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**Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Judith Porter
Conducted by Stephen Maxner
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Transcribed by Tammi Mikel**

NOTE: Text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

1 Stephen Maxner: This is Steve Maxner conducting an interview with Judith
2 Porter on the twenty-eighth of February, 2001, at 8:45 a.m. Lubbock time. I'm in
3 Lubbock, Texas, and Judy is at Kure Beach, North Carolina. Judy, why don't you go
4 ahead and briefly describe your early childhood, beginning with when and where you
5 were born and where you grew up.

6 Judith Porter: I was born in Holyoke, Colorado, which is up in the northeastern
7 corner. I was born there because my mother went home to her family as she did for my
8 brother before me. We lived in, I believe, it was North Platte, Nebraska, at the time and
9 then a few years later we moved to Illinois which was my father's original home. I was
10 born in late '38, November of '38, and by '46 he wanted to go out to California. So, with
11 the hundreds of others or thousands of others, we moved west and I was more or less
12 raised in southern California. My father had a hardware store on the corner of Ventura
13 and Topanga Canyon Boulevard, which is hard to believe today, but anyway, I grew up
14 on that corner. We were there until the mid '50s.

15 SM: How much do you remember about the Second World War?

16 JP: I remember my mother running a gas station in Illinois while my dad worked
17 at the defense plant. Bitter cold mornings, I can remember her going out to pump gas. I
18 can remember the sirens that sounded throughout the town when they announced the war
19 was over. But that's about the extent of it.

20 SM: Do you remember any discussions in your family about the Depression and
21 what things were like in the '30s before you were born?

1 JP: Yeah. My mother used to comment that they were the only family or the only
2 couple silly enough to try and sell pots and pans, which necessitated demonstrating
3 cooking. She wasn't the greatest cook in the world to begin with, but people would come
4 to their—it was like selling—oh, what can I—anyway, people would come because they
5 were hungry. They would sit through their demonstrations. That didn't last long, but that
6 was just one thing that I can remember. They had it pretty rough but probably no more
7 so than so many others. Okay.

8 SM: What about rationing and drives and things of that nature? Did they talk
9 much about that during the war or do you remember much of that during the war?

10 JP: I don't remember very much about that, Steve. No, I really don't remember
11 that.

12 SM: Okay. Well, what was life like growing up in California during the '50s, the
13 beginning of the Cold War, of course, the concerns of atomic and nuclear war, things like
14 that? Were you aware of that kind of tension between the United States and the Soviet
15 Union?

16 JP: Very much so. I spent a lot of time under my desk practicing those nuclear
17 bomb alerts. Let's see. Actually, life in southern California was pretty good. Those
18 exercises at school were the thing that sticks most in my mind. Yeah, southern California
19 was a pretty nice place to grow up.

20 SM: These are the duck-and-cover group drills, is that correct?

21 JP: Yes. Yes.

22 SM: Do you remember seeing—did you see that film with the turtle in it when
23 you were going to school?

24 JP: With the turtle?

25 SM: Yeah.

26 JP: No. I don't recall that.

27 SM: Oh, okay. How about shelters? Did your family have a fallout shelter?

28 JP: No.

29 SM: How about any of your friends?

30 JP: Not to my knowledge. I think we were pretty fatalistic for the most part about
31 that. No, I didn't know anyone personally that had a fallout shelter.

1 SM: Could you elaborate on what you mean that you were pretty fatalistic, your
2 family?

3 JP: Well, if we were going to have a bomb dropped on us, there wasn't too much
4 to worry about beyond that. I don't know that that's something I've concluded more
5 recently as an adult. I didn't give it that much thought as a child.

6 SM: What kinds of—did you have any siblings?

7 JP: I have a brother who's four-and-a-half years older.

8 SM: Did you have much interaction with him growing up?

9 JP: When we were really young he was very protective of me. As we got older I
10 was a terrible sister. I used to sell his baby pictures to his girlfriends. I was really bad.

11 SM: You'd sell them?

12 JP: Pardon?

13 SM: You would sell them? (Laughs)

14 JP: Yes. Yes. Fortunately he's forgiven me and we're very close now.

15 SM: Okay. Just out of curiosity, what was the going rate for a picture of your
16 bigger brother?

17 JP: I think I got a couple of bucks for them.

18 SM: Wow. Okay.

19 JP: Seemed like a lot then.

20 SM: What kinds of—when you were younger, what was your typical—I don't
21 know—typical games you'd play; just standard stuff, hide-and-seek, that kind of thing?

22 JP: I don't remember very much of that. We lived for several years behind my
23 father's hardware store. I didn't have a lot of interaction with other kids because I was
24 right downtown and they were out in the neighborhoods. I helped Dad a lot in the store.
25 Probably being around that hardware store has made me a little handier around the house.
26 I'm not afraid to tackle something and attempt to fix it myself. I probably spent quite a
27 bit of time alone.

28 SM: When you were in California, did your mom still work, or did she become a
29 homemaker primarily?

30 JP: No. In fact, we were having such a difficult time in the hardware store that
31 mother went to work at the Motion Picture Country House and Hospital as a domestic, as

1 a maid, to get—she needed the money then, or we needed the money I should say, and
2 then she started going to night school to polish up her secretarial skills and finally passed
3 the Navy Civil Service exam. Then she went on to have a fairly decent career in Navy
4 Civil Service.

5 SM: Okay. Did your dad remain in hardware?

6 JP: Until it just went completely bust. That was during a period of time when
7 supermarkets started selling hardware items and he threatened to put in a line of bread
8 and milk. It was a time of change. He wasn't ready for it. It was just as well that he sold
9 out. He didn't actually sell out, he just kind of closed down. That's when we all went
10 overseas for the first time. We went to Guam.

11 SM: What took you to Guam?

12 JP: Dad got a construction company job.

13 SM: It was working with a private—

14 JP: It was Brown Pacific Maxim. They had a lot of contracts after World War II
15 and continued until—oh, gosh, well into the '60s, I think.

16 SM: How long did you live on Guam?

17 JP: We went to Guam in my senior year of high school. I need to back up here,
18 Steve.

19 SM: Sure.

20 JP: In 1954 my mother and I went up to northern California to visit a friend of
21 hers who also had a daughter and this was probably around the Easter holidays or
22 something. They invited me to come back that summer. It was my summer I was fifteen
23 years old. By the time I got up there my girlfriend was working for her father in
24 Sacramento and she was living in an all girls' boarding house. She said, "Wouldn't it be
25 fun if you could stay over? All you need to do is get a job." So I started looking at
26 hardware stores because that's where my experience was. I wasn't having any luck there.
27 She learned about a job at the airport with a travel agent, one of those that dealt with only
28 the irregular carriers. They were called Non-Skeds then, supplemental air carriers. I
29 went out and interviewed for that job. I may as well tell you, she stuffed my bra full of
30 Kleenex because she knew the guy that needed the secretary.

31 SM: Oh, no.

1 JP: Yeah. That's the way things were then. Anyway, I got the job. I lied about
2 my age and got the job. So, I went to work at the airport and that's when my desk, if I
3 looked to the left I was looking into a hangar and they had lots of little airplanes there. I
4 had never flown at that stage, but it soon got to me. I worked that summer and I went
5 back and worked for two weeks at Christmas and I worked the following summer. The
6 following summer when I was sixteen I learned to fly briefly. I wasn't able to get my
7 private that summer. But anyway, that started my interest in aviation and that was my
8 first exposure to Transocean Airlines. They were big on Guam and I met a lot of people
9 at Transocean on Guam who later turned up either at Air Asia or SAT or Air America.
10 So, I had the bug then.

11 SM: Yeah. That's very interesting. How long did you work there in that
12 particular agency?

13 JP: Two summers and one Christmas. I said I lied about my age to the man who
14 hired me. It wasn't long before he wanted to take a tour, a Transocean tour, that is, a
15 group tour to Hawaii. He decided he'd better have me bonded. I couldn't lie to the
16 insurance agent who came to interview me prior to bonding. I told him I was fifteen and
17 it worked out all right. They understood why I lied and why I couldn't lie to an insurance
18 agent.

19 SM: Right. It didn't have an affect on your employment obviously.

20 JP: No. He was sort of surprised that he hadn't realized it. He also was
21 concerned over the next month or so that I was losing weight so rapidly because I stopped
22 using the Kleenex in the bra.

23 SM: (Laughs) I guess that didn't affect your employment, either?

24 JP: No. By that time I had proven myself.

25 SM: Right. What exactly were your primary responsibilities?

26 JP: Running the agency when he was out, and he was out a lot. He was starting
27 to run gambling tours to Reno. He was the first in that area, mostly to Harrah's Club up
28 there. We chartered aircraft and filled them up with firemen and policemen and various
29 special interest groups and ran them up for the evening. That in addition to selling Sky
30 Coach, a lot of our customers were military. There was Mather Field and McClellan
31 Field and a lot of military personnel in that area. We would have to shuttle them over to

1 Oakland and then they would pick up flights to Chicago and New York and Philadelphia
2 or wherever they needed to go. He was busy with outside sales and I was just doing all
3 the reservations in the office.

4 SM: Did you have a lot of off-the-street customers?

5 JP: No, virtually none out there at the airport.

6 SM: You said that you got your private flying license at this point, as well. What
7 did you learn to fly, the first aircraft?

8 JP: I used whatever was available. I would go out to work at six-thirty in the
9 morning. I was usually wearing high heels. So I would change into my flight instructor's
10 loafers and use those. Do you fly, Steve?

11 SM: No. I don't.

12 JP: You have to have heels to apply the brakes. My high heels weren't very
13 effective, so I would switch to his loafers and use those for flying lessons. I went through
14 four or five different aircraft at first, but by the time I had my six hours in I had a
15 Luscombe to solo. A Luscombe with a Lycoming engine.

16 SM: Was this a tail dragger?

17 JP: Pardon?

18 SM: Was it a tail dragger?

19 JP: Yes. Yes. None of that tricycle landing stuff for me.

20 SM: Okay. So you learned on a rather challenging aircraft then? Tail draggers—

21 JP: Well, Sacramento was pretty sophisticated. We had a control tower and I had
22 a radio in the aircraft and we had gas gauges. When I went back south—let's see. Daddy
23 had gone to Guam and Mom and I were in Ventura at the time waiting to join him a bit
24 later. I started working, flying [for a little outfit on the beach]. They were mostly crop
25 dusters, but they did some instruction, too. It was right there on the beach in Ventura,
26 California. The gas gauge was on a float. It was a cork float up there in front. I can
27 remember so vividly having to grab the struts over the—how do you describe that—the
28 front strut to apply pressure to the brakes to keep from going into a bean field. It was a
29 pretty primitive little set up compared to what I'd experienced in Sacramento, but it was
30 lots of fun. I liked it.

31 SM: You got paid for flying this?

1 JP: No. No. I didn't get paid. I did the books in exchange for flying lessons.

2 SM: Oh, okay. Did you ever get rated on multi-engine and that kind of stuff?

3 JP: No. No. I didn't ever get my private, Steve. We went out to Guam that
4 November. I started learning to fly that summer as much as I could afford. Then by
5 November we were ready to go out and join Dad on Guam and the admiral out there just
6 wouldn't hear of student pilots in his traffic pattern at all. That was the end of my flying
7 career.

8 SM: Did you miss it?

9 JP: Oh, yeah. I did and I didn't. I was going on to a lot of other things by that
10 stage. It's something that I wish I had been able to get back into, but it never worked out
11 right.

12 SM: Okay. So you were sixteen, seventeen when you went out to Guam?

13 JP: I had my seventeenth birthday on Wake Island. We were there for three
14 hours.

15 SM: Did your mother have something that she knew she was going to be doing
16 when you arrived in Guam?

17 JP: Not certain. Let's see, she was in Navy Civil Service. She didn't get a
18 proper transfer out there, but she was pretty certain and pretty confident that she would
19 have a job waiting. As it turned out, she did. That worked out very well.

20 SM: What kind of construction work was your father doing?

21 JP: He was in supply. I don't remember what Brown Pacific Maxim was even
22 doing at that stage. I don't remember.

23 SM: What about your brother? What was he doing at this point?

24 JP: Oh, my brother was first in Korea and then on Taiwan. He came down to see
25 us for a week's leave from Taiwan. Formosa we called it then.

26 SM: He was in—

27 JP: The Army, Army Security Agency.

28 SM: Was he—did he stay in the Army?

29 JP: No. No. He got out as soon as he could. He's retired from General Electric
30 now. Actually, now he is the commander of the sheriff's posse at Sun City West,
31 Arizona.

1 SM: That's interesting. Now what was it like arriving in Guam? Here you've
2 spent your whole life on the California coast, or pretty much your whole life. Now
3 you're going out to this little, tiny island out in the middle of the Pacific. What was—?

4 JP: Well, we moved around a lot in California at first until Dad decided on the
5 hardware store. We probably moved four or five times. Moving wasn't a problem with
6 me. It was more of a problem for Mother. The quarters were the pits. It was civilian
7 housing. Dad had to find something that the Navy considered habitable before we could
8 come out to join him. As it turned out, Mother did not consider it habitable and I think
9 we stayed there one night and moved in with some other friends for a couple of weeks
10 until better housing could be located. It was much harder on Mom. I thoroughly enjoyed
11 it. It didn't bother me a bit. It was just another adventure, more exciting than most. I
12 was going—I started to school out there. I finished high school on Guam. We were in
13 Quonset huts. There was a roll of toilet paper on the teacher's desk for us to dust the
14 coral dust off our desks and seats when we sat down without making a mess of our
15 clothes. There was a small group of State-siders, as they're called on Guam, or used to
16 be called, military kids for the most part. I enjoyed it. I liked it a lot.

17 SM: At this point had you thought at all about what you wanted to do after you
18 finished high school?

19 JP: I knew, unfortunately, that I didn't want to go to college at that stage, and
20 because I had this travel agency experience I got on with Pan Am before I actually
21 graduated. I think I started going to work for Pan Am on Saturdays probably in March
22 and I graduated in late May or early June. Then I stayed on with them until I was
23 eighteen.

24 SM: What did you do after that?

25 JP: I went into Honolulu and worked. I was supposed to go into reservations in
26 Honolulu with Pan Am, but they over-hired and I ended up in communications pounding
27 a teletype, which wasn't great fun, but it was a job. It was Honolulu. It was fun to be
28 there.

29 SM: Was it a very expensive place to live in?

30 JP: Pan Am paid better than anybody else. I lived first at the Y (YWCA, Young
31 Women's Christian Association) and my roommates were nurses. I made quite a bit

1 more than they did at that stage. Pan Am paid at twenty or twenty-five percent per diem,
2 which was really unusual, so I made out very nicely there.

3 SM: This is what year that you were in Hawaii?

4 JP: That was in '56-'57. [That was 1957.]

5 SM: What was life like in Hawaii at that point? I assume that you were treated
6 fairly well.

7 JP: It was really great in that there were very few tourists except during the
8 summer. You could tell when school let out on the mainland because of the influx the
9 following weekend in the islands. It was quite—well, as you can imagine Waikiki
10 without tourists—well, it's hard to imagine that today I guess, but it was really lovely
11 then and the local residents had it pretty much to themselves.

12 SM: Was the relationship between Anglo Americans from the mainland and the
13 actual indigenous Hawaiians, was that relationship pretty comfortable?

14 JP: You know, I don't think it was an issue. We were just all there together.

15 SM: Okay. So there was no kind of tension that you ever witnessed while you
16 were there?

17 JP: No, not that I ever noticed.

18 SM: How cosmopolitan was the population at that point? Were there a lot of
19 other Polynesians and other Asians that had migrated to Hawaii at that point? Do you
20 remember?

21 JP: Yeah. Yeah. A lot of people I worked with were *Nisei*, that is, Japanese-
22 American, Filipino. Not many had come in from Guam yet. It was just a lovely melting
23 pot and I don't recall any—I just don't recall any, race ever becoming an issue.

24 SM: You left when?

25 JP: I didn't—I had some personal problems at that stage and I went to the
26 mainland for a while. Then I decided to go back to Guam, and I did go back to Guam
27 and I didn't want to return to Pan Am. That Non-Sked experience in Sacramento was
28 good for me in that I liked being able to wear different hats and not be stuck into one
29 confining job. So when I went back I went to work for Transocean at that time and that
30 was good because I could work traffic and sales and do outside sales. I hesitate to say I
31 was the acting sales manager when they went bankrupt, for what that's worth. Anyway,

1 they did go bankrupt in late '59. By that time I had married a New Zealander who was
2 with a trading company there. He was the manager of the New Zealand Insurance
3 Company branch office. So, I was very much a part of the civilian community as
4 opposed to the military.

5 SM: Did you do much other traveling in terms of Pacific travel, going to the
6 Pacific Rim, going to New Zealand?

7 JP: Not a lot. I got up to Okinawa on business a couple of times and that was my
8 first exposure to Civil Air Transport. Civil Air Transport turned our aircraft at Okinawa.
9 So it was convenient for me to go up and see how they did things and learn from them
10 and see what kind of paperwork they wanted from me before the aircraft arrived and that
11 sort of thing. That was good. Also, CAT (Civil Air Transport) flew into Guam once a
12 week. They were in support of an operation on Saipan, which was very hush-hush, very
13 super secret. We know now that it was something to do with the Tibetan airdrop, I
14 believe. Anyway, they would come down from Tianan once a week and they would
15 bring us fresh eggs now and then, which was a real treat. We didn't get fresh eggs or
16 very good milk. Well, finally Foremost started producing some good milk out there.
17 Anyway, that was my beginning exposure to Civil Air Transport.

18 SM: Real quick, do you remember any other major civilian contractors in Guam
19 when you were there?

20 JP: Major civilian—Morrison Knudsen I think was there. The one thing that I
21 remember so vividly about Guam was that at that time, the Air Force general at Anderson
22 thought he ran the island. The Navy admiral thought he ran the island. In fact, it was
23 pretty much the bishop who called the shots down there.

24 SM: The bishop?

25 JP: The Catholic bishop, yes.

26 SM: Interesting. Was this a commonly understood—?

27 JP: Guamanians are very Catholic. That as you may recall from your history,
28 Steve, Guam and Puerto Rico became American possessions during the Spanish-
29 American War.

1 SM: Yeah. But in terms of the conflict of the misunderstanding between the Air
2 Force, the Navy, and in reality the bishop calling the shots. Was that something that
3 was—?

4 JP: They worked it out. It was kind of a local joke.

5 SM: So it was commonly understood that this was the nature of things?

6 JP: I beg your pardon?

7 SM: It was commonly understood that this was the nature of things, that although
8 the American military presence was impressive and important, in fact, they didn't run the
9 show?

10 JP: That was my opinion at least.

11 SM: Interesting. Now when did you finally leave Guam for good?

12 JP: In [1960]—let's see. My daughter was born at Guam Memorial in August of
13 1960. I left there just before, in December to go back and spend Christmas with my
14 parents. My husband joined us in the States. Then we went on long leave to New
15 Zealand. While we were in New Zealand he was supposed to be posted to Hong Kong
16 next, and while he was at head office in New Zealand they changed his assignment and
17 decided to send him to Nairobi instead. So he came back from the meeting at head office
18 that day with a copy of Robert Ruark's *Something of Value* and said, "Here, you'll want
19 to do your homework." So, instead of being in Hong Kong for the next few years, we
20 were in Nairobi.

21 SM: What was that like?

22 JP: I really liked it. It was a fascinating period. The Mau Mau Emergency was
23 still on but it had been pretty much brought under control. Jomo Kenyatta was under
24 house arrest. They were talking about independence. They were forming a coalition
25 government. It was a very exciting time to be there.

26 SM: Was there still much violence in the context of the Mau Mau Rebellion?

27 JP: No. That had been pretty much under control. There was a lot of violence
28 out there still, but it was left over, not as terrifying as it was during the height of the Mau
29 Mau Rebellion.

30 SM: What was the relationship like between whites and blacks in Nairobi?

1 JP: There was virtually no middle class. You had the politicians at a higher level
2 and then the very poor. The politicians had no reason to be acquainted with us middle-
3 level visitors sort of thing. I did some social work there. Before I went to work for a
4 travel agent I worked for the director of social welfare as a volunteer and he had—the
5 Karriokor was a boys' safe house. Youngsters could come in and get a meal and a safe
6 place to sleep, no questions asked. If they kept showing up and showed potential then
7 they could move or were welcomed to move into a school called Starehe. That was like a
8 boarding school for poor kids, all boys. Girls just weren't cut loose from the family at
9 that stage. I'd like to know what happened to Starehe. It was a wonderful opportunity for
10 youngsters whose life had become totally hopeless.

11 SM: Now were most of the people that you were working with in this context
12 displaced people because of the war, refugees, people, children whose parents were
13 killed, things like that?

14 JP: No. I can't say they were refugees at that stage. Young boys would leave
15 home because there wasn't enough food to feed the others and they would just take to the
16 streets. That's difficult to understand now. Refugee was not a word we used at that stage.
17 There were refugees from the Congo, but that was entirely different. That wasn't what
18 was affecting those in Kenya at the time. There was just a lot of poverty; nothing like
19 you see now. I don't believe nothing like you see now. Kenya was a wonderful place at
20 that time. Farming was very successful. They had the most wonderful dairy and great
21 beef. Food was very good there. It was only—let's see. I don't know how to explain
22 this. There were some very poor natives who didn't have land. Those are the youngsters
23 that ended up on the streets and came to us at Karriokor and Starehe.

24 SM: Did you have any difficulty adjusting to the local diet as you were moving,
25 say for instance to Guam and then to Hawaii and then back to Guam and Nairobi?

26 JP: No. That was never a problem.

27 SM: Never? What were your concerns as a parent, and now that you've got a
28 small child and you are taking this child to an underdeveloped country? Did you have
29 any particular concerns or did you take any particular measures to try to protect her?

30 JP: I think people in the States see more danger [in the unknown] than people do
31 in foreign locations. (Editor's note: Text deleted)

1 SM: What about immunizations or inoculations?

2 JP: Oh, yeah. There were those. In fact, she had her first small pox inoculation
3 in New Zealand and they gave it to her, a pediatrician gave it to her in her foot. She
4 broke out in a pox and it scared the daylights out of us. Fortunately, it didn't seem to
5 affect her at all, but she was an awful mess, just covered with these awful pockmarks.
6 But, it went away and if I remember correctly in a few days time. She got her first polio
7 vaccine over there. I had an Irish doctor. To me, life was just normal. I don't know
8 what to compare it with. My friends were mostly British, a few first generation Kenyans.

9 SM: What other foreign nationals were there, in terms of, you mentioned friends
10 that were British?

11 JP: Australia, New Zealand, British, Indian, lots of Indians, of course, and that's
12 about it. It was mostly New Zealanders, Australians, Brits.

13 SM: Did the other foreign nationals engage in similar work to what you and your
14 husband were doing at that time?

15 JP: Nairobi was a pretty cosmopolitan town. Yeah, there were other insurance
16 people there. We used to get together once a month with old China hands, a lot of people
17 who worked in Shanghai, oil company people as well as insurance people, a few from
18 aviation, not so many. We'd get together for a Chinese meal once a month. I can
19 remember puzzling over the fact that, one, the American political officer at the
20 consulate—it was the consulate then because this was before independence—was a
21 Chinese scholar. I couldn't figure out what the devil he was doing in East Africa, and
22 then Tom Mboya was—actually, I guess he as a protégé of Eleanor Roosevelt. He was
23 with Jomo Kenyatta's party. Actually, Mboya was not Kikuyu. I forget now what tribe
24 he was with, but he belonged to Kenyatta's political party. There was another one—let
25 me back up, Mboya was getting a lot of his support from the consulate, the American
26 consulate. There was another fellow by the name of Odinga. He was very cozy with the
27 communist Chinese. He was also in the same party. I could not figure this out. It was
28 just such a puzzle. That finally led me to—I didn't figure it out for myself, I'm not that
29 bright, but the Chinese scholar, the political officer at the embassy said this was the
30 reason he was there, because the Chinese and the Americans were backing in the same
31 political horse, probably never had it any place else in the world.

1 SM: This wasn't the nationalist Chinese, this was the communist Chinese?

2 JP: Communist Chinese, right.

3 SM: We were both backing the same person?

4 JP: That's right.

5 SM: Interesting. Now at the time, was this a typical topic of conversation
6 between you and other foreign nationals that you were friends with?

7 JP: No. In fact, I was the only American in that group. There weren't a lot of
8 Americans in Nairobi at that stage. When my husband and I decided to part company, I
9 moved to the coast. I didn't have a problem with the country, I just didn't get along
10 awfully well with him. So, I took my daughter and went down to the coast. I have to
11 back up again. I had gone to work for a travel agent in Nairobi and we decided—he [my
12 boss] decided to open a branch office in Mombasa. So he sent me to the coast to get that
13 going. I was supposed to return to Nairobi and we'd find someone else to run the
14 Mombasa branch, but as it turned out it was very convenient for me to just move down
15 there and run it myself. It was about this time—well, I was so much a part of the British
16 community that people would forget I think that I was American. As it turned out, when
17 I was on the coast the partners in this travel agency down there had a huge trading
18 company and a local shipping line. They were doing some work for an American
19 construction company. I just got furious with what they were doing to this American
20 company. I eventually quit my job with the travel agency and went to Orlando, Florida,
21 and signed on with a construction company and then went back to East Africa for another
22 year.

23 SM: Why were you getting angry?

24 JP: I was getting angry because they were charging them outrageous sums for
25 very little. When I figured out I could save the construction company quite a bit of
26 money, I just took that information to Orlando with me and said, "Look, I can do this,
27 this, and this." They said, "Great." They signed me on and I went to work for them at
28 about three times the money.

29 SM: (Laughs) Okay. How long did you stay in Orlando?

30 JP: I was just there long enough to sign a contract and go out to the West Coast to
31 see—my brother and my parents were coming in from Guam. I got to see them one day

1 before I had to get onto an airplane and go back to East Africa. I hadn't been home for
2 three years. They weren't happy with me, but I went back to East Africa for another year.

3 SM: Was your daughter with you at that time?

4 JP: Oh, yes. Absolutely. She was always with me.

5 SM: Now, how long did you continue working in—?

6 JP: In Mombasa?

7 SM: You were in Mombasa at that point? Okay. In Mombasa, before you met
8 your second husband and your last husband?

9 JP: While I was back in Nairobi between making the decision to go down there
10 permanently I was back at my desk which was very near the entrance to the Nairobi
11 office and this really big guy walked in and said, “Pardon me, ma’am. Can you tell me
12 where the American consulate is?” Well, it turned out to be the chief pilot from the Trust
13 Territory Operation on Guam, who was an old friend of mine. He had this mechanic with
14 him who turned out to be Jack Porter. They were on their way to Mombasa to work for
15 Philco Corporation which was then the support for the Indian Ocean Tracking Station at
16 Mahe in the Seychelles. They had an SA-16. That’s an amphibious sea plane, that they
17 would fly six hundred miles due east, no alternate, and land in Mahe Harbor. Jack was
18 the flight engineer, crew chief flight engineer, and Gil was going out as chief pilot.

19 SM: At what point did you begin a relationship with Jack?

20 JP: We were good friends for a year, and that was—there was nothing going on
21 there at all. He was a neighbor. I had a Seychelles nanny who lived with me to look after
22 Allyson at that stage. She used to like to—oh, let’s see. I have to explain the living
23 conditions. There was an Indian—gosh, it was almost like a subdivision. There were
24 bungalows out by the airport and because my job site was at Kismaayo, Somalia, the
25 construction company I went to work for out of Orlando was building this port facility at
26 Kismaayo. My job in Mombasa was to receive cargo by sea and by air and then make
27 sure it got trans-shipped from Mombasa up to Kismaayo. This also applied for personnel.
28 The burly construction men would arrive in Mombasa looking absolutely terrified and put
29 themselves in my hands. I got them up the coast to the job site. It was quite amusing at
30 times.

31 SM: Why would they be so terrified?

1 JP: They'd just heard stories about the Mau Mau and all kinds of bad things.
2 They just had no idea what to expect. So, here was this girl looking after them.

3 SM: You know, I meant to ask you a quick question about that political officer
4 who was also an Asian scholar. Did you suspect at the time, or have you suspected since,
5 that he was probably a CIA case officer?

6 JP: Well, most political officers are, aren't they?

7 SM: Yeah. I didn't know if that was something that was even understood at that
8 point.

9 JP: You know, I'm not sure I understood it then, or if that's where I learned it. I
10 don't know, Steve. Some of these things you pick up by osmosis and you're really not
11 aware of when it became understood in your own mind, or at least I'm not.

12 SM: Right. Speaking of living conditions, how—what was electricity and
13 utilities like, in both Nairobi and in Mombasa?

14 JP: In Nairobi, living conditions were lovely. In fact, this second home we had,
15 we had a beautiful garden with a full-time gardener. That was part of the lease
16 agreement. The owners had built up wonderful landscaping over the years. They wanted
17 it maintained. So we had to keep a full-time gardener to look after that. In Mombasa, my
18 housing was considerably more modest, but it was certainly adequate. I had a three-
19 bedroom house, one full-time servant. The nanny was kind of a housekeeper as well.
20 Then I had—in East Africa it's the males who do the housework. I had a houseboy—
21 they were called houseboys. He lived in a little village out in back someplace. I was
22 never back there, but there was a settlement within a couple of blocks of my home.
23 Where were we, Steve? I'm sorry. I'm lost. I've lost track.

24 SM: That's okay. Utilities, electricity, telephone, that kind of stuff in both
25 places?

26 JP: Not a problem. We had telephones, electric. Let's see, we did—we must
27 have—I don't now whether we boiled the water or not. I think we boiled the water.
28 Those things were taken care of by kitchen staff. In Mombasa, I didn't realize water was
29 so expensive until I got my bill one time and it was just outrageous. In fact, it was more
30 than the nearby hotel. I found out that my houseboy had been selling water to the village

1 in back of us. I had to put a padlock on the garden outlet. That sort of thing was not
2 uncommon.

3 SM: Because they didn't have water, access to water?

4 JP: That's right, or they had to pay more for it than what my houseboy was
5 charging for my water.

6 SM: My goodness. Did you fire him?

7 JP: No. I couldn't do that. I just told him that wasn't permitted.

8 SM: How old was he, your houseboy?

9 JP: Oh, gosh. He was probably thirty, thirty-five. He was—I don't know how to
10 explain it. He would push the envelope and get away with as much as he could. I had a
11 wonderful houseboy in Nairobi. He was a kind, gentle person and I hated that I had to
12 leave him. Well, that's another story, but he was a very fine person and had a wonderful
13 family back up near Lake Kisumu.

14 SM: Have you had any contact with the people that you met in Nairobi since you
15 left?

16 JP: None of the Africans, but certainly the Europeans and the Americans, yes.
17 That Gil Thomas I told you about who introduced me to Jack, those people were friends
18 on Guam. I saw them over Christmas in Florida. We've stayed very close. They went
19 from Mombasa to Mahe in the Seychelles for a few years. Then they went to Turk and
20 Caicos Islands, which was also down range on the missile program. By this time Pan
21 American had the contract. When we were living in the Dominican Republic we
22 visited—they would come down and visit with us there. So we've stayed in close contact
23 over the years. But that Transocean group from Guam, one of those persons became—
24 well, you might have noticed Jack Forney did the text on the Air America photos. He
25 was a mechanic with Transocean on Guam. You might have heard of Ward Reimer. He
26 was ex-Transocean. Val Bednekoff was a CAT pilot. He was a navigator on an SA-16
27 out of Guam with [Transocean's Trust Territory Operation]. There are just so many old,
28 old friends of mine from the '50s that are still part of the Air America family now.

29 SM: Okay. You said you were friends with Jack for a year and then I guess you
30 must have become involved with him?

1 JP: Yeah, finally. You turn around one day and you realize your best friend is
2 more than your best friend. We were back in the States for almost a year. He maintains I
3 wouldn't marry him until he got another overseas job. I'm not denying that or admitting
4 it. Anyway, we were married just before he went to Air Asia in Tainan. A fellow he
5 worked with in Mombasa, by the name of Mike Fleischer, was first to sign on with Air
6 Asia. He's the one that wrote Jack and said, "We really could use you in training out
7 here." So that was the beginning right there.

8 SM: What did you do for that year while you were back in the States?

9 JP: Oh, not much, wrote résumés, typed applications for him, very little. I tried
10 to get—I looked for work to some extent, but people would look at my résumé and they
11 just didn't know how to relate to it. It didn't make any sense to them at all. I never had a
12 conventional job after that.

13 SM: So that year was spent in Florida?

14 JP: No, California. Jack retired from Moffett Field. He had twenty years in the
15 Navy before I ever met him in East Africa. So I was down in southern California a while
16 with my family. By then they were in the States. Then he talked me into going up to
17 Mountain View, which is there by Moffett Field. It wasn't long before we decided to get
18 married and go to Tainan. I need to—the last couple of years I was in East Africa, my
19 mother was in Navy Civil Service and she said, "Vietnam is becoming—is getting really
20 bad. I really wish you would come home. This is no time for you to be overseas, and
21 certainly not to be overseas alone with a child." She was really put out with me when I
22 came home from East Africa and went to Asia.

23 SM: How much about what was going on in Vietnam were you aware at that
24 point?

25 JP: Probably not as much as she was. She was terribly concerned.

26 SM: Did you—

27 JP: Um—

28 SM: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

29 JP: I am inclined to follow—I don't know if that's where things are happening—
30 that's where the action is.

1 SM: Did you receive news, American news consistently while you were overseas
2 both in Guam and in Nairobi and Mombasa?

3 JP: In Guam I have never felt so well informed. That is such a crossroad. It's
4 just amazing. You seem to get all the news before anyone else. I suspect that's still true.
5 Nairobi, I felt a little more isolated. I was in Mombasa when President Kennedy was
6 shot. I have never in my life felt so far away from home. I was one of the only American
7 women working there on the coast at the time and people would stop by my office and
8 express their condolences. I was astonished that I felt really isolated. When I was living
9 in Nairobi during the Cuban Missile Crisis and friends of mine from Guam came through
10 and told—I guess I learned from them how terrifying that situation was in the States. I
11 did not feel it out there. On the other hand, while I was in Mombasa still with the travel
12 agency, I was speaking with a person in reservations with East African Airways, which
13 was a fine airline. They had—she was puzzled over something and she just wanted to tell
14 me about it. She said that she brought, I believe it was fourteen Cubans from Havana to
15 Dar es Salaam something like ten days before the Zanzibar Revolution. I've never heard
16 of the Cuban involvement in the Zanzibar Revolution except from that business from her.

17 SM: What kind of political activity did you engage in while you were overseas?
18 Did you get absentee votes and things like that, or absentee ballots?

19 JP: No. I am sorry and ashamed to say because I was never in the United States
20 after I was twenty-one to establish residency. I wasn't able to vote until I came back in
21 '83. I was one of those that fell through the cracks.

22 SM: But you still were politically attuned to what was going on in the United
23 States?

24 JP: Attuned, yeah, but it was remote and it was nothing that I could—I didn't
25 form opinions with thinking I could do anything about them or influence them. I was just
26 an observer.

27 SM: As you were getting ready to go to Tainan, what did you think about the
28 American involvement in Vietnam? What did you understand about the American
29 involvement in Vietnam at that point?

1 JP: I guess this is where my background kicked in. It's something that the
2 American government felt they had to get involved with and I accepted that. I could not
3 understand the Berkeley mindset. I didn't know how to deal with it. Did you go away?

4 SM: No. I'm here. I'm sorry. I thought you were going to continue.

5 JP: No.

6 SM: When you said "Berkeley mindset," could you explain what you mean by
7 that?

8 JP: Violent anti-war protests. Of course, I couldn't understand the free speech
9 movement, either, but that's probably my age, Steve. I still don't think we need to listen
10 to them.

11 SM: I'm curious. While you were in Africa and there was this obvious
12 cooperation between, or if not cooperation then at least recognition that at times
13 American interests and the interests of a communist nation like China can be coinciding.
14 Here we are backing the same horse in Nairobi. At the same time in Vietnam there seems
15 to, there was, of course, more of a monolithic mentality when it came to looking at
16 communism. The dichotomy between free market capitalism and democracy in the
17 United States and the communist system, dictatorial system in the Soviet Union, China,
18 North Vietnam, and elsewhere. Did that raise any questions in your mind in the early
19 '60s as you were—?

20 JP: No, Steve. It's only in hindsight that I can consider those questions now. I
21 had confidence in the government, misplaced as it may have been. That was my
22 upbringing. I didn't question. I did not question the right or wrong of my government.

23 SM: Is that something that you and Jack both shared in terms of your outlook?

24 JP: No. I don't think we discussed it.

25 SM: Okay. Did you discuss the Vietnam War at all and what was going on in
26 Southeast Asia and Laos and other places?

27 JP: Much later, but I still feel today that people who were involved in Laos truly
28 believed that they were doing a humanitarian job that needed to be done. We still didn't
29 believe that the United States was going to lose the war in Vietnam until it was gone. My
30 husband was very bitter about that in the end. We all were, I'm sure. This really seemed
31 sad and as though one is totally uninformed, but I think for the most part our people just

1 did a job. I did my job. I went to USAID (United States Agency for International
2 Development) and said, “Our press is really lousy. I would like to show people that we
3 are contributing something positive.” That led to my project, which we’ll get into later.
4 No, I wasn’t out there protesting the war.

5 SM: I didn’t think that you were. I was just curious about your outlook because
6 your upbringing was rather unique and you saw different perspectives. You have a much
7 more cosmopolitan background. I just was curious if that caused any concerns or
8 questions in your mind as someone who had—most Americans are born, grow up, and
9 live and work and sometimes even die in the same place. You moved around quite a bit
10 in an international context. So I didn’t know if that had an effect on your outlook. That’s
11 all.

12 JP: It probably did in many respects, but also probably not as intellectually as you
13 would have approached it, had you been the same. Well, I don’t know about that.

14 SM: I don’t either. (Both laugh)

15 JP: That’s a tough one, Steve. I can’t answer it.

16 SM: Okay. What was the move to Tainan like and what was it like living there?
17 How long were you there?

18 JP: We were there two years. They seemed to have towed our household effects
19 over there. The [ship’s] hold that contained our goods was three foot deep in water so we
20 had to start from scratch in Tainan. We decided since it was really our first home, my
21 husband decided that we would—the Marble Palace became available. It was the nicest
22 place in town, and we got it for \$125 a month. That seemed a lot to spend at the time, but
23 I think his salary was \$747 a month. That may go against what you heard about big
24 salaries over seas. Anyway, we had a nice home. It was lovely. We had furniture made
25 there. We visited the teakwood while it was in the kiln and we got to watch that process.
26 My husband designed the living room furniture and I did the engineering. I went around
27 measuring people’s backsides to be sure that it was big enough for most Americans.
28 Allyson started school there, first grade. She turned six shortly after we arrived. Let’s
29 see, actually we were at Tainan and we were at the Long Beach Hotel for about two or
30 three months. Then he was sent TDY (temporary duty) to Bangkok and we were there
31 for a month. Then we came back. By that time it was getting late summer. That’s when

1 we moved into a house and started living like normal people. What do you want to
2 know?

3 SM: How was your daughter adjusting to moving around so much?

4 JP: She was a real trooper. She's probably the first to have her bags packed and
5 waiting at the door. She's really good. As far as school, the best example I can give
6 about concern for children, in Tainan she caught—I put her on the school bus that first
7 day and she rode the school bus to first grade. She was in an afternoon class. I was
8 waiting for her that late afternoon. She didn't come home and she didn't come home and
9 she didn't come home, and I could not imagine what had happened. I called the school
10 and they said, "Yes. The bus driver is still driving her around town hoping she'll
11 recognize her neighborhood." I don't know whether that would happen in the States or
12 not, that the school bus driver would just keep running the route until a child recognized
13 home. But, in this case, the wonderful Chinese driver, he wasn't about to take that child
14 back to school. There was no point in that. He just kept doing the route until she
15 recognized home.

16 SM: Wow. How much longer did that take?

17 JP: They were probably two hours late.

18 SM: Wow.

19 JP: I consider that a long time.

20 SM: What were the other challenges to adapting to life in Tainan? Was there
21 anything for you?

22 JP: Yeah. I took ballet lessons to keep in shape. I took flower-arranging lessons.
23 I taught English for the United States Information Service. That was an interesting
24 exercise. I had students from Taiwan, that is, I had Taiwanese, and I had Chinese. There
25 was a lot of conflict going there. Very often the Chinese students would absolutely
26 worship Chiang Kai Shek and the Taiwanese had other opinions. You just could not
27 permit a discussion, a political science discussion to take place in this English,
28 conversational English, classroom. I didn't have a telephone. Very few of us had
29 telephones in Taiwan. They cost about five hundred dollars. We just did without. You
30 got in to a taxi or in a pedi-cab and went to ask questions or look for whatever you
31 needed. You didn't get on the telephone to take care of it. People with telephones were

1 pretty certain they were all bugged by the Foreign Affairs police. We had a wonderful
2 Doberman who was very docile as far, as I was concerned, except to the cook. That dog
3 would nip her on the rear end occasionally. He was teasing as much as anything it
4 appeared to be. But, this dog frequently got out Sunday evenings. I was never sure
5 whether it bit anyone or not, but invariably I had the Foreign Affairs police to deal with
6 because someone said that dog had bit their child. I got to be pretty friendly with the
7 police. I just paid them to deal—I never saw a wound on a child. I just don't think that
8 the animal was capable of that, but we were fair game. These were the challenges in
9 Taiwan. Jack was retired military. So I was able to go up to Okinawa to shop at the
10 military installation because the status of forces agreement between Taiwan and the US
11 prohibited retired military, US retired military, in Taiwan from using the BX (base
12 exchange). We had APO (Army Post Office) privileges, so I could go up to Okinawa, do
13 my commissary shopping, and mail it home, but I could not go into the BX in Tainan or
14 commissary. People dealt a lot with the black market. Bennie was the name of our black
15 market man. He could come up with anything I needed if I was willing to pay the price.
16 It was easier to do my shopping off-island four times a year.

17 SM: How long would it take you to get there?

18 JP: Okinawa?

19 SM: Mm-hmm.

20 JP: Oh, depending upon the flight. I'd have to fly from Tainan to Taipei and then
21 Taipei to Naha, commercial, and I was traveling space-available. I could usually get my
22 shopping done in a day-and-a-half. Only once did I ever get bumped at Naha because of
23 dead-heading crew members. It probably took three to four days to get that job done
24 once a quarter. It became a joke in our family that Allyson would say, "Where's
25 Mommy?" and Daddy would say, "She's gone to Okinawa," and that was just the way we
26 lived.

27 SM: It was cheaper for you to go through that process of going to Okinawa,
28 shopping there, and going back, cheaper to do that rather than buy on the economy or—?

29 JP: Buy from Bennie the black market guy?

30 SM: Yeah, buy from Bennie.

31 JP: Yes. That's postage as well.

1 SM: Okay. Now who was this Bennie character? What was his background?

2 JP: He was a Taiwanese, an aggressive entrepreneur. He had his contacts and he
3 could get anything you wanted and it was usually right out of the BX and commissary. I
4 don't know. You just didn't ask questions.

5 SM: That system stayed in place the whole time you were there, that is, that
6 retired military personnel could not go into the base exchange?

7 JP: Steve. No. That's correct. I've got to deal with guests. I'll say goodbye to
8 them. Can you call me back in fifteen minutes?

9 SM: Oh, absolutely.

10 JP: Okay? Sorry about that.

11 SM: No. That's quite alright. Call you back in fifteen.

12 JP: Okay. Bye-bye.

13 SM: What kind of work was your husband doing at this point? Who did he work
14 for?

15 JP: He was in training in Tainan and one of his favorite projects was a B-26 that
16 he did OJT (on-the-job training) on. He was really fond of that airplane and felt that he
17 accomplished a lot. He had students from Thailand and—let's see. Mostly from
18 Thailand. There were some Chinese from the area, but I think they were mostly foreign
19 students.

20 SM: This—what year did you arrive here again? What month and year?

21 JP: '66 to '68 we were in Tainan.

22 SM: Okay. Did you have a lot of interaction with other Americans?

23 JP: Yeah, quite a bit. The main social life worked around the officer's club.
24 There were usually parties on Saturday nights and Sunday night was family buffet. Yeah.
25 Social life was definitely around the club, the Air Force officers' club, US Air Force.

26 SM: Okay. Were there other civilians, that is Civil Air Transport families, Air
27 America families that you interacted with and you understood that they were working for
28 those organizations?

29 JP: Air America wasn't there to speak of. It was Civil Air Transport and Air
30 Asia. Then there was the Air Force, U.S. Air Force community that we interacted with.

1 There was a CAT club. We had the swimming pool. The club was opened for special
2 parties. It was an active social scene in a limited sort of way.

3 SM: Did you do any work? That is, did you have employment at all while you
4 were in Taiwan?

5 JP: I worked for the US Information Service teaching English.

6 SM: That's right.

7 JP: I administered one exam to something like 350 to 400 Chinese students who
8 needed to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language so they could get their student
9 visa to go to the US to study. That was a very big deal, very serious, stressful sort of
10 examination. Their futures hinged on passing that exam.

11 SM: So these were young people who wanted to go to college in the United
12 States?

13 JP: Yes.

14 SM: Did you train any Taiwanese military personnel to speak English?

15 JP: Not as such. I did get involved in one situation where some of us who were
16 English teachers judged an English competition at the Chinese Military Academy. That
17 was a very impressive affair. I was very impressed with those students.

18 SM: Did you pick up the language yourself while you were there?

19 JP: No. My language skills are zilch. In fact, every time I was exposed to
20 another foreign language, my English deteriorated. It was a bad thing. My daughter
21 asked me, "Please don't speak Spanish, Mother."

22 SM: Okay. (Laughs) How about her language proficiency? Was she—as a
23 young person?

24 JP: She's fluent in Spanish and she has some Thai.

25 SM: Okay. She didn't pick up Chinese, as well, while she was there?

26 JP: No. No. At least she doesn't remember it now.

27 SM: The school that she attended, was this an American school?

28 JP: In Tainan, it was a DOD, that is Department of Defense, school. In Udorn,
29 Thailand, it was the Air America School.

30 SM: Well, let's go ahead and discuss that. Is there anything else you want to talk
31 about with regard to your time in Tainan?

1 JP: No. No. It was a pleasant experience for both of us. I think my husband was
2 not as happy in training as he was in aircraft maintenance. So he wanted to make the
3 move. He considered putting in for Saigon, but when the Tet Offensive occurred, he
4 decided that Udorn would probably be better to take a wife and child. So, he put in for
5 Thailand. Fortunately, someone I knew from Guam, again Forney, was running that
6 show and offered him a job.

7 SM: So you were pretty much aware of what was happening in Vietnam while
8 you were in Tainan?

9 JP: Oh, yeah.

10 SM: Were you as well informed as you were in other places like Guam, or better
11 informed?

12 JP: I think so, although our newspaper was the *China Post*. You were getting a
13 very slanted picture of what was happening in mainland China seeing the Cultural
14 Revolution through a Nationalist Chinese newspaper. I probably learned more about the
15 Cultural Revolution than you did in the States, certainly from the nationalist slant. We
16 didn't have televisions and we didn't have radio. I think we depended more on word of
17 mouth. I don't—I believe we probably subscribed to *Time* and *Newsweek* because we
18 had APO privileges so we were getting decent mail service. I think we were probably
19 fairly well informed.

20 SM: Did you correspond a lot with your family back in the United States?

21 JP: Mm-hmm. Yeah, a couple of times a month.

22 SM: Would they include news about what was happening on the home front?

23 JP: Concerns, yes. I don't recall. Actually, my mother kept most of my letters,
24 which reminds me I've also got notes on how much I paid Bennie the black marketeer
25 and things like that in a notebook that I've kept.

26 SM: Interesting. Wow.

27 JP: I wrote home more from Udorn about the bombing. I remember seeing that
28 in letters that I read more recently. Tainan, I don't think I expressed much one way or the
29 other.

1 SM: Now the letters that they would write to you, would they include
2 information about the anti-war activities and the questioning of what we were trying to
3 accomplish in Vietnam and things like that?

4 JP: No. No. I don't believe they did.

5 SM: Let's see. So when you finally did leave Taiwan and went to Udorn, what
6 was the—I guess the shift was an employment to Air America where your husband was
7 moving? Now he was working for Air America?

8 JP: Yes.

9 SM: Did you all understand who was actually running Air America at that time?

10 JP: No, not particularly. A friend of mine who was the consul in Udorn
11 explained very methodically that there were seven customers. We just didn't dwell on
12 the CIA at that stage.

13 SM: What was your husband's—what was Jack's new job with Air America?

14 JP: He went into line maintenance, fixed-wing line maintenance at first and
15 gradually worked into shops. The last couple of years he was manager of aircraft shops.
16 He had about four hundred men of various nationalities.

17 SM: Four hundred? Wow. What did your daughter think about this move?

18 JP: Thailand? It was just another adventure. She's really good, Steve. She's a
19 trooper. She still is.

20 SM: What was it like flying in from Tainan, Taiwan, into Udorn, Thailand?
21 What were your first impressions?

22 JP: First we went by bus.

23 SM: Pardon?

24 JP: We flew from Taipei to Hong Kong. I have to mention that because my
25 husband bought a camera. I must specify *he* bought the camera and then it sat on the
26 shelf for a few months after we got to Udorn. I didn't ever want to look like a tourist, but
27 anyway, we were in Bangkok for a few days and then we took the company bus from
28 Bangkok to Udorn. Fortunately, my friend Jack Forney met us and made sure we had
29 transportation into town. His wife stopped by the hotel with her daughter who was just
30 the same age as Allyson. They became fast friends and still are to this day.

31 SM: What were your first impressions when you arrived in Udorn?

1 JP: Pretty primitive by Tainan's standards. Tainan was a well-organized city,
2 and [Udorn] had more of those businesses that seemed to congregate outside a military
3 base. The whole town seemed like that, not a lot going for it. I must say it's much more
4 attractive today than it was in '68. Let's see, we were in a hotel for a few weeks, I guess.
5 That was an interesting experience. One of Jack's Thai students married a Chinese girl.
6 She came by the hotel late at night, I guess the first week we were there. She said she
7 was leaving her husband and she didn't know whether she would kill him or herself. She
8 left her gun with me and I put her to bed on the couch and sorted it out the next day. I
9 wondered if life in Udorn was going to be like that. More often than not, it wasn't.
10 Things returned to normal.

11 SM: Was there a lot of interaction between you and your husband and other Air
12 America personnel?

13 JP: Not a lot. My husband wasn't a very sociable person. He was maintenance.
14 I don't think maintenance and the flight personnel socialized a lot. Now I could be
15 wrong, there are certainly lots and lots of exceptions. We went out to dinner Sunday
16 nights with a small group of other maintenance people or some administrative people, but
17 we didn't do a lot of partying there. We didn't frequent the Club Rendezvous, the Air
18 America bar. We led a pretty quite life, mostly at home.

19 SM: Okay. When did you start to seek work and other activities?

20 JP: I looked around for a job. There was a construction company with something
21 going on not far from Udorn. They said they could use me down at the port facility, but
22 there wasn't anything [for me at Udorn] so I ended up back to this bizarre resume of
23 mine. I started looking around for making a list of my assets to see what I could do or
24 what I had to work with. There was that camera laying on the shelf. By this time I had
25 checked out the Air Force base and they had a hobby shop that had film processing, a
26 photo lab in there. I got to thinking about that. I had never been interested in
27 photography. This was something I was going to have to cultivate an interest in, but I
28 knew I had to cultivate an interest in something that I could really get my teeth into or I
29 would go nuts, either that or take up strong drink. So I decided on photography, and one
30 of my friends said, "That dark room work will be like learning to do dishes after you
31 become a gourmet cook." Well, fortunately he was wrong because I discovered that

1 there's a whole lot of creativity in the darkroom. Pretty soon that interest mushroomed
2 and then I became an absolute bore. I couldn't discuss anything but "F" stops and shutter
3 speeds for eighteen months. I was just totally absorbed.

4 SM: Was there some place where you took classes for this?

5 JP: No, but at that time there was an outfit called Famous Artists and Famous
6 Photographers. It was a correspondence course, probably the best ever correspondence
7 course in both fields. I later met an artist who was art director for Young and Rubicam in
8 the Dominican Republic who was a graduate of that correspondence school. The
9 photographer's group was made up of some really fine professional photographers who
10 had invested a lot of their retirement into this program and this course. Unfortunately it
11 didn't pay off for them, but it certainly paid off nicely for me. It took me four years to
12 complete that course. It made a fairly good technician out of me.

13 SM: That included your darkroom work and everything else?

14 JP: By the time I realized I was spending eight and ten hours a day in the
15 darkroom at the base, I decided it was time to build a darkroom at home. That's when I
16 put a darkroom at home and it just turned out to be really well. I loved it.

17 SM: What was your daughter doing at this point in terms of her recreational
18 activity?

19 JP: Going to school of course and then there was Girl Guides. She was active in
20 that, and she had her friends. There were after school activities. She was pretty good at
21 entertaining herself. She spent time alone studying and reading.

22 SM: What kind of hours did Jack have to work?

23 JP: Pretty conventional. I think the company bus picked him up about 6:15 or
24 6:30 in the morning and he was usually home by 5:00 or 5:30 in the evening. He was off
25 for the most part Saturdays and Sundays.

26 SM: What month did you arrive in Udorn in '68?

27 JP: We got to Udorn I think it was April or May of '68 until May of '74.

28 SM: Wow. Good long time, six years. Now you mentioned that your trip or your
29 move from Tainan to Udorn was delayed somewhat because of the Tet Offensive. What
30 did you hear about the Tet Offensive prior to and when you got to Udorn? What was
31 your impression of what that was about, the Tet Offensive of '68?

1 JP: I remember that day because there were a whole gang of us at a lake. I
2 believe it was north of Tainan, we had gone for a Sunday outing. Somebody had a
3 transistor radio with them and, of course, we were appalled at the reports that were
4 coming over. It must have been Armed Forces. That seems odd now that I don't
5 remember that more clearly. It's vague to me now, Steve.

6 SM: That's okay.

7 JP: No. Those memories aren't clear.

8 SM: What were your impressions of—when you got to Udorn, was there any
9 sense that, “Well, the Tet Offensive was a success, a failure, irrelevant?” What was the
10 general perception that you recall? Anything?

11 JP: No. It was—no.

12 SM: At this point was the general mentality still that this war's winnable?

13 JP: At that stage, yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah. We were thinking that it was still
14 winnable long after that. I just kept thinking they would change their tactics, but they
15 didn't, of course.

16 SM: When you say they, who do you mean?

17 JP: The military or the politicians.

18 SM: That is the United States and our allies?

19 JP: Yeah. Do you know—have you ever looked at a map? Do you know
20 specifically where Udorn is located? Do you realize that it's halfway between Bangkok
21 and Hanoi?

22 SM: Yes. In fact, I have looked at the map.

23 JP: I had an uncle who was in Da Nang for a while and it just seemed that he was
24 so close. I kept hoping that he could come over and see us. It's just in many respects it
25 was just right there and in other respects it was a million miles away. We were so much
26 more involved in Laos.

27 SM: What did your uncle do?

28 JP: He was with the Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Service.

29 SM: He was helping to construct the base there?

30 JP: Yeah, at Da Nang.

1 SM: Okay. Well, in terms of the war as it was occurring in Laos, how much did
2 you understand in terms of the role of Air America and what the United States was doing
3 in Laos at the time?

4 JP: How much did I understand? I knew that there was a lot going on that I
5 wasn't privileged to know details on. There seemed to be an inordinate number of
6 memorial services held in our little auditorium. The mentality of "Don't ask questions"
7 was so pervasive. I didn't even discuss it with my husband.

8 SM: Did he talk much about his work?

9 JP: He was doing aircraft maintenance. Oh, sure. He'd mention when the
10 aircraft were severely shot up. I think for the most part it was—well, some of the things
11 that he enjoyed most of those challenges was going after crash-damaged aircraft and
12 getting them back to Udorn and rebuilding the thing. They could rebuild almost anything
13 if they had a data plate.

14 SM: Wow. How far would they travel, all the way up-country into Laos?

15 JP: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. That was just part of the job.

16 SM: Were there a lot of recovery missions?

17 JP: No. Not a lot.

18 SM: Did you ever go on any?

19 JP: No. Oh, no. In fact, I shied away from—even when I was up-country I kind
20 of shied away from Air America 'cause I didn't want to get him in trouble. So I would
21 either involve myself with USAID or civilians and took Royal Air Lao wherever I wanted
22 to go.

23 SM: Was there ever any kind of official briefing that you and Allyson and your
24 husband, Jack, that you received as new employees of this organization, where they told
25 you, "Okay, this is the way things are. You're not supposed to ask a lot of questions," or
26 was it just kind of an unspoken—?

27 JP: An unspoken.

28 SM: You never received any kind of official briefings or anything like that?

29 JP: No, but I think I've got some paperwork. There might have been a little
30 handout of some sort about what to expect in Udorn. Then I got involved with the
31 American Women's Club and we did the first map of the city that was available to wives.

1 We published a little booklet on where to buy this and that and how to deal with daily
2 life.

3 SM: Do those still exist, copies of those?

4 JP: I think so. Yeah. In fact, I've probably got them with me in my nostalgia
5 box.

6 SM: Okay. The work that you did with this club, why don't you go ahead and
7 describe—well, I guess, was the organization already in existence when you arrived
8 there?

9 JP: The American Women's Club of Thailand, is that what you mean?

10 SM: Mm-hmm. Yes ma'am.

11 JP: Yeah.

12 SM: How long had it been there? Do you know?

13 JP: Oh, gosh. I don't know, but probably as long as there had been more than
14 five American women in town. The thing that my friend whose name is also Judy, and
15 again her husband was Jack so there were two Jack and Judys—it was very confusing—
16 but somehow we got involved with doing a fashion show. It was the first fashion show
17 American style to be presented there. We wanted to have it at Air America at first. That
18 presented security problems because we wanted to invite a lot of Thai women that we
19 were acquainted with and getting them on base was the problem. Well, this was in mid-
20 [1968] when the hotel, Chalern Hotel, or Charoen Hotel—both pronunciations are
21 acceptable—was still under construction. Just as a long shot I went over there and talked
22 to the owner and said, "When are you going to open? Will you be ready in time? Why
23 don't you let us stage a fashion show as part of your opening festivities?" He bought the
24 idea. He liked that idea. So we staged this fashion show at this new grand hotel that was
25 by far the finest that Udorn had ever seen. It's still pretty nice, actually. I stayed there
26 last year. Anyway, that was a Women's Club activity and that kind of—I think we
27 started a new trend in bigger and better things for the club. Then Judy went on to be
28 elected president. I did the welfare job which gave me an entrée to the welfare services
29 people in town. I had an opportunity to meet the local government people and get
30 acquainted with them and appreciate what they were trying to do under very difficult

1 circumstances. I really enjoyed that time I spent as welfare chairman for the American
2 Women's Club.

3 SM: What kind of activities did you engage in, in that capacity?

4 JP: We have some pictures of that coming up, a lot of books to schools, water
5 tanks to schools. One winter was just horrendous when it got down to forty-five degrees,
6 which is just awful for elderly Thai people who don't have the clothing or the blankets.
7 We passed out hundreds of blankets in villages during that period. Working with the
8 local city and provincial governments, I would find out who needed what and then the
9 Women's Club would have a fundraiser and we'd pull it off. I'm enormously proud of
10 what we did. Also, I got to meet the Air Force civic action teams, the medical and dental.
11 I went out with them on several occasions and appreciated what they were trying to do in
12 the villages to improve the military image or hopefully the villagers would accept them
13 and not resent their presence.

14 SM: What was the general attitude of the population towards you and your family
15 and Americans generally?

16 JP: I thought it was pretty good. I got along very well with everyone I met. I
17 enjoyed the Thai people. They are very gentle, very kind, easy to get along with.

18 SM: Now you mentioned that you invited a lot of your Thai friends to the fashion
19 show that you had put on. Did most or did a lot of the Thai people that you came in
20 contact with speak English?

21 JP: To some extent, probably better than we spoke Thai. Yeah. One of my best
22 friends was a teacher at the teacher training college. A lot of her colleagues were very
23 well educated and had at least a smattering of English.

24 SM: The welfare activities that you engaged in, was there any kind of
25 coordination or cooperation with other organizations, missionary societies, or anything
26 like that?

27 JP: Not so much the missionaries. The Air Force would like to have had more
28 say in our welfare projects. We worked together for the most part, but some times I
29 didn't necessarily feel obligated to their agenda. Sometimes their motives were more
30 politically motivated than mine.

31 SM: How so? What kind of politics were involved with their activities?

1 JP: I'm trying to think now what the situation was when the Air Force civic
2 action colonel, Dan, I can't think of his last name. He wanted me to funnel everything
3 through his office. I didn't think that was necessary. I liked working directly with the
4 Thai government welfare officer whose name I can't recall. He was such a nice
5 gentleman, compassionate gentleman. I didn't think that he had any political axe to
6 grind. But, sometimes I'd work directly with him rather than going through the Air
7 Force.

8 SM: When you were a part of the American Women's Club, how many other
9 women were involved in that?

10 JP: Oh, that's a good question. I'll bet there were—this is a wild guess—I'd say
11 thirty. I haven't tried to think of that figure. I would probably have to dig through old
12 records or something to be sure, but that's just what comes to mind.

13 SM: What other types of activities did the organization support? You had your
14 welfare activities, you mentioned fundraisers. What did you typically do for fund
15 raising?

16 JP: Make and sell handicrafts at little fairs. That was primarily it. How did we
17 raise money? That's funny, I just spent it. I don't recall raising it that much. Somehow
18 we managed to finance an awful lot of schoolbooks. I can't say. I can only remember
19 one big fair we had, but there must have been many more. My mind has gone blank
20 there. I don't remember though, Steve.

21 SM: Was Allyson involved in any of these activities?

22 JP: Oh, yeah. She was always helping. We included our kids as much as
23 possible.

24 SM: Okay. Were her friends mostly other American children, or did she also
25 have Thai friends?

26 JP: She had the neighbor friends in our immediate area, but for the most part they
27 were American kids. There were Thai kids that she went to school with, Thai kids who
28 had American fathers. Most of her friends were from school.

29 SM: So, in addition to the American Women's Club activities, you also
30 eventually became involved in going out with Air Force civic action teams that went out
31 into the countryside in Thailand. Why don't you discuss how you became involved in

1 that and then we can discuss some of your photographs? (Editor's note: Interviewer is
2 referring to photographic slides Ms. Porter donated to the Vietnam Archive. Digital
3 versions of these photos are available on the Virtual Vietnam Archive)

4 JP: I contacted the civic action office at the base and told them that I was
5 interested in photographing their projects and could I go along. They made me feel
6 welcome, and said, "By all means." It became a regular thing. Not only the medical
7 civic action, they had a dentist usually with them. But, the civic action office also
8 repaired water pumps in villages, generally made themselves useful wherever possible. It
9 was good to go along with them and see what they were doing.

10 SM: This was the official Air Force activity to help increase the standard of
11 living in Thailand and, I guess, increase the popular perception that the Air Force was
12 there to help?

13 JP: That's right.

14 SM: Now was there a particular plan that you had for these photographs? You
15 just wanted to take them, you wanted to create a project with them somehow, or was that
16 even considered?

17 JP: At first, no. I was just trying to learn a trade, and that was my purpose. But
18 then I contacted the United States Information Service office there in Udorn. They said,
19 yes, they would be glad to buy some of my stuff. I started getting a little better organized
20 and trying to organize the whole project. It worked out very well and some of those
21 pictures toured Thailand.

22 SM: Now, I guess we could go ahead and talk about some of the specific
23 pictures. You mentioned that just for information purposes, for whoever's listening to
24 this or reading this transcript, we have the photographs in numerical sequence and picture
25 number one you mentioned is of Air Force personnel going out on civic action. This is
26 your first experience doing this? Your first time out with them?

27 JP: I don't know. I don't know, Steve. It was probably one of the first few
28 times. When the Air Force team would arrive in a village the people would be expecting
29 them and they would usually be lined up in some sort of order. Usually it was mothers
30 with children, they were the first priority.

1 SM: In this picture we see a truck of Air Force, obviously a young American Air
2 Force person. Is this a medic?

3 JP: Mm-hmm. Yes.

4 SM: Okay. Was it typically medics that would go out on these or were they
5 accompanied by actual physicians as well?

6 JP: Oh, there was always a doctor with them and a couple of registered nurses.
7 Sometimes we had a dentist, sometimes it was a dental technician.

8 SM: How well did the Air Force people interact with the Thai people that they
9 were trying to help?

10 JP: For the most part, very well. There were a few interpreters that belonged to
11 the medical staff or the medical team as well as to the civic action office. They worked
12 very closely. The doctors were very patient about discussing the children, the patients,
13 with the parents. There were some problems. At that time, the military did not take into
14 consideration the cultural differences and they thought just by being there that they were
15 doing the right thing. Today a major company would not send someone overseas without
16 a briefing. I fought a losing battle for a long time. I thought that civic action should brief
17 that medical team in some very basics about the Thai culture. They just thought I was
18 ridiculous, that it was unnecessary. Once a doctor did put his foot on a monk's platform
19 and point his toe at the monk. He was doing it without thinking. He was concentrating
20 on the monk's medical problem and trying to think what could be the cause of it. It
21 didn't occur to him that he could be offending, seriously offending. I had a problem with
22 some of the medics. A couple of them were left-handed, one in particular. He just didn't
23 stop to think that handing out medication with his left hand was doing more damage than
24 good. These are things that they should have been told about before they were ever
25 allowed off base, but at that time that wasn't considered important.

26 SM: Now with regard to the monk and the placing of the foot on his platform,
27 was that seen as a sign of disrespect by the—?

28 JP: Terrible disrespect.

29 SM: By both the monk and the other Thai that were near him?

30 JP: Yes. Yes. First of all, you don't rise above a monk. You just don't do it. If
31 he's seated, then you approach him in a bent over form. To point your toe at any Thai is

1 very rude. To show the sole of your foot to another person is very rude. These things are
2 easy to learn and easy to observe, but when the doctor rested his foot on the monk's
3 platform, you can visualize any number of people leaning over with their arms crossed on
4 the upraised knee and thinking and talking and conversing with an interpreter. It's just
5 the most natural thing in the world for an American to do, but it's very rude to a Thai.

6 SM: How about the—what was it that was wrong with handing out medication
7 with your left hand from the Thai perspective?

8 JP: The left hand is unclean.

9 SM: Okay. How is that in terms of Thai culture or Thai personal habits or
10 hygiene? How is that related?

11 JP: Well, the left hand is used in their toilet ablution, however you want to put it,
12 as opposed to toilet paper.

13 SM: So very much like the Arabic culture?

14 JP: Yes, very much so. You would never put your left hand in the food pot in an
15 Arab country and you just wouldn't do that among the Thais either.

16 SM: Were there other problems or not necessarily cultural misunderstandings,
17 but what other things did medics and medical personnel have to cope with in terms of
18 trying to work with the Thai people who probably had different notions of medical care,
19 different ideas about, perhaps, herbal and more folk or traditional medicines and things
20 like that? Did you witness anything in that regard?

21 JP: Not that I can think of. These were usually ear infections or splinters or sores
22 that wouldn't heal. One woman, a lovely older woman in picture 050, that woman had a
23 tooth extracted which she actually gave me. It was totally encrusted with betel nut. I still
24 have it someplace. These are fairly simple things. It wasn't a matter of cultural
25 differences or not. They had something that needed attention and they knew that the
26 medical team from the Air Force had a better chance of fixing it than they had otherwise
27 in the village.

28 SM: In this picture in particular, the medical person who's helping her is holding
29 her mouth open with his left hand.

30 JP: Both hands.

1 SM: Well, he's got the syringe in one hand and he's holding her lower jaw with
2 the other.

3 JP: Well, that—

4 SM: Is that acceptable?

5 JP: She went to him in pain. Yeah. For the dentist to do that, that's okay. You
6 notice he had on gloves?

7 SM: Yes. So that made a difference in terms of physical contact, wearing what is
8 obviously a surgical-type glove?

9 JP: You know, I don't know, Steve. I wouldn't dare say that that made a
10 difference other than he was a professional treating her I would say probably made the
11 biggest difference.

12 SM: Okay. Let's see.

13 JP: I'd like to add that these people were so grateful for this attention and the care
14 they were getting that they laid on a feast. If you can look at some of those pictures you
15 can see—let me be specific here. In some cases we're sitting on the floor eating and in
16 other cases there's actually a table laid out. If you go to fifteen, yes, go to fifteen. Look
17 at all of those dishes. They just go on forever. Everyone in the village helped to feed this
18 medical team that they were so anxious to have.

19 SM: In that picture, near the end of the table there, obviously someone paying
20 very close attention to the camera.

21 JP: That's the other Judy.

22 SM: That's the other Judy?

23 JP: Yes.

24 SM: Okay. The woman sitting next to her, is this another member of the
25 American Women's Club?

26 JP: Yes. In fact, that was Kit Richards. She was a customer's wife, that is—
27 well, customer's wife. It was JLD, a joint liaison department, I think we called them.
28 They must have been CIA. The captain that you see looking at the camera was the doctor
29 of that team. I see a Peace Corps person there. We didn't often have them but there was
30 one in our area and he was very, very, very conscientious about his work. He did a good
31 job.

1 SM: Which person is that in the photograph?

2 JP: He is the fair-haired fellow with the sideburns.

3 SM: Oh, yeah. Okay.

4 JP: His name was Alan. I can't think of his last name.

5 SM: Sitting on the left side of the table—

6 JP: Yes.

7 SM: About the fifth person down?

8 JP: Yes.

9 SM: All you can see is his head and his arms?

10 JP: The only fair-haired one with sideburns, on the left.

11 SM: You said there were not a lot of Peace Corps people that you interacted

12 with?

13 JP: Well, there just weren't that many there. There were three over at Loei,

14 which was a town to the west of us. We had just one or two in our area. There just

15 weren't that many there.

16 SM: Were there any other photographs that you wanted to discuss in terms of—?

17 JP: So many of them are of the Women's Club activities. You see them passing

18 out blankets. There are some pictures in there of some fellows from the base, GIs putting

19 gutters on the orphanage roof. There was that one orphanage in Udorn, and an Air

20 America wife who was a registered nurse spent nearly all of her waking hours at that

21 orphanage looking after those babies.

22 SM: Is there a particular picture that you're talking about here?

23 JP: Yes, Greer is pictured in 011, feeding a new arrival with an eyedropper.

24 SM: Wow. Now these children, these were children that they left there or were

25 they picked up and brought in? How would they arrive in this orphanage?

26 JP: I think that there were any number of scenarios there. I can't give you any

27 specific off hand. I don't know. I don't know what the circumstances were.

28 SM: Do you have any idea how many children were at this orphanage?

29 JP: Oh, that changed. I would say fifteen to eighteen most of the time.

30 SM: Was this the orphanage where—or in this orphanage, did Americans that

31 were serving there in Thailand, did they adopt some of these children?

1 JP: Actually Greer did adopt one child, Mata, from that orphanage. There were
2 some, but I think you may have heard of St. Mary's orphanage, the Catholic orphanage,
3 probably provided more adopt—what's the term, adoptee? No, children that were
4 adopted probably came more from the Catholic orphanage than from this other one, and I
5 don't know why that is.

6 SM: Are you familiar with Jim Parker?

7 JP: Yes.

8 SM: Were his children from that orphanage?

9 JP: No. They were from the Catholic orphanage. That's exactly what I was
10 thinking.

11 SM: That's what I meant, that's right. They were from that Catholic orphanage?

12 JP: The Catholic orphanage, not from this particular one. There is the picture 12,
13 that is Ambassador Unger's wife. She wanted to join us on a project we called "Book
14 Corner." We provided about seventy books on various things, various subject matter,
15 from physical hygiene to gardening. We'd like to think there was a lot of pure pleasure
16 in between. We hoped the kids would share the knowledge they learned from these
17 books with their parents. We brought several sets and we were taking them to schools
18 sponsored by the Thai Border Patrol Police. One of our problems was getting these
19 books to schools that were wide open to the elements. I found a source for ammo boxes.
20 These turned out to be the perfect answer because they could be closed and were water
21 tight. So, we could deliver the books in the ammo boxes and they stayed dry and useful
22 for a long time. Mrs. Unger joined us on that. I was upset about this particular
23 expedition because ordinarily I could go any place I wanted to go in my truck. I had a
24 little Mazda truck that was very dependable, and I could haul this stuff to the villages and
25 deliver it and that was that. If a dignitary joined us, then it created all kinds of problems.
26 In this case, we couldn't go by my truck with the ambassador's wife. We had to have a
27 helicopter. That just—to me they spent more on the helicopter transportation for her than
28 what our project was worth. It was just misguided to me. I used to get a little upset with
29 misuse of funds.

30 SM: As the ambassador's wife, was she involved in other humanitarian activities
31 in Udorn and in Thailand generally?

1 JP: Not so much in Udorn. Certainly she was very active with the Women's
2 Club in Bangkok. She came to join us on this occasion because Ambassador Unger was
3 touring the base with Charlie Gabriel, the base commander. He could arrange his events
4 to coincide with ours. It worked out nicely for her. I hope the US government got a lot
5 of publicity out of it, I don't know. They were little books.

6 SM: Now was the use of the helicopter disruptive to this area, this village, where
7 you went and delivered these books?

8 JP: Well, it's just that when a helicopter—they know ahead of time that the
9 American ambassador's wife is coming and this guest will be presented. When someone
10 of that stature or that degree of importance arrives, then they have to lay on soda pop and
11 make a big deal out of it. There again, they're spending more money on entertaining us
12 than we're giving them in the little books. It's just sometimes things got out of hand like
13 that.

14 SM: And the price of handling a dignitary, the village itself put out an awful lot,
15 expended an awful lot of its internal resources.

16 JP: That's right. They didn't have that kind of money to spend. They got it
17 together for something like this.

18 SM: Was this the only time that the ambassador's wife went out with you?

19 JP: Yes. Yes. It's not something we encouraged. We could do so much quietly.
20 It was just better if we were without the dignitary.

21 SM: How about other dignitaries, visiting senators, stuff like that?

22 JP: I was never, never involved in that.

23 SM: They did come to Udorn?

24 JP: They might have, I don't know. I was pretty low on the totem pole there,
25 Steve.

26 SM: Okay. Well, how about other pictures and activities that these pictures
27 depict?

28 JP: If you go through them you'll see a lot more schoolbooks. Let's see. There's
29 nineteen. I believe this was a situation where kids from a high school in Udorn went out
30 to a village with us. That's odd. I can't remember it specifically, but we did buy an
31 awful lot of books. There are several stacks of them in this picture, 019. There is one

1 young Sikh there, Gary [Singh] was his name. His family was the only Sikh family in
2 Udorn that I know of. His father had a plumbing or electrical business there. He had
3 some good friends in this village and asked if we couldn't do something for the school.
4 We passed out an awful lot of school supplies, a lot of blankets. Children's Day was a
5 special time for the kids. I thought giving them candy was so wasteful until someone
6 said they get so little joy out of life. It really makes it a special occasion for them and
7 they appreciate it so much.

8 SM: How about food distribution?

9 JP: I don't remember any food distribution in northeast Thailand. The whole
10 area was a rice growing area. Every village had lots of papaya and mangos. I don't think
11 food was such a problem over there.

12 SM: The reason I ask is I just looked at picture 56. I was curious what the sacks
13 were.

14 JP: 56, you just jumped over, 55 is the last in that medical civic action program.
15 56 goes to—hang on a second, please. Yes, 56 was in Laos.

16 SM: Oh, okay. Well, then let's stick with the Thailand. So pictures one through
17 fifty-five are all in Thailand, pretty much?

18 JP: There was a break there. Photos 40 through 48 were a different subject, but 1
19 through 39 and then 49 to 55 were all Thailand.

20 SM: They all involve Air Force civic action providing medical assistance, things
21 like that?

22 JP: That's right. They also include the American Women's Club. There are a
23 couple of pictures there of the orphanage there at Udorn. Is there anything else you
24 need?

25 SM: I'm curious, very interesting picture, number 52.

26 JP: That's a problem. The pills were handed over with the left hand. I don't
27 think that young lady probably took them. She probably tossed them. Is that what you
28 were referring to?

29 SM: Well, yeah, the left hand, but also the posture of that young person there?

30 JP: Oh, she's bowing to him. They call it *wai*. That is she has her hands folded
31 together for form and she's bowing.

1 SM: This is just an indication of appreciation?

2 JP: Yes, that's customary. You'll see that in nearly all of these pictures. The
3 children are bowing to whoever is—it's their way of saying "thank you."

4 SM: At the same time—

5 JP: Pardon?

6 SM: At the same time, more than likely, because this medic is handing that
7 medicine to her with his left hand, she's going to throw it away?

8 JP: That could be, but I can't—let me find it again. Which reminds me, I want to
9 tell you about—what was that picture again?

10 SM: Fifty-two.

11 JP: Hello?

12 SM: Mm-hmm?

13 JP: Hello?

14 SM: Yeah?

15 JP: Oh.

16 SM: Sorry.

17 JP: What was that picture number?

18 SM: Fifty-two.

19 JP: Fifty-two. Hang on. Oh, yeah. She probably was very much aware. I can't
20 say specifically, but that was a bad *faux pas*, but that was one that I tried to correct. I
21 don't know whether I got anywhere or not. Are you there?

22 SM: Yes ma'am. Can you hear me?

23 JP: Yeah, I can hear you. That one, 54, sweet little baby getting a check, that
24 particular picture was used in *Horizons Magazine* for some reason to illustrate Nixon's
25 policy on Asia. I never figured that out. Picture fifty-five I think is a perfect example of
26 how the doctors questioned the parents using the interpreter. Do you have that available?

27 SM: Mm-hmm. I'm looking at it now. She's got medicine already.

28 JP: Yes. She does.

29 SM: I mean, I would imagine that having interpreters there was extremely helpful
30 in explaining dosage and everything else.

1 JP: Oh, absolutely. They had to be able to get some kind of medical history on
2 these people. But the doctors were so patient. They loved going out into the field and
3 working with these people. They really enjoyed every bit of it.

4 SM: You mentioned something interesting, Nixon's policy and how that picture
5 had been used to supposedly reflect the Nixon position and policy in Southeast Asia.
6 What did you guys think, and was it discussed much, when in May of 1968, President
7 Johnson made his declaration that he would not seek re-election? Then what did you
8 think of the transition from Johnson to Nixon?

9 JP: The fact that he wasn't going to run for re-election was a huge surprise. I
10 can't tell you now that I had any opinions one way or the other, Steve. I really don't, I
11 don't—nothing sticks in my mind. It was a constant wonder at how we could be losing
12 this thing.

13 SM: What did you think about Nixon and his secret plan to win the war? Did
14 you guys have any disconcert about that at all?

15 JP: No. I didn't have any thoughts on it at all. I don't know. I guess if we hope
16 for anything we wish that the politicians would stay out of it and let our troops do what
17 they had to do.

18 SM: Now while you were there, did you notice at all any increase or decrease in
19 the tempo of activity or operations in Udorn?

20 JP: Oh, gosh. Well, for one thing our base was attacked twice by local
21 communist terrorists. That was kind of a surprise because we thought we were tucked
22 away safely, a little area in northeast Thailand. The Christmas bombing was the most
23 severe. That was just absolutely relentless, Steve. I can remember Bob Hope becoming
24 absolutely disgusted. They had told him that they would try and stop the bombing for an
25 hour or so and, in fact, something happened that they couldn't. They had his stage set up
26 very near the runway. He couldn't even get off a one liner without an aircraft taking off.
27 It just went on and on and on. I could not understand how any country, any city, could
28 survive the onslaught. It was just unrelenting.

29 SM: You're talking about the Christmas bombing campaign in late '72 and early
30 '73?

31 JP: Yes. Yeah.

1 SM: What was the general feeling, opinion, amongst the people that you talked
2 with and then what was your personal feeling about that bombing?

3 JP: I don't recall discussing it with anyone. I just could not believe that it was
4 going on and on and on and apparently not accomplishing anything. To me, that was just
5 not the thing to do. It couldn't have been. I'm over my head, Steve. I really don't have
6 that much of an opinion. It was just so awful and seemed to go on forever that I couldn't
7 imagine anyone surviving.

8 SM: What did you all think when you heard of the final Paris Peace Accords that
9 were signed in January of '73 and the fact that technically, from the American standpoint,
10 we were out of it, the war is over in Vietnam?

11 JP: Betrayal. For one thing, again, getting back to Laos, people forgot to mention
12 the thousands and thousands and thousands of North Vietnamese that had entered Laos.
13 We weren't having a war there all by ourselves with the Pathet Lao. There was this other
14 army that had no business there, either.

15 SM: Was there—you mentioned that Udorn was attacked while you were there.
16 What was the nature of those attacks? Was there any North Vietnamese involvement
17 from your understanding?

18 JP: I don't know that they ever found out specifically, but they definitely—I'm
19 sure they felt that those attacks were ordered by North Vietnam.

20 SM: At that point—when was the first attack in Udorn while you were there?

21 JP: '68.

22 SM: Very early?

23 JP: Yeah. Yeah.

24 SM: How much had you heard about the Pathet Lao?

25 JP: I was very new. Only that there was—actually, in fact, it was the other
26 brother. Souvanna Phouma had a brother and he was of the other side.

27 SM: When was the second attack?

28 JP: That was later. That must have been '71. I can't say specifically now when
29 that was. I was very familiar with the village that they came through. I was thoroughly
30 tempted to drive over and see what was going on and it's just as well I didn't. I could
31 have got caught in crossfire or any number of things.

1 SM: Was it mostly just rifle fire, or was there mortar and rocket and stuff like
2 that?

3 JP: Sapper teams entered the base.

4 SM: Sappers. Okay. Was there a significant casualty rate?

5 JP: Only on their part, I believe. I heard that there were seven bodies in the Air
6 America morgue. I don't even know where our morgue was, but they had a refrigeration
7 unit someplace on base there. This was very, very hush-hush. I never did hear the
8 details.

9 SM: Which was the harsher or the bigger of the two attacks? Was it the first or
10 the second, or were they pretty equal?

11 JP: You know, I couldn't say now. The first one I was in the outdoor movie at
12 the base and when it came under attack I cleared out as quickly as possible and had to
13 avoid—actually, there were the ambulances heading towards the flight line that almost
14 ran me over a couple of times. The second time I was living in a different location. I
15 wasn't on base that night. I don't know. I couldn't say which was more severe.

16 SM: Was the second attack similar in terms of it was mostly sappers?

17 JP: You know, I don't know. I don't know now what that—I don't recall hearing.
18 I'm sure the bodies I heard about belonged to the first group. I could be wrong there. It's
19 been a long time.

20 SM: Oh, yeah. Of course. Well, let's go—is there anything else you want to talk
21 about with regard to the Air Force civic action?

22 JP: Only that there's one here. Let me get this number, 32 with Airman John
23 Kelly. This kid was so good. He was a medic, but he did more good just by clowning
24 with children. He would entertain them, and get them to relax so that they weren't so
25 afraid of seeing the foreign doctor. He did a great job. He was really good. He was kind
26 of our own Danny Kaye. That's it.

27 SM: Oh, okay. So why don't we go ahead and end this first CD (compact disc)
28 of the interview with Judy Porter. Thank you.

29

30

31

Interview with Judith Porter
Session [2] of [3]
February 28, 2001

1 This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Judith Porter on February 28,
2 2001. This is CD number two. It's approximately 12:30 Lubbock time. Why don't you
3 go ahead and describe the transition from working with the Air Force civic action group
4 program and the Women's Club in terms of your photography, and then your work with
5 USAID, and how you became involved with taking photographs of USAID activities?

6 JP: First of all the civic action and the Women's Club all took place in Northeast
7 Thailand. After I became more confident about my ability with a camera and I had sold a
8 couple of pieces to *Asia Magazine* in Hong Kong—*Asia Magazine* is a Sunday
9 supplement that goes out with English-language newspapers from Seoul to Singapore and
10 points south. I just was so depressed about the lousy press we were getting in Laos.
11 Reporters would come and they'd seem to come with an agenda, "Let's trash the
12 government." It just got to be so depressing. I was around people constantly who were
13 working hard and really giving their all to do the right thing and nobody ever noticed.
14 That's just really vile. I had become good friends with the wife of the man who had been
15 US consulate in Udorn. They had gone on to Bangkok and such but they had good
16 friends in Laos because they had been stationed there before. I told my friend how I felt.
17 She said, "Well," and I said, "I'd really like to be able to photograph exactly what was
18 done up there and let somebody know that we had tried to do positive, constructive
19 things." So she sent me to a friend of hers and he introduced me to a couple of others.
20 One thing led to another, and I had their full cooperation. That's what I needed because
21 the people in the field with you, they had been so badly treated by press that they just
22 wouldn't have talked to anyone had I not had Vientiane's blessing. That's how it began.
23 I laid out a schedule from Ban Houei Sai which is in the northwest to Pakse in
24 Champasak in the south. I did it as methodically as I could. I'm very, very glad that I
25 did.

26 SM: Why don't we go ahead and discuss, then, the series of pictures that you
27 took for USAID?

1 JP: This is—this one that I have before me is a concerned rice drop. There are
2 thousands of Laotian youngsters who thought rice came from the sky. They had been
3 moved so many times in their short lives, because of the war, because the North
4 Vietnamese would move in from the northeast and they would have to move to the south.
5 They just kept moving so their parents never had a chance to establish a crop to grow
6 their own rice. As far as they knew, airplanes always shoved it out and it landed near
7 their village.

8 SM: Which photograph are you looking at?

9 JP: You can start with the rice warehouse, USAID rice warehouse at Vientiane
10 Wattay Airport, number 59. That shows the men emptying the bags that the rice came in,
11 the one-hundred-kilo bags. It had to be emptied and then it was re-bagged into forty kilos
12 with triple bagging so that when it was shoved out of an aircraft at eight hundred feet, it
13 didn't burst on impact. They were able to deliver it in that way, but it had to be re-
14 bagged first. Then picture 60 is—let's see. Picture 60 is re-bagging. Hang on. That's
15 more of the rebagging process at the warehouse. Then you get into picture 61 which isn't
16 listed here. Do you see a Royal Air Lao C-46 or C-47?

17 SM: Picture number—

18 JP: Are you looking at Continental Air Services?

19 SM: On the picture 61 that I have?

20 JP: Uh-huh.

21 SM: It's a Royal Lao aircraft. It's got the twin elephants?

22 JP: That's right. Actually, there are three of them.

23 SM: Okay. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm looking at a very small—

24 JP: That's a Royal Air Lao aircraft being loaded with rice in preparation for an
25 airdrop. 62 is Continental Air Services being loaded with rice and refueled. You will
26 read these captions and text, Steve?

27 SM: Yes, ma'am.

28 JP: Yeah. They cover everything there.

29 SM: Do you know the pilot in picture number 64?

30 JP: Bud Francis, yes. He was with Royal Air Lao and CASI (Continental Air
31 Services, Incorporated) for years. Unfortunately, he's no longer living. He died just

1 about four years ago, I think. He had been dropping rice for a long time for both Royal
2 Air Lao and CASI. Ask me questions, Steve. I don't know where to go from here.

3 SM: Sure. When you were working with USAID and when you were taking
4 photographs of some of their activities, did you hear of them or hear of other people
5 dropping hard rice?

6 JP: Oh, yeah. That happened.

7 SM: Was that part of this as well?

8 JP: Different program.

9 SM: Oh, it was not part of USAID?

10 JP: It could have been, but I don't know. I don't think so. That was another—I
11 don't know, Steve. It could have been and I wouldn't have been aware of it. There's a
12 picture of Mac Thompson in his office. He's the one that coordinated the rice drops. He
13 literally has rolls of people in the villages, births and deaths, so that he could calculate
14 how much rice each village would need, how many drops it would take to feed them for a
15 month's time, a staggering job, just huge. He's a good buddy of Les in Bangkok.

16 SM: Is that him in picture number 70 as well?

17 JP: Sixty-three.

18 SM: Oh, he's in 63?

19 JP: Yeah. Got it?

20 SM: Yep. Sure do. Who is that in picture—let's see here, 70 and 71?

21 JP: Oh, that—now you're getting into the story of sericulture. That's Jack
22 Parmenter.

23 SM: Okay. This is a different—

24 JP: Different series.

25 SM: Different series? Okay. When you were working with USAID, was it pretty
26 much—?

27 JP: Oh, sorry. He was still USAID, but it's not the rice drop.

28 SM: Okay. So your time with USAID you covered the rice drop activities. What
29 else did you cover?

30 JP: Oh, sericulture, food delivery by trucks, noodle factory in Ban Houei Sai,
31 agricultural experiments at [Luang Prabang] which is here. We can go into that. Food

1 delivery throughout the country, fish farms in the Luang Prabang province and also
2 around Savannakhet, everything. There was a lot being done there, the irrigation project,
3 the huge irrigation project. Let's deal with the rice drop by air and then we can go onto
4 something else. Let's see, what can I explain to you about that?

5 SM: I guess it's photograph number 64 begins that process. You've got the pilot
6 there, and then 65 is—

7 JP: That's—hello?

8 SM: Uh-huh?

9 JP: Yeah. Okay. Sixty-four is—the captions cover it all now. Then the [crew]
10 for the most part were good about wearing cables to keep themselves attached to the
11 aircraft so they didn't go out with the load. I put on a gunner's belt so I could not have to
12 worry about being too close to the door.

13 SM: Oh, okay. So you also had something holding you in?

14 JP: Yes.

15 SM: Good.

16 JP: Mac insisted that you had to have a parachute on board that had been fitted
17 for you, which bothered me. I could not imagine ever jumping out of an airplane. It just
18 seemed foolhardy, but he assured me that I would if they got shot at. But anyway, he
19 sent me to be fitted for a parachute. That was the first and last time I ever had to do that.

20 SM: Did you take that with you whenever you flew?

21 JP: Only on that rice drop. That's the only time I needed it. They apparently had
22 strict regulations that if you were on a rice drop there had to be a parachute for you
23 aboard that aircraft. That was a huge program. There is a manuscript that goes with it. It
24 explains that as the refugees, by late '73—let's see. I need to back up. (Editor's note:
25 Interviewee reading from text) "Five hundred drops over ninety-nine drop zones was the
26 requirement in April '71 to feed the a hundred and fifty thousand refugees. By January
27 of '74, all but forty-six thousand in forty-three locations were either self sufficient or
28 accessible by road." Did you know that we had a huge contingent of federal highways
29 building roads over there?

30 SM: No.

1 JP: Yeah. Yeah. That was another activity. There were no roads outside the
2 towns and the villages when we first started our involvement in Laos. Last year I was
3 able to take a bus from Luang Prabang to Vientiane by road and I could not have done
4 that during the war.

5 SM: Was this also a USAID activity?

6 JP: Building roads?

7 SM: Uh-huh.

8 JP: Back then, yes. Yes, definitely. Parmenter, this is a fascinating man. I really
9 admired all he tried to do. He even went to Taiwan and smuggled silkworms to get the
10 silk industry going again in Laos. It had been—I don't know why exactly it had
11 deteriorated so, but he was able to do a lot. He was able to get the handicrafts organized
12 so that there was a government outlet in Vientiane. Now there are other things going on.
13 I'm sad to say no one seems to know his name anymore. That's really sad because so
14 much—

15 SM: Now these are the pictures from 69, number 69 onward?

16 JP: Sixty-nine, seventy, yes. These are of silk worms that were growing on the
17 Vientiane Plain. It just became a worthwhile livelihood for a lot of people.

18 SM: What was this gentleman's name? No one knows?

19 JP: Jack Parmenter is his name. I'm sorry. He's not credited today for all he did
20 in sericulture and the silk industry. It apparently died out again after the war and has only
21 recently been revived by an American woman by the name of Carol Cassidy, but that's
22 another story.

23 SM: He was working for USAID as well?

24 JP: That's right. He went to Laos as an International Voluntary Services, IVS,
25 and then went on to work for USAID.

26 SM: How about the rest of the pictures in this series?

27 JP: Just various stages of the silkworms progressing from the cocoon through the
28 boiling them and separating them—removing the raw silk from the cocoon. The cocoon
29 was drowned in hot water to kill the—is that pupa?

30 SM: Uh-huh.

1 JP: And loosen the silk's filaments. The woman in the picture is drawing the silk
2 thread through a bamboo brush by expertly clicking the cocoon and jerking the filament.
3 She matched it together with four or five other cocoons and draws it through an eye of
4 the brush over a bobbin forming one continuous thread that goes into the basket.

5 SM: Tremendous amount of skill involved.

6 JP: Yes. They made the most wonderful silk borders that were about, oh, six to
7 eight inches wide. They were sewn on the bottoms of their skirts. Each and every one
8 was a work of art. They're worthy of framing.

9 SM: Pardon?

10 JP: They'd make wonderful wall hangings if you wanted to frame them. They're
11 that beautiful.

12 SM: The pictures that follow that in the sequence between 1 and 90, seems like
13 more medical activities as well. Let's see, picture number 76—no. I'm sorry. Seventy-
14 seven, picture seventy-seven and seventy-eight.

15 JP: Oh, that is the Methadone Clinic at Vientiane, the detoxification center. Laos
16 didn't customarily use heroin or opium for recreation purposes. It was used to alleviate
17 pain, to stifle hunger pangs, strictly medicinal purposes, but still they did on occasion
18 become addicted. It became more and more so in later years and they started a
19 Methadone program in Vientiane. It was very successful. That's what this series is
20 about. There's one picture there, 78, of a soldier who used opium to relieve the pain of
21 hunger and fear on the battlefield. Doctor [Chomchanh] Soudaly was the head of the
22 program. He's in one of these pictures, 77.

23 SM: Helping a very young person?

24 JP: Yes. He did seem young although this boy's probably a quite a bit older than
25 he would appear to us. [The boy was probably sixteen.] He had some help from an
26 [American doctor], Anne Kirkley, also was a part of that team. Methadone seemed to
27 work pretty well there because it wasn't a recreational habit. Doctor Westermeyer is still,
28 I believe, employed with the Veteran's Administration up north in Minneapolis, in that
29 area. He was the one who established this program, set it up, and sent Doctor Soudaly for
30 training in the United States before he took over there.

1 SM: This will end the interview with Judy Porter on the twenty-eighth of
2 February.

Interview with Judith Porter

Session [3] of [3]

Date: March 1, 2001

1 Stephen Maxner: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Judith
2 Porter on the first of March 2001, at approximately 1:15 Lubbock time. I'm in Lubbock,
3 Texas, and Judy's still in North Carolina. Why don't we go ahead and discuss the
4 photographs and the USAID activities concerning alternative crop production and
5 livestock maintenance and raising?

6 Judith Porter: Do you want to ask me questions?

7 SM: Well, what photographs pertain to those particular activities?

8 JP: I'm looking at one. Let's see. Its number 84 and that is of Mike Palacpac
9 who was a Filipino senior supervisor of this particular project at the Agricultural
10 Redirection Training Center in Luang Prabang Province. Redirection is the key word
11 here. That's USAID-ese for anything but opium. They made considerable effort to
12 improve crops so that the farmers could realize some cash. They brought young men in
13 to the training camp for at least six weeks. They tried to take one person and train them
14 in one aspect. That is, there was one person trained to deal with the swine, another with
15 chickens, another with rabbits, and so forth. Then they would have, this team would have
16 to go back to their home village and train others in what they had learned. The crop
17 program was actually an agricultural research station. They had their experimental
18 station at four thousand feet, which is where apparently the poppies grow best and that
19 they were trying to find a crop to replace them, the opium poppy. They had—one
20 minute. They tried grapes, peaches, limes, tangerines, ginseng, mung beans, corn,
21 lychee. They introduced various varieties of coffee, mushrooms in a number of different
22 varieties. They tried everything that they could think of that might provide a cash crop
23 for the farmers that would replace this opium. I don't know to this day what the outcome
24 was, but they were certainly investing a lot of effort into it at that time.

25 SM: To your knowledge, at the time with what you witnessed, did there seem to
26 be a genuine interest on the part of the Laotians, the Miao, or the Hmong to actually
27 switch from opium to other crops?

1 JP: I didn't have that much first hand knowledge of the program, but from what I
2 saw in the few villages that I was in, sure. If they could find another crop that would
3 provide the benefits that they had got from opium that would be fine with them. They
4 had no ulterior motive other than making a living. The one head man at this village at
5 Phou Padang, he had hired—he brought in a Yao, Y-A-O, tribesman to teach them how
6 to build a pigpen. Now that seems bizarre to us, but in fact they had always let their pigs
7 run free and they just did not understand the concept of penning something up. So, they
8 invited this Yao to come and build a pigpen. He did this and then before he headed back
9 to his village he wanted to have a rest and have a smoke of opium. Now, this was the
10 only time in the entire country that I ever witnessed someone actually smoking opium.
11 He stretched out on the floor of the headman's hut, or cabin, or whatever you want to call
12 that thing. That picture is in here someplace. He took a few puffs and this is where my
13 professional instinct kicked in. I kept saying, "Just one more picture, please." They got
14 the headman and my host got to laughing because they said that poor man was not going
15 to come down off his high for days. Anyway, he was smoking opium as a reward and as
16 a way of resting before he headed back to his own village. The headman spoke of him
17 rather contemptuously. He said that he did not smoke opium. He took a chunk out of his
18 pocket of solid—now I don't know what this state it is. It was in a square about two
19 inches square and he bit off a chunk that—well, I thought it would choke a horse. He
20 chewed it, and that was how he used opium himself, not smoking it. Well, chewing
21 tobacco is bad enough, but when you see someone biting off a chunk of opium like that
22 (inaudible). I'm not sure whether that was opium. It must have been opium at that stage,
23 rather than heroin. I'm just not that familiar with drugs.

24 SM: So was this a cultural distinction between the two groups?

25 JP: Yes. Apparently it was a cultural distinction that the headman was a little
26 contemptuous that this other tribesman would smoke it.

27 SM: Did the other people in that village also chew it? Do you know?

28 JP: I don't know. That was the only episode I witnessed.

29 SM: Now do you know what it is in their personal or their collective philosophy
30 that shied them away from the penning of their animals? Do you know if there was any
31 resistance to that based on some form of philosophical reason?

1 JP: No. I just think it was they hadn't learned a better way yet. I don't think that
2 there was anything mystical or philosophical. I just think it was a thoughtless way of
3 doing things.

4 SM: I just didn't know if like some Native American groups, there was more of a
5 mentality that you don't actually own animals or the land. So, to pen them in some
6 context, some cultural context, to pen animals or to put up fences, delineating property,
7 that kind of thing, that's just a very foreign concept, not just in terms of not thinking
8 about it, but also in terms of it actually is contrary to some core beliefs. So I wasn't sure
9 if there was a core belief.

10 JP: Steve, that could be a fact of the case. I'm just not aware of it. I've never
11 heard anyone express that with these people in mind. I'm sure there's a lot more known
12 about them today than was thirty years ago and that may be the case, but I was not aware
13 of it at the time.

14 SM: How large was this village that you visited where this particular transaction
15 occurred?

16 JP: I don't have an actual population figure, but this village was supposed to have
17 been in that area for forty years, which is just amazing. They have never been on the
18 refugee roll. They remained fairly isolated from the war itself. Mind you, this is pretty
19 far to the west of Laos. It's very near to the China-Burma border. So the Vietnamese
20 didn't get into that area nearly so much as they did other areas of the country.

21 SM: Was there anything else you wanted to talk about with regard to those two
22 programs?

23 JP: No. That's okay. Before we leave Laos, I did want to mention the Operation
24 Brotherhood medical team from the Philippines. They did a fantastic job. They had OB
25 hospitals—OB meaning Operation Brotherhood, not obstetrics—hospitals in Houei Sai,
26 in Luang Prabang, in Sayaboury. I don't know just how many hospitals they ran in-
27 country, but there were probably six or seven. USAID paid for their services. But they
28 contributed an awful lot to the country and they worked in areas that we'd have been hard
29 pressed to keep people there for a long period of time. They did a wonderful job. I don't
30 know what ever became of those teams, if they went onto other similar projects in other
31 parts of the world or whatever happened to them, but I'd really like to know.

1 SM: Now these Operation Brotherhood personnel, they were primarily—were
2 they Filipino?

3 JP: Yes. Yes. All of them were Filipino.

4 SM: Had they acquired—did you understand had they acquired the language and
5 necessary skills to work?

6 JP: They did much better than we did, than Americans did. I would say for the
7 most part they certainly had a working knowledge of the language. Yes.

8 SM: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about with regard to that initial—

9 JP: No. I just wanted to make sure they were mentioned.

10 SM: Of your time in Laos?

11 JP: Yeah.

12 SM: Okay. So we'll start looking at the slides now. This is slide 3-1 that we're
13 gonna take on first.

14 JP: It's an aerial picture of Vientiane, Laos. It shows the arch [Arch of Triumph],
15 which is a famous landmark in Vientiane. It's affectionately referred to as the Vertical
16 Runway because the cement was intended to extend the runway at Wattay Airport. It was
17 diverted into this monument to the war dead. It's definitely a well-known landmark there
18 in Vientiane.

19 SM: When were these photographs taken?

20 JP: These were taken in '73.

21 SM: Do you know about what time of the year?

22 JP: Summer of '73. It would have been August-September. The next picture, 3-
23 3 is again an aerial. This shows most of the USAID compound.

24 SM: This is 3-3?

25 JP: Yes. You can see where the arch is towards the center frame right, about two
26 thirds of the way up. The USAID compound is lower left. You can see what a big layout
27 it was.

28 SM: Do they have their own air facility here, the helicopters and whatnot?

29 JP: I don't think so. I think everything was at Wattay, at the airport. I don't
30 remember ever seeing anything land in town, except when the city was flooded. Then
31 they used to pick up people in town at, I believe it was Ta Luong and fly them out to the

1 airport to get to work. I don't understand why these have come up in different order, but
2 they're scattered all over the place today. After—Steve, you pick out the ones that you
3 can find and I'll have to look them up.

4 SM: Oh, okay. Well, if you look at picture—let me double check here—I think
5 it's 3—I had pulled up a picture of a village.

6 JP: 3-104 perhaps?

7 SM: I think that's it. It's got chickens in the foreground?

8 JP: Yeah. That was a typical refugee village and this particular one was on the
9 Vientiane Plain.

10 SM: Were most of these pictures taken, these slides?

11 JP: Yes.

12 SM: These mostly were taken in this village?

13 JP: No. I was moving all over the country at that stage and I just picked out the
14 ones that I liked best and illustrated their lifestyle. This is typical in that nothing was
15 penned. The ducks are running free, as were the chickens and the pigs. Even in a
16 refugee village, they built the houses on stilts for air circulation. These people had come
17 from further north and further northeast and then moved toward Vientiane Plain out of
18 harm's way. As well as housing them, USAID fed them as well.

19 SM: I'm sorry. I said earlier that there were chickens. They're ducks. So, the
20 project that you're working on here where you're flying around to different villages and
21 taking these photographs of obviously a refugee camp here and then some other
22 photographs of individuals dressed in traditional Laotian clothing, what was the purpose
23 for this project? Was it the same as the previous projects? You're just trying to get—

24 JP: Can you give me that picture number, Steve? I think you're looking at Akha
25 if you think they're in traditional—

26 SM: I'm going by memory, what we've talked about when I saw your slides for
27 the first time and they were dressed in the traditional clothing, very, very colorful, very
28 pretty clothing?

29 JP: Those, in fact, were Akha and they weren't dressed for anything special. That
30 is their daily costume. Well, I take that back. They had come into the village to see
31 friends off and were in to do some shopping. But the Akha are very—well, I would have

1 said they're more primitive than most but they have—well, at the time they were much
2 more primitive. Their costumes were quite different in that the pilots referred to them or
3 their area as the “mini-skirt village.” The skirts were worn very, very low on the hips,
4 very low on the hips, and they were quite short, well above the knee, so that the skirt
5 itself was probably twelve inches or less. They wore leggings and the leggings were very
6 colorful as well. The blouse was a cropped top with a jacket of sorts over it. So you had
7 bare skin showing in unusual places. Their headdress was elaborate in that it was
8 covered with Indochina piasters and various other silver decorations.

9 SM: Is there a particular picture that you're talking about here? I think if you
10 look at photograph number 5-35?

11 JP: Or 5-60.

12 SM: Or 5-60? I should say slide number 'cause these are slides. Okay.

13 JP: That's the typical headdress. Actually, there was a man by the name of
14 Gordon Young who with his brother Bill did some work for USAID. They were born in
15 Yunan province of China of missionary parents. They were very much at home in any of
16 these villages and spoke most of the dialects. He wrote a small book about the hill tribes
17 years ago and gave me permission to quote from it. He said that the Akha generally
18 believed that the Akha are a branch of the ancient Lo Lo that came from Yunan Province
19 about four thousand years ago. Various Miao groups formed into tribes in South China.
20 I guess there is nothing here that would be pertinent for today. The headdress that
21 Gordon described is (Editor's note: Interviewee reading from text) “made of cloth which
22 is shaped like an inverted bag on a bamboo frame with elaborate decoration, silver coins
23 and buttons, beads, embroidery, and tufts of gibbon ape fur cover the entire hat.
24 Considering the bulk and construction, it's astonishing to learn the only time the
25 headdress is removed briefly is during the dressing of the hair. The headdress is kept in
26 place with a cord under the chin, even when sick or during sleep or on the deathbed. A
27 married Akha woman may not remove her headdress for religious reasons.”

28 SM: Do you know what those specific religious reasons are?

29 JP: No. I can't tell you that. I really don't know. There is an Akha man here
30 someplace, very interesting. Can you see 61?

31 SM: Uh-huh.

1 JP: She is just lovely.

2 SM: Yes. Why don't you go ahead and describe a little bit?

3 JP: Her features are delicate by local standards. She's just unusually lovely. Her
4 headdress is not as elaborate as the one we were looking at previously. If you look to the
5 right of this picture you can see the back of another headdress and the bamboo frame.
6 Someone who's really into anthropology would enjoy these more, I'm sure. I'd like to
7 show you the man. I believe he's slide 63. I don't believe this man had ever seen a
8 Caucasian woman before. He followed me around quite a bit. He was really a very
9 attractive man. You would swear there was a Caucasian passed through there because he
10 did not look Asian at all. Did you find that picture, Steve?

11 SM: This is the gentleman with blue eyes, right?

12 JP: Yeah, light eyes, hazel, I would even say.

13 SM: Okay, hazel. While you were there—first of all, how long did you stay here
14 when you were taking the photographs?

15 JP: In this particular village?

16 SM: Mm-hmm.

17 JP: In this particular village or for the entire project?

18 SM: In this particular village for now.

19 JP: In this village, this village I was in not on the USAID project. I was up here
20 independently. You could say I was a tourist. I went into Ban Houei Sai on Royal Air
21 Lao. Frank Stergar, a pilot who died just a couple of years ago, found another girl and I
22 wondering around Ban Houei Sai. When he got over the fact that we were there he
23 insisted on taking us to the Air America hostel for a meal, which was very nice of him.
24 Then the next day we were given a lift into this particular Lima Site 93 is what it was,
25 Moung Mounghw. We were left there for the day and it was a great day. We found things
26 that we would not have ordinarily have been able to see, like this particular group of
27 people. There were troops staging in that area and being moved forward to combat
28 zones. So there was a lot of coming and going throughout the day. The senior officers
29 from the Lao Army were having a Baci ceremony which is a farewell string tying on the
30 wrist to keep some faith and wish them well and a meal. We were asked to join them.
31 That was a very special treat. I was honored to have been included. I was disappointed

1 when a porter [aircraft] came to get us later in the day. It was at least an hour or so of
2 daylight left and I wasn't ready to go yet, but we had to. This was in—oh, oh! Another
3 interesting thing about these pictures, I took these pictures probably in—I can't remember
4 now. I sent the film to Kodak lab in Palo Alto, California. The film was missing for six
5 months and I wrote letters and I asked them to check trash cans and kept after them
6 repeatedly. Then I finally gave up. I thought the film had been confiscated because there
7 were some pictures of troop movements. Well, I just didn't know what had happened to
8 it, and then suddenly in July of the next year it came as if nothing had gone astray. It just
9 arrived and I was amazed.

10 SM: Yeah. How odd.

11 JP: It is odd. No explanation, nothing.

12 SM: I just pulled up a picture in the slide folder, picture JP-1041. It's a small—it
13 looks almost like a treat bag of some kind.

14 JP: 1041?

15 SM: Right.

16 JP: These are a separate file. They belong in Udorn, Thailand. That is gifts
17 wrapped to present to monks for a house blessing ceremony. As you can see—well,
18 maybe you can't tell—it's toilet paper, toothpaste, soap, things of that nature. I was
19 taxing my mind recently, and you'll remember that my family visited the Wat here in
20 North Carolina. I wanted to take something to the monks. I was trying to remember
21 what we used to take to them in Thailand. I decided that was not appropriate for them at
22 all so we took fruits and soft drinks.

23 SM: So you took fruit and soft drinks?

24 JP: Yes, to the monks here in North Carolina.

25 SM: These are Laotian monks in the—I mean, or are they Thai monks here?

26 JP: Thai monks, yes, in these groups of pictures. It was a house blessing in
27 Udorn. In fact, you may want to go through those pictures. There are some interesting
28 ones of various scenes in Udorn, unless you'd like to finish the Lao pictures first?

29 SM: Yeah. Let's try to finish the Lao pictures first, and then we can move onto
30 the next section in Udorn.

1 JP: I feel like I'm letting you down in that I'm not very well organized here, but I
2 can't figure out what's happened to these.

3 SM: That's okay.

4 JP: You pick out something that interests you, Steve.

5 SM: Let me see. We've seen some pictures of the villagers in their very pretty
6 headdresses and, I guess, traditional clothing. I just pulled up—let's see here. This is
7 picture number 4-90. Here's a gentlemen sitting with a silver, it looks like a silver urn of
8 some kind.

9 JP: That man is a silversmith in Luang Prabang. He did not live through the
10 reeducation process after the war. I visited his family just last year. This picture, of
11 course, was taken in the early '70s. He was a master silversmith and he was
12 commissioned by the King of Laos to make things for the royal household. The bars of
13 silver at the base of the decanter are the silver bars that they work from. Sometimes—
14 I'm not sure whether they make or melt down piasters and turn them into bars or how that
15 works, but sometimes they'll work just from the silver piasters that have been melted.
16 This is .999 silver, very pure. The decanter is beautifully done. If you look at some of
17 the others in that series you can see the workman—I can't find any from—somewhere in
18 here you will find close-ups of them working individual bowls and the intricate nature of
19 the design. It's lovely.

20 SM: I just pulled up 4-93 and I think 4-94 will probably be very similar.

21 JP: Yes. Those are workmen in his shop. It's surprising the primitive conditions
22 under which they labored and they turn out these wonderful pieces. They're still doing it.

23 SM: They didn't have any concerns that you were there watching them, taking
24 pictures of their trade craft here?

25 JP: No. No. That never crossed their minds. I think they were pleased that
26 someone was interested in how they do it. I did an article for *Asia Magazine* on this
27 particular silversmith and I think it's in that collection someplace, Steve.

28 SM: Okay. About how far is this from the royal capital?

29 JP: It is in the royal capital at Luang Prabang.

30 SM: This is in the capital?

31 JP: Yes.

1 SM: Oh, okay.

2 JP: It's down on a side street about two blocks back from the river not far from
3 the favorite hotel. [On Sisavang Vong Street]

4 SM: So this is a completely different area from where we're talking before?

5 JP: Yes, we were out in the country and we were still in the Ban Houei Sai area, I
6 believe.

7 SM: Now the pictures of buildings in 4-83 and 4-86?

8 JP: Those are temples in Luang Prabang. They are hundreds of years old and
9 they exist today. 4-86 is typical French-Lao architecture. It's a government building
10 whereas 4-83 was a Buddhist temple. 4-69 is also in temple grounds.

11 SM: Oh, okay. This is gold?

12 JP: Gold leaf.

13 SM: In 4-69?

14 JP: Yes. It's mostly gold leaf applied to woodcarving.

15 SM: Okay. Were these structures guarded at all?

16 JP: Oh, no. No, the monks lived there. No. They're still not guarded. Today
17 they charge admission, the communist government charges admission as a maintenance
18 fee. It didn't used to be that there was any charge at all for visiting.

19 SM: While you were taking photographs in Luang Prabong and other areas, what
20 kind of military presence did you detect? You mentioned that you did get some pictures
21 of troop movements?

22 JP: At Lima Site 93, that was a staging area. For the most part, I did not see a lot
23 of troop movement. I did not see a lot of military activity. It was more to the west—
24 sorry, to the east, east and north of where I was permitted to travel. There wasn't any
25 time during the war that I wasn't free to go to Luang Prabong as a tourist. In fact, I took
26 my in-laws up there for a weekend once when they were out from the US. I took my
27 daughter up there the first year we were in Asia, Easter holiday. It's difficult to describe
28 now. The pilots would night-stop at Luang Prabong. RON, remain overnight, was the
29 term, and then work out from there towards where the action was. But there was very
30 little action right in the city, military-wise, I mean.

1 SM: Okay. When you said you did get some pictures from Lima Site, are those
2 included in here at all?

3 JP: Mm-hmm. The ones of the Akha. Every city and town had a Lima Site
4 number.

5 SM: Are they pictures of the actual troop movement?

6 JP: Hang on a second. 5-63, 5-73, 5-73.

7 SM: These are very young men.

8 JP: Very young men, especially the one in the middle. He doesn't look more
9 than twelve, but he's probably sixteen. These youngsters were waiting to board a
10 Caribou to move closer to the front lines. They just look so cocky now and I hate to think
11 of what they looked like a week later. Can you see the women to the right in this frame?
12 That's typical lowland Lao women. I saw lowland as different from the hill tribes that
13 wear the colorful costumes.

14 SM: Oh, okay.

15 JP: That's the difference there. The Miao costumes are very colorful, the Akha.
16 All the different tribes have different costumes and those people are different from the
17 lowland Lao. The Lao people dressed as these women are in the sarong skirt and the over
18 blouse.

19 SM: They're very—

20 JP: It's all colorful, though.

21 SM: It's colorful, but they're not as ornate.

22 JP: That's right. That's right. Until they're dressed for a special occasion and
23 then the silk borders and the silk shoulder scarf and then they are ornate in a more elegant
24 way.

25 SM: The women seemed to be carrying bamboo poles?

26 JP: Yes.

27 SM: With baskets on the ends?

28 JP: Yes. I couldn't tell you what—that's just the convenient way to move
29 packages.

30 SM: Again, this village, this is out—this isn't near Luang Prabang, is it?

1 JP: No. This is northwest of Ban Houei Sai. This is Lima Site 93. There was a
2 variety of people in this area and I think that this was kind of a place to shop and more
3 cosmopolitan because you did get people from the tribes as well as the lowlands.

4 SM: Now who actually built the infrastructure in the back? It looks like western
5 construction typical for the period as far as—

6 JP: That looks like cement block and to me cement block means USAID. If
7 you'll go to picture—oh, no, it's a black-and-white picture I have. It's of a school
8 building, but it's made of cement blocks and inside you can see on the blackboard the
9 lesson is mostly in French, partly in Lao.

10 SM: Which photograph is that?

11 JP: It's the black-and-white picture.

12 SM: That's okay. I do remember seeing that picture when you were here.

13 JP: Do you want to hold on? I'll get it for you. It'll just take a minute.

14 SM: Yeah, okay. Okay. So this is in the photo collection 040.

15 JP: This is one of my favorites because it shows the cement block, which again,
16 USAID. You see little boys in a classroom. On the blackboard you can see the French.
17 It says September nineteenth, that tells us something. The king and queen are pictured
18 above the blackboard. I love this picture because of what's left. You can see a notebook
19 and a pen and a soldier's cap. He was in there monitoring that class for some reason. I
20 don't know why, but he stepped out of the way before I took the picture.

21 SM: The military presence in schools like this, was it because he was learning or
22 was it because he wanted to make sure that the construction was consistent?

23 JP: I don't know, Steve. I thought that he was there learning. This is at Lima
24 Site 93, the staging area that I mentioned. He was waiting for transport to the front line.
25 Instead of out carousing with his buddies he sat in that classroom. The next picture, 41,
26 shows some troops and they look so—some of them just look like infants. Did you find
27 that one?

28 SM: (Editor's note: Interviewer is waiting for photo to download on his
29 computer) It's coming up slowly. I'm just waiting. Let's see here.

30 JP: You still there?

1 SM: I sure am, and that picture did come up. Yeah, some of these guys look like
2 they're barely teenagers.

3 JP: Yeah. This was getting into the later years. Pop Buell said, "You've got old
4 ones and you've got young ones, but the ones in between were all"—they're dead. It's a
5 tragedy. Okay. Where are we now?

6 SM: Do you know if these were the soldiers in this particular picture which again
7 is picture number 41 and also the slide previously where we were talking about soldiers,
8 were they conscripts or were they volunteers? Do you know how that worked?

9 JP: I don't know how that worked actually. I really don't.

10 SM: Did there seem to be any kind of hesitancy on the part of any of them to be
11 involved in the military activity?

12 JP: Not that I—no. I didn't see any. There was talk that certain groups were
13 more ferocious than others. I didn't witness any of that myself.

14 SM: In the course of your activities here and throughout Laos, when you were
15 talking with other USAID personnel and other westerners, Americans in particular, that
16 you came in contact with, did you guys discuss at all the fact that by this time, of course,
17 long after the Paris Peace Accords are signed, the war in Vietnam is effectively over and
18 yet all of this is still going on in Laos?

19 JP: No, hang on. When were the Peace Accords signed?

20 SM: January of '73. Was this December '72?

21 JP: This might have been September of '72, could have been September.

22 SM: Okay. Okay. So the Peace Accords still have not yet been signed.

23 JP: I don't believe so. No. In fact—

24 SM: But it's imminent.

25 JP: Oh, yeah.

26 SM: In late '72 it's imminent. It's just a question of getting the Vietnamese to
27 agree to the Peace Accords so that they can be signed. Was that even a topic of
28 discussion amongst you?

29 JP: It was to some extent, but oh, gosh. I can't remember the specific timeline
30 here. I was moving around a lot later, or I was doing the USAID project in '73 after the
31 accords had been signed. There was a presence of Pathet Lao in Vientiane, I believe.

1 They were a hostile bunch around their headquarters compound. When you go by slowly
2 they automatically just wave you off in a very brisk way. Someone suggested I go over
3 and take some pictures. I just said, "No thanks." They didn't look like they'd be at all
4 amused with my presence taking pictures. I don't remember seeing troop movement
5 after—no, I can't tell you. I really can't. I would have to sit down with my notes and a
6 calendar and a good history to make sense out of it now.

7 SM: These Pathet Lao soldiers that you saw, that were—although they were
8 treating you brusquely they did not act violently towards you, or other Americans that
9 you saw?

10 JP: I just remember passing by their compound in Vientiane a couple of times. If
11 you even slowed down they looked hostile at you and waived you on, "Hurry up. Move."
12 I think they were extremely nervous. People who are nervous scare the dickens out of
13 me.

14 SM: What was their general appearance that you remember, in terms of their
15 uniform and clothing and how easy was it to identify them as Pathet Lao?

16 JP: How easy was it to identify? They weren't hiding. They were just there. It
17 was their headquarters. It seems to me their uniforms were dark green. Their caps were
18 a little different. They were fuller. I don't know now, Steve.

19 SM: But you knew that that was the Pathet Lao headquarters in downtown
20 Vientiane?

21 JP: Yeah. I'm not sure if someone told me. I don't think they had a sign out
22 front that I could read. I can't tell you now what the situation was.

23 SM: Okay. Do you remember how you learned that this was the Pathet Lao
24 headquarters?

25 JP: I sure don't. Someone must have told me. I couldn't tell you now.

26 SM: Did you want to talk about any other photographs that are concerning the
27 time touring through Laos?

28 JP: Let me glance through. You might want to look at the Hmong village.

29 SM: Are these slides or photographs?

30 JP: Slides.

31 SM: What number?

1 JP: Try 5-30. This is where the experimental agriculture station was, northwest
2 of Houei Sai. Little boys—that's the irrigation system and the water system in bamboo
3 troughs.

4 SM: Oh, excellent. Okay. Yeah. Do you know what crops they were
5 experimenting with here?

6 JP: Those were the ones I was telling you about earlier, the tangerines and
7 grapes.

8 SM: All the different crops in this location?

9 JP: Yes.

10 SM: Wow.

11 JP: It was at four thousand feet. They had another experimental plot at, I believe,
12 six thousand feet.

13 SM: Now the little boy in the foreground looks like he's got a distended stomach.

14 JP: That could be, although I would be surprised if there was any serious hunger
15 in this village because of the strong USAID presence.

16 SM: Can you see what I mean as far as his stomach is concerned? It looks like
17 his stomach is sticking out quite a bit.

18 JP: It does, doesn't it?

19 SM: Yeah.

20 JP: Yeah. It sure does. I don't remember that. There's another little one, an
21 infant here on the back of his mother that has red hair. That's another indication though,
22 it can be malnutrition.

23 SM: Which slide is this? Do you know?

24 JP: 5-51. It's hard to believe your computer is slower than mine.

25 SM: I know. It is, though. This is an older laptop.

26 JP: My daughter went through a period at about eighteen months to two years
27 where she wouldn't eat anything but bananas. Her tummy got so distended.

28 SM: Oh, really?

29 JP: Yes. I took her to our family doctor and he said, "Well, if there's anything
30 that she's going to settle on to eat, and that alone, then bananas are a pretty good choice."
31 He said, "Don't worry about it," and I didn't. She finally got over it.

1 SM: Now are bananas abundant here?

2 JP: Yes.

3 SM: The picture that you had me just now open up, the 5-51.

4 JP: Mm-hmm. You see that fair-haired child?

5 SM: Okay. I think I opened the wrong one. Hold on a sec.

6 JP: 5-51.

7 SM: Okay, here we go. Wow. Yeah, I've got this one up now. My goodness.

8 That could also be caused by malnutrition?

9 JP: Yes, or among other things. Yeah.

10 SM: Interesting. There's a few children in this picture.

11 JP: Bare bottoms.

12 SM: Yeah, bare bottoms. This village looks—is it either it's very old or it looks

13 like they may have not been here for very long?

14 JP: This is the old village.

15 SM: This is the old village?

16 JP: This is the old village of Phou Padang, yeah. You look around at some of the

17 other pictures in the same series, let's see, 42, there's a woman and child there at a

18 sewing group. In that 5-, -44, -45, -48, they're all fairly well dressed. It's actually quite a

19 prosperous village.

20 SM: This one that I just opened up, the table with the various bowls and the fruit.

21 JP: You've got someplace else where—that's not this village.

22 SM: Oh, okay. Now I've got it, the woman sitting with the child in her lap?

23 JP: 42?

24 SM: Uh-huh.

25 JP: Uh-huh.

26 SM: This is the village that's about forty years old?

27 JP: Yeah. Yeah. It's an incredibly old village for a Hmong village because they

28 just normally move on to other areas and fresh soil. Can you see 5-44, there's several

29 women posing there?

30 SM: Yes?

1 JP: The tallest girl is the headman's daughter. I think she was decked out on this
2 occasion because Gary Alex was the USAID agricultural advisor and he was a handsome
3 young man. She kind of had her eye on him.

4 SM: Oh, really?

5 JP: Yeah. I don't have any idea where she learned to pose like a fashion model.
6 She must have got a hold of some magazines at one time or another. She loved having
7 her picture taken.

8 SM: How interesting. There's a lot of consistency between their dress, although
9 obviously the headman's daughter's outfits are much cleaner, crisper looking.

10 JP: Yes.

11 SM: Was there much use of betel nut amongst these villagers here? They all
12 seem to have very white teeth.

13 JP: I don't remember betel nut among the hill tribes nearly as much as the
14 lowland Lao. The lowland Lao, yeah, betel nut was a constant, always there. They have
15 wonderful wooden boxes to contain the betel nut paraphernalia. But I really don't
16 remember that much among the hill tribes. It could be something I just didn't notice.

17 SM: Very interesting. Okay.

18 JP: Okay. 5-54 was that Yao man preparing his opium. That picture should be
19 horizontal.

20 SM: He's laying on his side smoking his—

21 JP: I was shooting color and black-and-white and I didn't use flash, but I had to
22 make a hole in the straw wall so that I could get enough light on him to get the picture I
23 wanted.

24 SM: He didn't seem self conscious about you taking a photograph of him?

25 JP: He didn't seem troubled at all other than I kept saying, "One more, please,"
26 and the headman would tell him what I was saying. He was very patient with me. 5-14
27 is the H-34 that brought me into this site. I tried to identify the Thai pilot and I can't find
28 his name anyplace. I'm sorry.

29 SM: That's okay. I'm sorry, what slide was that?

30 JP: 5-14.

31 SM: This is the aircraft that brought you in, the H-34 that brought you in?

1 JP: They left us there for the day and at one stage it had got so foggy that we had
2 decided he wasn't going to get back for us. We had made plans to spend the night there.
3 We were just getting ready to take a toothbrush down to the river. We heard this
4 chopper. So we grabbed our bag and headed for the landing pad. He got in and it was
5 raining so hard and was so overcast that he had to stop twice along the Mekong River and
6 send Gary, the USAID advisor, into the village to ask where the dickens were we because
7 he couldn't find his way back to Ban Houei Sai. But I was very grateful that he did come
8 back and get us.

9 SM: How much time total did you spend out in the field for these photograph
10 projects?

11 JP: I would leave when I was working on the Vientiane Plain and in Vientiane, I
12 would leave Udorn on the what they'd call the "elephant run" at 6:30 in the morning and
13 go over and work the day and catch the flight back about 6:30 or 7:00 at night. I did that
14 every day for, oh, say a week at a time. Then I'd go out further into the field. Then I
15 would leave on Monday morning and go up to Ban Houei Sai and I would get up there
16 for three or four days and work out of Ban Houei Sai in the different areas. I worked that
17 job for probably three months all together all over the country. You sounded surprised
18 the other day when I mentioned that USAID put a lot of money and effort into looking
19 after the people that were displaced by war and finding different crops, but they did so
20 much in the way of the fish farming and the agricultural redirection. Fishponds were
21 very successful, raising carp mostly. Of course, the pigs, the sericulture with the
22 silkworms, the irrigation project, irrigation projects that enabled us to get more than one
23 or two rice crops a year. Sometimes they discovered that the land wouldn't support as
24 many crops as they had hoped for. There was just a lot going on in the country that was
25 separate from the war effort. I would like for you to go to 70. Let me see if it's 71. I'd
26 like for you to meet Father Michel.

27 SM: This is a slide or a photograph?

28 JP: Good question. I mentioned federal highways. I just came across one of
29 theirs, 6-A2. No, that's not it. Hang on. 7-72 shows a wash out on the Mekong River
30 with a bulldozer in the background. It belongs to our US federal highway—

31 SM: Okay, this is down by the river?

1 JP: Yes, but in this case it's up closer to Luang Prabang. So, when you say down
2 by the river I'm not sure—

3 SM: I looked at a photograph previously and it was right next to a waterway,
4 where there was a bulldozer.

5 JP: Okay. The washouts usually were further up-country. I guess you're used to
6 the term down.

7 SM: Oh, I'm sorry. (Both laugh) Yeah. We tend to think of rivers in valleys.
8 Let's see here, I finally pulled up the photograph so let me go ahead and get that. You
9 mentioned that it was 6—which slide was it that showed the road?

10 JP: 7-72.

11 SM: Oh, yeah, 7-72. Okay. Yeah. I guess what I was—right to the right of the
12 washout, as you put it, this is a major river here, isn't it?

13 JP: That's the Mekong.

14 SM: That's the Mekong River? Okay. The washout here, is this flood season?

15 JP: It doesn't look like it. It must have been heavy rains that caused the washout
16 because the river looks low to me there. Although actually that fall, September-October
17 it could have been. I wanted you to be aware that federal highways were there. I also
18 want to show you Ban San hospital, which is 4-4.

19 SM: Oh, okay. This hospital was also run by USAID?

20 JP: Have you got it?

21 SM: Yes, sure do.

22 JP: I've got an interior of 4-10. It shows some hill tribe people inside the
23 hospital. Yes, this was definitely run by USAID. Some of the nurses were Hmong. This
24 was a huge step forward to allow the Hmong women to work. I can't find 4-4.

25 SM: Now in 4-10, this is an elderly couple?

26 JP: Yes. In almost every case you have to have someone there with the patient to
27 care for them because there just is not staff enough to go around.

28 SM: Any idea what was wrong with her?

29 JP: No, I don't know what was wrong with her. One child died of cerebral
30 malaria the day I was there. They had just stopped using DDT
31 (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, insecticide). I think the Lao people paid a huge price

1 when they stopped spraying, but I understand DDT is even worse. 4-4 shows the exterior
2 of Ban Song with a good picture of a carst in the background. That is the hospital.

3 SM: It looks like in the top of that photo there's some wires up in the very top
4 cutting across the carst?

5 JP: It does. Yeah. What on earth? No. That simply could not be. That's got to
6 be an optical illusion. I think you can see some electrical connections on the roof to the
7 building on the left. I think that's where those wires go and it just looks like it's up at the
8 top of the carst.

9 SM: Yeah. I was just using the carst as an identifying point of the photograph.
10 But there was—

11 JP: We had some electricity. Let's see now. How did they get it in there? I don't
12 know how they got it in there.

13 SM: Interesting. That's all I was trying to identify was that there was actually
14 power out here at this hospital. Where was this hospital again?

15 JP: This hospital was at Ban San north of Vientiane. That's interesting. They
16 must have had electricity up there.

17 SM: Was the power itself, do you know if the electrification, was that also part of
18 USAID's programs to try to electrify certain areas of the country?

19 JP: I would be guessing if I said that.

20 SM: Okay. I didn't know if you were aware of any projects.

21 JP: I was not aware. They were trying to do some hydroelectric on the Ngum, N-
22 G-U-M, River. It was a huge dam. This was financed a lot by Australia and Japan. That
23 is hydroelectric today. I can't tell you now what the situation was twenty-five or thirty
24 years ago.

25 SM: Well, is there anything else you want to talk about with your time up in—?

26 JP: I would like to show you 4-27 and 4-28 just to give you an idea of the land.

27 SM: Yes. Okay. I'm looking at 4-27 now.

28 JP: That is a road which is fairly new, unusual, and you can have an idea of the
29 slash-and-burn agricultural technique they used.

30 SM: Yes. Especially in 4-28 you can see that. Now the—this is what they
31 referred to usually amongst the pilots and other personnel as “smoky season”?

1 JP: That's right. That's right. It was just very, very difficult.

2 SM: The photograph 4-28, this is a rather sizeable piece of area that is being
3 burnt?

4 JP: Yes.

5 SM: Any idea about what altitude this was taken?

6 JP: No. I would be guessing. I don't know.

7 SM: At the same time you can see really there's only—I guess those are roads.
8 There are some roads going through this area.

9 JP: Uh-huh. Yes. If there was a road there at this time it was built by US Federal
10 Highways.

11 SM: Wow. Okay. Do you know what the policy of USAID was concerning
12 slash-and-burn at the time? Did they even have a position or a policy?

13 JP: I don't know that they had a policy.

14 SM: I don't know if they promoted the attempt of getting villages to stop that and
15 instead of slashing, moving the migratory practice of slash and burn farming, try to stay
16 in one location and just farm in such a way that you don't completely deplete the soil?

17 JP: I don't know what their policy was. I'd like to know that today.

18 SM: Well, do you want to go ahead and move onto the slides of the monks in
19 Thailand?

20 JP: Yeah, let's do that.

21 SM: Now if we go in numerical sequence, I didn't know if there was a specific
22 order that you recall these being taken in.

23 JP: I think the first—yeah, if you just go in numerical sequence I think it'll be
24 okay. The 10-41 was the gift wrapped up. 10-42 was a wonderful display of food. Just a
25 second please, Steve.

26 SM: Sure.

27 JP: The monks—can you see the food?

28 SM: Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah.

29 JP: It's quite impressive. They don't eat that well here in North Carolina.

30 SM: This was for—I guess this is at Udorn, Thailand?

1 JP: This is in Udorn and a new housing compound had been built. The owner
2 whose name was Lucky, a very young woman, very successful business woman, had
3 invited these monks to come and bless the new home before they were occupied. She
4 rented them almost entirely to Farang. I didn't live in the compound but people like Air
5 America.

6 SM: Okay, yeah. So in picture JP-1045 this is a monk blessing a home?

7 JP: Did you see 10-43?

8 SM: Let me see, yes.

9 JP: The women adding food to the bowl? 44 was the senior monk. Okay, 45,
10 yes. Bless his heart. He was having a wonderful time soaking us all.

11 SM: Is this like a holy water type ceremony?

12 JP: It is.

13 SM: Okay.

14 JP: Yes.

15 SM: Interesting.

16 JP: 46, he's applying some white paste over the doorway, a sign of blessing. In
17 forty-seven, that young lady is Lucky, the owner of all of this. She's doling out money as
18 a gift to the monks for coming to bless their establishment.

19 SM: She looks awfully young.

20 JP: Isn't she, though?

21 SM: That's great. Okay.

22 JP: 10-48 is the—what do you call that? The tabernacle in the Catholic Church
23 itself at St. Mary's.

24 SM: Very ornate.

25 JP: I'm sorry. We've jumped from St. Mary's to the Udorn city spirit house.

26 SM: In 52?

27 JP: Yes.

28 SM: Okay.

29 JP: Then 53, this is a highway west of town, elephants on Route 210, I believe.

30 SM: Did you see a lot of elephants while you were there?

1 JP: Various areas, but the elephant population was either further to the south or
2 over to the west. There weren't a lot in our area. Our area was a rice-growing area more
3 than mountains. Forty—

4 SM: 54?

5 JP: 54, that's back in the civic action program with the Air Force. 55, that is St.
6 Mary's, the Catholic Church. I did an article about Brother Cornelius who designed and
7 built this church. One of the pictures, I don't believe it's in this group, he had thousands
8 and thousands and thousands of green ash trays which he made into an area that looks
9 like skylights in part of the ceiling all the way around it. He was so effective. No one
10 would have imagined that those were ashtrays.

11 SM: Go back real quick to 54, the Air Force civic action.

12 JP: Yes?

13 SM: The gentleman to the right of the American, do you know who that is? Is
14 that anybody noteworthy?

15 JP: I don't know him. He would be a village—he's got on a government
16 uniform. He would be a Thai government official of some sort to do with provincial
17 government. No. I don't remember him specifically.

18 SM: When you were with the civic action program and you were going out into
19 the field with those American personnel, was it typical for there to be also Laotian
20 government personnel in the area with them?

21 JP: Thai government, Steve.

22 SM: I'm sorry, Thai. I'm sorry, Thai.

23 JP: Yeah. There usually were. Let's see now, come to think of it, the Thai
24 government people were usually—would they have been Royal Thai Air Force guards,
25 perhaps? This looks just like a government official. He could have been a schoolteacher.
26 They all wore a military-style uniform.

27 SM: Oh, interesting. So he could have been just someone who was living there
28 that is helping oversee what's going on?

29 JP: He could have been, or he could have been a government clerk or worked for
30 the electric company or the water company. It could have been anything. The uniform
31 really doesn't mean a lot.

1 SM: Oh, okay. Good enough. Let's see, as we progress through some city
2 scenes, street scenes.

3 JP: 56 is a typical street scene. There's a buffalo walking down the road.

4 SM: I was just gonna say—it looks like a trail. There's quite a few of them.
5 There's about five or six, one in front of the other.

6 JP: It wouldn't be unusual. 57 is a gold shop. There were lots of those.

7 SM: Was gold very expensive?

8 JP: No, then, gosh, gold was thirty-five dollars an ounce, Steve.

9 SM: Okay. That's pretty cheap.

10 JP: That was the price that the government maintained for so many years. 58 is
11 the typical store scene, kitchen supply. 59 is a street fortune teller.

12 SM: Was this common?

13 JP: Yes. 60 is the train station. That was—we all used—the night train to
14 Bangkok was the most common form of transport. You could get a bunk. 61 is the
15 market scene. That's the main central market. 62 is more of the same. 63 is a street
16 scene, pedicab, samlor as we called them in Thailand.

17 SM: A Mazda truck. Is that your Mazda truck?

18 JP: I had a Mazda truck. I don't think that's—that looks like a red one. No, mine
19 was a light green. My daughter likes to think that she grew up in the back of a Mazda
20 truck. The reason trucks were so popular, Steve, is because the tax on sedans was very
21 heavy, very expensive, but trucks were not taxed like passenger cars. So they were much
22 more affordable.

23 SM: Was your little truck four-wheel drive or just two-wheel drive?

24 JP: Just two-wheel drive.

25 SM: Okay.

26 JP: It was—

27 SM: And—I'm sorry. Go ahead.

28 JP: It was so dependable and had such a good reputation that they were standing
29 up to buy it when I left. I paid a thousand dollars for it, drove it all over the northeast for
30 six years, and sold it for seven hundred. People were arguing to get in line first.

31 SM: Is there anything else you want to discuss with regard—

1 JP: I think that takes care of those slides. We probably ought to get into Air
2 America.

3 SM: Okay. Well, why don't we go ahead and discuss this other project that you
4 engaged in? This is after the decision to cease operations was made, correct?

5 JP: Yes.

6 SM: You were actually at this point hired on by Air America to conduct this
7 work?

8 JP: Here again, first of all after I installed a darkroom at home I decided to see if
9 I couldn't make this pay off on a modest scale. So I went to Air America to offer my
10 services to process their film. I was racking my brain, "How am I going to sell them this
11 idea to let me do the film?" Well, when I got there I felt like they'd been waiting for me
12 because there was no sales needed. They said, "Yes. When will you start?" So for a
13 couple of years, as long as I was there, I continued to process the film. They would send
14 it out to my house by what we called V-bus, it was a Volkswagen van the company used
15 for transportation. They'd send it out and I would give them some idea when it would be
16 ready, like three hours or the next day. Then they would come back and pick it up. It
17 worked out very well. It was better for them to have someone that they could have some
18 control over and trust rather than sending pictures of crashed, damaged aircraft
19 downtown to be processed.

20 SM: Did you have to go through any kind of clearance for this?

21 JP: No. No. They knew I wasn't going to talk. When it came time to do the
22 pictures, I don't know. I was just there and I always had a camera. So when Jack—you
23 know, I'm not sure whether this was Abadie's—it was Abadie's idea to include the
24 models and spice up the pictures a little bit and I'm so glad he did because people just
25 love these pictures now. Forney did the text and supplied me with the helper. Elmer
26 Gould was an assistant to Jack Forney. Elmer was the one who made sure the various
27 departments were ready for me and that I had their cooperation to get the pictures we
28 needed to present Air America in the professional manner in which it should have been
29 presented. It took a lot of coordinating. The only time anyone ever let Elmer down was
30 when we took the CH-47 and an H-34 down to Ramuson, the Army Security Agency
31 base just outside of town. We landed there. We were going to use an open area on their

1 base to illustrate load-carrying capacity. We got down there and we no more than got
2 landed and started organizing the pictures we wanted when security police came after us
3 with sirens blaring. They said, “If you don’t get out of here right now we’re going to
4 throw you in the brig.” They were just furious that we had landed on their property.
5 Elmer said, “But I have the base commander’s permission, discussed it.” Well, the base
6 commander had neglected to tell his security chief. His security chief wasn’t about to let
7 these foreigners, these Americans, he didn’t know who they were, mess around on his
8 base. We just got out of there quickly. Tom Moore and I were threatened with
9 immediate incarceration, and we talked about that later. Anyway, we left and then the
10 next day—no, I guess it was before the day was out the base commander called Elmer
11 and apologized profusely for forgetting to inform his staff he was expecting us. He
12 invited us to come right back and we said, “No, thanks. We’ll find someplace else.” I
13 believe the purpose of the pictures was to show others what could be done or what was
14 done in hopes that someone would want to take over the operations. I don’t know
15 whether ownership was clearly defined or what all the intricacies were, but we did this
16 project and this is the outcome. Do you want to ask any questions, Steve?

17 SM: Oh, yeah. I was curious. You had to coordinate, I would imagine, with
18 pilots, maintenance crews, and you also have pictures in here of school facilities and
19 everything else. I guess we should clarify what time period this occurred.

20 JP: This was late ’73.

21 SM: Late ’73?

22 JP: Late ’73.

23 SM: At this point, everybody realizes that Air America is shutting down and it’s
24 pretty close to being—

25 JP: We didn’t have anything specific. Remember that they didn’t actually turn
26 out the lights until [’74], I believe in Udorn. The handwriting was on the wall, you might
27 say, but we hadn’t been given notice or anything specific.

28 SM: Now in some of these pictures, I noticed like for instance in picture—I’ve
29 opened up the folder with the photographs that you’ve sent, or that you’ve allowed us to
30 scan in for the presentation, picture 130? This looks like a DeHaviland to me? But I
31 don’t have the captions in front of me.

1 JP: Yes?

2 SM: The people, the purpose for the photographs, you've obviously coordinated
3 to show the passenger carrying capability of these aircraft?

4 JP: That's right.

5 SM: Where did you get all these people? Who are they?

6 JP: These people, for the most part, are staff or wives. Only one instance, and
7 that is the picture in front of the terminal of this CH-47, we had to wait for the bus to
8 come from Bangkok to Udorn. We stopped it and we unloaded that bus and asked those
9 people to stand around our aircraft while I took pictures.

10 SM: Which one is that? Do you know?

11 JP: That is the last one that we closed with, 147.

12 SM: 147?

13 JP: Yeah. We had to wait for the bus to come through to get that many people.
14 I'm sorry that I didn't have the presence of mind to send pictures of our narcotic dogs.
15 You can see—

16 SM: Oh, yes, to the left in this particular picture.

17 JP: In this picture, yes. I have a few other pictures that I would actually like to
18 have in this collection of Rocky.

19 SM: That was his name, Rocky?

20 JP: Yes, Rocky was in Udorn and AWOL (absent without leave)—no, wait a
21 minute, it was Rocky was in Vientiane and AWOL was our dog in Udorn.

22 SM: Basically you used canines, narcotics dogs, to sniff and make sure that the
23 cargo being hauled was not drugs?

24 JP: That's right. They checked the passengers, too.

25 SM: How frequently—or at what point did that happen, to your knowledge, in
26 terms of your tenure there?

27 JP: The dogs, I probably have that in my notes, Steve. I'd rather check that to be
28 specific.

29 SM: Do you remember when you first arrived if you noticed that there were dogs
30 used?

1 JP: No. They weren't there when we first arrived. They came—they probably
2 didn't come until '70-'71, but I'm not certain about that.

3 SM: Was there anything in particular, anything else that you wanted to discuss
4 with regard to that collection? This is the current online collection, which is the facilities
5 and aircraft that Air America had there in Thailand.

6 JP: No. I think everything is self-explanatory. I think that most people who look
7 at this will be surprised that there was so much in the way of ground support. It was such
8 a well-organized operation. You ask about the pictures with people in them. Then there
9 were other pictures with cargo dispersed in the area. The idea was to show both
10 passenger and load capabilities. The only thing I can add was that we had a medical staff
11 on base that was Air America. There was a fire department. Personnel, of course, had a
12 travel section because our people did have travel privileges. The pilots especially and the
13 flight personnel had a lot of time off and they frequently left Udorn if they could take
14 their children out of school or could make other arrangements. It was quite a little city
15 right there on base. There's pictures of a water treatment plant. We had to—or most of
16 us carried water from the base to our homes and used that purified water. I guess, again,
17 the pictures have captions that explain it all.

18 SM: Right. Were you close with many of the people who posed in the other Air
19 America personnel, the wives and other civilians? Did you know many of them?

20 JP: Yeah, most of them. Yeah.

21 SM: Are those people in those photographs also still active in the Air America
22 Association?

23 JP: Yes, in fact a lot of them will be at the reunion in Las Vegas. Some of these
24 pictures from this series are in this year's Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's Association
25 calendar. I've had a bit of fun with those. One of the very pretty women in the picture, I
26 got a hold of her daughter. She ordered a copy of it for her mother. One of the fellows
27 also pictured with security, he's just recently retired as head of security for Warner
28 Lambert Company. His family gets a kick out of seeing him in these pictures. We still
29 have fun with them.

30 SM: These are some of the pictures that are in this collection right here?

31 JP: Yes.

1 SM: Which ones? Which numbers? Do you remember?

2 JP: Sure, the DeHaviland [Twin Otter] that you mentioned. The woman in the
3 middle foreground, her daughter—

4 SM: Okay. Which of those three women standing in the foreground?

5 JP: The one in the middle is Nancy Kline and her daughter and her ex-husband
6 will be at the reunion.

7 SM: How about the other two women that are in the foreground?

8 JP: I don't remember who the one on the left was at all. She was not a wife. She
9 was a temporary visitor. The one on the—sorry, the one on the left was the temporary
10 visitor. The one on the right was married. That's Donna Deebel and she was married to
11 Tom. Tom has since died and I have lost contact with Donna.

12 SM: How about the women to the right just standing in front of the men in the
13 colorful skirts?

14 JP: Yes, let's see. That's—oh gosh, I know one of them is an ex-wife and we've
15 lost touch with her. Another one—I can't remember now, Steve.

16 SM: Do you recognize any of the men in the background?

17 JP: Yes. Let me see if I can get this up. I'm looking at hard copy, a small, tiny
18 picture. The one thing that we fudged on was that some of the pilots standing in front of
19 the fixed-wing aircraft just happened to be there with a clean uniform. They were not
20 fixed-wing pilots. They were helicopter pilots.

21 SM: Okay. So the two pilots standing in front of this DeHaviland probably can't
22 fly it?

23 JP: Well, I wouldn't go so far as to say that.

24 SM: Or they're not fixed-wing pilots.

25 JP: They might not be the DeHaviland pilots.

26 SM: Oh, okay. Gotcha. That's funny.

27 JP: Hold on, I'll get this right in a moment. Yes, the pilot that has his hand up on
28 the door, I think that's Ben Densley. He's working at NASA (National Aeronautics and
29 Space Administration) down at Cocoa Beach right now and he's at every reunion. The
30 man with the—the first man closest to the door with the sunglasses and the briefcase,
31 that's Bob Noble. He's usually at the reunions. I can't remember the one in the middle,

1 but the next man also with sunglasses and briefcase is the one I mentioned, the security
2 man who just recently retired from Warner Lambert. He'll be at the reunion. The man
3 behind him, I'm sure that's Rick Melicsi, a Filipino—what did he do? [Fire Chief] I
4 can't remember now what he did. The wives, the one is an ex-wife. The middle one is
5 Jocelyn Harding. She was married to the senior security man. Next to her is Deanna
6 Dubinsky. She married a pilot. They had their wedding out there. They both became
7 teachers with the DOD program. Let's see what else we can find for you here. Is there
8 anyone specific that you'd want to know about?

9 SM: Oh, no. I was just curious. It's interesting, or it's nice to try to put some
10 names to the faces that are in these photographs. I knew that most of them were probably
11 just personnel that were available nearby, but I didn't know if—

12 JP: That's pretty much what it was all about. Any questions?

13 SM: No. I can't think of any right now as far as the photographs. Now what
14 happened after you finished this project?

15 JP: After I finished this project?

16 SM: Yeah. I mean how much more time did you have after finishing the
17 photography for this project? How much more time did you have in-country?

18 JP: Not long I don't think. I'm not certain now. I did one more project that I was
19 really keen on and that concerned three Khmer temples or Khmer rest houses. One was
20 in Thailand near Phimai at Khorat, and another was in Laos at [Wat Phu at] Champassak
21 and the other one was across the border in Cambodia. If you look at a map they formed a
22 perfect triangle and I was fascinated with this concept. I didn't know whether the
23 Khmer's had a compass at that stage or how they laid out these rest houses in such a
24 precise fashion. I learned later that there was a Chinese ambassador who visited the court
25 at Angkor Wat during this very early period. Of course, the Chinese had the compass, so
26 it could have easily have been. I guess that was probably my last project. I wasn't able
27 to write that story up for the longest time. It was just so complex. If you've ever delved
28 in to the Khmer empire, it's mind boggling. In fact, I telephoned one of the National
29 Geographic photographers that I knew had been into that site in Cambodia. He said,
30 "Yes, it was so complex that they couldn't find anyone to write it up for a layman," and
31 that was precisely the problem I had. But after I got back to the States I was able to do

1 some research at Stanford and get a better grasp of the overall picture. Finally, I wrote
2 that story while I was in the Dominican Republic. That was probably my last, very last
3 project.

4 SM: Now was that published?

5 JP: Yes.

6 SM: In what magazine?

7 JP: *Asia Magazine*, that Sunday supplement out of Hong Kong.

8 SM: Okay. Well, so after you left Thailand, where did you and your family go?

9 JP: We went back to the States for a short period of time and then to the
10 Dominican Republic.

11 SM: Was this something that—work that Jack got?

12 JP: Yes. Yes. He went down as manager of maintenance for Dominicana
13 Airlines, the government commercial airline.

14 SM: How long did you stay there?

15 JP: Eight years.

16 SM: Wow. Allyson was with you for that entire time?

17 JP: Yes. Yes. She graduated from high school at Carol Morgan School in Santo
18 Domingo and then started at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, after that. We
19 moved from the city out to the beach and she volunteered to stay home, but we convinced
20 her that it was time to get her education.

21 SM: The transition, was it difficult to go from Thailand back to the United
22 States?

23 JP: Yes, because people were so anti-war. It was an ugly time in our country. I
24 mean, for one thing I was able to place most of my Asian files with photo researchers in
25 New York and nothing sold until the early '80s. People just were not interested in Asia,
26 and certainly nothing to do with the war.

27 SM: When you went to the Dominican Republic, what was the reception like
28 there for Americans, because of course there was the Dominican Republic crisis back in
29 '65, which saw the Marines land?

30 JP: That's just a thing of the past. We didn't go down there until '75. They were
31 still arguing to some extent over it. One of the men that I worked for was with the 82nd

1 Airborne. He was Dominican, but he was a US citizen. His father was consul in New
2 Orleans when he was born. But, he was sent to the Dominican Republic on active duty.
3 He said it was a painful time for him, that he had never even conceived the idea that he
4 might be fighting his own brothers. It was just a terrible period. He left the military
5 shortly after and became a civilian.

6 SM: Were there many other Air America personnel in the Dominican Republic as
7 well?

8 JP: No, very few. One fellow, the same person that got Jack to go to Tainan with
9 Air Asia was the one that got him to go to Santo Domingo. He was the director of
10 maintenance at the time. John Wiren apparently was a pilot down there for a while
11 although I wasn't aware of it. Jack knew him, but I still haven't met John and Caroline
12 Wiren. There was another one from Air Asia by the name of Areseneau. I've never been
13 clear on what happened to him, but he died while he was working down there for
14 [Dominican Airline]. I don't know what the circumstances were. But no, there were a
15 lot of Americans, but just a very few handfuls from Air America.

16 SM: What were your thoughts when you came back to the United States, and
17 have your feelings or your thoughts changed concerning the role of the United States in
18 Southeast Asia, and in particular in Laos and in Thailand during the war? Did you—?

19 JP: My feelings didn't change so much as become a little more bitter. I don't
20 know why we were drug into something that we weren't permitted to win. I don't think
21 we should have got into it unless we were in it to win. Like so many, I put it behind me,
22 Steve, and moved on to other things.

23 SM: In terms of moving on to other things, has your activity in and your
24 membership in the Air America Association helped in that kind of regard?

25 JP: Actually we didn't—we weren't members of it. Well, the Air America
26 Association didn't start up until, I think it was early '80. We were still in the Dominican
27 Republic at that time and weren't aware of it. We didn't become aware of it until Jack
28 retired and we moved to East Texas. Then we did join the association and we did go to
29 the memorial plaque dedication in Dallas in '87. But, we weren't active in the association
30 until '97 when I got involved over the stamp project.

1 SM: Has your involvement with the association since then—how has that
2 affected your perspective and your outlook regarding the war, or has it?

3 JP: No, it hasn't effected, no. I am very anxious to see Air America credited for
4 the work they did and the truth come out. They got such a bad rap for so many years and
5 there was no way we could [defend] it. Now everything is declassified and the true
6 stories can be told. I'm very grateful for that. I want to see the history recorded properly.

7 SM: Speaking of how history has been portrayed in obviously historically and
8 accurate ways, did you see the movie *Air America*, and if so, what did you think of it?

9 JP: I thought it was a silly piece of fiction. There was one statement in there that
10 was accurate, and I got a kick out of that. It was when they made mincemeat out of a
11 123, Mel Gibson said to his partner, "Well, it'll take shops a day or two to fix this." I
12 thought, "Yeah, that's right. It would take our aircraft shops a day or two to put that back
13 in order." That's a joke, Steve.

14 SM: I know.

15 JP: Okay. There was nothing else in that.

16 SM: That was it? Just one thing?

17 JP: The rest of it was just disgusting. The scenery was great. Some of the flying
18 was fun. I don't get as angry over it as some of our people do because it was just a piece
19 of nonsensical fluff. I'm sorry that Mel Gibson felt he had to be involved in it. It could
20 have been so much better. Fortunately, Monty Markham has a better notion of the true
21 fiction and showed it off for the Discovery Channel.

22 SM: That movie in part was based on that book by Chris Robbins, right?

23 JP: I don't really see how. There was one episode in there that I thought was
24 taken from the book and that's something about coloring a coloring book. It was just so
25 silly. It's really not worth delving into.

26 SM: I was just curious in terms of the popular portrayals and portrayals in
27 popular media like movies. Unfortunately, too many people get their notions about
28 history—

29 JP: I know. I know. That's just something people mention. It's just awful.

30 SM: It's kind of scary, but some people actually do think that movies like that
31 portray reality.

1 JP: They think the *Apocalypse Now* was a true story, too, but oh my God!

2 SM: What resources or what books have you read that you find are good

3 portrayals and more accurate portrayals of Air America historically, from your

4 perspective?

5 JP: They haven't been written yet.

6 SM: You still haven't really come across many?

7 JP: No. I thought Robbins did a good job with *The Raven*. Roger Warner's

8 book—

9 SM: *Shooting at the Moon*?

10 JP: Yes. That, I thought that was very good. There was another one out there.

11 What am I trying to think of? I have not read *Conboy and Morrison*.

12 SM: I'm sorry. What is it called?

13 JP: *Conboy and Morrison*, a poem. It's a huge book. I have not read that, but I

14 understand that's excellent. Besides Warner, who else was—

15 SM: I haven't read—

16 JP: Tim Castle, I thought he did a good job. But, as far as a book about Air

17 America, no, it hasn't been written yet.

18 SM: Well, is there anything else you'd like to discuss today?

19 JP: I think that covers it pretty well. I'd be glad to provide specifics if anyone is

20 delving into this in detail. Please tell them to get a hold of me. I'd be glad to talk about it

21 with them.

22 SM: Okay. Sure will. Let me go ahead and end this officially real quick. This

23 will end the interview with Judith Porter. Thank you very much.