe: Right, so a relationship between an officer and an enlisted is...

Betzold: It's not promoted. It was tolerated if there was a particular reason. Two or three, you're off by yourself and carrying out a particular job, mission, and etcetera for a period of time, some of those barriers break down. But, when you're in a division of 120 people in a space aboard ship, it's not because, the enlisted have their advancement ladder, up through E-9 and then it goes into the officer ranks. So, I can take it that that's not quite what was learned in the Naval Academy?

Howe: Actually, that was what was learned in the Naval Academy. We definitely had that same system. I illustrated it for the topic of conversation for anyone coming back and doing research or listening to this experience. Your perspective on that is... I think this is the first time I've heard somebody illustrate that.

Betzold: I have a hand sketch on my wall at home and it's of the CIC area, enlisted around the drafting table and myself off to the side, smoking my pipe, which we're allowed to do at that point in time and it's just a great- third class Petty Officer had skills, and he went about creating this and it's just stuck with me all these years. Finally talked my wife into allowing me to put it up on the wall and I think it's a great shot because it shows that there was camaraderie there, a respect for- it was light hearted. Making some-laughing at ourselves for stuff that we do. So it's- you grow close to, but there's always that respect for position.

Howe: I'm trying to figure out how to frame this. The word professionalism.

Betzold: I've told you a couple of stories and one I'll harken back to as a by-product of this oral history. If you want somebody to do something, in my opinion, and in a leadership position, you have to be willing to do that. Thereby taking away the factor of, well why does he ask me to do it if he hasn't done it? And I've always accepted that particular position. Can I, in Combat Information Center, air control, kinda work the maneuvering board, work the table, or the displays, and of course all of that stuff is different today. It's all electronics now. I mean- they, you know, do a little scroll up, latch on to something and the electronics take over at that point. We at least had to go back and plot it a couple of different positions in order to keep track of it, but...

Howe: We still plot it.

Betzold: There was no job within CIC that I couldn't do after I'd been there six months. So I'm not asking them to do something that I either don't know about and feel comfortable with or have done.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: And [it's the] same way with oral histories. When I get into and ask other people to do it, I'm gonna be able to say, look, the process is...and here's what will occur and it's worth your time because whatever you did is of historical relevance.

Howe: I would agree. And that's the whole purpose behind doing this, and your point illustrates the level of respect that you accord the job. So, okay. Anything else from the aircraft carrier that you recall?

Betzold: No, I think that's fine. We've covered being aboard ship and staying aboard ship and completing that, did a lot of different things within the operations department, but that's expected if you're- if you are put into that position and expect to stay there for your tour. Need to learn that job inside and out.

Howe: Within operations, is it only combat information? Or are there other, you mentioned other billets within operations.

Betzold: Yes, I'm trying to think what they were. Not going to remember them right now, but there were other officers that reported to the operations officer. I think it was like not SONAR but SOSUS, that type of thing. That was, couldn't talk about it back then, but, you know, nowadays, you can talk about it because it's been in the magazines etcetera and I don't recall, there were other people reporting to that individual.

Howe: Okay, but you never did a tour of rotation in any of those jobs.

Betzold: No.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Strictly CIC.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Well, CIC, electronic warfare officer, anti-submarine, you know, air controller. All those particular things that they sent me to school for and that was an excellent opportunity that I had to go six months to school down in Brunswick, Georgia. Glynco Naval Air Station and appreciated the time because our first son was born in Brunswick, Georgia.

Howe: When were you married?

Betzold: I was married in 1964.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Thirteen years later, I was married again, well, I guess 15 years later. After 13 years we separated, after a couple of years, finalized the divorce and I was remarried to the woman that-we're still married and that's got 35 years going for it now.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: I keep telling her, I think this might be for real.

Howe: We'll see.

Betzold: We'll see.

Howe: Okay and you said that you were married your first time in '64 and your son is from that marriage?

Betzold: Three sons, three boys. And my current wife had a son and a daughter, so I've got my daughter, finally.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: So now I have a daughter and four boys, and they're the ones that are spread across the countryside and have 10 grandchildren between them.

Howe: So in '64 you were...just then on board the Randolph.

Betzold: Just had received the orders. Was graduated December 18th or whatever it may be concurrent with accepting commission. Being honorably discharged and accepting the commission.

Howe: Okay. Where'd you guys go after that?

Betzold: We got that, made a request to get out two months early on the active duty so that I could attend graduate school at the University of Denver in pursuit of a Master's in

Business Administration degree. And I guess, got out on the- December 27th and about January 6th, started school in Denver and moved into the student housing.

Howe: That's a quick turnaround.

Betzold: Very quick. All of a sudden *train noises* right on down the line. The reason we did it that way was they were on the quarterly system and I was coming in at a place in time that I could complete my required courses in a one year calendar period. January 1st - December 31st. So, because of the undergraduate business degree, experience in the Navy, allowed me to enter the MBA program with specific classes that had to be taken in a period, in a short period of time, but graduating again in December of that year and going to work for the Prudential Insurance Company as a group representative at the end of that year. So, it was a whirlwind that year. Extremely busy. Had one child at that point in time, second child on the way.

Howe: How old was your first son at that point?

Betzold: At that point, three, just about three, two-and-a-half, two, two-and-a-half, yeah and the second child wasn't born until we were done with graduate school and up in Minneapolis working for the Prudential.

Howe: When you transitioned and you came off of active duty, did you immediately transition to the reserve?

Betzold: Yes.

Howe: Okay. So getting you, you knew this was something you were going to continue?

Betzold: Mhm. I think it was an easier decision because I had been in the reservist environment before as enlisted. But, still wanted that opportunity to stay in contact with the military because, as I mentioned, that's where I grew up and liked the environment. What I didn't really realize was how entrenched after three years you are in a way of doing things. That happened to be the Navy way, right way, wrong way, Navy way, that's it. It's black, it's white, it's not gray. If you're gonna survive in the military, you best accept the fact that if it's in a book, it's gospel. If it's not in a book, while it might be nice to talk about it, don't waste your time because eventually it's gonna get done this way. Going to graduate school, I started in January, completed the first quarter, which is, I use the analogy, when I came out, the mind was the size of a pea, it had been shrunk and I went to this environment where they said, think! And I go, what? It's gotta be...no, we want you to think. We want you to assimilate all of these things that we're going to teach you. I was absolutely convinced that I had built one of the classes my first quarter and it happened to be a mandatory. So if I had done that, there was an opportunity to put it into the schedule for the summer sessions but I had to know right now because we were already planning that. So...

Howe: Built? Failed?

Betzold: Failed.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: And had to call a teacher. Well, this was like being an enlisted guy and calling an officer and called him up, got ahold of him and said now so and so in your class and oh yeah I remember that. He said, you're the one in the Navy, right? I said yeah that's me. I said I gotta know this etcetera. He says, you did okay. Well. I heard okay and I thought, don't push this thing. Accept a D or whatever it may be as okay, as long as you didn't fail it, I don't have to retake it. Now comes the grades. I had four classes, all A's. So I came to the conclusion that when you are accepted for a master's program and no doubt a doctorate program, you gotta go out of your way to screw up and not get a good grade because they had a lot invested in you in terms of going to their school and doing it their way and getting their degree and going out into business and representing their organization. Therefore they're not gonna allow a bunch of slugs into the program and take away from their image. The University of Denver was one of the touted universities at that particular point. It's kinda wavered over the years, but they were pretty well renowned after you get rid of Harvard and Wharton and Stanford then they're right in the mix for the top 10.

Howe: Okay. And that's particularly why you chose that institution?

Betzold: Nope, nope. Chose that institution because the supply officer who we shared the duplex with when we were up in Boston was from Denver and he said, "You know, apply to Denver, it's a great town. You ever been there?" No...He said, "You'll really enjoy it." We drove from Norfolk, we stopped in Chicago, saw the grandparents, drove to Denver, stayed with them for the better part of a week. Moved into housing and we were off and running for the year.

Howe: The supply officer was...?

Betzold: He lived in Denver and he moved back to Denver after he got out of the service. He got out a few months before I did. So they were up and operational by the time we got there.

Howe: And have you maintained contact with him?

Betzold: Nope, sorry I haven't. You know, just, kick myself for not doing that and there's...

Howe: Shame on you.

Betzold: I know, and there's too many Avalas in the phone book in Denver to go on that particular pursuit in this point in time and none with their names specifically, so it'd be

kind of, you know, throw the dart and see what happens. Keep making phone calls and follow the trail. So I haven't done that at this point and that's a regret I have.

Howe: You say that year's a whirlwind for you and in school they ask you to think.

Betzold: Oh yeah, that was an awakening. Believe me.

Howe: How else was this a culture shock, this experience?

Betzold: We knew that we would have one year of studies and be awarded degrees, so we had to find a job in there at some point in time so that when you get done with, you're ready to go. That wife was a registered nurse so [she] got a job in an emergency room. I had my studies. I was involved with the reserve program; I did a program with an insurance company on hiring graduates, graduate degree students. And finally, that professor that I had to call and ask about my grade, he made me his student assistant for the next three quarters, so I had that job and all of those things coming together; we were living pretty well in subsidized housing. All of these various incomes coming in. When we went out and we got a job with the Prudential, I actually started for five figures, \$10,000. Thought I just had the world on a downhill pull, could not imagine. Because at that point in time, we talked about staying in Denver, and in Denver there was Samsonite and I can't think of the other one. They were hiring graduate students, \$8,200.

Howe: What year was this?

Betzold: Late '67.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Yeah, late '67. So, when I heard \$10,000 vs. \$8,200 and going back to the twin city, which is back to the home state, that's where we went. And we accepted the position of a group representative, selling group insurance. Health, life and life programs and began in Minneapolis. Began as a field sales representative. Which was great, I'm a salesperson. Probably hadn't noticed that yet, but...

Howe: You have a certain organization, a certain aura about you. I wouldn't say sales.

Betzold: Interesting.

Howe: You organize and present yourself well.

Betzold: Thank you.

Howe: Graduate school...going into the business world and you're still serving in the reserves so, during this period of time, are you still drilling regularly?

Betzold: Absolutely, at that point.

Howe: What's that experience like?

Betzold: In ways similar to what it was with, when I came in as enlisted. One weekend a month and two weeks of active duty for training and depending on what type of reserve unit that you were attached to, if it was a shipboard unit, like it was in Indianapolis when I was there, you went to a ship for your active duty. If it was not, you could pretty well pick the school that you wanted to go for two weeks and that would be reserve time. So, went down to Key West, San Francisco, Treasure Island, wonderful place to have duty.

Howe: What'd you do there?

Betzold: Damage control school. And there's another sea story. I'm now a group representative and I have a book of business and I go for my two weeks and part of damage control is fire-fighting, and so they spend this time telling us 'bout the hatch and how you have to take the hatch, the dogs off the hatch in order that it won't blow back on you and how you use two hoses, one to beat the fire back and the second to provide an umbrella of water over the top so you don't get the flashback. So I'm on the lead of the hose, to beat the fire back, so we get the hatch open and it's an oil fire, there's just black smoke all over the place. And we go in there and we start beating it back and it worked, I mean, just like the chief said. This is the way to do it. This is the way you handle it and they cut off the water to the hose that was providing the umbrella and like that. I'm engulfed, all the way around, and so is the team behind me because you don't have that protection. So, you back up, you start beating down the fire again and they turned the water back on. They've proved their point and I'm sitting there on the end of the hose thinking, what would my clients think about my ability to manage if they saw me doing this? Good lesson. Again, not quite as stark as watching laundry dry but a good experience.

Howe: Did you ever feel like they were putting you in danger?

Betzold: No, because it happens too fast. There's a good example of training instinct, what you've learned and applying it. Because something occurred and you reacted to it. As it was in this case, appropriately, because, the way they trained us, we were able to overcome the obstacles that are not that unrealistic, to think that that could occur. So, thank goodness, it was a training exercise and they proved their point. You've been through the...nerve gas...no not nerve gas, what'd they put us through?

Howe: We had tear gas.

Betzold: Tear gas. That's it. You've been through that and that's another case where, you know, they tell you. Go in there, you're gonna have to take your mask off and take a deep breath and don't run, push, shove, climb over the other person, orderly, get out and nobody will have a problem. So of course, the jerk in the middle has to start pushing his way through and disrupts the whole flow of things and some people end up getting

pretty sick because they ingest this stuff, unfortunately. So, that's where the instinct, again, they teach you how to do it and then you gotta rely upon your other, your fellow sailors to do what they told us to do so that we all get out and don't have a problem.

Howe: And come out safely.

Betzold: And come out safely. Yes.

Howe: Okay, Treasure Island. Where else have you trained and...

Betzold: A destroyer out of Seattle, I believe. A destroyer tenders, when I got into the Indianapolis, I was in as a reservist I had gathering of sailors who, if ordered to active duty, would have gone as a unit to a particular ship. These are destroyer tenders. So, had quite a mish-mash of people that were assigned because destroyer tenders are technical people and they're [there] to repair or build whatever needs to be done for all kinds of ships and/or submarines that need help. And of course, their forward deployed, so that if you are on a tour, you're gonna be somewhere for nine months tied up to a pier in Japan or wherever it may be but that becomes your- that tender's your responsibility. So I had that probably aboard three or four different destroyer tenders or tenders during that period of time and then once I started with the Seabees it was all either battalion oriented, regimental or at the national level deployments. But that's when it got really busy within the reserves because the last three years while I was in the reserves I was actually being paid about 99-100 days per year for reserve time.

Howe: That's a good third of the year.

Betzold: Yep, and then holding down a full-time job. So...a little hectic

Howe: It sounds like it. I guess this is a good segue. It sounds like the Seabees was your next most memorable moment?

Betzold: Absolutely.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Always cherish the time aboard ship and the aircraft carrier and operations and just a growing up period of time. Seabees was an altogether different experience because I am not mechanically oriented; I am not [of] an engineering background. I am someone who can take the instructions and read them backwards and forwards and digest them and understand what you can do, when you can do it and what you can't do and why you can't do it. And so from an administrative point of view, the civil engineering corps couldn't handle a pencil with an eraser, but they could build things, so we married. I took care of the admin for them and they took care of all the other things that go with being civil engineering corps officers and I certainly learned a tremendous amount. Any other service has different designations as far as officers. Different assignments than

you would have if you were aboard a ship. They start out and mirror the Marine Corps and the army as far as platoon squads, platoons.

Howe: You're talking about the Seabees now?

Betzold: I'm talking about Seabees now.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Up to battalion level, detachment level, then the battalion level, regimental level and then into the national program at the brigade level. There were 18,000 people, Seabees, within the Navy when I was at the brigade level. So, brigade is looking at the overall context of the program and planning four or five years out. Regiment's planning three years out, battalion's trying to figure out where the bathroom is to get through the next year and detachment, they're just a bunch of good old guys that get together once a month and drive their road raider for a living. Do that five days out, come under a Seabee on the sixth and seventh day, have a couple of beers on Saturday night with the guys and drive a road raider again. They're just a tremendous bunch of individuals

Howe: Real quick what is a road raider?

Betzold: Road grader, for construction, making a road...

Howe: Grading...grading road. Okay.

Betzold: Grading...road grader, grading. Yeah. Or might bulldoze for another one. I mean, can you picture me on a bulldozer after they taught me how to run it? With my hard hat on driving this thing. Just amazing.

Howe: Do you have pictures?

Betzold: Oh yeah.

Howe: Where were you when you picked up orders to...?

Betzold: Seabees?

Howe: Seabees—construction battalion.

Betzold: The job had transferred me from Indianapolis to Boston and I moved from management, field management into an account executive position where I was given a book of business of only five or six accounts, but they were major accounts, 25, 50 thousand people, that type of thing.

Howe: This was still with Prudential?

Betzold: This was with Prudential, right. When I got to Boston, I went to the reserve center and they said, tough luck, we're downsizing and they were downsizing across the nation, the Navy reserve was downsizing. Similar to what they're going through right now. And we expect that you will take a position in the voluntary training unit. Ergo, you will drill once a month and you won't get paid for it, but you show up and be part of the Navy until such time as a position opens up and you can be given consideration for that pay job. Well, I'm now looking at 12, 13 years in and not really willing to give the whole thing up so I said okay. So, I started drilling that day and about four months into this, I got a call from a detailer who said, "Would you be interested in Seabee detachment or a Seabee organization, a detachment officer in charge, on pay, in Lowell, Massachusetts?" I said, "Excuse me? On pay, what do you want me to do?" Therein began the association as a detachment officer in charge of about 50 Seabees at this location in Lowell, Massachusetts. They're talking about battalions and regiments and brigades and all of these type of things that go with Marine Corps and army type organizations and I was talking about well the ship goes here and the ship goes there. You know this type of thing and flotillas and you know, whatever else is part of the Navy descriptive nouns.

Howe: So there's a language and a cultural barrier that you're crossing by going into the construction battalion rating.

Betzold: Absolutely.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Absolutely. So it had to be maybe the second meeting and one of the postal clerks, part of the Seabees, okay. A battalion is about 720 people. So there's all kinds of-you have all of the ratings, see. Machinist, excuse me, mechanics, the plumbers, the electricians, the carpenters and they make up a large part of that 700 people, but then you have administrative people also to take care of if the whole thing was called up and as a unit you went some place. You would need corpsmen and dental techs and post office clerks and personnel men and yeomen. So that was the admin part. That's what I took care of. So he comes up and says the town wants to have a track of bland turned into soccer fields, can we do it? I go, I don't know...I just started this thing two months ago, put together, let's scope it out, and put it together. Tell the battalion what we want and see what happens.

Howe: This is the town that you're assigned to as detachment officer...?

Betzold: Assigned to as detachment officer in charge.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: So we do this and send it up to Brunswick, Maine because that's where the battalion's located. Well, I didn't realize it, there's a table of allowance, you've heard that term, for

a ship, for a battalion, it's the equipment and everything they need in order to sustain themselves. I was asking for about three quarters of all the equipment that they had in the battalion to be sent down under my control as a detachment officer in charge slash ship driver to build this park. The commanding officer up there said send it down, and apparently the staff officers went nuts because what are we gonna do, what are we- we got an inspection coming up. How are we gonna handle this? You can't send that to this guy, he has no idea what's going on. But he said no, he said they got a project to do and I believe in this guy and send him the stuff.

So we did a project, [a] quarter million dollar project across the city \$1,700 for diesel fuel and we made two soccer fields, softball or softball/baseball diamond, took a hillside, took the trees that were cut down, made them into benches, put them into the hillside and created this park for the city. So that was our project. So then I take pictures of all this stuff and I go up and I'll have a meeting up at the battalion level. They call all of the detachment officers in charge in and explain to us what you've accomplished. Well, most of these guys are the senior enlisted and they do a great job with a hammer but don't ask me to speak because I don't spend a lot of time doing that, and John comes in with the slide show standing up there and this and that and we did it and before I left that weekend they asked me to be the administrative officer for the battalion.

Well long and short, then I transferred again and I got back to the Great Lakes, no billets available. So I said, okay, tell you what, I'll go to volunteer training because now I know how this game is played. I'll go to the VTU but I wanna be taken and put temporary duty over with the Seabee battalion that's at Great Lakes. They said, fine, so I went over and there was already an admin officer over there who didn't know right from left and we start working and we had a great relationship, and I think it was about 12, 13 months it took and the admin slot opened up and they slotted me into that and from there I spent maybe another year at the battalion level and then I went to regiment which was at...in Great Lakes again and about three years at regiment and then up to the national level, the brigade, where I was the inspector general. So...

Howe: Wow.

Betzold: Did well within that side of the organization.

Howe: Sounds like it.

Betzold: And after all of those particular positions and knowledge, the black shoe Navy decided when I came up for a promotion for the fourth stripe that because I was a line officer, I should've been playing in their sandbox and in the sandbox of the...

Howe: Seabees.

Betzold: Seabees.

Howe: Right.

Betzold: Three Seabees admirals wrote specific letters to the promotion board which was not sufficient to get the promotion. Telling the board that you promote this guy, put a fourth stripe on him and we'll take one of our billets and get him paid because he is of value to us and he's a staff officer at this point in time with all of this additional knowledge which 98 percent of the rest of the Navy has no idea of -except for the Seabees- and has the ability and has already demonstrated the ability to work with the Marine Corps on joint operations. [I] didn't buy into that therefore I remained and retired as a commander. And again, I respect the Navy, that was the decision, irked me, but life goes on.

Howe: That's understood. So my limited experience... I have encountered, you called the black shoe Navy. So it's largely a float.

Betzold: Ship drivers.

Howe: Right, ship drivers, being the center of that, surface warfare being the center of that service and you said early on that you did not have a warfare designator.

Betzold: Correct.

Howe: Do you- at what point in your career do you think this became important to the rest of the Navy and were you given the opportunity to specialize within the Seabees?

Betzold: Well, last point first. Each and every position within the Seabees was slated to take a position that a waiver had to be granted because it was not a CEC officer. However, admin officers could be line officers. So depending on where you are in the US and how many CEC officers are available, they would fill all of these positions, or if not available, a line officer would fill it. They were so short of people in the Northeast when I was out there that we went to active duty at one time and there was five companies that were lined up. Four ship drivers were in charge of those companies because they were just so short of CEC officers.

So it was great for the line officers who couldn't find a paid billet, but at the same point in time it became quite evident that if I chose to stay on the Seabee side, I was not gonna get promoted. So it wasn't a big surprise when it didn't happen but there was an emphasis within the Navy at that point of joint service and being able to operate on other staffs other than just the Navy staffs and again, back to the point, I don't think 98 percent, little high, 90 percent of the Navy never had the opportunity to do joint staff work, whereas here's this oddball out there that's all of a sudden got this piece of experience, how can we use that? If I had been really playing heads up- there were units, what the hell are they called? Inshore, something or other units. They operated

much the same as the Seabees, except they took care of mine warfare and obstacles in the beach and things like that and submarine protection coming into the waters.

Howe: A lot more inland, okay.

Betzold: And I would have taken the Seabee experience and put it to work, but by then I was at regimental level and probably the main reason that I stuck with it was there was never an assignment within the Seabees that was not organized along the lines of using people and doing projects. Regardless of where I was located, if a community, if another military facility needed something built, Seabees were there to take care of it and I said to myself, I am with an organization that utilizes their people, accomplishes things and does so in a manner that reflects very positively on the community.

That's where I wanna spend my reserve time. I do not want to go back to a reserve center in a classroom, listening to somebody talk to me about the military justice. I'd rather I'd proved that in Lowell, Massachusetts. When I got there, the Seabees, everything in the world that went wrong with that reserve center was the responsibility of some Seabee screwing up. So I said, okay, I'll figure this out and I started taking the people and I mustered them on Saturday morning and I put them on a project outside the reserve center. Two months later, the Seabees were the only ones in the world who could do anything right in that reserve center. Because now, all of a sudden, they weren't around to screw up or be blamed for screwing up and they were out there accomplishing, and the reserve center was getting the feedback about how great their troops were, etcetera. So it was a positive win-win situation and it was just, work with them and let these guys go out and do what they know how to do because it's their line of work.

Quick story: there was a- we get on an active duty, this is up at Brunswick, Maine and we get up there and we need to put up a Quonset hut. And I'm watching how these guys are organized because that's my first active duty with them and all of a sudden this one guy pops up and he's saying well, this is the way we're gonna do this and this is the way we're gonna do that and he was a second class and he got senior chiefs and master chiefs and chiefs and firsts and they're all sitting around listening to this guy and it's like he says okay let's go, get to work. I got a senior chief and I said, what? How can a second class be directing this whole thing and he's in charge of this project? He says, he owns the second largest construction company in New Hampshire and believe me he knows how to do this stuff. [Laughs]

And that's the essence of what the Seabees can get done. A reserve Seabee unit is far superior to an active duty Seabee battalion because they're in the trades, they've had the experience, they come together and they know how to work together and with the active duty people, they're training these kids how to do this stuff. So they never hit it, by the time they're proficient, they're someplace else. So once I got associated with

them, that was the end of it. It was just an instant respect and [I] still maintain contacts with the CEC officers and we take the wives and go away for a weekend, that type of thing. Haven't done it for a few years now but we were doing that every other year.

Howe: Nice. Do you feel-it sounds to me like the active duty Navy, black shoe Navy we talked about, was a lot more restrictive in how people worked together and it sounds like this wasn't so much the case working with the Seabees?

Betzold: Correct, because the Seabees were responsible also for their own defense so we, you know, got our training for rifles and pistols and learned how to do mortars and, not just shotguns but one other kind of weapon. I can't think of it right now, but the Marines would go in and the Seabees were right behind them and they're building this stuff out. But marines are doing their thing and at the same point in time, they can get into a position where the Seabees are responsible for their own wellbeing, therefore they carry the- in essence, the same skill level needed as a marine. So, that was a whole different thing to get used to also. Let's go down to Camp Blanding in Florida and see rattlesnakes running around the ground that we're supposed to sleep on that night. I'm going, you're nuts, come on. No, we're going on two nights, two nights out, I'm sorry, I gotta get this report done, you guys go ahead.

Howe: Nice, nice. Do you ever recall a situation working in the Seabees where you kinda stop yourself and look around and think, this would never happen where I came from, where I grew up in the Navy, culturally, socially?

Betzold: I would say no, because I had no idea what the SEABEES were to start with, so it wasn't until I got immersed with them that I saw the things that I consider that I knew that the black shoe Navy would never do. And I saw these people doing it and I saw the results and I said that's where I wanna spend my time, if I am going to be a reservist devoting a weekend, a month, and at least two weeks active duty, I wanna be busy, I wanna do something, I wanna be productive.

Howe: Other than working on some of those projects, what were some of the scenarios, what were some of your experiences that you never would've dreamed that would've happened in the black shoe Navy?

Betzold: Having the responsibility that was given out in terms of running an organization. In the black shoe Navy, you had a gathering of shipboard based reserve unit or a...whatever the reserve unit may be a part of. You would have thirty people, maybe. Not unusual to have, well, as the admin officer, sit there and talk in terms of what's good for the 700 people. What's at the regimental level, now conducting inspections. What are your responsibilities, how do you handle your responsibilities and doing the inspection and being able to say to the regimental commanding officer. This unit is not- we can't pass this unit. They have to go back and do these things, now I'm talking in the strictly administrative area but it was just that responsibility and he would then turn around

and say, you failed it and here's what you have to do and you're gonna be working with him. So then you go up to the brigade level and now you're inspecting regiments, as well as battalions, as well as setting the whole course of the inspection process. Basically redrafting every inspection foreman that they had within the Seabee program and having that go out and say- the admiral saying, that's my inspection program.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: So, just a lot of disrespect for how they operate. So it was worth not making the fourth stripe, because I had 10 solid years or eight solid years of working with the Seabees, but at the same point in time, really not understanding what the wherefores and the why as of... so, I don't expect anybody is gonna come back and put a fourth stripe on etcetera, and that's fine, because the benefits of being a reservist with 20 plus years of service when you hit that magic retirement age is unbelievable in terms of a monthly pension, and most important is healthcare. And you just- there is no way that Mr. Obama and his program come anywhere close to what has been promised to the armed forces, people who have retired and have access to an excellent, excellent program. So, it has proven very beneficial in my life and myself.

Howe: When did you get out of the reserves?

Betzold: They threw me...Oh no... I was retired in '87, I believe it was, and I got down to the point where I had been passed over twice. I was no longer eligible to continue service. So a risk program takes place at that particular point and you're on the outside looking in. I rephrase it and say, I knew too much about the system and it was time for me to move on. Being the inspector general, you learn a few things about what you can and what you can't do and we had responsibility for those things so. It was time because, you know, I'm tired after three years of doing that and there was still- there would have always been if I had gotten that fourth stripe, I would've ended up with another probably six years on reserve duty and I would've remained with the Seabees because they would've found a spot for a line officer at that point that had come up through the ranks.

Howe: Certainly.

Betzold: And by the way, I think, as best I can tell, I've never been questioned on this, I'm the only line officer to ever do that. Go over and play in somebody else's sandbox and go from the basic detachment officer in charge level up to the brigade level.

Howe: It really sounds to me like you've, in the reserves, kind of gone without a detailer and were able to carve your own career path.

Betzold: It does seem that way, and that's a very good way to put it because once I got started, and understood how to go through the waiver process etcetera, and then again the

overriding thing is being with units that do something and that was paramount to be in that situation. If I'm gonna spend the rest of this time, I'm not gonna sit in voluntary training units and do nothing except read the Sunday paper and go home.

Howe: Sure.

Betzold: That doesn't pique my interest at all.

Howe: Okay, and in '87...

Betzold: '87, they said, you are now retired and really have not- there's- you're in a gray zone at that point because you're not old enough to start getting paid, gotta be age 60 and therefore you're not eligible for medical benefits and or base privileges or any of those type of things. But once you hit the magic 60, then you can pick up a monthly payment and you get healthcare from that point on. Plus, going to the base and all of the facilities that are there including commissary you have access to, whether you use them or not is a personal decision.

Howe: So at this point, you had about 15 years before that was reality, yeah?

Betzold: Yeah.

Howe: Okay. And were you still working with Prudential?

Betzold: At some point after I came back to Chicago and was at the regimental level, I was still with Prudential. And I moved to a number of- it's one of those deals that once you make the first move, it's hard to do because you're leaving the nest and then you've made one move so the next time you give it a consideration it's a little easier. So I probably racked up another five or six companies that I worked for after the Prudential until I formed my own company and still have that kind of, because I haven't retired yet, so I'm still doing some consulting work in the group marketplace. But basically, the last full time employer I had was for a firm that handled just the prescription drug benefits of large organizations and I got involved with them and that was interesting.

Howe: Going from insurance to medical?

Betzold: Oh well, what I was doing was a sales position to take over a Rx program and work with what they call pharmacy benefit managers so it was still, in my way of thinking, still group insurance. So that's where I spent my time, and then when I did retire from that full time position, then I had this- have this consulting firm where I deal with smaller employers because they have absolutely no clue as to what's going on and there's too much misinformation and it's even worse now with recent changes in how healthcare is going to be delivered in the U.S. that I've basically reached the point of saying, I'm done, okay.

I will now officially retire and I will spend my time with the veterans of Lake Barrington Shores, which is the thing that I've done for the past eight years now as a member of that organization, which is the veterans that live in the condominium homes that we have. Condominium association that we have that's about 1113 units so it's a big condo community divided into 13 individual associations that come back together with what they call a master board, which is the 13 people that make up the individual units make up the master board and therein lies a whole 'nother discussion about politics and I went through the chairs with that particular thing and said I don't want to do this anymore and at that point in time, eight years ago, the head of security approached me and said we're going to have a memorial day service, this is the first one that we're going to have a specific service set up and run for all the veterans and their guests that live here in Lake Barrington Shores. Would you be the MC? I said, I knew the fellow, we'd been associates, and I said, that's fine, you know. When do you want to get together and talk about what, oh we'll get together soon. So, this was 10 days out and with seven days to go, I call and said, Ron, what are we gonna do? Do whatever you wanna do and I said no, I don't think that this is what I signed on for, what you expect? He said well, we really haven't got it down that well. Just put something down on a piece of paper and we'll have a service, and we did.

Howe: You were nominated to run the Memorial Day service?

Betzold: All they said-that was it-you know, you are MC and responsible for and when I look back at that first program as compared to the programs that we put on today, Cecil B. DeMille would be proud of us. We have turned this into a three-ring-circus. On Memorial Day and Veterans Day and this year, coming up in May, we will be honoring Korean War veterans. So, the emphasis will be put on the 37 that we have identified out of our group right now that were the Korean era and we will recognize them for their service and give them a Korean War hat or a cover and, haven't carried through completely as to what we're gonna do with it but the idea is it's...we now have a very good solid reputation in the community. We're the largest social group within the community and I work with a board that- we respect each other, we get the opportunity to say what we wanna say and we make decisions and if the project is-there's a certain criteria for projects, the main one being, if you got the bodies to run it. If you don't have the bodies to run it, don't bother bringing it. Because somebody's gotta do it and you gotta decide who it is up front so that we know whose going to be responsible and can work with that person to get it done. So we get into those particular discussions to wit, as of Monday, I use this phrase again, we are here to protect democracy, not practice it.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Came out of Red Storm Rising or something like that. Great lines out of the movie, but we do, it's a pleasure to work with these individuals and we get a whole bunch done and look forward to the opportunities, for instance again, by talking to the Pritzker folks

here, about bringing a group down to the library for a presentation in, I think it's the second week of April, so bring 'em into town, feed them lunch someplace and then have a couple hour presentation here so that I get more people aware of what the organization is and/or oral histories.

Howe: Making the connections.

Betzold: Yes.

Howe: Absolutely. You're active now socially with the veteran's community. With your local community and this is a development that has occurred for the last eight years. Since '87, what was that transition like before reconnecting with the veteran community?

Betzold: I got involved with the politics of the condominium community. I got elected as president of, not board... but association. And like I said there's 13 associations, so I was one of 13 that sat on the master board. The politics is as severe as the Democrats and Republicans, maybe the Tea Party and the Democrats. You know, it's just...you've got some engrained thoughts there and I've said many times and I will say one more time. Term limits. Put 'em on there, they can serve 4 years and then they're done. Period. Thank you. And maybe you'll start getting something done around here. But if you don't do it that way then you better have seven votes lined up before you decide you're going to try and do something so that when the bell rings you get seven check marks there and the other five are standing there looking at each other saying, how did that happen? So didn't like myself when I was doing the master board activity because of this infighting so said, enough of that.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: And moved onto- and about- concurrent with that was the starting of the veteran's experience. So, it keeps me off the streets at night, you know?

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: There's four of us that do almost everything and the only reason that we don't do more stuff is I can't get volunteers. So no matter how much I, you know, co-chair or go out and try to get people to do it etcetera, if they have some particular reason that they don't want to do it, you're not going to overcome it. So...you can still identify people and say would you take this small task and do it and they'll go yeah, I'll do that. You take the bigger task, no, I'm not going to do that, I only want to do the small task. Fine. Thank you. And you build the organization. So...But we could do more and the four or five of us know that but it's only meant to be...time will tell.

Howe: Fair enough. Aside from that, what else fills your time, what else do you do with your days?

Betzold: One of the things I noted in there is that I continue to have a stamp collection. Collector of stamps, US commemoratives and I found a way to weave that into the military. Because every time we have a Memorial Day or Veteran's Day service or some special recognition, I am able to use my knowledge of commemorative stamps that have been issued to go back and build a thank you plaque or...well, it's a plaque that represents something in that person's career. If it's a marine, use the raising of the flag at Iwo Jima, if it's a commanding officer of recruit training, there's a stamp showing US Navy recruits back in WWII. But you can go through and you can create these plaques and present it to these people and they just, they've never seen it before, it's not something that's, I don't know if it's even being done anywhere else, but the point is you personalize it and I know of the six or seven that are out there I can go into their homes or their office and that's where it will always be, somewhere real close by because it's unique. So I've been able to do that. Guys say as long as you don't run out of stamps, we're in good shape. I said, I think we can handle it.

Howe: Okay, so you provide the stamps and someone else does the craftsmanship for the plaque?

Betzold: Yeah, one of our sponsors is a framing shop and she does these presentation plaques as her contribution to us, and then we turn around and we've got various other things that we have to get done so we go to her and it works out well.

Howe: Bring her commercial opportunity.

Betzold: That's right.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: Let's see...that...

Howe: And you're still connected with your grandchildren, your children?

Betzold: Not as much as we could or should, but it's interesting, you would say out of five kids that you had, how many went in the service? Zero. And why is that? Can't really answer that, because nobody ever asked an opinion and I was not one to stand up and say you will do this, you will do that, however three of the five have indicated along the way, shoulda, coulda or woulda. Boy I should've gone into the, you know, Navy or whatever, and a couple of them were pretty close but they never pulled the plug and now we're working on grandchildren and oldest grandchild that, from my first marriage, has just enlisted in the Navy. So this is a proud point at this particular time and if Grandpa, if the recruiters are telling Grandpa the truth, I'll be able to swear him in when he is ready to, his ship date is March 13th, I believe. When he's ready to ship, I'll be down there and administer the oath to him in Indianapolis.

Howe: So will he go through basic training before?

Betzold: No, no.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: That's probably, I think it's on a Thursday, on the Friday he will be at Great Lakes.

Howe: Okay.

Betzold: That's where he starts.

Howe: Spending...?

Betzold: Seven weeks later he'll be out of boot camp and on his way to Pensacola, Florida, he's going to be a cryptologist, cryptotechnician. They're going to teach him how to hack programs. I'm goin', you know, that is really a fantastic opportunity and it's not going to decrease. Right now it's one of the top earning jobs that you can have and people are just running around trying to find people that have the background and I really don't think that this collection efforts are going in electronics the way they're going, it's necessarily going to change that much in, he's going to have a six year commitment, four year commitment, plus the equivalent time spent in training will be put onto that contract. So it's supposed to be six years, grandpa keeps saying where's another piece of paper? So far we haven't gotten the piece of paper that says that but grandson's all ready to go, gung ho.

Howe: Had you talked to him about...?

Betzold: He called me out of the blue. He said grandpa-this is now, probably two months ago now-grandpa, he says, I haven't been sleeping, I'm really all tied up in knots. What do you think about me joining the Navy? I go, what? Out of the clear blue, didn't expect it at all. But we had [a] talk and then at Christmas time, when we were down with that family, he and I went to seek recruiters and it was about 90/10, 90 percent I wanna go in the Navy, 10 percent army. We walked in to see the recruiter, I thought we'd be there half an hour, three hours later we leave and I told the recruiter, I'm ready to sign up man, just give me the form. You guys are gonna offer me what? And do this? And guarantee this? And that's the way we do business now. We went next door to the Navy and they go, well...we'll get you an A-school but you know from there it's kind of, your next assignment is based on how you do in A-school and you may get a C-school but you know, whatever, depends upon what you're looking at and he was looking at hospital corpsman because he's got this idea of wanting to be a nurse, which is another good thing, you know.

Howe: Certainly.

Betzold: The army would have said, you wanna be a physician's assistant? Here's where you go to basic, here's where you go to A-school, here's where you go to C-school and you'll be-

as soon as you've accomplished these things, you'll be qualified to go to that school and we guarantee that we'll send you there.

Howe: And they submit that to you in writing?

Betzold: In writing! The Navy goes...ehhh, hospital corpsman... yeah we've got room for you, and depending on how you do depends upon where you go. And if you wanna go to a ship, probably, there'd be a lot of room on ships. If you wanna go to be with the Marine Corps and their program, there's a lot of room in that program too. People don't want to run around being a corpsman, for forward...

Howe: Forward deployed.

Betzold: Forward position deployed marines and that's, and then how you do is where you go and that's as far as the Navy goes.

Howe: Sure.

Betzold: So we listened to this, and at that point in time after talking to the Navy, later that afternoon, he had switched to almost 50/50 and then it percolated for a couple of days, and we ended up talking to the army again and this guy was good, he was really, really good and ended up, they have a recruiting set of offices, so when you walk up, everybody can see who's going where so they know that you went from the army [and] over to the Navy, and so you walk back into the Navy and it gets a little more specific because, oh this is what you wanna do, here's what we can do and he chose, he did not make the decision based on the logic and the guarantees, he made it based on his heart and what he wanted to do and [that] just can't fault an 18-year-old to have that much moxie to be able to reach that decision and be comfortable with himself. That says a lot for him, says a lot for his parents.

Howe: Well, and, you know, say what you want, I think that he's going to be happier because he's fulfilling a commitment to serve and he's also doing what he wants to do and marrying the two together, it's a good thing.

Betzold: Absolutely.

Howe: Yeah.

Betzold: So grandpa's going to [be] awful proud to go down and raise the right hand and bring him into the service.

Howe: Nice, and then offer him a place for a weekend as he's travelling through to Pensacola from Great Lakes.

Betzold: That's right, just happened to be able to do that.

Howe: Yeah.

Betzold: And go over there and who knows, grandpa may be on the stage and watching the completion of the boot camp when he's ready to be graduated.

Howe: Nice.

Betzold: I've been known to do things by making some phone calls, you know.

Howe: You still have the dress whites or the blues?

Betzold: Absolutely. Not my original ones, but I've got a set that fits. So, we use the dress blues at Veterans Day and we use dress whites, not dress whites, you know, white whatever, not the high collar which is the open ended shirt for Memorial Day.

Howe: After having been discharged, how do you feel about putting the uniform on again?

Betzold: Extremely proud. I've been able to serve my country. Been able to represent the country and being able to accomplish what's been accomplished as far as military service. Didn't...if you would have said, when I raised my hand to enlist, that I would end up 26 year -plus the experience has allowed me to excel at a civilian career and also to be in a position that I'm in right now into retirement- I wouldn't have believed you. So, [it] fulfilled all those things. I went to high school, I went to college, I went in the service, I got married, I got married again... [Laughs]

Howe: Mission accomplished.

Betzold: Mission accomplished, here we are.

Howe: Nice, is there anything in your experience that you thought we would talk about today and that we haven't touched on?

Betzold: Not really. We finally...you know, weaved it back in. Though I've given you more examples than I put down on the piece of paper and it's only because at that particular moment, it struck me as a story.

Howe: Sure, any other sea stories that strike you?

Betzold: None that are printable, no.

Howe: They're all printable, it's all history.

Betzold: No, not really...it was an opportunity to associate with people and they were good people along the way. There's some jerks along the way, but you know, what organization are you going to commit to that doesn't have some of that. I get that today in the veteran's group. I had some guys, you know, just jump all over me, was a Korean vet, when I asked him for his DD2-14 so I could take a look at what medals he actually

qualified for and he just took off on me and I said well, I'm sorry you feel that way but we'll certainly make sure that you don't get any more information from us, and left. And just, it was embarrassing for him and for myself. But, he wasn't having too good of a day apparently.

Howe: No connection with the individual after that?

Betzold: No, and I hope we don't. I can't even remember his name right now. But one out of 160, that's not all bad.

Howe: Over the course of...?

Betzold: Yeah, eight, 10 years now I've been doing this.

Howe: Certainly.

Betzold: Look, I want to thank you and I want to thank Pritzker.

Howe: Absolutely.

Betzold: For this opportunity and it's a great exercise. I will be- continue to be a proponent of this organization as the oral history program could and would, should apply to the veterans that I associate with.

Howe: And real quick before we wrap up, you said you have a vision for that process, the 160 folks that you interact with, you want to try and inspire them in some way to come do the same thing.

Betzold: Absolutely. One, I think that each individual who is in the service, whether they think they're experience was of such a nature that it's not important, is wrong. Because, what will occur is, they will go through this process and they're sitting here talking to you and all of a sudden they'll go. Oh my god, there was this time, and they'll get into something that they haven't remembered. And it was just- in this give and take that kicked something off that they told a story about something they did, funny story, a sad story, whatever it may be but it's recorded at that point in time and I can assure them that whatever they say and put on tape is something that if their kids came up to them right now today and said, tell me about this, they wouldn't do it. So it takes somewhat of a, some preparation, I don't want to say an effort, if it's an effort, maybe you shouldn't be doing it. But if you wanna do preparation, and you want to have a chance to sit down in a very conversational mode and get across your points, we've found it.

Now, we have another organization out in Lake County that's run by a person from Cuba Township. He lost an election but he's an attorney in Wauconda, and he's put together five or six stenographers and was touting the fact that the veterans can come at a certain point in time and sit down, these stenographers will take down whatever they

have to say and reproduce it and that's their oral history. And I go, oh I don't think so, I don't think that, I really should go out and talk about this program when you've got the right way to do it over here and you've got the half-assed way to do it over here, why would I take away from the opportunity for somebody to come down and have their history recorded and transcribed and presented to them and then it becomes part of a historical collection which is available if your family is interested. I've always maintained that I'd love to have the kids and grandkids listen to what we've just been through. Too busy, too busy doing this kind of stuff, which in the case of the older one is great because that's what cyber people do I guess is...

Howe: Become a drone operator.

Betzold: Whatever they do. So, yes I do have a vision in that I want people to understand more about the organization, the benefits of the organization, the setup of the organization, I want to be able to entice, twist arms, whatever it may take for 10-12 people to get down here and do an oral history this year. And I want to say to the organization that we're a bunch of 160 out in the hinterland, is there some way you can see that we can support you? So that's my mission.

Howe: Awesome.

Betzold: And you gotta have something to do, so...you know, here I am doing this and enjoying it and I said, my bucket list is pretty long, but some of the stuff is farfetched. That's okay.

Howe: Like what?

Betzold: I guess world tour. Take one of the boats, one of the ships and do the, what is it nine months aboard ship, I think it's something like that. One of these cruises, about 55 thousand bucks. So, I would like to do that one, yeah.

Howe: For two or for one?

Betzold: For one.

Howe: It's 55 thousand dollars for one person?

Betzold: Yep.

Howe: Wow.

Betzold: And what's her name is in at that. My wife has indicated that she's going on that one if I go, so...

Howe: Yeah?

Betzold: We've had this standing. One of the questions is, after you get out of the active service, have you gone back to those countries that you visited? And I've said, no. And she says,

well I wanna go to Italy, I wanna go to Spain, I wanna go to... I said go ahead and go. Get your girlfriends or whoever you wanna take, take a kid with you and go do that. Well I wanna do it with you. Well I'm not doing it. Well why aren't you doing it? I said my last cruise, we were on our way back, we had stopped in the Mediterranean, three times in Naples and I never got off the ship, because I had enough of it. I had already been six times to Naples before we hit another three times in Naples and I don't think there's that much to see in Naples to begin with, much less the hassle of getting back and forth from the ship to the land and having 16 kids hangin' on you once you're there. So, she is still waiting for me to relent and go back too. I'm kinda bending on the northern Europe, I could maybe be talked into that one because I have this deal about going to St. Petersburg. I'm pretty convinced that I was a tank commander in the siege.

Howe: In a previous iteration?

Betzold: In a previous. That was my hook, to belong to these military organizations that have battalions, regiments and all that kind of stuff.

Howe: Nice. Yeah, the difference in structure, the difference in organization, it is a culture shock. My brother was a marine and so being able to relate...

Betzold: Don't hold it against him, he just...

Howe: And I love him and I love every marine that I see because of it. Then again, if you've never experienced that, all you have is well work, center, division, department, boat. There's the boat. Yeah.

Betzold: Yeah, we have to have marines. Whose gonna be the brunt of the jokes if we don't have marines?

Howe: They would argue it would be us and I give that to my brother. Yeah. There's that lighthearted, gentle natured ribbing that occurs.

Betzold: Oh, absolutely, and that's part of this executive group, we've got a couple marines that's a part of this so we go at it every once in a while but it's all in relatively good taste and we still respect each other when we're done.

Howe: No rug burns?

Betzold: No. The worst you get is I'm not here to practice democracy...preserve it, not practice it, and it seems to get my point across. One of the very interesting things about this board that- conglomeration of individuals that I deal with- is a Marine Sam Gewirtz who [has] already done an oral history for the museum here and he's, Sam's 92, 93, and he comes and he kinda sits there. Doesn't pop up with, you know, and if you want something you ask him and then toward the end he'll say well I've got a couple comments for you. And these guys just quiet, they listen to what he has to say because, normally he is right on

point. Doesn't waste a bunch of time, just says, guys, you were talking about this and I think this is what you mean or this is the way you should go and we say, Sam you're right, get it done. So when you can associate yourself with somebody at 92 that you still look at and say, yeah, I respect his judgment and what he's saying. It's a pretty good organization.

Howe: Wow, respectful of that experience and that leadership.

Betzold: Mhm. Okay, that's it.

Howe: On behalf of the Pritzker Library, Mission Continues and myself, thank you. Thank you for your service.

Betzold: Appreciate that.

Howe: And thanks for coming and sharing with us.

Betzold: Likewise for your service.