Q: Today is March the 26th 1983 and I’m interviewing Sidney Brown of the University of Oklahoma at the AAS convention in San Francisco. Sidney, before we talk about your experience in World War II studying Japanese at the Boulder school, I’d like to know something about your background. Would you tell me when and where you were born, where you grew up and a bit about your family and your early education.

SB: I was born on January 29, 1925 in Kansas, Douglas, Kansas. So, in fact, I was born in the country away from the town. I attended a rural school for the first eight grades. Bloomington, great school. Then I commuted to high school, 15 miles away. Augusta High School, where I graduated in 1941. My father was a farmer. And he lived until 1981, active almost to the end. And raising cattle and wheat. I came from that kind of background. Though, in fact, I left it when I was 16 years of age and came back mostly as a visitor, as a guest, not as somebody who worked on the farm.

Q: What sorts of things were you interested in when you were in grade school and high school? I mean, did you have any notion that you were going to grow up and become an historian?
SB: I was interested in history from the time I read my first books on history. Geography was the subject that interested me in grade school. I knew every place name in the world. I won the county contest in geography in the 6th grade probably. We had scholarship contests for Class C schools. You see, these remote country schools have their own classification, which wasn’t quite as high as the A and B schools in the big towns of 10,000 people.

Q: How did your family weather the depression years in Kansas...?

SB: We came through very well because we lived on a farm. We didn’t have any money, but we always had plenty to eat. And, frankly, my grandfather was rich. He had the foresight to buy some land, which happened to have oil under it. And, so, he would have stepped in if we’d had difficulty. My father, actually, operated very efficiently and we came through with enough to eat and we enjoyed the simple pleasures of the country. The Great Depression didn’t hit us nearly as hard as people who lived in the city.

Q: Did you grow up with the radio? Enjoying the old programs or anything like that? Or the voice of FDR on the radio?

SB: Oh, yes. I heard FDR’s fireside addresses. Our radio was a battery-operated radio. Then we had a wind charger, because electricity came to our farm in 1937 for the first time. But I listened to radio.

Q: Were you a family that talked a lot about politics – about Roosevelt, the New Deal, the Republicans?

SB: My father was interested in politics and I suppose I followed politics for that reason. He was a very minor functionary in the Republican Party, I might say. My family didn’t support Roosevelt at all. But I followed local politics and national politics because my father was interested. He subscribed to Newsweek magazine for me once. He then subscribed to the Kansas City Star when I was in high school, so I would have a good daily paper to read. He was always, I suppose, he was a kind of a mentor on things of that sort.
Q: Now that you mention reading the newspapers, what about reading the papers for international events? Were you in an isolationist pocket or what? What were your feelings about international politics in those years? Or did you pay much attention to what was going on in Europe and then, eventually, the Pacific?

SB: We didn’t have much consciousness of the world outside of Kansas, or Butler County, or even Bloomington, where I lived. But, we did listen to the news. I remember listening to Elmer Davis, who had a 5-minute program over CBS on the eve of World War II. And I think we kept up with the news that way. I do remember hearing the daily reports of the progress of Saboro Kurusu. They probably pronounced it differently in those days, as he made his way toward Washington to negotiate. Every day he was a little closer. I don’t know how he came? Maybe...

Q: Did he come by a train, perhaps, cross-country?

SB: I don’t know whether he flew or he came by ship. But I do remember hearing about the Japanese crisis on the radio when I was 16. And I’m certain that we talked about politics and talked about international affairs. I wouldn’t say that we were isolationists. Certainly we were not part of the anti-war group. Now my Illinois cousins, my Illinois relatives, were strongly opposed to the war. There was a conscientious objector. I had six or ten cousins all together in Illinois and I think that that family was isolationist, but I don’t think our family was. My father had taken part in World War I and talked about that and was conscious of foreign affairs because he’d been abroad.

Q: He’d been to France?

SB: He’d been to France.

Q: What about, then, the day of Pearl Harbor itself? Do you recall?

SB: Very well. I was a freshman in college. We were having basketball practice for an intermural team or a pep club team to which I belonged. One of the late-comers, George Reynolds, told us the Japanese had just attacked Pearl Harbor. However, we continued playing basketball until we finished. The next
morning, all of the people in the rooming house in which I lived, gathered around the Montgomery Ward radio, which I owned, to listen to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s speech. His “Day of Infamy” speech. And I can have a memory of sitting on the bed listening to Roosevelt tell us about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Q: And you were 16?
SB: I was 16.

Q: And already enrolled in college.
SB: That’s right.

Q: Which was what college?
SB: Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas. It was a private school run by the Methodists.

Q: I see. Did you, of course, think of what it portended for your own future? That you would be of draft age within two years?
SB: Oh, I knew very well what it portended for me. I stayed in college for two years. I joined the Navy when I was seventeen, but in the Naval Reserve Program, called B-12, which led to officer training. And I joined it because I knew I’d be drafted if I waited until I was eighteen.

Q: I see.
SB: It was a much superior program, we were told.

Q: So you were able to finish two years of regular, what, liberal arts education before...
SB: That’s right.

Q: ...becoming more directly involved in the war?
SB: And I was a history and government major. The second year of college was disrupted a bit because so many people left, including professors. My physics professor, for example, went off in mid-year, I think, to do research for the Navy. So, the second year was not as stable a situation for us.

Q: After you finished the two years, what was the next step for you in the Navy’s program?
SB: Then I was sent to Southeast Missouri State College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri in the V-12 Program. Actually, I belonged to V-1 when I first went in, but they called it V-12. And that was a continuation of college, but we were in naval uniform. And I continued taking history courses, liberal arts courses, but I did have to take physics, mathematics, naval history, naval administration. We got up at 5:30 in the morning to do the calisthenics. We tried to run the college dormitory as if it were a naval station.

Q: These history courses – were they American history and European or did you have a little East Asian history thrown in there since you were involved in a ___ war?

SB: No East Asian.

Q: Nobody had that kind of expertise?

SB: I took American history. Naval History was actually a very good course, taught by a man who’d done his Master’s Degree on the Navy. American history. I studied all the naval battles. Learned all of the famous quotations of naval commanders. And then we were against the Japanese, so I didn’t learn much Japanese history in the process. So I took European history from 1870 to 1920 and then World History, it was called, 1920 to the present, which was in 1943.

Q: Did you in fact finish four years?

SB: No, I had two semesters, so I finished three years, but I took an extraordinary number of hours so that by the time I was nineteen, I had nearly enough hours to graduate.

Q: Did you take language as well? French or German or anything like that?

SB: I took one year of college German. That was all. I took high school Latin, but had no special interest in languages.

Q: How did you happen then to end up in the Navy Language School, Japanese Language School?

SB: Well, I continued my naval career at various stations in the U.S. I was sent to Asbury Park, New Jersey, which is a kind of holding stations for people who hadn’t yet entered midshipman’s school.
Then I went to Camp Sampson, New York on Lake Seneca, partly because the Navy had some doubts about my eyes. One had to have perfect vision and I failed one test along the way, but I think somebody else who failed had written his congressman and they pulled us all out of there, so I went to Notre Dame for midshipman’s school. And became an Ensign in 1944.

Q: How long is the Ensign’s school or midshipman’s school?

SB: Four months. It was really a course in engineering. We would ___ mathematics, navigation, damage control, ordinance, and the like. And, I suppose I made a good record there. Indeed, they examined us every day in every course. And they knew just exactly where we stood, to the third decimal point.

Q: Was it a very competitive atmosphere?

SB: Highly competitive. About a third of the people bilged out. Of 1,900 who started, I think 1,200 were commissioned. I remember that I ranked 23rd on the list. It would have been higher, except that my grade in leadership was just average. But in all the academic subjects, I was very near the top. And so when Commander Hinemarsh came around the school to recruit people for the naval language school in Boulder, I decided to set up an interview. I thought that I would ask for Russian as a language, but Hinemarsh had all of my papers in front of me. He told me, I’m sending you to Boulder to study Japanese, before I had said one word. I told him that I’d like to study Russian and he said, we don’t need people in Russian, we need people in Japanese. He smoked his pipe. He looked very important as a commander sitting behind the desk. And I simply said, “Yes, Sir.”

Q: Now, had you had any previous knowledge of Hinemarsh’s recruiting trips or scouting trips? Was this the first time he came to your institution looking for people?

SB: I’d never heard of Hinemarsh.

Q: You hadn’t? Had you even heard of the Japanese program?

SB: I just saw the announcement posted that there was a naval oriental language school.
Q: I see.

SB: ...which included Russian, four dialects of Chinese, Malay, and Japanese. And my request was not for Japanese, but that’s what I got.

Q: Well, you say that Hinemarsh told you where you were going. But did he also put you through some kind of an interview or ask you some additional questions. Or was it enough, he had your records, he told you, and that was it.

SB: He did talk with me afterwards, but it was evident that he’d made up his mind before I set foot in the room.

Q: Were there others in your class that he sent to Boulder?

SB: Yes, he selected a number of people. The fellow who told me about the interviews, failed to be selected, I remember. But I’m sure that there were people who were pretty well known. Maybe 15 or 20 of us went to Boulder all together, in different languages.

Q: I know you said, “Yes, Sir.” But what did you privately think? What? You know, I’m going to study Japanese?

SB: Oh no. This sounded like a very interesting challenge. I might explain that 90% of the young officers went to Little Creek, Virginia to pick up landing craft. An Ensign was qualified to be the Commander of an LCI, which was the first ship into the invasion beach. And I’m sure my classmates took part in the war in the South Pacific, which I missed, by reason of studying Japanese.

Q: So the next step, then, was to travel to Boulder.

SB: Yes.

Q: Was the existence of this school supposed to be a top secret?

SB: Hinemarsh told me that it was secret, that I should tell no one exactly what I was doing, including my parents. I probably revealed a little bit about it. When I arrived in Boulder, I found that the taxi
driver knew exactly how many students were coming in to study what languages. And it certainly wasn’t a secret there.

Q: Were your letters censored, in an effort to prevent knowledge of the school?

SB: No, we were not censored. We sent letters bin the regular mail. Overseas letters might have been, but not letters out of Boulder. I rode in with two other naval officers whom I happened to meet in Denver on the bus. One of them was Bill Skinner, who was going off to study Chinese. I don’t know which dialect, probably Mandarin. And a fellow named Duarde, whom I haven’t seen since.

Q: Can you give me a description of sort of the physical layout of the school? And then we’ll proceed to the various other parts of the program, but how did they set things up? In, what, dormitories at the University of Colorado?

SB: We all stayed in the men’s dormitory. University of Colorado had one men’s dormitory at that time. It was a very fine building, I thought, for its day. There were actually some Waves there, too, who soon left.

Q: Now you arrived in late 1944?

SB: October 1944. There were some British officers there, as well, including W. G. Beasley. We lived in the dormitory. Had all of our meals there. But it was really a very relaxed operation, compared with the training schools, which I’d been before. We always had curfews elsewhere, but in the dormitory, there was none. We could come and go as we pleased, which seemed strange. Though we did have to have our lessons ready and be present at all classes. The classes were conducted in two or three different places. I remember going to a place called “Helen’s Hall”, I think, where the History Department is now located. I went to the library for most of my classes, the second floor of the University of Colorado Library, where small cubicles were set up for classes of five people each.

Q: How many were in your regular classes? You say the cubicles were for five each.
SB: Well, we had no more than five people in the classes. Occasionally, they grew to eight. Per section, I should say. Because there might have been 20 or 30 people in a given class. We had about six sections, if there were that many.

Q: So you were competing with four or five other people.

SB: That’s right. We changed teachers frequently. We even changed sections, as I recall. So we didn’t necessarily have the same classmates all the time.

Q: Now, this was sort of a naval intelligence school.

SB: Yes.

Q: And they wanted you to learn a certain kind of Japanese? And were you being trained for spoken Japanese and written Japanese or one particular kind of Japanese or just everything across the board?

SB: Everything. The Navy program put a lot more emphasis on written Japanese compared to some of the other programs. We did have spoken Japanese, but I think the strength was in the reading course. We took the courses in reading, the various books of Naganuma. We had dictation, which meant writing characters on the board. We had kaiwa, conversation. And later on, we studied yosho and sosho.

Q: How many hours a day were you in class? Do you remember how much work you had to do outside of class to keep up with your assignments?

SB: Four hours a day, five days a week. Then we took an examination every Saturday morning, lasting about three hours, probably from 8 to 11. Our grades were posted every week. The results of the examinations became public knowledge.

Q: Did you have anything else that you were doing at the same time or were you strictly focusing on language. I mean, did you have any drills...

SB: Strictly language. I suppose we did stand watch in the dormitory. I remember being on watch a few times. Saturday morning after the examination, we had drill. It was the most unmilitary organization with which I was associated, because people came from all the services. Some were civilians who had
not yet gotten commissions.  Major Pratt was the drill master.  He was a student in Japanese who later took part in the ____ trials.  We saw him in the movies, in the news.  But he tried to put us into shape without very much success.  Having come from midshipmen’s school where everything had to be just perfect, it was a shock to come into such a relaxed organization.  We had swimming classes.  In the Navy, I think every person swam every day and that was an important part of the training.  We did have lectures occasionally on other subjects.  ____ Tatsumi, for example, talked on the nature of the Japanese language.  At lunch, we had radio broadcasts.  Mr. Ozamoto taped NHK or JOAK or whatever it was called, and broadcast the news in Japanese to us.  He took this off the shortwave radio.  But then students in the classes were told to work up skits in Japanese in turn and occasionally we put these on over the speaker system.  We were in the studio and the dining room was a place out of which these reports came.  We always had music.  We got to know Shino no yoru very well, because it was played repeatedly.  We got to know the Patriots March, Ikoku something, koshinkyoku or whatever it was.  Every Wednesday night, we had a Japanese movie – Japanese soundtrack, no subtitles.  These were pre-War movies.  I don’t think the quality was especially high.  I really don’t know who the directors were or the actors now.  American servicemen laughed in the wrong places, when somebody was getting ready to leap off a cliff to commit suicide or that kind of thing.  It was a little bit embarrassing, actually, to be there.  Occasionally, something astonishing would come up on the soundtrack.  Swanee River, for example.  In wholly unexpected place.  We knew that Stephen Foster songs was popular in Japan, too.  Q:  Were these strictly domestic pre-War films or did they have anything to do with settings overseas or Japan’s empire?  SB:  These were mostly domestic films, as I recall.  But newsreels were shown, too.  And I remember seeing a newsreel of Yoshizawa going the Netherlands East Indies very pompously in 1940 to negotiate.  I saw lots of newsreels, but that’s one that stuck in my mind.  How arrogant he looked.  Q:  Did they show some historical films or Samurai dramas?
SB: We probably saw some Samurai dramas, but the things that I remember most are the comedy films. The Japanese were still in the pie-throwing stage. And the domestic dramas in which tension developed and they always had sad endings. Somebody died at the end of every one.

Q: Is this something that you sort of enjoyed, as relaxation or entertainment or was it pretty hard-slogging to sit there and watch them?

SB: Well, I don’t think we enjoyed them a whole lot.

Q: It was your duty?

SB: Attendance was required. And the truth is that nobody told us about the significance of the films. If we had had some background, it might have meant more. We simply went into the auditorium to see the film and that was it.

Q: Were they showing you the films because of the soundtrack was Japanese or were you supposed to be absorbing something about Japan?

SB: The soundtrack. I think the theory was that we would listen to Japanese. Though, in fact, the soundtrack was so fast that most of us didn’t understand more than a few words at the beginning.

Q: Did you have any assigned texts about Japan itself? I mean, was this a language and area studies program or more strictly language?

SB: It was strictly language, but the Naganuma readers had lots of stories about Japan, Japanese geography, Japanese heros. I remember reading about Ito and Fukuzawa and other people in the Naganuma texts. Japanese fairy tales, Momotaro. I was only 19 and some of the students were 25 or 30. It was amusing to see them struggling with the text of Japanese fairy tales.

Q: Was there any effort when you were in the early stages of the Naganuma readers to give you intelligence terms or military terms? A language that would be useful to a Navy officer? Or were you just doing standard Japanese?
SB: We learned standard Japanese at first. At the end, though, we had a book called Kaigun tokuhon, which was written at Boulder and introduced us to all the Naval terms. So we knew what a battleship was, what a destroyer was and that kind of thing.

Q: Who ran the school? Who were the instructors? Were they Japanese nationals or Nisei or some Caucasians?

SB: Of course, there was a naval officer in command of things. [J. Roger Deetz] is one I remember. He’d been one of Earl Warren’s proteges in California. Commander [Krowl] was another, a very unmilitary kind of person, who hitchhiked to Denver, who was in the constant company of a nineteen-year-old girl, co-ed, though he was more than 50. And, again, I think he ran things well enough. The civilian head of the school was Glen Shaw when I arrived. And Glen Shaw, apparently, had the major voice in selecting Colorado as a place for the school. He was a graduate of Colorado College in Colorado Springs, and he was the Director of the school. The Vice Director was Samuel [Hilbert], who was a Methodist missionary in Japan before the war, really an educator, a Professor of Philosophy at Kansai Gakuin Nishinomiya. Then the various languages were under particular people. And Nakamura Susumu was in charge of Japanese. A very laconic Japanese type. He struck terror in the hearts of students, I think, because he seemed not to show any emotions. And, yet, when I talked with him I found that he was a cordial and genial...

Q: Was he a Japanese national?

SB: He was from the faculty at the University of California-Berkeley. I know he was Japanese, but he had probably lived in the United States before he [came here]. You asked about teachers. We had many different kinds. We had missionaries, who were often the best teachers for beginning Japanese. I remember a man named [Kaiper] who was Dutch Reformed. He may have been Dutch in the beginning, but he was connected with the U.S. I remember Topping, whose mother made propaganda broadcasts for the Japanese. I remember a grandson of Hepburn. His name has slipped out of my mind, but he was
a missionary who taught us. We had Nisei instructors, who knew some Japanese, at least enough to teach us. I had the impression that some of them were not especially good at reading, but they could speak. One of my most distinguished teachers was probably Ikei Nobutaka. He taught Book Three of Naganuma, the reading course [for me]. We had some people who had come straight off the farm in California and taught us. A certain man named Abe, who tried to communicate to us the patriotic fervor of the Russo-Japanese War, 203-meter hill and so on, as we read about General Nogi. He was hooted down by the Marines who were in the class. We called him “Honest Abe”, though, because he was so rustic, I guess, and straightforward about everything. We had Japanese nationals, people who were trapped in the United States by the War and preferred to teach over being in an internment camps. Pat Katsura, graduate student in Chemistry at the University of Maryland, was one of the most interesting teachers I had. He refused to take an oath of loyalty to the United States Government and was denied a pay raise. But nevertheless, taught us and had a lot of interesting things to say. I think all of us liked Pat Katsura.

Q: What sorts of things did he talk about?

SB: Oh, he talked about baseball.

Q: In Japan?

SB: In the United States, I think. And, let me think, what did he say? I said that and I can’t really come up with illustrations now.

Q: I was just wondering whether you were learning some things about Japan and the Japanese through these language informants and language teachers in addition to the films.

SB: We did learn something about Japan. We had Suzuki. Ken Suzuki. Big Suzuki, he was called, who told us about studying Marxism when he went back to Japan in the 1920s, about struggling with the police, and we got some idea of how it was in pre-War Japan. A lot of very interesting teachers. I could
probably name every one of them, if I had a little time to think about them. Some had come from the internment camps and, of course, welcomed the chance to teach.

Q: I don’t know whether you had any occasion to reflect or not on all of this -- learning the language and learning it, in part, through these informants, some were trained, some were not. Did you begin to develop any kinds of feelings about Japan, the Japanese or were you able to speculate about the origins of the War or it was a pretty black and white thing in your mind. The Japanese had behaved badly on the Day of Infamy.

SB: Well, I think we all felt that the Japanese had behaved badly. We had no doubts about the righteousness of the war. But we came to admire the individual Japanese whom we met. We had a feeling that there was more to Japanese culture than militarism. And I think almost every one of us came to have a feeling of respect for our teachers, 90% of whom were Japanese. And a feeling of empathy for the Japanese in lots of ways.

Q: How long a course was this?

SB: 14 months.

Q: 14 months. So you knew you were in there 14 months and this sort of thing. Did you have much association with Glen Shaw or he was strictly an administrator? Did he do any teaching?

SB: He was an administrator. We saw him when we had graduation ceremonies. I don’t know that I ever went to his office. But I did hear him give those very interesting speeches at graduation ceremonies. He always had some interesting anecdote to relate. Kit Carson founded the first language school on this very spot when he learned Spanish in 1857 or something like that. One time, we had the British Naval Attache out to give the commencement address. About once a month, we had a commencement; all of us attended. We made a very special thing of graduation. That time, a lot of British officers were graduating, including Beasley. I knew one of the British officers very well. I didn’t know Beasley so well out there, but the Captain, who came out from Washington, told us about all of his
hair-raising experiences in the British Navy, and the Executive Officer on the Repulse, which was sunk. He’d been the Commanding Officer of three or four other ships which had been sunk. At the end of the speech, Glen Shaw got up to say that I hope that Captain So-and-So will come back to speak to us someday when he’s been aboard a ship which was not sunk. That created an international incident. English officers filed a letter of protest with the British Embassy, I guess. Demanded an apology from Glen Shaw. I saw Beasley ten years later in Tokyo. I joked about this speech. He was still mad. So, Glen Shaw said a lot of interesting things, but was always getting his foot in hot water. One time, he told us about the dog shogun. I heard this story about Tsunayoshi from Glen Shaw for the first time. So, my associations with him were always very formal. I knew Sam Hilburn pretty well, because he attended the same church I did. And a woman who had lived in our community invited me to dinner, where the Hilburns were present, all five children. So I got to know him on an informal basis, the number two man. One time, Fred Tremaine and I went into his office to give him advice on how to revise the program, which he didn’t receive especially well. Two 19-year-old boys thought we knew how...the schedule.

Q: What was your advice? Do you remember?

SB: I’m not even sure what the advice was. I think he was amused. He wasn’t angry.

Q: Did the students, including yourself, have a lot of respect for Shaw and Hilburn?

SB: Yes, I think we probably had more respect for Hilburn than for Shaw. But I think we looked up to both of them.

Q: What was Shaw’s background?

SB: Shaw had been a journalist and an English teacher in Japan. He started teaching English in Yamaguchi in Western Japan. He wrote for the old Japan Chronicle. Then he translated stories by Akutagawa. And, he was kind of a literary figure.

Q: And Hilburn?

SB: Hilburn had been a missionary educator. He was a Professor of Philosophy.
Q: He was the one at [____].

SB: That’s right. And he was a member of the Boulder Methodist Church, which I attended and I may have been one of the few language officers who went to church on Sunday. But I got to know Hilburn that way.

Q: Did you ever see Hindmarsh again?

SB: I don’t think I ever saw him again. He might have come through Boulder once. It’s dim in my memory now. I can still see his pipe and see his features from that one interview. But I don’t think I ever saw him after Notre Dame.

Q: Were all of you, in a sense, personally picked or recruited by him? He had some hand in picking all of the students?

SB: I think so. Every person I talked with had met Hindmarsh someplace or other. Some had been very aggressive about getting interviews with Hindmarsh. They were Marines out into the Pacific, who knew a smattering of Japanese, and wanted to come back.

Q: Had you... Now you only had the equivalent... You had the equivalent of four years of courses, even though you didn’t do the BA at that point. Had you been in long enough to be nominated for Phi Beta Kappa?

SB: The schools which I attended, did not have Phi Beta Kappa chapters. My grade point average was high enough.

Q: Because I had heard stories that Hindmarsh was looking for Phi Beta Kappas.

SB: I had heard that he did look for Phi Beta Kappa. I probably made it because he liked the results of my tests for the Navy and because of my performance in Midshipmen’s School. I was not Phi Beta Kappa. At one point, about 25% of the students were Harvard men. And there were lots of Harvard and Yale men around when I was there.

Q: You mentioned Beasley. Did you know him personally at the time or did you know him later?
SB: Later. I saw him at the time. I knew a couple of British officers personally. I’m trying to think of the
name of the man who went swimming with us sometimes. I can’t recall. John [Catt] I knew. A young
man who had a beard. I couldn’t understand him the first time I talked with him. I happened to drop
into line. He came from around the corner. He said, “Well, I say, were you in the queue?” I didn’t know
what he meant. But it turned out that I had crowded into line unwittingly.

Q: You really broke British protocol there.

SB: I saw him in Washington later. We worked at the Washington Documents Center together. I didn’t
recognize him, because he had shaved his beard. Then I learned that Catt’s beard had become an
international issue. That Catt had gotten permission from his British Naval Captain, [Drogbeard], he
turned up in Boulder under an American Naval Officer, who ordered him to shave his beard. He refused
on the grounds that the Captain had given him permission and only the Captain could order it taken off.
I think this Captain had gone down with his ship or something. Then in Washington, after that issue was
removed, he shaved it and looked much younger.

Q: Did you know Ivan Morris at that time?

SB: I knew Ivan Morris slightly in Boulder. He drove a 16-cylinder car around town. All of the rest of us
were on foot. I got to know him very well in Washington, because we were on the same translation
team. We had tea together in the afternoon. I’d never drunk tea until I met Ivan Morris. We went to
Chinese restaurants for lunch. He introduced me to Egg Foo Young, which I thought was a basic Chinese
dish. And I talked with him a lot when we were both 20 years of age.

Q: There are a few more things I would like to find out about the Navy language school. Your teachers -
- do you know how they lived in the town or where they lived -- the Japanese...Because the school was
located in Colorado, I understand, because the Governor did allow the Japanese to come there. They all
had to be evacuated from the West Coast, but the Governor of Colorado was somehow involved in the
possibility of the Japanese to resettle there and to be used in language school. Are you aware at all of how they lived or where they lived or how they might have been treated by the local population.

SB: Of course, the American teachers lived in regular houses. I think I did see Hilburn’s house, which was like any other house. I remember visiting the apartments of one or two Japanese teachers, which seemed quite nice. I think it was Tomizawa who invited John Howes and me over. His wife came out from in back to serve us tea and then disappeared. And he talked to us for a little while and showed us some of his scrolls. He was a calligrapher of some eminence. These people lived in houses which they rented in Boulder, and I think they lived all over town.

Q: And they could come and go freely?

SB: They could come and go freely if they were not Japanese subjects. In that case, they had to report to immigration to get permission to leave Boulder. Pat Katsura told us some stories about that. The nearest immigration office was in Denver. So, in order to get permission to leave Boulder, he went down to Denver. They asked him, “How did you get here without permission? Why did you come without permission?” and, so he was not allowed to leave the town of Boulder without getting clearance from someone. Katsura told us a lot of stories about his early experiences. He was here on Pearl Harbor Day. Maryland, for some reason he was in Washington D.C. He remembers seeing a mob on a street corner, which had cornered a couple of Filipino men and thought they were Japanese. These men protested, “We’re not Japanese, we’re Filipinos!” And somebody said, “We don’t trust you Japs.” Katsura, who looked like an American Indian, and was on the edge of the crowd watching all of this. And he was able to get by, I think, because he did not look very Japanese. He once said that the went into a Chinese restaurant and took a button off the cook’s coat that said that “I am a Chinese” and wore it. Went into a movie theater and he said that a woman come over to him and said we sympathize with your people so much, but those Japs, we don’t trust them. So, you asked about the stories Katsura told.
He related a lot of anecdotes about his life in the United States. He was very frank with us, very un-Japanese.

Q: You made the comment that some of the missionary teachers were the best introductory language teachers. Can you theorize about that?

SB: They were best at the beginning level, because they understood what problems we had. The Japanese did not understand what our pronunciation problems were. The missionaries did.

Q: You mentioned the WAVs. There were some WAVs there when you came. Was there another class of WAVs that went through in your time? I’m interested in what the Navy was doing with these women.

SB: I think that was the end of the experiment in training WAVs in Japanese. Glen Shaw’s daughter was one of the WAVs. I think that Helen Craig McCullough may have been there. Though I didn’t know her personally, I heard that she was there. I was told by Hilburn that the WAVs were actually the best people when it came to conversation. One of the rules was that we should talk only Japanese at the lunch table and dinner table. The WAVs obeyed that scrupulously. The men did not. The men were too sophisticated, Hilburn said. Indeed, the eager beaver who tried to talk Japanese, was likely to be ostracized by the other people at the table.

Q: But what about all these weekly grades and everything?

SB: We weren’t graded on dinner table conversation. We were graded only on our examinations on Saturday.

Q: So, trying to express Japanese or use it at the dinner table didn’t necessarily feed back into your...

SB: It probably would have if we had done it.

Q: So you were then still at the school finishing up when the war was over?

SB: Yes, I finished in February of 1946. Long after the war was over.

Q: Well, since you’ve recollected Pearl Harbor Day, can you tell me a little bit about VJ Day. How you received the news in Boulder and, beyond that, also how you received the news of the atomic bomb.
SB: I heard the news of the atomic bomb on the radio, while I was in the sick bay at the top floor of the men’s dormitory. I’d gone hiking in the mountains and had gotten an infected foot. A serious infection. And I was flat on my back when I heard the announcer interrupt the Fred Waring Program on my radio at my bedside to say something about the atomic bomb, the Hiroshima bomb. I was well by VJ Day. We were given three days off to celebrate. One of those days, I took the train to Cheyenne, Wyoming with John Howes and Walter [Brunhemler], who now teaches at Western Michigan in the field of European History, I think. The vista dome car gave us a splendid view of the countryside. We simply went up there and came back. Another day, I went to Denver to meet a girl I knew from my home state of Kansas. It was a riotous celebration, to say the least. I recall there was indiscriminate kissing. The girl with whom I was associated, did not want to be involved in that. My main duty was to protect her from sailors and soldiers, who thought every girl was fair game. But VJ Day lasted for three days. Larry [Kristkoff], the least enthusiastic of our students, burned his Naganuma textbook in the hall of the men’s dormitory on VJ Day. The house mother was upset about it. Commander Dietz put his arm around her and said, “Boys will be boys,” and overlooked it. But he very quickly shipped out to do something else.

Q: You said the least enthusiastic of the Japanese language students. During those 14 months, before the war was over, did you have any notion of how you might possibly be using Japanese if the war continued – in interrogation or what? Translating?

SB: We thought we might use it in interrogation and some of the graduates of the school in late 1945 were sent out to do interrogation. A lawyer, for example, from Gonzaga University was sent right directly to the Pacific islands to interrogate prisoners in connection with the War Crimes Trials. I don’t think I had a very clear notion of what I would do with the Japanese, but I continued studying, because that was my assigned duty. A lot of people did ask for transfers out of the school at that point.

Q: Now when you finished in early 1946, you were not eligible to leave the Navy or anything like that? You still had to [_____] a certain number of points or how was that?
SB: I didn’t have enough points because I’d been in the United States for my whole career. It was the people who were overseas who got lots of points. I think three points a month for combat, two points a month for overseas, one point a month for service in the U.S. And so I had considerable time to serve.

Q: And you were sent at this point to Washington? Is that when you got involved with the Washington Document Center?

SB: That’s right.

Q: What was the Center? What was its function?

SB: It was located in the Stewart Building, which was an automobile agency in Northwest Washington. It was a kind of a Navy annex. 6th and P St., or something like that. And it was a place where translations were done. One of the early projects involved translating things for the War Crimes Trials. I was given the handbook of the Japanese thought police. Our group was making a file on membership or leadership of right-wing organizations. I got to know the name of Okawa Shumei very well, because he cropped up every place. But after a few weeks our file was bundled up and shipped off to Tokyo, I think. And we lost that responsibility. A lot of the work there was busy work. They had us on duty – there must have been 100 people in the Washington Document Center. And they decided to have us classify books that were shipped back from Japan. Whole libraries were scooped up. And they asked us to look at books to give the titles, the authors, the dates of publication, and probable contents. And everything was involved. Once I even got the Confucian Analects, which, a Chinese book, not a Japanese book, but I dutifully wrote my little report on it. And I think those books were turned over to the Library of Congress later.

Q: When you say whole libraries were confiscated, really confiscated with the idea of keeping these books or with the idea of determining what was censorable and what might have contained ultra-nationalistic writings or...
SB: I don’t know why they were sent to us. My rank was ensign. I was too low in the hierarchy to know. It was not mine to reason why.

Q: How was your particular unit or office organized at this Washington Document Center? You worked under the direction of what, Lieutenant or Commander or...

SB: Well, the head of the office was a Captain Fullenwider, who’d been Naval Attache in Chile before he arrived. I don’t think he knew any Japanese. We were divided up into teams. The head of my team was Captain Mann of the Australian Army. Actually, it was not exclusively a naval operation. There were people from all the services and all the nations involved in this. One of the people on my team was a man named Smith from Scotland in the British Army. I had not seen his name anywhere until I read a book called, *The Samurai*, by Turnbull and observed that Smith was the translator of the Japanese passages in that book. Ivan Morris was a member of our team. We had Nisei from Hawaii who were in the Army. The Navy didn’t accept them, but... Sharkey Fujitani is a name that comes to mind. Marjorie Hada, a WAC, Florence Kanashiro, who was a very attractive lady, but not especially adept at Japanese. When the 442nd Regimental Combat Team came home from Italy, those men were treated as conquering heroes by the Nisei on our translation team.

Q: It sounds rather fascinating. A multi-national group of people you worked with, Washington D.C. The war was over.

SB: Yes.

Q: And exploring Washington with Ivan Morris. How long did this last?

SB: It lasted until August of 1946, when I had enough points to get out of the Navy.

Q: Did anyone approach you about serving in Japan in some capacity connected with the Occupation?

SB: The number two man in the office called me in once to say that if I would be willing to go to [Qing tao], China for 18 months, he would recommend me. But I was so anxious to get out of the Navy, that I didn’t want to go to [Qing tao], China. That was a place where repatriation of Japanese troops was
taking place. And if I’d gone, I might have had a ring-side seat for the Chinese Revolution. But you see, I was a country boy who’d been gone from home for more than three years. I was anxious to get home, and so I declined this one. There was never a chance to go to Japan directly. But word got around the office that if we applied to the Pentagon, we could be hired as civilians by the Department of the Army or by the Army. I went to the Pentagon for an interview. I’m virtually certain that I would have been hired if I’d gone through with the whole process, but I...

Q: What kind of interview [ ]?

SB: What kind of interview? I don’t remember the details now.

Q: I’ve heard from some people that there was some interesting guy who was conducting interviews at the Pentagon and trying to make sure that a certain number of liberals or Reformists [or that was before the Reformist, Caster Mine], got into Occupied Japan. I don’t know who this individual was in the War Department. He might have been someone previously employed in the [ ] administration.

SB: I don’t remember that political questions were asked. I’m not even sure if it was a man or a woman who interviewed me. My memory’s failed on that one.

Q: But you decided against...

SB: I decided on my own initiative that I wanted to go home.

Q: Were you going to say that you also didn’t want to be associated the Army?

SB: No, I didn’t worry about that much. It’s true the Navy had a superiority complex with regard to the Army. I deliberately joined the Navy because it was a more prestigious organization. I might say that in those days I read PM newspaper, which was a radical newspaper. It was an insane thing to do to take into my office in Naval Intelligence, but I did. I probably was suspect by somebody.

Q: Washington Documentation Center Navy people were all from Navy Intelligence? Is that right?

SB: They came from the Navy Language School, Navy Intelligence.

Q: So therefore, …
SB: Yes, we were all in the same Office of Naval Intelligence. [Admiral English] wrote a letter of thanks when I left. We did have a super-secret operation at the back of our office, where work was being done on Russia. And that was guarded rather closely. We heard only whispers, what was going on back there. Most of the things we did on Japan were not very secret.

Q: Well, I am curious then to know, first, how you put this language training to use or did not put it to use as you completed your academic training. And then when you actually saw Japan or arrived in Japan for the first time.

SB: All right. Let me say one word about two interesting people in the office. John Russell was there, the son of Bertrand Russell. He was an English officer, who was a translator. A woman named [Kisa] Noguchi, who was a Nisei, was a translator in the office. She later married the Head of the Harvard School of Architecture. I saw a story about her and her sister that was in a Denver paper and found out that her father and mother had groomed five girls for careers in scholarship and art. And every one was distinguished, but she was then just an ordinary translator in our office. I went back to college. I took a full year at Southwestern College in Kansas, though I probably didn’t need to to get my degree. I taught in high school for a year. I was married in that period. Went off to the University of Wisconsin in the Fall of 1948 to start graduate school. I was by then 23 years of age. I must have been much younger than people, now because of three years in the Navy, I was a little older. Well, I was younger than 90% of the graduate students still, because most were veterans. My intention was to study American History. I had read Frederick Jackson Turner. I thought that my future lay in studying the history of my country. My ancestors came here in the 17th century. The Brown family had a sense of history. Yet, the very first man with whom I talked, told me that I should study something about Japan, because I had that background. He was Fred Harvey Harrington. At least I did take American Foreign Relations and took a course under [Gordman] on Far Eastern history in my initial summer. By fall, I decided that, well, I would work on a Master’s Degree in East Asian History and Japanese History. And, took my Master’s at
Wisconsin. I considered going to the University of Michigan after that, because Wisconsin did not have a language program, among other things. A man named Yamane helped me with language. Yamane Taro, who was the first Japanese student at the University of Wisconsin. A graduate of the Japanese Naval Academy, who had come over and was very kind in sharing his knowledge of Japanese with me. He was a kind of a tutor.

Q: Now you say the first Japanese, do you mean...

SB: Post-war.

Q: Post-war. And was this in 1948?

SB: This was by 1950.

Q: Oh. By 1950, I see. So this is after the [ ] policy.

SB: I had my Master’s degree in hand. I did go to Michigan, though, in the summer of 1950, thinking that I might transfer. I met Jack Hall then. Listened to some of his lectures. I’d already taken courses which had the same names as his courses and so I didn’t really enroll in them. But I took things in Japanese society. I had a teacher named Masuoka. I enrolled in a course on Japanese language taught by Hattori Shiro, who was a linguistics man. He was given the job of teaching language. It was the advanced course. What I found was that everybody else in the class, and I think there were only five of us, spoke fluent Japanese because they’d all been out with the Occupation. I did not. Everything was conducted in Japanese, and so I was sometimes lost. But I knew a whole lot more kanji than anybody else. And so I could read better than anybody in the class. Well, Hattori didn’t quite know what to do with me, because I couldn’t even say the simplest things that, “I want to get off here”. But still, I got a good grade in his class. I went back to Wisconsin, partly because my wife was working on a degree in Sociology and felt that she couldn’t finish it. And the people at Wisconsin liked me. I thought of myself as a general historian, not as a specialist on Japan. And I thought that Wisconsin had great professors in the field of American history. Harrington I’ve mentioned. He became a kind of a mentor in the sense
that I served as his teaching assistant. Merle Curti was there. I took a lot of courses in the British
Empire under Paul [Mackland] and the only East Asian historian was Eugene Boardman. The only person
under whom I studied. He did teach a stimulating course on the history of modern Japan. The first time
he gave it. And that got me off on research. 1951 and ‘2... In the spring of ’51, I took my preliminary
examinations. Passed them. 1951 and ‘2, I was a NAP fellow, meaning that I had an $1100 fellowship,
which was a lot of money in those days, to do my dissertation. I went to the Library of Congress. I
decided to write on Kido Takayoshi because I had read in the bibliography in the [ ] textbook that his
diary was available, that his papers were available. For $25 I bought 13 volumes on Kido from Charles
Tuttle. And I set up my own research program. The only problem was that the first day I worked on the
diary, I read all day and still had only read one page. It was then that I called in Yamane Taro to help me
with this and got a little more progress. I never did read it very rapidly, but at least I went through the
Kido den, the Kido biography. I looked at some of the Kido letters. I didn’t read them all, by any means.
I went through the Kido diary, particularly the part that dealt with the Iwakura Mission. And counted on
reading books in English mostly to get background. To put the Kido papers in context. At the Library of
Congress, I did read books recommended to me by Edwin G. Beale, who was then the Japanese
Librarian. He introduced me to Osatake and the other people whom I wouldn’t have known about.
Arthur Hummel was the Director of the Library Oriental Division, the Division of Orientalia in that period.
I knew him. Andrew Kuroda was there. Miss Takeshita. I was overwhelmed that they all took me down
to coffee one morning to talk over my research program and treated me like a very important person. I
was still quite young. I was introduced to [Delmore] Brown who was doing research at the Library. The
man who sat next to me one day was Oliver Edmund Clubb, who just gotten into trouble at the State
Department. I heard Arthur Hummel tell him that someday people will say that you’re right and the
McCarthys are wrong. I spent time going to hear Congress in session. I was present for the IPR hearings,
at which Owen Lattimore testified under Pat McCarran of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee of
the Senate Judiciary Committee. Noland, Ferguson, all those people were there. So I kept an eye on contemporary Asia by attending these hearings.

Q: Were you there...you mentioned Lattimore...were you there when Eugene Dooman or any of those people came through and testified?

SB: I don’t remember him. I probably attended only the Lattimore hearings. I think I missed the Fairbank hearing. Mrs. Fairbank was in the audience for the Lattimore hearings. Somebody pointed her out to me as...that would be the mother of John King Fairbank, who was looking after him. No, I didn’t meet Dooman. I didn’t hear him. I attended the Senate debate on the Peace Treaty. San Francisco Peace Treaty. Ten senators voted against it. I heard Noland and Jenner and those people renounce the treaty. I was even recruited to make a comment for Voice of America on my response to the debate. This was through some Japanese person whom I knew. Ito Yoshitomo, who was another Japanese student at Wisconsin, had come down to Washington. Visited us at our home and attended those same debates.

Q: And you actually did do this for Voice of America?

SB: Yes. I have no idea whether my comments were broadcast or not, but they were recorded.

Q: And, at this point, did you begin...or you finished your dissertation?

SB: I finished the dissertation in the summer of 1952. Actually, I started it in 1951 in the summer. I finished it in late summer of 1952.

Q: And then found a teaching job or did something else...?

SB: The jobs were not very plentiful during the Korean War. And the summer was going on and I hadn’t heard about any jobs whatsoever. I did talk to some government agencies in Washington about employment. I actually talked to the CIA and I think that the CIA was anxious to employ me. But while I was living in Winfield, Kansas, to which place I’d gone with my wife and daughter, I heard about an opening at Oklahoma A & M College. A professor had died suddenly and I got the job. So, Stillwater,
Oklahoma was only 80 miles from Winfield, Kansas. I went down to start to work and that determined my career.

Q: Now this job that was available, was it, I can’t imagine that it was an East Asia history job, it was a general job?

SB: [O. E. Huly] had been an East Asian man. He had taught in China and so that was the main part of his work. He had two courses on Asia going, a third course on U.S. history, and a fourth course on English history, which has been assigned to him rather arbitrarily because the English historian had been sent on forced leave. I inherited those four courses.

Q: So that was a pretty rough teaching schedule. When did you finally get to Japan?

SB: I got there in 1956, after I’d been teaching for four years. I applied for a Ford Foundation Fellowship, which came through. I also applied for a Fulbright, which was granted, but I probably made a mistake in turning it down. A colleague had been put on the alternate list for a Fulbright to Finland. A senior colleague who was instrumental in my employment. He thought that my application probably hurt his standing, so I withdrew, since I had the Ford grant. I could have had both, I think, and spent longer. But I went in ’56 and ’7 for the first time, I was then 31 years of age.

Q: And I just wanted to ask you one more question, which is really a long question. You finally see Japan in 1956, ’57, and you went with your wife and daughter.

SB: Yes, I had two daughters.

Q: Two daughters. You had to set up a household and do research. What were your first impressions of Japan and the Japanese?

SB: Well, it was my first trip abroad, really. I’d gone to Cuba, but I’d never been in a place like Japan. I landed at Haneda Airport. Actually, I preceded my family. I went over alone.

Q: You flew over?
SB: I flew over on Pan American in the days of propeller planes, when it took 29 hours to get there. It looked like a poor country. I got a ride into town with a Japanese person whom I knew slightly on the plane. His family chauffeur had come out to the airport to meet him. They owned a Plymouth with red velvet seat covers. Something very special. I went to International House at once. John Howes had told me about the place. The first person I saw was George Beckman, whom I knew very well because we were involved in the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs. The Japan…Tokyo was a poor place. Japan was a poor country in 1956. We wondered if the Japanese would ever be able to recover from the war. There were evidences of war damage in parts of Tokyo. The Zojoji Temple hadn’t been repaired completely. I thought of it as an impoverished country. The Japanese people were oh so kind to me, but I couldn’t really speak Japanese very well, because I never had the experience of speaking it.

Q: Did…You mentioned John Howes, that you were really pretty much on your own as a Ford Foundation Fellow, as opposed to the Fulbright, which would have provided entrée to universities…

SB: I should have had those connections. What I did was to make use of my friend, Robert Sakae, of the University of Nebraska, who was at Tokyo University. He provided introductions to his professors and arrangements were made out there for me to be a foreign research scholar. Shimamura Fujio was my advisor, whom you know.

Q: Yes, indeed. He was mine, too. I, too, went over on a Ford. I wished it had been a Fulbright, but I just went over the year after you did, well two years, ‘58, ‘59.

SB: Yes.

Q: And then, subsequently went over on a Fulbright. It’s a world of difference.

SB: I knew Gordon Bowles, probably an introduction from John Howes to him. He had agreed to be my sponsor, because I didn’t have any way of getting into Japan. I needed a sponsor and I didn’t know anybody in the country. And he had never met me, but agreed to be my sponsor, in spite of that. And he did help me, I think, with the Tokyo University arrangements.
Q: And so it turned into a good year, a productive year? In spite of the rocky start, or did it remain difficult academically, but, should I say, interesting for the living experience?

SB: It was interesting for the living experience. The results, I think, were just so-so. As I told you, I really needed to learn to speak Japanese and I didn’t have the opportunity. My family was a kind of a cocoon around me. I worked hard. I worked every day. Sometimes in my own study, because sometimes at the International House library, sometimes at the Todai library. I did have a couple of assistants, whom I hired. One of them was [Uno Shonichi], who has become a rather distinguished historian. He was then a recent graduate of Tokyo University, who did not have a permanent position. And I paid him a little bit of money. He came out to my house and tutored me there in the Okubo documents, which I was studying at the time. So I made good connections along the way. I suppose that I had friends in Japan, families of students from A&M College.

Q: How did your wife manage then, because she didn’t know any Japanese – at all. And yet you set up a regular household in a Japanese house?

SB: Yes. I rented a place before they came and we lived in Den-en-chofu for a little while. But she had met some missionaries on the boat coming over. She came by ship. One of their houses was suddenly vacant. In Senzoku. They wanted some foreigners to live in the house, because if they rented it to Japanese, they might have trouble getting it back at the proper time and we lived in a big rambling house, it looked like a mansion to us – for minimal rent. We paid $30 a month. And that was a pretty nice place. Our next-door neighbors were very cordial. They were people who’d had a little bit of experience abroad. The old gentleman, Mr. Ogawa, had lived in Switzerland and other towns. His daughter – well, his son, I should say, and his daughter-in-law were cordial to us. Mrs. Ogawa, the daughter-in-law, was the sister of a lady who taught Japanese at the University of Washington. Her name was Masuda. And she was...I don’t think they knew any English, not very much, but they were very cordial to us. They had a daughter who was about the age of our daughter. And we visited back
and forth a lot. My wife, actually, became very competent in speaking Japanese, because she shopped every day. She had a splendid ear. She never did learn to read. And she went to the Naganuma School, which I didn’t do. And some ways her Japanese speaking ability progressed more rapidly than mine. I spent time alone with books in libraries instead. But we got along very well in that community. The Ogawas invited us over on New Year’s Day. If we had visitors, we sometimes took them there. We sat around the kotatsu in the middle of winter. They had one foreign room with a high settee, grandfather’s clock. Something out of the Meiji Era. All the rest of it was pure Japanese. And we warmed ourselves at the kotatsu. New Year’s Day we had the otoso and everything. It seemed that we had lots of company. Japanese people came to call on us [ ], I guess. Our former neighbors in Den-en-chofu came to visit us in the new place. One daughter went to kindergarten. Her classmates were friendly and one time we had a birthday party to which we invited the mothers of a number of her classmates, and we got to know those people.

Q: Well, on that very warm and friendly note, I want to thank you very, very much for telling me about the language school and all of the experiences that surrounded it, before and after.