

DETECTIVE SERGEANT FRANK "BUSTER" BRIERS

I was born on June 1st, 1921 in Victoria and also went to school in Victoria. My mother was born in Prince Edward Island on September 17th, 1896 and my father was born in London, England on December 15th, 1897.

My father came out in 1916 and got a job with the Fire Department in Victoria. He applied for the job through Chief Davis. He was 18 at the time and Chief Davis told him he would have to come back in three years when he was 21. He left, went around the block, went back in and told Chief Davis he was 21 and got the job. He was big for his age and they were looking for good men. He worked there forty-one years. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1937 and Captain in 1945, Assistant Chief in 1947, Deputy Chief in 1950 and Chief in 1951. He retired about 1960.

My mother kept house for us; my two sisters, Dad and myself. My sisters are Isabelle and Marilyn; one is younger and one is older than myself.

I went to Grade 8 in school and then served my apprenticeship with Spencers in linoleum and carpet laying. I joined the Army in 1941 and went overseas on the Queen Mary and fought through France, Belgium Holland and Germany. I was a Dispatch Rider for the full time. I got married overseas to my wife, Kathleen, on December 8th, 1945, in a little church near Stockfort called St. Marks. I returned from England on the Queen Elizabeth early in 1946 and my wife came out a couple of months later. I returned to my trade of carpet and linoleum laying, then sold cars for a while at Tip Top Auto Sales.

I then applied to the City Fire Department but they would not take me there because there could not be two in a family working in the same department. Then I applied at the Saanich Fire Department through Joe Law, but there was no vacancy at the time so I went to work for Saanich Municipality at the Works Department in 1951, patching roads and general maintenance work. I applied for and was accepted by Chief Joe Bull in the Police Department in February of 1954. I started as a Probationer and was promoted to Corporal in 1961, Sergeant in 1964. I worked about eleven years in uniform and 16 years in the Detective Branch as Detective Sergeant. I worked under eight Mayors, including Mayor Couvelier, and three Police Chiefs (Joe Bull, Bert Pearson, and Bob Peterson) and saw about 50 Commissioners come and go. I worked for Robin Stewart for the 16 years in the Detective Branch.

Briers, Frank (cont'd.)

I have been in the Police Department for 27 years and never had a sick day and have been treated more than fairly by the Municipality. They have treated me well and they always got their pound of flesh from me. I am now going to take a couple of months off and do a little fishing and then perhaps look around for some sort of work that is related to Police work. Night shift has never bothered me so perhaps I can get something in that.

I have always been an ardent hunter and fisherman and done a little trap shooting as well. I have been hunting with the same partner for over forty years. We used to hunt around here but now we go west of Williams Lake to Fletcher Lake. We have done this for the last 12 years and we hunt ducks, geese, grouse and deer. We go up there to enjoy ourselves. My hunting partner is Al Rhodes, Deputy Minister of Highways. We like to go up and pitch a tent, have a good bonfire at night. We are not game hobs. About six of us go every year and it is a fabulous trip. We usually give our catch away, except for the grouse. So many people never get this type of meat that they enjoy it and we have had it for many years. (Frank Briers would have you know that when these notes were taken he was still in shock over the wonderful retirement party given to him at the Harbour Towers. It was beautifully catered and the people who arranged the party did a wonderful job: Chris Gelling, Jack Stone, Don Russell and Bay Raey).

When I first started with the Department Joe Bull was the Chief and there were the following working there: Walter Mycock, Leslie Ledson, Ed Anderson, Joe Armstrong, Bert Pearson, Bob Coleman, Robin Stewart, Jack Hamilton, George Walton, Harry Adams, Bill Stevenson, Bob Peterson and Charlie Trueit.

(At this point in the interview Inspector Ted Owens came along and reminded Detective Briers about some of the funny happenings that had occurred.)

At one time we got a complaint that some people were running around nude up on the West Saanich Road, and as Ted Owens and I were on duty we responded. We drove up a long, long driveway through the bush and when we got to the top, there about forty feet away were two guys, two girls and a little kid all sitting on the front lawn, all nude. We hesitated and they said "Come on over". There were two families and they told us they were nudists from Germany. I remember they all had beautifully browned bodies.

Briers, Frank (cont'd.)

(Some years later, Ted Owens and Ken Gale were on duty on the West Saanich Road and in front of the Municipal Hall (old one) they pulled this lady over for speeding. Ken started to write up a ticket and the woman looked at Ted Owens and said: "Perhaps you don't recognize me with my clothes on". It dawned on Ted who the lady was, but he had a hard time explaining it to Ken Gale. He would not believe it.)

One time when Ted Owens and I were on patrol, I was driving and Ted was a passenger. We were on the Gorge Road, coming from Admirals and going towards Tillicum and being conscientious police officers, were looking around for anything unusual. As we approach Tillicum Road I looked over to the right and I saw a car upside down on private property and sitting on the trunk of another car. The four wheels of the car that was upside down were still spinning and having nothing better to do, I nudged my partner and said "Isn't that a stupid way to drive a car?". (The next remark has to be stricken). The car had obviously been coming down the Gorge Road, going too fast and had turned over and come to a rest on a new car sitting in the driveway. (The driver of the car was at my retirement party, and is a good friend of mine). When the towing truck came and got the car off the top of the other one and back on its wheels, the driver jumped back in it and tried to leave. He woke everyone in the neighbourhood because there was no muffler left on the car and the car wouldn't run. He was charged with impaired driving. When I crawled in the car before the tow truck came, the driver was sitting there smoking a cigarette and the girl beside him was unconscious. We got the girl out and then him. The poor fellow whose car was underneath! He had not parked his car on the street because it was new and he didn't want to get it scratched. He had only gone fifty miles in it.

Another time a call came in from Brookleigh Road. A child had been found in a pool and the family, when we got there, had him on the floor and were sitting around crying. We worked on him and brought him back to life before the Firemen even got there.

Another incident was on Borden Avenue. I was not dispatched to go, but I responded anyway. I arrived on the scene before the father had hung up the phone from calling the emergency. There was a little

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kid lying on the floor - he had fallen in the septic tank while it was being worked on. He was two years old. All I did was to put him face down and gently squeezed his stomach and kept going until he regained consciousness and started to cry. The father was very pleased and said if we were ever going for a raise, he would support us 150%.

It was not all rosy though. I recall one time when I was met at the door by a guy with a butcher knife. We had responded to a call for help. He said "You can't come in here" and started brandishing the knife. Chuck Trueit was with me and I looked at him and he nodded, so we rushed the guy and finally got him on the ground but it was a scary time.

A policeman has to be thinking all the time. You cannot take anything for granted, and if there is a proper procedure laid down for the situation you have to follow it.

From an interview with Jo-Anne Morrison on June 25, 1981.