

**David Barrett**  
**Interviewed by Sarah Davis and Arthur Dong**  
**World War II Project**  
**June 18, 1993**

**Transcribed: Loren Basham**

**Voice:** Today is the of June, 1993 and we are interviewing David Barrett \_\_\_?\_\_\_.  
[Misc. noise and chatter]

**Arthur Dong:** You were, what happened when you went, we're talking fifty years ago now. This is a long time ago, right, fifty years ago. Do you remember being processed in the service, do you remember that?

**David Barrett:** I can recall when I volunteered to go into the Navy. It was in San Diego after Pearly Harbor and I was not accepted by this lieutenant commander because I had speeding tickets and one driving while intoxicated charge. And he wouldn't accept me. I had been in the draft, of course, and I was given a 4-F classification because I had a deviated septum and I couldn't have gone into the service with a gas mask over my face because of the deviated septum. That was the original was the draft 4-F. Then I volunteered when the war and I was an air raid warden in Point Loma in San Diego for a period of a few months. And then I appealed the non acceptance, the refusal to let me enter the service through a wealthy uncle I knew had contacts in Washington DC and then I was accepted. I did have a friend on my air raid warden ....

**AD:** So you finally did get in?

**DB:** I got in, right.

**AD:** Why did you want to get in so bad?

**DB:** I did what we say and what's current today spoken of as I lied patriotically or I patriotically lied when the question came up about homosexuality because I thought it was the thing to do we were attacked in Pearl Harbor and that I should serve my country. As a matter of fact, I couldn't get out of the boot camp fast enough. I was at a place called Camp Meehan (sp?) in San Diego and I had to get out of there fast enough. I said I don't want to stay here I want to go where the fighting is and where the action is taking place. My friend in the air raid warden area he wanted to get me in the naval supply in San Diego which he was the head of. And I didn't want that, I wanted to go overseas.

**AD:** So you lied, wasn't that going to get you in trouble though, weren't you scared?

**DB:** I won't say I lied, I wasn't sure of my sexual orientation then. I didn't know what the score was too much. I was what they called, I was more passive than anything. I was what they called, there is a word called "trade" for many years. I didn't know what was

happening up or down. I was immature at my age. I was 25 years of age but I was an immature person at 25. Very immature.

**AD:** So you weren't sure about your sexuality anyway. You kind of knew, I mean, did you know?

**DB:** I was into this, homosexuality when I was 15. And here it was ten years later but I wasn't active, I was passive. That's an embarrassing subject to go into but nevertheless if you can add two and two together.

**AD:** What was it like to be homosexual at that time? For you.

**DB:** Everything was closeted. You went surreptitiously to bars and like this and you looked at the front door to see who was coming in if there was going to be a raid and stuff like that.

**AD:** Did your upbringing have any effect how you felt about yourself, being...?

**DB:** There's bisexuality in my family. God forbid when this comes out. There's bisexuality in my family, two members of my family are bisexual. And I was gay, but I didn't accept my gayness until years later. Till I was thirty-nine years of age.

**AD:** So your background, there was some bisexuality in your family. But what about like religion, were you Jewish, were...?

**DB:** Irish Catholic. With all the hang-ups there is with Irish Catholicism.

**AD:** How did that play into your feelings? Your sexuality.

**DB:** Oh, it was sinful. Heavens. When I would masturbate I was sure I was going to go to hell. Masturbation was a sin, to my knowledge. But a teenager growing up, I used to run off to confession and finally the guy told me, he said, come on this is kind of normal in your age. At your age, but just don't over-do it, you know. I was in, I had fears. I had this Irish Catholic guilt's and fears. But with the Irish Catholic, put a couple of drinks in them and then the walls of Jericho come down, you know.

**AD:** So you got in despite, I mean you lied, patriotically lied.

**DB:** Yes.

**AD:** When you got in did you see other homosexuals, I mean what was that like?

**DB:** You know I can't recall. That was the furthest from my mind with the was effort and doing my job well, conscientiously. And I gave a lot to work because I did well. They couldn't be happier to get rid of me from the boot camp or from Camp Meehan when I was because I was calling the chief petty office "mister." And you never call the

guy mister. So they said let's get him out of here. He's so anxious to go let him go. So then we got shipped to a couple of places before we went overseas to Noumea, New Caledonia, which was a French island.

**AD:** So you didn't have any idea of going there to practice your trade.

**DB:** No, never. Sex was the furthest thing from my mind. And if all the time, we have to think of all time that I was overseas before I got discharged, I think it was 14, 16 months, my activity in my testimony and all only two sailors and two people in the Army, four people in the entire time I was there. And the two people, one was only a casual event with alcohol involved in it.

**AD:** I mean there were a lot of things going on. I was surprised when you said you didn't meet people there.

**DB:** No, they were there and I was alone, I traveled alone. I knew them and would go to a hotel, the Frenchman, I spoke some French, and the owner of the hotel and I were good friends. And I invented the martini on that island, he had never heard of a martini before and I told him how. So we were very good friends and I enjoyed his cuisine. But when the gay ones came I didn't have a thing to do with them. I may have greeted them and that was it. They had a big party there one time and I told the owner, don't have the party. Don't have them here.

**AD:** Why were you doing this. I mean why were you, you separated yourself kind of, right?

**DB:** Yeah. It was my whole life. I'm still a loner, have been a loner for all my life.

**AD:** Were you afraid of being associated with them?

**DB:** I didn't see anything, I didn't get any pleasure being with them, there was no one of interest there. The one friend I had was an Army buddy and he was a close friend, a buddy, what you'd call buddy. But no one else. There was some jealousy among the gay Navy that I knew this particular guy in the Army. For reasons, well anyway he was an exceptional individual. We were buddies. And I tried to make it for him with some of the gay Army people and the gay sailors, the Navy, they wanted to get to know them so badly and he would have nothing to do with them. And when I made one introduction to a soldier he took offense and he said what did you do that for.

**AD:** So you were pretty much on your own.

**DB:** Absolutely.

**AD:** Now....

**DB:** No one even expected me to be hauled in. I saw them going one by one and I remember coming .... I used to wear blouse, whites, and I couldn't get out of them they were tailored so tight for me that when I came back to the base someone would have to pull my blouse off me. I was drinking heavily, drinking well. I remember saying to somebody well they'll be coming after me soon and he said, oh what are you talking about Barrett, don't be foolish. And I saw them coming. And it was only guilt by association. Someone put the finger on my. The JG in Admiral Halsey's staff, on the CONSULPAC's staff put his finger on me. And the day he put his finger on me the, who I recognized later, was the office, Naval Intelligence officer there to watch me at my work. He sped away in a jeep after this character came in and put his finger on me by soliciting, asking to buy something in the small store. Bypassed my executive officer and came in my stores just to ask me for a lapel pin. But his purpose was to put the finger on me. When I saw that jeep race away with that ensign then I knew the next day the commanding officer or Naval supply came down, put his arm around me telling me what a wonderful job I was and then the following day they came in and arrested me.

**AD:** Try to describe me what....

**Voice:** Switching to camera roll 92. Camera roll 92 and take 2 will be coming up.

**Voice:** Rolling and speed.

**Voice:** Move that a little to your right.

**AD:** So take me back to that, I guess the morning or afternoon that they tapped your shoulder. Tell me exactly what happened, what were you doing and what happened.

**DB:** I was the store keeper class and I sold jeans and t-shirts and stuff out for the Navy. Out of this Quonset hut out of this window. There were two or three, two windows I think. And I was excellent. They told me I did unbelievably good work. And they, after the JG came in to put his finger on me the one day, I noticed a fellow run away in a jeep who I learned later on was a Naval intelligence officer who had been watching me, was stationed there to check up on me. The second day of this episode, the commanding officer came down and embraced me and told me what a wonderful job I was doing there and complemented me very highly. I had had dengue fever a number of times so my weight was way down.

**AD:** So this jumped right to the point ....

**DB:** Then the next day ...

**AD:** Start, O.K.

**DB:** ....they came, this officer came and another one. No two officers came, it wasn't Remington, it was two officers came and said, you're under arrest, you're a defendant in a general courts martial trial, case. And they said, you know what this is all about. And

I said, no I don't know what its all about. I said, I do think if its anything I was less than discriminating in the choice of my companions and that's all I could think of. Well, you know what it's all about, and I said, no I don't know what you're talking about. And they took me out to my base, my camp and went through all my gear, looking for things then they took me off to this, which I learned later, was a farm house or something where the Judge Advocate was and where the interrogation began.

**AD:** So you said you didn't know was about.

**DB:** I didn't know what it was about. I didn't know what it was about. I wasn't, I didn't have behavior, conduct that they could.... I had no action, there was no conduct. And the people I knew was this guy in the Army and then another, a lieutenant in the Army that I met and then the two people in the Navy that I finally gave information on because they assured me nothing would happen to them. But they said you got to tell us who you tangled with, it takes two to tangle. Two to dance, you have to tell us and nothing will happen to them. I said I won't give any names unless you assure me that nothing will happen to them. And they said you have our assurance that nothing will happen. But you've got to tell us. So what I did was I incriminated myself by giving testimony about these two people in the Navy. But they happened, also, they knew about the two in the Army. They were watching me apparently and I can recall when I met the lieutenant in the Army we went up into the hills. A jeep was running around looking for us up there. I didn't realize at the time what was happening, but in hindsight now I know why they were up there.

**AD:** So, I'm going to backtrack a little bit.

**DB:** O.K.

**AD:** So they came and got you and they took you somewhere. Can you describe for me where they took you and what was that like.

**DB:** It's a little vague and I can recall someone had referred to it as something in the boon docks, we'll call it, or in the hills, a farm house. I remember it being up a road in the station wagon and into this kind of a farmhouse or office in this \_\_\_?\_\_\_. And this had the Judge Advocate and a gentleman along with him and the lieutenant JG was there and he was the one who was the good cop or the other one, the Judge Advocate was the bad cop and he threatens said that, if you don't come through Barrett I get you on perjury, 'cause what you're going to get here is going to be nothing. You can go into the merchant marine or you can go into the shipyards and get out of this thing, then you'll get an undesirable discharge and you can make some money when you get out. But if you don't come through, I'll get you on perjury. And then the JG, I wouldn't divulge any name, the JG took me out in the station wagon, put his arm over my shoulder like a buddy and said well now, this and that. So I guess he thought that I may as well if I'm detriment to the service and if it's good for the service that I be taken out then I go out, but I won't give any names or mention any, unless you give me assurance that nothing will happen to them. Nothing will happen to them. And I went in and named two

people. And then the one I just had one little experience with was just a couple of hours one evening in our base. A celebratory thing, We had champagne and the chicken that the Taiwanese woman made for us. Made for me. It was a party. And the other one, the other Navy guy I had no regrets about because he was an S.O.B.

**AD:** So you, so he gave you assurances and you named...?

**DB:** Two people.

**AD:** Did they keep their promise?

**DB:** No, as soon as it was out of my mouth they went after them. Then it was told later on that Halsey, Admirable "Bull" Halsey, had said throw both sides out, the active and the passive because one is just as bad as the other. Another one is getting serviced or is the recipient of the favors of the other so throw them both out. That was after some time. I didn't know it immediately. I didn't know that they had been doing that immediately. Not until I got into the .....

**AD:** So you're saying they lied to you about the, they lied to you?

**DB:** Yes sir. Emphatically. And here I am looking at the Judge Advocate General thinking this is the American flag and here's my country and everything say that nothing will happen to them. Although that I didn't learn that they had taken them in and that they were being thrown out until three or four days later in the gay Quonset hut where we were kept. I remember this JG came and I asked him. And he said, oh well Admirable Halsey has changed policy or that's his policy that they be thrown out too, yes. We have arrested them and they're going to go our too.

**AD:** Why did you trust them?

**DB:** Well, it would be unthinkable not to. Here I was nothing but a store keeper and a commander wearing his bars on this shoulder and a judge advocate and the American flag and my country and everything else. Well, I never thought they would lie. I was maybe naïve, but I didn't ..... There was no such thing as a GI bill of rights at the time. I was six thousand miles from home and I was scared. They brought up things about my childhood and high school, where I went to school, where I worked before I came into the Navy. They had all this but I was that was the last thing. And when I opened my guts and spilled the guts to the Judge Advocate, he turned to his yeoman and said, my God I thought he'd never break. And that tore me apart. He told his yeoman says, my God I didn't think he'd break. And I just took it all at face value, their honesty. I don't think I swore, I don't think it was under oath. I'm sure they didn't give me that stuff about, you know Miranda rights that you have today. You don't have to say anything that tends to incriminate you. I didn't know anything about the fifth amendment.

**AD:** Did they, did you have to, was this all verbal. Or did you have to sign something.

**DB:** I signed something in time that I was not under duress or I was not coerced. I signed it. That was given to me to sign. That I gave my testimony willingly and it was not under duress or coerced. That I could appeal my discharge and I have an honorable discharge now. It happened years later.

**AD:** They asked you to sign this saying that...?

**DB:** That you were not under duress or that you were not coerced. And he had just, five minutes before this, had come clean or I will get you on perjury, is what he said to me. Sad. Sad but true. Not only I. And when I later on learned when I was in the what we called the gay barracks or the Quonset hut, I learned that someone that did hold out was confined in the city jail in Noumea where there were rats running around on the ground. I don't know if they slept on the ground on that cot in the city jail there were rats. Me I had the biggest cockroaches you could ever hear. You could hear them in the street and the gutters when you were walking home at night. I could never have stood that. And he had been given no toilet articles. He hadn't shaved, no toothpaste. He was there for, they broke him in that jail because of the treatment he went through. He was a yeoman I learned then.

**AD:** Going back just a minute or so, when you, when they first arrested you, when you first arrived in this Quonset hut, or whatever, ...

**DB:** On the side of a hill.

**AD:** ...can you describe your arrival, your first arrival at this place?

**DB:** Yeah, I can remember because all the occupants said, oh my God, here comes another one. And they were astounded to see me. Because I had only known them casually. We went over I guess together and they had different jobs. One was a radio man and one was a yeoman one was a corpsman and all like this. And as I said I had no close personal contact with them. I didn't fraternize with them. I did my job. I went into my base. I was a loner. But when they saw me, oh my God, look whose here, Barrett's here. And they were surprised to see me. Here's another one. I remember Rebecca that would scream, oh here's another one. From then on, I was maybe the second to last, the , I think, that was brought in. The welcoming party when they come you have to scream, oh here's another one. Well we had one there that ONI would come and pick someone up and then they'd take them away. And then they'd apparently interrogated this person and wow the next day someone else would join us. So this person they took gave them a little more information and they brought someone else back. It was guilt by association.

**AD:** I think we need to stop for just a moment.

**DB:** O.K.

**Voice:** That's the end of this camera roll and the end of this sound roll, end of 46, end of sound roll 46, end of camera roll 92.

**[End of tape 1, side 1]**

**[Tape 1, side 2, David Barrett]**

**Voice:** We are continuing our interview with David Barrett. This is sound roll 47. Sound roll 47, we're starting camera roll 93 and take 3 is coming up.

**Voice:** Speed.

**AD:** We were talking about the government lying to you. Explain to me again, you know, when you first joined about your, the way you lied. I think the term you used was "patriotic lies."

**DB:** Lying patriotically or patriotically lying. Yes, I wanted to get in to serve my country because it was at war. I thought that was made for me. And so I didn't think I was so horrible. But the thing to come back in that form, for them to be throwing me out of the service after I, we kind of equivocated on the, I can't even remember the wording when I signed up for the draft or when I enlisted in the Navy. What was the wording. Have you any homosexual tendencies? And I mentioned, I said, I know I said no. Because I was accepted. Because that's what's ridiculous about the thing today is "don't ask." Well how many, do they think ever ask? They ask now in the affirmative about they wouldn't be accepted so of course they won't say yes.

**AD:** Were you asked?

**DB:** I am sure of that question there was do you have homosexual tendencies. But it's so long that I don't remember the wording of it and all. From what I understand from what's happening today that's what the whole basis of it is the questionnaire says do you have homosexual tendencies. What I have seen on C-Span with the .....

**AD:** Describe for me again, so they arrested you.

**DB:** Yes, sir.

**AD:** Then arrested you. I need for you to describe for me your arrival at the Quonset hut. O.K. And I can probably suggest a way for you to answer this question. To begin with, can you begin by saying: "They took me to the Quonset hut." The gay brig or whatever it is.

**DB:** After the farmhouse?

**AD:** Right. After the arrest, when you agreed....

**DB:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**AD:** O.K. so just describe the greeting that you got.

**DB:** When we, the gay Quonset hut was on the side of a hill at this receiving station and we would go over there and we drove around, I think it was a quite long road to go up to the top of the hill where we were. We were in view of everyone in the place. Our Quonset hut was. I remember the occupants of that hut, the other gay ones there, heard the station wagon so they knew someone was arriving they came, I can remember Rebecca very well saying, oh we got another one. Look who's here. And it was I. And they went right along in shock. Because I wasn't known. They knew I, the gays knew who the gays were. But there was nothing overt about it. I wouldn't socialize with them or fraternize with them. I never went to their parties, never traveled with them. They were envious of me because of my sole companion, for one thing: Button. And that's as far as it went. And I was a chaplain's yeoman aside from being a store keeper. So I had that other duty to perform. I was very active in that.

**AD:** When you were interrogated, you were interrogated....

**DB:** By the judge advocate.

**AD:** Good \_\_\_? \_\_\_, you named some names, and you found out one of them was arresting or arrested?

**DB:** I was told later, yes, they went and got him.

**AD:** How did that feel for you?

**DB:** It cracked my up. Rebecca, Rebecca Winter refers to me as being very, not traumatized, but I would look very haunted and very sad, very depressed. And I was depressed because of the people that I had named were taken in. Because I was given assurances nothing would happen to them. And I only learned about the one who I felt most badly about, the young Texan, when I went to get a hair cut. In the barber's chair, the barber confided in me and said, so-in-so, they came here and took so-in-so. And I said, oh no. And I remember confiding to him that I was given assurances that nothing would happen to anyone, and particularly that person that I named. That's why I had this horrible, haunted look. I felt so, I was devastated. I wasn't going to be a snitch. I had been given assurances that nothing would happen to either one of them. The other one I didn't care because he damned near killed me once.

**AD:** So when you were in the gay brig, as you call it, what kind of things would you do there?

**DB:** You know I can't recall too well, I imagine read, laid around. There was an exercise yard, we used to run around and jump over some hurdles or something like that. And then we were marched to chow three times a day, breakfast, lunch and dinner. We had, we were all in whites. When we went to chow there was a guard in front with a gun, and a guard, rifle, and one behind and we marched off to chow with arms folded. And

the whole hillside would see us coming to chow. And for some period time they were whistles and yells and people yelling at us, calling us faggots and etc., etc. Until the commanding, the executive officer learned about it. I don't know how he learned, he might have learned it from me but I'm not sure because he, I knew him well. He put into, he gave an order that we were to stop the chow line and whoever yelled at us we were to point the individual out and that individual was to join us when we went to chow. Because they emptied out mess hall when we came into eat, if I recall correctly we ate at a separate table. But that's what we did. That stopped the yelling at us.

**AD:** Well, while they're yelling at you, you heard them.

**DB:** Yes. The distance was only five or ten feet, fifteen feet maybe.

**AD:** Tell me what you heard. Words....

**DB:** Faggots.

**AD:** Tell me what you heard and how you felt about.

**DB:** It was rough. Faggots, queers, other things. Words we can't use on television, I imagine. And those were the words thrown at us. Screaming, whistling. It was hard, it was rough. But we had it stopped because the Exec had that action taken that we were to stop the line. That one yelled at me and said this to me. And he came into chow with us. So that stopped it.

**AD:** You said it was hard, they're calling you these names. I mean they're very derogatory names now. Did they make you feel that you were one of these things or that you were weird and...?

**DB:** It was a put down. I was gay, but no action. I was just gay as a person. There was no action involved in my discharge. It was guilt by association. There was no action involved, behavior, conduct, no. It was because I was gay and someone said I was gay and I admitted to having these two activities. But I had never been called that before. Anything that they were calling, who where they to point the finger. People in glass houses don't throw stones. How many of them out there that weren't involved or weren't partly not themselves. The ones that were gay ones that were yelling at me too.

**AD:** This Rebecca, Rebecca I guess, I mean he wasn't....

**DB:** Oh, Rebecca was wonderful. Rebecca had a sense of humor, just kept us going. She made, did impersonations of Tallulah Bankhead. If I recall back in those days. And Rebecca was a great pianist. In the USO she played the piano there. Tchaikovsky's first symphony or second, anyway the popular song was *Tonight We Love*. And she played it on our piano keyboard. But a wonderful personality. Entertainer.

**AD:** This at the brig?

**DB:** Pardon me?

**AD:** This was during the brig?

**DB:** No, before. I knew her from the USO when she played the piano.

**AD:** In the brig, in the brig....

**DB:** It was just a sense of humor she had. And her personality kept us all, kept me, really, my spirits up. Otherwise I was really in a depression. The life of the party. She kept a lot of people going because of her. Kind of like the \_\_\_?\_\_\_ spirit.

**AD:** I am going to ask you this again, about Rebecca. You can't use her name except saying "she" in case of ....

**DB:** Excuse me.

**AD:** So tell me about her. And using her name and what kinds of things she did in the brig and especially for you.

**DB:** I think that Rebecca sensed that I was the person who hadn't been into it, would come over and talk to me and maybe wise crack or jokes or humor, sing songs. As I've you, as I have told people that we would march down to the showers and we took, we all took our key in the showers daily and we had a little black person called Hildegard that we took with us. And we took Hildegard with us and we'd shower her and soaped her up all over, except for her nitty-gritty, and we were screaming and hollering in the showers and we had the guards going crazy outside the showers, what in the hell is happening in there. The people would hear us. We had a hilarious time. It was all a facade. But we still weren't going to let them know that they got us down. That shower scene was something. Rebecca gave Hildegard, or gave this person the name Hildegard who was a famous chanteuse in the Plaza Hotel in New York, the Persian Room at that time, I think. Rebecca was a real good person. I know her to this day.

**AD:** O.K. I guess we need to stop for just a minute.

**[Tape stopped]**

**Voice:** Speed.

**AD:** So you said it was a façade? What were you hiding? What was really going on?

**DB:** Well the devastation, the unhappiness that we were being thrown out of the Navy after all. We didn't join the Navy for any but patriotic reasons and it was the war effort. We didn't join the Navy, I didn't, and I know they didn't. Maybe one person, the person that put the finger on me was in there for....

**AD:** You said you were hiding. What were you really doing at night? In the prison.

**DB:** It was a Quonset hut with a lot of bunks in it. I wouldn't particularly call that a prison. The prison we went to was later.

**AD:** So I meant when the lights went down.

**DB:** We learned in time I can't recall to what, but.....

**AD:** I guess what I am referring to, when you're alone in bed.

**DB:** I had a lot of things to think about. Scarred stiff about my family learning about and all like this. And wondering why it happened and how it happened. Because I knew I was implicated just by the guilt by association but I had the individual coming in and asking to purchase something in my small store and his reputation was such that they knew, and they had been watching him apparently. All he did was retire his commission, cause he was an officer.

**AD:** As you were sleeping there alone at night, were you able to sleep?

**DB:** I imagine I did, in time. The place where you couldn't sleep was when were transferred to California when we had to sleep with the lights on all night long. The never turned the lights off. I had an upper bunk, double bunks in there. I sleep with the lights on. With the guard walking around on the outside with a rifle on his shoulder. Patrolling outside of our area in Pleasanton, California, Camp Shoemaker, whatever it was. There's where I had difficulty sleeping. To this day I don't sleep without a sleeping mask. I cannot sleep unless I can sleep in total darkness. I sleep with a sleeping mask. I travel with one.

**AD:** Why were the lights on all the time?

**DB:** Oh, the idiot, whoever was in charge, thought that there might be some hanky-panky going on between the gay ones in the barracks. It was a barracks, it was part of this place in Shoemaker. That was their intelligence. They thought they had been misbehaving so they had to have them sleep with the lights on and patrols outside so nothing would happen. It was ridiculous. But that was traumatic because I have not been able to, that was fifty years ago, and from that time on I can't sleep, absolute sleeping mask. I have to have darkness. I have it with me at all times traveling.

**AD:** So they took you to a, when they transferred you, I guess the trip, the transfer trip there was they had a guard?

**DB:** Well we left New Caledonia and came back to California. They say we came out on a ship called the Roue Chameau. (sp?) It was a French name. We were kept in a certain part of that ship and when they announced that that compartment was coming for

chow, of course everyone was interested because they knew it was the gay compartment, the gay ones that come for chow. We'd go through the chow line and all due respect for *sempre ferdiles* (sp?) but those were the, they were the mess cooks and all like that and they would made endeavors to date the gay ones coming through the chow line. If you can picture that. And we were kept in a certain compartment and told, announced that so-and-so come to chow and we would go there and there the people that were serving us chow were trying to make out with the gay ones coming through the chow line. I know alliances were started through that. And when we came through this horrible place in Yerba Buena Island, the brig there, the interrogation was terrible. It was horrible. It was brutal.

**AD:** Why?

**DB:** Well it was a guy called Big John. He lined us up in front of all the hard core criminals, the rapists, murderers, and all, and berated us and called us everything in the book and told they that he preferred to handling those that were there rather than us. And then the young recruits that were just coming to the Marine Corps interrogated us when we arrived. What do you do? What's your natural forte, or something like that. What do you do? And when it came to me, I said, well I try to be versatile. To this one. But then later on when the lights went out at night some of those Marines got active and took some of the gay ones out on work parties. Got serviced by some of the ones that were there to guard an to take care of them. So this is what \_\_\_?\_\_\_ is about everything. No one ever thinks of the other half. There is the active but no one talks about the passive. There's passive by the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands since the world war, World War II. Think of it. Just give some thought. The active is the gay one and then there's the other participant was the passive one. Think on any of them around? Halsey, he decided that one was just as bad as the other. I'm not going to say that the gay ones helped the moral of the services at all, but, come on, let's face it. There was a lot of activity going on. Which is getting 16,000 discharged in the last ten years. That's 1,600 a year but how many did they participate with. The Sixteen hundred. And were they thrown out too? Were the passives thrown out too.

**AD:** The ride from Yerba Buena to Shoemaker...?.

**DB:** I forgot to mention that we were transferred from the brig on Yerba Buena Island to Pleasanton, to Shoemaker. And when we got in there then, we were seated on seats alongside, the Marines came in there and the Marines sat there with their fingers on the trigger of the rifles aimed at us and said don't open your friggin mouths or .... And we went over there with that stress. It was a short distance, it wasn't too far away. When we got out of there the JG that greeted us when we got out of the van said why didn't they shoot the MF-er's over there instead of letting us have to bother with them. It was a lieutenant JG greeted us when we got out there. Why didn't they shoot 'em, over there. He didn't want to mess with.... Here we had these young recruits with the guns, the thing is I don't know, and I am confident that they were loaded. They were doing their duty, they were taking care of these dangerous people they were transporting from Yerba Buena Island to Shoemaker, California. To Pleasanton. It was ridiculous.

**AD:** You meant these people with, so they had the guns pointed right at you?

**DB:** Yes sir, their rifles pointed at us.

**AD:** Did you ever get visitors or, visitors when you were at Shoemaker or ...?

**DB:** Yeah, my mother came to visit me. I had, my brother had some ...

**AD:** I think we have to stop.

**AD:** Are we still going?

**Voice:** Yeah.

**AD:** O.K. start again, sorry.

**DB:** My family learned it because my brother knew influential people in Washington. They knew in Washington, as a matter of fact, our testimony they say was circulated in the gay cocktail....

**AD:** Tell me about your mother, I guess that's what....

**DB:** They learned, she learned through ...

**AD:** Can we use, say "mother."

**DB:** My mother learned of my discharge through a sister who I had written a letter, but she also learned from my brother who had heard in Washington DC where these people in Noumea were. And she came to visit me in Shoemaker. And all those that saw her come to visit me, the woman was in shock but she covered it up very neatly. I was in blues, dressed in denims and we got in the reception area I'm sure, and when she left all the others sat down and wrote letters to their families telling them, oh David's mother came to visit him. And they in turn got responses from their families, many of them, saying don't ever come near us as long as you live. We've given you and education, we've done this and that, but we want nothing more to do with you. And they were a disgrace where my family rallied and supported me. Particularly my mother making the trip from Hollywood by train up to San Francisco, Oakland out to Pleasanton by bus. My mother had never been there before in her life.

**AD:** Do you remember what you talked about, we didn't use the word "mother" instead of the word "she."

**DB:** My mother kind of related to it. I know that I had a gay second cousin in my family, going back many years ago they befriended this woman. A very wealthy woman, her parents were well to do.

**AD:** What did your mother say. What did you talk about when she visited you?

**DB:** I can't recall that conversation with my mother too well except admitting that I was gay and that this was happening and that I related to my second cousin and it must have been the same thing. And so I'm sure that she put it this way, well after all, you're my son and I love you as well as anyone else in my family. And she, we had a very close relationship. It wasn't, it wasn't anything that was strange or anything like that. It was just that it was a very loving relationship. I was the youngest son....

**AD:** We need to stop.

**DB:** O.K.

**Voice:** It's the end of this reel number 47 and the end of camera roll 94.

**[End of tape 1, side 2]**

**[Tape 2, side 1, David Barrett]**

**Voice:** This is sound roll 48, sound roll 48, camera roll 95. Continuing interview with David Barrett. of June, 1993. This is take 5 up.

**Voice:** Speed.

**AD:** Let's talk about Rebecca. Use the name you can talk about "Rebecca." What, she like thought about names a lot, right? Tell me about that.

**DB:** Like the name for a black, African-American, young boy, the name Hildegard. I can't recall.... We had someone whose name was Hading, we called someone Hading....

**AD:** What was she doing?

**DB:** The role would be house mother, more or less. Kept everyone from....

**AD:** Let's start over. Rebecca's role was?

**DB:** Rebecca's role was keeping our spirits up. One night the depressing she knew, some of us were in deep depression. Me, particularly, because the admission of the names. Rebecca was just the life of the party. Was how you could refer to her. And I imagine her professionalism came up. She was an entertainer. She entertained at that piano in the USO. It was just a wonderful person. I don't know if you want to call her, I'm trying to think of someone. An entertainer that she could resemble, that Rebecca could resemble, but I can't think of a name right now. Just the life of the party and wasn't one to let you get down. Keep the moral up with this continuous repartee and this "camp." The word in that day everything was "campy." Because of our shower scene

and nothing was going to get us down. But Rebecca took an interest in me because she knew that I was feeling very badly and I had this haunted front, look on my face because of my heavy \_\_\_?\_\_\_ anything to be done with them and then they changed their mind on that one. But Rebecca was an unusual person. I know her to this day. And I am very grateful to her.

**AD:** What's this thing about women's names. I mean Rebecca, Hildegard, what's this...?

**DB:** I never associated with any of them. When they interrogated me....

**AD:** No, no, no. Let's skip this. Let's go to you were transferred to Shoemaker?

**DB:** Yes sir.

**AD:** You went from Yerba Buena Island and then what happened when you were let out of the services?

**DB:** It was unbelievable. They stripped.... They took us to a place Rochester Clothing Store on and Mission. Took every vestige of anything that belonged to the United States Navy. Took everything from us and put us in clothes, I think maybe, I can't recall, but I'd say \$35.00 is what the, I'm sorry but I'm going to cough.

**AD:** We'll stop for a minute.

**[Tape stopped]**

**DB:** Let's go.

**Voice:** Speed.

**AD:** Let's start this again, about your discharge you can just start by saying....

**DB:** From Shoemaker?

**AD:** Where Shoemaker, you got let go, right? The day of discharge.

**DB:** The day of the discharge from Shoemaker, California we were loaded onto a bus and brought to the Rochester Clothing Company which is where tall men and short men or something, certainly tall men. The Navy had a contract with them. And they loaded us there and they took all vestige of anything that belonged to the US Navy from us. Imagine, shorts, sock, everything. And we were put into clothes that were absolutely unbelievable. I think, I'm not sure in those days, but I think mine was in the \$35.00, pants and jacket and all that. From there I went to Hastings and bought one of the wildest looking sport coats you could ever have seen in your life. But that was the discharge part of it. I think it was a yellow discharge. They tell me they found an article from Army

was blue but mine I think from the Navy was yellow. Because in time I know my mother knew this was disturbing me, my mental state was getting very bad and my drinking was getting bad and I think she destroyed it. It was someplace in my home and I think and I think my mother got into her strong box sometime and tore it up. So I have no recollections of it.

**AD:** So, again, let's backtrack, you went to Hastings?

**DB:** I went to Hastings and bought a sport coat that was, I think, was yellow green and blue stripes. It was the wildest looking thing in the world and I from there went to the bar of the St. Francis Hotel and got plastered on martinis. Before I went down south. Down to Hollywood. But what will happen from there, we met occasionally in Hollywood. We regrouped or reunited in Hollywood and we would come to my mother's home in Hollywood and we had dinner parties there. A number of times. I remember there would be twelve or thirteen up to twenty-six in my mother's home at one time for a dinner. And I kept in contact with the one, Rebecca, over the period of years. The others I don't know where they're at.

**AD:** So, what kind of discharge did you get? I mean you....

**DB:** Undesirable discharge. I received an undesirable discharge, which I think was the color of yellow in the Navy, but I understood that the Army had a blue colored one for undesirable. Not dishonorable, undesirable. What the hell the name they tag on the thing. The congress of the United States decides that they should name someone undesirable. Who the hell are they? Who in the hell is capable or who in the hell is entitled to call someone else undesirable? It's dishonorable or.... I got an honorable discharge in time. I had it appealed and I have an honorable discharge in my apartment now.

**AD:** So what does....

**DB:** To tag someone with the word "undesirable" \_\_\_?\_\_\_. Excuse me.

**AD:** The undesirable, what did that mean to you. I mean you went to Hastings, you went to St. Francis to get plastered on martinis and you had this undesirable, what were you thinking to yourself?

**DB:** \_\_\_?\_\_\_

**AD:** You looked in the mirror....

**DB:** I felt for years without looking in mirrors and alcoholism, years of alcoholism, and calling myself an undesirable. What the hell is an undesirable. What a tag to put on anyone. When I went looking for a job, I went to the California Department of Employment I had to show this woman, I remember having the discharge at the time. Showing this woman that I received an undesirable discharge. But then, she was

beautiful and we turned that over to a medical discharge because I had had dengue fever. And we also thought that maybe homosexuality would come under the terminology of psychiatry or something psychiatric so a medical would be all right. It was a prevarication. And she was just beautiful. She assisted me and helped me in getting a job. I recall that. I can't recall exactly with whom that she put down an application medical rather than an undesirable. And I sent her some flowers the next, brought some to the department, I don't know quite what. In gratitude. And then when my mother was converted and brought to word to the Jesuits at Sacramento Boulevard, they said they saw some of that coming their way.

**AD:** Why did you, you said you got it switched over, what were you doing, why?

**DB:** Just in, how in the hell can you tell I got an undesirable discharge. What does it mean? What it meant. They did give undesirable other than homosexuality. Undesirable discharges were given for alcoholism, for ....

**AD:** So you appealed, right? You appealed you appealed your....

**DB:** I appealed it years later. Thirty years later I got an honorable discharge. I have an honorable discharge from the United States Navy. Because they had to give it to me because of the method in which they obtained the first one. My rights weren't protected and I incriminated myself by them telling me that it takes two to tangle so you have to tell us who it was who you tangled with, nothing will happen to them and all that, so on that basis, my appeal was granted and I was given an honorable discharge. I with other thousands.

**AD:** And now that you have it, what does it mean to you?

**DB:** It means a great deal. That I served my country honorably and did my service to my country as I was supposed to do. As I see on the television today, C-Span, Lieutenant Colonel Kamermier (sp?) and Sergeant Halisea (sp?) and Sergeant Elsie. None of them behaved badly, none of them. With honesty, she admitted she was gay in that questionnaire and the other two were I think fingered at home.

**AD:** So lifting this ban, what does it mean to you.

**DB:** Absolutely, they should. The word is conduct. They didn't conduct themselves unbecoming to anyone whatsoever. Their behavior was OK. They were exemplary in the work they did, all three of those people testified.

**AD:** So if this ban was lifted, what would that mean for you then?

**DB:** For me? For me particularly, I would, maybe some vindication. That service meant something and that the war time my grades were very good. I can't recall what my grades are, but I had very good grades as far as my ability and my work and all. I made it over the hill, I might not have if that was against my record.

**AD:** We need to stop this tape.

**Voice:** This is reel 96, this is camera of roll 96 and take 8 will be coming up.

**[End of tape 2, side 1]**

**[End of recording]**